

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

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **13 September 2022**

Committee Room 2, CO3, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), George Coxshall (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Martin Kerin, Srikanth Panjala and Graham Snell

Sarah Barlow, Church of England Representative
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, HealthWatch Thurrock
Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors John Kent, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, James Thandi and Lynn Worrall

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 16
To approve as a correct record the minutes of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 June 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. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.	

4	Declaration of Interests	
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **5 September 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.

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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 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 June 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), George Coxshall (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Srikanth Panjala, Graham Snell and Lynn Worrall (Substitute) (substitute for Martin Kerin)

Sarah Barlow, Church of England Representative
Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies: Kim James, Chief operating Officer, Healthwatch Thurrock
Angela Surrey, Youth Worker, Children's Services
Councillor Kerin

In attendance: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Manager
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Coles, Independent Chairperson & Scutineer Thurrock LSCP

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.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Children Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8th February 2022 were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4. Youth Cabinet Update

A written report was provided.

5. Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership: Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review - Action Plans

The LSCP Business Manager introduced the report.

The Parent Governor representative asked who had been invited to attend the A Safe Place to Play conference in July 2022.

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed that sports organisations in the Borough had been invited such as sports and dance clubs. Professionals such as the Community Safety Partnership, the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and Essex Police had also been invited to give talks.

Councillor Worrall queried whether incidents of neglect were rising or decreasing and asked what is being done to reduce neglect. Councillor Worrall also asked how the numbers in Thurrock compared to other neighbouring authorities.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that Child in Need numbers have reduced and in comparison to our statistical neighbours in the region our numbers are comparable and actually slightly below. She confirmed they are doing a lot of work around Early Help and Think Family's service to make sure they are engaging families much earlier to reduce the incidents of neglect. Child Protection numbers remain fairly steady.

Councillor Worrall referred to the Shae and Ashley Local Health Review and noted that 2 of the 14 actions have been completed and asked when all the actions will be completed by.

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed that they are working through the other actions, there are timescales for when an action should be completed by and this is monitored.

Councillor Panjala asked about the number of cases involving violence and vulnerability in Thurrock and asked what is being done to tackle this including through their work with SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock).

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed she was unable to confirm the numbers of cases at the meeting today however, through their joint work with SET they do discuss the number of cases and they look at what they can do to tackle these issues collectively as well as locally.

Councillor Panjala raised the issue of whether working with neighbourhood watch could help support to reduce crime.

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed that the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership work closely with the Community Safety Partnership who do a lot of work with the neighbourhood watch service and she would be happy to

contact her counterpart in CSP to reach out and do some work with the Neighbourhood watch service too.

The Independent Chairperson & Scrutineer Thurrock LSCP added that in relation to the issue of neglect, early intervention is key to preventing neglect before it gets to the point where a child needs to go on a Child Protection Plan and their partners and health colleagues are also a key part of that. In relation to Child Protection Plan numbers, they are steady and they benchmark in terms of comparison to their statistical neighbours and nationally very well.

Councillor Snell referred to the findings from the National Child Safeguarding Reviews on Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and asked if we are confident that in Thurrock we are doing what these people were not doing.

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed that the LSCP (Local Safeguarding Children Partnership) have considered the reviews of Star Hobson, Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, Child Q in City & Hackney and the Croydon review 'Ben' and they have compiled an action plan of the recommendations. Where an agency is responsible for an area they have been asked to evidence what is currently in place and what additionally needs to be done. Once this information has been returned and collated agencies will be tasked with actions on what needs to be put in place, with identified timescales. This is in its early stages as the documentation went out two weeks ago and the agencies have been given a month to respond.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that they have completed the multi-agency MASH audit and audits with partners from health and education to reassure themselves that decisions being made are timely and that they are considering any safeguarding issues and so far in those audits the outcomes have been good and outstanding. In MASH they have audits fortnightly and a wider audit is completed every other month across the partnership too.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that the work the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help and the LSP have been doing did not happen in those places where the incidents subject to review happened. She confirmed that they are looking at what's happening on the ground, that caseloads are right for the workers and that the right agencies are working with them. They are very open to constantly looking at their practice and having other agencies come in and look at what they are doing and how decisions are made.

Councillor Anderson mentioned the external review into Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Activity and noted the learning and recommendations would be published in June 2022 and queried whether a verbal update could be provided at the meeting tonight.

The LSCP Business Manager confirmed it is not ready yet, it is in the process of being signed off and should be on their website in the next couple of days.
At 19.27 the LSCP Business Manager left the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee: -

- 1. Note the Partnership priorities for 2022-2024, update on the work of the LSCP and the progress made on Action Plans to date.**

6. The Care Review of Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel Review of Child Protection

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help introduced the report.

The Chair referred to the Care Review and the recommended investment of £76 million pounds to recruit 9000 more foster carers over 3 years, the Chair noted that Thurrock have already started an ambitious foster care recruitment policy and questioned whether this would affect their targets in any way.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help stated that investment in funding for the recruitment of foster carers is always welcome and explained that the recruitment of foster carers is a national issue. The Review makes recommendations about the use of family members and trying to use them first and she explained that we know children will often drift back to their families as they get older. It is being looked at how kinship carers can get the same support as stranger foster carers. It might be that we can increase our kinship carers alongside our foster carers. The feeling within the report is that lots of people want to be foster carers and if more is done to support them then we will get more foster carers. The remuneration in Thurrock to foster carers is very good, it is reviewed regularly, and it is in line with agency foster carers. Thurrock foster carers council tax is paid and they are supported through supervising social workers and therapists.

Councillor Coxshall referred to the unregulated care placements for under 18's and questioned how many we use in Thurrock currently and how the recommendation to rule out unregulated placements for under 18's will affect Thurrock.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that currently we have two young people in an unregistered placement. It is always a last resort, they are reviewed regularly, Ofsted are informed and increased visits to these placements are completed. The priority is always to place a child in foster care, if this is not possible then they will look at a Residential placement and they will always try creative ways to make a placement work.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services explained that in the Care Review they are suggesting supported accommodation for over 16's will need to be regulated and provide "care". Some older young people don't want to be in a care arrangement and supported accommodation is allowed under the current legislation. Thurrock has quite a few children in supported accommodation and that would be a big shift which would be resource intensive as it would probably mean fees would increase so those placements

can comply with the regulations that Ofsted require and they will probably need more staff. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help added that some young people would struggle with that level of intensity.

Councillor Panjala queried what is the current position on the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that there is a consistent supply of permanent workers. The majority of managers are permanent. In terms of the social worker work force there are a number of agency workers. Compared to Thurrock's statistical neighbours and nationally the retention rate is pretty good at around 20%. There is a challenge nationally around recruiting and retaining social workers.

Councillor Worrall asked whether kinship carers are paid.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help stated that if Children's social care are making an arrangement for a child to live with a family member then we would complete a reg 24 assessment to make sure it is appropriate and if it is then the kinship carer would be paid a fostering allowance.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services clarified that this would not necessarily be the case if it was a family arrangement.

Councillor Worrall asked whether further funding is expected to be received.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that in the report the author does state the figure that would be required to make these changes. That figure however is an estimate for what will be required nationally and it is not known what proportion of that Thurrock would receive. Commitment from the Government is required and the Government's response to the review is not known yet.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services confirmed that in the review there are 80 recommendations and there will be fundamental changes to the way they work and for families also. The Government's response is required by the end of the year. The Government may not accept all of the recommendations but they may accept some and some of the changes would require legislative change.

Councillor Anderson referred to the recommended investment of £2bn in family help, he questioned how much funding will be distributed between different Local Authority's and the mechanism for deciding how much each Authority will receive.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services confirmed this is yet to be confirmed but looking at other programmes she suspects there may be trailblazing which is where Local Authority's will bid and say that they can start to deliver a project and funding will then be awarded to them for this. There

will also be some criteria applied around finance which will be applied across the whole country. Thurrock were recently included in the Family Hubs pilot and there is funding that goes with that and it is very much about family support and help. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed 75 authorities have been put forward and are eligible for the family hubs £300 million funding over 3 years. It is not known what proportion Thurrock will receive from that yet.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services stated that in the National Safeguarding report they are looking at the introduction of multi-disciplinary teams. The Independent Chairperson & Scrutineer Thurrock LSCP is on the panel and Thurrock would be well placed to pilot some of this.

The Chair commented that the report is very new and the Government will be reviewing it by the end of this year and so hopefully we will get a more complete picture as to how it will affect Thurrock in the New Year.

At 19.45 The Independent Chairperson & Scrutineer Thurrock LSCP left the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Are involved in discussing the Review (s) proposals and recommendation and the impact these will have on service delivery over the next few years.**
- 2. Provide challenge and input into the development of the recommendations through the government consultation, and to be involved in the reshaping of children's social care services in the next five years.**

7. Education National Drivers: Schools White Paper, SEND & AP Green Paper, Levelling Up, Skills Act, School Admission and Attendance Guidance

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director for Education and Skills. In relation to the Schools White Paper and the proposed measure that schools will offer a minimum school week of 32.5 hours a week by September 2023, the Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed that having spoken to Schools most of them are already offering this in one way or another already.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills also referred to the proposed measure that by 2030 all schools will be part of a strong multi-academy trust and commented that Thurrock has a number of multi-academy trusts but also has some stand-alone Academy's. The Assistant Director for Education and Skills noted that the stand-alone Academy's are happy in how they currently operate and they are all currently rated as 'Good'. The Assistant Director for

Education and Skills and Corporate Director of Children's Social Care have met with their stand-alone academy schools already and are due to meet with them again in a few weeks to talk them through this.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills Access referred to the plan for funded training for a senior mental health lead, she explained that the School Mental Health Wellbeing Service has been in operation for two and a half years and Thurrock have almost led the way with some of this work. Moving on to the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper, the Assistant Director for Education and Skills commented that in her opinion it is positive that SEND and Alternative Provision will be included under one framework as many children in Alternative Provision have got a range of SEND requirements. They announced the framework yesterday and therefore the Assistant Director for Education and Skills has not had the opportunity to go through this yet.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills updated the Committee that they have managed to secure the resources to move forward with the plan for an online portal and hopefully it will create a digital solution for people to review their plans.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills noted in relation to The Skills and Post 16 Education Act Thurrock have been very positive in improving skills development. A possible challenge to ensuring adults have maths skills to progress in career opportunities is that schools are struggling to recruit maths teachers and she therefore confirmed that Thurrock are looking at how they can build capacity locally in this regard.

In relation to the Working together to improve school attendance guidance, the Assistant Director for Education and Skills informed the Committee that they hold fortnightly meetings regarding children who are missing education and confirmed that they are monitoring and tracking those children.

Councillor Coxshall commented that Thurrock should be proud of what they can offer as a skills hub and we should be promoting it. He has seen friends pushed down education pathways and for one friend it has taken him 5 years to get his life back on track.

Councillor Worrall questioned if we go down the route of every school being part of a multi-academy trusts what role will Thurrock Council continue to have?

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed that the Council will have a role as all their schools are already multi-academy trusts and stand-alone academy trusts and they continue to have a large role in working in partnership with them. The Local Authority has a strong role in driving up attainment in schools. Skills is another area where the Local Authority have a key role as they have to submit data to the Government regarding children who are not in education or training. The Local Authority are also responsible for SEND, EHCP plans and Alternative Provisions.

Councillor Worrall queried what the backlog of outstanding schools to be inspected is.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed that we don't have a big backlog. They are finding a lot of the early years providers have gone through Ofsted inspections recently and they have very few providers that are not rated as good or better.

Councillor Worrall requested an update with regard to the recruitment of teachers.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed she regularly meets with the CEO's of the multi-academy trusts and although there was some challenges, this is not something they have raised recently. Recruitment for support staff and learning support assistants is more of a challenge. She confirmed they do have a recruitment and retention group who work with the schools. They have a number of Early Career teachers coming through the system however, retention is a challenge and it cannot be underestimated the challenges teachers have faced over the last two years.

The Church of England Representative referred to the register for children not in school and queried how that is managed as she has had over the past year as a teacher two children from foster care coming into her class from other Local Authority areas, one was on her register for 6 weeks before being moved out of the area again and another one for 8 weeks who is still on her register despite also moving out of the area. She highlighted that it makes her class attendance look poor but also that these children are missing out on weeks of their education and it looks like they are still in her school as they remain on her register.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills clarified that if a Thurrock child moves somewhere else it is the responsibility of the virtual school to look into this and ensure a smooth transition. For those moving into the area the admissions team try to place them in a school nearby.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help explained that where children are looked after they do try and keep them in their own school so they can maintain links with their community and family even if they have moved to another neighbouring borough. If a child is placed miles away then they would have to look at changing their schools.

Councillor Snell commented that he was recently privy to a survey completed by a master's student regarding Newly Qualified Teachers and it asked them about their knowledge around SEND education and he was surprised to learn that a lot of SEND teaching modules are optional and therefore going back to the issue regarding the challenges around provision of SEND training he noted that there are likely to be a lot of teachers who don't have any relevant SEND training.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed that they have discussed this issue with the Harris Academy Teaching Hub and they have completed a lot of work with the SENCO in schools in training and supporting them. They have also looked at what they can offer to teachers too. They have recognised that there is a real challenge in the early years sector in that little ones have lost a lot of early language development opportunities over the last two years such as attending playgroups and they have looked to put in additional training for the early years providers to help with this. Health have also contributed to the training as there has been a significant increase in the number of little children on EHCP plans. They are looking at language delay and what can be done to enable these children to catch-up.

Councillor Snell queried what the Local Inclusion Dashboard is.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed they have a SEND dashboard at the moment but they need to work out how they are going to capture Alternative Provision data into that too. Ofsted did comment when they visited that they had a robust set of data.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills raised in relation to the green paper there is not much written about home to school transport and that is an area that is significantly overspending and in her opinion it is a policy that needs a review. They are pulling together a response to the paper.

Councillor Worrall highlighted that Tilbury is an area of high deprivation and they have lost two nurseries recently and she questioned if there will be enough places for all children in the area to attend nursery as vital skills are learnt at nursery in preparation for school and previously children who didn't attend nursery were holding others back in the infant's schools.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills responded that there are nurseries in that area that have availability and they are working with other providers to see if there is any more availability. Currently the work is being done and the Committee will be updated on the progress of this in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Recognises the amount of change and amendments to education over the next few years.**
- 2. Provided challenge around how the proposed and new changes to the educational landscape support Thurrock children and young people**

8. Children's Social Care Performance - Quarter 4 2021-22

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help explained that as a receiving Authority for unaccompanied asylum seeker children Thurrock often has higher levels of care leavers than other Local Authority's as they often come into the system around 16 -17 years old.

Adoption numbers are starting to go up following lots of delays in court proceedings as a result of Covid.

The Chair was pleased to note that the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan was below our statistical neighbours as well as the national average and thanked the Team.

Councillor Worrall queried the figure that 50.6% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in part or full-time education, employment or training and questioned why 50% of care leavers are not doing any of these.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help responded that a year ago the number was at 41.4 % as some of the care leavers really struggled through Covid to access education and employment. She confirmed they are being creative to support young people back into education.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills explained that they have panels meeting weekly and staff are contacting them every other day. She stated that the figure is not where they want it to be and she agreed they have a lot of opportunities in Thurrock such as the Prince's Trust and On-track Thurrock Programme but the issue is engaging care leavers. Covid had an impact on this group of young people and a lot of them experienced mental health challenges. She commented that hopefully they will see an increase in these numbers as we come further out of the pandemic.

Councillor Worrall raised the issue of housing for young people and asked what work is being done with the local plan and highlighted that young people cannot go on the housing list if living with their parents or a responsible person.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills confirmed that they are heavily involved with colleagues in housing to identify units to support care leavers. They currently come into the 'Head Start' housing scheme and they get them ready for a tenancy. She explained that you can't just put a young person in a property without the support around it. She assured members that they are involved in the local plan.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services stated that the Youth Cabinet are also involved in the local plan.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help explained that when looking at housing for care leavers they try to make the plans so that it is the right housing at the right time. Some young people want to stay at home so if they are in foster care that might mean a staying put arrangement. Not every person is ready to live on their own at 18.

Councillor Worrall queried if a foster child went to university could they return to their foster placement in Thurrock when they want to come home.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help stated that in respect of a staying put arrangement both the foster carer and the child must agree to it. If the child is going to a university far away they will be supported to return to their foster placement in the holidays and they will fund this. It is expected that a young person from Thurrock who wanted to return to Thurrock after completing university would be housed in Thurrock.

Councillor Coxshall queried the number of foster placements over 20 miles away.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help explained that they do always try to place children close to home and within 20 miles. Recently they had a large sibling group that couldn't all be placed in the same placement but they wanted them to be in placements close together so they could have carers who could work together to preserve the sibling relationships and in this instance the placements were over 20 miles away. She noted this was not the only reason to explain the figures but an example of why this was decision was made in this case.

Councillor Snell commented that overall this is a good news story and we should be proud of this. Officers have done well to get these figures going back in the right direction and he thanked them for their hard work.

The Chair echoed Councillor Snell's comments.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Reviewed the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to date to manage demand for statutory social care services.**

9. Work Programme

Nothing was added to the work programme.

The meeting finished at 8.37 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

Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting
September 2022
Youth Cabinet Update Report

Purpose of the report:

The Youth Cabinet would like to provide the committee with an update of their work.



- 1.1 **Make your Mark Campaign and Thurrock Teenage Mental Health Walk** – In February the Make your Mark campaign took place where Thurrock young people voted on a topic they cared about the most. Results of the national voting were released in early March. After 434,492 young people voted from over 780 schools, colleges and youth groups we now know that health and wellbeing is the biggest issue facing young people in the UK. At Youth Cabinet Working Group meetings, members have been exploring ideas on how they can support the theme and promote health and well-being to Thurrock young people. One of the ideas was to run a well-being walk over the summer holidays. Over the past few months' members have worked to set up the walk including creating posters, promoting the opportunity, planning the walk route and Q&A's about mental health to raise awareness. The walk took place on Wednesday 25th July at Grangewaters Outdoor Education Centre in which a group of 16 young people walked around the lake and spoke about mental and what it means to them on route. The day was a great success with lots of discussions about well-being, young people sharing their thoughts and feeling connected to others. Members would like to run another well-being walk later in the year. Our work on Health and Well-being will continue at our next Working Group meeting in September
- 1.2 **Interview Panel opportunities** – Youth Cabinet members have had the opportunity to sit on numerous interview panels this year. The most recent was for the recruitment of the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Place Delivery in early July. The two cabinet members found the experience to be enlightening. They enjoyed sitting on the panel being

part of the selection process. It provided them with some valuable insight into the how interviews take place. All good experience for when they eventually go for interviews as young adults themselves.

- 1.3 **Thurrock Youth Cabinet Mid-Year Elections Outcome** – The Thurrock Youth Cabinet Chairperson has recently left due to finding and moving onto full time employment. Members are thankfully for all the work and commitment during her time with us. A mid-year election will be held in early September to re-elect to the vacant Chairperson role.
- 1.4 **British Youth Council June Convention** – Unfortunately, the June BYC Convention was cancelled to the rail strikes taking place. However, this has been moved to October 8th in London. The day will be an opportunity for the young people to network with other areas, attend workshops, listen to guest speakers, join campaign workshops on health and votes at 16, Make your Mark focus sessions and much more.
- 1.5 **Annual Conference July 2022** – At the end of July the UK Youth Parliament Annual Conference took place at Hull University. Thurrock’s MYP attended the event to represent Thurrock Youth Cabinet. Here is a short paragraph summarising his experience of the weekend.

“On Friday 22 July I arrived in Hull to a breezy check-in, orientated myself to my room and collected lunch to eat with some MYPs from other regions. I enjoyed the opening ceremony with politicians, the Bank of England youth forum and Joe Seddon. I then had the regions and nations session with everyone in the eastern region discussing what we have done what we plan to do and our policies we would be speaking on in the following days. I also took the opportunity to voice my discontent with the structure of the big vote which was respected and dealt with. I enjoyed a relaxing evening of dinner and activities with newly made friends.

On Saturday I had several sessions of the big vote with multiple opportunities to speak of support or against other's motions. On Sunday, I spoke on my motion it passed with an overwhelming majority of 96%.

All in all, it was an amazing experience with lots of networking, debate and fun moving forward I am planning meetings with various politicians regarding my projects, running a focus group with children in schools with moderate and severe learning disabilities and completing things already in motion”

- 1.6 **Work on the horizon**
- Linking with Local Plan Manager for members to have an input into the local plan strategy
 - Youth Cabinet Recruitment Drive
 - Linking with Comms Team to explore the development of a Youth Cabinet Podcast

For any questions regarding this update report, please contact:

Name:

E-mail:

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13 September 2022		ITEM: 6
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
2021/22 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children's Social Care		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Lee Henley, Strategic Lead, Information Management		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The annual report on the operation of the Children Social Care Complaints Procedure covering the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 is attached as an appendix.

The report sets out the number of representations received in the year including the number of complaints, key issues arising from complaints and the learning and improvement activity for the department.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and note the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This is the annual report for Thurrock Council on the operation of the Children Social Care Complaints Procedure covering the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on Children Social Care complaints.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 This is a monitoring report for noting, therefore there are no options analysis. The annual report is attached as an appendix and includes consideration of reasons for complaints, issues arising from complaints and service learning.

3.2 Summary of representations received for the reporting period

3.2.1 The following representations were received during 2021/22:

- 25 Compliments
- 10 Initial feedback
- 15 Complaints
- 0 Ombudsman Enquiries
- 11 MP Enquiries
- 29 Members Enquiries

Further details are summarised within the appendix.

3.3 Learning from Complaints

Complaints and feedback provide the service with an opportunity to identify areas that can be improved; they provide a vital source of insight about people's experience of social care services.

Upheld complaints are routinely analysed to determine themes and trends and services are responsible for implementing learning swiftly. Further details are outlined within the appendix.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on children social care complaints. It is best practice for this to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. This report is for monitoring and noting.

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

- 5.1 This report has been agreed with the Children Social Care senior management team. Consideration of complaints issues and learning and improvement arising from them are identified as an ongoing priority in the report.

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

- 6.1 All learning and key trends identified in the complaints and compliments reporting have a direct impact on the quality of service delivery and performance. The reporting ensures that valuable feedback received from service users and carers is captured effectively and regularly monitored, with the primary focus on putting things right or highlighting and promoting where services are working well.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**

Assistant Director Finance

There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

7.2 Legal

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

The complaints and representations process is governed by The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. Regulation 13 requires the Council to produce an annual report as soon as possible after the end of each financial year on the operation of the process.

The report must be prepared in light of the statutory guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints: Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others'.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead Community Development and Equalities

There are no specific diversity issues arising from this report.

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 Social Care Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2021/22

Report Author:

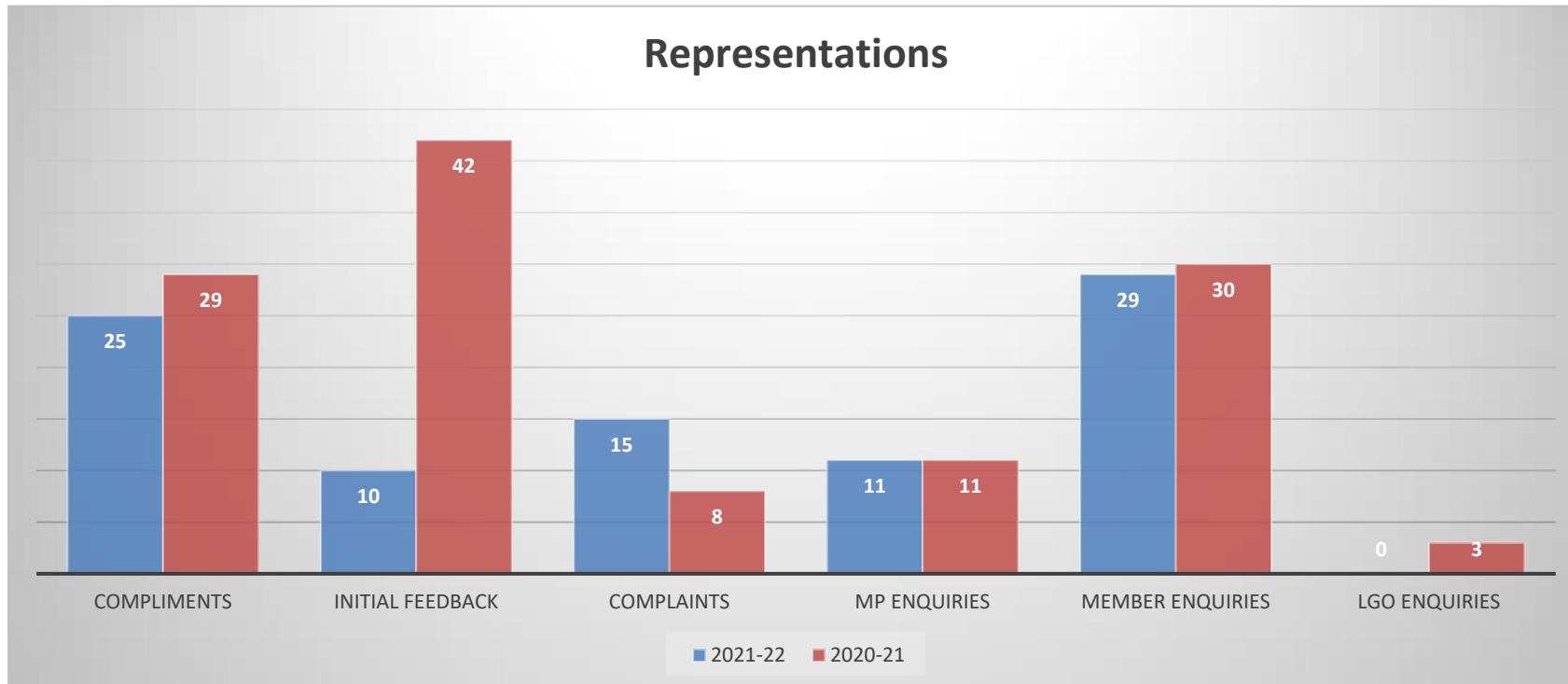
Lee Henley

Strategic Lead, Information Management
HR, OD & Transformation

Appendix 1 - 2021/22 - Children's Social Care – Complaints & Representations

1. Volume of Representations – 2020/21 vs 2021/22:

Below is a comparison of all representations received during both years. A total of **90** representations were received in 2021/22 compared to **123** in the same period of 2020/21.



2. Complaints – 2020/21 vs 2021/22:

Below is the comparison between the two years with additional details provided. There were no escalations beyond stage 1 for both periods:

Feedback:	Initial Feedback	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Stage 3 complaints	Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases	Cases closed in period	Cases Cancelled	% of complaints upheld in period	% timeliness of response for those due in period
2021/22	10	15	0	0	0	14	0	57%	80%
2020/21	42	8	0	0	0	9	0	44%	75%
Difference	-32	+7	0	0	0	+5	0	+13%	+5%

*For 2021/22:

- 15 complaints were received in the reporting period. These are shown within section 4
- 15 complaints were due a response in the reporting period. 12 of 15 (80%) were responded to within timeframe
- 14 complaints were responded to within this reporting period. These are shown in section 5
- 8 of 14 complaints responded to (57%) were upheld. These are shown in section 5 and the learning is detailed within section 3

3. Learning from upheld complaints:

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	<p>Communication</p> <p>Complaint 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns that the children are being let down regarding contact with their siblings. This is due to the contact arrangements not being clearly communicated by the Service Concerns raised that there are outstanding expense payments for transportation costs for contact between the siblings <p>(Children Looked After Team 1)</p> <p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sibling contact timetable has been updated Contracts that detail contact arrangements, including sibling contact details, are now held on file to make contact agreements clearer for families Staff reminded of the importance of ensuring contact expenses are paid on time 	<p>Decision Making</p> <p>Complaint 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child submitted a complaint regarding possibly being removed from their placement at New Beginnings, despite the child feeling safe and happy with the current placement The child is concerned that their views regarding the potential move have not been taken on board <p>(Children Looked After Team 3)</p> <p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that an advocate is involved at an early stage of care To ensure staff work with the young person to ensure that their views are listened to and/or considered 	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Complaint 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child and Family assessment that was produced contained false and misconstrued information. <p>(Children and Family assessment Team 1)</p> <p>Learning: The points below were made clear to the service via a service brief and in the team meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records held must be checked with multi agency partners Records held must be confirmed with the parents to ensure they are correct Child and Family assessments are shared with the family at the completion and any incorrect information is amended and recorded on the system

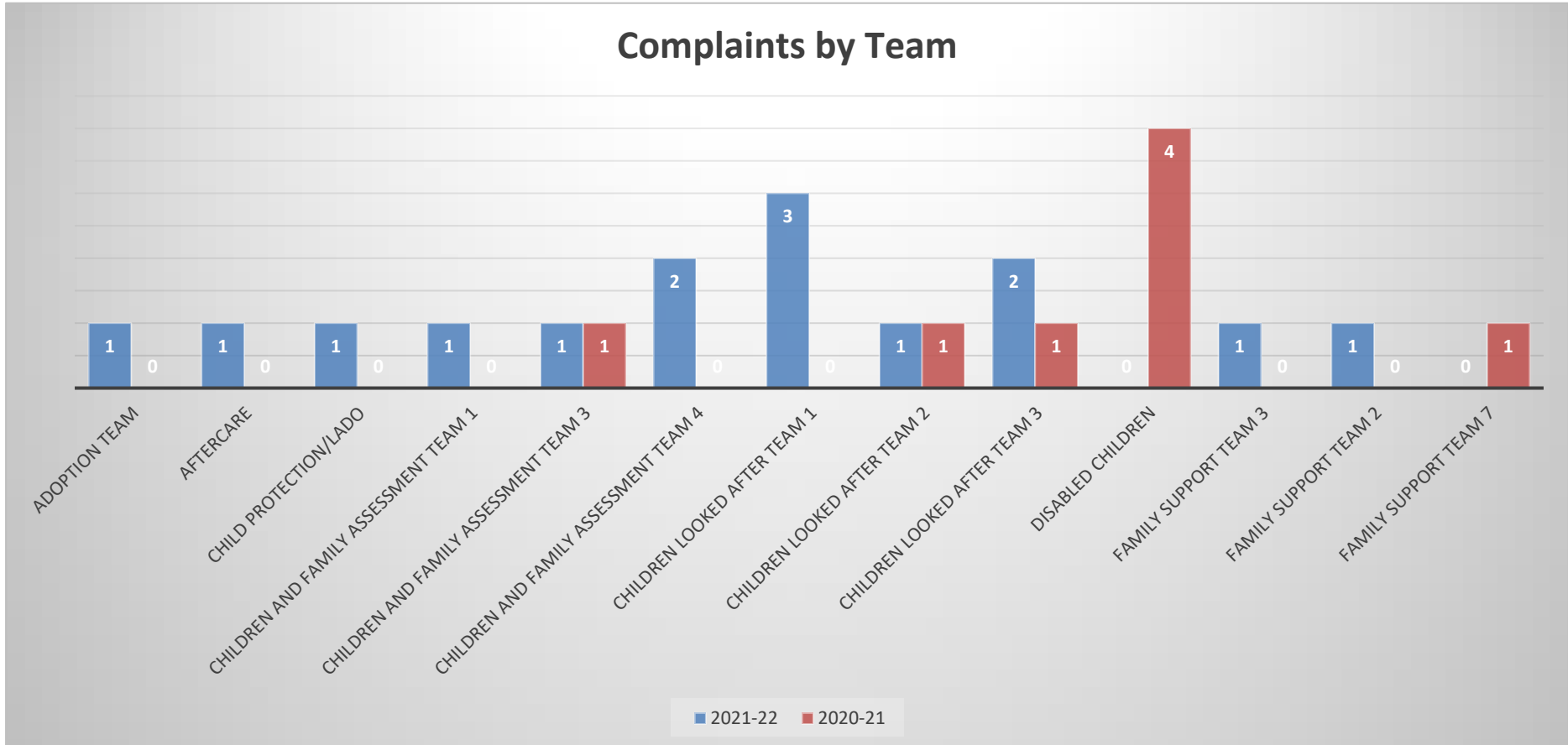
Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	<p>Communication</p> <p>Complaint 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child’s emails and telephone calls to the Adoption Team have not been responded to <p>(Adoption Team)</p> <p>Learning: A duty log has been implemented which will be completed each day. This log will record all incoming emails/calls and will detail what needs to be actioned</p> <p>Complaint 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns in relation to a lack of response from the Social Worker <p>(Children Looked After Team 1)</p> <p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant Social Worker spoken to and reminded of the importance of ensuring that contact is consistent 	<p>Decision Making</p> <p>when taking any action relating to their care</p>	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Complaint 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns that the safety plan completed as part of the Child and Family Assessment was not explicit regarding potential risks to the child <p>(Children and Family Assessment Team 4)</p> <p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training undertaken with the member of staff who completed the safety plan, to provide guidance and advice on how to complete a safety plan so any risks are clearly identified

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning Communication	Root Cause 2 and associated learning Decision Making	Root Cause 3 and associated learning Assessment
	<p>Complaint 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns that the parent was not informed of the requirement for any gifts for children to be brought 72 hours before contact, to ensure that they are safe to open due to COVID safety precautions <p>(Children Looked After Team 1)</p> <p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that reminders relating to COVID precautions are issued ahead of any arranged contact appointments <p>Complaint 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns from the child that contact received from their Social Worker was patronising and that they feel they are not being listened to <p>(Children Looked After Team 3)</p>		

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning Communication	Root Cause 2 and associated learning Decision Making	Root Cause 3 and associated learning Assessment
	<p>Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various methods and strategies of communication have been explored in supervision to ensure Social Workers are able to take on board any perspective and to prevent overloading service users or residents with too much information on a subject, as this may be perceived as patronising language 		

4. Breakdown of complaints received:

This may be different to figures shown within the upheld complaints section below, as the upheld section is based on closed complaints (not complaints received). The figures below will also exclude cancelled complaints.



5. Upheld Complaints:

This may be different to figures shown above within the complaints received section, as the figures below are based on closed complaints (not complaints received).

Complaint Area	Volume Closed 2021/22	Upheld	Volume Closed 2020/21	Upheld
Adoption	1	1	0	N/A
Aftercare	1	0	0	N/A
Children Looked After Team 1	3	3	0	N/A
Children Looked After Team 2	1	0	1	0
Children Looked After Team 3/UAS	2	2	1	1
Disabled Children	0	N/A	4	3
Family Support Team 3	0	N/A	1	0
Children and Family Assessment Team 4	2	1	0	N/A

Complaint Area	Volume Closed 2021/22	Upheld	Volume Closed 2020/21	Upheld
Family Support Team 7	0	N/A	1	0
Children and Family Assessment Team 3	1	0	1	0
Children and Family Assessment Team 1	1	1	0	N/A
Child Protection/LADO	1	0	0	N/A
Family Support Team 2	1	0	0	N/A

6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints:

There were **nil/zero** enquiries from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), where they reached a final decision on any cases within the reporting period. This is positive and shows that the council are effective at dealing with complaints at the first point of contact.

7. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Cases:

Complainants are seeking resolution and welcome the involvement of a neutral third person who will be able to assist both the complainant and the service in negotiating a settlement to their complaint. ADR is implemented as a mechanism to resolve complaints swiftly should the complainant request escalation. This involves assessment of the presenting issues by the Complaints Team. It can also include mediation with the complainant and the service area. For the reporting period, there have been **0** cases of successful ADR.

8. Initial Feedback:

The Council receives feedback which following assessment does not constitute a formal complaint but still requires addressing. Those within scope of an 'Initial Feedback' are sent to the service with a request that swift action takes place to resolve the issue. This should negate the need for a formal complaint taking place. For the reporting period a total of **10** 'Initial Feedback' have been recorded:

Team	Feedback total
Family Support Team 4	1
Family Support Team 2	1
Prevention/Support Service	1
Aftercare	1
Children & Family Assessment Team 1	1
MASH	1
Family Support Team 3	1
Child Protection/LADO	1
Disabled Children	1
Children Looked After Team 2	1

9. Enquiries

During the reporting period the following enquiries were received:

- 29 Member/Cllr Enquiries
- 11 MP Enquiries

Member/Cllr Enquiries	Feedback Total
MASH	8
All Services (Youth services)	4
Family Support Team 3	2
Aftercare	2
Children and Family Assessment Team 2	2
Children Looked After Team 1	2
Children Looked After Team 2	1
Permanency/Court Team	1
Children Looked After Team 3	1
Disabled Children	1
Oaktree	1
Registration	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 1	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 3	1
Family Support Team 4	1

MP Enquiries	Feedback Total
MASH	3
Permanency/Court Team	2
Child Protection/LADO	2
Children Looked After Team 3	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 2	1
Family Support Team 1	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 3	1

10. External Compliments:

25 compliments have been received during this period compared to 29 in the same period last year, breakdown of teams is below.

Service Area (2021/22)	Total Received	Service Area (2020/21)	Total Received
Prevention/Support Service	4	Families Together	12
Family Support Team 7	3	Family Support Team 6	7
Family Support Team 6	3	Children and Family Assessment Team 1	2
Fostering Team	3	Family Support Team 1	2
Permanency/Court Team	2	Disabled Children	2
Family Support Team 4	2	Family Placement Service	1
Family Support Team 1	2	Children Looked After Team 1	1
Support for childminders	2	Children Looked After Team 2	1
Aftercare	1	Family Support Team 4	1
Family Support Team 3	1		
Families Together	1		
Children Looked After Team 2	1		

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11. Examples of External Compliments

Prevention/Support Service:

The young person spoke very highly of you and said that the support you provided helped to change her life as well as her families. She would like to now become a social worker so that she can offer the same support to other families which she received from you. She was so positive about the support she received from your team and is very grateful.

Fostering Team:

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for the opportunity to be part of the support of the Sibling group of 4.

I would like to thank both social workers for the opportunity to gain more skills. I would like to say thank you for communicating and working as a team supporting children with their reunification with Dad. Both working with us and our agency to support young people. It has been a real positive working professional relationship which I will always take with us in supporting young people.

Family Support Team 4:

I just wanted to thank you for finding the emergency placement for the children and all the additional support you have put in place. The children have told me how supportive you have been recently and how grateful they are for all the additional time you given them. I think we will all be relieved to see them both settled again in a new placement before Christmas.

12. Benchmarking

Complaints benchmarking information is summarised below. This was requested by Committee when the 2020/21 annual report was considered.

Council	Complaints Received	% Of complaints upheld	% Responded to within timeframe
Thurrock	15	57%	80%
Croydon	148	36%	70%
Haringey	25	16%	16%
Hounslow	19	37%	89%

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13 September 2022		ITEM: 7
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Fostering Recruitment Update		
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 of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

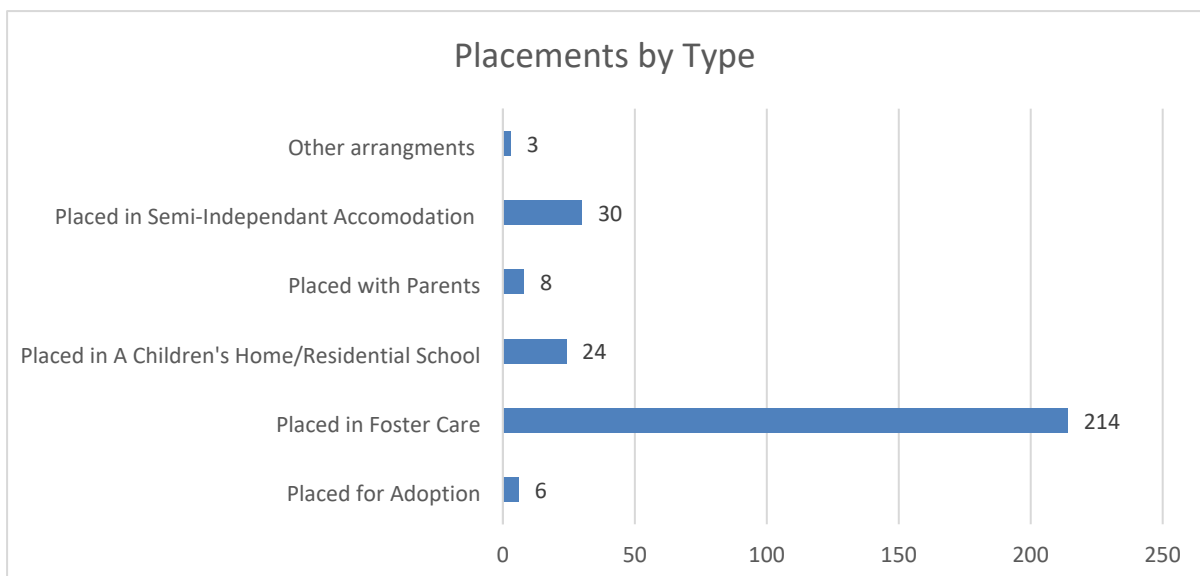
This report provides the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an outline of the fostering recruitment being undertaken and includes Key Performance Indicators reflecting the impact of the new brand with the implementation of the new marketing campaign.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Members are updated on the Thurrock’s Fostering Recruitment Strategy and its impact on the numbers of foster carer approvals.**
- 1.2 Members note the marketing activities being undertaken so opportunities are created to increase the recruitment of foster carers**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report is prepared to appraise members on the progress of recruitment of Foster Carers for Thurrock Council. We accept applicants from any background who are able to meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering and offer a safe loving home to a child. The recruitment process usually takes about four months from application to approval. This is shorter if the applicant is already an approved foster carer from another agency.
- 2.2 At the end of July 2022, there were 285 children looked after by Thurrock Council. They were placed as follows:



Of the 214 children placed in foster care at the 31 July 2022; the breakdown between external and internal placements is as follows:

31/07/2021	
In House	
Total number of Fostering Households	80
Number of children placed with in house carers	104
IFA	
Number of children placed with IFA carers	110

The number of children placed with Thurrock approved carers varies throughout the year but it usual for the range to be between 100-120 children placed with our own foster carers.

2.3 National Picture

Ofsted provide annual statistics on the national picture for fostering. It last reported in November 2021¹. Key points from the report in terms of recruitment are:

- The demand for foster placements exceeds the number of carers available and recruited
- People are more likely to enquire about fostering than in previous years but are less likely to make an application
- Nationally, 32% of applications resulted in approval as carers compared to 44% in previous years

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2020-to-31-march-2021/fostering-in-england-2020-to-2021-main-findings>

In July 2022 the Care Review² was published. This comprehensive review of the care system made specific recommendations in regard to Fostering Recruitment. Key points are:

- A Nation Recruitment Campaign to approve 3000 additional carers each year between 2023-2026
- Connected Carer should be sought from the wider child's network in addition to their family and friends (e.g., Teachers, nursery nurse etc)
- Extension of the Mockingbird Model of support to carers
- Enhanced training offer

The Government has yet to respond formally to the Care Review, but it is anticipated that action will be taken in respect of Fostering Recruitment on a national level in line with the review. Thurrock will continue to promote and recruit foster carers in line with current plans and will review the strategy when and a clear plan from central government is announced.

2.4 Local Offer

Thurrock Council has a highly competitive support offer for our foster carers. Foster carers approved by Thurrock Council receive:

- Priority for local placements for Thurrock children.
- Regular social work and clinical psychological 1:1 time and support
- An established fostering community with formal and informal support groups
- Online and in person specialist training program
- Hub carer model (*in development*)

Thurrock provides the following financial support per child per week

² <https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/> - pg 135 of the Final Report

Child's Age	Allowance only	Allowance + Care Skills fee	Allowance + Care Skills Plus fee	High need rate (Enhanced allowance and fee)
0 to 4	£147	£347	£397	£497
5 to 10	£168	£368	£418	£518
11 to 15	£210	£410	£460	£560
16+	£252	£452	£502	£602

In addition, Foster Carers who live in Thurrock and Foster a Thurrock child for a minimum number of days per annum have their Council Tax waived

2.5 Current recruitment position

Last financial year Apr 2021 to March 22

- Newly Approved Foster Carers = 11 Households
- Applications made that did not result in approval = 17 Households
- Left Fostering = 13 of those:
 - 1 Household ceased fostering due to ill-health
 - 3 Households had their approval ended due to standards of care concerns
 - 9 Retired from Fostering

This financial year Apr 2022 - August 2022

- Newly Approved Foster Carers = 3 Households
- Applications made that did not result in approval = 5 Households
- Left Fostering = 7
 - 1 Household ceased fostering due to ill-health
 - 2 Households left due to standards of care concerns
 - 4 Households retired from fostering
- 8 Households applications are being assessed as suitable to foster

Progress of applications (year to date compared to last year):

	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total YTD	2021/22
Number of households attending Information Sessions	1	1	3	0	-	5	39
Number of Enquiries	14	17	12	11	7	61	171
Number of IVs completed	6	3	2	6	2	19	72
Number of Applications Received	2	4	0	0	3	9	18
Number of applications dropped out	0	0	0	1	4	5	17
Numbers of approved foster carers	2	0	0	1	0	3	11
Transfer from IFA to Thurrock	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

2.6 Recruitment Activity

In the financial year 2021/22 Thurrock Council engaged in a broad range of recruitment activity and marketing. This included:

- Advertising in the MailOnline
- Television advertising
- Prominent advertising on the Thurrock Council Website
- Social Media Marketing via Instagram/Facebook and Twitter
- Physical Marketing around the borough, Billboards, Lampposts and Banners

This generated increased enquires and applications but end effect as demonstrated above is that Thurrock Council's position at the end of the year in terms of the number of foster placements available is broadly similar.

Continued marketing is required to both maintain our current position and to seek to grow the numbers of carers approved by Thurrock Council. A forward plan is attached to this document outlining out future actions. This will be reviewed should the government announce a nation campaign to ensure Thurrock Council aligns and benefits from such a campaign.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 In terms of recruitment of foster carers, Thurrock is able to recruit and support enough foster carers to keep the number of children placed in house stable. The effect of increased recruitment activity in the last year was to ensure sufficient carers were recruited to offset those leaving fostering. Thurrock requires a significant increase in applications to increase its position.
- 3.2 Thurrock Council will need to continue to attract members of the public in to foster. This will require further development of our marketing approach including using a range of media to generate interest and enquiries.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Members to note and consider the options available

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

- 5.1 We consult monthly with our foster carers via a group focussed on recruitment. Their views and ideas are included into our planning.

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

- 6.1 The Communications Team have supported the recruitment of Foster Carers and we would want this to continue with foster care recruitment being a corporate priority with marketing being innovative and wide ranging.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Corporate Finance – Resources and Place Delivery

The increased recruitment of foster carers will assist in the reduction of Independent Fostering Agencies and support the Council with their own cohort of foster carers.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Urenna Nwulu**
Safeguarding Solicitor – Team Leader

Thurrock Council is a registered Fostering Agency and recruits Foster Carers in line with its statement of purpose. The statement of purpose sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering agency and is required to be consistent with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards 2011, and the amended regulations.

The Council has a duty under Section 22 G of the Children Act 1989, so far as reasonably practicable, to secure accommodation for looked after children in the Council area, which meets the needs of those children: where this is consistent with those children's welfare.

Section 22C specifies that the provision of a foster placement is one of the ways the Council may provide that accommodation. The placement, so as is reasonably practicable must:

- a. Allow the child to live near his/her home;
- b. Not disrupt the child's education or training;
- c. Enable siblings to live together
- d. Meet a disabled child's particular needs
- e. Is within the Council's area

The successful recruitment of foster carers will assist the Council in meeting these duties

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

Applications to foster are welcomed from anyone of any background who wishes to apply. They are assessed against the National Minimum Fostering Standards and individual needs, circumstances etc. are addressed in detail.

The Fostering Service is committed to furthering equality, promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination in all its forms. We are committed to placing the needs of children first; to recognise children, young people and carers as individuals, and to treat our service users, carers and partner agencies with dignity and respect. We are also committed to raising the profile of equality and diversity issues across the Council.

The Fostering Service actively and consciously values diversity and difference and seeks to provide a high-quality service and fair and equal treatment for all our carers, children and young people. Our approach to promoting equality and diversity is to provide bespoke services, with due consideration and sensitivity to the complex needs of children and young people and families.

Increasing the numbers of foster carers provides greater choice of placements for looked after children and improved matching of children with carers. This will support our Thurrock children to fulfil their potential as they have homes providing stability.

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

Good practice is to place children in care in their local community where possible to do so. Unless the number of local foster placements are increased this could lead to children being placed further away.

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):


- Thurrock Fostering Statement of Purpose
- Payments to Foster Carers Policy
- Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2020-to-31-march-2021/fostering-in-england-2020-to-2021-main-findings>

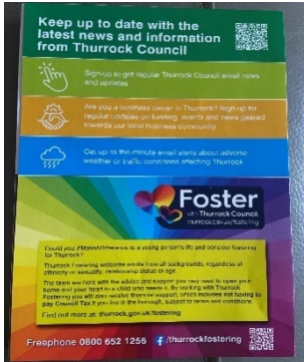

9. **Appendices to the report**


- Recruitment activity plan



Report Author:


Dan Jones
Strategic Lead CLA


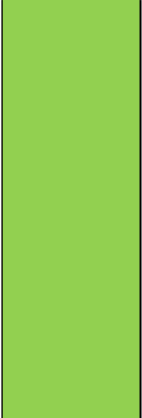
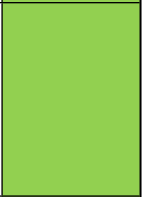

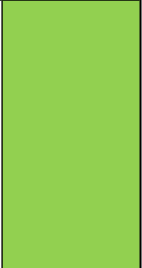

	Outcome	Actions	Progress	Timescales	RAG Rating
	<i>Thurrock Fostering service has a clear brand which is known and identifiable and recognised in Thurrock</i>	<i>Fostering Brand</i>			
		Banners across Thurrock so the brand is 'Out There'.	Banners have been placed within the Community. Posters in local shops and surgeries	Ongoing	
		Current Banners are visible around local schools, churches.	Banners have been placed in the Community. Recruitment team regularly check on them, to make sure not damaged or need replacing	Ongoing	
		Promote the brand through website, social media, Facebook, Instagram and the Council Twitter feed & TikTok.	Brand is promoted through these channels. Reviewed on a regular basis	Ongoing	
		Continue to Promote events on other Groups on Facebook	Recruitment continue to promote upcoming Thurrock Fostering events on other groups Facebook pages. Such as Fosterline, New Family Social, Local Community groups etc	Ongoing monthly	


		<p>Promote the Council Tax rebate offer to enhance the recruitment of foster carers.</p>	<p>Council Tax exempt - Advertised in Council Tax leaflet that was distributed in Annual bill. Advertised on Council webpages. Spoke about at fostering information events.</p>	<p>Review October</p>	
		<p>Enhance the use of banners to be advertised on prominent roundabouts within Thurrock</p>	<p>Currently we only have 1 roundabout outside Gateway school in Tilbury - renewed again on 7th May 2022 for another year at a cost of £750 Fostering would like more prime roundabouts but at present none available •Update April 2022 - Offered Southend Road/slip road on to A13 Stanford-le-Hope bypass – SS17 9HD for £2950 +VAT but decided to expensive and not a prime r/about. Hana confirmed unable to have it for cheaper as r/abouts are in demand.</p>	<p>Be reviewed on a monthly basis</p>	
<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Actions</p>	<p>Progress</p>	<p>Timescales</p>	<p>RAG Rating</p>	



	Corporate Parenting is owned through the Council and the Thurrock Fostering brand in all departments.				
		Thurrock Jobs website - Need for Foster Carers	Job Website has Fostering Banner on main landing page advising we need more Foster Carers	Completed	
		Promote our brand on Council vehicles that drive around the borough	<p>Agreed in principle 14 fleet van to have fostering logo on both sides of the vehicles. (Total Cost £650 + VAT) -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2022 Update - Awaiting to finalise - Comms will follow up/chase • 27/4/22 Update - Hana advised fleet got in contact yesterday (26/4) need artwork resize. Hana arranging. • 7/6/22- Update - Hana has chased again and asked for artwork dimensions, so we can re-size, if not we will go with original artwork they have <p>end of July - Hana sent another email and CC The manger in as well, asking for update on vans - upto 18/8 still not rec'd a response</p>	Be reviewed in September 2022	
		Head Teachers Bulletin	Fostering Article in Head Teachers Bulletin on 4th May and 18 May 2022, Before and during FCF	Completed May 2022	


		Thurrock Fostering Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review on fostering council webpage by FC and feedback is to have a Q&A/Myth busting section • Update 22/4/2022- emailed Steve - response no - by policy, we don't have any FAQs on the website because they are invariably just a duplication of information provided on individual service pages, which in the past have invariably resulted in information either getting out of step or doubling the maintenance overhead to keep the same information up-to-date in two different formats for no quantifiable benefit • 22/4/2022 - Asked if we could have a Myth busting section - awaiting response 	Review June/July 2022	
		Thurrock Fostering Logo on signature strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During FCF Sheila M agreed that all staff can insert fostering logo on signature strip for 2 weeks. Jo Desmond emailed all staff 	Completed May 2022	
		Lyn's Blog - Raise staff awareness	<p>Making staff aware of the importance and need for FC. Liking our Facebook page.</p> <p>Recruitment officers had a blog in Lyn's weekly message and talked about FCF and fostering</p>	Completed May 2022	



		#Team Thurrock - Raise staff awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on 'In the Loop' section (corporate notices) advising FCF starting on 9th May • FCF article and picture of Recruitment Team • Another way of making Thurrock Council staff aware of the need of Foster Carers 	Completed May 2022	
	Outcome	Actions	Progress	Timescales	RAG Rating
	<i>Our advertising promotes our offer</i>				
		New video promoting 'Siblings'	Video being produced late 2022 with 34 other LA/trust. This video's topic will be Siblings – No cost as there is still money left over from 2021 'Out There' video that was produce in 2021.	Review Oct 2022	
		Fostering Calendar	To be designed by Recruitment Team and distributed to everyone that has enquired over the last 3 years	Oct 22 - Start designing	
		Fostering e-Christmas Card	to start design process in Nov 2022 and to email to everyone that has enquired over the last 3 years	Nov-22	
	Outcome	Actions	Progress	Timescales	RAG Rating
		Marketing Opportunities			




	<p>Gazette</p>	<p>4 Paid Fostering Ads in Gazette throughout 2022 (Cost in Total £704.48+VAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 12 May 2022 • Thursday 8 September 2022 • Thursday 3 November 2022 • Thursday 5 January 2023 	<p>Completed (comms have arranged on our behalf)</p>	
	<p>Havering Resident Magazine</p>	<p>Fostering Advert in Magazine 1/2 page fostering advert- 15000 A4 glossy magazine given away with every copy of the Romford Recorder in month of April and May</p>	<p>Completed April 2022</p>	
	<p>Primary Times Magazine</p>	<p>Fostering Advert given to us for free in their Easter edition magazine. Primary Times goes into all primary school in Essex into the children's bookbags(61,000 copies printed). Also magazine online with a hyperlink on our Ad to our website</p>	<p>Completed - April 2022</p>	
	<p>Thurrock Adult Education Centre</p>	<p>Recruitment team are constantly keeping in touch with TACC, who support us in raising awareness of Thurrock Fostering</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	


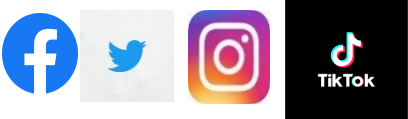
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Show	Date																											
Singin' In The Rain	05.04.22																											
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Joseph & The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat	26.09.22																											
	<p>Working with Thameside Theatre to promote Thurrock Fostering</p>	<p>Recruitment to speak to Thameside on a regular basis and request they share out Thurrock Fostering post on their FaceBook page</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>																									
	<p>Lakeside Shopping Centre</p>	<p>Hold fostering drop-in at their Community Stand - When available for free</p>	<p>reviewed monthly</p>																									

	<p>Drop-ins at Local Supermarkets</p>	<p>Once a quarter to have a community fostering stand in Thurrock at Morrisons, Tesco, Asda and Sainsburys.</p> <p>Dates so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26/4/2022- Morrisons - Corringham • 10/5/2022- Morrisons - Grays • 20/5/2022 - Asda - Tilbury • 7/9/2022 - Sainsburys - Chafford 	<p>reviewed quarterly</p>	
	<p>Thurrock News - residential e-newsletter</p>	<p>29th April 2022 - FCF fostering article in the residential newsletter and shows next 6 info/drop in events - Completed</p> <p>13th May 2022- FCF fostering article in the residential e-newsletter and shows next 3 info/drop in events - Completed</p> <p>Raise awareness to Thurrock Residents about the need for Foster Carers at Thurrock Council - Continue to advertise throughout the year</p> <p>Aug 2022 - Plan to have another fostering article in august e-newsletter</p>	<p>Continue to review during the year - Next review July 2022</p>	

	<p>Billboards</p>	<p>Billboard on M25/Lakeside roundabout - From December 2021 until 27 June 2022</p>	<p>Apr-22</p>	
	<p>Billboards</p>	<p>Additional Billboard aquired on corner of London Road & Western Avenue - New Billboard installed 26/4/2022 for 1 year - Cost £3900 + VAT for 12 months. Plus £350 for vinyl poster.</p>	<p>Completed May 2022</p>	
	<p>Train Stations: Advertising at C2C train stations</p>	<p>Highly visible information point units being installed at a number of C2C stations in approx April 2022/May 2022. 430mm x 610mm space agreed at a cost of £1495+VAT for 12 months</p>	<p>Completed May 2022</p>	

		<p>Vaccine Centre at Thurrock Hospital</p>	<p>Vaccine Centre have agreed to have our fostering leaflets and our fostering roller banner at centre. Also have A4 colouring pictures for children to colour whilst waiting which has our fostering logo at the bottom</p>	<p>Completed June 2022</p>	
		<p>Bus Stations/Bus Stops</p>	<p>New bus stops are being erected in 2022 with new advertising options. Update Aug 2022: Hana is hoping by September have an update re Bus Stops advertising</p>	<p>Review in Sept 2022</p>	
		<p>Enhance the use of banners on street lampposts</p>	<p>At present 8 Banners on lamppost on Crown Road/Grays Bus station Fostering would like more Lamppost Banners when additional sites become available</p>	<p>Review in August 2022</p>	

 <p>The Orsett Show</p>		<p>Orsett Show</p>	<p>Fostering will have a stall outside - obtained for free - saving of £120. Have to purchase extra staff wristbands 2 x £13</p> <p>Update Aug 2022 - Comms arranging 1/2 page fosterinf ad in their digital programme</p>	<p>Sep-22</p>	<p style="background-color: #92d050;"> </p>
		<p>Basildon Pride</p>	<p>Have a stall outside. Also we will be in their Discovery Hub (educational zone). Will have 3 x 10 minures slots to speak about Fostering with Thurrock Council</p>	<p>Sep-22</p>	<p style="background-color: #92d050;"> </p>
		<p>Sky TV advertising</p>	<p>Depending on Budget to be looked at again in September 2022</p>	<p>Sep-22</p>	<p style="background-color: #ffcc00;"> </p>
		<p>Grangewaters</p>	<p>Contacted Wendy Warman to ask for help with this</p>		
		<p>Cycle Hub</p>	<p>Contacted Julie Cooper to ask for help with this</p>		
		<p>Libraries and Hubs</p>	<p>Contacted Natalie Smith to ask for help with this</p>		
<p>Outcome</p>		<p>Actions</p>	<p>Progress</p>	<p>Timescales</p>	<p>RAG Rating</p>

	<i>Our advertising is a call to action</i>				
		The Thurrock Council fostering webpage shows how we are achieving in our recruitment of foster carers. We can celebrate reaching our targets. Encourage residents to join us to meet our target number of carers.	On our webpage we have a visual aid (20 Houses) to show we need 20 Foster Carers in 2022. Smiley face shows in the house when we have a new Foster carer approved at panel.	Reviewed every 2 weeks on a Thursday	
		Fostering adverts encourage enquiry.	Facebook & Social media posts to entice people to enquire about fostering	Review monthly	
		The councils communication at key times (Christmas, Mothers/father's day, times of thanks) recognises the work of foster carers	Facebook posts to reflect this	Review monthly	
		'Empty Nest' campaigns, birth children leave home and households may consider fostering, including respite	Facebook posts to reflect this	Review monthly	
		Foster carers celebrations events, achievements and long term service awards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •13/4/2022 - Recruitment team and TM Sandra - looking into venues. Details of costings of venues given to Dan and Janet •Update April 2022 - Awaiting for confirmation of budget •Update May 2022 - on hold due to costings PROGRESSING - Date arranged for 7th October 2022 at Ye Olde Plough House	Progressing	

Events:

Date	Day	Time	Venue
3rd September 2022	Saturday	10am to 7pm	Orsett Show
3rd September 2022	Saturday	11am to 7pm	Basildon Pride
6th September 2022	Tuesday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
7th September 2022	Wednesday	10am to 2pm	Sainsbury's Chafford Hundred
17/09/2022	Saturday	10 - 5pm	High House Community Group
21st September 2022	Wednesday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
3rd October 2022	Monday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
18th October 2022	Tuesday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
2nd November 2022	Wednesday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
16th November 2022	Wednesday	12noon to 9pm - t.b.c.	Orsett Hall Christmas Market

18th November 2022	Friday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event
1st December 2022	Thursday	10am to 12 noon	Virtual Online - information event
Date to be confirmed but either 3/4/10/11/17/18 Dec 2022 - waiting to hear back	Saturday/Sunday	time to be confirmed	Grays Beach Park Christmas Market
19th December 2022	Monday	6pm to 8pm	Virtual Online - information event

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13 September 2022	ITEM: 8
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
The Inspection of the Young Offending Service 2022	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Clare Moore, Strategic Lead Youth Offending Service and Prevention	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

An inspection of Thurrock Council’s Youth Offending Service by HMIP took place between 16 and 20 May 2022. The service was rated as overall ‘Good’ and inspectors found that the service has outstanding leadership and does excellent work in assessing what intervention is required to help prevent young people from re-offending. The inspection has 13 judgements, 6 were rated Outstanding, 4 as Good and 3 as Requires Improvement.

HMIP as an outcome of the inspection published a report. The Inspection Report is attached as Appendix 1 and was published on the 23rd August 2022. The report found that the service “has firmly embedded a child-first culture at a strategic and operational level, not detracting from its focus on keeping other people safe.” It also highlighted that active and cohesive partnerships and a commitment to learning and using an evidence-based approach means that the service has an effective strategy to deal with gangs and the young people they exploit and that it does a good job supporting children to stop them from re-offending. The report says:
“Children have good access to support for education, training, and employment; emotional and mental health; and speech, language, and communication.”

The 5 day on-site inspection was very intense, thoroughly testing the practice of the service and partnership for our most vulnerable young people. The outcome of the inspection is evidence of the hard work and commitment of all those striving to ensure children involved with the YOS receive good services within the Council and from partners.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Inspection Report of Thurrock Youth Offending Service and provide comment or challenge in respect of the outcomes**
- 1.2 That the areas for improvement and recommendations identified by HMIP are considered by the Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee and support offered to deliver against these recommendations.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. The inspection standards cover three domains and one stand-alone standard for resettlement. Domain one covers organisational delivery, including how well the Youth Offending Service is led and governed, including leadership, staffing, and partnerships. Domains two and three look at the quality of post-court supervision and the quality of out-of-court disposals respectively. The stand-alone resettlement standard covers resettlement policy and provision. This report needs to be read in conjunction with HMIP’s inspection report of the Youth Offending Service published in August 2022.
- 2.2 An inspection of Thurrock’s Youth Offending Service took place in May 2022 and was announced on the 08 April 2022, five weeks before the Inspection began. During the intervening period, inspectors were provided with over 100 documents, performance data and they undertook inspection meetings with the Corporate Director for Children’s Services, Assistant Director, Children’s social care, YOS team members and Partners. The Inspection was very thorough, and inspectors examined the experience of children through the lens of YOS and partnership interventions, by talking directly to YOS workers and examining their case work files in detail. They also met with young people, parents and carers and with partners. The inspectors were focused on evidence of impact of interventions and outcomes for children. The ‘on-site’ inspection was very intense, it thoroughly tested the practice of the service and partnership and corporate support and commitment from the Council for some of our most vulnerable young people. The Inspection is a judgement inspection
- 2.3 Whilst the inspection is overall very positive (please see report attached as Appendix 1), HMIP noted some areas for continued improvement and there are eight recommendations to further improve practice for children receiving a service from the YOS partnership. These are:
 - consider the nine characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 in its work to strengthen service provision
 - take steps to understand and address the overrepresentation of children known to children’s social care referred to the out-of-court decision-making panel

- strengthen its understanding of the impact of out-of-court disposals on first-time entrance rates by scrutinising disposal decisions made by the police
- involve children and their parents or carers in strategic and operational development work.
- provide a child-friendly, appropriate environment for children to meet with case managers and YOS specialists.
- make sure contingency planning supports an effective partnership response to changes in a case
- engage more effectively with operational partners to plan and deliver services to promote children's safety and wellbeing
- include an appropriately informed YOS assessment of need in the out-of-court decision-making process.

These recommendations are being taken forward within partnership and service plans. The Youth Crime Governance Board which is a partnership Board is important to assist with moving forward these recommendations.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The HMIP Inspection Report is attached as Appendix One.

The three 'Requires Improvement' grades are within the Domain for Out of Court Disposals. Work has already commenced to address these areas for improvement and a formal action plan incorporating the 8 recommendations will be completed by the 16 September in consultation with the Youth Crime Governance Board and submitted to the HMIP.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Members of the Board are aware of the YOS Inspection conducted by HMIP and the recommendations to further improve practice and outcomes for young people.
- 4.2 For the Board to have oversight of the plans against the recommendations and to provide support and challenge progress as appropriate.

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

5.1 Not applicable

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

6.1 Tackling youth crime and gang related violence is a priority for the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP), Youth Crime Governance Board and appears within the Youth Justice Plan 21-24, which is monitored monthly. Serious Youth Violence is also a priority within the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Plan, The Violence and Vulnerability Plan, The Health and Well-being Plan and the Brighter Futures Children's Partnership Plan. Performance against the recommendations of the HMIP Inspection will be monitored via the Youth Crime Governance Board.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Corporate Finance – Resources and Place Delivery

There are no Financial Implications.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Petrena Sharpe**
Safeguarding Lawyer – Team Leader

There are no legal implications.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are overrepresented in the Youth Justice System nationally and locally, especially within the Secure Estate. The recommendations from this inspection highlight the need to monitor the needs of the young people who fall within the 9 protected characteristics and strengthen the responses we give them.

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

Looked After Children are also overrepresented in the Criminal Justice System. There are systems in place to monitor the numbers and to successfully divert them away from criminal activity.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report

[An inspection of youth offending services in Thurrock \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](http://justiceinspectors.gov.uk)

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 – Inspection Report

Report Author:

Clare Moore
Strategic Lead Youth Offending Service and Prevention
Children and Families Service

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Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Thurrock

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2022

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Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector, Vivienne Raine, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Thurrock YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Thurrock YOS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

The Youth Crime Governance Board provides effective leadership and governance of Thurrock YOS. It takes an impressive, cohesive partnership approach to understanding and meeting the needs of children. A child-first, solution-focused culture is embedded at all levels of the organisation, and staff are given the guidance and support they need to work well. The partnership invests in evidence-based services and initiatives to make sure that children, especially the most vulnerable, can access effective support.

The post-court work we inspected was consistently effective, and an area of strength. Practitioners took a positive approach to supporting desistance, tailoring work to meet the child's neurodevelopmental needs, strengths and interests. We found that they successfully balanced this with work to protect victims. However, the YOS needs to strengthen the quality of its contingency planning and address the inconsistency of its approach to ensuring children's safety and wellbeing.

There is also more to be done to strengthen decision-making processes for out-of-court disposals and internal scrutiny of the impact of these decisions. Improvements were required across planning, and implementation and delivery for out-of-court work. Planning did not always set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child. Additionally, the YOS would benefit from reviewing its approach to diversity and ensuring all children's unique needs are met. Encouraging and enabling children and their parents and carers to actively participate will further enhance its strategic development in this area.

The board and the YOS staff are committed to ensuring the very best service for children. In this report, we make eight recommendations that we hope will support the YOS in building upon and further developing its practice and provision.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Thurrock Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started: May 2022

Score 26/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Outstanding



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Outstanding



3.2 Planning

Requires improvement



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Requires improvement



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Outstanding



¹ The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

Executive summary

Overall, Thurrock YOS is rated as: 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YOS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.² Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating.³ We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as: 'Outstanding'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below:

Organisational delivery

We interviewed more than 35 people, including volunteers, board members, and managers and staff from the YOS and its partner agencies. We also attended specialist presentations, conducted surveys, and spoke with children and parents or carers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- The Youth Crime Governance Board has been remodelled to strengthen its influence and impact.
- Board members work as an active and cohesive partnership to meet the YOS's objectives.
- The YOS uses the youth justice plan to drive improvement in service delivery.
- A culture of learning and improvement is firmly embedded at every level of the partnership.
- The board has an evident commitment to addressing ethnic disproportionality.
- Members of the board take an evidence-based approach to understanding, monitoring, and scrutinising the YOS's work and strengthening its service provision.
- Partners have developed an effective strategic response to issues relating to gangs and exploitation.
- Children have good access to support for education, training, and employment; emotional and mental health; and speech, language, and communication.
- The YOS has firmly embedded a child-first culture at a strategic and operational level, but this does not detract from its focus on keeping other people safe.

² HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

³ Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

- The YOS is agile and responsive in its approach to feedback about its provision.
- The YOS is staffed by well-established, skilled practitioners who are supported by effective management, and learning and development processes.
- Practitioners take a cohesive team approach to their work with children.
- YOS volunteers are supported well to fulfil their role on referral order panels.

But:

- The board would benefit from widening its definition of diversity to include the nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.
- The Probation Service has taken too long to fulfil its obligation to provide a seconded probation officer to the YOS.
- There is scope to strengthen the participation of children and their parents or carers in strategic development work.
- Some staff identified concerns relating to the YOS's building and considered it was not a welcoming venue for all children. Some outlined that they preferred to meet in alternate venues. We note further work is planned to extend the building.

Court disposals

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YOS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe, and keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- The YOS worked effectively with its partners, building and sustaining relationships with the child, and parents or carers to provide an effective service.
- The speech and language therapist made a significant contribution to the quality of case management.
- The partnership balanced a child-first culture appropriately with the need to protect other people.
- Children had timely access to mainstream services and the YOS took effective action to address any barriers to access provision as these arose.
- Case managers were active and thorough in their support for children who moved to another borough or transitioned to the Probation Service.

But:

- Planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing would have benefited from a stronger partnership approach and more detailed plans.
- There was too little focus on making sure contingency planning supported an effective partnership response to changes in a case.

- There was scope to improve recording, especially of reviews to protect the child and other people, and to make written plans more child-friendly.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected six cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions and three community resolutions, which were all the out-of-court cases that met the criteria for our sample period. We interviewed the case managers in all six cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in the data on out-of-court disposal cases. It uses this to identify emerging and current trends relating to disproportionality.
- Work to support desistance was consistently thorough and focused on the child's strengths and aspirations.
- Specific concerns relating to victims were addressed well.
- Case managers worked flexibly with children to remove barriers to their engagement and encourage their participation in a wide range of tailored, offence-focused interventions.
- Children received good support for their neurodevelopmental, emotional, and mental health needs, and work was proactively undertaken to strengthen their access to education, training, and employment.

But:

- Neither the case manager nor YOS victim's worker contribute to the out-of-court disposal decision-making process.
- There is scope for strengthening the voice of the child and their parents or carers in the out-of-court decision-making process.
- The quality of contingency planning was poor and did not provide a suitable, tailored partnership response to indicators of escalating risk.
- The YOS did not engage consistently well with its partners to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Case managers did not take sufficient account of children's diversity in their work to support desistance.
- The partnership had not sufficiently considered why children known to children's social care were overrepresented among those referred to the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel; or taken appropriate action to address this.

- There was too little scrutiny of the impact of out-of-court disposals delivered by the police outside the joint decision-making process.

Resettlement

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOS.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- The YOS partnership had established an integrated, effective style of resettlement.
- Practice was supported by a newly drafted, evidence-based policy.
- Resettlement planning was timely and tailored to the needs of the case, and focused well on the child, their family, and victims.
- YOS specialists worked with the child and practitioners in the custodial establishment to ensure that, once released, children transitioned seamlessly to services in the community.
- Children who turned 18 years old before the end of their licence period receive ongoing support from YOS specialists until they could access adult services.
- The partnership continued to work with children who left the borough, and beyond their licence period.
- Policy development and review were facilitated by a dedicated, strategic resettlement group.
- Understanding and meeting the needs of children who are overrepresented in the custodial cohort is high on the Youth Crime Governance Board's agenda.

But:

- Children and their parents or carers do not contribute in a meaningful way to strategic reviews of resettlement.
- The YOS could consider how to include children more proactively as part of the multi-agency network to support their resettlement.
- There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about keeping children and others safe in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.

Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made eight recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Thurrock. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The Youth Crime Governance Board should:

1. consider the nine characteristics protected by the *Equality Act 2010* in its work to strengthen service provision
2. take steps to understand and address the overrepresentation of children known to children's social care referred to the out-of-court decision-making panel
3. strengthen its understanding of the impact of out-of-court disposals on first-time entrance rates by scrutinising disposal decisions made by the police
4. involve children and their parents or carers in strategic and operational development work.

The Thurrock Youth Offending Service should:

5. provide a child-friendly, appropriate environment for children to meet with case managers and YOS specialists.
6. make sure contingency planning supports an effective partnership response to changes in a case
7. engage more effectively with operational partners to plan and deliver services to promote children's safety and wellbeing
8. include an appropriately informed YOS assessment of need in the out-of-court decision-making process.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the Probation Service, and local health services.⁴ Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Thurrock is a small unitary authority situated in the Thames Gateway. It is located next to Essex and East London and is easily accessible by public transport. Levels of deprivation in Thurrock are lower than the national average but relatively high in communities such as Tilbury and Purfleet, where one in four children live in poverty. The youth offending service (YOS) is based in Grays, central to many children who use it.



⁴ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

Thurrock YOS is part of Thurrock Council's children's service. Its operations manager reports to the authority's strategic lead for the YOS and for prevention work. Overall leadership is provided by the assistant director for children's social care and early help. Ofsted rated Thurrock children's care services as 'Good' in 2019 and found it provided 'effective, responsive services for vulnerable children' during its visit in 2021.

Covid-19 had a considerable negative impact on Thurrock, due to the virulence of the Delta variant. During this time, health practitioners were redeployed to clinical care and children were seen on a risk and needs basis. Although staff and children are now able to visit a YOS building, the hybrid model of office/remote working is firmly established for practitioners and referral order panels.

In line with the national trend, the number of children on the YOS caseload has reduced, and the complexity of cases it manages has increased. Gangs and exploitation are a growing threat among Thurrock children, many of whom are working with the YOS for offences involving weapons. More than half have substance misuse issues and over a third have emotional health needs. About one in three has difficulties with speech, language, and communication.

The YOS is one of three covered by Essex police and this strengthens its links with partners in Essex and Southend-on-Sea. While the police out-of-court disposal scheme has been developed to meet an agreed process for the county, Thurrock YOS has produced its own guidance, tailoring the Essex policy to reflect the borough's aspirations for children. Despite a recent rise in post-court cases, out-of-court disposals make up about 60 per cent of the YOS's annual caseload.

Contextual facts

Population information⁵

150	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Thurrock ⁶
167	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
36.4%	Reoffending rate in Thurrock ⁷
33.6%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales

175,531	Total population Thurrock
18,747	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Thurrock

Caseload information⁸

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Thurrock YOS	23%	77%
National average	18%	82%

Race/ethnicity ⁹	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Thurrock YOS	62%	27%	12%
Youth population (school age children) in Thurrock	81%	19%	0%

Gender	Male	Female
Thurrock YOS	87%	13%
National average	86%	13%

⁵ Office for National Statistics. (June 2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

⁶ Youth Justice Board. (2022). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

⁷ Ministry of Justice. (April 2022). *Proven reoffending statistics, July 2019 to Jun 2020*.

⁸ Youth Justice Board. (January 2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

⁹ Data supplied by the YOS.

Additional caseload data¹⁰

84	Total current caseload, of which:
33	Court disposals
51	Out-of-court disposals

Of the 33 court disposals:

29	Total current caseload: community sentences
02	Total current caseload in custody
02	Total current caseload on licence

Of the 51 out-of-court disposals:

03	Total current caseload: youth caution
12	Total current caseload: youth conditional caution
36	Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

Education and child protection status of caseload:

17%	Percentage of current caseload 'Looked After Children' resident in the YOS area
3%	Percentage of current caseload 'Looked After Children' placed outside the YOS area
3%	Percentage of current caseload with child protection plan
35%	Percentage of current caseload with child in need plan
65%	Percentage of current caseload aged 16 and under in full-time school
16%	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, or attending school part-time
41%	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training, or employment

For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement cases):

Offence types ¹¹	%
Violence against the person	78%
Drug offences	11%
Other summary offences	11%

¹⁰ Data supplied by the YOS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹¹ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

1. Organisational delivery

Strengths

- The Youth Crime Governance Board has been remodelled to strengthen its influence and impact.
- Board members work as an active and cohesive partnership to meet the YOS's objectives.
- The YOS uses the youth justice plan to drive improvement in service delivery.
- A culture of learning and improvement is firmly embedded at every level of the partnership.
- The board has an evident commitment to addressing ethnic disproportionality.
- Members of the board take an evidence-based approach to understanding, monitoring, and scrutinising the YOS's work and strengthening its service provision.
- Partners have developed an effective strategic response to issues relating to gangs and exploitation.
- Children have good access to support for education, training, and employment; emotional and mental health; and speech, language, and communication.
- The YOS has firmly embedded a child-first culture at a strategic and operational level, which does not detract from its focus on keeping other people safe.
- The YOS is agile and responsive in its approach to feedback about its provision.
- The YOS is staffed by well-established, skilled practitioners who are supported by effective management, and learning and development processes.
- Practitioners take a cohesive team approach to their work with children.
- YOS volunteers are supported well to fulfil their role on referral order panels.

Areas for improvement

- The board would benefit from widening its definition of diversity to include the nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.
- The Probation Service has taken too long to fulfil its obligation to provide a seconded probation officer to the YOS.
- There is scope to strengthen the participation of children and their parents or carers in strategic development work.
- Staff have expressed concerns relating to the YOS's building, its location, and consider it is not a welcoming venue for all children.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised, and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£665,719
Total projected budget current for financial year	£668,881

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

We saw an effective board, with members working actively and responsively to support, monitor, and challenge the work of the YOS.

The structures and role of the Youth Crime Governance Board have been remodelled since the arrival of the current chair in 2020.

Members have attended governance training (based on the Youth Justice Board's 'Modern Youth Offending Partnerships' guidance) to help them further understand their role. New terms of reference are in place, with revised membership and more frequent meetings, to strengthen the board's impact and scope of influence.

The board's membership is broad and includes housing, the Crown Prosecution Service, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and borough councillors.

The Youth Crime Governance Board reflects the importance of the evidence base in its decision-making by using research, local and national data, audits, and inspection to identify its priority objectives. The youth justice plan includes an objective to strengthen the use of the evidence base, to ensure children have access to relevant and effective interventions.

The partnership has successfully embedded a culture of 'child first, offender second' and this together with access to appropriate services is threaded through the youth justice plan. The board has recently added a stand-alone priority to this plan to monitor disproportionality and progress towards its targets to reduce this. The board would benefit from taking a broader look at the nine characteristics protected by the *Equality Act 2010* to ensure a systematic approach to addressing children's individual needs is embedded.

The partnership takes an active interest in the views of children and their parents or carers. The board uses this feedback to commission further research and builds this into its strategic decision-making. The YOS responds to the views of children and

their parents or carers and adapts its practice and processes appropriately to reflect these. There is scope to strengthen their involvement, however, in the review and co-creation of policies and procedures.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Board members advocate strongly in their wider organisations for the specific needs of YOS children. This manifests in effective commissioning by partner organisations, especially the health and education sectors, to make sure children have quick and easy access to appropriate services.

The Youth Crime Governance Board has effective links with a broad network of groups and boards across Thurrock. Although Thurrock is a unitary authority, board members work collaboratively with partners in Southend-on-Sea, Essex county, and London. This improves board members' knowledge, the range of services available to Thurrock children, and cross-border relationships to support children who move between boroughs.

The YOS is fully embedded into Thurrock's violence and vulnerability strategy, and works effectively with partners, including schools, to support children who are vulnerable to exploitation, gang affiliation, and associated offending behaviour.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The child-first approach is established across the partnership at a strategic and operational level alongside the needs and wishes of victims and keeping people safe.

YOS leaders take a proactive and inclusive approach to understanding what is working well. They adapt provision quickly where they can, for example to strengthen support to volunteers or adapt interventions and collaborate with partners to implement long-term solutions.

YOS managers have embedded a culture of trust and creativity. Practitioners use the evidence base, drawing on models of effective practice seen in other YOSs to strengthen their work with children.

The Youth Crime Governance Board and leaders are aware of current and potential strategic risks to service delivery, and monitor and consider relevant contingency plans. The rise in cases as the courts clear their Covid-19 lockdown backlog, and increase in custodial sentences, are both reviewed monthly.

YOS practitioners are fully conversant with the YOS's strategic priorities, and fully understand how they contribute to these. Their operational manager sits on the Youth Crime Governance Board and provides updates on its decisions. They are involved in sub-groups to review and improve service provision. Some staff, however, would like to know more about the activities of the board.

1.2. Staff



Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised, and responsive service for all children.

Good

Key staffing data¹²

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	12
Total headcount qualified case managers (FTE) ¹³	4
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	8%
Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	0%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) ¹⁴	6
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	2.5
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	16%

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

Staffing and workload levels are managed and monitored. The decision not to replace an operational manager has led to a change in role for senior practitioners, who now provide line management and oversight for their colleagues. Leaders have ensured the current structure provides a measure of staffing resilience to cover for practitioner absence and manage the potential increase in cases as the courts clear their backlog.

The sickness absence rate is low, averaging at 2.5 working days lost per member of staff per year, which is lower than the UK's 2021 national average rate of 4.6.¹⁵ Currently, the only vacancy in the YOS relates to the half-time probation officer post. The YOS caseload is manageable, and case managers have sufficient time to carry out good-quality work and cover for planned and unplanned absence.

The victims and restorative justice officer has a wide remit, including reparation coordinator, and managing the YOS's volunteers and referral order panels. The

¹² Data supplied by YOS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹³ Qualified case managers are those with a relevant social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

¹⁴ Data supplied by YOS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/sicknessabsenceinthelabourmarket/2021>

cumulative workload is being monitored and does not appear to be affecting the quality of this work.

Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The YOS works consistently to support and strengthen the skills of its staff. Senior practitioners have been supported into their new management roles through effective transition arrangements and support from their manager. The majority of cases are managed by qualified case managers, however, the staff survey indicated that a small number of practitioners do not feel fully experienced and qualified to manage their cases. There are systems in place to support staff who would like to gain a social work qualification.

The YOS monitors and publishes the gender and ethnicity of its staff, acknowledging the disparity between the ethnic representation of its workforce and that of the children who work with the YOS. Low staff turnover has made it difficult to address this. However, the YOS has made a conscious, successful effort to increase the diversity of its volunteers, and there are now more men, and representatives from minority ethnic communities, available for referral order panels.

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

In response to staff feedback, the YOS has recently been given the autonomy to tailor its oversight systems to better reflect the specific nature of its work.

Supervision and appraisal processes are completed in good time and provide effective support to staff. Every AssetPlus assessment is quality-assured, and we found that this made a positive difference to the quality of case management.

Volunteers are supported well, helped to prepare for panel meetings, and invited to staff training events. The learning from panel debrief sessions is shared across the volunteer team, and there are systems in place to make sure that volunteers have completed mandatory courses, such as child protection training.

Although we found quality in management oversight and examples of creative thinking in the cases inspected, we also identified the need for case managers to take a more dynamic approach to their work, strengthen their professional curiosity, and improve their recording, planning, and work to support children's safety and wellbeing.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Leaders have set a culture of learning and development. Training is identified, discussed, and agreed at a senior level to meet the strategic objectives of the YOS. The YOS has used the Youth Justice Board's skills matrix to identify learning and development needs relating to case management.

Recent training has focused on violence reduction, exploitation, and understanding special educational needs, which are all included in the youth justice plan. Practitioners have also attended comprehensive, skills-based training in trauma-informed practice, and speech, language, and communication training. Staff across the partnership feel able to participate in these programmes, which helps to strengthen the delivery of the child-first, trauma-informed vision for children in Thurrock.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

The YOS comprises a small, closely knit team. South Essex was badly affected by the Delta strain of Covid-19 and there is still a strong 'work at home' ethos. Despite the constraints of remote working, communication across the operational partnership has remained strong and practitioners have retained a strong focus on working effectively with children and victims.

Practitioners feel well supported by their managers and team, and there is evidence that leaders are sensitive to, and work to protect, the wellbeing of their staff. A YOS staff survey during 2020 led to an action plan, and many of the objectives in this have been implemented. Staff indicated that they are not asked often enough about their experience of working for the YOS, but when they are, their views are listened to and acted on.

Practitioners feel managers motivate them to deliver high-quality services. The YOS is able to participate in the local authority reward and recognition scheme. Some staff are not assured that exceptional work is recognised consistently.

1.3. Partnerships and services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Good

Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	36%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	57%
Percentage of current caseload with special educational needs or disability	27%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?

The Youth Crime Governance Board sees a range of case data, which stimulates discussion, drives decisions and requests for more granular information to understand the experience of children. The partnership also uses needs assessment reports commissioned by other boards and groups to help identify the needs of YOS children. This includes a recently commissioned comprehensive analysis of violence and vulnerability relating to gangs and exploitation.

Data evidence and the views of victims, children, and their parents or carers are all used to inform the YOS's priorities and its approaches to strengthening service provision. As a result, the partnership has funded staff to address violence and vulnerability, developed information packs for families moving from London to Thurrock, worked to strengthen access to education, training, and employment, reduced school exclusions, and provided skills-based training for practitioners.

Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?

The speech and language therapist and child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) practitioner add considerable value to the YOS at an operational and strategic level. The CAMHS practitioner sees every child within 10 days of referral and provides a 'pop in' service to see children during their YOS appointments. The speech and language therapist is fully integrated into the team, advising case managers, offering adaptive resources, and delivering training to the partnership. Both practitioners continue to provide support for children who move to neighbouring boroughs and transition to the Probation Service.

Case managers make sure children participate in a range of relevant interventions and deliver one-to-one offence-focused activity, often tailored to encourage the child's participation. Reparation includes skills-based, restorative activities, such as creating awareness-raising videos, as well as tutoring and mentoring peers at school.

Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

The partnership has implemented a comprehensive approach to supporting children and families affected by gangs and exploitation. The following merit specific mention.

- Welcome packs are provided for families who have moved to Thurrock from London for safety reasons. The pack contains points of support in the community, advice on hate crime and support for victims, and indicators that children could be involved in gangs or exploitation.
- A youth worker is based full time in the local accident and emergency department to identify and work with children who are vulnerable to gang affiliation and exploitation.
- The YOS and children's social care have funded a permanent strategic gangs/exploitation coordinator. The coordinator is currently involved in a partnership venture with education providers to raise awareness among professionals working in education, and parents and carers, of indicators for exploitation and involvement in gangs. This aims to strengthen the restorative approach used by educators and reduce the number of exclusions of children.
- A gangs and exploitation practitioner mentors and delivers interventions to children in the community and as they leave custody.

Partners work effectively to strengthen the offer of education, training and employment to YOS children. The YOS speech and language specialist works with schools to help them engage more effectively with their pupils, providing training to education providers and school nurses. The education engagement consultation group was introduced to strengthen the involvement of the educational psychology service in YOS cases.

Having identified the overrepresentation of neurodiversity issues in the YOS cohort, the speech and language therapist worked with NHS colleagues to introduce a fast-track neurodevelopmental pathway for YOS children.

The YOS works with children's social care and housing services to find appropriate supported accommodation and is involved in projects with schools to keep these

children in education. Additionally, the partnership has an agreed protocol to focus on diversionary disposals rather than charge children for their behaviour.

Essex police reflect the partnership's child-first ethos in their work with children. Having identified that the traditional approach of seconding a police officer to the YOS prevented these officers from getting to know children in the community, they introduced a specialist team of child and young persons (CYP) officers to link with the community and YOS. While other police staff carry out information and intelligence checks, the CYP officers accompany YOS practitioners on home visits, do one-to-one work with specific children and contribute to the out-of-court disposals and National Referral Mechanism¹⁶ processes. Case managers receive information and intelligence in a timely way. However, having reviewed their YOS model, the police have decided to strengthen it by providing a dedicated CYP officer to the YOS.

For some years, the Probation Service has been unable to fulfil its obligation to second a probation officer to the YOS. The restructure of probation services has strengthened the impetus to resolve this issue and the post was due to be filled in summer 2022. The Probation Service's failure to resolve this issue sooner is significant and has reduced the quality of coordinated work with probation services.

Finding suitable accommodation for children, especially those looked after by the local authority, raises challenges for the partnership. There are no local authority owned children's care homes in the borough.

Our inspection of case management indicated that children were not receiving sufficient support for their sexual health and safety. Practitioners were not consistently aware of the routes through which children could receive appropriate support and did not sufficiently consider the children's sexual health needs. The partnership should take steps to address this.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in hearing the views of children, their families, and victims, and understanding their feedback.

The YOS has implemented a rolling system to gather feedback from victims, children, and their parents or carers, as part of its 'You said, we did' process. Practitioners listen to the needs and aspirations of victims, children and their parents or carers, especially when delivering work to support desistance. The board has commissioned work that involves speaking with children who identify as black, Asian and minority ethnic to help it understand their experience of the criminal justice system.

The commitment to listening to the views of service users about their experience of working with practitioners is included in policies and procedures, such as out-of-court and resettlement guidance documents. The board recognises the need to strengthen the voice of children and their parents in the YOS's decision-making processes and has included this as a priority in Thurrock's youth justice plan.

The board and YOS actively use the views they collect to inform improvements to service provision. However, we assessed there is scope to increase the participation of children and their parents or carers in service reviews and in co-producing strategies and processes.

¹⁶ The framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

As part of our inspection, we asked children and their parents or carers for their views on working with the YOS. Three responded, all of whom rated the YOS highly. One child explained:

“Every time I go there, I learn something new. They teach me how to do better and help the community.”

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

The YOS’s work is supported by a good range of documented policies and guidance. An example is the Thurrock safeguarding and child protection policy, which provides comprehensive guidance and includes reference to the National Referral Mechanism. Policies are reviewed and updated appropriately.

Processes and procedures take appropriate account of the diversity of victims, children, and families.

YOS staff understand the policies and procedures that support their work and, in the main, know how to access services from partners and providers.

Does the YOT’s delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a high-quality service?

The YOS moved to a new base in 2021. This provides less office space to practitioners, but is co-located with the youth service, housing, and the employment and training service.

The building is neither child-friendly nor welcoming and there is not enough tailored, adaptive information in the reception area.

Most children visit the YOS building for their appointments. It is based centrally and accessible by public transport. However, its location potentially compromises the safety of children who are in conflict with others in the neighbourhood. To address this, practitioners coordinate appointments carefully, and will arrange to see children in alternative places.

Although YOS appointments are limited to one interview room, the council has recently granted approval to extend the building and increase the number of rooms available for work with children. The interview room is equipped with cameras, which are monitored in live time.

Do the information and communications technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

Thurrock responded well to the Covid-19 restrictions, providing practitioners with appropriate technological equipment to support remote working including Microsoft Teams.

Information can be passed between partner organisations with the support and guidance of information-sharing protocols. However, not all embedded partner practitioners are able to access AssetPlus and some rely on case managers to update records on their behalf.

Although Thurrock has an up-to-date website, the YOS does not have an online presence to help stakeholders understand its role and services.

Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The YOS's approaches to quality assurance include partnership task-and-finish groups and joint case audits with children's social care. The youth crime governance board has also commissioned an external peer review to identify whether and how to strengthen the quality of YOS case management.

The board uses performance and case data reports to stimulate discussion and request more refined data and information to help deepen its understanding of current needs. Members monitor trends, for example, the growing proportion of younger children who work with the YOS on statutory orders. However, they may wish to consider the benefits of taking early action to address emerging issues before these become firmly established.

The youth justice delivery plan includes completion dates and target measures. The objectives and target measures are ambitious in the context of the cases the YOS is working with. However, the YOS works quickly and effectively to implement change. Progress against the plan is a standing item on the Board's meeting agenda, with partners expected to provide updates on relevant priorities and objectives.

The YOS continuously learns lessons from inspections and incidents. Recommendations from our thematic inspections on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys, and out-of-court disposals have been used in the review of services to children.

Diversity

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

Disproportionality is a priority for the YOS, is included in its youth justice plan and is given sufficient oversight by the youth crime governance board. The YOS provides the board with case data reports, which help the partnership to monitor trends in disproportionality, and which stimulate its requests for more granular data to help explain the lives of YOS children.

The board's focus on disproportionality extends to age, education and learning, gender, and children who are looked after by the local authority. However, it has yet to consider needs relating to disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, all protected characteristics under the *Equality Act 2010*. Our assessment of cases identified that data relating to sexual identity, and religion or faith, were not routinely recorded.

In April 2022, the youth crime governance board took a detailed look at the ethnicity of children who work with the YOS. It found that seven per cent of children (18 of 24) who were sentenced to custody between April 2017 and December 2022 were of black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage. In 2021/2022, 24 children (41 per cent) given statutory disposals identified as black, Asian or minority ethnic. A more detailed analysis highlighted that 14 of these had been moved to Thurrock from London or were known to a London borough YOS. Nine were known to the local gang-related violence group.

The partnership's commitment to addressing disproportionality for children who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic is included in the youth justice plan and includes an overall target measure. The plan sets out the partnership's approach to meeting the identified needs of these children and includes strengthening ties with the black, Asian, and minority ethnic community, reducing violence and exploitation by gangs, and tailoring interventions to meet the needs of families who have moved to Thurrock for safety reasons.

We saw good progress against these objectives, including the appointment of a gang's exploitation strategic coordinator and gangs and exploitation practitioner. Progress is reviewed monthly by the partnership, with ongoing scrutiny of emerging concerns relating to black, Asian, and minority ethnic children, such as their prevalence among children in custody and under-representation in the out-of-court disposal cohort.

Work to address ethnic disproportionality focuses on the 'black, Asian and minority ethnic' race classification, which covers a group of communities. A focus on the individual ethnicities within this classification could help Thurrock further tailor its service provision and achieve its goal for equality more efficiently.

Leaders have assessed service provision against HM Inspectorate of Probation's thematic inspection report on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys, and monthly meetings are used to maintain impetus in this area of work.

On average, 30 per cent of the children who work with the YOS have speech and language recognition needs. The YOS's speech and language provision is thorough and effective. The speech and language therapist provides adaptive resources for the YOS, screens every case, provides advice to case managers, and works with children to assess and support their cognitive and communication needs. Children who work with the YOS have expedited access to the speech and language part of an ADHD or ASD assessment and are able to follow a fast-track pathway for a multi-disciplinary neurodevelopmental assessment.

The YOS is aware of the need for its workforce to reflect the diverse needs of its children. Representation among staff from the black, Asian and minority ethnic community is low. However, the YOS has recently completed a successful campaign to broaden the ethnicity of its volunteers.

Our inspection of the YOS's case management highlighted that case managers reflect children's diversity effectively in their post-court work but inconsistently in their out-of-court disposals work.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YOS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

The ratings for assessment, implementation and delivery, and reviewing reflect the YOS's inclusive and thoughtful approach to understanding and meeting children's needs. The score for planning met our criteria for applying professional discretion. There were elements of effective practice across the three planning standards and when taking into consideration the quality of planning to support desistance and keep others safe, we found grounds to lift the rating for planning from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

Case managers worked with care and skill to manage their post-court cases. Children received a holistic, individualised service that supported their needs and aspirations, took good account of their diversity, and encouraged them to engage with their case managers. Work to support children moving out of the borough or to the Probation Service was thorough and the YOS worked effectively with partners to manage cases involving gangs and exploitation. Management oversight of case work made an evident positive difference to the YOS's work.

There were some inconsistencies in the quality of case management; these related to work to support the child's safety and wellbeing, recording of case reviews and planning decisions made at multi-disciplinary meetings, and the quality of contingency planning.

Strengths

- The YOS worked effectively with its partners, building and sustaining relationships with the child, and parents or carers to provide an effective service.
- Service provision was tailored to reflect the child's diversity and aspirations.
- The speech and language therapist made a significant contribution to the quality of case management.
- The partnership balanced a child-first culture appropriately with the need to protect other people.
- Children had timely access to mainstream services and the YOS took effective action to address barriers to access as these arose.
- Case managers were active and thorough in their support for children who moved to another borough or transitioned to the Probation Service.
- Reviewing was a thorough and inclusive process, and the partnership responded quickly and appropriately to escalating risks.

Areas for improvement

- Planning to support the child’s safety and wellbeing would have benefited from a stronger partnership approach and more detailed plans.
- There was too little focus on making sure contingency planning supported an effective partnership response to changes in a case.
- There was scope to improve recording, especially of reviews to protect the child and other people, and to make written plans more child friendly.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical, and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁷ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child’s desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	88%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child’s desistance?

Case managers completed thorough and insightful assessments of the child, their circumstances, and diversity. They drew on all the information available, including where a child had links with other boroughs, and triangulated this to reach appropriate decisions about the needs of a child. Children and their families were involved meaningfully in the assessments and this helped the YOS to identify the strengths and aspirations of children as well as barriers to their progress, such as their sense of identity and level of maturity.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Case managers took a partnership approach to completing their assessments. They engaged well with other agencies working with families, and with the families themselves, to understand how to keep children safe and support their wellbeing. They drew on information such as child in need plans and that provided by the YOS speech and language specialist. There was an effective focus on the adverse

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

experiences of children, and an evident commitment to understanding the factors linked to exploitation and gangs. We saw examples of assessments being strengthened by the Thurrock multi-agency child criminal exploitation group and appropriate reference to the national referral mechanism.

The thoroughness of these assessments enabled the YOS to make well-reasoned decisions about the level and nature of need in each case.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

The children in the cases we inspected were all assessed as posing a medium or high risk of serious harm to other people. Knives featured in six of the eight cases we assessed.

Assessments considered the child’s perspective on their offence and looked at this as part of their pattern of behaviour and its context. Case managers liaised well with practitioners who were already working with the child and with specialists, including gang units, who could help them understand the child’s experience, community profile, and factors linked to potential conflict.

The YOS paid sufficient attention to examining the controls and interventions already in place to keep other people safe. In one case, for example, the assessment considered the relevance of a move to help the child comply with his bail conditions. Effective recording enabled us to ascertain the impact of management oversight, which, we noted, made a positive difference to the analysis of harm a child posed.

2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic, and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating¹⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	63% ¹⁹
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?

The quality of planning to support desistance was sufficient in every case. Case managers worked collaboratively, seeking a good balance between the aspirations of the child and the need to complete interventions, such as weapons awareness activity. Their ability and willingness to liaise with partners both locally and out of the area strengthened planning in relation to accommodation and education.

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁹ Professional discretion applied to increase the rating from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

There was variation in the quality of planning to make sure children could complete the work in their plans. YOS appointments were arranged around employment hours and provision was made for input by the speech and language therapist, for assessment and to help strengthen the child's participation in the interventions planned. However, planning documents were formal rather than child-focused, making it difficult for some children to understand what would happen during their appointments and what they would achieve. The number of objectives was not consistently proportionate to the child's ability to complete them, and case managers did not sufficiently consider barriers relating to their maturity or learning.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Case managers actively liaised with specialist workers, such as the speech and language therapist, substance misuse specialist, and CAMHS practitioner. They communicated effectively with YOSs in other boroughs to help facilitate the safe transition of children who moved out of Thurrock.

Parents or carers were at the heart of plans to keep children safe, playing a key role in understanding their child's behaviour.

However, the planning for some cases required additional focus to ensure the effective safety and wellbeing of children. The YOS's plans did not consistently reflect decisions made at partnership and high-risk meetings or the objectives in child in need plans. For children at risk from gangs and exploitation, we would have expected to have seen more emphasis on how they would be protected from known individuals.

We found some examples of good contingency planning that considered the changes that might occur, and how parents or carers and the partnership would respond to these. This included identifying named professionals with specific details of individual risks and the tasks that would be undertaken to support the child. However, contingency planning did not meet the child's needs in half the cases we inspected.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Partners worked collaboratively to plan their approach to managing and reducing the risk of harm the child posed, making sure appropriate controls and interventions were in place to promote other people's safety.

Controls included exclusion zones, and the provision of information and intelligence by the police and gangs' units. Parents and carers were involved in planning and played a key role in identifying escalating risks.

A range of interventions were planned to help children manage their response to other people, including work to help them manage their fear, and strengthen their ability to regulate their emotions and work towards resolving conflict.

Despite the effective focus on the children and their behaviour, the YOS did not always identify the individuals at risk from them. It had drawn up plans to address the specific concerns and risks relating to individual victims in only four of the seven cases where these should have been in place.

The quality of contingency planning was similar to that for planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing. Many of the children working with the YOS are affected by gangs or exploitation, and the risks related to this can escalate quickly and significantly. Half the contingency plans we assessed provided too little detail to

support a timely, appropriate response should circumstances change abruptly for these children.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating²⁰ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

The YOS's child-first focus translated well into practice. Case managers worked with children holistically and flexibly, staying in regular contact with their parents or carers to provide information and support.

A number of children moved to neighbouring boroughs during their sentence and case managers worked well with the receiving YOS and partners in the community to facilitate these moves, using escalation processes to advocate for appropriate accommodation. Transition to probation services was supported effectively.

Provision was tailored to reflect and further understand children's diversity and we saw effective and creative work to meet individual children's needs, including the provision of equipment to support one child's self-identity and Saturday appointments to reflect another's work obligations. The speech and language therapist worked directly with children to understand issues linked to their communication and cognition.

Children received support from the YOS's education and careers adviser, and case managers stayed in contact with schools. Referrals were made appropriately to the substance misuse worker, but the unreliability of this provision reduced some children's motivation to engage with the service.

Case managers considered the potential for restorative justice for all victims, and we saw evidence of successful restorative justice conferences.

Where case managers instigated enforcement action, including referral to court for breach proceedings, they considered this carefully and used it appropriately.

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

The YOS worked effectively with its partners to keep children safe. It engaged with the child in need process and staff attended meetings to contribute information. Access to children’s social care’s recording system allowed it to make safeguarding checks on an ongoing basis.

Partners collaborated effectively to provide a ‘wrap-around’ service for children at risk of exploitation. In some cases, it was clear that discussions at multi-agency child criminal exploitation meetings led to action to protect children.

Parents and carers were kept involved in work to protect children. We saw an example of a case manager using shuttle communication to help a child rebuild his relationship with his parents, who were key to his safety and wellbeing.

There was scope to strengthen provision in only a small minority of cases. This related to monitoring ongoing risks to the child, for example after episodes where they had gone missing, or to obtain updates about people linked to the child and being supervised by the Probation Service.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

Work to keep other people safe was the YOS’s strongest area of implementation and delivery.

The YOS took a partnership approach to protecting victims, with information flowing between agencies to monitor risks to others. In one case, the YOS considered the suitability and merits of a referral for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (category 3). Case managers also delivered a range of interventions that focused on weapons and violence, which aimed to help the child to develop skills in thinking things through and conflict resolution.

Case managers tailored their interventions to the individual child, rather than taking a generic approach. They used videos and nationally reported incidents to keep children interested and generate discussion about managing violence.

2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating²¹ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% ‘Yes’
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	88%

²¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Reviews of work to support desistance and the child's engagement were thorough. Case managers took a strengths-based, family-focused approach to their reviews and adjusted their plan of work to meet the child's changing needs, taking care to address barriers to the child's engagement and their diversity needs.

The YOS convened referral order review panels to consider the child's progress and offer additional support. In one case, this led to a child voicing his aspiration to return to full-time education and the case manager changing her focus of work to link with relevant specialists and deliver an integrated approach to help him achieve this goal.

Case managers involved YOS specialists and partners in reviews. In one case, ongoing liaison with an education provider led to a family finding out about a child's previously undiagnosed learning needs, and improved communication between the child and his parents.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

The YOS worked holistically with its partners, drawing on decisions made during multi-agency meetings to inform its reviews. It had strong relationships with children's social care, and case managers attended child in need meetings and used these to inform their own reviews.

Case managers used controls such as curfews and home visits to reduce threats to the child's safety. They responded effectively to evidence of escalating risk, referring the child to specialist services and the national referral mechanism if necessary.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Work to review the risk of harm children posed to other people was consistently thorough and effective.

When carrying out reviews, case managers used information available from families and partner agencies, including housing and the police, and liaised with their manager about how to meet changing needs.

The quality of reviews for children leaving the borough and transitioning to probation services was particularly strong. Case managers gathered and shared information to help receiving YOSs and the Probation Service understand the risks the child posed to others, and maintained contact to support their monitoring and review processes.

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected six cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions and three community resolutions and included all the out-of-court cases that met the criteria for our sample period. We interviewed the case managers in all six cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews.

Assessment was the strongest and most consistent area of work and was rated as 'Outstanding'. While the majority of planning work was holistic and carefully considered, there was some variation in the quality of planning, particularly in relation to supporting the child's safety and wellbeing. However, upon review we felt that planning was sufficient in the main and we, therefore, applied professional discretion and, as a result, planning was subsequently given a rating of 'Requires improvement'. Implementation and delivery also met our criteria for professional discretion, but there was no justification for changing the rating from 'Requires improvement', as this accurately represented the quality of provision in relation to children's safety and wellbeing.

The police and YOS worked together well at a strategic level to achieve their child-first vision for out-of-court disposals. They reviewed procedures against the evidence base to strengthen their approach. Thurrock's scheme focuses on offering children appropriate diversionary pathways and makes sure that all children have equal access to these. Addressing issues relating to disproportionality is a priority, especially for children looked after by the local authority and those who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic. At a case level, the YOS partnership focused well on supporting desistance and protecting victims. However, the quality of planning and joint work to support children's safety and wellbeing fell well below our expectations. We found that there was scope to strengthen the voice of children and victims in strategic and decision-making processes

Strengths

- Out-of-court decision-making processes are underpinned by clear policy and processes that reflect national guidance and HM Inspectorate of Probation's inspection findings.
- The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in the data on out-of-court disposal cases and uses this to identify emerging and current trends relating to disproportionality.
- Work to support desistance was consistently thorough and focused on the child's strengths and aspirations.

- Practitioners engaged well with families and partners to analyse and understand the needs in each case.
- Specific concerns relating to victims were addressed well.
- Case managers worked flexibly with children to remove barriers to their engagement and encourage their participation in a wide range of tailored, offence-focused interventions.
- Children received good support for their neurodevelopmental, emotional, and mental health needs, and to strengthen their access to education, training, and employment.

Areas for improvement

- Neither the case manager nor YOS victims' worker contributed to the out-of-court decision-making process.
- There is scope for strengthening the voice of the child and their parents or carers in the out-of-court disposal decision-making process.
- The quality of contingency planning was poor and did not provide for a suitable, tailored partnership response to indicators of escalating risk.
- The YOS did not engage consistently well with its partners to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Case managers did not take sufficient account of children's diversity in their work to support desistance.
- The partnership had not sufficiently considered why children known to children's social care were overrepresented among those referred to the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel or taken appropriate action to address this.
- There was too little scrutiny of the impact of out-of-court disposals delivered by the police outside the joint decision-making process.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating²² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

²² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

Case managers did not consistently receive enough information from the joint out-of-court decision-making panel but undertook their own enquiries to complete timely, well-reasoned assessments.

They liaised with partners, including education providers, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the child's circumstances and their cognitive and learning needs. We saw examples of thorough analyses of how a child's adverse experiences contributed to their outlook and behaviour.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

The YOS's assessments of need relating to safety and wellbeing were wide-ranging and analytical. Case managers used information from partners to identify accurately the level and nature of a child's vulnerability. They recorded their assessments well, providing adequate information on exploitation, physical and emotional harm.

Case managers considered the influence of parenting and the family's circumstances on the children's lives.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Case managers drew on information from children's social care, the police, education providers and parents or carers to identify the child's pattern of behaviour. They considered the context of the offence, the child's past behaviour and criminal justice disposals, and details of victims in order to reach decisions about the level and nature of the risk that a child posed to others and potential future victims.

One case, however, would have benefited from more information about and analysis of the offence and the link between the child's cognitive thinking and risk of harm he posed to his victim.

3.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Requires improvement

Our rating²³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

²³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	33% ²⁴
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Planning to support desistance included support for the child's mental health, education and career aspirations, and one-to-one work with the speech and language specialist. Case managers took account of the child's aspirations, concerns and other commitments, such as education and employment.

We saw examples of joint planning, which were enhanced by a case formulation exercise.²⁵

We also found examples of child-focused plans that took a Signs of Safety approach, often taken by children's social care practitioners to help children and their families plan a response to identified risks and opportunities in a child's life.

The plan of work reflected the needs of the child rather than prioritising the disposal type. However, case managers did not consistently consider whether the child was willing and able to change and how to sustain desistance after the period of working with the YOS. In one community resolution case, the plan included too many objectives for a child with learning needs.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

The quality of planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing was poor. In one complex case, there was a comprehensive plan in place to protect a child at risk of exploitation. This included a referral to the national referral mechanism and use of mentoring. However, many plans were not detailed enough or aligned with the plans held by partner agencies. They did not necessarily reflect the needs identified during assessment. Had they done so, we would have seen more planning that supported contextual safeguarding and addressed other links to safety and wellbeing, such as sexual health. We also saw little evidence of planning that set out how children would be protected from individuals known to affect their safety and wellbeing.

Too little priority was given to contingency planning. Circumstances can evolve rapidly in complex cases. The YOS had not given enough thought to how circumstances could change in a case or agreed a partnership response to safeguarding the child should risks escalate.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Having identified the level and nature of risk that the child posed to others, case managers planned an appropriate response to manage this, including measures to address the specific concerns relating to victims. We saw planning reference a range

²⁴ Planning met our criteria for applying professional discretion due to the relatively small number of cases inspected. We took account of the overall quality of planning and increased the rating from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement'.

²⁵ Case formulation is a psychological approach to assessing and addressing the needs of a case, based on the '4Ps': predisposing, precipitating, perpetuating and protective factors.

of one-to-one interventions to help children manage their emotions and decisions, with appropriate emphasis on weapons and victim awareness.

In one case, there was a clear plan to monitor escalating risks and share information with the partners who would be supporting the child's return to education. However, overall, there was insufficient joint planning with partners. Where control measures, such as exclusion zones, were in place, it was not always clear how the YOS would work with the police to monitor and enforce them.

The decision-making process did not provide for the effective flow of information between the out-of-court disposal decision-making panel and case managers. This weakened the concordance between the panel's and case manager's decision-making, and, ultimately, the quality of planning to keep others safe from harm. Case managers were not always aware of interventions suggested by the panel and in one case a condition to protect victims was added after the child had signed their youth conditional caution agreement, rendering this unenforceable.

Contingency planning was the weakest element of this work. While, generally, case managers could articulate what they would do if the risk the child posed were to escalate, documented plans were generic and lacked detail about the roles of those involved in the case and timescales for action to address specific risks.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Requires improvement

Our rating²⁶ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	83%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	50%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

The YOS worked with partners to provide a comprehensive approach to supporting desistance. Children had good access to the YOS's CAMHS practitioner, speech and language therapist, substance misuse service, and careers worker. Case managers drew on information from these specialists and schools to strengthen their own work with the child. They delivered one-to-one offence-focused sessions, some of which were delivered creatively to encourage the child's engagement.

Service delivery focused appropriately on building relationships with the child and their parents or carers. Case managers were skilled and worked well to encourage children to engage with their plan of work. They were flexible about when they saw children. We noted that despite the priority given to tailoring work to reflect

²⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

children’s individual needs, there was scope for the YOS to improve its focus on interventions relating to their diversity in two of the six cases inspected.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

The quality of implementation and delivery of work to support children’s safety and wellbeing required improvement.

We saw elements of effective practice in each of the cases we inspected. For instance, referrals were made to the national referral mechanism; exit planning included ongoing appointments with the CAMHS practitioner; and there was a coordinated approach with children’s social care. Case managers made referrals quickly and, in most instances, there were no delays in the child being offered a first appointment. However, for a period there had been long delays to access substance misuse services and little flexibility in the timing of appointments to accommodate children in full-time employment.

Case managers and the exploitation worker collaborated effectively to deliver one-to-one sessions with children that were tailored to address their individual risks from gangs and exploitation.

We noted, however, that case managers did not always address less obvious risks to children or indicators of escalating safety and wellbeing needs, including those linked to sexual safety.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Children participated in sessions to strengthen their ability to manage their anger, solve problems, think about the consequences of their actions, and increase their awareness about weapons and victims.

In the main, enough was done to protect victims. Restrictive measures such as exclusion zones and non-contact requirements were attached to youth conditional cautions and, in one case, the information that a child had shared during a session was fed into the ongoing management of risks to the victim.

We found room for improvement in joint work with the police to monitor compliance with restrictive measures and to monitor children’s behaviour in the community. Case managers were pleased with the progress made by children, but this optimism did not always reflect the evidence available.

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Requires improvement

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a policy in place for out-of-court provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?

Essex police's out-of-court disposal policy had been written in consultation with the three local authorities it covered to reflect an agreed approach across the county. Thurrock YOS has developed complementary guidance, which tailors the scheme to help achieve its vision for children. The out-of-disposal scheme aims to reflect a 'child first, offender second' ethos, both strategically and operationally. The type and length of intervention offered to the child are expected to reflect their diversity and the needs of the case.

The scheme is evidence-based, having been reviewed to reflect findings from inspections and audits, and to highlight the partnership's commitment to addressing issues relating to disproportionality. Although equality features in policy documents, this needs strengthening to include expectations relating to all nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.

The scheme reflects sound strategic imperatives, such as making sure panel members are skilled and knowledgeable, that decisions equally support the child's safety and wellbeing and protect victims, that children can only be offered one community resolution outside the panel process, and that there is a system to refer cases from court to the decision-making panel.

Case managers and the YOS's victims' worker did not contribute to the out-of-court disposal decision-making process. This reduced the panel's ability to consider the views of the child, parents or carers, and victims, and any issues relating to the child's life and adverse experiences. It also limited the time that case managers had to encourage the child to engage with voluntary interventions. National guidance advises that, for youth conditional cautions, 'the YOT must assess the young person and advise on appropriate conditions'. In Thurrock, the lack of input from the YOS before the decision was made had led to conditions being added by the YOS after the child has signed their out-of-court disposal agreement, rendering them unenforceable.

Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?

Out-of-court disposal decision-making panels were well attended by the YOS, police, education specialists, the speech and language therapist, and children's social care.

Pre-panel screening identified basic information about the child, such as health, education, training and employment, contact with children's social care, the circumstances relating to the current and previous offending, and past experience of working with the YOS. The police provide the views of victims and the child to the panel. The panel was not given an analysis or proposal for a disposal and, ultimately, the decision was made by vote.

We noted that once a case was referred to the decision-making panel, the decision, allocation to the YOS, and delivery of the disposal to the child were made promptly.

Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

The youth crime governance board was provided with data relating to the cases considered by the decision-making panel and used this to identify indicators of disproportionality. These include the under-representation among children offered an out-of-court disposal of those who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic. The police were working to reduce 'no comment' responses by children, in order to

address this issue. However, the board may wish to consider the effective practice models implemented in other boroughs, which are included in HM Inspectorate of Probation's report on its thematic inspection of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system²⁷.

In line with policy, the joint decision-making panel tried to divert children looked after by the local authority to the lowest disposal possible. However, during the first three quarters of 2021/2022, 48 per cent of children considered by the decision-making panel had active social care status, which suggests that the board needs to look more closely at this issue.

The joint decision-making panel preferred to recommend Outcome 22 disposals²⁸ rather than impose youth cautions because the latter provide too little support to children while bringing them into the criminal justice system. Children offered an Outcome 22 can access YOS services in the same way as those working with the YOS on other disposals, and Outcome 22 disposals make up a large proportion of Thurrock's out-of-court disposals. In the first three quarters of 2021/2022, the joint decision-making panel recommended an Outcome 22 in 23 per cent of the cases it considered. Additionally, a large number of Outcome 22s were delivered by the police outside the panel process.

Data on out-of-court disposals decided and delivered outside the panel process were not shared with the YOS and youth crime governance board. This limited the board's ability to understand the impact of out-of-court disposals on outcomes for children and against the YOS's key performance indicators.

At a case management level, children were offered a range of tailored interventions to support their desistance. As of quarter three in 2021/2022, only three of the 17 children (18 per cent) on an out-of-court disposal had reoffended within 12 months of the panel's decision. This is much lower than the proportion seen for children on post-court orders. The board may wish to explore this rate further to understand whether and how the YOS's intervention contributed to this.

The YOS asks children for feedback about their out-of-court disposal experience and uses this as part of its 'You said, we did' process. However, there is no system in place to involve children and their parents or carers in reviews of out-of-court disposal policy and processes.

²⁷ <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/10/The-experiences-of-black-and-mixed-heritage-boys-in-the-youth-justice-system-thematic-report-v1.0.pdf>

²⁸ Outcome 22 is the code recorded by the police when it is not in the public interest to take further action in relation to a crime and the child has agreed to engage with a diversionary intervention or activity.

4. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths

- The YOS partnership has established an integrated, effective style of resettlement.
- Practice is supported by a newly drafted, evidence-based policy.
- Resettlement planning is timely and tailored to the needs of the case, and focuses well on the child, their family, and victims.
- YOS specialists work with the child and practitioners in the custodial establishment to ensure that, once released, children transition seamlessly to services in the community.
- Children who turn 18 years old before the end of their licence period receive ongoing support from YOS specialists until they can access adult services.
- The partnership continues to work with children who leave the borough, and beyond their licence period.
- Policy development and review are facilitated by a dedicated, strategic resettlement group.
- Understanding and meeting the needs of children who are overrepresented in the custodial cohort is high on the youth crime governance board's agenda.

Areas for improvement

- Children and their parents and carers do not contribute in a meaningful way to strategic reviews of resettlement.
- The YOS could consider how to include children more proactively as part of the multi-agency network to support their resettlement.
- There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about children's safety and wellbeing in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.

We do not provide a separate rating for the quality of work in resettlement cases inspected under this standard. In making a judgement about resettlement policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a resettlement policy in place that promotes a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

A resettlement group, led by the YOS, was set up in 2021 to formalise processes and structures, and to evidence the partnership's resettlement work. The resettlement policy, introduced in January 2022, provides practical evidence-based guidance, drawn from YJB advice, HM Inspectorate of Probation's recommendations and relevant YOS policies and procedures.

As such, it recognises the importance of the seven key resettlement pathways, with appropriate emphasis on accommodation and addressing barriers to securing a suitable release address for the child and the role of temporary release in effective resettlement.

The partnership's child-first ethos is threaded through the policy, which emphasises the importance of the child's and family voice and the board's role in making sure resettlement is tailored to the needs of each child being released from custody. There is also reference to the *Equality Act 2010*. While reference to the Act is to be commended, the policy is unclear about how resettlement should consider the nine characteristics protected by this legislation.

There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about children's safety and wellbeing in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.

Does resettlement provision promote a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

The YOS partnership has well-established, effective processes in place to help children transition successfully from custody to the community. The YOS considers resettlement processes early in the custodial sentence.

Provision is based on the child's needs rather than funding constraints. Recognising the importance of accommodation as the foundation stone for resettlement, placements, once identified, can be held until release. Children who turn 18 years old during their sentence continue to be supported by YOS specialist practitioners until they can be seen by adult services. The YOS partnership also continues to work with children after the period covered by their licence.

Good relationships between practitioners in the community and the secure estate strengthened the quality of resettlement work. Examples included liaison between specialists in custody and the community, which helped to identify both the work the child has completed and their future needs; the YOS careers adviser meet with children before release to devise a training and employment action plan; and the gangs and exploitation worker met children when they were released to ensure they arrived safely at their next address.

The YOS maintained effective contact with parents or carers, takes account of their views in resettlement planning and helped them to maintain or rebuild their relationship with their child. Additionally, Think Family supported families during the resettlement period.

Some children were relocated to other boroughs on release, to protect their safety and wellbeing. In these instances, the YOS works effectively with the police, the receiving YOS and children's social care to facilitate this move. For care leavers who stayed in the borough, Thurrock was involved in a pilot that provided them with

'wrap-around' support in living skills, such as budgeting, housekeeping, training and employment.

YOS practitioners who work with children in custody have had training specifically for that role. Currently, the effectiveness of resettlement processes reflects their dedication, knowledge, skills, and relationships rather than the guidance in the documented resettlement strategy.

Although children were invited to attend the planning meetings led by their custodial establishment, multi-disciplinary resettlement meetings took place away from the secure establishment, with the voice of the child represented by the social worker or children's services independent reviewing officer.

Are resettlement policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

The board provides effective governance for resettlement.

The YOS and the board use data reviews and case and practice audits to assess the quality of resettlement provision. This has led to the inclusion of resettlement objectives in the YOS's youth justice plan and the creation of a board resettlement sub-group.

Performance reports that provide a breakdown of diversity factors relating to children in custody prompted the Board to request a deep dive investigation of these cases to understand the over-representation in custody of children who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic.

Children and their parents or carers are asked about the quality of their resettlement experience as part of the YOS's general feedback process. However, resettlement work could be strengthened by service users participating meaningfully in strategic reviews of resettlement policies and practice.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²⁹

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Director of children's services led a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 13 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 14 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.³⁰

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing, and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined eight court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us

²⁹ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined six out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YOT.

Resettlement

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining the case file and interviewing the case manager, in the one case where a child had received a custodial sentence or been released from custody four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of eight court disposals and six out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning, and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk. We reviewed a further one case to obtain data to illustrate our findings about resettlement policy and provision.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating for each standard is aligned to the banding at the key question level where the lowest proportion of cases were judged to be sufficient, as we believe that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (proportion of cases judged to be sufficient key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.

The resettlement standard is rated separately and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

Data from inspected cases:³¹

2.1. Assessment (court disposals)	
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	88%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	88%
g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	25%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	

³¹ Some questions do not apply in all cases.

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	75%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	88%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	88%

2.2. Planning (court disposals)

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	63%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	100%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	88%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	88%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	63%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	50%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	100%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	63%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	75%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	75%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	50%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	75%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	88%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	50%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	88%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	50%

2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	100%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	88%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	100%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	88%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	50%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	88%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	100%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	88%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	100%

2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	100%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	88%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	88%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	100%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	100%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	88%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	88%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	75%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	75%

b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	88%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	75%

3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	83%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	83%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	83%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	67%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	100%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	83%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	100%
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b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	83%
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3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	83%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	83%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	100%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	67%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	67%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	83%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	83%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	50%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	17%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	83%
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b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	100%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	33%

3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	83%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	67%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	83%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	83%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	83%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	100%

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	67%

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	67%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	83%

13 September 2022		ITEM: 9
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review - Action Plans		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director for Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report presents Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members with an update on the range of work of the LSCP and progress made on case review action plans.

The responsibilities of the LSCP are laid out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. The purpose of these local arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families’.

Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) were established under the Children Act (2004) to review cases where a child has died and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. SCRs could additionally be carried out where a child has not died, but has come to serious harm as a result of abuse or neglect. The aim of SCRs was to establish

learning for agencies and professionals to improve the way that they work together to safeguard children.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018), changed the structure of SCRs, these reviews are now known as Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs). Responsibility for learning lessons lies with a national panel – the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) – and with local safeguarding partners.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee note the update on the work of the LSCP and the progress made on Action Plans to date.

2. Update on LSCP Work

- 2.1 As part of the Neglect Strategy that sits under the Neglect priority to reduce the incidences of child neglect within the borough through a multi-agency approach, the LSCP will deliver a Neglect Conference on Tuesday 6th December 2022. The LSCP are fortunate to have Dr Prakash Srivastava, as keynote speaker at the event. Dr Srivastava created the neglect Graded Care Profile 2 assessment tool. The tool was then adopted and developed by the NSPCC to assess and identify neglect within families and homes to help deal with it quickly and early. Graded Care Profile 2 is currently being used across the partnership and training is provided for it's use. The aim is for more practitioners to be aware of neglect, the importance of identification, how to assess and what support is available for families to reduce the incidence.
- 2.2. In July, the joint LSCP and National Working Group (NWG) Safe to Play campaign was launched with an in-person conference. Sports and physical activity providers across the borough were in attendance. Presentations and speakers included the LSCP Independent Chair Scrutineer, Thurrock LSCP, Thurrock Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Essex Police, Thurrock Missing and Child Exploitation Team and The National Working Group. Safe to Play focuses attention on safeguarding in sports and physical activity clubs and organisations and raises the awareness of this in education settings, children, young people and families. Future events are being planned to ensure the campaign reaches all providers to promote safeguarding and support the development of safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.3 Under the priority area of Violence and Vulnerability and listening to the voice of the child, in partnership with the Participation and Engagement Officer, Thurrock Childrens Social Care a Girls Safety Day was delivered in August. During engagement with children and young people girls told us that they felt unsafe in certain circumstances and areas and would benefit from information and learning to help keep them safe. The Safety Day included workshops from Essex Police, Thurrock Child Exploitation and Gangs Lead, Thurrock LSCP, Thurrock Health and Well-being Service and a self-defence session where the girls were trained in methods and techniques to keep them-selves

safe and defend themselves should they need to. Future events are being planned to engage all children and young people.

- 2.4 Learning from the recently published thematic review into Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Activity will be disseminated via a practitioner's event in the autumn. Led by the external reviewer, the event will provide an opportunity for practitioners to discuss the findings and recommendations arising from the review. Outcomes from the event will contribute to the identification of actions to meet the recommendations in a multi-agency action plan.
- 2.5 Local Safeguarding Partnerships have a statutory obligation to publish an annual report, setting out what has been done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements, its effectiveness, and impact. This includes work on any child safeguarding practice reviews that have been conducted. The report for 2021/22 is being compiled for publication in the autumn 2022.
- 2.6 In response to the national learning reviews from Bradford, City & Hackney, Croydon and Solihull, the LSCP has created a multi-agency plan of the combined findings to gather what is currently in place and what more can be done to mitigate the risks to children and young people in Thurrock. Following the initial information gathering stage a multi-agency represented group is due to meet in September to identify what more needs to be done to mitigate the risks to children and young people in Thurrock.
- 2.7 As part of the refreshed Learning and Development programme for 2022/23, newly developed training on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Extra-familial Harm and Child Exploitation will be available to all multi-agency practitioners. The programme provides for learning based on statutory requirements, learning arising from local and national reviews, case audits and emerging areas where knowledge and skills are recognised.
- 2.8 In order to encourage continuous learning and maintain a skilled workforce, Thurrock LSCP have introduced 7-minute briefings as a quick and simple way to share learning on a range of safeguarding topics. A suite of 7- minute briefing have been added to the LSCP Learning Hub on the website. Topics include:
 - Contextual Safeguarding
 - Prevent
 - Professional Curiosity
 - Rapid Reviews
 - Safer Sleep
 - What is the Local Safeguarding Designated Officer (LADO)?

7-minute briefings can be accessed via www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/seven-minute-briefings/seven-minute-briefings

3. Case Reviews Action Plan Update

All case review action plans are developed through meetings attended by multi-agency representatives, to identify actions required by the partnership to address the recommendations. These action plans have been ratified through the LSCP Learning Practice Review Group, Management Executive Board and Statutory Partners.

3.1 **Leo Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Action Plan**
Leo Action Plan is now completed and has been signed off by the Independent Chair and Statutory partners as business as usual.

3.2 **Shae and Ashley Local Health Review (LHR) Action Plan**
This action plan was agreed and ratified through the LSCP Learning Practice Review Group, Management Executive Board and Statutory Partners in the last cycle of meetings.
The learning from Shae and Ashley LHR lists ten recommendations that are further divided into sub-sections totalling 14 actionable areas. Work has started on the actions and 3 actions are completed.

3.3 The LSCP is currently considering the findings from the recently published National Panel reviews on Star Hobson (Bradford) and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes (Solihull) along with the Independent Review of Children's Social Care written by Josh MacAlister. A document is being devised to identify what more can be done to mitigate the risk to children in Thurrock.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 None

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 To update members on the range of work carried out by Thurrock LSCP and progress on case review action plans. The action plans are multi-agency documents that are monitored through the LSCP governance structure.

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

6.1 Not applicable.

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

7.1 There is no impact.

8. Implications

8.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**
**Strategic Lead Corporate Finance – Resources
and Place Delivery**

There are no substantial financial implications arising from the action plan which have not been accounted for in the LSCP budgets and delivery plan.

The LSCP is funded by the three statutory partners and small contributions from other members of the partnership.

8.2 **Legal**

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

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 dissolved the requirement for Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB). The three Strategic Partners, determined under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, comprise Thurrock Council, Essex Police and Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Thurrock's new arrangements as the LSCP, came into effect on the 7th May 2019.

The statutory criteria for a serious child safeguarding case is set out in Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) with statutory guidance in Working Together 2018. The commission and oversight of the review of these cases, (a local child safeguarding practice review formerly Serious Case Review) and the auditing and monitoring of the 'programme of action' following the findings of the review continues to be the role of the LSCP.

Independent scrutiny is required by the Act as a part of the local safeguarding arrangements.

8.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

Supporting our children and young people who are disadvantaged is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. The Partnership promotes practice to achieve equality, 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. All Partners are signed up to these principles.

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

No implications identified.

9. **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.

10. **Appendices to the report**

None.

Report Author:

Priscilla Bruce-Annan

Business Manager

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2022/23**

Dates of Meetings: 16 June 2022, 13 September 2022, 17 November 2022, 17 January 2023, 14 March 2023

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
16 June 2022		
Youth Cabinet Update – Briefing Note	Angela Surrey	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board: Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review – Action Plans	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item/ Members
Education National Drivers: Schools White Paper, SEND & AP Green Paper, Levelling Up, Skills Act, School Admission and Attendance Guidance	Sheila Murphy	Officers
The Care Review into Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel Review of Child Protection	Sheila Murphy	Officers
Children's Social Care Performance – Quarter 4 2021-22	Janet Simon	Chair
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
13 September 2022		
Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item

2021/22 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children’s Social Care	Lee Henley	Officers
Fostering Recruitment Update	Dan Jones	Members
The Inspection of the Young Offending Services 2022	Clare Moore	Officers
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board: Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review – Action Plans	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
17 November 2022		
Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Educational Attainment Data 2021/22	Michele Lucas	Members
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2023-24	Kelly McMillan	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item
17 January 2023		
Youth Cabinet Verbal Update	Angela Surry	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
14 March 2023		

Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
Briefing Notes		
N/A	N/A	N/A

Updated: 30th August 2022

Clerk:

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