

## Report to Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Update</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 13 January 2020
<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 a summary of both the national and local developments across Children's Services. In addition, this report includes (a) an overview of the key activities within the service during the last 6 months, and (b) the findings from the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit.

### 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.

#### Funding of Local Authorities' Children's Services

2. In May 2019, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee published their [report](#) on the funding of local authorities' children's services. Local authorities in England deliver a range of statutory and non-statutory services for children at an annual cost of around £9 billion. The inquiry sought to find out whether the funding for this vital aspect of a local authorities' remit is sufficient to enable councils to fulfil their statutory duties, deliver non-statutory duties and secure the long-term sustainability of children's services.
3. The report found that current funding was insufficient for councils to deliver its duties and states "we heard about a system at breaking point, increasingly reliant on the goodwill of social care professionals; the children supported by or in the care of councils are some of the most vulnerable in society and deserve better."

4. The report recommends both changes to central government funding and systematic changes (e.g. improving commissioning and procurement). One of the most salient recommendations for Buckinghamshire is “that the Government should fund the creation and implementation of a national recruitment strategy to encourage people into the sector. As part of this work, the Government should consider whether additional recruitment incentives or support are required, particularly to attract staff to local authorities with poor Ofsted ratings.” This is a particular challenge that we are experiencing locally and as a result, we have seen our agency rate increase from 20% to 30% over the last 18 months.

#### Early Help Resource Pack

5. In May 2019, The Local Government Association (LGA) published a [resource pack](#) on early help services. Early help covers a broad range of vital services and support that are brought in before any formal interventions to help children, young people and families achieve good outcomes. The pack itself is designed to help councillors and policy makers better understand their own local offer and how they can look at the role of evidence in developing and improving early help services for children and families.
6. It is recommended that elected members would benefit from reading this resource pack.

#### Tackling child exploitation support programme

7. Also in May 2019, the Education Secretary launched a new [programme](#) to provide children most at risk of being targeted by gangs or violent crime with better support from specialists across education, health, social care, police and the voluntary sector. The new ‘Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme’ is designed to improve how different local areas respond to child exploitation. It will help equip professionals involved in the protection of young people to identify those most at risk from dangers in their communities and online.
8. Exploitation can take a variety of forms, and often there is a link between the threats vulnerable young people are exposed to. The National Crime Agency (NCA) found that in 2017 more than a third (35 per cent) of police forces reported evidence of child sexual exploitation in relation to so-called ‘county lines’ activity, a practice used by criminals of using children and young people to traffic drugs from one region to another, often in rural areas.
9. Every council in England will be able to apply for bespoke support from the scheme to tackle specific threats in their area, bringing social workers, police forces, schools, health services and charities together to improve how they respond to cases of exploitation, and learn from what works. The next round of applications opens in March 2020 and this is something that the service is considering.

#### New measures to support disadvantaged children in schools

10. In June 2019, the Education Secretary [announced](#) changes to the schools admission code so that the most vulnerable children, such as those fleeing domestic abuse, can access a school place more quickly. Schools will also receive guidance on how to use Pupil Premium most effectively, with evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) showing the success of particular methods in improving educational outcomes. At this stage, it is not clear when these changes will be introduced.
11. New analysis shows the extent of disadvantage, with every classroom having three children who have come into contact with a social worker and 1.6 million children needing a social worker at some point in the last three years. These children suffer further as they often miss out on education, being three times more likely to be persistently absent from

school and four times more likely to be permanently excluded. The changing nature of disadvantage has been outlined and a package of measures to support the most vulnerable in society, including new research on how to tackle persistent absence from school and exploring the expansion of advocates within education so that all children in need of a social worker, and not just those in care, are given the support they need.

#### Financial pressures and child protection

12. Yvette Stanley, the Ofsted National Director for Social Care published an [article](#) in June 2019, on the impact of financial pressures on the child protection system in England and how local authorities are coping with budget reductions. The article covers the importance of early intervention and the contextual challenges that local authorities face. In addition, the article states that “for social care practice to be successful, and for more children to remain or return safely with their families, all local partners must continue to work together to tackle these contextual factors. This is just as vital as responding effectively to every child and family’s specific needs. We are seeing good progress on the latter in many LAs. The former will no doubt be a priority across the new safeguarding partnerships”.

#### Children’s homes workforce

13. Also in June 2019, The Department for Education (DfE) published a [consultation](#) seeking views on professional registration and regulation of the children’s homes workforce. This Call for Evidence was launched in response to a recommendation made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), in its Interim Report published in April 2018, that the Government should introduce professional registration requirements for those working in care roles in children’s homes. Specifically, the recommendations were that:
  - Introduce arrangements for the registration of staff working in care roles in children’s homes;
  - Registration should be with an independent body charged with setting and maintaining standards of training, conduct, and continuing professional development, and with the power to enforce these through fitness to practise procedures; and
  - Recognising that registration may require a period of phasing in, priority should be given to professional registration of children’s home managers.
14. The consultation closed on 27 August 2019 and we are waiting for the findings to be published. The service is supportive of these recommendations.

#### Buckinghamshire College Group announced as T Level provider

15. T Levels are new courses coming into effect from September 2020, which will follow GCSEs and will be equivalent to 3 A Levels. These 2-year courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work. T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). They will provide the knowledge and experience needed to open the door into skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship. Buckinghamshire College Group has been selected by the government to deliver T levels from the 201/22 academic year.

## Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education

16. Towards the end of June 2019, the DfE [published](#) a new curriculum which will be mandatory from September 2020. All of this content should support the wider work of schools in helping to foster pupil wellbeing and develop resilience and character that we know are fundamental to pupils being happy, successful and productive members of society. Central to this, is pupils' ability to believe that they can achieve goals, both academic and personal; to stick to tasks that will help them achieve those goals, even when the reward may be distant or uncertain; and to recover from knocks and challenging periods in their lives. The service will work with schools to implement these changes successfully.

### National mental health programme between schools and NHS

17. In July 2019, the DfE [announced](#) that pupils struggling with mental health are to benefit from more joined up care and support across schools, colleges and specialist NHS services, in a national roll out of a £9.3 million training scheme. Every school, college and alternative provision will be offered training through a series of workshops as part of the Link Programme, with the most appropriate member of staff from each put forward to take part alongside mental health specialists. This is designed to improve partnerships with professional NHS mental health services, raise awareness of mental health concerns and improve referrals to specialist help when needed.
18. At the beginning of September 2019, the training was rolled out to schools and colleges in phases over four years, being offered to up to 22,000 schools and colleges, including alternative provision settings. The four-year scheme will be led by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, backed by the multi-million-pound government investment.
19. In Buckinghamshire, 32 primary and secondary schools are currently enrolled on Wave One of the programme, which is focused in Aylesbury and High Wycombe as key areas of identified need. A bid has been put in for further Waves which will include schools in other areas of the county. The scheme has a waiting time of only 4 weeks and aims to reduce CAMHS waiting times by tackling mental health issues early, allowing CAMHS to deliver more focused work for young people with a greater level of need. The project will develop training to ensure that each school will have a trained mental health lead who will be able to refer children to mental health specialists, as appropriate.

### Preventing offending and re-offending by children

20. In August 2019, Public Health England [published](#) new guidance to help local partnerships work together to support vulnerable children and young people and stop them offending and re-offending. This resource outlines how health, education, social care, criminal justice, voluntary sector services and others can work together to stop children and young people offending.
21. Collaborative approaches to preventing offending and re-offending by children (CAPRICORN) sets out a framework to help local authorities prevent young people offending and re-offending. Children and young people in contact with the youth justice system have been shown to have poorer health outcomes than children in the general population. Almost all of the causes of childhood offending lie outside of the direct influence of the youth justice system. Therefore, it is crucial that health, education, social care, law enforcement and other services form a collaborative approach to preventing offending and reoffending behaviour in children by addressing health and social determinants of offending and reoffending behaviour. Importantly, if there is to be a direct impact on practice and implementation then a local, place-based approach is essential for success.

22. The service welcomes this guidance and has used some of the recommendations to strengthen our work with the children and young people of Buckinghamshire in an attempt to reduce the number that enter the youth justice system. A key part of this work has included the development of a shared vision and co-ordinated approach across the partnership.

#### New measures to support disadvantaged children in schools

23. In June 2019, The DfE [announced](#) new measures to continue raising standards in schools, including lifting the exemption on 'Outstanding' school inspections and more support for struggling schools. Since 2012, schools rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted have been exempt from routine inspection, freeing them up to continue to focus on providing an excellent education for pupils without unnecessary intervention. Some 'Outstanding' schools have not been inspected for a decade and this programme will ensure that parents have up to date information about the quality of education their children are receiving, and that standards remain high. The DfE will consult on how best to do this, and subject to parliamentary approval, bring these schools back into a regular inspection cycle. In addition, the DfE will also work with Ofsted to ensure all reports also include a rating for financial management and oversight within the school in order to ensure best practice is shared across the sector.

24. Buckinghamshire welcomes the new measures to support increasing standards in schools. The move away from an exemption for 'Outstanding' schools is a practical and pragmatic decision which recognises that inspection regimes have changed significantly in the last ten years and schools deserve to be judged on the current framework. We have many great schools across the county and they deserve the validation that the new framework will bring to them. The Side by Side model of school improvement within Buckinghamshire strives to ensure that schools learn from each other with regard to their standards. As such, we see great value in academies being offered the chance to work in a similar way to share good practice and support schools that face barriers to success. Where schools have continued to face significant challenge to perform over a number of years it is right to look at the support that they are receiving and to ensure that they have the best chance to succeed. In Buckinghamshire, there are currently 56 schools that are judged to be 'outstanding', of which 17 have not been inspected in the last 10 years.

#### Consultation on changing the dedicated schools grant

25. In October 2019, the DfE [launched](#) a consultation on changing the conditions and regulations applying to the dedicated schools grant (DSG), to clarify that it is a ring-fenced specific grant, separate from the general funding of local authorities. It also clarifies that local authorities are expected to carry forward any deficits they may have on their DSG accounts, and the deficit does not have to be covered by their general reserves. The government will then make a decision on the proposed changes, in time to inform the setting of local authorities' budgets for the 2020 to 2021 financial year. The service, along with finance colleagues have responded to the consult and we will await the DfE's response.

#### Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms

26. Also in October 2019, the DfE [launched](#) a further consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. The aim of this consultation is to seek views from interested parties on proposed changes to the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. This consultation seeks views on:

- Proposed revisions to the educational programmes;



- Proposed revisions to the early learning goals;
- Proposed changes to the assessment and moderation process for the early years foundation stage profile;
- A proposed change to the safeguarding and welfare requirements to promote good oral health.

27. The service is currently in the process of preparing a response, prior to submission before the 31 January 2020 deadline.

#### Exploring moving to home education in secondary schools: research summary

28. Ofsted has recently released a [report](#) that states “special educational needs, medical, behavioural or other well-being needs were the main reasons behind such a move for parents and their children.” Parents, local authorities and schools told Ofsted that, often, there was little or no communication about the decision between parties before the child moved, and alternative options or consideration of what was the best outcome for the child were not always discussed. Ofsted also found that, in some cases, the process of making the move can take less than a day. In the absence of a national framework for support, schools and local authorities have different approaches to providing support to parents.

29. Ofsted’s report makes several recommendations for government, schools and local authorities, aimed at supporting the interests of children who may be moving from secondary school to home education, including:

- The DfE should consider the extent to which current legislation and guidance considers children’s views during decisions to home-educate.
- Schools and local authorities should develop clear processes for working together once they know a parent’s intention to home-educate.
- Local authorities and schools should be aware that when a school writes a letter to remove a child to home education on behalf of a parent, this may be evidence of off-rolling.
- After a move to home education is made, it would be good practice for schools to provide parents with children’s previous classwork.

30. In Buckinghamshire, 647 children are recorded as being electively home educated, a 19% increase in the last year, which is in line and reflects regional and national trends. To support our oversight in this area, the service continues to remind schools of their responsibilities to report children missing education and regular training is delivered to support schools in monitoring irregular attendance. In addition, an officer will visit every family who chooses to home educate their child within four weeks of being notified.

#### **Local context**

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

#### Ofsted Monitoring Activity

32. On 16 and 17 October 2019, Ofsted conducted their fourth monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in January 2018. The monitoring visit reviewed the progress the local authority has made in respect of the arrangements for supporting children in care, including:

- The understanding and application of thresholds for children in care.

- The quality of planning, oversight and review of children in care, including those that have returned to the care of their parents.
- The quality and timeliness of direct work with and for children, including life story work.
- The quality and timeliness of supervision, management oversight and decision making, social work capacity and caseloads.

33. A range of evidence was considered for the visit, including electronic case records, discussions with social workers and their managers, and reviewing supporting documentation. In addition, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services was interviewed and inspectors also meet with young people in care to gain their views and experience.

34. As reported previously, the service is experiencing significant difficulties in recruiting high quality, experienced social workers and managers, which is hindering the progress we are making. Whilst this was recognised by Ofsted and featured in the letter, the findings were critical of the quality of practice and inspectors reported "that progress is less evident in respect of services for children in care than it is in other parts of children's services seen during previous monitoring visits." The report did also highlight that the leadership team has an accurate understanding of what needs to be done, and that our improvement activity is appropriately targeted.

#### Peer review

35. Buckinghamshire is part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP), which is a membership group of all single/upper-tier local authorities in the South East that aims to:

- Improve outcomes for children and young people across the South East.
- Establish a culture of honest and constructive dialogue and challenge within and between authorities.
- Demonstrate the capacity and capability of the sector to achieve a coherent and consistent self-improving system.

36. As part of the programme, local authorities routinely take part in a range of improvement activities and on 15 November 2019, the service's senior leadership team participated in the peer challenge process, with West Berkshire and Brighton and Hove, facilitated by a member of the SESLIP team. Feedback on the service included:

- (a) Strong leadership team that knows the service well
- (b) Clear priorities and focus in order to improve the service.
- (c) Progress evident since the last peer review in February 2019.

37. The service was very pleased with this feedback and will continue to utilise the learning from the sector led programme of support to assist the improvement journey in Buckinghamshire.

## School Inspections

38. In the 6 months between 1 April 2019 and 30 September 2019, 21 schools in Buckinghamshire have been inspected by Ofsted. The majority of the inspections were in the primary sector (95%), with one inspection of a special school. The grades of the 21 published inspections are as follows:

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Special</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	1	-
<b>Good</b>	18	1
<b>Requires Improvement</b>	1	-
<b>Inadequate</b>	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>

39. At the end of September 2019, the overall picture within Buckinghamshire was that 90% of pupils attend a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school, compared to 85% nationally. This is a slight increase on the same period last year, when 89% of pupils in Buckinghamshire attended a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school. As reported previously, the Ofsted Inspection framework has changed and as a result, we are anticipating a potential reduction in the number of 'Outstanding' inspection outcomes awarded this academic year.

## Academic results

40. Data released by the Department for Education in October 2019 shows that 5 year olds leaving their Reception year at primary school achieved better than pupils across the rest of the country. 74.3% of our pupils achieve a good level of development, compared to 71.8% nationally. We are ranked 8th against our south east neighbours and 34th compared to all local authorities nationally.

41. The recently released provisional Key Stage 2 results for 2019 show that 66% of our pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 65% nationally. Our results are the same as reported in 2018 whilst national results for state funded schools increased by 1%. When compared to statistical neighbours and all local authorities nationally, Buckinghamshire ranks 6th and 51st respectively. In addition, 12% of Buckinghamshire pupils reached the higher standard or were working at greater depth across all of reading, writing and mathematics. This is an increase of 1% from 2018. Nationally, 10% of pupils achieved this benchmark, which is the same as in 2018.

42. Key Stage 4 (GCSE) outcomes are significantly higher than national and we are, by quite a wide margin, 1st amongst our statistical neighbours and 5th nationally. The long term trend shows a gradual increase of pupils in Buckinghamshire against a decline nationally.

43. Overall, our results are very pleasing and we will strive to improve these further by supporting schools through our Side by Side Project.

## Side by Side Project

44. Side by Side is the Buckinghamshire model for a local school improvement system. The strategy builds on the established, strong relationships across Buckinghamshire and enables all schools across the county, regardless of type, size or status, to work collaboratively to support county wide school improvement. It recognises that it is this wider system that will deliver improvements and as such harnesses and utilises the experience, strengths and knowledge within our schools, with school leaders and practitioners. The Local Authority's role is one of a facilitator; identifying areas of strength



and those which require development, building expertise capacity, empowering system leaders and enabling support. The key aspects of Side by Side include:

- Working with the Local Authority, schools are empowered to identify areas of development that would support them on their continuing improvement journeys
- Schools work collaboratively to share experience and learning, through both formalised and bespoke relationships
- Where particular vulnerabilities exist, the local authority brokers support by deploying 'champions' from within the Buckinghamshire family of schools to deliver significant improvements
- Learning is shared for the benefit of all schools and settings across the county
- The Side by Side Partnership team quality assure the work delivered and identify areas for further improvement.

### SEND Educational Needs and Disabilities

45. The statutory deadlines that we must adhere to as a Local Authority in relation to the issuing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is 20 weeks. Performance in Buckinghamshire has been low for some time; however, performance in the last 6 months continues to improve.
46. Currently, caseloads are high and stand between 300 and 350 per officer. Shortly, we will be starting a campaign to recruit up to 12 additional officers which will help reduce caseloads to between 180 and 200, more in line with our statistical neighbours. This will assist the service in improving both the timeliness and quality of our EHCPs.
47. SEND Local Area Inspections, combining the efforts of the CQC and Ofsted to enable a thorough inspection of SEND across the local area. The service has a SEND Improvement Plan in place with a number of focus groups working on the key areas that have been identified as being concerning within our Self-Evaluation Framework. Buckinghamshire will be inspected at any point between now and February 2021.
48. On 7 November 2019, the service held a conference for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at Adams Park in High Wycombe. The conference was aimed at young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those who are registered as receiving SEN Support. 28 young people attended representing 13 Buckinghamshire secondary schools and Elective Home Education. The conference provided an opportunity for young people to review the support available to them and their peers. During the day young people were asked to provide feedback on their experiences accessing education, their life outside of school and college, as well as their transition into adulthood. The activities generated discussion and some challenging questions which were put to a panel of Senior Managers from across Health, Education and Social Care. The information gained from the day will now be used to inform the development of a new 2020 SEND Strategy for Buckinghamshire. Pupils attending the conference received a certificate to show their participation and I would personally like to say thank you, for their valuable contribution. We plan to make the conference an annual event, bringing together a range of young people with varying skills and abilities to share ideas and have their voices heard.

### Early Help

49. The new Family Support Service went live on 2 September 2019, on time and within budget. The new service launched following the decision by the High Court on 12 July 2019 to dismiss the Judicial Review brought against the Cabinet decision made in March 2019.

50. All areas of work have progressed appropriately to enable a smooth implementation. This include the TUPE transfer of contracted staff from Adviza and Children's Centre providers into the new service and the subsequent recruitment and selection process to the new structure. In addition, all 16 retained Family Centre sites have all been inspected by property colleagues and meet the council's statutory obligations for buildings management, including routine system and safety tests. Work continues to ensure that our online presence supports our statutory functions, such as childcare provision and the Local Offer as well as providing accurate, accessible and relevant content to users seeking to access self-help tools and pathways to community and formal support. A robust performance framework has been developed in conjunction with the Business Intelligence and Insight Team to ensure that the service is delivering the expected outcome.
51. Currently, the Family Support Service is supporting over 800 young people through its direct work with families and the addition of the Intensive Family Support Team provides a resource focused on families at greatest risk of statutory intervention.

#### Sufficiency of places for looked after children

52. Over the last year, the service has continued to concentrate on developing and reinforcing a strong message to the public regarding the benefits of fostering for Buckinghamshire County Council. Since April 2019, this team has delivered 11 new placement options and are currently on track to deliver over 25 placements within the year from an original target of 18. The new recruitment strategy has resulted in significant increases in enquiries about fostering with us and there were over 130 enquiries between April and October 2019, compared to 182 during the 2018/19 financial year.
53. On Friday 4 October 2019 at The Dairy, Waddesdon, we hosted our annual foster carers awards to recognise the huge commitment from our carers to the children in their care. In addition to certificates awarded to foster carers for long service and training achievements, there were also four awards for special achievements: Best Newcomer, Foster Carer of the Year, Willow Award (celebrating the courage and dedication that foster carers bring to their role each day) and the Emergency Award. Nominations for these awards were submitted and the winners were decided by a panel of judges. This year's awards went to:
- Best Newcomer: Sam Hines and Aidan O'Neil
  - Foster Carer of the Year: Rachel and Barry Porter
  - Willow Award: Denise and Michael Wiles
  - Emergency Award: Rose and Ted Farrar
54. Our fostering awards evening is just a small way of showing appreciation for all the fantastic commitment from our carers day in, day out. Without this brilliant group of carers, many children's lives just would not be the same. We are extremely proud of everything our carers do to change children's lives for the better and would like to personally thank each and every one of them. As lucky as we are to have our current group of foster carers, there are still children out there in need of a foster home close to their local community and we need more foster carers to look after them.
55. During the last 6 months, our 3 children's home have all been inspected, 2 of which were judged to be 'Good' and the other 'Requires Improvement'. This home had a new manager in July 2019 and although the inspection identified that the new manager had begun to make improvements within the home and clear progress had been made in some areas, the inspector had concerns relating to the speed of progress and continued challenges the home has faced with managing the behaviour of the young people in the

home. The service has responded swiftly and a robust action plan is in place in order to address the areas of concern.

## HR & Resourcing Update

56. As a commitment to supporting mental health at work and to give people a different avenue of support to the Employee Assistance Programme 24/7 helpline, Children's Services have trained 7 Mental Health First Aiders. These First Aiders are fully trained by Bucks Mind (a Mental Health First Aid England accredited training partner) to offer initial support through non-judgemental listening and guidance. In addition, we have issued revised guidance for managers and introduced a new guide 'Mental Health at Work: A Guide for Managers' as part of a 'Wellbeing in the Workplace' section on the e-learning hub with modules including Stress Awareness, Mental Health Awareness, Suicide Prevention Awareness, Personal Resilience, and Carers Awareness. Coupled with this, wellbeing, and particularly mental health, has become a larger part of the employee induction session.
57. All team managers in Children's Services are now offered training on how to supportively and effectively manage health and attendance issues, and wider employee relations issues, through Employee Relations Workshops and HR bitesized training delivered at team management meetings.
58. Our HR support has been expanded and we now have a dedicated weekly presence at the Wycombe office through members of our Employee Relations and Resourcing teams to support managers. Feedback from the teams has been positive and this is something that will continue.
59. Within social care specifically, we are continuing to develop our long term strategy to 'grow our own' and build a substantive permanent workforce with our own home grown experienced talent. 10 newly qualified social workers have been recruited to our social work academy where they will be supported during their Assisted Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) to develop the required skill set. When trained, these workers will displace agency workers in the service, reducing agency staff numbers and improving stability. The intention is that, at month 12, permanent contracts will be issued to all ASYE who are successfully assessed.
60. Recruiting experienced qualified social workers permanently though, remains a significant challenge and we have struggled to attract candidates with new and recent advertisements not attracting any increase. Our geographical position in the south east means that workers have easy access to London and neighbouring authorities, coupled with a high cost of living and a shortage of affordable housing in the county means that recruiting professionals from outside the locality can be difficult. We are currently exploring key worker housing options as this may assist us in attracting candidates.
61. The turnover rate for Children's Social Care has increased from 25% in quarter 1 to 26.5% in quarter 2. This is higher than our organisational target of 10-14% and turnover for the Council as a whole, 16.6%. Turnover for qualified social workers remains even higher at 34.6%. This is reflective of the period of change whilst the service focuses on managing and improving performance.
62. We continue to need to rely on agency workers (31%) and this percentage has remained at this level for the past 12 months. There is an increased drive to convert good agency workers to permanent BCC contracts alongside focused activity in the service to implement a plan where agency workers are replaced with workers on fixed term or permanent contracts, wherever possible.

**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.

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**Background Papers**

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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, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 10 January 2020. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)*