



Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
Children's Social Care and Learning

Date: Tuesday 20 September 2016
Time: 10.30 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.

10.30 am Formal Meeting Begins

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	10:30	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To declare any Personal or Dislosable Pecuniary Interests.		
3 MINUTES Minutes of the meeting held on 5 th July 2016 to be confirmed as a correct record		5 - 14
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.

Members of the 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>

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| 5 | CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
For the Chairman to provide an update to the Committee on recent scrutiny related activity. | 10:35 | |
| 6 | COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES
For members of the Committee to provide an update on any issue they are investigating on behalf of the Committee. | | |
| 7 | CABINET MEMBER UPDATES
i) Cabinet Member for Children's Services

ii) Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills | 10:55 | |
| 8 | VOICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON INQUIRY
To agree the final scope of the Voice of the Child and Young Person Inquiry. | 11:05 | 15 - 22 |
| 9 | THE SEND REVIEW AND STRATEGY
An opportunity for Members to explore the outcomes of the recent Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Review and receive an update on the drafting of the new SEND Strategy. | 11:15 | 23 - 54 |
| Contributors

Mr N Wilson – Service Director Education
Ms G Shurrock – Head of SEND | | | |
| 10 | CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SERVICE

To provide Members with an opportunity to review the current activity and performance of the Child Sexual Exploitation Service and receive an update of the re-commissioning of the service. | 11:45 | To Follow |

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For further information please contact: Kevin Wright on 01296 387832, email: kwright@buckscc.gov.uk

Members

Mrs M Aston	Mrs V Letheren
Mrs P Birchley	Mrs W Mallen
Ms J Blake	Mr R Stuchbury
Mr D Dhillon (C)	Vacancy
Mr P Gomm	Ms K Wood
Mr P Irwin	

Co-opted Members

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



Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
Children's Social Care and Learning

Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 5 July 2016, in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.33 am and concluding at 12.51 pm.

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place, please see the webcast which can be found at <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/>
The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D Dhillon, Mr P Gomm, Mr P Irwin, Mrs V Letheren, Mrs W Mallen, Mr R Stuchbury and Vacancy

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms P Camilleri, Ms C Douch, Mr D Johnston, Ms A O'Bone, Ms J Shakespeare, Ms G Shurrock and Mr N Wilson

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Mr P Gomm proposed that Mr D Dhillon be the Select Committee Chairman for the coming year. This was seconded by Mr R Stuchbury.

RESOLVED

That Mr D Dhillon be elected as Chairman of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee for the ensuing year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The appointment for Vice-Chairman was deferred until the next meeting.
Mr D Dhillon appointed Val Letheren as temporary Vice-Chairman for the meeting only.



3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mrs P Birchley, Mrs J Blake, Ms K Wood and Mr D Babb.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were noted:

- Mrs V Letheren – husband works occasionally as an Appropriate Adult for the Youth Offending Service as a trained volunteer.
- Mr D Dhillon - member of the Farnham Common Children’s Centre Advisory Board.

5 MINUTES

Mr R Stuchbury requested a change to the wording of bullet point 8, item 9 in the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2016 to more accurately reflect the response.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to amend bullet point 8 at item 9 of the minutes of 24th May.

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24th May 2016 were agreed as a correct record pending the change requested above.

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman welcomed by Mr D Berry to the meeting and invited him to present his question to the Committee. The Chairman then asked the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to respond.

Mr Z Mohammed responded and made the following points:

- The format of the Education Standards report to which the question referred had been changed this year to include clearer information, case studies and details of the impacts of school improvement work.
- It was important to read the detailed information in the report as well as the summary information.
- The attainment gap at Key Stage 4 (KS4) had reduced by 3% in Buckinghamshire compared to a 1% increase nationally.
- The gap needed to be looked at in the context of Buckinghamshire having an overall KS4 attainment of around 10% above the national average. The focus would remain on disadvantaged children.
- Four schools had improved from adverse Ofsted ratings and the most recent figures for non-selective schools showed 61% at good or outstanding.
- For schools overall, the percentage of pupils attending good or outstanding schools had risen from 74% to 83%.

- Buckinghamshire had 1.3% of schools that were rated inadequate compared to 2% nationally. All nurseries, pupil referral units and special schools were rated at least good.
- There was no information available for GCSE results with out of County pupils removed. The service aimed to ensure that anyone being educated in Buckinghamshire would get a good education.
- For pupils attaining 5 or more GCSEs including Maths and English in 2014/15: low attainers improved by 2% to just slightly below national averages and middle attainers were at national level.
- Improvement work included The Aspire project and the Bucks Learning Trust education advisers. There had been a focus on phonics which resulted in performance now being at the national average rather than below as it had been previously.

Mr R Stuchbury noted that it would be useful to have had advance briefing of Mr Z Mohammed's response.

Mr P Irwin requested that an item be brought back to the Committee's September meeting on the Committee's "Narrowing the Gap" Inquiry report to look at improvements since the report was first published in 2014.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to put on the Committee work programme for September.

7 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended the Improving Leadership and Partnership meeting and a Members briefing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

8 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mr P Irwin informed Members of a visit to a Children's Centre on the afternoon of 5th July and apologised for inappropriately mentioning an officer's name in a previous meeting.

Mrs V Letheren, the previous Committee Chairman thanked Members for their good wishes. She informed Members of a forthcoming visit to Farnham Common Children's Centre on 6th July.

Mr R Stuchbury informed Members of the following.

- His attendance at an informative safeguarding briefing at a secondary school.
- He had encouraged secondary schools to respond to the Vale Plan consultation to ensure future provision of school places would meet demand.
- Buckingham Town Council had given a joint award to the grammar and secondary school for their good work together on an art and drama project.

Mr P Gomm updated Members of the following.

- The offer of help from officers in resolving issues regarding communication with some of the Children's Centres Advisory Boards and Members was still outstanding. In his update at item 9 Mr Z Mohammed advised that he would take the issue forward in arranging help.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to liaise with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and officers to arrange help to resolve the issues.

- Recent visits to nurseries in the County and the work that they did in making sure children had a good early start to their education.

9 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills updated the Committee on the following:

- The national teachers strike taking place on 5th July.
- Problems with teacher recruitment and retention both locally and nationally. A Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy had been developed to help Buckinghamshire deal with the issue.
- The home to school transport consultation was ongoing and had been widely publicised. The consultation would end on 15th July.
- The second stage of the National Funding Formula Consultation had been delayed so there was still some uncertainty about school's funding arrangements next year. As soon as the second stage was announced, Buckinghamshire would be making representations.

Mr D Johnston, Managing Director of the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit updated the Committee on behalf of Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services in her absence.

- Buckinghamshire was progressing with other Local Authorities in developing a Regional Adoption Agency. Initial proposals would be put forward in the next month or so.
- Work was continuing with the Improvement Board. The Chairman of the Committee confirmed that he would be attending the next meeting.
- In response to a question about the Committee's recent Children's Workforce Inquiry and specifically the South East Regional Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), Mr D Johnson said that the MoC was showing positive results in managing the recruitment of agency staff and that 17 of the 19 local authorities had now signed up to the MoC.

Following the update, there was a discussion about recruitment and retention more generally across social work, teaching and health. It was noted that recruitment and retention was a problem for the area for a number of reasons including workload and cost of living in the South East and that initiatives were in place or being put in place where possible to help and support staff.

The Committee discussed key worker housing. They heard that options being discussed needed to take account of a number of different strategies and that it was important to make

sure key worker housing was included in development plans. It was acknowledged that this was a difficult area that would need further discussions with District Councils and developers.

Mr D Johnston informed Members that work was continuing in respect of the children's centre review. This was now being brought together with the wider Family Support review that was taking place to make it as comprehensive as possible. This meant that work could take a little longer than originally thought.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills was asked if he would provide a written version of his verbal response to the public question.

ACTION: Mr Z Mohammed to provide a written version of the public question response.

10 THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed

- Ms P Camilleri – Head of Youth Offending Service
- Mrs C Douch – Service Director Children's Social Care

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The main aim of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) was to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people
- Buckinghamshire performance was slightly better than national averages against key performance indicators. There had been continuous improvement in performance over the past 5 years against the national indicators particular for the indicator "First Time Entrants"
- A further breakdown of performance data was presented to the Youth Offending Service Management Board.

ACTION: Ms P Camilleri to provide a further breakdown of performance for the Committee.

- There was very close partnership working in the YOS including with mental and physical health professionals.
- Work was being done to look at strengthening the speech, language and communication service for young people.
- There was a very stable workforce with an emphasis on training and development which helped staff deal with complex cases and ensured good engagement with families and young people.
- A core part of the YOS was information sharing between partners. A national assessment tool was used to identify specific needs for individual young people so that the relevant professionals in specialist fields were brought in and worked together with the young person.
- There was a close working relationship with social workers to provide additional support to looked after children. However, it was more difficult for the service when dealing with those Buckinghamshire children who were looked after outside of the County. The YOS of the county in which they were placed was responsible for delivering the plan for that

child. An audit of looked after children placed out of county had been done to try to improve practice in this area.

- It was expected that there would be some major changes affecting YOS nationally from a report due to be published by the Ministry of Justice. The service was waiting for this delayed report before making decisions on how to deal further with reducing funding.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to include a future meeting agenda item on the changes once known.

- The service worked closely in transitioning young people to the probation service when they became 18.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

11 FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME

The Chairman welcomed

- Mrs J Shakespeare – Head of Early Help.

Mrs J Shakespeare explained that the Families First report included a brief summary of phase 1 of the programme together with an update on phase 2 which was a longer term programme continuing the work of phase 1 but using broader criteria.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The outcomes for families were tracked during and after leaving the programme using 31 different measures. Oxford University had been commissioned to conduct a 3 year study with families that worked with the programme.
- There were wider positive impacts of the programme such as reducing numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system and an increase in school attendance rates.
- The wider criteria for phase 2 included families with children in need and children on a child protection plan as a result of neglect. It was hoped that the new criteria would help reduce the numbers of children in need and/or on a child protection plan in future.
- Reduced funding for phase 2 would not have any implications for resourcing or capacity because of the way the programme was originally structured. There was a sustainability plan under development to beyond 2020.
- The majority of funding had been used to train and support staff and on specific projects. There was a small co-ordination team that would not be funded beyond 2020.
- It was hoped that by tracking outcomes longer term, this would help indicate how many families had been diverted from having to access more intensive services. It was acknowledged that this was a difficult area to monitor.
- The early help panels had been successful in enhancing partnership working. It was too early to assess the outcomes of the panels on children and families but the annual report due out later in the year would include an assessment of outcomes.

- Checks were made to ensure that families that need help are worked with. The agency that identified the family needing support had the responsibility to refer them in line with the referral process. 7.9% were self-referrals.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

12 THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

The Chairman welcomed
Mrs A O'Boone – Head of First Response.

Mrs C Douch explained that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) aimed to ensure children received the right services at the very start of their journey within social care. She also thanked Members for visiting the MASH and reported that the visits had been well received by staff.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The percentage of referrals to the MASH had fallen over the past few months but this was expected as there were peaks and troughs during the year. Schools tended to refer more to MASH when there were school holidays imminent.
- There was now an improved picture on staffing capacity with only limited vacancies and a much reduced reliance on agency staff with many previous agency positions now filled by Council officers.
- The agencies within MASH still had their own IT systems and databases but they were able to share information on referrals as part of the comprehensive data sharing protocols in place. Audits of referrals showed positive results in decision making.
- A manager would make an initial decision on a contact within 24 hours but a full decision at MASH would take longer as individual agencies contributed information. The delay over the 24 hours was seen as positive in enabling good quality decisions.
- New accommodation for the MASH has meant that two health professionals and education support officers were able to join the MASH. A domestic abuse officer was also to be located at the MASH. It was hoped that drug and alcohol team officers would be able to join in future.
- Analysis was being undertaken to understand the reasons for repeat referrals. The trend in repeat referrals was positive reducing from around 40% at one point to about 23%. Around 20% of repeat referrals would be classed as normal.
- There was an aim to send a positive message about seeking early help. Information was available on the website and schools and other partner agencies re-inforced a positive early-help message.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

13 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES - LOCAL AREA INSPECTIONS

The Chairman welcomed

Mr N Wilson – Service Director Education

Ms G Shurrock - Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Ms G Shurrock took Members through a short presentation on the new local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspections.

The following points were made during the presentation:

- That the inspection would be on the local area and not just the Local Authority.
- Parents and carers would take part in the meetings with the inspectors.
- There was lots of performance data on the SEND scorecard to provide as evidence to the inspection.
- Partners had put together a “readiness” document setting out how the local area were meeting the criteria set out in the Inspection Framework and an action plan on areas of improvement. .

The following points were raised during a discussion after the presentation:

- Buckinghamshire had a higher percentage of children and young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan than the national average. However, Buckinghamshire schools identified fewer children with SEND at SEN Support.
- The current SEND review provided an in depth look at SEND provision in Buckinghamshire. Mr R Stuchbury asked whether the Committee could have early sight of the report.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to include agenda item on a future meeting

- There was a lot of support in Buckinghamshire in the area of speech and language therapy. The decision on what support to provide was made by a panel and tailored to individual need.
- A SEND Board including Members, parents, carers, social care workers and others looked at strategic issues.
- Special schools in Buckinghamshire were only for children and young people with the most complex needs. All special schools were rated as good or outstanding. There were processes in place to make a decision on the provision that each young person needed.
- Ms G Shurrock was happy for Members to sit in on the decision-making meetings.
- The inspectors would not take account of finances when making judgements.
- The wide spectrum of need meant that SEND budgets were not set for individual children or young people.

- The increase in demand on SEND services was as a result of a number of factors including medical advancements, rising population and better identification of SEND than in the past.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

14 INQUIRY OUTLINE - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED the inquiry outline in principal and that a planning workshop was needed to scope out the inquiry further.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to arrange a planning meeting during July.

15 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED the work programme and that the following be added:

- Update of work undertaken as a result of the Narrowing the Gap report
- A report to understand the impacts of integrating health and social care on children's services including the NHS England Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED to look at co-opting School Governors and lay members onto the Committee.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to investigate the process for co-opting onto the Committee.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 20th September 2016 10.30am, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee.**Inquiry Scope**

Title	Children and Young People's Voice
Signed-off by	Select Committee
	Head of Member Services (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)
Author	Kevin Wright – Committee and Governance Adviser
Date	20 th September 2016
Inquiry Group Membership	All Members of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee
Member Services Resource	Member Services will provide the following officer support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Turnbull - Head of Member Services – Policy Advice and Report Quality Assurance • Clare Capjon - Committee & Governance Manager – Project oversight • Kevin Wright - Committee & Governance Adviser – Policy Lead & project management • Committee Assistant – Administrative support (as needed)
Lead Cabinet Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services • Zahir Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education & Skills
Lead HQ/BU Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devora Wolfson – Director of Joint Commissioning • Sue Butt – Head of Strategic Commissioning Children • Carol Douch – Director Children's Social Care • Nick Wilson – Director of Education • Karen Dolton – Director Early Help, Care & Quality Assurance
What is the problem that is trying to be solved?	<p>To consider how well Joint Commissioning (including with health .e.g. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services & Therapies), Youth Participation and Children's Social Care listen to the voice of the child and young person and the extent to which it influences the way children's services are planned, commissioned and delivered.</p> <p>Members want to explore the extent to which the processes and procedures that are in place for gathering, recording and using the views of children and young people are feeding effectively into the commissioning cycle, thereby ensuring services are commissioned and configured most appropriately to address their needs.</p>
What will not be considered	<p>The following will NOT be part of the scope for this inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for children outside of the remit of CSCL Business Unit, Joint Commissioning or Youth Participation. • Service commissioned by partners for children e.g. District Council services, Bucks Learning Trust. • Services commissioned by schools • School placements. • School Transport
Is this topic within the remit of the Select Committee?	Yes
What are the inquiry objectives	To assess the strengths and weaknesses in taking children and young people's* views into account when planning, commissioning and delivering children and young people's services so that the Council can improve where it is weak and share good practice across business units and with partners where there are strengths. To identify any

	<p>recommendations for improvements in specific areas if needed</p> <p>To assess the effectiveness of the Council at gathering, recording and using the views of children and young people to inform service commissioning and to identify any recommendations for improvement.</p> <p>*Children and Young People 0-18 years and up to 25 years for those with special educational needs or disabilities or using after care services.</p>
<p>What are the key issues to investigate/evidence needed.</p>	<p>Stage 1 – Fact finding & discovery phase</p> <p>Stage 2 – Assessment</p> <p>Stage 3 – Identification of improvement measures. (Stakeholder views on improvement ideas for feasibility, effectiveness and deliverability.)</p> <p>What are the processes and procedures in place to gather record & use the views of all children including those from minority groups/hard to reach groups?</p> <p>How effective are these processes and procedures in feeding into the commissioning cycle?</p> <p>What examples are there of children’s and young people’s views shaping the commissioned service?</p> <p>How easy is it for Commissioners to find out about and access the views that have been gathered recently without having to repeat evidence gathering?</p> <p>What effect, if any, are current commissioning resources (staffing and budget) and/or service structures having on embedding children and young people’s views into local service commissioning and design? What plans are being developed to manage MTP savings and what impact this may have on gathering and using children and young people’s views?</p> <p>How easy it for all children and young people and their families to express their views, how confident are they that their views have been taken into account and what feedback do they get from Commissioners about how their views have been taken into account?</p> <p>How are the views of children and young people used at a strategic level to understand need and inform service planning?</p>
<p>Is the topic of relevance to the work of BCC?</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) has committed itself to taking the views of children and young people into account when commissioning services. There is also national legislation which sets out statutory duties on the Council to take the wishes and feelings of children and young people into account when making decisions about them.</p> <p>The Council’s Commissioning Framework includes as a core principle that <i>“Involving customers and service users to ensure their views are central to commissioning services”</i></p> <p>The Buckinghamshire Children’s and Young People’s Partnership</p>

	<p>confirms that <i>“listening and acting on the voice of our children and young people is central to the planning and delivery of services in Buckinghamshire”</i> in their Children and Young People’s Plan 2014-18</p> <p>BCC has a statutory duty set out in The Children Act 1989 to consider the wishes and feelings of children when decisions are made about them.</p> <p>The UK Government is signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 outlines the right for children to give their opinion on all matters affecting them.</p>
What work is underway already on this issue?	<p>Currently views are gathered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Voice Work Plan • Youth Voice Events • Young People Panels • Youth Council • Takeover Day • Children in care council called “We do care” • Children and Young People Voice Survey • Youth Steering Group • Social workers working with individual children • CSE service Commissioning (and other current commissioning activity)
Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue?	<p>In April there was a restructure of the Children’s Joint Commissioning Team into a Joint Commissioning Team with Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Both commissioning and the fair access and youth provision service have been tasked with making budget efficiency savings and service reductions during 2017/18.</p>
What are the key timing considerations?	<p>August is a key holiday period which impact on evidence gathering and inquiry group meetings.</p> <p>Ofsted are due back to visit social care twice for two days each time during August and a full re-inspection probably during the Autumn.</p>
Who are the key stakeholders & decision-makers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckinghamshire children and young people and their families (service users and non-service users) • Senior management / leadership team Children’s Social Care and Learning (CSCL) Business Unit • Commissioners of Children’s and Youth Services including Youth Offending Service • Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Partnership • Social Workers • Providers • CSC&L Business Unit officers • Fair Access and Youth Provision Service • Children’s Advocacy and independent visitors. (National Youth Advocacy Service - NYAS) • Children in Care Council (We Do Care) • Independent Reviewing Officer
What media /communications support do you want?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release to let the public know that the inquiry is taking place • Press release post report publication • Publicise on social media • Call for evidence

Evidence-gathering Methodology

What types of methods of evidence-gathering will you use?

List them here e.g.

- Desktop research
 - Local information/access
 - National and peer group good practice
 - International approaches
 - Review of commissioning policies/strategies
 - Recently commissioned service documentation (including any KPIs in respect of seeking views)
 - CSCL complaints
- Interviews and visits
 - Joint Commissioners
 - Providers of Key Services
 - Senior managers including from fair access and youth provision
 - Social work teams
 - Participation Team
 - Local Children and Young People's Partnership Board members
 - Youth Steering Group Members
 - Youth Voice members/groups
 - Children's and young people's advocates or groups
 - Commissioning and Supplier Management Group (Oversee the Strategic Commissioning Framework)
 - Charity Groups
- Any groups/workshops/meetings that have already been set up by Commissioners to gather children and young people's views.
- Survey
- Social Media

How will you involve service-users and the public in this inquiry?

Interviews as detailed above.

Aim to have a youth group (e.g Youth Steering Group) providing a critical friend view and support to the inquiry.

Explore the possibility of having a co-optee onto the inquiry team.

Produce an additional child and young person friendly version of the report.

Assessment Methodology

Identify a number of key services to ascertain whether the voice of the child and young people has been used in commissioning those services. Key services to look would be based on the higher value contracts.

Make an assessment against a key list of criteria to identify what good or successful would look like and then use this assessment criteria as the basis for collecting and triangulating evidence from agreed stakeholders e.g. partners/officers/children (users). (See attached list at appendix 1)

Outline Inquiry Project Plan

Stage	Key Activity	Dates
Scoping	Inquiry Outline Agreed by Select Committee Planning Workshop	July
Evidence-gathering	Evidence-gathering phase - List key events	Aug/Sept/October
	Final Evidence Session – fact finding complete	October
Developing Recommendations	Inquiry Group/Select Committee meeting – Key Findings Report & Possible Areas of Recommendations considered	October
	Testing & developing recommendations with stakeholders	November
Reporting	Final Inquiry Group report with recommendations completed (signed-off by SC Chairman)	November
	Report published for Select Committee	November
	Select Committee agrees report to go forward to decision-makers	November
	Cabinet/Partner considers recommendations	December

See appendix 1 for draft assessment criteria and what good/success might look like.

Inquiry. Children and Young People's Voice.

Assessment Criteria.

Evidence shows that the wishes and feelings of children and young people have been taken into account in commissioning and delivering services.

- Children and young people can express their views and these are taken into account in planning of services
- Children & young people know how to share their views and experiences
- Children & young people are supported and encouraged to be involved in expressing their views
- The views of children and young people are acted upon in service provision
- The views of children and young people are informing future service delivery.

What will good / success look like?

Children & young people are supported to express their views. They are involved as far as possible in making decisions about services. Staff use innovative ways to support CYP in focusing and prioritising their goals so that services are shaped to meet their needs.

Children & young people who use the service are asked about their experiences. There are a range of ways for children & young people's views to be sought taking into account individual communication skills and abilities

Where appropriate children & young people who use the service know about & have access to advocacy support to share their views & there are links to local advocacy services where available.

There are a range of ways in which children & young people can feedback their experiences of the service they receive and raise any issues or concerns they may have.

There are a sufficient number of views taken into account relevant to the service being commissioned and delivered

The compliments and complaints raised by children, young people & their families are used to improve the service

There is a clear strategy or framework for gathering, recording and using the voice of the child & young person in commissioning services

Representation on looked after children groups, groups of children in the community or youth voice groups is effective and reflects the diversity of the community.

The views of children & young people are systematically recorded and are available to all commissioners

There is evidence that the views of children & young people are taken into account when commissioning and delivering services.

There is evidence that the views of children & young people are taken into account when looking at future service provision at a strategic level

The voice of children & young people is shared widely amongst commissioners and partners as appropriate to commission services

Feedback from children & young people is sought regularly and not just when re-commissioning or making changes to services.

Children and young people feel confident that their views will be dealt with in confidence where appropriate and that they trust and respect those that are seeking their views.

Report to Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee

Title: SEND Review – Outcome and proposal for consultation on draft vision and draft improvement priorities

Date: 20 September 2016

Author: Nick Wilson, Interim Director for Education Tel 01296 387849

Contact officer: Gillian Shurrock Tel: 01296 382109

Local members affected: All Electoral Divisions

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

Is the report confidential? No

Summary

The current SEND and Inclusion Strategy spans the period 2013 – 2016. A new framework of priorities was required. These needed to consider the recurrent overspends against SEND budgets as well as the impact of recent SEN Reforms.

A Review was commissioned to undertake a strategic analysis of the current position. It considered, in particular, the link between the SEND statutory process of assessment and preparing Education, Health and Care Plans, and the budget outcomes. The review considered stakeholder views and perceptions, including those of children and young people, their parents and carers, school and education setting leaders and SENCOs, specialist professionals from health, education and social care services and officers of the Council. The Chair of the Parent Carer Forum has been directly involved and sits on the SEND Board, to which ongoing reports of the progress of the Review have been sent.

During the course of the Review (from January to July), interim feedback discussions and presentations were arranged in April, May and June, to ensure that stakeholders remained



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



linked in to the progress and findings of the review and could assist in the interpretation of early findings.

A framework of Improvement Priorities has resulted. These have been discussed and developed with stakeholders through Interim Feedback sessions, and, subject to further consultation, will form the cornerstones for the new SEND Strategy.

There is an urgency about financial matters. A history of recurrent overspends against SEN budgets, and evidence of continuing similar trends, means that it is important that all stakeholders understand the context and their role and contribution to working together to achieve a strategic approach and direction that is affordable, and will not compromise provision for those children and young people with the most significant special educational needs and disabilities.

The direction of the future SEND Strategy, and the proposal of a draft Vision and the development of 8 draft Improvement Priorities, are compatible with the outcomes and priority areas of the Council's Children and Young People's Plan (2014-2018).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Select Committee:-

- Considers the findings of the SEND Review as detailed in the attached consultation document
- Subject to views from the Select Committee, confirms the Improvement Priorities and the draft Vision for SEND, as a basis for consulting with stakeholders. (Appendix 1)
- Receives a final report from the Review, to include the draft SEND Strategy with a view to finalising the Strategy by December 2016.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

The Improvement Priorities arise from the recent SEND Review. They will secure changes in practice and emphasis that take account of stakeholder views, whilst moving towards a financially viable approach.

The SEND and Inclusion Strategy will provide the framework to link the management of the High Needs Block and other SEND Budgets, with the statutory SEND framework as set out in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2015, and the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (January 2015). It will provide a clear framework of priorities and outcomes, within a structure of performance targets. It will assist the effective use of resources, and enable greater coherence across Buckinghamshire in both expectations and professional practice.

The strategic analysis that has been a focal feature of the review, will contribute to the evaluation of the Council's contribution to the Local Area's approach to identifying, assessing and providing for children and young people with SEND.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

The extent of the financial risks means that a new approach and strategy are essential.

The 8 Improvement Priorities may develop or change following further consultation. The Children and Families Act (2014) requires that Local Authorities must consult with children and young people, and their parents in reviewing SEND provision. A Consultation on the draft Vision, and the framework of Improvement Priorities will give a further opportunity for parents and young people to express their views and will assist in the drafting of the future strategy.

C. Resource implications

The resource implications are significant. If new approaches are not put in place, and if recurrent overspends against the High Needs budget continue, the shortfall will have to be met from other education or Council budgets. Current DFE consideration of Education and Schools Funding, may lead to a position where the Schools Block can no longer subsidise the High Needs Budget in respect of overspends. This would mean that the Council would need to ensure that individual children's resource entitlements were met, and this may lead to the need for the Council to fund these expenses from outside the Schools, High Needs or Early Years budgets.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment

It is expected that robust and rigorous implementation of new approaches and emphases, will achieve better value for money.

E. Legal implications

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act sets out the Local Authority's responsibilities in relation to SEND. Section 27 sets out the duty of the Local Authority to keep education and care provision under review, and in doing so to consult with children and young people and their families.

F. Property implications

N/A

G. Other implications/issues

An Impact Equality Assessment is not needed at this stage. Following consultation on the Improvement Priorities and draft Vision, the SEND Strategy will be drafted. At that stage it will be necessary to carry out the Equality Impact Assessment.

The SEND Review was unable to fully encompass matters relating to young adults with SEND between 16 and 25. The review will propose this as a future action.

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

There has been extensive consultation during the Review, and annex A to this report sets out the various structured discussions between stakeholders and the review consultant.

I. Communication issues

The consultation document and web-based text will refer to the consideration of the Final Report of the SEND Review by the Lead Member, and will seek comments on the proposed Vision and Improvement Priorities.

The web-based email link SENDReview@buckscc.gov.uk will continue to operate.

Schools, Colleges and Early Years settings will be specifically notified of the consultation, as will parent representatives.

J. Progress Monitoring

The consultation progress will be monitored by the Head of Service (SEND) reporting to the Director of Learning. It is expected that a report on review feedback and a draft SEND Strategy will be brought by the Lead Member to Select Committee on 8 November.

K. Review

N/A

Background Papers/Links

- Bucks Local Offer – SEND Review page
<https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/advice.page?id=ginScCY9QWo>
- Children and Families Act, 2014, Part 3, s27
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/part/3/crossheading/review-of-education-and-care-provision/enacted>

Your questions and views

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

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Member Services Team by 5.00pm on [Date]. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 387969), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Children, young people and families	
Priority 1	Enhance the experiences of families, children and young people of the statutory SEND processes.
Developing provision and supporting Schools and Settings	
Priority 2	Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENCOs and others, across schools and settings.
Priority 3	Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as special schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.
Priority 4	Improve the leadership, co-ordination, deployment and collaborative working of specialist SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.
Planning ahead	
Priority 5	Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most significant and complex needs.
Strategic Leadership and Management	
Priority 6	Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND processes
Priority 7	Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings.
Priority 8	Develop a better shared understanding of the relationship between High Needs funding, current demands and volume and need.

SEND Strategic Priorities 2017 – 2020**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (date)****Introduction**

1. There are 5 outcomes that drive the Children and Young People' Plan for Buckinghamshire, 2014-2018. They are:

- Children and young people are safe
- Children and young people live fulfilling lives
- Children and young people are healthy
- Children and young people reach their potential in education and other aspects of their lives.
- Children, young people and families are resilient and build their own solutions

2. The Children and Young People's Plan has 4 Priority areas:

1. Keep children and young people safe and in their families wherever possible.
2. Enable and support children, young people, parents and carers to overcome the challenges they may face.
3. Improve children and young people's health and well-being
4. Provide opportunities for children and young people to realise their full potential

A Draft Vision for the SEND Strategy

Our vision for the future for Buckinghamshire children with SEN and disabilities, is that they will:

- Be able to attend their local early education setting, school and college, and develop as an included and integrated member of their local community
- Follow a smooth pathway through their education, supported by teachers and others with expertise and confidence and who will have high expectations of their learning potential
- Be supported and assessed by high quality professionals who listen carefully to their views, and those of their parents, and involve them in decisions about their lives and learning
- Receive a well-planned, complete and appropriately individualised education
- Be happy, feel confident, feel welcome and valued at school and make the best progress possible
- Be successful as an adult, living independently or with support, and engaging in purposeful and rewarding activity, in employment, positive and voluntary activities or work experience

3. We have made sure that our suggested Vision reflects what people have told us during the Review, and that it gives everyone a Vision to aim for. We would like to know what you think, and if you have any other suggestions.

Priorities for Improvement

1. To help us to achieve our Vision we know that we need to oversee and administer a SEND pathway that will ensure:
 - (i) Strong and strategic leadership of SEND system by the Local Authority, to link:
 - Accountability by schools and settings for provision made for children with SEND
 - the management of the statutory SEND process and related decision making
 - the deployment, co-ordination and performance management of specialist education fieldwork services
 - the central SEND team
 - accountability by schools, settings, Local Authority funded services for defined areas of SEND and high needs funding
 - (ii) A greater focus on planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most severe and complex needs
 - (iii) Increased capacity, confidence and competence for SEND in mainstream settings
 - (iv) Specialist provision is focused on the children with the most significant and complex needs.
 - (v) Developing a better shared understanding of the relationship between our High Needs Block, current demands and volume and need

4. We have developed some draft Improvement Priorities. The Review has shown that we need to do some things better and some things differently. We have suggested 8 Improvement Priorities. They are:

Children, young people and families	
Priority 1	Enhance the experiences of families, children and young people of the statutory SEND processes.
Developing provision and supporting Schools and Settings	
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Priority 6	Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND processes
Priority 7	Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings.
Priority 8	Develop a better shared understanding of the relationship between

	High Needs funding, current demands and volume and need.

So what will happen for each Improvement Priority?

5. Priority 1

Enhance the experiences of families, children and young people of the statutory SEND processes.

We will:

- Make sure that we keep in better contact with parents and young people, after they have contacted us. We will let them know what will happen next. If we can't do it by the time we said, we will let them know so that they are not waiting and wondering.
- Do much better at making sure that someone will call back within 24 hours of a phone call.
- Work with SENCOs so that they feel more confident about their role in Transfer Reviews and annual Reviews.

6. Priority 2

Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENCOs and others, across schools and settings.

We will:

- Convene a SENDCO advisory group to work with us.
- Encourage all mainstream schools to undertake a self-review of their arrangements for SEND, using an established and successful SEND framework.
- Target specialist SEN services to work directly with mainstream schools to ensure that provision for children and young people at SEND support is carefully planned and individualised, and that it follows the graduated approach.
- Ensure specialist services support children and young people, where necessary and that an ECHP is not a requirement of support.
- Monitor the provision of specialist support to individual schools and settings to evaluate its impact, and consider the school's / setting's response
- Be more proactive at Phase Transfer so that transition plans become a required process between the old and the new mainstream settings

7. Priority 3

Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as special schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.

We will:

- Strengthen our decision making, so that the places that we have in special schools or Resourced Provisions, are allocated to the pupils with the most significant needs.
- Target specialist SEN services where parents of children with less complex needs may experience a loss of confidence in their child's mainstream school.
- Work with special school leaders to explore the implications of extending the complexity of needs that their schools may provide for
- Incrementally develop specialist provision to provide for their localities, reducing unnecessary time spent in journeys to school and the consequent cost
- Undertake a short review of Resourced Provisions to consider what facilities and staff experience may be required to ensure that the RP provision is making the level of specialist provision required
- Undertake a forensic analysis of current out of authority placements, to consider the implications of exploring options for returning to locally based education
- Develop an improved approach to considering requests for specialist placements, using an options appraisal and costing methodology, re-focusing attention on locally based mainstream provision wherever possible and appropriate
- Undertake a review of residential provision to consider what provision is required.

8. Priority 4

Improve the co-ordination, leadership, deployment and collaborative working of specialist SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.

We will:

- Introduce new approaches so that the allocation of all specialist SEND support to schools and settings is better co-ordinated and achieves better value for money
- Develop a "Support around the school" approach so that those schools that have sought more EHC assessments, plans or extra funding than others are able to be supported to develop improved arrangements at SEN support
- Reduce the very significant increases in the number of EHC assessments, so that skilled specialist advisory and educational psychology support, is available to work with schools and settings to support the majority of children and young people with SEND who do not have statements or EHC Plans, and are at SEN support.

- Put in place a co-ordinated leadership structure for all SEND fieldwork services, that makes best use of available resources and which is available for children and young people both with and without statements and EHC Plans or specific diagnoses.
- Ensure that specialist teachers have enhanced skills and experience and can add value to the skills already in place in many mainstream settings
- Ensure that there are close links with the administration of the statutory SEND processes, decision making and the role and function of specialist teachers and educational psychologists

9. Priority 5

We will:

Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most significant and complex needs.

- Make better use of the annual review process and annual review reports to predict potential requests for a change in the type of school from mainstream to special school
- Use data from previous years and cohort size to plan ahead and predict reductions or potential increases in demand for specialist provision through a 5 year special school place planning strategy.
- Improve casework management, through drawing on fieldwork intelligence of support services and identifying early indications of parental or school views that a move to specialist provision may be being considered
- Monitor the percentage of year cohorts attending specialist provision, and where other in-year places are unavailable, outlining coherent plans in place to support locally available alternatives
- Develop robust financial plans to demonstrate planned use for places in Buckinghamshire special schools, using these plans as the basis for discussion with any other authority that may seek increased use of Buckinghamshire specialist provision
- Ensure that there are robust and structured links between SEN officers and school funding officers in relation to the financial implications of placement trends

10. Priority 6

Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND processes

We will:

- Review the way in which we make decisions about:
 - When to carry out an EHC assessment
 - When to issue an EHC Plan
 - What school or setting to name on the EHC Plan
 - What financial support will be provided to the school or setting
 - When we oppose SEN appeals and when we concede them
 - When we make amendments following annual review and when we do not

- Embed the description of the provision that schools and settings should make from within their own budgets, using the Graduated Response as a vehicle to support this, and reviewing its impact after 6 months

- Introduce more rigour into decision making, exploring new approaches to moderation in the current context of very large numbers of requests.

11. Priority 7

Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings.

We will:

- Review the way in which top-up values are allocated, to consider approaches that would:
 - move away from describing top-ups for mainstream by teaching assistant hours,
 - reduce the number of top-up bands to create more stability, less bureaucracy and more flexibility at school / setting level
 - allocate funding values that are compatible with salary ranges in different types of settings

- Review widespread approaches that allocate enhanced pupil level funding to schools for pupils without EHC Plans, undertaking a thorough audit of a sample of schools and settings

- Refocus the allocation of High Needs funding for pupils without statements or EHC Plans in the way that EFA guidance expects such a system to operate.

- Linking with Priority 2, embed the use of resources within a tool to support schools and settings evaluate their effectiveness in making SEN provision for children at SEN Support and with statements / EHC Plans

12. Priority 8

Develop a better shared understanding of the relationship between High Needs funding, current demands and volume and need.

We will:

- Establish a new approach to gathering and analysing SEND data and trends, drawing on the examples in the report of the SEND Review
- Publish data on a regular (at least) annual basis, explaining trends in the statutory process and financial implications, and highlighting any particular pressure points
- Put in place a framework of Performance Indicators and targets, and monitor these on a monthly basis
- Address any perverse financial and data trends
- Make regular reports to the Service Director – Education, the SEND Board and the Schools Forum to track the progress of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Q1 Do you think that the draft Vision for the SEND Strategy is complete? (Y/N/DK)

Q2 Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve the Vision?

Q3 Do you agree that the 8 Priorities cover the most important things we should try to improve?

(Y/N/DK)

Q4 Do you have any suggestions for Priorities that we have missed that we need to improve?

Q5 Please write any comments you have about the individual Priorities below. (The box will expand as you write)

Priority	Comments
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

Q6 Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for the time you have spent in telling us your views.

Please send your comments to us by

Special Education Needs and Disability Briefing

June 2016

Nick Wilson
Interim Director for Education



Content

- Key Trends
- Definitions
- Assessments, Statements & Plans
- Financial Implications
- Permanent Exclusions
- Transport
- Next Steps



Definitions

- Children & Families Act 2014
- Special Education Needs
- Disability
- Assessment
- Education Health and Care Plans
- Statement of Special Education Needs
- Age Range 0-25
- Tribunal
- One System
- Local Offer
- Local area inspection

Statements and EHC Plans

- **3.2% of Buckinghamshire CYP have statements & EHC Plans compared to a national and statistical neighbour average of 2.8%.**
- **This means we have 329 more Plans / Statements than if Bucks was at national or SN average**

Over the last 5 years (March 2011 – March 2016) the total number of statements / EHC Plans has increased by 12% over which time the Buckinghamshire school population has increased by 8%.

Year	Total Statements / Plans
March 2011	3066
March 2016	3436

Bucks Schools population – Jan 2016

	Under 5 (0-5)	KS1&2	KS3&4	Years 12-14	Years 15-16	Totals
No.s	9,184	36,534	29,321	7,774	3	82,816
% of all	11%	44%	35%	9%	0%	
Change from 2014	+ 939	+1,646	+537	+116	-8	+3,230 (+4%)

Using the total school population, if statements/Plans in Bucks were at national average, there would be 348 fewer Plans / statements

Using the 3-19 population, there would be 329 fewer

Using the KS1 – KS4 population, there would be 263 fewer



Assessments, Statements & Plans

- The number of requests for assessments is increasing. 267 assessments were agreed between 1 Sept 15 and 31 March 16, compared to 187 in the same period in 14-15 - a 48% increase.
- The average number of assessments per month has increased from 28 per month in the Autumn and Spring Terms of 2014-15 to 40 per month in the Autumn and Spring Terms of 2015-16. (excludes Statements conversions)
- Of the 267 assessments agreed in the Autumn and Spring Terms (15-16) 194 were made by schools and 73 by parents. 14% of school requests, and 45% of parent requests were turned down.



First time statements & EHC Plans

- **The total number of first time EHC Plans has increased by 83% between 2014 and 2015**
- **The numbers of children under 5 with first time Plans has increased to 91 in 2014 to 139 in 2015, a 2014-15 increase of + 53%.**
- **The biggest numerical increase was in children aged between 5 and 10 (from 108 to 194)**
- **The biggest percentage increase was for children aged between 11 and 15 (from 41 to 95) a 131% increase for this age group.**



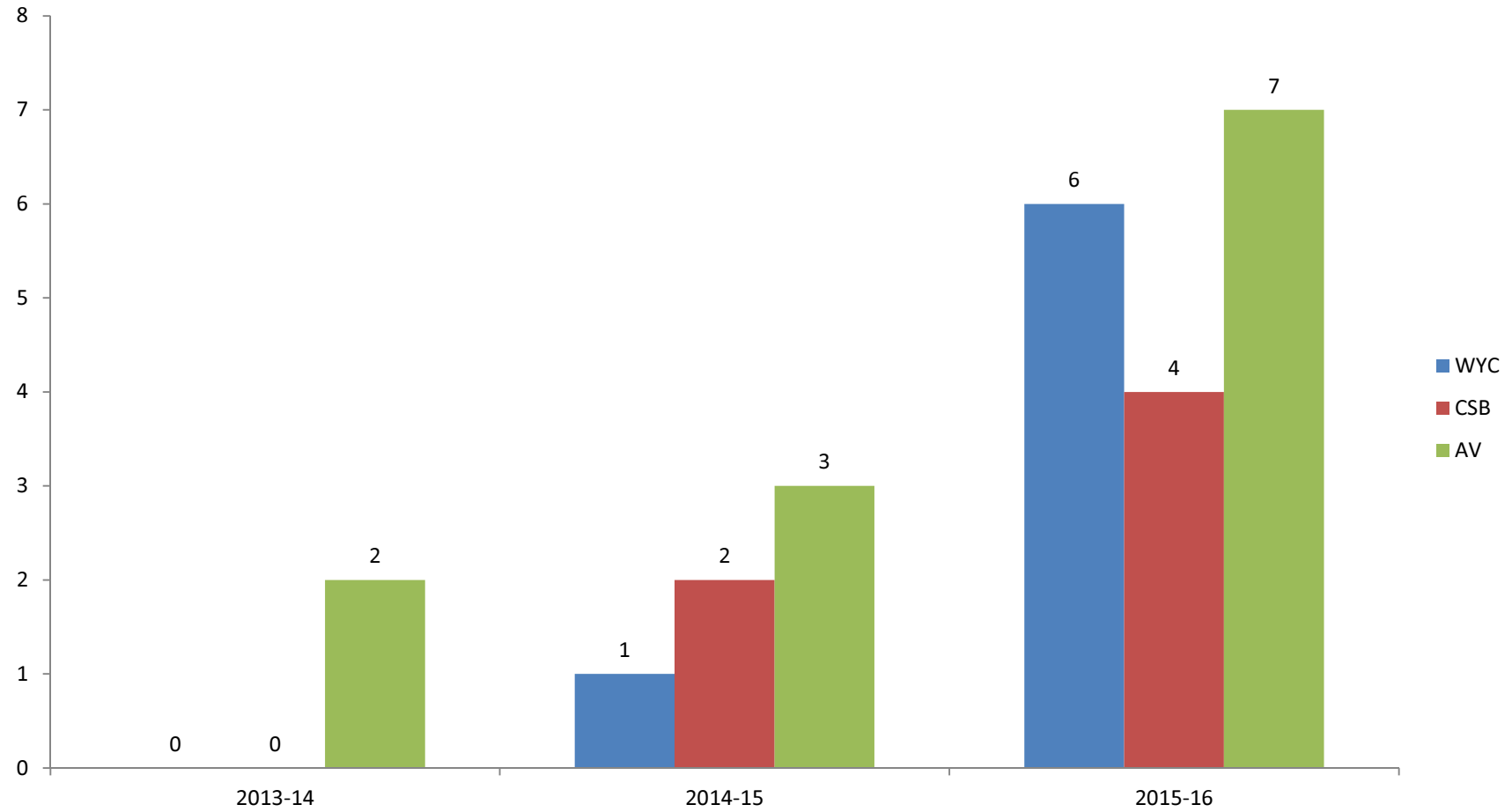
Changes in age of 1st time Plans and Statements

Age range	2013		2014		2015	
	No.s	%	No.s	%	No.s	%
Under 5	74	30	91	38	139	32
5 – 10	112	46	108	45	194	44
11 – 15	56	23	41	17	95	22
16 – 19	1	0.5	2	1	11	2.5
20 - 25	0	0	0	0	2	0.5
	243		242		441	
			+0%		+83%	



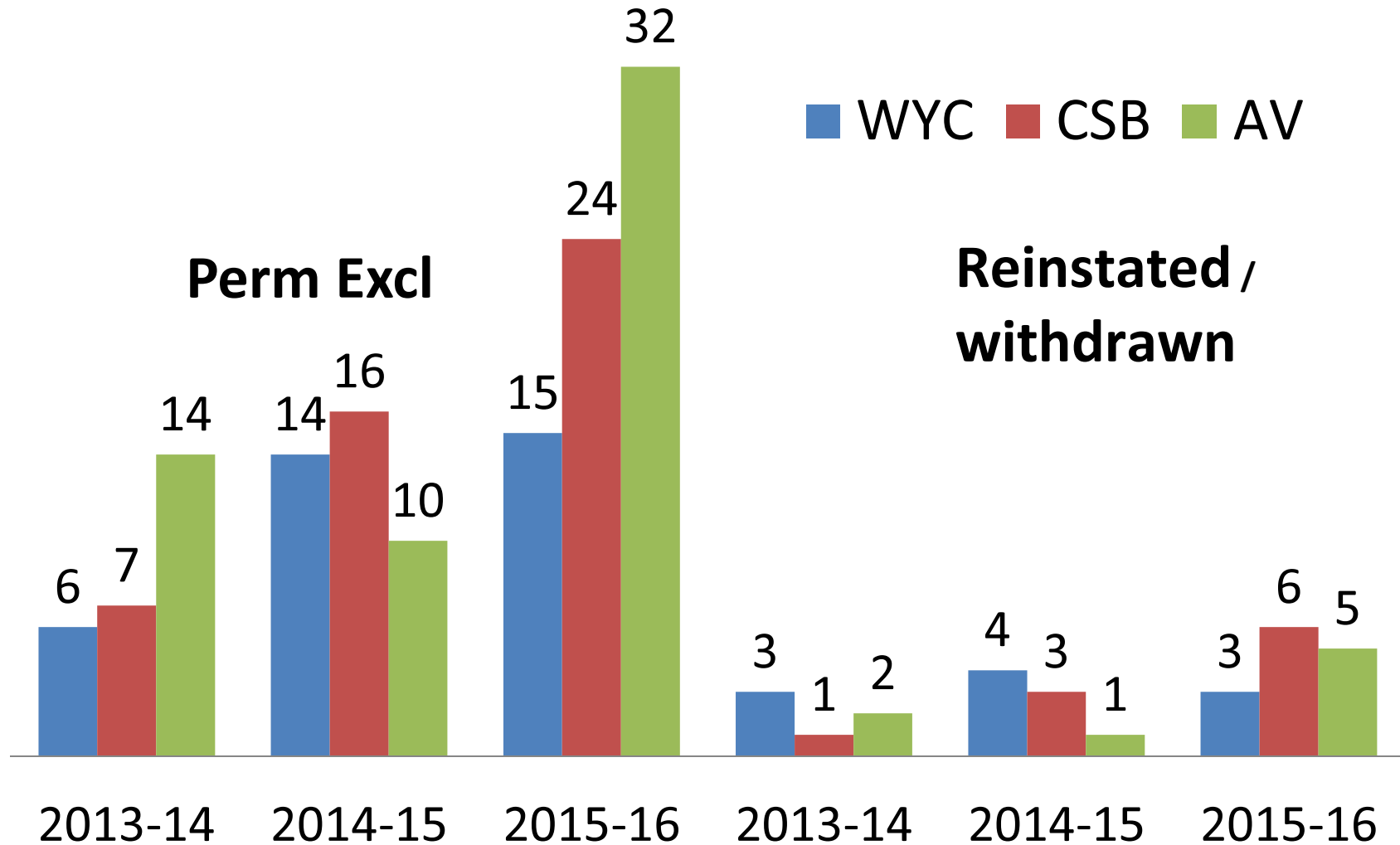
Primary School Permanent Exclusions

45




Secondary Schools – Permanent Exclusions

46




Trends in top-up costs for mainstream (1)

Statements and EHCPs (school age)

- Full year cost in 14-15 - £5,011,885
- Full year cost in 15-16 - £5,174,371
- Difference =  £162,486 (+3.24%)

No Statements and EHCPs (school age)

- Full year cost in 14-15 - £506,942
- Full year cost in 15-16 - £979,945
- Difference =  £473,003 (+93%)



Top-Up allocations to Special Schools

Between April 2013 and January 2016,

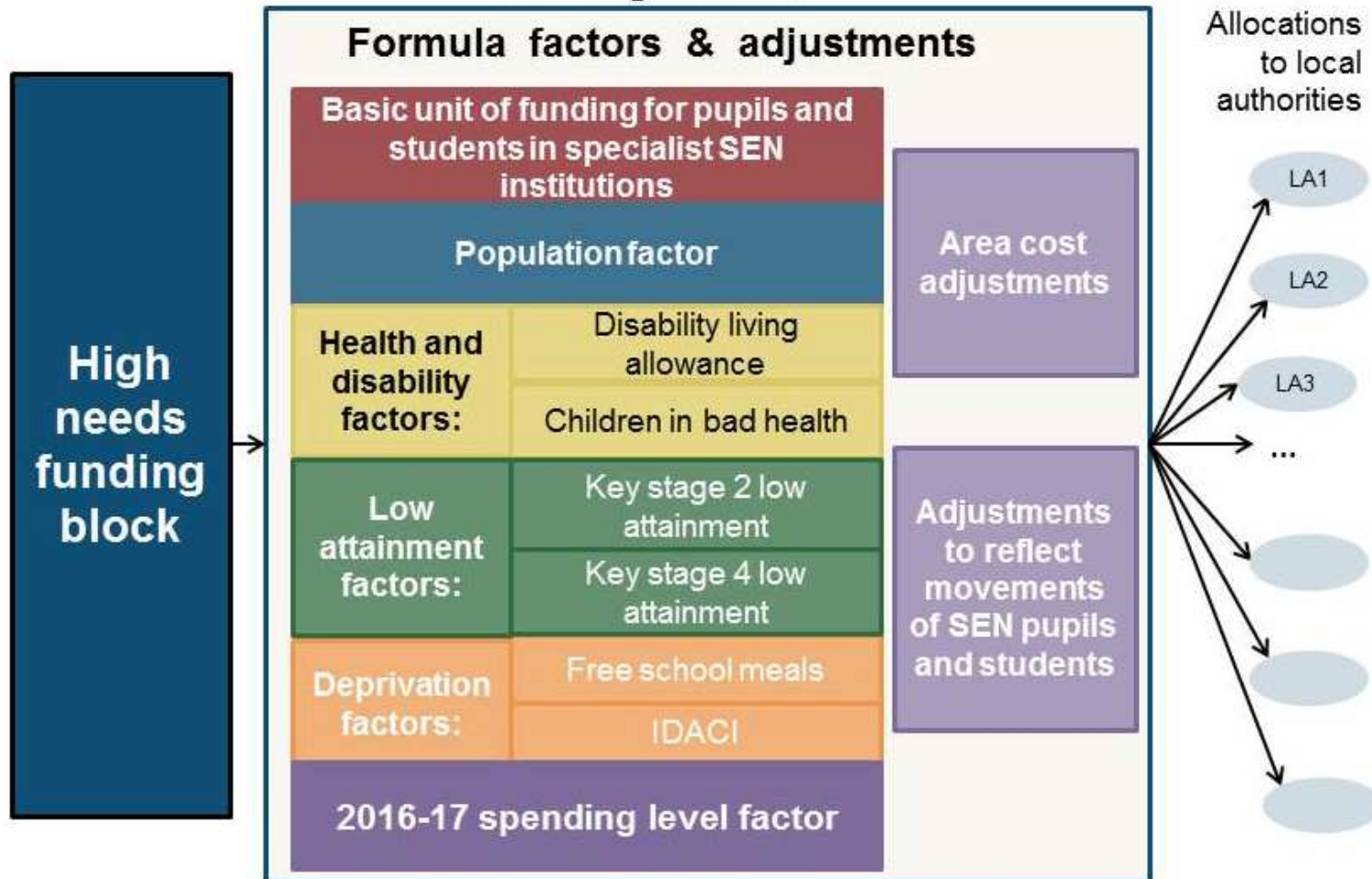
- **There has been a 17.5% increase in the average value of Top-Ups across all special schools. (Average school level top-up increase was £1,247)**
- **Over the same period the number of pupils has increased by 15.3% (171 children)**
- **The total increase in special school top-up funding has been £2.83m, from £7.98m to £10.8m – a 35.43% increase.**
- **The current average special school Top-Up is £8,394 – range £2.5k - £15.9k**



Per Pupil Funding (15-16 planned spend)

Funding focus	Buckinghamshire £	England £	Statistical Nghbr £
Top-Up funding (Maintd & Acad)	250	167	139
Top-Up Independent	120	70	96
SEN Support Services	51	36	36
All HN Total	455	305	303
Educational Psychology	29	16	18
SEN administration	11	15	17
Parent Partnership	2	2	2

Figure 1: Proposed design of high needs funding formula



A bit about Transport

- **50% of children with statements / Plans, receive free home to school transport**
- **1,333 are under 16 (cost £5.3m)**
- **316 are post 16 (cost £1.3m)**
- **Many children do not attend their nearest special school, so a web of transport routes emerges**
- **Transport costs can be critical in placement costings.**



Review Objectives / Outcomes

- **A SEN and Disability Strategy with priorities that link the statutory & strategic approaches to funding and the statutory processes for SEND, including a framework of data that can be used to monitor provision, costs and placement for future years.**
- **Identify “Choices and Challenges” to achieve improved financial and statutory SEN outcomes**
- **Propose approaches to the management of SEND at school, college and education setting level that will assist robust financial management of High Needs funding**
- **Identify issues that would benefit from further attention, that have been out of scope, but have arisen during the Review**



Next Steps

- More interactive dialogue with school leaders – Primary HT HUBs, SENCO meetings, Special School HTs, BASH, Schools Forum
- Prepare Final Report and draft Strategy
- Chief Officers and Elected Members to consider





Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Title:	Looked After Children's Strategy
Committee date:	Tuesday 20 September 2016
Author:	Karen Dolton Interim Service Director
Contact officer:	Karen Dolton 01296 383537
c-kdolton@buckscc.gov.uk	
Cabinet Member sign-off:	Lin Hazell

Purpose of Agenda Item

- This report is provided for information. It is to provide members with the Looked after Children's strategy that outlines the values, principles and key priorities to support the children and young people who are looked after by Buckinghamshire County Council.

Background

Buckinghamshire County Council and its partners are committed to providing good and effective parenting to all the children and young people it looks after. This also includes all young people who are care leavers, 16 to 24 years of age who have left care following their 16th birthday.

Every parent wants the best for their child and as a Corporate Parent we want to ensure that all children in our care are healthy, safe and happy, do well at school and enjoy good relationships with their peers. That they are able to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs, and financially secure

In the past seven years there has been a significant growth nationally in the number of Looked After Children and, although Buckinghamshire has seen some rise in the number of children it looks after, it has not been at the same rate and pace as other Authorities.



The number of children looked after in Buckinghamshire and comparator authorities at the 31st March for each year since 2009.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	60,900	64,470	65,510	67,070	68,060	68,800	69,540
Bucks	330	345	390	375	400	440	435
Oxfordshire	415	450	425	450	415	460	515
Surrey	820	765	730	805	830	795	780
South East LAs	7,660	8,160	8,480	8,720	8,820	8,950	9,310

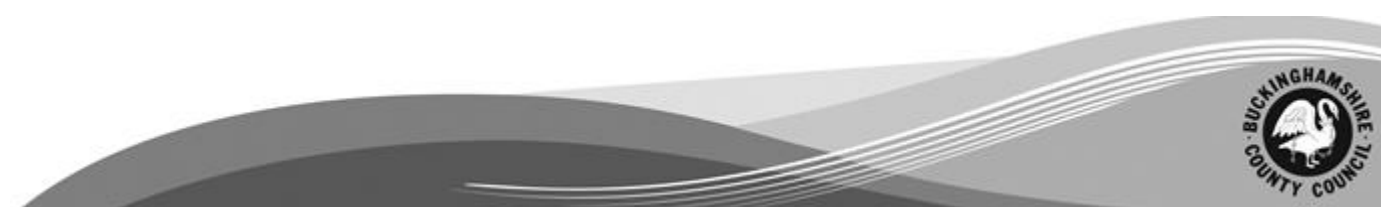
The main issue with our Looked after Children is that currently, over half of Buckinghamshire's Looked After Children are placed outside of the County borders, and approximately 60% are placed in privately owned provision.

Location of Care Placements 2015			
Area	% Within 20 miles of home	% In County	% Out of County
England	77	61	40
South East	69	65	35
Buckinghamshire	54	42	58

Summary

The main issues in relation to our Looked After Children can be summarised as:

- Too many children placed out of County
- Too many young people are living in residential care compared to other LAs
- High unit costs
- Insufficient in house foster carers
- High use of external providers



All these factors have the following impact:

- Too many Looked After Children are required to change schools when they become looked after
- Educational outcomes for children in care are proportionally lower than their peers
- Rehabilitation of children is affected by the physical distance from home
- Access to specialist services, such as CAMHS, is limited to the availability in the locality they are placed in, and they are not a priority
- Financial impact is greater, therefore reducing the financial investment in preventative services
- Valuable professional practice time is wasted on longer travel time when attending visits to children, meetings and reviews
- The costs of resources for Looked After Children are rising as we are more dependent on the external market for provision

Key issues

There is an urgent need to shift our placement provision to ensure that most of our Looked after Children can live within the County. The following actions will be taken:

- Create an effective multi-agency Early Help offer and pathway, including targeted specialist support.
- Commission evidence based multi-agency interventions at the edge of care to ensure only the right children come into care at the right time.
- Commission evidence based interventions to enable children in care to return home in a timely manner.
- Increase the number of local foster care placements through a radical partnership with fostering providers.
- Increase the number of children in care placed within the county or within 20 miles of their home address.
- Residential care provided outside of the Buckinghamshire, and neighbouring authority areas will only be used when there is no local capacity or when the complexity of the child's needs requires specialist provision.
- Ensure children are placed in secure family settings, using adoption and special guardianship where appropriate. Also to ensure there is no financial detrimental effect on a foster carer becoming a special guardian.
- Reduce the need for residential care placements by creating specialist fostering placements.
- Ensure young people have the opportunity to remain with their foster carer past their 18th birthday to continue with education, employment and training through promoting Staying Put, and ensuring there is no detrimental financial effect on the carer.
- Transform the culture, management and working practice of all professionals involved in care planning for children in care.

- Promote corporate governance by creating a project delivery board, led by Senior Managers and County Councillors.

Resource implications

An improvement partner has been commissioned to work with our fostering team. Core Assets successfully won the bid for this role and their team will commence work on 19th September. There will need to be dedicated project support to this work and the details of this are being detailed in the five year plan.

As the strategy is implemented savings will be realised through improved placement sufficiency and more effective market management

Next steps

A LAC Project Board is being established to deliver on this strategy. The Board be responsible for strengthening and driving the performance for LAC.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will provide support and challenge for the strategy and will have it as a standing item on their agenda. There will be a clear suite of indicators that will measure performance against the key strands of the strategy. A quarterly report will also be brought to Select Committee.

Together...Keeping Children Safe

Buckinghamshire Looked After Children Strategy

Responsible Manager: *Service Director Children's Social Care*

Version number: V0.9

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Foreword

This Looked After Children Strategy outlines the values, principles and key priorities to support the children and young people who are looked after by Buckinghamshire County Council. We want to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and their families; by working in partnership we can deliver the services children and young people need to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives.



David Johnston
Managing Director
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Lin Hazell
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1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council and its partners are committed to providing good and effective parenting to all the children and young people it looks after. This also includes all young people who are care leavers, 16 to 24 years of age who have left care following their 16th birthday.

Every parent wants the best for their child and as a Corporate Parent we want to ensure that all children in our care are healthy, safe and happy, do well at school and enjoy good relationships with their peers. That they are able to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs, and financially secure.

Corporate Parenting is the responsibility of every employee and elected Member within Buckinghamshire County Council and its Districts, not just those working directly in Children's Services.

Our pledge to young people in our care is:

We will:

- *Treat you with respect and hear your voice*
- *Look after you*
- *Provide a good education for you*
- *Keep you healthy*
- *Support you to be independent*

2. Our Priorities

Our priorities for children and young people in our care are:

1. To ensure that children and young people are able to remain with their own families wherever this is consistent with them being safe, secure and promoting their welfare
2. To provide placements that achieve permanence, in particular maximising the number of children that achieve permanency through adoption or special guardianship
3. To provide placements for children close to their home
4. To place children with foster carers wherever this is appropriate, only using residential provision where this is in the child's best interests
5. To provide a sufficiency of good quality placements for young people aged 16+
6. To keep children and young people in care, and Care Leavers, safe from harm and help young people to keep themselves safe and make good choices
7. To improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers including health, education, higher education, employment and training
8. To maximise value for money and value-added from all services

To achieve this Buckinghamshire County Council will ensure there are:

- High quality, multi-agency services available which support families to look after their children and young people and prevent them from entering the care system.
- Robust assessment of needs before children become looked after,
- Sufficient, high quality foster carers available within the County to ensure children in care are placed, wherever possible, close to their family and friends,
- Sufficient, high quality multi-agency support available to enable children to return to their family as soon as this is a safe option for them,
- Sufficient, high quality multi-agency support is available to Looked After Children to ensure they reach their potential through access to quality education, health and social services, and are able to move into adulthood successfully,
- Effective leaving care services that enable young people to transition into adulthood safely.
- Cost effective services which show improved outcomes for children and young people.

3. Our Looked After Children

The Local Authorities which have experienced the greatest success in improving outcomes for their LAC have one overriding feature in common; the managers and all those with responsibility for Looked After Children have a very detailed knowledge and understanding of their care population and can give accurate information about age patterns, proportions accommodated or with care orders, the type of care provider and what the exit options are. In other words being clear about what the cohorts are in the LAC population and applying an approach to each of these cohorts that will be most effective.

How many are there?

In the past seven years there has been a significant growth nationally in the number of Looked After Children and, although Buckinghamshire has seen some rise in the number of children it looks after, it has not been at the same rate and pace as other Authorities.

The number of children looked after in Buckinghamshire and comparator authorities at the 31st March for each year since 2009.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	60,900	64,470	65,510	67,070	68,060	68,800	69,540
Bucks	330	345	390	375	400	440	435
Oxfordshire	415	450	425	450	415	460	515
Surrey	820	765	730	805	830	795	780
South East LAs	7,660	8,160	8,480	8,720	8,820	8,950	9,310

What is there Legal Status?

The table below shows that there has been a continuing pattern of children and young people who require a court order to be in care, this shows an appropriate use of the care system for those children who are deemed to be at greatest risk.

Legal Status of Looked After Children					
Legal Status	March 2011	March 2012	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015
Interim Care Order	22%	19%	12%	11%	9%
Full Care Order	33%	41%	45%	44%	50%
Placement Order	9%	9%	15%	13%	14%
Accommodated	36%	31%	27%	31%	28%

In the past 12 months the number of children subject to care proceedings in Buckinghamshire has increased by 100%, from a steady state of about 45 children per year to 100 as of March 2016.

Who are they?

The age, gender, ethnicity and needs of children entering care are significant in understanding the preventative services that need to be commissioned and the types of care placements required to meet their needs.

Age:

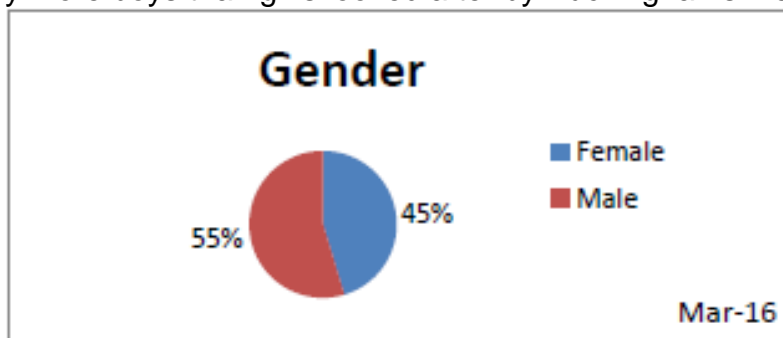
A significant proportion of Buckinghamshire's looked after children population are in their adolescents rather than infant years:

Age Range	March 2011		March 2012		March 2013		March 2014		March 2015	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Under 1	20	5	20	5	15	4	20	5	20	5
1-4	75	20	65	18	70	17	65	15	65	15
5-9	75	19	75	21	85	21	90	20	80	19
10-15	135	35	145	38	150	38	160	36	165	38
16+	80	21	70	18	80	20	105	24	100	23

There is evidence to show that adolescent entrants to the looked after system have poorer outcomes than adolescent graduates, i.e. those who enter care before they are adolescent.

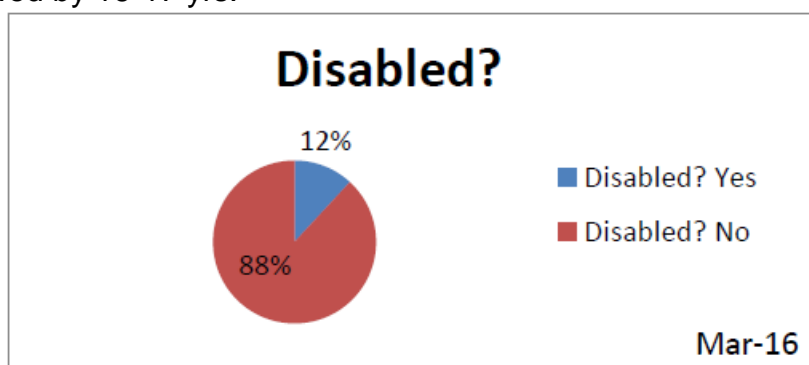
Gender:

There are slightly more boys than girls looked after by Buckinghamshire.



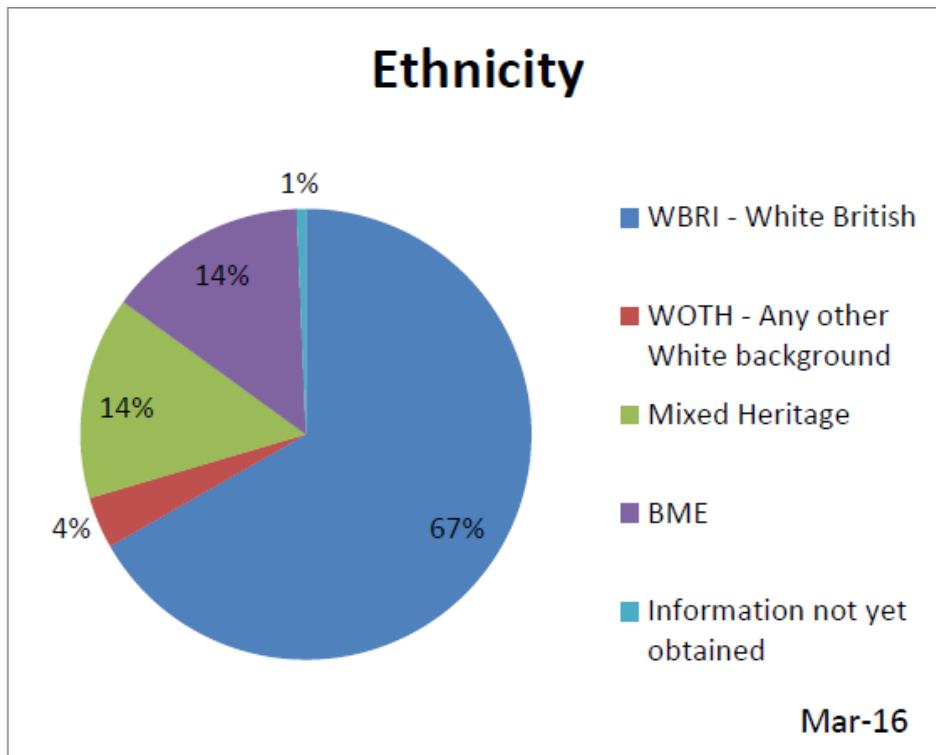
Disability:

Currently, 12% of our looked after children have a disability. The highest age bracket is 10-15yrs followed by 16-17 yrs.



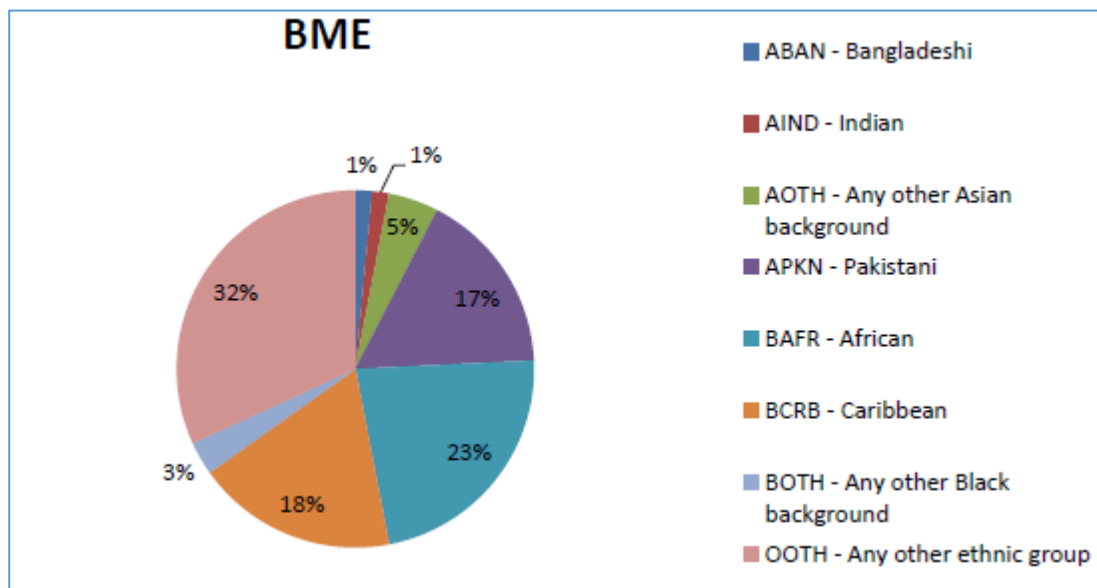
Ethnicity:

29% of the looked after children population are Mixed Heritage/BME.



Currently 14% of Looked After Children are BME in comparison to 18% that are Children in Need and 18% of Children on a Protection Plan. In 2014/15 there were 13% BME. Currently a high proportion (65%) of BME children are male, particularly those with African and Other ethnicities. In relation to age, the highest proportion of BME are those who are in the 10-15yr age group and of those slightly more were male.

Currently there are 19 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, whose ages range from 15 - 17 years. Of these 4 are of African ethnicity and 15 come under the category of Other, which includes countries such as Iran and Vietnam.



Where do they live?

Currently, over half of Buckinghamshire's Looked After Children are placed outside of the County borders, and approximately 60% are placed in privately owned provision.

Location of Care Placements			
Area	% Within 20 miles of home	% In County	% Out of County
England	77	61	40
South East	69	65	35
Buckinghamshire	54	42	58

Nationally approximately 75% of looked after children are cared for in fostering placements, 10% are in residential care. Currently, Buckinghamshire has a greater number of children in residential care (15%). Residential care should only be used when the complexity of the child's needs cannot be met within a family.

Buckinghamshire County Council only has 1 Children's Home and so when residential care is required we are rarely able to accommodate within our own provision. There is consistent evidence that outcomes for children and young people in care are generally poorer for those in residential settings than in foster care.

The All Parliamentary Group on Children Missing From Care, published in June 2012, recommended urgent action on "out of area placements" to reduce the number of children living outside their own LA citing this as a major factor in causing them to run away and putting them at additional risk. The report highlighted it was difficult to ensure the children placed out of area receive the additional specialist support they need.

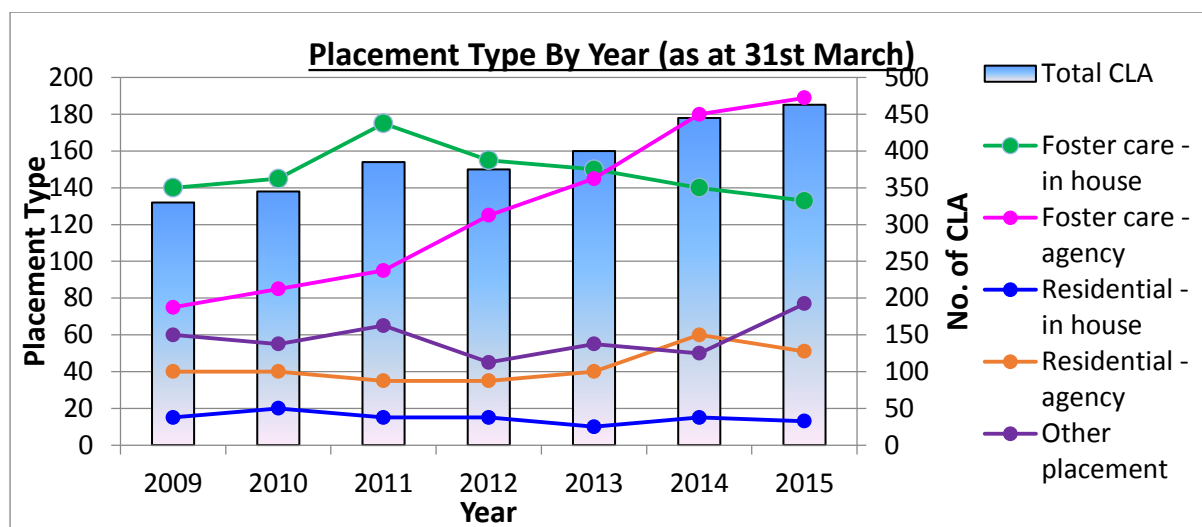
Types of Provision where Children are Placed 2014-2015		
Area	% in Fostering	% in Residential Care
England	75	12
South East	76	12
Buckinghamshire	72	15

Buckinghamshire places 42% of its looked after children in independent fostering provision, compared with a 27% average in comparator authorities. This means that approximately only 1 in 3 looked after children are placed with the in-house fostering service in Buckinghamshire, compared with around 2 in 3 in comparator authorities.

Until 2012/13 Buckinghamshire's fostering service provided the majority of foster care placements, however the increasing number of children in care has required the independent sector to meet the additional demand.

The table below shows the types of placements children were living in from 2009. It shows the growth of the total population and the increase use of IFA placements to meet the additional demand. During 2012-13, IFA use was greater than in-house use.

The use of residential placements significantly rose during 2013-14, when the first cases of CSE in Buckinghamshire came to light. There was a slight increase the previous year in the use of agency residential following the closure of Chiltern View children’s home, which was a BCC home.



The number of foster carers provided by the Council’s fostering service has remained the same in the last four years. The recruitment of foster carers in Buckinghamshire is extremely challenging. There was only one fostering enquiry per thousand households in 2013/14. Most comparator authorities have twice as many enquiries.

Whilst recent Council investment in marketing has driven a 25% increase in fostering enquiries in 2014/15, with a doubling of the numbers of people receiving an initial visit and subsequently being assessed, the impact of this on increasing the numbers of foster carers needs to be evaluated to decide where the in house recruitment should focus future activities. The loss of foster carers, through retirement or other factors means that the net gain in available carers is very small.

How much do they cost us?

Even though Buckinghamshire’s looked after children numbers are relatively low the costs are rising due to the challenging nature of many of the children and young people by the time they come into care and this impacts on their placement choice.

As would be expected, with the increased use of agency provision the cost of this care increases.

The overall financial commitment in 2014-15 to children in care, those receiving residential short breaks and after care support was in excess of £24m. The greatest expenditure was in residential care and independent fostering placements, £11m and £7.6m respectively.

4. Early Help and Prevention

We want to ensure we have an enhanced Early Help offer that delivers evidence based interventions to ensure only the right children come into our care at the right time. Most children are more likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own family.

Early identification, prevention and intervention are key factors in supporting families to stay together. Buckinghamshire will support families using evidenced based approaches which will enable them to solve their own problems to live a successful family life.

Working Together 2015 states:

- *Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later*
- *Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years*

In Buckinghamshire we have developed a partnership approach to Early Help which has been agreed by the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board and a range of other partnership Boards. The approach is built around the Troubled Families national programme evidence (locally we call this Families First) and is described in the [Early Help Strategy](#).

Within Buckinghamshire County Council, Early Help is delivered through a range of commissioned services including Children's Centres, Connexions and voluntary sector providers such as Barnardo's as well as through in house services such as the Youth Service. The Family Resilience Service is based in locality settings across the County and works with children and families as lead agency through both one to one and group based interventions such as parenting courses. All of these services use the Outcomes Star to measure progress.

We also offer two specialist services targeted at children who are deemed to be at high risk of coming into our care:

- The **Junior CATCH** service provides a flexible and high priority response service to work intensively from pre-birth and primary school aged children and families where there is a risk of children becoming accommodated by the Local Authority and to prevent family breakdown. The service provides support to families out of core hours and over weekends to meet the individual needs of a family. Junior CATCH works systemically within a professional network alongside the child's social worker. All work undertaken is time limited and planned to specifically focus around the families' individual needs using a range of interventions, tools and resources. The services provided include parenting support, pre-birth and post birth support and assessment, adoption breakdown, 1.1 work with children, 1.1 work with adults, reunification support and parenting capacity support.

- The **Senior CATCH** service works with young people of secondary school age up until 17 years of age. The aim of the service is to work with families to prevent young people entering the care system. The service provides short-term targeted interventions to families in crisis situations where there is an imminent risk of family breakdown and/or high likelihood of accommodation by the Local Authority. Interventions provided by can include family mediation, boundary setting, solution focused approaches, parenting support and one to one interventions with young people. They work closely with partner agencies to ensure families are in receipt of thoughtful and coordinated support systems to bring about positive change and keep families together when safe to do so.

Our approach to Early Help in Buckinghamshire is family centred, consent-based and focused on working collaboratively with families to build their resilience. A critical ingredient to successful working is the need for families to make a commitment to change. An assertive, challenging, persistent approach, based on national research, this is the way in which professionals can most often bring about real change in the lives of children and their families.

The Early Help service for the child and their family is coordinated through the multi-agency Early Help Panel. The Panel identifies which is the most appropriate lead agency to provide the lead family worker.

As our business intelligence improves, we will focus on the 'hot spots' in the County for admissions to care to gather information to build a picture of:

- What characteristics the area have that means it is more likely children will come into care
- Whether demand in an area can be predicted, managed and reduced by addressing deprivation alone
- What additional assets the area needs to build resilience in the neighbourhood
- What is the early offer of help in the area
- What local commissioning is there that aims to build resilience in the community
- What do the residents think the solutions are

This knowledge will assist in all partners understanding the profile of their area so that they can evidence their contribution to reducing numbers of looked after children through effective early interventions and provide targeted Early Help services to address those needs, focusing on activities which will significantly improve the outcomes for the child and family. This approach and intelligence will also inform future commissioning at a local level.

5. Life-long Learners

Children and young people of Buckinghamshire will have access to appropriate education, additional support and services which will enable them to reach their potential. A good education is essential in order to become successful, give young people choices and opportunities to live fulfilling lives. We want our children to do well in school and in any further and higher education that they choose to undertake. Most importantly, we want them to achieve their very best in everything that they do.

Some looked after children do very well at school, but they often face additional barriers to success in their education. This includes missing substantial periods of their education, which can occur for different reasons, such as delay in being given a school place, poor health, being excluded from school, placement changes making it harder to get to school, being placed in the wrong school for them and truanting. Having at least one adult in their life who acts as a good role model, encourages them to attend school and supports them in their reading and doing their homework is as important for every school-aged looked after child as being provided with a good school.

Our strategy will focus on addressing the imbalances that children and care leavers face so that they can achieve their very best.

Buckinghamshire's looked after children have told us that, in relation to their education, we should:

- Help to seek work experience opportunities
- Enable creativity
- Encourage goal setting in education, work and training
- Be realistic about what can be achieved
- Have access to the relevant information
- Use positive language in communication
- Be respectful and show faith in them
- Share enthusiasm

The Virtual School

Buckinghamshire's Virtual School is part of Buckinghamshire County Council. All children and young people in our care are part of the Virtual School. The majority attend their local educational setting, although the Virtual School does have a classroom for additional tuition and support in Amersham.

The team of 20 experienced educational staff work directly with schools, social workers, foster carers and the child in order to improve their educational achievements. They also offer support to children who have been adopted and live in Buckinghamshire.

Overall educational achievement in Buckinghamshire is very high and so the gap between looked after children and their peers is large. However the Virtual School can demonstrate the impact that it has on every looked after child and can evidence the good progress made by our children once they come into our care. At the time of writing, we have 14 young people going to University and a number of young people in Further Education.

Performance (2014/15 academic year)

- The Personal Education Plan (PEP) process has become streamlined with the Virtual School (VS) supporting this statutory social care function by co-ordinating the collation and distribution of PEP's. PEPs are completed termly and we usually achieve our monthly target of 100% of pupils having a timely and current PEP.
- The Virtual School have made contact within 10 days of the pupil becoming looked after or moving placements. (Usually 100%)
- 82% of Virtual School pupils attend a school which is judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. There is a narrative for all other children to ensure their provision is at least good. New placements are always in good or outstanding schools.
- Of the 26 children finishing primary school in July 2015, 16 were educated in mainstream schools, with 15 eligible to take the end of Key Stage tests. 60% of those entered achieved Level 4 in both Reading and Maths at Key Stage 2. 96% achieved expected progress and 35% exceeded expectations when compared to prior attainment.
- 5 pupils started university courses in October 2015.

Attainment at Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1 attainment for looked after children nationally continues to improve – increasing slightly for both mathematics and writing and remaining stable for reading. In Buckinghamshire:

- 73% of looked after children achieved Level 2 or above in mathematics (up from 72% the previous year)
- 71% achieved Level 2 or above in reading (the same as last year)
- 63% achieved Level 2 or above in writing (up from 61% last year)
- 77% are meeting national expectations in Reading and Writing
- 92% are meeting national expectations in Maths

Attainment at Key Stage 2

	Percentage who achieved at least level 4			
	Mathematics	Reading	Writing	Reading, writing and mathematics
Buckinghamshire	42	68	53	37
South East	62	71	59	51
England	64	71	61	52

Whilst the Buckinghamshire results at Key Stage 2 for looked after children were below both regional and national averages, it must be noted that the Buckinghamshire cohort was very small, with results for a single pupil accounting for approximately 5 percentage points each. However, there is a lot of work to do to get looked after children in Buckinghamshire in line with their peers as 83% of all pupils in Buckinghamshire achieved level 4 or above in all of reading, writing and mathematics, compared with 37% of looked after children.

96% of Buckinghamshire's looked after children achieved expected progress when compared to previous attainment and 35% exceeded expectations in one or more area.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

	Buckinghamshire	South East	England
% 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C	17.5	17.6	18.3
% A*-C in English & mathematics	15.0	16.8	15.9

Given the small number of pupils in the looked after cohort in Buckinghamshire (40 pupils), results are broadly in line with national and regional averages.

6. Health

Good physical, mental and emotional health is an essential pre-condition to successful learning, happiness and success in life. Looked after children and care leavers are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health. Many looked after children come into care with chronic physical and mental health problems that are a result of their early experiences and neglect.

For children who had been looked after for at least a year as at 31/03/2016:

- 88% had up to date immunisations
- 92% had a dental check in the previous 12 months
- 95% had a health assessment completed

There have been extensive and ongoing improvements made to the working partnerships between Buckinghamshire County Council, Buckinghamshire Health Care Trust, Designated Health Care Team for Children in Care, the Children's Joint Commissioning Team at BCC and the CCGs.

Following recommissioning, a new integrated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) commenced in Buckinghamshire on 1st October 2015. This was a joint commissioning initiative between the Council and the two Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and provides targeted and specialist Child and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services and referral and step down responsibility for inpatient placements (Tier 4). Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT), in partnership with Barnardos and BEAT (the eating disorder charity) provide the integrated service and this includes a specific pathway for adopted, Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. Key objectives for looked after children are:

- timely access - 5 working days to initial consultation, including to those placed within an hour's radius outside of Buckinghamshire in border counties
- ensure high levels of information sharing across the different social care teams and CAMHS
- consultation, advice and strategies to children and their carers across the whole care pathway including those eligible under the Care Leavers Strategy
- run training programmes eg. on attachment

Key outcomes of the new CAMHS to date:

- No breaches to 5 day initial consultation access.
- DNAs (did not attend) have continued to reduce to 2% (from 6%) indicating appropriate appointment times and locations to meet the needs of looked after child.
- Buckinghamshire children placed on the borders (eg. Milton Keynes, Slough, Hemel Hempstead) have all received timely access to Bucks CAMHS without need to wait 18 week referral to treatment national NHS criteria to access locally provided CAMHS services.
- Locality based training sessions taking place.
- Information sharing agreement established between the Council and OHFT to enable greater understanding of children in care accessing CAMHS including psychological outcomes.

7. Care Leavers

In October 2013, the Government issued its Care Leaver Strategy with a clear aspiration that care leavers “*should expect the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parent*”.

The strategy sets out the Government’s commitment to remove some of the practical barriers that care leavers face as they progress to adulthood. They want to see “*holistic and quality support provided in all mainstream and specialist services by: local authorities; Jobcentre plus; housing; health bodies; the justice system; and, educational institutions.services that are integrated, simplified and that treat care leavers with dignity and respect.*”

The Government’s Strategy seeks to improve the educational attainment of care leavers and strengthens duties on local authorities to support Children in Care to remain in education and provide support to care leavers aged 21-24 who wish to return to education or training.

If a young person aged over 16 requires supported living, a suitable independence option will be offered to enable them to move into adulthood safely. All placements should prepare children and young people for adulthood, regardless of their age, in order for them to reach their potential within their communities and succeed as adults.

In March 2016:

- 80% of Care Leavers had an up to date Pathway Plan
- 86% of Care Leavers were in suitable accommodation
- 58% of Care Leavers were in employment, education or training

When appropriate, young people living with foster carers who are approaching 18 years of age will have the opportunity to remain with that carer through Staying Put. ‘Staying Put’ arrangements enable young people to remain with their former foster carers in order to help ensure that they are adequately prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition similar to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be less likely to experience a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown. Buckinghamshire has implemented a Staying Put Policy and has increased the number of young people who stay with their foster carers beyond the age of 18.

8. Summary of the Issues

The main issues in relation to our Looked After Children can be summarised as:

- Too many children placed out of County
- Too many young people are living in residential care compared to other LAs
- High unit costs
- Insufficient in house foster carers
- High use of external providers

All these factors have the following impact:

- Too many Looked After Children are required to change schools when they become looked after
- Educational outcomes for children in care are proportionally lower than their peers
- Rehabilitation of children is affected by the physical distance from home
- Access to specialist services, such as CAMHS, is limited to the availability in the locality they are placed in, and they are not a priority
- Financial impact is greater, therefore reducing the financial investment in preventative services
- Valuable professional practice time is wasted on longer travel time when attending visits to children, meetings and reviews
- The costs of resources for Looked After Children are rising as we are more dependent on the external market for provision

9. Actions we will take

There is not a one size fits all approach to supporting families in the community or for improving outcomes for Looked After Children. Different cohorts of children require different approaches and so this strategy sets out how we will do this.

The following overall actions will be taken:

- Create an effective multi-agency Early Help offer and pathway, including targeted specialist support.
- Commission evidence based multi-agency interventions at the edge of care to ensure only the right children come into care at the right time.
- Commission evidence based interventions to enable children in care to return home in a timely manner.
- Increase the number of local foster care placements through a radical partnership with fostering providers.
- Increase the number of children in care placed within the county or within 20 miles of their home address.
- Residential care provided outside of the Buckinghamshire, and neighbouring authority areas will only be used when there is no local capacity or when the complexity of the child's needs requires specialist provision.
- Ensure children are placed in secure family settings, using adoption and special guardianship where appropriate. Also to ensure there is no financial detrimental effect on a foster carer becoming a special guardian.
- Reduce the need for residential care placements by creating specialist fostering placements.
- Ensure young people have the opportunity to remain with their foster carer past their 18th birthday to continue with education, employment and training through promoting Staying Put, and ensuring there is no detrimental financial effect on the carer.
- Transform the culture, management and working practice of all professionals involved in care planning for children in care.
- Promote corporate governance by creating a project delivery board, led by Senior Managers and County Councillors.

These actions are captured in the table below. There are more detailed plans that will sit alongside this to ensure the necessary progress is made.

10. Monitoring and Governance of the Strategy

In addition to monitoring improved outcomes for children and young people through quality measures, a suite of indicators have been developed to enable high level tracking of the impact of the Strategy.

Research conducted with other local authorities highlights the key drivers for good quality and performance for Looked after Children. The findings highlight the following five common characteristics:

- 1) **Strategy and leadership** – a strong focus on securing corporate and elected member buy in to the strategy and active engagement of partners so that everyone is clear how they can and are improving outcomes for LAC and why.
- 2) **Prevention and early intervention** - There is a positive connection between services and support designed to stop needs escalating and the ability to reduce the numbers of Looked After Children.
- 3) **Approach to practice** - Evidence supports that there are different approaches to practice that can influence the numbers and outcomes of LAC within an area, including a clearly defined social work model; sufficient time to work with children and families; robust Quality Assurance and IRO functions; and a different approach to delivering adoption.
- 4) **Partnership working** - a common aim around LAC which is shared by partners and stakeholders, developed by joint planning and shared action
- 5) **Information and intelligence on performance** - Performance information that enables stakeholders to monitor the impact of interventions and to develop evidence of what works, when and who for to ensure that families get the right intervention when they need it.

It is proposed in order to strengthen the leadership for this strategy and develop and embed these characteristics that a LAC Project Board is established to deliver on the work strands. Key partners will be the “owner” of the strand and with the Board be responsible for strengthening and driving the performance for LAC. There will need to be dedicated project support to this work.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will provide support and challenge for the strategy and will have it as a standing item on their agenda. There will be a clear suite of indicators that will measure performance against the key strands of the strategy. A quarterly report should also be taken to Select Committee. The Children’s Council should make a critical contribution to the strategy. It is essential that young people who have experience of being cared for are able to influence current and future practice and provision.

Actions

	Cohort	Issue	Approach	Impact
Cohorts already within the care system	0-5 year olds	Target group for permanence. These children have the highest potential of being moved out of care and into adoption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Coram as an improvement partner to improve adoption performance and timeliness Tracking of all children under 8 years to ensure permanency in place and no drift. Robust challenge from IROs- improvements in the IRO service New PPM process Progress Foster to Adopt 	<p>Reduce drift</p> <p>Identify blockages to timely planning</p> <p>Foster to Adopt improves the outcomes for young children and</p>
	All Looked after Children	<p>Increase number of both in house foster carers and the supply if foster carers in County</p> <p>Increase residential placement options for young people with complex needs in County</p> <p>Understanding why children come into our care</p> <p>Improve exits from care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with an improvement partner from an outstanding fostering agency to improve our own service Investigate different models of future service delivery Partner with Coram for Innovation bid to improve Long Term Fostering Explore options for investment to increase in house residential provision in County Business Intelligence analysing all children that came into care between April15- Feb 16 Working with Coram as an improvement partner to Improve care planning across the child's journey, adoption timeliness and 	<p>More children placed in our own foster carers</p> <p>LAC can attend local schools and access health services</p> <p>IRO and social work time can be better spent with children rather than travelling</p> <p>Unit costs for LAC reduced</p> <p>Capital investment may be required</p> <p>Focussing resources and commissioning on</p>

			social work practice around permanency planning.	services that will reduce incidents of care. Permanence is achieved more quickly
16-17 year olds	A rising number of these coming into care in crisis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource panel to review all care plans for 15-17 year olds to ensure that care is the right option for them. • Consider what other options we can develop to support young people to remain at home eg Adolescent support services. • A significant number of young people return home when they leave care. We need to focus ensuring this happens where appropriate asap. With appropriate support • When young person leaving a residential placement outside of the County we should consider decommissioning the bed and reduce our dependence on residential beds • Develop fostering scheme to care for difficult adolescents 	Reduce the number of 16- 17 year olds requiring care Reduced costs
LAC with disabilities	Currently there are a small number of disabled children in care who require specialist external placements to meet their individual need.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of these cases will be undertaken to ensure quality and effectiveness 	Improved outcomes for children living in the right placement to meet their needs

Cohorts already within the care system	Those placed in residential care	<p>If we were to have the same proportion of young people in care as our SN then we would have 54 in residential care rather than the 61 we have.</p> <p>Some specialist external placements are necessary where a child's needs are so great that they cannot be met through internal placements. However, these are the most expensive placements. There are a number of younger looked after children currently in residential care that need to move into specialist foster care to improve their long term outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to review who we might be able to target to be safely returned home or onto independence or foster care • Challenge the independent foster care market to provide more carers • Market warming event held in September 2015 • Increase our own numbers • A market warming event took place in Sept 15 to challenge the independent foster care market. We want them to provide "step down" foster care placements in County for this specific cohort of young people. They will be given the profile of these young people. • Plan to move some of these children into foster care placements. 	<p>Fewer young people in residential care improving outcomes.</p> <p>Young children with complex needs live with foster carers rather than residential care</p>
	Section 20	<p>Xx of admissions into care were made under a Section 20. Is this the right solution for these children and young people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstating better gatekeeping through the weekly Resource Panel. All new admissions are taken to this panel to assess the quality and suitability of the plan in place. Plans are then reviewed every 4 weeks to ensure progress is maintained. • This centralises decision making on cases at a senior level and facilitates 	<p>Reduce drift for CYP</p> <p>Ensure PR is established</p> <p>Right actions are taken for CYP at the right time</p>

			<p>multiagency working which shares the risk across partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All section 20s to be reviewed and kept under review by HoS for CiN 	
	Neighbourhood intelligence Approach	<p>Focus on one of the hot spots in the County for Admissions to care to gather intelligence to build a picture of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What characteristics does the area have that means it is more likely children will come into care • Can demand in an area be predicted, managed and reduced by addressing deprivation alone • what additional assets does the area need to build resilience in the neighbourhood • What is the early offer of help in the area • What local commissioning is there that aims to build resilience in the neighbourhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the right children, young people and families who need extra help and support at the earliest opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By working together as a strong partnership to deliver an effective local offer of support • By delivering a whole family approach to make a difference and achieve good outcomes 	<p>More effective local commissioning focussed on areas of need to reduce demand for social care.</p> <p>More resilient communities.</p> <p>Reduced dependency.</p>

- What do the residents think the solutions are
- Do the Universal services know the profile of their area and can they evidence their contribution to reducing LAC through effective early interventions;

Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee				
Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Service Officer	Attendees
20 Sep 2016	Child Sexual Exploitation Service	Information about the current operation of Buckinghamshire's Child Sexual Exploitation Service including an update on the current re-commissioning process.	Amanda O'Borne	David Johnston, MD Social Care and Learning. Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
20 Sep 2016	Looked After Children's Strategy	For the Committee to review and comment on the new Looked After Children Strategy.	Karen Dolton, Interim Service Director, Children and Families	David Johnston, MD Children's Social Care and Learning. Karen Dolton, Service Director. Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
20 Sep 2016	The SEND Review and Strategy	To review and comment on the recently completed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review which will inform the new SEND strategy.	Gillian Shurrock, Head of SEN	Nicholas Wilson, Service Director Education. Gill Shurrock, Head of SEND.
20 Sep 2016	Voice of the Child	Inquiry. To consider how well we listening to the voice of the child, including the extent to which it influences the way services are planned, commissioned and delivered.	David Johnston, Strategic Director (Children and Young People)	Ms Lin Hazell - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Mr Z Mohammed - Cabinet Member for Education & Skills and Mr David Johnston - Managing Director Children's Social Care and Learning

Date	Topic	Description and purpose	Lead Service Officer	Attendees
8 Nov 2016	Buckinghamshire Youth Services	To receive an update approx. 12 months after commissioning of the new Information, Advice & Guidance service.	David Johnston, Strategic Director (Children and Young People)	Contributors: Ms Lin Hazell - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Mr David Johnston - Managing Director Children's Social Care and Learning and Laura Nankin, Head of Fair Access & Youth Provision.
8 Nov 2016	Closing the Gap Inquiry. Recommendations Update	A report on how the recommendations from the Closing the Gap Inquiry have been implemented and the outcomes achieved.	Nicholas Wilson, Service Director Education	
8 Nov 2016	Permanent Exclusions.	A report on permanent exclusions. (Focus on primary schools)	Nicholas Wilson, Service Director Education	

Date	Topic	Description and purpose	Lead Service Officer	Attendees
8 Nov 2016	Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry 12 Month Update	To receive a report on the implementation of the CSE Inquiry agreed recommendations, 12 months on.	David Johnston, Strategic Director (Children and Young People)	Contributors: Ms Lin Hazell - Cabinet Member for Children's Services Mr David Johnston - Managing Director Children's Social Care and Learning, Fran Gosling-Thomas, Chair, Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board
8 Nov 2016	Standards in Education	To assess schools in the wake of the introduction of the new national curriculum and the removal of nationally determined 'Levels' of attainment.	David Johnston, Strategic Director (Children and Young People)	Contributors: Ms Lin Hazell - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Mr Zahir Mohammed - Cabinet Member for Education & Skills and Mr David Johnston - Managing Director Children's Social Care and Learning

