

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 **19 July 2022**

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices 3, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Membership:

Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), Maureen Pearce (Vice-Chair), Paul Arnold, Georgette Polley, Kairen Raper and Lee Watson

Christopher Bennett, Chair, Children in Care Council

Annie Guidotti, Open Door

Sharon Smith, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Jenny Josling, Vice-Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Substitutes:

Councillors George Coxshall, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard and Joycelyn Redsell

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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2 Minutes	5 - 8
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 1 March 2022.	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
4 Declaration of Interests	

5	Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22	9 - 34
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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: **11 July 2022**

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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 1 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Abbie Akinbohun (Chair), Georgette Polley, Adam Carter, Sara Muldowney and Kairen Raper. Elizabeth Rigby and Lynn Worrall

Christopher Bennett, Children in Care Council
Laura Hall, Thurrock Open Door
Sharon Smith, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Apologies: Councillor Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair) and Jenny Josling

In attendance: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Naintara Khosla, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead Of Quality Assurance And Reviewing
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention
Trevor Willis Service Manager Safeguarding & Reviewing
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

29. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 4 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

30. Items of Urgent Business

The Chair of the Committee explained she had agreed to an item of urgent business which would be taken before the word programme item.

31. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Children in Care Council Update

The Thurrock Open Door representative presented the report to Members outlining that over the last 12 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Children in Care Council (CICC) had taken the support of its members online as they were unable to meet with the young people they supported. She

explained consultations and discussions had been had with members of the CICC as to how to best improve the support given to young people, given the restrictions of COVID-19 it couldn't be what it needed to be.

Members heard now that restrictions had been lifted members of the CICC were looking forward being able to meet face to face, as this was not only an important part of socialising but also assisted with recruitment within the group, as this was done by word of mouth.

It was commented that revamping the CICC and the support given was a big job and it was asked what the CICC should be able to do and what could it do. The Thurrock Open Door representative explained that with meetings now being able to be held in person and therefore face to face, it would be easier, to have interactive meetings which were more child lead which is what the CICC needed. She continued by stating it was important that young people were given the opportunity to speak and give their views as gave them the opportunity to promote their voices.

The Committee heard before the pandemic the structure of meetings was very formal with an email of the agenda sent to all members of the CICC as this is what was required three years ago, however big changes could now take place with the use of social media and more interaction for young people which could include working together in age groups as well as mixed groups on projects.

The Chair of the CICC stated he felt it was easier to engage and give your views when meeting face to face, as when meeting online at home there were other things which could cause interference. This included the use of Internet Connections. He continued to say he was excited to see the new changes being made and looking forwards one of which, was the use of social media and members of the CICC making animation videos, writing letters to new young people in care explaining to them the LAC Reviews and alike.

Members thanked the Chair of the CICC for attending the meeting and for presenting the report as it was important to hear back from children within the Council's care.

RESOLVED

That the report of the Children In Care Council report be noted.

33. Children's Social Care Performance - Quarter 3 2021/22

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report which was on pages 13 to 36 of the agenda.

Councillor Muldowney thanked officers for the report and commented there had been an increase in missing episodes, however the number of return to home interviews had fallen. She enquired as to whether it was possible to make the return home interviews more informal so to improve the take up of

them by young people. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help explained officers had weekly meetings to discuss different ways to improve return home interviews, however not all young people wanted to take part within these interviews. Members heard there was a network of support provided for children to try and engage with them and understand the reasons for their missing episodes, this included inspire, foster carers and social workers.

Councillor Carter commented there had been 17 new foster carers and wondered if officers were aiming to increase this figure during the recruitment process. The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children commented the number of foster carers was now up to 25 and this was being maintained, she explained the service was moving into a better position and hoped to increase the number of foster carers by 10/15 new households.

Members discussed care leavers in education, employment or training, during discussions they were advised Officers were looking at assisting with apprenticeship roles and bespoke roles for young people to be able to give them the experience of work such as interviews and best practise. Members further heard it was important to offer young people the opportunity to be able to undertake work experience as it enabled them to build on their self-esteem as well as other skills.

It was commented that the headstart programme within the local plan supplied housing for care leavers. Members suggested it would be good practise to speak with young people to be able to understand their needs for example, if they were living with friends, or being close to local amenities such as shops in walking distance.

RESOLVED

- 1. That members noted improvements and areas for improvement in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.**
- 2. Noted the continuing impact of COVID 19 on some areas of performance.**

34. IRO Reports for Children Looked After Reviews

The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing presented Members with the presentation.

The Thurrock Open Door representative commented on the review stating she was really impressed with the handbook and through the review officers had taken on board everything which had been said, such as making it more friendly for the young people themselves and more child focus. The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing commented saying as a team they would get better and continue to improve. He continued saying it was

important to make the handbook and interviews more child focus and young person friendly, he was pleased with the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers, and they were proud as a team to represent Thurrock's young people.

Councillor Polley thanked Officers for the presentation and for engaging with young people to make the reviews more child friendly and easier for them to understand.

Councillor Rigby enquired as to whether there would be further reviews undertaken. Officers advised that six monthly interviews would be taking place.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the child/ young person friendly style of recording for looked after children reviews which is being developed.

35. Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme 2021/2022

The Corporate Parenting Committee discussed the work programme at pages 43 to 44 of the agenda.

It was agreed that Officers would speak with the Chair of the Committee outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Officers speak with the Chair of the Committee outside of the meeting with regards to items to be presented to first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee 2022/2023.

The meeting finished at 9.05 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

19 July 2022	ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children’s Social Care Performance 2021-22	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director, Children’s Services	
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 some of the performance is within the context of COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions which have been in place over the period; this report focusses on data of 2021-22.

Thurrock continues to provide services to approximately 300 Children Looked After (CLA) and approximately 297 Care Leavers. Children and young people are visited regularly and the management of missing children is consistent and reflects good partnership with the police and Thurrock Community Safety. The work with health colleagues continues to ensure that there is a positive focus on Initial Health Assessments for children entering into care.

The Care Leaving Service continues to be a focus for improvement, 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, with family members. To support children being placed locally in their communities and recruit foster carers there is a new fostering brand and recruitment campaign.

It has been previously reported to Corporate Parenting Committee that permanency planning has been particularly impacted by COVID-19. There have been delays in timetabling for final court hearings. The court has 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 improvements and areas for 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 some areas of performance.**

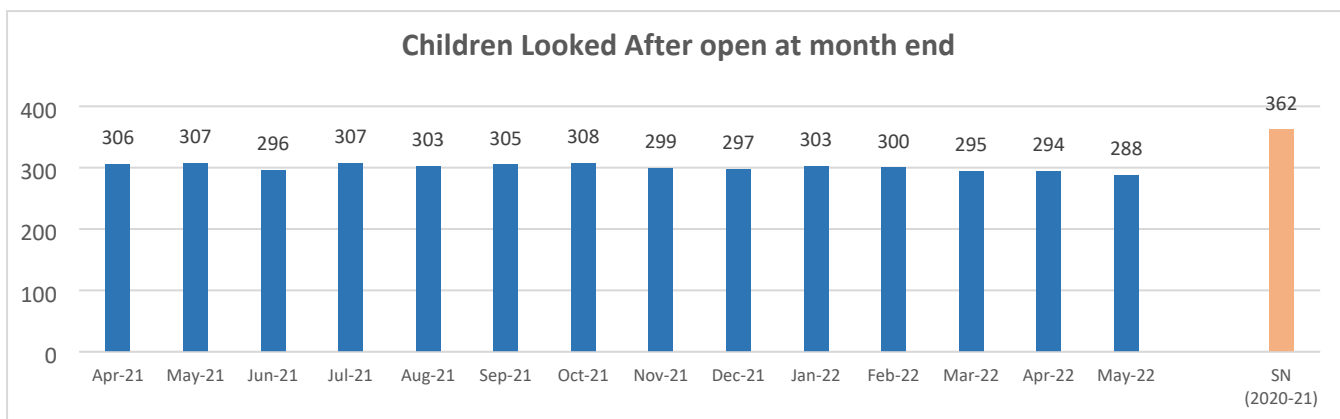
2. Introduction and Background

- 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 of children have shown a sustained small decrease in quarter 3. 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)

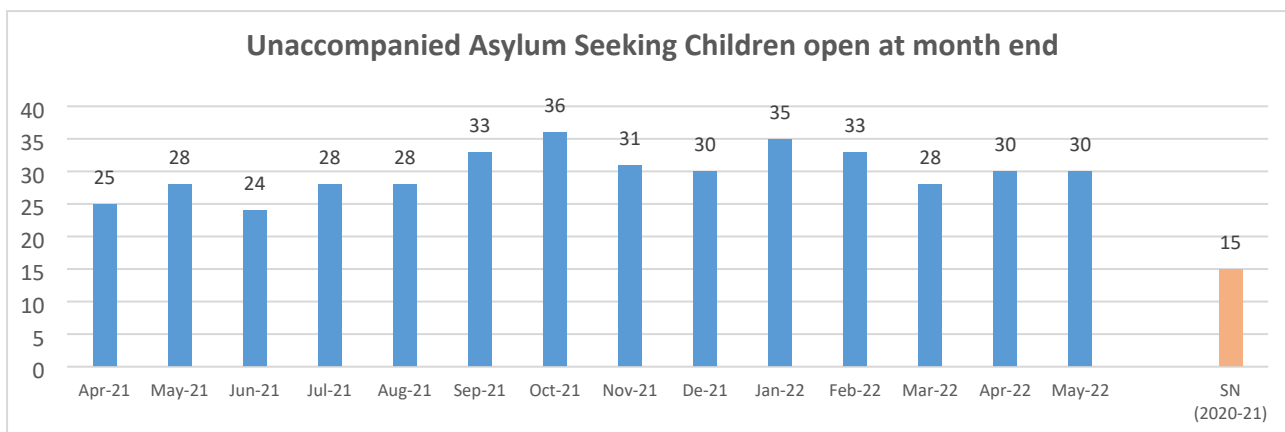
UASC are a subset of the Children Looked After number above. Local Authorities through agreement have a simple formula to ensure a fair distribution of the responsibility for looking after unaccompanied children. Each local authority has a 0.07% ceiling for how many UASC and unaccompanied asylum seeking children a region or local authority is reasonably expected to be looking after at any time, as a proportion of its total number of children.

Thurrock's allocated number is 31 children. There was a reduction in the entry of UASC into Essex Ports in 2020 to 2021 as the preferred route appears to have been through Dover. Between January and March 2022, there have been 12 new UASC arrivals into Thurrock compared to 4 between January and March 2021. There is ongoing work with the Home Office to ensure timely and smooth transition for this cohort if Thurrock's allocation of UASC is exceeded

When a local authority reaches its allocated number there are arrangements in place for new arrivals to be transferred via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The NTS replaced, the Eastern Region¹ Transfer scheme in July 2021 which worked efficiently and effectively with the transfer of UASC usually within 10 days of arrival.

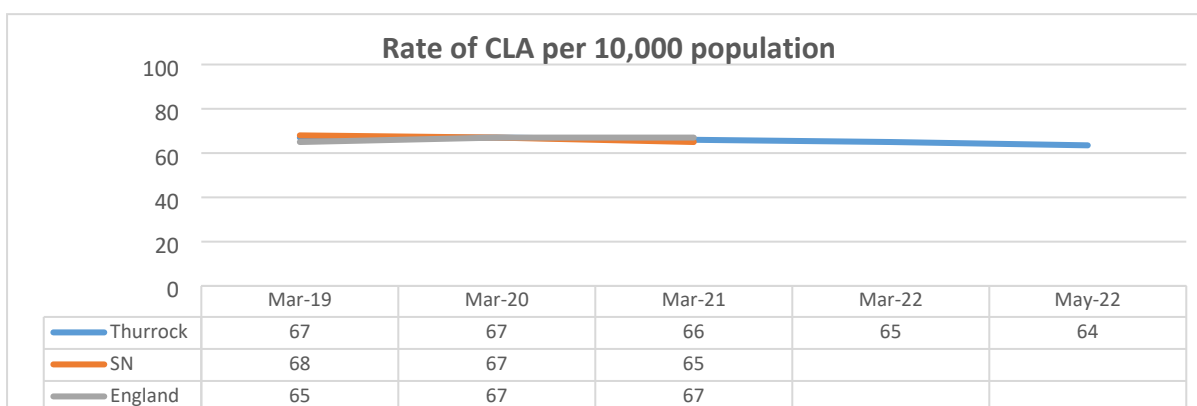
The NTS is operated by Central Government with the Home Office responsible for administration of the scheme. The Eastern Region Co Coordinator who previously ensured the smooth transfer process in the region is no longer responsible for the transfers, however their role is to liaise with the Home Office co-ordinator.

¹ The Eastern Region comprises of Bedford Borough, Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton, Norfolk, Peterborough, Southend, Suffolk and Thurrock Local Authorities



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. At the end of May 2022 there were 288 Children Looked After in Thurrock with the rate of 64 per 10,000. Based on the benchmarking data 2021, Thurrock is below the Statistical Neighbour average of 65.0 and England rate of 67.0 as at the end of May 2022.



3.4 CLA episodes started and ended

It is normal for the number of children leaving care to fluctuate. Between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, the number of Thurrock children who ceased to be looked after was 121; 122 left care.

The most common reason for episodes ending in 2021-22 was children returning home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility and moving to an independent living arrangement. Similarly this was the case in 2020-21. The cohort of UASC will have ended as they moved into the Aftercare Service or were missing.

There is currently a delay in the timeliness of court proceedings, preventing children from leaving care and progressing to their permanent placement

(Adoption, SGO or returning home). This is a direct result of COVID which has caused delays in concluding proceedings for children.

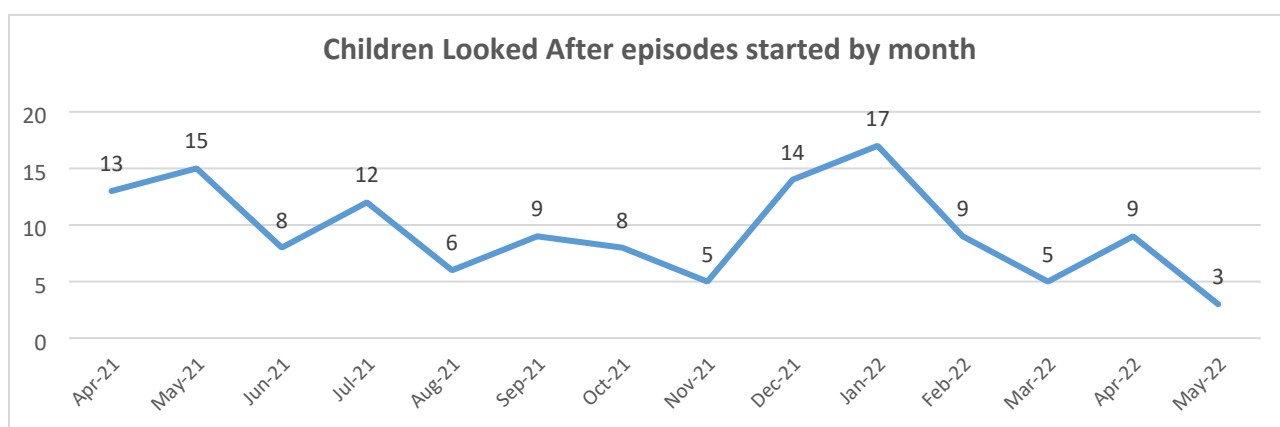
Four factors contribute and impact on the numbers of children in care in Thurrock;

- Numbers of children entering care
- Numbers of children leaving care
- Numbers of UASC entering care
- Numbers of UASC who remain looked after by Thurrock

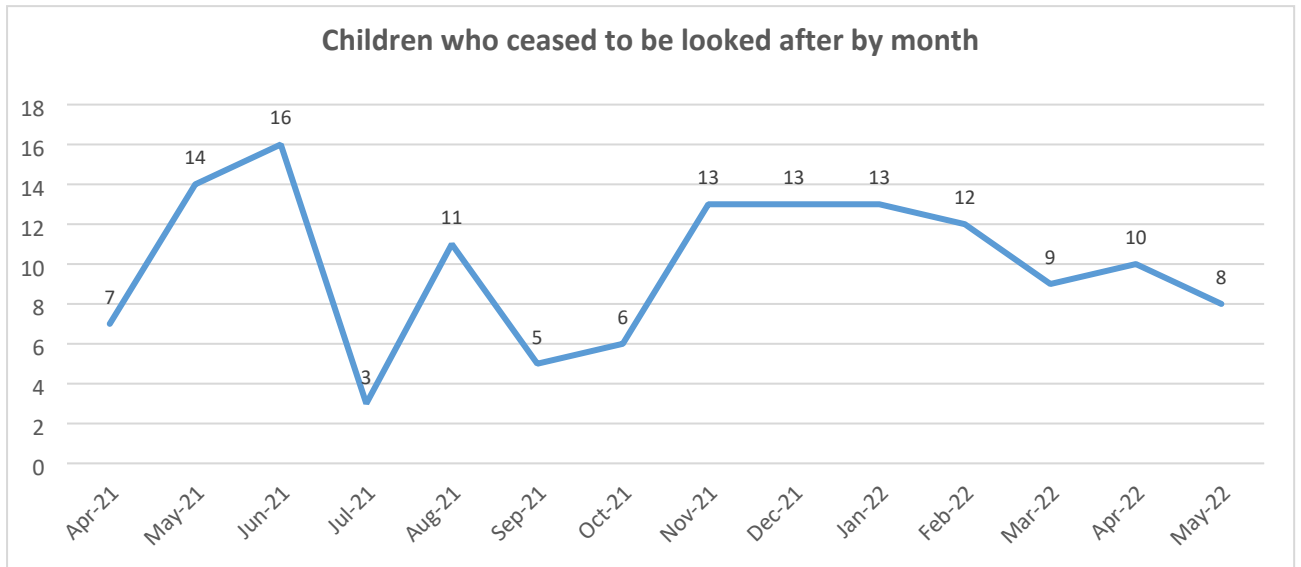
The below chart shows entries and exits in and out of care over the last few years and evidences fewer numbers of UASC entering care in Thurrock and a stabilising of UASC numbers in line with 0.07 of the child population and transfers taking place appropriately.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 (Q1, Q2 Q3 & Q4)
Entering Care total	203	242	150	121
Entering Care UASC (% of CLA population)	91 (44.8%)	75 (30.9%)	36 (24.0%)	38 (31%)
Exiting Care	211	235	148	122
CLA No, at end of reporting period	290 Reduction of 8	298 Reduction of 8	298 No change	295
Average UASC Population	39	23	21	28

All cases are reviewed to ensure the correct children come in to care and court proceedings are only issued where necessary. Children and Families are supported to remain together to stabilise families who may be in crisis.

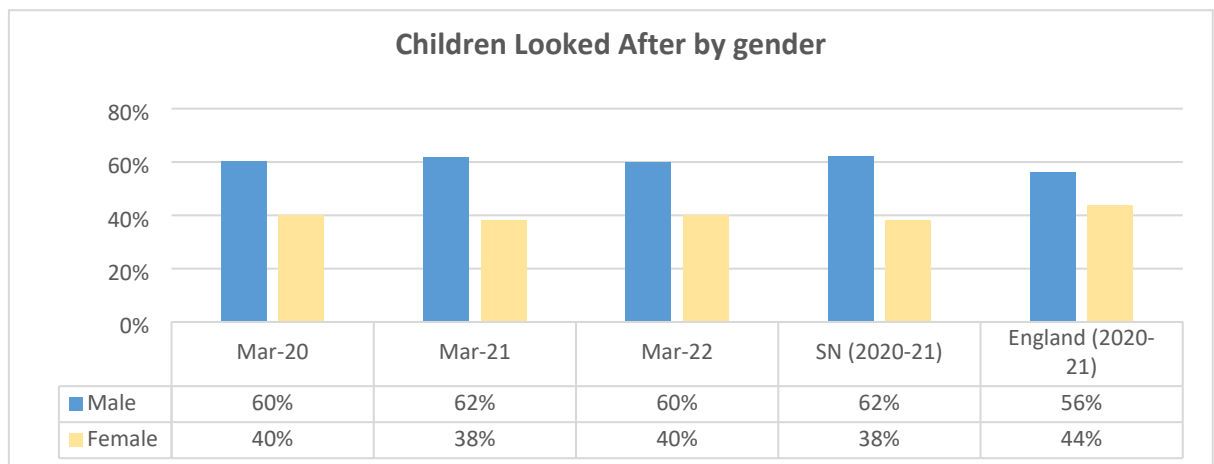


3.5 CLA episodes ended in month



3.6 CLA by gender

Based on the benchmarking data in 2020-21, the gender breakdown is in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages as at March 2022.

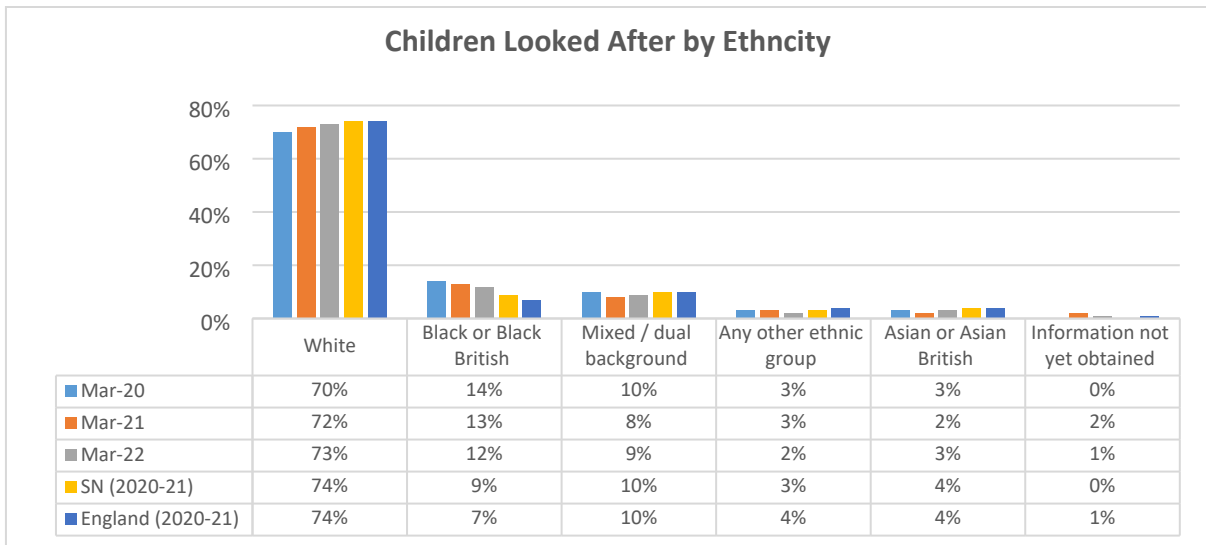


3.7 CLA by ethnicity

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

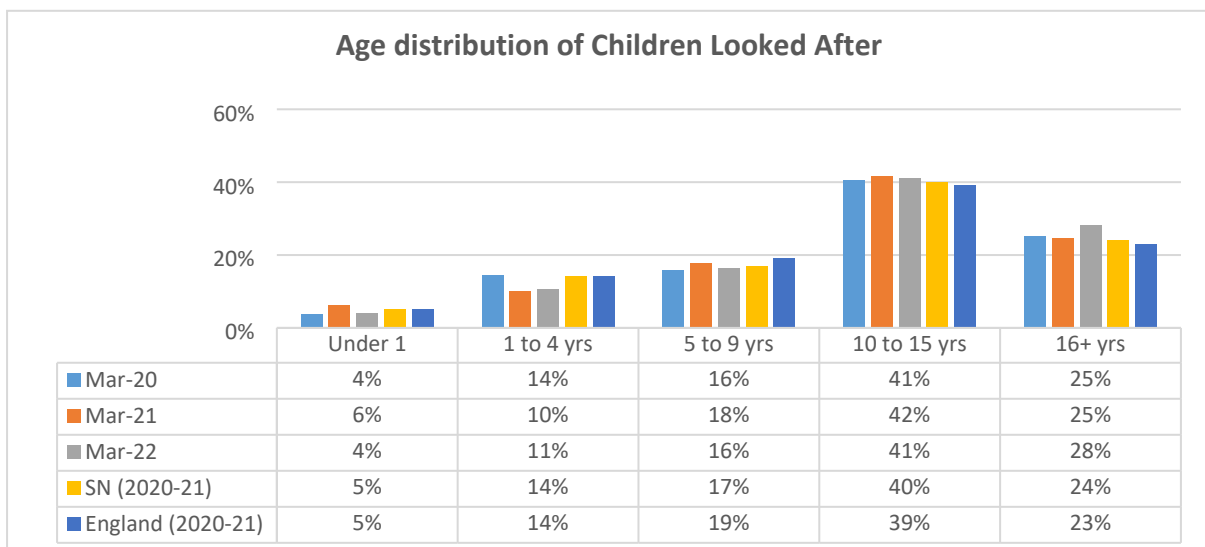
Thurrock's Children Looked After are predominantly White which is in line with Thurrock's School Census in Spring 2020 and the Statistical Neighbour and England averages.

While the numbers of Children Looked After Black/Black British have slightly decreased since April 2021, there have been no particular issues influencing this change.



3.8 CLA age profile

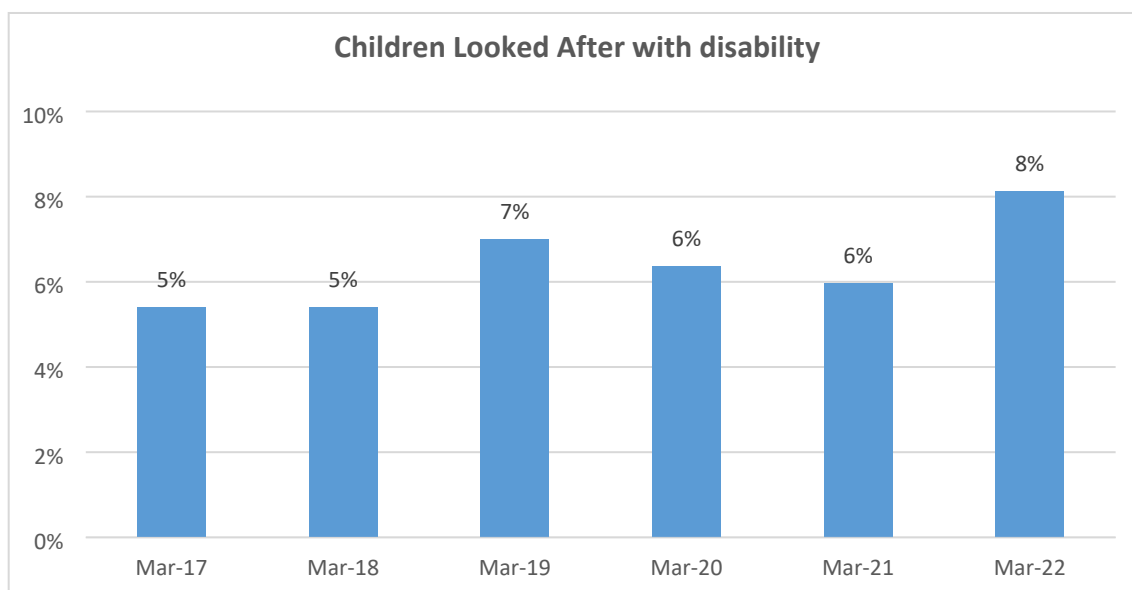
Based on the benchmarking data as at March 2021, the age profile of the Children Looked After cohort remains mostly stable and in line with the Statistical Neighbour and England averages. Since March 2021, we have seen an increase in the number of 16+ years and Thurrock is above England average of 23% and Statistical Neighbour average of 24%.



3.9 CLA with a disability

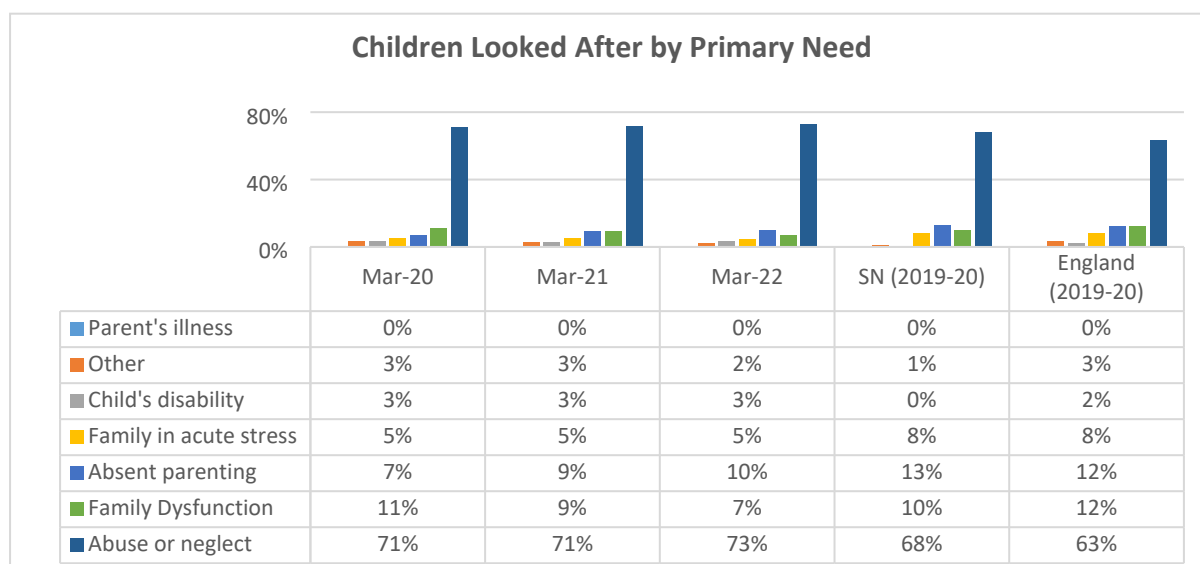
The number of children looked after with a disability has remained relatively stable since April 2021. At the end of March 2022, 24 of the total CLA cohort were recorded as having a disability. 19 of these children were boys aged

seven and over and 5 girls aged 12 and over. 17 of 24 children were placed within 20 miles or less from their home.



3.10 CLA by Category of Need

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 provide support and intervention to enable families to remain together and ensure that children only become looked after, when absolutely necessary.

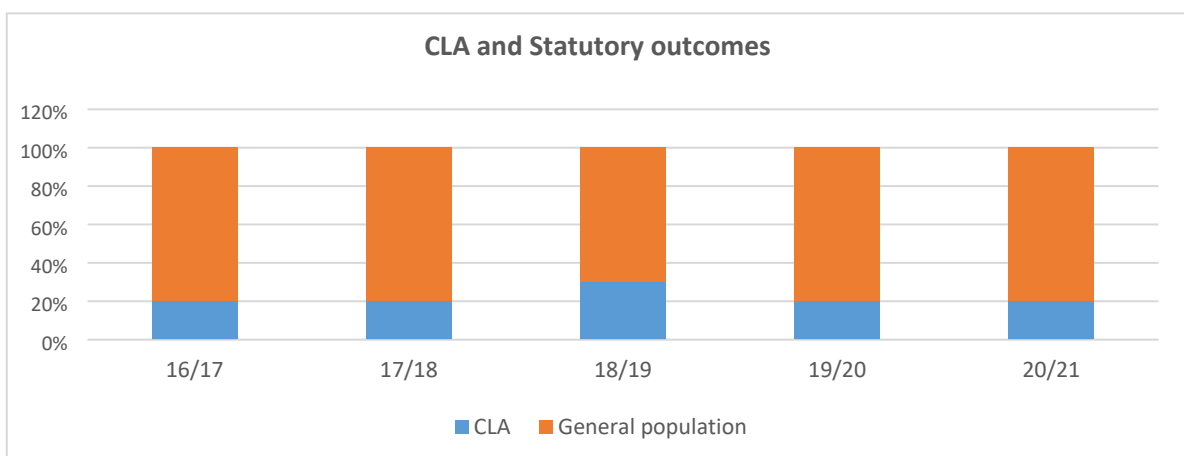


4. Number of CLA open to the Youth Offending Service (YOS)

4.1 Statutory Interventions

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

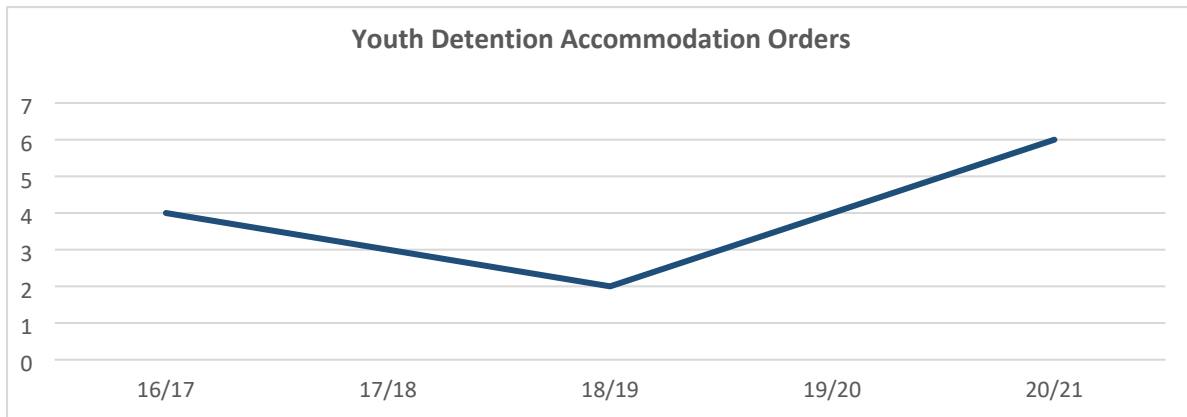
Between April 2021 and March 2022, there were 56 children open to the Youth Offending Service on statutory outcomes, 10 of these were looked after children of which 8 were looked after by Thurrock. The 10 looked after children represented 18% of the young people open to YOS, 60% were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background (BAME).



The above graph represents the percentage of Children Looked After versus the total number of young people in the Youth Justice System for the last five years. 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.

4.2 Youth Detention Accommodation

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



Of the 7 children made subject to Youth Detention Accommodation Orders in 2021-22, 5 (71%) were from the BAME community. This is reflective of over representation of children from the BAME community in the criminal justice system and in particular the figures in relation to children in custody, locally and nationally.

The over representation of BAME young people in the Criminal Justice system is reflected nationally national issue. Research into this area evidences that young black males children are not always given the same opportunities for Diversion (Early Intervention), as young white male children, from the Police and the Courts.

Essex wide, we are working with our partners to identify the root causes for over representation via the Essex Criminal Justice Board. Locally we are monitoring the numbers of black young children coming to the Out of Court Disposal Panel, where early intervention and diversion can be offered. The data in relation to our BAME young people in custody, on Court Orders, or receiving diversion intervention is scrutinised via the Youth Crime Governance Board on a quarterly basis and is a priority within our Youth Justice Board Plan 2021-24. The Essex wide Criminal Justice Board is also sponsoring some research in this area.

4.3 Out of court disposal panel

In 2021-22, the out of court disposal panel dealt with 56 offences relating to 48 Thurrock children, of which 6 children had looked after status. All 6 children were diverted away from the criminal justice system with identified support from the YOS partnership.

Thurrock YOS and Essex Police are committed to the national protocol² 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

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-protocol-on-reducing-criminalisation-of-looked-after-children>

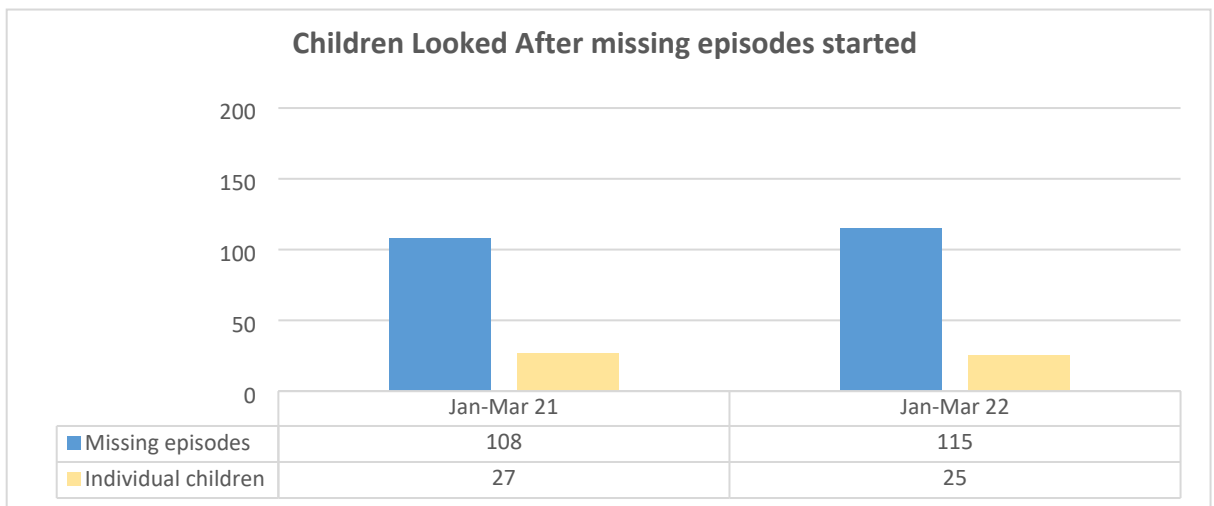
diverting any child (where possible) who is Looked After from the Criminal Justice System.

5. 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 January and March 2022.

Between January and March 2022, there were total of 115 missing episodes compared to 108 missing episodes in the same period in 2020-21; this represents a 7% increase in the number of missing episodes. The number of young people that went missing has fallen by 7% from 27 to 25. Between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, there was total of 593 missing episodes made up by 65 children compared to 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 when the number of episodes was 406 episodes and number of children was 54.

Since April 2020, the number of episodes has increased by 46% and the number of children has increased by 20%. The chart below shows the number of missing episodes and children between January and March over the last two years.



Between January and March 2022:-

- 22 children had between 1-10 missing episodes
- 2 children between 10 and 20 episodes
- 1 child over 20 missing episodes

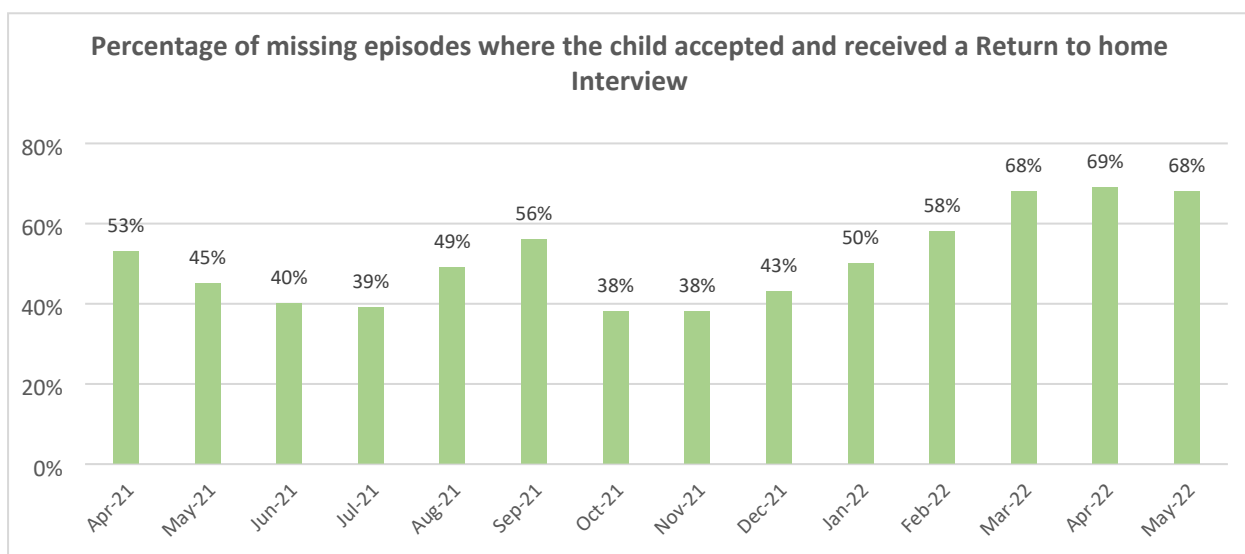
The most common reason for children going missing was contact with family and friends, representing 54% of missing episodes between January and March 2022.

5.1 CLA return to home interview (RHI)

Since 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.

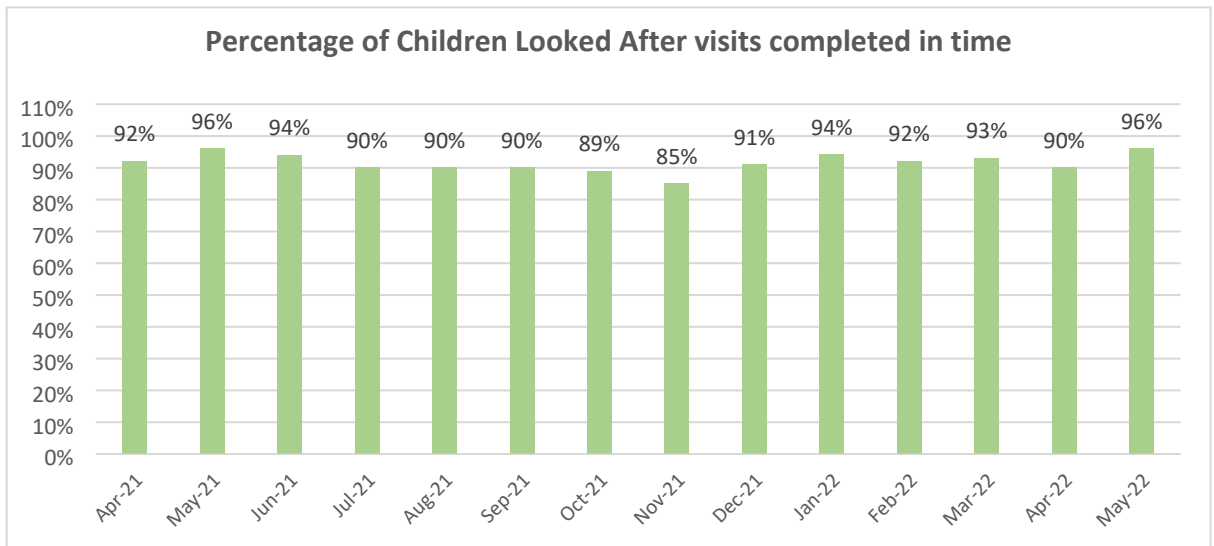
Between January and March 2022, the average take up was 59% by all young people offered a RHI compared to 52% between January and March 2021. The offer of an RHI via Inspire is not always accepted by young people for a number of reasons including not wanting to reveal their whereabouts when missing and not believing that they were missing but ‘out’. All young people who have a missing episode are reviewed at the weekly Risk Management Meeting.

The graph below shows the percentage of return to home interviews taken up by young people through Inspire over the last 12 months. There has been an increase in the number of missing episodes in a cohort of 7 young people who have consistently refused return home interviews. We are reviewing how we engage this cohort of young people and alternatives such as whether there is anyone within the network better placed to have these conversations when they return from missing episodes including their social worker and how this information is captured. Part of this review will include gaining an understanding from young people about what works for them, what the barriers are to taking up a return home interview and working with representatives from the National Working Group who are supporting Inspire to improve the take up of that offer



5.2 Timeliness of social worker visits

Social workers are required to visit a child/young person within one week of the start of any placement. Visits are then due in accordance to the time agreed within the Care Plan. This can vary from 20 to 65 working days, permitted within regulations. There has been a slight dip in performance in the last quarter and there is focused work within the service to ensure sustained improved performance and that children are seen and spoken to. The average quarterly visits completed in time between January and March 2022 was 93% compared to 96% between January and March 2021.



5.3 CLA Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

Every child who becomes looked after should have an Initial Health Assessment within 20 working 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 an 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 colleagues that a child has become looked after and to ensure that an Initial Health Assessment is offered and completed within 20 working days.

Performance for IHA requests being sent to Health have shown a sustained improvement in the 12-month period between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, with 83% of notifications being made within 5 working days. The numbers of IHA’s requests required each month can be small and therefore fluctuations can be impacted on by very small numbers

Two performance measures inform the data and success in children having an initial health assessment in time;

- Whether the referral for an initial health assessment is made by the local authority within 5 days
- An initial health assessment takes place within 20 working days of a child entering into care.

IHA request made to health by social care within 5 days of child becoming looked after.

The average percentage completed in time from January and March 2022 was 88%.

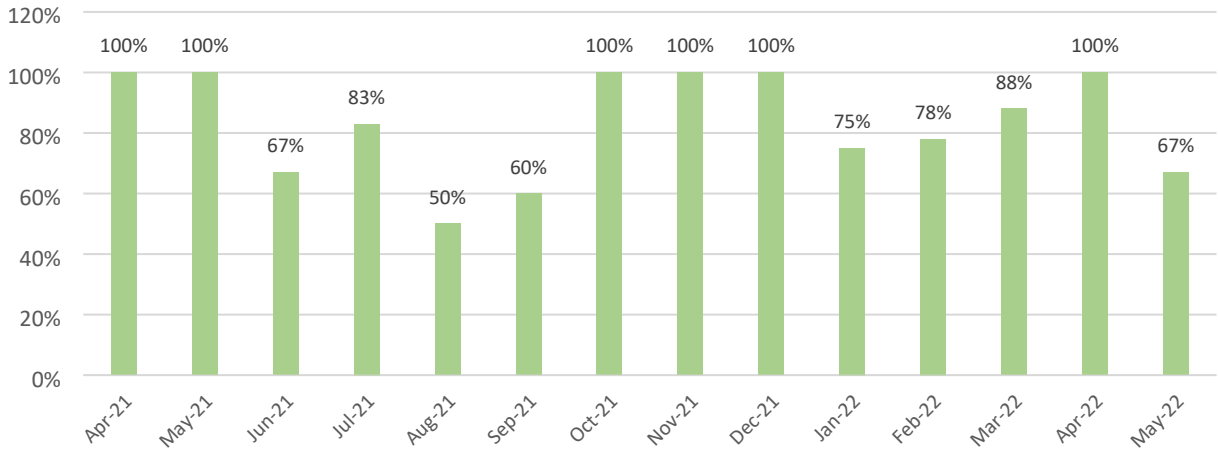
Between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, reasons for delays included parents refusing or delaying in providing written consent; procedural issues such as a child moving placement and the paperwork needing to be resubmitted and request for consent being late or a child who is able to give consent refusing or going missing.

Initial Health Assessment taken place within 20 working days of a child entering care

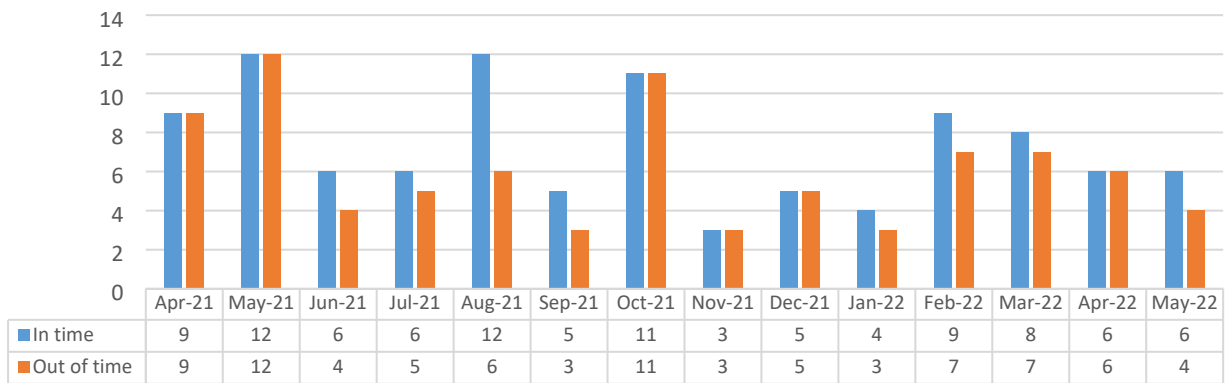
The timeliness of referrals from social care to health can but does not always impact on assessments taking place in time. Between January and March 2022, the reasons for delay varied from children moving placements, paperwork not being provided on time or incorrectly completed by social care and capacity issues.

The average percentage of initial assessments completed in time between 01 April and 31 March 2022 was 48%. Reasons for delays in children having an initial health assessment in time included parents refusing or delaying in providing written consent; procedural issues such as a child moving placement and the paperwork needing to be resubmitted; capacity within health due to sickness and redeployment for vaccination clinics, and other reasons such as clashes in appointments for the young person or a child being ill.

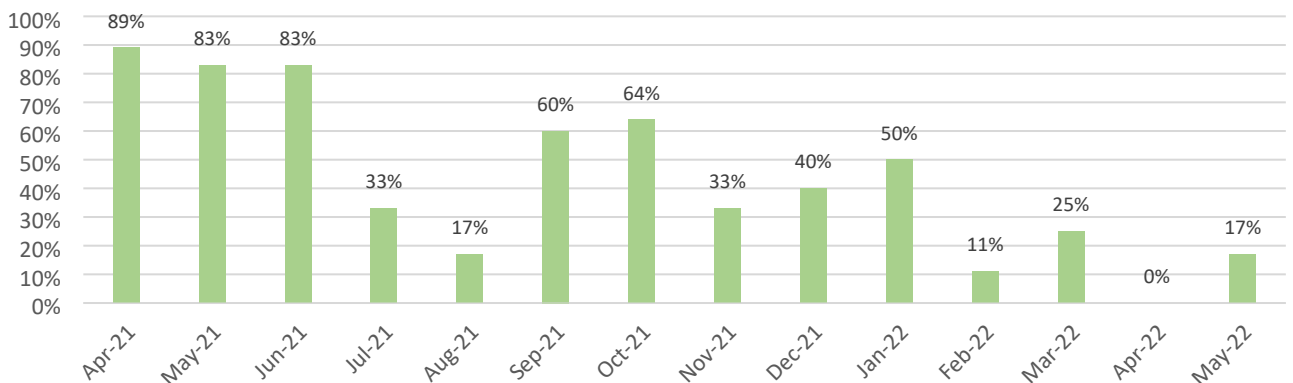
CLA Initial Health Assessment 5-day requests made in time

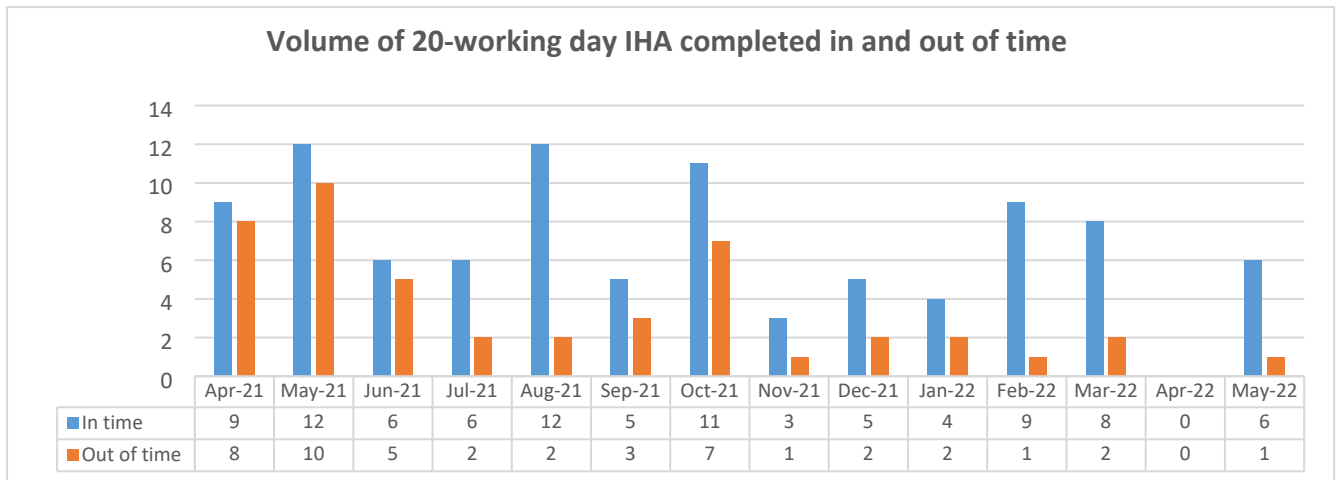


Volume of 5-day requests completed in and out of time



Of the children who reached their 28th day in care within the month; % that had an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) within 20 working days





5.4 CLA in Education

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, all national academic testing was cancelled. In line with Department for Education guidance, schools will not be publishing their data for 2021.

The annual report of the Virtual School Head teacher is a key document which must be produced as part of reporting arrangements. The 2019-20 report was presented to Corporate Performance Board in January 2021.

In addition to the annual report, the Virtual School Head teacher and her team members provide reports to the Governing Body every term. These detail a range of information such which is provided to ensure that we are held accountable and that the delivery of services is efficient. (Please see Agenda item 8 within Corporate Parenting Committee Pack January 21)³

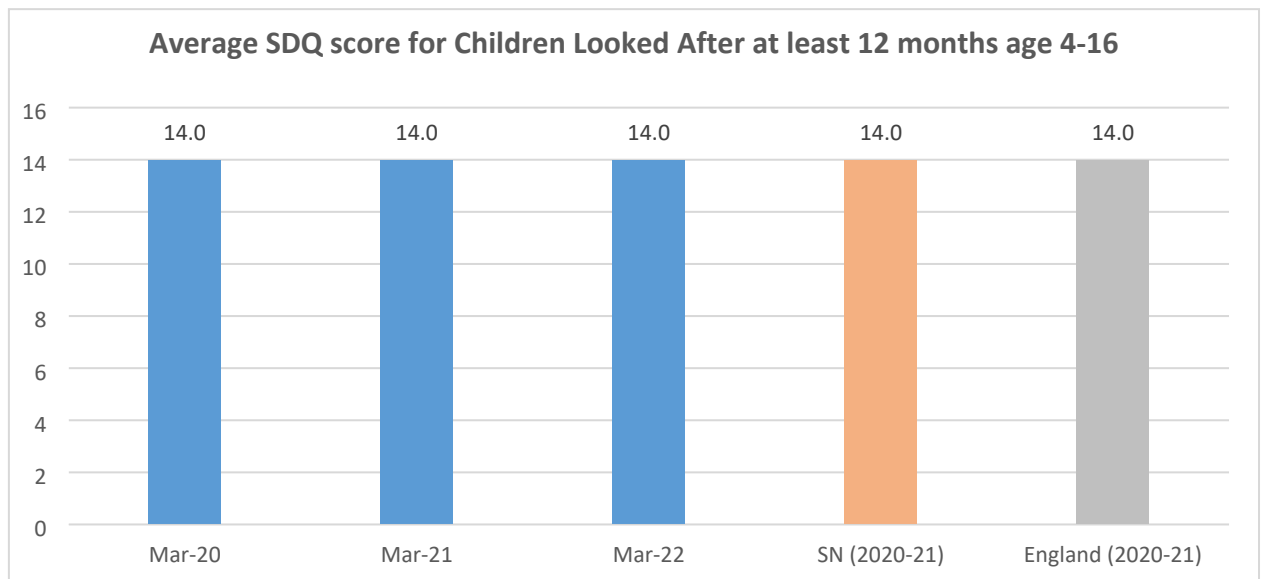
5.5 CLA Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

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

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

³ (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Corporate Parenting Committee, 05/01/2021 19:00 (thurrock.gov.uk)

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.



6. Number of children adopted

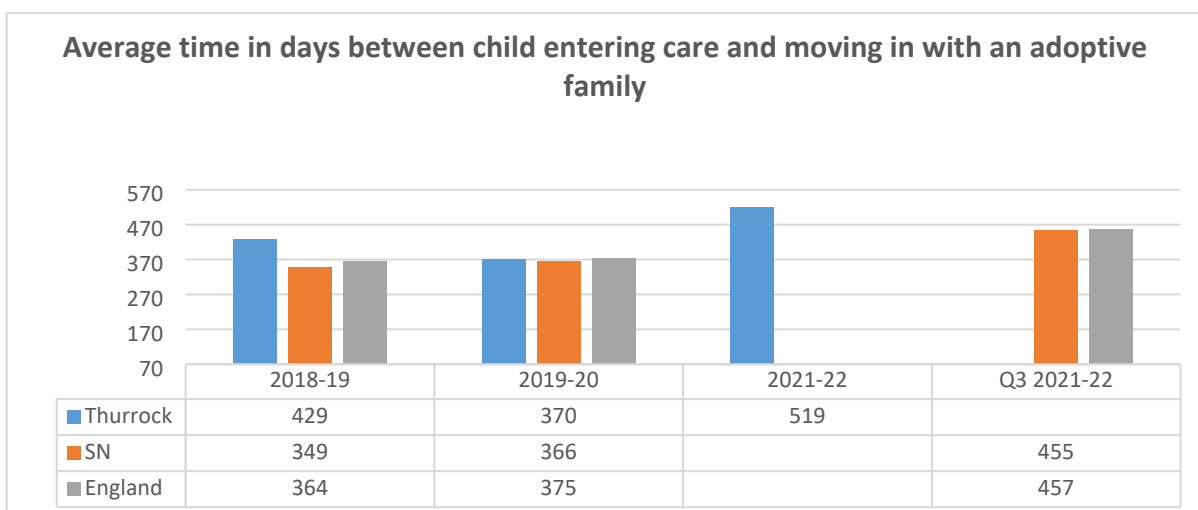
Between 01 April and May 2022, there are a total of 11 children who have either been adopted or placed in adoptive placements.

6.1 Timeliness of Adoption

The timeliness of adoption is measured as a 12-month rolling average, it is the length of time from the child entering care to moving in with an adoptive family. As at end of March 2022, Thurrock's average was 519 days.

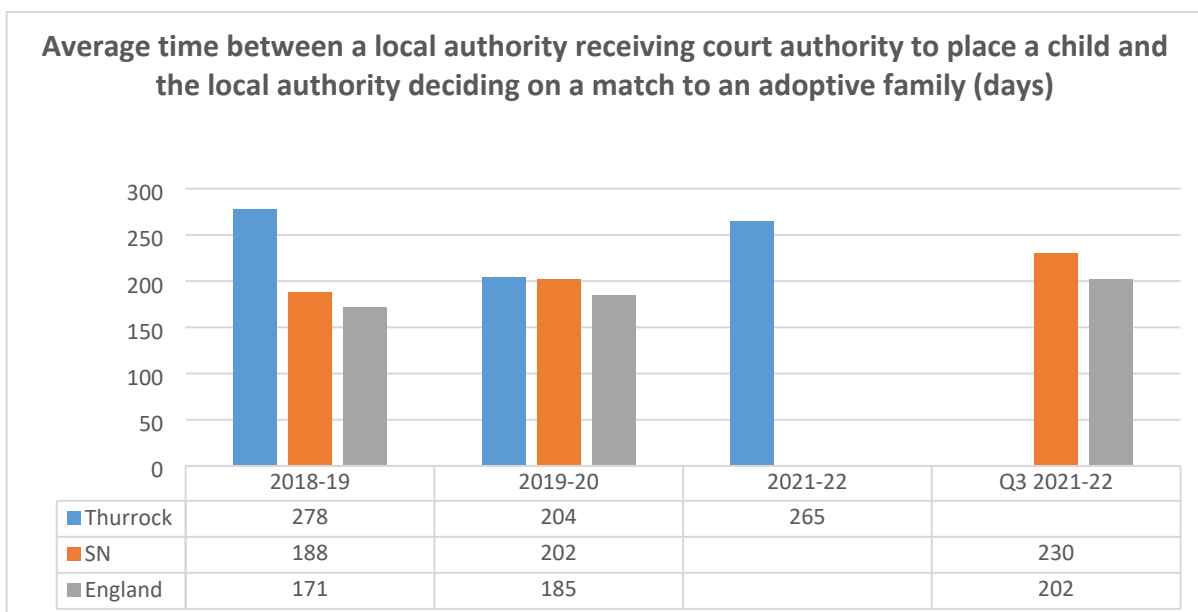
Care proceedings have seen significant delays due to covid; court availability and family members being identified late.

Based on the latest benchmarking data as at the end of March 2020, Thurrock is above the Statistical Neighbour average of 455 days and England average of 457 days as reported for Q3 2021-22.



As at end of March 2022, the average time in days between Thurrock receiving a Placement Order (court authority) to place a child with the adoptive family was 265 days.

Thurrock is above the Statistical Neighbour average of 230 days and the England average of 202 days and as reported at the end of Q3 2021-22.



This is an area for the Service to focus to ensure there is timely matching and placing of children with their adoptive families. The impact of COVID 19 will affect the timeliness of children being placed for adoption due to the delays in timetabling of final hearings for Placement Orders, and further delay as a result of birth parents re-applying to the court to revoke Placement Order, sometimes as soon as the Order has been made. The application by birth parents to revoke a Placement Order prevents the placement of children with

adoptive families. There can be a further appeal if the birth family do not agree with the chosen adoptive placement.

6.2 **CLA permanency**

Purposeful early permanency planning continues to ensure that children are in the right placement at the right time to meet their needs. Securing placements where needed 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.

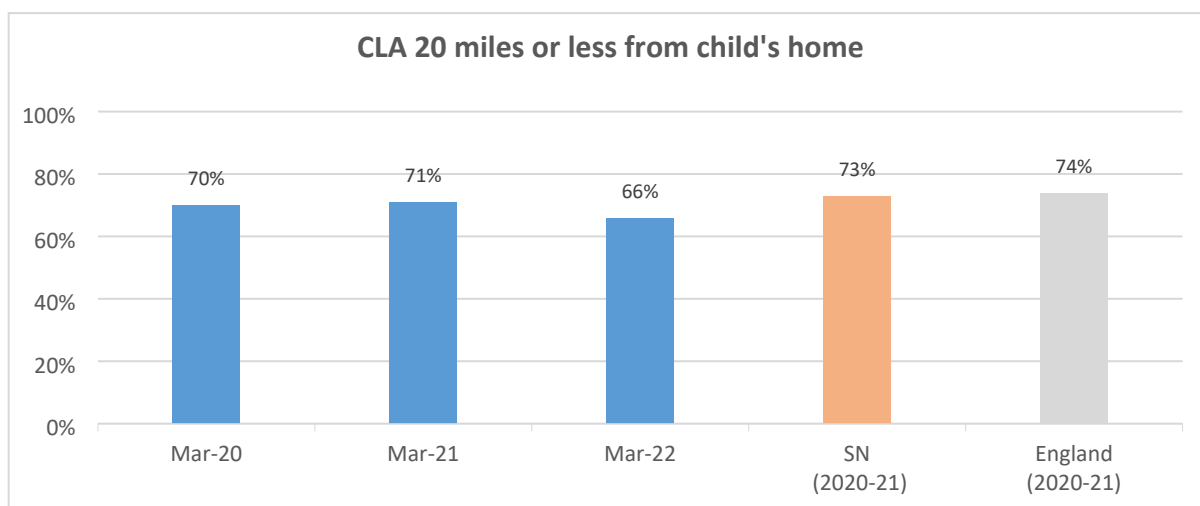
As at the end of March 2022, there were 49 (17%) children aged 0-5, the total cohort of CLA being 295. The majority of children under five who are not able to return home, are moved on to permanent placements through adoption or permanent alternative carers. There have been significant delays, as a result of COVID-19, resulting in children being subject to court proceedings for longer periods, and transition to their permanent homes being delayed.

6.3 **CLA placement distance**

It is good practice to ensure that children remain within their communities. At the end of March 2022, 66% of the Children Looked After cohort were placed within 20 miles or less from their homes, which represents 196 of 295 children looked after. Based on the latest benchmarking data available in March 2021, Thurrock reflects performance close in line with the national average of 74%.

This is an area of intense focus for the Placement Service. The fostering recruitment campaign seeks to increase local placements. However it is not only Thurrock Local Authority who are finding the recruitment of local foster carers a challenge. Local placements are not available from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) or Residential care homes. There is a national shortage of fostering and residential care⁴, (the interim report published by the Competition and Markets Authority, October 2022, has noted the pressure on Local Authority placement services) and the local authority continues to seek Ofsted registered provision and sometimes this is outside of the Thurrock and Essex area.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-interim-report/interim-report>.



7. Care Leaving Service

A Care Leaver, as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000⁵, 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:

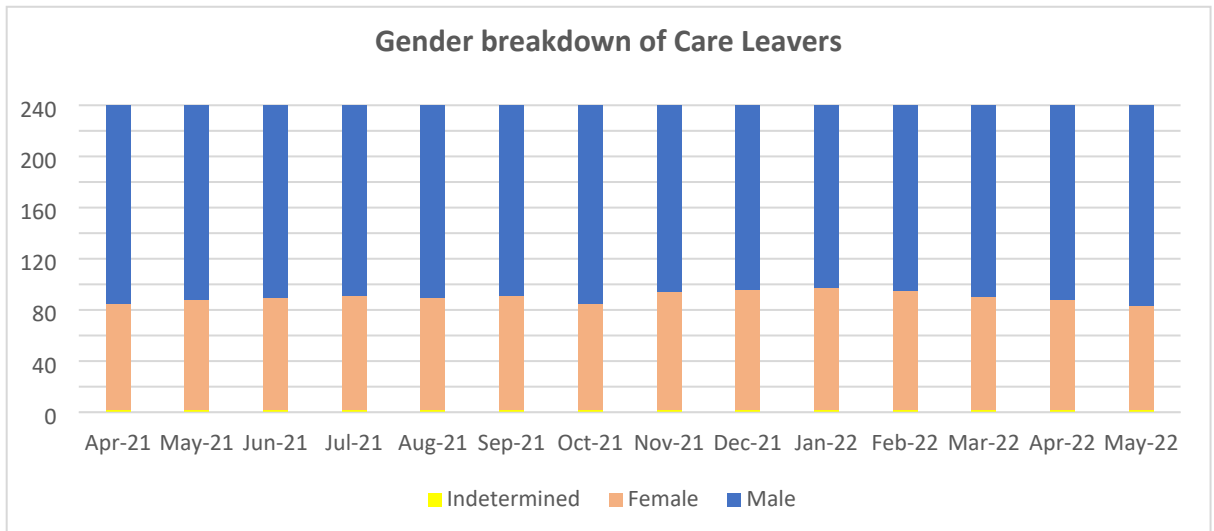
- Eligible child - a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/health and social care trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.
- Relevant child - a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th 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.

The graph below shows the total **OC3 care leaver cohort** (Relevant and Former Relevant Children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within Financial Year) of Young People age 16-25 years who are in receipt of a Care Leaving service. The numbers are increasing and this is in part due to legislative changes that 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.

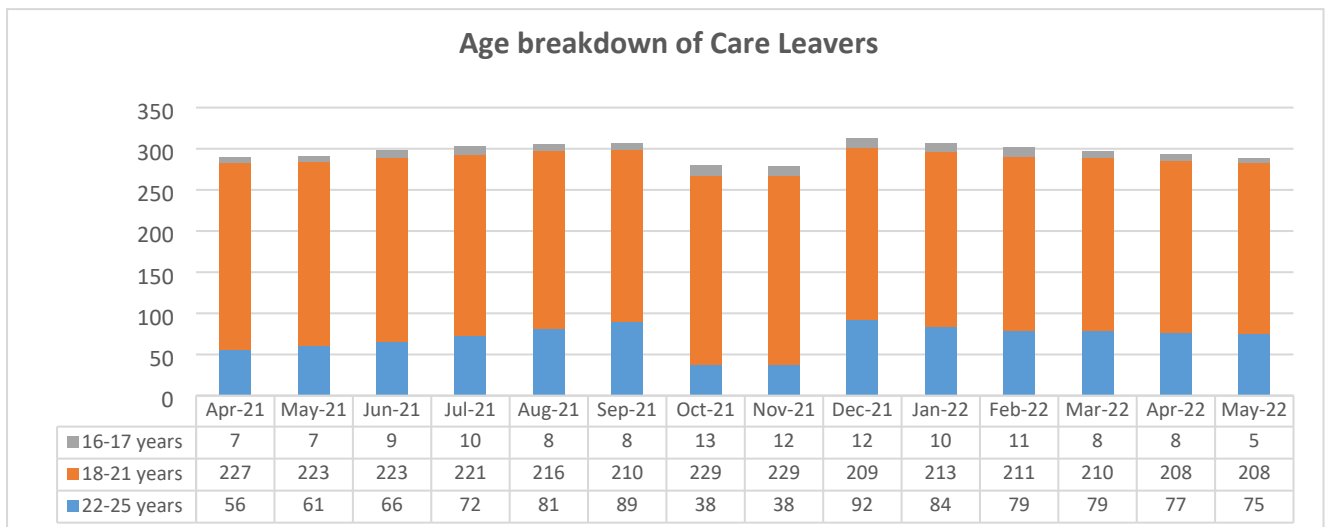
As at end of March 2022, 297 Care Leavers were being supported and were receiving an Aftercare service. This is a decrease from the previous year and

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>

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.



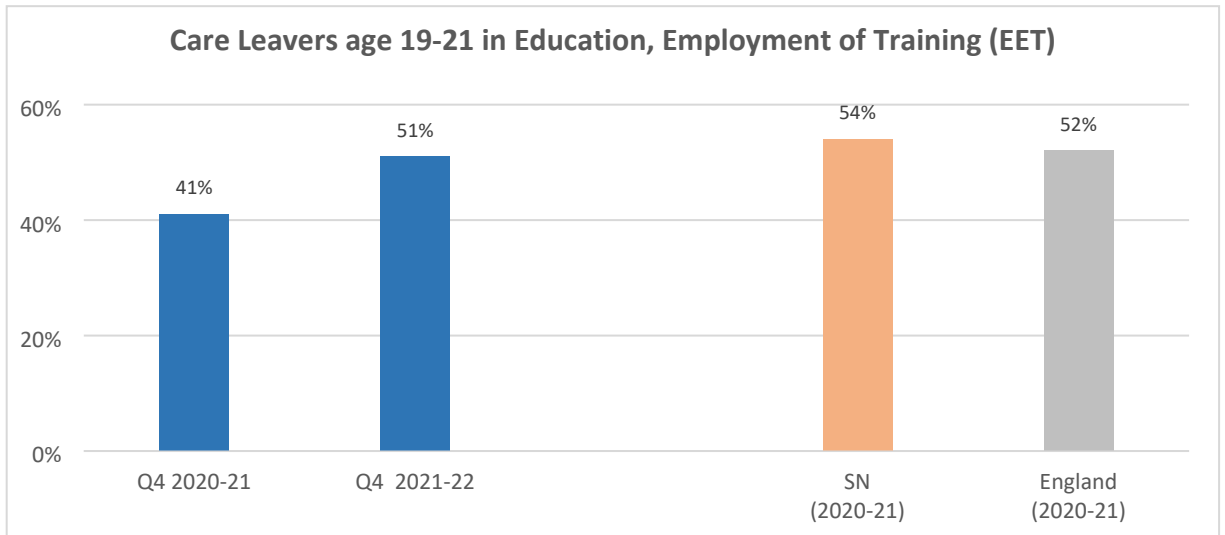
The charts below show the Care Leaver cohort broken down by age groups and gender.



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

At the end of March 2022, 51% of the Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 year old were in part or full time education, employment or training compared to 41% in March 2021. Thurrock is in line with England average of 51% To strengthen oversight and planning to ensure our young people have support and 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 Aftercare Service, Inspire Youth

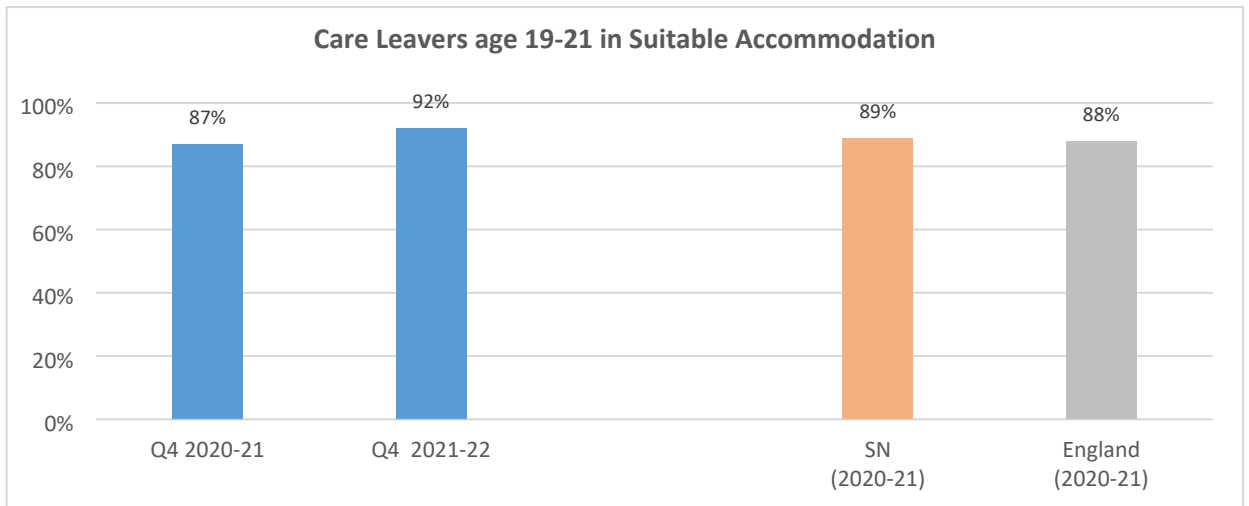
Hub and the Virtual School. The panel seeks to understand the issues for individual young people and align their interests to an EET offer. The panel discussions have highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on Young People which has limited opportunities to engage in work experience and continue with employment.



7.2 Care Leavers age 19 to 21 years in Suitable Accommodation

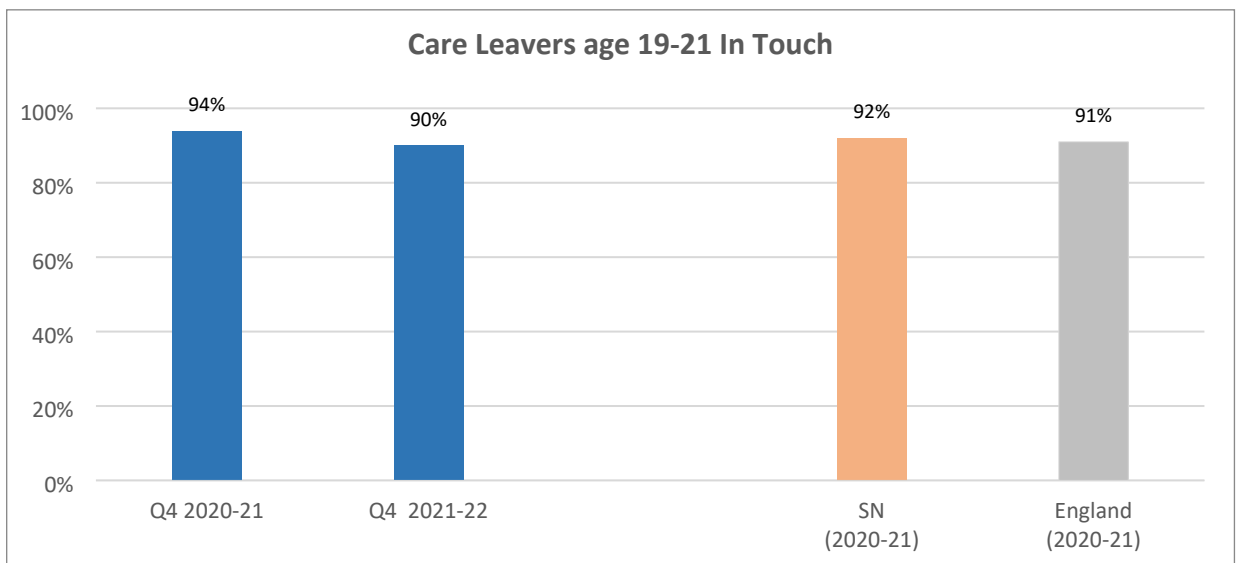
At the end of March 2022, the number of 19 to 21 year old Care Leavers reported to be in suitable accommodation was 92%. Thurrock is above England average of 88% and Statistical Neighbour average of 89% based on 2021 benchmarking data. There are some care leavers who are not in touch with the service, as well as those whose accommodation is unsuitable. Reasons for accommodation being deemed unsuitable include care leavers who are UASC and missing, young people declining to say where they are living or care leavers who are in prison.

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



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

Local Authorities are expected to stay in touch with Care Leavers and provide statutory support to help care leaver's transition to living independently. At the end of March 2022, Thurrock was in touch with 90% of Care Leavers. Thurrock's performance is slightly below the statistical neighbour average of 92% and England average of 91%. This is mainly due to the cohort of missing UASC.



8. Reasons for Recommendations

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

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

9.1 Not applicable.

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

10.1 None.

11. Implications

11.1 Financial

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

The Children services budget continues to face increased financial pressures arising from placement costs, with limited supply of specialist provisions increasing the cost required to be paid. The Councils MTFS continues to provide support within a challenging financial climate.

11.2 Legal

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

No implications identified.

11.3 Diversity & Equality

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

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

11.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, and Impact on Looked After Children

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

- 13. Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Daniel Jones, Strategic Lead, Children Looked After, Children's Services

Statistics: Anna Watkins, Business Intelligence Analyst, Children's Services

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19 July 2022	Item: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Dan Jones – Strategic Lead, Children Looked After Catherine Wilson – Strategic Lead, Commissioning	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon – Assistant Director Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy – Corporate Director Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report will give an update to Members regarding the progress of delivering the outcomes and next steps identified within the Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2021 – 2024. Offering reassurance that the statutory duties the Council has regarding this are met. A copy of the Strategy is provided for ease at appendix 1.

The Local Authority has a duty, as far as is reasonably practicable, to secure sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area, which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is local.

The quality of placements strongly relates to children and young people ‘doing well’ and having stability in care. It is therefore, as Members are aware, our aspiration to provide the best possible placements, accommodation and support provision for our children and young people in the care of the local authority.

There are six key priorities set as a part of this strategy:

- The voice of children and young people is at the heart of planning
- Achieving placement stability and permanence
- Recruitment and support of foster carers
- Commissioning and partnership working

- Developing the offer for care leavers
- Developing the offer for our most vulnerable children

It is important to acknowledge that the delivery in first 2 years of the strategy has been restricted by the pandemic and the previous and resulting challenges in the care market.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Members review the update within this report of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy January 2021 – 2024.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) places a general duty on local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area, which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area. In September 2021, the law changed to require that children aged 0-16 years are placed in either foster care, residential care or other registered care setting.
- 2.2 The Strategy builds on our long-term vision for the development of our sufficiency duty within a three-year plan from January 2021 to January 2024 supporting planning and commissioning.
- 2.3 The delivery of the strategy has, as mentioned, been significantly restricted due to the pandemic however alongside this, Members will be aware of the national, regional, and local challenges within the social care provider market. The provider market for children and young people's care and support is not delivering as it should. In April 2022 Ofsted called for a national audit of needs of children in care to properly understand and deal with issues around the sufficiency of social care placements. This was based on Ofsted's latest report indicating that there is a lack of collective knowledge of needs and resources to meet those needs.
- 2.4 The final report published by the Competitions Authority in March 2022 found that private Children's home providers were making profits much higher than expected. This report also raised the prospect of wider commissioning reforms. This influences our own local delivery and supports our understanding of the challenges faced day to day by operational and commissioning colleagues in finding high quality value for money placements for our children and young people.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The overall context for meeting the Duty is set out in the statutory guidance, Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for children looked after 2010 which states that:

“Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of looked after children is a vital step in delivering improved outcomes for this vulnerable group. Having the right placement in the right place, at the right time is a critical success factor in relation to the delivery of better outcomes for looked after children.”

3.2 One of the key priorities of the strategy is ‘*To ensure the voice of children and young people is at the heart of planning*’. The Children in Care Council has continued to meet regularly and be consulted on a wide range of issues. The voice of the young person is at the heart of the assessment process ensuring that their wishes and feelings are included. Advocacy is available to support children and young people in this process. Whenever possible children and young people can give their views when placements are being found for them. As contracts and placements are monitored for effectiveness and quality children are asked wherever possible to give their views on where they are placed and the experience of living there.

3.3 The Sufficiency Duty Statutory Guidance describes the accommodation required for a child looked after that, so far as is reasonably practical:

- is near the child’s home
- does not disrupt his/her education or training
- enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling
- where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child and
- is within the local authority’s area unless not reasonably practical

3.4 At the 31 March 2022 there were 294 children looked after by Thurrock Council. Over the last financial year, the average number of children in Thurrock’s care at any one time was 302. Whilst the overall number varies a continued downward trend will likely be impacted by the growing population in Thurrock. There will always be a number of children requiring local authority care to thrive. We anticipate this number to be between 280-290 children each year.

3.5 The highest percentage of children in care in Thurrock are those aged 10-15 years, this has remained broadly stable over recent years.

3.6 The majority of Children Looked After have a placement in a foster care setting. These placements are provided through In-house foster placements and placements through commissioned Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA’s).

The table below gives a breakdown of the placements that our children and young people are currently accommodated in.

Placement Type	Number of Children Placed
Placed for adoption	6
Placed with Thurrock Connected Persons Foster Carers (Family and Friends)	23
Placed With Mainstream Thurrock Foster Carers	92
Placed with Other Local Authority Foster Carers	1
Placed with IFA Foster carers	107
Placed with Parents/those with PR	10
Placed in Registered Children's Homes	25
Placed in Supported Accommodation for children aged 16+	26
Placed in other settings (e.g., YoI, Individual Arrangements)	4

3.7 We want to ensure the right children are in our care, that they are in the right placements and that they transition into adulthood feeling supported with the skills to progress to independent living feeling settled, secure, and stable. We aim to do this through robust permanency planning and placement stability.

3.8 Over 2021/22 key placement pressures have been:

- Low availability of local Parent and Child Placements
- Low availability of 52 week SEND School Placements
- Fewer placements for children with complex trauma

3.9 Market pressure and increased costs mean private providers have been increasing the weekly rate charged particularly for residential care:

£/week	Jan 2020	Nov 2020	May 2022
Average Price paid nationally	£3963	£4130	£4599

3.10 Given the increasing costs and limited residential placements Thurrock is developing new solutions for children. To address the gaps locally we are in the early stages of a project to establish small residential placements through local council housing stock. If successful it will offer bespoke residential care to a small number of children with specific needs and increase our emergency placement capacity.

3.11 Children and young people placed outside the Local Authority area has slightly increased this reflects the challenges of the care market and very little local provision being available. Often out of area placements are put in place to support children and young people with complex needs. The performance

on placement stability and educational attainment at Key Stage 2 and 4, including school attendance, is above that of our statistical neighbours and national performance for Children Looked After.

- 3.12 Development of the care market has been a key priority under the difficult circumstances described. However, we have implemented a Placements Framework for supported accommodation, Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and residential placements. For supported accommodation 95% of placements have been made through the framework we are working hard to encourage providers to be based in Thurrock and to date we have 5 supported living providers with 7 placement addresses within the boundaries of the Local Authority.
- 3.13 The placement framework has supported around 65% of placements made with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). Attracting residential care providers has been difficult. The framework has set pricing which allows providers to amend their pricing each time the list is opened for new providers to apply. Providers understand they are ranked on both quality and price, this approach has resulted in fewer requests for uplifts throughout the year. The placement framework operates a quality monitoring approach to ensure that providers deliver to the standards set out in the specification. This has brought more stability and resulted in less providers being decommissioned.
- 3.14 A Placement Framework is also being introduced for Special Education Needs (SEND), and currently we are undertaking the tender process developing the specification, engaging with the provider market, and preparing to go out to tender later this year. This will bring the same stability and quality to our SEND provision as we have developing in our overarching placement framework.
- 3.15 Getting the right support for care leavers is a priority for Thurrock as this supports transition into adulthood. Several interlinked projects are already in place bringing together partners such as Housing, Adult Services, Headstart and Children's Services to identify and meet support needs and find housing solutions locally.
- 3.16 Currently Aftercare has 275 care leavers to support. So far, since April 2022, Headstart Housing has provided accommodation for 68 care leavers. The Headstart Programme has increased the availability of local accommodation. This in turn provides improved access to support, training and employment and access to services. Now managing a portfolio of 114 beds, including 42 supported by key workers, the service provides a tailored approach to support young people to develop. Last year, Head Start Housing accommodated 64 care leavers excluding Clarence Rd and young parent provision.
- 3.17 The current sufficiency strategy was developed prior to the impact of COVID-19. The current national picture is one of reducing availability and increasing

costs of placements in the private sector: The Sufficiency Strategy requires a review because of these changes.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy is a Statutory Duty of the Council and provides a framework for the development of high quality placements to meet the identified need.

4.2 Given the national changes Thurrock should review and update its strategy

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

5.1 The views of children and young people were obtained through the existing mechanisms in place as described in the report and will be used as services are developed.

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

6.1 This report relates to the following corporate priorities in particular:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- 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

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The provision of high-quality, cost-effective placements is a priority in meeting our duties for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Whilst this strategy does not have savings targets attached, any savings that are achieved will contribute to the costs of earlier intervention and increased demand.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**

Interim Deputy Head of Legal Social Care & Education

Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) places a general duty on local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area, which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.

The overall context for meeting the Duty is set out in the statutory guidance, (Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children 2010) which states that:

“Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of looked after children is a vital step in delivering improved outcomes for this vulnerable group. Having the right placement in the right place, at the right time is a critical success factor in relation to the delivery of better outcomes for looked after children.”

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

Access to placements that meet the needs identified are key to improving outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This strategy outlines key factors such as ethnicity, gender, age and provides an analysis of these to aid planning.

Placement planning addresses the individual diversity needs of children placed and the supervising social workers assist foster carers to ensuring appropriate oversight and supervision is in place. In some situations where a cultural match has not been possible, foster carers' support network (Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Workers, and Independent Visitors) can provide and contribute to the information and care that foster families need to provide appropriate support.

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

- Appendix 1: Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2021 to 2024

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Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy

January 2021 - 2024

This version date
Version number
Review Frequency
Next review date

08/12/2020
Final
Every 3 Years
December 2023

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1.0 Introduction

Children and Young People in Care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. It is our priority to ensure that all children and young people in our care and their families receive the best possible support. This strategy outlines a review of the needs of our Children and Young People who are Looked After and Care Leavers by Thurrock Council and our approach to addressing these.

Meeting the needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers is the responsibility of the local authority as corporate parents and a priority across the council and its partners. It is the responsibility of the local authority as corporate parents, to support each of our care leavers as individuals in order to enable them to achieve their maximum potential.

Our vision is to provide sufficient high quality placements for children and young people which understand their aspirations and ambitions and can support them to fulfil their potential. We aspire for our Care Leavers to have all the necessary skills and support to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence at a time that is right for them individually.

We want to make sure that we have appropriate placement and accommodation options, both now and in the future, that support our looked after children to achieve the best possible outcomes, whilst ensuring best use of available resources.

By working together across the service and with our partners responsible for Children Looked After we are focused on delivering the services children and young people need and deserve to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives.



Joe Tynan, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help

2.0 Sufficiency Duty: Legal Context

Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) places a general duty on Local Authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area, which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the Local Authority's area.

Sufficiency Duty Statutory Guidance describes the accommodation required for a Child Looked After that, so far as is reasonably practical:

- is near the child's home;
- does not disrupt his/her education or training;
- enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
- where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and
- is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.

The overall context for meeting the Duty is set out in the statutory guidance, (Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for Looked After Children, 2010) which states that:

“Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of Looked After Children is a vital step in delivering improved outcomes for this vulnerable group. Having the right placement in the right place, at the right time is a critical success factor in relation to the delivery of better outcomes for Looked After Children.”

The key areas that need to be addressed in relation to meeting the Duty are:

- The number of accommodation providers in the area
- A range of accommodation capable of meeting different needs
- That the Local Authority is active in managing the market
- That the commissioning strategy and practice is part of the “market management”
- That the Duty applies not just to meeting the needs of “Looked After” Children and young people but also children at risk of care or custody
- Sufficiency includes providing early intervention and prevention services that help support children and families

This document builds on the long term vision for the development of our sufficiency duty that was set out in the Sufficiency Strategy 2019/20. This version provides a three year plan from January 2021 to January 2024.

3.0 Thurrock – Our Vision

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

When a child becomes Looked After, the Local Authority becomes their “Corporate Parent” responsible for them during their period as a child who is looked after and when they leave care. Every parent wants the best for their child. In Thurrock, we believe that where possible and in children’s best interest, children should live with their families or their communities. It is not always possible for children to remain with their families due to risk of harm or because they have been harmed.

We want to ensure the right children are in our care, that they are in the right placements and that they transition into adulthood feeling support with the skills to progress to independent living. We want our Children Looked After and care experienced young people to feel settled, secure and stable and aim to do this through robust permanency planning and placement stability.

Members and senior leaders in the Council are committed to providing the best possible services and ensuring that children within Thurrock remain safe. Members from all parties support Children’s Social Care and provide support and challenge through the Corporate Parenting Committee.

4.0 Thurrock - The Place

There are 29,898 children on the school roll (School Spring Census 2020). There are an estimated 44,650 children and young people under the age of 18 years in Thurrock accounting for 25.6% of the population (ONS Mid 2019 estimates). The population of children and young people is expected to increase by 11.2% in the next ten years.

Alongside existing increases in the child population in Thurrock, there is expected to be a rapid economic and housing growth over the next decade. It is expected that the population of children and young people aged 0 – 25 years will rapidly increase as a result. It is highly likely, therefore, that the numbers of Children Looked After in Thurrock will also grow. In order to account for this expected population growth, the local Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) population projections take into account the levels of job and housing growth expected to take place in Thurrock in the coming years to provide a more realistic forecast of population growth than the standard Office for National Statistics (ONS) forecasts.

It is estimated that from the baseline year of 2014 the child population (0 – 17 years) will grow by 19% by 2024 and 35.4% by 2037. By comparison, the child population of England is projected to grow by just 13.3% by 2024 and 19.2% by 2037. This is around half of the rate of growth expected in Thurrock over the next 20 years.

5.0 Thurrock Priorities

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- 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

Place – a heritage rich borough which is ambitious for its future

This means:

- 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

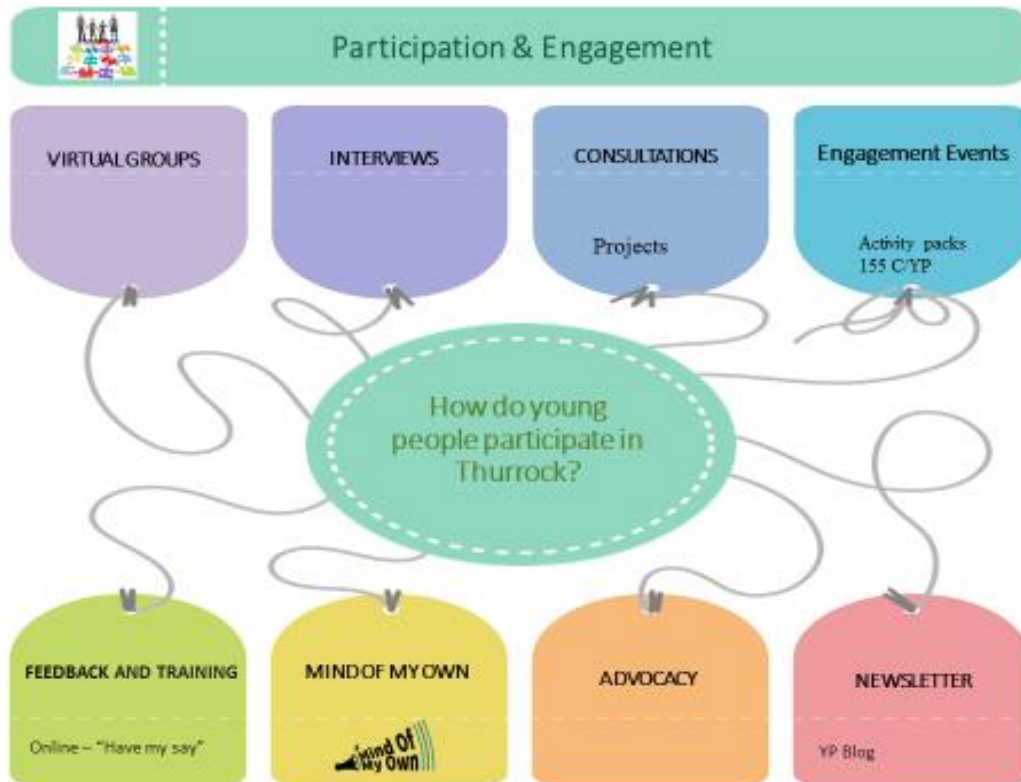
Prosperity – a borough, which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

This means:

- 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

6.0 What Children and Young People Tell Us

There is a commitment to create a culture of listening to children and young people; understanding what they want from the services they receive so that our work is relationship based and informed by listening to the voice of our children. This commitment includes the development of sufficient accommodation which meets the needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Feedback is via the Participation and Engagement Team who routinely collect the views of children and young people through a variety of methods and use this information to ensure the voice of children and young people is at the heart of planning and delivering services. Some of the ways the Participation and Engagement Team do this are illustrated below, these were developed with children and young people:



We want all Children Looked After and Care Leavers and to be healthy, safe and happy, do well at school, training or employment and enjoy good relationships with their peers. We want our young people to be able to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as adults into higher education, good careers and jobs, and achieve financial security.

The quality of placements strongly relates to children and young people 'doing well' and having stability in care. It is therefore the aim of this strategy to ensure that across all areas of our services supporting Children Looked After and our Care Leavers, we aspire to achieve the best possible placements and housing provision for our young people.

Children can be in care for varying lengths of time. Some children are unable to return to live with their parents because to do so would mean that they would likely suffer further harm, abuse and/or neglect. When children become Looked After in Thurrock, we will work hard to make sure that they are not further disadvantaged and that the care we provide is better than the care they have previously received. We will provide high quality care in a foster placements with a family or, where necessary a high quality residential setting.

We want to enable our children and young people to be involved in decisions affecting their lives, along with their parents and carers. We will work with our Children Looked

After and our young people who have left care to shape how we manage and organise the resources and services that support them.

When the Council’s five year commissioning exercise commenced it included engagement and consultation with young people who experienced being “Looked After” they used the following key words to describe the features of a good service:

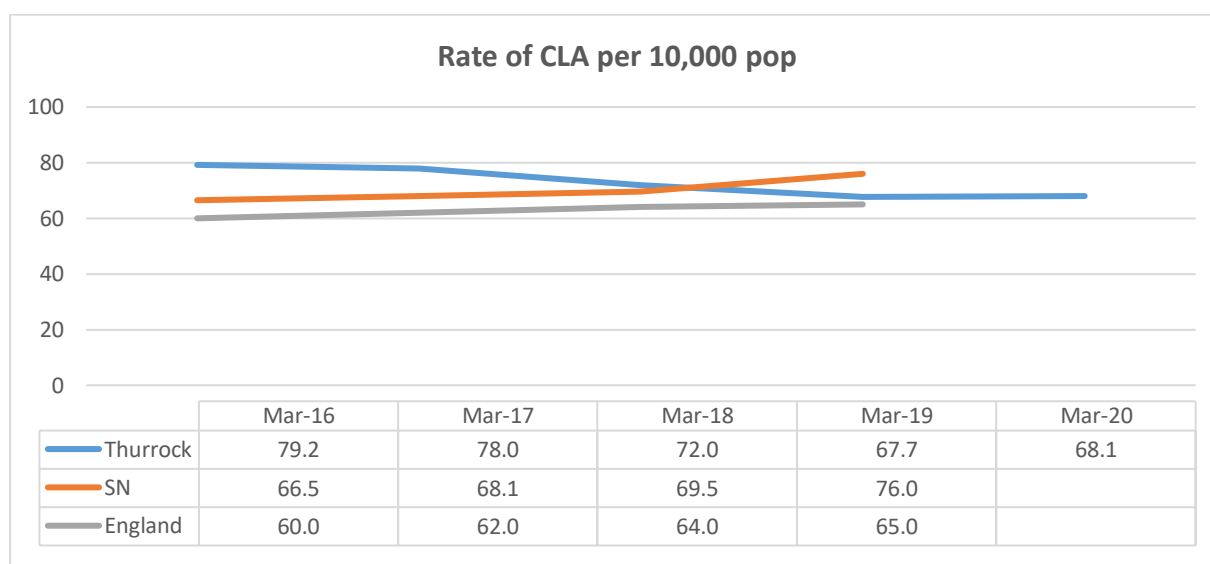
Trust	Listening	Structured
Communication	Helping	Transparency
Supporting	Understanding	Knowledge

This feedback was reflected in the specification that sets out the requirements for providers and this remains in place. The expanded participation and engagement of children and young people who are looked after and care leavers will be used to contribute the development of new placement commissioning on an ongoing basis.

7.0 Placement Needs Analysis

7.1 Profile of Children Looked After (CLA)

As at the end of March 2020 there were 298 Children Looked After in Thurrock which shows a reduction from 72.0 per 10,000 in 2018 to 68.1 per 10,000 in 2020, this is lower than our statistical neighbour average of 76.0 and higher than the England average of 65.0 per 10,000 based on the most recent data available (2018-19).



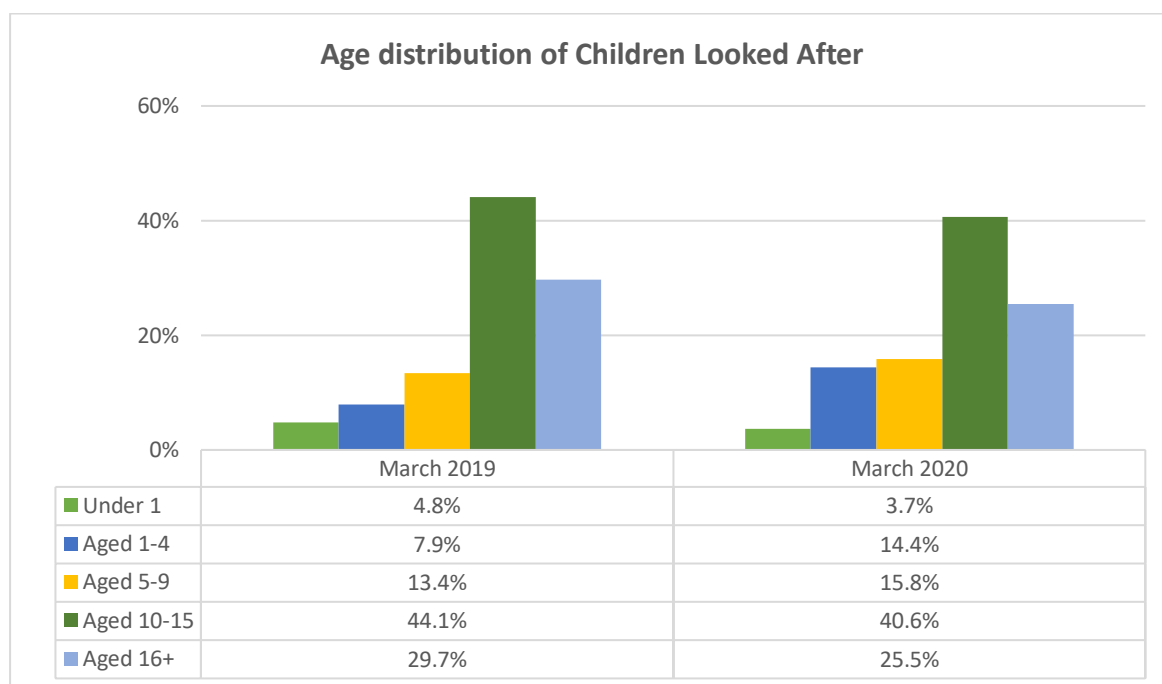
The child (0-17 years) population has been increasing in Thurrock at a much faster rate compared to the national average. This higher rate of growth is expected to continue in the future in part due to the high level of economic and housing development currently taking place. It is likely that there will therefore, be a

proportionate increase in the numbers of Children Looked After in Thurrock, even if the rate per 10,000 remains constant. The 19% predicted growth in the population of children and young people in Thurrock by 2024 compared to 13.3% for England needs to be considered when planning support and placements.

The implementation of the Brighter Futures Strategy aims to provide support earlier and reduce the number of children entering the care system, alongside this is the Families Together Team who work with children and young people aged from 10-17 years and their families to help families learn together safely and learn to overcome difficulties. The investment in these programmes will help to mitigate the likelihood of increasing demand of children becoming looked after due to increased population.

7.2 Age of Children Looked After

The highest percentage of children in care in Thurrock are those aged 10-15 years, this has remained broadly stable over recent years with this age group representing 40.6% of the children in care population as at 31st March 2020.



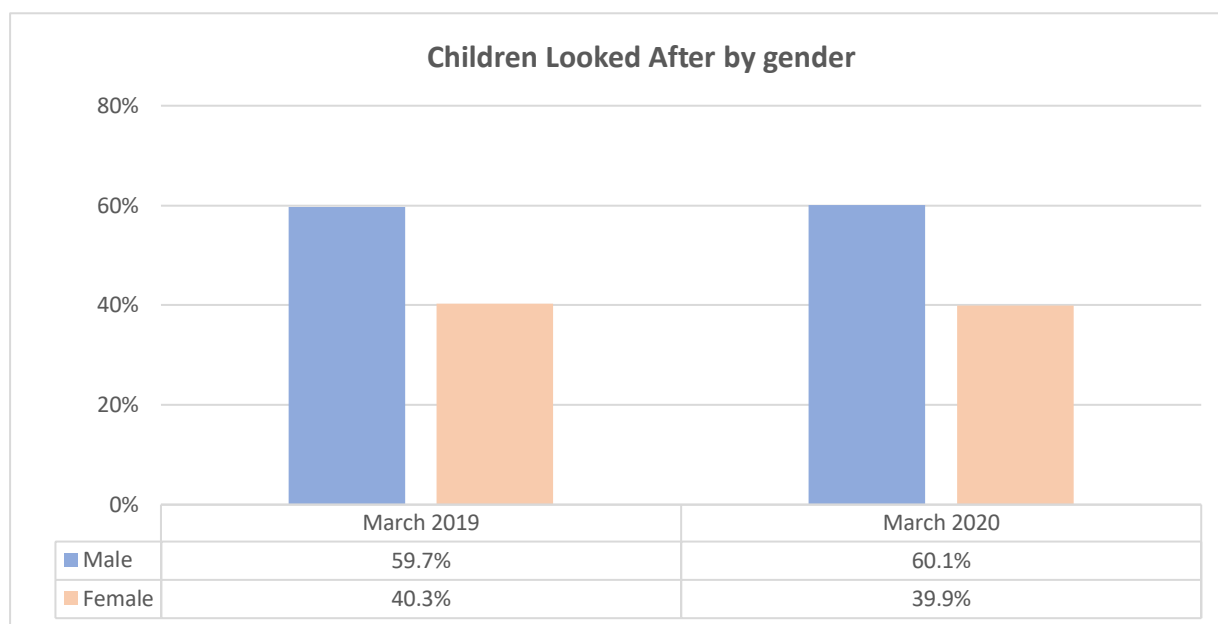
	March 2019	March 2020
Under 1	14	11
Aged 1-4	23	43
Aged 5-9	39	47
Aged 10-15	128	121
Aged 16+	86	76

This data on age breakdown is used in planning services and support. This is particularly important in planning likely demand for Care Leaver support services

including housing and wider support needs. The number of children and young people is monitored to identify the numbers that turn 16 and 18 per month along with those moving into independence, this helps with case load management and the provision of support.

7.3 Gender of Children Looked After

There are a larger number of male Children Looked After than female although the numbers remain broadly similar from 2019 to 2020.

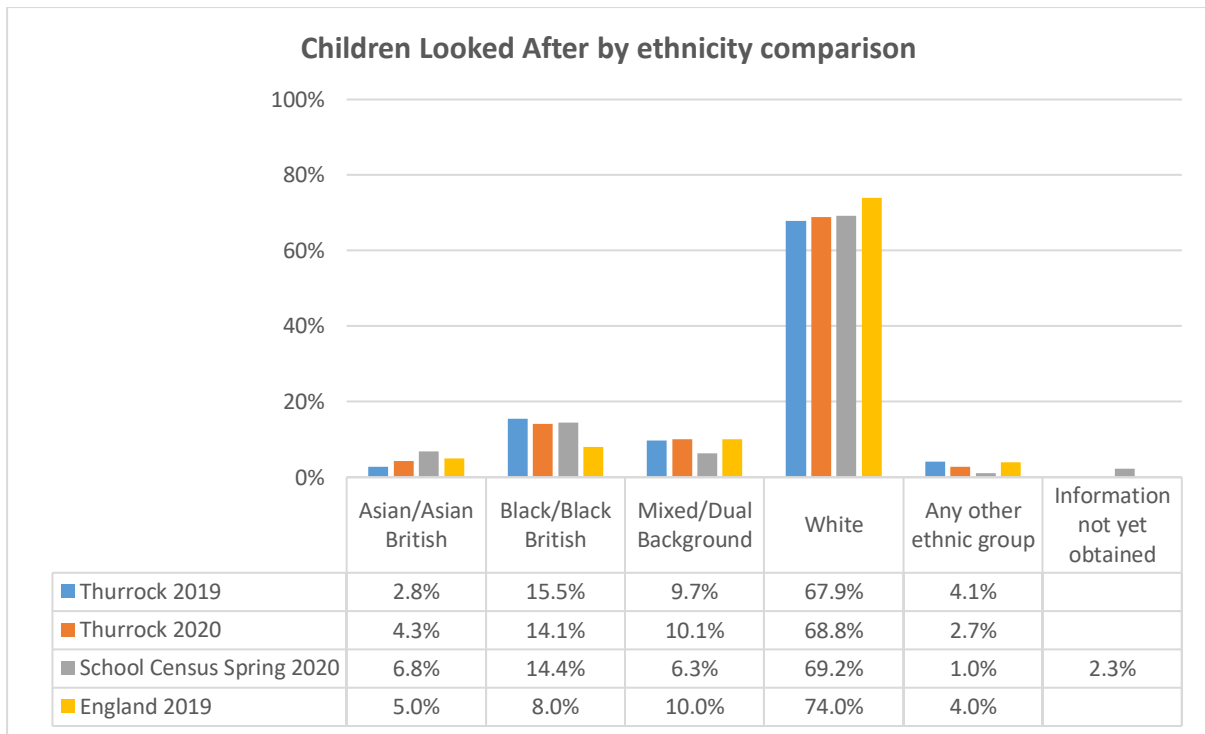


	March 2019	March 2020
Male	173	179
Female	117	119

Male Children Looked After can be more difficult to find suitable placements for and also on average adoption takes longer than for female Children Looked After. We closely monitor this data and assess any increase in risks if the gender breakdown changes.

7.4 Ethnicity Breakdown

The ethnicity of Children Looked After remains broadly similar from the data held in 2019 and as illustrated below, this is broadly similar to the general population of children in Thurrock.



Comparison with England 2019 data shows that a higher percentage of Black/ Black British children are Children Looked After, in Thurrock however this is consistent with the percentage of Black/ Black British children in the general Thurrock population. The percentage of Children Looked After who are of Mixed/ Dual background is slightly higher than the Thurrock general population data however this is in line with the England 2019 trend.

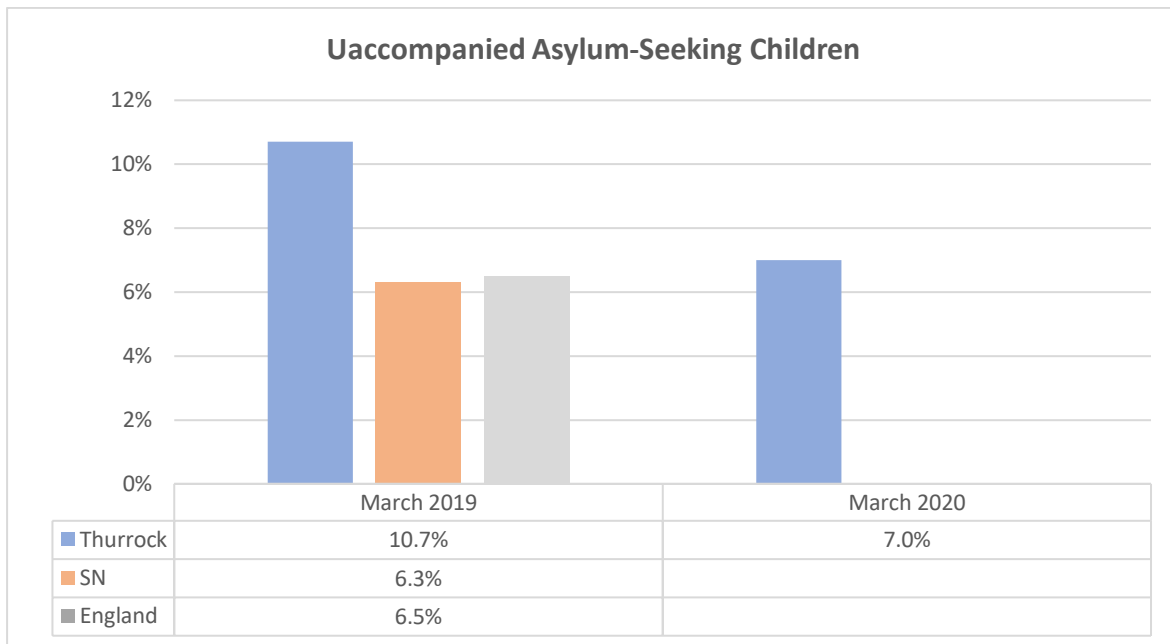
Placement planning addresses the individual diversity needs of children placed and the supervising social workers assist foster carers to ensuring appropriate oversight and supervision is in place. In some situations where a cultural match has not been possible, foster carers' support network (Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Workers, and Independent Visitors) can provide and contribute to the information and care that foster families need to provide appropriate support.

7.5 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

We have reducing numbers of UASC Children Looked After who are 16+ reducing from 25 in 2019 to 16 in 2020. The overall number of UASC has reduced representing 7.0% of our Children Looked After population. At the end of March 2019, the number of UASC was 31 compared to 21 in 2020, the majority of these children are aged 16+.

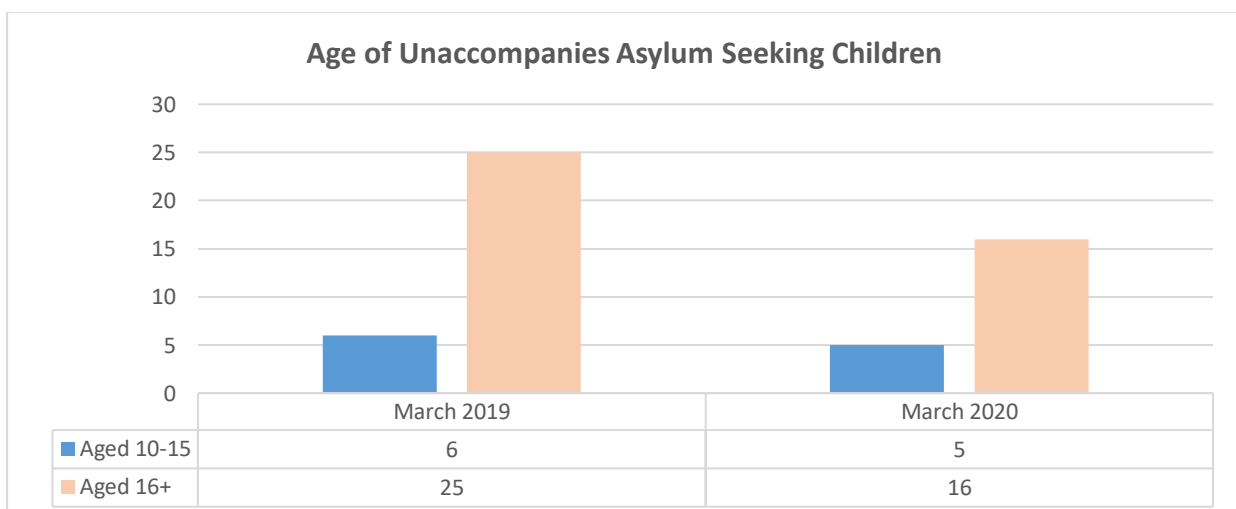
The Eastern Region Transfer Scheme provides a regional response to meeting the accommodation and support needs of UASC, this is not part of a national scheme. Through this we have an allocation of 0.07 as a part of the total cohort of UASC. Locally this translates to 28 children and young people and we continue to

accommodate and receive UASC from the Eastern Region to meet our 0.07 allocation.



	March 2019	March 2020
Thurrock	31	21
SN (2018-19)	26	not available
England (2018-19)	5,070	not available

Number of Children Looked After who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and % of Children Looked After Total.

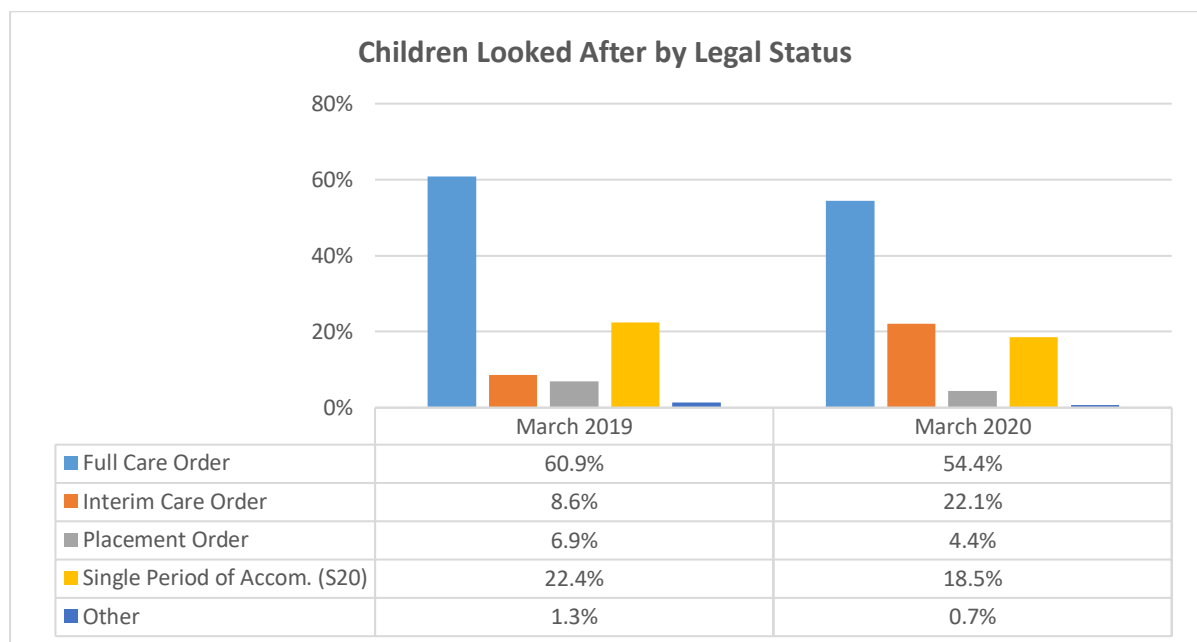


For Care Leavers who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, the Headstart Housing Programme referred to later in this document has increased the availability of local accommodation. This in turn provides improved access to support, training

and employment and access to services. Additional details of the support available are outlines later in this document.

7.6 Legal Status of Children Looked After

As of March 2020 there were 66 of children who were subject to care proceedings. This is an increase on the March 2019 figure of 25. There were 176 number of children who became subject to a Care Order in March 2019 and 162 in March 2020. There is a focus on ensuring the Order reflects the status of a Looked After Child so Placement with Parents Regulations are an exceptional placement, very small numbers of children placed in this way.

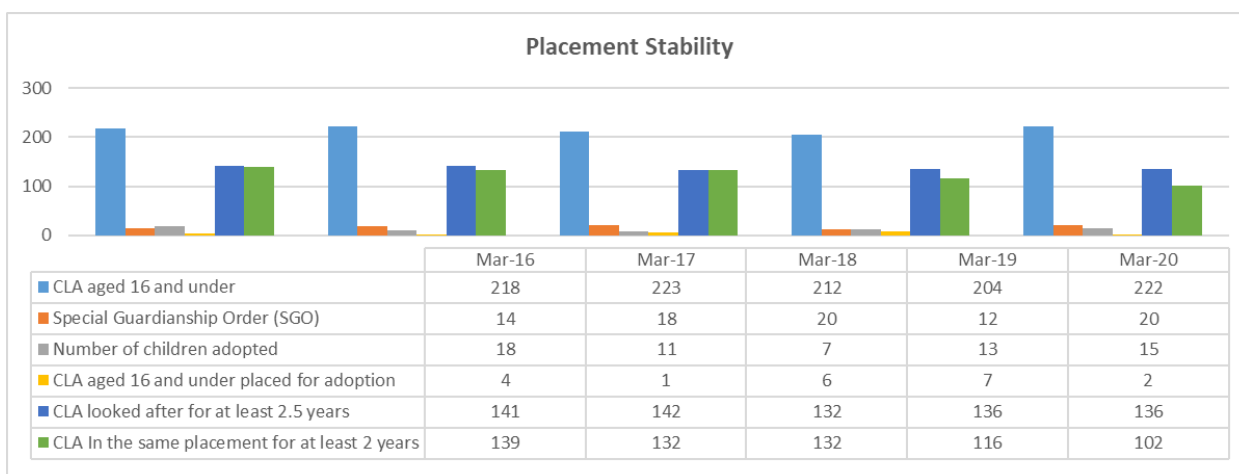


	March 2019	March 2020
Full Care Order	176	162
Interim Care Order	25	66
Placement Order	20	13
Single Period of Accom. (S20)	65	55
Other	4	2

There has been an impact on court proceedings as a result of COVID and this will impact 2020/21 adoption timescales and plans for permanency as Final Hearings have been delayed and proceedings are taking longer than the Public Law Outline of 26 weeks for conclusion.

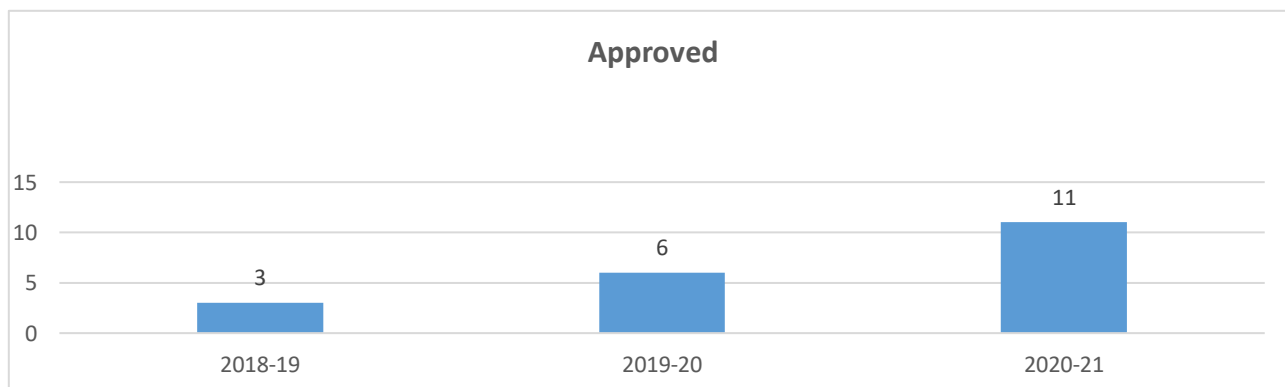
7.7 Placement Stability, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) and Adoption

More children achieved permanency through adoption in 2019-20 in Thurrock and an increased number are identified for 2019-20 with adoption as a potential permanence plan. A total of 15 children were adopted in 2019-20 compared to 13 in 2018/19.

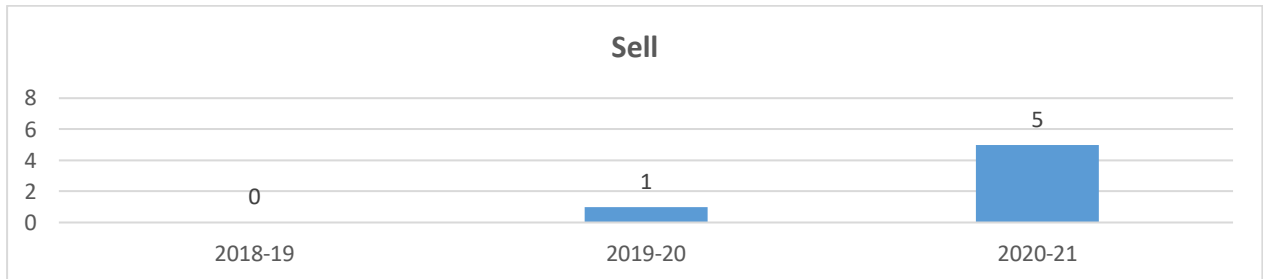


Thurrock Council are part of an alliance with Adopt East. Adopt East is a regional adoption alliance which brings together the professionalism, skills and expertise of eight local authorities and two voluntary adoption agencies from across the East of England.

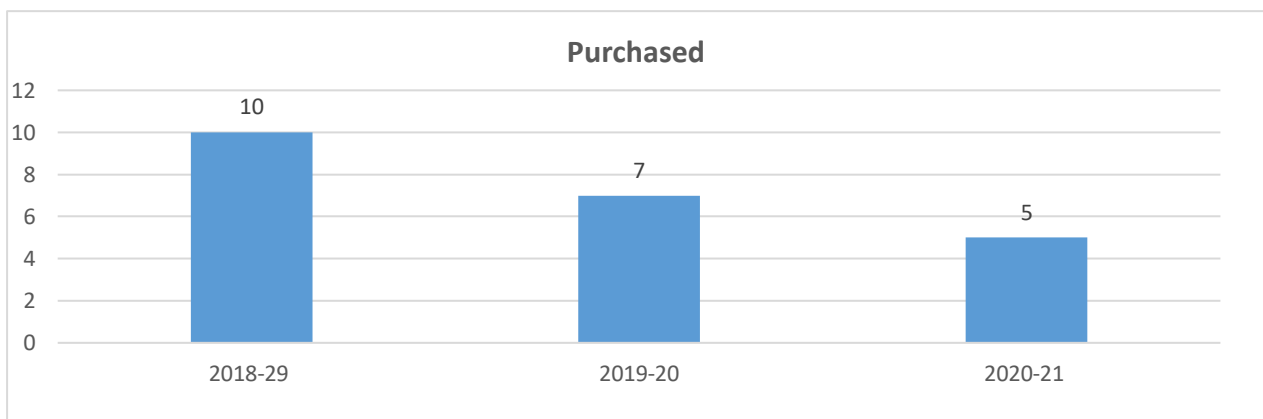
The Adopt East Alliance is committed to delivering the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout our region. We work with families in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Bedford Borough, Adoption Plus, Hertfordshire and Luton. The scale of our organisation means that Thurrock children waiting for adoption have access to a large number of adopters. By working collaboratively, we are able to share best practice avoiding any unnecessary delay. Adoption performance through the in house team is reflected in the data below. There is a positive trend in the number of adopters recruited with 11 in 2020/21, a significant increase from 2018/19 (3) and 2019/20 (6).



In common with many Local Authorities in the region, where we recruit local adopters who may not want/ be suitable to adopt local children we are able to transfer these or 'sell' to other Local Authorities in recognition of the costs we have incurred in approving them as adopters. We also purchase adopters to support the matching process and increase adoptions. This data is shown below, costs vary due to many factors such as the needs of the child, number of siblings, and ages of the children.



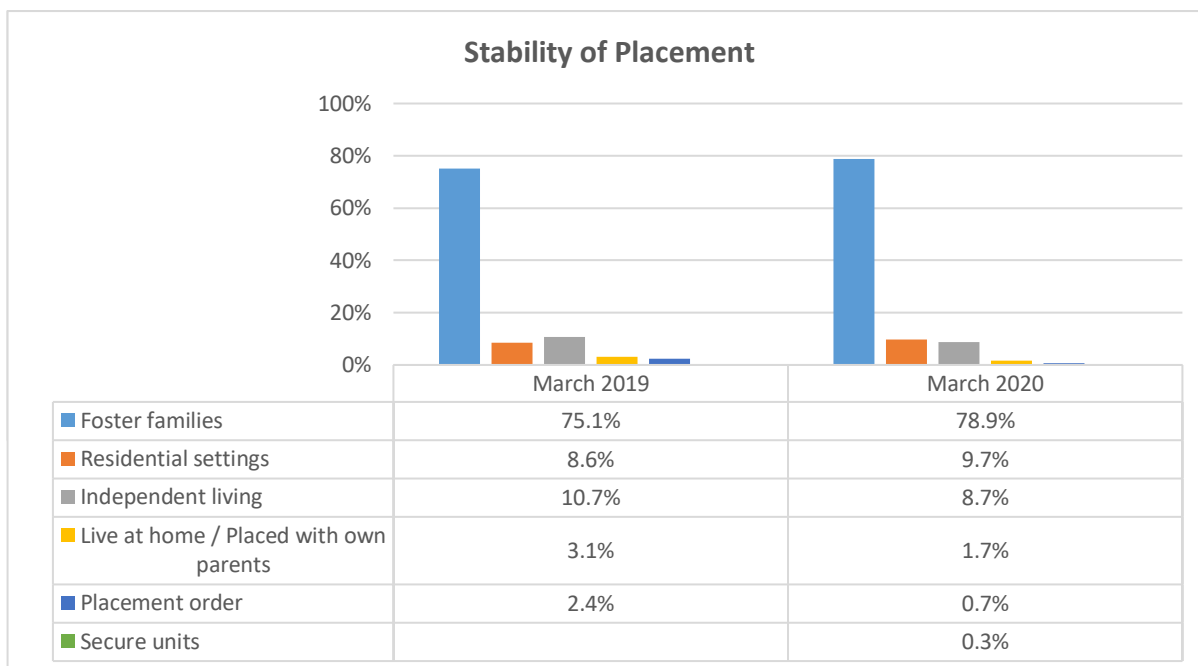
How many adopters we have purchased in the last 3 financial years. How much this has cost in 2020/21 we have also developed the Fostering to adopt programme and have an initial 3 cases that have resulted in adoption.



In 2020/21 we have also developed the Fostering to Adopt Programme and have an initial 3 cases that have resulted in adoption.

7.8 Placement Stability

Although it is sometimes necessary to move a child to provide them with a better placement our aim is to minimise the number of times each child changes placement as this can be very disruptive, we describe this as achieving permanence for that child. To achieve permanence it is essential that all our teams work effectively together to support each placement. Permanence can be achieved in a number of ways, including adoption, Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or matched for long term fostering. Each of these options gives the chance for the child to achieve stability and achieve their potential. We know that placement stability is an important factor in how well our Children Looked After are doing, the performance on placement stability is shown below.



	March 2019	March 2020
Foster families	218	235
Residential settings	25	29
Independent living	31	26
Live at home / Placed with own parents	9	5
Placement order	7	2
Secure units		1

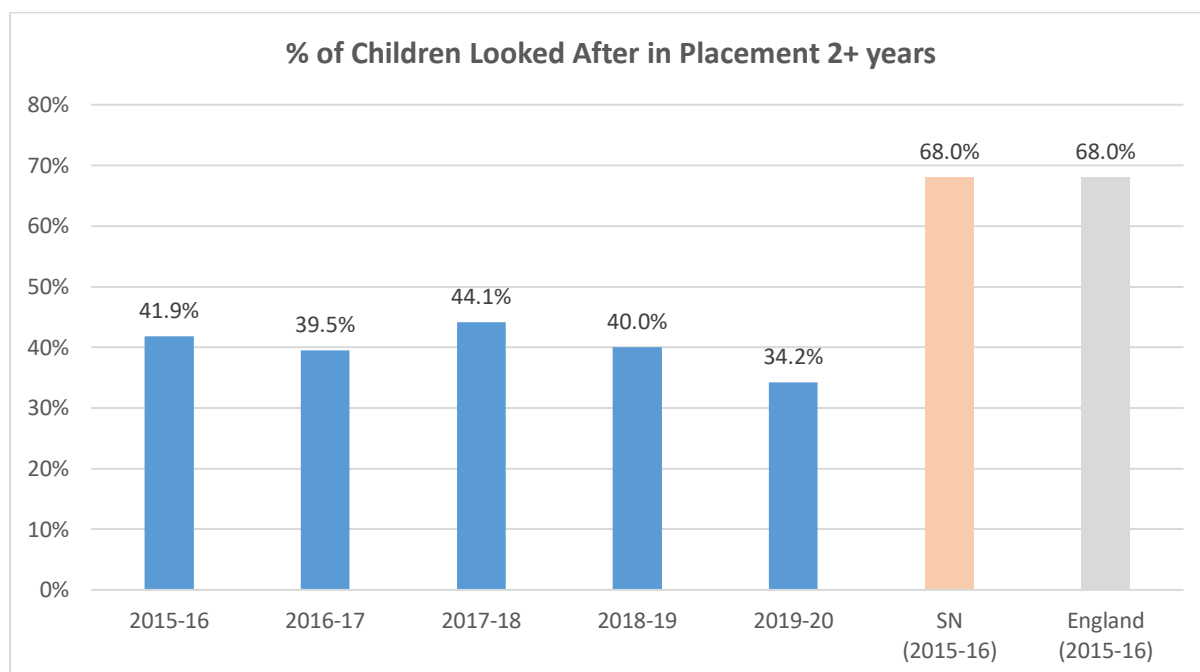
The performance across the factors shown in the chart above has remained relatively stable and maintaining and improving this is a priority.

In addition, a key measure of placement stability is also the percentage of children with three or more moves in a year. Thurrock's performance over recent years has been improving and in 2018/19 (the most recent published data) performance was better than national and our statistical neighbours. A part of achieving this is based on the quality of providers in place, the increase in in house-foster carers and the activity in recent years to set local standards and encourage providers on to the framework through the select list is a part of this.

The chart below provides a comparison of the 3 or more placements data with our statistical neighbours and national (latest published data). There has been a significant improvement over recent years, this is routinely monitored.

The percentage of Children Looked After who have been in a placement for 2 + years has reduced in recent years as permanency planning has been further developed. Thurrock has significantly lower numbers than our statistical neighbours and England data.

The chart below gives an indication of how long current Children Looked After have been in their placement and is used in permanency planning and placement stability.



	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Thurrock	139	132	132	116	102

8.0 Educational Attainment of Children Looked After

There are also strong indications that placement stability is also a factor in the educational attainment of Children Looked After, whilst the factors that determine this are too diverse to measure at a child level there are some key performance indicators that provide the direction of travel. These are outlined below.

The Head Teacher of the Virtual School ensures that Children who are Looked After have access to education and works closely with the Social Work teams and other professionals. They hold and publish a range of data on attainment however for the purposes of this document we are reporting on two of the key stages. School attendance data is also shown below.

School Attendance 2019	
Average attendance CLA	96.9%
All Thurrock Children Attendance	94.9%

Key Stage 2

The combined reading, writing and maths scores remain consistent with 50% of Children Looked After achieving the expected levels in 2019 and 2018. This

compares with the national level of 35% in 2018 and 37% in 2019. The comparison with all Thurrock children is shown in the table below.

2019 Key Stage 2 Exam Analysis: 12+ months in care	Thurrock CLA	Thurrock ALL	National CLA	National ALL	National Disadvantaged	National Non - Disadvantaged
Reading, Writing & Maths combined %	50%	70%	37%	64.9 %	51%	71%

Key Stage 4

The 2019 KS4 Attainment 8 Score for Thurrock Children Looked After was 23.20 compared to a national Children Looked After score of 17.9. For Thurrock Children Looked After, this is an improvement from the 2018 score of 19.7.

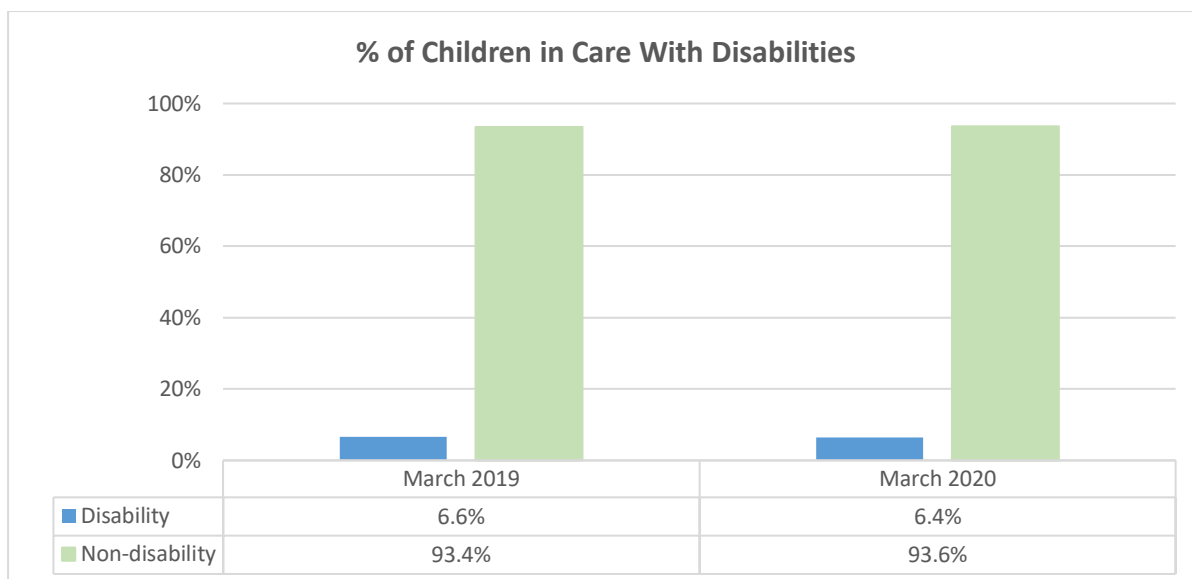
The 2019 KS4 Progress 8 Score for Thurrock Children Looked After was -1.09 compared to a national Children Looked After score of -1.47. For Thurrock Children Looked After, this is an improvement from the 2018 score of -1.42

The chart below shows the 2019 data, including a comparison with all Thurrock children.

2019 Key Stage 4 Exam Analysis: 12+ months	Thurrock CLA	Thurrock ALL	National CLA	National ALL	National Disadvantaged	National Non – Disadvantaged
Attainment 8 Score	23.20	42.90	17.90	44.80	36.80	50.50
Progress 8	-1.09	-0.10	-1.47	-0.08	-0.45	0.13

9.0 Children in Care with Disabilities

6.4% of our Children Looked After as at the end of March 2020 had a disability as defined by the Children Act 1989 (Section 17 Part 11), this number remains broadly static against previous years although there has been a slight reduction in recent months and this will be reflected in the next published data. Although this group make up a comparatively small proportion of the wider cohort of Children Looked After, they usually have complex needs and so it is essential that we can provide placements, which are able to meet their needs and provide them with the support they need to thrive. The specialist nature of the care needs of this group, the national shortage of provision and the need for an effective transition to Adult Services where appropriate make this a key group to consider with regards to planning of provision.



	March 2019	March 2020
With disability	19	19
No disability	271	279

10.0 Transition to Adult Services

Transition is complex as young people move from Children’s Services into adult provision and it is important that those involved in support work closely together to reduce concerns about the change from children’s to adult provision. Support across Adult Social Care Services is offered in a number of different ways guided by the Care Act 2014, ranging from support and advice, early intervention and prevention to delivery of support to meet complex needs. Most young people who utilise adult services will be those who have complex challenges such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health challenges. A Preparing for Adulthood Strategy has been written to support young people and their families and an implementation plan for this strategy will be developed in partnership with young people, their families, education, health, social care and the wider community. We want to ensure that young people are placed at the heart of our Better Care Together Agenda which focuses on community, place, strengths and integrated approaches. We have identified within our Market Development Strategy that there will be a steady increase in the numbers of people between 18 to 65 who will have learning disabilities and autism and as such our planning for future supports reflects this.

11.0 Care Leavers

The definition of Care Leavers includes young people who have left care post 18 but also children who have not left care but have become eligible for support post the age of 18.

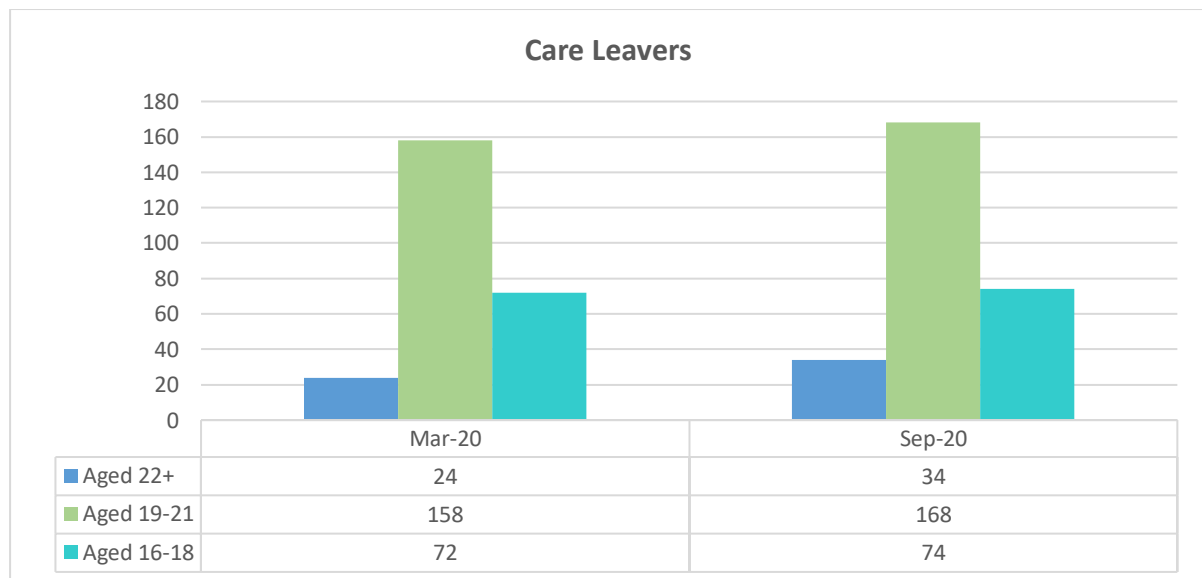
Eligible children within the meaning given by paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989. Eligible children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been

Looked After for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still being Looked After.

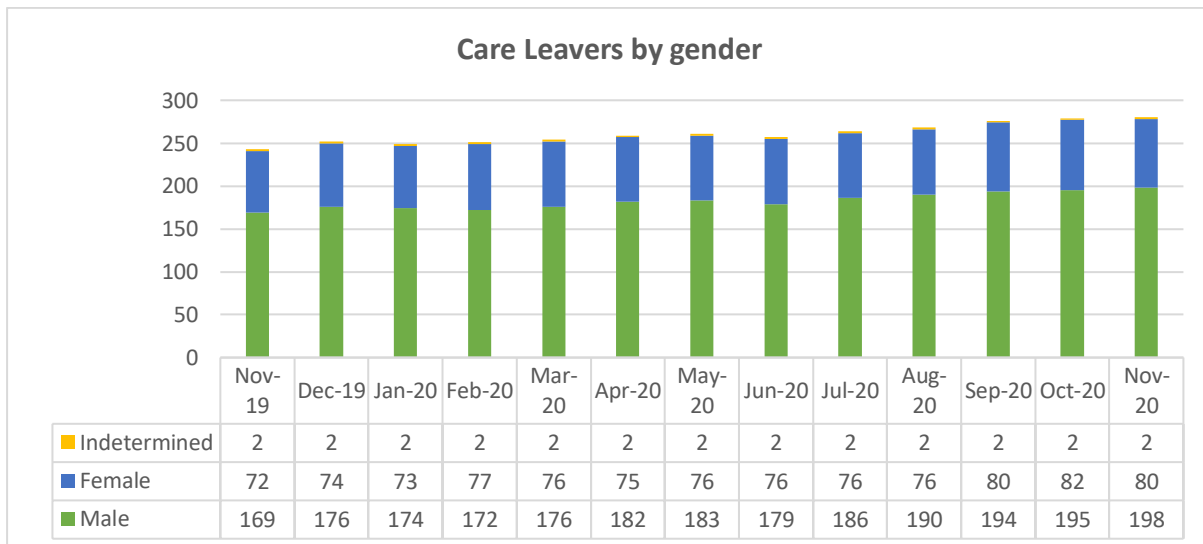
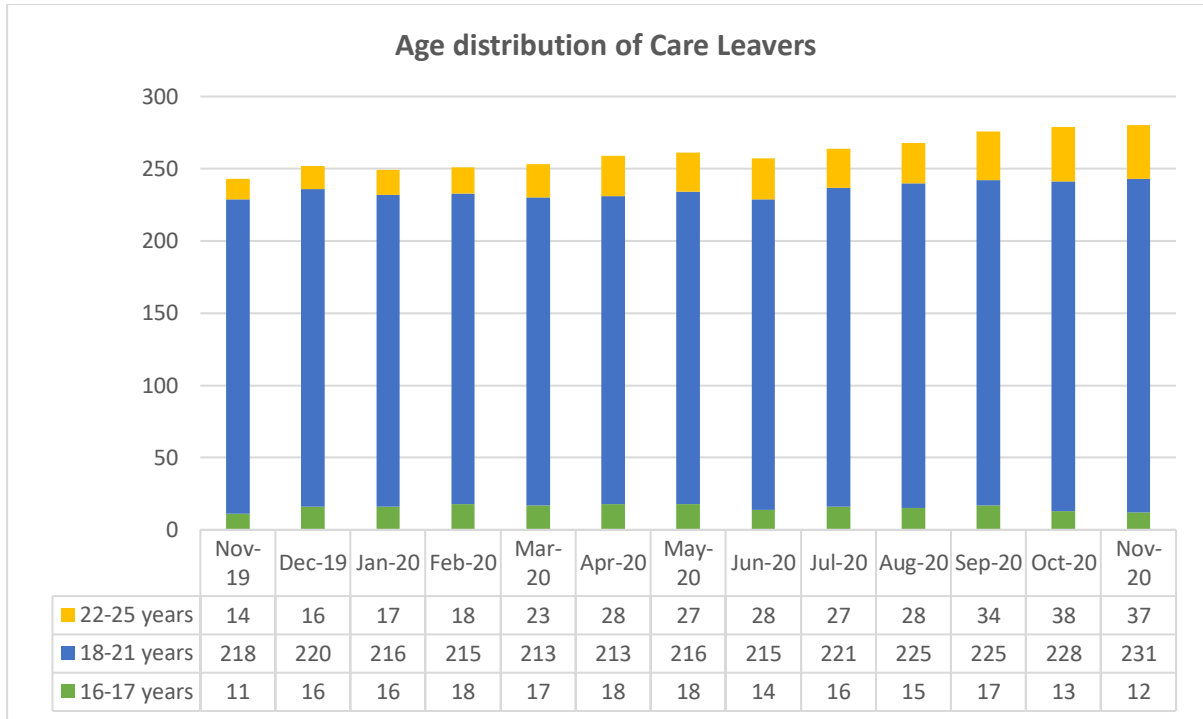
Relevant children within the meaning given by section 23A(2) of the Children Act are children who are not being Looked After by a Local Authority, but was, before last ceasing to be Looked After, an eligible child, and is aged 16 or 17.

Former relevant persons within the meaning given by Section 23C (1) of the Children Act 1989 are young people aged between 18-25 who have been either eligible or relevant children or both.

As at the end of March 2020, 276 Care Leavers, including those 16-18 being supported, were receiving an Aftercare Service, this is a slight increase from March 2019 but this is largely dependent on the age of children in care.



Getting the right support for Care Leavers is a priority for Thurrock as this supports transition into adulthood. A number of interlinked projects have already commenced that bring together partners such as Housing, Adult Services and Children’s Services to identify and meet support needs and find housing solutions locally. The data below aids the planning of this as we can see that the number of 22-25 year olds increased in recent years and this will impact particularly on providing support for the move to independent living for this cohort.

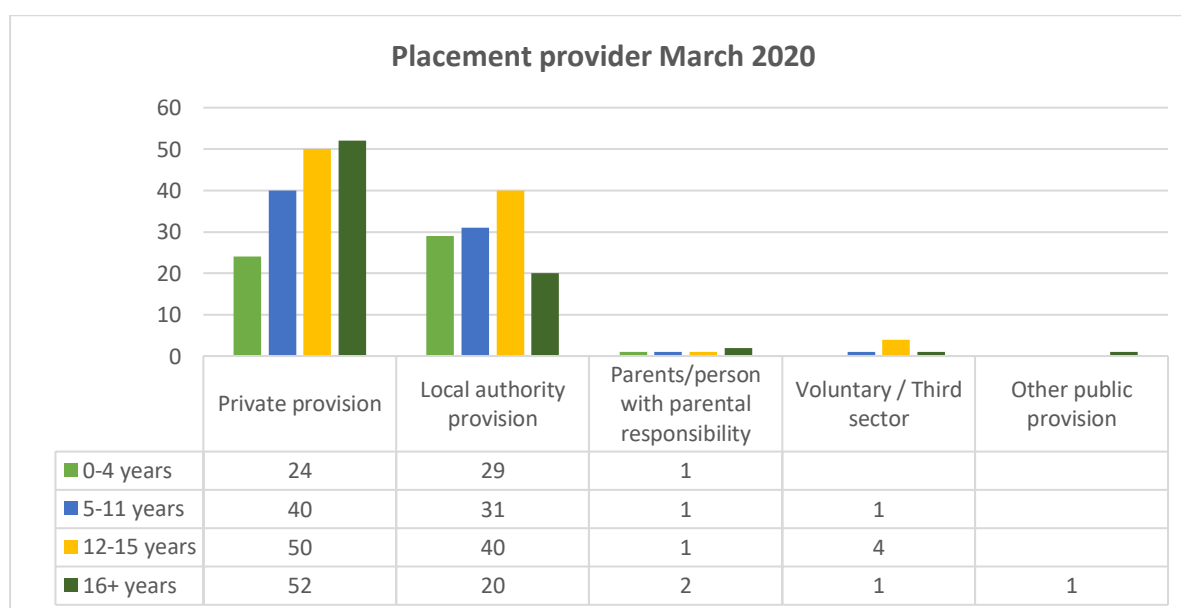
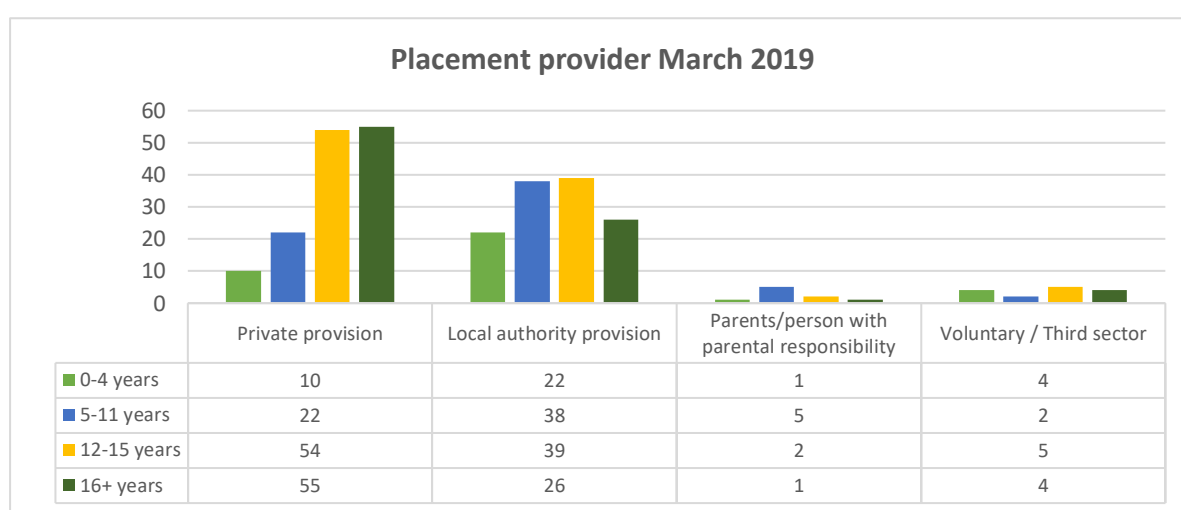


The high percentage of Children Looked After aged 10-15 years means that demand for Aftercare services is likely to remain high and due to the increasing local population this may increase over the coming years. A profile of when Care Leavers aged 16-17 years turn 18 is shown below for the period January 2021 to March 2022. This only provides an estimate due to other factors but is useful in managing support needs.

Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2

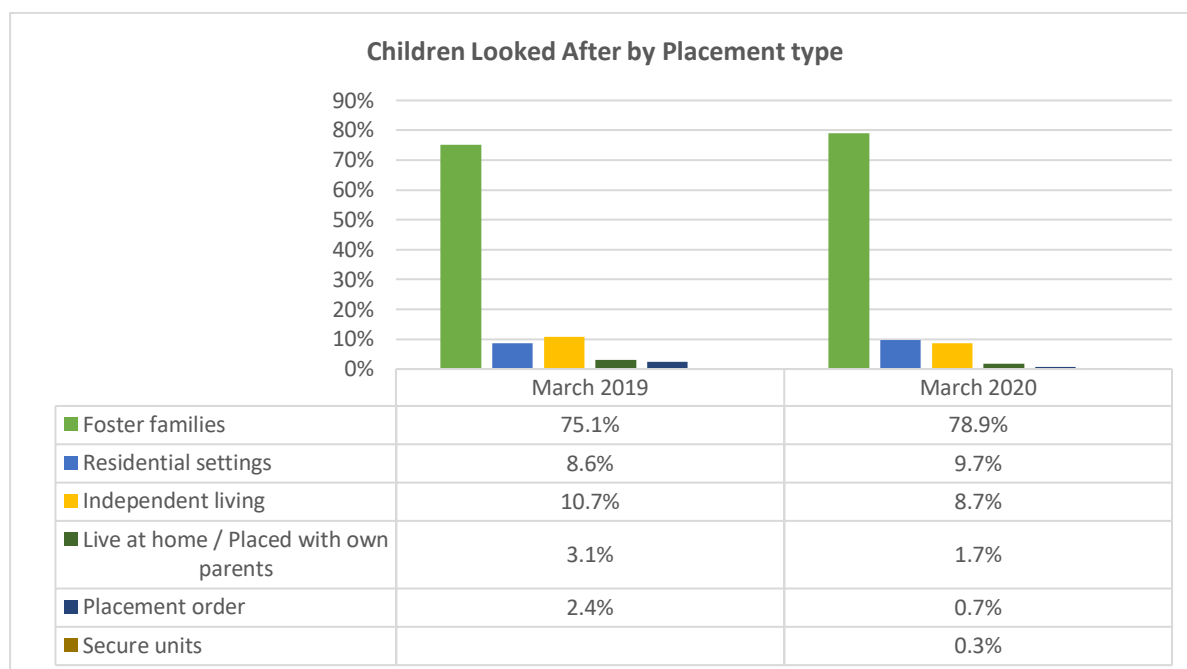
12.0 Placement Availability

As of March 2019 there were 218 of children in fostering households; 119 of which were IFA and 99 of which were in house. In March 2020 the number of children in fostering households was 235 and 117 were IFA and 118 were in house. In 2020-21 and 2021-2022 if the numbers of Children Looked After remain at 298 (as of March 2020), an increased fostering recruitment campaign would seek to increase fostering capacity by approximately 20 households and reduce the number of children placed over 20 miles from Thurrock and in other types of placement by at least 20 Children Looked After. The Thurrock placement need is focussed on the recruitment of fostering households that will be able to manage sibling groups locally as this is currently where we often have difficulty securing a local placement.



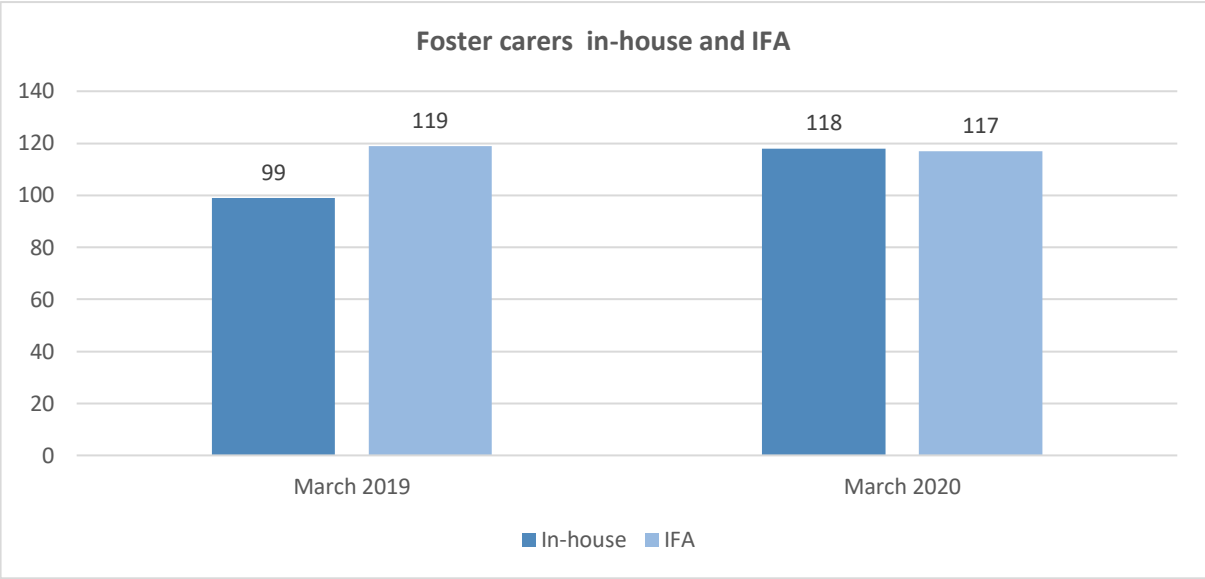
The majority of Children Looked After (78.9%) have a placement in a foster care setting, this is a slight increase from 2019 (75.1%). These placements are provided through In-house foster placements and placements through commissioned

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and breakdown of fostering placements is also provided.



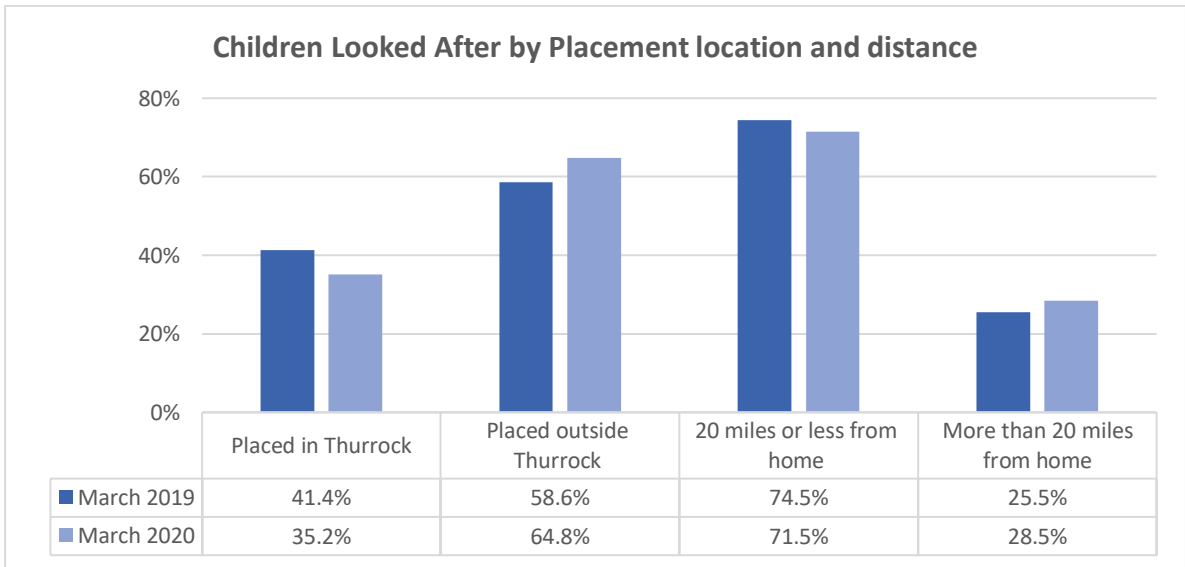
	March 2019	March 2020
Foster families	218	235
Residential settings	25	29
Independent living	31	26
Live at home / Placed with own parents	9	5
Placement order	7	2
Secure units		1

A further breakdown of the fostering placements is shown below. The increasing number of in-house foster carers reflects the recruitment activity the team have been undertaking. This supports the provision of local placements and value for money. IFA placements are recruited through the select list provision of which there is still a need however the offer of local provision that meets individual needs has priority over carers further away.



Thurrock operates a select list and annually invites providers to become a part of that framework. This has led to the development of a Thurrock specific contract that better meets the needs of children and young people in the borough. There are currently 13 Semi Independent providers, 7 Residential providers and 19 Independent Foster Agencies as a part of the framework. Placements are made under the framework where possible but where this is not possible, usually due to the need for specialist or emergency placements then they are spot purchased.

The nature of the residential care market has resulted in a lower number of this type of placement on the select list. This is replicated in Local Authorities across the Country; the majority of residential placements are spot purchased for individual children however the same terms and conditions apply regardless of the contract type. It remains a priority to recruit high quality placement types, suitable to individual needs as close to the local authority as is practicable.



	March 2019	March 2020
Placed in Thurrock	120	105
Placed outside Thurrock	170	193
20 miles or less from home	216	213
More than 20 miles from home	74	85

There is a recognition that there is a slight decrease in the numbers of Children Looked After who are placed both within the Borough and within 20 miles of their home. As at end March 2020, 71.5% of children and young people are placed within a 20 mile radius of their home compared to 74.5% in 2019 and 79.3% in 2018. The geographical size of Thurrock means that those children not placed in the Borough are generally in neighbouring or nearby authorities such as Essex, Southend, London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

Placements over 30 miles tend to be of a specialist nature where there are few providers available to meet specific needs. The children who are placed in residential care have specialist needs and are unable to settle within a foster family environment. They generally have extensive trauma histories and foster families can be challenged with the presenting needs of these children. Residential care offers safe care to some older adolescence who can be subject to grooming from gangs and experience exploitation.

The renewed Thurrock fostering campaign with the additional benefits for Thurrock foster carers to receive council tax rebate will support the focus on local recruitment of carers so children can remain within their communities. This assists with the continuity of school and support ensuring links to families and environment. We are hoping that an inclusive and diverse approach to the fostering recruitment will also assist in placing children within culturally matched placements and offer familiarity with family customs and placement within familiar communities.

We now have one standard Thurrock Select List. Individual/ spot purchases will only be utilised if a placement cannot be found from the Select List, and in these cases will still be subject to a standardised set of contract terms and conditions.

The exception to this is the limited number of Special Educational Needs placements made with Residential Non-maintained Special Schools and Colleges where the National Contract is used. Thurrock is also a part of the Children's Cross Regional Arrangements Group, this brings a collective approach to monitoring and fee negotiation to those providers who are members.

13.0 Accommodation for Care Leavers and Vulnerable Young People

The majority of Children Looked After are supported by the Aftercare Team on turning 18. At the end of September 2020, 276 Care Leavers were receiving an Aftercare service. Working closely with the Aftercare team, Headstart Housing provides transitional accommodation whilst young people develop the independence skills required to manage social housing. Now managing a portfolio of 114 beds, including

42 supported by key workers, the service provides a tailored approach to support young people to develop. The portfolio includes:

Homelessness: A joint project between Children's services and Housing is in place to offer accommodation for young people who meet the relevant criteria. For young people, this consists of:	
Hostel 1	5 beds primarily for young people aged 16/17 years who have declared themselves homeless and are assessed by Housing as being so. Mediation support is also offered to try to support the young person to return home. If rooms are empty they can be used as emergency supported accommodation while a suitable placement is found.
Hostel 2	9 beds available to Headstart Housing/ Aftercare for former Children Looked After aged 17-25 years. Support is provided to a maximum of 25 hours per week and is allocated based on individual needs.
Young Parents Support Project: This project provides accommodation and parental support	
Accommodation and Support across 2 hostels	For 20 young women plus support for a further 5 women aged 16-25 who are pregnant or who have children under 5. The project is open to Thurrock residents and any current or former Thurrock Council Child Looked After.
Move on flats	2 flats housing 4 young families
Other Accommodation for Care Leavers Where Appropriate	
Local accommodation	A mix of Council housing stock and the use of private landlords

There remains a shortage of:

- Post 18 low need 24/7 Supported Accommodation
- Post 18 medium / high need CQC Registered accommodation
- Floating support for Care Leavers aged 18-25 years old.

Joint working has already commenced across Children's, Adults, Housing and Public Health to integrate commissioning and identify opportunities to better use existing funding.

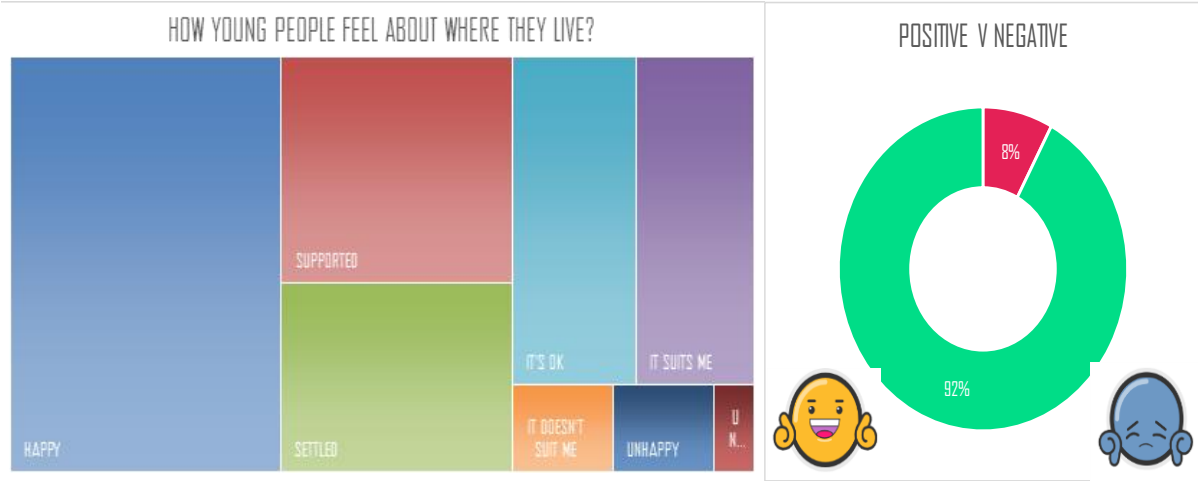
14.0 How Children Looked After and Care Leavers Feel About Where They Live

The following diagrams summarise how children and young people who are Looked After feel about where they live and their local area, they were gathered by the Participation and Engagement Team. It is broken down to show the different age groups and the individual aspects of their responses. We can see that 92% feel positive about where they live and 86% feel positive about their local area. In addition the majority of children in each age group say they feel safe where they live.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

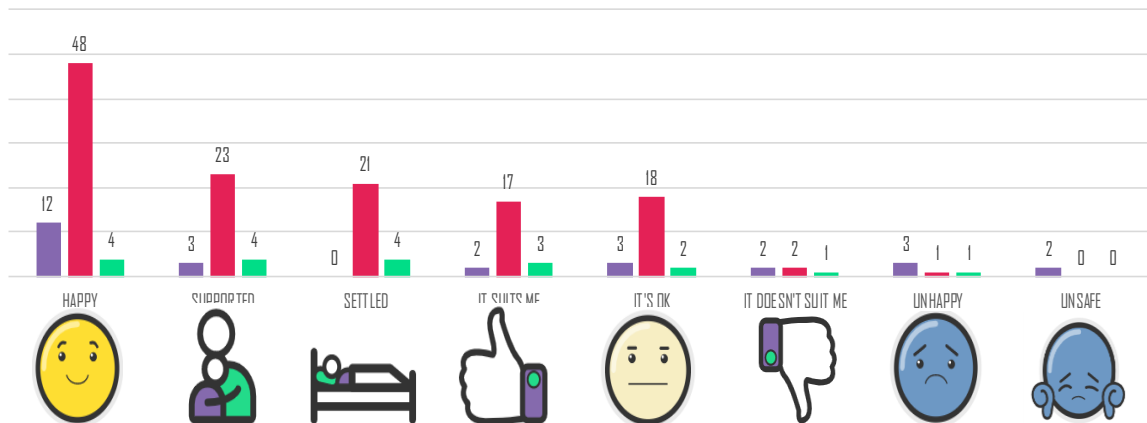
OVERALL

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES 108



HOW YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVE

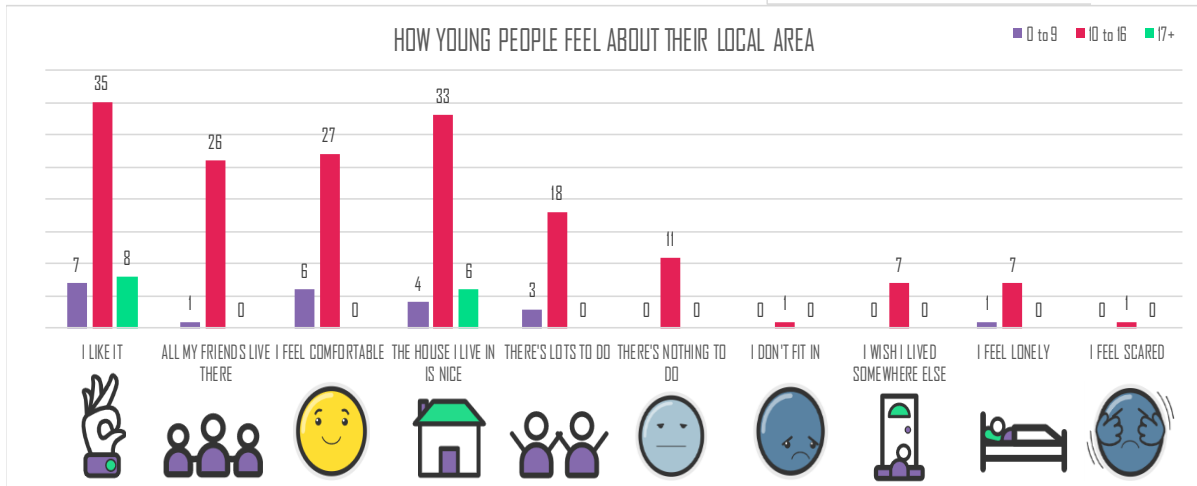
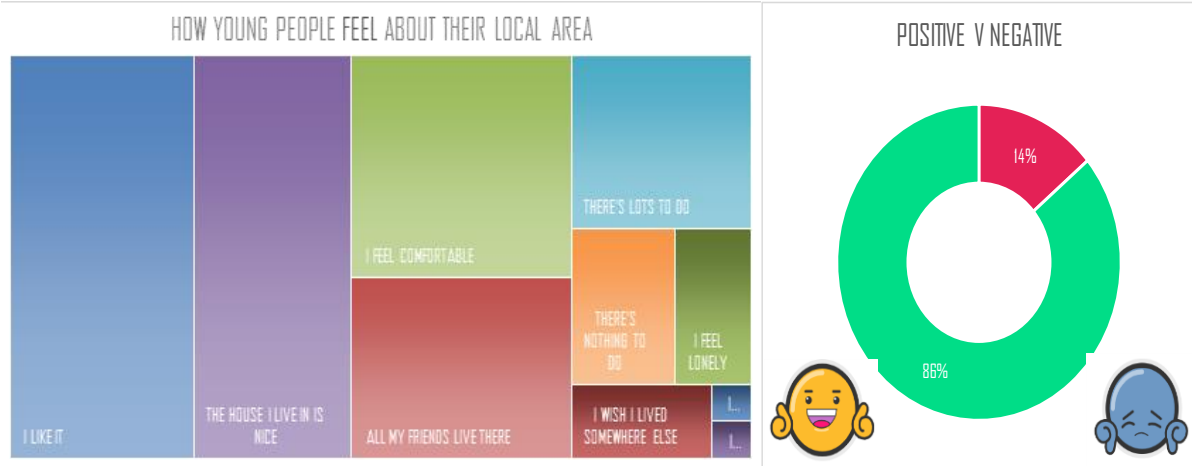
0 to 9 10 to 16 17+



HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR LOCAL AREA?

OVERALL

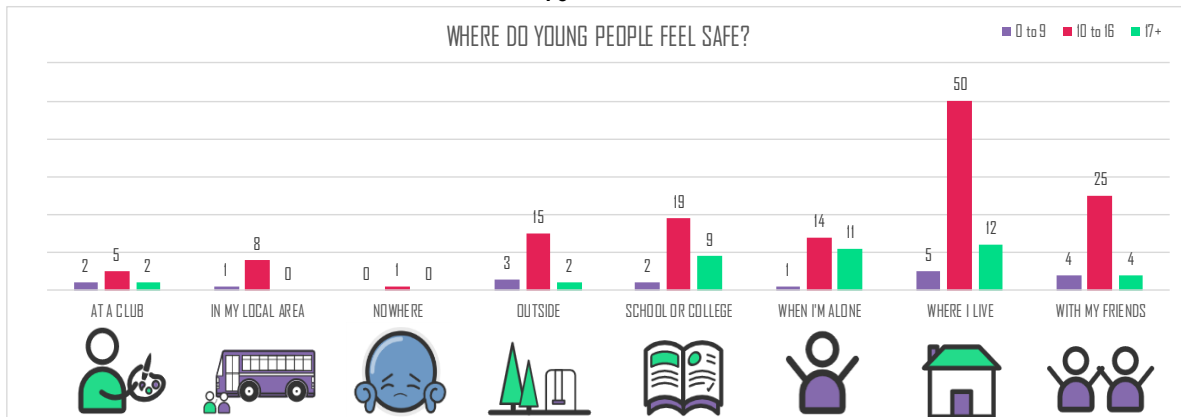
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES 77



WHERE DO YOU FEEL SAFE?

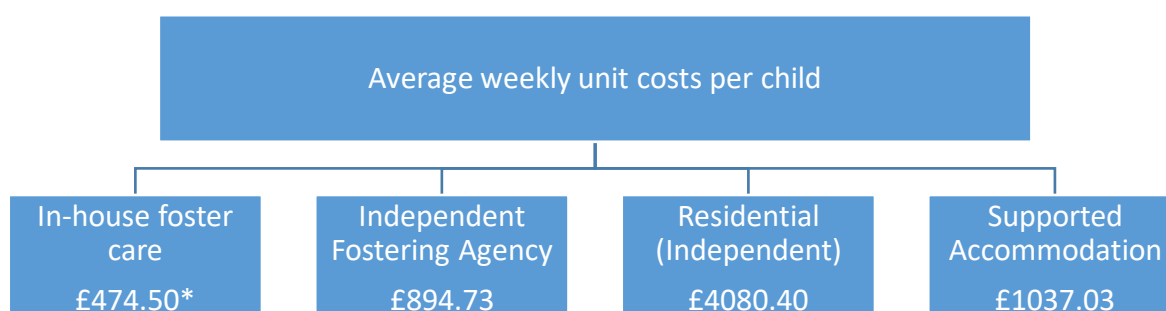
OVERALL

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES 76



15.0 Placement Costs

Provided below is the average weekly unit cost per child in each different placement type. These costs will vary based on the needs of the child and the placement type required with significant variations between the minimum and maximum cost, especially for placements out of area. This breakdown is designed to provide an overview.



In house foster placements provide the most cost efficient placement type* (support costs are met in house) and are generally provided locally, these are followed by Independent Foster Agency placements. We always seek to place children in foster care where possible with priority given, subject to the child's need, to placements within a 20 mile radius, the next level of priority is to those providers who are a part of the Select List/ framework. To support to use of foster care we have the local in house recruitment drive along with the annual select list to support an increase in Independent Foster Agencies. Residential care is only used for specialist or emergency use. The cost of all placements are based against a framework of costs dependent on the level of need. Whilst it is recognised that costs will be dependent on the need and availability a pricing framework is used regardless of if the placement is from a framework or spot purchased. It remains a priority to reduce placement costs whilst maintaining the right level of care for children and young people.

There is limited comparator data available for the last 12 months however a report 'Price Trends and Costs of Children's Homes – February 2020' indicates that the average weekly cost for an education inclusive residential placement is £3,970 which is broadly similar to the rate we currently pay. It remains a priority for us to achieve value for money and the Commissioning team work on placement costs will be ongoing.

16.0 Gap Analysis

The development of the Brighter Futures commissioned parenting offer should focus on the reduction of 10-15 year olds entering the care system by ensuring there is a clear pathway from the Children's Centre support offered into other forms of support.

Edge of care support for 10-15 year olds particularly must remain a focus as this is the consistently the largest cohort of Children Looked After.

The high levels of Care Leavers combined with the cohort of 10-15 year olds who will become Care Leavers in the coming years means that there is a risk of a shortage of post 18 accommodation in the local area, this should be a focus for development through the existing programmes.

Post 18 support has been identified as a priority through a number of areas of work along with the joint programme of commissioning to meet the increasing levels and complexity of needs. These programmes should continue to align to reduce duplication and maximise the use of resources.

Permanence remains a priority for Thurrock Children Looked After, adoption numbers are increasing however this must remain a focus to meet the demand for adoption permanency.

Whilst the Children Looked After number is lower than our statistical neighbours, the local projected population growth particularly of children means that even if our rate per 10k remains the same we are likely to see an increase in the number of Children Looked After. The development of in-house foster carers is important as these carers often allow for local placements. The recruitment activity should be matched to any % population growth and also provide opportunities for local placements for sibling groups.

We need a range of providers to meet different placement needs, currently there is a shortage of residential and IFA's providers locally who are part of the select list. Market development activity should aim to increase this when the Framework opens annually.

The majority of residential placements are more than 20 miles from Thurrock, we must work with providers based closer to Thurrock to address this.

The number of Children Looked After who experience 3 or more moves in a year should continue to be a focus, the placement development work will support this.

The costs per placement vary significantly, there is a need for improved step down processes and fee negotiation to achieve value for money to allow us to invest more of our budget in supporting our children who are looked after.

17.0 Key Priorities

Across all of the services we deliver, we seek to make sure that all decisions are centred on the views and needs of the child. We also aim to make sure that our time is focussed on achieving the right outcomes for our children who are looked after to achieve these aims.

Placement type and the age of our children in care population have recently been relatively constant. The numbers of children in care have decreased in line with our

statistical neighbours but are predicted to increase as the local population does. If we are to achieve the best outcomes for all these children we need to ensure that all our placement services are fit for purpose and continue to grow and develop.

There are six main strands to our strategy, these are a continuation of the work developed in recent years:

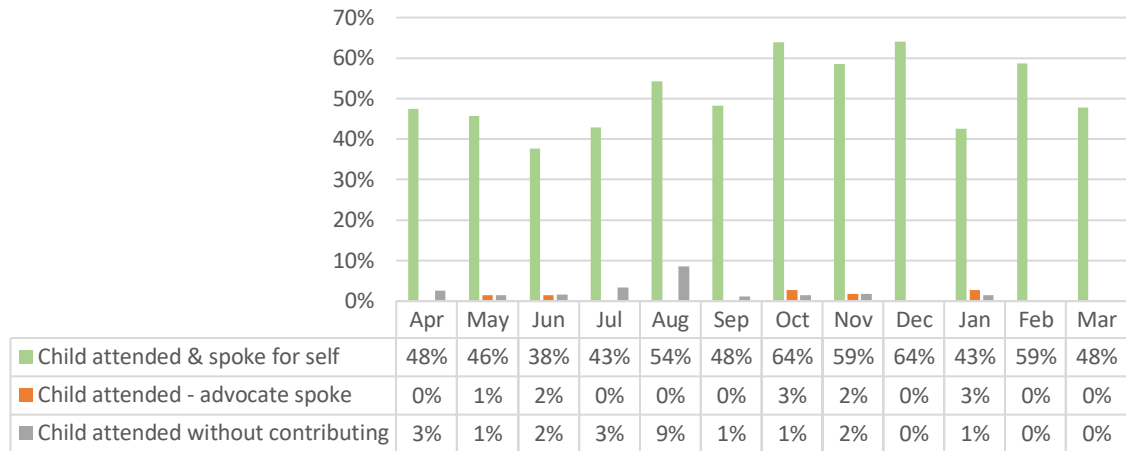


Priority 1: The voice of children and young people is at the heart of planning.

We feel it is of importance to listen to our children and young people and this measured in a number of ways including:

- Children and young people are able to comment on their placement through the engagement of the Participation and Engagement Team
- Children and young people report that they feel happy where they live

Percentage of children participating in CLA reviews between April 2019 and March 2020



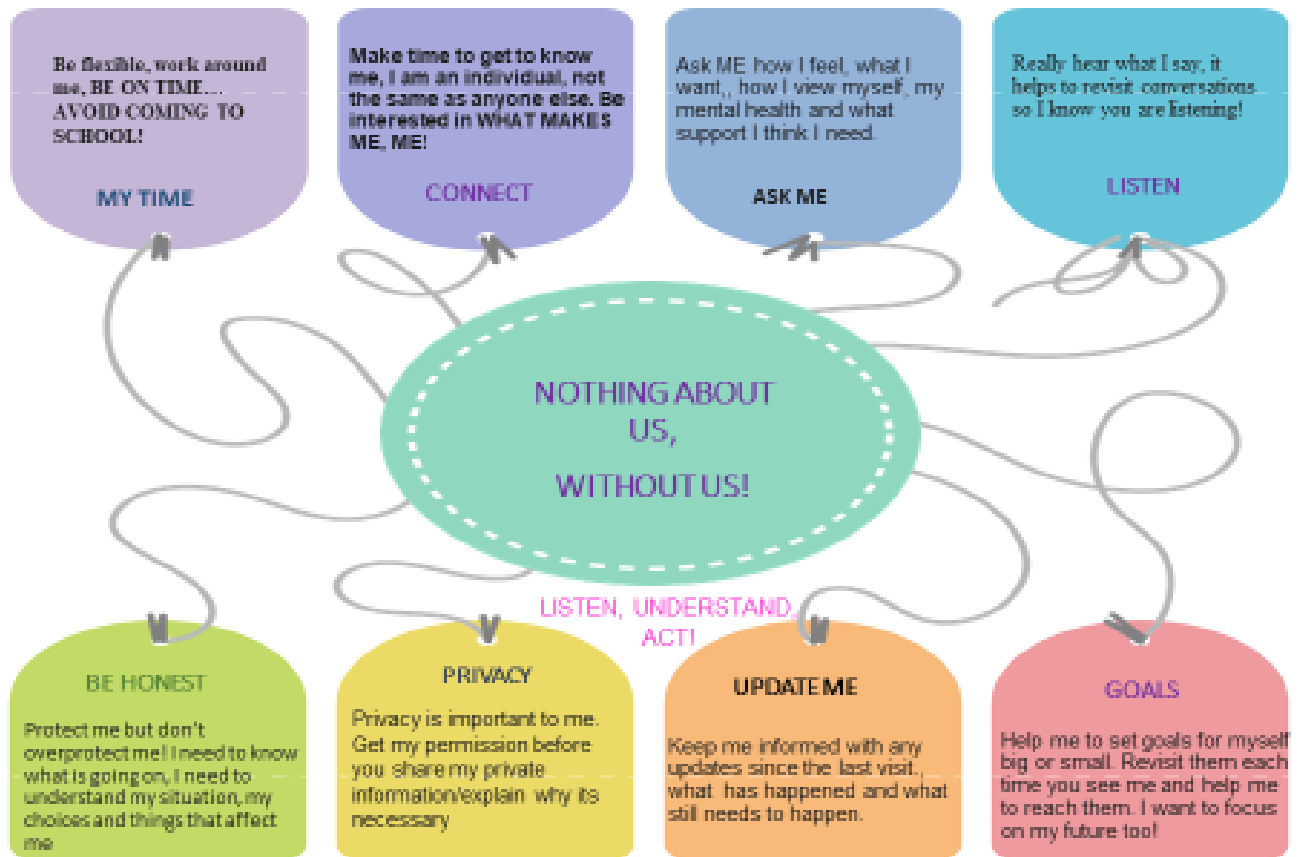
The Mind of My Own App is one of the ways children and young people can feedback how they feel about their placement, the following comments were taken from the feedback when asked how they felt/ what they liked:

- Enthusiastic
- Get on well
- Safe, happy, part of the family
- School
- Computer access, hobbies, activities
- Personal space
- Excited
- Enjoy time together, they are good at listening
- I talk to them if I am worried, they care about me
- Calm
- The other kids, food, money, friends, school, Wi-Fi
- Safe
- Safe and settled
- Its ok, part of the family

When asked about the things we could do better, children and young people feedback the following comments below:



Young Voices



Next steps

- To create a culture of listening to children and young people and hearing back from them about the services they receive and improving our relationships with them.
- The ideas from children, young people and their families contributing to the shaping of service development and service improvements
- Ensuring the voice of the child is at the heart of assessment, planning and intervention
- Ensuring that children who are looked after and children who are subject to a Child Protection plan know they can ask for an advocate and are supported to attend/contribute to conferences and reviews
- Ensure that all internal processes are focused on the child and maximise the impact of money spent to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved.
- Ensure that all processes are efficient and minimise any potential wasting of resources.

Priority 2 – Achieving Placement Stability and Permanence

As a part of our national reporting, this indicator measures the percentage of Children Looked After aged under 16 at who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement together last for at least 2 years.

More children achieved permanency through adoption in 2019-20 in Thurrock and an increased number are identified for 2019-20 with adoption as a potential permanence plan. A total of 15 children were adopted in 2019-20 compared to 13 in 2018/19.

Where possible, we want all our children to be in placements which provide them with long term placement stability, and where appropriate to leave care.

We describe this as achieving permanence for that child. Although it is sometimes necessary to move a child to provide them with a better placement our aim is to minimise the number of times each child changes placement as this can be very disruptive. To achieve permanence it is essential that all our teams work effectively together to support each placement. Permanence can be achieved in a number of ways, including adoption, special guardianship order, child arrangement order or matched for long term fostering. Each of these options gives the chance for the child to achieve stability and achieve their potential.

Ensure there is sufficient support available for children to achieve their long term care plans to prevent Children Looked After remaining in placements which may not best meet their needs.

Next Steps

- Continually review all placements to understand where there is opportunity to support permanence or where a child might be better served by moving to a different placement.
- Improve the placement review process to ensure all placements are regularly brought before the placement panel for review and all options for that child are considered at this time so each child is able to move towards permanence where appropriate.
- Ensure all children who are at the edge of care and those becoming looked after are part of a Family Group Conference/Meeting.
- Put in place necessary support for our carers and children in care to enable long term placements. This covers placement support such as therapeutic intervention to ensure the carer's home can meet the needs of the children placed with them.
- Raise awareness of and assist carers to apply for Special Guardianship Orders wherever suitable to ensure that this option is available to achieve permanence for children who are Looked After.
- Improve our offer of life story work for children.
- Review all approved connected carers to see whether an SGO would be more

appropriate to meet the child's long term needs.

To recruit sufficient adopters, maintain existing placements as the number of available adopters continues to fall across the UK and further develop our adoption support services to achieve and secure improvements in service delivery.

Next Steps

- Implementation of the Adoption Recruitment Strategy.
- Raise awareness of support for those who have adopted through more effective use of social media.
- Increase targeted support groups for families to allow early intervention where a placement might be at risk of breaking down.
- Maintain quality and quantity of matches through a review of processes to ensure they are robust and achieve what is right for the child
- Increase our early intervention and therapeutic offer to provide the additional support for adopters funded through the Adoption Support Fund (government funding to provide therapeutic support to adoptive families)

Priority 3 – Recruitment and Support of Foster Carers

There are three main types of foster care available to our children who are looked after. Where possible we keep children with people they already have some form of relationship with, this type of placement is Family and Friends Foster Care. When a child is first referred to us we will speak to any proposed carers to assess whether they will be able to provide the support that child needs. If we cannot find a suitable related carer, we will try to place them with one of our Thurrock 'in-house' carers. Only where we cannot identify an in-house placement to meet their needs will we then look to place them with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) as these placements are more likely to be outside of Thurrock.

It is a priority for us to significantly increase the number of children placed with Thurrock Council foster carers as placements are more likely to be local and carers will have access to local clinical support and specialist training along with local supervising social workers, however we value the role that independent fostering placements have in meeting the diverse needs of our Children Looked After. We have set a target to increase in house placements by 20 year on year and increase the proportion of children placed locally with in-house carers. The importance of placing children and young people with foster carers where appropriate means that we will also continue to recruit from the independent sector as a part of the commissioned framework.

In 2019/20 the service was successful in recruiting 19 fostering households. At the beginning of COVID-19, recruitment had good momentum. The fostering recruitment strategy highlights the key areas which result in the increased recruitment of fostering households. Enquiries are steady but progression to application is slower as applicants deal with the uncertainty of COVID-19. This is

a similar experience to other authorities and is confirmed in the feedback from our Eastern Region colleagues. The decision to provide a Council Tax rebate for Thurrock foster carers provides financial support as well as emphasising the value Thurrock places on the fostering community and the care they provide to Thurrock Children. The fostering recruitment campaign is being updated to create new marketing opportunities, the idea is to focus on our local communities, enhance the profile of Thurrock and our excellent offer to increase successfully approved fostering households.

Next Steps

- To ensure that there are more foster carers recruited than resign or are de-registered so that the total number of foster care households increases year on year.
- Increasing local engagement and raising awareness of fostering with Thurrock through an updated fostering recruitment campaign and brand.
- To increase the number of independent foster carers on the select list to further increase the availability of foster care placements

Priority 4: Commissioning and Partnership Working

Thurrock continues to place and match all those children and young people requiring a placement. Children would benefit from increased choice in placements that support their education and proximity to Thurrock. In order to support placement choice, a newly refreshed fostering campaign is being launched with the additional offer of Council Tax rebate.

The enhanced placements offer is supplemented through the annual placement commissioning review which has enabled Thurrock to develop a framework of providers who have clear quality frameworks bringing a consistent approach to the commissioned provision which includes IFAs and residential care. Whilst this has been successful, there is still a need to spot purchase foster and residential provision.

Close working such as the partnership between Children's and Housing to support Care Leavers accommodation and support is providing a range of opportunities to jointly commission provision. In addition, we work closely with the Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) particularly for cases where there are significant care needs. Residential places are currently purchased according to need and where appropriate, agreed through a joint decision making process. It is acknowledged that where there are complex needs the market drives the cost and availability of provision, this is an issue facing local authorities across England and continues to be a priority for us to address. Placements for children with significant health needs are jointly funded with the Continuing Care team in the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Mind of My Own app is being used to consult with young people around their health and the health services they receive in order to feed back to the Children Looked After Health Steering group.

Commissioning is an ongoing part of the development of a range of service however there are some key areas that need a specific focus, either because they are not already commissioned or where the challenges of these need a partnership approach. These are outlined below:

Next Steps

- Continue to ensure children and young people contribute to the planning and quality assurance of the services they access
- To continue to improve our market development strategies as a part of the relationship with providers and the procurement of placements
- The joint commissioning of an integrated support offer for Care Leavers and Children Looked After
- Increase the number of in-house carers to meet our ambition to place more children with Thurrock Council carers
- A higher proportion are in placements located within 20 miles of Thurrock through the development of the work with placement providers, including IFA's, residential providers, providers of supported accommodation
- Increased value for money in placements by reviewing and improving spend outcomes
- Increase placement stability through the continued development of the select list and associated quality assurance frameworks and risk assessments locally and regionally
- Pilot new models of step down approaches for residential and foster care
- To further develop placements for a higher level of complexity of need through all placement types
- To commission specialist SEND/ Residential provision in partnership with the local Clinical Commissioning Group
- To develop a joint quality assurance process across agencies to support high quality provision

Priority 5: Developing the offer for care leavers

To support young people as they move into our leaving and aftercare team we have the following services in place:

Inspire – Education Employment and Training: We have dedicated personal advisors who support young people into education employment and training, this includes our outstanding Prince's Trust team programme which supports young people who lack confidence to progress into other learning pathways.

Inspire – Headstart Housing: Recognising the need to ensure that young people entering into the Aftercare Service require suitable accommodation we have developed our own housing support team to provide a range of housing opportunities. Young people coming into the leaving care service have priority around social housing however, for some young people they are not ready to take on a tenancy and as such we provide a range of alternative accommodation until they are able to access their own social housing. A newly developed Housing

Protocol has been developed to ensure there is suitable accommodation for all Care Leavers.

Next steps

- Develop the work through joint work between Headstart Housing and Housing to improve our accommodation offer to Care Leavers and ensure that there is sufficiency of accommodation for Thurrock Care Leavers with different levels of support needs.
- As accommodation is provided through a range of different types of providers we are working to extend the processes we have implemented for semi-independent accommodation for 16-18 year olds to standardise what we offer for care leavers
- Working with the Aftercare Team and Inspire to provide a range of support for those aged 18 and over to ensure they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after
- To develop a jointly commissioned support offer for those aged 18+ who need additional support to be able develop independence as an adult
- Put in place a supported lodgings offer through recruitment of foster carers who can provide a bed to those who are aged 18 and over within a family environment.
- Support the early identification of young people leaving care who are planning to move to live with birth relatives.
- Integration of the Corporate Parenting Duty in the Housing Offer to ensure young people in Aftercare are no longer intentionally homeless.
- Transition planning: Work closely with Adult Services to ensure they are aware of those young people who have housing and care issues
- Develop Housing Plans for all young people in Aftercare
- Develop UASC and specific 18+ support

Priority 6: To develop the early support offer available to our most vulnerable children

Earlier support for families has been shown to prevent the escalation of issues and where possible keep children at home. It also aids families by providing advice and helps to avoid confusion and duplication for families who need information advice and help. It also provides families with the tools to help them solve their own problems and also be more resilient in the future while making sure they know where they can go for help when they need it.

This support is delivered across a range of services however the Brighter Futures and Thurrock Families Together Teams work to provide a support offer to families to prevent children and young people becoming looked after. Families Together also provide placement stability support to enable foster carers to provide consistent and enhance care. There are a range of commissioned services that also provide support including: Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service with consultant psychologist offering advice on the management of trauma issues, support with parenting for carers (SGO, connected carers and foster carers). Foster carers are encouraged to access the Coram parenting support offering access to a range of accredited parenting programmes. Also, support to Aftercare and new parents to enhance their skills and prevent social care intervention.

Next steps

To continue to develop early support to address the demand driven nature of preventative work which results in us not being able to provide support early enough to some of our most vulnerable children by:

- Continued implementation of the Brighter Futures Strategy to identify opportunities for integration with partners so that we can target services more effectively to the most vulnerable.
- Providing the right support at the right time to children and their families with a focus on the commissioned offer.
- Providing Edge of Care and Reunification support for children and young people.

18.0 Measuring Success

There is not a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting families in the community or for improving outcomes for Children and Young People who are looked after. Different cohorts of children require different approaches. This strategy has identified some of the key challenges we face in meeting our sufficiency duty and actions proposed to make sure we are best placed to meet these challenges and deliver financially sustainable services.

The impact of the work to improve sufficiency will be mainly measured through the outcomes for the children and young people in placements, through feedback from them as a part of their individual reviews and through different methods of participation and engagement.

We will base our success on the extent to which:

The rate of CLA per 10K population reduces year on year due to earlier intervention.
The number of children and young people placed within a 20 mile radius of Thurrock increases.
There is an increase in adoption permanence year on year.
There is a reduction in the number of children experiencing 3 or more moves per year.
The number of Thurrock in-house Fostering Placements increases by at least 20 carers.
There is an increase in all types of provider included on the Thurrock Select List and a cost analysis is completed as a part of this exercise.
A jointly commissioned support offer for care leavers is in place.

There is an increase in the availability of accommodation for Care Leavers within a 20 mile radius of Thurrock.

There is a jointly commissioned SEND/ Residential offer in place.

Appendix 1

This is the current version of the Pledge however this is due to be updated and the most recent version can be found on the Council website.

Our Pledge to Children Looked After

Our pledge

Our pledge makes 5 promises to children and young people in our care. These cover:

- health
- education
- reaching potential
- positive relationships
- leaving care

The pledge was written by young people and has been adopted throughout the council.

It applies to all children and young people, from birth to their 18th birthday, who are in our care. Some apply to those leaving care from the age of 18 up to 21 years, or 25 years in certain cases.

The pledge applies regardless of sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, age, ability or background. It applies wherever young people are placed, whether this is inside or outside Thurrock.

Our 5 promises

We promise to work to help you to develop healthily by:

- helping you to keep fit and healthy and giving you the resources and information on how best to equip yourself to continue to develop
- making sure you are given support to have regular health and dental checks
- having social workers support you in all aspects of your development and giving you every opportunity to flourish

We promise to do everything we can to keep you safe and feel important to us while in care by:

- making staff available to speak to you when you need to contact them to discuss your problems, anxieties and achievements
- involving you in decisions and plans that are made that will affect your current and future life
- not changing your social worker unless absolutely necessary
- giving you advice and support to stay safe both within your home and community

- calling you back within 24 hours

We promise to help you reach your dreams while in care by:

- celebrating your achievements and recognising your goals and helping to push you further while in care
- supporting you to attend and achieve in education
- providing you with good educational opportunities that best meet your abilities
- providing you with a translating dictionary in your language when you first come into care if your first language is not English
- giving you the same opportunities available to young people who are not Looked After

We promise to support your positive relationships and social activities by:

- giving priority when you ask to stay with friends and relatives away from your normal placement
- aiding you in having easy access to libraries, youth clubs and positive activities
- giving you access to an independent visitor/ mentors
- supporting you in being heard throughout the local authority across all departments

We promise to prepare you for adult life and leaving care by:

- supporting you financially up until the time you start work or are entitled to claim benefits
- providing you with a grant to help you settle into your own accommodation when you leave care
- supporting you in higher education at university
- helping you with support to seek employment and training
- helping you with transport for attending education and Children Looked After appointments
- supporting you to apply for all documentation and providing you with necessary

Appendix 2

This is the current version of the Charter however this is due to be updated and the most recent version can be found on the Council website.

Charter for care leavers

We have a responsibility to children and young people in our care, and to our Care Leavers.

Our charter for Care Leavers was written jointly with a group of young people. It is a set of principles and promises to care leavers.

We will respect and honour your identity

We will:

- support you to develop your own identity, respect your background and accept your culture and beliefs
- treat you as an individual, taking into consideration your own values and personal needs

We will believe in you

We will:

- support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can
- believe in you, celebrate you and help you overcome limiting barriers

We will listen to you

We will:

- respect and strive to understand your point of view
- be honest with you and place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you

We will support you

We will:

- do our best to support you in achieving your goals, dreams and aspirations
- provide you with the support that you require with education, training and employment to succeed in life

We will help you find a home

We will:

- keep you safe and well by working alongside you to help you find the most appropriate place to live and prepare you for independent living
- do everything we can to prepare you for a smooth transition to adulthood and help you to be where you want to be

We will inform you

We will:

- point you in the right direction and journey alongside you at your own pace
- help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger

19 July 2022		Item: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Dan Jones – Strategic Lead, Children Looked After		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon – Assistant Director Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy – Corporate Director, Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is to update Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee on actions taken by Children’s Social Care and Health colleagues to address the timeliness of Initial Assessments for Children who are Looked After.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That Members are aware of the work that has taken place, and areas for improvement in completing Initial Health Assessments, and note the work that is being undertaken to ensure improving performance.**
- 1.2 **Note the impact of COVID 19 on this area of performance.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 When a child becomes looked after there is a duty under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 to undertake an assessment of their health needs within 28 days of accommodation. This is referred to as the Initial Health Assessment and must be carried out by a registered medical practitioner who is ideally a paediatrician. The Initial Health Assessment (IHA) identifies existing health problems and deficits in previous healthcare and provides a baseline for managing the child’s future health needs.
- 2.2 Joint work with partners in Health is required to complete these assessments and there are clear arrangements in place with local Health partners, Referrals for IHA’s should be completed within 5 working days of becoming

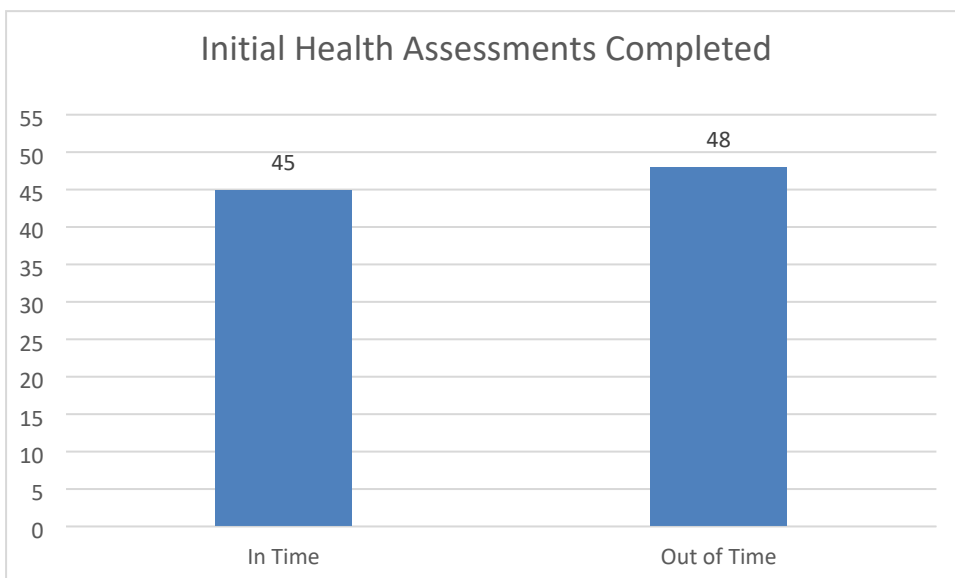
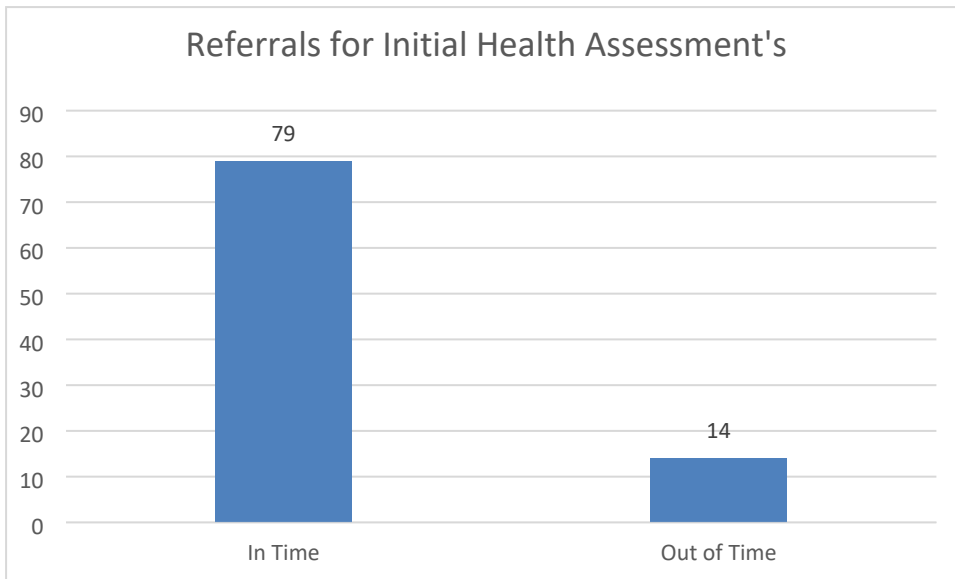
looked after and sent to Health. The IHA appointment will then be arranged, the child seen and assessed within 28 days (20 working days) of entering care and a subsequent report sent to the local authority.

- 2.3 The timely completion of IHA's is an improvement area for Thurrock Council that was identified in our last full Ofsted inspection in 2019. Since then, considerable work has been undertaken to ensure our processes are clear and there is a weekly joint scrutiny meeting between health and social care which considers and discusses all children who are due an IHA including any barriers and how to overcome these. This has continued consistently throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this high level of oversight, meeting the above timescales presents a number of issues for health and social care.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The local authority, through its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, has a duty to promote the welfare of Looked after Children, including those who are eligible care leavers and those children placed in pre-adoptive placements. This includes promoting the child's physical, emotional, and mental health.
- 3.2 Every Looked After Child needs to have an up-to-date health assessment so that a health care plan can be developed to reflect the child's health needs and be included as part of the child's overall Care Plan.
- 3.3 Health assessments are a statutory requirement and should be carried out within 28 days of entering care and then at a minimum of:
- 6-monthly intervals for babies and children under 5 years of age; and
 - Annually for those aged 5 years and over.
- 3.4 Local Authorities and local Health partners should have arrangements in place to support the completion of statutory health assessments for Looked After Children within statutory timescales, irrespective of whether the placement of the child is an emergency, short term or in another area.
- 3.5 The Local Authority should always advise health colleagues when a child is initially accommodated and there should be effective communication and understanding between each other as part of being able to promote children's wellbeing.
- 3.6 During the year 2021/22 121 children became looked after by Thurrock Council. Of those children:
- **93** children received an Initial Health Assessment.
 - **13** Children were pending an IHA at the 31st March 2022

- **7** children were looked after for 5 days or less meaning the IHA referral could not be progressed
 - **3** Children who were looked after for less than 28 days so the IHA could not be completed
 - **2** Children refused to attend their IHA
 - **3** children did not complete their IHA for other reason
 - In addition, **10** children, all UASC, transferred to another authority before the IHA was due/completed – Where it is possible to complete an IHA where the plan is to transfer a child to another authority, this is prioritised. When the child transferred, the IHA becomes the responsibility of the authority who is looking after their care.
- 3.7 The majority of children entering care receive Initial Health Assessments and there are clear reasons when these are not completed. Most children are referred for their Initial Health assessment within the 5 working day referral window.
- 3.8 Timeliness of IHAs remain a key area of focus with weekly oversight from Senior Managers in Health and Children’s Social Care. Two performance measures inform the data and success in children having an initial health assessment in time;
- Whether the referral for an initial health assessment is made by the local authority within 5 working days
 - An initial health assessment takes place within 20 working days of a child entering into care.
- 3.9 Thurrock has prioritised referrals for IHAs with 85% completed within 5 working days of entry in to care in 2021/22 (see below). We continue to face some difficulties in ensuring IHAs are completed on time, with 49% completed within 20 working days. This is improved performance from a low point of 17.7% in 2018/19, 40% in 2019/20 but a reduction from 57% completed in time in 2020/21.



- 3.10 The timeliness for children placed outside of the local health area remains a challenge and where possible, children are brought back to our local health service for their IHA to avoid delay. Reasons for delays in children having an initial health assessment in time includes availability of paediatric appointment; parents refusing or delaying in providing written consent; procedural issues such as a child moving placement and the paperwork needing to be resubmitted; late submission of paperwork; capacity within health due to sickness or otherwise, and other reasons such as clashes in appointments for the young person or a child being ill.
- 3.11 Once the referral is completed and accepted by health, an appointment is arranged, a report written by the Paediatrician and, finally, sent to Children's Social Care. The date the IHA assessment is physically completed is the date recorded for this measure. However, in order for this to be formally recorded as complete the report needs to be received by the local authority.

3.12 Initial Health Assessments remain a priority focus area for improvement for both Children's Social Care and Health partners. Progress continues to be reviewed weekly. The following are routes to improve performance:

- Service Manager oversight and managing weekly review meetings to ensure referrals are completed on time identify any barriers or themes to ensure they are addressed.
- The local Health provider (NELFT) has increased the resources to create more appointments for IHA's to provide improved capacity for children placed in the local area
- Prioritising of IHA appointments with social workers leading on and ensuring children attend appointments and that carers understand that this is a priority to ensure children's health needs are met.
- Health Colleagues are reviewing the escalation pathway so there is quicker resolution where children are placed in other areas
- The Multi-Agency CLA Steering Group continues to track performance monthly to escalate strategic issues.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Committee are aware of Statutory Duty to complete Initial Assessments for all children and young people who come into care and how we are meeting these duties.

4.2 Members of the Committee are aware of the issues and steps being taken to improve these.

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

5.1 Consultation with NELFT in preparing this report.

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

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.

The service recognises that a range of communities and groups of people may have experienced obstruction or the impact of prejudice when accessing services including Social Care and Health services. Both Services are committed to support all children in the care of Thurrock Council to access Initial Health assessments, individual arrangements are made where required to meet needs and address individual concerns.

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

- None

Report Author:

Dan Jones

Strategic Lead - Children Looked After

Children's Services

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19 July 2022		Item: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Inspire - Head Start Housing: Supporting Care Leavers		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Tiffany Bright – Inspire - Skills Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children’s Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

Local Authorities have a duty, as a corporate parent, to ensure continued involvement in supporting young people as they leave care and move into independence until they are 21 years of age (or up to 25 years if specific, targeted support is required). Thurrock is committed to ensuring that care leavers (CLs) receive targeted support in high quality accommodation.

Young people in care and leaving care can be highly vulnerable and at risk of experiencing multiple accommodation moves, and/or in the case of young people leaving care, risk of becoming homeless.

Head Start Housing (HSH) was formally launched in December 2018. This is a joint initiative between Children Service and Housing.

HSH sources and manages a portfolio of accommodation for young people either in care or in the process of leaving care.

The HSH Strategy aims to return all care leavers (CL) to Thurrock by December 2023, providing this is the right decision for them. Returning to Thurrock can be better supported by more visits from their After Care Personal Advisor, can easily access the range of local services, diverse education and employment opportunities and regular access to networks of family and friends.

Preparing young people leaving care for adulthood remains a key priority for Thurrock Council. HSH has been created to provide a solution for their accommodation.

1. Recommendations:

1.1 That the Report be noted.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In March 2016, Children's Services and Housing designed a pilot to test HMOs for vulnerable young people, either in employment/working towards or at risk of losing their job on account of unstable accommodation.
- 2.2 Considerable learning has been applied from the pilot to inform the Head Start Housing strategy, 2018 - 2023. Working collaboratively with Housing, the Head Start strategy has been refreshed one year early (to coincide with the refresh of Housing's strategy). The Head Start strategy, 2022 – 2027 makes provision for switching all private rental beds for LA housing stock by the end of December 2027.
- 2.3 When Head Start Housing launched it did so with a commitment from Housing to provide 6 beds each year until 2023. The combined use of Transformation Funding and Right to Buy receipts supported Housing's strategy to increase LA owned housing stock whilst making a positive contribution to the Housing Reduction Act 2017.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Over the course of the past two years, three properties have been purchased and modified for exclusive use by care leavers. At £1.14mn for 12 beds including legal fees and modifications, the underspend was returned to core funding.
- 3.2 12 CL are settling into the 'new' properties that are well positioned in Grays, South Ockendon and Aveley.
- 3.3 Over the past 12 months, 8 properties (7 out of borough) have been handed back. Predominantly the properties relinquished were used to accommodate CLs with a high level of support needs; housing provision for this cohort is now being supported by the Commissioning team.
- 3.4 There is a process for CLs to access the housing element of universal credit. Aftercare supports the CL to make a contribution towards their rental costs by setting up a direct payment to HSH. To date, £10k has been received from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to contribute towards CLs' accommodation. The income from DWP helps to offset the costs of Head Start Housing.
- 3.5 As of 17 June 2022, HSH provides accommodation for 67 CLs. The team manages a portfolio of 25 properties, ranging in size:

Property size	No. of properties types in portfolio	Additional skills development support from external partner (no. of beds)
1 bedroom/self-contained unit	13 (9 of these are Clarence Road hostel)	11
2 bed	9	-
3 bed	3	-
4 bed	4	-
5+ bed	4	-
Average occupancy 21/22 - 95%		

- 3.6 Each property provides essential furnishings, utility bills, water rates, wifi, cleaning tools, blinds, and light shades. This is designed to reduce the CL's outlay from their Setting Up Home Grant, enable online access to courses/employment, working with the communal cleaning contractor to learn how to keep the property clean, reduces the amount of property in storage and an added benefit of reducing the number of financial transactions.
- 3.7 HSH works closely with other teams and external partners to provide targeted interventions so that HSH accommodation is transitional, and no one stays for longer than is necessary. A target reduction in average length of stay from 9 months to 4-6 months should have a positive effect on the number of CLs that can be accommodated by HSH in the future.
- 3.8 Excluding the hostel provision, HSH weekly rental cost per person, per week is £148.57 (after £35k housing benefit applied).
- 3.9 CLs are actively encouraged to access mental health support, vaccinations and Education, Employment or Training to enable transition into adulthood and engage in the community in which they live.
- 3.10 HSH Mediation continues to work with young people and their families to delay/avoid homelessness. This intervention remains very successful with more than 90% positive outcomes, with positive relationships maintained.
- 3.11 HSH is working with After Care to move on 15 CLs in the next few months to make way for 8 new arrivals, by end August. Maintaining occupancy rates of more than 90%, meeting demand and supporting timely move-on is a challenge though achievable.
- 3.12 A single framework specification for supported accommodation will be published within the next 4 months. It is intended to create specialist provision for CLs and CLA (16-17-year-olds) to reduce the number of moves at key transition points whilst meeting Ofsted requirements.

- 3.13 An Invitation to Tender will be published for repairs and maintenance of private rental properties within the portfolio. LA stock is repaired and maintained by a provider as commissioned by Housing.
- 3.14 Cross directorate conversations have started to explore the feasibility of self builds by CLs as a way of building community, pride, and skills. Anticipated timeframe: two years.
- 3.15 HSH will continue reviewing systems and processes, making modifications as required to ensure a high-quality service is delivered to CLs.
- 3.16 Continued work, cross directorate, to develop fair joint protocols, standardise templates and consistent terminology for services provided to young people aged 16+ years, should provide a coherent transfer across services and improve young people's understanding of their entitlements and how to access them.
- 3.17 Children's Services and Housing have formed a small task and finish group to explore the benefits of HSH being managed by Housing. It is envisaged that efficiencies may be possible with compliance being absorbed by existing contracts and the support provided by HSH officers to continue. Update to follow.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 For the Committee to note delivery and outcomes delivered by HSH in supporting Council's priority of supporting CLs into independent living.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 n/a

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

The accommodation and associated costs are to be contained within the annual Headstart budget allocation, supported by the housing element of universal credit received from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

7.2 Legal

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

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which came into force in October 2001 and gave Local Authorities the statutory duty to provide significantly **enhanced** leaving care service, with the intention to raise the quality of our support to that of good parents.

"Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. The local authority responsible for their care should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need, which will include offering them more than one chance as they grapple with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood." Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers.

The duties introduced by the 2000 Act are supported by this statutory guidance. This guidance also sets out in chapter 7 and in Annex C the requirements on the Local Authority in planning accommodation provision for CL. It sets out the need for joint working between Housing and Children's Services and the creation of joint protocols.

There is further government non-statutory good practice advice on 'joint housing protocols for care leavers' :-
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>
which sets out the Corporate Parenting Principles in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 section 1 which the Council must have regard to when exercising its functions in respect of CL and its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The exercise of the corporate parenting principles is subject to statutory guidance which the Council must follow unless there are clear reasons to depart from this. The statutory guidance can be found here: [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
**Team Manager - Community Development and
Equalities**

Supporting CLs with suitable accommodation is a significant function for Thurrock's most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Decisions are based on each young person's needs, including equality and diversity, SEND and emotional health needs.

The Authority recognises the importance of ensuring that young people who are leaving the care system can and should have access to the offers available locally. They are positively discriminated for priority housing and, by being in borough can access a full range of offers and services to lead to sustainable employment. We are working cross directorate, in an holistic way, to provide CL's with the best life chances and ensure that they have a voice that is heard and shapes the provision.

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

There are no other implications as a result of this report.

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:

Tiffany Bright

Skills Manager

Inspire Childrens' Services

19 July 2022		Item: 9
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Corporate Parenting Strategy		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non Key	
Report of: Daniel Jones – Strategic Lead, Children Looked After		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon - Assistant Director Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy – Corporate Director – Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Corporate Parenting refers to the **partnerships between the local authority departments, services and associated agencies** who are collectively responsible for meeting the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers. Local authorities should care about children in their care, not just for them.

This informs members of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and what work is being done to fulfil these.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee note their responsibilities as Corporate Parents.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The term ‘corporate parent’ is broadly understood in relation to how local authorities should approach their responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers. However, it is vital that all parts of a local authority beyond those directly responsible for care and pathway planning recognise they have a key role too.

2.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces corporate parenting principles, which comprise of seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked-after children or care leavers (collectively referred to as looked-after children and young people).

2.3 The corporate parenting principles are intended to secure a better approach to fulfilling existing functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers and for the local authority to facilitate as far as possible secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for looked after children and young people and enable positive outcomes for them.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 None – Corporate Parenting responsibilities are a statutory responsibility.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To ensure members are aware of the corporate parenting responsibilities.

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

5.1 None.

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

6.1 When making key decisions about corporate policies our corporate parenting responsibilities should be considered and our children and young people prioritised.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

Prioritisation of Corporate Parenting is consistent with the financial priority provided within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

7.2 Legal

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

Local Authorities must, in carrying out functions in relation to the children and young people mentioned in subsection [\(2\)](#) Children and Social Work Act 2017, have regard to the need—

(a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;

- (b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- (d) To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- (e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- (f) For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The children and young people mentioned in this subsection are—

- children who are looked after by a local authority, within the meaning given by section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989;
- relevant children within the meaning given by section 23A(2) of that Act;
- persons aged under 25 who are former relevant children within the meaning given by section 23C(1) of that Act

The exercise of the corporate parenting principles is subject to statutory guidance which the Council must follow unless there are clear reasons to depart from this. The statutory guidance can be found here: [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/2020-07-20-Applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers.pdf)

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

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 Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

Prioritisation of Corporate Parenting will have a direct impact on the outcomes for Children who are Looked After.

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):

- Children and Social Work Act 2017

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting – Defined Responsibilities

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Committee – Terms of Reference

Appendix 3: Corporate Parenting Strategy

Report Author:

Dan Jones

Strategic Lead – CLA

Children's Social Care and Early Help

Appendix 1: CORPORATE PARENTING - Defined Responsibilities

Services for children looked after and care leavers need to be coordinated, focused and effective. Responsibility for this rests at a corporate level with Elected Members, who hold senior officers to account for the implementation of strategies and services.

In 2009, NCB created a gold-standard approach to corporate parenting, with a range of resources available to Councillors to help them design the best-fit corporate parenting model for local needs and to understand and fulfil their corporate parenting roles; [ncb corporate parenting tool-kit](#)

NCB identify three distinct levels of role responsibility for Councillors: 'universal', 'targeted' and 'specialist'. These responsibility levels are defined below:

Universal responsibility

Every elected member and manager within the Council, in conjunction with members of governing bodies of partner agencies, needs to:

- Be aware of their 'Corporate Parenting' role
- Have some knowledge of the profile and needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers
- Understand the impact on looked after children and young people of all council decisions
- Receive information about quality of care and services children and young people are experiencing and consider if this would be 'good enough' for their own child
- Ensure that action is being taken to address any shortcomings in services and support for looked after children and young people and strive to continually improve outcomes

Targeted responsibility

For elected members who visit Children's Homes or who are members of the Corporate Parenting Committee, and for managers of children's services, their responsibilities are as for universal responsibility. In addition, they will need to make sure, in partnership with those with lead responsibility in partner agencies, that they:

- Are aware of Government expectations regarding services to looked after children and young people
- Have access to and examine qualitative and quantitative information about this group
- Consider how they are going to respond to and hear the voice of children and young people and their carers/parents
- Regularly take action, in conjunction with officers and partner agencies, to improve services and respond to changing needs

Specialist responsibility

[Statutory guidance](#) on the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.

There is a responsibility for these individuals to:

- Provide leadership across the authority in safeguarding and monitoring the welfare of children looked after and young people
- Ensure governance arrangements are in place
- Undertake regular in-depth analysis of the needs of looked after children and young people and the services required to meet these needs
- Ensure strategic plans of the local authority and joint plans with partner agencies reflect the needs of children looked after and young people, particularly the Children and Young People's Plan, and the Directorate Children's Services Plan
- Keep up-to-date with national research and new performance indicators in relation to children looked after children and young people

Terms of Reference – Corporate Parenting Committee

3.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	
Appointed by: The Council under section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972	Number of Elected Members: Eight	
Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by: The Council	Political Proportionality: The elected Members shall be appointed in accordance with Political Proportionality	
Quorum: Three elected Members	Co-opted Members to be appointed by Corporate Parenting Committee: (i) A nominated representative from Open Door (ii) Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Children in Care Council (iii) Chair and Vice-Chair of the Foster Carers Association	
<p>Functions determined by Council:</p> <p>1. Purpose</p> <p>1.1 The Committee exists to ensure that all elements of the Council work together to ensure that the children looked after by Thurrock get the best possible service that can be offered.</p> <p>1.2 The Committee will serve to aid elected members to drive the improvement of the service forward including by interacting with the looked after children</p> <p>1.3 The Committee will monitor, review and update the looked after children strategy.</p> <p>1.4 In carrying out this role, the Committee has set as its Mission Statement: “We want to ensure that all children looked after by Thurrock Council are given the same opportunities, the same level of support and given the same amount of attention as would be given to our own children. We acknowledge that because children looked after have often had very difficult and damaging experiences in their lives, at times they need extra support and resources in order that they can benefit from the same opportunities as other children in our community as well as ensuring that young people have access and knowledge of their elected members who run the authority for the LAC and therefore give them a voice”.</p> <p>2. Objectives</p> <p>2.1 To champion and promote the best interests of all children and young people who are, have been in care or may be at risk of becoming looked after children, particularly in relation to the following –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and well-being • Ability to stay safe • Ability to enjoy and achieve • Ability and opportunity to make a positive contribution • Achievement of economic well-being <p>2.2 To promote the role of all councillors as corporate parents and provide the robust vehicle for their mandate to be exercised on behalf of young people</p> <p>2.3 To bring together members/officers/representatives of partner agencies with corporate parenting responsibilities, with the Chair having discretion to extend invitations to attend</p>		

meetings of the Committee as appropriate.

- 2.4 To routinely examine the performance data relating to looked after children and, as necessary, seek to inquire into those areas where performance is poor or of concern.
- 2.5 To explore the extent to which the Council as a whole is contributing to meeting the needs of looked after children and to identify and pursue areas where there could be improvement.
- 2.6 To receive effective 'preventative' and qualitative information in order to hold senior officers to account in relation to meeting the needs and improving the outcomes of looked after children.
- 2.7 To oversee the strategy for looked after children and ensure that the various elements within it are being delivered in a holistic and comprehensive way by all responsible.
- 2.8 To identify and celebrate the achievements of individual children and young people who are or who have been looked after.
- 2.9 To see the service shaped and influenced by those it serves i.e. young people.
- 2.10 To prepare an annual report on the work of the Committee for consideration by the Council.
- 2.11 To make recommendations to the relevant executive decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the executive
- 2.12 To report to the relevant scrutiny committee any matter which it believes that committee should give consideration to.
- 2.13 The Corporate Parenting Committee shall be responsible for setting its own work programme, taking into account the wishes and preferences of the members of the Committee, together with any suggestions from Officers of the Council for particular topics to be considered.

Matters reserved for decision

There are no specific matters reserved to this committee.

The reason for this is that the role and function of the committee is to review and monitor the council's role as a corporate parent. This involves the participation of members on a cross political group committee. However any specific actions the committee might identify as necessary would be executive functions and need to be taken by a cabinet decision maker, in accordance with cabinet responsibility for functions.

Functions determined by Statute

THURROCK COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 - 24

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Forward by Cllr Adam Carter (Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee)

- In Thurrock, we believe that children should be given the best start in life, with every opportunity to develop and thrive. Our number one priority will always be the safeguarding of our children and young people; ensuring that they are happy, safe, and well-prepared for adult life.
- When a child is looked after, the whole Council becomes their Corporate Parent. As Corporate Parents we have a special responsibility to make sure children and young people who have had disrupted experiences of family life get the support they need to live the happiest and healthiest lives possible. This means ensuring that our children are at the centre of our thinking and work and that we make sure that they have all the support they need. I want to ensure we all have high aspirations for our children looked after and care leavers as we have for the children growing up in our own homes, with our families and the people we are close to.
- To ensure we provide the best services and support for our children and young people, we must work together in partnership to provide joined up services that will help them to reach their full potential. I welcome Thurrock's Corporate Parenting Strategy which outlines our key vision and principles for our children looked after and care leavers and look forward to working with services, young people, and our partners to develop and deliver the best services possible.

Introduction

- Corporate parenting refers to the collective responsibility of all elected members, council staff and partner agencies to provide the best possible support and safeguarding to Children Looked After (CLA). Thurrock's Corporate Parenting Committee brings together all these people and provides a welcoming forum for our children, foster carers and care leavers to discuss and influence the full range of services available to them.
- This strategy outlines our priorities for supporting children looked after and sets a framework for the council and partners to be held accountable on their promises. Delivery against our commitments will be monitored diligently by the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Members will listen to young people and check that they are happy and healthy, receiving a top quality education and have access to training and employment opportunities, as well as their own home to go to when the time comes to live independently.
- Our approach means we engage directly and routinely with our children and young people, their carers and social workers, encouraging them to share experiences so that we can better understand the issues they face and adapt services to meet their needs.
- Our young people also give regular feedback through their statutory reviews, Mind of My Own App, participation events and the Children in Care Council. Children's experiences will always form the centre of our approach, with the foundations of this strategy set by young people. Our priorities respond directly to issues of primary concern for children young people and their carers.
- In Thurrock we understand that each young person has a unique history and vision for the future. This strategy seeks to ensure that their vision becomes a reality - every child must be supported to reach their full potential, with no one left behind. We have a diverse group of children and young people in care. Their experiences need to be heard, considered and acted upon. We are proud to have such a diverse group of looked after children in our care and will actively encourage everyone to feel confident and proud of who they are. Whatever their circumstances or characteristics, all our young people will receive complete support to make every success of their lives.

Children Looked After in Thurrock



In Thurrock we have a relatively stable Children Looked After population, which is diverse in make-up. In recent years the numbers of older children have increased reflecting numbers of older children starting care but over the last year our number of children looked after has decreased by a small number.

- The number of children looked after at March 2022 was 294, a rate of 64.8 per 10k compared to similar authorities of 65% and England average of 67% in 2020/21.
- During 2021/22 121 children started to be looked after and 122 left care during the year.
- 60.5% Male and 39.5 % female
- 30.5 % under 10years, 41.2% aged 10-15 and 28.2% aged over 16yrs
- 24 (8.1%) of CLA have a disability
- 27 (9.2%) of our children looked after were unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- 26.2% of the CLA population were BME
- Care leavers engaged in employment, education or training: 17/18yrs 80% above statistical neighbours and national performance.

What our young people have told us

Consistency of staff is likely to help young people to engage with their social workers, counsellors, mentors.	Promote supportive relationships between adolescents, their peers and families.	Help young people to build resilience and find coping strategies.	Develop a wide range of community-based interventions with families.
Train social workers to recognise the signs of trauma experienced and provide trauma-informed approaches.	IROs support relationships with peers and family. Where possible children are supported to return to family	Hear the child's voice. Provide help to children and young people to enable and encourage them to express their wishes and feelings.	Ensure access to early intervention for families through PASS
Continue giving young people opportunity to participate with interventions and opportunity to influence plans and decisions.	Ensure timely availability of services to access support and the right length of support.	Importance of good family relationships for the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people.	Ensure early intervention to support children's emotional and mental health in schools

Our priorities for looked after children and young people, 2022 – 24

- Safety and Permanence



- Educational Achievement



- Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing



- Employment and Independence



Priorities

Safety and Permanence

Key area of focus

- Children remain cared for in their family or return to family where it is safe to do so.
- Think Family and Early Help Service successfully working with children and young people on the Edge of Care
- Children move to permanent family care without delay
- Good outcomes secured through placement stability for children and young people who are looked after.
- Young people staying in their foster placements until they are ready to leave and feel prepared to live independently
- Young people will say they feel cared for and supported in their placements and are happy with the services that they are offered
- Increase in number of in house foster carers who are well supported and able to meet the needs of children with complex needs, sibling groups and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children.

How we will measure impact

- Reduction in numbers of children looked after.
- Timely matching for children to adopters
- Sufficiency Strategy to understand the placement requirements of our children including fostering recruitment
- Reduction in number of children placed at distance from their home, community and school
- Reduction of number of children placed in Residential settings and more children placed with families
- Monitor through permanence tracking
- Numbers of children staying put increase
- Young people will be prepared for independence and move on appropriately
- Feedback from children and young people during Feedback Weeks will demonstrate that children and young people are happy with the services that they are offered

Priorities

Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing

Key area of focus

- Involve children and young people in decisions that affect their lives, and maximise the opportunity to make choices
- Children and Young People's health needs are assessed
- All children looked after have up to date immunisations, dental care and developmental checks where required.
- Children and young people have timely access to mental health assessment and treatment

How we will measure impact

- Attendance at LAC reviews Children in Care Council
- Advocacy feedback
- Feedback from Children and Young People
- Monitor timeliness of initial and annual health checks
- Through monitoring CAMHs performance and SDQ scores
- Care leavers have access to health passports

Priorities

Educational Achievement

Key area of focus

- To narrow the educational attainment gap between the CLA cohort and their peers
- Promote ambition for children looked after.
- We will identify any Special Education Needs (SEN) and meet these needs through an Education Health Care Plan or other SEN support - helping our young people overcome barriers to education attainment.
- Support young people to engage in further education and training

How we will measure impact

- The Virtual Head will ensure all children have a PEP that is supported by the designated teacher in school
- Children's outcomes at school and in education will continue to improve. Key stage and Attainment 8 scores are tracked
- More Young People entering Further Education
- More Young People in Training or Employment
- Increases in the number of young people going on to access higher education at university

Priorities

Employment and Independence

Key area of focus

- Ensure that CLA and Care leaver's rights and entitlements information is transparent and accessible.
- Care Leavers needing transition to Adult Social Care have timely assessment and plans
- Care leavers live in suitable accommodation and have access to a secure home when they are ready to manage a tenancy
- Care Leavers are engaged in employment, education or training
- Care Leavers are supported to develop independence skills

How we will measure impact

- Care Leaver Offer
- Big Wide World
- Pathway Plans
- Feedback from Care Leavers
- Tracking data EET
- Tracking data on suitable accommodation
- Care Leavers have good pathway plans to support them
- Track transition planning to Adult Social Care

CORPORATE PARENTING ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2024

Appendix 3

	Objective	Actions	Evidence	Lead	Completion/Review Date
1	Ensure that all Elected Members and partners are aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities	Provide copy of corporate parenting strategy to all Elected Members and partners.	Strategy distributed	Dan Jones/Janet Simon	July 2022
		Offer Corporate Parenting training to all Elected members and partners.	Training delivered to all members Training evaluation	Dan Jones/Janet Simon	Quarterly
2	Corporate Parenting Members strengthen their links with Children in Care Council and Care Leavers	Each Member of Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) to attend the Children in Care Council (CiCC) at least annually by invitation Chair of CPC and Assistant Director to attend CiCC at least 6 monthly by invitation	Meeting minutes LAC more aware of CPC Improved collaboration and support	Participation Team and CPC Chair CPC Chair/Assistant Director Children's Services	Commencing July 2022 and annually thereafter 6 monthly
3	Corporate Parenting Committee Members to engage with LAC and Care Leavers to improve Services	CPC members support and attend Celebration events and appropriate activities attended by LAC and Care Leavers supported by the Participation worker	Feedback from young people and Members	Janet Simon/ CPC Chair	

CORPORATE PARENTING ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2024

4	Ensure all Children's Services Managers are aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities	Link to Strategy sent to all CSC managers for dissemination Briefing to Managers	Briefing delivered and Strategy shared	Janet Simon	July 2022
5 Page 120	CSC and After Care managers regularly engage with CLA and Care Leavers to get an understanding of their lived experience of care and as a result are able to evidence an improvement in outcomes	Managers to engage in and listen to the Voice of the Child through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful Supervision • Case Auditing • Work shadowing • Attendance at reviews • Exit Interviews 	Managers at all levels in Children's Service Managers routinely attend, contribute and facilitate improvement work with children and young people through these activities and are able to evidence change as a result of their engagement.	Strategic Leads Service Managers Team Managers	Regularly throughout the year
6	Ensure partner Agencies and all Council Departments are aware of the strategy and how it relates to their work,	Briefing through Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership and engagement with partners	Minutes	Dan Jones/Janet Simon	Regularly throughout the year

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

Appendix 4

19 July 2022

Item	Lead Contributor	Purpose
Headstart Housing support to Care Leavers	Kate Kozlova-Boran/ Tiffany Bright	Report on Head Start Housing support to care leavers.
Corporate Parenting Committee Strategy 2022 - 2024	Dan Jones	For Members to discuss and approve the strategy
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	To hear the views of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
Performance Report	Mandy Moore	To provide information on the performance of Children’s Services and trends.
Update on Initial Health Assessment Performance	Dan Jones	To provide an update on Initial Health Assessment performance and actions taken to improve it.
Sufficiency Strategy Update	Catherine Wilson/Dan Jones	To provide an update to committee on the performance in this area.

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

September 2022

Item	Lead Contributor	Purpose
Adoption Service Report Adoption Statement of Purpose	Dan Jones	To provide update and performance information on the Adoption Service
After Care Report	Luke Froment	To provide feedback on developments for Care Leavers
Update on Joint work and Housing Protocol for Care Leavers	Dan Jones /Ben Tovey	To report on the joint work between Housing and Social Care and the agreed arrangements for housing Care Leavers
Performance Report	Mandy Moore	To provide information on the performance of Children’s Services and trends.
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	To hear the views of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
CLA Health Report	Health	To provide an update to committee on the health offer to CLA
Update on Fostering Recruitment	Dan Jones	To provide an update on Fostering Recruitment in Thurrock

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

January 2023

Item	Lead Contributor	Purpose
LADO Report	Ruth Murdock	To provide feedback on the work of the Local Authority Designated Officer
Overview of Safeguarding Arrangements for Looked After Children	Ruth Murdock	To offer sufficient information to satisfy Elected Members that the safeguarding needs of Children including Looked After Children and Care Leavers are appropriately addressed
Placements and Commissioning Annual Report	Catherine Wilson	To provide assurance to the Committee about the work carried out with regards to commissioning and monitoring of children's homes and supported accommodation.
Fostering Statement of Purpose Fostering Report	Dan Jones	To provide an update on the Fostering Service and share the Fostering Statement of Purpose
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	To hear the views of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
Transition arrangements for CLA	Dan Jones/Iyobosa Osunde	To update Committee members on the joint work being undertaken between children and adult social care.
Performance Report	Mandy Moore	To provide information on the performance of Children's Services and trends.
Virtual School Annual Report	Keeley Pullen	To report on the educational progress of Children Looked After

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2023

March 2023

Item	Lead Contributor	Purpose
Performance Report	Mandy Moore	To provide information on the performance of Children's Services and trends.
Early Help Annual Report Impact of edge of care work	Clare Moore	To provide information to the committee on Thurrock's Early Help Activity within Thurrock and the work carried out and the impact on children entering and leaving care.
Fostering and Adoption Panel Report	Dan Jones	To provide performance information on the Fostering and Adoption Panel.
Review Corporate Parenting Strategy	Dan Jones	Progress report
Participation Report	Ruth Murdock	To provide key messages to CPC about matters of importance to looked after children and care leavers
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	To hear the views of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
Youth Offending Service Report	Clare Moore/Probation	To provide an overview to Committee on support provided to CLA and Care Leavers by the Youth Offending and Probation Services

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

June 2023

Item	Lead Contributor	Purpose
UASC Report	Luke Froment	To provide feedback to committee on the work with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
Missing Report	Clare Moore	To provide information to the committee on the work carried out with children who go missing to reduce episodes and report on findings of Return Home Interviews.
Private Fostering Report	Dan Jones	To provide information to the committee on Private Fostering Activity within Thurrock and the work carried out to ensure they are safe.
Children Looked After Initial Assessments – Update	Dan Jones /Health partners	To provide an update on the performance in this area and actions being taken to ensure children are having their health needs assessed and met.
Children in Care Council Update	Open Door	To hear the views of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
Performance Report	Mandy Moore	To provide information on the performance of Children’s Services and trends.
IRO Annual Report	Trevor Willis	To update Corporate Parenting Committee on the work of the IRO service
After Care Participation and Feedback Report	Luke Froment	To provide feedback on participation with care leavers

Work Programme

Committee: Corporate Parenting

Year: 2022/2023

Dates of Meetings: 19 July 2021, 06 September 2021, 04 January 2022 and 21 March 2022

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
19 July 2022		
Childrens Social Care Performance 2021-22	Mandy Moore	Officers
Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy Update	Catherine Wilson/Dan Jones	Officers
Corporate Parenting Strategy	Janet Simon	Officers
Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children	Dan Jones	Officers
Inspire - Head Start Housing: Supporting Care Leavers	Kate Kozlova-Boran	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
06 September 2022		
Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Corporate Parenting Committee – Annual Report 2021/2022	Democratic Services Officer	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

04 January 2023

Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Independent Reviewing Officer – Annual Report	Ruth Murdock	Officers
Annual Report of the Virtual Schools	Keeley Pullen	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

21 March 2023

Children's Social Care Performance	Mandy Moore	Officers
Children in Care Council Update	Chair Children in Care Council & Thurrock Open Door	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item