

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SELF-EVALUATION

June 2023

Local Authority:	Thurrock
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Thurrock Children and Young People

There are **44,499** children and young people under the age of 18 in Thurrock, accounting for **25%** of the population.

Source: Census 2021, ONS



The population of children and young people is expected to increase by **4.6%** in the next ten years (2022 - 2032).

Source: ONS Projections 2018



Black and Minority Ethnic Group



28% of the school-aged population is from Minority Ethnic Groups

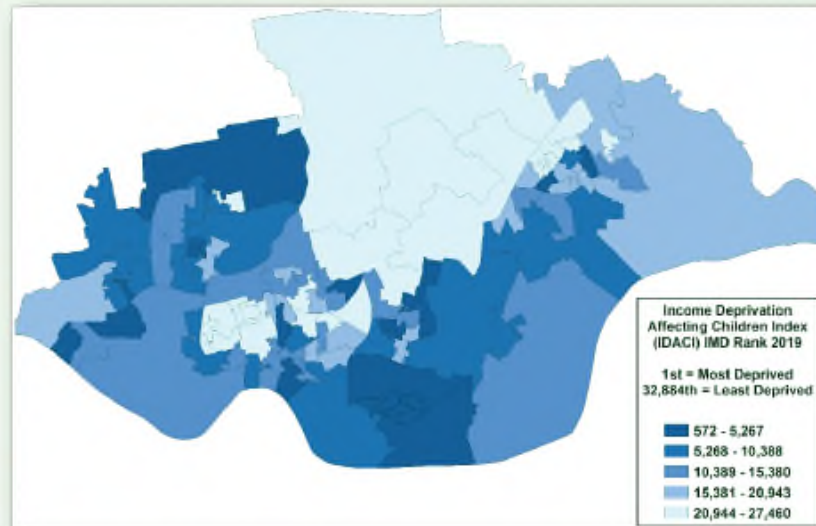
Source: School Census 2021/22

24.8% of the total child population is from Minority Ethnic Groups compared to **22.1%** Nationally.

Source: ONS Population by broad ethnic group 2019

392 is the number of open CAFs, as at March 2023. Early Offer of Help works in an integrated way with Children's Social Care

Source: Thurrock Council Business Intelligence, 2023



Some parts of the boroughs LSOAs have large percentages of children in poverty - particularly parts of Ockendon, West Thurrock & South Stifford, Tilbury, Belhus, Grays and Chadwell St Mary.

Source: English Indices of deprivation 2019

1 in 4 children in Thurrock live in relative poverty compared to **1 in 5** nationally

Thurrock



Nationally



Key health priorities for Thurrock's children and young people include:



All children are enabled to achieve their potential.



All children live safely in their communities - with a focus on Youth Justice.



Children are able to access the services they need and be healthy, focusing on prevention and early intervention.



Children and their families experience good emotional health and wellbeing.



2,141 children had an EHCP / Statement of SEND as at March 2023

A further **3,507** children received SEN Support as at March 2023

Source: Thurrock Council Business Intelligence, 2023

Other Needs in Thurrock Identified:



Neglect and Abuse



Child Sexual Exploitation



Gangs and inter-related drug issues



Emotional wellbeing and Mental Health - NEET



Vigilance: FGM, HBA, FM, Radicalisation

Vulnerable groups of children and young people

1,387 children identified (CIN) through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service as at March 2023 (**311.7 per 10,000**)

107 children were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) as of March 2023 (**24.0 per 10,000**)

292 Children Looked After (CLA) as of March 2023 (**65.6 per 10,000**)

164 children supported by the disabled team (CWD) with more complex and enduring conditions requiring social care service, as at March 2023

Source: Thurrock Council Business Intelligence, 2023

1 INTRODUCTION

This self-evaluation provides information and analysis of Thurrock's continued improvement journey, identifying areas where we have made progress since our last annual engagement meeting and areas for continued focus in improving outcomes for children and young people as of June 2023

This self-evaluation evidences:

- What we know about children and young people and communities in our area.
- How well we are serving children and young people, and what the outcomes are for them.
- What we know about the quality and impact of practice in our local authority and where this evidence comes from.
- What our plans are over the next twelve months to maintain or improve the quality of our practice as well as outcomes for children and young people.

Government Intervention and s.114 notice

The Council is currently facing very challenging financial circumstances and issued a s114 notice in December 2022 as it was unable to balance its budget for 2022/23 and 2023/24. This situation will recur for several years. The Council has to enable and evidence that it can achieve financial sustainability in the longer term – this is leading to more robust budget and related financial procedures. This includes a rigorous budget and expenditure control process for all services that challenges planned expenditure in verifying essential of costs, the value for money from them and the affordability of the planned expenditure. Throughout this process, the safeguarding of children and young people in Thurrock remains a high priority of the Council and we have continued to deliver services in line with achieving good outcomes for children.

Children's social care has contributed to savings but in doing so has continued to ensure no negative impact on the effort and progress made by children's social care. Caseloads and spans of control remain manageable, and the structure of the service has been reviewed and remodelled to ensure that it continues to meet the changing needs of children and young people in Thurrock. This includes increased capacity in the Aftercare Service in recognition of the increasing care leaving and UASC population, and the planned introduction of an Adolescent Team in the Autumn of 2023 with a focus on children at risk of exploitation and on the edge of care. Whilst it is undoubtedly a challenging working environment, the Council has a firm commitment to Children's Services, but like other Councils across the country facing financial issues children's services need to evidence they are as efficient as they can be, whilst still protecting vulnerable children in the community.

Previous Ofsted Recommendations:

Timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHA) (ILACS 2019)

Timeliness of IHAs remain a key area of focus with weekly oversight from Senior Managers in Health and Children's Social Care. Children's social care has prioritised referrals for IHAs with 76% of referrals completed within 5 working days of entry in to care in 2022/23 (April – May 2023 data is 82%). However, only 21% of children received an in time Initial Health Assessment during 2022/23.

Thurrock accounts for a minority of IHA appointments in the health South Essex area and, the limited paediatric appointment availability alongside an increase in the numbers of children placed within the South Essex area has led to this poor performance which has been raised at the Health and Well Being Board, the ICB and Corporate Parenting Committee by children's social care. Escalation to the Integrated Children's Board resulted in an additional 100 paediatric IHA appointments from February 2023. This has improved performance (April - May 2023) the numbers of children receiving a timely initial health assessment at 56%. All children do achieve an IHA, 77% within 4 weeks of the due date, a small number of children taking slightly longer.

Children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and children missing from home and care (Focused visit in 2021)

- **The involvement of children in the take-up of return home interviews and the information the authority relies on to capture activity and the impact of these interviews.**
- **The arrangements for support and engagement with children at risk of extra- familial harm; in particular, the agility of services to meet the diverse and complex needs of these children and their families.**

The service has reviewed how return home interviews are undertaken to make sure we are better able to capture the experiences of children who have been missing. In 2021/2022, 47.3% of children with missing episodes engaged in RHIs, performance has improved in 2022/23 with 72% of young people accepting and engaging in a return home interview. Strategy meetings are held to fully consider with partner agencies all available information and presenting risks to the young person. The Child Exploitation (CE) Risk Assessment informs our work with young people. Risk Assessments highlight that the language used continues to be trauma-informed, sensitive, and reflects support to children with greater emphasis on disruption. Our data reporting has been enhanced to provide information on children and young people who are missing or deemed to be at risk of criminal and/or sexual exploitation.

To further strengthen this work, we are reconfiguring resources and are developing an adolescent team to focus on young people at risk of exploitation and edge of care; we are currently recruiting the team manager for this team and expect to have the team in place by October 2023.

Planned transitions and closer collaboration with adult services for disabled young people and care leavers. Earlier transition planning for children in care and care leavers who are exposed to risk of child exploitation, gangs and extra-familial harm (Focused visit in 2021).

A review of the Transitions core offer and practice to provide a more joined up approach across directorates has resulted in a number of positive changes to practice around transitional planning for children with disabilities and care leavers. Children with disabilities or young people expected to transition to adult social care are identified and discussed at the Transition Panel from the age of 17.

Pathway planning processes have been updated and renewed. The Reviewing service has extended the role of the IRO to include the first pathway plan review post 18 to provide continuity of oversight and challenge of young people's plans. Monthly joint meetings with housing have enabled care experienced young people to access tenancies earlier. In preparation for young people taking on their own tenancies training on managing a tenancy is now delivered jointly by the Housing and Aftercare Services.

An audit focused on children in transition was completed in February 2023, with the outcome that 90% of audits were rated good. The LSCP multi-agency audit group also audited 3 cases which showed improved integrated working across partner agencies and evidenced that children and young people were being listened to and included examples of agencies working well to engage children/young people and families.

Challenges for the service:

- Financial and reputational implications of being subject to a 114 notice.
- Placement Sufficiency
- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Recruitment and Retention of qualified social workers.

Placement Sufficiency and recruitment of Foster Carers

Placement Sufficiency is an area of continuous challenge and intense focus for the Local Authority with a shortage of foster placements and registered residential settings. Thurrock's fostering recruitment campaign has deployed a number of strategies to increase local placements including a Community Event campaign, social media, online advertising and has developed a strategy covering the whole year with the local authority's Comms Team. Our offer to foster carers includes exemption from Council Tax payments and a competitive financial package. The recruitment and retention of foster carers and residential placements is also a national challenge. A strategic plan to open local children's homes has been progressed to support some of our most vulnerable children to remain in Thurrock and reduce and address the risk of young people being placed in unregistered placements. Two children were placed in unregistered placements with a local provider in conjunction with the local authority, both homes were registered by Ofsted in November 2022 and were inspected by Ofsted in May 2023 and rated as Good. Both of the

properties were provided by Thurrock housing and the commissioning services worked closely with placements service and the provider to make the placements good environments for those children. We are continuing to work with local providers to set up additional locally registered provision to meet the needs of our children.

The use of unregistered arrangements is limited to rare occasions and subject to rigorous processes. Thurrock ensures oversight of the High Court in respect of these placements, and as identified above has been able to work closely with local providers to ensure registration with good outcomes for children. Ofsted are always alerted to any unregistered arrangements and the forward plan and regular meetings have been established with Ofsted to discuss and ensure progress is tracked. We currently have three unregistered placements; all three unregistered placements have applied for registration and have an allocated lead inspector.

Recruitment and Retention of qualified social workers

There is a national shortage of qualified social workers for frontline social work services; this includes, child protection, looked after children, child in need, court work, children with disabilities and this challenge is being experienced in Thurrock. Turnover of qualified social workers has increased by 4.8% from 17.3% (21/22) to 22.2% (22/23) and the national figure is 17.1% (September 2022). Turnover data whilst higher than national is lower than our nearest statistical neighbours. Vacancy rates were 25.7% (March 2022), 26.1% (September 2022 return) and the national figure is 20%. We are mid-range for performance amongst our nearest statistical neighbours.

The recruitment of qualified social work staff including interim staff, where necessary, has remained a priority for the council. We have a rolling programme for recruiting newly qualified social workers and have had success in recruiting 9 NQSW's who will start in the service by Autumn 2023 and currently have 6 NQSW's in the service. We have had more success in recruiting to permanent management roles providing management stability within the service. The Assistant Director, Strategic Leads and Service Managers are all permanent and there is currently only one team manager vacancy within the service.

Strengths in the service

There has continued to be strong support for Children's Services across the Council in Thurrock. Members and senior leaders in the Council are committed to delivering the best possible services and ensuring that children within Thurrock remain safe and have the best life chances possible. The political leadership in Thurrock remains with the Conservative Party following the 2023 local elections. Children's Social Care has cross party Member support and regular challenge through the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This challenge is welcome and supports improving outcomes for children and young people. The current Portfolio Holder has been in that role for 2 years and is passionate and supportive of Children's Social Care and understands the importance of the child's voice and getting things right for children and young people.

The SEND Development Board chaired by the Director of Children's Services has recently reviewed its terms of reference which has resulted in a name change to the SEND Local Area Partnership and this as well as the SEND/AP operational group form part of the governance arrangements for Thurrock's provision for children and young people who have SEND. Quality assurance is driving sustained improvement in the quality and impact of EHCPs and the timeliness and quality of annual reviews. A Development Plan is in place and the Local Area Partnership is ensuring that outcomes are being monitored and achieved. The current performance for completion of new requests for EHCP's is more than 90% against a backdrop of significant increases in the request for plans.

CSC and Early Help have a continuous Development Plan which drives consistent good practice and good outcomes for children. The DCS chairs a monthly Development Board which is attended by Strategic Leads for each service area, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, a member of the performance team and Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help. The Board provides an opportunity for the DCS and Lead Member to have a clear oversight of progress against the priorities in the Development Plan, provide challenge and to set stretch targets.

The DCS reports on progress and challenges to the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) so there is corporate ownership of the challenges facing young people children and families in Thurrock. There is a strategic meeting three times a year for the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to hold the DCS and the Portfolio Holder to account for safeguarding practice.

Partnership safeguarding arrangements are fully embedded. The LSCP progress, with regard to development of the partnership and action plans resulting from learning/children's safeguarding practice reviews (CSPR's), have been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly and received appropriate challenge and scrutiny.

We have a stable and permanent management structure through successful recruitment and growing our own within the services. This includes strategic leads, service managers and front line team managers.

The LGA Employers Standards for Social Workers Report, published in February 2023 indicated a positive response – particularly in relation to the strong and clear practice framework.

The already comprehensive training programme has been enhanced with training seminars in systemic practice to support analytical thinking.

Social workers and managers have remained proud of the work they are doing in Thurrock. Oversight, audit, and outcomes for children demonstrates that social workers know their children and families and are committed and passionate about their work with them continuing to develop and improve practice.

The Signs of Safety [SoS] practice approach is integrated into all areas of practice and training provided for all practitioners. SoS training has also been made available to partner agencies via the LSCP.

We adopted a Think Family approach in April 2022, building on the effective and long established 'whole family' approach used by our Early Help services and in line with *Best Practice Guidance from the President's Public Law Working Group (March 2021)*. Practitioners assess the needs of all family members and co-ordinate multi-agency interventions and intensive support at the earliest stage. Feedback from parents and professionals has helped to shape this way of working. It is strengths and relationship-based and complements Signs of Safety and our other existing practice models. Our focus on early help, supplemented by the funding for the Family Hubs, has seen us reduce our numbers of children who are child in need to being effectively worked within our early help services. Our overall rate for CIN has reduced from 380 per 10k to 330 per 10k (March 2023), slightly below national average and correspondingly our numbers of children receiving support through early help services has increased from 230 (March 2020) to 428 (March 2023).

Overall, we self-assess and supported by external independent review, as services remaining Good with some Outstanding features.

Development Priorities for 23/24:

- Reducing the numbers of Care Leavers who are NEET
- Ensuring all Care Leavers have a Pathway Plan that makes sense to them and that they have co-produced
- Continued improvement in numbers of Return Home Interviews which provide quality information to reduce missing episodes.
- Increased recruitment of in house foster carers
- Development of a refreshed and increased focus on recruitment and retention to further reduce vacancies for social workers and to achieve permanent establishment.
- Reduction of children and young people at risk of CE and CSE.
- Increased numbers of CLA having a timely Initial Health Assessment.
- Relaunch of the Children in Care Council and development of a Care Leavers Forum.
- Focus on reflective supervision to promote critical thinking and a better understanding of the quality of practice and areas for practice development.

2 CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION


2.1 Key Personnel

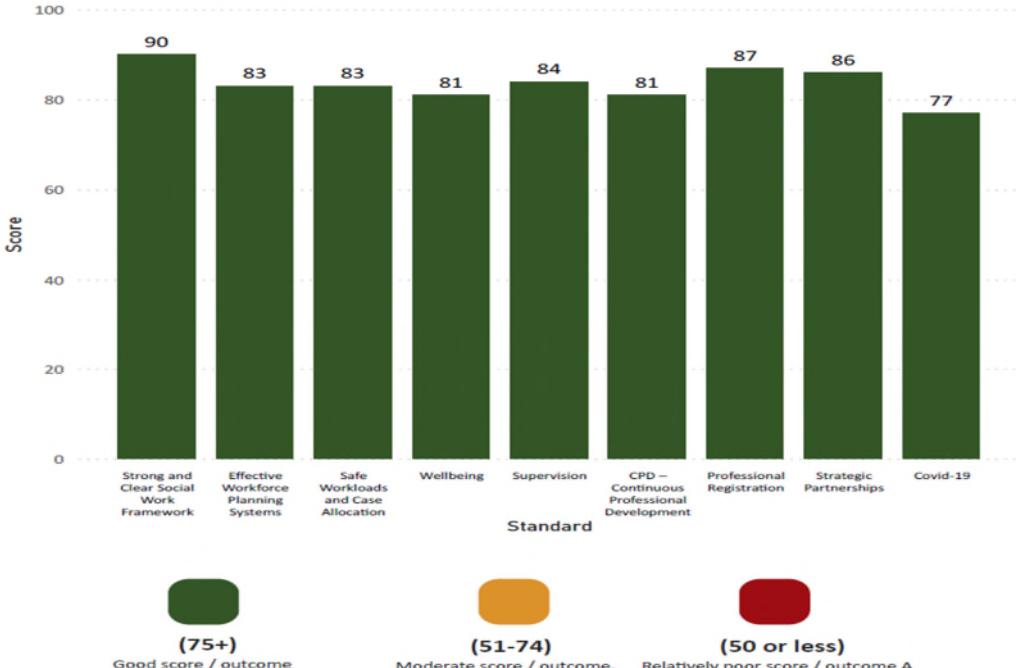
Job Title	Name	Start date in current role
Corporate Director of Children's Services	Sheila Murphy	March 2020 (previously Assistant Director, May 2017 – March 2020)
Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care	Cllr Barry Johnson	May 2021
Chief Executive, Managing Director Commissioner	Dr Dave Smith	March 2023
Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help	Janet Simon	May 2021 (previously Strategic Lead January 2018 — April 2021)
LSCP Chair/Scrutineer	Jenny Coles	September 2021

3 PROGRESS AND PLANS

What do we know about the quality of front line practice in Thurrock?	How do we know it?	What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain and improve practice?
3.1 Leadership		
<p>There is stable and permanent leadership in Children’s Social Care at all tiers through to front line managers.</p> <p>There is clarity of expectation and accountability, supported by information, to ensure a clear line of sight through the organisation. This helps us to know ourselves and drive continued improvement.</p> <p>The Leadership Team has taken steps to embed good practice expectations supported by audit and workforce development.</p> <p>Partnerships are strong and effective.</p> <p>The Leadership Team is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The senior management structure is embedded and stable. All Senior Manager posts are filled by permanent members of staff. • There is currently only one Team Manager vacancy in the service for the Adolescent Team which will come into effect by October 2023. • Managers are committed to the service and working in Thurrock. • Senior Managers are visible and responsive to staff. As we have moved to a hybrid model of working, managers are present in the office regularly and available to staff. • Team Manager and Service Managers are equipped to lead good practice, through weekly practitioner workshop sessions. Practice experts including young people contribute to these sessions • Practice standards are in place and provide consistent clarity of expectations for managers and practitioners. • There is a clear and shared focus on improving practice. • Performance reporting and scrutiny of the service are in place. • The DCS chairs a monthly Development Board, which is attended by the Portfolio Holder. • The Assistant Director chairs a monthly Performance Meeting to scrutinise performance and data across the whole service including deep dives on specific areas. • Children’s services are monitored as part of the Corporate Performance Framework to ensure corporate ownership of service goals and performance. • Audits are consistently resulting in outcomes of good or better in over 70% of cases demonstrating consistent and good practice. • Where areas for development are identified training and development is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain stability and experienced leadership across the service. • Continue to support manager development through Practice and Performance sessions. • Continue to support improved use of data and QA information to drive consistent practice and best outcomes for children. • Target to maintain at least 70% audit findings good or better and a stretch target of 80%. • Senior Management moderation of audits. • Continued high expectations, support, scrutiny, and challenge. • Focus on reflective supervision to promote critical thinking and a better understanding of the quality of practice and areas for practice development. • Maintain weekly practitioner practice sessions to continually deliver good outcomes for children.

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<p>committed to delivering high expectations, high support and challenge, so that staff can deliver the best quality of practice, improving the pace and impact of support to children and families.</p>	<p>identified alongside supervision and refresher training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workforce has access to the right training to improve and embed good practice. • The LSCP is embedded and is well-supported by the multi-agency partners. • A permanent experienced and independent Chair/Scrutineer has been in post since September 2021 contributing to a clear focus on improving partnership working. • Our Brighter Futures Early Help Strategy is established, updated and led by a multi-agency Board chaired by the DCS. • There is a multi-agency commitment to MASH evidenced through a quarterly MASH Strategic Board with oversight from the LSCP providing scrutiny and challenge to all partners alongside regular themed partnership audits within the team. • Quarterly multi-agency EH audits are consistently good or outstanding (90%) with no inadequate audits. • The DCS meets regularly with staff across the Directorate to provide information and an opportunity for staff to raise issues and provide feedback. • Feedback from external and peer review has shown good practice, recording and partnership working with partners, children, young people, and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise and drive multi-agency strategies with partners reflecting high expectations, scrutiny, and challenge. • Maintain performance management and quality assurance systems in SEND to drive impact of EHCPs. • Development of a refreshed focus on recruitment and retention to reduce qualified social work vacancies. • Promote recognition of risk and coordinated response with partners, particularly risk linked sexual abuse. • Continued challenge and review of services both internally and externally to test and reassure quality of practice and areas for improvement.
<h3>3.2 Practice Approach</h3>		
<p>Thurrock has invested in the development of Signs of Safety (SOS) as a practice approach to provide a focus on recognition of risk; response delivering risk reduction and engaging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety is understood and embedded across the service and with partners. • SoS is evidenced in case recordings and minutes of meetings. • The recording system in Children’s Social Care supports the practice approach. • The LGA “SW Health Check” published February 2023 showed a very good score from staff regarding a strong and clear social work framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to invest in and embed the SoS practice approach and link learning to use of tools such as Graded Care Profile, and issues of concern such as Neglect, Domestic Abuse and Criminal

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<p>family strengths to deliver safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Practice Framework has been applied across services supporting consistency for families and a shared understanding of expectation and values of working among practitioners. The LSCP is taking the lead on the framework being applied by partner agencies.</p> <p>The embedding of SoS has led to improvements in practice across all services and improvements in communication and information sharing with partners.</p> <p>To reduce the interventions at the high end, a strengths-based approach is utilised leading to continued reductions from high levels of children subject to child protection plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our training programme has used the learning from audits to identify areas where training and development would benefit staff and practice for example an LSCP audit focussing on adolescents and mental health resulted in training seminars delivered by the lead pharmacist regarding medication for adolescents • Staff at all levels continue to engage in revised SoS training focusing on family network meetings, care planning and analysis. Recently over 40 staff attended training session focusing on trajectories • A multi-agency Conference focusing on the impact of harm and neglect was held in April 2023. <p>Delivery of Standards</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Delivery of Standards Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Standard Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strong & Clear Social Work Framework</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Effective Workforce Planning Systems</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Safe Workloads & Case Allocation</td> <td>78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wellbeing</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supervision</td> <td>73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</td> <td>78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional Registration</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic Partnerships</td> <td>80</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Standard Category	Percentage	Strong & Clear Social Work Framework	79	Effective Workforce Planning Systems	81	Safe Workloads & Case Allocation	78	Wellbeing	79	Supervision	73	Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	78	Professional Registration	79	Strategic Partnerships	80	<p>Exploitation/ Contextual Safeguarding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly managers strategic implementation group which will continue to review signs of safety across the service including planning for training, new starters, audit feedback. • Bi-monthly Signs of Safety champions group which looks at the implementation of the strategic group – including looking at good examples and areas for improvement. • Continue to provide theme focused workshops designed with input from managers to address specific issues and learning priorities, build practice depth and alignment of processes/forms. • Key partners to be invited to service workshops to maintain a shared understanding and application of the SoS approach across agencies. • Continue to engage the connected family network to strengthen family problem solving. • Induction training attendance by the Think Family Service Manager to ensure that the embedding of the service
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<p>and contributed to the stabilising of the numbers of children looked after.</p>	<p>Figure 1: Standard Scores</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Standard</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strong and Clear Social Work Framework</td> <td>90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Effective Workforce Planning Systems</td> <td>83</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Safe Workloads and Case Allocation</td> <td>83</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wellbeing</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supervision</td> <td>84</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CPD – Continuous Professional Development</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional Registration</td> <td>87</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic Partnerships</td> <td>86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Covid-19</td> <td>77</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SoS training has included staff from our partners and has been embraced by the LSCP who run training events • The approach is being enhanced through systemic practice training which has included training for managers and staff and also group supervision supported by a family therapist practitioner equipping managers and staff with confidence in creating cultural genograms and also modes and methods of questioning to improve their ability to work with families and create more considered analysis. • The Think Family model has re-asserted the importance of family network meetings leading to the creation of family plans • A group of Social Workers from across services are coming together with an arts company to find more creative and innovative ways of working directly with children and young people and already delivered a 3 day session for young carers. 	Standard	Score	Strong and Clear Social Work Framework	90	Effective Workforce Planning Systems	83	Safe Workloads and Case Allocation	83	Wellbeing	81	Supervision	84	CPD – Continuous Professional Development	81	Professional Registration	87	Strategic Partnerships	86	Covid-19	77	<p>continues with new practitioners in Children’s Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly practice seminars to reinforce quality of direct work, assessment and case mapping, and use of danger statements to enhance analysis and safety planning. • The SW Academy was launched in partnership with Adult Services in March 2022 and the offer of a training pathway for Social Workers in the 2nd and 3rd year of qualification is nearing completion in discussion with the Eastern Region under development. • Exploration of a full accredited systemic training programme in 23-24
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graded Care Profile training was delivered by the LSCP and is being used with families where neglect is a concern. A neglect toolkit was launched by the LSCP in April 23 at a multi-agency conference • Children and young people are involved in some weekly seminars and contribute to recruitment via a young people's panel. • Children and young people are consulted on a regular basis via audits and direct contact with the Participation and Engagement Officer • The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has reduced further over the past two years from 110 in 2021-22 (24.2 per 10,000) to 107 in 2022-23 (23.6 per 10,000). • The number of Children Looked After has remained relatively stable over the past year from 295 (65.0 per 10,000) in 2021-22 to 292 (64.3 per 10,000) in 2022-23. • To coincide with World SW Day Adult and Children's services collaborated in offering a joint seminar presented by SWE focussing on Racism and anti-racist practice. 	
3.3 Quality of Practice		
<p>A development programme of work has been established to support continued improvement in the quality of practice.</p> <p>There is a strong commitment within the service to drive up practice standards to achieve consistently good outcomes for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of practice is monitored by audit, including multi-agency audits, performance data, service reports, and feedback from complaints from partners and service users. • A mixture of themed and routine audits are used to sustain learning from audit and to strengthen management oversight and feedback to practitioners. Audits that are graded were mostly above 70% rated good. In the past 12 months (April 22- March 23) there have been 420 audits completed and reported on, covering a range of themes/ with feedback sought from families in 45 audits. 38% of audits received moderation. • The Audit programme has included <i>At a Glance</i> collaborative audits, themed audits e.g. working with fathers and dip sample audits e.g. PLO Thurrock young voices have produced a video emphasising the importance of good handovers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued programme of Learning Audits with specific focus on quality plans, family plans and the voice of the family/child/young person • Training for staff including innovative direct work methods and systemic practice. • Actions from Audit findings reviewed to ensure learning and timely responses. • Fortnightly multi-agency MASH audits and Quarterly Strategic MASH audits to ensure a good

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits have been tailored to meet the changing needs of the service. In 2023 generic audits were re launched with a focus on themes such as contingency planning and transitions • Findings inform weekly practice workshops to address themes identified by audit, feedback or by practitioners. • Practice standards are regularly used by practitioners and managers during induction and supervision. • Induction sessions take account of the learning from audits, feedback from young people and performance data • The Dashboard is enhanced as needs change to ensure practitioners and managers have access to a wide range of daily performance data, to drive individual and team practice and performance. • Across the whole service, Social Workers continue to receive regular supervision, currently 87% compliance with timescales. 	<p>understanding of Thresholds across agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the recommendations from the Think Family stocktake. • Monthly CE/CSE Tracking Panels co-chaired by the Strategic Leads for YOS and Prevention and MASH, CFAT and FST. • learning arising from the external reviews into CP CIN & QA and Aftercare actioned

3.4 Contact, Referral and Re-Referral

<p>The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has successfully maintained a consistent application of thresholds with a positive culture of providing support and challenge to partner agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance of the MASH continues to provide scrutiny and challenge and has completed themed audits, tracking cases through the MASH, making observations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The quality of the contact information. b. Application of thresholds by referrers and MASH workers. c. Screening and managerial oversight of contacts. d. Quality of decision making. • Audit confirms threshold decisions by MASH are good with outstanding features and that cases are RAG rated in line with the level of risk and stepped up to Social Care appropriately. • The rate of referrals has dropped in 2022-23 to 518.3 per 10,000, which is below Statistical Neighbours of 566.63 and the England average of 537.70 • 94% of referrals are concluded in one working day. • The re-referral rate is 20% which is below Statistical Neighbours average of 20.26% and England average of 21.5%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain a shared understanding of threshold across partners to ensure children get the right help and assist managing demand so that resources are focused most appropriately. • Review of s.47s where concerns are substantiated but the outcome is NFA to ensure action is proportionate in terms of applying s.47 and outcome. • Continue to deliver CAF training across the partnership • Further develop the quality of CAF referrals and support the
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual rate of s.47 enquiries in 2022-23 was 134.0 per 10,000 compared to 182.0 in 2021-22. Thurrock is below the Statistical Neighbours average of 173.0 and England average of 180.0 per 10,000 in 2021-22. Application of threshold is scrutinised and a Dip Sample of s.47s is carried out at Service Lead level, to ensure proportionate response for families and consistency in threshold. 90% of s.47s thresholds were judged appropriate. 	<p>threshold decision making in the MASH.</p>

3.5 Early Help and Prevention

<p>There is a strong culture of working together to achieve a set of common aims and an understanding that success for families and good outcomes for children comes from clearly defined priorities, aims and a clear vision that is adopted by all of the partners.</p> <p>We understand the benefits of preventative interventions. We use analytics to help shape our interventions and system through understanding what works and what has the most impact on certain groups of people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Brighter Futures Board has been part of ensuring that the delivery of Family Hubs, Early Help, Supporting Families, Think Family and whole system working is successful. The Think Family approach starts in Early Help, throughout the family's journey into statutory services. intervening earlier, with evidenced based interventions using the family network to divert families away from statutory services, by offering a whole family approach to planning. The service is well staffed and trained to offer interventions at the right time to ensure needs do not escalate. The Family Hubs, Start for Life grant funding has increased capacity and the delivery of multi-agency services across the borough. Increased numbers of children open to Early Help Services from 232 in 2020 to 428 at end of March 2023. The overall data shows that the Prevention and Support Service continues to perform well against its performance indicators. Feedback from families is very positive about the services they receive, and quarterly multi agency audits have been consistently good in relation to the work with families and partners. For the 5th year in succession, we have achieved 100% of our targets set for the Supporting Families Programme which evidences that we have successfully 'turned around' vulnerable families with intensive support and intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Multi Agency audit focus on Early Help and the decision making in MASH for Tier 2 service delivery. Monitor re referral rates Reduction in the numbers of children becoming looked after through diversionary services Focus on supporting children to return home safely through utilising the family network. Meeting targets set for delivery in Family Hubs
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What do we know about the quality of front line practice in Thurrock?	How do we know it?	What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain and improve practice?
<p>In April 2022 we became one of 75 local authorities eligible to join the Family Hub and Start for Life programme. Following a successful sign-up process and approval of our Delivery Plan, we are developing and implementing the Family Hub Start for Life Programme alongside partners in Education, Public Health and the ICB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have created a number of multi-agency workstreams to drive forward the plans we have in place, as well as a Board chaired by the Assistant Director, Social Care and Early Help, that has strategic oversight of the progress of the programme. • We are on track to meet programme requirements by March 31st 2025 and have clear plans and timelines in place for 2023/25 targets. • We have 8 Family Hubs within all 3 localities in Thurrock and additional sites that are part of our Family Hub network; our network will continue to grow over the coming years. • Our first seven Hubs opened on 28th April and a further Hub will open by the end of June 2023. • We have consulted with parents, carers and community and voluntary groups to ensure that we tailor our Hub services to meet the needs of each locality and seldom heard groups, and this programme of engagement will build during 2023/24, including through our Parent Carer Panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Family Hubs, Start for Life programme within the Early Help Service, including additional services for 11–18-year-olds, (25 if SEND), delivered by The Family Hubs going forward.
<p>Youth Offending - The Ministry of Justice launched the Turnaround Programme in January 2023 which has secured additional funding to deliver the new service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Turnaround Project aims to divert more young people away from the criminal justice system by offering early intervention. We have successfully managed to meet our targets for the first quarter of the programme. • The Youth Offending Service was Inspected by HMIP over 5 days between 16th and 20th May 2022 involving the service and partners. The outcome was published on the 22nd of August 2022, and we received a rating of Good, with some outstanding features. • Out of Court Disposals processes have been changed to improve potential outcomes and to ensure that all children receive an assessment prior to being presented at Panel, to understand the holistic needs of each child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling disproportionality in BAME children in the Criminal Justice System and effective resettlement. • Focus on understanding and tackling the increase in numbers of females offending and diversion. • Increased focus on supporting whole family working to enable diversion from future offending. • Focus on reoffending rates. • Monitor the recommendations from the HMIP inspection alongside the actions from the YJP 21-24 refresh

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<p>A Think Family approach was adopted in line with the family approach in Early Help in April 2022 and closely aligned to and complimenting SoS.</p> <p>There has been investment and commitment to training practitioners across the service in using the Parenting Assessment Manual Software (PAMS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with research (<i>Myths of Invisible Men - March 2021</i>) our Think Family approach has included a focus on working with fathers / significant male figures and ensuring they are involved in both parenting assessments and interventions to give them the best opportunity to develop and sustain appropriate parenting skills. • Parenting programmes previously commissioned are now being delivered in-house. Families are experienced a more joined up approach. • Practitioners are trained to lead a range of evidence-based parenting programmes covering pre-birth to age 18 which inform assessments wherever possible and help structure our work with families to help embed learning both during and after these programmes end. • Family Network Coordinators are located within TFS to convene Family Network Meetings (FNMs) for our most complex and vulnerable families; between April 2022 and 31st March 2023 they undertook 59 FNMs/ review FNMs and supported practitioners across the service in setting up and facilitating their own FNMs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued evaluation of the effectiveness of the Think Family approach • Roll out further Family Network Meeting Training across the service to further develop practice in this area • Increase numbers of Family Network Meetings throughout the service • Development of a Think Family dataset to aid our understanding of its impact on outcomes for children and families diverting cases from entering the court system and enabling children remain living safely within their connected family networks.
<h3>3.6 Children in Need and Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan</h3>		
<p>Practice is robust ensuring the level of intervention is stepped up or down in a timely way.</p> <p>There is effective throughput of cases with effective monitoring.</p> <p>There is a focus on keeping children safe by using the right</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall rate of CIN per 10,000 has reduced from 380.3 to 333.0 per 10,000. This remains above Statistical Neighbour average (313.0) and slightly below the England average (334.0 per 10,000) in 2022. • Step down to Early Help is timely; this has avoided too early closure of cases whilst ensuring timely throughput. • There has been a decrease in the number of step-down cases to Early Help in 2022-23, facilitated by the additional capacity of the Pass Plus Team. In 2022-23, 301 cases were stepped down to Early Help compared to 438 in 2021-22, representing a 31% decrease. • Review of CIN practice identified the need to increase participation of Health agencies in Child in Need meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Network Meetings will be a focus of all CIN plans. • Continue to improve and promote the quality of chronologies, case summaries and genograms. • Continue to embed Graded Care Profile 2 and supporting training to support practice around Neglect.

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<p>intervention at the right time; less escalation to higher interventions.</p> <p>There are robust escalations/raising of concerns processes to ensure issues are resolved.</p> <p>PLO is used appropriately and effectively when required.</p> <p>Cases in PLO are tracked and any delay is identified and robustly scrutinised</p> <p>There is consistent scrutiny and oversight of decision making to initiate PLO or issue proceedings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular supervision is evident in our case records and performance is regularly reviewed. Performance is good in terms of regularity of supervision, in 2022-23 99% were completed within timescale. • Ongoing provision of Graded Care Profile training supports the understanding and practice around neglect. • An independent Child in Need reviewing officer provides independent oversight on CIN subject to Court Orders or those children being stepped down from a CP plan. • the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has remained stable. As at end of March 2023, the number of children subject to a child protection plan was 107 (23.96 per 10,000) which is below the statistical neighbour average of 38.27 and national average of 42.1 per 10,000. • There is a bi-monthly CP Surgery which thematically reviews cases subject to a CP Plan to support planning for children and to ensure plans are progressed. • At the time of writing, no children are subject to a CP plan for 2yrs plus. • Children with 2nd or subsequent CP plans have remained stable, 13% as at end of March 2023 compared to 15% in 2021-22. Thurrock is below the Statistical Neighbour average of 19.9% and England average of 23.3% based on 2021-22 benchmarking data. • Timeliness of Initial CP Conferences completed in timeframe for 2022-23 is 97.1%. Review conferences held in timescales was 100%. • Neglect remains the largest category for children subject to a CP plan accounting for 57.9% of all children. • It is planned that children and young people will be offered group work sessions relating to domestic abuse. • Feedback is being sourced from families via a QR codes to fully evidence impact of service delivery. • Action plans arising from Learning practice reviews are regularly reviewed via the LSCP and the learning is shared within the service • The CIN Reviewing Officer role is established and regularly reviewing CIN cases especially after stepping down from CP or subject to a SO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresher training to be provided to managers on s.47 threshold. • Monitor evidence of learning from Case Reviews completed and build actions into QA audit where needed. • Multi-Agency Audits to focus on CIN and CP. • Monthly Child Protection Surgeries to consider themes in relation to practice and identify learning and development needs. • Monthly multi-agency pre-birth forum to continue to provide scrutiny to the plan pre-birth and ensure a co-ordinated support and intervention plan is in place.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision to escalate to PLO or issue care proceedings is made at a Legal Planning Panel, chaired by the Strategic Lead to ensure there is consistent oversight and scrutiny of the threshold decision and proposed plan. • A rolling workshop is delivered to managers across the service in relation to the re-launch of the PLO. • Cases in PLO are tracked fortnightly within the PLO Tracker Panel, which provides oversight and scrutiny to any delay within the PLO and to the parallel plan for the child. • Family Network Meetings are consistently held at the earliest opportunity. Assessments of alternative carers are completed in parallel, as part of permanency planning. 	

3.7 Children Looked After

<p>There is consistent application of thresholds for children entering care.</p> <p>The Multi-Agency weekly Placement Panel reviews all planned and emergency entries into care to ensure that children's needs are met and placements are provided in line with the care plan</p> <p>The panel provides robust scrutiny to ensure that children who can</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of thresholds for Children Looked After (CLA) is consistently applied and court proceedings are only issued where necessary. • All options within the family network are fully explored. • Entries into care are reviewed and agreed at a Strategic Level and placements reviewed at a weekly multi-agency panel. • For young people with complex needs, oversight, challenge, and joint funding is agreed at a monthly panel chaired by the Assistant Director. • The rate of Children Looked After is 62.6 per 10,000, slightly below the Statistical Neighbour average of 68.0 and The National average of 70.0. • The number of CLA has remained stable over the past two years. At end of March 2023 there were 292 Children Looked After compared to 295 in March 2022. • Children continue to have clear permanence plans driven through Permanency Tracking. • Timeliness of CLA Reviews remains good at 98.8% of reviews held within timescales throughout 2022/23. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure contact plans are embedded into permanence planning. • The Children in Care Council [CiCC] to be further developed and monitor the Pledge and support the ongoing use of Mind of my Own. • The Participation Officer to lead on CiCC to increase impact of consultation on service practice and development. • Maintain focus on permanence and transition planning. • Recruitment of a Permanency Practitioner to support the child's journey and timeliness.
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What do we know about the quality of front line practice in Thurrock?	How do we know it?	What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain and improve practice?
<p>safely and appropriately return home do so.</p> <p>Children in Care have a voice through the Children in Care Council and with the Corporate Parenting Group.</p> <p>Children are placed as close as possible to their home, community and school, and in a family environment when this is consistent with their best interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation at review is effective with 98.6% of over 4s sharing their views. • IROs routinely using creative presentations in minutes writing personalised letters or pictorial minutes for children and young people. • The IRO compliance checklist is shared monthly, and themes and practice performance issues identified and addressed. • Children looked after have up-to-date good quality PEPs, evidenced by audit. Pupil voice is formally recorded as part of the PEP process • The ‘Mind of my Own’ consultation tool is embedded, and its use promoted. • CiCC has come together to develop an animated video to promote the CiCC and written information about being in care. • As a result of feedback from young people around supporting mental health, the Participation & Engagement Officer was successful in securing dance course places and gym passes via a Public Health grant. • TFS has been successful with children on the edge of care remaining living at home and supporting the successful reunification as well as intensive support to promote stability in placements. • Transitions oversight has been increased and improved. Children are allocated a Personal Advisor at 16 and their transitions plan is co-produced. • Thurrock young voices have produced a video about transitions between workers The video has been shared in service briefs and training events • The service is ensuring all children in care have passports and the opportunity to travel; this is improving and tracked by the service manager for CLA. • Children are matched to their long-term carers. • Children are supported to transition home to their parent’s care where appropriate by their Social Workers and Think Family Service. • Practice around transitions has been strengthened to include a greater emphasis on using the expertise of the Personal Advisor at an earlier stage to ensure that issues for transition are addressed from 16yrs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our ambition and aspirations for Children who are Looked After. • Increase numbers of children who have had Life Story work completed with them and have a physical record of their family history and journey. • Transition for children to be driven by their carers, personal advisors, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers so that young people are involved in and are aware of the pathway to independence. • Ensure involvement of Children Looked After in improvements in the service and policies and procedures including developing Young Inspectors guidance pack for young people involved in recruitment. • Create a training package for children who are involved in recruitment panels. • CLA successfully diverted from the Criminal Justice System through intervention. • Continue to pursue a net increase in foster care placements, specifically

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated processes have led to closer working between Children and Adult Services including referrals to the Preparing for Adulthood team and Adult Mental Health Services. 70% of the Children Looked After cohort were 20 miles or less from their homes. Of children placed more than 20 miles away, most are in bordering Authorities or with relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of children placed with Thurrock carers or in Thurrock Increase Placement sufficiency through innovation.
<p>Children’s physical health needs are being met, and timeliness of Initial Health Assessments needs to be improved.</p> <p>We are giving priority to improving performance through tracking of health indicators including access to mental health support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLA Strategic Group with partners reviews and monitors health care for CLA. High scores for SDQs are monitored with appropriate support in place for young people reporting mental health wellbeing issues. [Scores in line with similar authorities at 14]. SDQs are completed in line with statutory requirements. As of March 2023 99% were up-to-date and the average score in line with national averages. IHA and RHA completion is tracked to ensure there is appropriate management oversight. In 2022-23, 21.4% of the IHAs were completed in time compared to 57% in 2020-21. This is an area of continued focus and is impacted in particular by capacity in health services. Additional Paediatric resource has been provided to improve IHA timeliness and is starting to show limited improvement. RHA completion for 2022-23 was 80%; there is evidence of improvement, and health colleagues monitor the health care issues for CLA, providing resources and intervention for health issues including substance misuse, weight management and smoking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to use data to drive performance in ensuring timely access to both physical health checks and access to mental health support for children. Continue weekly monitoring and challenge of Initial Health Assessments performance including escalation with Health providers. Exploration of alternative options to meeting initial health assessments. Looked After Children Health Steering Group to track and intervene to deliver improved health outcomes for children including mental health. Joint work with the ICB to ensure the Dynamic Support register is meaningful for looked after children. The scope of CETR’s has been widened to include children at

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		risk of a 52 week residential placement and those at risk of placement break down who are already in a 52 week residential placement
<p>Educational attainment and attendance for Looked after children. Attainment is good and attendance and exclusion data shows performance better than similar authorities.</p> <p>The implementation of the Virtual School Governing Board [GB] has improved levels of reporting and accountability. The Virtual School HT and each phase adviser, provide detailed reports for attainment and progress for scrutiny by the Governing Board and the Corporate Parenting committee.</p> <p>In addition, the Virtual School HT reports to the SEND Improvement Board regarding the</p>	<p>Attainment Data is Provided for 2022. Grades for National Testing in 2023 are not available in June 2023 and will be published later in the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational attendance, progress and attainment is tracked for all Children Looked After in and out of area and validated data outcomes continue to improve. 86% of Thurrock schools were judged to be Good or Outstanding (Watchsted 12/6/2023) As of April 2022 89% of Thurrock Children Looked After attend a school that is judged to be Good or better. 3.3 % of pupils attend a setting that has converted to academy and so is waiting for a new Ofsted grade. Thurrock Council is committed to only placing children in Good or above rated provision. All children in schools rated below Good at the point of change are risk assessed and the Virtual School closely monitors provision. In 2019, LAIT tool shows Thurrock CLA ranked 3rd in the country for Key Stage 2 pupils with 58% reaching expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths combined as of 2019 validated data. No further KS2 data is available for 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19. Data contained in the LAIT for 2022 does not show due to the small cohort size, however 58% of pupils achieved expected in RWM and this exceeded the eastern region and England CLA. Progress for pupils in KS 2 continues to be better than CLA comparable groups in Reading Writing and Maths and has improved on published data since 2019. Progress scores for 2022 are better than all Thurrock pupils and ABOVE the National Average. Attainment 8 score is in line with national Children Looked After figures. LAIT data shows that attainment 8 in 2019 was 24.40, it increased to 31.10 in 2020 and then declined in 2021 to 23.20. In 2022 the attainment 8 score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational attainment and attendance for Looked after children. Attainment is good and attendance and exclusion data shows performance better than similar authorities. Key Virtual School Priorities for this year remain focused on clear actions for improving pupil outcomes. These are to improve achievement of all pupils by: [KP 1] Improve the attendance of CLA with a particular focus on pupils who may have persistent absence and provide strategies and solutions to overcome barriers to attendance [KP 2] Increasing the use of assessment tools to meet needs and ensure that interventions match academic, social, and emotional needs

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<p>work completed for CLA with SEND needs and their progress and attainment.</p> <p>There is an ethos of driving improvement which is evidenced through streamlining of strategy and processes. This has led to improvements in PEP compliance and quality as well as educational outcomes for CLA pupils.</p> <p>There is an expectation that all pupils have a PEP within timescales. We are ambitious for our children and strive to continually improve their outcomes for progress and attainment.</p>	<p>improved to 25.00. We continue to be above our statistical neighbours, the eastern region and England CLA attainment 8 scores. This data is very cohort specific and was affected by an increase in UASC who were not able to be assessed to take 8 GCSEs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress 8 scores improved from -1.42 in 2018 to -0.97 in 2019. No data is available for 2020 or 2021 due to Covid-19. In 2022 the Progress 8 score was -1.11. Although this has increased, the trend has remained stable, and we are showing that we are in Quartile B of the LAIT tool. Thurrock CLA progress 8 score is still lower than Statistical Neighbours, East of England, and England • LAIT data shows that achievement of English and Maths combined at grades 4-9 has improved over 3 years, however it has decreased from 2020. In 2019 this was 23.30% and then increased to 47.4% which ranked us as number 1 in the country for 2020. However, it decreased to 28.00% for 2021. In 2022 this reduced to 24% achieving grades 4-9 in English and maths combined. We have had an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum seekers who were entered for exams but did not achieve the expected standard. • Attendance of our Children Looked After pupils is improving. For 2022 the LAIT shows that attendance for those in care for 12+ months was 93.2% with an overall absence figure of 6.8%. This is an improvement on the previous year. • The LAIT tool shows that the percentage of CLA who had persistent absence in 2019 was 5.5% which ranked us in the top 5 of the country. There was no data available for 2020 but 2021 data showed that persistent absence had increased to 23% but we are still within the top 5 local authorities in the country which indicated that this trend in persistent absence is nationwide. For 2022 PA rates have declined to 18% which is in line with PA for statistical neighbours and is below East of England and England. • Unauthorised absence as evidenced by the LAIT tool shows that in 2019 Thurrock was ranked No 1 in the country for low unauthorised attendance at 0.50. In 2021 this had increased to 1.10 and then to 2.50 in 2022. We had a number of pupils in KS4 who were persistent absentees due to their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [KP 3] Continue to embed processes of quality assurance of educational provision • [KP 4] Enhance the provision of support, training, and challenge to all professionals to ensure that provision meets need • [KP 5] Continue to create a Thurrock wide initiative to support the education of pupils with a social worker • [KP 6] Maximise positive outcomes for pupils

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	<p>individual needs. This affected overall rates. There is a big focus on Emotional School Based Avoidance in order to combat the increase in PA. However, it must be noted that PA has increased across the country, and this is in line with the national and CLA trends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been no permanent exclusions for over 10 years. • LAIT data shows that in 2019 8.03% of Thurrock CLA had a Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) and this reduced to 6.72% in 2020. Thurrock CLA remain below the national average for FTE. LAIT data for 2021 (published late) showed that 10.6% of the cohort had a period of exclusion. In 2022 (data not yet published but held with HT annual report) shows that 10.6% of this year's cohort had a fixed term exclusion. This is broadly in line with the CLA national averages and statistical neighbour average. • All PEPS are audited every term. Compliance and quality data is provided every half term. • This data is reported to Director's Board and to the Governing Body every term and is detailed in each HT report. • PEP compliance is currently 93% as at the beginning of June 2023 for the first half of the summer term. • As of 5th June 91% of pupils have a PEP graded as good. 3% of pupils have a PEP that is graded on the cusp of good. The Virtual School provides regular training and guidance to all professionals to complete a high quality PEP and will attend PEPs for those pupils who previously had a poor graded PEP. • Every pupil has their progress, attainment and attendance tracked and actions are taken to address poor progress for ALL pupils irrespective of where they are placed. • All CLA with SEND have individual provision maps which detail the interventions they are receiving. • All CLA have intervention planning as part of their PEP. 	
Our Fostering Service is continuing to evolve to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2023 there were 292 Children Looked After with 103 (35%) being supported by Thurrock approved foster carers. There are 104 children placed with agency carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of fostering households.

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<p>meet the changing profile of need.</p> <p>The service currently supports around 115 foster placements at any one time.</p> <p>We provide additional support to carers looking after children with very complex emotional needs and challenging behaviour through our linked therapist.</p> <p>There is an ambitious drive to recruit new in-house foster carers for Thurrock children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurrock's CLA are predominantly White, at 67.01% in March 2023. • The number of CLA who Asian/Asian British has increased to 4.47% in March 2023 and the number who are Black/Black British has increased to 14.43% in 2023. • Recruitment of foster carers remains a challenge and in 2022/23 we successfully recruited and approved 7 new In-house fostering households with 8 assessments ongoing at the end of the financial year. • The fostering recruitment and retention plan has been refreshed following consultation with approved foster carers and this is being taken forward by the service with support from our communications team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To further promote Staying Put arrangements with foster carers and young people. • To continue to review the effectiveness and explore areas of innovation for recruitment and retention to maximise impact. • Continued consultation and feedback from foster carers about the service and support provided and what makes foster carers remain with Thurrock. • Reduction in numbers of net foster carers leaving the service.
<p>Thurrock's adoption performance has improved over the last year and more children have achieved permanence through adoption in 2022/23 after a two year decrease in adoption numbers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption is always considered for children as a way of achieving permanence where appropriate. • The number of children adopted in 2022/23 was 14, an increase of six children on last year. On 1st May 2023 there were 8 children subject to a placement order and 6 are placed for adoption. • The average time between a child entering care and moving in with adopters for children who have been adopted is measured as a 12-month rolling average. At end of Q4 2022-23, Thurrock's average was 560 days. Based on 2021-22 benchmarking data, Thurrock is above the National average of 397 days and above the Statistical Neighbour average of 435 days, England average of 397 and Eastern Region of 459 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to increase the number and percentage of children leaving care through adoption, by ensuring tight permanence planning. • Continued focus on placement timescales to ensure they remain within target. • Escalation with the lead family judge for children with a plan for adoption who are facing delay due to court capacity

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the small number of adoption cases in Thurrock, one or two cases with specific circumstances have also impacted on this measurement. As at end of Q4 2022-23, the average time in days between Thurrock receiving a Placement Order (court authority) to place a child with the adoptive family was 106 days. Based on 2021-22 benchmarking data, Thurrock is below the National average of 188 days and the Statistical Neighbour average of 201 days. This is an improving picture which reflects the work done to progress children's plans once the court process is concluded. Adopt East is the Regional Adoption Alliance which brings together eight local authorities including Thurrock, two voluntary agency partners (Adoptionplus and Barnardos), and the charity Adoption UK. Adopt East offers Thurrock's children a greater pool of prospective adopters and early permanence carers than Thurrock can provide alone, and is co-ordinated by a Regional Matching Manager Adoption and SGO support services are jointly commissioned which has increased the number of providers and range of service options to families seeking support. Our recruitment of adopters is successful, and we are a net contributor to Adopt East. Peer supervision and management support is provided from the region to practice leaders – good practice is shared regionally. Thurrock is pursuing more open adoptions so that contact with birth families can be maintained, but permanency achieved. In 2022/23, 12 SGOs were granted; 8 were previously LAC and 4 were not. This compares to 13 in the previous financial year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional tracking of children in proceedings and adopter applications to identify links earlier. A single front door for applicants that reaches beyond our borders – this is supported by a regional brand and website. A wider training offer pre- and post-approval for prospective and approved adopters. Enhance adopter capability to have direct contact with birth families and between siblings placed separately. Improve awareness and drive for Early Permanence through training for all social workers. Adoption Social Workers to continue to provide CPR advice and supervision to case holding social workers to ensure quality and timeliness.
<p>Permanency planning is supported by proactive tracking.</p> <p>Achieving permanence for all children at the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All cases in the PLO are monitored and tracked through a fortnightly meeting chaired by the Strategic Lead. The PLO process is effective and robust, we have continued to work effectively with families to reduce the need for statutory intervention through pre-proceedings. Recommendations from the Peer Review on PLO in February 2022 have been progressed and embedded within practice. An audit of PLO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain focus on early permanence planning. Continued focus to progress cases in a timely way through the PLO process and early identification of cases

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<p>earliest appropriate stage continues to be a priority for the service.</p> <p>Alongside adoption as a key route to Permanence and Placement Stability, Thurrock actively pursues permanent fostering, SGOs, CAOs and reunification where possible and appropriate for children.</p>	<p>completed in May 2023, identified that in the most, PLO cases were progressed within timescale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases are reviewed with representation to the Designated Family Judge to ensure there is court availability for final hearings. Where possible IRHs have been used as final hearings. • Feedback from the Designated Family Judge is positive and supportive of Thurrock’s Think Family approach. • Adoption hearings have been prioritised. • There has been continuing impact from Covid on the availability of court time and a contributing factor to lengthy court proceedings. • A number of factors impact on the duration of cases in the Court some of which are out of the control of the local authority. Factors include repeated assessments, potential carers within the family network being identified late in the proceedings, difficulties experienced in identifying birth fathers at an early stage, efficient early and contingency planning, and capacity in the courts at all stages of the process. • Currently, there are care proceedings in which the final hearings are delayed, which also reflects a continued backlog within the court system. • There are regular meetings with Cafcass to review case work including to analyse delay. • There has been renewed focus on PLO to ensure that only those cases which are ready for court are being issued. Discussions have taken place with Cafcass to confirm the use of experts and reduce there where this is possible. • 17 practitioners have been trained to use PAMS and 26 PAMS based assessments were allocated in-house during 2022/23 preventing commissioning delays. • Family Network Meeting Facilitators, support practitioners to identify connected family networks from the initial assessment stage and facilitate Family Network Meetings to develop Family Plans. These meetings can also identify connected family members who can provide placements for children who cannot remain living at home. 	<p>appropriate for PLO including early assessment pre-birth. Ensure there is a continued focus on utilising TFS interventions and support at the pre-PLO stage and for families in PLO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of CLA, as a result of improved permanence tracking and planning. • Continue increased use of SGOs. • Work with the Think Family Service to support children to remain living with their families where this is safe. • Continued support for post-adoption and SGO children and carers. • Continue to promote Thurrock’s Think Family approach and ensure Family Network Meetings are embedded in practice to promote family problem solving. • Embedding learning identified in Peer Audit of PLO to evidence positive impact for children. • Monthly Joint Legal and Social Care meeting to consider cases to prevent delay.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective sessions within the service to identify themes and actions where delay can be avoided through improved planning.
3.8 Care Leavers		
<p>Our Aftercare Service has delivered improved outcomes for care leavers.</p> <p>Young people and staff are focusing on how the principles of the National Outcomes Framework for care leavers will be embedded in practice. Care Leavers have a good relationship with their Personal Advisors.</p> <p>Care Leavers understand what their rights and entitlements are</p> <p>Care Leavers feel safe</p> <p>Care Leavers has a plan which they have participated in developing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2023, 276 Care Leavers were being supported by the Aftercare Service. The cohort of Care Leavers aged between 22-25 years has increased from 27% in March 2022, to 28% in March 2023. • As at March 2023, 70% of Care Leavers are aged between 18-21 years and 2% are aged between 16-17 years. • All Care Leavers are assigned a Personal Advisor at 16 years of age. • The Sufficiency Strategy highlights the issues in relation to provision of suitable accommodation for Care Leavers, with clear plans in place to address this. • The Aftercare Service and Housing Department have developed a Joint Housing Protocol. • The Pathway Plan template has been updated to include more detailed information about housing and ensure there is good transition planning in place. • The Aftercare Service strive to ‘Keep in Touch’ regularly with all Care Leavers, using the young person’s preferred communication method. A program of in person events and training is now available and being developed with Care Leavers • Care Leavers have access to mental health support and substance misuse services. • Transition planning takes account of any mental health needs for young people and there is a mental wellbeing offer for young people to ensure they are not isolated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Audit the Aftercare Service to ensure Care Leavers understand their plan, that it’s co-produced and meaningful. • Continue to check through audit that a minimum target of 90% of young people have an up-to-date pathway plan. • Effective transition planning for children in care with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This will include making sure the young person understands their pathway plan and feels empowered to contribute to its development, and that plans for their future are ambitious. • Ensure the specific views and needs of Care Leavers are considered in service development and service delivery. • Discussion and participation session at Leadership and Member’s level around

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Transition Panel addresses early transition planning for Care Leavers and young adults who have a disability and require ongoing support from Adult Social Care. • The local offer is available on the Thurrock Council website, this includes a specific financial offer for Care Leavers • An external review of Thurrock’s Aftercare Service ids taking place in June 2023 to consider practice and outcomes for care leavers. • A review of the structure of the Aftercare Service has been completed and additional capacity being added to the team with an additional team manager and Personal Advisors. • Consultation sessions with young people has gathered feedback and a 	<p>Thurrock’s Corporate Parenting responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update of the financial offer for Care Leavers which will be included in an updated Local Offer. • Social media group to be created to assist care leavers to connect • Additional capacity to meet the needs of our care leavers - Team Manager and 2 additional PA’s. • Care leaver Forum to be established.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care leavers have accommodation that best meets their needs and helps them to develop their independence skills safely. Risks of tenancy breakdown are identified and addressed; alternative plans are put in place promptly when necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care leavers are encouraged to ‘stay put’ and ‘stay close’ to their care placement and the authority. • We have piloted a programme for Care Leavers sharing Council owned accommodation that includes basic furniture, white goods, and utility services at 23% reduced market rent rates. Headstart will pay for utilities for properties so that young people do not have to “pay as you go”. • All of the Council owned accommodation and the majority of rented properties that Headstart use have Wi-Fi access which has been important and supports young people to access education opportunities. • The number of Care Leavers who were residing in semi-independent accommodation in April 2022 was 41 and 12 in supported lodgings. • Since April 2018, young people who are care experienced and between the ages of 18 to 21 years, are not required to pay Thurrock Council Tax. • In 2021/22 there were 25 Care Leavers in social housing tenancies. As at April 2022 there are 41 Care Leavers in social housing tenancies. • Care Leavers who were in Staying Put arrangements. Staying Put is encouraged where it is agreed by carers and the young person this is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing review of this housing offer and the support for Care Leavers. The joint Housing Protocol has been updated. Close working is enabling more care experienced young people to achieve tenancies at a current rate of one tenancy per fortnight/ • An increased focus on Care Leavers developing their independence skills. Support by joint training by partners as part of the post-16 offer • Risk of tenancy breakdown identified and addressed through the Preparation for Tenancy Panel

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	<p>preferred transition plan and there are currently 25 young people in Staying Put Arrangements. The Staying Put Policy has been updated to clarify roles and make Living Together Agreements clearer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sufficiency strategy has been updated to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place for young people as they progress into their own accommodation. • Head Start Housing is now led withing Thurrock’s Housing department. The current cohort has been reviewed and 9 young people have been identified for additional support to progress to a tenancy. Post head start provision is being identified for young people who immigration decisions are pending but are ready for independence. • There has been good partnership working between Social Care and Housing, resulting in the development of a ‘Preparation for Tenancy’ Panel, to prevent eviction and to provide early transition planning to ensure successful tenancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support plans are put in place promptly when necessary. • Staying put Training to be delivered to the network (PA’s Carers, Social Workers in adults and children’s • Development of a Care Leavers Forum is support young people in the feedback process and assist co-design of services
<p>We are proactive in driving the proportion of Care Leavers in education, employment, or training (EET) post pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2023, 69% of Care Leavers aged 17 - 18 year old were in part or full time education, employment, or training. 50% of Care Leavers aged 19 – 21 were in part or full time education, employment or training. Both measures are similar to last year and reflect the challenges young people face. • The percentage of care leavers who were EET increased from 49% in 2021/22 to 52% in 2022/23. This is slightly below statistical neighbours. • There are two monthly panels which focus on young people who do not have an EET offer. The panel strengthens oversight and planning to ensure young people access EET, understand the issues for individuals, and align their interests to an EET offer. • The Inspire hub offers routine workshops to support with writing a CV and preparation for interviews, applying for university and short courses to improve employability. • Inspire has been working with Make Happen (NCOP) on a programme for care-experienced young people in Year 9-13 to access Higher Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Care Leavers have a good offer of education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships. • Through the EET panel drive engagement with continued education and training, including those aged 21 to 24 years to ensure that Care Leavers are progressing well and achieving their full potential through either being in further or higher education or in their chosen career/occupation.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLA and Care Leavers aged 15-24 who are NEET (and able to work in the UK) can now access a range of provision (such as Functional Skills and CSCS Card Training) Careers guidance and mentoring through the roll out of On-Track2 by our delivery partner, TCHC. Learners who need more one to one support to improve their English and Maths have access to a tutor. Young people can access services directly by dropping in to our Inspire Hubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A renewed focus on engaging young people in EET, with a target of 80%. • Support access for Care Leavers to Council apprenticeships. Target 10 apprenticeships and work experience. • Focus group to obtain feedback from young people who are attending university, about help and support Care Leavers need to progress.
<h3>3.9 Missing from Care, Home, School</h3>		
<p>Multi-agency working to promote risk recognition; response and risk reduction is well established.</p> <p>Scrutiny of activity levels, analysis of patterns and quality of risk reduction has received continued focus in the last year.</p> <p>Good evidence of risk recognition and safety planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on missing children is circulated daily to managers within Children’s Services. • A weekly report on Missing Children is sent to Senior Managers, the DCS and the Portfolio holder. • The service has overseen the delivery of return home interviews with Inspire which has improved performance. From the 1st April 2023 the service has been managed ‘in house, but independently of the operational teams. • In 2021/2022, 47.3% of children with missing episodes engaged in RHIs, Performance has improved in 2022/23 with 72% of young people accepting and engaging in a return home interview. • The number of missing episodes has also decreased and the timeliness of RHI’s has also improved. • The multi-agency Missing Children Panel chaired by the CE and Missing Manager, meets weekly. Intelligence from RHI’s is shared at the meeting and the group focuses on multi-agency safety planning and disruption of activities of gangs and other groups or individuals to reduce risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return Home Interview data and information from interviews to be analysed to identify trends / patterns / themes and inform strategic planning and safety planning for individual children. • Improvement in the quality of information and engagement with young people through RHI’s. • A continued focus on promoting RHI’s and ambitious target of 80% or more children receiving an RHI. • Practice workshops to further strengthen individual safety planning.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Thematic audit took place in March 2023 to inform practice in relation to the quality of the RHIs completed. The most common themes identified included pull factors of family and friends if CLA, school issues and parental conflict in relation to boundary setting for those who are not CLA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A continued focus in the audit programme on safety planning, and risk reduction. • Continued staff training in relation to CE, Contextual Safeguarding and Gangs.
3.10 Child Exploitation / Gangs & Groups		
<p>There is a good level of awareness of child exploitation and the risks arising from involvement with Gangs.</p> <p>There is a clear focus and firm safeguarding response in relation to children at risk of and experiencing Sexual and Criminal Child Exploitation in the context of Gangs and Trafficking.</p> <p>We have well-developed Gang Related Violence Strategic and Operational Groups to monitor and track individuals and their activities.</p> <p>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are additional operational meetings held within Children’s Social Care to plan and disrupt activity. • Bimonthly Contextual Safeguarding Reports are completed for Senior Managers and Strategic Partners. The reports provide an overview of the contextual safeguarding issues present in the borough and affecting the young people we work with, to promote disruption and reduce risk. • Return Home Interviews (RHIs) are completed for children who have been missing to understand the reasons for their missing episodes, where they have been and how their time away was spent identifying behaviours and push and pull factors that may increase the risk to young people. • A bi-monthly Contextual Safeguarding Report is completed by the Gangs and CCE Coordinator to give Senior Managers an overview of the contextual safeguarding issues present within the borough and surrounding areas which are affecting the vulnerable young people we work with. • Teams and Service areas have CE Champions, who work closely with the CE and Missing Manager in supporting Social Workers with training, mapping and safety planning. • Gang Injunctions are used when needed and were last used in 2022 resulting in reduced gang activity in the borough. • We have developed joined up working between Early Help, Social Care, YOS, Commissioned services and Community Safety partners to engage with individual young people and deliver community interventions ie detached youth work in known hotspots to reduce the risk of CE. • Additional funding has been secured to support the Violence and Vulnerability programme across Essex. We have a ‘Reachable Moments’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with multi-agency partners in Adult Safeguarding to promote risk recognition and response to vulnerable adult Care Leavers and other adults at risk of exploitation and trafficking. • Ongoing support provided by the dedicated Gangs and CE worker to Social Workers regarding safety planning, increased awareness, and use of contextual safeguarding. • Continued awareness raising events. • Operation Goldcrest to continue. • Ongoing development around mapping of individuals, gang networks, criminal activity and geographical considerations. • Further work is required with Met Police to achieve improved information sharing and attendance at Strategy

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	<p>offer, increased detached Youth Work and improved early intervention for schools and colleges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing support is provided by the dedicated Gangs and CE workers to Social Workers regarding safety planning, increased awareness, and use of contextual safeguarding. • Continued awareness raising events are held. • There is ongoing development around mapping of individuals, gang networks, criminal activity, and geographical considerations. • We were successful in securing funding for a Specialist Support Worker and a Primary School Prevention Worker who alongside the CE and Gangs Senior Practitioner offers individual and group support, as well as training and interventions to Schools and Colleges. • Following an increase of youth violence early in the Spring of 2021, an Independent Review was commissioned by the LSCP which highlighted a positive multi agency response to youth violence. • Children’s Social Care has worked with Housing to develop a support offer to families who have moved to Thurrock from other LAs, where safety is required from Gangs. 	<p>Meetings, as local gang activity often takes place across the county border into London.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current risk and vulnerability assessment to ensure that it is focused on safety planning • The development of Family Hubs to include young people will build on and strengthen our impact.
3.11 Domestic Abuse		
<p>There is a co-ordinated, multi-agency response to Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Victims report that they feel safer following Multi Agency Risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All domestic abuse cases are considered by the MASH before the MARAC meeting so that any urgent action is taken. • Partner referrals into MARAC are triaged weekly by the DV Manager, Police and IDVA to ensure they meet threshold. • Attendance at MARACs from all partner agencies is consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain awareness through training of partners to increase partner referrals. Also promote awareness by schools • Hold partner review meetings to ensure partners are

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<p>Assessment Conference [MARAC] planning.</p> <p>Risk assessments are completed at the first instance to ensure families are safe.</p> <p>Achieve whole family working, supporting victims and their children and providing intervention for perpetrators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions are reviewed weekly to ensure they are met and agency accountability is achieved. • All high-risk domestic abuse cases are heard at MARAC within seven working days, and minutes shared within 7 days of this resulting in timely safety plans to support victims of domestic abuse and their children. • Feedback from victims indicate that they are feeling safer because of their cases being heard and actions from MARAC. • Thurrock MARAC attends SETDAB scrutiny panel where cases are reviewed by partners identifying areas of strength and development. • Signs of Safety approach has been adopted to deliver strengths base approach increasing our ability to engage service users. • Perpetrator working moved to remote delivery during the pandemic the perpetrator programme was delivered via Teams. As we have come out of lockdown this has now moved to a more hybrid arrangement of face to face and remote which has improved engagement for those who need a more flexible approach because of work patterns. • Training has continued to be delivered to staff and partners by adjusting the material so it can be delivered remotely. The service is now moving to providing a hybrid model of training/recordings, face to face and remote. • Funding has been obtained to deliver programmes working with children and young people around healthy relationship, safety plans and boundaries and this is being progressed. • Risk assessment training has been rolled out to front line staff to support Social Workers to assess risk. • Joint visits are completed to increase professional confidence and provide support in delivering interventions. • A Domestic Abuse Champions group has been set up to ensure the latest information in domestic abuse is shared within all teams. It also provides a picture of the whole service and how caseloads are affected by domestic abuse. • There was further investment in 2021/22 from the DWP in training staff in Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC), as well as support for Families from the Tavistock Parenting Together Programme and online support from You, 	<p>supported to maintain high engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend scrutiny panel, take on development points, and build on strengths. • Perform random audits on MARAC cases internally. • Continue to review data collated by partners regarding victims. • Hold additional awareness events for our partners and wider organisations. • Work with LSCP to develop multi-agency offer of training including victim awareness and Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based (DASH). • Continue to deliver training to front line staff in domestic abuse awareness, perpetrator theory, perpetrator engagement, and victim support and risk assessments and extend training to a multi-agency offer. • Roll out mandatory training for the risk assessment tool to all teams. • Delivery of Children’s Groups around domestic violence and keeping safe from the Family

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	<p>Me and Baby too and How to Argue Better programmes. A bid for further DWP funding in 2022/23 was submitted and we have successfully recruited a RPC Coordinator who offers training to professionals and interventions with families. He is also going to offer interventions to parents pre and postnatally as part of the Family Hubs Start for Life offer.</p>	<p>Hubs, and extended support for parents through the Family Hub programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the Champions Groups across the service to share knowledge and expertise with a focus on delivering best practice.
3.12 Workforce		
<p>There is a stable management team within the service. Our Recruitment and Retention Strategy has been successful in reducing vacancies in the management group. We have had a successful recruitment campaign for newly qualified social workers. Further work is needed to increase our cohort of experienced qualified social workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a good learning culture and support between managers and front line staff which promotes retention. • We have a stable management group from team manager through to assistant director. • All vacancies are covered by agency staff where required. • 33% of agency staff have remained in Thurrock for over a year and 26% for between 6 months and a year. • Social workers report positively on the working environment in external reviews and the LGA social work health check survey • Recruitment and retention of qualified social workers remains an area of focus. • Turnover of qualified social workers has increased by 4.8% from 17.3%, and vacancy rates increased 5% from 25.7% between April 2022 and the end of March 2023. This increase is above national performance but in line with or below our closest statistical neighbours. • We have been successful in recruiting Newly qualified social workers with six currently in the service and a number due to start in August/September 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and development of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Qualified Social Workers including “Grow your own”. • We will continue to embed and provide specialist training around the SoS Model. • Continue to hold Recruitment and Retention Board to analyse staffing trends and to ensure Thurrock remains an employer of choice.
<p>Caseloads are regularly monitored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily updates of caseload data is available via the Dashboard. • The LCS Management System is available to Managers to maintain continuous oversight of caseloads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate and maintain reasonable caseloads within the service that enable practitioners to build

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<p>Strategic Leads and the Assistant Director monitor caseloads on a monthly basis. There is a strong commitment to ensuring caseloads are within the ranges agreed for each service area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads are reviewed and discussed by Senior Managers at the monthly Performance Meetings, chaired by the Assistant Director. • All cases are allocated. • The caseload average across the whole service is currently 14, however caseloads can vary across services areas to reflect the intensity of the workload. In this regard, caseload limits have been set across the different service areas and these are reviewed by Team Managers to ensure caseloads remain manageable and within the limit. Caseloads in Aftercare have risen and a review of the needs of the service identified a need for increased capacity which is being implemented. 	<p>relationships with children and their families and improve their life chances.</p>
<h3>3.13 Case Management System</h3>		
<p>Social Care service performance, monitoring & targeting has been supported by reporting of performance and management information.</p> <p>The health check of LCS and review of data reporting has led to us updating reports to make information more accessible to front line managers and teams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been a number of significant developments in the reporting and usage of data. Reporting is now fully self-service enabling practitioners and managers to readily access the Dashboard to obtain all operational and management data, which is updated daily. • The redesign of reports has made them more user-friendly which has resulted in them becoming a useful everyday tool. The reports provide actionable data enabling practitioners and managers to recognise which tasks need to be completed or prioritised. • Performance data has been updated, providing operational (team-level) and strategic (service-level) data. • Some key template forms on LCS have been redesigned to better complement Signs of Safety Practice and to reduce duplication, including assessments, supervision templates and CP Plans. • Think Family template forms have been uploaded onto LCS so that referral and outcomes data can be reported. • DCS monthly Development Board, supported by the Portfolio Holder, provides support and challenge to practice and performance. • The Corporate Performance Framework also holds Children’s Services to account and engages corporate commitment to service goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCS will continue to be reviewed and adapted to ensure the system promotes and embeds the use of the SOS approach. • Electronic data collection through LCS is being developed for Think Family. • Further updates are needed to forms templates on LCS to fully integrate the SoS model into all aspects of our digital work. • Continue to develop functionality, to promote the use of data by front-line managers, to drive performance and practice. • There is an Action Log to prioritise further development

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Systems and Governance Board has been implemented and is now embedded, which oversees all system changes and new developments within LCS (the ITC Case Management System) and Reporting/Performance. • A number of changes have been made to the reporting of CE, Vulnerability and Missing Children. These include templates for Return Home Interviews, Risk Assessments, Planning and Strategy Meeting templates, which are aligned to a Contextual Safeguarding and SoS approach. 	<p>of the Reporting, Data and Performance function.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project is underway to provide a strategy and road map for detailed data matching and common approach to Data Analysis between Children's Social Care, Education and other functions.