

## Report to Cabinet

---

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Update</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 10 December 2018
<b>Author:</b>	Cabinet Member for Children's Services Cabinet Member for Education & Skills
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Tolis Vouyioukas – 01296 382603
<b>Local members affected:</b>	All
<b>Portfolio areas affected:</b>	Children's Services and Education & Skills

*For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444*

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the national and local developments across Children's Services. In addition, this report includes (a) an overview of the key activity within the service during the last 6 months, and (b) the phase 2 Ofsted Improvement Plan.

#### Recommendation

**Cabinet is asked to note (a) the national and local developments across Children's Services, and (b) the programme of work taking place to further improve Children's Services in Buckinghamshire.**

### National context

1. The following section gives an overview of the key national developments in Children's Services.

#### Working Together to Safeguard Children

2. In August 2018, following a significant period of consultation, the Department for Education (DfE) published the revised version of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. The document provides statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in England. The guidance, which is now in effect, sets out the changes needed to support the new system of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements established by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
3. Specifically, of note are changes to the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements where Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) will be replaced by 'safeguarding partners'. Under the new legislation, three safeguarding partners (local authorities, chief officers of police and clinical commissioning groups) must make arrangements to work together with relevant agencies, as they consider appropriate, to safeguard and protect the welfare of

children in the area. Transition to the new arrangements must take place by 29 September 2019. Buckinghamshire's Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) has been working across all partner agencies to plan the transition to the new arrangements.

#### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

4. In October 2018, a new statutory 'duty to refer' which applies to certain public authorities including social services, came into effect as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Under the duty, public authorities are required to refer any users of their service who they have reason to believe are homeless or threatened with being homeless within 56 days, to a local housing authority of their choice.
5. The duty to refer will help ensure that people who face the threat of homelessness are identified earlier through their contacts with public authorities, and referred for help. The duty should also strengthen communication between children's services and housing to ensure 16-17 years old and young people leaving care threatened with homelessness receive co-ordinated support around their housing needs. Further work is required with our colleagues in the District Councils to implement this statutory duty locally.

#### Social Care Funding

6. The Local Government Association (LGA) have warned that the pressures facing children's services are rapidly becoming unsustainable, with a £2 billion funding gap expected by 2020, and advised that unless urgent action is taken to reduce the number of families relying on the children's social care system for support, the gap will continue to grow. They also outlined that the financial pressures councils are under, coupled with the spike in demand for child protection support, mean that the limited money councils have available is increasingly being taken up with the provision of urgent help for children and families already at crisis point, leaving very little to invest in early intervention.

#### Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

7. Ofsted have recently announced that Children's Services rated 'inadequate' will no longer face re-inspection under the single inspection framework (SIF).
8. The new framework, Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) was introduced at the start of this year. ILACS is a system of inspection which uses the intelligence and information held by Ofsted to form decisions about how best to inspect each local authority. This system includes:
  - a) Local authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice.
  - b) An annual engagement meeting between Ofsted's regional representatives and the local authority to review the self-evaluation.
  - c) Ofsted's local authority intelligence system, which brings data and information into a single record.
  - d) Focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children.
  - e) Standard and short inspections where judgements are made using Ofsted's four-point scale (inadequate, requires improvement, good, outstanding).
  - f) Joint targeted area inspections designed to assess the contribution all partners make to keeping children safe.
9. This approach aims to support improvement, while still holding the local authority children's services to account in meeting their statutory responsibilities to children in need of help, protection and care.

10. As an inadequate authority, the service will still receive regular monitoring visits which will evaluate the progress made in improving the quality of children's services.

### Fostering and Foster Care in England

11. In July 2018, the Government published its response to two reports into foster care: The Education Select Committee Inquiry into Fostering and the Foster Care in England report, an independent review commissioned by the DfE.
12. The response outlines the Government's vision 'for all children in foster care to have stable lives, establish trusted relationships, to feel cared for and to benefit from high quality foster care for as long as they need it'. Underpinning the vision are 5 overarching ambitions:
  - a) Children are listened to and involved in decisions about their lives.
  - b) Foster parents receive the support and respect they need and deserve to care for children.
  - c) There are enough high quality fostering placements, in the right place, at the right time.
  - d) Local authorities commission placements according to the needs of the child.
  - e) Children experience stability regardless of permanence plan.

### Keeping Children Safe in Education

13. In September 2018, the DfE published revised statutory guidance for schools and colleges outlining their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The updated guidance includes a new section on child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment which covers:
  - a) How schools should respond to incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment, emphasising the need for effective training and policies in schools and colleges.
  - b) The need for risk assessments in school following reports of incidents of sexual violence or sexual harassment.
  - c) The action needed to take to support victims and alleged perpetrators of sexual violence or harassment.
14. In addition, the guidance adds further information on the management of safeguarding in a school, including emphasising that staff need to act immediately where there is concern about a child.
15. Locally, the service will continue to work in partnership with schools to implement the revised changes to this guidance.

### **Local context**

16. The following section focuses on the current issues and key priorities across Children's Services.

## Early Help for Children and Families

17. Following a Cabinet Member decision in October 2018, the Council launched a 10-week consultation to capture the views on proposed ways to deliver early help services to support vulnerable families and children in Buckinghamshire. Currently, existing services are not reaching those families who need help the most. Only 14% of the families who are currently accessing the Council's early help services in 2017/18 had an identified need for support, compared to 31% of the 0-19 year old population estimated may benefit from early help services. With this in mind, it is vital that the Council changes its approach to ensure that the service reach those that need it most to prevent future statutory intervention.
18. The consultation is specifically seeking the views on:
- a) A draft new Early Help Strategy, which is a partnership document.
  - b) The Council's preferred option for Service change, as well as other options.
  - c) The proposed set-up of a network of 14 family centres in the preferred option (at existing children's centre sites).
  - d) Possible alternative uses for those children's centre buildings no longer proposed for use for council-run early help services.
19. Several public meetings have taken place across the County during the consultation period to support people in understanding the options and filling out responses. The consultation is due to close on Wednesday 13 December 2018.

## Educating our Children

20. The Education and Skills Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July 2018. The delivery of the Strategy will be carefully monitored and evaluated through an action plan that draws upon the business critical priorities from each service area and the key performance indicators that will demonstrate outcomes. Underpinning this are robust processes for monitoring the impact of the various improvement projects that are underway to realise the aims of the strategy.
21. The main feature of this strategy is the development and implementation of the Side by Side project which aims to secure better outcomes for children and young people in Buckinghamshire through a sustainable, school led model of improvement. Side by Side was initiated for secondary schools that do not yet have a good or outstanding Ofsted rating. In order to support these schools, deployment of the best teachers and senior leaders from other secondary schools in the county has taken place in 8 secondary schools since April 2018. Similarly, a Side by Side primary school project commenced in September 2018 involving 12 schools that do not yet have a good Ofsted rating. In addition, the scope of Side by Side will extend to both primary and secondary schools that are currently rated as good, but for various reasons may require preventative support in order to maintain their rating.
22. There is an Early Years Side by Side initiative, whereby Early Years providers and school settings within a given locality will be working together to improve outcomes through the sharing of expertise and best practice to meet local demand.
23. The Side by Side SEND initiative is also now underway through the roll out of the Maximizing the Impact of Teaching Assistants training programme.
24. The final stage of the transition of Services from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT) to the Council was completed at the beginning of August 2018. The statutory duties

within School Improvement and School Governance are now being delivered by the Service.

25. The transition process began with the transfer of the Specialist Teaching Service, Early Years and Workforce Development team and the School Financial Management team. In total, 84 colleagues have transferred and the knowledge and experience that the transferring teams bring is very much valued and will enhance the delivery of Services to support children and young people in schools in Buckinghamshire.

### School Inspections

26. Since the beginning of the calendar year, 60 schools in Buckinghamshire have been inspected by Ofsted, 47 primary and 13 secondary. The grades of these inspections are as follows:

Judgement	Primary	Secondary
Outstanding	2 (4%)	2 (15%)
Good	35 (74%)	5 (39%)
Requires Improvement	5 (11%)	4 (31%)
Inadequate	-	2 (15%)
Awaiting outcome	5 (11%)	-
Total	47	13

27. In the inspection outcomes, 4 primary schools were downgraded from 'Good' to 'Requires Improvement', whilst 2 schools improved their rating. The remaining, all maintained their rating. The 2 secondary schools that were judged to be 'Inadequate' as well as all those that were downgraded are being supported as part of the Side by Side initiative.
28. 5 schools were inspected for the first time following their conversion from being a maintained school to an academy, 4 were judged to be 'Good' and 1 'Inadequate'. The school that received the 'Inadequate' judgement, was previously 'Inadequate' as a maintained school.
29. The overall picture within Buckinghamshire is that 89% of pupils attend a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school, compared to 86% nationally. 91% of schools in the county are 'Good' or better, which is 5% higher than all schools across the country.

### Early Years Service

30. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for 2018 was published in September. This provides an analysis of the early years and childcare market in Buckinghamshire, identifying any gaps in provision and the plan of action to increase the availability of places. It also considers the impact of legislative changes across the sector and the introduction of the extended free entitlement also known as the '30 hours' was introduced in September 2017 to support working families.
31. Data published in June 2018 by the DfE indicates that the introduction of 30 hours is impacting on the take up of places of vulnerable two year olds with a national decline which is also mirrored in Buckinghamshire. Fewer children are accessing provision and

those that are taking a place tend to take fewer hours than previously. Take up by two year olds has reduced from 82% in 2016 to 75% in 2018 (72% nationally).

32. Following a successful bid to the DfE for a grant to support developing additional SEND childcare places for early years aged children, research has been undertaken with families and supported four providers to develop additional capacity to support parents requiring provision during school holidays.
33. The quality of early years provision in Buckinghamshire continues to be high with over 97% of providers having a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement (237/243).

#### Sufficiency of places for looked after children

34. This work stream focuses on improving placement sufficiency for Buckinghamshire's looked after children population. The services residential care homes project will deliver four new homes for looked after children to reduce the number of children placed outside the county and improve placement stability.
  - a) Home 1 is located in Aylesbury and opened in July. It is being used to house young people previously placed out of county.
  - b) Home 2 will also be located in Aylesbury. This will be a 4 bed, short placement home, with an attached 1 bed unit for emergency placements. The planning permission to permit change of use to residential accommodation has been received and the refurbishment and registration commenced in November. The home is expected to open in February 2019.
  - c) Homes 3 & 4 will be located in the south of the county. The service is currently in the process of reviewing suitable properties and engaging with local residents prior to purchasing. The homes are anticipated to open in late 2019 early 2020 respectively.
35. The second part of the project is about increasing the capacity of in-house foster placements. The service is now in the process of implementing its recruitment and retention strategy with the aim of launching a new offer to carers in January 2019. The ambition is to achieve a 20% net increase in placements year on year to 2021. This workstream also includes a campaign to raise awareness of fostering and working with Bucks Business First to engage with the business community through the foster friendly employer initiative.
36. The service has recently revised and published the placement sufficiency strategy for looked after children. This provides an outline of the plans to ensure that there is sufficient placements to meet the needs of looked after children over the next 3 years and that they are supported to achieve their full potential.

#### Short Breaks for Disabled Children

37. Short Breaks provide a break from day to day caring arrangements. Short breaks provide disabled children and young people with an opportunity to make friends, learn new skills, develop independence and have fun. They also help parents, carers and families to take a break from their caring responsibilities and spend time with other family members.
38. A draft Short Breaks Strategy for Children has been developed to set out a vision for how short breaks can achieve positive outcomes for disabled children as well as helping carers to provide sustainable support for their families.
39. The strategy will help the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group to:
  - a) Deliver an offer which enables access to universal services and helps children with disabilities use provision locally. This will help children make friends, help parents

build networks of support and allow us to develop provision where children with and without disabilities can interact with each other.

- b) Deliver a more flexible short breaks offer to provide tailored support at the right time to prevent families from falling into crisis.
- c) Ensure the services represent value for money and that available resources for short breaks are targeted at those who need support the most, through eligibility criteria and regular reviews.

40. This is the first Children's Short Breaks Strategy for the Council and it has been developed in partnership with Adult Services, the Clinical Commissioning Group and FACT Bucks (Bucks Parent Carer Forum). The draft Strategy was developed following pre-consultation activity with service users and families. In October 2018, Cabinet approved a 10 week public consultation on the short breaks offer. The consultation is focused on what the principles within the strategy will mean for service users, their families and carers and how these will be applied to create a more flexible offer. Feedback will be used to inform specifications for future short breaks service which will be developed in spring 2019.

### Special Educational Needs and Disability

41. The Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) improvement action plan has been updated and signed off by the Integrated Services Board in their October meeting. The action plan includes the following key priorities:

- a) Compliance with the statutory Education Health and Care Planning 20 week timescale, annual review process and effective use of panels.
- b) Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans and the family experience.
- c) Ensuring children have their needs met locally in mainstream schools where possible and appropriate through the work of the inclusion hub.
- d) Developing early identification and early intervention support as part of the Early Help programme that ensures children registered with SEN Support are effectively supported to achieve their potential.
- e) Developing a shared understanding of co-production, owned across the local area and underpinning all SEND delivery and ongoing improvement.
- f) Improving the communication with and experience of families leading to a reduction in the number of complaints and tribunals.
- g) Improving the experience of children and their families preparing for adulthood from year 9 and transitioning to adult services.
- h) Upskilling the workforce across the local area to ensure children and their families benefit from skilled and knowledgeable professionals.

42. Work is underway to redesign services for children and young people with SEND, including remodelling the Specialist Teaching Service, Educational Psychology Service and the SEN team with a view to developing a more integrated structure that can better meet need. It is anticipated that this work will embed a more collaborative approach to meeting the needs of children and families, improve the timeliness of statutory processes and enable some early intervention and preventative work to be developed to help manage demand.

43. Preparation for a potential SEND Ofsted/CQC inspection is also continuing and the Self Evaluation Framework has been shared with partners and parent/carer representatives in a range of forums. A challenge event has been held to ensure all key stakeholders understand the local context, are able to articulate their strengths and have robust evidence to support improved outcomes. In addition, this event will support professionals to describe the areas for development and ensure they have plans in place to address any areas of concern.

## Ofsted Monitoring Activity

44. Following the re-inspection in November 2017, Ofsted conducted a two-day monitoring visit in July. During this visit, inspectors reviewed the progress made in the following areas:

- a) Thresholds for working with children in need.
- b) The recognition, understanding and response to risk for children in need.
- c) The quality of direct work with children and parents, and the links between this work and children's plans.
- d) The quality of plans, the quality and timeliness of arrangements for the review of children's progress, and the understanding that children and their families have of these plans, and of what needs to improve.
- e) The quality of management oversight and supervision, particularly in the following areas: assessing the impact and progress of work; support for social workers to address any difficulties in working effectively with families; and the guidance and support provided to social workers in their direct work with children.
- f) The speed and decisiveness of the response to escalating risks.
- g) The effectiveness of the quality assurance of social work with children in need.

45. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including case files, meetings with social workers and managers, discussions with senior managers and analysis of other documentations and data. The key findings are shown below:

- a) From a very low base, the local authority is making some early progress in improving services for children and young people who are the subject of a child in need plan.
- b) Senior leaders have a clear and well-informed understanding of the significant weaknesses in the quality of work with children in need. Plans to improve practice are credible and well devised. Senior managers are strongly committed to moving forward at a realistic pace, and are determined to achieve rapid and sustainable improvements in children's circumstances and outcomes.
- c) While the impact of most social work remains too weak, there are encouraging signs of early improvement, underpinned by realistic plans to build on this foundation.
- d) The majority of social workers who spoke with inspectors said that they have opportunities to express their views, and that recently appointed permanent senior managers are more visible, responsive, approachable and practice orientated. Staff expressed cautious optimism that practice is slowly improving, and that the culture is increasingly transparent.
- e) Caseloads are too high, and this limits the time that social workers have available to spend working directly with children and their families.
- f) The quality and impact of management oversight and supervision are too variable: managers do not consistently support and assist social workers to evaluate and build an improved understanding of the needs of children.
- g) Not all risks are fully recognised or understood, and this leads to failures and delays in the safeguarding of a minority of children. Some children's cases continue to be stepped down too quickly before children's circumstances and outcomes sustainably improve.
- h) Most child in need plans lack focus and specificity and do not achieve purposeful, timely and measureable outcomes for children. Most contingency plans are too vague and generic and are not tailored to individual children's circumstances.

46. Ofsted are due to complete the next monitoring visit on 11 and 12 December 2018, the focus of which will be Children subject to Child Protection Plans.

## Role of Improvement Adviser



47. Following the Commissioner's review of Children's Services, the DfE issued a revised statutory direction that Buckinghamshire County Council will retain its Children's Services. As a result, the Secretary of State appointed Hampshire County Council as the Council's improvement advisers. The overall purpose of the improvement partnership with Hampshire will be to provide independent advice and support to the Council. Progress against the plan will be monitored by the DfE.

## **Ofsted Improvement Activity**

### High level action plan update

48. In response to the Ofsted re-inspection in November 2017, a high level action plan was developed and a significant amount of immediate remedial action was taken to establish a firm base for improvement within the service.

49. The Senior Management Team continues to discover areas of practice that need improvement across the service. In response, a phase 2 improvement plan has been produced to incorporate these findings and is attached to this report to expand on the actions included in the high level action plan. The plan will be under regular review to ensure that actions are further expanded where it is necessary.

50. The outcome of a number of actions taken from the initial action plan have informed the phase 2 improvement plan and concentrate heavily on the impact that team managers and assistant team managers need to have in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

51. Progress will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the Children's Improvement Board. The Board is chaired by the Children's Improvement Adviser and comprises of Buckinghamshire's Corporate Management Team, Children's Services Management Team representatives, representatives from partner agencies and Hampshire County Council.

### Development Centre Programme

52. The Development Centre Programme was developed in response to the Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) findings which identified significant concerns about the quality of management oversight and decision-making. Strengthening these two elements remains a key driver at the centre of all the on-going improvement activity.

53. Effective and competent first line management tiers of Team and Assistant Team Managers are critical to achieving and maintaining a good standard of social work practice and delivering improved outcomes for children. Collectively, this cohort of managers is central to the assessment, planning, support, intervention and review functions for children, young people and their families known to the service.

54. The Senior Management Team is addressing the outcomes of the development centre.

55. Personal Development Planning sessions are being offered to agree the bespoke training, learning and development offer with this tier of managers.

### Children in Need (CIN) Audit and Review

56. In February 2018, Children's Services began an audit and review of a high proportion of open Children in Need cases. The audit and review has provided an opportunity to evaluate social work practice, through scrutinising electronic case records and consulting with allocated staff, to reach a professional judgement about the overall standard of practice and the child's safety and well-being.

57. Whilst there remains a concerning cohort of cases that have been judged to be 'Inadequate', the majority have been judged to be 'Requires Improvement' with a small cohort of cases judged to be 'Good'.
58. The Senior Management Team is addressing the outcomes of these audits both in supervision with their direct reports and through the quality assurance framework. To assure the quality of future practice standards in implementing audit findings, it is proposed that an unannounced spot checks will take place regularly.

### Beyond Auditing

59. The Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) includes recommendation number nine which states that Children's Services should:

*“Apply an appropriate audit tool to ensure that qualitative analysis, alongside quantitative compliance auditing, measures effectively the improvements, impact and outcomes for children.”*

60. The 'Beyond Auditing' pilot programme was subsequently launched at the end of April 2018 as part of the post-inspection activity to improve qualitative analysis and measure improvements, impact and outcomes for children. The 'Beyond Auditing' Quality Assurance Framework and programme of activity aims to promote and embed practice evaluation and assure the quality of practice as part of business as usual. The 'Beyond Auditing' Team work in collaboration with the allocated social worker and team/assistant team managers in 'real time' to review a number of different elements, analyse the quality of practice and measure improvements over time. The process includes consultation, audit review and observation activities to connect the outcome and findings with active feedback, learning and change by increasing the level of insight about identified strengths and areas for improvement. The Principal Social Worker and 'Beyond Auditing' Team provide the necessary feedback, learning and development support to individual social workers and team/assistant team managers to address the identified recommendations and support the required learning and development that has been identified.
61. As with the CIN audits, there is a small number of cases judged to be 'Good', the audit evidence shows that the general standard of practice is still not consistently good.
62. It is important to note that there is a number of 'legacy' issues which are being addressed and these cases require robust management oversight to ensure that the audit feedback is acted upon.
63. Having analysed the combined findings to identify the most common themes and issues, a practice guidance tool has been created to assist social workers in their roles.

### Public Law Outline Review (Court work)

64. As part of the post-inspection improvement programme a thematic review has been completed in respect of Public Law Outline (PLO) practice. This focuses on several practice concerns highlighted in the Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018):
- a) Widespread and serious weaknesses in some safeguarding services.
  - b) Critical weaknesses spanning the children protection and court work teams.
  - c) Risks not being recognised and weak managerial oversight being found at all levels.
65. The review provides a comprehensive analysis of pre-proceedings and court practice. The review includes input from social work managers and practitioners as well as legal service and takes into account available performance data and legal spend.

66. Based on the findings of the thematic review, the report sets out a number of recommended actions, which the service is in the process of implementing. Progress against this action plan will be monitored by the Children's Improvement Board.

#### Placement at Home with Parents Arrangements

67. The Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) raised concerns in relation to children subject to Care Orders who are placed at home with parents. These arrangements are part of the legal framework set out in Regulations 15 to 20 of the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010' which govern practice and decision making regarding the return of children, who are the subject of Interim Care Orders or Care Orders, to the care of their families.

68. Since the last update presented to Cabinet, all children currently subject to these arrangements have now been reviewed by the service. The main impact of the intervention to date has been to consider all arrangements, identify weak areas of practice regarding individual children and young people in order to strengthen the management overview and decision making to make these arrangements safe. This has resulted in some children and young people requiring remedial action to address deficits in their care planning. In a small number of instances, evidence of poor practice and non-compliance with agreed plans has resulted in escalation and direct intervention, including a return to court where necessary.

69. To assure the quality of future practice standards regarding children placed at home, there will be six monthly unannounced spot check. This activity will include a review of the child's records and case discussions with the allocated Social Workers, Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers, as necessary and appropriate.

#### Children's Services Workforce Strategy

70. The implementation of the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy continues to be a key priority. The workforce continues to receive significant investment and remains a major factor in delivering the necessary practice and Service improvements that are required to deliver the right outcomes for children and families as well as achieve an improved rating from Ofsted.

71. The Children's Service Workforce Strategy Board has agreed updated terms of reference, developed a priority action plan and refreshed its membership with representation from Children's Social Care and corporate colleagues. The Board will focus on:

- a) Recruitment and Change
- b) Retention and Wellbeing
- c) Training, Learning & Development

72. The Executive Director for Children Service's (DCS) continues to hold staff surgeries with individuals and teams across the 3 area office locations. These surgeries provide an opportunity for staff to share their views, feelings and ideas with the DCS. Future surgeries will continue to be scheduled on a termly basis.

#### Recruitment

73. A new external social worker recruitment campaign was launched in September 2018. A dedicated website has been developed with new branding and design work plus a social media campaign, new candidate pack and refreshed job summaries. The campaign is designed to give Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Service visibility in the recruitment market and encourage social work qualified applicants to apply to work in one of the local social work teams and Services.

74. The service continues to actively focus on recruitment of permanent staff to replace agency workers and the percentage of agency staff is significantly down from over 25% in 2016. There has been a sustained reduction and it now fluctuates between 12-16%. This is in line with the average for both England (16%) and the South East (15%). It is likely that the service will see a slight rise in agency workers in the short term, during a period of transition, whilst there is a focus heavily on improving performance of the service.
75. Over the last 12 months, 57 qualified social workers have been employed and 17 agency Social Workers have converted to permanent contracts. This process will continue and a refreshed permanent employee benefits offer will hopefully contribute to an increase in the conversion ratio.
76. Vacant posts continue to remain steady, with between 5-9 vacancy posts per month in total across all social care teams. The turnover rate is at 25% which is higher than the national average (15%). This is reflective of the period of change whilst the service focus on managing and improving performance. The completion of on-boarding and leaver surveys are actively reviewed and, where necessary, have implemented a number of initiatives to help attract and retain staff.

**B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

N/A

**C. Resource implications**

N/A

**D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment**

N/A

**E. Legal implications**

N/A

**F. Property implications**

N/A

**G. Other implications/issues**

N/A

**H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views**

N/A

**I. Communication issues**

N/A

**J. Progress Monitoring**

N/A

## **K. Review**

This report is intended to provide a six monthly update on the full range of policy developments and Service transformation activity taking place within children's Services in Buckinghamshire in response to national and local drivers.

---

### **Background Papers**

Ofsted Improvement Plan – Phase 2

---

### ***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 Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 7 December 2018. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)*