

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Corporate Parenting Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **2 March 2021**

Due to current government guidance on social-distancing and the COVID-19 virus the Corporate Parenting Committee on 2 March 2021 will be held virtually online. The press and public will be able to watch the meeting live via the Council's online webcast channel: www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast

Membership:

Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Daniel Chukwu, Barry Johnson, Sue Hooper, Sue Shinnick and Jennifer Smith

Rafael Antunes, Chair, Children in Care Council
Christopher Bennett, Vice Chair, Children in Care Council
Annie Guidotti, Open Door
Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Substitutes:

Councillors Luke Spillman, Gary Collins, Bukky Okunade and Lynn Worrall

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 5 January 2021	
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.

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **19 February 2021**

Information for members of the public and councillors

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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.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 5 January 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair), Steve Liddiard (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun, Daniel Chukwu, Barry Johnson, Sue Hooper, Sue Shinnick and Jennifer Smith

Christopher Bennett, Vice Chair, Children in Care Council
Annie Guidotti, Thurrock Open Door
Sharon Smith, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Jenny Josling, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Apologies: Rafael Antunes, Chair, Children in Care Council

In attendance: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Joseph Tynan, Assistant Director
Michael Addo-Boateng, Interim Developmental Role (DNLAC) & Safeguarding Children Specialist Nurse (Lead for CDR)
Helen Farmer, Thurrock CCG
Joanne Guerin, Thurrock CCG
Sue Green, Strategic Lead Commissioning
Naintara Khosla, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Mandy Moore, Strategic Lead - Business Intelligence
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing
Keeley Pullen, Head Teacher for Virtual School
Janet Simon, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Ben Tovey, Strategic Lead Housing Solutions and Homelessness Team
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's online webcast channel.

23. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 1 September 2020 was approved as a true and correct record subject to the last paragraph on page 10 being re-written to the following:

Councillor Liddiard commented on consultations with Councillors in that he still felt regardless of training most Elected Members did not understand their role when it came to being a Corporate Parent. He suggested there needed to be a change of communications for Elected Members, such as short videos or soundbites which could be sent either via email or other forms such as text message. Councillor Redsell agreed that Members needed to be involved

more in training and communications, she continued by congratulating Officers for how far the Committee had come since it started.

24. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

25. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Children's Social Care Performance

The Strategic Lead for Business Intelligence introduced to report to Members and in doing so advised there was a good overall performance of looked after children, in addition the after-care service was also improving.

Members heard there was continuous focus on encouraging care leavers to keep in touch with the after-care service and ensuring that these young people were in education or employment.

It was explained the report highlighted the impact on the Social Care team since the initial lockdown in March 2020 due to Covid-19. Members heard there were currently 300 looked after children and 275 were Care Leavers. During discussions Members were advised that the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering the Borough had reduced, as preferred routes had been through the Ports, for example through Dover. Officers explained there was an expectation for numbers to increase in the coming months due to the winter weather.

The Strategic Lead for Business Intelligence continued by advising Members the data within the report took into account a change in Legislation which placed additional responsibilities upon the Care Leaving Services under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

It was mentioned how the Initial Health Assessments (IHA) had been improving and during September 2020 the number of completed IHA within 20 working days was now 75% compared to the 50% to the previous year.

The Chair of the Committee thanked Officers for the report and sought if there were any questions from Members.

Councillor Chukwu queried as to the recruitment of Foster Carers. The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children explained the Foster Carer Strategy along with the branding for recruiting Foster Carers was currently going through a refresh, with ideas such as offering Foster Carers within Thurrock Council tax rebates to encourage local people to join the Foster Carer team.

It was explained once the new branding had been agreed it would be reported to the Committee for their comments. Officers further advised during the

pandemic the Council had accepted nine new Foster Carers with a further thirteen applications to be reviewed.

Councillor Johnson enquired as to if a Care Leaver did not require a Personal Adviser, could they change their mind at a later date and seek support. Officers explained there were tight protocols regarding Care Leavers and Personal Advisers, however should a Personal Adviser not be required, it was for the young person to put this into writing. The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children continued to explain if a young person wished support for a varied period of time this could be arranged and discussed within the team.

Councillor Akinbohun thanked Officers for the report and queried as to the number of complaints and concerns received within the Social Care Service. The Strategic Lead for Business Intelligence advised that the complaints data was held by the Complaints Team, however she could get this information to the Councillor outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That members note the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and the work undertaken to manage demand for statutory Social Care Services.**
- 2. For any specific areas of interest to be flagged for inclusion/expansion within the next report.**

27. Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy

The Strategic Lead of Commissioning presented the report and in doing so gave an overview of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy which insured the duties of the Council were met.

It was explained the strategy looked at a long-term vision as well as bringing teams together across the authority with a focus of development of local placements within the borough.

Members heard the quality of placements strongly related to the children and young people having stability within care, it was therefore the aim of the strategy to ensure that across all the areas of services supporting children, Officers inspired to achieve the best possible placements and housing for all young people.

Officers explained they were working with the participation and engagement team to be able to ensure the views of children and young people were included within the development of the strategy. It was therefore decided to develop this as one of the key priorities of the strategy "open speech to ensure the voice of children and young people is at the heart of its planning".

The Strategic Lead of Commissioning commented placements over 30 miles tended to be used when there was specialist nature, as there were fewer

providers available locally to meet specific needs.

It was explained at the end of March 2020 there were 298 children looked after within Thurrock this was a reduction from 2018, and was also lower than the statistical neighbour average. Members enquired whether the Council were meeting the demands of accommodation for young people. Officers clarified they were currently meeting the demands and they were looking for consistency to be able to offer all young children and young people local placements.

The Chair of the Committee queried as to whether children within the local area were able to be supported closer to the borough Officers explained all placements even those furthest away would receive the same support and care needed for the young person in question.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services and Early Help commented that discussions were had within the Eastern region to ensure that the best accommodation possible was given for young people.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That members support the delivery of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy January 2021 – January 2024.**
- 2. That members note the information contained in the report and accompanying strategy.**

28. Independent Reviewing Officer - Annual Report

The Strategic Lead of Quality, Assurance and Reviewing presented the annual report to the Corporate Parenting Committee in order for it to meet statutory requirement.

Members heard that the appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer for a child or young person in the care of the local authority was a legal requirement under the section 118 of the adoption act 2002. In addition it was advised during the reporting period there were five Independent reviewing officers, experienced social workers and all had the relevant and appropriate skills to carry out such tasks.

Officers continued to advise Members timeliness of reviews were being completed on time recording over 90% completed within timescales. It was then commented that during a recent activity day the views of children and young people were sought by the independent reviewing service and of this feedback received 100% of children or young people wanted their reports shared with them in advance of their meeting, 91% of children stated they would like to participate in their own review, and 41% stated they would like they would like to share their own view. It was also noted that young people

were not worried about the length of time they review meetings took, however 80% of them stated they would not like their reviews to take place at school.

The Independent Reviewing Officer continued by informing Members there had been an increase of 24% to the number of reviews held.

The Chair thanked Officers for the excellent report, she commented she was pleased with the increase of completed assessment within time.

RESOLVED:

For the Corporate Parenting Committee to review and comment on the IRO Annual report 2019 - 2020 and the recommendations in the report.

29. The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After - Academic Year 2019-2020

The headteacher of the virtual school for children looked after presented the report to the committee and in doing so, explained the virtual school monitored and supported the educational process and outcomes for children looked after. She continued to advise the responsibility of the school covered pupils aged between three and 18 years and also included those who had left care during an academic school year.

Members heard the cohort numbers of pupils was part of the virtual school had remained relatively consistent over the academic year, the headteacher of the virtual schools continued to explain due to the cancellation of all exams for the previous year 2020 there was no attainment data to be reported.

She continued by explaining the progress and outcomes of all pupils were still monitored very closely for the academic year and support was still provided for those children transitioning from into years seven and eleven. Members heard the virtual school had been working with all schools and colleges to support pupils as they moved into new educational establishments.

Members were advised as a minimum requirement every looked after child age between three and eighteen years were required to have a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) that was reviewed as a minimum of every six months. It was explained that reviews were to be taken more frequently and therefore PEP were produced every school term. It was further explained at the end of the academic year the PEP compliance rates were 99% with only one pupil who had not had a PEP within the designated timescales.

The headteacher of the virtual school mentioned that 39% of the whole cohort had been identified as either having an educational health care plan or saving additional help as SEN support, this meant that statistically Thurrocks looked after children had a high level of need compare to children nationally. She continued to explain when comparing thoughts are looked after children with all looked after children nationally in 19–20 they were 59.9% of children with special educational needs, 27.2% had an EHCP and 28.7% had SEN support,

therefore compared to the looked after children nationally Thurrock had fewer pupils with SEND.

Members were notified of the number of support measures taken when the announcement to close schools happened in March 2020, despite working virtually the service adopted a business approach and made adaptations when necessary to ensure there is no disruption to the role and support given to students; such as schools offering online lessons and learning which had been improved for students going into the second lockdown.

Councillor Liddiard enquired as to whether Foster Carers were due to provide Wi-Fi for students to enable them to complete their online learning. The Strategic Lead for children looked after explained although they hadn't had any issues with Wi-Fi raised by Foster Carers they were supporting all looked after children during lockdown including online learning and any issues should be reported via Social Workers.

During discussions it was commented that some schools were struggling due to the challenge of closures, however we were working hard to maintain social bubbles and support for students whether that be online or within classrooms for a number of children. It was explained many schools were working creatively due to COVID-19 and offering online learning. As well as this schools are working closely with public health and local authority colleagues.

The headteacher of a virtual schools explained they were supporting schools and Foster Carers as well as children such as year 11 students who may wish to resit any exams assessment such as English or maths.

The Chair of the Committee enquired as to the percentage of children attending schools throughout the pandemic such as those children of key workers. The headteacher for virtual schools explained they were currently collecting such data, however most children didn't attend school in March 2020 due to the first lockdown. She continued to advise that schools were offering online learning and 97% of this was being up kept.

RESOLVED:

The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2019-2020 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate and, if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all CLA.

30. Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers

The Strategic Lead for Children in Need and Child Protection presented the report and in doing so, explained how the local authority had statutory duties and responsibilities for young people leaving care in order to support them into independent living as adults. Members heard that depending on whether or not a young person was ready to live independently there were a number of

accommodation options available for them aged 18 or over, which included remaining with former Foster Carers and the staying put arrangement, moving into supported housing, moving into other independent living situation such as shared accommodation with other young people, or where a young person remained in full-time education or was at university the children's social care team would support the young person in order to access adequate funds to secure accommodation suitable for their needs during term time and would in addition support them to access accommodation during school holidays.

The Committee heard that under the protocol there were also a number of accommodations highlighted that were not suitable for independent living this included bed and breakfasts.

The Strategic Lead continued to notify Members Officers were working with Housing colleagues and using the Headstart fund in order to support young people to become independent young adults after leaving care. Officers highlighted the importance of putting the needs of the young person first so that they could be supported through the transition into independent living.

Councillor Rigby, Chair of the Committee thanked Officers for the report she continued by seeking if a young person was to stay with the Foster Carer whether the support package stayed with them post 18 years old. The Strategic Lead for Children in Need and Child Protection if a young person stayed in full-time education they would still receive the full rate however the rates adjusted post 18 and if possible the young person was asked to come to contribute to this in some way.

During discussions the Strategic Lead explained that workshops were also available for young people to offer support as thinking about bills and managing tenancies. The representative from Thurrock Open Door advised Open Door ran similar workshops and should any young person wish to attend they could notify the council who could refer them on to her for further advice.

RESOLVED:

- 1. For the Committee to note the statutory duties of the Local Authority to support young people in obtaining suitable accommodation and how we plan to meet these duties.**
- 2. For the Committee to have oversight of the joint protocols and be involved in the ongoing review of delivery across Children's Services and Housing Services.**

31. After Care Report

The Strategic Lead for Children Looked After presented the report to Members which provided them with an update regarding the service provision for Thurrock after-care young adults who had previously been in the local authorities care. She continued to advise Members the after-care service

were transferred to Children Social Care in July 2019.

It was explained that following the OFSTED inspection of Children's Services in November 2020 which graded the children services as good, OFSTED noted there was a need to ensure better partnership with Adult Social Care colleagues to support the transition arrangements for care leavers and particularly for those young people with additional needs.

Members heard that as Corporate Parents the Council were aspirational for their children and young people in care supporting them to achieve in all areas of their life and insuring a smooth transition into adulthood. The Council was committed to listening to children and young people and involving them in decision-making and service development.

The Strategic Lead the Children Looked After explained that unaccompanied asylum seeking children had not received high numbers as it seemed the preferred route was through the port at Dover, however this could change due to the winter weather in future months. It was mentioned the Council were reviewing the needs of young people using the after-care service to ensure they had the opportunities necessary for ongoing education training and employment.

The data received for November 2020 showed the total number of care leavers up to the age of 25 not in employment education or training was 49.8% with no significant change being seen in the last three months. Members heard that Thurrock offered access to the Princes Trust program which enabled young people to build their confidence and access to opportunities such as apprenticeships so they could engage within local communities.

Officers continued to advised Members of the after-care newsletter which updated young people on such topics as online courses, and gave them the links to be able to sign up for such events. In addition the newsletter updated young people on new interesting things happening such as a new WhatsApp group exclusively for care leavers and monthly meetings which were currently being held on Zoom. The newsletter also informed young people on the Inspire Youth Hub and gave details on how to contact colleagues. In addition there were weekly sessions covering topics such as interview skills, writing CVs and applying for college and university places.

Officers explained they were trying to create more opportunities for care leavers to be able to support them transitioning into independent young adults.

The Chair of the Committee commented the difficulty of offering such support such as face-to-face meetings during COVID-19 and queried if care leavers were attending training due to having no employment would they in addition have to find employment to seek support.

The Strategic Lead for Children Looked After explained that Care Leavers

post 18 did not have to find employment in addition to training, she further commented, Officers had a good relationship with young people and were offering a range of opportunities to support employment, training or additional education if required.

RESOLVED:

This report provides Members of the Committee with an overview of the services provided to our young adults. Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the service provision to young adults in the Thurrock Aftercare Service.

32. Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme 2020/2021

The Committee discussed the work programme, and agreed to a number of reports being included on the Work Programme including:

- Support provided to Care Leavers and Children Looked After during COVID19
- Support provided to Foster Carers during COVID19
- Support offered by the virtual School during COVID 19

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parenting Committee agreed for the Work Programme to be updated and include the reports discussed throughout the meeting.

The meeting finished at 8.46 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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2 March 2021	ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children’s Social Care Performance	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst	
Accountable Assistant Director: Joe Tynan, Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides information on the performance across Children Looked After and Aftercare. The overall performance for the service is good and this is within the context of COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions which have been in place over the period March 2020 to December 2020.

Thurrock continues to provide services to approximately 295 Children Looked After (CLA) and approximately 281 Care Leavers. Children and young people are visited regularly and there are notable improvements with the management of missing children, which reflects good partnership with the police and Thurrock Community Safety. The work with health colleagues continues to ensure that there is a focus on Initial Health Assessments for children entering into care.

The Care Leaving Service reflects a trajectory of good performance. There continues to be a focus on continuing improvement of the service, particularly to keep in touch and support young people into employment or education and to ensure they have the right accommodation to meet their needs.

Children are generally placed with foster carers or where possible family members. To support children being placed locally in their communities, there is a drive to promote the recruitment of Thurrock based foster carers.

Permanency planning has been particularly impacted by COVID-19, as some children have not been able to progress to their permanent placements as there are delays in final court hearings. The court have agreed to prioritise cases where the care plan is one of adoption, to prevent the delay for younger children in court cases.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members note the areas of improvement in Children’s Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.

1.2 Note the impact of COVID 19 on performance.

2. Introduction and Background

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

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

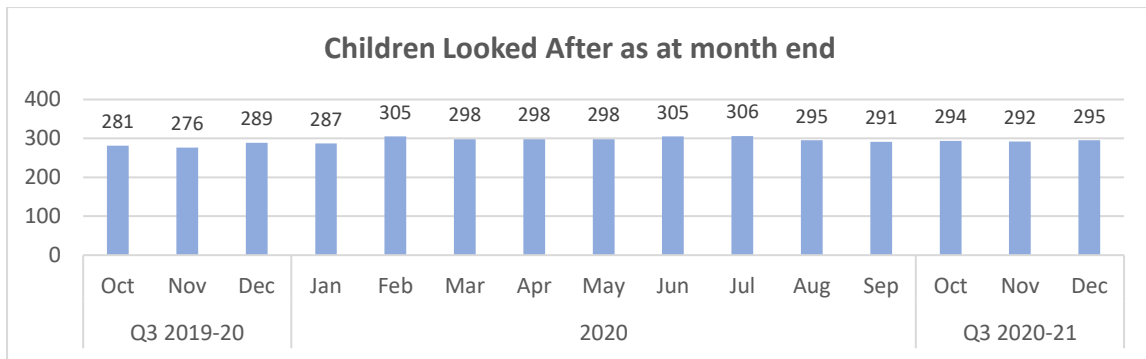
2.3 This data has been presented and discussed with the Children & Families Performance Group.

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

3. Performance Data for Children Looked After

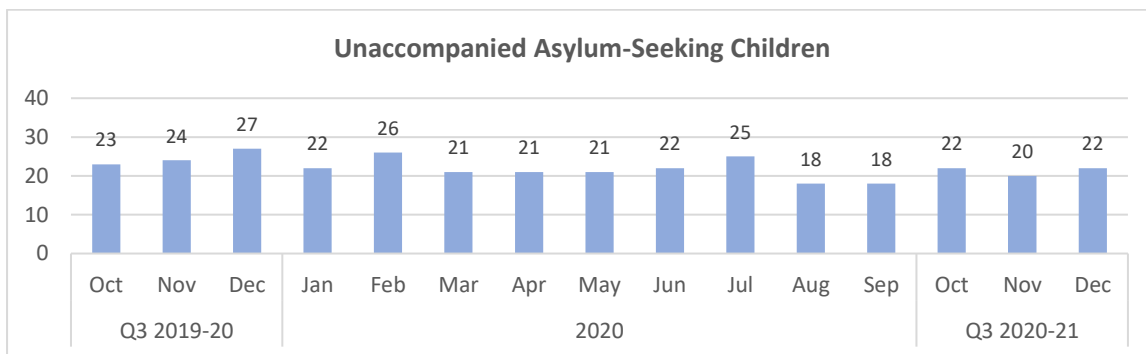
3.1 Number of Children Looked After (CLA)

The graph below shows the number of children who were Looked After at the end of each month. The numbers have remained stable. The small fluctuations are normal and to be expected. There is monitoring of children who may need to become Looked After and there are regular reviews of children entering care. Where possible, children are returned to their family where safe and appropriate.



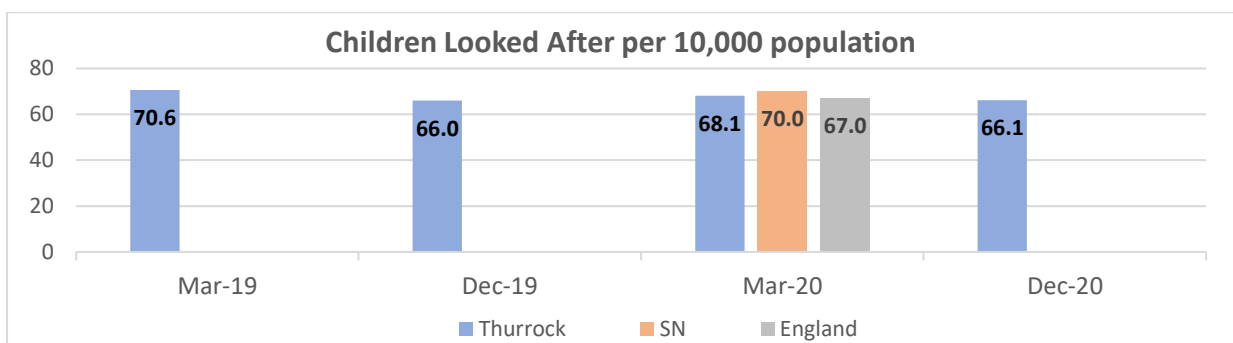
3.2 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

UACS are a subset of the Children Looked After number, above. There has been a reduction in the entry of UASC into Essex Ports as the preferred route appears to have been through Dover currently.



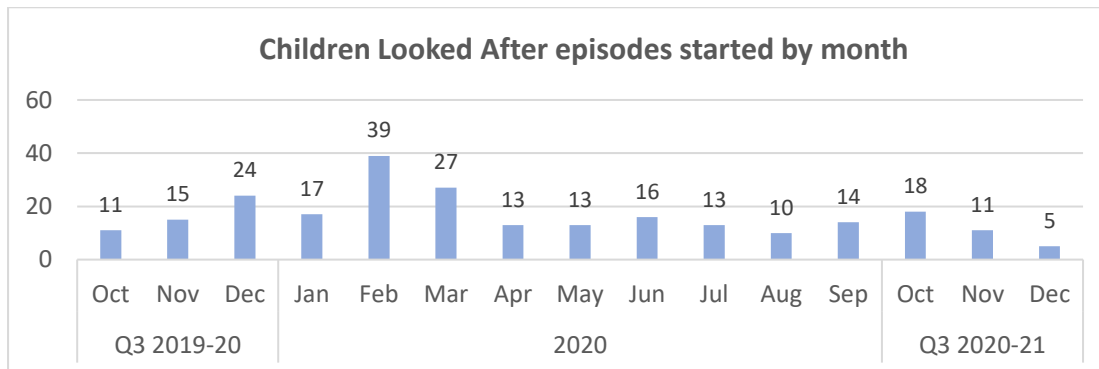
3.3 The Rate of CLA per 10,000 population

The graph below shows the rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 population of under 18 year olds in Thurrock. Based on benchmarking data, Thurrock is below the Statistical Neighbour average of 70 and the England average of 67 as at the end of March 2020.



3.4 CLA episodes started in month

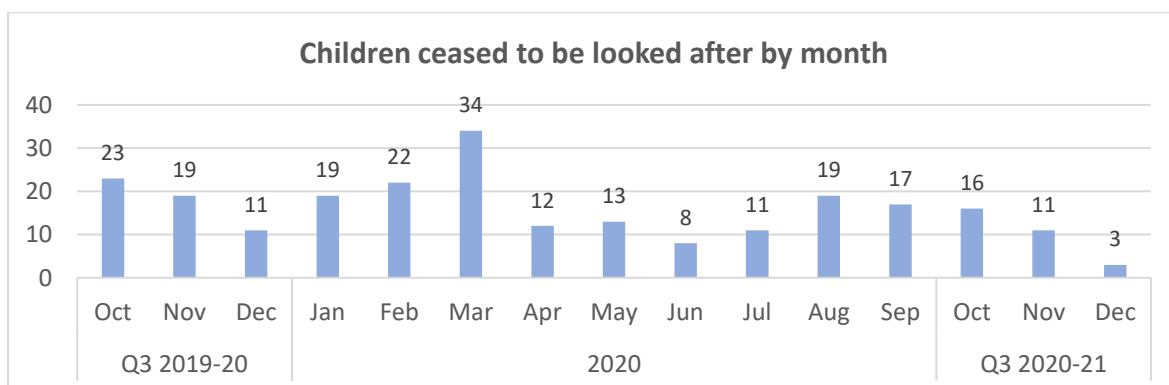
It is normal for the numbers of children entering care to fluctuate. The fluctuation and the relatively small numbers make it difficult to identify significant trends. However, there has been a decrease in the number of children entering care since the start of the pandemic. For example, 34 children started to be looked after between October and December 2020. This compares to 50 children who started to be looked after between October and December 2019. All cases are reviewed to ensure the correct children come in to care and court proceedings are only issued where necessary.



3.5 CLA episodes ended in month

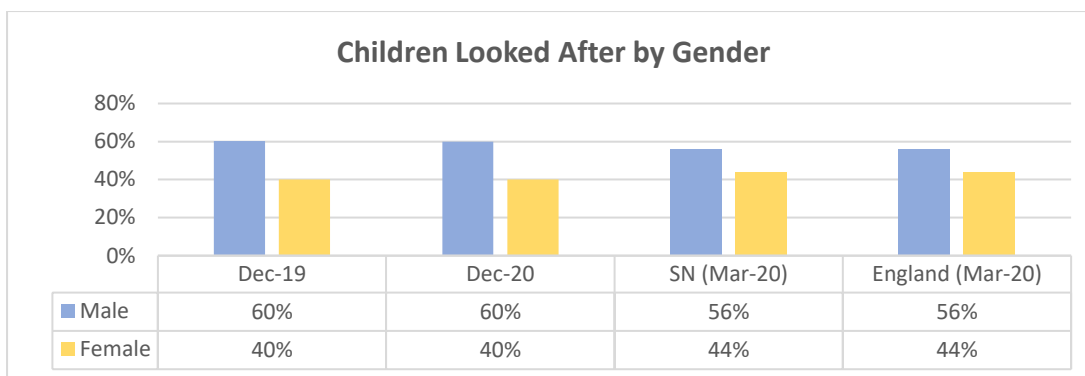
It is normal for the number of children leaving care to fluctuate. The fluctuation and the relatively small numbers make it difficult to identify significant trends. However, there has been a decrease in the number of children leaving care since the start of the pandemic.

This decrease is partly due to delay in the timeliness of court proceedings, preventing children from leaving care and progressing to their permanent placement (Adoption, SGO or returning home).



3.6 CLA by gender

Based on the benchmarking data, the gender breakdown is in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages.

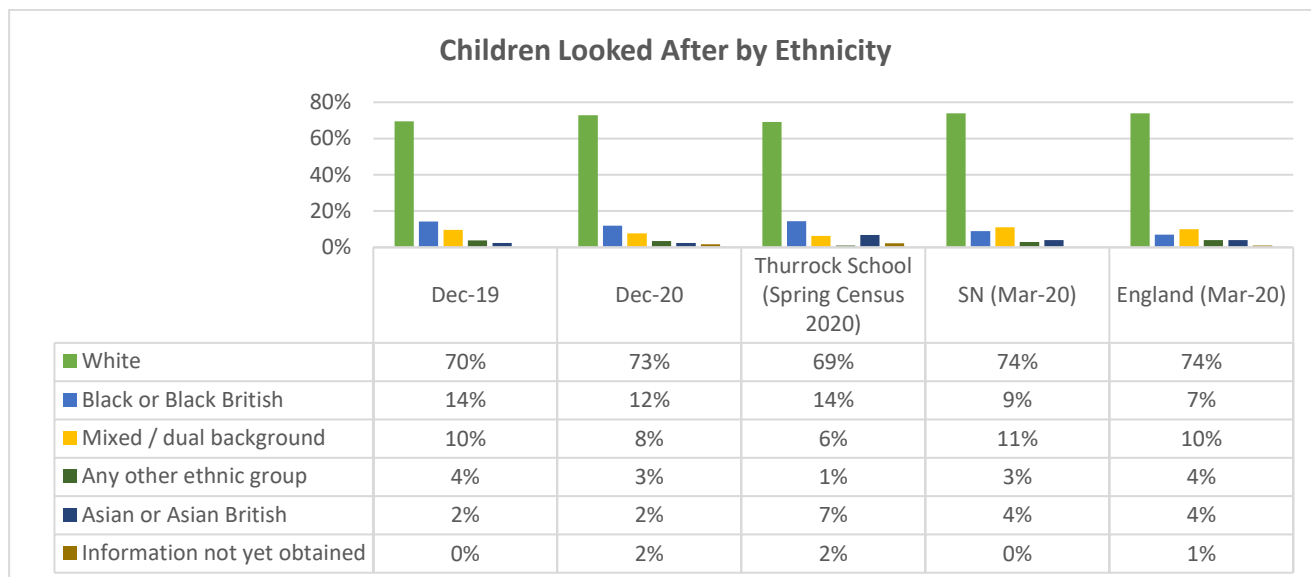


3.7 CLA by ethnicity

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

Thurrock's Children Looked After are predominantly White which is in line with Thurrock's School Census in Spring 2020 and the Statistical Neighbour and England averages.

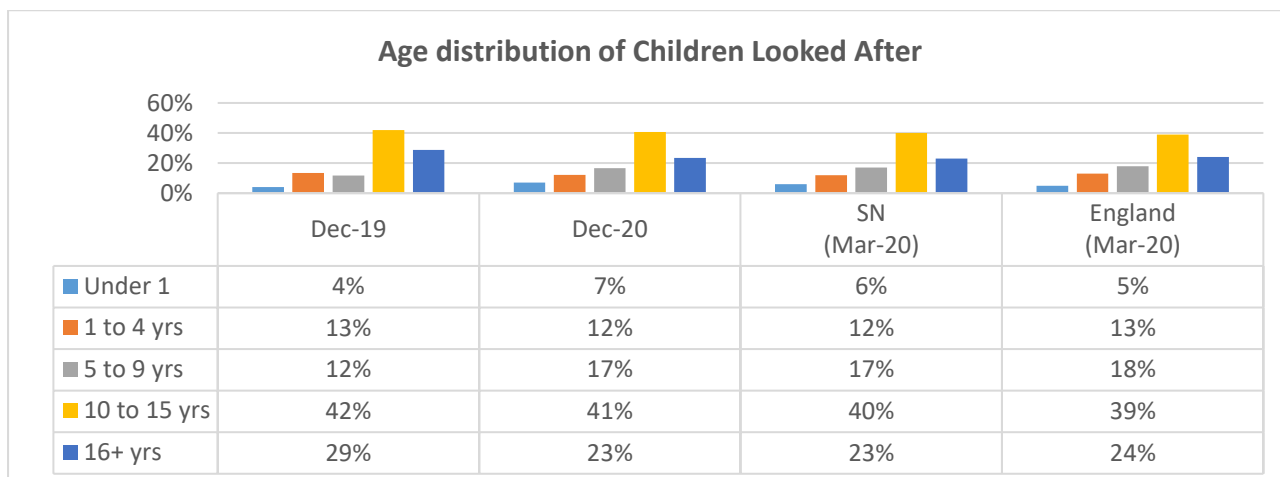
While the numbers of Children Looked After who are Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British have slightly decreased since December 2019, there have been no particular issues influencing this change.



3.8 CLA age profile

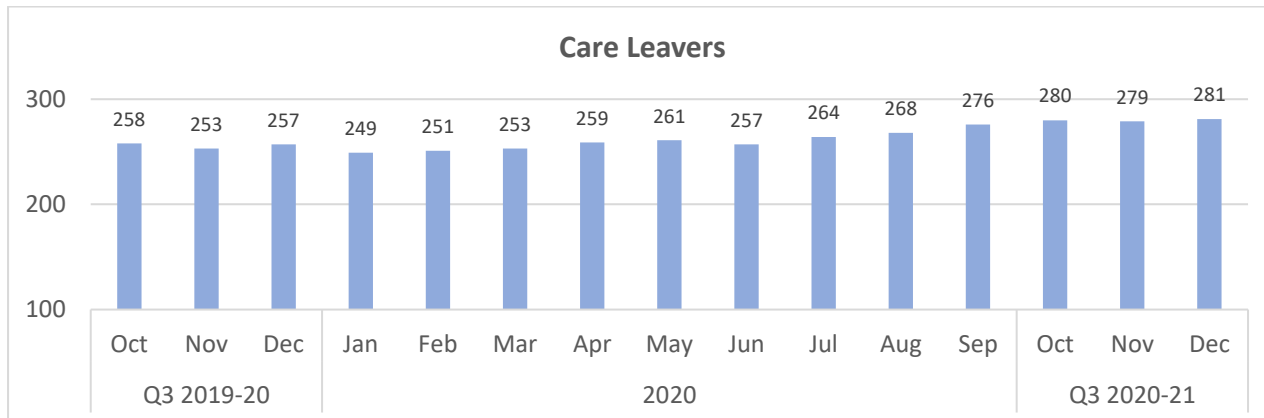
The age profile of the Children Looked After cohort remains mostly stable and in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. There has been an increase in the number of children who are aged 5 to 9 years. This has partly been caused by delays in final court hearings. Children are not able to

move to their final permanent placement (SGO, Adoption) where court proceedings are continuing.



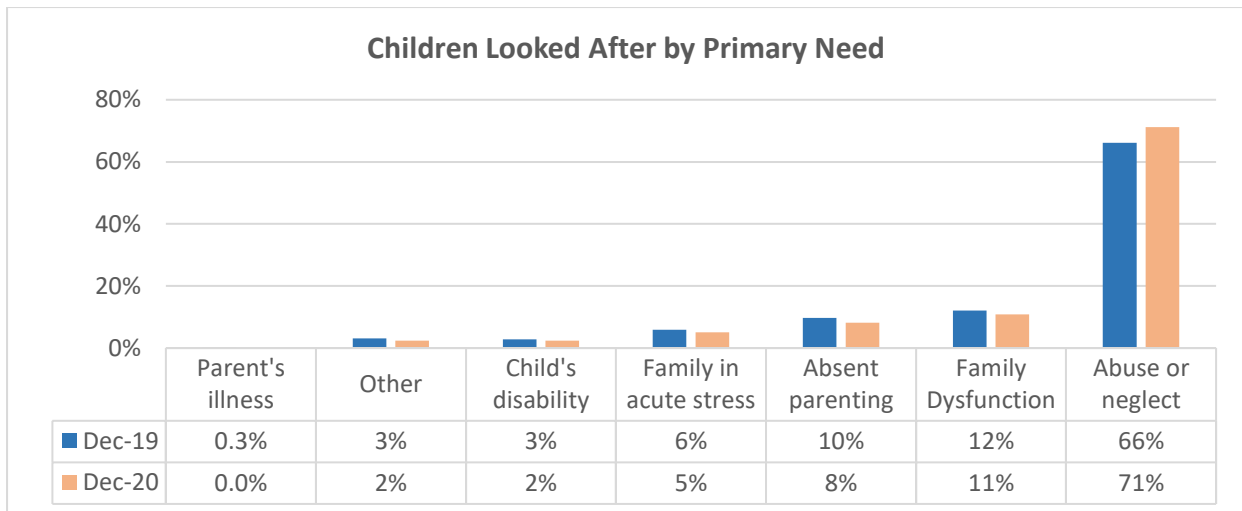
3.9 Care Leavers

The graph below shows the total number of Young People age 16-25 years who are in receipt of a Care Leaving service. The numbers are increasing and this is due to legislative changes that have placed additional responsibilities upon Care Leaving services (Children and Social Work Act 2017). Section 3 of the Act now requires Local Authorities to appoint a Personal Adviser for Care Leavers (who request one) up until the age of 25.



3.10 CLA by Category of Need

There has been a slight increase in the percentage of children becoming Looked After as a result of 'Abuse or Neglect'. The majority of children become Looked After as a result of the significant harm they are experiencing or likely to experience. Where possible, Social Care are providing support and intervention from Social Workers and the Families Together service to enable families to remain together and ensure that children only become looked after, when absolutely necessary. Thurrock works to minimise the use of the 'Other' category. Local Authorities use slightly different definitions of the categories and this makes it hard to meaningfully benchmark.



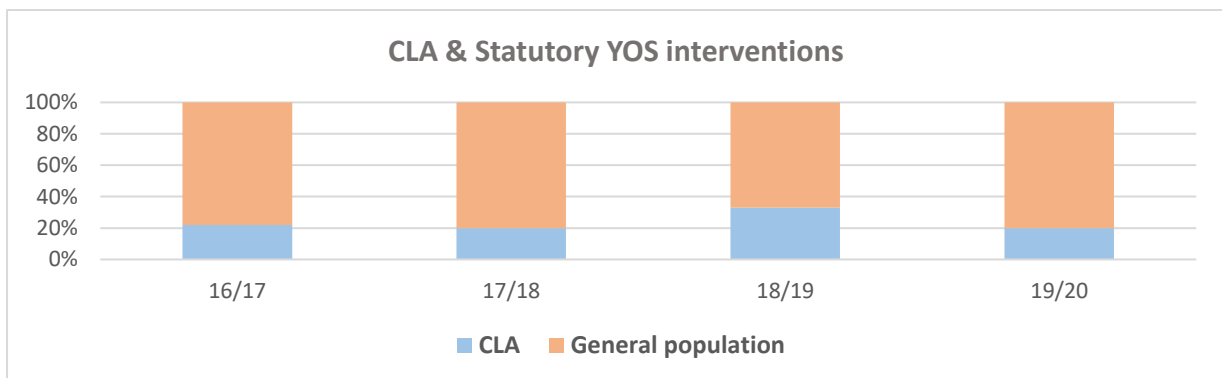
The percentages in the graph above relate to 257 Children Looked After in December 2019 and 281 children looked after in December 2020.

3.11 Number of CLA open to Youth Offending Services

Statutory Interventions

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

In 2019-20 (Financial Year April 19 – March 20) there were 63 children open to the Youth Offending Service on statutory outcomes, out of which 13 were Children Looked After, representing 20%. Out of the 13 Children Looked After, 38% were from the BAME community.



The above graph represents the percentage of Children Looked After versus the total number of young people in the Youth Justice System for the last four years. Despite an increase from 20% to 30% in 2018-19 the numbers of Children Looked After has been relatively static at around 20%. There were no notable reasons for the increase in 2018-19.

The throughput of the Youth Offending Service in 2020 has been significantly affected by COVID-19 and the closure of the Courts. This has resulted in

delays of children being sentenced and lower numbers of young people being referred to YOS for statutory intervention. Thurrock YOS is working with the Court Service to review if any actions can be taken to reduce the backlog in the Courts.

A recent analysis of Thurrock CLA and their prevalence in the Criminal Justice System indicated that 67% of Children Looked After had committed offences prior to entering care. Further analysis is being undertaken to understand the criminal offences of young people who are in care.

Diversion Strategy

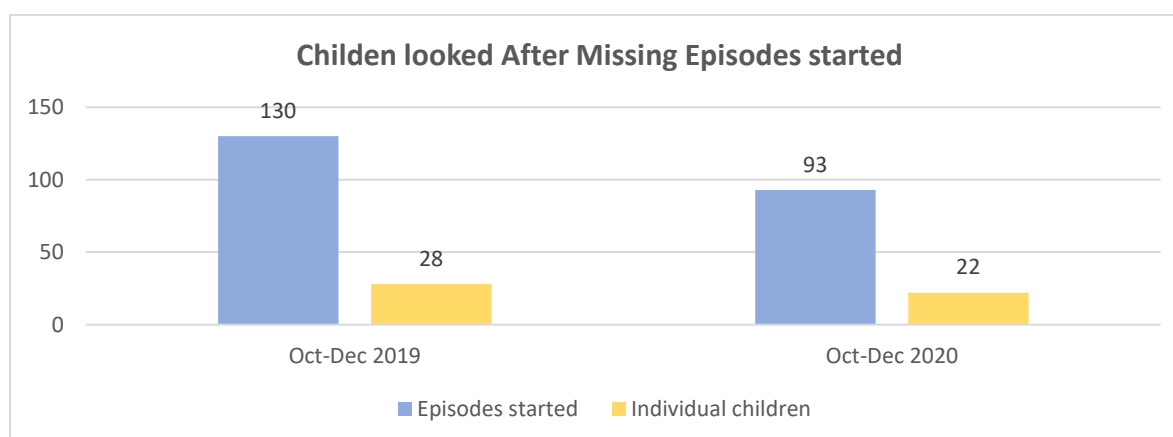
In 2019 Thurrock YOS implemented its new diversion strategy. This enables young people to work with YOS through diversionary interventions rather than statutory orders. Children Looked After are a priority for diversionary interventions. In the period, October 2020 to December 2020, 8% (3) of Looked After young people were made subject to diversion interventions.

Thurrock YOS and Essex Police are committed to the national protocol¹ aimed to reduce the criminalisation of Children Looked After. This approach will be supported with a local pan-Essex protocol to ensure there is a focus on diverting any child who is Looked After from the Criminal Justice System.

3.12 CLA missing episodes started

The graph below shows the number of missing episodes started and the count of the individual children who went missing between October and December 2020. It is of note that the number of missing episodes and the number of children who went missing have reduced since December 2019.

There has been a strong focus on Thurrock missing children and good joint working with the multi-agency partnership. There is a weekly missing meeting with partners that includes Essex Police and liaison with Thurrock Community Safety colleagues. A Contextual Safeguarding approach has been embedded which is assisting with the partnership working and social work practice.

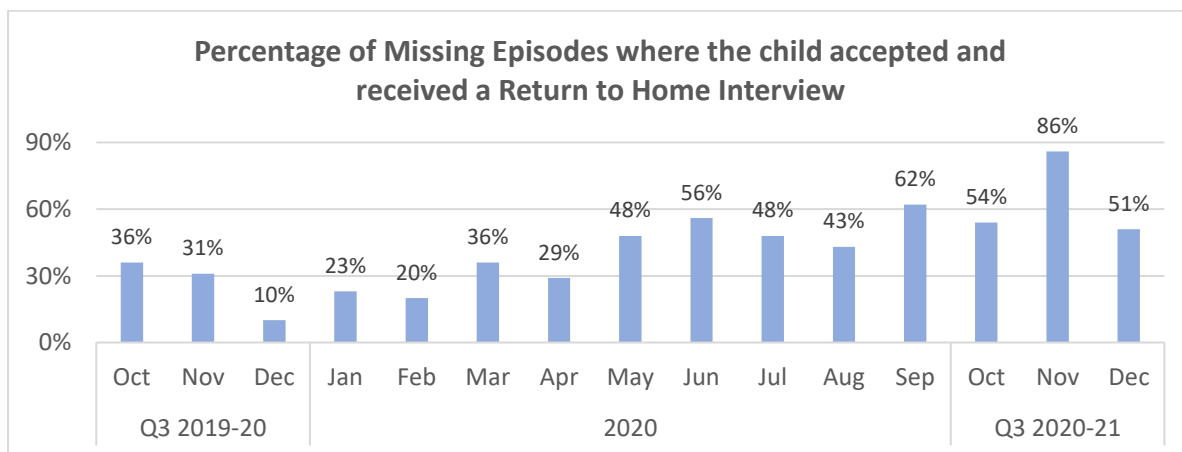


¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-protocol-on-reducing-criminalisation-of-looked-after-children>

3.13 CLA return to home interview

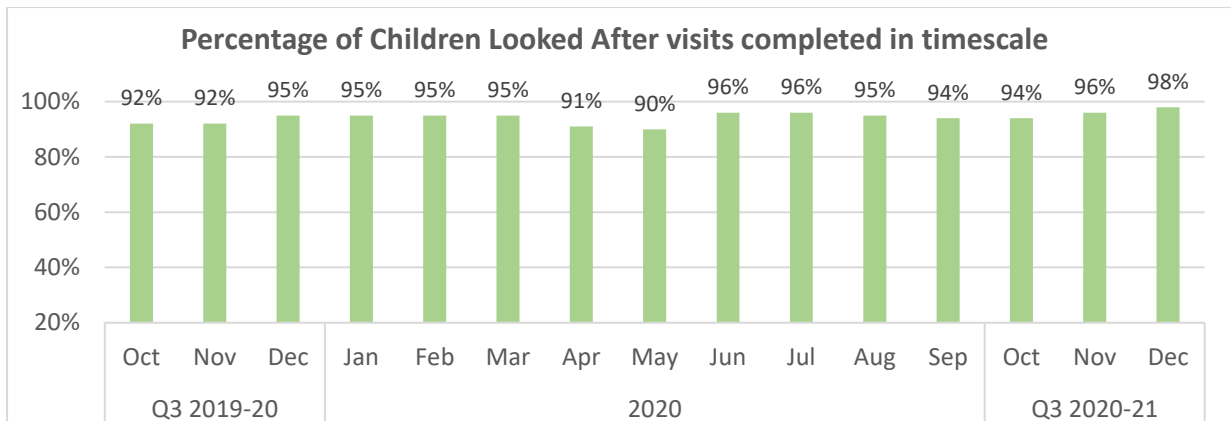
Since 1 April 2020, Inspire Youth Hub have been commissioned to undertake independent Return Home Interviews (RHI). All children are offered a RHI within 72 hours following each missing event, with the aim of understanding the young person’s circumstances and the reasons why they go missing. Key Workers from placements, Foster Carers and Social Workers will discuss missing incidents with children. There is a network of support provided to children to try to engage with them and understand the reasons for their missing episodes. The Participation Team have been able to engage and seek feedback from young people and this has been invaluable.

The offer of an RHI is not always accepted by young people. Since April 2020 Inspire Youth Hub are managing to increase the numbers of young people who engage with the RHI service.



3.14 Timeliness of social worker visits

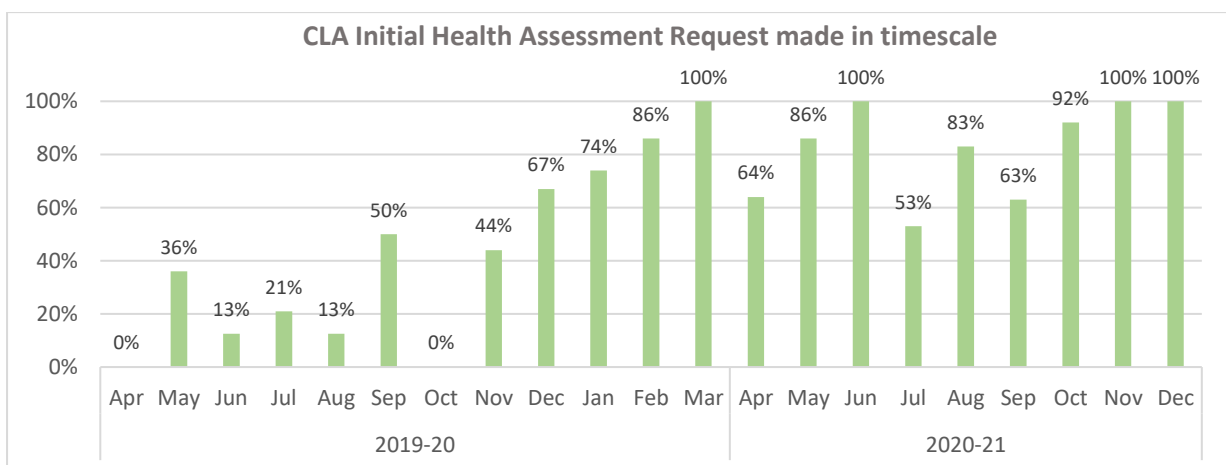
Social workers are required to visit the child within one week of the start of any placement. Visits are then due in accordance to the time agreed within the Care Plan. This can vary from 20 to 65 working days. Performance has improved since last year and there is focused work to ensure this performance is maintained. 98% is very good performance as there are often practical reasons for a visit being late and there are safeguards to ensure that missed visits take place quickly after the due date.



3.15 CLA Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

Every child who becomes looked after should have an Initial Health Assessment within 20 days of entering into care. To achieve good performance for this indicator, there is reliance on working with Thurrock Social Workers, the children’s families, Thurrock health care providers, and also other health providers for children placed outside of Thurrock. Sometimes notifications for IHA cannot be processed if parents have not provided consent for medical treatment and there is no court order which gives the Local Authority responsibility for consenting to health care. There is a weekly IHA tracking meeting to ensure that there is a focus on meeting the 5 day target to notify Health that a child has become looked after and to ensure that an Initial Health Assessment is offered and completed with 20 working days.

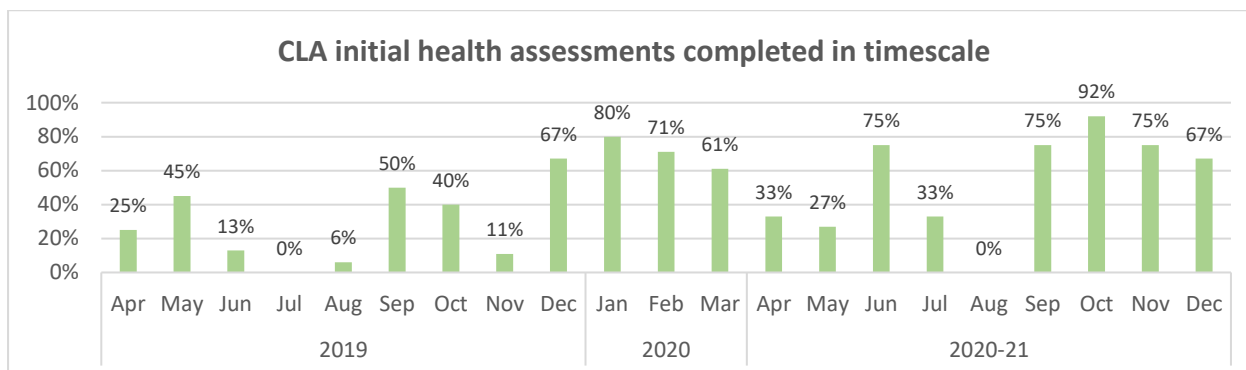
The chart below shows that between April 2019 and December 2020 there was variable performance for IHA requests being sent to Health. There was improved performance in the period October 2020 to December 2020, with over 90% of notifications being processed within 5 days.



The chart below reflects the timeliness of IHA appointments being completed within 20 days in the period April 2019 to December 2020. The performance

has improved in the period September to December 2020; despite there being additional pressures in the Health Service due to COVID-19.

In some circumstances an IHA appointment was offered by Health within 20 days; however there are occasions when the initial appointment offered was not taken up. Please see separate report on health assessments presented to this Committee.



3.16 CLA in Education

Children Looked After continue to make good educational progress, with better than national average figures for attainment for Thurrock's Children Looked After and performance this year being in the top 25% of Local Authorities.

3.17 CLA Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

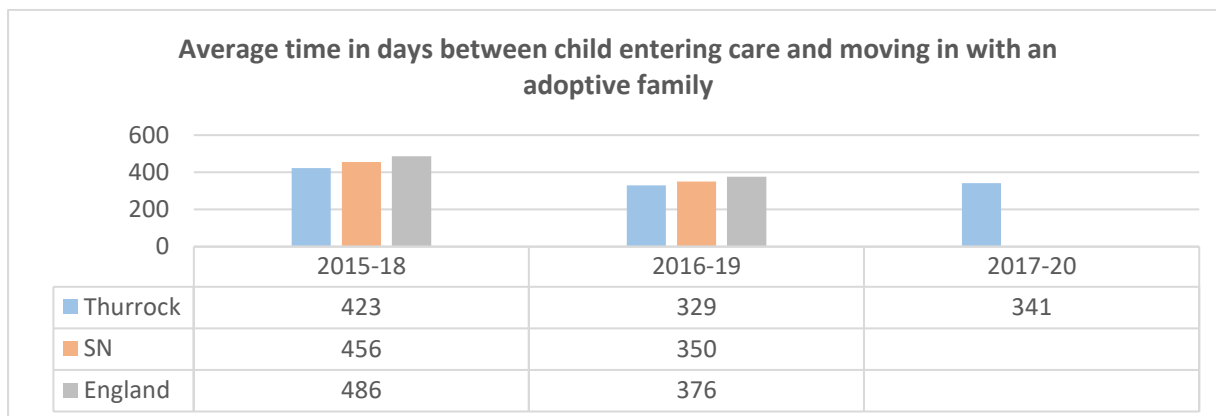
SDQ scores are a measure which provides an indication of the mental wellbeing of Looked After Children. SDQ scores are collated annually for all children aged 4-18. The care plans for children are reviewed by the SDQ panel. During COVID-19 the average scores have not increased and the mental wellbeing of Children Looked After is being appropriately reviewed, with support and intervention provided as necessary.

3.18 Number of children adopted

Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, a total of 15 children were adopted; this met Thurrock's target of 15. In the period April to December 2020, 4 children have been adopted; 9 children are placed in adoptive placements and have adoption hearings planned between January 2021 and March 2021. There are a further 15 children who have plans for adoption currently in court proceedings. Due to COVID-19, there has been a significant delay in court proceedings which has impacted on the numbers of children adopted or placed for adoption in the period April 2020 to December 2020. There are likely to be an increased number of children adopted through 2021 - 2022, with increased court hearings as the pandemic eases.

3.19 Timeliness of Adoption

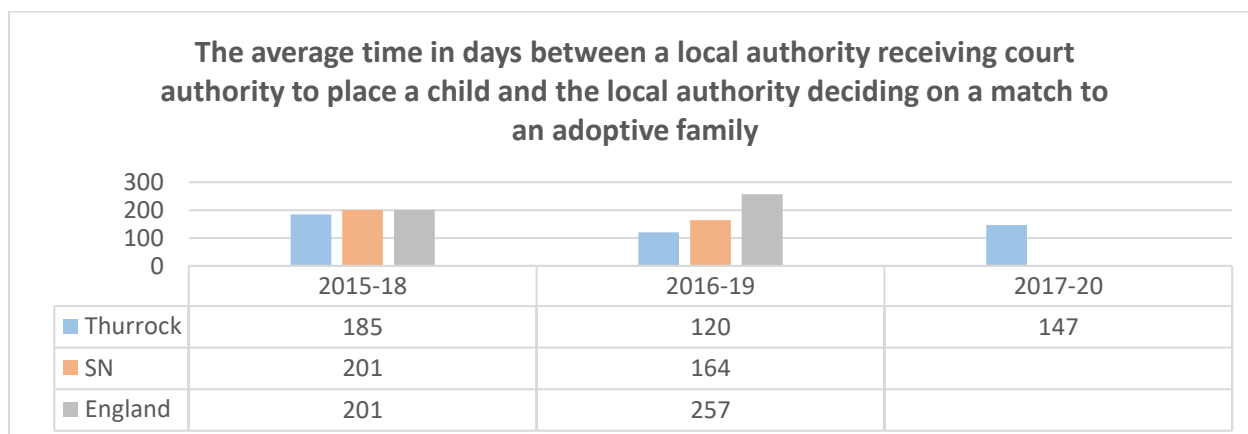
This measure is the average length of time from the child entering care to moving in with an adoptive family. Our 2020-21 target is set at 426 days for a child to be placed with their adoptive family, therefore performance is currently good at 341 days.



This measure has now been adjusted to include foster carers who adopt children that are placed with them. The average time for a child entering care and being placed with their adoptive family (including foster carers who adopt children who are placed with them) is 266 days for adoptions completed in 2017-2020.

This measure is the timeliness of finding a family for a child once Thurrock has received authority from the court. The average time in days between Thurrock receiving court authority to place a child with the adoptive family was 147 days.

Compared to the Statistical Neighbour and England 3-year averages of 2015-18, 2016-19 and 2017-20, Thurrock's performance is good.



3.20 **CLA permanency**

Purposeful early permanency planning continues to ensure that children are in the right placement at the right time to meet their needs. Placement and supporting children, where appropriate, to remain at home with their families is the priority. Children are placed for adoption only once all family and friend options have been exhausted.

In December 2020, 19% of the total CLA cohort were under the age of five. The majority of children under five are moved on to permanent placements through adoption or permanent alternative carers. There have been significant delays, as a result of COVID-19, resulting in children being subject to court proceedings for longer periods, and transition to their permanent homes being delayed.

3.21 **CLA placement distance**

It is good practice to ensure that children remain within their communities. In December 2020, 74% of the Children Looked After cohort were 20 miles or less from their homes, compared to 70% in December 2019. With the continued focus on Fostering recruitment and the Thurrock Council Tax Exemption Offer, the Service has an expectation that more local Foster Carers can be recruited.

3.22 **Care Leavers**

A Care Leaver, as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000², is a person who has been 'looked after' or 'in care' for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday.

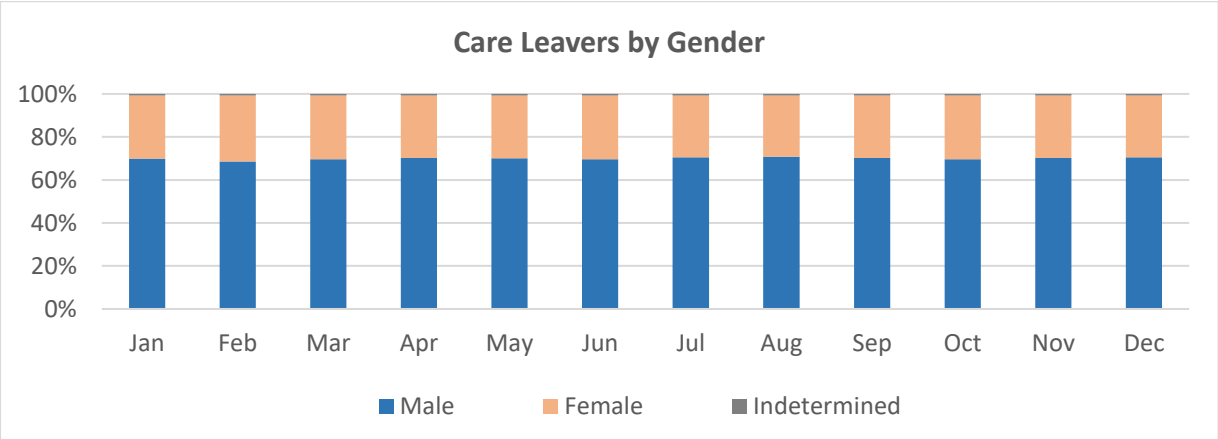
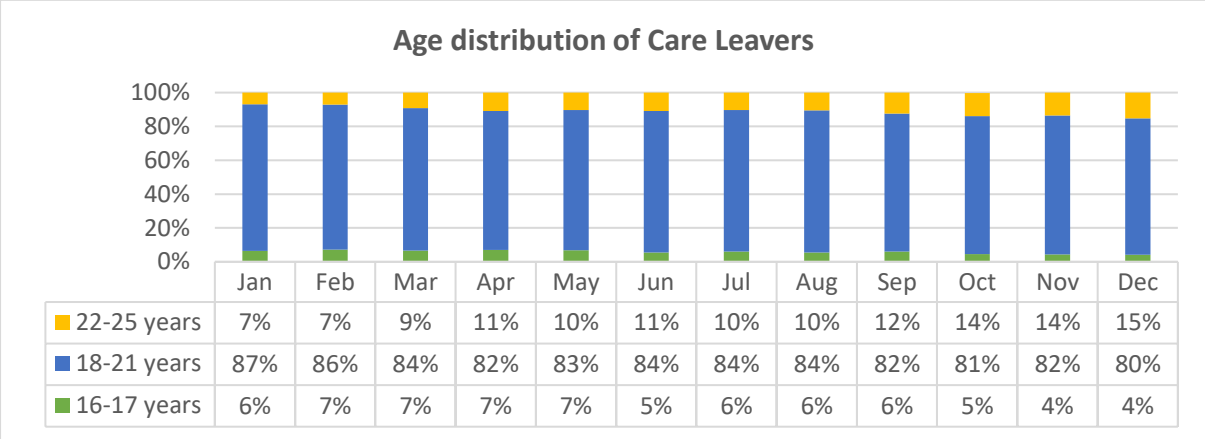
A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

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

In December 2020, 281 Care Leavers were being supported and were receiving an Aftercare service. This is an increase from the previous year and this cohort now has a wider remit as all Care Leavers can request support services until the age of 25, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

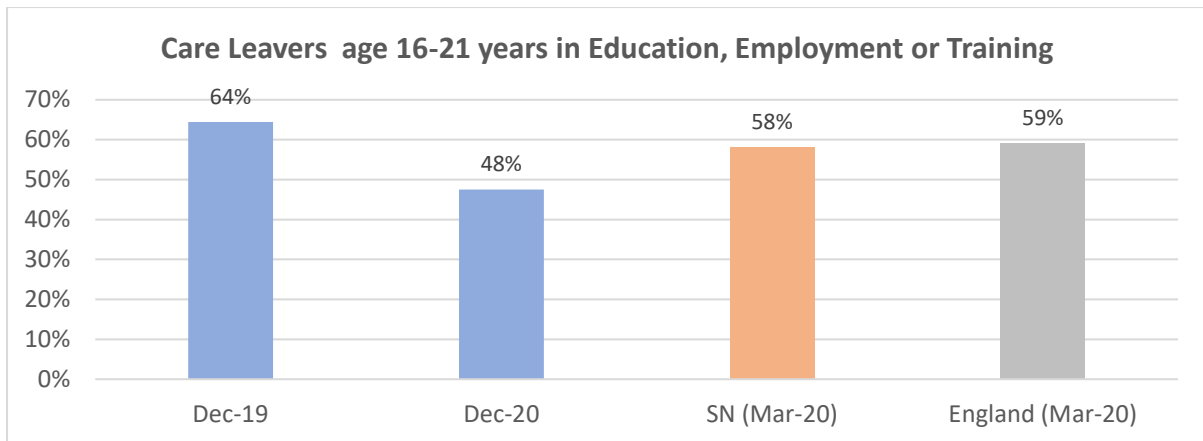
² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>

The charts below show the Care Leaver cohort between January and December 2020, broken down by age groups and gender.



3.23 Care Leavers age 16-21 years in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

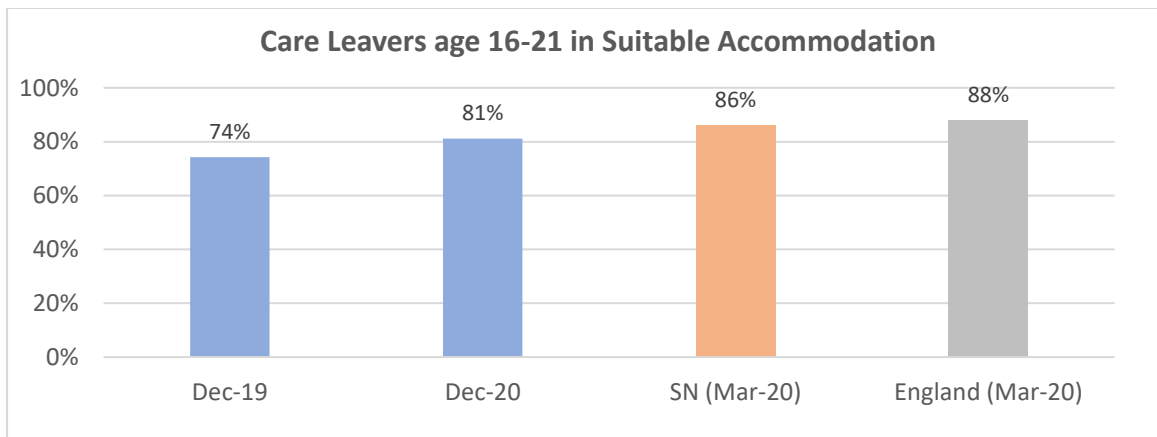
In December 2020, 47% of the Care Leavers aged 16 to 21 year old were in part or full time education, employment or training compared to 64% in December 2019. Performance in 19/20 was above statistical neighbour and England average. However, COVID-19 has impacted on the employment situation for young people nationally. To strengthen oversight and planning to ensure our young people have opportunities for Education, Employment and Training (EET) there are two monthly panels which focus on pre and post 18 year olds who do not have an EET offer. These panels are attended by the Inspire Youth Hub and Virtual School. The panel seeks to understand the issues for individual young people and aligned their interests to an EET offer. The panel discussions have highlighted the impact of Covid 19 on Young People which has limited particularly, opportunities to engage in work experience and employment opportunities.



3.24 Care Leavers age 16 to 21 years in Suitable Accommodation

In December 2020, the number of 16 to 21 year old Care Leavers reported to be in suitable accommodation was 81%. This compared to 74% in December 2019. However, this is still marginally below statistical neighbour and England averages, but shows an improving trajectory.

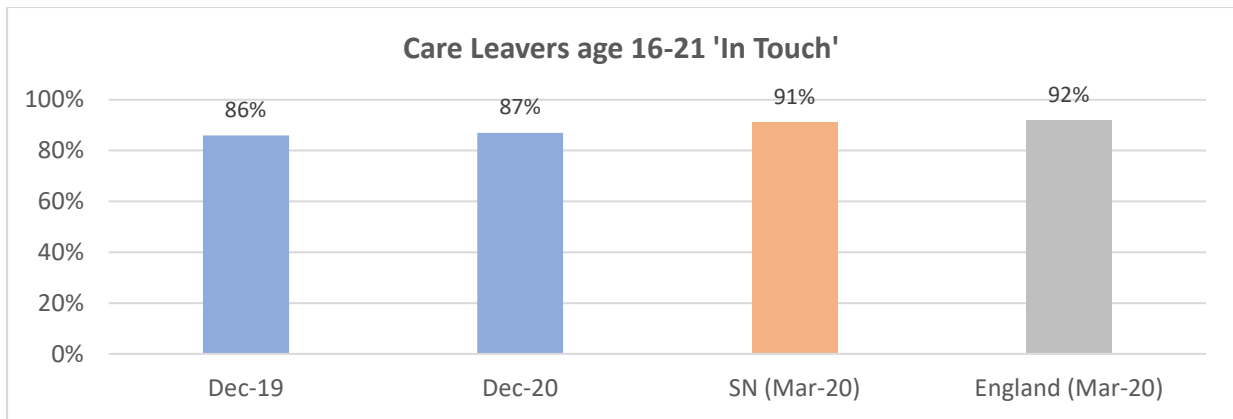
Increased housing support is being provided to young people by the Aftercare Service, Head Start Housing and Thurrock Housing Department. The 'Housing Offer' to Care Leavers has been updated with the Joint Housing Protocol 2020, ensuring good partnership working with clear pathways for young people to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



3.25 Care Leavers age 16-21 years 'In Touch'

Local Authorities are expected to stay in touch with Care Leavers and provide statutory support to help the care leaver transition to living independently. At the end of December 2020, Thurrock was in touch with 87% of Care Leavers, compared to 86% in December 2019.

While the performance is improving, continued focus should enable Thurrock to be in line with statistical neighbours and the England average.



3.26 CLA Fostering

Most children who are Looked After are placed with Foster Carers. The Thurrock In-House Fostering service provides support and supervision to foster carers. There are 92 fostering households providing 117 placements as at the end of January 2021. In 2019-20, we met the target of a net gain of 15 carers. There have been 8 foster carers recruited in the period April 2020 to December 2020. We expect to meet the target of 15 new fostering households by March 2021.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to note and comment on current performance position.

5. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Consultation (including Overview & Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 6.1 Not applicable

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

- 7.1 None

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

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

There are no implications identified within the report.

8.2 Legal

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

There are no implications identified within the report.

8.3 Diversity & Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Community Development and Equalities

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

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

- Not applicable

10. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Not applicable

11. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author(s):

Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst, Children's Services

Marc Rhodes, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics Manager, Children's Services

Service contributions:

Naintara Khosla, Acting Strategic Lead, Children Looked After, Children's Services

Daniel Jones, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption & Placements Service, Children's Services

Jason Read, Operations Manager, Youth Offending Service, Children's Services

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2 March 2021	ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Health Assessments Corporate Parenting Committee	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Naintara Khosla, Acting Strategic Lead Looked After Children	
Accountable Assistant Director: Joe Tynan, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report is to advise and update Members of the Committee on Thurrock’s timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) and Review Health Assessments (RHAs). It highlights the joint working across Childrens Social Care and Health to ensure there is a good health offer in place for all children who need their Initial and Review Health Assessments.

The performance continues to improve with the scrutiny provided in weekly meetings that take place between Health and Social Care. The use of virtual Team Meetings has supported the sharing of information and clarifying issues. It should be noted that performance has been improving within the context of COVID-19 which has impacted delivery of services for both Childrens Social Care and Health.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members note the areas of improvement in Children’s Social Care and the work that is being undertaken with Health colleagues to ensure good and improving performance with IHAs and RHAs.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 When a child or young person comes into care, they must have an Initial Health Assessment (IHA), a statutory requirement for all Children Looked After. The health assessment should be completed within 20 working days of the child coming into care. Childrens Social Care provide the referral within 5 working days, notifying Health of a child becoming looked after. A Paediatrician or an appropriately trained Medical Practitioner completes the health assessment.

- 2.2 The Local Authority, through their Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and Health have a duty to promote the welfare of children who are Looked After, including their physical, emotional and mental health.
- 2.3 Every child who is Looked After must have an up-to-date health assessment so that the child's health needs are fully understood and this information contributes to the child's overall Care Plan.

Review Health Assessments (RHA) are a statutory requirement and must be carried out at a minimum period of:

- 6-monthly for babies and children under 5 years of age; and
- Annually for those aged 5 years and over.

- 2.4 The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have arrangements in place to support the Local Authority to complete statutory health assessments for Children Looked After within statutory timescales, irrespective of whether the placement of the child is an emergency, short term or in another CCG area.
- 2.5 The Local Authority should always advise the CCG when a child is initially accommodated. Where there is a placement which will require the involvement of another CCG, the child's originating CCG and receiving CCG should be informed, as well as the child's GP. Any placement changes whilst the child is Looked After are also notified to the CCG.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 There has been a significant review of the processes for managing Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) and Review Health Assessments (RHAs). A weekly meeting is held to review IHAs and RHAs, attended by Senior Managers from Childrens Social Care and Health.

3.2 Initial Health Assessments

The meeting ensures the children who are entering care are tracked and the IHA paperwork is sent to the appropriate Health department within the timescale of 5 working days, so that the IHA appointment can be made. Generally, appointments are made for IHAs within 20 working days. There is ongoing work to ensure there is data available to reflect the appointments that were offered but for a variety of reasons the appointment times were not suitable for carers and therefore the IHA has taken place outside of the expected 20 days.

In October 2020, 12 IHA appointments were required and all but one were completed in timescales. The IHA that was out of time was completed in 22 days, (a court order was required regarding consent).

In November 2020 3 out of 12 IHA appointments were delayed. For 2 children who were placed out of the Thurrock area, there was a delay of 17 days.

Escalation was made to the Health Team where the children were resident, highlighting the need for IHAs to be more timely. For one child, an appointment was offered in timescales that did not suit the carer and another appointment time was offered and completed at 26 days.

In December 2020, there were 2 out of 6 children who did not receive their IHAs within the timescales. The 2 children were living in two separate placements; for one child an IHA appointment was offered within the timescale but the foster carer was unable to make that appointment; a second appointment was quickly offered and subsequently completed in 21 days. For the second child, the IHA was completed within 25 days (this was a child placed outside of Thurrock).

In the period October 2020 to December 2020 there were 30 IHAs required both within Thurrock and outside of the Borough. There was a delay for 6 IHAs, this is 20% of the total number of IHAs for this period. Of the 6, there were 3 children placed outside of Thurrock.

The changes implemented by Children Social Care and Health have resulted in improvements in the timeliness of IHA referrals to Health. Prior to September 2020, there were some Paediatric capacity issues within Health, which resulted in delays in the IHAs. This capacity issue has now been resolved, for those children in the Thurrock area.

Where Thurrock children are placed outside the local Health area, there have been some challenges, as out-of-area Health Authorities have not always prioritised the offer of an Initial Health Assessments for Thurrock children, or they have had long waiting lists. This situation has been escalated within the CCG and arrangements have been made for our children to have their IHA within Thurrock, where appropriate. There is a clear escalation process to ensure that Thurrock children receive their appropriate appointments.

Health and Social Care professionals engage and encourage young people (over 16 years) to have an IHA. In circumstances where the Local Authority does not share parental responsibility with the parent, the Local Authority cannot consent to the Health Assessment taking place, if the parent refuses, unless the Local Authority subsequently gains shared parental responsibility.

Table 1 Provides the information of referrals made to Health from Children’s Social Care within 5 working days in 2020.

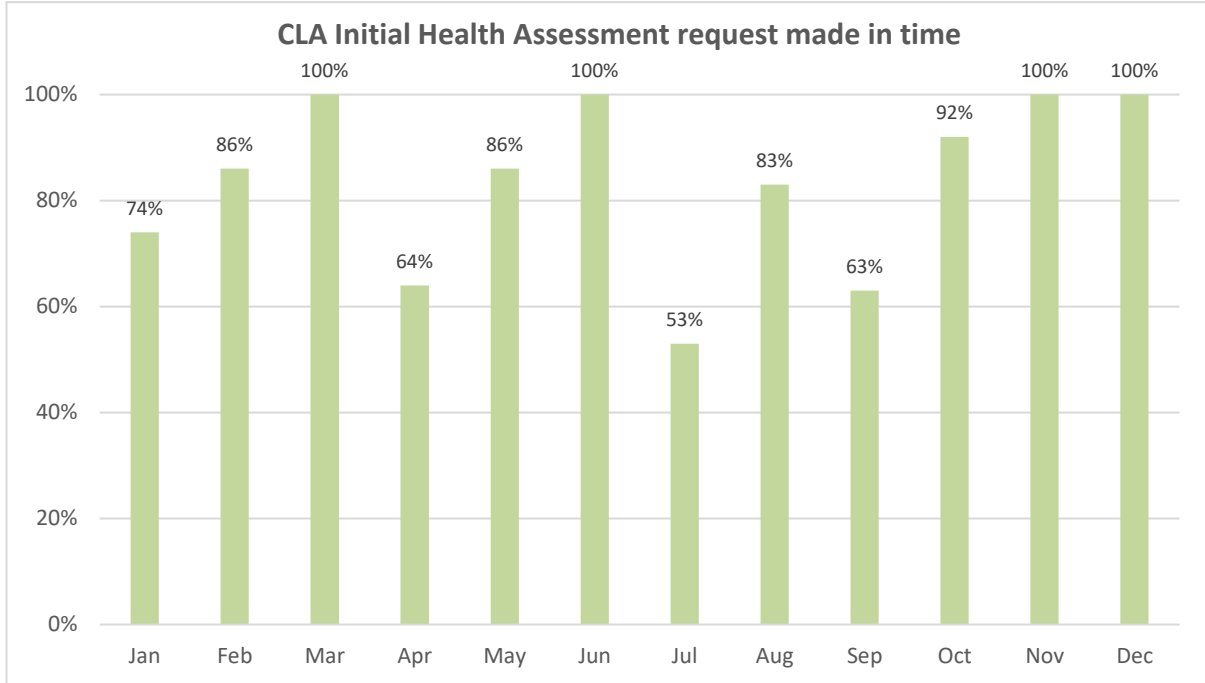
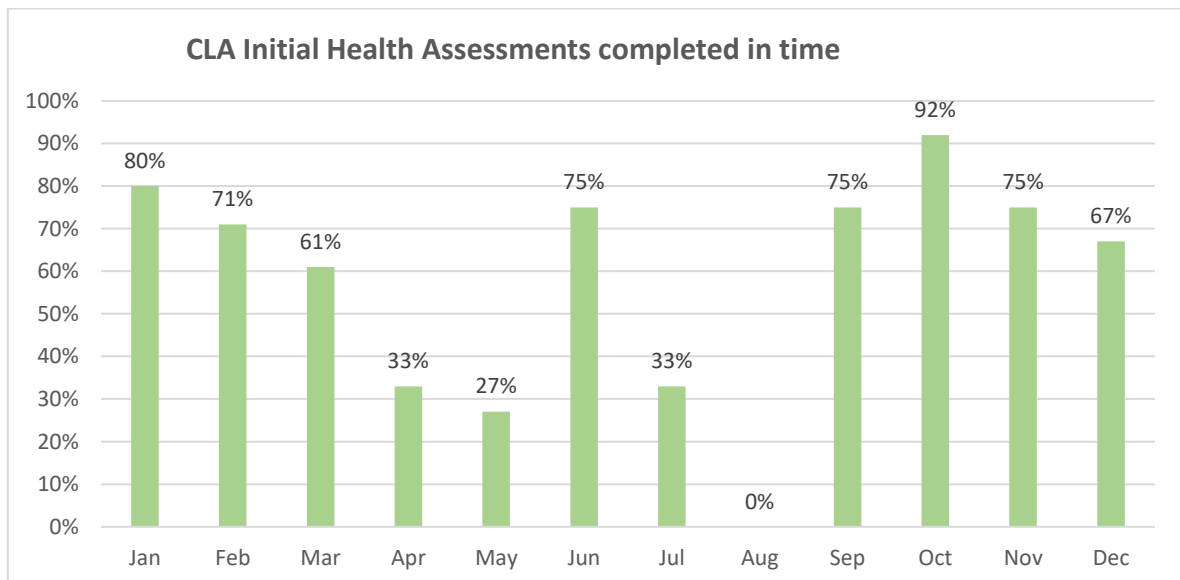


Table 2 illustrates IHAs completed in time and out of time for a 12 month period.



Additional identified actions:

- To ensure that IHA referrals to Health are consistently completed within 5 working days.
- Health to monitor and analyse the data which notes the rate of IHA appointments offered within 20 working days following receipt of the referral from Children’s Social Care.
- Health assessments are regularly discussed and actions identified at the Monthly CLA Health Steering Group.
- Weekly tracking meetings continue to be held to discuss referrals from Children’s Social Care and any outstanding Initial Health Assessments. This includes tracking the receipt and upload of the reports as they are completed. The out-of-area referrals are also identified and escalated if there is an issue of delay.
- Cancelled (not required) paediatrician appointments could be used for children waiting for an appointment as standby appointments. On some occasions this has been possible, however this has proved a challenge due to the short timescales to organise the arrangements with carers.

3.3 Review Health Assessments

Table 3 (below) reflects the total number of Review Health Assessments for Children Looked After, which were due each month in the period January 2020 to December 2020.

Table 3 Total CLA Review Health Assessments Due in 2020

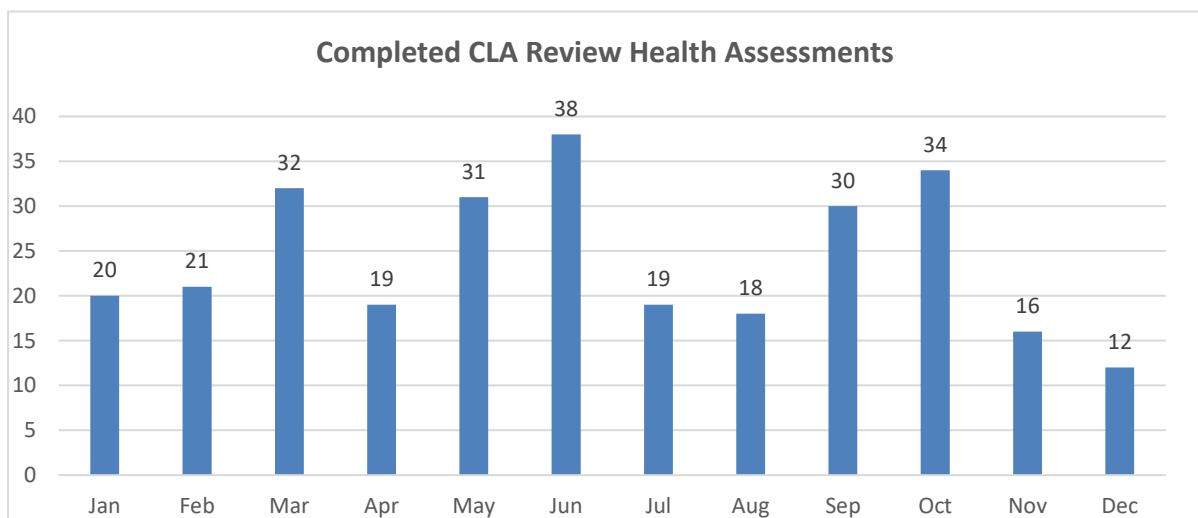
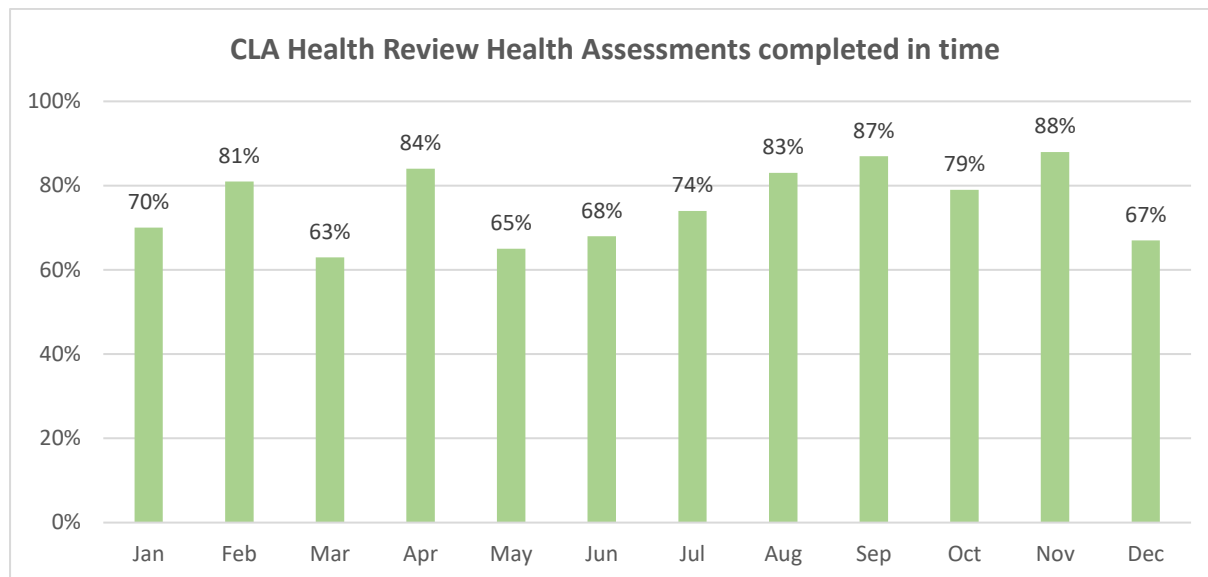


Table 4 (below) reflects the progress made in relation to the completion of RHAs that were due, during 2020. Both Health and Children’s Social Care are working to reach a target that is consistently above 90%.

Table 4 Completed CLA Review Health Assessments in 2020



In the period October 2020 to December 2020 there were 61 RHAs due and 13 of these RHAs were out of time. The RHAs for the 13 children and young people have now all been completed. The ongoing joint work between Health and Childrens Social Care will support data-sharing and maintain a focus on the performance in this area.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to note and comment on current performance position.

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

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Parenting Committee are aware of the issues and the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments.

5.2 Health and Children's Social Care colleagues have been working together to ensure a good partnership exists which has contributed to the improving performance in achieving timely Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments.

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

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no Financial Implications within the report.

7.2 Legal

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

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

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 set out the detailed legal requirements in caring for Looked after Children. The timescales for health are set in regulation 7 which provides for the Council to make arrangements by the child's first review for the health assessment to take place as soon as reasonably practicable.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The Service is committed to practice, which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy.

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

There is an ongoing focus for all social workers and Health colleagues to ensure that children looked after receive appropriate health care as they enter into care and ensure this is continued whilst they are looked after away from home.

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(s):

Naintara Khosla, Acting Strategic Lead, Children Looked After, Children's Services

Service contributions:

Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst, Children's Services

Named Safeguarding Professional for Primary Care

Joanne Guerin - Assistant Director NELFT

Michael Addo-Boateng NHS Basildon and Brentwood / Thurrock CCGs Interim

Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (Development Role)

Yvonne Anarfi - NHS Basildon and Brentwood / NHS Thurrock CCGs

Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children.

2 March 2021	ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Support Provided to Foster Carers during Covid-19	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Dan Jones, Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption	
Accountable Assistant Director: Joe Tynan, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report is to update Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee on Thurrock’s support services provided to Foster Carers. In order to maintain services through the pandemic, much of our offer has moved to an online provision.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Corporate Parenting Members are informed about the support provided to Foster Carers approved by Thurrock Council during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Council is a Fostering Agency registered with Ofsted. We approve, monitor and support Foster Carers who in turn support Children Looked After.

2.2 Foster carers receive a package of practical and financial support to meet the needs of these children. The non-financial support is as follows:

- Regular face-to-face supervision with a qualified Social Worker.
- Clinical supervision with a specialist therapist as required.
- Training relevant to their role.
- Foster Carer support groups.
- An out of hour’s phone line to provide advice and support at evenings and weekend.

In terms of financial support Foster Carers receive a regular allowance paid

for each child in placement; this is to meet the costs of care and, depending on the carers' status, a fee payment.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The Fostering Service has reviewed its practice in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and Government Guidance. Fostering families, like many families, have faced the challenges of living together without the usual options to socialise, access services and activities that form part of normal life. Our approach has been to provide services so far as possible to Foster Carers who continue to care for children during the outbreak.

3.2 We last updated members of this Committee in June 2020 and advised of the following amendments that have been made to the usual support services:

- Regular supervision of Foster Carers was via telephone/video calls to ensure social distancing is maintained.
- Clinical supervision was provided in a similar way and this has been utilised.
- Support groups were provided online.
- Annual reviews of approval and attendance at Fostering Panel has been completed remotely.
- The social work team continued to provide the out of hours support service.

3.3 Since June 2020, there has been much variation in the levels of restriction in place which means that the service has had to adapt frequently. The following is a summary of our practice and support to carers:

- **Regular supervision in person with an allocated Social Worker:** this has continued although the format of supervision has varied according to the relevant restrictions at the time. The service has made use of social distancing guidance to continue direct visits when possible. When this is not possible, video and telephone calls have replaced direct visits. This has been generally well received by carers who find the mixed medium more flexible.
- **Carer Support Groups:** This has operated on Friday mornings and on occasions in the evenings or, as and when necessary. This has been taking place virtually since Covid-19 began. When the group is held within working hours, a member of the team will attend if possible. The Assistant Director, Strategic Leads and the Service Manager have all attended the group at various points to update carers. Video calling is a safe and effective interim measure, until face-to-face groups can resume.
- **Access to a clinical supervisor:** Thurrock has maintained access to a clinical supervisor for foster carers. Like support groups, this has transferred to being online and the uptake here is variable. Foster Carers

are encouraged to use this service and they are able to book in meetings via video call. Some carers are making good use of this service.

- **Training programme for carers:** As a registered fostering agency, Thurrock Council is required to provide training to its carers. Direct training has not been possible so the Council has provided carers with a specialist suite of online learning which has both mandatory and optional training. This has allowed carers to progress their training at their own pace.
- **Access to the Fostering Network:** The Fostering Network is a national organisation for Foster Carers and Thurrock Council provides our approved Foster Carers with membership. During the pandemic the Fostering Network has issued guidance for carers via their [website](#).
- **Financial Package:** The financial offer to Foster Carers was updated in June 2020. This improved the initial fees for those new to fostering and better recognised those carers who are able to offer sibling placements. In the Autumn of 2020 Thurrock Council was proud to announce that from 1st April 2021 Foster Carers approved by Thurrock who have provided placements to children will be exempted from paying council tax in recognition of their service to Thurrock children. The service offers an excellent package that reflects the hard work our Foster Carers do and our gratitude to them.

- 3.4 Foster Carers are usually expected to facilitate supervised contact between children and their parents via the contact centre at Oaktree. There has been considerable change in this area, as the Covid-19 restrictions have varied. Oaktree is open and operating a reduced direct service with an agreed Covid-19 Safe environment. Foster carers are also taking part in supervised indirect contact. The means that children in our care are still able to see family members but the risk to carers is reduced.
- 3.5 All Children Looked After are entitled to continuing education at school. Foster Carers have been provided with detailed advice from the Virtual School as to whether the school place should be taken up or not. Thurrock Council supports the children in our care continuing to attend their school. Foster Carers are able to consult with the Virtual School and allocated Social Worker for a child and agree working at home in specific circumstances. Foster Carers are able to seek advice regarding IT equipment from the child's school.
- 3.6 Health appointments fall within the description of essential travel provided by the government. Foster Carers have been expected to attend these appointments and, where needed, alternative forms of transport to public transport have been offered. Children continue have their health needs met and attend their appointments.
- 3.7 Sadly the annual fostering awards scheduled for January had to be cancelled along with other social events. We hope to plan something for the summer of 2021 but as it is unclear whether restrictions will be in place, we will offer a 'Spring Fling', via a video call where the work of Foster Carers will be

recognised and thanks given. An in-person event will subsequently be arranged.

3.8 Thurrock Council recognises that Foster Carers provide a vital caring role to local children. This is both the ongoing care they provide and emergency placements. Following initial guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care with regard to vaccinations against Covid 19, Thurrock Council in partnership with local NHS services, took the decision to offer vaccinations to front line carers and staff who are critical to maintaining effective care and support for children. All Thurrock-approved Foster Carers were offered the opportunity to be vaccinated and most accepted that offer. This protects Foster Carers and the children they support.

3.9 It is notable that many of our Foster Carers continue to open their homes to children needing placements during the lockdown and support the children they have in placement already. We are grateful to them for their continued services. We received the following comment from the Foster Carer who co-ordinates the support group:

"I know we are all used to you thanking us for the job that we do but this time we would like to thank you, so from myself and all us carers I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you! Thank you for listening to us and acting as fast as you did to help us all receive the vaccine; it really has put a lot of minds at rest. Thank you for all your support at this difficult time."

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Committee are aware of support provided to Foster Carers approved by Thurrock Council.

4.2 Members of the Committee are invited to join officers in thanking all our Foster Carers for their continued commitment during Covid-19

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

5.1 None

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

6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no financial implications to this report.

7.2 Legal

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

There are no legal implications to this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The Service is committed to practice, which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy.

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:

Dan Jones

Service Manager – Fostering and Adoption

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2 March 2021	ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Update on the actions of the Virtual School service during lockdown	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director for Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

Supporting the educational achievement of our Children Looked After (CLA) is a key priority for Thurrock Council. Every council must have a Virtual School Head to be responsible for ensuring that the statutory guidance ‘Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children’ (DFE February 2018) is implemented and adhered to.

The Virtual School monitors and supports the educational progress and outcomes for CLA irrespective of where they are placed, in or out of borough. The responsibility covers pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and this includes those who have left care during an academic year. The Virtual School is also required to provide information, advice and guidance to Previously Looked After Children and their families when requested.

On the 4th January 2021, the Government announced a national lockdown which closed schools to all pupils except those deemed as vulnerable or whose parents/carers were critical workers. This report will provide members with an overview of the work that the Virtual School is doing to promote the educational outcomes of our Children Looked After during this lockdown period.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **The Committee uses the information provided in this report to evaluate the response of the Virtual School team and to scrutinise the support that is being provided to our service users.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Schools and Colleges are currently closed for all pupils but they have remained open in order that certain children and young people can attend. The criteria for this attendance for face to face learning has been identified as those who are vulnerable children and young people or those who are children of critical workers. Those who do not access school/college are expected to be provided with an online learning offer and that they are supported at home to do so.
- 2.2 All Early Years settings have remained open to all children and are currently expected to operate as normal.
- 2.3 Thurrock Children and Young People Looked After are classified as being in the vulnerable category because they have a social worker and are in care to the local authority. This means that if a face to face offer of education is possible, they can attend.
- 2.4 There are currently 267 children and young people who are aged between 3 and 18 years old who are eligible for accessing an educational placement at 137 different establishments.

3. Expectations for Education

- 3.1 It is expected that wherever possible and safe to do so, our children and young people should be accessing the face to face offer provided by their respective educational establishments.
- 3.2 For our pre-school and school age children, the social workers have discussed with their families the individual circumstances surrounding school attendance. A joint decision has been made which considers the educational needs of our CLA alongside any potential health implications.
- 3.3 Many of our post 16 college students have only been offered an online educational package by their college. This has been due to staffing, timetabling and general logistics surrounding the running of the college. Many of our students who are studying English as Second Language have been able to access face to face learning. Some students are also able to access their college's pastoral team if required.
- 3.4 During the autumn term (pre lockdown) many of our college students were accessing a combination of face to face and online learning. The online learning has tended to be for their subsidiary subjects, for example, if they were re-sitting English or maths. The core subjects studied as part of their courses have been provided face to face.
- 3.5 There has been a shift in the quality of provision offered in this current lockdown compared to the previous lockdown of March 2020. Schools and Colleges are now far more able to provide face to face and high quality online

learning during this period of closures and there is a greater expectation nationally that this is offered. There is an expectation that schools/colleges can offer a 'blended learning' approach which means that when students are sent home as part of a self-isolating bubble, their learning should not be detrimentally affected as it should be provided online.

4. Removing Barriers to Learning

- 4.1 Within 4 days of the recent lockdown, the Virtual School team knew the educational offer for our CLA. We keep weekly records for all of the children and young people in order that we know what their educational offer for that week has been. By having this level of data, it enables us to Red Amber Green (RAG) rate our pupils to know if there are any concerns or barriers to learning they may be facing. By knowing this, we are able to challenge and support as appropriate.
- 4.2 A sheet is provided by the Designated Teachers that we work with at the 137 different educational establishments who report the educational offer for that week. This provides us with a list of who is either having face to face, online or a blended learning approach. Teachers have been very supportive with this data return and should be commended for their support of this process. (Please see Appendix 1)
- 4.3 Some of our carers have requested that their children/young people stay at home. This has been relevant for those who may be shielding or caring for clinically vulnerable family members. We have supported this decision, however, we have stipulated that if our CLA are detrimentally affected by not being in school, then other arrangements must be made to support education, including consideration of a return to the classroom environment.
- 4.4 Access to IT resources has been key to ensure that online home learning can be supported. Any pupil who has not had a laptop issued has had one provided either by the Virtual School or their own educational establishment.
- 4.5 Carers have been contacted to remind them that the Virtual School are available to support in terms of educational advice and guidance and also to challenge schools/colleges if they have not been as supportive as we would have wished. Ideas for home learning activities and mindfulness resources have also been circulated to support those carers who may be wanting to supplement activities.
- 4.6 Overall there is a mixture of educational experiences that our children and young people are being provided with by their educational establishments. For example:
 - Some children are attending school but are having online learning whilst in school
 - Some are being taught in small group bubbles

- Some are attending school for practical subjects but then remote home learning for other subjects
- Some are attending in the morning and then home learning in the afternoons
- Some are working purely online and submitting work as requested
- Some are having live lessons combined with pre-recorded lessons

This illustrates that there is no 'one size fits all' approach and if the pupils are not engaging or making progress our monitoring system has enabled for the Virtual School team to respond to any areas of concern or barriers to learning.

- 4.7 We currently have 3 CLA who are without a school place at present. These students have a 1-1 tuition offer for 15 hours per week. We currently have 7 pupils who are post 16 and who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). These pupils are being offered a variety of courses and opportunities to support their engagement in order that they can access further education or employment post lockdown.
- 4.8 The Virtual School are continuing to fund additional tuition to certain year groups for those pupils who require it. These being our current years 6, 11, 12 and 13. This is in order to sustain the support required for the national testing requirements and ensure that their teacher assessed grades are as high as possible now that testing has been cancelled.
- 4.9 In terms of monitoring mental health and well-being, we are still requiring that the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is be completed as part of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process to ensure that conversations and actions are taking place to support emotional well-being. There is a monthly SDQ meeting which takes places with social care, the virtual school and EWMHS to discuss distribution of support for mental health.
- 4.10 Personal Education Plan meetings continue to take place as normal (i.e every term) to ensure that this statutory part of the care plan is maintained and that education is formally monitored through this process. This means that we are able to monitor attendance, educational targets and assessment data to promote good educational outcomes.
- 4.11 Those pupils who are affected by the cancellation of 2021 testing will be written to so that they are given advice and guidance as to how their grades are going to be managed. We have contacted the schools and colleges of these affected pupils in order to ascertain how these grades will be allocated and to discuss any further action that is required by the Virtual School in order to support pupil attainment.

5. Use and Allocation of Pupil Premium Plus Funding

- 5.1 This grant is provided by the Department for Education for children who are looked after aged between Year R and Year 11. This fund is managed by the Virtual School Head Teacher. The principle aim for this funding it to raise

educational outcomes. Schools apply for this funding through the Personal Education Plan by creating high quality educational targets and support. Schools can apply for £1,800 across an academic year.

- 5.2 During the course of the national lockdowns, schools have been encouraged to continue to use this funding to support learning. Some have found this a challenge as certain interventions have not been able to take place due to the pandemic. Moving forward, schools will continue to receive this funding, which they can carry forward within their budgets, to allocate resourcing to our pupils when they are able to do so.
- 5.3 As a Virtual School, we are continuing to use the Pupil Premium Plus top slice amount of £545 per pupil to source additional resources such as IT equipment, extra tuition, access to online courses for NEET pupils, sourcing Educational Psychologist referrals. Further details of this can be provided in the June 2021 corporate parenting report regarding Pupil Premium Plus Grant spending for the financial year 2020/2021.

6. Overall Comment

- 6.1 In line with the changing nature of the situation, the Virtual School will continue to plan, adapt and respond to challenges that are faced and remain as committed as ever to ensure that this lockdown has the minimum detrimental effect to our children and young people.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1 It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and uses the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of the Virtual School on behalf of Children Looked After.

8. Impact On Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance And Community Impact

- 8.1 This report relates to the council priority to create a great place for learning and opportunity.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

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

This report asks that the Committee notes the increasing demand of services for Children Looked After and the range of services provided as detailed in the this report. This financial demand has been increased during the lockdown periods in order to supplement additional tuition, interventions and IT based resources. We are maintaining our financial commitment to those pupils who are in the post 16 phase of their education in Year 12 by using Pupil Premium

Plus funding to assist them in college. Additionally we are supporting Year 13 pupils who require additional tuition to achieve better outcomes.

9.2 Legal

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

This report asks that the Committee scrutinises the duties and responsibilities of the Virtual School. No decision is required. The Council is required by s22(3A) of the Children Act 1989, as amended, to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and also for relevant children under Section 23ZZA (1) of the same Act. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended s22 to require the Council to appoint an officer to ensure that the duty is properly discharged. There is statutory guidance “Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children” that must be followed in meeting this duty. The government has produced “Coronavirus (Covid 19): guidance for children’s social care services” updated on 2 February 2021 provides advice regarding provision of services including education during the pandemic. It is non-statutory.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Supporting the improved educational attainment of Children Looked After targets Thurrock’s most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Individual plans are informed by each young person’s personal needs, including equality and diversity as well SEND and emotional health needs. It is expected that all reasonable adjustments are in place to ensure that our CLA are not disadvantaged by the current lockdown.

9.4 Other implications (where significant) –

- There are no implications as a result of this report

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 In summary, the above report details the variety of actions and support provided to limit the negative impact of the current lockdown on our CLA. Once schools and colleges are re-opened, the key focus will shift to ensuring that the transition back into full-time face to face teaching is as smooth as possible and that educational establishments are providing appropriate interventions to support needs.

11. 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):

- 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools. Guidance for all schools in England' DFE January 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf
- 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' DFE February 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

12. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Designated Teacher Questions for Lockdown January 2021

Report Author:

Keeley Pullen BA (Hons), PGCE, NPQH

Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After. Children's Services

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Week Commencing: Child/Young Person’s Initials

Year Group: School/College:

Is there a face to face teaching offer? Y/N Is there an Online Offer? Y/N

What option is the child/young person taking? Please state the reason for this.

Please comment here:

How many hours of education are they expected to have per week? hours

Do they have access to IT to support home learning if needed? Y/N

What (if any) are the barriers that will prevent learning during lockdown?

Please comment here:

Who is the member of staff point of contact for the child/young person?

How often is contact made?

Each Week please comment on

Attendance for learning – whether face to face or online

Please comment here:

Engagement in learning– whether face to face or online

Please comment here:

Please note that PEPs will continue as normal during the lockdown period. If there are any issues you need to discuss please contact the relevant Virtual School Education Adviser.

Thank you very much in advance with your support with this.

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2 March 2021	ITEM: 9
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Corporate Parenting: Communicating with Members	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not Applicable
Report of: Naintara Khosla Strategic Lead CLA, Aftercare and Placements	
Accountable Assistant Director: Joseph Tynan, Assistant Director Children Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Childrens Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides an outline to the Corporate Parenting Committee of the Roles and Responsibilities of a Corporate Parent. The report refers to the Government Guidance and expectations for Councils in their role as Corporate Parent. Thurrock has a good approach to its Corporate Parenting role, providing information to members on Children Looked After (CLA), their progress and the performance of the CLA, Placements and Aftercare Service. This report provides further considerations for the Council and Members to develop the Corporate Parenting approach, ensuring we promote the voice of children and young people across the Council.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 Members are updated on their Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.**
 - 1.2 Consider and note the options for raising the profile of Corporate Parenting activities in Thurrock.**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
 - 2.1 Good and Effective Corporate Parenting in Thurrock.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Committee is to lead on and ensure that the corporate parenting roles and responsibilities of the council are being met.

The Corporate Parenting Committee is chaired by Councillor Elizabeth Rigby. It is the responsibility of all members, not just the lead member for Corporate Parenting Committee or the Lead Member for Childrens Services, to be a

corporate parent by ensuring that our children receive the right support to enable them to reach their full potential. At Thurrock we take seriously our moral duty as well as our legal responsibilities to our children and we will continue to strive to improve our services so that our children and young people can experience happy and fulfilling lives by providing warm and nurturing care.

What it means to be 'in care' or 'looked after'; the term 'Children Looked After' has a specific legal meaning based on the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a Local Authority if he or she has been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989 or is placed in the care of a Local Authority by an order made under part IV of the Act.

There are 3 main routes by which children can be taken into care:

- Care Orders made by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989
- Voluntary accommodation arrangements under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- Police Protection or involvement with the Youth Justice System and, since 2013, all young people who are remanded into custody within the Youth Justice System

2.2 Good corporate parents, just like all good parents, need to understand and know what is happening to their children and young people. In Thurrock this means ensuring the information that all agencies collect about children in care and care-experienced young people is used to the best advantage, sharing information with each other appropriately. Performance data for Children Looked After and Care Leavers are reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee for scrutiny, oversight and future work planning to help ensure improved management of performance and outcomes delivered by our services as well as ensuring our children are not disadvantaged by their characteristics or background.

Good corporate parenting is about doing what any parent should do to promote the safety and welfare of their child by: -

- Keeping children at the centre of everything that we do
- Ensuring good results through the support needed to fulfil their potential in life especially in relation to education and health
- Providing the quality of care necessary in achieving the best possible outcomes

- Effective partnership working including working across the multi-agency partnership and geographical boundaries
- Knowing how many children and young people are in care
- Knowing the profiles of the children and young people (gender, age, race, religion, sex, disability) they have responsibility for within Thurrock
- Being ambitious for our children and celebrating their achievements
- Providing good quality local placements through a range of services including Fostering, Adoption, Virtual School (VS) and the Aftercare Service, taking into consideration the needs of the child, their background and where they would be best placed. This means:
 - Opportunity for young people in foster care to remain with their carers after the age of 18 (Staying Put)
 - Ensuring education needs are appropriately assessed, supported, and maximized for future life chances through further education, training and employment

2.3 Health services ensure health needs are appropriately assessed and supported, and the opportunity to maximize their health through life skills development and healthy choices, with guidance and support around healthy sexual relationships and reducing risks associated with using alcohol and substances. Further considerations include:-

- Reviewing the emotional wellbeing of children and young people; ensuring their needs are assessed and supported to minimize the impact of adverse life experiences, such as access to mental health and offering support or treatment. Additionally, offering opportunities to build protective relationships such as maintaining contact with siblings.
- Identify social needs, creating opportunities for building positive relationships and friendships.
- Opportunities to undertake positive activities and contribute more widely to their communities.

2.4 As Corporate parents, there are areas of interest that Members will want to ensure they are aware of:

- Childrens Services should be monitoring instances of children going missing, and how regularly the independent return interviews are taking place (including for children placed out of area), as well as any emerging themes. The Local Authority should also collaborate and

share information and intelligence with other countries if a child in care goes missing and is thought to have travelled abroad.

- Child victims of modern slavery are particularly vulnerable. A strong multi-agency approach should be in place to protect victims from further risk from their traffickers and preventing trafficking from taking place. In particular, there should be a clear understanding between the Local Authority and the Police of roles in planning for this protection and responding if a trafficked child goes missing.
- Children in care are also disproportionately likely to be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) than those in the general population, though it is important to remember that the vast majority of CSE victims are living at home. While those issues that led young people to need Local Authority care in the first place may increase their vulnerability to CSE, the experience of care itself can also be significant, especially if the child's placement lacks stability. Those at risk of CSE will need to have clear plans in place to protect them, and all Social Workers and partners should know how to spot signs of risk and deal with them appropriately.
- Participation, ensuring that children in Thurrock are being listened to. Local Authorities have wide-ranging duties to give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of children in care and care-experienced young people. This applies to decisions and actions affecting children and young people as individuals, and to wider strategic policy issues that impact Children Looked After and Care Leavers. As corporate parents, all councillors should take an active interest in how well Children Looked After and Care Leavers are listened to and how this is acted upon. Care-experienced people of all ages have valuable, direct knowledge of how it feels to be in care, and what needs to change for the better.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Members can become involved with the many aspects of the Corporate Parenting Role.

Participation and Children in Care Council (CiCC)

There are events which take place to engage and seek feedback from the children who live in Thurrock. Many of our Children Looked After participate in these events. The Committee may wish to provide a regular, short opening slot on the agenda for the CiCC to update on the participation events and activities planned. The regular updates can include a variety of information including newsletter updates, videos of the children and young people or a report on the issues where feedback has been sought. Members can request to attend a CiCC or meet with some young people in Aftercare when there are regular Zoom meetings in place.

Thurrock Fostering and Adoption Services

Foster carers are represented on the Corporate Parenting Committee and can make representation to the Service through the Thurrock Foster Care Association. Members may wish to understand further the role and responsibilities of foster carers and they are welcome to attend any of the fostering information sessions that are regularly held to recruit new foster carers into Thurrock. There is also the potential for Members to visit (virtually) the Placements Service Team to understand their role in locating placements and matching children to their new homes.

The new branding is in development for the recruitment of foster carers and there is a marketing plan with Key Performance Indicators to recruit new foster carers. The brand is being refreshed to include the offer of Thurrock's Council Tax rebate.

The Adoption Service has a good offer to our adoptive families and is part of the developing Adopt East Regional adoption agency. Members may wish to take up the opportunity to meet with the Adoption Service and understand how they are recruiting and supporting adopters, prior to and following an Adoption Order being granted.

The Service would also be able to organise for Members to meet with Thurrock adopters and hear about their experiences of the service.

Aftercare

Members may wish to meet some of our care-experienced young people. This would provide an opportunity to listen to their experiences, understand the challenges for them as young people transitioning into adulthood and contextualise the reasons for entering into care. The Aftercare Service have a number of themed WhatsApp groups which are popular and used to communicate with Thurrock Care-Experienced young people. The service are encouraging Zoom or Teams meetings so there are opportunities to meet online for support.

Members may want to gain a greater understanding the role of Inspire and their remit for supporting our care-experienced young people into education, employment and training. An event could be organised so that Members can meet the Inspire Team and understand their role facilitating young people to develop work skills and work placements.

Training and Information

Further reading about the role of Corporate Parent is provided in the Appendices. A presentation from the Strategic Leads in Childrens Social Care will be delivered to Members annually, and Members are encouraged to attend.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members to consider and note the options available.

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

5.1 There is consultation with Children in Care Council who meet monthly; Foster Care Association, care experienced young people and Inspire.

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

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no financial implications in this report.

7.2 Legal

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

There are no legal implications to this report.

Corporate parenting principles are set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Local authorities must have regard to the seven needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children). It should be read and applied alongside the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The diversity information is communicated to the Corporate Parenting Committee to ensure that services are inclusive of the children and families in Thurrock. The information that Members should be familiar with is outlined at 2.2 which includes the characteristics of the CLA population.

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

- 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

- https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15.74%20Corporate%20parenting_05_web.pdf
- <https://ourcareoursay.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/ocos-executive-summary-2021-finished-1.pdf>

Report Author:

Naintara Khosla

Strategic Lead CLA, Aftercare and Placements

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Work Programme

Committee: Corporate Parenting

Year: 2020/2021

Dates of Meetings: 2 June 2020, 1 September 2020, 5 January 2021 and 2 March 2021

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
2 June 2020		
Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Overview of Academic Year 2019/20	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Pupil Premium Plus report	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Update on Ofsted Recommendation – Timeliness of Initial Health Assessments	Janet Simon	Members – requested a further update following the March 2020 meeting.
Support provided to Care Leavers and Children Looked After during COVID19	Janet Simon / Luke Froment	Officers
Update on the support provided to Foster Carers during COVID19	Janet Simon / Dan Jones	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
1 September 2020		
Fostering Statement of Purpose	Janet Simon / Daniel Jones	Officers
Adoption Statement of Purpose	Janet Simon/Dan Jones	Officers

Corporate Parenting Committee Strategy 2020 - 2022	Janet Simon/Joe Tynan	Officers
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	Officers
Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
LAC Health Report	Anne Kavanagh	Officers
Children Looked After Initial Health Assessments	Janet Simon / Yvonne Anarfi (Designated Nurse CLA)	Officers
Corporate Parenting Committee – Annual Report 2019/2020	Democratic Services Officer	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
5 January 2021		
Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Sufficiency Placement	Sue Green	Officers
Independent Reviewing Officer – Annual Report	Ruth Murdock	Officers
Annual Report of the Virtual Schools	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers	Janet Simon	Officers
Aftercare Report	Naintara Khosla	Officers
IHA/RHA Report	Helen Farmer / Michael Addo-Boateng	Officers/Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

2 March 2021		
Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Health Assessment Review	Naintara Khosla	Members
Corporate Parenting Communicating with Members	Joe Tynan & Naintara Khosla	Members
Support Provided to Foster Carers during Covid-19	Janet Simon / Dan Jones	Officers
Update on the actions of the Virtual School service during lockdown	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

Clerk: Kenna-Victoria Healey

Last Updated: February 2021

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