



Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
Education, Skills and Children's Services

Date: Tuesday 25 March 2014

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

AGENDA

9.30 am Pre-meeting Discussion

This session is for members of the Committee only. It is to allow the members time to discuss lines of questioning, areas for discussion and what needs to be achieved during the meeting.

10.00 am Formal Meeting Begins

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	10.00	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To declare any Personal or Dislosable Pecuniary Interests.		
3 MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 18 th February 2014 to be agreed as a correct record.		1 - 12



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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| 4 | PUBLIC QUESTIONS
Public Questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in the county to put a question to a Scrutiny Committee about any issue that has an impact on their local community or the county as a whole.

Member of public, who have given prior notice, will be invited to put their question in person.

The Cabinet Member and responsible officers will then be invited to respond.

Further information and details on how to register can be found through the following link and by then clicking on 'Public Questions'.

http://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=788 | 10.01 | |
| 5 | CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
For the chairman of the Committee to provide an update to the Committee on recent scrutiny related activity. | 10.16 | |
| 6 | COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES
For members of the Committee to update the Committee on any issue they are investigating on behalf of the Committee. | 10.25 | |
| 7 | PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC (PSHE) EDUCATION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
A review of the delivery of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education in Buckinghamshire.

Contributors
Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Bill Moore – School Improvement Advisor – The Bucks Learning Trust
Members of the Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament

Papers
A report on the delivery of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education in Buckinghamshire, including a summary of the requirements of the curriculum, the areas for local discretion, any guidance from the local authority / BLT on this and any areas for development, including, specifically, young people's work readiness.

<u>Appendix</u>

A report of the Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament on PSHE (Physical, Social, Health and Economic) Education. | 10.30 | 13 - 22 |
| 8 | FAMILIES FIRST
A review of the progress of the Families First programme (Buckinghamshire's response to the "Troubled Families | 11.15 | 23 - 30 |

initiative).

Contributors

Mrs Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service

Joy Shakespeare – Head of Family Resilience

Papers

A report on the Families First programme, Buckinghamshire’s response to the Troubled Families initiative.

9 FOSTERING 11.35 31 - 40

A review of the arrangements, policies, and procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.

Contributors

Mrs Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services;

Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service

Steve Tanner – Head of Children’s Care

Papers

A report on the arrangements, policies, and procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.

10 ADOPTION 11.55 41 - 50

A review of the arrangements, policies, and procedures for fostering and outcomes for children, young people and families.

Contributors

Mrs Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service.

Steve Tanner – Head of Children’s Care

Papers

A report on arrangements, policies, and procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.

11 THE MUNRO PROGRAMME 12.15

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services on the work and progress of the Munro Programme.

Contributors

Mrs Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

51 - 60

To consider and agree the updated Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee Work Programme 2013 - 2014.

Contributors

Councillor Mrs Val Letheren – Chairman of the Committee
Michael Carr– Scrutiny Policy Officer, Policy, Performance and Communications

Papers

Appendix 1: The detailed Education, Skills and Children's Services Work Programme 2013-2014 and Committee Agenda Plan, from 18th February 2014.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.30

To note the next meeting of the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee on **22nd April 2014**, 10am, Mezz room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

Purpose of the committee

The Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee shall carry out the local authority scrutiny functions for all policies and services relating to education and learning and children and young people, including: Nurseries and early years education; Schools and further education; The Bucks Learning Trust; Quality standards and performance in education; Special Educational Needs (SEN); Learning and skills; Culture and learning; Adult learning; Children and family services; Early intervention; Child protection, safeguarding and prevention; Children in care (looked after children); Children's psychology; Children's partnerships; Youth provision; The Youth Offending Service; Libraries; The County Museum; and Registrars.

In addition to the Buckinghamshire County Councillor membership, the Education, Skills and Children's Services also has up to 5 statutory education co-optees as set out in the Council Constitution.

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*For further information please contact: Katy MacDonald on 01296 383604
Fax No 01296 382421, email: kmacdonald@buckscc.gov.uk*

Members

Mr C Adams	Mrs W Mallen
Mrs M Aston	Mr M Shaw
Mr J Chilver	Mr R Stuchbury
Mr D Dhillon (VC)	Ms R Vigor-Hedderly
Mr P Irwin	Ms K Wood
Mrs V Letheren (C)	

Co-opted Members

Mr D Babb, Church of England Representative
Ms R Burchell, Secondary School Sector
Mr M Moore, Roman Catholic Church
Ms M Nowers, Primary School Sector



Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
Education, Skills and Children's Services

Minutes

EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2014, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.04 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

John Chilver, Dev Dhillon (Vice-Chairman), Paul Irwin, Valerie Letheren (Chairman), Wendy Mallen, Mark Shaw, Robin Stuchbury and Katrina Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Michael Moore and Monique Nowers

GUESTS PRESENT

Michelle Kukielka and Angela Macpherson

OFFICERS PRESENT

Simon Billenness, Michael Carr, Amanda Hopkins, Raza Khan, Coral McGookin, Chris Munday and Yvette Thomas

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Margaret Aston and David Babb.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mark Shaw, Paul Irwin and Katrina Wood all declared an interest as they are members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Mark Shaw declared an interest as he was a member of Ms Macpherson's Medium Term Plan (MTP) panel.



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Monique Nowers declared an interest as she currently works for an education publisher.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chairman advised that written responses to the questions raised at the December meeting would be provided for the next meeting.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman provided the following update:

Members of the Committee visited the House of Commons Select Committee on 14th January 2014 and met with Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee, Kevin Maddison (the Committee Specialist) and Alasdair Mackenzie, Outreach Officer for London and the South-East of England.

The Narrowing the Gap Select Committee Inquiry has received evidence from Mr Nick Gibb MP, Mr Robbie Coleman Education Endowment Foundation, Diana Warne, Head of Secondary Learning and Achievement at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Jemima Reilly, Head Teacher of Morpeth School, Tower Hamlets. The Chairman said that the Vice-Chairman and she were also able to see the school first hand.

The Young People Ready for Work Inquiry has held a series of videoed and non-videoed interviews with young people.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mr Stuchbury and Mr Irwin commented that they found the visit to the House of Commons very interesting.

7 QUESTIONS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Committee received oral evidence from the Cabinet Member.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to highlight to the Committee the key issues within the portfolio and whether there were any key performance issues that the Committee should be aware of.

The Cabinet Member advised that there are currently serious issues within the Children's Services portfolio particularly around demand and capacity. She said that in terms of capacity the portfolio was seeing a large number of referrals. She highlighted that in 2009/2010 there were approximately 3000 referrals compared to approximately 7000 to date. This is putting huge pressure on the Children In Need and First Response teams to process the referrals and then pressure on the social workers who then work with the families. The Cabinet Member said in terms of performance figures the high referrals could impact on the number of core assessments carried out within the 45 day timeframe. She said that the portfolio was working very hard to achieve the indicator and that it was being kept under continual review.

The Cabinet Member advised that the capacity issue was compounded by the fact that nationally there was difficulty in recruiting social workers and there is a shortage. The Council currently has some social worker vacancies and there are some locum social workers in place. The Cabinet Member said that this is fine for the short term but is not desirable for the long term particularly as the Council needed to embed the Munro training with all staff. High turnover of staff would make this process difficult. Recruitment of social workers is therefore a pressure and it was hoped that this would be addressed through the Medium Term Plan (MTP) process by investing more money to make social worker pay scales more attractive. She said some research was carried out on social worker pay and BCC's social worker pay scales was significantly below surrounding neighbouring authorities. It is hoped that by improving the pay scales more social workers will be attracted to Buckinghamshire. The Cabinet Member advised that newly qualified social workers were easier to attract but that the difficulty was in attracting experienced social workers. A mix of newly qualified and experienced staff is required and this is also part of the Munro requirements.

The Cabinet Member also informed the Committee that the number of Looked After Children (LAC) had risen over the last 5 years. She said that number had risen from 300 to 453 and that the portfolio was seeing an increase in the number of 15/16 year olds with quite risky behaviours some of whom require a high level of supervision or accommodation. She said that this type of care is expensive as it often means out of the county placements or secure accommodation. This produces budget pressures as it is more expensive. The Cabinet Member commented that the outcomes for young people was the priority and said that the outcomes for young people in residential care were not as good as long term foster care.

The Committee was informed that BCC had a disproportionate number of children in Independent Fostering agencies as opposed to its own fostering provisions. There is a huge need to encourage and recruit foster carers.

Members then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

Are you having to rely more on agency staff? How confident are you that we are keeping our children safe?

We are doing everything we can to protect children in our care and that we are rigorous in our procedures. I am confident staff are working as hard as they can.

When do you expect Ofsted to arrive for their inspection?

An Ofsted inspection is due and Ofsted could arrive any day.

Please can you provide us with a brief update on the Munro Programme? Do you think we will achieve our efficiencies linked to that?

The Munro programme started on 1 April 2013 so it hasn't been in place a year yet. I realise that the Committee has asked for this to be discussed in full at the next Select Committee meeting and I will have detailed figures available for that meeting. It is fair to say that the Munro Programme is still embedding and positively staff have responded favourably to the systemic practice and we are seeing good results on the front line with the children and families we are working with.

Were you hoping the Munro Programme would cut down the number of children in care?

When Munro was in its infancy and being planned and implemented we hadn't seen the unprecedented demand and level of referrals coming into the system. In some ways it can be a victim of its own success with First Response and Families Resilience services and preventative service being strengthened against a background of national issues which have fuelled referrals. That potentially has masked the impact of Munro had the situation been stable.

Can you please provide us with a brief update on the Families First programme and to what extent is the Families First programme achieving the predicted efficiency savings anticipated?

Families First is BCC terminology for the Troubled Families Initiative which aims to turn around the lives of families with different issues and troubles. It is a Payment by Results initiative focusing on different indicators such as worklessness, truancy, crime and anti-social behaviour. We measure against the indicators and then submit a claim against those. We identified 545 families in Buckinghamshire and officers are currently working with 526 families. The team is doing an amazing job. In terms of hard figures I cannot provide these today and it must be understood that some of the efficiencies will be spread across partners. The suggestion is that for every £1 spent the return is £4.30 and this figure could be significantly more with families who have particular difficulties. I can provide more details of this at a future meeting.

In programmes like Families First it is not just about cashable savings, it is also about cost avoidance for the future. The measures include financial savings but also the wider social return on investment and the costs which partners may avoid in the future.

Are the partnerships working?

The partnerships are working very well and new partnerships are being formed such as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Could you provide more information on the wider social benefits?

It is around the indicators we are looking at such as worklessness, truancy, drug and alcohol addiction. If issues are tackled at the right time a young person could be set up for success in life and that is the sort of intensive work being undertaken. By tackling the issues at source refer to the correct agencies and we hope put people on a path for the future which will prevent them requiring intensive health or social care provision. It is a holistic programme.

Please can you provide the Committee with a brief update on the Adoption and Fostering programmes in Buckinghamshire?

Campaigns have recently been run and these have been successful, particularly in adoption which received over 300 enquiries. A figure which was double the number compared to last year. The downside is capacity, and to handle those enquiries in a timely fashion has been a challenge. The number of enquiries has been encouraging. 25 children have been placed for adoption since April 2013 and a further 11 families are going through a matching and approval process but there is also a pool of children who are difficult to place.

Fostering has been more of a challenge, new foster carers are recruited but existing providers are also lost. It is a challenge to keep a base of foster carers whilst also adding new foster carers. To add an additional 60 foster carers is our target.

What are you doing to keep foster carers?

We are providing excellent support and training to our foster carers.

The Council carried out a big fostering campaign, which seemed to have a great response. However uptake wasn't taken forward and some foster carers leave. Do we know the reasons why those foster carers left and are we doing enough to encourage people to foster and retain those foster carers?

We need to be forensic about the reasons foster carers leave and to see if there is anything that the Council could have done to prevent them from leaving.

There are a number of initial enquires but then people find out that there is certain requirements such as the need for a spare room. We carried out an analysis of 26 foster carers who left. 12 had a significant change in their household circumstances, 4 were lost due to natural retirement, 5 left to go to other agencies due to financial reasons, 4 resigned due to

difficulties with the children they had been caring for and 1 stopped being a foster carer due to becoming a special guardian for the child.

15/16 is a difficult age and there is a stigma towards social workers from parents/carers who may want to ring for support. How are we communicating that there is help for parents/carers?

Preventative services are critical. We want to prevent children coming into care to ensure the best outcomes for those young people. We are getting the message out through initiatives such as Families First and universal services such as the Families Information Service and Children's Centres. It is not solely down to the Council to spread the message but a partnership approach. There are many different ways to get the message out such as health visitors, GPs and schools, who all have a role to play in the preventative agenda.

It has been highlighted at the Bucks Safeguarding Board the need for every agency to play their part in the preventative agenda and early help. This agenda will be progressed through the Bucks Safeguarding Board.

RESOLVED

That the oral evidence be noted

8 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PREVENTION

The Chairman welcomed Ms Coral McGookin, Safeguarding Business Manager and Ms Michelle Kukielka, Barnardos.

Ms McGookin advised the Committee that her role involved supporting and overseeing the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and help drive the work of the LSCB through its sub committees. She said that the LSCB had a working group on CSE.

Ms Kulielka advised that she is the Assistant Director for Children's Services for Barnardos, South East and Anglia Region, which covers Buckinghamshire. She said that she strategically manages the Barnardos services in Buckinghamshire of which there were 19 overall. (16 Children Centres, 1 Family Support Service, 1 Short Break Service called Little Breaks, 1 Child Exploitation and Missing Service (the R U Safe project). Ms Kulielka advised that she set up the RU Safe project in 2007.

The Committee was informed that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was a complex issue and that until recently had been quite low in public profile and that Barnardos had recognised this for some years. Barnardos had some services around the Country which were specifically addressing CSE with young people. Barnardos also carried out the research which identified a link between young people who went missing and CSE. Ms Kukielka said that Bucks was very quick to respond to a scoping exercise carried out which identified that there was an issue of CSE in Buckinghamshire, which was very forward thinking at the time and Buckinghamshire started working on the R U Safe project early 2006 in partnership with Addaction and Barnardos.

The Cabinet Member commented that CSE can be a hidden problem and that no Local Authority was immune. She said that Thames Valley Police (TVP) identified 170 young people at risk of CSE. A figure she said is of great concern. She highlighted that it is not just girls at risk of CSE but boys also. The Cabinet Member said she was encouraged that the portfolio had received £200k extra funding following the MTP process and that the issue had been reflected in the Strategic Plan for the County Council. The Cabinet Member advised that the funding would primarily be used to fund staff to work in partnership with the Police and other partners.

Ms McGookin advised that the Council used the government definition for CSE which is “Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, context and relationships where young people or a third person or persons receives something (such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities. In all cases, those exploiting the child or young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion, intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young persons limited availability of choice resulting from their social, economic or emotional vulnerability”

Ms McGookin advised that there was a whole range of abuse within the definition and said that TVP had advised that they were seeing an increase of the number of 1:1 situations as opposed to the more organised or complex situations.

CSE is a growing concern and has come into the spotlight following the cases in Derby. She said that at the same time the Office of the Children’s Commissioner launched a 2 year enquiry into CSE in gangs and groups. The outcome of which gave greater priorities to LSCB to develop local strategies. In response to the Derby case Buckinghamshire was quite proactive locally and it was identified quickly that frontline staff needed information and lunchtime forums were run during 2012 with experts from Derby who had that local experience to help embed the understanding, signs, symptoms and appropriate responses. Buckinghamshire was already in a fortunate position to have the R U Safe project which has been at the forefront of identification and providing support to the young people affected in Buckinghamshire especially those going missing.

In November 2012 the Office of the Children’s Commission produced an interim report called ‘I thought I was the only one, the only one in the world’. This followed a national audit which identified that 16,500 children were identified as being at risk of CSE and that 2409 were confirmed as victims of CSE between August 2010 – August 2011. Ms McGookin commented that not all agencies recorded data and that there was some caution with the actual figures but said that the national picture clearly showed that CSE was increasing.

LSCB were encouraged to audit local arrangements and map the nature and prevalence of CSE in their areas, to agree Policy and Procedures and measure the effectiveness of the agencies responding. Buckinghamshire already had Policies and Procedures in place and instead commissioned an independent auditor to audit how well equipped staff and local businesses such as local hotels were in order to identify and appropriately respond to cases of CSE. The findings of the audit informed Buckinghamshire’s initial strategy and the working plan for the newly formed CSE working group. Last year ran an event to help embed the understanding of CSE. The government produced another report at the end of November 2013 called ‘If only someone had listened’. The learning was drawn from key investigations and prosecutions including the Oxfordshire case. Some of the key findings were that professionals were still not taking a child’s statement seriously and sometimes ignored or discounted them.

In terms of responding the LSCB ensured the strategy was up to date, updated Policy and Procedures in light of the learning, run dedicated training courses on CSE, identifying data and information to improve local knowledge, mapping and measuring effectiveness. Ms McGookin advised that Buckinghamshire was working with Bedfordshire University on a project to help measure effectiveness.

Members then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

You have received an extra £200k funding. How will you achieve the reductions you are hoping for?

The extra funding will supply extra staff. In terms of reducing numbers there will be activities on raising awareness of CSE and activities on guidance for professionals to recognise CSE.

What are the strategies in Buckinghamshire?

It is a double edged sword because once the working group was formed and it was realised that prevention and raising awareness needed to be addressed more proficiently an officer was employed to raise awareness. As awareness is raised and young people understand that the situation they are in is not acceptable the referral rate in turn is shooting up. The strategy is very much to keep raising awareness and keep doing the preventative work but for a period of time we will see a flurry of activity and we need to respond to that.

Have we in Bucks got any notable knowledge of genital mutilation cases and how are we dealing with them?

I thought I read a report that Doctors were under reporting cases and that the government has asked for fuller reporting in the future.

If you work with maternity services the rate can be looked at. Unless someone notifies staff during the ante-natal period or it is identified during labour you may not know that someone is affected. It is very difficult to identify as it is such a private and discreet thing.

We address with young people we work with as they will be the future population and awareness needs to be raised. It is a horrendous problem but also very difficult to get to the root of.

Buckinghamshire does have procedures and protocols in place regarding response but it is about having the right people in place and constant raising awareness.

How can we be sure that we have identified the specific situations where they may be CSE and how can we be sure the strategies we adopt will prevent or mitigate them?

In addition to preventative work, training programmes for Year 11 pupils is being run. The course is due to run from April/May 2014 and all schools are encouraged to participate.

In relation to keeping on top of the intelligence we have set up a specialist multi agency group. The group looks at the cases coming through, escalates those at greatest risk. One finding which has proved very useful is that the discussions allow them to make connections with other cases. This wasn't anticipated and it is working very well. It has been running for approximately 8 months now and it means that Buckinghamshire is in a better position to identify where the risk areas are developing and the connections between cases.

How do we ensure that the multi-agency approach is effective? What are the information protocols in place? What are the key roles of the different organisations?

The message that the LSCB delivers is that everyone has a part to play. There are key players such as social care, R U Safe and TVP but in relation to identifying and supporting a child through the process, any agency working with that child has a responsibility and we try to impress that message across the field of services.

What protocols exist for schools to provide information to the Local Authority and to the police on any concerns they may have? We also heard in a previous meeting that the school had to choose between 3 different agencies to phone and it seemed confusion. Communication is the key and how does it work?

There should be no variation in Child Protection, CSE is a child protection issue. Any agency should refer their concerns to the First Response team or to the Police if immediate risk.

Was communication confusing as the First Response team was new?

First Response is an initiative under the new Munro model. If an agency has any concern whatsoever regarding child protection they should contact First Response. Schools are clear on this process.

RESOLVED

That the oral evidence be noted

9 CHILD PROTECTION AND INTERNET SAFETY

Mr Simon Billenness, Chairman, Child Safeguarding Board Sub-Committee Internet Safety was welcomed to the meeting.

The Committee had received a written report on Child Protection and Internet Safety.

Mr Billenness advised that according to an Ofcom report 47% of young people owned mobile phones which could access the internet. Young people can also go online through gaming and can establish a rapport with people. Recent results in the BCC Young People resident survey identified that 31% of young people said that they had people on their social networking profiles who they did not know personally. To address the concerns the E-safety sub-committee of the LCSB has been raising awareness with children, young people and parents by showing them how to set up devices and talking about conduct.

Mr Billenness advised that recent events included engaging a Theatre company to deliver a production to highlight to children and young people how to keep safe online and the risks. The aim is to deliver the programme to primary, secondary and grammar schools across the County. Mr Billenness said that the programme was very successful and produced evidence of young people changing their behaviour. Young people were involved in the programme from the start and also helped with the evaluation. Mr Billenness said that the young person's perspective was very important as they provided useful information to support the delivery. Officers also re-visited schools to ask young people whether they remembered what the production was about and whether they did anything differently as a result of seeing the production. Comments from young people included: "I am more careful about what I put online" and "I am only friends online with people that I know".

Members then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

How do you see Internet Safety working within your portfolio strategies?

It is fundamental as it is safeguarding young people. If we can raise awareness of internet safety it will link to the Core Strategy of providing effective safeguarding for all children. It will also link to the corporate plan to protect the most vulnerable.

How will you be measuring Internet Safety?

There isn't a direct measure for Internet Safety.

The Committee could perhaps do a Select Committee Inquiry on Internet Safety

As Corporate Parents it is important that all County Councillors are able to highlight how to use the Internet safely.

Please can you provide the Committee with a brief overview of the Internet Safety programme and how it works? What key partners are involved? What are the key areas of risk to young people?

In terms of the multi-agency approach we have the representatives on the Board, some of those are Ambassador trained by CEOP which means that their role is to go out and train other people.

We are also carrying out some pilot work with primary schools to look at how we can raise awareness with parents. It is a multi pronged approach. We are trying to change the conduct of young people, trying to raise awareness of professionals so they can support young people and parents and also support parents to have an open dialogue with young people so that they know what is going on.

The other group we are focussing on is peers because we know the impact that peer groups have on individual young people. On 28 March 2014 an Anti-bullying conference will be held.

What is being done with providers such as mobile phone providers?

Internet Service Providers are doing work highlighting how parents and young people can set up equipment to be safe. It is also about having a conversation with young people before they are given any devices which can access the internet. You can have the settings in place but we need to ensure that if a young person comes across something they don't like feel able highlight it.

What do we need to do to improve Internet Safety?

Previously we were working with older children, now we are working with parents, children centres and primary schools due to the influence of older siblings.

Can you do more with parents?

Ofsted will inspect schools specifically on Internet Safety. Schools will need to have a strategy in place, engage with parents and teach staff.

RESOLVED

That the oral and written evidence be noted

10 THE ADOPTION CAMPAIGN

The Chairman invited Members to ask the Cabinet Member questions on the Adoption Campaign.

The questions and answers are summarised below:

Can you please provide us with a brief update on the adoption campaign?

The current campaign has been very successful in creating interest. We have learnt that the majority of those expressions of interest came through Google which is quite interesting and something we can build and learn from in terms of our media approach.

We are actively working with our families to achieve a suitable match. We also have a pool of children who are quite difficult to place for adoption and this needs some further work.

Are you able to speed up the process through the courts?

We have to shorten the process and we are working hard to reduce the time it takes from the initial enquiry to the end of the process.

We are meeting much shorter timescales than previously. As part of the adoption reforms we invited a company to undertake a diagnostic service on our adoption services and see what we could make improvements. As a result we are working with Milton Keynes on developing a family drug and alcohol court. The aim is that families where drugs and alcohol is an issue agree to work with us and the courts in a different way so that we can work better with those families.

In terms of permanency we have improved and increased the number of family of group conferences to see if there is anyone in the wider family who may be suitable to adopt the child. We have also streamlined the adoption panel process by looking to see if it is possible to reduce the amount of paperwork, arranging more panels, training for social workers who write the reports and arrange adoption activity days.

We heard earlier how successful the adoption campaign had been and that you had received many initial enquiries but only 25 children have been adopted. What was your target?

The target is to recruit and improve 30 adopters and we are well on the way. There is a lot of interest but we need to be rigorous in the recruiting and matching process which means that there will be a large number of people fall out from those enquiries.

Is the department at capacity to deal with the current demand?

The department is over capacity. In terms of caseloads most of our units are operating at overcapacity. It is hugely variable geographically with the areas of greatest deprivation having very high caseloads. The teams are all working at capacity and we are working hard within our financial constraints to manage that.

RESOLVED

That the oral evidence be noted

11 NARROWING THE GAP SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

The Chairman welcomed Mr Chris Munday, Service Director for Learning and Skills Mr Raza Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Bucks Learning Trust and Mrs Amanda Hopkins, Director of Education, Bucks Learning Trust

The Chairman Advised that Mrs Hopkins was new in post and invited her to introduce herself to the Committee

Mrs Hopkins advised that she was currently Chief Executive Officer for Broughton Meadow Education Trust which is in Buckingham and is part of Broughton Meadow Academy. The Trust is also responsible for Grenville Combined School and the new school which will be opening. She advised that there is initial teaching training at the school and that 40 graduates a year were trained who are then employed in Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire. She advised that she had recently been appointed as Director of Education for the Bucks Learning Trust and would be starting the post full time after Easter following a gradual change over.

The Chairman invited the Committee to look at the Select Committee Inquiry report and thanked the Committee and Officers for all their hard work and contributions.

The Policy Officer advised that the report was the product of the work of the Committee over a period of months where numerous stakeholder and witnesses had been interviewed. He advised that if the report was agreed it would be submitted to Cabinet who would be invited to respond to the recommendations. The response would then come back to a future Select Committee.

The Chairman then took Members through each of the recommendations.

RESOLVED

That the Narrowing the Gap Select Committee Inquiry report and recommendations be agreed and referred to the Buckinghamshire County Council Cabinet and any other relevant decision makers for consideration, requesting an Executive Response.

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from the Policy Officer on the detailed Annual Committee Work Programme 2013-2014

RESOLVED

That the agreed Education, Skills and Children's Services Committee Work Programme be noted.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the next meeting of the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee on Tuesday 25 March 2014, 10am, Mezz room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, Bucks

CHAIRMAN



Buckinghamshire County Council

Select Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services

Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title:	Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament PSHE Report
Committee date:	25th March 2014
Author:	Amber Smith – Youth Participation Officer Buckinghamshire County Council
Contact officer:	Amber Smith 07736952537
Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Purpose of Agenda Item

An Evaluation of Physical, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) within the County of Buckinghamshire and recommendations for reform.

Members of the Bucks Youth Parliament have researched the delivery and effectiveness of PSHE in a number of areas across Buckinghamshire. They will be making recommendations to members of the select committee to enhance the quality of PSHE provision in schools across the County. This item is for information and consultation.

Background

BCC Youth Service facilitates the running of the UK Youth Parliament project in Buckinghamshire and supports young people to run their own Bucks Youth Parliament. The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) aims to give the young people of the UK between the ages of 11 and 18 a voice, which will be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies that have an interest in the views and needs of young people.



Members of Bucks Youth Parliament decided to launch a research project to highlight the gaps in PSHE provision in the County, this links to the national UKYP campaign 'curriculum for life'. The members felt that it was important to voice the concerns of their constituents to key decision makers within the County Council.

Summary

Members of the Bucks Youth Parliament will present their findings and recommendations from the research they have undertaken over the last eighteen months.

Resource implications

None.

Next steps

After consideration of evidence at its meeting the Select Committee may decide to consider the matter further, make recommendations to the Cabinet or other decision maker, or take no further action.

Any recommendations arising from the Select Committee inquiry will be referred to the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or other relevant decision maker for an Executive Response and executive decisions.

DRAFT

Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament PSHE (Physical, Social, Health and Economic) Education report

An Evaluation of Physical, Social, Health and Economic Education within the county of Buckinghamshire and recommendations for reform.

Report by:

Thomas Pike, Member of Youth Parliament for Wycombe. (2012-2014) **Kavita Sharma**, Deputy Member of UK Youth Parliament for Aylesbury Vale. (2012-2014 and 2014-2016) **Ethel Tambudzai**, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Wycombe. (2012-2014) **Nicola Dwornik**, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for South Bucks and Chiltern. (2012-2014)

Contributions from:

Rosie Lord, Member of Youth Parliament for South Bucks and Chiltern. (2012-2014)

Date: March 2014

OVERVIEW

PSHE was made compulsory by the Labour Government of 1997 and implemented in the year 2000. Our research suggests that, for many years, young people across the County of Buckinghamshire have viewed PSHE lessons as something of little value due to the lack of educational material and practical information they feel they attain from these lessons. With the Department of Education having pumped millions into this sector of education, surely something has been going wrong if those who are meant to be benefactors feel they have gained little. Over the last eighteen months of compulsory PSHE during secondary education in England. Members of Youth Parliament have consulted with young people from across Buckinghamshire through social media, youth councils and consultations in schools as a way of raising awareness of this issue. Quality PSHE education has the potential to affect society as a whole in a very positive way.

Investment in the futures of young people across England is crucial, this is why the UK Youth Parliament have raised and voted for Curriculum4Life to be their national campaign. The motion was one of five debated by the UK Youth Parliament in the House of Commons in 2013 and received 154 of the 295 votes cast. A total of 307 Members of Youth Parliament aged 11-18 took part in the debates, the subjects for which were voted for by over 250,000 young people across the UK.

The planned programmes introduced through PSHE, present an opportunity to solve (or at least work towards solving) social problems identified, reducing acts of anti-social behaviour, sexual health and unplanned pregnancies that often lead to unhealthy relationships with the family setting, better managing of finances – in society as a whole- as a way of reducing national deficit levels, accessing further education and jobs.

Although the scheme was met with great support from the schools & teachers, the question remains whether the students themselves ever fully understood the benefits they were meant to gain as part of this government initiative. The basis for this assumption is from some of the views the

young people have expressed and the teachers perception of the students 'laissez- faire' culture towards PSHE; therefore leading to frustrated teachers creating teaching plans and the handful of students engaged and interested in learning. There is a feeling of the need for better delivery of PSHE. In addition to this, with many schools having become Academies since 2006, PSHE has been one of the many subjects axed as its worth has not been seemingly matching its value and cost.

The need is for Bucks County Council to reconsider how Academies are monitored and how the physical, social and economic health of students is otherwise being catered to in order to enable young people access valuable life skills. Also, the continued restructuring work of the County Council should be taken as a timely opportunity to reform and improve the existing PSHE Scheme. It is in the best interests of local businesses, young people and the County Council to proceed with a reformed scheme as soon as possible instead of removing it, as this report will highlight. By doing so, Bucks County Council may look to make savings on their education budgets currently allocated to PSHE lessons and resources for schools.

This report establishes and clarifies the differences between what the proposed PSHE planned programmes were meant to look like and what the young people of Buckinghamshire say they are like. This is a way of determining both the successes and failures of the current scheme in order that an even better scheme may be reintroduced into schools. Recommendations for revision and improvement are outlined so that the current scheme could become more useful for young people in Buckinghamshire and worth the investment for Bucks County Council. The proposals of what should be taught and how the lessons should be delivered is based upon the views of young people and teachers during various consultations through the UK Youth Parliament, Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament, Bucks Youth Cabinet, and general youth engagement opportunities in schools and other places in 2012 to 2014. Some parts of the report may specifically reference the source of information.

What is PSHE?

PSHE education is a planned programme of learning through which children and young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives. As part of a whole school approach, PSHE develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society¹; according to the PSHE association for England. However, when we asked many young people what PSHE was, they simply reiterated what the acronym of PSHE meant (physical, social, health and economic education) but had no real grasp of what they had learnt from PSHE but understood what it was meant to teach them.

According to Ofsted's 'Not yet good enough: PSHE report'; 'PSHE is a non-statutory subject' that schools choose to teach because 'it makes a major contribution to their statutory responsibilities to promote children and young people's personal and economic well-being; offer sex and relationships education; prepare pupils for adult life and provide a broad and balanced curriculum of the benefits and preparation it gives young people for life.'²

¹ <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1043>

² Well-being is defined in the Children Act 2004 as the promotion of physical and mental health; emotional well-being; social and economic well-being; education; training and recreation; recognition of the contribution made by children to society; and protection from harm and neglect.

Below the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of PSHE lessons helps us to appreciate how young people see and behold PSHE.

How Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education is delivered throughout England, focusing on key strength and weakness of implantation.

In a report conducted by the Department of Education in November 2009 entitled Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education³: A mapping study of the prevalent models of delivery and their effectiveness it was concluded that schools with successful PSHE education were more likely to have the following features: a coherent, progressive curriculum across the full range of elements, core curriculum time, and well-resourced delivery. They were more likely to work in a context of clear support from senior leaders, and motivated, rewarded PSHE leaders. These schools were more likely to see the role of PSHE education as supporting both life skills and pupil learning and align this with their vision of the purpose of schooling more broadly.

In an Ofsted report which carried out an investigation into PSHE provision in 165 maintained schools in England between 2006 and 2009 it concluded that Pupils' achievement was good or outstanding in over three quarters of the schools visited. Across all the schools visited, the pupils seen enjoyed their PSHE lessons and saw their relevance. The development of their personal and social skills was a particular strength. They generally knew how to stay safe and healthy, although not all of them applied this knowledge to the choices they made, for example in relation to the food they ate. The new economic well-being and financial capability aspect of PSHE is still in its early stages and achievement in this area was less strong.

A key strength adopted by better schools implementing PSHE strategy, was the provision of a wide range of interesting extra-curricular activities, such as music and drama productions, school councils and residential visits, where students could develop and practise their personal and social skills. Many of the schools were using peer mentoring schemes successfully, where pupils were trained to use their skills to support others.

Additionally where teaching of PSHE was seen as good or outstanding, the key strengths were relationships, strong discipline and purposeful activities in each of the schools. External agencies provided expert contributions and enlivened lessons. The most effective curriculum model adopted for the provision of PSHE was one in which discrete, regularly taught PSHE lessons were supplemented with cross-curricular activities. In terms of weaknesses, where PSHE lessons were seen as inadequate, PSHE was mainly taught by form tutors, teachers lacked the necessary expertise to engage pupils and to challenge their misconceptions. Many of the secondary schools still fail to provide discrete curriculum time for PSHE education. In these schools it was taught only through tutorial time by form tutors or through 'suspended timetable' days with teaching lacking continuity and not covering some aspects of the subject in sufficient depth. Key aspects of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in PSHE education were still the weakest aspects of provision.

In a report 'Positive Guidance on Aspects of Personal, Social and Health Education' conducted by the National Children's Bureau in 2006 a number of recommendations were delivered to enable

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe>

schools and Education Authorities create a positive context and approach for PSHE approaches , develop good group work routines and use active learning methods.

In researching the above ideas it was discovered that PSHE has sometimes been driven by ‘problems’ which need to be solved, such as teenage pregnancy, substance misuse or obesity. In a desire to ‘solve the problem’, children and young people become targets of interventions, which, in many cases, they find irrelevant or detached from their experiences. It was found that PSHE lessons might focus on the exceptional in case studies, for example, by highlighting the case of a pregnant teenager rather than the strategies successfully used by the overwhelming majority of teenagers to avoid pregnancy. This can unintentionally lead pupils to a belief that becoming pregnant is more common than in fact it is which does not enable pupils to learn from the positive successes of others.

It seen that PSHE is much more likely to be successful if it starts with positive beliefs in children and young people. Emphasising positive social norms from the outset presents an exciting new approach to delivering PSHE and should be the way forward in delivering an effective programme within schools with a message that focuses on the majority behaviour or belief and not the minority.

PSHE IN Buckinghamshire

In the past year, a survey was conducted across Buckinghamshire about PSHE via the internet ⁴ and via paper copies on young people aged 11-18. Teachers were also invited to give their views too. Some alarming weaknesses were found, however there was some strength’s included, below is what we found:

Weaknesses

1. A concerning proportion of young people surveyed (44%) did not know how to seek further support if an issue arose in a PSHE lesson that directly affects them.
2. Nearly half of young people who we surveyed (46%) ranked Sexual Abuse first or second on a list of topics they felt these topics were most in need of improvement (list included Relationships; Sexual Abuse; Mental Illness; Stereotypes, Appearance and Conforming to Trends; Real Life Advice (e.g. Financial education)
3. Consequences of such failings are highlighted elsewhere in our survey, where 11% of young people surveyed believed that engaging in sexual activity when they do not feel like doing so is ‘sometimes’ appropriate.
4. Only 9% of students surveyed believed that teachers ‘always’ take PHSE lessons seriously. The majority (51%) held that teacher ‘sometimes’ take PHSE lessons seriously, while a worrying proportion (40%) believed their teachers ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ take such lessons seriously.

⁴ <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/88GS9G9>

5. When we asked the young people surveyed to rank 1-10 the usefulness of their PHSE to date (10 as the highest), the lowest and most common score (25%) was 1, and two thirds (65%) of those surveyed gave a response between 1-3. No respondent gave a score above 7.

A few student comments on provision (For references please ask for the copies of the paper surveys):

- 1) On lessons: 'I find it boring. The lessons are worthless.' 'I want my lessons to change.' 'I don't like the lack of learning anything valuable.'
- 2) On Sex Education/ Health: 'Little or nothing is said about sex education or the health (physical/mental) of young people and how we can deal with it.'
- 3) On student involvement: 'It's just the teacher talking throughout the whole lesson and students aren't involved enough.' 'Please make them interactive, not just copying stuff off the whiteboard.'

A few teacher comments on provision (For references please ask for the copies of the paper surveys):

- 1) On student input influencing schools PSHE Curriculum: 'None at all.'
- 2) Positive aspects of provision: 'Well for the students it is a time to talk.'
- 3) On how provision could be improved: 'More time given.' 'More outside speakers.' 'Status is often an issue – perception by both staff and students a constant battle.'
- 4) On resources: 'Some handy County produced guides / list of good resources would help.'

Analysis

Provision in regards to sex and relationships education appears in need of serious improvement. Students believe that PHSE is currently of little benefit to them. This may be due to student disengagement with the topics covered by schools, and a desire for other topics to be introduced to the syllabus, or for existing topics to be covered in greater depth. Both students and teachers have separately acknowledged that teachers may also be disengaged with the topics which they are covering.

Recommendations

Possible Improvements to Sex & Relationships Education Provision

1. BCC should encourage schools to considerably increase the time allocated to SRE related topics.
2. BCC should encourage schools to ask students which SRE topics they wish to see covered, and in what depth.
3. BCC should encourage schools to invest their PHSE budgets into resources provided by charities and pressures groups aiming to promote a healthy sexual lifestyle for young people. Such organisations **include** Brook, The Christopher Winter Project, and True Tube.
4. BCC should encourage schools to make use of relevant outside speakers, who may be able to provide a higher quality of provision on certain SRE topics than regular teachers within the school.

Possible Improvements to the Student Perception of PHSE

1. BCC should encourage schools to timetable greater time for PHSE provision, thus placing and demonstrating greater commitment to the subject.
2. BCC should encourage schools to elect representatives from year groups to work alongside the teachers responsible for PHSE coordination. The aim should be to tailor each particular year group's PHSE provision to that year group's needs, within the constraints of the national curriculum. This should better ensure genuine student engagement.
3. BCC could establish a County wide PHSE monitoring committee, organised through the Youth Service. Each school within the County would be offered one seat, their representative elected from their student body. The committee would meet as often as required (possibly termly). Its aim would be to strengthen links between schools in regards to PHSE provision, identify examples of best practice, and expand such strong provision to other schools across the County. The existence and importance of such a committee would likely raise the student perception of PHSE.
4. BCC should encourage schools to train teachers in certain areas of PHSE expertise. Some handy County produced guides / list of good resources would help i.e. a resource bank.

Facebook Survey In the summer of 2013 a Facebook group was opened by us to all young people in Buckinghamshire to post their views about current PSHE provision in the county.⁵ Any young person was welcome to comment if attending a school within the county. Below is information we pulled out.

Most mentioned topics from the Facebook page

- 1) A vast amount of comments of young people wanting PSHE to be less taboo, less generic, more real life, not awkward or holding back, treat them like adults and tell it to them straight
- 2) Relationships – hetero, homosexual and lesbian. How to act in a relationship. Not just sex.
- 3) Sexual abuse
- 4) Mental illness
- 5) Stereotypes, gender dysphonia, how to act, respecting yourself
- 6) Real life advice and teachings – finance, bills, rent, University fees, jobs.

Interesting comments from young people

1) Relationships: - How to communicate, for both hetero and homosexuals and possibly include a bit about gender dysphonia for intersex individuals. This should be separate from sex education though, it should also include personal safety and discussions about stereotypes. Young women need to realise 'rolling their skirt up won't make boys like you and boys need to realise taking dangerous risks to impress peers isn't the way either.'

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/533074733391728/?fref=ts>

2) Sex education: - It shouldn't just be about straight relationships. 'I'm a lesbian and I'm pretty sure I can't get pregnant from a girl so half the lessons are irrelevant to me.'

3) Information: - 'We need UN-FILTERED information. We learn all about drugs alcohol etc. but in a much filtered way, as to not 'upset' us. We need to know about real issues! The harsh reality! Mental illnesses for example aren't taught properly because it is seen as a taboo subject. We need to be taught these things so that we can understand and know how to deal with these problems!'

4) Lessons: - I think that as much as some of it is useful, the majority is useless, dull and unimaginative. It ends up just being a free period. Nobody shows an interest because they are aware of the fact that most of what we learn is not relevant. I think they need to take more interest in what we are interested in and what affects us.

5) Sexual Abuse: - Oh and we need to be taught about sexual abuse because there are still loads of people who think it's ok, or don't know where to draw the line.

Analysis: Comments like the one's drawn up above, raise concern over discontent on PSHE provision. Students seem to demand much more from their PSHE lessons in regards to content and what is taught, they seem to want a key input into content that is taught.

Recommendations:

- 1) Schools should be more thorough in their monitoring and evaluation of PSHE, using a wide range of evidence.
- 2) Schools should engage with pupils to determine how they can best respond to their individual needs and concerns, drawing on the support of appropriate external agencies.
- 3) Greater attention should be paid to creating a broad PSHE programme including elements such as mental health and well-being, parenting education and financial awareness education which are currently being neglected in many schools.

Strengths of PSHE provision within the County

In our survey and additional analysis across the County some strengths were found, never the less there is still room for improvement. Below is evidence which highlights the strengths.

- 1) Currently BCC has an audit on the Bucks GFL website to help schools with monitoring and evaluating PSHE. ⁶

During Key Stage 3 pupils:	What we already do	Effective			What else we can do	Difficulty		
		+	-	?		1	2	3
learn about themselves as growing and changing individuals and as members of their communities with more maturity, independence and power.								
become more self-aware, and are capable of more sophisticated moral reasoning.								
take more responsibility for themselves and become more aware of the views, needs and rights of people of all ages.								
build on the experience, confidence and competence they developed in key stage 2, learning new skills to help them make decisions and play an active part in their personal and social life.								
learn how to plan and manage choices for their courses and career.								
continue to develop and maintain								

Bucks GFL website

- 3) We found some schools that did have outside speakers and include a lot of student input e.g. appointing 'PSHE prefects.'
- 4) Pupil's knowledge has seemed to improve over a while.



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title:	Families First
Committee date:	25 March 2014
Author:	Joy Shakespeare
Contact officer:	Joy Shakespeare 01296 387762 eshakespeare@buckscc.gov.uk
Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Angela Macpherson
Electoral divisions affected:	All
Purpose of Agenda Item	Information

Background

The Families First Programme is Buckinghamshire's response to the national Troubled Families Agenda, which seeks to "turn around" the lives of families where there are issues around truancy, exclusion from school, crime and antisocial behaviour or worklessness. The aim of the programme is to improve the outcomes for children and families and to reduce the burden on public sector resources.

The programme was developed in partnership with families, all statutory agencies and the voluntary and community.

Buckinghamshire's share of the 120,000 families nationally is 545.

Summary



The Families First approach had a measured start to ensure that all partners were fully engaged, and that the model was fully discussed. The model was tested through prototyping in Chesham in the spring of 2013 and then rolled out across the whole of Buckinghamshire by October 2013.

By the end of 2013 we had engaged with 523 families and are now beginning to see significant improvements in how we work, leading to real outcomes for families. This has resulted in payment by results claims for 187 families to date, and means that we are now on track against the targets set by DCLG.

The initial period of the programme was for 3 years, 2012 – 2015. This will be extended for a further year, to March 2016. Detailed information from DCLG on the criteria, numbers and financial arrangements to apply from April 2015 have not yet been published. However, it has been announced that in order to qualify for funding from April 2015 Local Authorities will need to produce a Sustainability Plan that is agreed with statutory partners.

There is cross party support for a further extension to 2020, although firm commitments are yet to be made.

The response from families so far has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 90% expressing high levels of satisfaction with the approach.

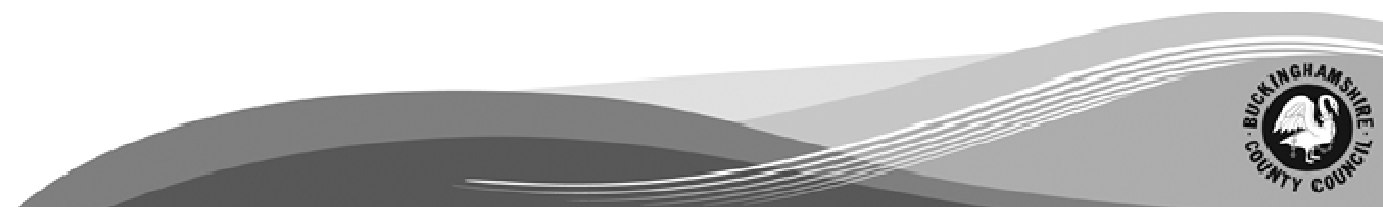
Nationally there is no 'one size fits all' approach to Troubled Families. Local Authorities have made a range of strategic choices to ensure that their systems and delivery models reflect local priorities alongside the national agenda. The Buckinghamshire systems change approach, integrating family work within existing support services across partner agencies, is increasingly being adopted as authorities recognise that simply adding an additional service is not sustainable long term.

An interim report on progress has been produced and will be available in April 2014.

Resource implications

Over the current 3 years of the programme (2012-15) funding is provided partly through a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) grant, reducing annually and partly through an increasing payment by results element. Part of the grant is ringfenced for salary costs.

As a result of the outcomes achieved for 187 families to date, Buckinghamshire has claimed payment by results amounting to £105,000 during 2013/14. It is anticipated that



further payments will be achieved in 2014/15 and 2015/16. While these payments are not ring fenced, like the grant element, it is hoped that the majority of the money will be reinvested in the further development of services for families, to ensure that the programme is sustainable in the long term.

A FROI (Fiscal Return on Investment) was undertaken to calculate the benefits/cost ratio for ten families who have received support. From this small sample, the cost avoidance generated for every £1 invested in family support was 4.3 – for every £1 spent there was an average benefit return of £4.30. However, our view is that the evidence base to support this conclusion is insufficient and our intention is to conduct a much more rigorous assessment with a much larger sample size when the Government FROI tool is published later in 2014.

Next steps

Summer 2014:	DCLG announcement of arrangements for 2015-6
June 2014:	Payment by results claim
October 2014:	Payment by results claim
January 2015:	Final payment by results claim under current arrangements
March 2015:	End of Phase 1
April 2016:	Phase 2

Attachments

1. Summary of Families First Service
2. Newsletter
3. Case studies



Families First Briefing

December 2013



What is Families First?

- A more co-ordinated way of working with families who are experiencing difficulties or challenges in their lives.
- A partnership approach that focuses on the whole family, addressing all of their needs together.
- Working together with families to make positive changes to their lives & move away from dependency on public services.
- Taking a preventative approach by working with families before their problems become too difficult to manage, as well as supporting families out of crisis.

It is **NOT**

- A new service or extra bureaucracy.
- The next 'Big Idea'

Outcome

Case study 1:

- The Families First team have been instrumental in halting an eviction by engaging Housing, Bucks Floating Support and a primary school in a multi-agency approach. The lone parent who suffers from depression, and has an 8 week old baby and 2 older children was overwhelmed with relief.

Case study 2:

- Information sharing, and a systemic approach involving Police, Social Care and Health resulted in a family being removed from a Child Protection Plan. This involved the Families First team motivating partner agencies to work more creatively, by praising the positives within the family which in turn empowered the family to re-engage with professionals.

Case study 3:

- A case closed by FRS due to positive outcomes has engaged voluntarily with the Families First DWP Advisor to find employment. She was empowered to do so because of her child's increased school attendance, and her own improved self-esteem.

Case study 4:

- Feedback from Thames Valley Police indicates that the joined up approach from FRS, Social Care and Families First has shown a reduction in call outs in relation to several families in South Bucks.

For further information or to contribute to this briefing, please contact:

Tracey Lawrence at tlawrence@buckscc.gov.uk
or Jan McGregor at c-jmcgregor@buckscc.gov.uk

News and Updates

- Following a recent conference on 5th Dec, Louise Casey, Director General of the Troubled Families Unit reported that 22,000 families have been 'turned around' so far.
- In an inspirational speech Louise talked about how to enable change: "you need to start with the person, not the issues", and how troubled families: "get stuck in the system".
- Louise described the Families First approach as: "like scaffolding, ensuring the families are supported, until they are enabled to cope themselves"
- Looking forward, the project will extend into 2015-2016 (with an "in principle" agreement for further investment up to 2020) - to improve the lives of a further 400,000 families.
- The focus will be on intervening before crisis point and increasing system change. This has been the Bucks approach from the start, so we are delighted that we are on the right track.
- Our involvement in Phase 2 is dependent on our achievement of the outcomes in Phase 1!

Training and development

- **Understanding Resilience**
13th Jan 2014 - Clare Foundation, Saunderton
- **Developing Resilience**
21st Jan 2014 – Clare Foundation, Saunderton
13th Feb 2014 – Clare Foundation, Saunderton
17th Mar 2014 – Clare Foundation, Saunderton
- To book a place on any training event please send your name, role, service area, email address and course to:
candftraining@buckscc.gov.uk
- **We are offering the opportunity for a limited number of interested individuals from all agencies to be trained to deliver Family Outcome Star Training. If you are interested, please register your interest via: candftraining@buckscc.gov.uk**

Families First



National Picture

The Government has pledged to 'turn around' the lives of 120,000 troubled families by 2015. As part of the 2013 spending review this has been extended to 2016. These are families with multiple and complex problems including worklessness, crime, anti-social behaviour and truancy or exclusion from school. They are likely to be long-standing and in some instances multi-generational challenges. The Government estimates that £9 billion per year is spent on these families and that the vast majority is spent on reacting to their problems but not necessarily providing lasting results and changing lives. Buckinghamshire have chosen to call this initiative 'Families First'.

Families First is:

- A more co-ordinated way of working with families who are experiencing difficulties or challenges in their lives.
- A partnership approach that focuses on the whole family, addressing all of their needs together.
- Working together with families to make positive changes to their lives & move away from dependency on public services.
- Taking a preventative approach by working with families before their problems become too difficult to manage, as well as supporting families out of crisis.

Families First supports:

- A whole systems approach
- Family focused interventions
- Effective information sharing and co-ordination of resources
- Co-operative collaboration between professionals and agencies to meet the needs of the family
- A single planning and joint assessment process

Identification and support:

- Families First is an approach delivered through and by all partner agencies

Criteria are based on families who:

- Are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Have children not attending education
- Have an adult on work related benefits
- Are experiencing
 - mental health issues
 - violence in the home or the community
 - substance misuse
 - bereavement or loss

For further information contact:

- Programme Lead – Joy Shakespeare: eshakespeare@buckscc.gov.uk
- Project Manager – Tracey Lawrence: tlawrence@buckscc.gov.uk
- Health Lead – Jan McGregor: c-jmcgregor@buckscc.gov.uk
- Employment Advisor – Harriet Ellis: Harriet.Ellis@dpw.gsi.gov.uk
- Advisor – Alison Smith: Alissmith@buckscc.gov.uk



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title: Fostering

Committee date: 25 April 2014

Author: Steve Tanner, Interim Head of Care Services

Contact officer: Steve Tanner, Head of Care Services, c-stanner@buckscc.gov.uk (Tel: 01296 387673)

Report signed off by Cabinet Member: Angela MacPherson, Children and Young People

Electoral divisions affected: All

Purpose of Agenda Item:

Information:

This item is intended to provide members of the select committee the opportunity to consider some of the key issues facing the provision of sufficient fostering places for those children and young people in the care of Buckingham County Council. It should be read in conjunction with the report on adoption, which is also on the agenda of this committee.

Background

Background information on fostering and what it involves is set out in appendix A of the report.



The 1989 requires local authorities to "take reasonable steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of looked after children in their local authority area, otherwise known as the sufficiency duty".

According to the Fostering Network, there is a shortage of 10,000 Foster carers across the UK.

The government has undertaken a number of changes to improve fostering services, including the introduction of the foster carers charter, changes to regulations to make fostering easier and quicker, and revisions to national minimum standards. A number of proposals have been announced to help local authorities to recruit more foster carers, including making fostering more compatible for working families, and encouraging employers to be more fostering friendly. The government is also consulting on changes to make assessment and approval quicker and more transparent, and providing better support and training to foster carers.

Summary

- Buckinghamshire County Council has around 450 children in care at the current time. Buckinghamshire, like many local authorities since the baby Peter Connelly case have witnessed a significant rise in the number of looked after children. Numbers have increased here by nearly 20% since March 2011 when there were 381 children looked after.
- Despite this, Buckinghamshire still has fewer children per 1000 population (0-17) than its comparator group, according to 2013 CIPFA benchmarking data. Buckinghamshire has 3.4 children per 1000 population compared with the benchmark average of 4.3 children. Buckinghamshire is the seventh lowest out of nine.
- There are more boys in care (54%) than girls (46%). Around 11% of children have a disability. There are similar numbers of children looked after in each of the age groups between 0 to 14 (around 20), but more than twice as many children in the 15 to 17 age bands. In the last three years, the greatest demand for placements has been for young children aged under five and teenagers 14 or over.
- Nearly 16% of children are placed in residential settings (children's homes of residential schools provided either by the local authority or by independent sector providers). This is around twice as many as the authorities deemed to be similar to Buckinghamshire by CIPFA.
- 64% of children are placed in Foster care placements provided by the local authority or by independent fostering agencies. This is broadly similar overall to comparator authorities. However, Buckinghamshire places 37% of its looked after children in the independent sector fostering provision, compared with a 27% average in comparator authorities.

- This means that approximately only one in four looked after children are placed with the in-house fostering service in Buckinghamshire, compared with around one in three in comparator authorities.
- Of the remaining children, 13% are placed with family and friends ("kinship placements") and parents, and 5% are placed for adoption. The remainder are placed in independent living up placements.
- Critically, less than 50% of looked after children are now placed within the County Council boundary, with many children being placed considerable distances away from their families, schools, and communities.
- In total in March 2014, there were only 282 places with 205 carers across all sectors to look after the 470 children in our care. i.e.

No of Children placed by Bucks	Bucks CC* (No Carers in brackets)	IFA's
In County mainstream	95 (83)	152
In County – family and friends	24 (17)	0
Out of County Mainstream	6 (10)	29
Out of County family and friends	7 (6)	0
TOTAL	132	181

- The local authority fostering service was judged to be good when inspected by OFSTED in June 2012. Feedback from Foster carers as part of the biannual service user survey shows high levels of satisfaction with the in-house service, with none evaluated as poor by Foster carers and many elements such as training and support evaluated as excellent.
- The number of mainstream foster carers registered with Buckinghamshire county council has increased in three of the last four years (in 2012/13 there was no overall change in numbers) to 93 mainstream carers in total, as has the overall number of "bed nights" provided by the service. However, the net increase over that period has been small (+10 carers) and has been much too small to prevent the significant growth in the use of independent sector fostering placements.
- So far in 2013/14, there have been 194 enquiries about fostering (including Facebook enquiries) and 12 foster carer approvals. The County of Bucks has a population of 505,000 people, according to the 2011 census and there are around 200,000 households. This makes an enquiry rate of less than one per thousand households.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA	NATIONAL AVERAGE	PERFORMANCE IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Conversion rate from enquiry to approval	11%	6.2%
Utilisation of in-house Foster carers	69%	87%
Journey from initial enquiry to first panel	281 days	189 days
Foster service attrition rates (loss of carers)	13%	9.6%

- Buckinghamshire's conversion rate from enquiry to approval appears lower than the national average, although there is some controversy over the definition of an "enquiry". For example, Buckinghamshire's data includes information requests on Facebook, whereas other authorities don't. More in house placements are being used in Buckingham than elsewhere. The service approves foster care much more quickly than the national average and loses fewer foster carers per year.
- The age profile of the in-house Foster carers is such that 57% are aged over 50, with 28% aged over 60.
- According to data gathered by the commissioning team in 2012, the in-house service is able to provide places for less than half of the looked after population, compared with 82% in Oxfordshire, 96% in Hertfordshire, and 76% in Milton Keynes.

Resource implications

- The impact of the increased numbers of looked after children over the last three years has meant an increased budget spend of over £5 million between 2011 and 2014 (spend has increased from £12.3 million to £17.5 million).
- The average yearly cost per child per week in care in Buckinghamshire is £906. The average across the nine CIPFA comparator authorities is £846. This is almost entirely explained by the higher percentage of children placed in residential care and the higher numbers placed in independent fostering agency placements.
- Buckinghamshire county council's in-house fostering placements cost £393 per child per week. This is the same figure as the benchmark average although Buckinghamshire's unit costs are the eighth cheapest.

- Independent sector fostering placements are much more expensive, on average, at £740 per child per week.
- Buckinghamshire has been successful in negotiating "cost and volume" contracts with the independent sector which means independent fostering agency placements are bought more cheaply by the authority compared with similar councils where the average is £850 per week. Buckinghamshire has the cheapest unit cost of independent fostering agency placements of all nine benchmark authorities. (CIPFA benchmarking report 2013).
- Allowances paid to foster carers are above the national minimum allowance set by government. Compared to neighbouring local authorities, Buckinghamshire has been competitive up until recently, although the absence of specialist fee attracting schemes and the absence of an annual inflationary uplift to fees in recent times may have made the authority much less competitive than in the past.
- However, most local authorities do not pay foster carers the same amount of money paid by private fostering agencies to foster carers. Our unique selling point tends to be a public service ethos, good support, and excellent training.

Key issues and action already taken:

- The key issues in relation to fostering are:
 - How do we dramatically increase numbers of people in Buckinghamshire, who are prepared to provide care to looked after children?
 - How do we increase interest in fostering in Buckinghamshire?
 - How do we encourage younger people to foster so the service is sustainable in the longer term?
 - How do we improve the conversion rate of those who express an interest into approved foster carers?
- Action being taken includes:
 - Undertaking a full business process review to improve our efficiency, effectiveness, and customer orientation at enquiries stage and beyond to improve our conversion rates
 - Carrying out a year-long recruitment campaign, focusing on fostering fortnight as the highlight, but targeting particular markets to improve recruitment in key areas of need- under-fives and 15+.
 - Strengthening our performance management and user feedback to improve the use of data and information to strengthen our recruitment and retention of carers.
 - Establishing trading accounts for the in-house service to develop a much stronger cost and business focus.
 - Examining the feasibility of developing specialist fostering schemes-for example, parents and baby placements, remand fostering, adolescent fostering scheme.

Further action for consideration

The numbers of children being cared for in Buckinghamshire has been declining for a number of years now. This is having a significant impact on not only the budget but outcomes for children and young people who often are remaining in care much longer than is necessary because of the impact that the displacement from their communities is having on our ability to successfully return them home.

Arguably, continuing to do more of the same is likely to yield similar results in the future. More radical options may need to be considered to reverse this trend. This might include:

- A significant investment in local capacity and resources to bring about a bigger and more focused emphasis on the development of local Foster care capacity ("invest to save").
- Looking at other models of delivery to see what alternative options might be more effective in recruiting local carers.
- Significantly increasing allowances in payments to carers to create an incentive to care in Buckinghamshire.
- Investing in specialist fostering schemes as referred to above.

Steve Tanner

March 16, 2014

Appendix A

What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents.

It is often used to provide temporary care while parents get help sorting out problems or to help children or young people through a difficult period in their lives.

Often children will return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved and that it is clear that their parents are able to look after them safely.

Others may stay in long-term foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently.

Are there different types of fostering?

Types of foster care include:

- **Emergency** - where children need somewhere safe to stay for a few nights.
- **Short-term** - where carers look after children for a few weeks or months, while plans are made for the child's future.
- **Short-breaks** - where disabled children or children with special needs or behavioural difficulties enjoy a short stay on a pre-planned, regular basis with a new family, and their parents or usual foster carers have a short break for themselves.
- **Remand fostering** - where young people in England or Wales are "remanded" by the court to the care of a specially trained foster carer.
- **Long-term and permanent** - not all children who cannot return to their own families want to be adopted, especially older children or those who continue to have regular contact with relatives. These children live with long-term foster carers until they reach adulthood and are ready to live independently
- **"Connected persons" or "kinship" fostering or "family and friends"**- where children who are looked after by a local authority are cared for by people they already know. This can be very beneficial for children, and is called "connected persons", or "kinship" fostering or "family and friends". If they are not looked after by the local authority, children can live with their aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters or grandparents without outside involvement.
- **Private fostering** - where the parents make an arrangement for the child to stay with someone else who is not a close relative and has no parental responsibilities, and the child stays with that person (the private foster carer) for more than 27 days. Although this is a private arrangement there are special rules about how the child is looked after. The local authority must be told about the arrangements and visit to check on the child's welfare.

Is fostering a job?

All foster carers are registered with and contracted to a local authority or independent fostering provider. Increasingly foster carers are seen as professionals and receive a fee on a basis of being self-employed.

What do foster carers do?

The foster carer's role is to provide high quality care for the child. All children in foster care will be looked after by Buckinghamshire county council and the foster carers will work in partnership with the local authority to provide this.

The foster carers may also work with other professionals such as therapists, teachers or doctors to help the child to deal with emotional traumas or physical or learning disabilities.

What kind of people become foster carers?

Fostering service providers, including local authorities, need a wide range of people to meet children and young people's very different needs.

Wherever possible foster carers are sought who reflect and understand the child's heritage, ethnic origin, culture and language, and fostering agencies need carers from all types of backgrounds.

People do not need to be married to become a foster family - they can also be single, divorced or cohabiting. Gay men and lesbians can become foster carers.

There are no upper age limits for fostering, but fostering service providers expect people to be mature enough to work with the complex needs that children needing fostering are likely to have, and should have a good support network and be in general good health.

How are foster carers recruited?

Fostering service providers, including Buckinghamshire County Council, often recruit new carers through publicity campaigns or newspaper or radio advertisements. There may also be stands in public places such as local supermarkets, roundabouts, etc.

What preparation and training do foster carers get?

People who want to become foster carers need to go through thorough preparation and assessment.

- They attend groups where they learn about the needs of children coming into foster care.
- Alongside this, they receive visits from a social worker.

- The social worker will then prepare a report that is presented to an independent fostering panel, which recommends whether this person/family can become foster carers.
- Training does not stop when a person becomes a foster carer. All carers have an annual review and any training that's needed to ensure they are suitable to continue fostering.
- Training is linked to the training and development standards for foster carers set out by the Training Support Development Standards (TSDS) which have to be met by the end of first year of fostering. There are slightly different expectations for family and friends carers and short break carers.
- Foster carers are supported to continue to attend training following approval.

Are foster carers paid?

Allowances

- All foster carers receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child in their home.
- For foster carers working on behalf of an agency, this is set by the individual fostering agency such as the local authority, and is usually dependent on the age of the looked after child.
- The government has now introduced a national minimum allowances for Foster carers

Fees

- Increasingly, fostering is being seen as a "professional" role. Any local authorities and independent fostering agencies run schemes which pay foster carers a fee. This may be linked to the child's particular needs but is often a reflection of the skills, abilities, length of experience or professional expertise the foster carer has.

Tax relief

- The introduction of tax relief in 2003 means that foster carers in the UK do not pay tax on their income from fostering, up to a maximum of £10,000 plus allowances..

National Insurance contributions

- Since April 2003, foster carers have also been entitled to Home Responsibility Protection - a way to make sure that they do not get less Basic Retirement Pension just because you have stayed at home to look after a child.



Buckinghamshire County Council

Select Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title:	Adoption
Committee date:	25 March 2014
Author:	Steve Tanner
Contact officer:	Steve Tanner, Head of Care Services, c-stanner@buckscc.gov.uk (Tel: 01296 387673)
Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Angela Macpherson, Children and Young People
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Purpose of Agenda Item

Information:

This item is intended to provide members of the select committee the opportunity to consider some of the key issues facing the provision of sufficient adoption placements for children in the care of Buckingham County Council. It should be read in conjunction with the report on fostering, which is also on the agenda of this committee.

Background

Background information on adoption and what it involves is set out in appendix A of this report. The 1989 requires local authorities to "take reasonable steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of looked after children in their local authority area, otherwise known as the sufficiency duty".

Adoption has been a high priority for governments of all political persuasions for some time now. The current government has been particular concern to ensure more children are adopted and that they are adopted quickly. The government is currently consulting on a range of changes to statutory guidance and regulation concerning adoption. The consultation document has a joint Ministerial Foreword, by the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, and Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson – both of whom have personal experience of adoption (the former was adopted as a baby, the latter has siblings who were adopted by his parents). They express their delight at the recent increase in the number of adoptions, but their disappointment that there has been no overall improvement in how quickly children are adopted, which they intend to continue to tackle. Most of the issues included in this consultation are covered by measures in the Children and Families Bill, which received Royal Assent on 13 March 2014, and relate to the following key issues in adoption:

- Fostering for Adoption
- Consideration of ethnicity when matching children with prospective adopters
- Placing siblings with an adoptive family
- Information to be provided about adoption support
- The Adoption and Children Act Register
- Contact in respect of children in care and adopted children.

To support these amendments, the government is providing local authorities with a grant called the Adoption Reform Grant. It is intended to increase the numbers of children adopted and the speed with which they are placed for adoption. Buckinghamshire's grant allocation for 2014/15 is £450,864.

Summary

- The government introduced a national performance framework called the adoption scorecard in 2012. This measures over a three year average:
 - how long it takes between a child coming into care and being placed with its adopted family;
 - how long it takes a local authority to decide on a match for a child after court authority to place a child and;
 - the percentage of children who have waited more than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.
- The average time it took between a child entering care in Buckinghamshire and being placed with its adopted family over the last three years (2010-13) was 649 days (lower is better). The statistical neighbour average was 573 days and the England average 647 days. Oxfordshire took 450 days but

Hertfordshire took 672 days (National target by 2016=426 days). Performance in Buckinghamshire in 2013/14 to date was a much improved 474 days.

- The average time it took between Buckinghamshire receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family in the period 2010 to 2013 was 200 days (lower is better). This compares with a statistical neighbour average of 162 days and an all-England average of 210 days. Oxfordshire took 114 days and Hertfordshire 194 days. (National target by 2016 = 121 days).
- The percentage of children who wait more than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family was 49% in Buckinghamshire. Between 2010 and 2013 (lower is better). This compares with the statistical neighbour average of 41% and an all England average of 45%. In Oxfordshire, 21% of children wait more than 20 months, and 41% of children wait more than 20 months in Hertfordshire.
- In December 2013. Buckinghamshire had 5.2% of the looked after population placed for adoption compared with 5.8% of children in comparator authorities.
- However, 19.1% of children who have left care so far this financial year have done so through adoption (17/89). This compares with 15% in 2012/13, a statistical neighbour average of 11%, an all-England average of 13%, and a performance of 12% in Oxfordshire and 10% in Hertfordshire.

Adoption numbers

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PRESENTED TO ADOPTION PANEL OR AGENCY DECISION MEETING						
Children	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/14* *to Jan 2014
Placement for adoption	21	34	29	49	49	
Matched for adoption	15	15	17	24	28	
Children Adopted	19 This represents 8.6% of the Children Looked After	17 This represents 8.4% of the Children Looked After	11 This represents 3.4% of the Children Looked After	22 This represents 5.9% of the Children Looked After	23 This represents 5.7% of the Children Looked After	17*
Families	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/14* *to Jan 2014
Approved	22	11	16	18	21	22*

for Adoption						
Matched for adoption	7	5	7	8	11	
Families adopted	15	14	14	13	18	

Expressions of interest in adoption (Enquiries)

Year	Number of enquiries
2013/14* (to end of February)	566
2012/13	180
2011/12	164

- Following a concerted adoption advertising campaign since June 2013, there has been a massive increase in interest in adoption. More adoptive parents will have been approved in 2013/14 than in any year for the preceding five years.
- Currently, there are 40 potential applicants in part one of the adoption assessment process, and 4 prospective adopter applications are ready for consideration by the March adoption panel.
- This success of the adoption recruitment campaign is creating capacity issues further down the system, such as making sure we have enough social workers to undertake assessments, the adoption panel is able to consider the considerable increased number of applicants, and we have in place the right amount and type of support to ensure those adoptive placements made are successful.
- Buckinghamshire County Council adoption service was inspected by Ofsted as a local authority adoption agency in September 2011 and was rated as "good".

Resource implications

- Adoption is a positive option for children (adoption tends to provide much securer long-term care than other forms of permanent care, particularly the younger a child is when adopted) and financially for the local authority as the new adopters take on full responsibility for the child, including financial responsibility.
- However, if finances may prevent an adoption from taking place or continuing, the local authority has the discretion to pay adoption allowances. In Buckinghamshire, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of

children being adopted and also attracting adoption allowances. The consequence of this is that spend on adoption allowances will exceed the budget in 2013/14.

- Moreover, the budget is predicated on the local authority buying and selling placements from and to other adoption agencies using the national adoption register. As the number of children requiring adoption placements in Buckinghamshire has grown, and to date the number of in-house local authority adopters has not kept pace with demand, spend on interagency placements has increasingly exceeded income generated from selling placements. This has created a budget pressure.
- Future budgets are planned on the basis of the local authority selling more adoption placements than it buys from other adoption agencies and expenditure from the adoption reform grant has been used to support this development.
- Current planned use of the adoption reform grant is focused on:
 - Reducing court timescales so children are available more quickly for adoption by creating a specialist family drug and alcohol court.
 - Increasing capacity to assess, approve, and support a significant increase in adoptive carers, and to become a net exporter and income generator from selling placements.
 - Developing a “fostering to adopt” scheme, and taking part in “adoption activity days”.
 - Modernising our adoption process.

Action being taken:

- Other action being taken to improve performance in relation to adoption and to ensure decisions about adoption are made more quickly include:
 - Strengthening permanency planning and tracking arrangements.
 - Extending family group conferencing
 - Training and developing staff in permanency planning, report writing for court etc.
 - Working with the courts generally to reduce delay.
 - Reviewing our business processes and improving our customer orientation review for adoption enquiries and;
 - Strengthening our performance management of the adoption and permanency process and creating a stronger, quality assurance framework.

Key issues:

- Making sure we have the right number and right type of adoptive placements for those children for whom adoption is the plan.
- Developing the fostering to adopt scheme.

- Reducing delay, particularly for those children who are traditionally "hard to place" (older children, those with disabilities, and sibling groups).
- Reducing expenditure on adoption allowances whilst avoiding putting people off adopting children
- Speeding up decision-making about permanency and ensuring that adoption plans are progressed more quickly.
- Working with the courts to reduce how long it takes to conclude care proceedings, in line with the Family Justice Review.
- Ensuring there is enough social work capacity in the system to deal with adoption assessments and post adoption support so that potential adopters are not discouraged from proceeding with Buckinghamshire and go to other local authorities or adoption agencies.

Steve Tanner

Head of Care Services

March 17, 2014

Appendix A

What is adoption?

Adoption is a way of providing a new family for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents.

It's a legal procedure in which parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters.

Once an adoption order has been granted it can't be reversed except in extremely rare circumstances.

An adopted child loses all legal ties with their first mother and father (the "birth parents") and becomes a full member of the new family, usually taking the family's name.

What is the difference between adoption and fostering?

Foster carers share the responsibility for the child with a local authority and the child's parents.

Fostering is usually a temporary arrangement, though sometimes foster care may be the plan until the child grows up. This long term or "permanent" fostering cannot provide the same legal security as adoption for either the child or the foster family but it may be the right plan for some children.

Who are the children who need adopting?

There are upwards of 6,000 children across the UK needing adoption every year. These children are from a great variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Many of these children are of school age and over half of them are in groups of brothers and sisters who need to be placed together.

There are disabled children and children whose future development is unclear

Some children have been abused and/or neglected and all will have experienced moves and uncertainty and their resulting behaviour may be challenging.

Who can adopt?

- You have to be over 21, happy to make space in your life and home for a child, patient, flexible and energetic, and determined to make a real difference to a child's life, for a lifetime.
- There is no upper age limit. Agencies are looking for adopters who have the physical and mental energy to care for demanding children, and whose

lifestyle suggests they will still have that energy when the child is a teenager, or young adult. Older children are among those children who wait the longest so we are keen to hear from people who can give a permanent and loving home to an older child.

- A record of offences will need to be carefully looked into but, apart from some offences against children, will not necessarily rule someone out.
- Everyone has to have a medical examination and health issues will need to be explored.
- People from all ethnic origins and religions can adopt. It is essential that any family with whom a child is placed is in a strong position to meet the child's emotional, identity, health and development needs. Over many years, research and practice experience indicates that children usually do best when brought up in a family that reflects or promotes their ethnic, cultural or religious identity. What this means in practice is that efforts are made to find a family that reflects or can promote the child's individual identity. This search always needs to be balanced against the importance of minimizing any delay in placing the child. In practice, social workers need carefully to consider how available adopters can meet as many of a child's assessed needs as possible while ensuring the child is placed with the minimum of delay. In England, the revised Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011 establishes a clear framework for addressing these complex issues.
- Disabled people are not excluded and sometimes experience of disability will be positively welcomed.
- A single person or one partner in an unmarried couple - heterosexual, lesbian or gay - can adopt. Since 2005 unmarried couples in England and Wales can apply to adopt jointly.

How do people apply to adopt?

Prospective adopters need to go through an "adoption agency". This is usually the local authority, although some agencies are voluntary organisations.

People are not limited to their own immediate locality but most agencies work roughly within a 50 mile radius of their office. Although it is only possible to follow through an application with one agency, several can be contacted at this early stage.

How do people get approved to adopt?

As of July 2013 there is now a two stage adoption process in England which takes about 6 months to complete.

Initially agencies will encourage applicants to find out all the information they need about adoption and to fully explore what it will mean for them and their family. We provide applicants with written information and offer information sessions. When applicants are ready to proceed, we provide them with a registration of interest form and this will enable us to decide whether we can begin to work with applicants.

1. Stage One – Registration & Checks

This stage of the assessment allows prospective applicants to explore in more detail what will be involved in adoption through attending training provided by the local authority, doing relevant reading and beginning some exploratory work which applicants are asked to complete with support from our staff. At the same time we complete all the statutory checks so we can be confident about progressing applicants through to a full assessment.

This stage will usually take two months but applicants can ask for extra time if needed and the local authority may need extra time to follow up some of the statutory checks. For example, if we need to contact specialists relating to a medical issue or obtain an overseas police check.

At the end of Stage One, we let the applicant know that all references have been received and we are happy for applicants to begin the next Stage where a detailed assessment will be completed.

If the local authority feels they cannot progress people to the assessment stage we have to give applicants written reasons.

If we do not have capacity to offer a full assessment and applicants do not want to wait then we must signpost applicants to other agencies or to First4Adoption, the National Adoption Gateway so applicants can be helped to identify another agency.

2. Stage Two – Assessment & Approval

Once applicants notify us that they wish to proceed to the full assessment, we meet with the applicant to agree a stage two plan detailing how the assessment process will be completed. This will include details of assessment meetings, dates for training sessions and a proposed date for the adoption panel.

A social worker will then make several visits to applicants in their home or sometimes in our offices. We speak to them about their past experiences and how these have influenced them in thinking about what kind of parents with a want to be. We may also ask to speak to any children say have living at home or away from home and some of their significant friends and family.

At the end of this assessment the social worker will prepare a written report which applicants can see and comment on and then this will be presented to the adoption panel who will consider the report and recommend whether or not applicants should be approved as adopters. Applicants will be given the opportunity to meet with the panel to assist them with their recommendation.

The agency's decision maker will usually make their decision that applicants are approved to adopt within four months of the start of Stage 2. Applicants can ask for extra time during the assessment if they need it and we let applicants know if we feel more time is needed.

How are approved adopters matched with a child?

After prospective adopters are approved, the local authority will try and match them with a child. They can also enquire about children being profiled in Be My Parent and other family-finding publications, like *Adoption Today*.

In England and Wales, agencies also refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register for England and Wales which links waiting children with waiting approved adopters.

The proposed match will be presented to the adoption panel who will recommend whether to proceed with the placement.

What happens when the child moves in?

The child will move to live with their new parent/s after a planned period of introductions, which lasts a few weeks or a month or two, depending on the child's needs.

Social workers will remain involved to support the new family and the child at least until an adoption order is made.

How is adoption made legal?

There are certain minimum periods for which the child must live with the adopters before an application can be made to the court for an adoption order.

A birth mother cannot give consent to adoption until her child is at least six weeks old. Where birth parents do not agree, there is a process for the agreement to be independently witnessed. The detailed process varies according to the legislation of the particular country in the UK.

If birth parents do not agree to adoption, there are circumstances in which the court can override their wishes. In many cases the question of consent will be considered by the court before the child is placed for adoption. A children's guardian will be appointed by the court to investigate and give advice to the court on the child's best interests. In some circumstances, it will be necessary for the question of consent to be considered when the adopters actually apply for the final adoption order.

Do birth parents and other relatives have any contact with their child after adoption?

It is common for there to be an exchange of written information, perhaps once or twice a year, via the adoption agency.

There will be unique arrangements for each individual child which may mean direct contact for some children with various members of their birth family, including grandparents and brothers and sisters who may be placed elsewhere. Sometimes there will also be contact with birth parents - if this is best for the child.



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title:	The Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee Work Programme 2013-2014
Committee date:	25 th March 2014
Author:	Michael Carr - Scrutiny Policy Officer
Contact officer:	Michael Carr, Tel. 01296 387164, mcarr@buckscc.gov.uk
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Purpose of Agenda Item

This report is to present the updated Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee Work Programme 2013-2014.

1. Background

The Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee is one of the four scrutiny committees established by Council in May 2013. The Committee's Work Programme will inform the agenda of the Committee over the 2013-2014 Municipal Year and commission reports in advance from the relevant council departments and other organisations.

2. Summary

The Committee Work Programme 2013-2014 was agreed by the Committee on 23rd July 2013, in consideration of priority topics identified from consultation with Members of the Committee, Cabinet Members and chief officers of the relevant departments, prior consultation with the department and consideration of the Cabinet Member's Portfolio Plans, the Strategic Plan, and planned council consultations identified the Key Topics for Scrutiny. The Work Programme was updated on 10th September 2013 to include a consideration of



Internet Safety on 18th February 2013, which was a topic that had been proposed by Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, to the Chairman of the Committee.

The agreed Work Programme has been used to inform the Committee’s agenda plan for 2013-2014 to plan the work of the Committee throughout the 2013-2014 Municipal Year. The updated Committee Agenda Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

3. Priority Topics for 2013-2014

On 23rd July 2013, ten priority topics were agreed by the Committee:

1. Narrowing the Gap
2. Young People Ready for Work
3. Child Protection
4. Early Help (early help and yearly intervention services available, for children and families)
5. Children, Ready for School / Early Years (school readiness)
6. Special Educational Needs (SEN)
7. Improving schools through effective local accountability
8. Strengthening the role of councils and councillors in the local school system
9. Adoption
10. School Absenteeism.

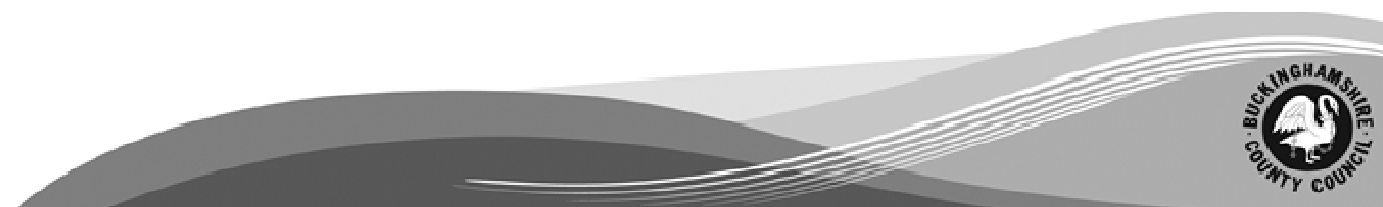
The list of priority topics for the 2013-2014 Work Programme were identified after receiving feedback from Members of the Committee, the Cabinet Members and chief officers. In addition, Internet Safety, has been proposed by Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

Brief monitoring reports and updates are also anticipated on the Bucks Learning Trust, Educational Standards/performance, quarterly monitoring and review narrow educational attainment gaps, the Munro Programme, Families First, and a review of the implementation of the agreed recommendations of the Learning new Ways Scrutiny Review.

On 23rd July it was agreed that the scrutiny officer, in association with the Chairman of the Committee, would programme these items around the Committee agenda plan throughout the 2013-2014 Municipal Year. .

4. Resource implications

There are no financial implication anticipated at this stage. Recourse implications will include officer time in support of the scrutiny inquiries undertaken.



5. Next steps

The Select Committee work programme is being used to forward plan the agendas of the Select Committee meetings throughout the Municipal Year 2013-2014.

Appendix

Appendix 1: The detailed Education, Skills and Children's Services Work Programme 2013-2014 and Committee Agenda Plan, from 25th March 2014.





Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
 Education, Skills and Children's Services Select
 Committee

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee Agenda Work Programme 2013-2014

Version: 1.3 DRAFT

Updated: 18th February 2014

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25th March 2014 10am		
<i>Venue Mez Room 2, New County Offices, Aylesbury</i>		
Topic / Description	Evidence	Witnesses
<p>PSHE in Buckinghamshire An overview of the PSHE provision in Buckinghamshire, including evidence and a report from the Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament and the requirements of the curriculum. The officer reports to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the areas for local discretion, • any guidance from the local authority / BLT • areas for development, • young people's work readiness. 	<p>A brief report on the delivery of PSHE in Buckinghamshire, including a summary of the requirements of the curriculum, the areas for local discretion, any guidance from the local authority / BLT on this and any areas for development, including, specifically, young people's work readiness.</p> <p>A report from the Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament.</p>	<p>Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member Education and Skills Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services The Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament Buckinghamshire MPs Buckinghamshire school Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors</p>
<p>Families First A review of the progress of the Families First programme (Buckinghamshire's</p>	<p>A report on Families First, progress to date and future service development, including the newly published criteria</p>	<p>Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p>

response to the “Troubled Families initiative).	for the 2015-16 service roll out.	Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service Joy Shakespeare – Head of Family Resilience
Munro Programme Questions from the Committee and a briefing on the work and progress of the Munro Programme, including, specifically, progress on financial savings. Following from the questions to the CM on 10 th September 2013		Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services; Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service; Keith Francis – Head of Children’s Care Service
Fostering To review the arrangements, policies, procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.	A brief report on the arrangements, policies, procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.	David Martin – Deputy Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service Steve Tanner – Head of Children’s Care
Adoption To review the arrangements, policies, procedures for fostering and outcomes for children, young people and families.	A brief report on the arrangements, policies, procedures for adoption and outcomes for children, young people and families.	David Martin – Deputy Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service Steve Tanner – Head of Children’s Care
22nd April 2014 10am		
<i>Venue Mez Room 2, New County Offices, Aylesbury</i>		
Topic / Description	Evidence	Witnesses
Elective Home Education and School Absenteeism An overview and review elective home school education in Buckinghamshire, and of the rates of absenteeism in Buckinghamshire schools, identified groups of high absenteeism, identified schools with high rates of absenteeism, and the strategies in place to support schools in reducing absenteeism.	A report on An overview and review elective home school education in Buckinghamshire, school absenteeism, including the rates of absenteeism in Buckinghamshire schools, identified groups of high absenteeism, identified schools with high rates of absenteeism, benchmarked against national and statistical neighbour local authority areas, and the strategies in place to	Councillor Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Spring 2014 (one meeting)	support schools in reducing absenteeism.	
Young People, Ready for Work Inquiry To agree the Young People Ready for Work Inquiry into young people's work readiness report and recommendations	The Young People Ready for Work Inquiry report.	Councillor Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Youth Parliament representatives
The Bucks Learning Trust 2 An update on the Bucks Learning Trust. – performance monitoring and review (ongoing) Starts - 23 October 2013 Ends – 22 April 2014 (two meetings)	An questions from and questions to the Chief Executive of the Bucks Learning Trust to introduce the Bucks Learning Trust, it's aims and objectives, structure, service provision, targets and performance indicators, key stakeholders, risk management and progress to date. Ref: E&SPO6(a)	Raza Khan – Chief Executive of the Bucks Learning Trust. Chris Munday - Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention
School Governance 2 Improving schools through effective local accountability. <i>An inquiry to review the support and advice available to school governors in their role and how this could be enhanced.</i> Starts - 10 December 2013 Ends – 22 April 2014 (two meetings)	A report on the provisions in place to support effective school governance. Ref: E&SPO4(f)	Councillor Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Chris Munday - Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention Andrew Walker – Chairman of the BASG Head Teachers and School Governors
Learning New Ways To review the implementation of the agreed recommendations of the Learning new Ways Scrutiny Review. April/May 2013 (one meeting)	A report on the implementation of the agreed scrutiny recommendations of the Learning New Ways Scrutiny Inquiry, including identification of agreed recommendations implemented, agreed recommendations not implemented and reasons why, implementation	Cllr Mr Mike Appleyard – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Chris Munday - Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention Councillor Avril Davis – Chairman of the Learning New Ways Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (schools inc Head Teachers and Chairs of School Governing Bodies)

	dates and key stages, actions arising and quantitative and qualitative evidence of outcomes from the implementation of the agreed recommendations and scrutiny inquiry.	
Key Issues for Scrutiny 2014-2015	Education and Skills Portfolio Plan Children and Young People Portfolio Plan Children's Services Portfolio Plan	Cllr Mr Mike Appleyard – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services
27th May 2014 10am		
<i>Venue Mez Room 2, New County Offices, Aylesbury</i>		
Topic / Description	Evidence	Witnesses
The Munro Programme A briefing on the work and progress of the Munro Programme, including, specifically, progress on financial savings. Starts – 10 September 2013 Ends – 18 February 2014 (two meetings)	Questions on the work and progress of the Munro Programme and questions to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. Ref: CSPO1/2/3/4 CSPO1(a) E&SPO6(c)	Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service
Families First 3 A review of the progress of the Families First programme (Buckinghamshire's response to the "Troubled Families" initiative). Starts - 23 July 2013 Ends – May 2014 (three meetings)	Questions on the progress of the Families First programme and questions to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. Ref; CSPO1 (b) E&SPO6(d&m)	Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service
Child Protection To review the arrangements in place to	Questions on arrangements in place to ensure that the right children have	Cllr Ms Angela Macpherson – Cabinet Member for Children's Services Stephen Bagnall - Service Director - Child & Family Service

<p>ensure that the right children have a formal child protection plan and that they receive appropriate help to secure their long term safety and well-being.</p> <p>Starts – 10 September 2013 Ends – Spring 2014</p> <p>(two meetings)</p>	<p>a formal child protection plan and that they receive appropriate help to secure their long term safety and well-being and questions to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.</p> <p>Ref: CSPO2</p> <p>(JCS&ESPP 2012-2013 - 3. Early Intervention and Secondary Prevention)</p>	
<p>Educational Attainment Gaps Quarterly Monitoring and review narrow educational attainment gaps (alignment and progress).</p>	<p>An update and review narrow educational attainment gaps (alignment and progress).</p>	<p>Councillor Mr Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Chris Munday - Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention</p>
<p>Educational Standards 2 To review the attainment performance of Buckinghamshire schools at various Key Stages.</p> <p>Starts - 23 July 2013 Starts - February 2014</p> <p>(two meetings)</p>	<p>A report on the attainment performance of Buckinghamshire schools at various Key Stages in 2012-2013.</p> <p>Ref: E&SPO7(b)</p>	<p>Cllr Mr Mike Appleyard – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Chris Munday - Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention</p>
<p>ESCSSC Annual Work Programme 2014-2015</p>		<p>Cllr Mrs Val Letheren – Chairman of the ESCSSC Michael Carr – Scrutiny Policy Officer</p>

