Buckinghamshire County Council
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Agenda

STATUTORY / MANDATORY / DISCRETIONARY SPEND (ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNING) TASK & FINISH GROUP

Date: Monday 25 January 2010

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury

Agenda Item	Time	Page No

1   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3   INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN   10:00am

Brenda Jennings, Chairman of the Achievement and Learning Task and Finish Group, will open the meeting and remind members of the scope of the review

4   THE PLACEMENT PROGRAMME   10:10am   1 - 6

Contributor: Chris Munday, Divisional Director for Commissioning and Business Improvement

Purpose: The Placement Programme was developed when it was identified that assessments of children in the county were not holistic. Chris Munday will give an overview of the four strands of this programme.

Background papers:
Towards a Placement Strategy for vulnerable children placed away from home

LUNCH - 11:45AM

5   CHILDREN IN CARE   12:15pm   7 - 8
Contributor: Alan Dinning, Divisional Director for Safeguarding

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Purpose: Alan Dinning will give an overview of the area of looked after children, including current trends, pressures, challenges and the impact these have on placements, including out of county placements.

Paper:
Return – Children Looked After at 31 March

CLOSE OF MEETING - 2PM

For further information please contact: Helen Wailling on 01296 383614
Fax No 01296 382538, email: hwailling@buckscc.gov.uk

Members

Mrs M Aston	Mrs B Jennings (C)
Mr N Brown	Mr M Phillips
Mr N Hussain	Mr B Roberts

Co-opted Members

Mr J Bajina, Parent Governor, Secondary Sector
Mr R Davey, Church of England

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Towards a Placement Strategy for vulnerable children placed away from home

Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to ensuring high quality services that meet the needs and improve the outcomes of individual children. The County Council invests over £19 million per annum in placements away from home for vulnerable children and needs to ensure that its systems and process are ensuring that all of those children are safeguarded, educated and that placements meet identified needs and are commissioned in a cost effective way.

This document sets out some of the main areas that the fuller placement strategy will cover, so that

- It establishes core principles for the strategy
- It establishes a clear scope at the outset
- Stakeholders can comment and contribute further suggestions at an early stage
- It can be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis to take account of the developing agenda and completed work (first review date April 2009)

This document has been developed in line with the following key strategic imperatives. The vision of the Children and Young People's Trust incorporated in the Children and Young People's Plan and the County Councils corporate plan

Vision of Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust

"In Buckinghamshire we want all our children and young people to have the best start in life and to be able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives, and to be able to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society. Our aim is to ensure access to a range of universal services as well as developing more targeted services to meet their specialist needs"

Corporate Plan Aims

- *Aim 3 - Give children and young people the best possible life chances*

- *Aim 5 - Provide support to help families cope with their responsibilities*

Vision for Children and Young People Placed away from Home

Wherever possible children and young people are supported to live with their families or friends in their own communities.
If they need to be placed away from home they are in suitable, stable placements that can meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

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Core Principles of the future strategy

1. Improving Outcomes

- Focus on improving outcomes for children

2. Effective Integrated Assessment

- An integrated-Health, Education and social care, specialist assessment to confirm the need for the placement and the type of placement required

3. Promoting Prevention

- Clear integration with other strategies, both for universal services such as Early Years and specialist services such as CAMHS to ensure that all vulnerable children are appropriately targeted and have straightforward access to all the services they require.

- A preventative approach to entering the care system, e.g the use of alternatives to care such as the boarding pathfinder.

4. High Quality Placements

- Any placement away from home is for sound and valid social and educational reasons (supported by legislation eg a statement or order) that have been tested and reviewed by an appropriate process

- Placements are with family and friends where this will best meet the identified needs of the child/young person taking into account all appropriate safeguards

- Placements are near home unless that is inappropriate for specific reasons e.g where considerations relating to safety are paramount .

- Education needs are met in line with statute and continuity of education is protected wherever possible.

- A choice of placement where possible to meet needs.

- Continuity of placement post 18 where this is desirable and appropriate.

5. Intelligent Commissioning & Process

- Focus on effectiveness and efficiency of delivery and commissioning based on rigorous evaluation of outcomes

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- Focus on quality information about levels and types of need

- A market management approach is established using a mixed economy of provision including private, independent and voluntary and in-house provision so as to increase options for meeting needs.

- A clear approach to managing risks of a market management approach

- Effective transition planning to adulthood.

- An integrated approach with an integrated meetings structure to carry out the necessary processes i.e there should be no parallel or duplicate aspects of the process with different meetings covering similar ground.

Objectives of the strategy

Improved outcomes for children and young people delivered cost effectively with:

1. High quality fit for purpose in house boarding, fostering and residential services

2. Clarity about the levels and types of all placements required and how these will be commissioned and procured.

4. Improved placement stability through appropriate assessment processes and placement choice.

5. Consideration of the implications of the legislation arising from the Care Matters bill currently before parliament.

6. Generation of efficiencies through.

- Understanding our needs more effectively
- Establishing a efficient system for the commissioning of external placements
- Using National Contracts both internally and externally
- Learning from the independent sector and piloting new approaches to assessing in-house carers
- Reducing unit costs through contract negotiation.
- Getting it right first time through effective integrated assessment processes thus reducing placement moves
- Increasing percentage of placements near home and minimising transport costs.
- Developing Framework Agreements with external providers

- Developing consortia arrangements with other local authorities for children and young people required highly specialised education, care and other support

For most of these objectives there exist performance indicators and appropriate targets for them will be set.

NI 61	Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption
NI 62	Stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements
NI 63	Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement
NI 117	16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
NI 99	Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2
NI 100	Looked after children reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2
NI 101	Looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths
NI 103	Special Educational Needs – statements issued within 26 weeks
NI 104	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving Key Stage 2 English and Maths threshold
NI 105	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths
NI 147	Care leavers in suitable accommodation
NI 148	Care leavers in education, employment or training

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Work Programme 2008/09

Programme Stream 1: Strategy

Analysis of data and trends so as to give a sound assessment of future need:

- Trends in children and young people's population
- Forecasts of young people's population
- 5 year trends in placements
- Trends in caring arrangements (5 years)
- Unit costs
- Benchmarking information

Clear flow charts of the required processes so that, for example, there are clear "audit trails" on decision making on significant funding decisions for individual children.

Programme Stream 2: Integrated Specialist Needs Assessment

To evaluate present systems and seek to establish improvements to ensure effective, high quality integrated assessment processes to improve outcomes for vulnerable children placed away from home. The project will consider the following assessment processes:

- Initial Assessment (Social Care)
- Core Assessment (Social care)
- Statement process (AIS)
- Health assessment – specialist placements

The project should establish the following:

- What is a good integrated assessment-
- What processes are required to achieve good quality integrated assessments

Programme Stream 3: Managing the Market

To establish more robust commissioning and procurement approaches and manage the market more effectively to generate efficiencies. This work will include

- Expanding the role of the Access to Resources team and transfer the responsibility for commissioning and procurement of Independent Fostering Agencies to them

- Ensuring the implementation of National contracts for all placements (including in-house provision and Buckinghamshire Special Schools (where there is residential provision)
- Identify and agree the core business of the Fostering Service, identifying the children for whom they will be the preferred provider.
- Identify and agree the core business of the Counties Children's Homes, identifying the children for whom they will be the preferred provider.
- Establishing appropriate framework agreements to ensure access to appropriate resources in a timely, safe manner in line with contract standing orders
- Where appropriate seek to develop consortia of Local Authorities and partners to commission key placement services.

CLA Summary2005_10v1.xls

SSDA903 - Children Looked After

SSDA903 Return - Children Looked After at 31st March

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (Nov 09)
Number becoming looked after	112	116	99	65	134	
Number ceasing to be looked after	128	101	100	105	110	
Total number looked after at 31st March	296	317	316	287	313	355
Rate (10,000 0-17)	26.4	27.5	28.5	24.4	27.4	31.0
Statistical Neighbour Rate	35.5	34.7	33.8	33.4	n/a	n/a
England Rate	55.1	54.6	54.6	54.1	55.0	n/a

Children's Information Team

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SSDA903 - Children Looked After

Children and young people who are looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18
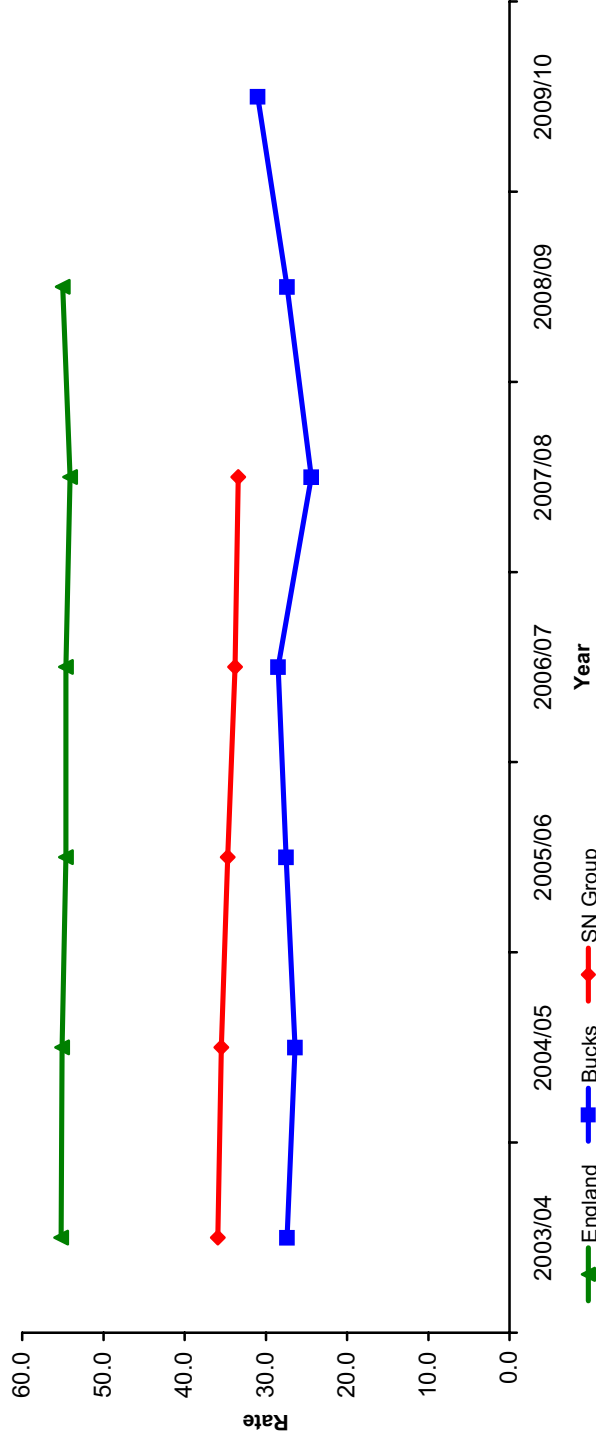
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Bucks	27.4	26.4	27.5	28.5	24.4	27.4	31.0
SN Group	35.9	35.5	34.7	33.8	33.4		
England	55.2	55.1	54.6	54.6	54.1	55.0	

Comment

The number of children looked after by Buckinghamshire has risen over the last 18 months, however is still slightly below the rate for similar authorities.

The number of children looked after has risen by 53 or 17% in the six months April to September 2009 and by 79 or 28% in the eighteen months from April 2008.