

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 **12 September 2023**

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

Membership:

Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair), Sara Muldowney (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Vikki Hartstean, Srikanth Panjala and Maureen Pearce

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

Substitutes:

Councillors Paul Arnold, Aaron Green, James Halden, Susan Little, Sue Shinnick and Cici Manwa

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 June 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.	

4	Declaration of Interests	
5	Youth Cabinet Update	13 - 20
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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: **4 September 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 15 June 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair), Sara Muldowney (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Srikanth Panjala, Maureen Pearce and Aaron Green (substitute for Vikki Hartstean)

Apologies: Councillors Vikki Hartstean

In attendance: Priscilla Bruce-Annan, Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Manager
Jenny Coles, Independent Chairperson & Scrutineer Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership
Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Steven Mair, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Angela Surrey, Youth Worker, Children's Services Youth Cabinet
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

The recording of the meeting can be found from the following link:
[2023/24 recordings | Committee recordings | Thurrock Council](#)

31. Minutes

The minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 March 2023 were approved as a true and correct record.

32. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

33. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

34. Terms of Reference

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that this item is to draw Committee Member's attention to the terms of reference of the Committee which is in the Council's Constitution. It sets out what areas the Committee covers and essential information such as the quorum for meetings.

ACTION 1: Councillor Muldowney requested a further advert be put out for co-opted members for the Committee

35. Youth Cabinet Update

The Youth Cabinet Representatives presented an update to the Committee on the Youth Cabinet and a separate presentation on their Youth Wellbeing Day. The Youth Wellbeing Day involved activities such as debates around social media, a quiz, answering questions on health and wellbeing, building a campfire and a bug hotel and a canoe activity.

The Committee thanked the Youth Cabinet Representatives for their presentations.

Following the presentation the following was confirmed:

- Recruitment to the Youth Cabinet is going well
- It is hoped that those who attended the Youth Wellbeing day will feed back the knowledge gained on health and wellbeing to their wider social groups so others will know what is available
- The Chair and Vice Chair of Youth Cabinet will change from September

36. Fees and Charges Review 2023/24

The Chair agreed to hear item 9 next.

The Interim Chief Financial Officer introduced the report and commented that the Council needs to do what it can to put it back into a sustainable financial position. The Council has begun a three-part review of fees and charges. The first stage is to examine benchmarking and some price reviews. In the second stage there will be further price reviews. The third stage will be a longer-term piece of work which normally takes around 2-3 years and this will look at the profitability of all services and that the Council is actually charging what it can charge for. The recommended price reviews are contained within the appendix to the report.

During the discussion the following was acknowledged/ confirmed / highlighted:

- The Vice-Chair commented that she did not find it acceptable to raise fees and charges twice in the same financial year and for the raises to be above inflation
- The Vice-Chair noted that in the Equality Impact Assessment the charges will negatively affect children and young people in the borough and they are not responsible in any way for the financial situation the Council finds itself in.
- The Council's financial position is extremely challenging, there is a need to reduce expenditure and increase income. The Commissioners have specifically requested that fees and charges are reviewed. An exercise has been completed where they have looked at whether in the previous 5 years fees and charges have kept pace with inflation. If a charge hasn't been increased in the last 4 years, it will see a much larger increase in its 5th year. Councils cannot make a profit but they can fully recover their costs.
- The Vice-Chair noted the negative impacts in relation to Grangewaters recorded in the equality impact assessment and that the increase in charges is still being proposed
- Market testing has been completed in relation to Grangewaters and a central Government funded Holiday Activity Programme is available for vulnerable children to ensure they have access to similar activities. There are also other programmes for children with Special Educational Needs. Work is also being completed to identify external funding and officers are always looking at ways to generate income on the Grangewaters site.
- The Assistant Director for Education invited the Committee to put forward any suggestions they may have on how to generate income from the site and involve businesses. The Chair suggested the site could be used for advertising space.

Councillor Muldowney, Councillor Green and Councillor Panjala did not agree to recommendation 1.1 and the commitment to full cost recovery and annual CPI inflation increases as the default. Councillor Muldowney also commented that although it is not a recommendation that the Committee is being asked to agree the changes to the fees and charges being proposed, she wanted it noted that she does not agree to them. Councillor Green and Councillor Panjala agreed with Councillor Muldowney's comments. The Chair, Councillor Pearce and Councillor Abbas agreed with recommendation 1.1

All Committee members agreed with recommendations 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4.

ACTION 2: *Councillor Muldowney requested a more detailed breakdown of the working out to explain the percentage increases in fees and charges proposed.*

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the proposed Fees and Charges policy, Appendix 1, in particular**

agreeing the commitment to full cost recovery and annual CPI inflation increases as the default.

- 1.2 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the proposed Fees and Charges increases for the material areas, Appendix 2.**
- 1.3 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the proposed new Charges in section 8 of this report.**
- 1.4 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the requirement for a further detailed review & analysis of remaining Fees and Charges by Quarter 4 2023/24.**

37. Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Business Manager for Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership presented the update report to the Committee on the work of TLSCP and progress made on case review action plans.

- Councillor Green referred to the Thematic Review into Serious Youth Violence and gang related crime and queried what the further action points are to put residents at ease concerned about visiting areas such as Chafford Hundred Train station and Lakeside. It was confirmed that some project work is being completed in schools to work with children who may be at risk and are displaying questionable behaviours in schools. The aim is to pick up children at risk at an earlier age.
- The attendance at the Walk Online Roadshow was very good with only a few children not attending due to illness or not being at school on that day.

RESOLVED:

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

38. Children's Social Care Performance - Quarter 4 2022-23

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help presented the report to the Committee and summarised as follows: -

- The number of referrals between January and March 2023 have stayed roughly the same
- The number of children on Child Protection Plans has remained stable

- The number of Looked After Children has remained fairly steady at 292 at the end of March, a greater proportion of LAC children are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children than the year before
- The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children has gone up. This trend has been seen across all Local Authorities.
- Adoption numbers have increased to 14. Performance in this area has improved. Pre-covid around 12 children were adopted annually, during covid it dropped to 7-8. Some of this was due to delays in court as a result of the pandemic.

Following the presentation members were invited to ask questions. Key points raised included:

- Return home interviews are not always possible as young people don't want to engage. A lot of work is being completed to encourage young people to engage with the interviews even if it is not a social worker conducting it but some other professional who has a relationship with the young person. The Vice Chair congratulated the department on the increase in number of return home interviews completed.
- Some of the statistics can be affected if there is a family with a large number of children in it. Performance is measured monthly and audits take place to make sure the threshold is right.
- Foster care recruitment nationally remains an issue. Thurrock has a good fostering recruitment campaign, 7 households were recruited in year and recruiting more foster carers remains a challenge. Work continues with the Communications team to improve this.
- Placement sufficiency is a big concern for Local Authorities. Two residential placements have been set up in Thurrock and more options are being looked at.
- The Committee discussed the figures around care leavers not in education, employment or training. The department has regular meetings to monitor this and the Strategic Lead works closely with Inspire. Many young people are not ready for an apprenticeship and work needs to be done to get them ready for an apprenticeship such as supported internships. This area is a national and local challenge. The Assistant Director for Education stated they are trying to increase the scope of employers who are able to offer apprenticeships.
- The department has recently recruited 9-10 newly qualified social workers who will be starting once they have completed their studies. There are also another 6 about to start. Recruitment of social workers remains a national issue and to combat this Thurrock is trying to find a different way to recruit through growing their own social workers.

ACTION 3: *Councillor Panjala requested a breakdown of the number of permanent social workers and agency social workers. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help agreed to provide this after the meeting. Councillor Muldowney requested confirmation of the total number of social workers employed by the Council.*

ACTION 4: *Councillor Panjala requested a breakdown of the difference in pay for agency social workers and permanent social workers.*

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That members review the areas of improvement and areas requiring further development as well as challenges in Children's Social Care.**
- 1.2 That members note the work undertaken to date to manage demand for statutory social care services.**

39. Statutory Duties Report - Education

The Assistant Director for Education introduced the report. The Assistant Director for Education confirmed that the Committee is not being asked to consider recommendation 1.2 "*Children's Overview & Scrutiny to review these duties in line with the new operating models developed by Children's Services*" as the operating model has not been circulated.

The Committee discussed the report and the following was highlighted / confirmed: -

- The Home to School Transport budget overspends. The Department are looking at ways to reduce this. This may include providing a train or bus pass to a young person where it is safe to do so, or to offer parents or a relative mileage or a personal budget.
- Some children have struggled to return to school after the pandemic, the Local Authority has termly meetings with all schools to look at attendance and conducts case work to see what can be done to assist a child to attend school.
- The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure all children have a school place
- Recruitment in the Early Years sector remains a challenge and recruitment in the Educational Psychology Service
- Requests for Education and Health Care Plans continue to rise
- Recruitment of Speech therapists remains a challenge, however this is a health commissioned service.
- A review of the Home to School Transport policy is being completed. When it is completed, it will go through the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- All 36 children who were due to attend the Harriet Primary School in Avey have been offered a school place elsewhere

ACTION 5: *The Assistant Director for Education will review that the appeals process is outlined in the refusal letter for Home to School Transport.*

ACTION 6: *The Assistant Director for Education to confirm to Councillor Muldowney how many children have lost Home to School Transport.*

RESOLVED :

1.1 Children’s Overview & Scrutiny to gain an in-depth understanding of the Council’s Statutory duties across Education and Skills in Children Services.

40. Statutory Duties - Children’s Social Care

The Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care and Early Help introduced the report. She confirmed that the department is subject to regular inspections to ensure that the Statutory duties are met. Ofsted conduct inspections and ILAC (Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services) inspections were also introduced in 2018. An ILAC inspection of the Service was completed in November 2019. The Youth Offending Service was also inspected by HMIP last year and received an outcome of Good.

During the discussion the following was confirmed or highlighted:

- The Local Authority has a Statutory duty to have an out of hours service. The department no longer has a dedicated out of hours emergency duty team. The department did look at the impact of not having a dedicated team. There is someone on duty every night and this work is covered now by staff who also work during the day time on a Rota. An experienced social worker and manager is on call every night. The feedback so far has been very positive.
- The Corporate Director for Children’s Services confirmed that the budget for Children’s Services is less for 2023-24 than 2022-23 as a result of savings created of around 1 million pounds.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be aware of the council’s statutory duties in relation to Children and Young People

1.2 Committee to be assured that the statutory duties as set out are being met.

41. Work Programme

The Committee discussed the work programme. A report on the Aveley schools and Orsett Heath and the Adult Community College will be brought to the November meeting.

An update report on the Governments report Stable Homes Built On Love will be provide at the November meeting.

Councillor Carter offered to attend the March meeting as Portfolio Holder for Education to provide an update for the Committee.

The meeting finished at 9.16 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting
Tuesday 12 September 2023
Youth Cabinet Update



Purpose of the report: The Youth Cabinet would like to provide members with an update of their work.

Please note: Thurrock Youth Cabinet are on summer recess from Friday 21 July till Monday 4 September; therefore, no meetings took place during this time. For this report we will provide an update of our work prior to summer recess and share work plans for September onwards.

1.1 **Essex Wildlife Trust**

As part of the Youth Cabinet's ongoing work with Essex Wildlife Trust for the [Nextdoor Nature project](#) ten members of Thurrock Youth Cabinet, along with Essex Wildlife Trust and Riverside Community Big Local Group, completed a successful community litter pick on Wednesday 28 June at Falcon Woods, Grays. Thurrock Youth Cabinet were keen to host the event to help clear the community woodland of unwanted rubbish and waste.

Residents were also invited to join the litter pick, in which two members of the public took part and helped to fill fourteen bags of litter in the process. *Please see appendix A for images of the event.*

Thanks to the success of this event, the youth cabinet, working in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust and Riverside Community Big Local, will be holding a small community event at Falcon Woods in September. This is an opportunity for residents to drop in, share their views and learn more about the work that the groups have been doing. We look forward to sharing news about this ongoing piece of work.

1.2 **Local Plan**

At June's Working Group Meeting we continued our interactive workshops with Thurrock Council's Local Plan Manager. This month's workshop was slightly different. We grabbed our clipboards and pens and ventured into Grays High Street with Thurrock's Local Plan Manager to carry out a place check. What is a place check? A place check is the simplest way of finding out what a place and its people can tell us about an area and start the process of making change happen.

For us this was an exciting outing, where we were able to learn and practice a new skill with the support of the Local Plan Manager who guided us through the task as we walked through the High Street. On our journey we discussed the space, the buildings, and noted down what we liked, dislike and what could do with improving.

At the end, our feedback was collected up and shared with the relevant team(s) at the council to inform growth plans for the area. We found the site visit to be really interesting. We looked at Grays High Street with different eyes and discussed how small changes could make a big impact.

Over the summer we carried out place checks in our own local communities and we plan to feedback our thoughts to the Local Plan Manager at September's Working Group Meeting. *Please see appendix B for images of site visit.*

1.3 **British Youth Council (BYC) Events**

BYC YouthCon

On Saturday 1 July 2023 seven members of the Youth Cabinet, along with two 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 campaign and public speaking skills, build our confidence and improve our ability to express ourselves verbally whilst feeding into the Food for Learning campaign work. The day was extremely valuable to us.

Annual Conference

On Friday 21 July Thurrock's Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) headed to Leeds University for a weekend residential to take part in the British Youth Council's Annual Conference.

The weekend's focus was around the Food for Learning Campaign and creating a Food for Learning Bill. MYP's from across the country debated and voted on five chapters for the Bill, which is now being drafted ready for the House of Commons Sitting in November.

Thurrock young people will be given a chance to discuss and vote on topics around the Food for Learning campaign in the coming months and have the opportunity to take part in Free School Meal lesson plans via their schools. The outcome of these votes in Thurrock will feed into the Food for Learning Bill which MYP's will debate and vote on at the House of Commons Sitting in November. Thurrock's MYP is looking forward to hearing the thoughts and opinions of other young people in the borough and being part of the Commons Sitting.

Members of the Youth Cabinet thoroughly enjoy attending British Youth Council events. They 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 **Dr Dave Smith**

On Tuesday 11 July, four members of the Thurrock Youth Cabinet met Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive & Managing Director Commissioner during a visit to the Inspire Youth Hub in Grays. The meeting is part of a range of visits by Dr Dave Smith across all services.

The four members enjoyed meeting Dr Dave and spoke to him about the Youth Cabinet's work. This included the recent Youth Wellbeing Day at Grangewaters Outdoor Education Centre; the Falcon Woods litter pick in Grays; and their work with the Local Plan Manager on the new emerging Local Plan making sure that young people have a voice on the future of the borough that they live in. *Please see appendix C for image.*

In November Dr Dave Smith will be attending one of our Youth Cabinet meetings. We are looking forward to welcoming him and sharing our news and progress.

1.5 **Work on the horizon**

- Thurrock Youth Cabinet elections for the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson roles will take place mid-September. At the next O&S meeting there will be a new Youth Cabinet representative.
- Developing a new strand to our work to encompass SEND Youth Voice. We have felt for a while that this is an area of growth to ensure that the voices of SEND young people are captured in our work.
- Raising knife crime awareness with the support of Essex Police.
- Thurrock Youth Cabinet recruitment drive to replace members that left the cabinet in July.

Appendix A – Falcon Woods Litter Pick Event (June 2023)



Before



After



14 bags of rubbish collected 😊



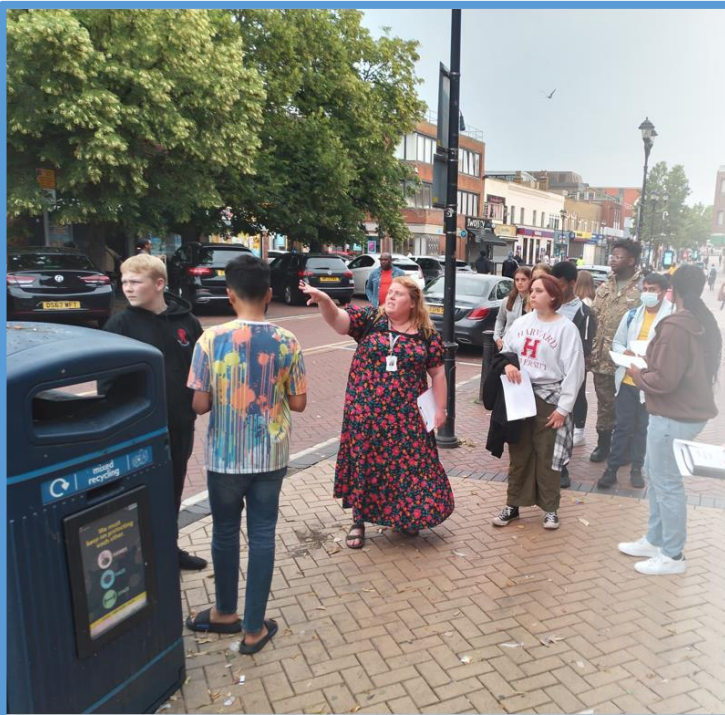


Linking with Thurrock Council's Local Plan Manager



Helping to shape the future of Thurrock

Us taking an active role in helping to shape the future of the borough by taking part in a series of interactive workshops that will inform the new Local Plan.



Appendix C – Youth Cabinet meet Dr Dave Smith (July 2023)



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12 September 2023	ITEM: 6
Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
2022/23 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children’s Social Care	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not Applicable
Report of: Lee Henley, Strategic Lead, Information Management	
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon - Assistant Director CSC and Early Help	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy - Director Children's and Families	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on Children Social Care complaints.

The annual report covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 is attached as an appendix. The report sets out the number of representations received in the year including the number of complaints, key issues arising from complaints and learning from complaints.

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This is the annual report on the operation of the Children Social Care Complaints Procedure covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

2.2 Summary of representations received for the reporting period

2.2.1 The following representations were received during 2022/23:

- 24 x Compliments
- 14 x Complaints
- 6 x MP Enquiries

- 21 x Members Enquiries
- 2 x Ombudsman Enquires

2.2.2 The details for this report are included within the appendix and a high-level summary is provided below:

- Complaint volumes are low
- The performance in responding to complaints within timeframe has improved and is strong at 93%
- There have been no complaint escalations onto stage 2
- There are no negative Ombudsman findings within the reporting period
- 47% of complaints were upheld

2.3 Learning from Complaints

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

Upheld complaints are routinely analysed to determine themes and trends and services are responsible for implementing learning swiftly.

Learning and/or outcomes from complaints are detailed within the appendix.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

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

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report on Children's Social Care complaints. It is best practice for this to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. This report is for monitoring and noting.

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

5.1 This report has been agreed with the Children Social Care senior management team. The report also went via Senior Leadership Team.

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

6.1 All learning and key trends identified in the complaints and compliments reporting have a direct impact on the quality of service delivery and performance. The reporting ensures that valuable feedback received from service users and carers is captured effectively and regularly monitored, with

the primary focus on putting things right or highlighting and promoting where services are working well.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Jonathan Wilson
Assistant Director Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. Any wider financial implications arising from the follow up of complaints will be assessed by the service and will form part of the wider service budget monitoring as appropriate.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: Judith Knight
Strategic Lead Legal Services

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

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

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report. Individual complaints that include an equality related expression of dissatisfaction are considered by the service alongside all complaints.

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

- None

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

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix – Children Social Care Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2022/23

Report Author:

Lee Henley

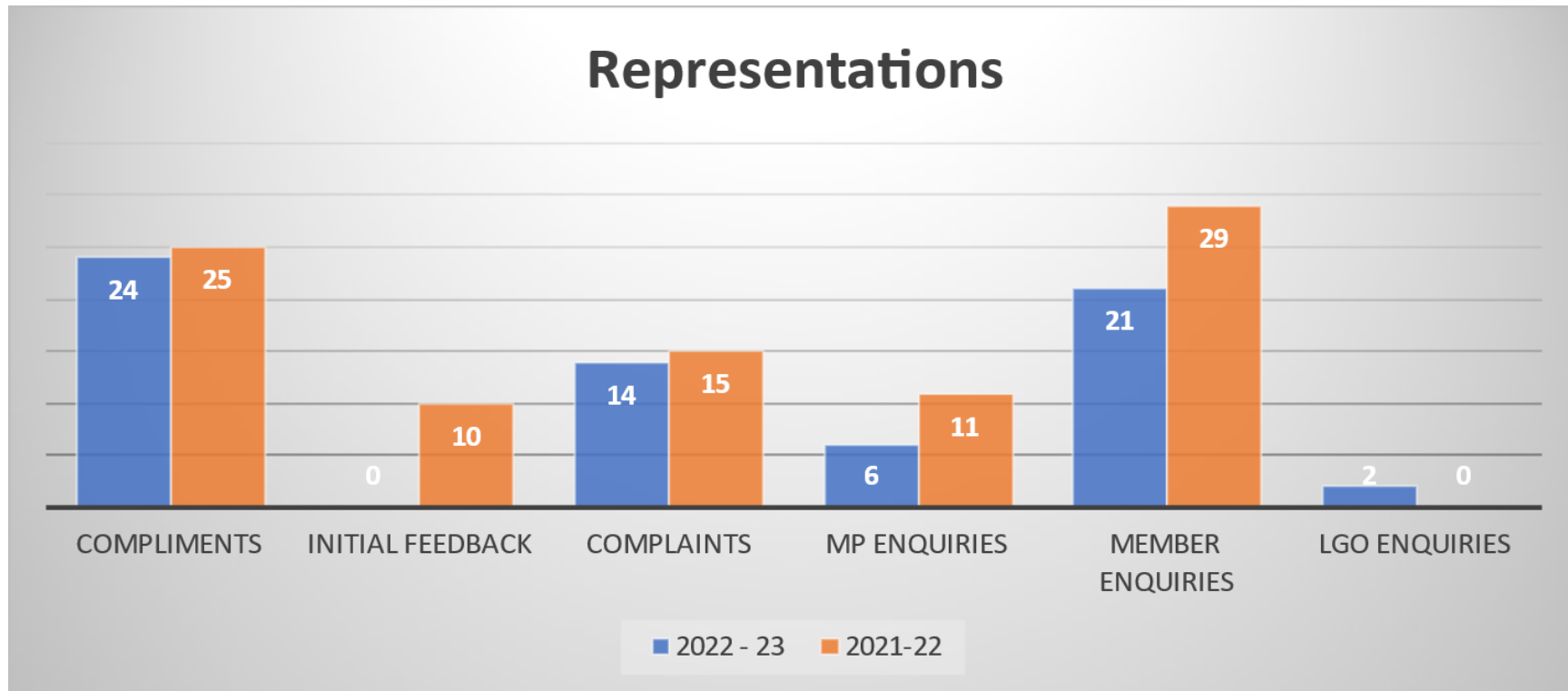
Strategic Lead, Information Management

HR, OD & Transformation

Appendix - 2022/23 Children's Social Care Complaints & Representations

1. Volume of Representations – 2022/23 vs 2021/22:

Below is a comparison of all representations received during both years. A total of **67** representations were received in 2022/23 compared with **90** for 2021/22.



2. Complaints – 2022/23 vs 2021/22:

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

Feedback:	Initial Feedback	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Stage 3 complaints	Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases	Cases closed in period	Cases Cancelled	% of complaints upheld in period	% timeliness of response for those due in period
2022/23	0	14	0	0	0	15	0	47%	93%
2021/22	10	15	0	0	0	14	0	57%	80%
Difference	-10	-1	0	0	0	+1	0	-10%	+13%

*For 2022/23:

- 14 complaints were received in the reporting period. These are shown within section 4
- 15 complaints were due a response in the reporting period. 14 of 15 (93%) were responded to within timeframe
- 15 complaints were responded to within this reporting period. These are shown in section 5
- 7 of 15 complaints responded to (47%) were upheld. These are shown in section 5 and the learning is detailed within section 3

3. Learning and/or outcomes from upheld complaints:

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	<p>Communication</p> <p>Complaint 1</p> <p>Parent raised concerns that they are receiving minimal support from the service with regards to their son. (Disabled Children)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>The social worker managing the case was spoken to and has been reminded of the importance of providing frequent updates to the parents. This will ensure the parents are kept up to date regarding the actions being taken and to reassure them that adequate support is provided.</p> <p>Complaint 2</p> <p>Concerns that factually incorrect information was held on son's file in relation to his care history. These errors were pointed out by the mother on numerous occasions however amendments were not made (Disabled Children)</p>	<p>Standard of Care</p> <p>Complaint 7</p> <p>Concerns regarding the level of care and support provided by the Foster Carer placement. (Fostering team)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>Meeting held with the Carers to share the concerns raised and ongoing guidance will be given to these carers to ensure that anyone accommodated by them in the future feels supported.</p>	<p>Level of support received</p> <p>Complaint 6</p> <p>Complaint raised by advocate on behalf of parents regarding concerns that their social worker has been unsupportive with their child's case (Disabled Children)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>The child's assessment had not been updated in over two years. This has now been actioned to ensure that this assessment is updated and followed going forward.</p> <p>There was also a delay in the minutes from a meeting being provided to the parents. An apology for this has been issued as this is not in line with standard practice. Going forward any minutes will be provided in a reasonable timeframe to ensure they can be reviewed before any scheduled meetings.</p>

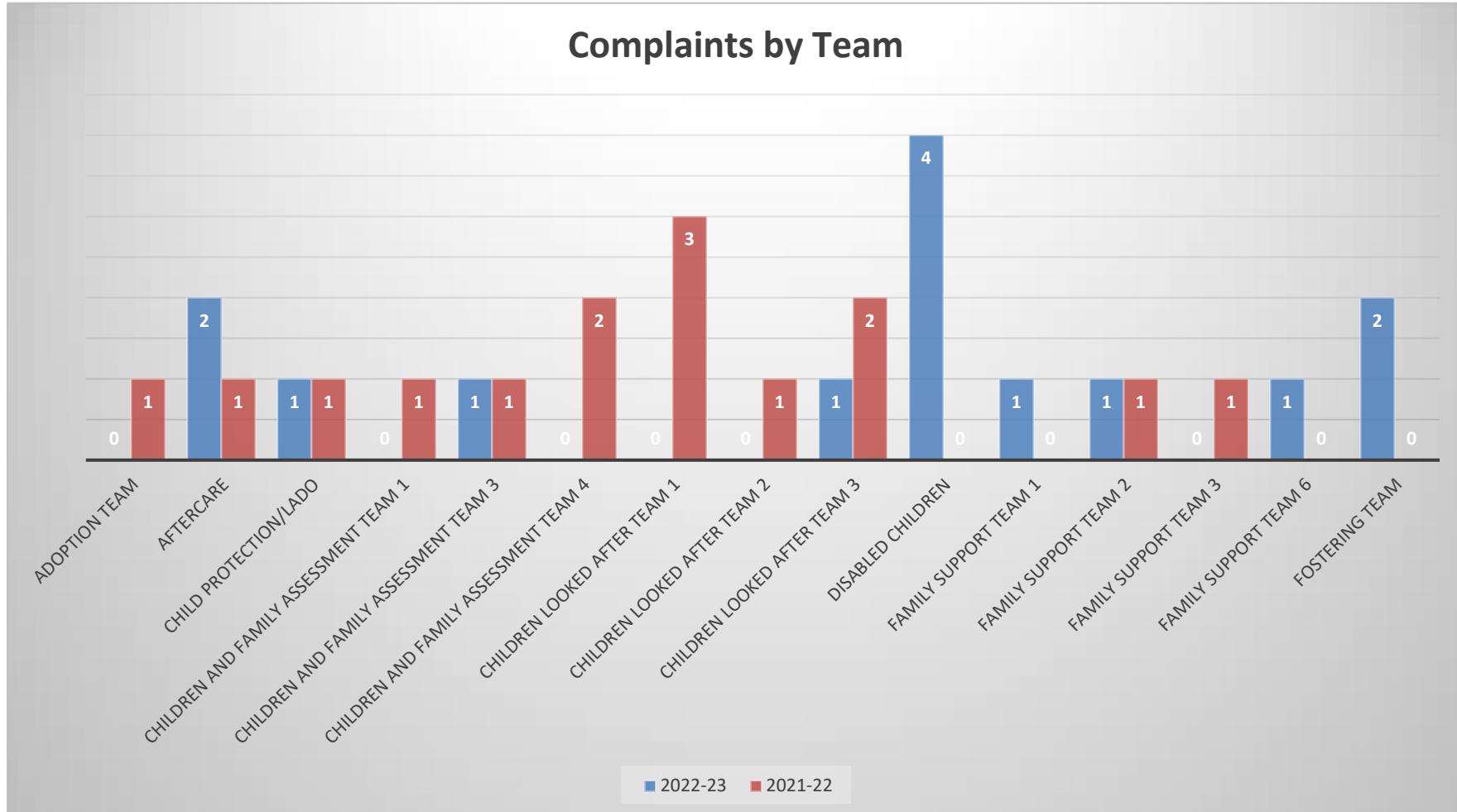
Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	<p>Communication</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>Requested amendments have now made to the files and all team members have been reminded of the importance of maintaining accurate information</p> <p>Complaint 3</p> <p>Concerns regarding a lack of communication from the allocated care worker and that care files relating to adoption have not been provided (Aftercare)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process regarding allocation of new cases was discussed within the Team Meeting, making it clear that the expectation is that young people must be contacted by the new care worker at the point of allocation • Where there is an absence of a care worker as with this case, the young person should be contacted by the responsible Senior Practitioner 	<p>Standard of Care</p>	<p>Level of support received</p>

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	Communication	Standard of Care	Level of support received
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Subject Access Request process has been circulated to all Team Members (including Managers), to ensure all staff are aware of the process for providing requested information <p>Complaint 4</p> <p>Concerns raised regarding a lack of response to a parent, when they raised concerns that they were not consulted regarding a respite placement (Fostering Team)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>The Fostering Team to ensure that they make all individuals aware ASAP regarding any respite care matters, to enable time for the families to address any concerns with the service</p> <p>Complaints 5</p> <p>Parent raised concerns that they have not had contact with their children, despite being advised that this would</p>		

Root cause analysis and learning from upheld complaints:	Root Cause 1 and associated learning	Root Cause 2 and associated learning	Root Cause 3 and associated learning
	<p>Communication</p> <p>happen (Children Looked After Team 3)</p> <p>Learning and/or outcome</p> <p>This was caused by staff absence. The service are reviewing processes to ensure contact is maintained at all times, in the event of staff absences from work</p>	<p>Standard of Care</p>	<p>Level of support received</p>

4. Breakdown of complaints received:

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



5. Upheld Complaints:

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

Complaint Area	Volume Closed 2022/23	Upheld	Volume Closed 2021/22	Upheld
Adoption	0	0	1	1
Aftercare	3	1	1	0
Child Protection/LADO	1	0	1	0
Children and Family Assessment Team 1	0	0	1	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 3	0	0	1	0
Children and Family Assessment Team 4	0	0	2	1
Children Looked After Team 1	0	0	3	3
Children Looked After Team 2	0	0	1	0

Complaint Area	Volume Closed 2022/23	Upheld	Volume Closed 2021/22	Upheld
Children Looked After Team 3/UAS	1	1	2	2
Disabled Children	4	3	0	N/A
Family Support Team 1	1	0	0	0
Family Support Team 2	1	0	1	0
Family Support team 3	1	0	0	0
Family Support Team 6	1	0	0	N/A
Fostering Team	2	2	0	N/A

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

There were 2 enquiries from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), where they reached a final decision on cases within the reporting period.

Area	Issue Nature	LGO Findings	Financial Remedy	Learning where relevant	Did the council respond to the LGSCO timeframes
MASH	Resident claims the council failed to respond properly to a safeguarding referral and did not report the matter to the police, which has made it impossible to bring criminal proceedings	Closed after initial enquiries - Outside of jurisdiction	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Yes
Family Support Team 2	Resident complains about how the council assessed the care needs of an unborn child. Resident also complains that their views were not included in the assessment which also contained inaccuracies.	Outside Jurisdiction	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Yes

7. Initial Feedback:

The council receives feedback which following assessment does not constitute a formal complaint but still requires addressing. Those within scope of an 'Initial Feedback' are sent to the service with a request that swift action takes place to resolve the issue. This should negate the need for a formal complaint taking place. For the reporting period a total of **0** 'Initial Feedback' have been recorded:

8. Enquiries

During the reporting period the following enquiries were received:

- 21 Cllr/Member enquiries
- 6 MP Enquiries

Member/Cllr Enquiries	Feedback Total
MASH	3
Family Support team 7	1
Operation of Homes	2
Fostering Team	1
All Services	7
Registration	1
Family Support 6	1
Aftercare	1
Children looked after Team 1	1
Family Support Team 2	2
Fostering Team	1

MP Enquiries	Feedback Total
Children and family assessment Team 1	1
Disabled Children	1
Children looked after Team 3	1
Family Support Team 2	1
Faily Support Team 1	1
Prevention/Support Service	1

9. External Compliments:

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

Service Area (2022/23)	Total Received	Service Area (2021/22)	Total Received
Family Support team 4	3	Prevention/Support Service	4
Family Support Team 3	2	Family Support Team 7	3
Children Looked After Team 1	3	Family Support Team 6	3
Children Looked After Team 3	2	Fostering Team	3
Children and Family Assessment Team 4	2	Permanency/Court Team	2
Fostering Team	2	Family Support Team 4	2
Aftercare	1	Family Support Team 1	2
Family Support Team 2	1	Support for childminders	2
Family Support Team 7	1	Aftercare	1
All Services	1	Family Support Team 3	1
Prevention/Support Service	1	Families Together	1
Family Support Team 6	1	Children Looked After Team 2	1
Children and Family Assessment Team 3	1		
Disabled Children	1		
MASH	1		
Child Protection/LADO	1		

10. Examples of External Compliments

Family Support Team 4 - Your member of staff is a child focused practitioner and definitely one who is advocating on behalf of the family and showing empathy, putting herself in the child's and parents' shoes. Her ability to reflect has contributed to good work undertaken with families.

Family Support Team 7 - Feedback from a parent during a pre-consultation discussion " Firstly you are brilliant at your job and I feel that you are doing more than just doing your job, but that you really cared about me and the kids. I have had lots of social workers over the years, but never one like you. You listen and make me feel that I'm worth something"

Children Looked After Team 1 - I just wanted to thank you for all the support that you have given to x and helping her achieve her goals and becoming an amazing young person! I know she has appreciated all that you have done for her

11. Benchmarking

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

Council	Complaints Received	% Of complaints upheld	% Responded to within timeframe
Thurrock	14	47%	93%
Newham	17	56%	48%
City of London	4	0%	100%
London Borough of Redbridge	146	21%	83%
Hounslow	11	14%	85%

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12 September 2023		ITEM: 8
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Family Hubs and the Start for Life Programme.		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Clare Moore, Strategic Lead Youth Offending Service and Prevention.		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock Council is one of 75 local authority areas eligible to benefit from the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. Funding of £301.75 million has been allocated to the programme between 2022–2025 alongside an additional £28.7m to improve the home learning environment (HLE) for 3–4-year-olds, as part of the pandemic education recovery programme. Funding is dependent upon local authority areas meeting all programme requirements over three years.

Support for children aged 0-19 years, young adults up to 25 who have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND), and services to support parents/carers are being delivered through a family hub network. These services are designed to enhance and expand a range of existing children’s centre and early help provision. Local authority areas must involve parents and carers in the development and design of local services (co-production) and look at opportunities to co-locate services including those delivered by the voluntary sector and community groups.

The programme has a focus on the Start for Life period from conception to age two, incorporating recommendations from *‘The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days’* review (2021). In response to this, funding has been specifically allocated to develop or enhance perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships services, and infant feeding and parenting support. Local authority areas are also required to deliver a range of multi-agency core services through their family hub network.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Members receive this report for information and note the progress of the requirements and responsibilities of local authority areas engaged in the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme was launched in April 2022 and aims to improve a range of physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing and education outcomes for children aged 0-19, young adults to age 25 with SEND, and parents/carers. Services and support will be delivered through a family hub network designed to meet local need. The programme is aligned with existing government programmes that are already delivered in Thurrock including Supporting Families (previously known as Troubled Families) and Reducing Parental Conflict and builds on the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 public health services.

2.2 Seventy-five local authority areas are currently eligible to join the programme based on levels of deprivation and health and education outcomes. £301m has been allocated to the programme over a three-year period (2022 – 2025) with a further £28.7m allocated to improve early language development / home learning environments (HLE) for 3–4-year-olds as part of the pandemic education recovery programme.

2.3 The programme grant comprises of a fixed rate for all local authority areas. Local authority areas are required to meet all the ‘minimum expectations’ set out in the Programme Guide by March 2025 and funding is predicated on this. In addition to meeting the minimum requirements, local authority areas must also commit to identifying ‘go further’ options to expand and enhance their family hub services. Funding must be used to improve the offer for children and families and so if local authority areas already have most, or all the minimum requirements in place, it is expected that more ‘go further’ options will be delivered. In Thurrock ‘go further’ options will be designed to meet assessed need eg tailoring services to engage groups that we know from local data are less likely to access universal and targeted early help services.

2.4 The programme has a focus on ‘Start for Life’ support for children and families from conception to age two (the ‘1001 critical days’). *‘The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days’* review published in March 2021 found that services offered during this period can be disjointed and difficult for families to navigate meaning some do not access the universal or targeted support they need. The review identified perinatal mental health, parent-infant relationships and breastfeeding support as essential services but found that support in different areas was inconsistent. To address this, funding has been earmarked through the programme to enhance and expand a range of Start for Life services through family hubs, these are referred to as the ‘funded elements’:

- perinatal mental health/parent-infant relationships
- infant feeding

- parenting support
- early language / HLE

These services aim to support a smooth transition to parenthood, the development of secure attachments, and school readiness, thereby reducing the need for specialist support.

2.5 There are three additional funded elements within the programme which will underpin the development and delivery of local family hub models:

- Parent and Carer Panels must be established for expectant parents and those with children aged 0-2, so that service users are involved in service design and delivery, this is known as ‘co-production’
- A Start for Life Offer must be published both online and in hard copy, so families are clear what services and support are available to them during the ‘critical 1001 days’
- Transformation funding is available to support local authority areas through their change/transformation process to develop their local family hub model. It is not intended to cover the costs of family hubs and Start for Life services. Transformation funding includes a small capital element which can be used for such things as adaptation of existing buildings to improve accessibility or space, IT upgrades to facilitate multi-agency working, or the purchase of essential equipment or furniture.

2.6 In addition to the funded elements, family hub networks must also deliver the following core services for children and families from existing funding sources, e.g. core grants and other programme funding arrangements:

- activities for children 0-5 eg interactive stay and play sessions
- debt & welfare advice and housing support
- domestic abuse support
- early childhood education & care and financial support (early years entitlements)
- SEND support and services (inclusive of the Start for Life period)
- health visiting 0-5 years and midwifery/maternity
- intensive targeted family support including through the Supporting Families programme
- local authority 0-19 public health services
- mental health services beyond those provided through the Start for Life offer
- nutrition & weight management
- oral health improvement
- reducing parental conflict & support for separating parents
- stop smoking support
- substance (alcohol / drugs) misuse support

- Youth services – universal & targeted including youth justice

These core services are delivered by local authority teams and partner agencies, with some commissioned from the voluntary sector. Many were already delivered from Thurrock's Children's Centres and Youth Hubs and so this programme provides the opportunity to build on this strong base and ensure these services are part of the local family hub offer. Local authority areas can choose to deliver additional services from their family hubs if this will meet local need.

- 2.7 The programme's objective is to join up and enhance services delivered through a network of family hubs, ensuring that all parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it.
- 2.8 Family hub networks can include a range of existing delivery points including children's centres, youth hubs, partner led premises, and community outreach sites where programme-related provision is already offered. These will be augmented by a comprehensive virtual offer. Guidance regarding central branding conventions for family hubs will be provided for local authority areas to use alongside existing local branding in recognition that families will be familiar with this.
- 2.9 Local authority areas are required to engage with emerging digital solutions and Thurrock Council is represented on the Family Hubs Growing Up Well project co-design group. This project will conduct testing and implementation of various digital solutions in a small number of local authority areas in Year 1, incorporating all local authorities in 2023-24.
- 2.10 Each local authority area is required to submit a Delivery Plan by the end of 2022. This will sit alongside locally owned plans and set out the overall ambition for change over the 3 years of the programme and show how funding will be used to achieve funding objectives. The Delivery Plan will set out medium to long terms goals including 'go further' options, milestones for opening family hubs and financial modelling. Each local authority will be assigned a Regional Delivery Lead, to support this process.
- 2.11 The Programme will be closely monitored by the Family Hubs Unit with quarterly updates regarding progress of the Delivery Plan and management information/outcome data, and bi-annual financial monitoring returns. The Family Hub Unit is working with a small group of local authorities to develop and test the management information dataset and Thurrock's Performance Quality Business Intelligence service is part of this team.
- 2.12 In terms of the programme timetable, 2022/23 counts as Year 1. There is an expectation that local authority areas will seek to open family hubs during the first half of 2023 and start to deliver visible change. Start for Life Offers should be published, and Parent and Carer Panels established, by April 2023. Local authority areas also need to conduct a local population needs assessment during Year 1 or build upon existing Joint Area Needs Assessments.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Thurrock partners have a strong history of working together to develop and enhance cohesive universal, targeted and specialist services and support for children, young people, and families across Thurrock, currently through the Brighter Futures Partnership Board. The Partnership is chaired by the Corporate Director Children's Services and is well placed to oversee the implementation of the programme in Thurrock. A Family Hub and Start for Life Programme Board has been established which reports to the Partnership and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Thurrock's Delivery Plan. It is chaired by the AD Early Help and Children's Services, who is also the programme's named accountable person.
- 3.2 Thurrock's children's centres already hosted or delivered a number of the multi-agency core services set out in paragraph 2.6 and they have evolved to meet changing local need e.g., increasing their age range from 0-5 to 0-11 in 2018. The service was already underpinned by the three Family Hub principles of accessibility, connection, and relationships and, along with Thurrock's youth hubs, is well placed to transform into a family hub network within required timescales.
- 3.3 7 of the 8 Children's Centres rebranded to Family Hubs at the end of April 2023. The last Hub, Stifford will go live at the end of July. Tilbury, Aveley and Stifford, the 3 main Family Hubs have been refurbished and upgraded, by utilising the Family Hubs Transformation Capital funding and they held Family Fun days in the May school holiday to mark the occasion. Official openings will take place on the 24 October.
- 3.4 There are 3 main family hubs one in each of the three Children Services localities (West, East and Central), with the smaller hubs as part of the broader network. The network also includes existing sites delivering early help services such as youth hubs, Health Centres including the Integrated Medical, Wellbeing Centre in Corringham, Libraries, Sunshine Centre, East Tilbury, and Orsett Village Halls sites (known as 'spoke's) and outreach delivery points including voluntary sector and community support.
- 3.5 Strategic managers have worked together to develop the 'go further' options for the funded elements of the programme. These were submitted as part of the sign-up process for consideration by the Family Hub Unit Infant feeding, parenting support and early language/ HLE sit within local authority / public health areas of responsibility and the 'go further's' sought to expand our evidence-based parenting programme offer and the provision of perinatal / 0-2s health services, and early years support across the family hub network. Opportunities to extend the co-location of practitioners from partner agencies and promote multi-agency workforce training is underway with Midwifery, Health Visiting, Debt and Welfare advice, Domestic Violence support, Housing, Reducing Parental Conflict and Stop smoking support already being

delivered. Oral Health and Weight management will follow in the coming months.

- 3.6 The Family Hub model is underpinned by co-production to ensure families and young people are involved in the co-design of family hub services and how and where they will be delivered. Whilst our Parent and Carer Panel will help to achieve this in relation to the Start for Life offer, a broad communication and consultation strategy is in development. This will include opportunities to engage young people as well as parents / carers and will have a focus on reaching seldom heard groups.
- 3.7 The Parent Carer Panels have been established in all 3 localities and have had 2 meetings each so far. The Panels are helping us drive the programme forward and have been consulted on a number of items, including the Start for Life Digital Offer and the Family Hub timetables.
- 3.8 The Start for Life website went live on the 28 April, whilst it is still a work in progress, the site already contains a wealth of information on the support available to families. We will be holding a formal consultation with residents in the Autumn.
- 3.9 There has been regular communications with residents, including a postcard that gives information on services, their location and how to access the Start for Life digital offer. Translation into other languages is underway, so we can engage those seldom heard groups.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are aware of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme and the responsibilities that attach to local authority areas engaged in the programme.
- 4.2 Collectively, Thurrock partners were already meeting the early help needs of many local families, however management information showed that some seldom heard groups are less likely to access some services or come late. This programme gives partners the opportunity to work together to target those harder to engage groups, ensure that all families are aware of the support that is on offer particularly in the Start for Life phase, and enhance and expand existing universal and targeted early help services to meet local need through a family hub network.

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

- 5.1 As stated above, a Consultation and Communication Strategy is being developed to ensure that young people and families can be involved in service design. We have had 3 workshops with the Community and Voluntary sector, and more are being arranged. We have met with the Youth Cabinet who have given their views on what the Hub delivery could like for Adolescents.

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

- 6.1 Ensuring that children have the best start in life is a priority for the Brighter Futures Children’s Partnership Board and the Health and Well-being Board. The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme will promote this.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

Programme funding is predicated upon effective delivery of the minimum requirements of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme over the next three years. Matched funding is not a feature of the programme.

7.2 Legal

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

The work of Family Hubs and the proposals outlined in this report supports Thurrock Council’s duty under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. This is a general duty to provide a range and level of services to children in need.

Under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the Council is required to cooperate with its relevant partners with the view to improve the well-being of children in its area. The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the statutory requirement and responsibilities for the Council and its partners in providing support and services for children, young people, and families. This legislation is underpinned by statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), which states that, “Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early.” The Family Hubs and the Start for Life Programme will support the Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities to meet need early.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

Thurrock's local Family Hubs and Start for Life programme will have a focus on consulting with and supporting families from seldom heard groups including ethnic minority communities, care leavers, vulnerable adults, fathers, and families of children with SEND.

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

None

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

[Family hubs and start for life programme: local authority guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author

Clare Moore

Strategic Lead Youth Offending Service and Prevention
Children and Families Service

12 September 2023		ITEM: 9
Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Thematic Review Action Plan - Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
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 an update on the Thematic Review into Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Crime Review action plan.

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

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee note the progress made on Thematic Review Action Plan to date.

2. Thematic Review Action Plan Update

2.1 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 within the review. These action plans have been ratified through the LSCP Learning Practice Review Group, Management Executive Board and Statutory Partners.

2.2 This action plan has been devised to identify actions to be taken to meet the recommendations from the Thematic Review into Serious Youth Violence and Gang Related Crime. The plan has been ratified and is monitored through the LSCP governance process. Six recommendations were made following the review that are further divided into sub-sections totalling 15 actionable areas. Currently six are rated green and complete and nine rated amber as work has started and is on-going. All actions are progressing within timescales.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 None

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 To update members on the progress on the Thematic Review action plan. The action plan is a multi-agency document that is 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: **Michelle Hall**
Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications.

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: **Petrena Sharpe**
Safeguarding Lawyer – Team Leader

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 to Safeguard Children 2018 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 Government has set out statutory guidance under Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. It requires specified authorities for a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities

to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

Supporting our children and young people who are disadvantaged is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. Reviews are informed by equality data, and the Partnership promotes practice to achieve equality, inclusion and diversity. The Partnership carries 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 Thematic Review Action Plan.

Report Author:

Priscilla Bruce-Annan

Business Manager

Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

Thematic Review of Youth Violence and Gang Related Activity							
Recommendation	Actions	Progress	Lead	Timescale	RAG		
1.1	Ensure the completion of the current review and to then monitor the implementation of actions to improve information sharing between Essex Police to the Thurrock YOS and CSC.	This Action Plan has been presented to the Thurrock Council Youth Crime Governance Board. Specific actions have been added to the Youth Offending Service Delivery Plan and are monitored through that structure and back into the LSCP via Multi-agency Child Exploitation Group (MACE) group meetings.	Progress on this action is reported to the LSCP Multi-agency Child Exploitation Group as a standing item. The actions continue to be reviewed as part of the Delivery Plan for the YOS.	Thurrock LSCP Business Team	31/10/23	A	
1.2	Explore ways to gain the support required from London Boroughs and the Metropolitan Police to share information in relation to the flow and interaction of youths between Thurrock and the London boroughs.	Essex Police to consider how this information can be obtained from the London boroughs via a protocol or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Identify a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) within the London boroughs that can be contacted when information is required. This to be a reciprocal arrangement.	Protocols are in place within the Youth Offending Service (YOS) within Thurrock, London boroughs and Essex, which need to be followed. Work is currently being undertaken into young people who are arrested in Thurrock but live in other boroughs. Enquiries are made with the young persons home borough (London and Essex) to ensure that this work is joined up. The SPOC within the Metropolitan Police for information is MSO@met.police.uk from there the enquirer is placed in contact with the respective department for that child. A copy of the national protocol and local transfer request form has been received. This action is complete and the work ongoing.	Essex Police and Thurrock YOS	31/10/23	G	
1.3.1	Improvements are required in the communication and information sharing to, and between, health agencies in a number of areas; a) Ensuring information relating to the transfer of care from vulnerable children and their families from 'Out of Area' into Thurrock is shared with relevant health agencies. This could be widened to all agencies and the Thurrock LSCP audit group could undertake an audit of information sharing for children transferring into Thurrock from outside the local authority.	Transfer In and Out of records/information to be shared and captured across the whole of the health organisation. This theme to be added to the LSCP Audit Group schedule.	The audit for transfer in and out has been completed in 2022. GP surgeries transfer out records once the patient has registered with a new GP. They send the full medical records in bulk, this includes clinic letters, A&E attendances and safeguarding information. This is also the case when a local GP registers a new patient. Patients are offered a new patient appointment – this covers any medication medical conditions they have plus known to services. It may be required for example if they were known the previous area paediatrician they will need to complete a referral to the new area. In some cases this may have already been completed by the previous area. Once these records are received a full review should take place, if there any identified safeguarding concerns this should be noted within the medical records. If the child is open on a child protection/child in need plan contact should be made with Social Care. This is also the case with Looked After Children (LAC). Acute settings only hold records once a child has attended the hospital or has been referred for treatment. As such a child could move in to the area in 2020, but not have an episode of care until 2023. The acute would only be aware of that child in 2023 and they would only have a record from 2023. If a child moves into the area with a complex health need, it is possible that their local hospital would communicate with us to ensure care is arranged. This may also be via the GP. Transfer of records relate with community services than acute services.	ICB and MSEFT	31/10/23	G	
1.3.2	b) The communication of hospital attendances of Thurrock children to hospitals Out of Area (especially when those relate to serious youth violence) is shared with relevant agencies in Thurrock.	B) as above	Links created with Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) as this is being progressed within a larger project that has been commissioned across Essex.	MSEFT	30/09/23	A	
1.3.3	c) Ensure the inclusion of health representatives in relevant multi-agency forums where children who are known to be at high risk of youth violence are discussed.	Health Colleagues are invited weekly to the Risk Management Meetings (RMM). YOS to report back on the attendance of Health colleagues at these meetings if there is any cause for concern. Health colleagues are also invited to participate and contribute to range of other multi-agency meetings, where children and young people in this category are discussed. The MSE lead is now also invited to the RMMs to ensure all relevant information is shared.	Health attend the Missing Children's Panel weekly, but Health representation is still being sought at the Child Exploitation Tracker Panel. Ideally this should be a representative from Sexual Health. Discussions are on-going with Public Health who commission this service to resolve this situation.	Thurrock CSC	31/10/23	A	
1.4	Thurrock LSCP to consider hosting multi-agency information sharing workshops to develop professionals' knowledge on serious youth violence in the context of safeguarding.	Plan and deliver workshops on this theme.	Workshops on Gangs and Serious Youth Violence are being delivered four times a year.	LSCP Business Team	31/07/23	G	
2.1	Thurrock LSCP to develop a clear threshold and pathways document in relation to contextual safeguarding.	Ensure the pathway document is reviewed and current. Plan and deliver awareness raising programme.	Child Exploitation (CE) Pathway to CE Tracker and the Thurrock Missing Children Flowchart provided and will be reviewed shortly. (Timescales on this to be reviewed)	LSCP Business Team and YOS	30/10/23	A	
2.2	Following the completion of this document an extensive practitioner awareness raising campaign should take place across the partnership.	As above	A practitioner awareness raising campaign to be launched once document is finalised and published.	LSCP Business Team	31/12/23	A	
3	The development of a transitional safeguarding approach should be considered jointly with the Safeguarding Adult Board.	A joint planned approach to Transitional Safeguarding is being developed across the Thurrock Boards and Partnerships and forms a large piece of work.	Work being developed across the LSCP and SAB is developing a Transitional Safeguarding approach. A Transitions Working Group is in place to discuss and progress the work in this area. Currently, capacity in the Transitions operational team is causing delay. A conference is being planned for April 2024.	LSCP Business Team, SAB to include CSC and ASC	31/12/23	A	
4.1	The Partnership needs to ensure that further work takes place to look at how Thurrock can be more creative in engaging and educating young people and families, who do not either recognise identified risk, or are resistant to social care involvement. This will involve identifying different models, skills, services, and ways of working		Specialist support workers within the CE and Gangs Team are in place and provide short term interventions to identified at risk children/young people e.g. those excluded from school etc. Thurrock Education working with schools to reduce exclusions. The Thurrock Alternative Provision providing a programme of structured training and support to Thurrock schools on reducing Exclusions. Links between YOS and Inspire on Alternative Provision is very good. The CE and Gangs Team provide training, drop-ins and information sharing sessions with parents in schools to prevent CE escalation. This work is developing and on-going. Essex Police are working with some Thurrock schools on this theme during PSHE lessons to raise awareness etc. The LSCP deliver the Walk Online Roadshow event to children in Year 5 exploring online safety and emerging digital risks. The LSCP offers training for practitioners on 'Proactively Engaging Families who are Uncertain' to look at different methods to engage with children, young people and families.	CSC and Thurrock Education	31/07/23	G	
4.2	Agencies working with children and young people at risk of youth violence need to clearly ascertain in their assessments the views of the child, but also their parents and carers views of risk.	Ensure this is captured in assessments.	Child and Family assessments are completed and the views of the child and family are taken into account however, currently this may not look at risk. CE Risk Assessment to be reviewed to ensure it captures the young person and families view of the risk etc. The risks are clearly recorded on the CE Risk Assessment and the CE plan. These are also discussed at the CE Tracker panels. The views of young people and their parents are recorded on file through the assessment process, direct work and in Strategy Meetings. Safety training to include an emphasis on the child, young person and family's view of risk and what parents/carers can do to increase safety for the child or young person.	Thurrock CSC	31/07/23	G	
5.1	Housing services in Thurrock to exercise managed housing reciprocal and only use temporary accommodation in an emergency, for those children subject to, or likely to be involved in serious youth violence.	As in recommendation.	There is currently a reciprocal in place for those fleeing Domestic (DA) and Sexual Abuse (SA). A risk assessment is carried out to see which boroughs are 'safe' etc. Once this is known a reciprocal is requested. Currently, there is no such procedure in place for children and young people subject to or likely to be involved in serious youth violence. The Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Team are working on a similar procedure in relation to Gangs. Discussions are being held. There is a procedure/policy in place whereby if a Borough moves a family into Thurrock they should notify Thurrock, but this does not always happen - for temporary accommodation? For private renting, there is no policy or procedure in place. This would not be possible unless there was licenses in place for private landlords.	Thurrock Housing Council and Private Landlords and ASB Team	31/10/23	A	
5.2	Work is required with housing providers in Thurrock to alleviate the major concern for agencies locally regarding those vulnerable families that are moved into Thurrock that they are not aware of, and therefore may be housed in an inappropriate area and not given the support required.		Thurrock Housing are undertaking a resettlement programme with new and existing residents. Sharing information, support and advice on a range of issues e.g. education, health, faith and community groups etc. Additional work is being undertaken with Thurrock Housing and temp accommodation.	Thurrock Housing	31/10/23	A	
6.1	Engagement is required with secondary schools in relation to permanent exclusions. This includes Thurrock LSCP receiving reports in relation to the continuing development of the ongoing project with the Alternative Provision in Thurrock.		This recommendation is captured within the Annual Public Health Report and is in turn reported through to LSCP MACE Group. A programme of training, support and advice is being undertaken by Olive Academy (Alternative Provision) with schools around preventing permanent exclusions and is reported to YOS and Brighter Futures. This is also reported to the LSCP via the MACE group. The Secondary Outreach Programme has been delivered and reports provided to the Youth Crime Governance Board. Risk factors associated with secondary exclusions have been identified and linked into some of the work around human learning systems. This work is on-going and will be gathered along with evidence around the outcomes of the outreach programme provided by Olive Academy, alternative provision.	Thurrock Education	31/10/23	A	
6.2	Engagement with primary schools will also be a positive move by the partnership in order to identify children at risk earlier, this should include an awareness programme to these children highlighting the risk of carrying bladed articles.		Olive Academy, alternative provision is delivering training, support and advice to primary schools in Thurrock on reducing exclusions and working with children identified as at risk of exclusion. The Thurrock Gangs and CE Team have specialist workers in primary schools providing interventions with identified children, carers and school staff. For primary aged children there is no alternative provision, there are alternative provisions in place - Inclusion base for a "time out". A protocol is in place around if a child or young person brings a bladed article on school site a referral is made to YOS for support and intervention to prevent permanent exclusion. This is also covered during the Walk Online Roadshow for children in Year 5. Fundin has been secured funding from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Unit (PFCCU) to offer an outreach programme for primary pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. The programme will be offered via The Osborne Trust, who currently run Thurrock primary inclusion units. The Osborne Trust are currently working with our secondary provider to identify areas of good practice that can be used to support primary pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.	Thurrock Education and Thurrock LSCP	31/07/23	G	

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**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2023/24**

Dates of Meetings: 15 June 2023, 12 September 2023, 16 November 2023, 16 January 2024, 12 March 2024

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member	Description of Report
15 June 2023			
Terms of Reference	Democratic Services	Officers	
Youth Cabinet Update	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	
Statutory Duties Report - Children's Social Care	Janet Simon	Officers	
Statutory Duties Report – Education	Michele Lucas	Officers	

Children's Social Care Performance – Quarter 4 2022-23	Janet Simon	Chair	
Fees and Charges Report			
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item	
12 September 2023			
Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item	
2022/23 Annual Complaints and Representations Report – Children's Social Care	Lee Henley	Officers	
Fostering Recruitment Update	Janet Simon	Members	
Family Hubs / Start for Life Update	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	
16 November 2023			
Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item	
Children's Social Care Performance Quarter 1	Janet Simon	Officers	
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2023-24	Kelly McMillan	Officer	
Update on Aveley & Orsett Heath Schools	Michele Lucas		
Update on Adult Community College			
Update on Stable Homes Built on Love			
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item	
Childrens Transport contract re-procurement 2024	Sarah Williams		

Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item	
16 January 2024			
Youth Cabinet Update	Angela Surrey	Standing Item	
Overview of Responsibilities of Portfolio holder for Children's Services	Councillor B Johnson		
Children Obesity report			
Educational Attainment Data 2022/23	Michele Lucas		
Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Annual Assessment Report 2023	Michele Lucas		
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item	
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item	
12 March 2024			

Youth Cabinet Update Report	Angela Surrey	Standing Item	
Overview of Responsibilities of Portfolio holder for Education			
Update from Working Group on Mental Health			
Update from Working Group on Health Living (Childhood Obesity)			
Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership Board	Priscilla Bruce-Annan	Standing Item	
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item	

Updated:

Clerk: Rhiannon Whiteley

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