

## Report to Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Update</b>
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<b>Local members affected:</b>	(All Electoral Divisions);
<b>Portfolio areas affected:</b>	Children's Services

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<https://intranet.buckscc.gov.uk/how-do-i/member-services/decision-making/>

### Summary

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 (Children's Social Care and Education).

### Recommendation

**Cabinet is asked to;**

- **Note the national, regional and local developments in relation to Children's Services.**

## 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 which has occurred over the past few years, driving the academisation agenda and resulting in increased school autonomy, diversity of school provision (academies, free schools, University Technical

Colleges (UTC), studio schools), raised Ofsted expectations and increasing development of school led system leadership to promote school improvement.

Significant changes are being made to schools funding. Most funding to support schools goes directly to schools themselves and the amount of funding is triggered by a formula within the National Funding Formula (NFF). Recent announcements suggest that Buckinghamshire will benefit from changes to the NFF as currently the county is one of the lowest funded Local Authorities across the country. Analysis of NFF announcement headlines suggest that the biggest gainers in Buckinghamshire will be grammar schools, who have historically been the lowest funded schools in the country, as they will eventually be guaranteed a minimum funding level per pupil significantly higher than their current levels. However, many primary schools will see only small increases, with those primary schools with the highest levels of disadvantaged children seeing real term decreases in funding and some actual cash decreases. In addition, funding changes will create additional pressures on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding and in particular on High Needs Block funding.

Central government funding reductions to the Education Services Grant (ESG) will reduce the ability to deliver financially sustainable models of school improvement, either through commissioned services or direct deliver. However, Local Authorities will retain the following statutory duties with regard to school improvement:

- Understanding the performance of pupils and schools, using data to identify those schools that require improvement and intervention.
- Taking swift and effective action when failure occurs in a maintained school, to get leadership and standards back up to at least “good”.
- Intervening early where the performance of a maintained school is declining, ensuring that schools secure the support needed to improve to at least “good”.
- Encouraging good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement and to support other schools.

Local Authorities are responding to this challenge in differing ways:

- some councils have worked with all education partners to develop a ‘collective entity’ model of school to school support,
- others have created a ‘not for profit school improvement company’ which is ‘owned’ by the schools who pay an annual membership fee
- finally, some LAs have adopted a ‘hand-off’ approach with school improvement being led by Teaching Schools or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

In light of these key changes that will impact the educational landscape and the challenges that they will bring, an Education and Skills Strategy is being developed for Buckinghamshire to ensure that we have the appropriate educational provision for our children and young people. The strategy will be an all-encompassing roadmap that caters for 0-19 year olds (up to 25 years for children with Special Educational Needs and /or Disabilities) and will set out a blueprint on how appropriate provision across all age ranges is going to be configured and delivered. This is being written in collaboration with schools and other education stakeholders to ensure there is a shared ambition for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire. A consultation process is underway; a series of dedicated consultation events have taken place with schools, other educational settings and Early Help services and there is an online consultation currently available to all stakeholders.

## **2. Children and Social Work Act (April 2017)**

The Children and Social Work Act received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. The Act aims to:

- Improve support for looked after children in England and Wales especially for those leaving care;
- Enable better learning about effective approaches to child protection and care in England;
- Establish a new regulatory regime for the social work profession in England.

The Act is intended to improve support for looked after children and care leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers. The Act sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care. Local authorities will be required to publish their support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements. The legislation extends the current considerations of the court when making decisions about the long-term placement of children to include an assessment of current and future needs and of any relationship with the prospective adopter.

The Act makes changes to the arrangements for local child safeguarding partnerships and the serious case review process, including provision for a central Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel for cases of national importance. It also establishes a new regulatory regime for the social work profession.

The Act also places a duty on the Secretary of State to make regulations that require all schools in England to provide relationships education to pupils receiving primary education, and relationships and sex education to pupils receiving secondary education. The duty applies in relation to academy schools and independent schools as well as maintained schools. The education must be appropriate having regard to age and religious background, and regulations must detail the circumstances in which a pupil can be excused from receiving that education. The regulations will be consulted on. This is welcomed in Buckinghamshire as, following the recent Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) we need to ensure the responsibility for educating and safeguarding children in relation to sexual exploitation is spread across all agencies and sectors.

## **3. Children's Commissioner's report on vulnerability (July 2017)**

On 4th July, the Children's Commissioner published new analysis documenting the scale of vulnerability among children in England. The report brings together a range of information held by various government departments, agencies and others. Its initial analysis reveals a host of worrying statistics about the number of children living in vulnerable situations.

- Over half a million children so vulnerable that the state has to step in
- 670,000 children in England growing up in 'high risk' family situations
- Thousands of children living with adults in treatment for drink or drugs
- 800,000 children suffering from mental health difficulties
- Tens of thousands of children involved with gangs

- Over a thousand new child victims of slavery each year
- Many more children under the radar, not being seen

The report and other supporting information can be found at: [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

#### 4. Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017)

On 4 July 2017, DfE updated '[Preventing and tackling bullying](#)' outlining the government's approach to bullying; legal obligations and the powers schools have to tackle bullying; and the principles which underpin the most effective anti-bullying strategies in schools in England. The advice also lists further resources school staff can access for specialist information and advice.

#### 5. NSPCC Overview of child protection in the UK (August 2017)

On 23 August 2017, the NSPCC published their [state of the nation report](#) compiling and analysing up-to-date child protection data across the UK for 2017. The report sets out 20 different indicators. Each indicator looks at the question of 'how safe are our children?' from a different perspective. They also include historic data, to help track progress over time.

#### 6. Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS)

Ofsted is due to publish the new ILACS framework before Christmas. In January 2018 they will hold a series of launch events in Leeds and London for local authorities about how the new programme will work.

#### 7. Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) (September 2017)

On 18 September, Ofsted, CQC, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services and HM Inspectorate of Probation published a [report](#) about the second joint targeted area inspection programme, which examined 'the multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse'.

The inspectorates inspected six local areas in this round of JTAs: Bradford, Hampshire, Hounslow, Lincolnshire, Salford and Wiltshire.

The report calls for a national public service initiative to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence. It also calls for a greater focus on perpetrators and better strategies for the prevention of domestic abuse.

#### 8. Overview of Social Care Inspection Outcomes

To date, 151 Single Inspection Framework inspections have been completed and published. Overall Effectiveness grades are:

Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	3	2%
Good	46	30%
Requires Improvement	67	44%
Inadequate	35	23%

Buckinghamshire County Council is expecting to have another Single Inspection Framework inspection of its safeguarding services before the end of 2017.

## **9. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

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.

## **B. Regional Context**

We work closely with colleagues across the South East region on a range of policy, commissioning and service delivery issues.

### **10. Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)**

Buckinghamshire County Council is working with a number of other local authorities in the 'central east' (CE) region to develop a Regional Adoption Agency in line with government expectations. Due to a number of issues, at the Executive Board meeting in June 2017, attended by the Department for Education (DfE), it was agreed that the CE RAA project would be formally handed over from Coram to the Local Authorities with Central Bedfordshire taking the lead. A Director of Children Service (DCS) Executive Board will be established supported by an Operational Board to drive the project forward.

Since its development, Buckinghamshire has been a core member of the CE RAA attending and engaging in all relevant meetings, sharing information and best practice. There are no Buckinghamshire seconded staff currently within the Hub. Apart from officer time and travel costs, there have been no financial costs incurred.

Since the June Executive Board, there has been an invigorated approach. Impower have been commissioned to undertake an analysis of the current adoption provision across the region in order to create a business case and options appraisal for the future RAA.

### **11. Regional Commissioning of Care Placements**

We are actively engaged with Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Milton Keynes, Reading and Bracknell Forest to re-commission the Cross Regional Project. This is to expand the number of local placements for looked after children from 20 to 26. The tender is about to be published and we anticipate significant interest.

## **C. 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.

### **12. Change for Children Programme**

By way of reminder, Change For Children is a programme of change that supports the implementation of the Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy 2016 to improve outcomes for children and young people, whilst at the same time ensuring that services are financially stable and affordable in the long term.

The programme has gained pace over the last 6 months, with strong programme management overseen by a board of officers drawn from Children's Services and across the wider organisation.

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

Progress against each of the main workstreams is as follows:

- **Early Help for Children and Families** - the new model for Early Help services was presented to Cabinet in July 2017 and approved as the basis for public consultation, the outcome of which is subject to a separate report to this Cabinet meeting.
- **Support for Looked After Children** - strong progress is being made in relation to this project:
  - Individual placements are being reviewed to ensure that they are delivering the best possible outcomes for our children looked after.
  - We have achieved 'Fostering Friendly Employer' status from the Fostering Network, as a way to help encourage our own staff to become foster carers. We are now looking to roll out this approach across both the wider public sector and with local businesses.
  - Plans are progressing to increase the number of local children's homes, initially with additional provision in Aylesbury and Buckingham.
- **Educating our Children** - progress is reported more broadly at paragraph [A1](#)
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**
  - We are developing our capability and systems to forecast and model demand.
  - Joint work across portfolios (with colleagues in Transport) to complete implementation of changes to Post-16 college transport
  - We have reviewed our end-to-end processes for SEND, resulting in the design of a new more efficient and effective process. This will improve the experience for children and families and implement support for them at an earlier stage in line with the Graduated Approach
  - We have established the Integrated services Board, whose ambition is to champion the SEND Reforms by committing to ensuring that services are better aligned, valuing the principles that will ensure positive outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people

#### **Associated Savings:**

In addition to improving our service delivery, the programme of work over the next four years has been tasked with finding savings that have previously been agreed by Full Council, as part of its Medium Term Financial Plan. Currently the savings target by 2020/21 is £13.324m and the programme is forecasting that this level of saving can be delivered.

### **13. School Exclusions**

Last academic year (2016/17), Buckinghamshire saw a small increase in the overall permanent exclusion rate of 6%. This is the third year we have seen an increase but the rate of incremental increase has reduced dramatically. The level of exclusion in the primary sector went down by 3% (from 24 to 22). The secondary sector increased to 78% from 76% (from 85 to 93) with the special school rate remained constant at 3%.

National data is always at least 1 year behind. In the academic year 2015/16 the national data showed that overall permanent exclusions from all schools have gone up from 0.07% to 0.08%. Buckinghamshire data for the 2016/2017 academic year is 0.14% compared to 0.14% in the previous year.

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. Buckinghamshire Inclusive Education Working Group was formed in the summer term and will be driving forward an agenda of inclusive education and reducing exclusions. The group is made up of Headteachers from all sectors and Local Authority officers. A pilot multi-agency project is being launched in the Autumn working on a locality based model of joint working to support schools and families with inclusion in mainstream settings.

### **14. Children's Services Workforce Strategy**

A workforce strategy and action plan has been written and agreed for Children's Services, based on the Human Resource/Organisational Development People Strategy. This covers our core workforce project streams as follows:

#### **Culture & Leadership**

Better Every Day management training has been rolled out to around 70 middle managers across Children's Services and has been very well received. Children's Services senior leadership team have actively supported the introduction of these events and played an important role in reinforcing messages about leadership and workplace culture.

The workforce culture and values are measured in part through the Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) Viewpoint survey. The June 2017 survey showed that like BCC as a whole, approximately one third of the children's workforce responded positively to questions in this area and this is up slightly on the previous year.

There have been a number of interim role holders in the wider leadership team in recent years and the permanent appointment of Mr Tolis Vouyioukas, as the new Executive Director of Children's Services, and Sarah Callaghan, as Service Director Education, will provide further stability and enable the Wider Leadership Team to set a clearly integrated Children's Strategy and help develop the workforce culture to meet future service challenges.

#### **Engagement & Wellbeing**

Colleagues who have a positive experience of working for BCC will want to stay and develop their careers with the Council. They are also more likely to engage with the Council's strategies, general productivity and performance outcomes. Questionnaires and focus groups allow us to gather data on staff engagement, including the views of new starters and people leaving the Council.

In addition to the Viewpoint survey, this year we have also invited Children's Social Care staff to complete the national Social Worker Health Check Survey.

Outcomes from these two surveys show that some staff are concerned about long working hours and caseloads but they respond positively about their team managers and work colleagues. Their personal values are aligned to those of the organisation but they do not always feel valued or recognised for the work they do. Work is ongoing to monitor and reduce the caseloads for social workers and we have been working to recognise the contributions of individuals and teams. For example, Children's Services employees were celebrated in the 2017 Annual Workplace Heroes Awards winning Safeguarding our Vulnerable & Creating Opportunities & Building Self Reliance, as well as individual awards for Career Achievement and Workplace Hero of the Year. We carry on recognising individual and team effort throughout the year with Local Workplace Hero awards announced in the monthly One Newsletter.

We also engage with staff and colleagues through the local Joint Consultative Health & Wellbeing meetings and have recently reviewed arrangements to make sure that these are working effectively. This has resulted in an improved agenda and better engagement from employee and union representatives. At the last meeting there was a detailed discussion about sickness absence and, as a result, we are setting up a staff focus group to look at ways of improving wellbeing at work. The first of these meeting will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

## **Attracting, Retaining and Managing Talent**

### ***Hard to recruit roles***

Social Worker turnover has reduced from over 18% in January 2017 to 16% in August 2017 and is less than some of our neighbouring areas but we are still higher than the national average of 14.5%. There are teacher shortages – particularly in Maths and Science and for roles in Schools Leadership. Educational Psychologists are hard roles to fill on a permanent basis. These challenges have encouraged us to be creative in our approaches to recruitment and we have focused particularly on our employment proposition, reward arrangements and in developing internal talent pipelines to grow our own workforce.

### ***Growing our own recruitment pipelines***

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 January and September 2017, we have recruited 39 Social Workers, 17 of whom were newly qualified.

### ***Recruitment & Onboarding***

We have moved from conventional advertising to the use of our careers website and social media to promote vacancies and attract candidates – including videos of managers and colleagues talking about their roles and the work of the Council in an authentic way. An 'always on' approach to recruitment allows us to continuously advertise and promote opportunities in Buckinghamshire. 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.

### ***Selection methodology***

Children's Social Care have also developed an innovative way to screen and assess social workers using a digital interactive exercise. Applicants step inside the shoes of a front line social worker 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.

### ***Young People's Interview Panels***

Young people get involved in the selection process for all Leadership roles and they are directly involved in the interview panels for all Children's Social Care roles from Team Manager (Range 9) and above. Questions that young people want to ask prospective Social Workers below range 9 are also included in the panel interview for other social worker roles.

### **Learning Development & Succession Planning**

A number of social worker training programmes have been run in Buckinghamshire. 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 non-qualified workers who already understand what it is like to work with children and families.

The Social Work Academy is a formal partnership between Bucks New University (BNU) 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 Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (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.

A dedicated career pathway for Social Workers and social care workers was developed for Buckinghamshire 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).

Children's Service have identified 30 rising starts and emerging leaders across the portfolio to go into the Council talent pool for 2017-18. This group will be included in a dedicated training programme including the Better Every Day Training if they haven't already been through it, and, along with all staff be encouraged to actively focus on their personal development.

### **Performance Improvement**

A monthly workforce performance dashboard is produced for Children's Services showing key workforce performance metrics for the service and updates on work programmes for the period.

The Delivering Successful Performance (DSP) staff appraisal process structures performance objectives for all staff and is structured around the following headings:

- Service to Customers

- Business Improvement
- Colleagues Self and Partners
- Managing Resources

Work has also been undertaken this year to develop overarching objectives that relate to Children's Services and the Change for Children work programme. This will help all staff across the service understand how their work priorities interconnect and keep a sharp focus on ensuring the right outcomes are achieved for children, the service and the organisation.

Where performance is not at the expected level work is done to understand why. The service has observed that sickness levels are running at 12.6 days lost per FTE in the rolling year for August 2017, compared to 8.4 days in June 2016. We think the increase relates partly to improvements made to the reporting of days out of the office but a deep dive has been conducted into absences in the last 6 months and an action plan has been put in place to ensure we are appropriately dealing with cases and putting in plans to help improve attendance. We do know that 5 people on long term absence have left the organisation during the latest quarter which gives reassurance that cases are being managed.

### **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 Senior Appointments and Bucks Pay Award Committee (SABPAC) for Social Workers and Educational Psychologists in 2016/17. These will be reviewed annually with the next review scheduled for early 2018.

### **Organisation Design and Change**

In the last year Children's Social Care have reviewed their front line service structures to create slightly bigger, more resilient teams allowing more opportunity to train and support newly qualified staff and retain greater control of caseloads – helping to improve some of the workforce issues identified in this section of the report.

The new Change for Children programme will also shift the way services are delivered and present further opportunities for reviewing structures, designing roles and embedding new workplace behaviours. Early Help, Education and Special Educational Needs will all be in scope, alongside the opening of new Residential Children's Homes.

## **15. Key Performance Summary**

This section provides an overview of some of the current performance of Children's Service. All figures reported are for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, unless otherwise stated.

### ***Children's Social Care***

- Our performance against measures relating to the timeliness of Contacts has improved during the year and at the end of August was at a reported high of 91% of contacts actioned within 24 hours, compared to 77% in April 2017.
- The proportion of children with an up-to-date assessment has been consistently high during this year, with the lowest performance reported at 88% and the performance at

the end of August reported at 91%. This indicator measures the proportion of children who are open to Social Care teams and who have had an updated assessment either within the last 12 months (for children aged 1yr and over) or within the last 6 months (for children aged under 1yr). In addition, the proportion of children who are seen during assessment has also been consistently high this year to date, with the latest reported performance at 96%.

- There have been recent improvements to performance regarding the proportion of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC's) which take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion. Performance against this indicator has been variable over the past 12 months, with a low of 11% reported in May. Performance has improved steadily from this point in the year, with performance for July and August both above 80%, higher than the National and South East averages of 77% and 72% respectively.
- The proportion of Children Looked After (CLA) whose reviews are completed on time was 100% in August. Performance has improved month on month since June and the latest figures demonstrate we have achieved the target set, of 100%, in August. The proportion of CLA who have an up-to-date care plan has been high throughout this year to date, with each month on or above the target of 98% with the exception of August where the performance dropped to 97%. In addition, the proportion of Child Protection Plans that are reviewed within timescales has improved in recent months and performance for July and August are within the target tolerance, at 95% and 100% respectively.
- Our performance against two key metrics to monitor outcomes for Care Leavers has been above target during this year. These indicators are lagged and at the time of writing the latest performance available is for July 2017. The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation was reported as 89% at the end of July, above our target of 78% for the year and above National and South East benchmarks of 83% and 77% respectively. Similarly, the proportion of care leavers who are in employment, education or training at the end of July was 67%, above the target of 47% and also above National and South East performance of 49% and 47% respectively.
- Repeat referrals continue to be an area of concern and have been worse than target since April 2016. The target we have set for 2017/18 is 20%, and performance reported between April and August has around 31%. Our performance is also higher than that of Statistical Neighbours (20%), the South East (24%) and England (22%). Our performance has worsened this year and is due, in part, to an increase in repeat referrals from Primary Health and Anonymous sources. Further analysis is also currently being undertaken to better understand the problem.

## **Education**

- The proportion of pupils who are attending schools rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding at the end of July 2017 has improved slightly from the beginning of the year, and stands at 88.6% compared to a target of 87%. There are currently 17 schools in Buckinghamshire that have been rated as less than Good, of which 11 were rated as Requires Improvement and 6 as Inadequate. We are proactively monitoring all schools, using a mix of hard and soft intelligence, to identify schools causing concern including those at risk of falling into an Ofsted category. In addition, we work closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner to support improvement in schools within the County.

- The proportion of new Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) issued within 20 weeks is significantly below the target set for the year of 65%. At the end of August, performance was 23%. There has been increased demand for ECHP's this year, and this continued increase has created pressure across the teams. Between June 2016 and June 2017 the number of ECHP's and Statements maintained by Buckinghamshire County Council increased by 4%. At the end of August, the number of old-style SEN Statements maintained by the Council was 964, all of which will need to be converted to EHCP's by the end of March 2018. Stretch targets have been established to measure the effectiveness of recent improvements.

## **16. Business Intelligence & Insight**

The Business Intelligence & Insight (BI&I) team continue to work collaboratively with colleagues in Children's Services to produce performance information, facilitate a deeper understanding of key performance issues and to conduct complex in-depth analysis on areas that will have significant impact on cost, risk and/or outcomes. This section highlights a number of the projects which are currently being undertaken working in partnership with the BI&I team and Children's Services.

### ***Exclusions***

Since 2013/14 permanent exclusion rates in Buckinghamshire have risen from 0.04% of the school population to 0.14% in 2015/16. Although the overall proportion is small, the increase is statistically significant and is markedly different to the national trend. Following discussions between representatives from the Business Intelligence & Insight team, the Educational Entitlement Manager and Public Health, we have identified the following areas for further analysis:

- Detailed analysis of 2015/16 data to explore the profile of excluded children, trends, repeat exclusions and influencing factors. This profile of local data will be compared to risk factors identified in national research to identify similarities.
- Conduct comprehensive benchmarking against national/ regional/ statistical neighbours, identifying areas with similar trends as well as those with low numbers of exclusions and investigate reasons for these differences.
- Explore analysis of exclusions from Secondary Schools – building on the previous work completed in early 2017.
- Development of a chronology of policy/law changes – to compare with local exclusion numbers and determine what impact these have had.

This analysis is underway and we are working closely with key colleagues to highlight key trends, test hypotheses and shape the direction of further analysis.

### ***Not in Education, Training or Employment***

The number of young people in Buckinghamshire who are Not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) is low but these young people are at high risk of poor outcomes, low earnings, criminal behaviour and poor health. Local analysis completed in 2012 joined Connexions and Education data to establish groups who were most at risk of becoming NEET. This analysis identified a number of similar characteristics within this group of young people which were interpreted as high-level risk factors, for example low attainment at Key Stage 4.

The current project aims to build on the previous local analysis to consider multiple data sources and identify risk factors for young people in Buckinghamshire. Following discussion with colleagues in Commissioning, we have identified the following priorities:

- Conduct cohort analysis of young people who were Year 11 leavers from Buckinghamshire schools in 2015/16 and can be tracked – to test prevalence of known risk factors and identify any other patterns or emerging trends
- Exploration of additional potential risk factors including:
  - Social Care involvement
  - Drug and/ or alcohol issues in household
  - Domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse (Toxic trio) in the household
  - Involvement of Adult Social Care with parents
  - Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
  - Involvement with Virtual School

The resultant analysis from this project will enable us to understand the detailed risk factors which may result in a young person becoming NEET, identify possible solutions or ways to mitigate these and inform service development or design to reduce the number of NEET young people in future.

### ***Weekly Performance Report***

Following a number of queries from the interim Executive Director for Children's Services, we developed a weekly reporting tool to give regular oversight of key performance issues across both Children's Social Care and Education which complements the existing monthly performance scorecard.

This weekly report enables oversight of:

- Weekly caseload numbers across the social care operational teams by type
- Performance against key timescales for allocation, assessment, visits and review
- The number of Children Looked After who have up to date plans and health checks
- The number of children who are missing or are becoming looked after
- Performance against key measures for SEND including conversions and assessments within timescales
- Weekly tracking of key performance challenges regarding repeat referrals and timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences.

In addition to the 'hard' performance information, this report allows for commentary and emergent issues to be recorded from colleagues across the portfolio as well as by the Business Intelligence and Insight team. The report was launched in August and further development is underway following feedback received.

### ***Team Around the School***

The Business Intelligence and Insight team have developed a data collection and reporting mechanism to inform the recent launch of the Team Around the School forum. This forum pulls together colleagues from across the Education service and wider Council to share intelligence and identify schools who are causing concern and who may require support. To inform this, Business Intelligence & Insight were asked to provide analysis of key performance information including school performance, attainment and performance of vulnerable groups – using this information in the forum to highlight any concerns identifiable through this hard data. In addition, we have developed a bespoke online survey to enable colleagues to record concerns they hold against schools in a consistent format. This survey captures Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings alongside specific comments against a number of key areas including finance, risk and staffing. Collecting the information in a structured way such as this allows us to aggregate it up for the Team Around the School meetings, thus we can present a comprehensive picture of existing

concerns and using a data-driven approach to inform the meeting and ensuring action is targeted to areas of most concern.

### **SEND Exploratory Analysis**

Following completion of the SEND predictive models detailed in the previous report, and in response to queries raised by a number of colleagues within the SEND service, Commissioning and Finance, we are conducting exploratory analysis to better understand the SEND landscape in Buckinghamshire and the expected impact on schools.

To date this analysis has investigated a number of key areas including:

- Correlation between special school numbers and wider population trends
- Pathways into special schools for Year 7 pupils
- Profile of demand from non-Bucks residents
- Trend analysis of need types and deprivation
- Profile of children with MLD
- Impact of new housing developments

Working collaboratively with colleagues across the Business Unit, this exploratory analysis has been an iterative process that is continuing to evolve and develop enabling us to better understand young people with SEND in Buckinghamshire.

## **D. 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.

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### **Background Papers**

None

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### ***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 10 November 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to [democracy@bucksc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@bucksc.gov.uk)*