

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 **14 March 2023**

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

Membership:

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

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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To approve as a correct record the minutes of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 January 2023.	
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.	

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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: **6 March 2023**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non-pecuniary

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

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

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

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

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

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

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), George Coxshall (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Paul Arnold, Martin Kerin and Srikanth Panjala

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

Apologies:

In attendance:

Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Manager
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
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Youth Cabinet Representative
Angela Surrey – Youth Worker

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.

11. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

13. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

14. Youth Cabinet Update

The Youth Cabinet representative presented the report. She explained that The Mayor Councillor J Halden and Councillor B Johnson attended the Youth Cabinet's November meeting to explain their roles and answer any questions

the Youth Cabinet Members had. The Mayor offered the Youth Cabinet the use of the Council Chamber for their monthly meetings.

Councillor M Coxshall joined the meeting at 19.02

The Youth Cabinet Representative stated that the article that went out about the Member of Youth Parliaments visit to the House of Commons (see Appendix 1) resulted in 85 clicks to the Thurrock Council Youth Cabinet webpage. This was the second highest link click stat in that week's edition. Members were very pleased with the stat result as it indicates that 85 people are interested in what they are doing.

The Youth Cabinet Representative explained that they are still looking to grow the number of members of the Youth Cabinet. The Youth Cabinet Representative highlighted that another wellbeing walk will be taking place in February half term.

Councillor Kerin thanked the Youth Cabinet for the work that they do and confirmed that he supported the recruitment of more members as the more voices they hear, the better. Councillor Kerin noted the priority campaign is the cost of living and health and asked what support they needed to push the campaign.

The Youth Worker stated that they are currently building the campaign and it will be released in March, she thanked Councillor Kerin for the offer of help. The meeting discussed the Youth Cabinet Members involvement in working with the Local Plans Manager regarding the local plan.

The Chair queried how accessible the information on the Local Plan was for Youth Cabinet Members.

The Youth Cabinet Representative responded that it did take her a while to understand and how it impacts the environment and commented that she is grateful to be working on it. The Youth Worker added that the Local Plans Manager had really broken it down for them. She used slides which were easily accessible and they played games and used mind maps to get Youth Cabinet Members really engaged.

15. Overview of Responsibilities of Portfolio holder for Children's Services - Verbal update

Councillor B Johnson gave a verbal update as Portfolio holder for Children and Education.

Councillor B Johnson confirmed there is only one school that remains under the direct control of the Local Authority and that all other schools in Thurrock are Academies or Multi-trusts. However, the Local Authority continues to be closely involved with all schools and the Director and Assistant Director attend fortnightly meetings with the CEO's and School Headteachers. The Schools

Appeals process for admissions remains with the Local Authority and Home to School transport. He urged members to become familiar with Thurrock's Home to School transport policy.

Councillor B Johnson highlighted that he is looking forward to being a Judge on Thurrock's Next Top Boss. He also noted that the Summer holiday activity programme is continuing and they have 13,000 spaces on offer.

Councillor B Johnson stated that one of the hardest decisions that has come across his desk was the necessary closure of 2 nurseries in Tilbury which could have caused a problem for the Community. He was pleased to confirm that they have not received any complaints from parents that they haven't been able to obtain a nursery place for their child.

Councillor B Johnson confirmed that Home to School transport remains a real challenge, they continue to look at ways they can reduce the spend whilst not putting children at risk. A further challenge is the increase in Educational Healthcare Plans (EHCP's), Thurrock currently has in excess of 2000 plans.

Councillor B Johnson explained that the Social Care and Early Help service are in a constant state of alert to be prepared for external regulatory Ofsted inspections but continues to support children, young people and families to ensure they receive the right the service at the right time. Councillor B Johnson reminded the committee that as elected members they are all corporate parents.

Councillor Johnson commented that he is very proud that in April 2022 Thurrock was chosen as one of 75 Local Authorities to join the Start For Life Family Hubs programme.

Councillor B Johnson highlighted that some of the challenges the service face is that they are now required by the Home Office to accept 45 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children which is up from 31. They are also having difficulty recruiting more foster carers which is a national issue too.

Councillor B Johnson recalled attending an enjoyable evening event in October to celebrate foster carer's achievements and met a foster carer who had been fostering children in Thurrock for 40 years which he described as a humbling experience.

The Youth Offending Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) this year and was rated as Good.

Councillor Anderson asked about gang activity and queried what Councillor B Johnson is doing within his own portfolio to help tackle that issue in the borough.

Councillor B Johnson responded that it does cross over into other portfolio areas in terms of stopping it but the main job in this portfolio is identifying the children that are vulnerable and trying to stop them going down that route.

The Director of Children's Services added that when they become aware the children are normally involved or on the edge of becoming involved. They have preventative workers in YOS and a gang lead who reach out to predominantly young boys. In Children's Services families can struggle with the behaviours their children are exhibiting and social workers can become involved where there is danger of exploitation and work with families to put in as much support as possible to get young people on another course.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that the LSCP have completed a thematic review on youth violence and there are actions from that plan which they are putting into place. They have also received funding from the Violence and Vulnerability Board for a worker to go into schools and work with children. They are also putting in extra training for social workers.

Councillor Kerin thanked Councillor B Johnson for the verbal update and queried whether there will be a Portfolio Holder report for 2022/ 23 for the next Committee meeting.

Councillor B Johnson responded that he believed he had to be invited but he was happy to attend the next meeting.

Councillor Kerin queried what are the main issues discussed at the fortnightly meeting with Schools.

Councillor B Johnson responded that the main issue was during Covid and issues such as lack of staff.

The Director for Children Services confirmed they often discuss the local issues going on at that moment. At the last meeting the Public Health Director came along and discussed Strep A. The school's really value the forum and in Covid the meeting took place weekly.

The Assistant Director of Education updated the Committee that 120 places will not be offered in September 2023 at Orsett Heath because the building is not ready. Other schools have already offered to take classes. She confirmed that the department is working hard to offer enough school places.

Councillor Kerin queried what the future is for Grangewaters.

Councillor B Johnson said he does not have an update on this but reassured the Committee that all the services offered by Grangewaters could be offered by Stubbers Adventure Centre.

Councillor Kerin queried what services will be affected by the Council's financial situation.

Councillor B Johnson responded that statutory services will not be affected and the majority of the services in the portfolio are statutory. Everything else will be looked at but he cannot say anymore than that at the current time.

The Assistant Director for Education confirmed that the school holidays activity programme is funded by Central Government so children on school meals are offered a range of activities. It is therefore up to Central Government. She added that the take up has been really positive.

The Chair confirmed a report will be brought to the next Committee meeting regarding the impact of the budget and savings on the portfolio.

Councillor Arnold raised the issue of children being placed in schools far away from their home.

Councillor B Johnson confirmed the Schools or Academies make the decision and the Council are left with the appeals. He confirmed that they talk to Schools regularly to try and understand their admissions policies.

Councillor Arnold asked for an update on the Oak Tree Centre. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that a capital bid has been put in and improvement works are taking place.

Councillor Kerin asked about recruitment of foster carers.

Councillor B Johnson confirmed it is hard work being a parent to your own children and therefore you have to be a certain type of person to foster. Thurrock do pay the Council Tax for foster carers but money is not the reason why foster carers do the job they do.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed that foster carers an ageing population, Covid caused a lot of people to look at their priorities. Some foster carers moved out of Thurrock and some retired or stopped fostering. She reiterated that it does take a special type of person to foster and difficulties in recruiting more foster carers is a national issue.

Councillor Kerin thanked Councillor B Johnson for attending the meeting and answering the questions and added that it had been a really useful exercise.

Councillor G Coxshall noted that there are over 2000 EHCP's now in the Borough and queried how timely the EHCP's are completed.

The Assistant Director for Education confirmed that they ended the year with 55 % completed within 20 weeks. The past year has been challenging and they have had staff that have left; however they are reliant on a range of other partners to obtain information to complete the plan. They are now fully staffed and are hoping to improve on the figures this year. There has been an increase in EHCP plans, a lot of little children missed out on playgroups where they would have developed speech and language and social skills.

The Chair queried what is being done to retain foster carers and other key workers in early years.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help responded that they constantly look at what they can do differently. They consulted with the foster carers and asked them what mattered to them. They offer an out of hours service for foster carers and will provide additional support to them if requested. They also celebrate the work they do.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help stated that recruitment of social workers is also a national issue. They support their social workers by ensuring they have the right case loads, regular supervision and training and they also have a retention policy to try and keep social workers. There is a recruitment campaign out now for newly qualified social workers. Thurrock also has agency workers who have converted from agency to permanent which is very positive.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Government is imminently about to publish their response to the Independent Social Work review by Josh McAlister and workforce and fostering are likely to be key areas that will be looked at.

The Chair suggested a report on this is discussed in the work programme item.

16. Verbal Update on Family Hubs/ Start for Life

The Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention provided a verbal update. The Committee were updated that they have completed the required delivery plan and submitted it to the Department of Education on 6th January 2023 and they are currently waiting for the funding to be released. The feedback received from the Government is that they have a good understanding of the programme. A multi-disciplinary board has been set up to monitor the delivery of the programme and a number of work streams to oversee the delivery of the programme. A recruitment process has also started for the additional staff.

Councillor Kerin thanked the Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention for the update.

17. Educational Attainment Data 2021- 22

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and Special Educational Needs / Disabilities presented the report and confirmed that it is a good news story. Thurrock's Looked After Children and SEND children have done very well compared to their peers nationally. The early years children have not done as well as they have done previously, and this has been put down to the pandemic and lost opportunities for socialising and attending early years settings.

Councillor Anderson asked about the virtual school.

The Director for Children's Services confirmed they have a Statutory duty towards all Thurrock Looked After Children and therefore the Headteacher of the virtual school is another layer of looking at what these children need and they will go into the children's schools to support and challenge them to ensure the children get what they need.

Councillor Kerin queried why disadvantaged children aren't beating the national average.

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and Special Educational Needs / Disabilities confirmed they are slightly behind the national average. They will attract the pupil premium and the national tutoring funding too.

The Assistant Director for Education stressed that attendance is a key priority and children need to be in school. They are having termly meetings with schools to look at attendance.

Councillor G Coxshall queried what is being done to support early years children.

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and Special Educational Needs / Disabilities responded that the Council is working with all early years settings delivering free training on speech and language to upskill practitioners and improve outcomes for children.

Councillor Arnold queried the work being done to improve young children's social skills.

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and Special Educational Needs / Disabilities confirmed that after the pandemic schools quickly realised children's physical fitness and social skills had been affected and children are not ready to learn until they are happy in school. Therefore, the two terms after that were used to work on the development of children's social skills.

Councillor Panjala queried what is the action plan to improve Key Stage 4 levels as they are below the national average.

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and Special Educational Needs / Disabilities confirmed they are closing the gap. The Teaching School Hub looks at school improvement and are identifying schools that need extra support. Leadership support and teacher training can be provided. The Assistant Director of Education also highlighted the need to give children at that age options such as apprenticeships and skills as not all of them will go down the further education route.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive the provisional outcomes of the summer 2022 tests and examinations and commends early years' settings, schools, pupils, and parents/carers on their achievements.**
- 1.2 Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognises the impact of Covid on our youngest children and how we are looking to support our early sector.**
- 1.3 Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee formally thank our early years, school and colleges settings for the work that has ensured a range of positive outcomes for our children and young people.**

18. Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review - Action Plans

The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager presented the report to the Committee.

Councillor Arnold stated that he attended the Walk Online Roadshow and commented that it was very informative. He urged anyone who has not been to attend it as he was shocked to hear what children were exposed to and it is really important for parents to be engaged.

Councillor Kerin queried the progress of the actions from the thematic review on Serious Youth Violence.

The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager confirmed there are 6 recommendations, and each recommendation has sub-sections. Agencies are starting to work on the actions pending this being signed off in March. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager confirmed she doesn't have the action plan with her so she cannot elaborate on the detail further tonight but progress is being made.

RESOLVED:

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

19. Work Programme

The Committee discussed the items to be added to the March work programme which will be the Portfolio holder report, an update report on the Government's response to the Independent Social Work Review and a report on the budget and savings.

The Chair decided that an extraordinary meeting will be necessary for the reports on the Re-procurement of the Homes to School Transport Contracts and the Capital Schools programme as these will need to be heard before the Cabinet meeting on the 15th March 2023.

The meeting finished at 8.59 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

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Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting
March 2023
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 Monthly Meetings

At February's Monthly Meeting our guest speaker was from the Essex Wildlife Trust to speak to us about the Nextdoor Nature programme. They spoke to us about how Thurrock Youth Cabinet can support nature's recovery from the biodiversity crisis linked to the current climate emergency. The aim of the project is to provide people with advice and support they need to help nature on their doorstep and to leave a lasting natural legacy within their communities.

Thurrock Youth Cabinet will be supporting the Nextdoor Nature programme by coming up with and running their very own Nextdoor Nature project in Thurrock. So far, we have identified five potential project locations within the borough and at our next monthly meeting we shall be voting to decide where the project will take place. We look forward to sharing the location with you and further details of our project proposal in the coming months.

1.2 Working Group Meeting

In February's Working Group Meeting we continued our interactive workshops with Thurrock Council's Local Plan Manager. Our chosen problem to explore at this meeting was the 'Lakeside Basin'. The format (which is still a work in progress) is that we pick a problem in Thurrock that we think planning could solve. We discuss challenges and opportunities with a focus on considering how other types of people might view the problem and then come up with potential solutions that the Planning Team can look at including in the emerging plan. We find the work to be quite fun and interesting as we get to be as creative as we like when exploring a problem but are also coming up with solutions on how we can improve an area. We feel like our thoughts and views on the future of the borough are being heard, listened to, and included into plans that matter.

1.3 **British Youth Council Youthcon Event**

On Saturday 18 February 2023 11 members of the Youth Cabinet, along with two youth workers, travelled up to London to take part in the British Youth Council YouthCon event. It saw over 200 young people come together for a day of discussions, guest speakers, workshops, and campaigns all around Youth Voice and making a positive social impact.

The event enabled us to develop our skills around public speaking, build our confidence and improve our ability to express ourselves verbally. We also got the opportunity to listen to an inspirational guest speaker, who enlightened us on how to grow our self-confidence, fuel a career growth mindset and master good communication skills. And lastly, the new Youth Parliament campaign on the cost of living and health was officially launched. More news on this to follow soon.

The day was extremely valuable to us. We all felt that we took a new skill or insight away to help us on our journey as Youth Cabinet members who advocate on the behalf of other young people in our borough. These events are crucial to our development as we can bring back what we have learnt to our local areas and begin to take action to make positive social change.

1.4 **Research Project**

Thurrock Youth Cabinet was recently approached by Tonic, a research company, with an opportunity for them to take part in a research project. The project, commissioned by Ofcom, is about understanding more about young people's experiences with online content that may promote or glamorise eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide.

A few members from the Youth Cabinet were keen to be involved in the co-design workshop stage of this opportunity helping to develop appropriate research tools. The findings gathered are being used, by Ofcom, to help develop policies and guidelines to protect young people from harm online. Youth Cabinet members felt compelled to have a say in this research to aid the work being done to safeguard young people online, which we feel is extremely important.

1.5 **Youth Cabinet News and Promotion**

We are pleased to share with you our newly launched Thurrock Youth Cabinet online consultation portal. Please see this link at your convenience [Thurrock Youth Cabinet | Have my say | Thurrock Council](#)

The website is now live! We have been linking with the comms team to launch the webpage and get the message out there. Our aim is to use the page to keep young people of Thurrock up to date with Youth Cabinet happenings and create a two-way conversation about the things that matter in our borough. We'll share news, photos, interviews with

members and send out polls/surveys. We'll encourage young people to get involved in opportunities, let them know what we're working on and take any questions. We are excited to get this going and drawing more young people in to have a say in things that matter in Thurrock, which will help inform and shape the direction of our work.

The Youth Music Survey that we have spoken about in previous meetings is now live. We are running this until Thursday 23 March. We politely request that you support us on our mission to encourage as many young people as possible to complete this survey. Please see the link at your convenience

<https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/embeds/projects/20987/survey-tools/22431>

1.6 **Work on the horizon for Youth Cabinet**

We have been working hard planning our Youth Wellbeing Day for May half-term. Our poster will be released soon for young people to book on to. We are very excited to host the day and promote youth wellbeing.

1.7 **Thurrock 11- 25 Strategy Group**

The Youth Cabinet chair and vice chair continue to attend the 11-25 strategy meeting to update head teachers on the positive work being achieved within the Youth Cabinet and to share this good news within their schools.

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14 March 2023	ITEM: 6
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Annual report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Report of: Cllr Barry Johnson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

This report is to update the committee on the work that has been undertaken by Children's Services year to date, service priorities and savings, and to highlight the successes and challenges experienced by the service.

I will start by addressing some of the changes that have taken place in Children's Services to support the council's current financial position. In the financial year 2022/23 Children Services reduced its overall spend by £788,000. Savings of £2,857,000 were achieved by reviewing our services to deliver more efficiently and cost effectively whilst ensuring that services continue meeting statutory duties to children such as the removal of council run nurseries, and the decommissioning of parenting assessments and courses.

Over the coming two years Children's Services have identified savings of £1,415,500. Savings made to date in 2022 and planned in 2023/24 and 2024/25. An overview of the financial position in Children's Service and savings are set out in Appendix 1 attached.

EDUCATION & SKILLS – supporting our children and young people and adults to achieve.

School Effectiveness Schools

There are over 30,000 school-aged children living in Thurrock. They are served well by the 39 Primary Schools, 13 Secondary Schools, 1 Alternative Provision and 3 Special Schools that operate across the borough.

In 2022 Thames Park School moved into their new state of the art accommodation in north Grays and although there have been some delays, Orsett Heath Academy is due to open in September 2024.

We saw the first set of SATS & GCSE data since before the Covid 19 Pandemic. Children of all ages have been affected by the disruption. I am pleased to report that despite the disruption to their education, children in Thurrock performed well when compared to their peers across the country.

At the end of year 6, 62% of children reached age-related expectations in reading, writing and maths. Whilst due to the pandemic, this was fewer than in previous years, it was still higher than national averages.

Early years settings, schools and colleges should be recognised for ensuring stability, continuity and catching children up on their missed time in school. In 2022 68% of children at the end of their reception year in Thurrock attained a good level of development compared to 65% nationally.

In 2022 64.9% of children achieved a 9-4 pass in both English and Maths in Thurrock, which was slightly better than the England average of 64.3%.

It should also be noted that a higher proportion of Children in Thurrock with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and those who are Looked After by Thurrock, achieved the expected standard than their peers nationally.

Between January 2022 and January 2023 eight primary schools were inspected by Ofsted and all but one retained their previous good or outstanding judgements. The school that was graded RI (Requires Improvement) has already made significant improvements to their curriculum with the help of their Multi-Academy Trust. Currently 92% of Primary schools in Thurrock have a good or outstanding judgement from Ofsted.

There are 13 secondary schools in the borough; eleven of them have an Ofsted judgement resulting in 64% of them having a good or outstanding grade. Thames Park School recently had their first inspection but at the time of writing this report, the inspection outcome had not been published.

Holiday, Activity & Food (HAF) Programme

HAF clubs were delivered throughout Easter, summer and Christmas holidays for school-aged children who are eligible for free school meals through means tested benefits. On average, 20 clubs were held over each holiday period offering a vast range of activities for children to take part in; e.g art, drama, music, sports of all types, wellbeing, Special needs etc. They delivered healthy meals and activities, family information and advice and signposting to other services. Over 2000 family packs were distributed to help families stay active and receive support. The places are funded by grants from DfE.

Early Years

Early language development takes place in a range of settings including playgroups, parent & toddler groups, Children's Centres and through general socialisation. During

the pandemic much of this was lost and, as a result, we are seeing significant language delays in our early years cohorts in language development.

To address some of these challenges, the School Effectiveness Early Years Team is working closely to deliver training to all Early Years Providers to support them to further develop their knowledge and skills around addressing speech, language and communications difficulties and delay. Between March 2022 and January 2023 over 150 Early Years Practitioners had benefitted from this training. This work has been co-funded by the Integrated Care Board and will remain a key focus for the forthcoming year where they will be focusing on working with Children's Centres and Family Hub staff to help them to support our youngest children.

The latest published data (2022) shows that 74% of our most vulnerable two-year-olds benefitted from funded early education and childcare, which is in line with national data. The data also shows that 87% of our three and four-year-olds benefitted from funded early education and childcare.

83% of our Early Years Providers are judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted. The settings that are not good have not engaged with our School Effectiveness Team who deliver the statutory responsibility of the council around delivering support and advice to settings to improve. As a result, we are offering settings where Ofsted ratings have dropped further advice and support.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

In January 2023 Thurrock maintained 2097 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children and young people with SEND. These plans set out what the children's needs, aspirations and intended outcomes are and what provision must be in place to meet them.

In line with legislation, EHCPs must be issued within 20 weeks. The latest available published data shows that in 2021 in England, 59.9% of EHCPs were issued on time. However, in 2021, Thurrock issued 78.9% of EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks.

The SEND Service is in the process of reviewing and updating its strategy in coproduction with health, social care, college, schools and settings, children and young people and their families as well as a range of other professionals. This should be ready in draft form in the autumn of 2023 and will align with the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper as well as the revised Joint Area Inspection Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Framework for Inspection.

School Attendance Support Team (SAST) (previously known as Education Welfare Service)

In May 2022 the Government published new guidance for Councils, *Working together to improve school attendance*. This guidance came into effect from September 2022 and sets out clearly the expectations and responsibilities of parents, schools, governing

bodies and the local authority and partners to increase levels of school attendance. The guidance requires all Local Authorities to rigorously track local attendance data, have a SAST which provides expert advice in respect of attendance matters, share good practice, hold termly conversations with all schools in respect of pupils identified as persistent or severely absent. The service has set out clear attendance management processes for schools to follow to ensure that barriers to good attendance are identified, explore multi-disciplinary support for families and monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker.

The Guidance is expected to become Statutory no sooner than September 2023. Whilst there has been no additional funding provided by government to carry out these duties, the service has quickly embraced the new guidance, mobilised and is working with the Department for Education Advisor to develop and implement a School Attendance Strategy and action plan. Termly meetings with schools and academies have already taken place.

In addition to the attendance advisory work the SAST fulfil the local authority's statutory duties in respect of Elective Home Education (EHE). Contact is made with each new EHE case to establish the reasons for EHE and to ensure that a plan for a suitable education is in place. Cases found to be suitable are reviewed every 12 months. Cases are reviewed sooner if there is a need. Cases known to social care or those with an EHCP are given highest priority. Statutory action such as School Attendance Orders are used if there is a need to return a child to school.

In this current academic year there are currently 345 children or young people recorded as EHE. This academic year alone a further 66 children have been returned to school.

The service also issues child performance licenses, chaperone licenses and child employment licenses on behalf of the Council.

The Virtual School

The Virtual School continues to monitor and support the educational progress and outcomes for Children/Young People Looked After (C/YP LA) irrespective of where they are placed, in or out of borough. The responsibility covers pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and this includes those who have left care during an academic year. It is also required to provide information, advice and guidance to Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and their families when requested.

At the end of the academic year 21/22, there was 292 pupils aged 3-18 years in the Virtual School. This was fewer than the previous year. During the academic year, 8 pupils left care and 40 entered care. 16 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) entered care during this academic year and in total there were 35 UASC. This equates to 11% of the cohort, which was a decrease of 1% from the previous year.

In June 2021 the Department for Education published non-statutory guidance which extends the role of the Virtual School Head to support educational outcomes for

Children with a social worker. A grant of £100,000 was allocated by DfE for the academic year starting in September 2021. We have used this funding to recruit a project manager to lead on developing a Thurrock wide strategy for supporting and challenging schools and social care to improve the educational outcomes for this vulnerable group. We have also used the additional funding to provide Thurrock schools with intensive trauma and attachment training and consultancy to support all pupils in schools. In addition to this, books and licenses to the Access to Inclusion software have been purchased for all Thurrock schools to enable them to plot behaviours of pupils in their school and support them using the suggested strategies. This has proved successful with our CLA, and we have extended this to all schools to use as they require.

Inspire Employability & Skills

Inspire Employability & Skills Services are enhancing the work with young people by focusing on developing the skills young people needed to progress into the world of work. Employability and Skills team are successfully delivering on the ONTRACK and CLLD ESF funded programmes by delivering bespoke and one to one support for those young people and adults who are furthest removed from employment. Both programmes are part funded through the European Social Fund and managed by the Department for Work and Pensions. ONTRACK is a 2.5-year programme worth £3.7m to Thurrock which plans to formally engage and sign up 815 young people aged 15-25 who will be able to benefit from the range of support on offer. CLLD programme is specifically designed to deliver similar work to 203 adults in Tilbury area. Both programmes are on track to complete the targets.

In partnership with Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) Employability and Skills Team are engaging with Career Coordinators in schools and Employability Advisers (EAs) from industry to improve delivery of careers strategy to the schools, i.e., bringing the world of education closer to the world of work. 18 secondary schools and colleges in Thurrock are engaging in the project.

Successful partnership with Make Happen is providing valuable resource to work with the most vulnerable young people to progress them to Higher Education (HE), focusing on Care Leavers. There are currently 19 (aged 18-21) care leavers at university. There are a further 11 care leavers aged over 21 at university.

Inspire Employability and Skills Team are further developing partnerships with Thurrock secondary schools by providing Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in 8 out of the 15 schools. This work shows positive results in Thurrock's NEET figures which are below national and rank Thurrock in the top 10% of the 152 LAs.

September Guarantee 2022 stands at 100% ensuring that every 16-year-old had a place of learning reserved for them in September 2022. September Guarantee 2023 is on the same trajectory.

Grangewaters – the team have enhanced our exciting SEND offer at Grangewaters: young people with SEND access Grangewaters for a range of training sessions getting them ready for the world of work and preparing them for adulthood. New SEND schools have come on board, whilst one to one tuition has been explored and enhanced.

SEND Post 16 service is enhancing its post 16 provision by working with training providers to deliver the best possible offer to our SEND young people and its quality assurance – the service is actively working with the young people to enable provision to meet the young people’s needs.

Youth Offer have offered a range of programmes to support over 100 young people in overcoming their barriers, building self-confidence, enhancing skill sets. The Youth Team are currently focusing on the voice of young people, engaging with the Youth Cabinet, and supporting them via monthly meetings, campaign groups, national sittings, receiving guest speakers and seeking ways to engage with additional young people across Thurrock. Prince’s Trust worked with 22 YP over two programmes this year whilst the DofE Team are currently supporting 482 young people to complete their DofE awards in Bronze, Silver and Gold either via their schools or through the open centres.

Thurrock Adult Community College

Graded as Good by Ofsted and as such we offer a range of courses to support getting into employment across the Authority. The college also offers a wellbeing programme for individuals and families that develop confidence and supports people to progress into more formal learning related to their career or personal ambitions.

The work of the college is key to meeting elements of key council strategies including the Backing Thurrock Skills Plan, the Brighter Futures strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The skills agenda will remain a key focus. The college has started to realise its long-term ambition to level up access to learning by working alongside libraries in learning hubs enabling residents to develop essential skills closer to where they live. They will have a choice of online, in person or blended delivery models based on their individual preferences.

Home to School Transport

Restructure of Children’s Transport Service

This year we have brought together the operational organisation of home to school transport which was previously managed by the Passenger Transport Team under the Public Realm Directorate with SEN eligibility assessment and budget management accountability sitting within Children’s Services Directorate and mainstream eligibility assessment currently residing within the Finance Directorate into children’s services.

Home to School Travel and Transport policy update

The policy is in the process of being reviewed and any changes required will be presented to Children's Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet for approval. In addition, we have reviewed the Post 16 policy statement and made changes to the layout and order of information to enable an easier read for parents. The Post 16 policy statement will be published by 31st May 2023.

We will continue to work to ensure that we are providing sustainable transport keeping a clear focus on best value, The increase in demand has continued and this has meant challenges on the home to school transport budget.

Free School Programme and School Expansion

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that every child in Thurrock has a school place. We continue to achieve this with strong working relationships with our schools.

Since the last report Treetops Free school has opened along with Thames Park. Orsett Heath Academy is planned to open in their permanent location from September 2024. The new Harrier Primary School, part of the REACH2 Academy Trust is planned to open in September 2023 with a Reception class of 30 pupils in the first year.

In relation to pupil place planning, we are in the process of compiling the next pupil place plan which will include forecasts from 2023-2027.

This year we have developed a further two primary resource bases to support our children with additional needs this links to our strategy of keeping children with SEND within the borough, We have recently submitted a free school alternative provision application in partnership with Olive Academy the outcome will be known in the summer of 2023.

The two new Primary mainstream resource bases developed in 2021/22 are the two new bases at Aveley Primary School and Stifford Clays Primary School. Each of these bases is for 10 pupils with complex needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). These have been developed to meet the increasing need for specialist provision in this area of SEND.

Thurrock has 4 Secondary Resource Bases for pupils with SEND covering Speech and Language Needs and Autism; Hearing Impairment; Visual Impairment and Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs.

In total we have 182 places in our Special Resource Bases in Thurrock.

Access and Inclusion

We have continued the process of holding 3 weekly Primary and Secondary Inclusion Panels for all schools within the Local Authority. These panels ensure that the Fair Access Protocols are appropriately implemented ensuring that pupils who come under this, who are often particularly vulnerable, get access to a school placement in a timely

manner with a fair distribution of these pupils across all schools in Thurrock. All schools in Thurrock have continued to engage positively in this process.

The Inclusion Panels also facilitate the process of managed moves for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion to avoid where possible the need for this and enable a fresh start at a new school. The Panels also oversee the reintegration of pupils who have been previously excluded back into mainstream provision from our Alternative Provision.

Primary Inclusion Panel 21/22

Perm ex	Advice by panel	Sum of outreach/observations	Placement in Base
2	6	3	17

Secondary Inclusion Panel 21/22

Sum of Perm ex	Managed Moves	Successful moves and ongoing at end of year	Placement at Olive AP
30	48	35	86

Wellbeing and Mental Health Services

The School Wellbeing Service (SWS) has delivered a full programme of training and support to schools over the past year. This has consisted of a range of activities and support for schools across Thurrock. There has been ongoing co-ordination and work with the Health services, and Third Sector service supported by input and supervision from the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to ensure there has been a joined-up approach to wellbeing and mental health services in schools. All schools have worked through their action plans for wellbeing and have had access to a range of training and support for school staff and pupil activities with reflective sessions for staff groups being provided which have been very well received.

Dedicated Schools Grant

Nationally, all local authorities and the education system have struggled to meet the additional demand for payments in support of children with Education Health and Care plans (EHCP); for out of borough placements, independent special school residential placements and for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) top up payments.

The high needs block remained a significant issue for Thurrock, with the number of EHCP's increasing by 9%, in 2020/21. This has required both additional top up funding

to be paid to Schools and Academies and an increase in demand for specialist placements.

The DSG has a carried forward deficit into 2021/22 of £1.883m. This is a decrease of £0.095m from 2019/20. Discussions continue with the ESFA and the Schools Forum on options available to reduce demand for EHCP's and to increase Thurrock's Local Offer. A meeting is scheduled with ESFA in July to discuss Thurrock's DSG Management Plan.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY HELP

Children's Social Care and Early Help:

The following sets out key highlights during the year (April – December 2022) for Children's Social Care and Early Help, the work undertaken, priorities and challenges.

The most significant challenges for the service, and for the children, young people and families we work with, has been fostering recruitment and retention, placement sufficiency; the continuing effect of Covid 19; recruitment and retention of qualified social work staff and the financial pressures facing the council.

Children's social care has contributed to savings but in doing so has ensured that there is no negative impact on the effort and progress that has been made by children's social care over recent years. Caseloads and spans of control remain manageable. Following a review of the service a new operating model was introduced delivering savings and pulling some aspects of the service together to develop a Think Family approach and further develop our early help offer to support statutory social work.

Children's Social Care and Early Help have a continuous Development Plan which drives consistent good practice and good outcomes for children. The DCS chairs a monthly Development Board which I attend. This meeting provides the DCS and myself with a good line of insight into the service on progress against the priorities in the services Development Plan, challenges the service is experiencing and sets stretch targets.

The most recent LGA Employers Standards for Social Workers Report, published in February 2022, saw Thurrock as second in the Eastern Region and 12th Nationally for satisfaction amongst Social Workers against the Standards tested. We are currently awaiting the outcome of the most recent Report.

Key priorities have included:

1. Continued support to children, young people and families to ensure they receive the right service at the right time.
2. Preparing the service for regulatory external Ofsted inspections.
3. Recruitment and retention of qualified social workers.

4. Embedding and ensuring good Corporate Parenting cross council.
5. Working collaboratively with colleagues in adult social care and housing to ensure that children receive a seamless service.
6. Continued recruitment to expand our Thurrock based foster carers and adopters.
7. Continued work to reduce youth violence and child exploitation.
8. Working towards the development of a Start for Life, Family Hubs model.
9. Work with young people to prevent gang membership and youth crime.
10. Development of local registered residential provision for Thurrock children.
11. Embedding a Think Family approach across Children's Social Care.

Keeping children safe

The service continues to respond quickly and, in a child focused way to provide safety and protection to our most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Quality of Practice

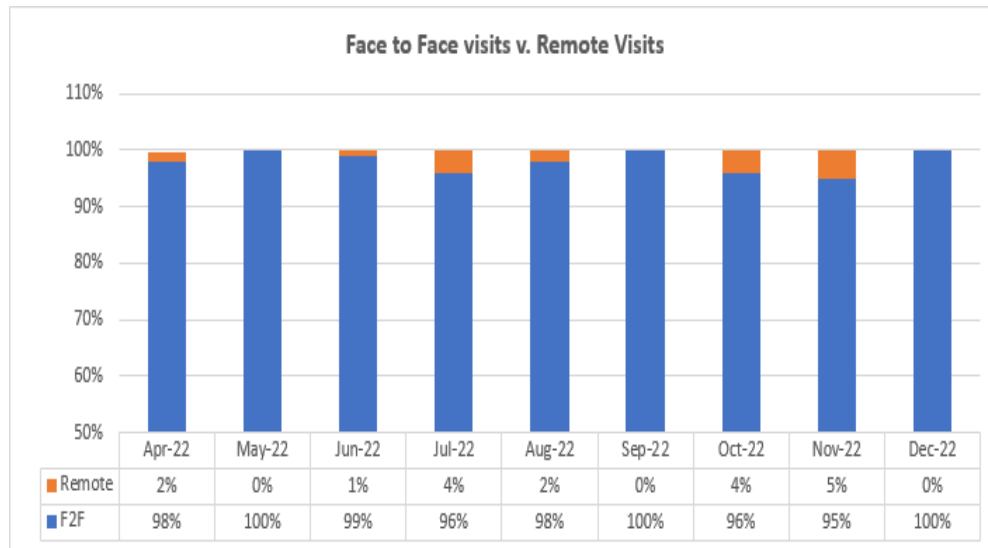
Thurrock has invested in the development of Signs of Safety (SoS) as a practice approach to provide a focus on recognition of risk, engaging family strengths to deliver safety and wellbeing. The embedding of SoS has led to improvements in practice across the service and improvements in communication and information sharing with partners. The Framework has been applied across services supporting consistency for families and a shared way of working among practitioners. Feedback indicates the SoS approach is welcomed by practitioners, partners and families providing clarity of goals of the work. A recent external review of child protection and child in need services has evidenced that the framework is embedded and integrated into most areas of practice. All social work teams receive ongoing training, both in the principles of the approach and specialist training tailored to their area of work. SOS training has also been made available to partner agencies via the LSCP and confidence has increased in using SOS practice contributing to improved assessments and more focused purposeful plans.

Quality of practice is monitored by audit, including multi-agency audits, performance data, service reports and feedback from complaints and compliments from partners and service users. 70% of Audit's are graded good or better. A mixture of themed and routine audits has been used to sustain learning from audit and to strengthen management oversight and feedback to practitioners.

Following the Covid Pandemic when all meetings were remote, Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Reviews moved to hybrid and face to face. Since September 2022 Child Protection conferences where possible have been held face to face, especially initial conferences which families have indicated they prefer. The attendance and participation by professionals at CP Conferences and Looked After Child reviews is good.

Social workers and managers are clear that children and young people need to be physically seen, to effectively safeguard them. The service has returned to face-to-face

visits unless it is not safe to do so, and a clear rationale provided and management agreement. Visits to children are mostly face to face with 98% of children having face to face visits in year, and in December 2022 100% of children were seen face to face and 95% of all children visited in timescale.



F2F is face to face visits

MASH

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has successfully maintained a consistent application of thresholds with a positive culture of providing support and challenge to partner agencies. There is a continued focus on further developing partnership relationships within the MASH. Multi-agency audits support the MASH to continuously review practice and identify what is working well and areas for development. Audit indicates a good shared multi-agency understanding of threshold in MASH and that the quality of assessments is good and plans are purposeful.

The re-referral rate year to date is 18.6% which is below (therefore good performance) Statistical Neighbours (20%) average in 2021/22 and the national average of 21.5 which is also an indication that threshold is being appropriately applied.

Early Help and Intervention:

Our Prevention and Support Service (PASS) undertakes time-limited bespoke work with families who do not require statutory intervention. There is strong partnership working between the PASS Service, statutory teams, and partner agencies. Early Help Services continue to provide intervention to families at the right time to prevent escalation into statutory services and supporting children to remain at home with their families. Allocations of children in Early Help have noticeably increased including an increase in the number of Early Help Episodes started.

In April 2022 we became one of 75 local authorities eligible to join the Start for Life, Family Hub programme. Early Help Services are integral to the Start for Life, Family Hubs Programme This programme also reflects our Think Family approach. We have reviewed our Early Help offer and mapped the existing provision for young people alongside partners to determine how best to deliver the funded elements of the Family Hub programme.

Think Family Practice approach

We adopted a Think Family approach as our operating model in April 2022, building on the effective and long established 'whole family' approach used by our Early Help services. Feedback from parents and professionals has helped shape this way of working. The approach is strengths and relationship-based and compliments Signs of Safety and our other existing practice models. Regular Family Network Meetings starting from the initial assessment is helping families to develop family plans which underpin their child's local authority plan, and importantly, give young people and families more agency in problem solving in a way that will continue to support them when our involvement ends.

By adopting this approach, we aim to increase the number of children who can remain living safely within their connected family networks, diverting children from becoming looked after or entering court proceedings. Parenting assessments and Parenting Programmes previously commissioned are now undertaken in-house This has led to tailored interventions with families with the most complex needs including extending the successful reunification and placement stability work previously undertaken by the Families Together Team. There is also a focus on engaging with fathers / males, children on the edge of care, and families before they enter pre-proceedings Public Law Outline (PLO).

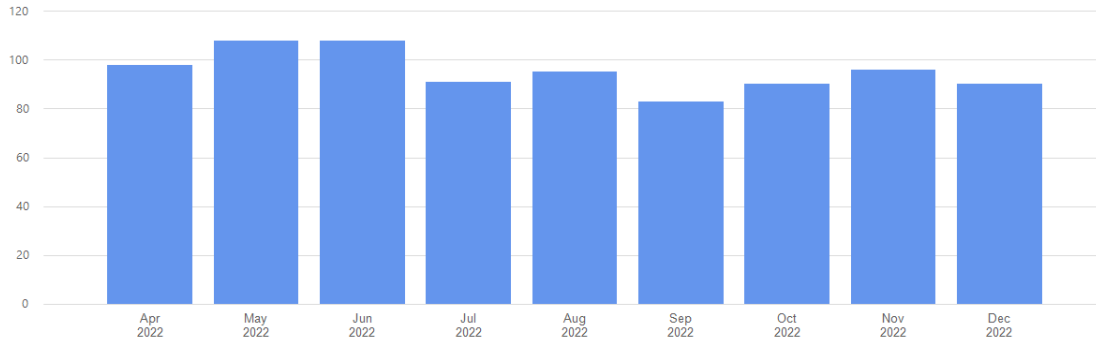
Children in Need (CIN) and Children subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan:

Thurrock has seen a small reduction in contacts and referrals, and we continue to work closely with partners to ensure that children are not receiving a statutory service where it is not required, and universal or early help services are better placed to support children and their families.

Thurrock's CIN cohort was 388 per 10,000 in 2020/21 above statistical neighbours at 312 and National performance at 321. The rate of Children in Need has continued to show a decrease from 511 at the end of March 2022 to 412 at the end of quarter 3 2022/23. At 333 per 10,000 Thurrock's performance is more in line with statistical neighbours at 331 and National performance at 334 per 10,000 in 2021/22.

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has stabilised between 90-98, which is below statistical and national averages but in line with the Eastern Region. This can be attributed to a combination of factors, including appropriate application of threshold, clear and robust processes, and use of CP surgeries to provide case challenge and oversee progression.

CP Cohort - Open at Month End



	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
Open at Month End	98	108	108	91	95	83	90	96	90

Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers:

The number of Children Looked After reduced from 301 in 2020/2021 to 292 in 2021/22 and has stabilised at or around this number which is slightly below the statistical neighbour and national average. We have started to see a slight increase over the three months to the end of December in CLA numbers in line with the increase of the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) cohort as identified further in my report.

Plans for all children are reviewed to ensure the correct children come into care; application of thresholds for Children Looked After (CLA) are consistently applied; and court proceedings are only issued where necessary. This oversight of care entry has been effective in supporting timely removal in the best interests of a child and ensuring all options within the family network are fully explored.

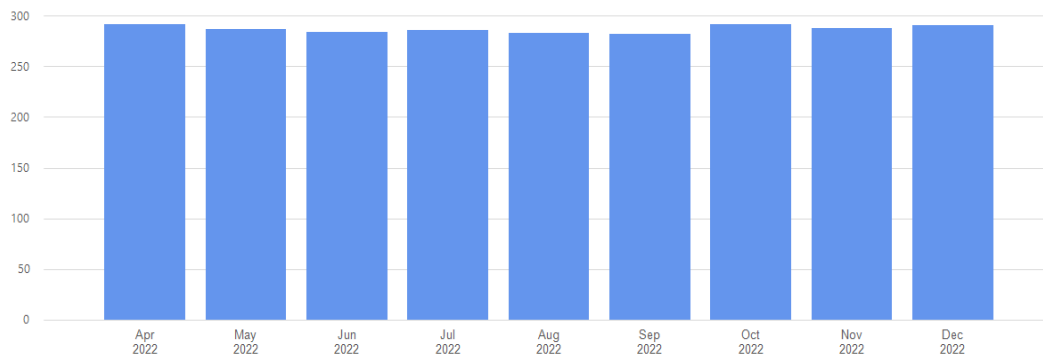
The Aftercare Service at the end of December 2022 was supporting 257 Care Leavers aged 18-25 alongside young people who are aged 16 and above who meet the criteria for a Care Leaving Service and are currently allocated a social worker. In December the Aftercare Team ran a consultation exercise with our Care Leavers alongside celebrating Christmas with Care Leavers. The team also worked closely with young people to make sure that they had clear plans over Christmas and would not be isolated.

The service has worked closely with Housing colleagues to ensure young people’s housing needs are met. Between January 2022 and December 2023, 27 young people gained social housing. Regular joint meetings and work continues between children’s social care and housing.

27 of our care leavers are in Staying Put arrangements with their previous foster carers which means they are continuing to remain “at home” in line with young people reaching the age of 18 who are not care leavers.

20 young people are at university and are supported by the local authority to ensure they have access to appropriate grants, loans, and accommodation including holiday accommodation.

CLA Cohort - Open at Month End

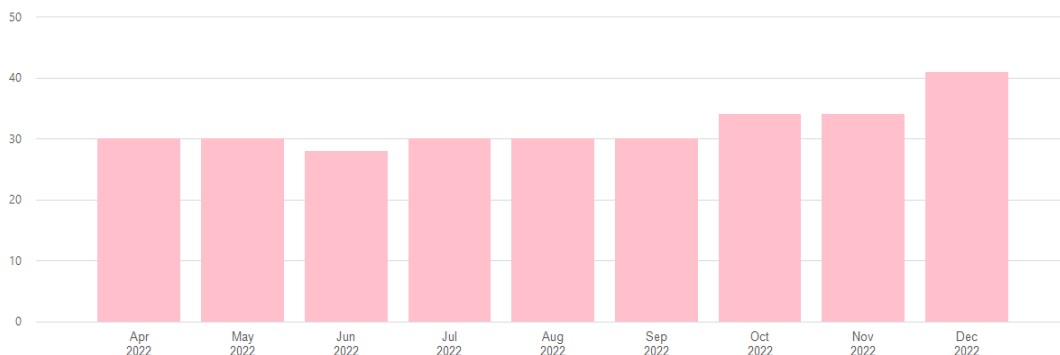


	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
Open at Month End	292	287	284	286	283	282	292	288	291

The overall number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) has increased following the uplifting of the numbers of UASC each local authority is required to accommodate from 0.07 (31) to 0.1 (45) by the Home Office. This is to ensure a fair distribution of the responsibility nationally for looking after unaccompanied children. This increase in numbers will place an increased demand for placements, social work time and After Care support.

The below graphs show the number of UASC that were looked after at the end of each month and the rise in numbers.

CLA Cohort - UASC Open at Month End



	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
Open at Month End	30	30	28	30	30	30	34	34	41

Fostering, Adoption and Placements:

Adoption recruitment continues to be positive and in line with Thurrock's need for Adoptive parents. We continue to contribute to and benefit from Adopt East. 13 children have been Adopted year to date

In line with national challenges, we are experiencing difficulty in recruiting the volume of foster carers we would like to meet the needs of our children There continues to be significant recruitment activity in fostering to recruit new foster carers within Thurrock and the surrounding area. A wide array of engagement events has been held in and around Thurrock and our brand is visible in the Thurrock Community. We have made use of a range of advertising including at the end of December and into January 2023, a targeted Google ads campaign was launched to drive enquiries. We continue to encourage residents to make the leap in to fostering. Six Households have been approved year to date and 8 Household applications are being assessed as suitable to foster which should result in 12 placements.

Like many authorities, Thurrock has faced significant challenge finding suitable and available placements. We are developing a residential home offer, tailored to specific children's needs so they have dependable care provision for their childhood in partnership with Housing and an external provider. Two homes have so far been successful in their registration application with Ofsted. The service continues to have

careful strategic oversight of placements to ensure our resources are well used and placements appropriately supported.

Thurrock celebrated Foster Carers achievements and contribution to children's lives at a Fostering event in October 2022. As part of the Fostering Network, we also participated in the celebration of Sons and Daughters month for children of foster carers thanking them for their contribution to fostering.

Youth Offending Service (YOS):

Thurrock YOS was Inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in May 2022 which graded Thurrock Good with outstanding features. HMIP identified Thurrock's Resettlement Policy as a model of good practice, with multiple strengths and have shared the policy nationally.

The LSCP undertook a thematic review on youth violence, with a focus on learning from best practice. A multi-agency response is in place and actions are overseen by the Youth Crime Governance Board chaired by the Director of Children's Services and the Community Safety Partnership. Work has focused on awareness raising and prevention, contributing to a reduction in the number of offences of violence against a person including possession of knives.

The involvement of the Specialist Criminal Exploitation (CE) Support Worker has demonstrated the ability to engage previously hard to reach families through intensive support and tailored programmes designed to divert young people away from CE and criminal activity.

The Ministry of Justice are funding Youth Offending Services with an early intervention programme called 'Turnaround' with a focus on early intervention and prevention of offending. Violence and Vulnerability funding has also been secured via the Home Office for a Primary School Prevention Officer who will be offering support to schools and young people around prevention and diversion from youth violence. In addition, we have a Gangs and Exploitation Support Worker who works primarily with social workers, schools and young people who are at risk of exploitation also secured through Violence and Vulnerability funding.

Participation:

There have been several successful Participation and Inclusion events with cohorts of Thurrock's children such as a consultation event at an outdoor activity and a 6-session course offered to 12 children "Feel Good About You" resulting from the Mind of My Own feedback from children about their self-esteem. The service also held a Children's Looked After Award event (the first since Covid) in 2022 celebrating the achievements of the children for whom Thurrock are Corporate Parents. The Children in Care Council (CICC) has continued to meet bi-monthly as a group. Members of the Children in Care Council have attended the Corporate Parenting Committee and have also participated in children's panels for staff recruitment. The Young Voices bi-monthly newsletter which

was launched in June 2020 continues and regularly includes a young person's blog which highlights topical matters such as the importance of the social work relationship with children and young people and endings when social workers leave or move on.

Strong and Effective Partnership:

The Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) is well embedded following an update of its structure in 2019. It is well supported by its multi-agency partners. An independent Chair/Scrutineer was appointed in April 2021. The LSCP has good attendance at the various committees and subgroups and there is collaborative working evidenced in all the subgroups.

Our Brighter Futures Early Help strategy is established and led by a multi-agency Board chaired by the Director of Children's Services. The Strategy is currently being updated.

There is a multi-agency commitment to MASH. A quarterly MASH Strategic Board provides scrutiny and challenge to all partners. The governance of this has recently transferred to the LSCP.

The Youth Crime Justice Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services with full participation and contribution from partners and welcomed challenge and scrutiny.

Children Services Budget

Children & Education Portfolio	2022/23 Indicative Budget	2023/24 Indicative Budget
Children and Family Services	£32,209,526	£34,466,000
Dedicated Schools Budget	£46,288,000	£51,258,000
Education and Skills	£4,381,223	£5,185,000
Head Start Housing Service	£943,359	£955,000
School Transport	£3,291,574	£4,545,000
Children & Education Total	£87,113,682	£96,409,000
Dedicated Schools Grant	(£46,288,000)	(£51,258,000)
Children & Education Total	£40,825,682	£45,151,000

In determining the Children Services budget, the following levels of growth and savings have been applied, as reflected in the MTFS

Growth

Children Services Growth	2022/23	2023/24
Children's Placements	2,336,000	1,432,000
Children's Legal Proceedings	0	450,000
Home to School Transport	500,000	1,243,000
DSG – CSSB 20% Reduction	164,000	135,000
Total	3,000,000	3,260,000

Childrens Placements

The placements budget continues to experience increased cost and complexity of need. Significant cost pressures are generated by moves within care. Children with the most complex needs are experiencing a high level of placement instability driven by both providers giving notice on their placement and by intervention by the regulator. Thurrock is reliant on external providers for residential and complex care including SEN placements.

Childrens Legal Proceedings

Demand for legal Services in 2022/23 is exceeding base budget provision. In the last 2 financial years, additional one-off funding has been provided to cover additional costs

incurred in response to Covid backlogs in the courts. An updated budget has been prepared based on current case levels. Growth fund of £0.450m has been provided to reflect 2022/23 forecast outturn position and base budget review.

Home to School Transport

Thurrock continues to experience yearly increase in pupil numbers and Education Health and Care Plans. The increase to the Local Offer for pupil with Special Education Needs, places additional demands on the Home to School Transport budget. This is a recognized national issue.

Dedicated Schools Grant – Central School Services Block 20% reduction

The element of funding received for historic commitments made prior to 2013/14 is subject to a 20% year-on- year reduction. Funding is provided to minimise the impact of this reduction in funding. This allows Education budgets to be reviewed as part of the Council’s budget reduction proposals.

Savings

The following savings have been identified within Children Services for 2022/23 to 2024/25:

Children and Education Portfolio	Savings Narrative	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Children and Family Services	Review of Children's Social Care operating model.	£1,337,000	£77,500	£233,000	£1,647,500
Children and Family Services	Out of Hours Duty Team - revised model of operation (November 2022)		£255,000		£255,000
Children and Family Services	Review of children with Continuing Health Care to secure appropriate Health contribution		£200,000	£100,000	£300,000
Children and Family Services	Increase the number of Internal Foster Carers	£300,000			£300,000
Education & Skills	Review of Education Services	£1,010,000	£126,000	£378,000	£1,514,000
Education & Skills	Cessation of Council provided Nursery Provision (August 2022)	£64,000	£46,000		£110,000
Home to School Transport	Review of Home to School Transport	£146,000			£146,000
Children & Education Total		£2,857,000	£704,500	£711,000	£4,272,500

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14 March 2023	ITEM: 7
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Stable Homes, Built on Love: Government Implementation Strategy and Consultation on Children’s Social Care Reform 2023	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Janet Simon, Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help	
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	
Report is Public	

Executive Summary

On the 16th June 2022, Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, received a report on Josh McAllister’s Care Review of Children’s Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel Review of Child Protection following the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. The report to Committee, highlighted that the findings from the child protection review identified a set of chronic challenges that get in the way of child protection work and these relate to practice and practice knowledge; system processes; leadership and culture; and wider service context.

The Care Review is presented as a once in a generation opportunity for radical change in children’s social care, there were eighty recommendations which would require an investment of £2.6 billion over a five-year programme. The care review called on the government to be ambitious for children and to play a more active role in creating the conditions for success both in the design and delivery of services and for children’s rights and outcomes.

The government published their response to the reviews on the 2 February, ‘Stable Homes; Built on Love’ with an implementation/strategy plan and consultations are through to 11 May 2023. The government implementation plan responds to recommendations made by 3 independent reviews; Josh McAlister, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel into the tragic murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) review of the children’s placement market. The combined findings from these reviews revealed the current children’s care system is often fragmented, siloed, and struggling to meet the needs of children and families across England. Vulnerable children will be better supported to stay with their families in safe and loving homes, as part of an overhaul of children’s social care.

Backed by £200 million over the next 2 years, a new and wide-ranging children's social care implementation strategy will transform the current care system to focus on more early support for families, reducing the need for crisis response at a later stage. *Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation*, sets out six pillars for reform underpinned by £200m of new investment, alongside related consultations on a new framework for children's social care and the children social care workforce.

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho in introducing the consultation document said:

'Children in care deserve the same love and stability as everyone else. Our wide-ranging reforms will put strong relationships at the heart of the care system. From supporting our brilliant foster carers, kinship carers and social workers to getting early help to families and improving children's homes, we want every child to get the support and protection they need.'

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Government's implementation strategy for reforms to children's social care and the potential impact these will have on service delivery over the next few years.

1.2 That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note that the implementation strategy is open for consultation until 11th May 2023.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Government's implementation and strategy consultation, '*Stable Homes; Built on Love*', is over 200 pages long and is a direct response to the Care Review, the National Child Protection Review and the Competition and Markets Authority review, all of which reported in 2022. The government's implementation and strategy consultation document is seen as phase one of implementing a whole system change to how children's social care will operate over the coming two to five years. Realising a new vision for children's social care requires long-term reform, underpinned by further investment and changes to legislation. Phase one will be between now and the spending review in two years' time and will seek to make immediate improvements while laying the foundations for whole system reform. Activity in phase two will be about embedding reform everywhere. This will require further investment, legislation (subject to parliamentary time) and a wider programme of support to embed the reset of the whole system envisaged within the implementation plan.

2.2 *Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation* sets out six pillars for reform underpinned by £200m of new investment alongside related consultations on a new national framework for children's social care

and the child and family social worker workforce. Summary actions are as follows:

- **Pillar 1: Family help provides the right support at the right time so that families stay together** - Families will receive local early help and intervention with challenges such as addiction, domestic abuse or mental health, to help families to stay together where possible and overcome adversity. This will start in 12 local authorities and is backed by £45 million to embed a best practice model that will then be shared more widely. These 12 local areas will test a new approach to family help to provide increased, evidence-based support for families to overcome issues to prevent problems from escalating. In a welcoming and non-judgemental way, the new service will help families with issues such as domestic abuse or poor mental health, giving them access to local support with the focus on the help they need rather than bureaucratic boundaries and assessments between services and professionals.
- **Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system** – This includes the development of a new Child Protection Lead Practitioner role and moves to strengthen leadership across multi-agency partnerships. A new Child Protection Lead Practitioner role will have advanced, specialist training, and will work in a fully joined up way with other services such as the police, to better identify and respond to significant harm. The change will mean services work more effectively to protect children from harms that happen outside of the home, such as criminal exploitation and serious violence.
- **Pillar 3: Unlocking the potential of family networks** – Actions here include the publication of a national kinship care strategy by the end of 2023, new training and support for kinship carers and testing family group decision making and Family Network Support Packages. There will be a focus on improved support and reducing barriers to kinship care, including investing £9 million in a kinship care training and support offer for all kinship carers. The government will explore the case for a new financial allowance, possible additional workplace entitlements and options for an extension of legal aid for kinship carers who become special guardians or who hold child arrangement orders.
- **Pillar 4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care** – Includes investment in a fostering recruitment and retention, two Regional Care Cooperative pilots, renewed focus on the quality of leadership and management in children’s homes and a universal offer of wrap around support and accommodation for all care leavers. In addition to the recruitment programme and the above inflation increase to allowances, the government is investing £30 million in family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes to support children in care and care leavers to find and maintain loving relationships. The government will also increase the leaving care allowance from £2,000 to £3,000 from April this year, an above inflation increase to help them set up home independently. For care leavers

undertaking apprenticeships, there will be an increase to the bursary available from £1000 to £3,000.

- **Pillar 5: A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one** – This includes plans for a 5-year Early Career Framework for social workers, boosting social worker recruitment and retention, a National Workload Action Group plus action on the cost of, and reliance on, agency social workers (a separate consultation running concurrently). Local authorities will be supported to recruit up to 500 new child and family social worker apprentices and there will be consultation on proposals to reduce over-reliance on agency social workers. The government will also introduce a new early career framework for social workers that will make sure that social workers have the knowledge and skills they need to support and protect children.
- **Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data** – Includes the introduction of a Children's Social Care National Framework, supported by a data dashboard, enhancement of the Department's intervention role and offer and a new formula for children's services funding. Setting clearer direction for everyone who works in the system, through a new children's social care national framework and dashboard.

2.3 Children who grow up in loving, stable homes tend to have better outcomes, which is why the proposals put relationships at the heart of the care system and prioritise family-like placements where a child can no longer live with their parents. Recognising the transition within a family can be challenging for all involved, the government will also provide training and support to kinship carers.

2.4 Foster carers will also see an above-inflation increase in their allowance to help cover the increasing costs of caring for a child in their home. This is alongside £25 million over the next 2 years on a recruitment and retention programme, which is the largest investment in recent history, helping to attract more people to offer a loving home for children in need.

2.5 The strategy and implementation document are ambitious for reforms within children's social care. A phased approach will allow testing of the proposals before rolling out to the whole sector. There will be opportunities going forward to input before final decisions are taken regarding any changes to the way children's social care deliver services to the most vulnerable children and their families in the community.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 It is positive there is a clear direction of travel following last year's reviews, the government strategy and implementation document points to a range of consultations over the coming year and a period of pathfinder and pilot activity. This is important for medium to long-term change, however, most of

the changes signalled in this strategy will not deliver results quickly. Inflation and pressures on council budgets will only compound the difficulties facing services, while the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis is increasing children's need for support every day.

There will be an opportunity for debate and review over the coming months during the consultation period. There will be significant changes in how services are delivered to and with vulnerable children and families going forward for the next generation. Committee will need updating when the pilots have started operating and at the point phase two of the reforms are being proposed.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure that Children's O&S is kept informed of the potential changes to the children's social care landscape both within Thurrock and across the country.

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

- 5.1 The Government consultation will close on the 11 May 2023. This will allow opportunity to input into the consultation process.

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

- 6.1 There will be an impact on Council Policies and performance as and when the proposals are agreed by the Government and are then developed into legislation and guidance.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

Financial implications arising in 2023/24 will need to be contained within the Children Social Care budget. Growth funding of £1.432m in 2023/24 has been received for placement realignment and inflation.

Future medium- and long-term financial implications will need to be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.2 Legal

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

The report has no immediate legal implications. However, the Council needs to be mindful that the Government's Consultation contains Key Milestones (subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise): including updating Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance and Information Sharing Guidance. The Council will need to respond to any changes in the guidance. At present the timetable for proposals on legislative reform is set for Autumn 2023 when the legal implications will become clearer.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities. Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

There are no direct diversity and equality implications within this report. The development of the recommendations will reshape children's social care in a way that should benefit children and families, particularly those that are vulnerable

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

None

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

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Janet Simon

Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help

14 March 2023		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment 2022 Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead School Effectiveness and SEND		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This is a follow up report relating to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which was presented to Committee in the Autumn term 2022. At the meeting committee members requested further information around the work of the Early Years Team in supporting families to access childcare opportunities across Thurrock.

The report recognises the regeneration opportunities locally and will look to support some of the national drivers around early year's education.

Thurrock Council will continue to:-

- **To support further early years & childcare development across the borough where re-generation and new housing is taking place.**
- **To consider early education future needs before decisions are taken in relation to capital assets across the Local Authority.**
- **To support sessional providers to offer, or access wrap around care in partnership, for working parents.**
- **To encourage providers, including schools, to participate in the 30 hours entitlement offer to enable more working parents to access their full entitlement.**

1. Recommendations

1.1 That Children’s Services O&S review the requested additional report relating to the Annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022 and offer any additional comment or feedback.

2. Introduction and Background:

Local Policy Context

The Annual Assessment and appendix links with the following Council vision and priorities:-

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

Priorities-

1. People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
2. Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
3. Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

National Policy

Recruitment and retention of staff is a major challenge for early years providers, this is a national as well as a local issue. School Effectiveness Early Years Officers are working with other local authority’s both locally and nationally to develop a strategy to overcome the challenges the sector is facing.

The challenges over the past couple of years has meant a reduction in the number of early years providers. This has the potential to impact on the places that will be available to 2-year-olds and 3 and 4-year-olds across the borough. Officers from the Early Years School Effectiveness team are working closely with potential new providers to ensure that we can meet local demand to create places for 2, 3 and 4-year-old provision.

Current Support to Early Years Providers from School Effectiveness Team:-

- Support pathways for new early years providers.
- Regular visit to providers to ensure quality of care and education.
- Support settings with recruitment and retention of staff.
- Liaison with planning department and assets team to identify future opportunities around vacant buildings.
- Monitoring new planning applications to ensure early years provision is included in new development as and when required. We also appreciate councillor support in including early year’s education and childcare in any new strategic developments.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

These are highlighted within the introduction of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

The O&S Committee requested additional information regarding recruitment and retention, support for childminders and geographical statistical information on available childcare across the borough. We have asked Children's O&S to review and offer comment on the appendix to this report.

The Department of Education recognises the importance of local governance arrangements and, as a result, Local Authorities have to present the childcare Sufficiency Assessment to a range of governance structures. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to make sure that there are enough childcare places within its locality for working parents or for parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). The Childcare Sufficiency Report is a statutory report that must be published on our website and updated annually.

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

We work closely with a range of our early years settings to gather feedback and look at potential opportunities. Our local offer also looks to gather feedback to ensure we are capturing the voice of parents/carers. A parental survey is undertaken yearly to assess the availability to parents of quality and affordable childcare to meet their children's need.

6. Impact On Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

1. People - a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
2. Prosperity - a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance - Schools & DSG

This report is part of the statutory duty as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 which states Local Authorities need to ensure that we are meeting the requirements of early years entitlement with due regard to planning and growth across the Local Authority.

Funding to fulfil this duty is provided by Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The funding to the Local Authority in 2022/23 is to be based on annual census. Funding to providers is based on a termly head count and distributed through the local early years funding formula.

7.2 Legal

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

The Council has a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of working parents in so far as reasonably practicable. In determining for the purposes whether the provision is sufficient to meet those requirements the Council must have regard to:

- a) The needs of parents for the provision of childcare for which childcare element is included in working tax credit or universal credit
- b) The needs of parents for childcare which is suitable for disabled children.

The Council is obliged to have regard to the statutory guidance of the Secretary of State. The guidance requires that the Council produce an annual report that is considered by elected members. The format of the report is not prescribed but the guidance suggests it covers provision for specific groups of children, supply and demand, affordability, and any gaps in provision.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer, Adults, Housing & Health

The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 and equality of opportunity is a key principle of all early years' providers; they ensure they meet statutory duties around offering places to all early years children – part of the Ofsted requirement is to evidence how they have ensured equality of opportunity. Further information on the demand of childcare in Thurrock including data in relation to children with Special Educational Needs and or Disability (SEND), school age children and the take up funded early education places is contained within the body of the assessment.

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

None.

8. **Appendix to this report:**

- **Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment 2023**



Appendix - Thurrock
Childcare Sufficiency ,

Report Author:

Andrea Winstone

Strategic Lead School Effectiveness and SEND

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14 March 2023		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
School Capital Programme Update 2022/23		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Barry Johnson, Cabinet member for Children and Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The council's school capital programme is developed following extensive pupil place planning to assess the potential likely demand for school places, this forms part of the council's statutory duties around pupil place planning. The current programme aims to deliver sufficient pupil places for the 2022 and 2023 academic years.

Cabinet approval will be sought to procure an architect led design team, as well as a principal contractor for the expansion of Tilbury Pioneer Academy from a 2FE to a form 3 FE Primary school which would provide an additional 210 school places plus the potential for an additional special need autism base. Design feasibility studies are already completed at the time of writing this report, with initial indications showing that depending on the option taken, this project will have an estimated provisional total value of up to £3.0M inclusive of Architects fees and all other disbursements.

Additionally, this report provides an update on current capital projects managed by Thurrock Council which form part of the current school capital programme outlining the progress that has been achieved since the last report to Cabinet in January 2021.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider and recommend the following decisions to Cabinet.
- 1.2 To approve the commencement of the procurement process in accordance with Council & UK procurement procedures to appoint 1. A

Design and multi discipline project Team, for the Tilbury Pioneer aspect of the School Capital Programme and 2. Following planning approval and the production of a full technical specification, undertake a further procurement exercise to appoint a Principal Contractor to take forward the proposed Tilbury Pioneer scheme.

- 1.3 To approve the commencement of the procurement process in accordance with Council & UK procurement procedures to appoint Designers and Project Teams, for the School Capital Programme and appoint the Principal Contractors to take forward the proposed scheme.**
- 1.4 That authority be delegated to the Director of Children’s Services, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to enter into any form of agreement following the award of the agreements arising from 1.2 above in compliance with the Council’s procurement regulations.**
- 1.5 Note the recent in-year accommodation works that have been commenced in order to ensure sufficient pupil places for 2022/2023 in-year applications.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that suitable and sufficient places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to take up a school place.

The 2022/23 school capital programme has progressed well and incorporated innovative partnership working, as well as utilising modern methods of construction to deliver the identified additional pupil places required.

- 2.2 The demand for pupil places has increased significantly, over the last few years we have seen a large increase in ‘in year’ admissions from families moving into Thurrock. In the academic year 2021/22 (September to July), 1846 children moved into Thurrock. At the time of writing this report, 604 more children moved into Thurrock between September and December 2022. We are not seeing a decrease in the demand for school places, the level of demand continues to be unprecedented. To be in a position to accommodate this demand, we are building in additional places to support in-year growth across a number of year groups where it has been identified that we do not have sufficient school places.

3. Tilbury Pioneer Academy

- 3.1 Despite the recent expansions of the early years provision at Lansdowne Primary School in 2016/7, and a one form entry expansion at Woodside Academy in 2015/16 which created a total additional 240 places within the Tilbury planning area of the borough, following the annual review of forecasts for pupil places and the large increase being experienced with regards in-year

admissions there is now educational need for further primary school places in the Tilbury area.

- 3.2 The report presented to cabinet on 13th January 2021 stated that a feasibility study had commenced at Tilbury Pioneer Primary Academy to identify whether an expansion of the school would be possible, with a view to addressing the shortage of places from September 2023.
- 3.3 Following completion of scoping and feasibility studies, the proposal upon Tilbury Pioneer Primary Academy is to firstly apply to planning to retain the west wing of the old 'Tilbury Manor' building, then if successful, undertake a full internal & external refurbishment of this structure in order to provide an additional 2 classrooms each in excess of 56 m², 8 classrooms each in excess of 47 m², a school hall of 166 m², a new separate entrance lobby with reception office, and back office new WC's including 1 x accessible , a remodelled caretakers office, and 2 no. cleaners cupboards, 1 staff kitchen and 5 no. classroom storage areas. Upon on the 1st floor, 1 new staff room and 1 no. meeting room. Upon completion, Tilbury Pioneer will have capacity to increase from a 2 FE to 3 FE primary School with integral higher needs autism base.
- 3.4 An estimated budget of £3.0M is required to cover both an architect led multi-disciplinary design team responsible for providing specialist services needed to oversee the detailed and technical design for the expansion project, and a Principal Building Contractor for its construction phase.
- 3.5 A JCT consultancy agreement and a separate JCT Standard Building contract both competitively procured and evaluated on both quality and price will provide opportunities for maintaining quality and value for money. This approach will give the Council the added control over design and output specification as well as maintaining control over project costs and variations.
- 3.6 In advance of these procurements, small value individual contracts are being utilised for the carrying out of topographical surveys, transport assessments, and environmental impact assessments, these will be to an increased level of detail for this scheme given that the proposal sites within the Green belt, and also Flood zone 3.

4. Abbots Hall Primary Academy Expansion Update

- 4.1 In Summary, the project when completed will seek to expand the existing school by half a FE to accommodate 2 full forms entry ready for the start of the September 2023 academic year. In addition to providing the 2 additional class bases and ancillary facilities, the scheme will look to include an infill extension to the existing school quadrant to provide an enlarged IT suite and Library, as well as an extension to create a new nurture room with dedicated outdoor space, link corridor and additional WC's.

Works commenced in March 2022, and the first 2 phases have already completed, and been handed back to the school for immediate use. The final phase of the project which comprises a new 2-storey teaching block extension is due to be handed over in early March 2023.

5. Further in-year accommodation works

- 5.1 Due to an ongoing challenge of available school places within the Ockendon/Aveley areas, internal remodelling, to create additional class bases at Dilkes Primary has commenced. This involves internal remodelling to convert a large circulation space, and oversized ICT Suite into 2 no. standard classrooms with new corridor leading to emergency exits. The existing ICT Suite is being reduced in size and relocated to another area within the school. When completed, these alterations will result in an additional 30 primary school places. The cost of undertaking the above alterations is £94,730 this figure per head (£3,157.66) is significantly lower than the published Department for Education cost per pupil place which is £18,007. In addition, by creating these additional places, prevents pupils being transported to the next nearest school with available places at the cost to the council.

The anticipated completion date for this project is February 2023.

6. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 6.1 If the local authority does not undertake the school expansions and builds, the Local authority will not be able to fulfil its statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient places available in Thurrock for every child of school age.
- 6.2 Upon the Tilbury Pioneer site, several development options were considered, a copy of the briefing note dated 7th September 2022 is appended to this report and provides an overview of the 4 options. All four options carry a degree of planning risk due to the location of the Pioneer site within both the Green Belt, as well as Flood Zone 3. The decision to pursue option 4 (Refurbishment) is primarily driven by the projected reduced cost, coupled with the much shorter construction phase duration.
- 6.3 Both the JCT Consultancy agreement, and the JCT Standard form of contract, will fall below the UK government's Find a Tender Service (FTS) thresholds, and are therefore not subject to a fully published procurement process.
- 6.4 Following Cabinet approval, it will be possible for the commencement of a sub-FTS single stage procurement exercise for the appointment of the Design and multi discipline project team. A copy of the signed Stage 1 document (REF: PS/2023/006) already approved by Strategic Approvals Panel is appended, this document also contains a draft timeline.
- 6.5 Additionally appended is a copy of the signed Stage 1 document (REF: PS/2023/009) already approved by Strategic Approvals Panel for the

undertaking of a procurement exercise to appoint a Principal Contractor. As with the above, this will be conducted as a Sub-FTS traditional single stage exercise, and will only proceed on the basis that planning consent is approved.

7 Reasons for recommendations

- 7.1 If the local authority does not undertake the school expansions and builds, the Local Authority will not be able to fulfil its statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient places available in Thurrock for every child of school age.

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

- 8.1 This report is due to be considered by the Children’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14th March 2023.
- 8.2 The principle has been agreed with schools and any detailed build content will be agreed with the relevant schools. Consultation will continue with each school and key stakeholder, as each scheme and schedule of works evolves within the programme.

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

- 9.1 The award of these JCT Construction and design contracts will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty under the Education Act 2006.
- 9.2 The improvement of the educational assets is linked to key corporate priorities:

Priority	Delivered by
People	Improve health and wellbeing through improvements in the quality of the learning environment and opportunities provided
Place	Creating a great place for learning and opportunity by improving the education assets within the borough.
Prosperity	Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity through the provision of local employment and training opportunities.

10 Implications

10.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**
Senior Financial Accountant
Corporate Finance

Additional accommodation, necessary to meet the statutory requirement to provide places for the increasing pupil numbers, will be funded from the DfE capital basic needs grant held for Education provision. Once in-depth feasibility and design studies have been completed, funding requirements will be quantified and confirmed.

There is £15.25m unallocated basic need grant which will be used to fund £3m for the works identified within this report. However, given the financial challenges which face the authority the works must be maintained within this budget and there can be no scope for overspend.

The funds identified are ringfenced and are required to be used in the delivery of our statutory function of sufficiency of pupil numbers.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor for Education on
behalf of Thurrock Council.

Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 imposes a specific duty on local authorities to secure within their area that there is efficient primary education, secondary education and further education available to meet the needs of the population of their area. This is an absolute duty that is imposed by statute.

There are additional duties that flow from this such as duties under section 88 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which imposes the duty to set school admissions numbers for each school year as well as Regulation 4 of the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 which sets a limit of 30 pupils to one teacher in all infant classes. These duties mean that local authorities must take care to ensure that there are adequate school provisions within their area to meet these duties.

Therefore, Thurrock Council is under an obligation to ensure that there are available school places for children that live in its area and wish to access education in the area. Accordingly, the proposal set out herein is in line with

the positive statutory duty to ensure that the demand for school places is met on an ongoing basis.

10.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

Whilst there are no direct diversity and equality implications, the provision of these services will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion. The procurement process will follow responsibilities as set out within The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, with due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The procurement approach set out in this report will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty under the Education Act 2006, to ensure that suitable and sufficient places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one, whilst ensuring value for money.

11. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

Cabinet report 13 January 2021 – Approval to increase scope of the Schools Capital Programme.

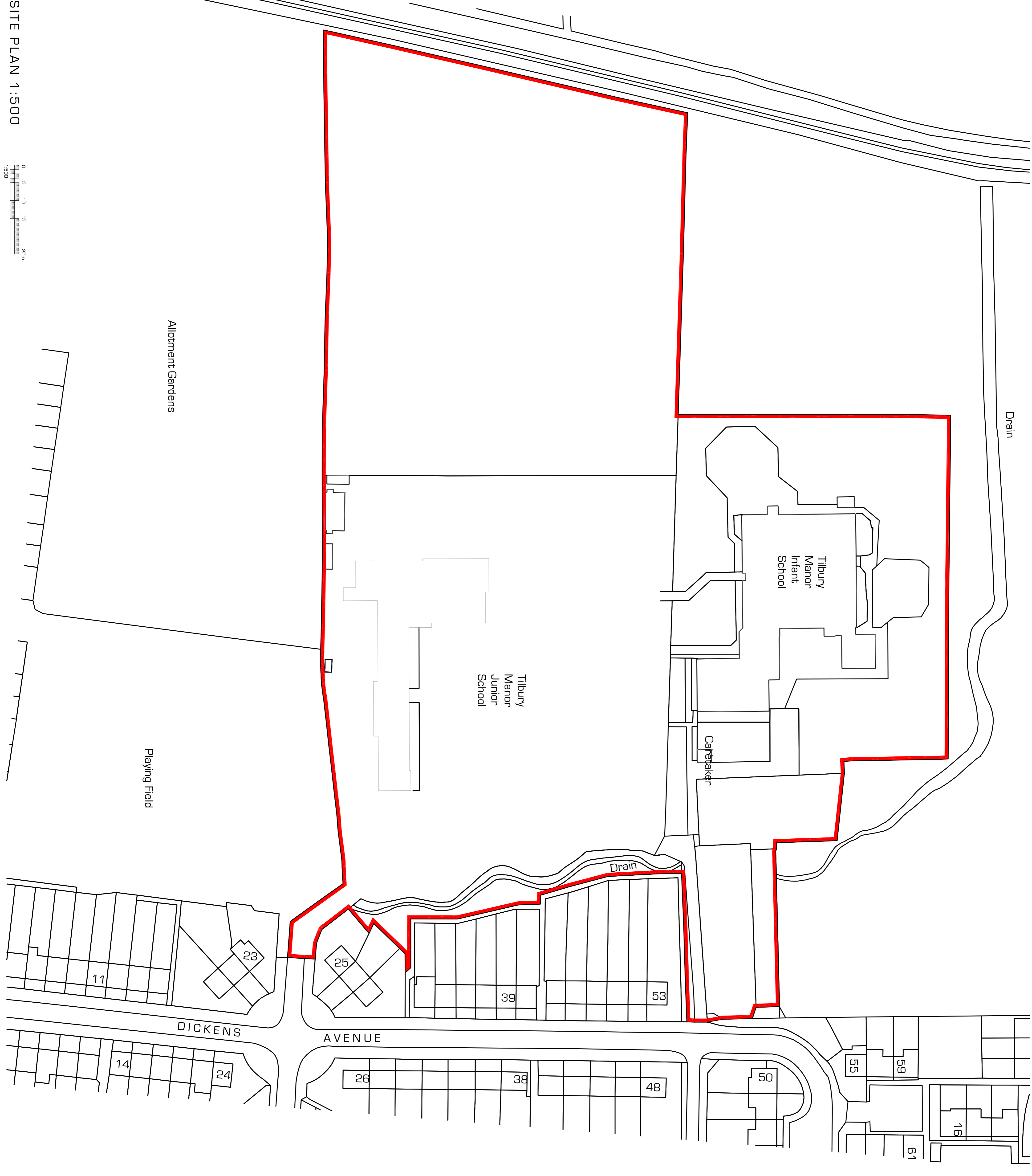
12. **Appendices to the report**

- Huggins Bromage Ferguson Feasibility Study dated: 07/07/2022
- Tilbury Pioneer Expansion Options - Briefing Note
- Stage 1 Form - Approval to Proceed to Tender PS_2023_006 - Tilbury Pioneer Architect (part 1) – signed
- Stage 1 Form - Approval to Proceed to Tender PS_2023_009 - Tilbury Pioneer Contractor (part 1) - signed

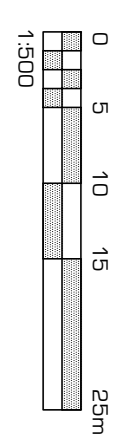
Report Author:
Sarah Williams
Children's Services

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Notes
 Any errors or omissions to be reported to the Architect immediately. The drawing and its contents are the property of the Architect and shall remain confidential. The Client and Contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and building regulation approvals and for ensuring that the drawing is used in accordance with the terms of the contract. The Client and Contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the drawing is used in accordance with the terms of the contract. The Client and Contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that the drawing is used in accordance with the terms of the contract.



SITE PLAN 1:500



Rev.	date	drawn	approved

HUGGINS BROMAGE FERGUSON LTD
 RIBA Chartered Practice

109 Orsett Road Grays Essex RM17 5HA
 Grays Thurrock (01375) 374415
 Fax No (01375) 391524
 reception@hbfa-architects.co.uk
 Web www.hbfa-architects.co.uk



Client THURROCK COUNCIL AND
 TILBURY PIONEER ACADEMY
 Project REFURBISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS, TILBURY
 MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL / TILBURY PIONEER
 ACADEMY, 43 DICKENS AVE, TILBURY RM18 8JL
 Subject SITE PLAN

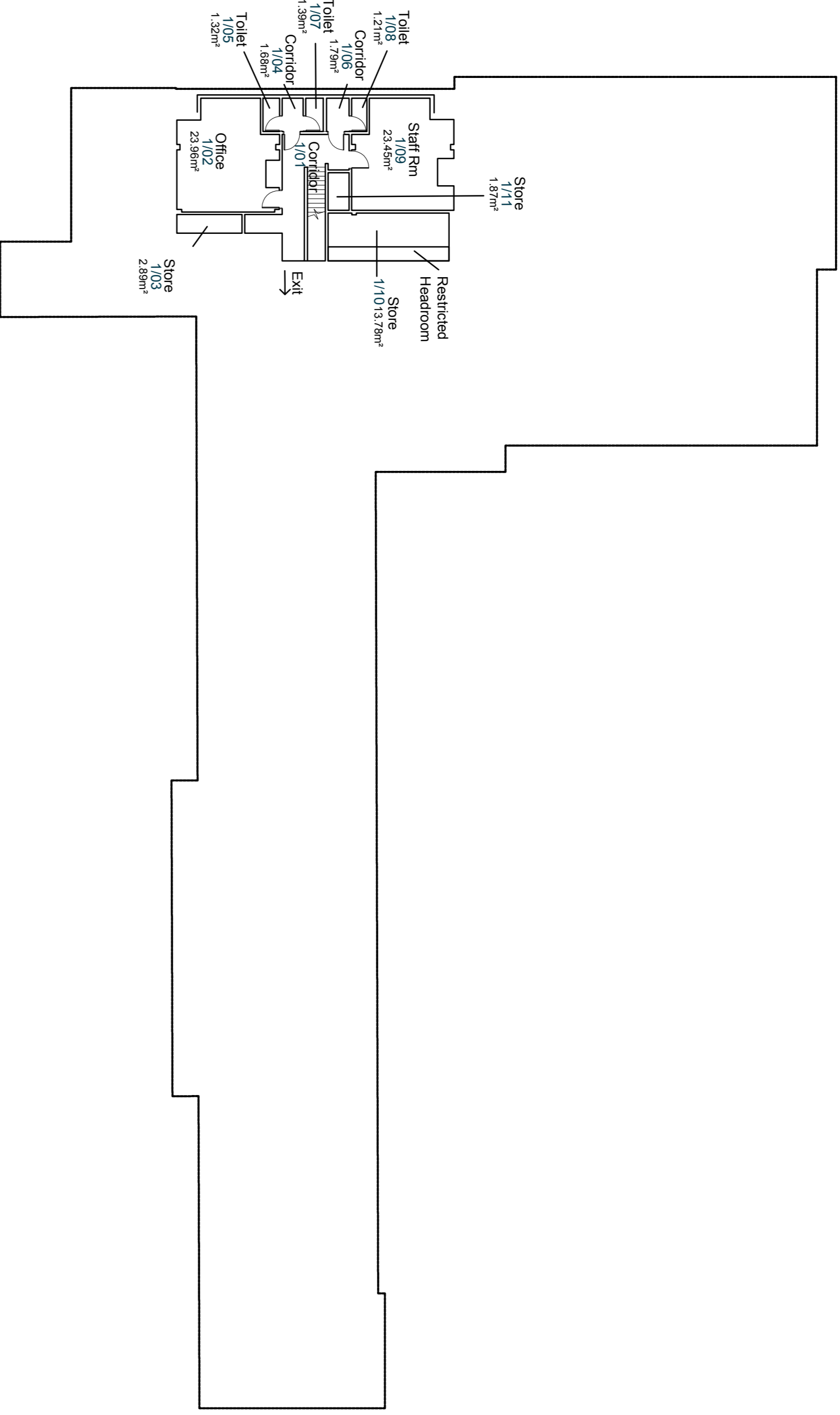
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Date	Date	Date
	MAR 2022	

Dwg No.	5620	01	rev'n
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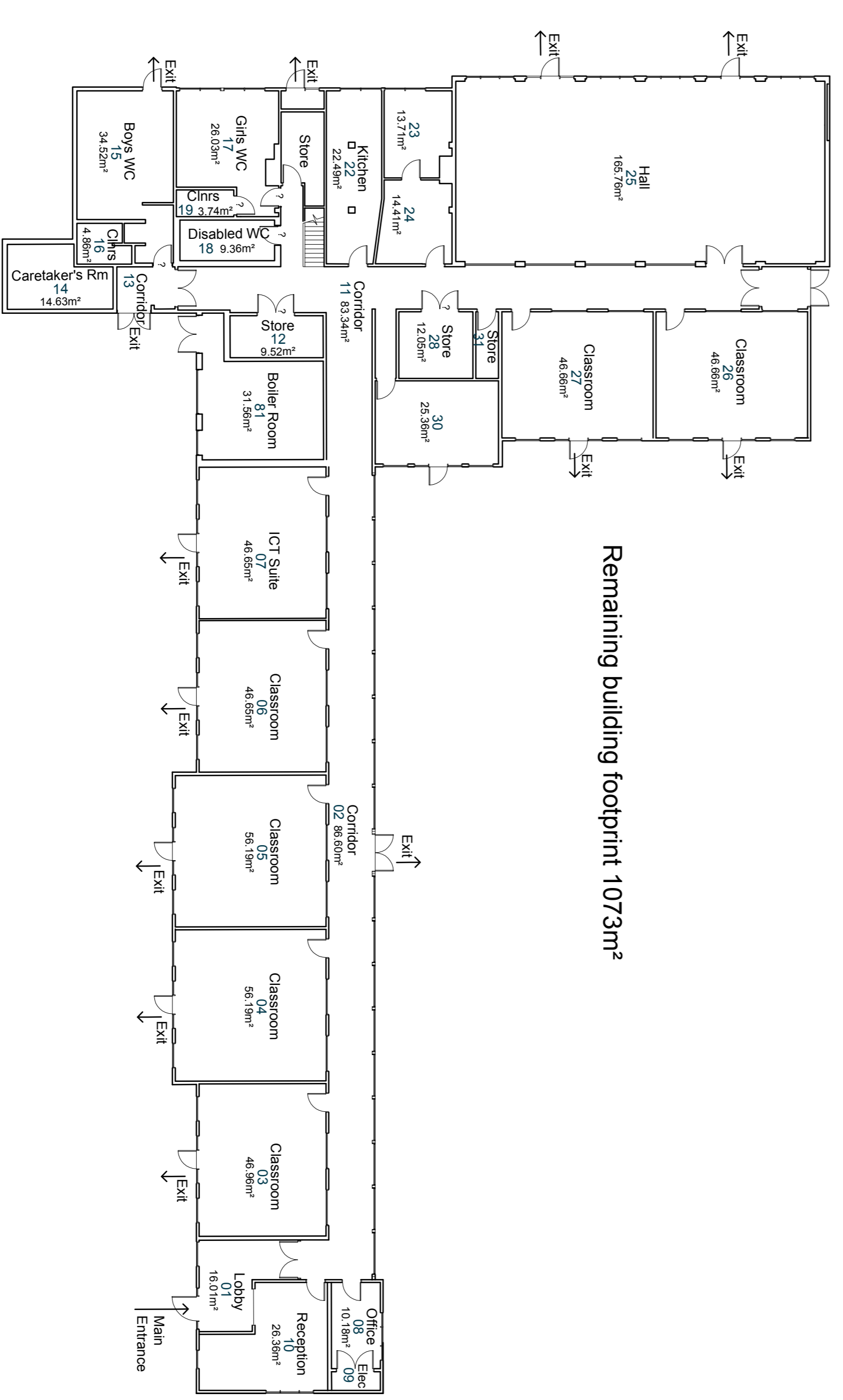
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Notes
 Any errors or omissions shall be reported to the Architect immediately. The drawing and its contents shall be used for the purposes stated and shall not be used for any other purpose without their consent. Challenging Planning and Building Regulation approvals does not remove a building owner's responsibilities under the Party Wall Act 1996 or the Rights of Light Act 1999. The Architect's design shall be based on the information provided. Proposals might require Party Wall Act notices or require a Rights of Light Agreement.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1:200



GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:200

Remaining building footprint 1073m²

Rev.		date	drawn	approved

HUGGINS BROMAGE FERGUSON LTD
RIBA Chartered Practice

109 Orsett Road Greys Essex RM17 5HA
 Greys Thurrock (01375) 374415
 Fax No (01375) 391524
 reception@hbf-architects.co.uk
 Web www.hbf-architects.co.uk

Client THURROCK COUNCIL AND
 TILBURY PIONEER ACADEMY
 Project REFURBISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS, TILBURY
 MANDOR JUNIOR SCHOOL / TILBURY PIONEER
 ACADEMY, 43 DICKENS AVE, TILBURY RM18 8JU
 Subject FLOOR PLANS AS EXISTING

Scale	Approved	Drawn
1:200 @ A1	GF	GF
Date	Date	Date
	MAR 2022	

Dwg No.	5620	02	rev'n
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REFURBISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS, TILBURY MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL/ TILBURY PIONEER ACADEMY, 43 DICKENS AVE, TILBURY RM18 8HJ

APPROXIMATE COSTING

Approximate costing calculation based on building floor area using SPONS Price Book rates.

Existing building floor area (Less demolished sections)

Gross floor area = 1062 m²

SPONS rate £1350 per m²

1062 x 1350 = **£1,433,700**

Say £1.435 million

As a cross-check on the 'Approximate' costs for the refurbishment works, we have also calculated more detailed building cost for building elements.

ELEMENTAL COSTING

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	COST
1.	Cut out and replace damaged timber superstructure	£50,000.00
2.	Under-pinning/ remedial works to minor subsidence/ settlement	£200,000.00
3.	Remove existing timber cladding and replace with new felt, battens and Hardie-plank cladding 500 m ²	£200,000.00
4.	Repair/ replace external windows and doors	£100,000.00
5.	Replace PVC window surrounds. Remove existing 100m ²	£6,500.00
6.	New carpet and vinyl flooring	£60,000.00
7.	Repair Drainage, replace sanitaryware and cubicles	£50,000.00
8.	New classroom joinery 6 no @ £4k	£24,000.00
9.	Flat Roof, replace and insulate. Corridors and changing block 163m ²	£16,300.00
10.	Pitched Roof repairs, renew valleys, gutters, downpipes etc	£60,000.00
11.	External works; repairs to tarmac. New Play area.	£100,000.00
12.	LED lighting to all areas	£80,000.00

13.	Ceiling- suspended 1000 m ² x £780/m ² =	£70,000.00
14.	Electrics, Dado and additional sockets to classrooms	£80,000.00
15.	Data cable upgrades	£40,000.00
16.	Asbestos removal	£100,000.00
17.	Fire stopping	£20,000.00
18.	DDA improvement, DDA toilet, door widening etc.	£15,000.00
19.	New fire doors; 24 x £400	£9,600.00
20.	Replace glazing to internal corridor windows	£20,000.00
21.	Works to mitigate Legionella risks	£10,000.00
22.	Works to distribution boards	£5,000.00
23.	Works to main switch-gear	£20,000.00
SUB-TOTAL		£1,333,400.00

Elemental cost: £1,333,400.00

Contractors profit and overhead 10% of £133,400.00 = **£1,466,740.00**

NOTES

Costs exclude contingency (5% = £72,500), planning & building regulation application fees and professional fees

INFLATED COSTS

Building material and labour costs have been escalating significantly over the last 2 to three years. The Covid pandemic and more recent Ukraine/ Russia conflict have resulted in persistent material shortages, cost increases and labour shortages and increased labour costs.

ESTIMATED COST

The above approximate costing and Elemental costing give similar cost. **We estimate** the building cost to be **£1.55 Million (including client contingency)**

Factoring in increasing material and labour cost, which we estimate will increase by 20% in the next year to 18 months....

Calculated building cost of £1,550,000.00 x 20 % = £310,000.00

£1,555,000.00 + £310,00.00 = £1,865,000.00.

We estimate costs in the range of between £1.55 million to £1.9 million pounds.

Tilbury Pioneer Expansion Options – Briefing Note

07/09/2022

In late February 2021, Thurrock Council commissioned Alderton Associates to undertake a feasibility study for the potential 1 form-entry expansion of Tilbury Pioneer Academy. The brief was to provide a report into options for an expansion that would seek to provide additional teaching space for 210 pupils only.

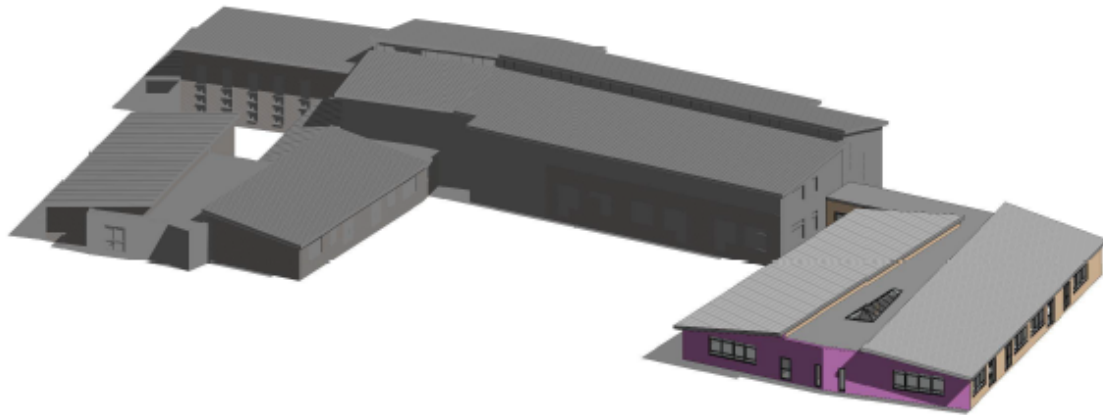
Appended to this note is a copy of the completed feasibility report, along with feasibility sketch drawings for the 3 options provided.

Option 1 is for the construction of a new teaching block to the rear of the site (north of the existing two-storey block). This option proposes to construct a single-storey teaching block comprising 8nr. New classrooms with shared breakout space, unisex pupil WCs, Accessible WC, office and a corridor link to the existing two-storey teaching block. All classrooms would be provided with access to external play areas and sports fields with lobbied entrances including coat and bag storage.

All circulation and teaching areas will be carpeted and have an area of vinyl around a sink and base units (and in WCs). The classrooms and circulation spaces would have suspended ceilings with provision for LED lighting, small power and IT equipment, all internal walls would meet the required Fire and Acoustic standards for schools and would be fully decorated on completion. External windows and doors would be aluminium framed, double-glazed units with solar controlled glazing.

The block easily links to existing walkways within the school and provides a holistic approach to the development of the school. These proposals would require planning approval but due to the position within the site, overall building height and the impact on neighbouring residential areas, the planning risk is considered to be low, and would be unlikely to receive any adverse comments.

At the time of the report, the option was costed at £1,827,500.00 although with the steep increases in costs experienced over the last 20 months, when applying a CPI linked increase, this is now more likely to be in the region of £2,120,730.00 and within the next 12 months projected to increase to approx. £2,438,839.00.



PROPOSED ISO VIEW

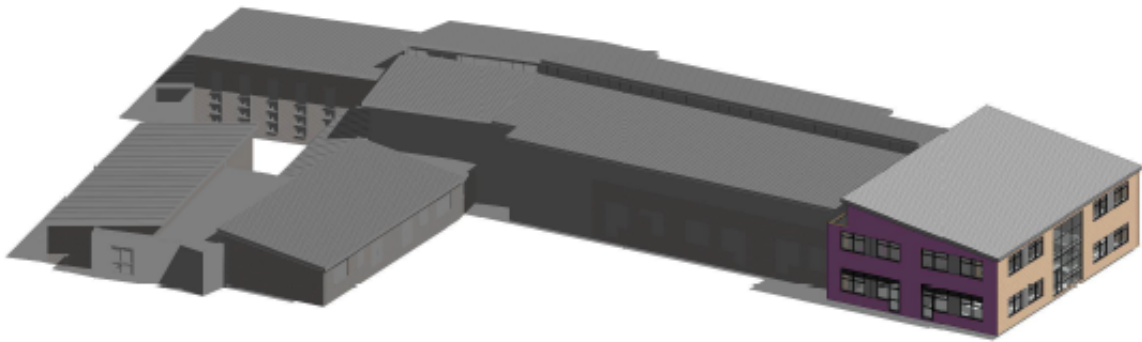
Option 2 also looks to utilise the available space at the rear of the site, with a view to constructing a new two-storey teaching block comprising 8nr. Classrooms for use by the upper years (Years 4,5 and 6) plus WCs, stairs, lift and circulation spaces.

The proposed location provides a link to the existing school at both ground and first floor levels to aid general circulation to and from the new classrooms. The 4nr. classrooms situated on the ground floor will be provided with direct external access to the playground and playing fields.

With construction costs based on a steel frame and masonry construction with suspended concrete plank (block and beam) floor construction on each floor, the building has been designed sympathetically to be in-keeping with the adjacent buildings. The proposal would be to have the same level of finish and provision in terms of power, lighting and IT facilities and all would be designed in accordance with the space standards set out in Building Bulletin 103 and current Building Regulations.

This option would also require planning permission, although it is a two-storey construction it is very much in keeping with the existing buildings in terms of scale and design and is therefore felt to carry a relatively low planning risk. As with previous development on the site, mitigation to flood risk will form a key part of the planning application.

At the time of the report, the option was costed at £1,496,400.00 although with the steep increases in costs experienced over the last 20 months, when applying a CPI linked increase, this is now more likely to be in the region of £1,736,504 and within the next 12 months projected to increase to approx. £1,997,078.00



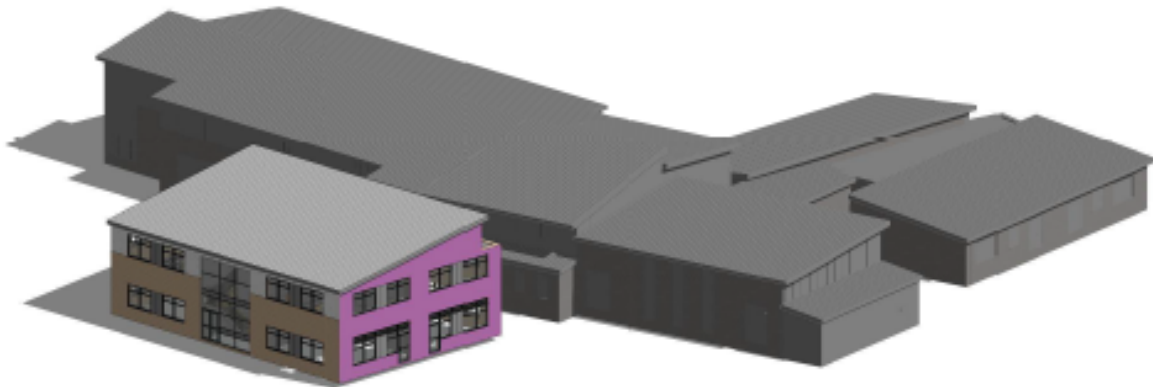
Option 3 proposes a similar two-storey teaching block to Option 2, although an alternative location has been proposed. The intention is to situate the block towards the front of the school site, where one of the bunds are currently located. Although this would require additional groundworks and a slight increase in overall project cost, the location offers a number of benefits due to its close proximity to the main hub of the school comprising the entrance/reception, kitchen, hall and other key ancillary services. This would improve the general circulation of pupils around the school and

reduce the interaction between pupils in Year 4, 5 and 6 and the Early Years pupils currently situated in the recently opened two-storey block.

The new teaching block will comprise 8nr. classrooms for use by the upper years (Years 4,5 and 6) plus WCs, stairs, lift and circulation spaces.

A similar method of construction is proposed (steel frame and masonry construction with suspended block and beam floor construction on each floor) to ensure good value for money and a robust construction meeting all requirements for Fire, Acoustic and Thermal performance in accordance with the relevant Building Bulletins and current Building Regulations.

At the time of the report, the option was costed at £1,583,400.00 although with the steep increases in costs experienced over the last 20 months, when applying a CPI linked increase, this is now more likely to be in the region of £1,837,463.00 and within the next 12 months projected to increase to approx. £2,115,920.00



Option 4 (Refurbishment of the old Tilbury Manor Building)

Following high level discussions between the CEO of GLC Academy Trust and the LA's ESS Strategic Lead regarding a further possible option to appraise, Thurrock Council commissioned Huggins Bromage Ferguson Architects to work up a costed proposal for the complete refurbishment of the remaining northern and western wings of the former Tilbury Manor building. This building as existing comprises of the following spaces.

- 2 x classrooms of 56 Sqm.
- 5 x classrooms of 47 Sqm.
- 1 x Hall of 166 Sqm.
- 1 x Separate entrance lobby with reception office and back office.
- 1 x Female WC
- 1 x Male WC
- 1 x Accessible WC
- 1 x Caretakers Office
- 2 x Cleaners Cupboards
- 1 x Kitchen (Staff)
- 5 x Storerooms (Separated from Classrooms)
- 1 x 1st floor Staff Room
- 1 x 1st Floor Meeting Room

Estimated costs are as follows: £1,550,000 at present although as with the other options above, when applying an inflationary value this rises to £1,900,000

This option does carry a greater planning risk however, details are as follows:
When the GLC applied for planning consent in 2018 for the new teaching block, the title of the application was:

20/01339/FUL | Two storey primary teaching block along with associated landscaping, hardstanding, new main entrance, site facilities and phased demolition of the existing junior block and associated earthworks and reinstatement (resubmission of 18/01104/FUL)

The application was approved in January 2021 and the decision notice states that in regard to the phased demolition of the former junior block:

The eastern and northern portions of the existing Junior Block on the site shall be demolished and the resulting material removed from the site. The West wing is permitted to remain in occupation until 30th September 2024 after which it shall be demolished and resulting materials removed from site. Reason: The development has only been approved on the basis that the building hereby approved is a replacement building in the Green Belt in accordance with policy PMD6 of the adopted Thurrock LDF Core Strategy and Policies for the Management of Development [2015].

HBF have enquired with planners whether this obligation could be varied or removed by way of a Section 73 application but received a negative response due to a precedent set from a former application.

Ultimately, the only clean way around this planning obligation would be for the School's Architect to re-apply for planning consent for the new school without seeking demolition of the old block, and there is no guarantee that this would be approved due to the green Belt issue.

Author

Graeme Parker

Senior School Capital Programme Manager

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STAGE 1 FORM - APPROVAL TO PROCEED TO TENDER

Following the introduction of new Spend Control Processes, this form must be completed for all procurements above £25,000. If contract value is over Cabinet approval threshold (£500,000) this form shall be appended to the Cabinet report - this form will be "open" for publication.

Once completed, this form must be sent to the relevant Category Manager.

1.	CONTRACT DETAILS		
1.1	Contract title	Architect led Multi Discipline design team for the 1 Form of Entry Expansion of Tilbury Pioneer School	
1.2	Reference number	PS/2023/006	
1.3	Responsible Officer	Graeme Parker	
1.4	Directorate	Children's Services	
1.5	Contract description	Services	
1.6	Applicability of off pay-roll working (IR35) rules*	Is this an applicable contract?	No
		Employment status for tax**	N/a
1.7	Proposed contract start	30/06/2023	
1.8	Proposed contract end	31/12/2024	
1.9	Proposed extension options	Only in line with agreed JCT terms and conditions	
1.10	Estimated contract value	Excluding VAT	£175,000.00
		Including VAT ¹	£207,600.00.00
2.	BUSINESS CASE		

¹ Required solely to determine whether the contract value exceeds the UK public procurement threshold (which includes VAT)

2.1	Business case	<p>The council's school capital programme is developed following extensive pupil place planning to assess the potential likely demand for school places this forms part of the council's statutory duties around pupil place planning.</p> <p>The demand for pupil places has increased significantly, over the last few years we have seen a large increase of 'in year' admissions from families moving into the Authority. In 2021/22, 504 children moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and 1342 pupils from elsewhere within the UK. For the first 3 months of this year, 217 more children have moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and there have been 387 new arrivals from within the UK.</p> <p>We are currently not seeing a decrease in the demand, the level of demand has and continues to be unprecedented. To be in a position to accommodate this demand, we are building in additional places to support in-year growth across a number of year groups where it has been identified that we do not have sufficient school places.</p> <p>Despite the recent expansions of the early years provision at Lansdowne Primary School in 2016/7, and a one form entry expansion at Woodside Academy in 2015/16 which created a total additional 240 places within the Tilbury planning area of the borough, following the annual review of forecasts for pupil places and the large increase being experienced with regards in-year admissions there is now educational need for further primary school places in the Tilbury area of the Borough.</p> <p>There is political sensitivity as the procurement and appointment of a multi-discipline design team is critical to the delivery of the expansion project and the implication of not undertaking this procurement is that the Council will be unable to comply with its legal duty under section 13 of the Education Act as described at greater length in section 2.3 of this document.</p>
2.2	Expenditure control criteria	The spend is for essential statutory services, goods and/or works
2.3	Expenditure control justification	<p>Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 imposes a specific duty on local authorities to ensure within their area that there is efficient primary education, secondary education and further education available to meet the needs of the population of their area. This is an absolute duty that is imposed by statute.</p> <p>There are additional duties that flow from this such as duties under section 88 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which imposes the duty to set school admissions numbers for each school year as well as Regulation 4 of the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 which sets a limit of 30 pupils to one teacher in all infant classes. These duties mean that local authorities must take care to ensure that there are adequate school provisions within their area to meet these duties.</p> <p>Therefore, Thurrock Council is under an obligation to ensure that there are available school places for children that live in its area and wish to access education in the area. Accordingly, the proposal set out herein is in line with the positive statutory duty to ensure that the demand for school places is met on an ongoing basis.</p>
2.4	Award criteria	Most Economically Advantageous Tender 60% Price x 40% Quality

2.5	Social Value	<p>Unfortunately, not only are children negatively affected by not being educated, but the negative affects often reverberate through society. Improving the quality of the education environment of children and young adults is one step that can be taken to improve a society both economically and socially.</p> <p>The proposed award criteria allows for 40% of the overall score to be judged upon the bidders responses to the quality evaluation questionnaire, and specific questions are contained within this part of the tender pack relating to bidders Social value initiatives.</p>
2.6	Previous contract	N/A

3.	FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	
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3.1	Previous contract spend	N/A
3.2	Scope of changes	N/A
3.3	Budget considerations	<p>The proposed expansion of Tilbury Pioneer will be funded from a combination of the DfE capital basic needs grant and Section 106 monies held for Primary & Secondary Education provision. There are sufficient funds available within the schools DfE basic need grant, for the works identified within this report.</p>
3.4	Expenditure type	Capital
3.5	Cost centre	B0998
3.6	Anticipated savings	<p>Early stage feasibility studies have already been undertaken to evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of multiple options to achieve the desired goal at Tilbury Pioneer. It has been firmly established that there are considerable savings to be realised by choosing the refurbishment of the old building option rather than any of the three new build options that were proposed. These savings are not purely financial, but also in terms of project duration.</p>

4.	PROCUREMENT ROUTE	
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4.1	Procurement route	Other (specify in Rationale below)
4.2	Rationale	<p>As the total contract value is under the current UK threshold for services, a closed invite-only Request for Quotation process will be undertaken to a minimum of 6 organisations thus making evaluation manageable given the limited resources available and time will be saved by utilising suppliers already registered on the Council's e-tendering and purchase systems.</p>

5.	PROPOSED PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE		
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5.1	Procurement timetable	Publish Contract Notice	N/A
		Selection Questionnaire return	N/A
		Invitation to Tender issue	31/03/2023
		Tender return	28/04/2023
		Notification of result	19/05/2023
		Standstill period	02/06/2023
		Expected award	16/06/2023

		Contract commencement	30/06/2023
6.	RISKS, CONSULTATION AND MANAGEMENT		
6.1	Risk management	A copy of the project Risk Register is appended.	
6.2	Contingency	A number of temporary solutions can be arranged at short notice to ensure that sufficient pupil places are available. These have previously taken the form of relocatable classrooms, and remodelling works to redundant rooms to form new teaching spaces.	
6.3	Consultation	Full consultation will be carried out with all stakeholders at detailed design stage, supported by relevant communication plans.	
6.4	Data Protection**	Neither the successful architect or contractor will process any personal data so N/a	
6.5	Project and contract management ²	Tier 3 - Low Level Contract Management	
		There will be established contract management and monitoring arrangements in place as with all schemes undertaken as part of the schools capital programme, Project management will follow the RIBA plan of work 2020 which is the standard protocol for construction projects. Documents will be kept in accordance with the councils document retention policy. Legal Services will retain the original signed copy of the contract and both Procurement & Childrens Services will retain a digital copy of that document. At procurement stage, the Senior Schools Capital Programme Manager will work Closely with the designated Category Manager to produce the tender pack, drawings, preliminaries and technical specification, Legal services will be engaged to provide a draft copy of the relevant JCT contract complete with Thurrock Council amendments. During the tender period all clarification requests will be responded to in a timely manner. Post award, the Schhols Capital programme manager will work closely with the appointed Architect to regularly monitor project costs, issue CAI's, monitor KPI's, interrogate and process monthly valuations and oversee regular monthly progress meetings will all parties including representatives from the end client. A full budget review is undertaken at handover stage, with final accounts formally agreed. The architect will oversee the managing of the defects rectification period as part of the scope of their works. Throughout the duration of the project from initial mandate to the release of retentions, monthly progress reports are submitted to the Education Support Services Strategic Lead for further circulation.	
6.6	Will TUPE apply to the proposed contract?	No	
		N/a	
6.7	Community and Equalities Impact Assessment****	N/a for this project. The provision of these services will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion. The procurement process will follow responsibilities as set out within The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, with due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	
6.8	Exit strategy	N/a – there is no existing contract to exit.	

² Refer to the contract management framework or your category manager for guidance

6.9	Collaboration	Interdepartmental collaboration will occur throughout the project, at Procurement Stage collaboration takes place with Corporate Finance, Legal Services, Community Development & Equalities, in addition to the Procurement Team. At Planning Stage, the contract will allow for collaboration with Planning and any other internal statutory consultee's such as Highways. The construction phase will see collaboration with Building Control, as well as Planners and Finance.
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7.	APPROVALS				
7.1	Strategic Approval Panel	Decision	Approved	Yes	Rejected
		Signed	<u>Marie Ogles</u> <small>Marie Ogles (Jan 30, 2023 11:22 GMT)</small>		
		Date	Jan 30, 2023		
		Comments	on behalf of SAP		
7.2	Procurement (only required if spend is above £75k)	I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Procurement implications			
		Name	Sarah Hurlock		
		Signed	<u>Sarah Hurlock</u> <small>Sarah Hurlock (Jan 30, 2023 11:41 GMT)</small>		
		Date	Jan 30, 2023		
7.3	Legal (only required if spend is above £75k)	I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Legal implications			
		Name	Kevin Molloy		
		Signed	<u>Kevin Molloy</u> <small>Kevin Molloy (Jan 30, 2023 16:54 GMT)</small>		
		Date	Jan 30, 2023		
7.4	Finance (only required if spend is above £75k)	I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Financial implications			
		Name	David May		
		Signed	<u>D May</u> <small>D May (Jan 31, 2023 09:36 GMT)</small>		
		Date	Jan 31, 2023		
7.5	Responsible Officer	I confirm that this procurement will be carried out in accordance with Rule 5 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (Chapter 9, Part 2 of the Constitution).			
		Name	Graeme Parker		
		Signed	<u>G. Parker</u> <small>G. Parker (Feb 1, 2023 08:55 GMT)</small>		
		Date	Feb 1, 2023		
7.6	Authorised Signatory	In accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules, I confirm the accuracy of the information contained within this form and authorise this request to proceed to tender.			
		Delegation level	Cabinet delegated authority to Corporate Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (over £750,000)		

		Name	Sheila Murphy
		Signed	<i>sheila murphy</i> <small>sheila.murphy (Feb 1, 2023 10:01 GMT)</small>
		Date	Feb 1, 2023
7.7	Cabinet (only applicable if £750k or over)	Minute number	Click here to enter text.
		Date	

*Guidance on the rules surrounding contractor employment status for tax can be found on the below link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-off-payroll-working-ir35>

**The Check Employment Status for Tax (CEST) tool can be found on the below link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-employment-status-for-tax>

***Information on Data Protection and the DPIA form can be found on the following link:
<https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/services/information-management/data-protection/>

****You can search for Community and Equalities Impact Assessment guidance using the following link:
<https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/document-store/>

STAGE 1 FORM - APPROVAL TO PROCEED TO TENDER

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Once completed, this form must be sent to the relevant Category Manager.

1.	CONTRACT DETAILS		
1.1	Contract title	Principal Contractor for the 1 Form of Entry Expansion of Tilbury Pioneer School	
1.2	Reference number	PS/2023/009	
1.3	Responsible Officer	Graeme Parker	
1.4	Directorate	Children's Services	
1.5	Contract description	Works	
1.6	Applicability of off pay-roll working (IR35) rules*	Is this an applicable contract?	No
		Employment status for tax**	N/a
1.7	Proposed contract start	17/10/2023	
1.8	Proposed contract end	31/12/2024	
1.9	Proposed extension options	Only in line with agreed JCT terms and conditions	
1.10	Estimated contract value	Excluding VAT	£2,300,000.00
		Including VAT ¹	£2,760,000.00
2.	BUSINESS CASE		

¹ Required solely to determine whether the contract value exceeds the UK public procurement threshold (which includes VAT)

2.1	Business case	<p>The council's school capital programme is developed following extensive pupil place planning to assess the potential likely demand for school places this forms part of the council's statutory duties around pupil place planning.</p> <p>The demand for pupil places has increased significantly, over the last few years we have seen a large increase of 'in year' admissions from families moving into the Authority. In 2021/22, 504 children moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and 1342 pupils from elsewhere within the UK. For the first 3 months of this year, 217 more children have moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and there have been 387 new arrivals from within the UK.</p> <p>We are currently not seeing a decrease in the demand, the level of demand has and continues to be unprecedented. To be in a position to accommodate this demand, we are building in additional places to support in-year growth across a number of year groups where it has been identified that we do not have sufficient school places.</p> <p>Despite the recent expansions of the early years provision at Lansdowne Primary School in 2016/7, and a one form entry expansion at Woodside Academy in 2015/16 which created a total additional 240 places within the Tilbury planning area of the borough, following the annual review of forecasts for pupil places and the large increase being experienced with regards in-year admissions there is now educational need for further primary school places in the Tilbury area of the Borough.</p> <p>There is political sensitivity as the procurement and appointment of a Principal Contractor is critical to the delivery of the expansion project and the implication of not undertaking this procurement is that the Council will be unable to comply with its legal duty under section 13 of the Education Act as described at greater length in section 2.3 of this document.</p>
2.2	Expenditure control criteria	The spend is for essential statutory services, goods and/or works
2.3	Expenditure control justification	<p>Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 imposes a specific duty on local authorities to ensure within their area that there is efficient primary education, secondary education and further education available to meet the needs of the population of their area. This is an absolute duty that is imposed by statute.</p> <p>There are additional duties that flow from this such as duties under section 88 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which imposes the duty to set school admissions numbers for each school year as well as Regulation 4 of the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 which sets a limit of 30 pupils to one teacher in all infant classes. These duties mean that local authorities must take care to ensure that there are adequate school provisions within their area to meet these duties.</p> <p>Therefore, Thurrock Council is under an obligation to ensure that there are available school places for children that live in its area and wish to access education in the area. Accordingly, the proposal set out herein is in line with the positive statutory duty to ensure that the demand for school places is met on an ongoing basis.</p>
2.4	Award criteria	Most Economically Advantageous Tender 60% Price x 40% Quality

2.5	Social Value	<p>Unfortunately, not only are children negatively affected by not being educated, but the negative affects often reverberate through society. Improving the quality of the education environment of children and young adults is one step that can be taken to improve a society both economically and socially.</p> <p>The proposed award criteria allows for 40% of the overall score to be judged upon the bidders responses to the quality evaluation questionnaire, and specific questions are contained within this part of the tender pack relating to bidders Social value initiatives.</p>
2.6	Previous contract	N/A

3.	FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	
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3.1	Previous contract spend	N/A
3.2	Scope of changes	N/A
3.3	Budget considerations	<p>The proposed expansion of Tilbury Pioneer will be funded from a combination of the DfE capital basic needs grant and Section 106 monies held for Primary & Secondary Education provision.</p> <p>There are sufficient funds available within the schools DfE basic need grant, for the works identified within this report.</p>
3.4	Expenditure type	Capital
3.5	Cost centre	B0998
3.6	Anticipated savings	<p>Early stage feasibility studies have already been undertaken to evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of multiple options to achieve the desired goal at Tilbury Pioneer. It has been firmly established that there are considerable savings to be realised by choosing the refurbishment of the old building option rather than any of the three new build options that were proposed. These savings are not purely financial, but also in terms of project duration.</p>

4.	PROCUREMENT ROUTE	
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4.1	Procurement route	Other (specify in Rationale below)
4.2	Rationale	<p>As the total contract value is under the current UK threshold for works, a closed invite-only Request for Quotation process will be undertaken to a minimum of 6 organisations thus making evaluation manageable given the limited resources available and time will be saved by utilising suppliers already registered on the Council's e-tendering and purchase systems.</p>

5.	PROPOSED PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE		
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5.1	Procurement timetable	Publish Contract Notice	N/A
		Selection Questionnaire return	N/A
		Invitation to Tender issue	31/07/2023
		Tender return	31/08/2023
		Notification of result	14/09/2023
		Standstill period	25/09/2023
		Expected award	02/10/2023
		Contract commencement	16/10/2023

6.	RISKS, CONSULTATION AND MANAGEMENT	
6.1	Risk management	A copy of the project Risk Register is appended.
6.2	Contingency	A number of temporary solutions can be arranged at short notice to ensure that sufficient pupil places are available. These have previously taken the form of relocatable classrooms, and remodelling works to redundant rooms to form new teaching spaces.
6.3	Consultation	Full consultation will be carried out with all stakeholders at detailed design stage, supported by relevant communication plans.
6.4	Data Protection**	Neither the successful architect or contractor will process any personal data so N/a
6.5	Project and contract management ²	Tier 4 - Light Touch Contract Management
		There will be established contract management and monitoring arrangements in place as with all schemes undertaken as part of the schools capital programme, Project management will follow the RIBA plan of work 2020 which is the standard protocol for construction projects. Documents will be kept in accordance with the councils document retention policy. Legal Services will retain the original signed copy of the contract and both Procurement & Childrens Services will retain a digital copy of that document. At procurement stage, the Senior Schools Capital Programme Manager will work Closely with the designated Category Manager to produce the tender pack, drawings, preliminaries and technical specification, Legal services will be engaged to provide a draft copy of the relevant JCT contract complete with Thurrock Council amendments. During the tender period all clarification requests will be responded to in a timely manner. Post award, the Schools Capital programme manager will work closely with the appointed Architect to regularly monitor project costs, issue CAI's, monitor KPI's, interrogate and process monthly valuations and oversee regular monthly progress meetings will all parties including representatives from the end client. A full budget review is undertaken at handover stage, with final accounts formally agreed. The architect will oversee the managing of the defects rectification period as part of the scope of their works. Throughout the duration of the project from initial mandate to the release of retentions, monthly progress reports are submitted to the Education Support Services Strategic Lead for further circulation.
6.6	Will TUPE apply to the proposed contract?	No
		N/a
6.7	Community and Equalities Impact Assessment****	N/a for this project. The provision of these services will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion. The procurement process will follow responsibilities as set out within The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, with due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
6.8	Exit strategy	N/a – there is no existing contract to exit.
6.9	Collaboration	Interdepartmental collaboration will occur throughout the project, at Procurement Stage collaboration takes place with Corporate Finance, Legal Services, Community Developmant & Equalities, in addition to the Procurement Team. At Planniing Stage, the contract will allow for collaboration with Planning and any other internal statutory consultee's such as Highways. The construction phase will see collaboration with Building Control, as well as Planners.and Finance.

² Refer to the contract management framework or your category manager for guidance

7. APPROVALS		Decision		Approved	Yes	Rejected	
7.1	Strategic Approval Panel	Signed	<u>Marie Ogles</u> <small>Marie Ogles (Jan 30, 2023 11:21 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Jan 30, 2023				
		Comments	on behalf of SAP				
		I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Procurement implications					
7.2	Procurement (only required if spend is above £75k)	Name	Sarah Hurlock				
		Signed	<u>Sarah Hurlock</u> <small>Sarah Hurlock (Jan 30, 2023 11:42 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Jan 30, 2023				
		I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Legal implications					
7.3	Legal (only required if spend is above £75k)	Name	Kevin Molloy				
		Signed	<u>Kevin Molloy</u> <small>Kevin Molloy (Jan 30, 2023 16:55 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Jan 30, 2023				
		I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Financial implications					
7.4	Finance (only required if spend is above £75k)	Name	David May				
		Signed	<u>D May</u> <small>D May (Jan 31, 2023 09:35 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Jan 31, 2023				
		I confirm that this procurement will be carried out in accordance with Rule 5 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (Chapter 9, Part 2 of the Constitution).					
7.5	Responsible Officer	Name	Graeme Parker				
		Signed	<u>G. Parker</u> <small>G.Parker (Feb 1, 2023 08:57 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Feb 1, 2023				
		In accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules, I confirm the accuracy of the information contained within this form and authorise this request to proceed to tender.					
7.6	Authorised Signatory	Delegation level	Cabinet delegated authority to Corporate Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (over £750,000)				
		Name	Sheila Murphy				
		Signed	<u>sheila murphy</u> <small>sheila murphy (Feb 1, 2023 09:03 GMT)</small>				
		Date	Feb 1, 2023				
		I confirm that I have been consulted and agree with the information contained in this report in so far as it relates to Financial implications					
7.7	Cabinet	Minute number	Click here to enter text.				

	(only applicable if £750k or over)	Date	
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*Guidance on the rules surrounding contractor employment status for tax can be found on the below link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-off-payroll-working-ir35>

**The Check Employment Status for Tax (CEST) tool can be found on the below link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-employment-status-for-tax>

***Information on Data Protection and the DPIA form can be found on the following link:
<https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/services/information-management/data-protection/>

****You can search for Community and Equalities Impact Assessment guidance using the following link:
<https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/document-store/>

14 March 2023	ITEM: 10
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Thurrock LSCP Annual Report 2021/22	
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, Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report presents Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members with the LSCP Annual Report 2021/22.

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’.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018), In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee note the LSCP Annual Report 2021/22 and the work undertaken against the priorities.

2. LSCP Annual Report 2021/22

2.1 <https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/about-the-partnership/lscp-accountability>

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 None

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 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.

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

5.1 Not applicable.

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

6.1 There is no impact.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

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.

7.2 Legal

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

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (by amending the Children Act 2004) 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 Act requires the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area. The Act does not create any separate body or additional powers for the Safeguarding Partners. The arrangements must be published and must include arrangements for scrutiny by an independent person of the effectiveness of the arrangements.

The Act requires that at least once in every 12 month period the safeguarding partners must prepare and publish a report on:

- a) What the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area have done as a result of the arrangements, and
- b) How effective the arrangements have been in practice.

Working Together states that the scrutiny should be objective, acts as a constructive critical friend and promotes reflection to drive continuous improvement. As well as considering the effectiveness of the arrangements these should include how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported. The published arrangements should include how they will be reviewed and, also, include arrangements for independent scrutiny of the annual report.

The Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements for Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children to take place before the child first review under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Community Development and Equalities
Adults, Housing and Health Directorate
Team Manager

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.

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

No implications identified.

- 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 A LSCP Annual Report 2021/22

Report Author:

Priscilla Bruce-Annan

Business Manager

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership



ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

As independent chairperson and scrutineer of the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (TLSCP) I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2021-2022. This has been a year of continuing development and strengthening of the Safeguarding Partnership building on the recommendations of the external peer review which had taken place at the end of 2020. As a result, the TLSCP has a comprehensive data set to help consider how partner agencies are working together to support families and safeguard children and where we can improve. This report includes details of how our partnership is scrutinised, how we learn from local and national reviews and then how this informs the learning and development programme for staff working across both the public, voluntary and community sectors. An example

of this is the learning we have been doing to further multi agency working with young people vulnerable to becoming involved in serious youth violence.

As a Safeguarding Partnership we work closely with the Domestic Abuse and Community Safety Partnerships as well as taking opportunities for activities with Southend and Essex Safeguarding Children Partnerships. We are also continuing to develop an all-age approach to safeguarding with the Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board.

In the coming year we want to find ways to better monitor the impact of our programme of activity and to ensure the feedback and voices of children, young people and families inform safeguarding practice in Thurrock.

Our priorities for 2022-24 are Neglect promoting multi agency working to provide help at the earliest time to families; Violence & Vulnerability linking with partners within Thurrock and with Essex and Southend; Think Family to take a family-based approach to safeguarding in order to improve protection of children; Transitions & Transfers to ensure support for children at significant life stages and working with the Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board particularly as young people transfer to adult services; and Emotional Wellbeing for both children and young people and the multi-agency workforce.

The TLSCP wants to thank all the front- line staff and managers who have been working so hard to keep services operating throughout the last year and during the pandemic. This has been an incredibly challenging time for families, children and young people and the children's workforce in schools, children's and local authority services, the police, health agencies, other statutory services and the voluntary sector.

Jenny Coles

Independent Chairperson and Scrutineer, Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership

INTRODUCTION

Statutory requirements for local arrangements to safeguard children are set out in government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 published in July 2018 and amended in 2020. This report sets out what we have achieved under the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

INTRODUCTION FROM SAFEGUARDING STATUTORY PARTNERS

Annual Report of Thurrock LSCP which covers the period of 2021-2022.

Thurrock LSCP is required to publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in its area, including an assessment of local safeguarding arrangements. This report sets out the progress and achievements in the last year and the work undertaken.

This report captures some of the excellent work of the Partnership to support and challenge improvement of services for children and its work in raising awareness within all elements of the community.

Our vision is that every child and young person in Thurrock will grow up safe from maltreatment, neglect and criminal activity. We commit to further improve our safeguarding system with the focus firmly on the lived experience of the child or young person.

Practice has evolved with the embedding of the Signs of Safety approach to Child Protection Conferences and Graded Care Profile 2 is being rolled out to support our response to our neglect priority. We are pleased with the progress being made locally during this period as we emerge from the pandemic and the challenges that arise as a result. The Partnership will continue to be vigilant in providing a high level of challenge to Partners responsible for keeping the children and young people of Thurrock safe.

We would like to thank all partners, agencies and the Business Team who have contributed to the work of the LSCP over the year for their continued hard work, support and commitment.

Sheila Murphy

Neil Pudney

Linda Moncur

Thurrock Childrens Social Care

Essex Police

Thurrock MSE ICB



SINGLE AGENCY ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

Essex Police

Essex Police are a committed statutory partner within the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership. Safeguarding of children and vulnerable families will always be a priority for Essex Police. Through the TLSCP we ensure that arrangements and processes are in place to capture the voice of children, learn lessons and working together with our partners in accordance with legislation, statutory guidance and best practice to ensure the best outcomes are delivered for families across Thurrock.

Thurrock Children's Social Care

Thurrock Children's Social Care remains a committed statutory partner of the Thurrock Child Safeguarding Children Partnership. Legislation and guidance lay down the statutory duties of Children's Social Care. There is a requirement to demonstrate that appropriate systems are in place for discharging these duties which is ultimately tested through the Ofsted Inspection process. Thurrock Children's Social Care has a central role in safeguarding children and young people and ensures robust arrangements are in place to provide strong leadership, vision and direction for Safeguarding, by providing clear accessible policies and procedures in line with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and best practice. Children's Social Care was judged as good in the last full inspection in November 2019, and the Ofsted focussed visit in June 2021 and had no areas for priority action identified. These findings are underpinned by evidence of strong Governance, leadership, learning and improvement. More recently Thurrock's Joint Area SEND revisit in December 2021 concluded that sufficient progress had been made against areas for action and the YOS inspection in May 2022 was graded Good with Outstanding features. The work and development of services is overseen by monthly Development Board meetings which involve the lead portfolio holder and the DCS, and reports are regularly submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board.

NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (TCCG) is a committed statutory partner of the Thurrock Child Safeguarding Children Partnership. The Accountability and Assurance Framework (2019) outlines the statutory duties of CCG's and CCGs are required to demonstrate that they have appropriate systems in place for discharging these. Thurrock CCG recognises safeguarding as a high priority for the organisation and ensures robust arrangements are in place to provide strong leadership, vision, and direction for Safeguarding, by providing clear accessible policies and procedures in line with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice. The Designated Professionals for safeguarding children are involved with the various partnership sub-groups and work closely with key providers, including acute Trusts, community services, mental health Trusts and primary care, to ensure system oversight, assurance, support, and advice.

As we transition into the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (MSE ICB) from 1st July 2022, Thurrock CCG will continue to work closely with CCGs in Mid and South Essex. Following a whole system review of child / adult safeguarding arrangements in January 2020 a decision was made to continue to collaborate SET through Safeguarding Clinical Network (SCN), MSE Matrix Group and Health Executive Forum (HEF). The SCN brings together CCG safeguarding leads and executive nurses to drive forward the safeguarding agenda, highlight risk and collaborate on areas of mutual interest. The HEF has executive representation from all Health commissioners and Providers to providing strategic direction to the health economy. As we become an ICB as a system, we will continue to work in partnership with partnership boards in collaboration to co-produce priorities and agendas to ensure safeguarding our population is safe and robust for better outcome for our vulnerable population.

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership is a statutory arrangement which has a range of roles, scrutinising and challenging local safeguarding arrangements and practice, as part of its responsibilities under Section 14 of the Children Act 2004.

The Partnership has an independent co-ordinating and challenging role around safeguarding practice across its Partner agencies and these functions are carried out through the Management Executive Board, Strategic Group and its sub-groups.

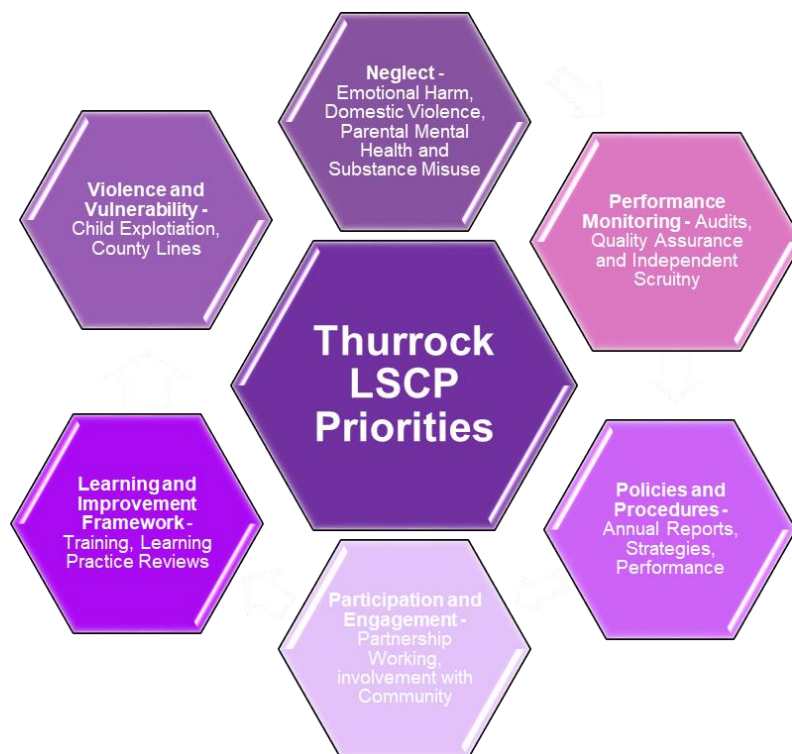
While the LSCP does not have the power to direct Partner agencies, it has a key role in making clear where improvement is required. Each Statutory Partner and relevant agency retains their own existing line of accountability for safeguarding (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018).

**THURROCK LSCP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND DELIVERY PLAN
2019/2022**

For 2019 -2021, the Partnership agreed its six priorities as:

- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Performance Monitoring
- ❖ Policies and Procedures
- ❖ Participation and Engagement
- ❖ Learning and Improvement Framework
- ❖ Violence and Vulnerability

The period of COVID meant that this delivery period was extended to the financial year 2021-2022.



Our Delivery Plan sets out actions that we will take in order to address the need within our priorities. Progress on the delivery plan has been monitored and tracked by the relevant sub-group, who reports to the Strategic Partners and is fed up to the Management Executive Board to ensure accountability and outcomes achieved.

Among the successfully completed actions are:

- ❖ Fully implemented a Neglect sub-group to review the multi-agency response to Neglect
- ❖ Review and update of the SET Management of Suspicious Injuries and Bruising in Children
- ❖ New Independent Chair Scrutineer in post and provides independent scrutiny of the Partnership
- ❖ Action Plan of 26 recommendations following the independent scrutiny of the Partnership into its effectiveness completed and embedded
- ❖ Annual Reports received from all Partners covering Safeguarding received and
- ❖ Multi-agency dataset devised, implemented and reviewed for effectiveness
- ❖ Engagement with children and young people and ensuring their voice and lived experience is heard
- ❖ Learning and development offer and resources reviewed to reflect learning from audits, and local and national reviews.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Thurrock LSCP Strategic aims are:

1. To ensure Safeguarding is everyone's business
2. To reduce the number of children in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage
3. Ensure the voice of the child is listened to
4. To develop a Partnership fit to meet future demands

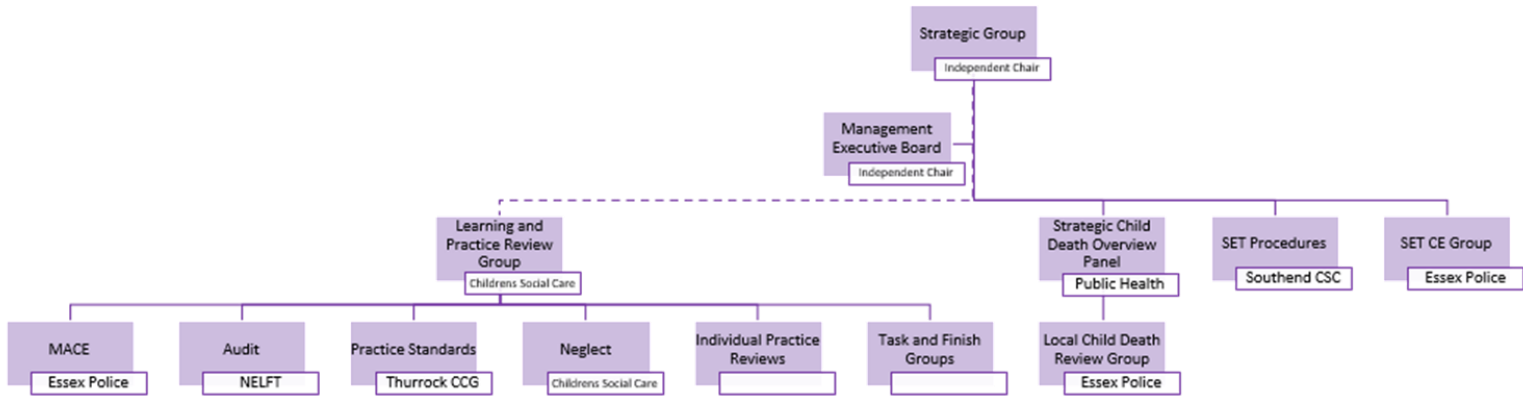
The following principles underpin the work of the LSCP.

The Partnership will:

- ❖ Keep the safeguarding and welfare needs of children at the centre of everything it does
- ❖ Operate a challenge and assurance function to both partner members and external organisations
- ❖ Involve children, families, carers and frontline practitioners and managers in its work
- ❖ Develop strong working relationships with Strategic Partners to promote clear roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements
- ❖ Be open and transparent in the work that it undertakes
- ❖ Be a learning and development Partnership that seeks continuous improvement.

THURROCK LSCP STRUCTURE

The Partnership functions through a hierarchal structure led by the Safeguarding Statutory Partners through a Strategic Group. Its structure is reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose to safeguard Thurrock’s children.



To ensure the Partnership is aware of all cross cutting safeguarding impacts, representation on other boards and multi-agency groups includes:

- ❖ Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board (Business Manager)
- ❖ Thurrock Health and Well Being Board (Chair)
- ❖ Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (Business Manager)
- ❖ SET Child Exploitation Group (Business Manager and Chair of MACE Group)
- ❖ SET Procedures Group (Business Manager)
- ❖ Regional LSCP Chairs and Business Managers Group (Chair and Business Manager)
- ❖ Violence Against Women and Girls Group (VAWG) Business Manager

WHO MAKES UP THE PARTNERSHIP?

STRATEGIC

The Strategic Group is made up of the three statutory partners: Thurrock Council, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Essex Police.

MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE BOARD

A Management Executive Board oversees and drives forward multi-agency child safeguarding in Thurrock. The Board meets four times a year and hold partners to account through a ‘high support’, ‘high challenge’ culture.

SUB-GROUPS

In addition to the Executive there are five sub-groups who are responsible for specific areas of work:

- Learning Practice Review Group
- Audit Group
- MACE Group
- Neglect Group
- Practice Standards Group

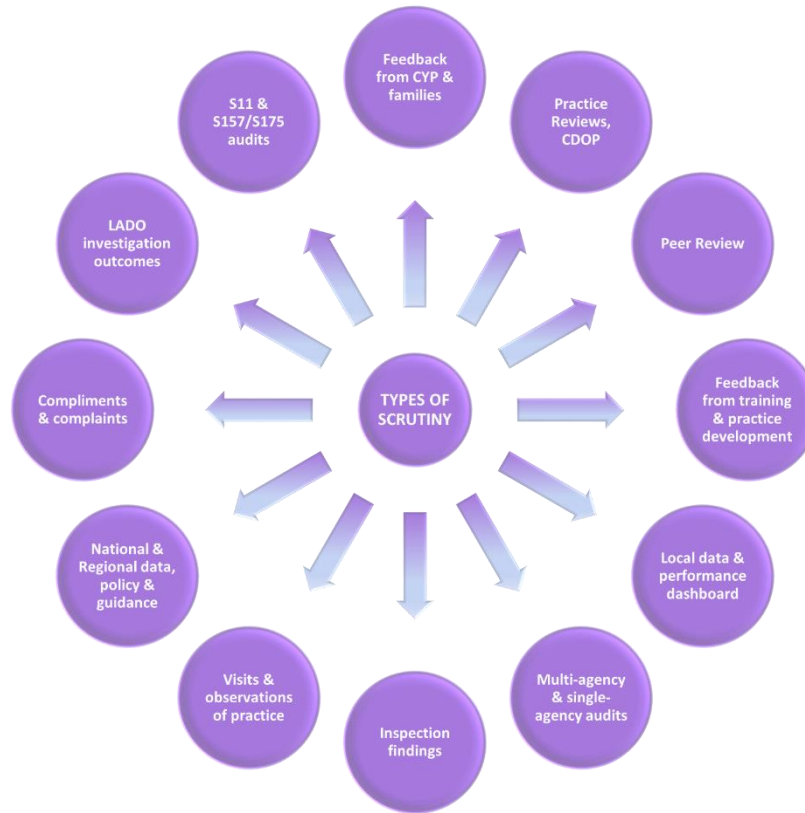
Task and Finish groups are convened where needed to complete short pieces of work.

HOW IS OUR PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINISED?

The newly appointed Independent Chair Scrutineer provides assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases (Working Together 2018).

Additional scrutiny arrangements include a range of mechanisms, deployed to provide robust examination of performance and practice. Following the independent Peer Review of the LSCP in 2020, all 26 recommendations are complete and embedded which has developed the Partnerships effectiveness.

Further sources of scrutiny can be found in the following areas:



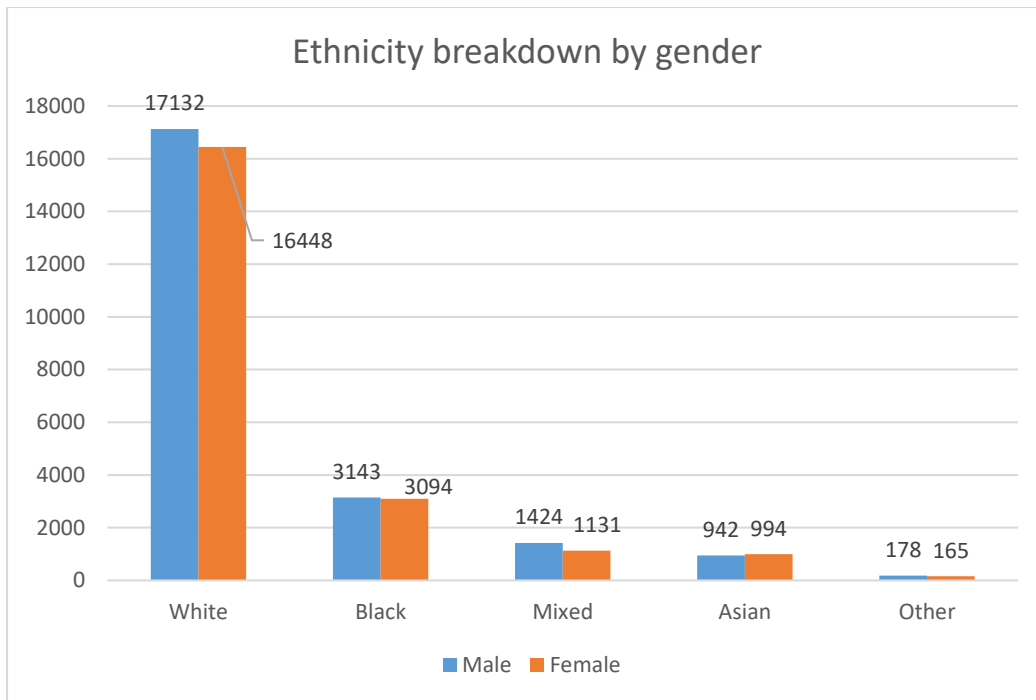
LSCP IN NUMBERS

Thurrock has a population of approximately 146,343 as at 2019*.

The overall child population is (0-17) is 44,650.

Thurrock's children and young people population is diverse, just under 25%* of children and young people come from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

*Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2019.



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The overall purpose of the Learning and Development (L&D) programme is to support statutory and voluntary organisations and schools to comply with their Section 11 requirements under the Children Act 2004.

The LSCP L&D programme includes course specifications that correspond to different competency levels and delegates are asked to ensure that they book onto the course that address their individual training needs.

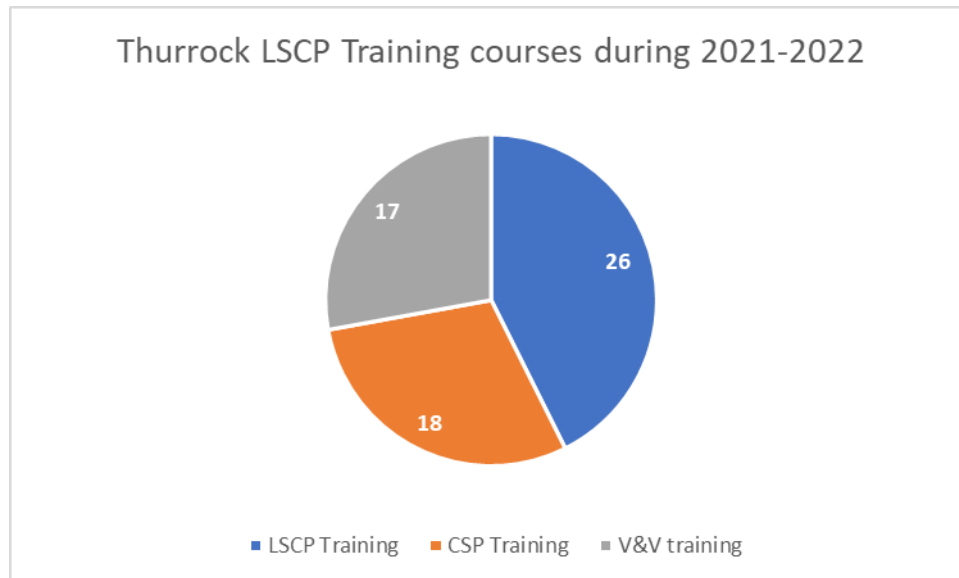
The awareness training supports our mission to make safeguarding children everyone’s business to understand and recognise risk factors and understand how to apply the LSCP threshold guidance for referral and assessment.

The LSCP also arrange themed conferences and seminars that are targeted to the strategic leadership and management, safeguarding specialists and a variety of frontline roles across the partnership.

The L&D programme is reviewed annually, and new events are added to respond to and help embed learning from national and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and findings from multi-agency case audits.

All learning and development events have been adapted to enable virtual attendance via Microsoft Teams and an e-learning platform.

During the period 2021 – 2022, 61 learning and development events reflecting partnership priorities were held and there were more than 1000 instances of attendance by multi-agency professionals. Some learners attending were from the Southend and Essex Partnership areas attending Violence and Vulnerability courses. Training events are also delivered in partnership with Thurrock Community Safety Partnership and the Violence and Vulnerability Board.



Feedback from training is consistently positive and evaluations evidence ‘golden threads’ between learning and practice. Evaluations are used to refresh content and target gaps in the learning and development programme and learning resources.

LESSONS FROM SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS (SCRs) AND LOCAL CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS (LCSPRs)

During this period an independent Thematic Review of Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Activity was commissioned and recently published.

The key learning and recommendations from the review will be disseminated through a summary booklet, podcast, practitioner learning event and a 7-minute briefing. The Learning Practice Review and Strategic Groups will provide oversight of the implementation of the action plan once formulated and ratified and reported to the Management Executive Board.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Section 11 Compliance Audit

The Partnerships Section 11 process is robust and provides good assurance regarding the quality of Partner’s commitment and prioritisation of safeguarding. The annual returns are

reviewed by the Audit Group for compliance and any action plans monitored for improving outcomes.

Education Section 157/175 Audits

There is a good level of response received from schools along with the requirement for additional information supporting the PREVENT agenda. The submissions are quality assured by the Audit Group and where relevant actions plans are in place to monitor compliance and improvement processes.

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Contributions:

Contribution Breakdown	Budget
Local Authority	116,977.10
Police	58,488.55
National Probation Service	3,630.82
Thurrock CCG	58,488.55
	237,585.02

The budget is made up of contributions from the Statutory Partners and a relevant agency and is reviewed annually.

THE REPORT OF THURROCK LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDRENS PARTNERSHIP

Learning Practice Review Group (LPRG)

Chaired by: Thurrock Children’s Social Care

Background

The LPRG was established following the Safeguarding Arrangements which came into effect in 2019. It replaced the previous Serious Case Review Groups and took on some of the functions of the Management Executive when it was the LSCB. The main aim of the LPRG is to focus on learning, delivery, and outcomes. The terms of reference were agreed at the outset- August 2019 and the last review of the terms of reference was in October 2021.

Membership and chairing

The chair is currently Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help. The membership includes the key statutory partners, Police, Health & CSC, and includes Housing, Probation, CAFCAS, Public Health, SERICC & Adult Safeguarding.

Meeting frequency

Meetings are currently held every 2 months. Following Covid, meetings have been held virtually. The virtual platform has resulted in an improved attendance at all LSCP meetings.

Key agenda items

The Group review the reports and receives updates from the Audit, Practice Standards and Neglect subgroups and the MACE and signs off key partnership documents.

The delivery plan for the LSCP is reviewed at each meeting. Learning Practice reviews are tracked, and the action plans monitored. The training programme, attendance, feedback, and costs/income are reviewed and tracked.

The development of a training plan for Signs of Safety across the partnership is discussed at each meeting. Information from the Child Death Review Panel is discussed, and any learning identified

Partner agencies update on developments in their agency to inform colleagues and improve inter agency communication. Feedback from SET groups and Safeguarding Leads Forum is shared.

Main actions

- The group reviews and approves terms of reference for the various groups that report into the group.
- The following documents have been signed off – Threshold document, Neglect Strategy and Learning & Improvement Framework.
- The reports from Practice Standards Group, Neglect Subgroup, MASH Strategic Governance Board and Safeguarding Leads Forum are now part of the formal LSCP monitoring process and are on the agenda for the LPRG.
- The Data Dashboard has been developed and is reviewed and discussed

Focus Areas

Themes during 2021/22 period that have been covered include:

- Female Genital Mutilation
- Liberty Protection and Inherent Jurisdiction
- Think Family Approach
- Training
- Use of Data
- Neglect

Learning from Reviews

If there is a case which requires notification to the National Safeguarding Panel, the chair of the LPRG will Chair the Rapid Review. 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.

During this reporting year we have worked hard across the partnership on the recommendations arising out of case reviews and a Peer Review of the partnership previously

published. Action Plans for our Peer Review and two case reviews are now complete and signed off by Strategic Partners. Ongoing work to provide safeguarding assurance forms part of business as usual. Actions contained within two case review action plans are part of our current work

Following a serious incident of youth violence Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) commissioned a focused review of Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Activity, along with a deep dive case audit.

The review which will identify areas of learning will be published in June 2022 and initial findings include:

- that there was a strong commitment from all agencies and individuals to tackle serious youth violence.
- The structures, processes and procedures that are currently in place, and those proposed actions, are addressing where possible serious youth violence.
- No practice or system failings were identified.

Training

The Group has oversight of training offered via the LSCP and discusses and identifies training needs and receives a bi-annual report which provides data on attendance and nonattendance by the partnership as well as feedback on training provided. Training has included:

- Graded Care Profile 2 Awareness
- Designated Safeguarding Leads Training
- Multi-Agency Child Protection Training
- Safer Recruitment
- Gangs and Serious Youth Violence
- Trauma Informed Practice

Audit Group

Chaired by: NELFT.

What did we do?

The LSCP audit group meets on a bi-monthly basis and is well attended. There are regular representatives from the CCG, NELFT, CSC, police and the LSCP business support team. Practitioners involved in cases are to contribute and participate in discussions around practice, what needs improving and what is working well.

Over the last year, the LSCP audit group has reviewed the effectiveness of child safeguarding practices. There has been a deep dive and thematic review into youth violence in Thurrock. There was a focus on a local case in which a young person who was known to Youth Offending Services (YOS), Health, Police and CSC seriously injured another young person and how services could improve information sharing and improve risk assessments to prevent further incidents. The report has recently been published.

We have looked at the transfer in process and how processes can be improved to ensure vulnerable families receive the appropriate support from Thurrock services. Outcomes from the audit group has opened up communication between local housing departments and their counterparts, health have reviewed the transfer of records process.

NELFT have recently updated the transfer of records policy and have made contact with safeguarding leads at other trusts to improve the transfer process.

Thurrock LSCP adopted the signs of safety process for child safeguarding practice. This was recently reviewed at the audit group, where it was established that practitioners find the process helpful in identifying risk and strengths.

The audit group has reflected the Thurrock LSCP priorities addressing:

- Neglect
- Performance Monitoring
- Policies and Procedures
- Participation and Engagement
- Learning and Improvement Framework
- Violence and Vulnerability

What was the impact?

Feedback is given to practitioners and managers via the Audit Group, this has resulted in improved practice.

To improve contribution to the audits, it has been agreed that the LSCP Business Manager will escalate a lack of response to the Audit Group representatives.

What we plan to do next?

We have set out the next cases to be reviewed with a focus on the areas of priority for the LSCP.

MACE Group

Chaired by: Essex Police.

Following on from the successful integration of the new safeguarding arrangements implemented through the MACE group, the new chair, Detective Inspector Brian Palombella has now assumed responsibility for chairing the meetings moving forwards.

The MACE group continues to report directly into the LPRG (Learning Practise Review Group) encompassing: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Exploitation (CE), Missing, Modern Day Slavery, Domestic Abuse and Contextual Safeguarding. At the end of each MACE meeting a report is compiled to be presented at the LPRG.

OP GOLDCREST continues to progress and evolve in terms of its integration across services since the initial launch in 2019. The initial PIER evaluation found that the project “effectively worked” as an alternative way to report abuse for young people at risk of sexual abuse. Feedback from stakeholders was “largely positive” in all four areas of relevance: effectiveness, appropriateness, efficiency and impact. Further bespoke training with service providers continues to be undertaken, with continued success in terms of uptake and engagement with young people using this pathway as a way to secure wider support, without the need to formally engage with Police. This continues to be a useful vehicle to enable social workers and other key professionals to start those difficult conversations, around risk-taking behaviours and sexual exploitation. There will be further activity in terms of media and partnership engagements around this project over the coming months as we look to expand its success, and our vision to integrate this process across the entire county.

There remains continued activity between Police and partners around OP MAKESAFE, which continues to raise and maintain awareness of CSE in the community amongst local businesses and hotels/B&B’s, with continued training, visits and engagement with Community Policing teams. Spot checks via OP KIRN have identified some wider opportunities for learning and dissemination and highlighted the importance of managers and employees at such premises regularly refreshing their knowledge around CSE and CCE.

OP ENCOMPASS continues to grow and evolve in terms of awareness and integration into the sharing and dissemination of information between Police and key partners where children who are either victims of, or witness domestic abuse. OP ENCOMPASS offers educational establishments the opportunity to provide wider support and care via Key adults at such premises, which continues to reduce the harmful impact that domestic abuse can have on a child’s mental and emotional health and well-being.

Working practices and protocols set in place during the initial COVID lock-down periods are now well-established and teams continue to engage and operate in a hybrid-working manner, making best use of the available technology to expedite the sharing of information, with MACE meetings regularly taking place with partners via Teams.

At every MACE meeting, the contextual safeguarding report continues to be discussed with focus around activity associated with developing trends, hotspots for exploitation and continues to include an overview and discussions around the Risk Management Meeting associated with young people that are going missing.

Neglect Group

Chaired by: Thurrock Children’s Social Care

What did we do?

As part of the partnerships Neglect Priority, the LSCP Neglect Group was created and is into its first year. The group was created to reduce the incidences of neglect of children and young people within the borough through a multi-agency partnership approach and further to reduce repeat incidents of neglect for individual children and young people.

This group meets on a quarterly basis, meetings are well attended by representatives from across the partnership and the Business Team provide support. Members contribute to and participate in discussions on the Neglect Strategy, Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) Assessment Tool Implementation Plan and on learning and development activities to raise the profile of the tool and its use.

In the year 2021-2022, the Neglect Group has reviewed the Neglect Strategy in light of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, which made delivering some parts a challenge. The group has monitored and tracked the GCP2 Implementation Plan, which has seen practitioners train as Train the Trainers in GCP2, the creation of an annual training programme, the delivery of GCP2 awareness and training sessions incorporation the Signs of Safety approach, to a range of multi-agency practitioners, identified GCP2 champions in agencies to support staff in the completion of the tool, the creation of a Neglect 7-minutes briefing and a rise in the numbers of completed assessments.

What was the impact?

Practitioners are aware of the GCP2 tool, how to obtain training on how to use it and are able to identify and support children and families where neglect is present. Numbers of completed assessments have risen in the 12 months and support has been written into plans to provide intervention and support to families.

What we plan to do next?

To build on the work already done we plan to deliver a multi-agency Neglect Conference launching the strategy, create a Neglect Screening Tool, devise a Neglect Tool Kit, launch a neglect campaign in partnership with the NSPCC and deliver a Reflective Neglect Learning Workshop for practitioners to explore how to develop our multi-agency response to neglect.

Practice Standards Group (PSG)

Chaired by: Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (TCCG)

The PSG is a new Multi-Agency Group. There have been six meetings held from February 2021 to June 2022. This report covers April 2021-March 2022. The group consist of members across the partnership and key agencies. As a collective group, we believe Practice Improvement is at the heart of the role of the safeguarding arrangements. The group examines a range of information (case review recommendations, practice issues) relating to safeguarding practice and procedure for all Thurrock Babies, Children, Young people and Families (BCYPF). This multi-agency partnership forum identifies where partnership is working well and share models of good practice. The forum also explores where partnership working requires improvement and develops practice standards.

The PSG aims to support Partnership working through:

- Sharing learning from single agencies, including voluntary sectors
- Sharing learning from Serious Incidents (SIs)
- consider the learning from single agency deep dives

- Identify key priority areas for analysis and make recommendations to multi-agency practice improvements
- Receiving thematic information and learning on Escalations from Stage 3 and 4 of the Escalation Policy
- Making recommendations for training and development to the Learning Practice Review Group (LPRG)

The table below gives a narrative from the PSG for the 2021-2022 reporting Period.

What did we do?

Between April 2021 to March 2022, there has been four meetings held. The key agenda items covered within this reporting year were:

1. Serious Case Review (SCR) Sam & Kyle Recommendation 2.3 – ‘Create and implement models of multi-agency group supervision’ to be run between agencies to explore and build on better co-operation and understanding of handling complex or persistent cases’

- Work Generated - Partnership Complex Case Discussion Group

To implement the recommendations and learning from the above case review, the PSG after numerous discussions agreed to pilot the ‘Partnership Complex Case Discussion Group’ where invited members, including frontline practitioners and lead managers working with families in stuck and complex cases will have a safe place or forum to discuss issues around complex cases collectively, once a term. The PSG is in the process of finalising the guidance for the above group, whilst members also discuss within their agencies the appropriate cases to consider for the group.

2. Composite Action Matrix Recommendation 20 Peer Review

It is in the remit of the PSG to look at the standards across the partnership on the key themes that are coming out of the composite action plan and take it back to the respective agencies to look at ways of improving standards. On critical review of the document, the themes identified in the reporting year included: Information Sharing, Neglect, and Non-Accidental Injuries (NAI) in pre-mobile babies.

Neglect continues to be one of the TLSCP priorities for further work in 2022-2024. The PSG will continue to work with other subgroups, partners, and practitioners in Thurrock to identify and recognise issues of neglect in our population, and work with and within Thurrock to ensure the appropriate resources are available.

NAI’s – The numbers for NAIs have significantly increased across the wider system. The chair for the PSG has led on the health economy NAI’s reviews, where the learnings have been shared with health partners. Other strategic partners have equally reviewed the data within their organisations and immediate learnings put out. As a SET system, there is currently a SET Multiagency NAI Planning Group, where a system conference is being planned for October 2022 to share any learnings. This will also raise the awareness and the need to be professionally curious to raise attention timely to prevent and or minimise any abuse/impact.

Whilst providing support to BCYPF and practitioners alike. The SET Procedures for Management of Suspicious, Unexplained Injuries and Bruising in Children is now available and accessible through Partnership websites.

3. Work Generated - Practitioners Quality Conversation - TLSCP Priorities for 2022-2024

In December 2021, the PSG invited Frontline Practitioners as representative for agencies to the meeting. The session was organised to seek the views, opinions, and suggestions from practitioners on the Thurrock LSCP Partnership priorities for 2022-2024. The PSG believes hearing the voices of frontline practitioners is key to implementing any plans, strategies, and embedding these into practice. It also engages them and provides commitment and ownership to the TLSCP Priorities.

The following key questions were explored with deep discussions with the frontline practitioners:

- What do you know about Thurrock Local Safeguarding Child Partnership (TLSCP)?
- What priorities do you think the Partnership should consider for 2022/24? Why?
- What emerging themes/areas of concerns do you experience and practical barriers?
- What can the Partnership do to support you in your role?

To identify the priorities, the Independent Chair Scrutineer and Statutory Partners considered the results of consultation with multi-agency frontline practitioners, the multi-agency data received during the year 2021 – 2022, case audit outcomes, national and local reviews. The Partnership have agreed five priorities for 2022 – 2024. It is worth noting the PSG contribution to this outcome.

- Neglect
- Violence and Vulnerability
- Think Family
- Transitions and Transfers
- Emotional Health and Well Being

The PSG will continue to support and work with the Partnership to implement and embed these areas into practice to safeguarding our vulnerable population for all ages.

4. Agency Escalations

As one of the main purposes of the PSG is to review safeguarding practices across all agencies and for learning and understand the types of escalations within agencies in Thurrock, it was agreed that agencies would provide updates twice a year on any thematic areas of escalations. The group will be looking at this twice a year, i.e. six monthly to give agencies enough time to gather and analyse agency escalations before they are shared at these meetings. Learning the escalations across agencies will provide an overview on system issues and concerns.

5. LSCP Delivery Plan – conduct thematic on specified areas to improve outcomes for Children and Young People

The Thurrock Partnership Delivery Plan aims to improve standards of practice that impact on children and young people. The PSG oversees the work of the Delivery Plan on behalf of the Partnership, one of the actions on the plan was to select a thematic piece of work to review that will benefit Thurrock CYP and Families. Pre-Birth assessment was agreed. This piece of work was to look at any practices needed to improve or change in relation to pre-birth assessments, as there had been several concerning cases.

- Pre-Birth Assessment

Following discussions across the system there is now a piece of work being undertaken across SET Partnerships on Pre-Birth Assessments and the learning from the audit will be shared in due course.

What was the impact?

As Thurrock Partnership, we are listening more to Frontline Staff, hearing their voices, and evidencing how their voices are making a difference and impact on Thurrock Partnership decision making from a strategic level – for example the Thurrock LSCP Priorities for 2022-2024.

These priorities will impact on system workforce and how we work with BCYPF, knowing where Thurrock resources are needed most.

What do we plan to do next?

Priorities for the PSG from a Partnership perspective will be implementing and embedding and socialising the TLSCP 2022-2024 Priorities and supporting partners to safeguarding BCYPF in Thurrock.

Impact of Covid - One of the challenges across agencies is workforce and capacity/workloads demand across agencies. The PSG recognises and acknowledges the representatives on the PSG also have their agencies day to day demands and the same pool of staff. We need to find new ways of working to ensure the demand and requests from Thurrock are met in a timely manner.

From a PSG perspective, the group plans to continue the pieces of work started last year, to ensure these come to an effective, sustained, and successful fruition. Examples include:

- Partnership Complex Case Discussion
- Agency Escalation Group
- Repeat the Practitioners Quality Conversations - The group plans to invite the Practitioners back in December 2022, a year on for a follow up Practitioner Quality Conversation (PQC) to inform the TLSCP on progress.
- Invite more Guest Speakers to the PSG to improve practice and learn from innovative ideas.

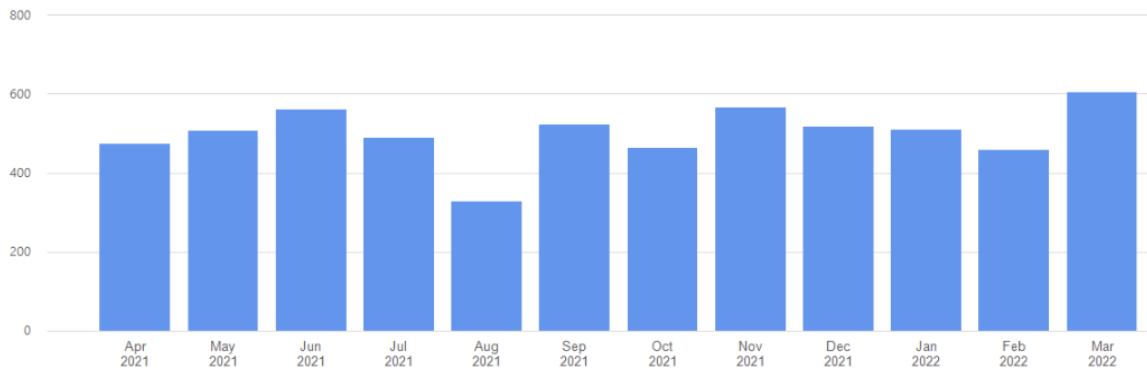
Thurrock's MASH Team

Chaired by: Thurrock Children's Social Care

What did we do?

Contacts

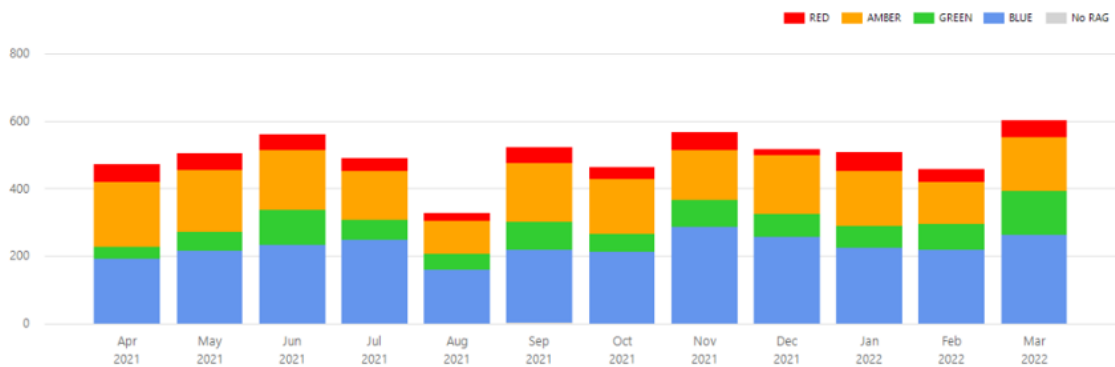
MASH Contacts - Completed Volume



	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Total
Total	472	506	561	489	328	523	463	566	517	508	458	603	5994

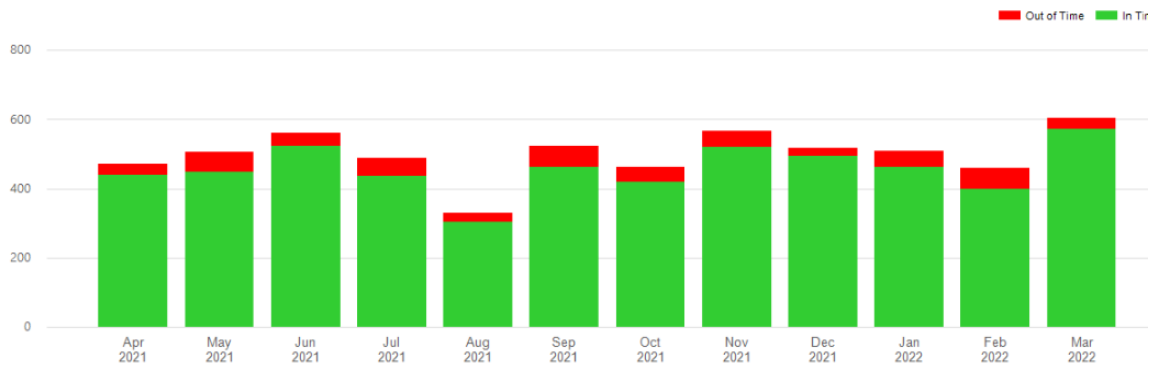
- Thurrock MASH received 5994 contacts April 21- March 22. Fluctuations tend to reflect school term times and holidays.

MASH Contacts - Completed by Revised RAG Rating



- 31% of the total number of contacts were graded as Amber and 45.51% were graded as blue. Average of 8.6 % were rated Red.

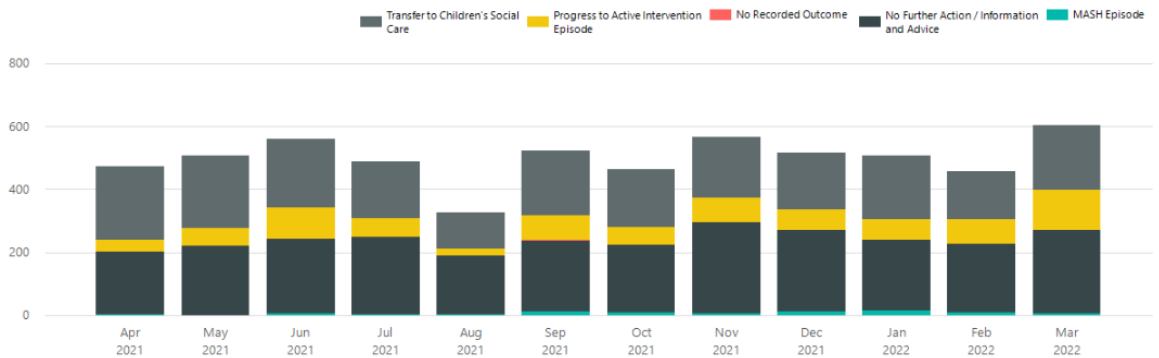
MASH Contacts - Completed by In/Out of Timescale



	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Total
In Time	93.2 %	88.7 %	93.2 %	89.0 %	92.7 %	88.1 %	90.7 %	91.7 %	95.7 %	90.7 %	87.1 %	94.9 %	91.4 %
Out of Time	6.8 %	11.3 %	6.8 %	11.0 %	7.3 %	11.9 %	9.3 %	8.3 %	4.3 %	9.3 %	12.9 %	5.1 %	8.6 %

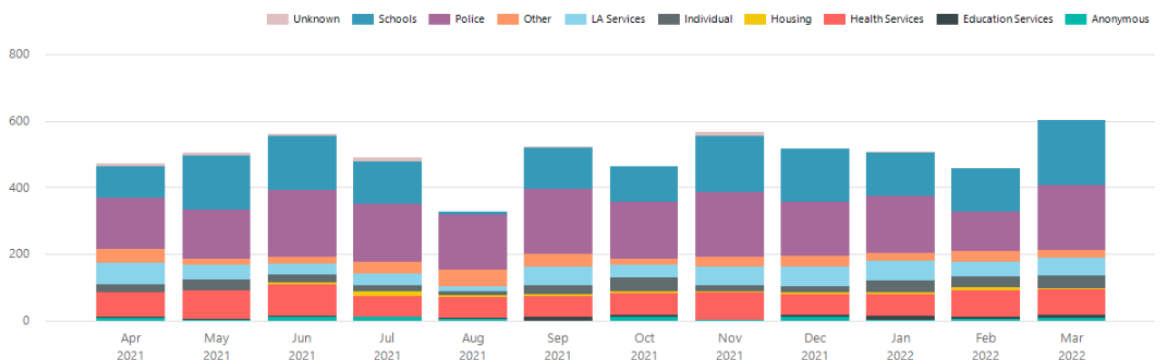
- Over 91% of the total number of contacts were completed within timescales (24 hours).

MASH Contacts - Completed by Main Outcome



- 46% of the total number of contacts led to no further actions, and 38% led to CSC's intervention.

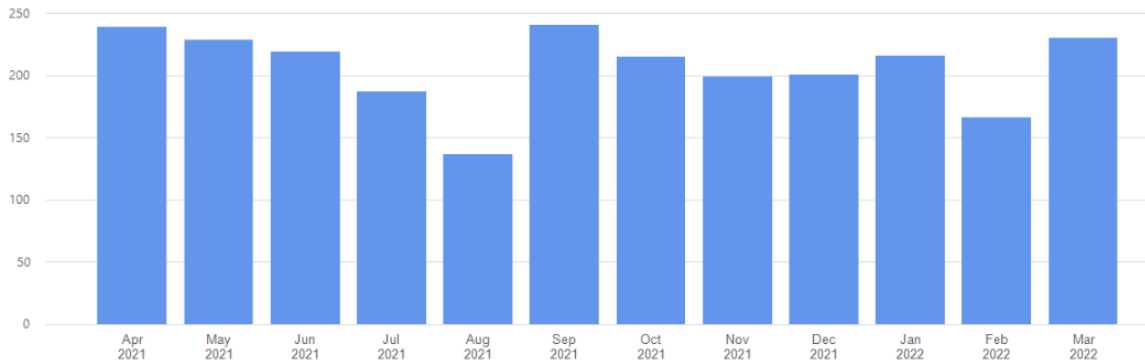
Completed Contacts by Category of Referral Source



- 34.2% of contacts were made by the police, 26.3% schools and 14.6% were made by health. This is similar to the previous annual report- with a slight increase in the percentage from schools and decrease in those from police

Referrals

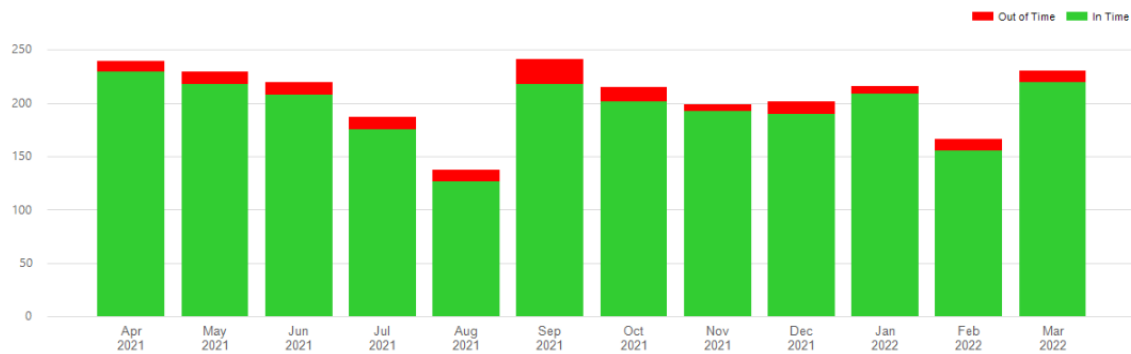
LCS Referrals - Completed Volume



	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Total
Total	239	229	219	187	137	241	215	199	201	216	166	230	2479

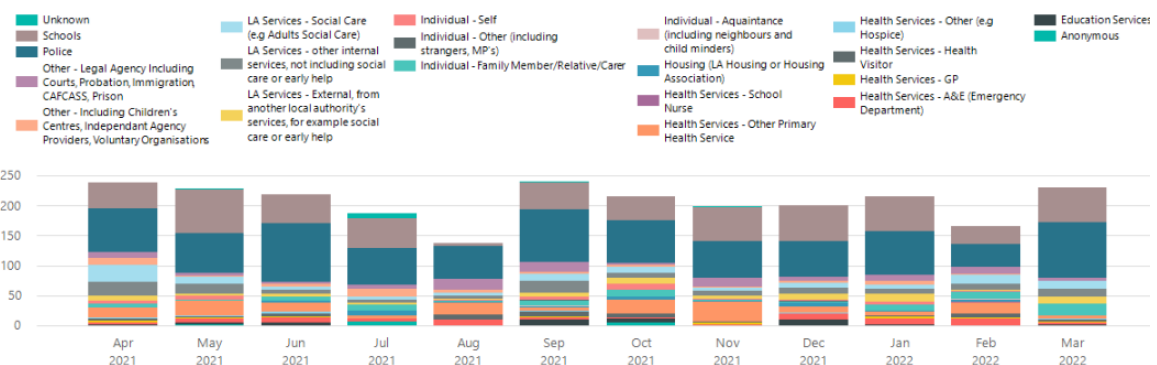
- 2479 referrals were converted from contacts April 21- March 22.
- Over 93.3% of the total number of referrals led to C&F assessments.

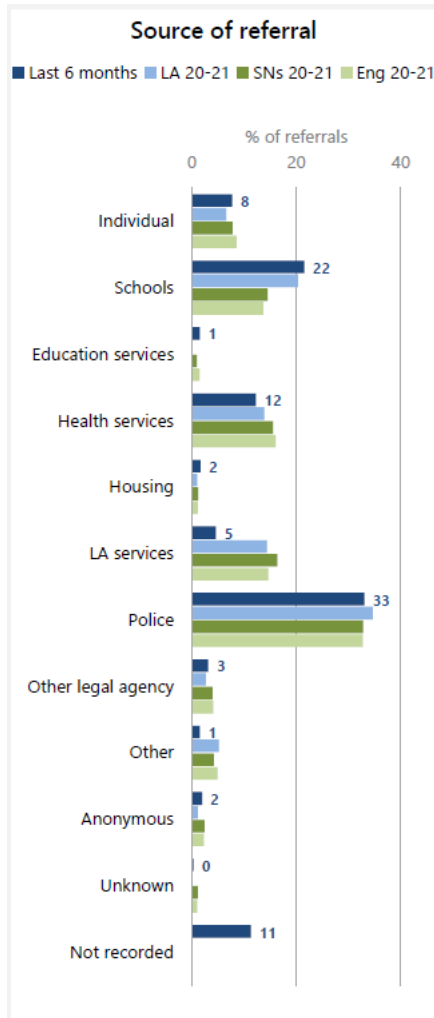
LCS Referrals - Completed by In/Out of Timescale



- 94.4% of referrals were processed within timescales

LCS Referrals - Completed by Category of Referral Source





On the left table there is a break down of the referral sources into more detail particularly in relation to health.

When compared to statistical neighbours and nationally Thurrock tends to receive more referrals from school and less from health than comparators. See current information from the last 6months April to August 22

Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness

- Over 91% of all contacts and 94% of referrals were completed within timescales.
- No risks were identified with regards to the practice within MASH during internal and external audit. This includes focused visit in Jun 2021 and a live audit with partner agencies in May 22. In addition to regular multi agency dip sampling
- Risks identified in respect of children were responded to appropriately and within timescales.
- Evidence of multi-agencies collaboration continue to be seen in cases within the MASH and now more partner agencies are on site including Probation and Health and Police.

The May 2022 live audit embraced the learning from national high profile child death reviews to test the robustness of MASH processes. The outcomes were listed as follows

WHAT WORKS WELL

- ✓ The overall practice in MASH as good
- ✓ Clear processes, structure and timescales in place
- ✓ Contacts are clear about the concerns about the Child/Young Person/Family
- ✓ Thresholds are carefully considered
- ✓ Initial RAG rating reflective of the identified risk in majority of the cases

- ✓ Families are spoken to and consent obtained where appropriate by MASH
- ✓ Information from key partner agencies such as Health, Police and Education is being sought and promptly received
- ✓ The impact on the Child or Young Person is carefully analysed by the MASH practitioners
- ✓ There are very clear outcomes and recommendations being made to PASS and a breakdown of a proposed plan of how the family could be supported

WHAT WE COULD DO BETTER

- Child's voice to be more evident both in the referrals and in the MASH Risk Assessments
- Practitioners to be more professionally curious regarding information being shared and request further information, as necessary.
- Physical presence of other agencies will make information gathering easier and faster (Probation and YOS).
- More evidence of partners sharing the referrals with families
- Information provided by Health was not always sufficient and did not address any issue of concern; they are sometimes given information without a full consent which prevents them from being more proactive in assessing the needs of the family
- More consideration for obtaining information from agencies around the Fathers (GP, Adults services).
- Support to practitioners to understand child to parent violence (potentially delivered via LSCP across the partnership)
- MASH practitioners could benefit from understanding what services are available from Adult Services so they can approach the family as a whole.

What we plan to do next?

The multi-agency audit was effective in improving partner agency collaboration. Consideration is being given to Open Day when agencies can visit the MASH.

Challenges

- The past few years have presented a number of challenges which will have far-reaching future implications in the medium and long term. We anticipate that the impact on children and families will lead to increased levels of need. It is likely that there will be increased numbers of families living in poverty, and increased need and risk due to mental illness, substance misuse, domestic abuse and homelessness. We continue to experience a number of families being placed in Thurrock from a number of London Boroughs, as Thurrock's housing is more affordable.
- Following on from the significant fluctuations we saw in demand on the service linked to Covid over the last couple of years, we are now seeing a statistical return to previous level of demand on the service. Situations children and their families find themselves in appear to be more complex. In the wake of Covid there are significant financial

pressures placed on all in society, but ones that are likely to be hit the most are those that are vulnerable.

- We have in the last 12 month seen a reduction in contacts coming into the MASH being transferred into Children Services, this has been achieved and maintained by working with partner agencies and Universal Services where appropriate. This has ensured that families are working with the right agencies at the right time, we have not seen an increase in re-referrals in this period. We are also utilising the Early Offer of Help in Thurrock more than over previous years, which is allowing for families to have access to support before things escalate.

Priorities

- Appropriate decision making within the MASH to ensure the safety of children remain the prime focus of the service.
- Supporting families at the earliest opportunity
- Continuing to build strong & diverse multi-agency partnerships

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Service, Thurrock Council Thurrock Local Authority Designated Officer

The LADO Service has continued to develop and build positive relationships with partner agencies working together to keep children safe in Thurrock. Information sessions regarding the management of allegations and the role of the LADO continue to be disseminated to statutory and voluntary sectors within Thurrock. Good links with Partner Agencies, Educational Establishments, Nursery and Early Years Providers, Fostering Agencies, the Football Association, Rugby and Cricket Boards have all been established by the LADO during the course of Managing Allegations. Contact for advice, support and guidance continues to be received from all sectors. The LADO has also provided support and advice to the Safeguarding Team of the Church of England Diocese and is currently working to expand this across all multi-agency faith groups.

How to contact the LADO Service, make a referral and seek advice and guidance has been widely distributed by the LADO this can also be found on the Thurrock Council Website. Educational establishments also promote this information on their individual websites, contact from parents seeking advice or reporting a concern has also been received by the LADO Service. At the start of each new school academic year, the LADO sends out a letter to each and every educational establishment in Thurrock, providing contact details and a Guidance Document about the management of allegations and the role of the LADO.

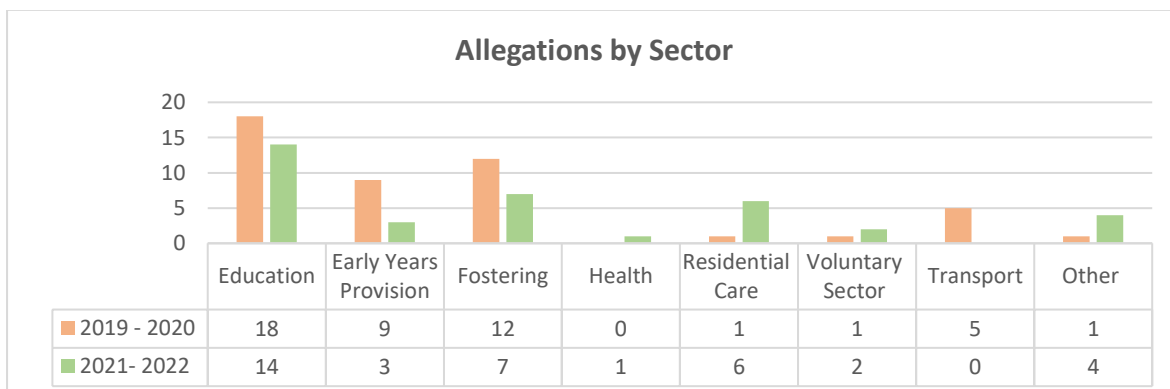
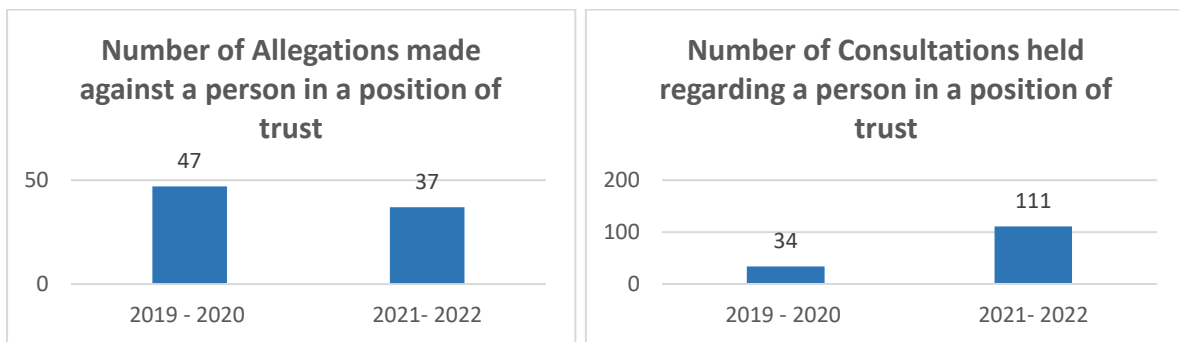
Following the identification of the need for further training for educational establishments with regard to safer recruitment, the management of allegations and how to undertake an investigation, the LADO in conjunction with the LSCP discussed the merit of providing further training through the LSCP. A suitable trainer was commissioned to deliver this training. Feedback from the training has been very positive although there is room for more participants to take up the training. This will be evaluated at the end of the year.

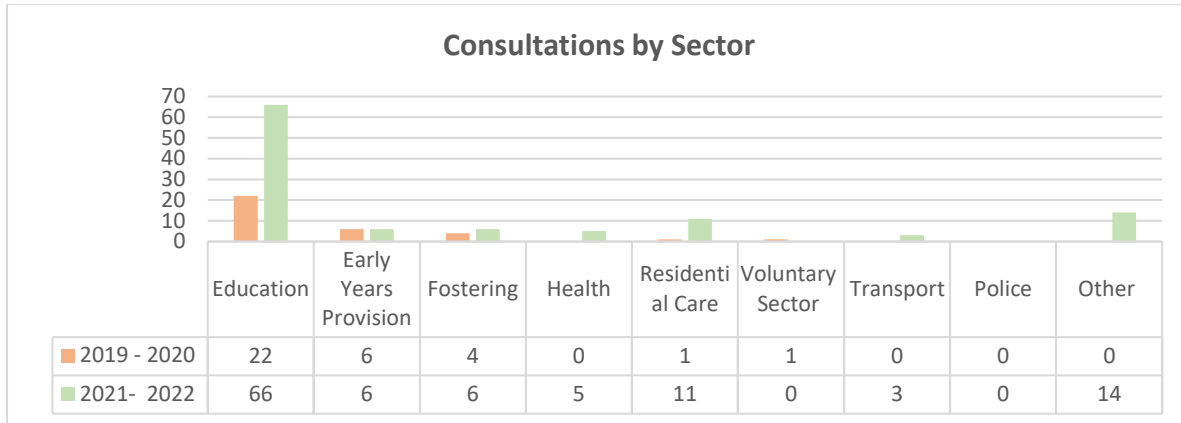
Over the last year, the LADO Service has seen a significant increase in the number of referrals received when compared to last year. A total of (148) referrals were received to the LADO Service in 2021-2022, compared with (81) for the year 2019-2020. Referrals are categorised into two separate groups, those that meet the LADO threshold (Allegations) and those that do

not meet the LADO threshold (Consultations). The actual number of Allegations received in 2021-2022 (37) decreased when compared to 2019-2020 (47). However, the number Consultations received significantly increased in 2021-2022 (111), when compared to (34) in 2019-2022.

Educational Establishments remain the highest sector for both Allegations and Consultations received into the LADO Service. This is not necessarily a negative, it signifies that schools are aware of the need to seek advice, guidance and consultation where concerns have been raised in regard to the conduct/behaviour of staff. Equally, a reduction in the number of Allegations that met the threshold of harm is also positive. The reduction in numbers does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of reporting to the LADO, the significant increase in consultations would suggest this is not the case.

Similarly, this year has seen reductions in the number of allegations received in both Early Years establishments and Fostering Services. However there has been an increase in the number of allegations received in respect of Children’s Residential Units. This primarily related to two residential units in the Borough which resulted in the LADO and Ofsted working together to address the identified concerns. One unit is now under new ownership and the other has made significant progress since employing new management and liaising with the LADO Service.





There may be several reasons for the increase in consultations, firstly because the role of the LADO has and continues to be promoted through the Designated Leads Forum, the annual letter sent out by the LADO, and the training provided around the management of allegations. Part of the role of the LADO is to provide advice, guidance and consultation. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had an impact upon some children’s levels of anxiety and their social and emotional development/behaviour, which potentially affects their ability to manage their emotions and behaviour more reasonably in the classroom environment. This then has an impact upon staff trying to support and manage these difficulties and as a result concerns and complaints are made by the children and their parents when situations have not been managed appropriately. However, these low-level concerns do not reach the threshold of harm and the employer is tasked to address them through their own complaints’ procedures. Those that do reach the threshold of harm are managed through the LADO procedures.

Agencies are fully aware of the management of allegations procedures, they know how to contact the LADO Service, they know who the Local Authority Designated Officer is and what their responsibilities are, they continue to seek support, advice and guidance and this is reflected in the significant increase in consultations.

The number of referrals that reach the threshold of harm have dropped which would indicate that partner agencies are working hard to keep children safe from harm and are seeking advice where appropriate, and are referring to the LADO Service when they should be

The LADO continues to communicate with the National LADO Network and attends the Regional LADO network meetings. The Pandemic meant that we had to adapt to new ways of working, and Management Planning Meetings continue to be held virtually. We have found virtual meetings to be most productive in terms of attendance from other partner agencies.

The LADO continues to promote closer working relationships with the police and health services. Links have been made with Essex Police Complaints Department and the Common Law Police Disclosure and Assessment Unit.

Going forward, the LADO Service is keen to make closer links with multi faith and voluntary groups in the community. The LADO is participating in a working group looking at ways to reach out to multi faith groups in the community and will be attending a planned Interface Conference to be held later in the year.

Effectiveness of Early Help (Brighter Futures) Thurrock Childrens Social Care: Early Help and Prevention Service

Corporate Director of Childrens Services

The Brighter Futures Board is responsible for discussing how successfully the strategy is being implemented and ensuring that multi agency solutions are possible with minimal friction. For each strategic priority a different lead has been assigned to take ownership:

SP1 - Assistant Director for Education and Skills

SP2 - Assistant Director for Public Health

SP3 - Assistant Director for Children's Social Care

SP4 - Director for CYP, MSE

The Board has been part of ensuring that the delivery of Family Hubs, Early Help, Think Family and whole system working is successful.

There is a strong culture of working together to achieve a set of common aims and an understanding that success for families and good outcomes for children comes from clearly defined priorities, aims and a clear vision that is adopted by all of the partners.

We understand the benefits of preventative interventions. We use analytics to help shape our interventions and system through understanding what works and what has the most impact on certain groups of people.

The launch of the Think Family approach in April 2022 starts in Early Help, throughout the family's journey into statutory services. The aim is to intervene early, with evidenced based interventions, bring in the family network to divert families away from statutory services, by offering a whole family approach to planning.

The service is well staffed and trained to offer interventions at the right time to ensure needs do not escalate.

Each strategic priority in the Brighter Futures Strategy includes a 'How will we know when we are there' section intended to judge our success against. For example, some of the measures from SP2: 'Children are able to access the services they need and be healthy, focussing on prevention and early intervention' are:

- Proportion of CLA that receive statutory Health assessments in the recommended timescale increases (IHAs and RHAs)
There is a reduction in the gap between the most and least deprived groups that achieve school readiness by reception year whilst the overall proportion does not decrease.
- Proportion of children in year R and year 6 that are a healthy weight increases
The gap between the most and least deprived groups being obese at year 6 reduces.
- Increase the % of children who receive 2 doses of MMR by the age of 5
Increase the % of CLA with up-to-date immunisations

These are clear measures that fall across several different domains and require multi-agency collaboration.

However, they are all accountable to the Assistant Director of Public Health. Additionally, it is very easy to know whether these measures have been met or not."

There has been a focus on Early Help with the development of the Think Family approach, where early intervention using whole family working and including families support network aims to decrease the number of children needing statutory services. Those families that are subject to Child Protection Services and the Public Law outline will receive intensive support via evidenced based parenting interventions, assessments and Family Network Meetings, earlier to ensure that better outcomes for families can occur without the need for Court Proceedings.

The Early Help service has been strengthened in its capacity and skills base, to ensure that the right families receive the right support at the right time.

We have seen an increase in the numbers of assessments being completed by the Prevention and Support Team in 2021/2022, from 748 the year before to 1059. With more families being stepped down from CSC from 327 to 441. Whilst there has been a slight increase of cases being stepped up to Social Care, the data shows that the Prevention and Support Service continues to perform well against its performance indicators.

Feedback from families is very positive about the services they receive, and quarterly multi agency audits have been consistently good in relation to the work with families and partners. For the 4th year in succession, we have achieved 100% of our targets set for the Troubled/ Supporting Families Programme which evidences that we have successfully 'turned around' vulnerable families with intensive support and intervention.

What we plan to do next?

- Develop the Early Help Service Provision including services for 11–18-year-olds (25 if SEND), delivered by The Family Hubs going forward.
- Maintain Multi Agency audits focus on Early Help and the decision making in MASH for Tier 2 service delivery.
- Evaluate impact of increased capacity in Early Help on caseloads in Social Care and take corrective steps if needed to increase capacity in Social Care teams if needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Think Family approach.

The priority for 2022-2023 is to ensure that we deliver against the milestones set for the development of Family Hubs and the Start for Life programme alongside our partners.

This programme reflects our Think Family ambitions and will enable us to further develop this way of working. We had already planned to review our Early Help offer and will do this alongside Health and Education partners to determine how best to deliver the funded elements of the Family Hub programme. We will also map existing provision for young people and consult with them to ensure we are able to provide a comprehensive and relevant offer for them. We will review our existing Children's Centres, youth hubs and other local authority and partner delivery points to create a cohesive, all age hub network across the borough.

Missing Children Children's Social Care and Prevention Service

What did we do?

- Multi-agency working to promote risk recognition, response and risk reduction.
- Scrutiny of activity levels, analysis of patterns and quality of risk reduction has received continued focus in the last year.
- Good evidence of risk recognition and safety planning.
- Information on missing children is circulated daily to managers within Children's Services.
- A weekly report on Missing Children is sent to Senior Managers, the DCS and the Portfolio holder.
- INSPIRE Youth has taken over the contract for RHIs since April 2020.
- In 2021/2022, 47.3% of children with missing episodes engaged in RHIs, however performance improved in March 2022 to 67.7%, and it further improved to 78.6% in April 2022.
- The multi-agency risk management group, chaired by the CE and Missing Manager, meets weekly. The group focuses on multi-agency safety planning and disruption of activities of gangs and other groups or individuals to reduce risk.

Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness

- A Thematic audit was completed in July 2021 to inform practice. This audit reported improvements in the quality and timeliness of safety planning.
- Some common themes emerging from the review of safety plans and return home interviews include pull factors of peers and a desire to return home for children looked after due to boundaries set within placements.
- Intelligence from RHIs is shared at risk management meetings for individual children but also with our community safety network or other key players such as British Transport Police, to disrupt activities or address locations where there is increased risk to children.

Changes made as a result of previous learning/priorities

- Return Home Interview data and information from interviews is analysed to identify trends / patterns / themes. This informs strategic planning for the service and wider community, and safety planning for individual children.
- There has been a continued focus on promoting Return Home Interviews to children who have been missing. The target is 80%. This is monitored weekly with INSPIRE.
- Practice workshops to further strengthen individual safety planning.

What was the impact?

- Increased take up of Return Home interviews with information that assists with identifying risks to young people, especially exploitation and therefore safety planning can be put in place to disrupt this activity.
- A reduction in children and young people going missing, however there remains an increase in missing episodes that is due to a small cohort of young people going missing frequently. Regular Strategy meetings are being held to identify the reasons for this and to minimise any risks of exploitation.

What we plan to do next?

- Continue to analyse Return Home Interview data and information from interviews to identify trends / patterns / themes. This will inform strategic planning for the service and wider community, and safety planning for individual children.
- Continue to focus on promoting Return Home Interviews to children who have been missing in order to meet the target is 80%.
- Continue Practice workshops to further strengthen individual safety planning.

Challenges and priorities for this year (2022/2023)

- Increase the take up of Return Home interviews from INSPIRE
- Decrease the number of children going missing.
- Decrease the number of missing episodes.
- Gain a greater understanding of the cohort that go missing frequently
- Ongoing mapping of young people to inform a Contextual Safeguarding approach to diversion and disruption of CE/CSE.
- Share information of the mapping exercises with partners to effectively safeguard young people that are frequently missing from home and care.

Youth Crime Governance Board Youth Offending Service Corporate Director of Childrens Services

What did we do?

The Youth Crime Governance Board completed the Youth Justice Plan 21-24 with 6 priorities. These priorities are reviewed by the Board monthly.

- Violence and Vulnerability
The Public Health approach seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or perpetrator of violence.
By definition, Public Health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programmes for prevention of violence based on the Public Health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at population level.
- Effective Partnerships

Thurrock Youth Offending Team recognises the need for effective partnership working at both a strategic and operational level to ensure the services it provides young people are relevant and targeted.

- **Education Training and Employment**
Improve our offer of suitable and sustainable ETE provisions by working with key partners to provide services that meet the needs of its cohort.
- **Prevention and Support**
Commit to the continued development of preventative interventions to improve life chances and opportunities for children, young people and their families at the earliest point in time.
- **Evidenced Based Practice**
Ensure our youth justice practice continues to develop in line with the evidence base and remains relevant for our current cohort
- **Diversion**
“Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.” (YJB strategic plan 2019-2022)

Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness

There is a delivery plan that has been produced so our strategic priorities and objectives can be reviewed by the governance board. It has been designed to evidence our progress across our 6 priorities using a direction of travel system. We also provide a narrative around our progress by highlighting what is going well, what isn't and what we intend to focus on over the forthcoming period.

Due to the fact we are working from a three-year strategic plan the delivery plan will also be incorporated within our annual reviews and can be shared with the YJB. This provides up to date progress reports of our work and ensure we remain focused on delivering our objectives.

During the monthly updates, the direction of travel is rising on all areas following review by the Board.

There is a good level of awareness of child exploitation and the risks arising from involvement with Gangs.

There is a clear focus and firm safeguarding response in relation to children at risk of and experiencing Sexual and Criminal Child Exploitation in the context of Gangs and Trafficking. We have well-developed Gang Related Violence Strategic and Operational Groups to monitor and track individuals and their activities.

Changes made as a result of previous learning or priorities

We have included an additional priority that will focus on the disproportionality of Black and Mixed heritage young people in the Criminal Justice system. Whilst this is a National issue, Thurrock has also seen a rise in this vulnerable cohort.

The multi-agency Risk Management Meeting convenes weekly and focuses on Gangs and Exploitation (including trafficking), to review and track children who have been missing in the

previous week. The group focuses on multi-agency safety planning and disruption of exploitation by gangs and other networks or individuals, to reduce risk.

There are additional operational meetings held within Children's Social Care to plan and disrupt activity.

Bi-Monthly Contextual Safeguarding Reports are completed for Senior Managers and Strategic Partners. The reports provide an overview of the contextual safeguarding issues present in the borough and affecting the young people we work with, to promote disruption and reduce risk.

Thematic audits which were completed in 2021 to inform practice, evidenced significant improvements in working with and minimising risk.

Teams and Service areas have CE Champions, who work closely with the CE and Missing Manager in supporting Social Workers with training, mapping and safety planning.

Gang Injunctions are used when needed, last in 2020 to disrupt gang activity and associated exploitative harm to children. These were successful, resulting in the gang in question becoming obsolete.

We have already developed joined up working between Early Help, Social Care, YOS, the Youth Service and Community Safety partners to engage with individual young people and deliver community interventions i.e detached youth work in known hotspots to reduce the risk of CE. The development of Family Hubs to include young people will build on this and strengthen our impact.

Additional funding has been secured to support the Violence and Vulnerability programme across Essex. We have a 'Reachable Moments' offer, increased detached Youth Work and improved early intervention for schools and colleges.

Ongoing support is provided by the dedicated Gangs and CE workers to Social Workers regarding safety planning, increased awareness and use of contextual safeguarding.

Continued awareness raising and training events are held.

There is ongoing development around mapping of individuals, gang networks, criminal activity and geographical considerations.

What was the impact?

We were successful in securing funding for a Specialist Support Worker, who alongside the CE and Gangs Senior Practitioner offers individual and group support, as well as training and interventions to Schools and Colleges.

Following an increase of youth violence early in the Spring of 2021, an Independent Review was commissioned by the LSCP which highlighted a positive multi agency response to youth violence. Action was taken to strengthen prevention and awareness. Children's Social Care has worked with Housing to develop a support offer to families who have moved to Thurrock from other LAs, where safety is required from Gangs.

In Q4, YOS has outperformed both statistical neighbours and England in relation to its reoffending rate per offender after 12 months. YOS reoffending rate was 29% compared to 36% for statistical neighbours and 37% for England.

Following a successful bid with other Eastern Region LAs Thurrock has been able to invest in additional support from a local provider for young people that are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded due to CE, as well as further investment in ANTSER VR training resources and an extension of the Reachable Moments offer.

What we plan to do next?

- Continue to work with multi-agency partners in Adult Safeguarding to promote risk recognition and response to vulnerable adult Care Leavers and other adults at risk of exploitation and trafficking.
- Ongoing support provided by the dedicated Gangs and CE worker to Social Workers regarding safety planning, increased awareness and use of contextual safeguarding.
- Continued awareness raising and training events.
- Operation Goldcrest to continue.
- Ongoing development around mapping of individuals, gang networks, criminal activity and geographical considerations.
- Further work is required with Met Police to achieve improved information sharing and attendance at Strategy Meetings, as local gang activity often takes place across the county border into London.
- YOS reporting of Reoffending rates and knife crime is monitored quarterly via the Youth Crime Governance Board.
- Additional Task and finish groups have been set up to tackle disproportionality in BAME children in the Criminal Justice System and effective resettlement

Challenges and priorities for this year (2022/2023)

- To implement the recommendations from the HMIP Inspection of the Thurrock Youth Offending Service that was undertaken in May 2022. Report will be made public in August 2022.
- A focus on the disproportionality of Black and Mixed Heritage Young people in the Criminal Justice System with a dedicated Task and Finish Group.
- A focus on Diversion with a refresh of the Out of Court Disposals Policy and Procedure.

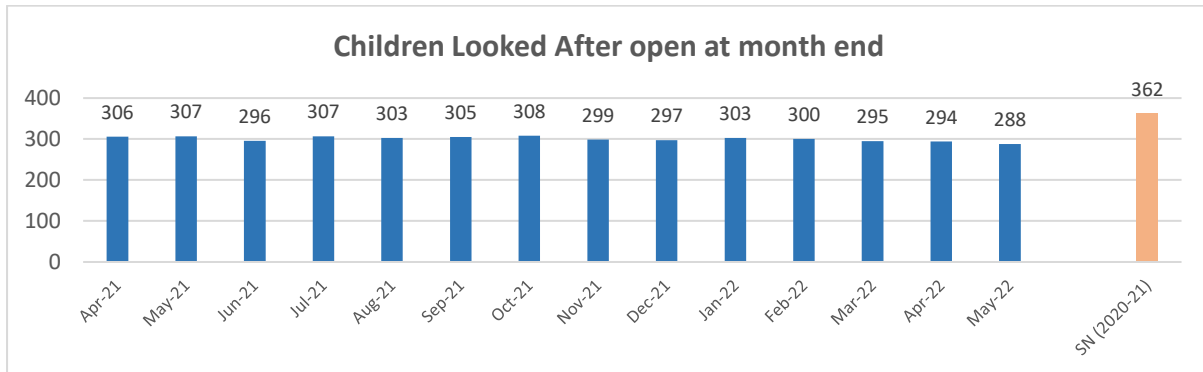
Looked After Children

Children Looked After, Thurrock Council Children's Services Strategic Lead

What did we do?

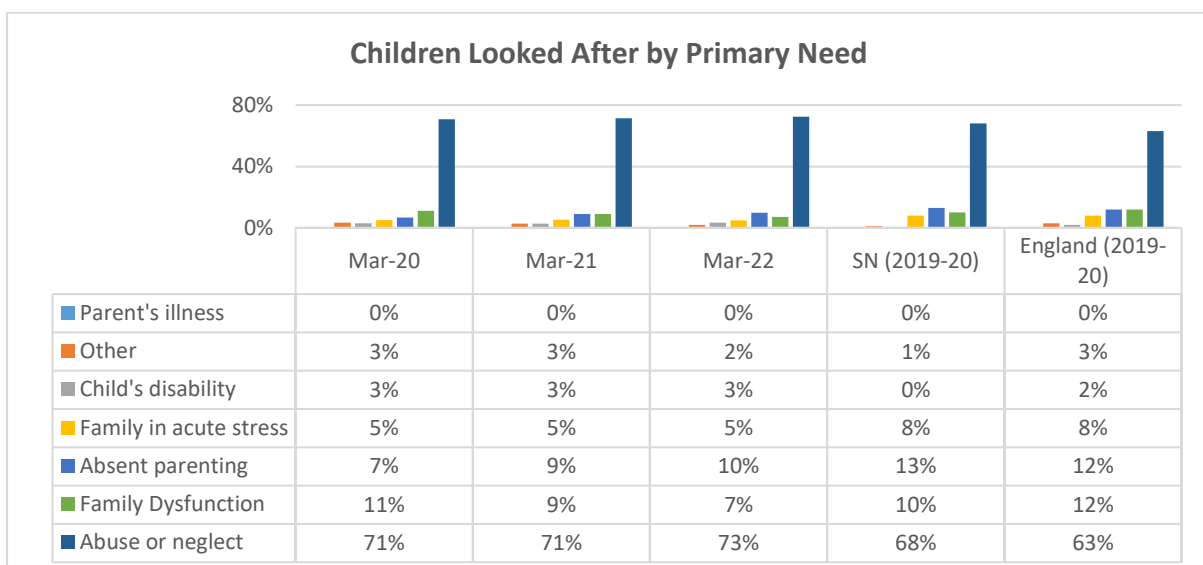
When a child is unable to live with their birth family there are a range of options that can be considered to meet their needs whilst they are living away from home. This could be to live with foster carers or reside in the care of friends or family of the child (these carers are known as 'connected persons'); live in a residential home or, for some older children over the age of 16 years they are able to live in supported accommodation. The service is dedicated to ensuring children enter into Thurrock's care only when they need our care and, they are looked after in the right placement. Young people should be able to have secure, stable and settled placements so they can transition into adulthood with the skills to progress to independent living.

As of the 31st of March 2022, the number of children in the care of Thurrock Council was 295, this is a small decrease on the previous year. Much of this is attributable to fewer arrivals of UAS children and progression of proceedings in court. Fewer older children (aged 14+) children have entered care in 2022 due to more extensive interventions at home. The graph below demonstrates this small reduction has continued into the next financial year and that Thurrock remains a little below its statistical neighbours:



As outlined in the previous report the availability of placements for looked after children nationally is reduced. This initially began due to the COVID 19 pandemic, but shortages continue due to, increasing numbers of children in care, fewer available foster placements nationally and shortages in care staff in residential care. As of the 31st March 2022, of the 294 children in Thurrock’s care, 36% were placed within Thurrock and 66% were placed within 20 miles of home. The geographical size of Thurrock means that those children not placed in the borough are generally in neighbouring or nearby authorities such as Essex, Southend, London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge. Placements at a greater distance are generally reflect the need to access specialist residential provision.

The primary reason children enter care is due to the protective action of Thurrock Council due to the risk of, or experience of abuse and neglect. The graph below demonstrates the reasons for entering care and Thurrock’s performance in relation to its statistical neighbours:



Unaccompanied Minors:

Thurrock continues to be a port of entry for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. In 2021/22 changing migration routes have meant that fewer children are arriving Thurrock as small boat crossings at other ports are preferred. Central Government updated the National Transfer Scheme, which has brought the benefit of improved compliance nationally but locally we have noted transfers taking longer to complete. Thurrock Council remains at or just below its quota of 31 UASC who are looked after.

Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness

Thurrock Council continues to evidence strong performance in relation to its duties to looked after children:

Performance Measure	Annual Average for 21/22
Of CLA at the end of the month; the % with an assessment in the last 12 months	100%
Of the CLA reviews held in month; the % completed in timescale	99%
Of the CLA visits completed in month; the % completed in timescale	91%
Average number of CLA who go missing each month	30
Of the CLA missing episodes where the child returned in month; the % who were offered a return interview	94%
Of the CLA missing episodes where the child returned in month and were offered a return interview; % who received a return interview	42%
Of the Care Plans completed in month for; the % completed in timescale	81%
Of CLA at the end of the month; % with 3 or more placements in the last 12 months	14%
Of the CLA as at the end of the month aged under 16 who have been continuously CLA for at least 2.5 years; the % who have been in the same placement for at least the last 2 years	66%
% Children participating in CLA reviews	92%

What was the impact?

The information above demonstrates that Thurrock Council acts to provide care to children would have been at risk of harm or who are vulnerable through other substances This demonstrates that, children are regularly seen by their Social Worker and they have an up-to-date assessment of their needs. Children's care plans are reviewed regularly and on time. About two thirds of children benefit from stable placements and less than 15% experience three placement moves in a year. There is good evidence that most children take part in and contribute to their care planning.

Development work and Challenges and priorities for this year (2022/2023):

The CLA service is focussed on the following:

- Improving the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments
- Identifying and developing the local Residential Care Capacity
- Responses to CE, CSE and Missing Children
- Improving placement stability

Aftercare Service

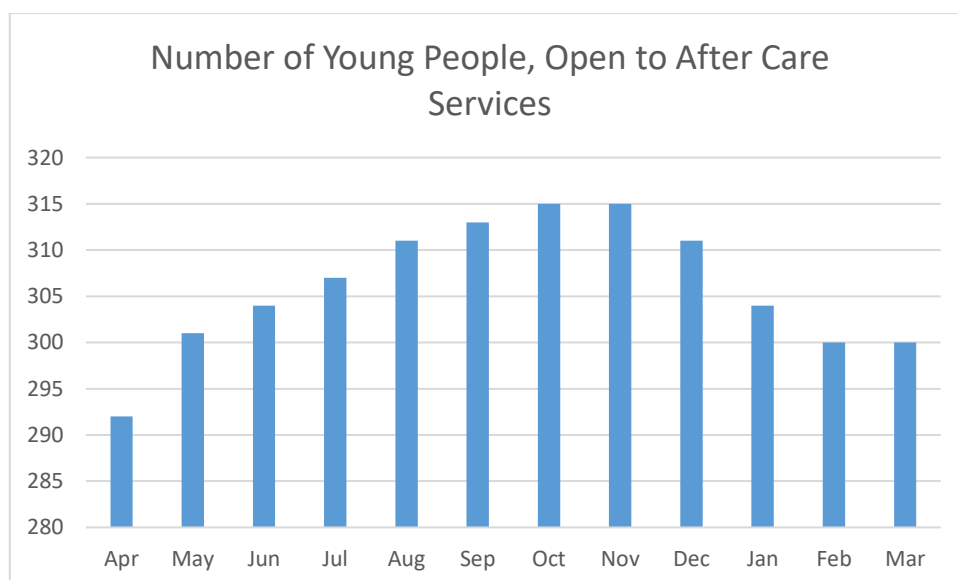
Children Looked After, Thurrock Council Children’s Services, Strategic Lead

What did we do?

Thurrock Council acts as a Corporate Parent providing the care, services and concern for children and young people that is expected of good parents. A Care Leaver, as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, is a person who has been ‘looked after’ or ‘in care’ for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday. A young person’s status as a care leaver is categorised as follows:

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

The number of young adults open to the After Care Team has been around 300 with some variation over the year.



The team also works with children who are looked after by Thurrock Council aged between 16-18 years to assist in their preparation for early adulthood.

Personal advisors and Social Workers in the team work with young people to assist them in ensuring they are in suitable accommodation, have the opportunities of education and employment and that they can access health services. Thurrock Council has a Joint Protocol between Housing Services and Children’s Services to ensure young people are supported to have a housing offer when they are ready to take on a tenancy. Those who have just turned 18 are supported in other arrangements until they are able to find permanent housing, such as:

- Remaining with their Foster Carer under a ‘Staying Put’ Arrangement
- Living in semi-supported accommodation
- Living in ‘Head-Start Housing’
- Choosing to live within their own family
- Attending university
- Supported by Adult Services in a CQC registered home or Shared Lives arrangements (for young adults with significant additional needs)

Young people leaving care can stay in these arrangements for varying period of time. The ultimate goal is to move on to a permanent arrangement. Thurrock’s Aftercare services supports a group of care leavers who were looked after having arrived in the UK as unaccompanied children. As young adults some face additional challenges as the decision as to their immigration status is pending.

The full local offer to eligible young adults with care experience is here:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/young-people-leaving-care/leaving-care>

What was the impact?

The following sets out key areas of performance against our Statistical Neighbours where possible:

Care Leavers <i>Definition 'Relevant and Former Relevant Children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within Financial Year'</i>	Thurrock Average for 21/22	Statistical Neighbour
17-18 year old cohort	57	56
19-21 year old cohort	164	152
22-25 year old cohort	78	Not available
In Touch: 17-18 year old	80%	96%
In Touch: 19-21 year old	90%	92%
In Touch: 22-25 year old	98%	Not available
In suitable accommodation: 17-18 year old	79%	93%
In suitable accommodation: 19-21 year old	86%	89%
In suitable accommodation: 22-25 year old	93%	Not available
Education, Employment or Training (EET): 17-18 year old	62%	66%
Education, Employment or Training (EET): 19-21 year old	50%	54%
Education, Employment or Training (EET): 22-25 year old	59%	Not available

NEET: 17-18 year old	41%	32%
NEET: 19-21 year old	49%	40%
NEET: 22-25 year old	41%	Not available
Number of Care Leavers currently open who were previously UASC - NEW	112	Not available

This demonstrates that the After Care team maintains regular contact with the majority of young adults allocated. Most live in homes that are suitable and meet need; the lower number for 17-18, reflects children who were remanded to custody prior to sentencing (Children are 'looked after' whilst on remand and when sentenced to prison, this is not counted as 'suitable accommodation'). Thurrock Council performs competitively with its statistical neighbours when it comes to education and employment opportunities for young people leaving care. The performance data for 2021/22 reflects periods of Covid-19 intervention which impact education and employment offers.

Development work and Challenges and priorities for this year (2022/2023):

The After Care service is focussed on the following:

- Improving the timeliness of Housing offers by ensuring Young People are supported to apply, bid for and take advantage of the Thurrock Housing offer
- Identifying and developing the education and employment opportunities
- Re-design of the referral pathway to adult services so assessments of need are received earlier (prior to age 17)

Private Fostering, Thurrock Council Children's Services, Strategic Lead

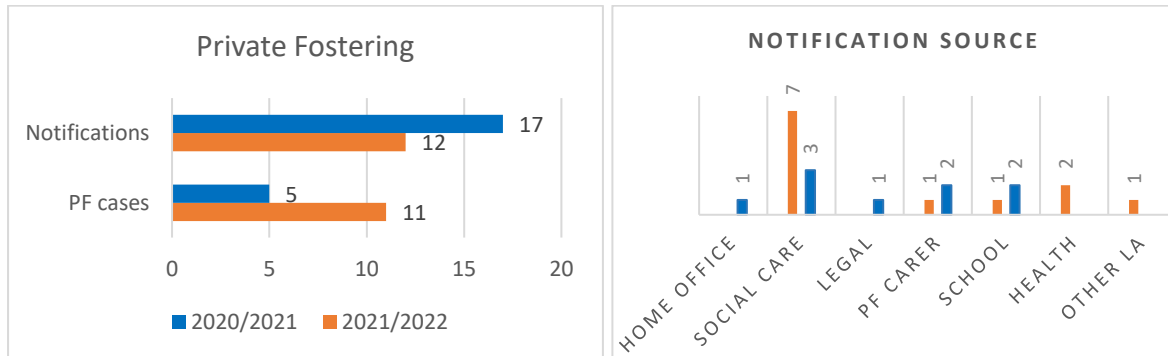
What did we do?

Responsibility for private fostering, which is a distinct and separate activity from other fostering arrangements, is delegated to the fostering service. There is a named lead social worker, managed by the Placement Assessment Team Manager, who undertakes initial visits, Private Fostering Assessments and Regulation 8 visits. The Local Authority has a Duty to respond to all Private Fostering notifications, by visiting the child and carer within 7 working days, and to complete an assessment within 42 working days, including undertaking statutory checks. The child/young person is visited every 4-6 weeks in the first year, and the Private Foster Carer receives supervision. The frequency of visits reduces to 10-12 weekly visits, provided the placement is stabilised, but not until the arrangement has been established for a year or longer.

In November 2019 Private Fostering was one of the areas inspected by Ofsted during their inspection of Thurrock Council's children's social care services. Thurrock were graded as Good by Ofsted, with the following reference to Private Fostering:

'Effective arrangements for identifying and responding to children and young people who are privately fostered helps protect them and ensure they are appropriately cared for. Private foster carers have the same access to training and support as

other foster carers. Privately fostered children are seen regularly and are seen alone.'



Between April 2021 and March 2022, 12 Private Fostering notifications were made. This is a significant reduction from previous years. In 2020/21 there were 35 notifications made. Previously notifications were specifically received via school admissions, however following the school closures and travel restrictions applied due to the Covid19 pandemic, it is viewed that less children were placed by family arrangements in the borough. From the 12 notifications, 11 cases were opened as Private Fostering.

- 7 notifications were made by children’s social care; 6 cases were jointly managed as the children were open cases and being managed under Child in Need or Child Protection.
- A notification was received for a young person who moved from another Borough, where he had been previously Private Fostered.
- A local school notified us of 1 child who had arrangements made by his father to be cared for by a friend
- A notification was received from a family member who was caring for her cousin’s child
- 2 notifications were received from health in respect of siblings

In respect of home visits, Government guidance was followed, including the use of PPE, and Covid19 risk assessment plans were completed prior to visits.

Face to Face workshops were adapted to being held remotely, and a series of PF workshops for a variety of professionals within the community were offered to raise awareness of private fostering.

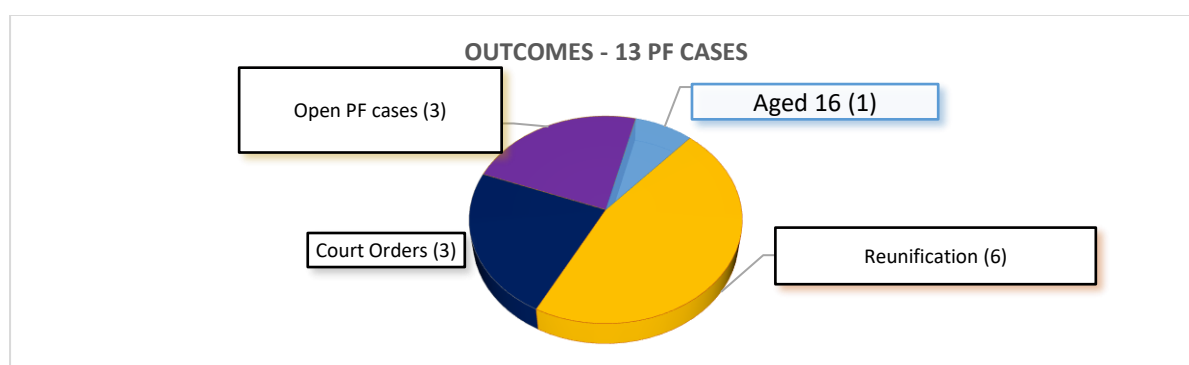
Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness

Management case audits are conducted on all active PF cases; through these audits the PF Team Manager has been able to ascertain that PF initial visits and PF assessments are completed within timescales, and capture the children’s holistic needs, ensuring they are well cared for and safeguarded within their PF arrangements. The evidence of direct work with

children in private fostering placements continues and permanency plans for PF children, either through reunification with parents or other orders (SGO, Adoption have been tracked and progressed).

A total of 6 private fostering assessments were completed during 2021/22 and a further 5 cases closed due to reunification with parents prior to assessments being completed. The one case where the arrangement was not Private Fostering did not progress to full assessment, and the family were directed to universal services. Six cases with complicating factors were jointly worked with Family Support Teams.

2 cases remained open from previous years. Both have since closed with permanence achieved with 1 placement and 1 SG Court orders granted. A further case was closed to private fostering when a child arrangement order was granted.



6 children were reunited with their families and closed as Private Fostering. From these two children returned to their mother's care following her rehabilitation following surgery, one child returned to their father's care on his release from prison, two returned to their mother's care on her discharge from hospital and one child was reunited with her father in Wales.

1 young person turned 16 and no longer met the threshold for private fostering. She remains living with her cousin and his family under a private arrangement.

As at July 31st 2022, there are 3 children privately fostered in Thurrock. This includes:

- 2 white British female siblings aged 2 and 7, living with their great grandmother. The primary plan is to obtain Special Guardianship Orders.
- 1 black British male aged 11, whose mother is in Africa, living with a family friend.

Changes made as a result of previous learning/priorities and new developments

- Continuous scrutiny in respect of sharing information has been implemented to comply with Data Protection.
- Frequent communication with birth parents, including those not living in the UK has been actively promoted.

- Private fostering manager is attending the Thurrock leads group in respect of Unaccompanied Ukrainian minors, working with professionals to ensure that sponsors and young people are supported.

Fit with and contribution to TLSCP current priorities

The Private Fostering process was developed in order to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded, and their living arrangements are monitored to ensure that the placement is meeting their needs. Any instances of risk of harm are escalated through MASH and the Private Fostering Social Worker continues to be involved.

The Private Fostering Statement of Purpose, and Private Fostering Policy and Procedure are under review. There continues to be robust audits on cases where learning and improvement are fed into the Private Fostering work-plan.

Thurrock Council is a member of the Coram BAAF Private Fostering Special Interest Group and also is represented at Regional and National PF Leads groups. It is evident that nationally there are low notification of Private Fostering arrangements, resources for promotion of PF is limited and without a national campaign is proving to be a challenge. Despite this, Thurrock remain committed to work with local community coordinators to establish stronger links especially with faith groups and the travelling community.

Challenges and priorities for this year (2022/2023)

To increase awareness of private fostering within the Community. It is recognised that the notifications have decreased although notifications are consistently appropriate.

The number of children and young people applying for sponsor visas to live in Thurrock is low although it is recognised that this may change. We continue to work with our education colleagues to ensure that the child and young people arriving from Ukraine are able to access good quality education. To continue working with our Housing colleagues, who are leading on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, to ensure information is updated Foundry database

The development of a safeguarding factsheet, for children and young people arriving from Ukraine, with details of who and how to make to contact, to be devised and printed in Ukrainian and Russian.

To arrange social opportunities for peer development for children, young people and their families from Ukraine.

Adults Social Care, Director of Adults Social Care, Thurrock Council

There have been many challenges as a result of having to focus so intently on the pandemic over the past couple of years. Demand for our services has increased exponentially, both in terms of complexity and in the number of people requiring our support; in such circumstances the risk to vulnerable people has increased and we now need to redouble our efforts to ensure we continue to deliver safeguarding support to those that need it. Furthermore, the increase

in the insular nature of our lives caused by the need to “lock down” has also increased risk, as we know that having friends and family around, or a community presence is one of the most effective preventative measures against people being subjected to abuse. As people begin to reconnect to others and live more normal lives again, we must ensure that we are receptive to the issues that may emerge as a consequence. I am reassured though that the quality of the individuals and organisations working in Thurrock, in terms of their commitment to safeguarding and their level of skills and experience, puts us in a strong position to deal with these challenges in the future.

Thurrock Council has lead responsibility for operational safeguarding of vulnerable adults in the borough. This responsibility is mainly delivered within the Adult Social Care directorate by the Adult Safeguarding Team.

The Adult Social Care (ASC) department is part of the board’s executive, working closely with other statutory partners in the local Clinical Commissioning Group and the Police Service. ASC also provides support to the wider partnership via its role in administration of the Adult Safeguarding Board and Operational Group.

I am pleased to announce that the transformation strategy – “Better Care Together Thurrock – The Case for Further Change” – has now been completed. This strategy has been developed with all system partners involved in the Thurrock Integrated Care Alliance and is system wide. The strategy is person centred, strengths and place based and has been co-designed with our communities. The strategy places those people in need of care and support at the heart of decision making and moves service delivery far closer to where people live, both ways in which safeguarding through prevention can be further enhanced. To allow people to stay independent, as such the approach fits extremely well with the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda.

Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board, Strategic Lead

This year has been another turbulent year as Adult Social Care face the continued challenges of the pandemic and those associated with its aftermath, alongside significant changes to the working relationship we have with our Health colleagues as they go through a reorganisation, moving from local Clinical Commissioning Groups to an Integrated Care Partnership covering a much bigger footprint. In spite of these challenges our safeguarding performance has continued to be strong, delivered operationally via the various safeguarding teams and strategically through the Safeguarding Adults Board.

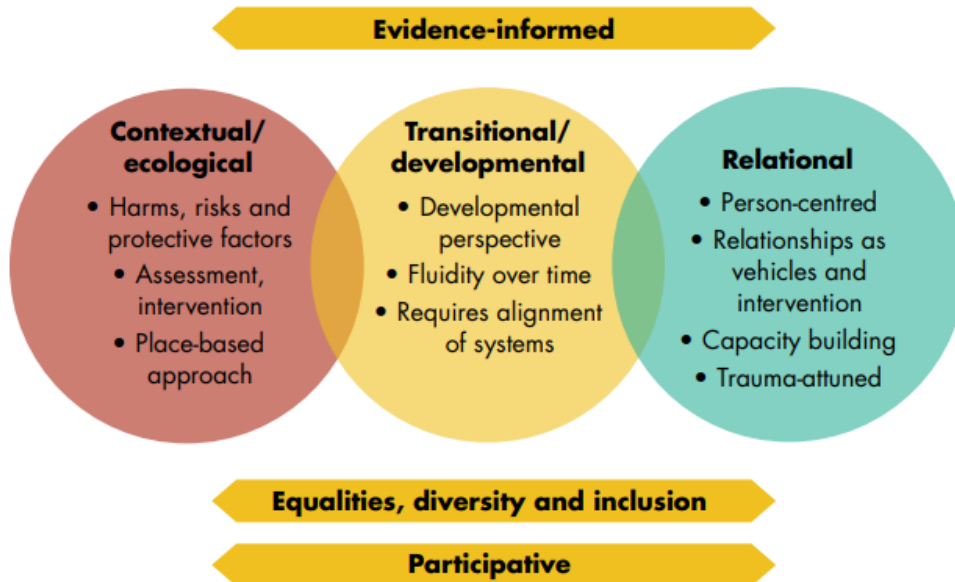
Unfortunately, this year has seen the first Safeguarding Adult Review commissioned in Thurrock and we await its completion in anticipation of ensuring any and all recommendations are swiftly implemented. We have also seen a learning review commissioned, which has already completed, and which produced important findings that a number of local and national agencies are now implementing. Despite the tragic outcome upon which the review focussed it was reassuring to see that the process identified a number of good practice examples, these will be used to build upon to further improve our responsiveness to similar cases in the future.

The Safeguarding Adult Board has continued to work on its strategic priorities around supporting the outcomes from the sexual violence and abuse JSNA and strengthen safeguarding transitions.

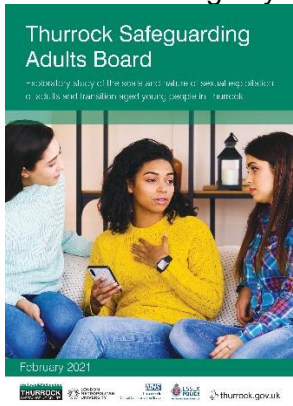
Transition to adulthood can be a particularly challenging and vulnerable time for some young people. Young people experiencing, or who have experienced abuse or harm may often

require ongoing support beyond the age of 18 as harm and its effects do not stop at the age of 18.

They may need support to recover from the harm and/or trauma or because the harm continues into adulthood. The transitions work that we are undertaking is based on the following model taken from Holmes (2018) whilst also considering Children’s and Adults’ safeguarding systems are very different, governed by different statutory frameworks.



Strengthen safeguarding transition arrangements for those moving from children services to adult services.	
What did we do	What do we plan to do next
Continued to gather information about where the gaps are and possible solutions to these	Seek the views of young people who have transitioned between services to find out what they need
Reviewed the recommendations from national reviews involving transition age young people	Raise awareness of contextual safeguarding within the adult workforce
Reviewed the recommendations from ‘Bridging the Gap’ followed up with a presentation from the author Dez Holmes to discuss implementing the recommendations locally	Develop a framework to provide guidance on managing cases where there is a high level of risk, but the circumstances may sit outside of traditional adult safeguarding
Improved information sharing between children and adult social care to identify young people who are at risk of exploitation and approaching critical transition points	Seek assurance from commissioners about how they are commissioning services for young people transitioning to adult services

To contribute implementing the recommendations of the Sexual Abuse/Violence Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	
What did we do	What we plan to do next
<p>Published the exploratory study of the scale and nature of sexual exploitation of adults and transition aged young people</p> 	<p>Develop a bespoke toolkit for professional use in order to facilitate appropriate responses to disclosure. The toolkit should be used to supplement training and provide information including safeguarding requirements, appropriate language, local service provision and referral pathways</p>
<p>TSAB solely funded a sexual abuse and violence online training package for staff across the partnership which will be rolled out across the workforce next year</p>	<p>To support the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda in implementing a coordinated programme of communications activities to be delivered to the public</p>

Other areas of close working:

- Regular meetings with the Board managers of the Thurrock Safeguarding Adult Board, Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership
- Worked with Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding Adult, Safeguarding Children and Domestic Abuse Boards to develop resources around 'Think Family'
- Regularly attended MACE and the LSCP Audit Group.
- Through our multi-agency hoarding panel and our newly established hoarding support group we have been providing more targeted and effective support to people who hoard across Children's and Adults Social Services.

There are still many challenges ahead due to the impacts of the pandemic, however, I think that the partnership has been strengthened as a consequence of our joint response and remain confident that we will continue to do everything we can to safeguard vulnerable people effectively in the future.

ESSEX POLICE: KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Essex Police has a clear structure and strong governance in place to champion the safeguarding of children throughout the organisation.

In addition to the specialist Child Abuse Investigation Teams, dedicated Children and Young People (CYP) officers work with vulnerable young people through engagement with education, youth clubs and social care to identify support networks for young people and create referral pathways to divert potential victims of exploitation. The focus is on building self-confidence, respect for self and others, and making a contribution to society.

It is recognised that children are often the overlooked victims in a domestic abuse incident between adults. This year, a Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Team (DAPST) was set up to prevent re-offending through intervention, proactive monitoring of preventative orders and an “Achilles’ heel” approach. The team focuses on repeat offenders and repeat victims and will undoubtedly help to reduce emotional and physical distress for children caught up in domestic abuse incidents.

The Force Child Abuse Investigation procedure specifically directs staff to the partnership SET procedures developed in response to the Working Together 2018 guidance. The SET Procedures are well embedded across the organisation and form a central part of compliance and practices within the daily operations within the C&PP Command.

A well-embedded practice for sharing information with partners is utilised by the Force via the PP57 Essex Police Request for Children's Services form. Information sharing with partners is supported through engagement with and attendance at strategy meetings and discussions and case conferences. The officers embedded in MASH engage in daily discussions with Children's Social Care regarding referrals for children and young people.

The Force has a specific Police Protection Powers procedure setting out the powers available under Section 46 of the Children Act. For children taken into Police Protection and awaiting Social Care placement, Sunflower Rooms have been identified at four key police stations and electrical/ decoration work has been commenced in two of them this year. The aim is to provide comfortable rooms that do not look like typical police station rooms, equipped with TV, sofa bed, toiletries, games and even a gaming console; so that a traumatic experience is made to feel safer and less stressful for children.

A specialist Child Sexual Exploitation proactive investigation team proactively pursues and disrupts individuals/groups who seek to sexually exploit children and manage organised non-familiar abuse and complex CSE investigations. The team participate in local MACE meetings and are seeking to increase CSE referrals from the Thurrock area.

The Force's Initial Police Learning Development Programme (IPLDP) provides every student officer with a broad overview of investigative and safeguarding activity. Further training provision is given in the 3-day Public Protection Awareness Programme course and the Initial Crime Investigators Development Programme, which captures front-line officers' responsibilities for safeguarding children and how to report concerns to partner agencies. CAIT accredited detectives complete the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme (SCAIDP), giving them the right support to plan, conduct and supervise child abuse investigations and form effective co-operative working practices with other statutory and voluntary agencies to bring about the best possible outcome in relation to allegations of child abuse. They also undertake Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) and National Child Death training courses as well as training to become a Sexual Offences Trained Officer (SOTO).

Vicarious Trauma training was delivered as a mandatory one-day package to all members of C&PP Command this year, to educate all officers and staff as to how traumatised children might present to officers and different ways to engage with them.

A Public Protection Training & Skills board was set up this year to ensure all incoming staff are offered relevant and timely training, identify training gaps from various departments, identify role-specific training required, enable officers to maintain their accreditation via CPD events and discuss general improvements in training provision.

Voice of the Child training was given to Local Policing officers in 2021. A Voice of the Child steering group has been set up to present a formal and consistent process that is tracked and audited and focuses on contextual safeguarding. All force policies & procedures have been reassessed in light of this Voice of the Child work and amendments made where necessary.

All training is supported through the use of e-learning training packages, alongside a varied programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The force is taking forward recommendations from the recent Thurrock serious violence report with focus on information sharing across agency teams, primary prevention activity, diversionary activity and early intervention to support young people in custody or at risk of exclusion.

A new strategic governance framework has been agreed for Operation Encompass, with this being adopted by the Force Domestic Abuse lead. Renewed efforts will see expansion to involve as many schools as possible, with a consistent process to monitor and evaluate referrals. There is an ambition to widen Encompass across the whole county after it is fully embedded within Thurrock and Southend Local Authorities.

Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Overview of the Impact of COVID 19

The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a profound impact on NHS services across the entire health economy. Over 2021/22 NHS services in Essex have continued to respond to COVID 19 whilst resetting other health services that had been adversely affected since 2020.

Throughout the pandemic, safeguarding (adult and child) remained a business-critical activity and NHS services maintained the integrity of provision to adults at risk, children in need of protection and other vulnerable populations within the parameters of government guidance. The arrival of the Omicron variant in November 2021 and the subsequent national drive on the delivery of the vaccine programme meant that some safeguarding professionals were redeployed to clinical settings.

The longevity of the COVID-19 pandemic has at times adversely impacted the capacity of NHS staff to fully commit to some operational activities. In addition, there has been fluctuating capacity due staff vacancies and secondments. TCCG/MSE ICB remains a committed Safeguarding Partner and the newly appointed (April) Interim Director of Nursing (Safeguarding) brings with her strong leadership and directions for moving forward the agenda and strategies for Safeguarding all ages.

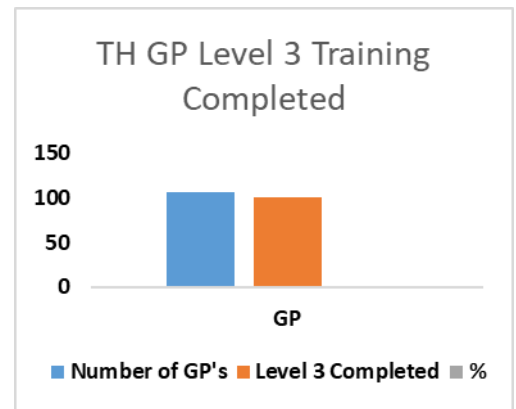
Thurrock CCG safeguarding professionals have supported the TLSCP workplan through its subgroups and workstreams and endeavoured to ensure there is a CCG contribution at all meetings. In particular, the Practice Standard Group been chaired by TCCG has led and contributed to the TLSCP priorities. The transition of CCGs into Integrated Care Systems was also delayed by the pandemic from 1st April 2022 to 1st July 2022. In preparation for this change the 5 Mid & South Essex (MSE) CCGs have been working closely to ensure a smooth transition into MSE Integrated Care Board.

Keeping Children Safe In Thurrock: Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Including Primary Care

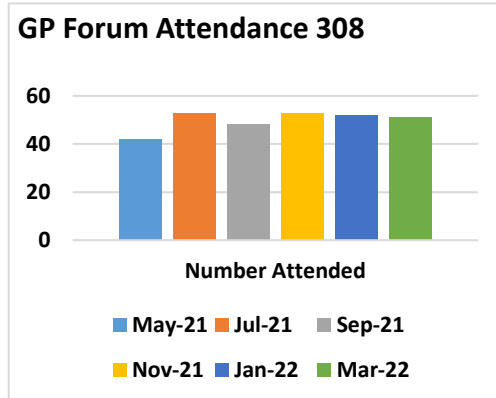
Thurrock Primary care (GP Practices) Level 3 training & GP Safeguarding Leads Forum 2021 - 2022

107 practitioners (GPs and Practice Nurses) attended the yearly Safeguarding and LAC Core Level 3 update.

	Level 3	
Number of GP' Completed		%
107	101	94.39%



GP Forums are bi-monthly and used to raise safeguarding awareness. The frequency increased to provide additional support related to the challenges presented by COVID-19.



System Partnership – There has been various system work that has been led by Thurrock CCG and or on behalf of SCN or MSE ICB, some of these pieces of work has been leading the **FGM Training** and **Pathways** on behalf of SET Health & Partners. **Attendance: 62** Multiagency Partners. **Recommendation:** To have System FGM Training yearly. Training Pack and FGM Pathways disseminated to Partners, ratified by TLSCB and Implemented by Providers. **Others include – Training for SET Social Workers on Health Services Landscape and Interface between Children Social Care and Health Services. Attendance :60. Recommendation:** Request for six monthly updates.

What you shared is an extremely sensitive and difficult subject. Well done and thanks for further creating awareness on the matter... It is an extremely insightful and well-put together presentation.. Thank you

The pathways have been shared across Maternity. The SG midwives and Named Midwife will support the maternity Matrons and midwives to ensure that the SET pathways etc. are embedded in practice.

I will have more knowledge on the processes of SARC and CP medicals.

A brilliant, thought-provoking session. Thank you so much

I will discuss putting a session together for operational teams and discuss getting this onto our system

Commitment to Partnership & Multiagency Work

- Representatives at all TLSCP Subgroups
- TLSCP Strategic Partnership Group
- Management Executive Group
- Multiagency Audits
- Practice Standard Group (PSG) – TCCG Chair
- Learning and Practice Review Group
- Neglect Subgroup
- Looked After Children Steering Group
- Children In Care Partnership

System Partnership Work – 2021-2022

- Female Genital Mutilation SET Work
- Work between CCG, GPs, and Local Authority
- Leading on Non-Accidental Injuries – Mid & South and SET wide conference work
- Case Reviews Thematic Learning Away day-SET

Implementation of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR)

The CCG Safeguarding team, working in partnership with other statutory and key partners, has continually supported the development and implementation of the recommendations and action plans for Case reviews. The CCG also coordinated and delivered a thematic approach Virtual 'Away Day' to the implementation of system learning which brought agencies together to move this work forward.

Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) for Looked After Children are holistic assessments that involve the review of health needs, the analysis and assessment of past medical history, missed health problems and screening opportunities. There have been historical difficulties, exacerbated by the pandemic, in IHAs being performed within timescale, which have been linked to:

- Communication and information sharing between agencies
- Challenges in arranging and completing IHAs due to shortage of paediatricians
- Challenges associated with children being placed out of area

Following some interventions locally, improvements have been substantiated. Further work is ongoing to ensure these are sustained and to explore commissioning a centralised service across MSE.

Mental health issues for young people continues to be highlighted including death by suicide. This is being addressed through work across multiagency committees and forums.

- Local authorities are constrained in their ability to utilise unregulated placements for children under the age of 16. There has been a significant increase in the attendance of Looked After Children occupying medical beds within MSE.
- **Tier 4 Beds and MSE Hospital Beds Occupied by Complex Young People:** Pressure on the Acute system continues and there are weekly touchpoint system meetings scrutinising packages of care in alternative placements and in the community.

Next Steps

- Effective Due Diligence reporting highlighting key workstreams for first 100 days post ICB.
- Workforce - Recruitment and Retention.
- Joint working across the ICBs and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) through Partnership working, Collaboration and Co-Production.
- Six defined transition workstreams – working across SET ICS and Regional Teams.
- Completion of the policies for ICB.
- Learning and development workstream pulling together all health and care partners shared learning and co-production on Training packages.
- Continuing / Establishing new relationships and Network.

NELFT

Named Professional for Safeguarding Children

What did we do?

NELFT Safeguarding Advice Service has continued to operate as the central hub into which all safeguarding enquiries from members of NELFT staff, or relating to NELFT service users/patients, are received. This has continued to operate remotely throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic. The purpose of the service is to provide advice and support to NELFT staff in relation to safeguarding concerns across the trust and assist operational teams in escalating concerns to the local authority / other agencies when appropriate.

All NELFT safeguarding children training has been updated to reflect the competency requirements in the updated Intercollegiate Document 2018 and in line with updates to the SET procedures, Working Together, Prevent and FGM awareness and reporting. Safeguarding Children training is mandatory and is provided to all staff working for NELFT at levels appropriate to their role. As an organisation, NELFT is compliant with the Care Quality Commission target of 80% for all levels of Safeguarding training.

The Level 2 training is now delivered on-line through a national NHS system and due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the Level 3 safeguarding training has now been made into a virtual training package. As a result, compliance with training has remained steady throughout the Pandemic. In addition, NELFT have been developing a new Level 3 Domestic Abuse and Criminal Exploitation online training that adopts the Think Family approach and covers the lifespan of children and adults.

PREVENT training continues also to be mandatory for all staff.

In addition to the mandatory training, the safeguarding team responds to requests from services to provide bespoke and ad hoc training, in particular where there have been identified themes for learning through Serious Incidents and Learning Reviews.

NELFT is committed to partnership working and promoting collaborative working. The Named Professional for Safeguarding Children, a Safeguarding Advisor or Operational Manager is a standing member of all LSCP including the Learning and Practice Review subgroup.

NELFT also now have 2 safeguarding Advisors who are GCP2 trainers and deliver multi-agency training within Thurrock.

Learning from Reviews is widely shared across the staff in NELFT. For example, NELFT have used 7-minute briefings and bespoke training to address identified themes such as Non-Accidental Injuries and Back to Basics Training.

All clinical staff working with children and young people receive quarterly safeguarding supervision and compliance is monitored regularly at senior leadership meetings.

NELFT policies and procedures continue to be update in the usual cycle of business and are reviewed at any points in between where there are changes to local or national guidelines. For example there is currently an update being undertaken in response to the new national guidelines considering management of Fabricated and Induced Illness and Perplexing Presentations which will be ratified in August 2021 and shared within the organisation.

NELFT audits have been suspended since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, but the organisation has continued to regularly contribute to the multi-agency audits held by the Partnership to identify new areas of learning and that group is also chaired by the NELFT Named Professional for Safeguarding Children.

In response to the escalating number of cases of Youth Violence, NELFT have undertaken a thematic review within their own services of these cases to identify further learning.

What was the impact?

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic it has been hard to assess the impact of the work that has been undertaken by NELFT, however the number of staff contacting the Safeguarding Advice Desk has in general increased over the last 2 years and the complexity of the cases being brought has also heightened. The Think Family model has become more of a focus for the Trust as more of the complex cases are requiring both Childrens and Adults Services working together and there has been a highlighted need for more work to be done around those vulnerable young people transitioning into adulthood and adult services.

What we plan to do next?

In response to the Thematic Review into Youth Violence NELFT have undertaken there are plans to hold a multi-agency conference in 2021.

The Trust needs to find better ways in conjunction with Partnership and other agencies of being able to capture the views and experiences of its service users in order to truly understand the impact the work is having on their lives. This will be done through the partnership audit groups initially.

To ensure all our frontline clinical staff are trained in GCP2 and are using it effectively and regularly in order to identify neglect.

The internal Audit Programme is to recommence.

Example/s of effective practice

NELFT are core member of the newly created Practice Standards Group and will look to share with partner agencies examples of good and outstanding practice across the organisation.

NELFT is part of the Neglect working group that is overseen by the Thurrock Partnership.

NELFT are represented at a variety of multi-agency groups that look to review work that has been undertaken and audit its effectiveness. This includes the MASH audit group which meets regularly to review a theme of referrals into MASH and consider if they have been triaged correctly from a multi-agency perspective. We are also representing health as part of work being undertaken with regards to long-term missing UASC.

Keeping Children Safe in Thurrock: South Essex Rape Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC)

SERICC Director

What did we do?

SERICC:

- provides specialist sexual violence and sexual abuse services to adults, children and their families in South and West Essex who are experiencing, or who have experienced, any form of sexual violence and abuse, at any time in their lives.
- offer free and confidential 'one to one' counselling, online counselling, family support, criminal justice system support, emotional support and practical information.
<https://sericc.org.uk/>

SERICC's Thurrock Brighter Futures Programme

Aims to enable families/carers to make confident, informed, choices that they feel are right for the children in their care. Under this programme SERICC provides an integrated, intensive and highly personalised offer of help intended to support and equip families who have been impacted by sexual violence or abuse to learn and apply parenting skills that develop resourcefulness and resilience while strengthening positive relationships with their children.

Who is it for?

The service is specifically designed for Thurrock families/carers who have experienced any form of sexual abuse including childhood sexual abuse, rape or sexual assault. SERICC work together with the family to agree a support plan to ensure recovery by building confidence, understanding and rebuilding parenting capacity.

Families can be referred to SERICC's specialist sexual violence counselling service regarding emotional well-being issues which will be explored through appropriate therapeutic support. Families can also access the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser Service (ISVAs) for support through the criminal justice process where the abuse has been reported to the police. This service has been designed specifically to raise awareness of online safety, sexual violence and abuse, recognising and understanding signs of sexual abuse, and the impact of childhood sexual abuse and sexual violence has on victims/survivors/families and how it potentially impacts on parenting.

Referral process – Brighter Futures

To Make a Brighter Futures referral please visit our secure online portal:
<https://www.dpmscloud.com/external/referralformorgessex>

Evidence for and evaluation of effectiveness.

SERICC Key statistics. During the period that this report covers, SERICC worked with:

- **530** Thurrock service users, who received specialist sexual violence and abuse counselling, family work and/or specialist Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA- specialist criminal justice system support) services through SERICC's 'Synergy Essex' contract with the Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) and Thurrock Council Children's Services commissioner.
- **166** young people aged **13-25** who received specialist young person's counselling and advocacy services through SERICC's Thurrock Council contract.
- **21 children under the age of 13** who received specialist therapy services through SERICC's Thurrock Council contract
- **36 parents and 39 children** through the Thurrock Council Brighter Futures Programme

- **23 parents** outside of the Brighter Futures program
- **245 aged 26+** who received specialist sexual violence and abuse counselling, family work and specialist Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA-specialist criminal justice system support)
- SERICC have continued to offer multi agency training and awareness raising with across the borough through initiatives such as the ‘Challenging Myths, Changing Attitudes’ programme.

What was the impact?

Outcomes are recorded individually for all provided services. **Outcomes:** service users more in control of their lives **97%**; Better health and wellbeing **97%**; More able to access further support **97%**; More able to assert their rights **91%**, Prevention of family breakdown **91%**.

Cases referred to the Thurrock Brighter Futures service saw either a social care case closure or de-escalation of a case following the end of the SERICC intervention.

What was the impact?

Learning and Impact of work

Views of parents/carers/children/young people

SERICC Service User Feedback

Quote 1	“Our family would not be where it is today, getting the support we needed through SERICC has made all the difference to us as a family”
Quote 2	“The Keep Safe Works SERICC did with the ‘body charts’ gave my daughter the confidence to speak out towards the perpetrator telling him he was not allowed to touch her and that he lied to her” {Using her loud voice as well”}

Trends

1	Starting to notice more and more children with additional needs coming through the programme.
2	Not a lot of keep safe work being done in schools
3	Lots of family sexual abuse – cousins especially teenagers with younger cousins

Case study

A referral was made to social care when T’s oldest son W disclosed that he had been sexually abused by his father for a number of years. T wasn’t happy to engage with the service, she felt her son’s disclosure was because he had watched something on the T.V, she didn’t really believe the sexual abuse had happened, this made it difficult for her to engage with the service.

T wouldn’t look at the SERICC staff, she struggled to engage with the staff throughout the children’s engagement. T slowly began to engage, her thinking has now changed she is more positive towards the service, she feels she is learning a lot throughout the SERICC children’s programme. She has made recommendations about the children’s service and explained as a parent with additional needs that she would have liked a library of recommended books to

enable her to continue her work at home, she also felt her children wouldn't retain the whole programme and would eventually forget. The children engaged well, T has now engaged in open, honest conversations, she has become more understanding of the need to support her boys in a holistic way and is working more collaboratively with other agencies.

SERICC has also seen a change in her protective factor, initially she didn't believe her son she now is fully aware of the concerns raised and feels she understands the 'red flags'.

T has said statutory support providers are not pitching the right support for children with additional needs.

Improvements this year-what are we doing better as a result of the activity?

- Continuing to use the direct feedback from victims, survivors and their families in the shaping of our service delivery ensuring reflection of local need.
- Identification of organisational developmental service requirements through the analysis of robust SERICC data sets, outcome framework results and survivor voices
- Redesigning the SERICC website
- Creating a Parent's Pack - **Looking After Yourself and Your Child**

This guide is for parents and carers who are supporting a child/ren who have experienced any form of sexual violence and abuse. This guide gives useful tools and coping skills - available on SERICC's website.



What we plan to do next?

- Raise the awareness of child sexual abuse, specifically in relation to the forthcoming Final Report of the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).
- Engaging in dialogue with the TLSCP with regard to the recommendations in the IICSA Final Report.
- Situating in Thurrock a public 'Legacy Bench' as an acknowledgment of child sexual abuse survivor's engagement with IICSA.
- Improve data collection to help us all better understand prevalence of child sexual abuse in Thurrock.
- The Thurrock Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (TJSNA) has identified key recommendations. SERICC will work with the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership and the Thurrock Violence against Women and Girls Board to action key recommendations (COVID has delayed the actions related to the TJSNA).
- Improve the commissioning arrangements for sexual violence and abuse support work. There was a 5.57% increase in demand for SERICC services in Thurrock compared

to the previous year. This represents a challenge to ensure there is sufficient service capacity to meet this need. Furthermore, whilst under-reporting is present across all age groups, children and young people reporting sexual violence and abuse may still not be receiving specialist sexual violence and abuse support, even amid the tighter safeguarding protocols in place around them.

**Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) Strategic Child Death Overview Committee
Chaired by: Director of Public Health & Wellbeing, Essex County Council**

What did we do?

Child Death Notifications:

For the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, 95 Notifications of Child Deaths were received.

Local Authority area of residence	Notifications received
Essex	76
Southend	6
Thurrock	13

Of the 13 notifications received for Thurrock resident children, 3 cases were subject to a Joint Agency Response¹ (JAR).

Annual comparison:

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. of notifications received	17	16	20	13	13

Completed Reviews:

88 cases were completed during this period.

Local Authority area of residence	Reviews completed
Essex	69
Southend	8
Thurrock	11

Of the 11 reviews completed for Thurrock resident children, 10 (91%) cases were found to have modifiable factors.

What was the impact?

As a result of notifications of child deaths across Southend, Essex & Thurrock the following themes have been identified:

- Deaths of children with asthma – Four deaths occurred of children with asthma, aged between 9 and 17 years.

¹ The Joint Agency Response process is applied when a death could be from an external cause, or when it is sudden and there is no immediately apparent cause

- Suicides, including influence of social media – There were six deaths of children by suicide or deliberate self-inflicted harm
- Neonatal deaths – 43% of notifications during this period were for babies aged between 0 & 28 days. For Thurrock area this equaled 38% of notifications.

What we plan to do next

- To hold a thematic review of the recent deaths of children with asthma in Southend, Essex and Thurrock
- To develop an Action Plan following the Thematic Review of SET Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) cases
- To work with partners across SET to consider the recent cases of youth suicide and in particular the possible influence of social media and risk behaviours

Further details and information regarding the work of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Strategic Child Death Overview Committee will be included within the SET Child Death Review Annual Report for 2021-2022 which will be available in August 2022.

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership

Director of Public Realm

Violence and Vulnerability: Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (CSP) continue to work with Southend and Essex partners to understand Child Exploitation, County Lines, and work to reduce the risk.

This aligned to the CSP priority for 21/22 of 4.2.1 Tackling violence and gang related activity. The following highlights some of the work delivered by the CSP that supports improving understanding and reducing the risk to young people in relation to Child Exploitation, and County Lines.

- Through Essex Police, areas of priority have been identified for intervention (localities work) due to their societal factors and where offenders known to criminal justice services reside (this therefore includes those offenders open to our services but offending out of borough) and where victims / perpetrators known to Essex Police reside (not where offences happen). The areas highlighted were:
 - West Thurrock and South Stifford
 - Tilbury St Chads
 - Grays

Additional funding provided by the Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VUU) has enabled youth outreach work to be delivered in these areas: St Stephens in West Thurrock and South Stifford and Red Balloon deliver detached youth work in Grays, Tilbury, and West Thurrock and South Stifford. This includes the holiday hunger programme, sports activities, and links to existing organisations in the community.

- Mentoring project (CREW) in place through the Youth offer with a focus on SEND and Children in Need

- Protocol has been revised and is in place with schools to reduce exclusions, provide targeted intervention and manage risk & vulnerability.
- Those being exploited or identified as members of a gang are managed through the multi-agency Operational Gang Related Violence Group which meets monthly
- SOS project (run by St Giles Trust) was delivered in the Olive Academy
- Through violence and vulnerability funding Well Homes (within our private housing team) have led on the vulnerable family's project taking 17 referrals of families new to the borough of which we continue to resettle into their community.
- School safeguarding leads have received training and termly update with regards to current risks in relation to Prevent (Counter Terrorism and Extremism).

Participation and Engagement: Engage with the community who all have a role in safeguarding children and ensure the voice of children, young people and families are included in support and plans.

The Safer Streets work in Grays supported this priority which saw Essex Police Community Safety and Engagement Officers and CSP Officers with a number of events including a launch event in August which saw a number of partners attending, hate crime awareness raising in Oct, and promoting personal safety in conjunction with 16 days of activism 2021 in November. This targeted the railways station and we spoke to a number of young people using trains to access their schools. We gave out personal safety alarms and advice on how to report where they didn't feel safe.

In addition, a leaflet for parents was created and distributed through schools

www.thurrock.gov.uk/gangs-and-gang-crime/gangs-and-exploitation

The Young Voices report for Thurrock focused on young people engaging in services in and around Seabrooke Rise and Koala Park. Their biggest concern was knife crime/getting stabbed, followed by theft, big groups of people, shootings and being raped.

In response they said what makes them feel safe is being with friends / group, being in well-lit areas, knowing the area, having trusted adults in the area and their mobile phone.

There was an almost 100% increase in offences of possession of bladed article committed by children resident in Thurrock in 17/18 based on the previous year. However, data for the last three financial years shows that this increase has abated and that numbers have decreased significantly and are now similar to those in 16/17.

Offences of possession with intent to supply decreased significantly in 2020/21 although it is noted that this period could have been impacted by the national COVID 19 restrictions

Changes made as a result of previous learning/priorities and new developments

1. The Localities work remains as a focus with the same areas identified.
2. Operation Minerva will use the data gathered within Safer Streets to part inform plans of action to improve safety and feelings of safety on our streets, particularly in relation to VAWG
3. We are strengthening our engagement with young people through working with the Youth Participation Worker, attending their girl's safety day and providing information in relation to drink spiking and Safer Streets
4. We are seeking funding for a Prevent workshop/conference with young people to raise awareness of exploitation

5. We are looking to make environmental changes to Koala Park so that it feels safer
6. Seeking engagement to launch Street Pastors in Grays and on the railway.

All of the priorities within the CSP for 22/23 will contribute to the priorities and work of the Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership:

- 1. Tackling disproportionality in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls –** including sexual offences, stalking and rape, whilst recognising that men and boys can also be victims
- 2. Breaking the cycle of Domestic Abuse:** in line with the Domestic Abuse Duty and needs assessment
- 3. Violence and Vulnerability:** Tackling gang related activity and offensive weapons to reduce drug driven violence
- 4. Counter Extremism and Terrorism:** Preventing Violent Extremism locally
- 5. Reduce harm to and safeguard victims from Hate Crime –** including Sex/Gender based hate crime
- 6. Tackling Community based Anti-social Behaviour and Safeguarding victims -** including off road motorbike nuisance
- 7. Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime**
- 8. Safer streets through increased visibility and community engagement**
- 9. Tackling offending –** reducing high volume crimes e.g., burglary

Violence and Vulnerability

The following activities planned by the CSP will support delivery of this priority:

- Continue to recognise and respond to the public interest in VAWG and men's violence against women, promote reporting to Safer Streets and act on findings (Op Minerva)
- The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment identified the following priority areas for victims who are resident within safe accommodation.
 - Support around financial inclusion for victims supporting access to education, training, and employment in preparation for moving on from the refuge.
 - Support to increase staff knowledge and working practices around victims with physical and learning disabilities and mental health issues.
 - Specialist drug and alcohol support for resident adults & children.
 - Support to expedite the process of moving on from refuge to independent accommodation when safe to do so and to ensure support is continued once victims are settled.
 - Implementation of trauma informed psychological support for resident adults and children.
 - Increase in capacity of the existing children's worker to support parenting work.
 - Tutoring for resident children who as a result of moving into refuge have additional identified learning needs.
- We are piloting training to raise awareness of sexual abuse against men and boys.
- We will be part of the wider steering group for the harmful sexualised behaviour audit
- Preventative work will continue to be focused in the Grays area including the schools
- Develop the role of the CE and Gangs Lead and Exploitation worker and the training offer available to professionals, schools and parents.

- Focused campaign to raise awareness in relation to offensive weapons alongside knife bin launch campaign
- Through the Violence and Vulnerability Board the long-term public health approach to this issue should continue and the data start to drive earlier preventative activity
- Support Op Henderson, an operation focusing on addressing CSE and CCE in relation to transport hubs
- Continue to safeguard those at risk of or involved in criminal exploitation through the Operational Gang Related Violence Group
- Support schools to understand risks through a termly contextualised safeguarding report
- Run a programme of street football in parks where concerns in relation to exploitation have been raised.

Transitions and Transfers

The CSP recognises that this is priority area. It is included within the Violence and Vulnerability work plan; we are members of the Adult Safeguarding Transitions Delivery Group and Re-Route will be adopted to work with 17-22 yr. olds who are currently released under investigation (RUI).

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

We will be supporting the LSCP led walk online roadshows to provide an input on gangs and knife crimes to year 5-8 inclusive, accounting for those who missed these important messages due to COVID.

We offer a termly meeting with schools to discuss those at risk of exclusion, exploitation or causing harm in the community. We will also seek to continue to seek funding through the Essex violence and vulnerability unit to support schools in our identified locality areas with mentoring programmes and the Olive Outreach programme
There is an offer of domestic abuse awareness training to businesses.

In addition, we will work with the LSCP to implement any recommendations for the CSP following the Thematic Review led by the LSCP.

Thurrock Adults, Housing and Health

What did we do?

The Housing Safeguarding Team operates as the housing link into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. The purpose of the service is to provide a response to disclosures of domestic and sexual abuse, regardless of housing tenure. They also provide advice and support for all housing staff and contractors by guiding them through the reporting and escalation process for any child or adult safeguarding concerns.

The team also manage the Thurrock Women's Refuge contract on behalf of Public Health and as part of our commitment to safe accommodation in the borough we provided an additional three units to the current contract.

In addition, following the allocation of the New Burdens Funding as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 we assisted Violence Against Women and Girls Group (VAWG) to implement the recommendations from the Domestic Abuse needs assessment.

We increased the number of support services available to the refuge residents and to support the act which aims to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children. As the act considers children to be victims of abuse and violence as opposed to witnesses, we have provided funding to support:

- Trauma focused counselling for children through the Healthy Relationships Programme
- Increased the capacity of the children's worker in refuge to ensure all who want the support can access it
- Funding for additional Tutoring for children in Refuge –bridging gap in education whilst away from home/delays in accessing education.
- Specialist sexual violence and abuse counselling for survivors in refuge and resettlement into independent accommodation.
- We have updated our leaflets and poster which raise awareness of the work of the team, to reflect the new domestic abuse statutory definition. We are including the leaflet in all our sign-up packs for our new tenants and widely distributing among our local community partners.

What was the impact?

The number of instances of children supported in safe accommodation for the period 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2022 was 35.

During the same period the number of instances of individual children provided with direct support was 38 and the number who received counselling and therapy was 12.

The number of children with protected characteristics who were supported in safe accommodation were 10.

During the period 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2022 the Housing Safeguarding Team supported 737 survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and their families.

What will we plan do next?

Private Rented Sector

A campaign to reach private landlords to build awareness, information and signposting for victims of domestic/sexual abuse and violence. The Southend, Essex and Thurrock

Domestic Abuse Board have provided a resource library to share with our contacts in the Private Rented Sector and local stakeholders. The library supplies an online resource which offers training and support which can be accessed through an online link. We look to promote this resource, particularly with the Private Lettings Team for:

- Private sector lettings
- Inclusive of those who sign a tenancy for the private rented sector properties.
- Private landlord's forum
- Inclusive of those landlords we work with on a regular basis and those known to us.
- Online communication

Examples of effective practice

The Thurrock Anti-Social Behaviour Team have been working with the School Safeguarding Leads from Olive and Hassenbrooks, Hathaway, Gateway Academies. We received lots of complaints from residents about young people gathering in groups and causing low level anti-social behaviour. We met with the schools in monthly meeting to identify the pupils involved.

We contacted the parents and arranged to discuss the details of the complaints and suggested they agree to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract, 100% of the parents signed the contracts and agreed to monitor the behaviour of their children to ensure they complied. The contracts are not legally binding but an attempt to resolve problems through intervention and diversion. Although the contracts do provide prohibitive measures, we also seek more positive provisions to provide support or intervention at the earliest possible stage, following our receipt of the complaints. The process is one of engagement, rather than a punitive measure.

We continued to contact the parents and discuss compliance and this process is continuing. In terms of the new pupil intake the schools decided they would continue to engage with our process to ensure that we are applying preventative measures to ensure there is no further impact on residents.

The officers are planning to start a new process with local public transport providers, to offer a similar service where anti-social behaviour from young people in uniform is impacting their service delivery.

This project is likely to continue as we have found that it produces outcome in line with the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership priority to reduce the number of children and young people in need of responsive safeguarding through effective help and support at an earlier stage.

Challenges and Risks for 2022/2023

- Recovering from the impact of the pandemic the partnership will continue to progress some of delivery plan items into 2022/2023, especially around the area of Neglect.
- Key risks include ensuring that the system has trained workforce capacity to meet business as usual and any possible rise in safeguarding referrals and the emerging issues and challenges for children, young people and their families following the pandemic.

Our Response

- Priorities set for the next period and the delivery plan has been revised to focus on priority areas.
- The Statutory Partners meet bi-monthly with additional monthly meetings with colleagues from Southend and Essex Councils to discuss current and emerging concerns.
- Safeguarding referrals are closely monitored.
- Multi-agency audits and case reviews will continue to ensure the voice of children and young people and their families are heard and included in work with do with them.

Conclusions

- The Safeguarding Partnership demonstrates good communication and effective working relationships.
- There is good leadership by the Executive and an Independent Chairperson and Scrutineer has been appointed to create a culture of transparency, high challenge and high support working together to solve problems in an effective positive way.
- Progress against priorities is tracked and reported on regularly in a transparent way.
- The audit schedule for 2022/23 reflects partnership priorities.

Recommendations

- To further develop the multi-agency dataset to support the identification of safeguarding areas of focus
- To review and refresh the training offer for 2022/23 to ensure it reflects the TLSCP priorities, complements training already locally on offer and incorporates impact feedback.
- The delivery plan should incorporate local learning from case reviews.

GLOSSARY

CIN	Child in Need
CP	Child Protection
CSC	Children's Social Care
DA	Domestic Abuse
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Childrens Board
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Childrens Partnership
SCR	Serious Case Review

LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
RR	Rapid Review
MACE	Multi-agency Child Exploitation
MAPPA	Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
NELFT	North-East London Foundation Trust
SERICC	South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre

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14 March 2023	ITEM: 11
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Children’s Transport – One year extension to the current Framework 2023/2024	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Barry Johnson, Cabinet Member for Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director – Children’s Services	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

The contracts for Children’s Transport provision, including home to school transport, are due to expire in July 2023 and therefore due to be renewed for the start of the academic year, September 2023. The continued provision of this transport is required as a part of the Council’s statutory requirements. The value of the contracts means that Cabinet approval to proceed is required.

This report proposes that all of the current contracts procured under the framework are extended for one year to allow time for the service to review options for a full re-procurement of the Childrens Transport for the start of the academic year 2024/2025 to ensure best value is achieved and allows for new transport operators to join during the contract period.

Members have the option to extend the contracts in compliance with Section 14 of the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules. This must meet the conditions set out in Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This paper sets out how these will be met.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Children’s Overview and Scrutiny recommend Cabinet agree that the Director of Children’s Services, in consultation with the Education Portfolio Holder is authorised to extend any transport contracts under the current framework, which expire in July 2023 for a one-year period.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The provision of home to school transport is governed by the Education Act

1996 and the Transport Act 1985. In addition, the provision of transport, in exceptional circumstances for children who are subject to Child in Need or Child Protection procedures is supported by the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Childcare Act 2004. This legislation is clear that other than in exceptional circumstances, parents are responsible for getting their children to school.

- 2.2 The current framework agreement (“the Framework Agreement”) originally awarded in 2019 is due to end in July 2023. All contracts procured under the framework agreement cover home to school transport and children’s social care transport. A framework is an overarching agreement between the council and transport operators and outlines the principles under which contracts can be placed. The framework is used to procure transport operators under individual routes and is a closed procurement whereby once awarded onto the framework no other operators can apply to join and can only be for a maximum period of four years with no option to extend other than under exceptional circumstances. This type of framework does not allow for new transport operators to join the framework during its lifecycle. When this framework was last procured in September 2019, there were set transport routes that were published and awarded to operators for a fixed price and over a period of four years, which was not sustainable for the operators given the price rises in fuel costs and cost of living. However, by extending for one year only, will give us the time needed to explore the best options for the re-procurement so that the new contracts would allow new operators to join at any point over the contract period increasing operator availability which is an issue under the current framework.
- 2.3 Current transport operators have been finding delivering routes sometimes difficult due to driver shortages and difficulties recruiting drivers. At the end of December 2022, two transport operators delivering school transport gave notice to the council to cease delivering those routes, which then had to be retendered and costs for the transport increased.
- 2.4 Due to the current value of this contract and in line with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules, this report seeks Cabinet approval for the extension of the current framework.
- 2.5 The Council currently has contracts in place for a total of 140 routes covering the full spectrum of primary, secondary and special Children’s Transport provision. This currently affects 1000 pupils. Transport is provided by coach, minibus and taxi. Members should note that this is subject to change depending on demand.
- 2.6 In addition to the current transport contracts, Thurrock also provides transport provision in the form of travelling expenses where this represents best value.
- 2.7 The current contract value is approximately £4.5m per annum. This amount fluctuates due to changes in demand where the immediate implementation of additional route contracts is needed.

At the time of writing this report expenditure on these contracts under the current four-year framework agreement from September 2019 to date is £15,497,408 broken down as follows:

Contract Period	Cost £
September 2019 – August 2020	4,199,928.66
September 2020 – August 2021	4,631,607.48
September 2021 – August 2022	5,246,242.88
September 2022 – December 2022	1,419,630.77

2.8 There are two distinct areas of home to school transport:

- Mainstream schools - where for example distance / safety of a route to school require the Council to provide school transport. In such cases there is a statutory duty to offer transport.
- Special schools – A statutory duty to offer transport subject to the pupil meeting the relevant criteria.

2.9 There continues to be an ongoing transport review looking at a number of areas to ensure best value is achieved wherever possible in line with the adopted Home to School Transport policy and the statutory duties:

- Service transformation whereby school admissions and transport are in the process of being integrated to provide a better overview and ensure pupils are offered places at a more local school, therefore reducing transport costs
- Continual review of routes to ensure efficiencies realised, such as amalgamating SEN and mainstream students where possible
- Providing a fuel reimbursement to parents in the first instance as this is more cost effective and allows parents, should they wish to transport their student. This option also allows for a more comforting journey for the young person.
- Review of the Post 16 statement to make easier reading and understanding for parents.
- To continue understand demand and support future planning
- To review the assessment of transport awards and where this could be better joined up across services and directorates.
- To identify opportunities to better meet and commission transport requirements in a cost-effective way.

2.10 Officers have taken a phased approach to the review in order to minimise disruption caused by any changes, however, the following work has been undertaken to date:

- A review of the current policy was completed and approved by Cabinet in 2021 and published in advance of September 2021.
- A route optimisation exercise continues to be undertaken to ensure that the Council is obtaining good value from each route.
- A rolling, school by school programme to review the type of transport offered is in place, this will move to more cost effective public transport options where possible. These changes will, where appropriate, support children to develop independence through, for example, the increased use of Travel Training or through the implementation of central pick-up points in a local area.

- A review of transport currently provided due to 'unsafe routes' is reviewed each year to ensure these are still relevant so that where possible parents are able to make their own arrangements for their children's transport to school. The significant development of the Borough in recent years has meant that many roads and pavements have been developed and may now be safe.
 - Improvements to how we offer Children's Social Care transport are in place and it is proposed that any planned procurement is suitably flexible to incorporate social care requirements.
- 2.11 Members should note that there continues to be an increasing demand for Children's Transport particularly home to school transport due to unplaced pupils or children with special educational needs and /or disability being transported to out of borough placements. The current arrangements are being reviewed to ensure that all awards are in line with the current policy and that these are reviewed regularly to support independent travel where possible.
- 2.12 Members are asked to note that the rolling programme of service review will continue. This will ensure that the most effective and cost-efficient method of providing transport that is required within the current statutory duties is implemented.
- 2.13 The continual review will also ensure that the service adapts to meet changing needs to improve services and to encourage independent travel to school where possible.
- 2.14 Contracts and costs will be managed within the service along with a monthly review of budgets and forecast expenditure for the financial year. As part of the contract management process, termly meetings with transport operators will take place and key performance indicators measured in line with contract terms and conditions.
- 2.15 A further report will be presented in the autumn term 2023 to Children's Overview and Scrutiny and to Cabinet for the decision on the re-procurement of the Children's Transport provision after full options analysis has taken place.
- 2.16 An annual update report will be presented to Children's Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

The current fixed framework does not allow new transport operators to join during the framework period, therefore restricting the flexibility and availability to provide transport for required routes. This option may have a longer-term financial impact due to Consumer Price Inflation which was 10.1% in January 2023, if inflation does not return to previous lower levels before contracts are awarded. Negotiation will take place with transport operators to seek to agree to use Consumer Price Inflation as of 1st September 2023 (Inflationary rises will be written in the new re-procured contract to allow for these rising costs).

Option 1: Undertake a new fixed four-year framework tender to include 140 existing transport routes

The council has a statutory duty to provide transport for eligible pupils. By undertaking a new procurement exercise this will fix prices for a four-year period. However, due to the lack of drivers, transport operators have been left with no choice but to hand back routes where they are unable to continue to deliver transport due to staff shortages and recruitment issues. We have also seen an increase in route costs where new routes are tendered within the academic year, therefore, this option is not recommended for the new contract. We need to look at other procurement options that allows for new operators to join over the contract period which will increase choice and potentially make savings.

Option 2: Recommended option – extend all of the current contracts procured under the Framework Agreement for one year

This option will ensure that the council continues to meet its statutory duty to provide transport for the academic year 2023/24 by extending the current framework whilst ensuring dedicated time is given to reviewing options to undertake a full re-procurement for Children's Transport.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The recommendation to extend the current framework to procure the Children's Transport will ensure sufficient service and procurement resources are available to undertake a full re-procurement. The current contracts for home to school transport expire in July 2023 and the ongoing service review is likely to include recommendations that will make material changes to the way the current routes and contracts are designed and provided. In order to adapt the home to school transport offer in the light of the review findings it is recommended that the current contracts be extended for one year. This will also ensure:

- The Council meets its statutory duties with regards to children's transport.
- That the Councils Contract Procedure Rules are met
- That best value in providing the services is obtained

4.2 Extending all contracts procured under the Framework Agreement which commenced in 2019 will need to meet Public Contract Regulation 72 – Contract Modification for Contracts and Framework Agreements and 14.2 of the council's contract procedure rules.

The relevant clause which the Council proposes to rely upon is Public Contracts Regulation 72(C) – where all of the following conditions will need to be fulfilled:

1. The need for modification has been brought about by circumstances which a diligent contract Authority could not have foreseen
2. The modification does not alter the overall nature of the contract
3. Any increase in price does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract framework agreement

The above conditions apply in this situation for the following reasons:

1. There has been a major change in service responsibilities and contract management which previously sat within the department of Passenger Transport but has recently moved to Childrens Services. Therefore, a new service review is necessary which is likely to result in material changes to how the service is currently delivered, and which has delayed the re-procurement that was unforeseen.
2. The extension of the said contracts does not change the nature of the current framework agreement and the modification is to extend existing routes and allocate new routes as they required.
3. The spend per annum is around £4.5 Million and we anticipate this to increase by 10% on most routes if we applied the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate. This would increase the annual spend by an additional £450,000, therefore, the extension value will be around £5 Million, which is less than 50% of the total value of the contract. The original contract value was £20 Million over the four years of the current framework. Each of the contracts extended will therefore have an increased spend no greater than 50% of its original contract value.

Under the Councils Contract Procedure Rules Section 14.2 any extension must be shown to be of exceptional need. These are:

1. Home to school transport is a statutory service and therefore the requirements thereof have to be considered
2. The S114 notice requires improved value for money to deliver the statutory function
3. The council has additional governance procedures following the issue of the S114 notice which have complicated the landscape for re-procurement within the very tight timescales the Council is now operating under.

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

- 5.1 This report will be considered by Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th March 2023.

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

- 6.1 This report impacts on the following corporate priorities:

- People: a place where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay;
- Place: a heritage rich Borough which is ambitious for its future;
- Prosperity: a Borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The provision of Home to School Transport is a statutory duty on the Local Authority, for those considered eligible, to facilitate their attendance at the relevant education establishment.

Children's transport costs have a significant impact on Council Budgets. A one year extension to the existing framework will provide time and capacity to determine the most efficient and effective long term way forward. This will support the S114 notice by securing improved value for money in expenditure required to deliver a statutory function.

The current financial year continues to see an increase in demand for transport, predominantly for children with Special Educational Needs. Consequently, cost pressures are being realised in the current financial year and are anticipated to continue across the medium term. The table below summarises the 2022/23 budget and projected outturn alongside the 2023/24 budget:

Home to School Transport	Budget 2022/23 (£'000)	Outturn 2022/23 (£'000)	Budget 2023/24 (£'000)
Hired Transport	4,479	4,950	5,708
Public Tickets	48	48	53
Personal Travel Budgets	167	168	176
Budget / Outturn	4,695	5,166	5,938
Dedicated Schools Grant	(1,600)	(1,600)	(1,600)
Net Budget / Outturn	3,095	3,566	4,338

The 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy provides growth of £1.243m, recognising significant increases in Special Educational Needs and inflation.

There is significant risk when awarding the contract extensions as Consumer Price Inflation was 10.1% in January 2023. However, it also provides an opportunity to allow inflation to reduce over the 12-month period. The option to extend for 1 year should be agreed with providers at the CPI – September 2023 rate. This would ensure reductions in 2023 are reflected in the inflation rate to be applied.

Sensitivity analysis has been undertaken to assess the stressors in the assumptions that may mean that the budget envelope may be exceeded (£5.9m).

The table below summarises this:

Home to School Transport Sensitivity Analysis 2023/24	Contract cost (£'000)	2023/24 Budget (£'000)	Variance to budget (£'000)
Outturn 2022/23	5,166	5,938	(772)
Inflation at CPI (10.1%) - Applied from Sept-23	304	0	304
Cost base at 2022/23 pupil numbers	5,470	5,938	(468)
Increase Demand 5% and CPI Sept-23	5,744	5,938	(194)
Increase Demand 7.5% and CPI Sept-23	5,881	5,938	(57)
Increase Demand 10% and CPI Sept-23	6,017	5,938	79

The analysis has built in an assumption that there will be a 10.1% uplift in cost base due to general inflation (CPI September 2022). Anything over a combined further increase in cost due to pupil numbers 10% and further contract inflation over 10.1% would lead to the 2023/24 budget being exceeded.

In order to contain cost pressures whilst ensuring that Thurrock fulfils its statutory duty, the most economical and suitable method of transport should be selected, which includes travel allowances, use of the commercial bus network and hired transport. There does, however, remain a cost pressure risk in 2023/24 and beyond. Alternative funding opportunities and mitigations to the pressure may have to be sought by the service to contain it within the budget envelope should this risk materialise.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**
Principal Solicitor

Section 508B of the Education Act 1996 which was inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 sets out the general duties placed on local authorities to make school travel arrangements as they consider necessary for eligible children within their area, to facilitate their attendance at the relevant educational establishment. Such arrangements must be provided free of charge.

Section 508A places a duty on local authorities in England to assess the school travel needs of all children and persons of sixth form age in their area and to assess and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Section 508C of the Act provides local authorities with discretionary powers to make school travel arrangements for other children not covered by section 508B but the transport does not have to be free and the local authority is entitled to charge for this.

Section 508D of the Act places a duty on the Secretary of State to issue guidance to which local authorities have to have regard to in the performance of their functions under Section 508B (Travel arrangements for other children). The Secretary of State may revise the guidance from time to time. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 expressly states that the child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school if the parent proves that the local authority fails to make appropriate transport arrangements to and from school under Section 508, however parents are responsible for their child's attendance at school and local authorities are under a duty to provide home to school transport, where necessary, to enable them to enforce attendance.

The above duties must be viewed against the backdrop of The Council's Chief Financial Officer having issued a section 114 Notice. The Council will need to review **its spending under the Framework Agreement contracts together with any proposed extensions thereof** to ensure that the Council is proactive in ensuring that its **expenditure** supports the financial recovery of the Council. Members will need to consider carefully having weighed the arguments outlined in paragraph 4.2 above whether the extensions referred to have complied with the

requirements of regulation 72 and clause 14.2 of the Council's procurement rules referred to above, as if a Court considers in the event of a challenge that these requirements have not been met then the Council may be judged by the Court to have extended unlawfully, and provide a range of remedies to the successful litigant at the Council's expense. Such an award may be significant in value depending upon the value of the contract(s) challenged.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Development and Equalities

The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment. This means that the Council must ensure that all policies and local strategies promote the inclusion of all groups and equality of opportunity. Any tendering process will be designed with these duties in mind.

We will ensure the partner meets the statutory duties of a local authority in the provision of home to school transport, and also in its HR policies. The authority should note that where an external supplier carries out a function, the Council remains responsible for meeting the statutory duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. The authority should give due regard to ensuring that all services are delivered in a way which is non-discriminatory and promotes equality of opportunity for staff and service users. The services provided will cater for the needs of all users and identifying the needs of particularly vulnerable groups will be a key aspect of the tender process. Prospective contractors should give due regard to the diverse needs of young people in Thurrock and plan to meet these accordingly. The equality requirements will be identified in the service specification and pre-qualification questions.

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

None.

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

None.

9. **Appendices to the report**

None.

Report Author:

Sarah Williams

Children's Services

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**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 Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item
Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment Report 2022	Michele Lucas	Officers
Children’s Social Care Performance	Janet Simon	Officers
Family Hubs, Start for Life	Clare Moore	Officers
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2023-24	Kelly McMillan	Officer
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item
17 January 2023		
Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item

Overview of Responsibilities of Portfolio holder for Children's Services – Verbal update	Councillor B Johnson	
Verbal Update report on Family Hubs/ Start for Life	Clare Moore	Member
Educational Attainment Data 2021/22	Michele Lucas	
Progress Update on Peer Review and Case Review – Action Plans	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
14 March 2023		
Youth Cabinet Update Report	Angela Surrey	Standing Item
Portfolio Holder Report	Councillor B Johnson	Member
Stable Homes, Built on Love: Government Implementation Strategy and Consultation on Children's Social Care Reform 2023	Sheila Murphy	Member
Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment 2022	Michele Lucas	Officers
School Capital Programme Update 2022/23	Sarah Williams	
Re-procurement of Home to School Transport	Sarah Williams	Officers
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item

Updated: February 2022

Clerk: Rhiannon Whiteley

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