

7g. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Improving Children's Social Care Services

I am pleased to report that the Department for Education appointed advisers have confirmed that the updated Improvement Plan is fit for purpose and that the recent accelerated pace of change across the programme, with involvement and ownership from colleagues across the Council, is continuing.

One of the areas of concern has been in relation to how well effective partnership working is in Buckinghamshire and our partner agencies not understanding our social care thresholds or their role in the safeguarding of children. A 'Making Partnerships Working Work for Children and Young People in Buckinghamshire' workshop was held on 23rd March. The event was well attended by colleagues from across the partner agencies. The Chief Executive led the event; we came away with commitments to a set of partnership working principles and agreed solutions to a number of the current issues. These solutions will now be embedded into the relevant workstream project plans.

Courageous Conversations

Staff from the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit took part in an event called 'Courageous Conversations' starting on the 23rd March. The event saw 5 days of staff representatives from the various teams across the service working through values, mission and vision statements, exploring user journeys, and sharing and finding solutions to challenges and barriers. I, along with the Leader and Chief Executive, attended the feedback sessions led by staff on the 27th March and was very impressed at how staff engaged not only during the day but how they also discussed progress each evening with their colleagues. This ensured a larger number of staff had the opportunity to shape the future of our social care services. Presentations and discussions were very informative and there were some wonderful suggestions on how to move our service forward. Staff will have further opportunities to remain involved and we look forward to hearing how these suggestions are progressing.

Placement Service

The First Step and Fostering Teams put on three Information Sessions in our most recent campaign to recruit new foster carers in Buckinghamshire. The Information Sessions were held in January in Buckingham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe. Representatives from the two teams and approved foster carers spoke at the sessions. Over the three areas, 70 people attended expressing an interest in becoming a foster carer and we are undertaking assessments with this now.

Parents' Event to Raise Awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation

The Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board child sexual exploitation working group held their first 'Be Wise, Know the Signs' community event for parents, carers and people working with young people in Chesham on the 23rd March. The event focused on raising awareness of sexual exploitation, focusing on how to spot the signs, what you can do to keep your children safe and where to go if you are concerned. The evening was led by key agencies across Buckinghamshire who are working together to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation including the County Council, Barnardo's RUSafe?, Thames Valley Police and Chiltern District

Council. Around 40 people attended the event and participated in discussions about sexual exploitation and what they could do to help in the local area, with many parents sharing ideas on how to raise awareness with other parents, family and friends. The working group will use this feedback now to plan events for the other district areas across Buckinghamshire.

Families First (Troubled Families)

We are pleased to confirm that Buckinghamshire has successfully supported the turnaround of the lives of 471 families as at the end of February 2015. This government funded programme is moving into Phase 2, where we aim to turn around the lives of 2000 families by 2020.

LIN HAZELL
CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES