

15 January 2019		ITEM: 10
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children's Social Care Performance		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Jackie Groom, Strategic Lead of Performance, Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children and Families		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock has seen demand rise in the second half of the year for children's social care. Work has focussed on ensuring children get the right help at the right time. The rate of referrals is below similar authorities matched for need but more referrals result in full assessment of need and any risks. This is a more proportionate response for families. This has been achieved through the work of the "MASH" the multi-agency safeguarding hub and improving access to the Early Help Service. Early Help is currently supporting 730 children and their families.

The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan due to concern about abuse or neglect have reduced because we are starting fewer plans and reducing the length of time children are subject to plans.

The number of children looked after has also reduced this year and this has been achieved by reducing the length of time a child is looked after by progressing plans for long term care more quickly. This means that children who can return to live with their family or relatives do so more quickly and the smaller number of younger children who cannot live safely with their family are placed with an adoptive family sooner. The rate of children looked after has fallen over the last two years and is now coming more in line with similar authorities matched by need. The number of young children placed with adoptive parents or in permanent care with relatives has increased. The number of children adopted has risen from 7 last year. It is likely to be 14 this year.

Children looked after are making good educational progress with progress scores better than national average figures for looked after children. Performance this year being in the top 25% of authorities. The commitment of schools and our virtual

school deserve credit for ensuring educational support helps our children do as well as they can. Despite disadvantage they have faced we want our children to do as well as children in the general school population and we are reducing the gap in attainment. This will have long term benefits for children's wellbeing as they grow up.

Our care leavers are doing well with 69% in education training or employment which is higher than in similar authorities matched by need.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That members note the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a summary of Children's Social Care performance. It describes current activity levels and performance of Children's social care services in responding to the needs of vulnerable children.

2.2 Thurrock produces a number of data sets and performance reports to meet internal and external reporting requirements. Teams and Managers use the data to understand and respond to changes in activity levels and to monitor and respond to the quality and timeliness of services and information about how well children are doing. The information is discussed with front line workers so we know how well we are doing.

The data in this report is from the latest performance digest (October 2018), regional benchmarking data and national data sets. This data has been presented and discussed with the Social Care Senior Management Team and the Corporate Director's Performance Group

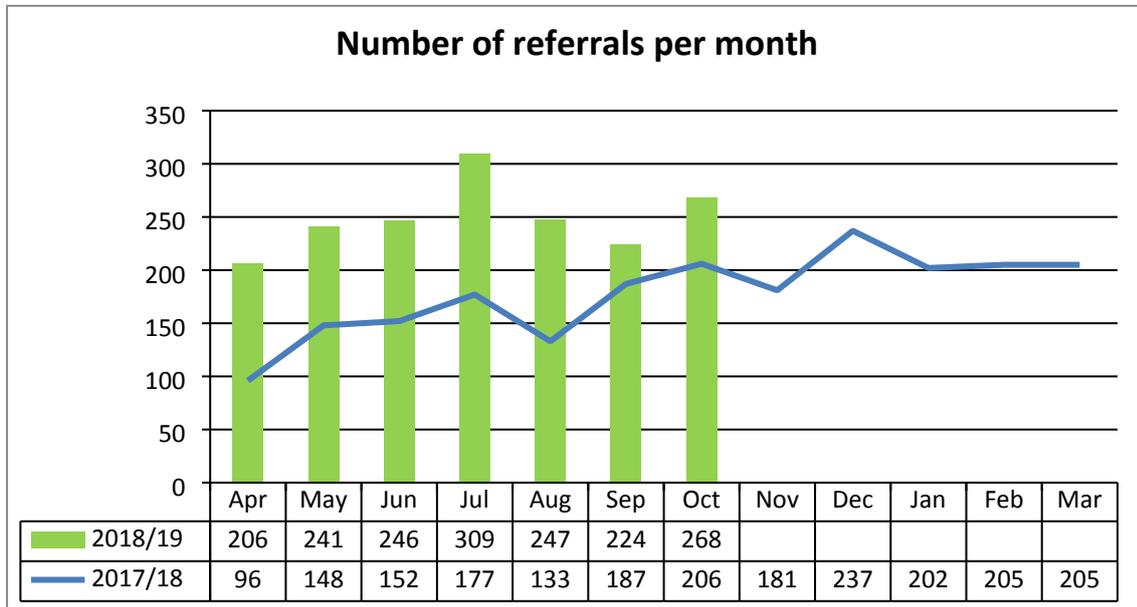
3. Performance

3.1 Contacts and Referrals

3.2 Thurrock is managing demand well at the front door (MASH) of Children's Social Care. Compared to previous years the rate of contacts and referrals has dropped. We receive on average about 500 contacts per month. Each month on average we receive about 220 referrals for October this was 268. The table shows a moderate rise in referrals in the second half of the year. Reduction in contacts in referrals reflects more confidence among partner agencies about appropriate referrals and in use of Early Help. Most contacts come from the Police schools and health but families also get in touch when they need help themselves. Contacts are calls about concerns for a child which are largely dealt with by giving advice or by referral to Early Help. Referrals are those circumstances that need a social care intervention because of more serious concerns about a child's wellbeing or development.

The number of re referrals has been much reduced in the last two years giving us confidence about the impact of work with families and is currently 9.3% compared to 22% for similar authorities matched for need.

Number of Referrals.

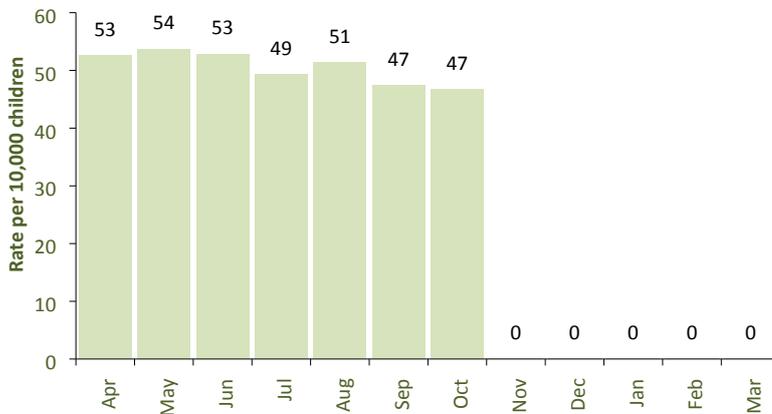


3.3 Children subject to Child Protection Plans

The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan due to concern about abuse or neglect have reduced because we are starting fewer plans and reducing the length of time children are subject to plans. Plans are reviewed in a timely way so that children and families understand what needs to change and progress.

There are 200 children subject to Child Protection plans in October. This reflects a rate of 47 per 10,000 child population compared to similar authorities at a rate of 51. The % of children remaining on a plan for more than two years is currently 3% which is higher than similar authorities at 2%. This is a key area of focus and we expect to see this reduce in coming months to ensure children and families where risk is reduced have plans ended quickly and where risk has not reduced decisions are not delayed about next steps. Strengthening Early Help can help build confidence among professionals about stepping down child protection plans when families can have continued support without a child protection plan.

Rate of Child protection plans [Rate calculation allows comparison with other similar authorities]

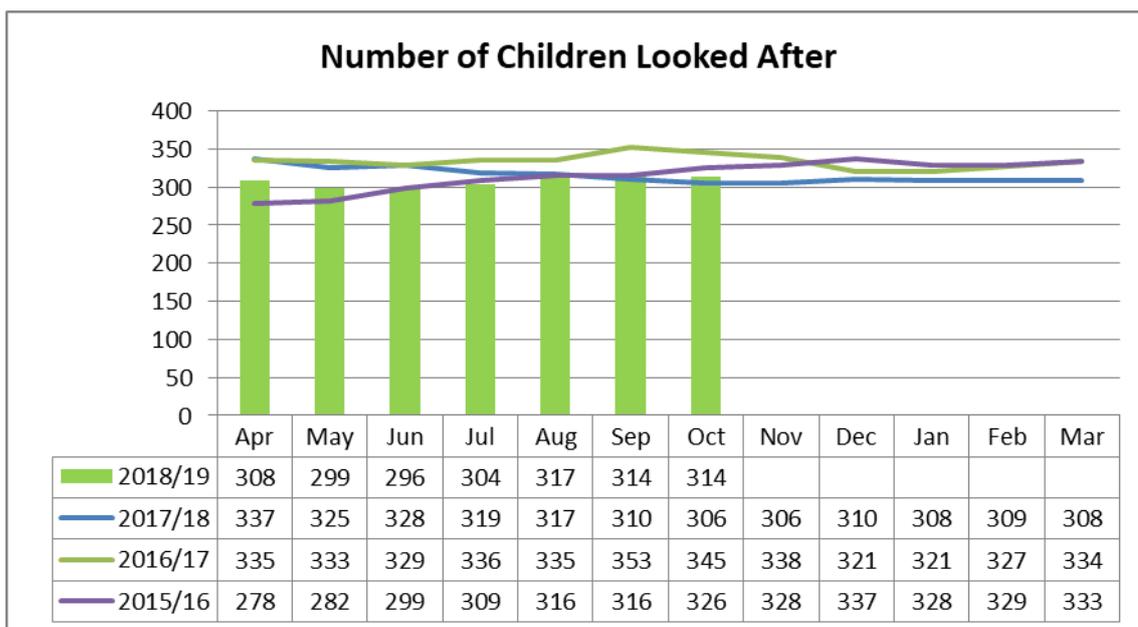


3.4 Children Looked After

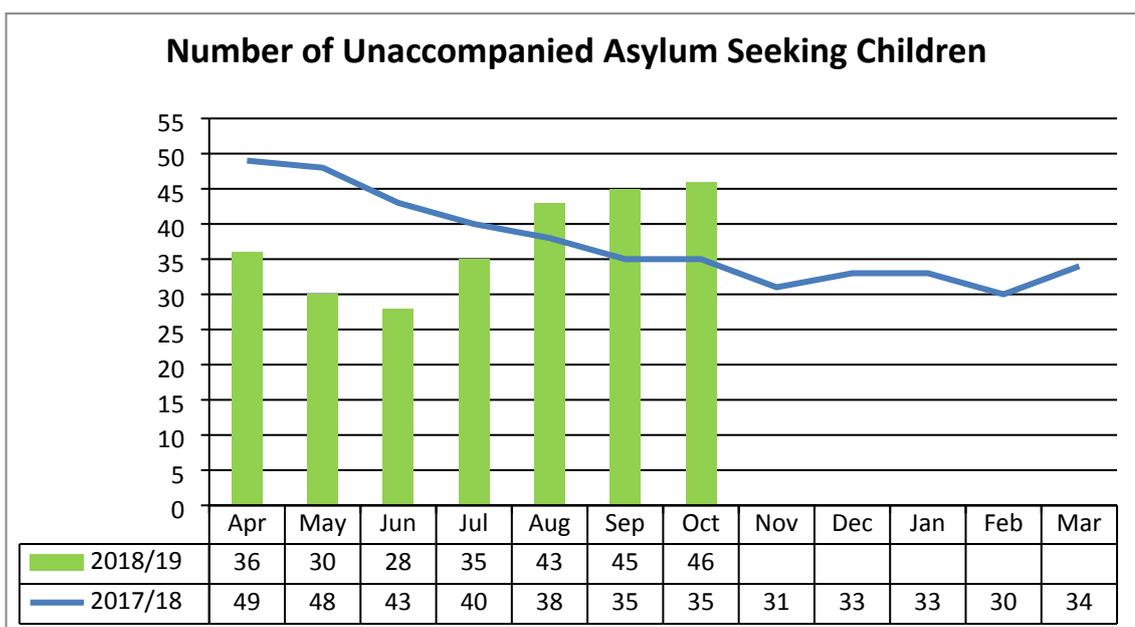
The number of children looked after has reduced this year and this has been achieved by reducing the length of time a child is looked after by progressing plans for long term care more quickly. Our numbers are a little above similar authorities but have reduced this year coming more in line with the average. This means that children who can return to live with their family or relatives do so more quickly and the smaller number of younger children who cannot live safely with their family are placed with an adoptive family sooner. The rate of children looked after has fallen over the last two years and is now coming more in line with similar authorities matched by need. The number of young children placed with adoptive parents or in permanent care with relatives has increased. The number of children adopted will rise from 7 last year to 14 this year.

There are currently 314 looked after children of whom 46 are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. 17 children have a disability. For ease of comparison our rate of children looked after per 10,000 child population is currently 73.3 compared to similar authorities at 69.50. Last year our rate was 79.

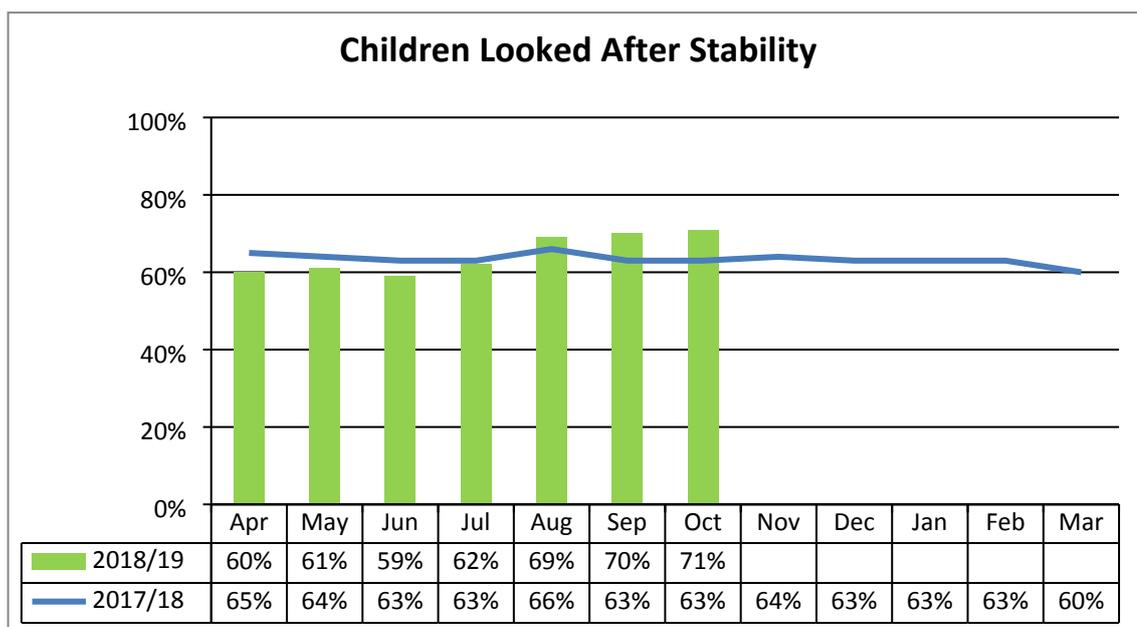
The scrutiny of reviews by the independent reviewing officers is key to ensuring plans for children are progressed and that the best outcomes are achieved for children in our care. Currently 84% of reviews are held on time. Performance needs to improve further to ensure consistent performance is over 90%. This will be achieved by improving coordination and planning of meetings which is currently being undertaken to improve performance.



The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children remains high in Thurrock.



Placement stability for children is improving from previous years and this contributes to their sense of security and emotional wellbeing and supports them doing well in education. Factors that affect placement stability are good matching of children to placements that meet their needs. Stability has improved in October from 60 to 71% of children in the same placement for the last two years compared to similar authorities where the figure is 67.4%.



3.5 Adoption

The number of children who are adopted or placed for adoption has increased this year from 7 to an expected 14 by the end of the year. The current number of children adopted exceeds last year's figure already. The numbers of children adopted is low compared to similar authorities at 29. The average time for a child from entering care to being placed with adopters has reduced from an average of 565 days in 2015 – 17 to 175 days this year. The time scale from Court authority to place to matching with adopters has reduced from an average of 193 days to 40 days this year. This has been achieved by tracking processes to achieve placement weekly to reduce delay. Timeliness is now the shortest in the eastern region, which is good performance.

3.6 Children with missing episodes

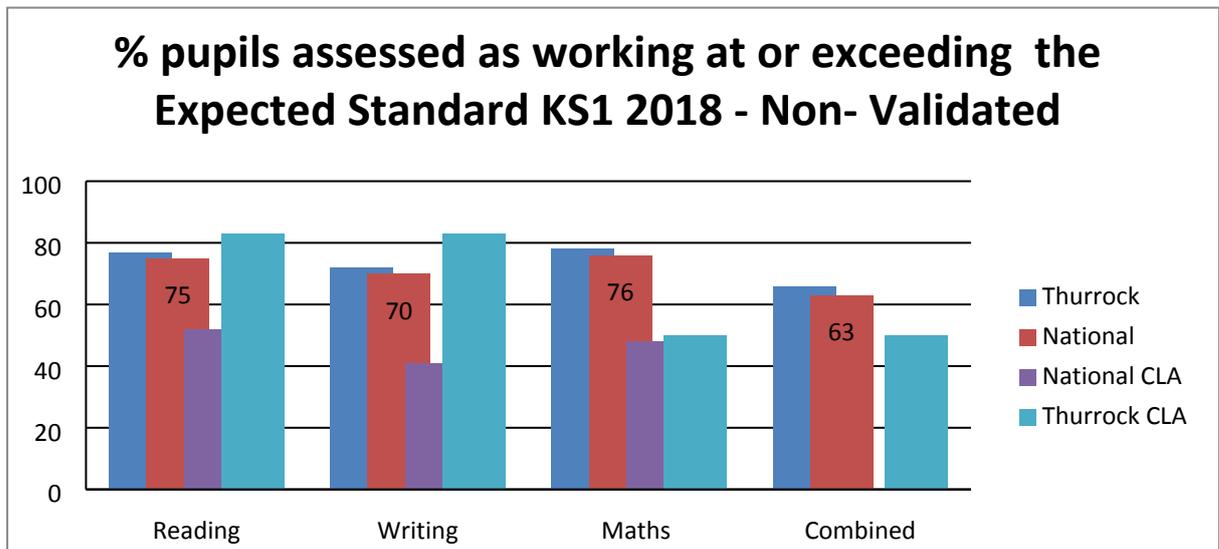
Children with missing episodes have reduced from 25 to 22; for these children the number of episodes has reduced from 76 to 57 in October. All children are offered an independent return interview to try to address their reasons for going missing. The reasons range from not being settled in placement to the draw of friends.

3.7 Educational attainment of children looked after

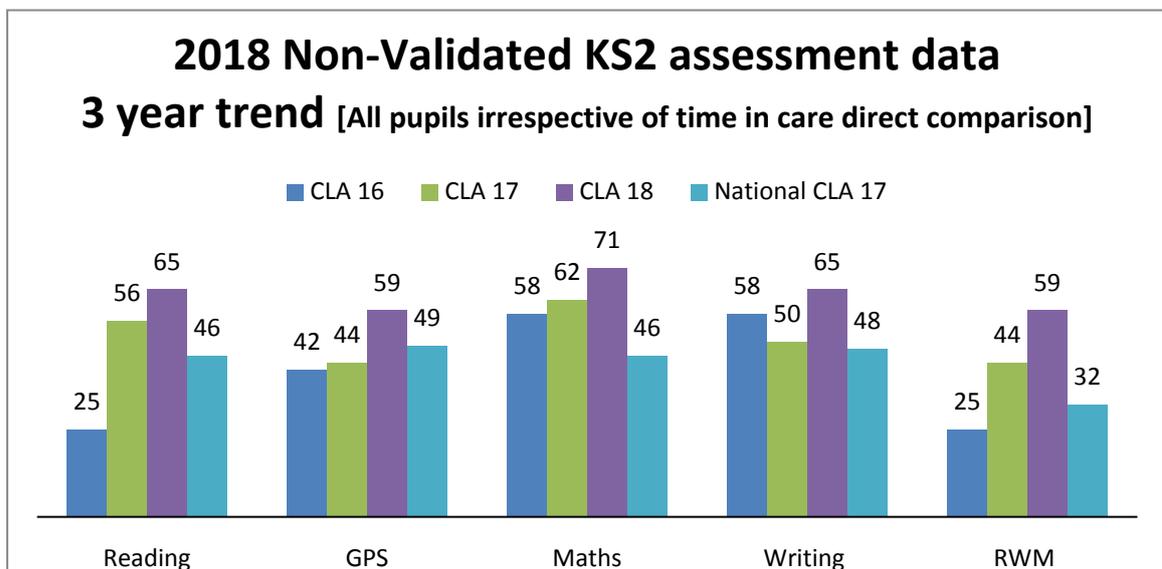
Children looked after are making good educational progress with progress scores better than national average figures for looked after children. Performance this year is in the top 25% of authorities. The commitment of schools and our virtual school deserve credit for ensuring educational support helps our children do as well.

The attainment of children at Key Stage 1[KS1] improved last year reducing the attainment gap with non-looked children. Performance is significantly

above national CLA attainment figures. Indicative data for this year for KS1 saw 83% of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and writing which is above national average, although only 50% achieved it in maths.

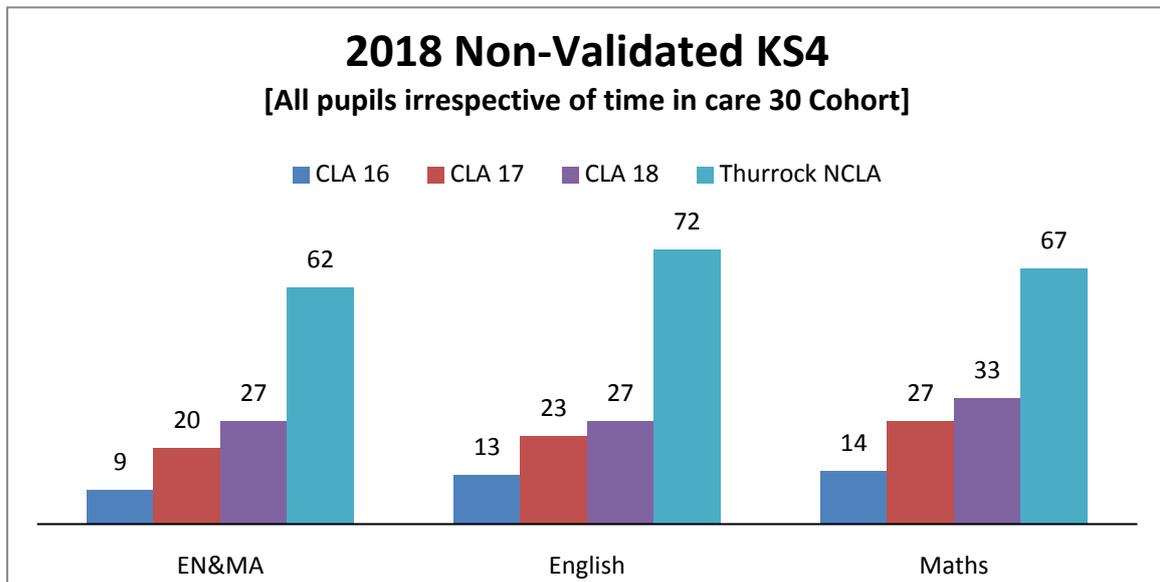


Since 2016 children at Key Stage 2 [KS2] attainment has shown rapid improvement reducing the gap with the general child population for maths and writing in particular. Attainment is significantly above national and Eastern region for writing, maths and reading writing and maths [RWM] combined. In 2017 KS2 data for those eligible for the tests saw further improvements for meeting expected standards. Indicative data for KS2 in 2018 has shown further improvement with 59% achieving expected in reading writing and maths combined.



For Children at Key Stage 4 there has been an improvement for Progress 8 score from -0.81 to -0.61 this is better than National attainment levels for children looked after. The "Attainment 8" score showing progress remains

above national children looked after attainment figures. In 2018 of those eligible for taking maths and English at GCSE, 47% achieved the expected grade of 4 or above. 27% of the total cohort achieved maths and English.



Attendance of our CLA pupils improved significantly from 86.6% in 15/16 to 94.6% in 16/17 In 17/18 it was 94.1% with a reduction of unauthorised absence from 2.5% in 16/17 to 1.8%. We have a very clear policy in place and processes for improving attendance. There are no permanent exclusions for over 5 years. The number of pupils having a Fixed Term Exclusion is reducing and in 17/18 was the lowest it has been for 5 years.

3.8 Fostering

Most of our children looked after are placed with foster carers. We recruit and support our own foster carers but also have to use independent agency foster carers to get the right match for a child.

Current performance as of August 2018 for in-house fostering provision is as follows:

Area	Number
Number of new carers approved between Apr 18 to Sep 18	4
Number of mainstream fostering applications current in progress	8
Number of current fostering households	98

3.9 Care Leavers

The percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training has improved from 61% last year to 69% in October. This is better than the similar authority average of 50.89%.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has improved from 87 to 92%

The realignment of the aftercare service into the Inspire Youth Hub has seen a significant improvement in the number of young people in education employment and training. The On-Track Thurrock Programme continues to offers a bespoke programme to ensure that care leavers can access education, employment and training. We have had considerable success with this.

For many of our care leavers we provide our Prince's Trust programme which is a way in which we enable young people to build confidence. We actively seek apprenticeship opportunities for our care leavers and continue to provide a range of support programmes to enable them to engage fully in the local communities in which they live.

Housing remains one of the key challenges for young people who are Leaving Care, to address this we have further developed the Head Start Housing Programme – which will look to support care leavers into a HMO. This will provide a holistic approach to supporting young people in both sourcing and sustaining tenancies. We recognise that one of the key barriers relating to this is budget management and to address this we have developed a budgeting programme to ensure that young people can manage finances.

The current position shows that we have 1.1% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation – the rest of the data relates to young people who have gone missing from the LA – a significant percentage of these are made up of our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and this is recognised nationally as an issue.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

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

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

- 5.1 Not applicable

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

6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no financial implications, however any costs associated with this report need to be met from existing resources.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no diversity and equality implications arising from this report.

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

N/A

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):

N/A

9. Appendices to the report

N/A

Report Author:

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Strategic Lead – Performance, Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence

Strategy, Communications and Customer Services