

Report to Cabinet

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Local members affected:	(All Electoral Divisions);
Portfolio areas affected:	[Portfolio areas]

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Summary

This report was written in March 2017 but was delayed to being presented to Cabinet due to the local elections.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet on the national, regional and local developments in relation to Children's Services (the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit). In addition, this report includes an overview of the inspection regimes which cover the business unit. A separate paper providing an update on the Children's Improvement Programme was presented to Cabinet in April 2017.

Recommendation

Cabinet note the national, regional and local developments in relation to Children's Services.

[Please number paragraphs from here]

A. National Context

The Government has a major legislative programme which will impact on children's services in Buckinghamshire. The following section gives an overview of the key developments; we regularly assess the implications of these for Buckinghamshire and proposals will be brought to Cabinet as appropriate.

1. **The Changing Landscape in Education**

There has been a significant shift in national educational policy and funding which has occurred over the past few years, resulting in increased school autonomy and diversity of school provision (academies, free schools, UTCs, studio schools), raised Ofsted expectations and increasing development of school led system leadership to promote school improvement. A detailed paper on the changes in relation to policy and funding will be brought to Cabinet in June 2017.

2. **Wood Report** (March 2016)

In December 2015, Alan Wood was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education to lead a fundamental review of the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). The outcome of the review was published in March 2016 (The Wood Report) and sets out a new framework for improving the organisation and delivery of multi-agency arrangements to protect and safeguard children. It contains recommendations for government to consider and suggests that appropriate steps should be taken to recast the statutory framework that underpins the model of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs).

The government published its response to the report in May 2016 and confirmed that they will:

- Introduce a stronger but more flexible statutory framework that will support local partners to work together more effectively to protect and safeguard children and young people including placing a new requirement on local authorities, the police and the health service to make arrangements for working together in a local area.
- Replace the current system of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and miscellaneous local reviews with a system of national and local reviews including establishing a National Panel which will be responsible for commissioning and publishing national reviews and to investigate the most serious case and requiring LSCBs (and their successor arrangements) to carry out and publish lessons from local reviews.
- Put in place arrangements to transfer national oversight of Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs) from the Department for Education to the Department of Health, whilst ensuring that the keen focus on distilling and embedding learning is maintained within the necessary child protection agencies.

The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) have already started discussions in relation to the impact of these changes in Buckinghamshire and there will be an extraordinary Board meeting in the next few months to discuss in more detail.

3. **Children and Social Work Bill** (May 2016)

In May 2016, the government published the [Children and Social Work Bill](#) – a set of legislation it hopes will drive up standards in the social work profession. The legislation proposes five key changes for practitioners:

- The bill allows the government to potentially directly regulate social workers, or set up a government-controlled body for social workers. This would replace the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- The bill allows for a set of criminal offences to be introduced for social work misconduct. The offences could apply to practitioners who fail to comply with

restrictions on registration or in cases where social workers facing fitness-to-practise cases fail to attend hearings or provide evidence in their defence

- The bill allows the government to 'exempt' local authorities from legal duties under certain pieces of children's social care legislation, including some sections of the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004.
- Social workers will have to factor in the impact of harm a child has previously suffered, or are likely to suffer in future, as part of their permanency assessments and plans for care proceedings.
- The potential for social work to become directly regulated by government could hand ministers control over the way social work education providers have to operate in order to be accredited.

Following progression through the House of Commons, the Bill has been returned to the House of Lords to consider the Commons amendments prior to receiving Royal Assent. Further information about the implications will be presented to Cabinet in the next update report in October 2017.

4. National Assessment and Accreditation of Child & Family Social Workers (NAAS)

The DfE proposal is to deliver a national assessment and accreditation system for child and family social workers as part of the wider reforms of children's social care. The government view is that the introduction of NAAS will offer, for the first time, a consistent way of providing assurance that child and family social workers, supervisors (first line managers) and practice leaders (directors) have the knowledge and skills required for effective practice. The initial expectation was that all social workers in the children's social care sector will be accredited by 2020, however, the programme will not be mandatory, at least initially, and so this will be difficult to achieve. The DfE said in a briefing this week that they do not want staff put forward for the assessment unless they are likely to pass, so expectations around all social workers achieving this by 2020 are flexible.

Workforce implications for BCC and other employers will be about assessing and accrediting the existing workforce at the various levels within timescales and understanding the implications for how this is done (time, cost, job rotation, supervision, assessment process etc).

5. Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse and Neglect (July 2016)

The Home Office and Department for Education published a consultation which sets out the Government's wide-ranging programme of reform to provide better outcomes for vulnerable children. The consultation sought views on the possible introduction of one of two additional statutory measures:

- A mandatory reporting duty, which would require certain practitioners or organisations to report child abuse or neglect if they knew or had reasonable cause to suspect it was taking place.
- A duty to act, which would require certain practitioners or organisations to take appropriate action in relation to child abuse or neglect if they knew or had reasonable cause to suspect it was taking place.

The consultation closed on 13th October 2016 and the Government is considering all responses before deciding on the next steps and publishing an outcome report.

6. **Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence**

(July 2016) sets out the Government's vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society. The Strategy identifies and describes how the Government will support care leavers to achieve five key outcomes:

- Better prepared and supported to live independently.
- Improved access to education, training and employment.
- Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure.
- Improved Access to Health Support.
- Achieving Financial Stability.

Work is underway in Buckinghamshire to ensure that our services for care leavers are in line with the government's vision.

7. **Putting children first: our vision for children's social care** (July 2016) sets out fundamental reform of each of the three pillars on which the children's social care system stands; people and leadership, practice and systems, governance and accountability. By 2020, the Government wants to ensure that every local children's social care service across the country has a workforce, at all levels equipped with the knowledge and skills, verified through robust assessment and accreditation. The ambition is that, by 2020, over a third of all current local authorities will either be delivering their children's services through a new model or be actively working towards a different model.

8. **Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales by Charlie Taylor** (December 2016)

The Taylor Review makes recommendations for extensive reform of the youth justice system covering devolution, courts, sentencing and custody. The government's response supports many of the principles of The Taylor Review and sets out the intention to review the governance of the system, to improve the way youth offending is tackled and to put education and health at the heart of youth custody. Since the publication of the Review and Government Response further clarity has been sought regarding a timetable for implementation of the parts of the review which are agreed to.

9. **New definition of CSE** (February 2017)

In February 2016 the government launched a consultation on revising the current definition of child sexual exploitation with the aim of agreeing a clear, common definition of child sexual exploitation which would be used by practitioners across all sectors. In February 2017, the government published the outcome of the consultation along with the final revised definition and supporting guidance for practitioners. The final revised definition will shortly be included in the 'Working Together' statutory guidance:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

10. Tackling child sexual exploitation: progress report (March 2017)

In March 2017, the government published its Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Progress Report and announced a £40m package of measures to protect children and young people from sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, and to crack down on offenders. It includes:

- £7.5m for a new Centre of Expertise which aims to be the authoritative source of research and best practice on tackling child sexual abuse and exploitation, led by Barnardo's
- £20m for the National Crime Agency to tackle online child sexual exploitation
- An additional £7m for organisations helping victims of sexual abuse, including children
- £2.3m for the second phase of the successful Disrespect NoBody campaign, which raises young people's awareness of healthy relationships
- £2.2m from the Child Trafficking Protection Fund will help protect vulnerable children in the UK and overseas who are at risk of trafficking
- Independent Child Trafficking Advocates service launched in three early adopter sites across the country for which will provide specialist support to trafficked children.

The Progress Report details delivery of the programme of work set out in the 2015 *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Report*.

11. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse - work programme for 2017/18 (March 2017)

The Governments Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) launched its plan for 2017/2018. The Inquiry's plan for the coming year reflects a greater focus on making recommendations that will keep children safer now and in the future. Alongside its investigations into a range of institutions in England and Wales, the Inquiry is leading an extensive programme of research and analysis, and will host seminars on a range of important topics. Seminars will be used to gather information and views to help the Inquiry to identify areas for further investigation and scrutiny.

12. No Good Options: Report of the Inquiry into Children's Social Care in England (March 2017)

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) has published the findings of their latest Inquiry into children's social care services in England in March 2017. The report pulls together information obtained throughout the duration of the Inquiry which ran from February 2016 to January 2017.

Headlines include:

- LA's available resources are being disproportionately spent on children at most risk of harm meaning there is insufficient resource to help families earlier
- 89% of DCSs surveyed as part of the inquiry said they are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their S17 duties
- Substantial variations in local policies and outcomes across the country, the report hones in on CiC figures, ranging from 22 per 10,000 up to 164 per 10,000 asserting that this can't be solely attributed to deprivation
- Calls for the government to address 'the funding crisis engulfing children's social care, and in particular the lack of resource for preventative and early intervention services'
- Other key recommendation is more research to help the government to understand the difference in approaches / outcomes across the country.

Key recommendations include a review of resourcing by the DfE and DCLG; the government should incentivise early intervention; and the DfE to develop a workforce strategy to reduce churn in the social work workforce.

B. Inspection Regimes/ Update

13. Future of social care inspection (February 2017)

In June 2016 Ofsted published a consultation seeking views on proposed changes across Ofsted's inspections of children's social care in four key areas:

1. The principles of social care inspection
2. Inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS)
3. A social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) for all
4. Specific changes to Ofsted's inspections of independent fostering agencies (IFAs)

Ofsted published the outcome of the consultation and next steps (['Future of social care inspection'](#)) in February 2017:

- They confirmed that they will be adopting the first two proposed principles for social care inspection: 'focus on the things that matter most to children's lives' and 'be consistent in our expectations of providers'. They have amended the third principle to be 'prioritise our work where improvement is needed most'. Details of how these inspection principles will be applied in practice will be fully explained in the SCCIF and ILACS when published later in 2017.
- They will pilot the proposals in relation to inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS) throughout 2017. They will continue with their current approach to local authorities judged inadequate: quarterly monitoring visits followed by either a single inspection (SIF) or a post-monitoring SIF. They will publish the ILACS in the autumn of 2017 for implementation from January 2018.
- They confirmed that they will be implementing the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) in children's home, independent fostering agencies, boarding schools and residential schools, voluntary adoption agencies, adoption support agencies, residential family centres, residential holiday schemes for disabled children and residential provision in further education colleges. The SCCIF will be published in February 2017 ahead of its implementation from April 2017.
- They will be implementing the proposal to re-inspect independent fostering agencies judged as inadequate within six to 12 months and within 12 to 18 months for those judged as requiring improvement.

14. Overview of SIF Inspection Outcomes

To date, 129 local authorities have had their children's safeguarding services inspected under the Single Inspection Framework. Overall Effectiveness grades are:

Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	2	2%
Good	35	27%
Requires Improvement	60	47%
Inadequate	32	25%

15. Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)

From February 2016, under the Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI), Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission as well as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation are jointly responsible for assessing how local authorities, the police, health, probation and youth offending services are working together in an area to identify, support and protect vulnerable children and young people. These short inspections allow inspectorates to be more responsive, targeting specific areas of interest and concern and also identify areas for improvement and highlight good practice from which others can learn.

The inspection includes a 'deep dive' element, with the first five inspections focused on children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care. The inspections were conducted in Central Bedfordshire, Croydon, Liverpool, Oxfordshire and South Tyneside and an [overview report](#) was published by Ofsted in September 2016. The second area of focus has been children living with domestic abuse. To date, Salford, Lincolnshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire have been inspected. No rating is given but a summary of strengths and weaknesses is provided.

16. SEND Area Inspections

To date, 20 local authorities have had a Joint Local Area SEND inspection. These inspections focus on the effectiveness of the local area in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/ or disabilities. In Buckinghamshire, the SEND Board has led on the development of a multi-agency SEND Self-Evaluation in preparation for an SEND Area Inspection.

C. Regional Context

We work closely with colleagues across the South East region on a range of policy, commissioning and service delivery issues. The following section sets out two current areas of focus.

17. Adoption - A vision for change

On 27 March 2016 the Education Secretary unveiled a new 4 year strategy 'Adoption: a vision for change', which sets out how the Government plans to address challenges in the adoption system over the next four years. The strategy details how, by 2020, the Government will deliver a system where all children are matched with adoptive parents without delay and includes a new drive to boost the educational success of adopted children. To end delay in adoption for vulnerable children, larger local pools of approved adopters will be developed by making sure every single council is part of a regional adoption agency by 2020.

Buckinghamshire County Council is working with a number of other local authorities and Coram to develop a Regional Adoption Agency in line with government expectations. A report will come back to Cabinet on this issue in due course.

18. Cost of agency workers – Memorandum of Cooperation

Workforce developments have taken place across regions, to better manage agency pay rates and prevent the circulation of poor quality workers between Councils. Memorandums have been agreed to cover:

- A standardised approach to references for agency staff
- An agency pay cap to stop pay rates from escalating with agency recruitment
- A six month 'cooling off' period for permanent staff moving to agency work

D. Local Context

The following section focuses on how Buckinghamshire is responding to some of the national, regional and local issues affecting us at the moment.

19. Change for Children Programme

This programme is in response to the changing national, regional and local picture and supports the implementation of the Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy 2016. Its stated mission is: *'To ensure Children's Social Care and Learning is financially stable and future proofed whilst continuing to support the most vulnerable children throughout Buckinghamshire'*. The programme will also deliver the majority of the required MTFP savings for the Business Unit over the next 5 years.

The programme's Operating Principles are:

- To ensure we have the **capacity to intervene where children are not safe**
- To ensure that **there is a market** to meet the needs of children and young people – but **not necessarily to deliver everything ourselves**
- To build on parents and families strengths and **help communities to be resilient**
- To **actively manage the co-ordination of services** and deploy them in an effective way
- To **manage demand** to reduce the needs on high cost intervention

There are four main work-streams, which complement and sit alongside existing day-to-day operations and our Improvement Programme:

- **Early Help for Children and Families**
 - Development of a new delivery model for Early Help
 - Services integrated at a local level around children and their families
 - Financially sustainable services
 - Reduction in demand on social care services
 - Improved outcomes for children and families
- **Support for Looked After Children**
 - Strategic review of services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, realigning placement provision whilst managing demand.
 - More children placed within 20 miles of home
 - More children placed within a family setting
 - Increased internal residential capacity
 - Placement costs in line with our statistical neighbours
 - Services that are able to meet children's needs, in the right place, at the right time for the right cost
 - Improved adoption timescales
- **Educating our Children**
 - Strategic review of Education services
 - A new 0-25 education and skills strategy for Buckinghamshire

- A new operating model based on the team around the school methodology
 - Procurement options finalised for the delivery of school improvement/ support services
 - Spend in line with the Retained Duties Grant
 - Income from services to schools optimised
 - A new multi-agency education board established to support the project
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**
 - Delivery of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities reforms
 - Spend per pupil in line with statistical neighbours
 - A clear view developed of the future needs and demand of special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - A comprehensive, joint agency strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - A Capital investment strategy
 - Greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings developed
 - A needs led, focused service, that supports families to care for their children
 - Increased use of direct payments / personalisation

Progress to date:

- Programme Board established and overseeing delivery. Reports to One Council Board and the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit Board as appropriate
- Programme team now in post, detailed project plans and milestones in place
- Options for future operating models being developed
- Validation of the level of savings that can be achieved

20. Corporate Parenting

A review has been undertaken of corporate parenting across the Council in order to evaluate what is working well and areas that need to be improved and the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy will be published soon. Following this review a set of recommendations have been proposed for the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) to consider. As part of the corporate parenting review, a virtual team will be set up to deliver operationally against the plans the CPP have strategic responsibility for.

21. Primary School Exclusions

Last academic year (2015/16) Buckinghamshire saw almost a 100% increase in the amount of permanent school exclusions across both the primary and secondary sectors. This was most notable in the primary sector where the rise was 400% rising from 6 permanent exclusions in 2014/15 to 24 in 2015/16. This has been identified as a key priority within the draft Education Strategy where there will be an increased focus on outcomes for vulnerable groups. It will also be supported through the activity supporting the SEND reforms where the introduction of a 'graduated response' to manage need will aim to build capacity across the school system to better identify the risk factors contributing to exclusion rates.

National data is always 1 to 2 years behind and therefore does not include the recent rise in Buckinghamshire. In the academic year 2014/15 the national data showed that overall permanent exclusions from all schools have gone up from 0.06% to 0.07%, however mainstream primary school permanent exclusions have remained the same at 0.02% of the population.

Buckinghamshire is reported to have had 0.01% of permanent exclusions for the primary sector, equal to our statistical neighbours (below the national average of 0.02%) and 0.13% from secondary mainstream (below the national average of 0.15% but above our statistical neighbours which was 0.07%).

22. Workforce

Leadership

Strong leadership impacts positively on attraction and retention of staff as does a work culture that reinforces the right values and behaviours to allow workers make a difference to children and families. Some initiatives that have been put in place to support a positive work culture include:

- Reducing social worker case loads
- Courageous conversations/Staff surveys
- Production of an Employee charter
- New starter engagement and induction programme
- Roll out of the new Change for Children vision
- Leadership training (50 middle managers to attend training over the next few months)

Recruitment & retention challenges in the Children's workforce

The recruitment and retention of experienced social workers has been well documented. Social Worker turnover averaged 18% in December 2016 against a SE average of 14.5%. Teachers are also hard to recruit – particularly in Maths & Science and for roles in Schools Leadership. Educational Psychologists are hard roles to fill on a perm basis. These challenges have encouraged us to be creative in our approaches to filling roles. We have focused amongst other things, on our employment proposition, reward arrangements and in developing internal talent pipelines to grow our own workforce.

Attracting staff & development of our careers website

Since 2015 there has been a continuous drive to recruit qualified social workers. We have moved from conventional advertising to on line promotion - the development of an innovative website, use of social media, and improving our 'search optimisation'. Most people, these days, will start looking for a job using google search – so BCC needs to invest in being at the top of the search results. An 'always on' approach to recruitment allows us to continuously advertise and promote opportunities in Buckinghamshire.

Robust Assessment & Selection

Robust recruitment methods are always important but even more so in the children's workforce where standards need to be as safe as they possibly can. In the last year we have ensured that all frontline staff in regulated activity has had 3 year DBS rechecks.

Safer recruitment training and training to improve recruitment and retention has been delivered to Governors and Headteachers in evening and weekend workshops. Children's Social Care have also developed an exciting new digital methodology for recruiting social workers in collaboration with the University of Kent. This on line, interactive exercise invites applicants to step inside the shoes of a front line social worker on a visit to a fictional, but realistic, research-based at risk family - allowing them to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in a very tangible and practical way. Candidates also undertake a structured interview based on critical areas of competence from the social worker Professional Capabilities Framework. This process is now in place for all front line social worker recruitment and as a development tool for internal staff already in role.

Contingent Workforce

There will always be a need to engage a certain proportion of contingency workers and for specialist skills to be called for at short notice. We have taken a number of measures to reduce our reliance on agency workers and better manage workforce stability with permanent recruitment strategies and make associated savings on agency spend. Annualised estimates for social worker agency costs were reduced from £3.9m in January 2016 to £2.9 m in December 2016 and agency workers as a percentage of the workforce reduced from 25% to 20% in the same period.

Employee engagement

Colleagues who have a positive experience of working for BCC will want to stay with and develop their careers with the Council. They are also more likely to engage with the Council's strategies, general productivity and performance outcomes. BCC has an engagement score well above the national average – at 58% compared to 33% (Engage for Success data 2013). There is variation at local level and improving employee engagement is a key action in CSC&L as part of efforts to reduce turnover.

We measure employee engagement through our Viewpoint survey. Following the last survey in May 2016 a number of key actions were developed to improve engagement. Questionnaires and focus groups allow us to gather data on staff engagement – including the views of new starters as well as people leaving the Council.

New Starters

New starters are given access to their own new starter portal via email on acceptance of an offer of employment. This features a short interactive e-learning module introducing new starters to BCC; Welcome to Bucks film; the Employee Handbook, plus a range of useful resources and tips.

Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) recruitment

The majority of our permanent recruits into social worker positions are newly qualified workers. We find this group far easier to attract and the quality is good. Between April – December 2016 we recruited 45 Social Workers, 26 of whom were newly qualified. Since January 2016 we have also converted 16 temporary social workers to permanent employment.

Growing our own talent & developing internal pipelines to fill vacancies

A number of social worker training programmes have been run in Bucks. The preferred programmes that seem to work best for us are Open University and the Step Up programme. Open University is especially liked because it focusses on developing our own junior workers who already understand what it is like to work with children and families.

Career Progression Arrangements

A dedicated career pathway for Social Workers and social care workers was developed for Bucks in 2013 and sets out what is expected of staff when they start practising for the first time, and as they progress through their career. It has allowed staff to progress more readily through the grade structure as they become qualified and means we are not holding people back who are ready to take on additional responsibility. The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) developed by the College of Social Work acts as a framework for informing the career progression for individual staff. This works in conjunction with supervision and appraisal (Delivering Successful Performance).

Social Work Academy

The Social Work Academy is a formal partnership between Bucks New University and Buckinghamshire County Council that aims to improve and support learning opportunities for experienced social workers and managers, embed the learning culture, encourage our social workers to continue to link theory with practice and build on the well-established ASYE programme for newly qualified social workers. Each year the academy provides a series of masterclasses for social workers, managers, BNU students and partners where appropriate. Pop up sessions on hot topics is a key feature and 200 staff will have access to social work research and journals via the university's online learning portal.

Reward & Recognition Arrangements

Market data has allowed us to demonstrate that in some cases, special reward arrangements are necessary for us to attract and retain the best quality of people into the Children's workforce. New allowances have been signed off by SABPAC for Social Workers and Educational Psychologists in 2016. These will be reviewed annually.

Restructuring and Organisation Design

Children's Social Care have recently reviewed their front line service structures and scaled things up to create slightly bigger, more resilient teams that allow more opportunity to train and support newly qualified staff and retain greater control over case- loads.

The new Change for Children programme will shift the way services are delivered and present further opportunities for reviewing structures and roles across the whole service. This will include reviewing the number of management layers for decision making/accountability (DMA).

23. Key Performance Summary

This section provides an overview of some of the current performance of the business unit.

Children's Social Care

- Performance in relation to assessments is consistently high. 96% of assessments are completed within 45 days which is well above our Statistical Neighbours (86%), the South East (77%) and England (83%). 98% of children have also been seen during assessment. Data will continue to be used to improve practice and raise awareness with Social Workers in order to maintain performance in this area, avoiding delay and improving outcomes for children.
- During 2016, a permanent Independent Reviewing Officer team and manager were established which has had a positive impact on the service's ability to increase consistency in both standards and timeliness of looked after children reviews. Latest performance reflects these improvements with 100% of reviews being completed on time. On average there has been a 10% improvement in performance across 2016/17 compared to 2015/16.
- Repeat referrals are an area of concern and have been above the target of 25% since April 2016. Around 10% more repeats referrals are recorded in Bucks than our Statistical Neighbours (20%), the South East (24%) and England (22%). This includes a rise in the number of referrals linked to domestic abuse and addiction. A recent audit has taken place and identified the need for improvements to the recording system and staff training in relation to these issues. Further analysis is also currently being undertaken to better understand the problem.

- The % of referrals received actioned within 3 days is slightly below target (100%) however performance is improving and currently stands at 92%. Positive improvement is due to a reduction in MASH enquiries and a full complement of managers being present during December 2016 enabling them to progress work in a timely manner.
- 79% of children in need have been seen within 6 weeks and 96% of children subject to a child protection plan have been seen in 4 weeks. Pressures on the service in Q3 due to staff leaving, difficulties in recruiting and the CIN service restructure are thought to have impacted on performance in this area.
- Performance for the timeliness of children in need reviews (76%) is currently below target (85%) however is expected to improve in the coming months following LCS improvements and the restructure of the CIN Service.
- 77% of Initial Child Protection Conferences are held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion. Although below the target of 100%, there has been a notable improvement in the timeliness of ICPCs since March 2016 and therefore we are now in line with the national average (77%), performing above the South East (72%) and are in line with our Statistical Neighbours (82%). There has been a slight reduction in % child protection plans reviewed within timescales (91%) however on average during 2016/17 96% are held on time against a target of 95%. These areas will continue to be monitored closely to ensure the timely booking of meetings.
- The % of children placed within 20 miles from their home address (39%) is significantly below our Statistical Neighbours (62%), the South East (63%) and England (74%). A recent reduction in the performance of this KPI and an improvement in the % of children placed in county are likely to be due to a greater utilisation of in-house provision and targeted use of IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) placements in the area. Plans to create a strategic partnership with local IFAs to utilise their Bucks carers more effectively will positively impact on the performance in this area. One of the key change work streams for the business unit is to improve our sufficiency of placements.
- The average time (in days) between placement order and matching a child to an adoptive family is currently 226 days in comparison to the recommended national target of 122 days. A steady reduction in the number of days throughout 2016/17 puts us in line with England average (223 days) and the South East (219 days) but we remain above our Statistical Neighbours (172.8 days). A small number of children with complex cases and delays have impacted significantly on adoption performance.
- Since the local authority was rated 'Inadequate' in 2014, extensive activity linked to the Ofsted Improvement Programme has driven improvement across Children's Services in regards to compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards. During 2017, we have also embarked on a 5 year plan 'Change for Children' to ensure Children's Social Care and Learning is financially stable and future proofed whilst continuing to support the most vulnerable children throughout Buckinghamshire. These programmes are also key to maintaining areas of positive performance and improving areas of poorer performance, as outlined above, in order to provide the best service to children and families.

Education

- 93% of state-funded schools in Buckinghamshire have been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted, compared to a national average of 90%. Overall school

performance is at least in line with or above national averages for most key measures. Exceptions are the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics by the end of KS1 (1% below national) and the KS2 progress measure for writing (significantly below national averages).

- Results for some groups of pupils are lower than local or national averages. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged children. The difference between results for Buckinghamshire disadvantaged pupils and results for national non-disadvantaged pupils was 16% for pupils achieving the expected standard in the Yr1 Phonics Check, 23% for pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of KS2 and 18.4 for the Attainment 8 measure at KS4. Assessments and accountability measures for KS2 and KS4 were new for 2016 so can't be compared to results from previous years, however improvements have been seen for the Year 1 Phonics Check results (2% improvement since 2015).

24. Business Intelligence & Insight

This section highlights a number of projects currently being undertaken to provide in depth research and analysis which is then being used to inform service redesign and improvements.

- **Early Help Needs Assessment**

- Analysis completed to understand and map need across Buckinghamshire
- Established where services will have most impact and informed proposal for Early Help hubs

This needs assessment was undertaken to support the remodelling of Early Help across the council. The objective was to highlight the key needs of communities in Buckinghamshire to identify what and where the greatest need for supportive services are as well as establishing how current services are reaching the population. The assessment will be used to determine where hubs will be located and how we will reach different communities in Buckinghamshire.

Further analysis is currently underway to support the project team with their proposal on specific locations for the Early Help hubs.

- **Tipping points project**

- Exploratory analysis of children's records including demographic, episodic and detailed case-note information
- Developed understanding of trigger points and route causes for children coming into care in Buckinghamshire

This project used data from LCS to explore reasons for why children and young people in Buckinghamshire become children who are looked after by the Local Authority. Following extraction of demographic and episodic data, in addition to a deep-dive into the rich information held in case notes, BI&I completed complex exploratory analysis of 140 children. The insight generated from this analysis enabled us to understand the journeys of children coming into care, the underlying drivers influencing this activity and the trigger points.

In addition to furthering our understanding of this area, the resultant analysis has informed strategies and practice changes in Buckinghamshire, and highlighted areas for future research.

- **Journeys through child protection**

- Range of analyses completed using latest dashboarding tools and innovative visualisation techniques
- Provided much deeper insight into Child Protection process and has informed development of the Children's 5 year plan

The analysis completed for this project aimed to map out the journeys for children in Buckinghamshire through the Child Protection process from initial enquiry through to the termination of plans. There were already a number of indicators reported in the performance scorecard that provided oversight of the Child Protection process, but these did not provide the level of insight needed to fully understand practices and thresholds, or to identify improvements. Using interactive dashboarding tools, BI&I conducted a series of analyses that provided a level of information previously inaccessible to colleagues across CSCL.

This insight has been used to support practice changes and training strategies, to inform the Children's 5 year plan and to inform how we work with key partners.

- **Ethnographic research for families first**

- Exploratory analysis conducted utilising a wide range of analytical, quantitative and qualitative techniques
- Information used to remodel the Families First service

To support the development of the Families First programme, BI&I undertook a series of exploratory analyses. These analyses were conducted using an ethnographic approach, encompassing data analysis, organisational research and focused workshops, which enabled us to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced families with complex needs in Buckinghamshire. This research included engaging with staff and families to understand their perspectives, concerns and recommendations for the future.

Following this research, BI&I were able to inform senior managers and key stakeholders to support the co-design of a new model for Families First.

- **SEND projections**

- Business Intelligence & Insight requested to develop model to understand current and future demand for SEND along with influencing factors
- Complex model developed allowing for scenario testing and simulation of impacts, to be presented to project board on 11th April

To support the development and delivery of the 5 year plan, BI&I were asked to develop a complex model that would enable understanding of how demand and costs for services is likely to change over next 5 years based on past trends, service use and population growth. The model would need to be able to factor-in different scenarios, so that long-term impact of service changes on activity and cost could be understood to provide an evidence base for these changes. Resource was drawn from across all BI&I teams to support the development of this tool, and an external data science company was also engaged to provide consultancy and expert opinion.

Following a short development period, we have successfully developed a framework using a Markov Cohort Model which enables us to simulate the 5 and 10 year impact of changes to key aspects of this service. This will be presented to the project group on 11th April.

In addition, the model framework developed can be adapted for use across other areas as required.

- **Attainment Gap project**

- Analysis in progress to facilitate better understanding of factors impacting on attainment gap in Buckinghamshire

- Resultant report will provide insight into how we can maximise use of resources to improve attainment for disadvantaged children

There is a large gap in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children in Buckinghamshire. This issue has existed for a number of years and despite improvements recently following targeted work, this is not progressing as quickly as necessary to ensure that all children reach their full potential. To investigate this further, and to establish why there continues to be an attainment gap in Buckinghamshire, BI&I are undertaking detailed analysis of available information. This exploratory work aims to establish outcomes for disadvantaged children across Buckinghamshire and determine how these vary depending on school size and location, identify and evaluate combinations of factors that may be impacting on educational attainment and uses a cohort analysis approach to identify particular areas with a high proportion of disadvantaged children.

The analysis for this project is largely complete and the draft report is being written which will ascertain how we make best use of the resources available.

- **CLA short/ long term projections**

- Work being scoped to determine estimates of future demand and associated costs
- Analysis is expected to identify opportunities for improving outcomes

This project is still in the scoping phase but it aims to help the service understand what the projected number and cost of looked after children may be in the future if no action is taken. It also aims to support decision in how to do things differently in order to improve outcomes for children as well as reducing the number of cost of children coming into care.

E. Conclusion

This report is intended to provide a six monthly update on the full range of policy development and service transformation activity taking place within children's services in Buckinghamshire in response to national and local drivers. A separate report will be presented to Cabinet on the improvement journey for children's social care.

Background Papers

[This section should include unpublished documents on which the report has been based and documents which have been relied upon to a material extent in preparing the report. Exempt or confidential information should not be listed, as any background papers must be made available for public inspection if requested.]

It is good practice also to include published papers. However if you do so, please indicate where they can be obtained, e.g. Internet, Library.]

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Member Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 2 June 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk