



Buckinghamshire Council Children's & Education Select Committee

Agenda

Date: Thursday 9 September 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, HP19 8FF - Aylesbury

Membership: P Birchley (Chairman), S Adoh, K Bates, D Blamires, A Collingwood, M Dormer, R Gaster, N Hussain, S James, C Jones, S Kayani, R Matthews, A Osibogun, D Summers and P Turner

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	14:00	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING The minutes of the meeting held on 24 th June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.		3 - 6
4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS		
5 EMOTIONAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS The Committee will consider a report outlining the significant amount of work undertaken in relation to the emotional health of Buckinghamshire's school pupils, particularly in the light of the Covid pandemic. The report gives details of current issues, the profile of need, current work underway in schools and steps for the future. Contributors: Richard Nash, Corporate Director Children's Services Simon James, Service Director Education Elizabeth Biggs, Public Health Principal Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement & Learning Dr Tim Jones, Principal Educational Psychologist	14:10	7 - 20
6 CLOSING THE ATTAINMENT GAP IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	15:10	21 - 28

The Committee will consider a report giving details of the current attainment gap in schools, the Buckinghamshire versus national levels; key actions to address the gap and the delivery plan for the next academic year.

Contributors:

Richard Nash, Corporate Director Children's Services
Simon James, Service Director – Education
Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement and Learning.

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| 7 | WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022 | 16:00 | 29 - 34 |
| | The Committee will consider the draft work programme for the municipal year 2021-2022. There will be an opportunity to discuss areas of the programme which might be considered for more detailed work. | | |
| 8 | DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING | | |
| | The next meeting of the Children's and Education Select Committee will be held on 11 th November 2021 at 2.00 p.m. at The Gateway, Buckinghamshire Council. | | |

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Katie Dover on 01296 531339, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.



Buckinghamshire Council

Children's & Education Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2021 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, HP19 8FF - AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

P Birchley, S Adoh, D Blamires, A Collingwood, M Dormer, S James, C Jones, R Matthews, A Osibogun, D Summers, P Turner and R Stuchbury

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

A Cranmer

Agenda Item

1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Birchley welcomed the Committee Members to the first meeting of the Select Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year and the Committee Members introduced themselves. The Chairman noted her aim was that the Committee would work alongside the Council's Officers to support them in their work, helping to provide children's and education services to Buckinghamshire.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman appointed Councillor Mark Dormer as the Vice-Chairman of the Children's Services and Education Select Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mark Dormer be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Children's Services and Education Select Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that Councillors Bates, Gaster, Hussein and Kayani had given their apologies for the meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Stuchbury was attending as a substitute for Councillors Bates and Kayani.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Matthews – School Governor and Volunteer at a Charity “Transitions UK”

Councillor Blamires – parent of a SEND child and works in a school

Councillor James – school governor

Councillor Adoh – school governor

Councillor Summers – school governor

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 4th March and 26th May 2021 were reviewed. Councillor Stuchbury noted that a detailed conversation that he had on the subject of Ofsted was not included in the March minutes, although it would be viewable on the webcast of that meeting.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 4th March and 26th May be AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6 PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Councillor Cranmer introduced the priorities for the Children’s Services and Education Select Committee for this municipal year, noting that there are 84,000 children in Buckinghamshire and that the council’s services for them covered many different areas of work.

Mr Richard Nash, Corporate Director for Children’s Services, introduced both service Directors; Palvinder Kudhail for Children’s Social Care and Simon James for Education. Mr Nash noted that Children’s Services is heavily regulated through the work of Ofsted, the registration of children’s homes and in terms of special education and disability inspections.

Palvinder Kudhail, noted that the priorities for the Children’s Social Care service area were as follows:

- Service Improvement; ensuring that quality of front-line services impacts positively on outcomes for children. Quality assurance was highlighted with a focus on implementing various quality assurance activities and learning from them.
- Responding to the growing demands on the service as a result of COVID 19. For example; there had been a 24% increase in contacts referred from partner agencies since last year and a 47% increase in contacts that resulted in referrals.
- Recruitment and retention of social workers. This is a national and local issue. The focus is on reducing the agency workforce via various mechanisms such as the social work academy and media campaigns.
- Recruitment of in-house foster carers. The number of looked after children has increased and those looked after by foster carers.

Simon James, Service Director for Education outlined the service priorities as follows:

- SEND delivery and improvements; noting that the area is subject to inspections by Ofsted and CQC. 85% of all new assessments are completed within 20 weeks where the national average is 65%. Children with education, health and care plans; increasing quality assurance and audit work to ensure plans are received quickly and are of good quality. The focus is on working with families and understanding their needs. Another focus is on transitions into adult services and preparing for adulthood.
- Improving educational provision and outcomes. 95% of early years providers and 90.3% of schools were noted to be good or outstanding. Schools were being prepared for Ofsted visits. Work had focussed on ensuring that vulnerable children were supported with schooling through lockdowns with good attendance. Focus on narrowing the

attainment gap for disadvantaged children. The service was supporting schools on the academic and mental health catch up project. School buildings were being built in Kingsbrook to give 60 primary places and 180 secondary school places. 36 places would be provided for children with mental health issues.

- Access to Good Mental Health Support – The service is working with Aspire, working with headteachers and with Bucks Mind; some commissioned by community boards. The service was ensuring children were referred quickly. Supervision for headteachers was being provided.
- Early Help – ensuring children and families have support as soon as it is needed. The interface between early help and children’s social care is assessed weekly. The Early Help strategy is being reassessed and brings in the work of several partners.

The following key points were raised during discussion:

- The importance of special educational support as demand is increasing in this area, and Councillors mentioned autism and dyslexia issues. It was noted that the SEN report had now been published. SEN support looked after 8500 children. The service screens for their needs as early as possible.
- Children in special schools can be left behind educationally. £6million had been received by Buckinghamshire schools so far and it was for the schools to decide how to use the funding. The service is helping schools decide how best to use the funding; the aim being to guide the funding to help the most vulnerable. The “Quality First” teaching project gave support to teachers as to how to help children with additional needs. Through this project, work is evidence based and monitored.
- The Ofsted improvement journey was documented. Since the 2017 inspection an Improvement board had been put in place and met to discuss improvements on a regular basis. Another Ofsted inspection was expected soon. The improvement plan report from the improvement board was reported to Cabinet on a regular basis.

It was noted that the Ofsted report and the last monitoring visit report was available online. The service would provide a link to the report and a summary of success rates.

Action: Mr Nash

- There is a national context regarding the recruitment of social workers. A new cohort of social workers would be starting at the council’s academy in September. The service was looking at how to increase the academy in the future. The management team were working hard to provide support and connectivity to the social workers. The aim was to provide a career pathway for social workers with opportunities to apply for other roles within the service. The service currently has 350 qualified social workers, with unqualified social workers also employed. At the ASYE Academy social workers were given work in controlled circumstances while they were training so that skills were gained in the appropriate way. Immersion in the service occurred gradually over time and under supervision. Recruitment packages were not a barrier to recruitment.
- Work on engaging with young people was ongoing to assess the right services were being provided to them. The Corporate Parenting Panel was the body responsible for this area of work.
- Formal graded visits from Ofsted would resume from September. Results were collated from each school. It was requested that a summary of attainment would come to a meeting of the Select Committee.

Action: Mr James

- Different teams had different capacity for case work, depending on their role. The average social worker caseload would depend on where the social worker was based.

- The Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) was working well; reacting to risk and concerns over children in a timely way. It was noted that between 1 April and 31 May 2020, the service received 2299 contacts compared to 2771 contacts during the same period in 2021. In addition, referrals also increased from 1410 to 2072 during the same period. Mr Nash noted the need to support the MASH staff well.
- Councillors wished to receive training on their role in corporate parenting.
- **Action: Mr R Nash to provide training opportunities for Councillors on corporate parenting.**

7 WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Scrutiny Officer, Mrs Katie Dover introduced the work programme item. The Committee considered ideas and suggestions for areas of the service's work to be examined by the Select Committee over the forthcoming municipal year. The following suggestions were made for the work programme:

- Mental health issues; and how schools and partners work together on these
- Ofsted – the implementation plan and gaining understanding of the process before and after the inspection.
- SEND – understanding the range of issues and how all the services work together to help families and the timeframes involved. Possibly a subject for a working party.
- Transitions, preparing for adulthood for care leavers
- Fostering and adoption

Mr Nash stressed the need to avoid duplication and to inform Councillors at the outset of discussions as to how far progress had been made on each of these areas of interest.

The suggested items would be brought back as a work programme item to the next meeting of the committee.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be Thursday 9th September 2021.

CHAIRMAN



Report to Children's and Education Select Committee

Date:	9 September 2021
Title:	Emotional well-being in Buckinghamshire Schools
Relevant councillor(s):	Anita Cranmer and Julie Ward
Author and/or contact officer:	Elizabeth Biggs, Public Health Principal Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement and Learning Tim Jones, Principal Educational Psychologist

1. Executive summary

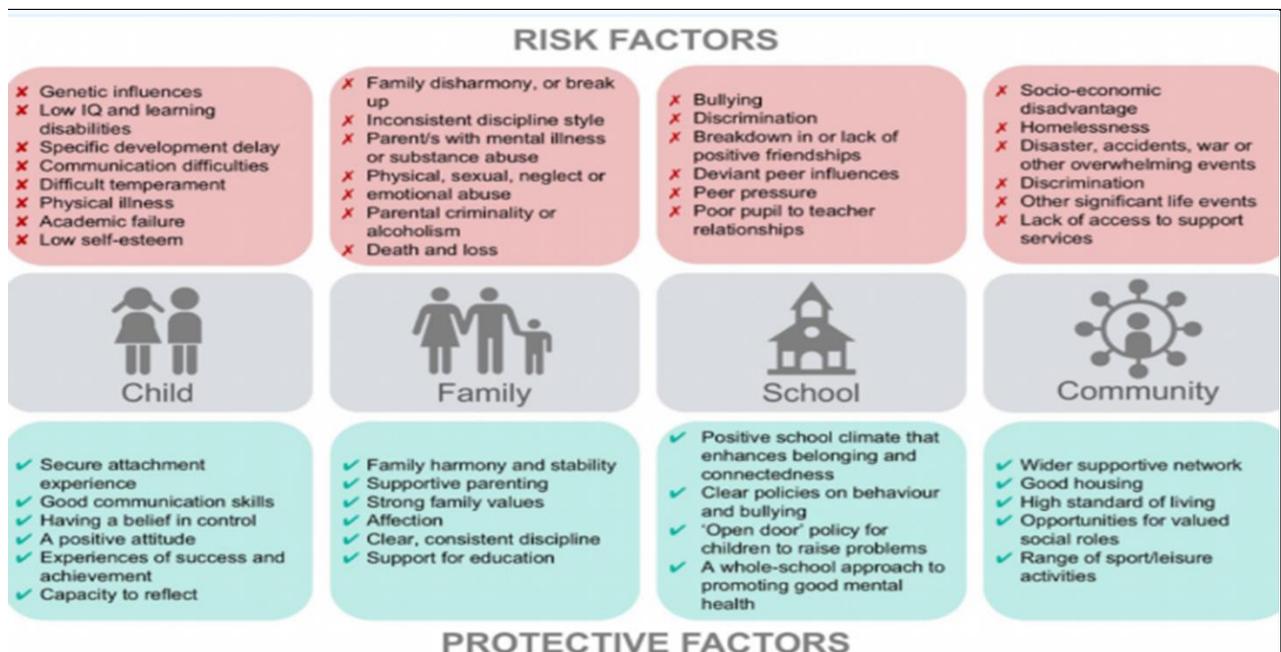
- 1.1 There is a recognition that emotional well being is key to ensuring that children and young people in Buckinghamshire thrive and succeed. The pandemic has raised the profile of well being and mental health in schools and created challenging conditions for children and young people. A significant body of work has taken place to support pupils in our schools over the last year, some programmes embedding from previous years and some new work funded by the council and central government. Plans for the next academic year are in train and oversight of this work is being driven by a new board. It is worth noting that the responsibilities for promoting positive emotional well-being sits with a wide range of professional bodies and individuals, not solely the Local Authority. Good practice and effective responses rely upon strong and connected multi agency partnership working.

2. Situation in Buckinghamshire Schools

2.1 Current issues and profile of need

Good mental health is key to the current development and future outcomes for children and young people. Mental health and wellbeing are a fundamental part of young people's general wellbeing, and is closely bound up with their physical health, life experiences and life chances. Mental health problems not only cause distress but can also be associated with significant problems in other aspects of life. In addition,

they can have implications for every aspect of young people’s lives including their ability to engage with education, make and keep friends, engage in constructive family relationships, and find their own way in the world. Identification, support and treatment for children and young people with mental health problems are all important parts of the response and services which are needed for this age group. The following chart provides an overview of risk and protective factors for children and young people’s mental health.



The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have generally fallen harder on already-disadvantaged sub-groups of the population (*O’Shea, 2020*), including those:

- experiencing urban deprivation and overcrowded housing.
- who smoke and/or suffer from long-term health conditions.
- working in frontline and caring professions.
- individuals with disabilities.
- from some minority ethnic groups.

Since the start of the pandemic demand for services has altered:

- suppressed demand – children, young people and young adults who are already not coping with their thoughts, feelings and behaviours who would otherwise benefit from a psychosocial intervention. This includes those from poor income households, who have been exposed to multiple adversities, who are disabled, who have coexisting health conditions, with neuro-disabilities, who are victimised and socially isolated because of their sex, sexuality and/or ethnicity.

- altered demand – children, young people, young adults and pregnant women who do not have access to digital interventions or have not benefited from those interventions.
- generated demand – children and young people who have been exposed to adversity. Key workers and their families, young carers, those from minority ethnic communities, those in low-income households.

Approximately 10m people, including 1.5m children, are likely to need new or additional mental health support as a direct result of the crisis (O’Shea, 2020).

2.2 National and local benchmarks

a) National data context before Covid-19

- One in six school-aged children has a mental health problem. This is an increase from one in ten in 2004 and one in nine in 2017 (NHS Digital, 2020).
- Pupils who have a mental health problem are more likely to be excluded from school than their peers. In 2013/14, one in five students with an identified social, emotional and mental health difficulty received at least one fixed period exclusion (Department for Education, 2016). Research suggests that school exclusions are linked to long-term mental health problems (Ford et al., 2017).
- Two-thirds of children with a mental health problem have had contact with professional services. Teachers were the most commonly cited source (48.5%), followed by primary care professionals (33.4%), and mental health specialists (25.2%) (NHS Digital, 2018).
- Children from the poorest 20% of households are four times more likely to have serious mental health difficulties by the age of 11 compared to those from the wealthiest 20% (Morrison Gutman et al., 2015).

b) National data context during Covid-19

University College London, Institute of Child Health systematic review, 2021¹
 Academic paper prepared for SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies)
 International review of 72 studies on the effects of school closures on children and young people’s mental health. The key findings are detailed below:

¹ [Impacts of school closures on physical and mental health of children and young people: a systematic review \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94221/impacts-of-school-closures-on-physical-and-mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-a-systematic-review.pdf)

- Reductions in child protection referrals, emergency department and hospital admissions.
- Increased screen-time and social media use.
- Decreased physical activity.
- Increased reporting of anxiety and depressive symptoms.
- Higher harms documented in children and young people from more deprived populations.
- Increases in anxiety and depression were greatest in those with a pre-existing physical or mental health condition, neuro-disability, SEND or disability (Young Minds, 2020; NHSD, 2020; Family Fund, 2020; Waite, 2020; Waite & Creswell, 2020)
- Children and young people's behaviour or wellbeing was the highest stressor for parents of children and young people with pre-existing mental health or neurodevelopmental difficulties, and 50% parents of children and young people with SEN reported children and young people's behaviour as a frequent stressor (Waite & Creswell, 2020)

c) Local data context – Oxwell School Survey

The Oxwell School Survey is led by the University of Oxford, who have devised a 30-minute questionnaire for pupils on a range of health and wellbeing issues. Adolescence is a critical period for mental health and brain development. The survey asks school pupils about how they experience school life and health-related issues, as well as providing insight into how the school lockdowns have impacted their wellbeing. Questions are tailored to the age range of pupils. Buckinghamshire pupils have taken part in the survey in Summer 2020 and 2021. A number of other local authorities have also taken part in the survey.

2020 Buckinghamshire Oxwell Survey - 3,493 primary and secondary pupil responses

- Approximately 3 in 10 primary pupils reported that lockdown worsened their general happiness and made them more lonely.
- By Year 13, 6 in 10 pupils reported that lockdown had worsened their general happiness and made them more lonely.
- 50% of all pupils reported doing less exercise.

2021 Buckinghamshire Oxwell Survey - 4,385 primary and secondary pupil responses

- Schools have been completing the Oxwell School Survey in the Summer term 2021.
- Currently the data is being analysed and individual reports are being sent back to schools. The Buckinghamshire-wide report is expected at the end of September. Findings from the survey will be disseminated widely to support system partners in priorities and future planning arrangements for children and young people. In the 2021 survey there was strong focus on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

2.3 Current work in schools and their impact

a) Mental Health Support Teams

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) complement existing school support for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing by providing expertise and resources to deliver quicker support to individuals who may not typically meet the CAMHS thresholds for involvement, but would benefit from accessing early support. MHSTs aim to bring together education and mental health professionals to develop a systemic and sustainable approach to children and young people's mental health.

In 2019, the Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group was selected as part of the National Trailblazer Mental Health Support Team Programme, funded by NHS England. As a result, a collaboration between Buckinghamshire Council, the Oxford Health Foundation Trust and Bucks Mind has established two MHSTs – each comprising education mental health practitioners, a youth worker, a family worker and a peer support educator. The project is expanding, with MHSTs currently directly linked with 47 schools and settings across Buckinghamshire.

The Buckinghamshire MHSTs engage in a variety of work within the partner schools, including individual therapeutic work with pupils, small-group sessions, parent-based interventions, mental health awareness training and community signposting. It is recognised that schools need to actively promote mental wellbeing and resilience, and thus the MHSTs adopted an integrated, whole-school approach that goes beyond teaching alone to pervade wider aspects of school life.

The impact of this intervention has been that the project has had reach to 28% of all young people in Buckinghamshire this is a rise from 16.5% last year and will increase further next academic year. Practitioners are engaging directly with students in this work, the outcomes of which are reported directly to Health and Wellbeing board.

b) Senior Mental Health Lead

Following the government's response to the consultation on the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health green paper in July 2018, it is the expectation that every school and college will designate a member of their senior leadership team (or individual with equivalent whole-setting authority) to be the Senior Mental Health Lead. This role involves coordination and oversight of mental health and wellbeing provision within the school or college, with a focus on implementing an effective whole-setting approach to supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

As part of the work of the Local Authority's Social, Emotional and Mental Health Impact Group (chaired by Stuart Cateridge – Executive Head Teacher), a directory of Senior Mental Health Leads has been compiled in order to facilitate cross-setting support and sharing of good practice. Furthermore, representatives from the SEMH Impact Group are working alongside the School Improvement Team to develop an offer for senior mental health lead training, for which Department for Education grant funding has been announced.

Whilst this intervention is in the early stage of development, there has been impact in that schools have started to identify senior mental health leads and raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing in their establishments. Training will be delivered in the academic year 2021-22.

c) Wellbeing for Education Return

The Department for Education's Wellbeing for Education Return (WER) programme was announced in August 2020, requiring local authorities to oversee the dissemination of training materials out to schools and settings, focussing on a whole-school approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

In Buckinghamshire, professionals from Aspire Alternative Provision and Buckinghamshire Council's Educational Psychology Team delivered the WER training to a total of 244 members of staff from schools across Buckinghamshire. From the project evaluation, more than 90% of survey respondents agreed with the statements:

- I understand the mental health and wellbeing impacts of Covid-19 on myself and the wider staff in my school/college.
- I understand the impact of staff mental health and wellbeing on children and young people in my school/college.
- I recognise the importance of acknowledging staff concerns and dilemmas and identifying and signposting staff for further support.
- I am aware of normal responses to stress and loss.

To further support the training, a local directory of mental health and emotional wellbeing resources has also been developed, hosted at the Connecting Bucks Schools website (www.connectingbucksschools.com/buckinghamshire-wellbeing-resources). This website has been accessed by 2,456 different users, with feedback indicating that school staff and parents are able to quickly and easily access local support for a range of mental health challenges and wellbeing opportunities. This directory will be maintained and updated by Buckinghamshire Council.

The impact of this intervention has been that over 95% of schools attended the training and in each of these settings staff are trained to identify and address low level mental health and wellbeing needs of students and other staff as well as being clear for escalation routes through to other services.

d) Link Programme

The Link Programme is an evidence-based initiative led by Anna Freud Centre and funded by the Department for Education. The programme brings together schools, colleges and mental health services in a series of workshops led by Clinical Commissioning Groups to deliver sustainable change in the delivery of children and young people's mental health services. In particular, the programme highlights the importance of taking on a collaborative approach when dealing with mental health in children and young people.

The programme has been delivered successfully to two cohorts within Buckinghamshire. Cohort 1 consisted of 32 professionals (18 school representatives and 15 representatives ranging from the local authority/CAMHS/CCG); cohort 2 consisted of 28 professionals (16 representatives from schools and 12 representatives ranging from the local authority/CAMHS/CCG).

Key themes to emerge from the programme included the need for more information about processes and pathways for accessing CAMHS, greater availability of details about local services, and the desire for school mental health liaison groups to facilitate networking and sharing of good practice amongst settings.

The impact of this intervention has been that there has been circulation of information regarding CAMHS and the MHSTs to schools, promotion of the newly-revamped Local Offer webpages, and exploration of ways to best deliver a school liaison group (see Section 4.1). This further ensures that schools have the tools to address issues surrounding mental health and wellbeing for their students.

e) Staff Training and Support

In parallel with the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, Buckinghamshire Council commissioned several projects aimed at developing the knowledge and

expertise of school staff in relation to supporting mental health and wellbeing. These included a programme of twilight webinars delivered by experts from a range of agencies and services, providing bespoke continuing professional development in areas such as emotional attachment difficulties and bereavement.

Other projects included establishing 'peer learning sets': a reflective group framework promoting cross-setting mutual support for school staff, facilitated by professionals from Aspire Alternative Provision and the Educational Psychology team. There was also a coaching package for senior leaders, accessed by 33 headteachers across the county.

Facilitated by Aspire Alternative Provision, this gave school leaders access to a confidential source of support, providing opportunities to improve their confidence and competence when dealing with the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

Responding to requests from school leaders, Public Health commissioned the youth suicide prevention charity Papyrus to deliver a sequence of online seminars and workshops. Multiple sessions have been arranged in order to maximise accessibility for school staff, with the first tranche taking place in July 2021.

In addition, schools were given access to a new 'Psychological First Aid' training course, developed by Public Health England (PHE). The training focuses on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations, such as those triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

The impact of this is that across the 2020/21 academic year there were 903 attendees in total, with over 90% of evaluations indicating that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the training.

f) Critical Incident Support

The Educational Psychology team within Buckinghamshire Council are responsible for providing direct support to schools and settings with respect to 'critical incidents' – i.e. serious local events that are likely to have a profound emotional impact on the school community, such as the sudden death of a pupil or staff member. In these circumstances, the focus of the educational psychologists is typically to work in close collaboration with school senior leaders in order to guide and facilitate the practical and emotional support provided to pupils, staff and families, both in the immediate aftermath and over the longer term.

The Educational Psychology team responded to 21 critical incidents during the 2020/21 academic year, across nursery, primary, secondary and college settings. The

support provided ranged from advice and consultations with key senior staff through to home visits for families directly impacted by the critical incident.

Alongside the response to critical incidents, the Educational Psychology team produced resources to aid schools and settings in supporting children and young people experiencing bereavement, particularly in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. These were made available using the Buckinghamshire SchoolsWeb platform.

The impact of this work varies depending on the specific incident, but the aims are for staff to have the mental resilience to manage a critical incident and to have the tools at their disposal to support the pupils who have been affected by it.

g) Suicide prevention in Buckinghamshire upper school

In line with national trends, there has been a marked rise in Buckinghamshire cases of serious self-harm and suicidality amongst children and young people in the past year. In autumn 2020 Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust recorded a 50% increase in acute paediatric assessments, including a 67% increase in suicidality presentations at A&E.

The Educational Psychology team was approached by senior leaders at a Buckinghamshire Upper School following multiple instances of attempted suicides amongst the student population. In response, educational psychologists produced a session for students on peer suicide prevention, which was embedded within a whole-school initiative aimed at spotlighting and promoting youth mental health and wellbeing. The educational psychologists combined this with relevant training for all school staff, as well as written communication out to parents/carers on the topic. Since this work, there have not been any further cases of attempted suicide amongst the school population.

h) Promoting staff wellbeing in a Buckinghamshire primary school

The Department for Education notes that “taking a coordinated and evidence-informed approach to mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges leads to improved pupil and student emotional health and wellbeing which can help readiness to learn” (DfE, 2021). It is recognised that in order to promote these positive outcomes for children, there is a need to support staff mental health and wellbeing (Glazzard & Rose, 2019).

Prompted by reflections on the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, the headteacher at a Buckinghamshire Primary School contacted the Educational Psychology team for support with regards to the mental health challenges being faced by his school staff. In response, a bespoke workshop was created and delivered,

covering aspects such as proactive self-care and mitigating vicarious traumatisation. Each attendee was guided to produce a personal wellbeing plan to follow after the session. Qualitative feedback gathered indicated that the workshop had been positively received, with clear next steps identified in terms of staff managing their own mental health and wellbeing.

2.4 Links to Health and Wellbeing Board

The refreshed Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Buckinghamshire ('Happier, Healthier Lives') aims to create the best conditions for people in the county to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives and achieve their full potential. The vision is to improve outcomes for the whole population as well as having a greater impact on improving the health and wellbeing of those people in Buckinghamshire who have poorer health and wellbeing.

The strategy proposes to make an impact on three key priority areas:

- Start Well
- Live Well
- Age Well

The Health and Wellbeing Board has responsibility and oversight of the population health and wellbeing recovery plan (part of the Bucks 3 Rs for recovery model). The action plan for the first year of the refreshed Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be aligned with the actions in the recovery plan that sit under the Board's priorities of Start Well, Live Well and Age Well.

The actions are supported by an evidence base detailed in a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA), which draws on multiple sources including research, stakeholder views from residents, elected members and wider partners – including a commissioned schools survey completed by 815 primary school and 2,678 secondary school pupils (June-July 2020). Seven health and wellbeing recovery plan priorities have been identified, one of which is 'promoting mental health and wellbeing including addressing social isolation'.

Health and wellbeing outcomes can be improved by focusing on children and young people. We want to make sure that every child has the best possible start in life. The key to getting this right is tackling health and social inequalities and preventing poor outcomes. We want to make sure all children are supported to reach their potential in school, further education and employment, and that families are supported to make healthy lifestyle choices.

We know that good mental health helps us to enjoy life and build positive relationships. It gives us resilience to deal with day-to-day difficulties and major life events. Early diagnosis of mental health problems is a key factor in the success of treatment and preventing the worsening of conditions. This will enable young people in Buckinghamshire to reach their full potential.

2.5 Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Group

The delivery and monitoring of the DfE’s Wellbeing for Education Return programme has been through a local steering group chaired by the Head of Service, Achievement and Learning. The group has included representation from Public Health, ASPIRE Alternative Provision, Educational Psychology and CAMHS.

Prior to the Wellbeing for Education Return programme starting, Buckinghamshire had already been committed to supporting children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing. A multi-agency Children’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group was established in 2014 chaired by Public Health/CAMHS Commissioners. An action plan has been developed to reflect current key priorities and actions, and the meeting includes a standing item for partner updates. However, it has been identified that there is a need to make this action plan more reflective of the wider mental health and emotional wellbeing system. For context, Buckinghamshire is also required nationally to produce an annual update of its transformation plan for children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Given the context outlined above, it was recognised that there was a significant opportunity to further develop and strengthen the Buckinghamshire mental health and emotional wellbeing work by bringing together the two existing groups – the Wellbeing for Education Return Steering Group and the Children’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group into one single group. This creates opportunities to align action plans and priorities, thus avoiding gaps and duplication. The bringing together of these two groups ensures there is an appropriate multi-agency mechanism to address key issues as and when they arise, e.g. suicide behaviours in young people. Smaller task and finish groups may also be established for focused short-term pieces of work. The group has already had its initial meeting and is producing an annual plan of work to ensure that schools have a depth of coverage appropriate to age and stage of learning for all pupils. The group is chaired by the Head of Service, Achievement and Learning, with the Public Health Principal as Vice Chair.

The Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Group has four key aims:

1. To continually improve children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, and promote equitable outcomes across the county.
2. To further develop and strengthen a whole-system approach to promoting and supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.
3. To co-ordinate and promote a whole-system awareness of the resources available to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.
4. To embed the core principle that mental health and emotional wellbeing is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility.

3. Next steps and review

3.1 Future plans to address mental health and wellbeing in Buckinghamshire schools

The Department for Education announced an extension to the Wellbeing for Education Return grant funding for the 2021/22 academic year. The stated aims are for local authorities to continue the work from the 2020/21 programme whilst also helping schools to find sustainable ways of working together, and expanding existing programmes supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools.

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Group has identified five key areas of activity in order to deliver against these objectives:

- a) School improvement support on best use of recovery and PP funding. Link to The Bucks Challenge Board and the closing the gap agenda, working collaboratively with Ed Psych team to establish a local evidence base.
- b) Aspire commission for 2021/22 – updating training for school and college leads (inc. local directory and support to cascade), training to examine well-being support in a post-COVID system.
- c) Liaison Group Well-being Champion Network developed (link to MHST). Promotion of a single whole-school approach to well-being, potentially align with a well-being award/quality mark.
- d) Oxwell school survey – triage school results & provide bespoke support for schools with greatest need (e.g. 1:1 support, action plans). Support for all schools through drop in clinics.
- e) Review current support to determine areas of greatest need/impact. Projects to include: senior MH lead training, suicide prevention training, supervision of Headteachers, ELSA, Nurture Groups, Headteacher Wellbeing Support & Advice Line, mental health and well-being training sessions.

3.2 **Expected Outcomes from Future Work**

- School staff are trained to better recognise and support wellbeing and mental health concerns amongst students and staff and able to address low level issues.
- School staff are clear on escalation routes for significant concerns and have experience of engagement with partner organisations such as CAMHS
- A wider understanding of wellbeing and mental health issues and how they affect children and young people – both in the short and long term, and that this is everyone’s responsibility
- Staff recognise and access support for their own mental health and wellbeing
- Where children and young people are in crisis, this is recognised earlier leading to a decrease in acute presentation at paediatric services

4. **Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 4.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone [] or email []

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Report to Children's and Education Select Committee

Date:	9 September 2021
Title:	Closing the Attainment Gap in Buckinghamshire
Relevant councillor(s):	Anita Cranmer and Julie Ward
Author and/or contact officer:	Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement and Learning

1. Executive summary

1.1 The report identifies the current academic outcomes for children eligible for the pupil premium grant (PPG) and the attainment gap between them and all pupils nationally. Key actions to address the gap taken in the last year are highlighted along with the delivery plan for the next academic year. It identifies key measures of success as:

- Maintain the attainment gap at 2019 levels for exam outcomes in 2022.
- 90% of schools in the universal training offer for the academic year 2021-22.
- 100% attendance from focus schools in support sessions.
- 0.5% reduction in the attainment gap for exam outcomes in 2023.
- Further develop programmes, meeting need, to support schools in closing the attainment gap for the next five years.

2. Content of report

2.1 The attainment gap - what it is and how it is measured

The "attainment gap" measure used by Ofsted and the Department for Education, and referenced in this report, looks at the difference in performance between pupils who are classed as "disadvantaged" in the LA and the national average for other, non-disadvantaged, pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are defined as:

- those who were known to be eligible for free school meals in any of the previous six years as indicated in any termly or annual school census, pupil referral unit (PRU) or alternative provision (AP) census;
- children looked after by the local authority for at least 1 day;

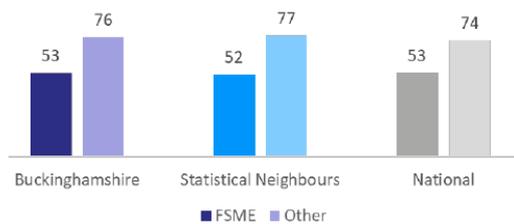
- or children who have been adopted from care. Schools receive Pupil Premium funding for their disadvantaged pupils.

In Buckinghamshire, as reported in the October 2020 census, 12.7% of the pupil cohort (or 10,980 pupils) were eligible for pupil premium.

2.2 What is the attainment gap in Buckinghamshire and how does it compare to national comparators?

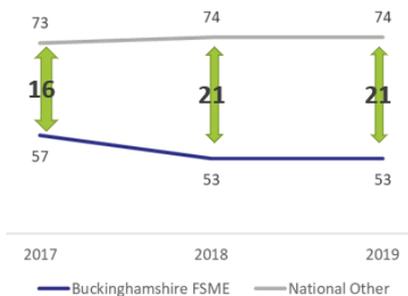
Data is routinely captured at statutory points of assessment throughout the learning journey of every pupil. Standardised results for children who are eligible for the pupil premium are compared with the average attainment for all pupils in England. As there were no statutory assessments for the majority of pupils during the pandemic, the latest data that we have are outcomes from 2019 which were included in the Education Standards Report presented to the committee in November 2020 (appendix 1). The main graphs from the report relating to attainment at each key stage, are shown below.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2019 - Attainment of key pupil groups



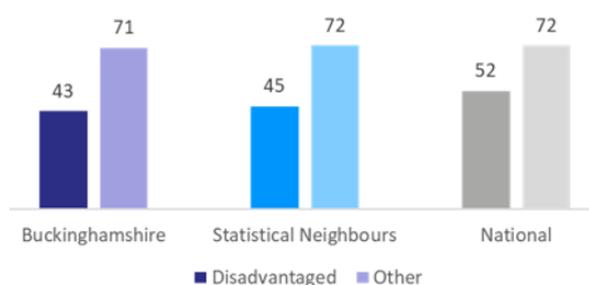
This chart shows the attainment of pupils at the end of their Reception year for the last academic year where we have data. It shows that children in Buckinghamshire who were eligible for free school meals attained as well as those nationally and slightly better than those in our group of statistical neighbours.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2019 - Attainment Gap



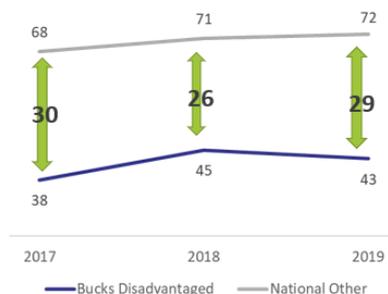
This chart demonstrates the attainment gap between five year olds in Buckinghamshire eligible for FSM against the attainment of all pupils nationally for the last three years. Whilst the gap increased between 2017 and 2018, it remained stable into 2019 (and was in line with national figures).

Key Stage 2 (SATs) 2019 – Attainment of key pupil groups



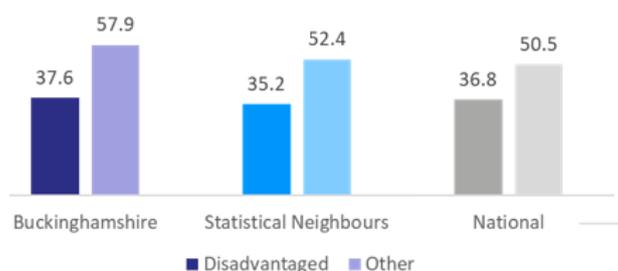
This chart shows the percentage of children achieving at or above age related expectations in reading, writing and maths at the end of their primary school career (Year 6) for the last academic year where we have data. This demonstrates that pupils in Buckinghamshire who were eligible for FSM performed less well academically than equivalent pupils in their Key Stage 2 SATs, both nationally and in relation to our statistical neighbours.

Key Stage 2 (SATs) 2019 – Attainment Gap



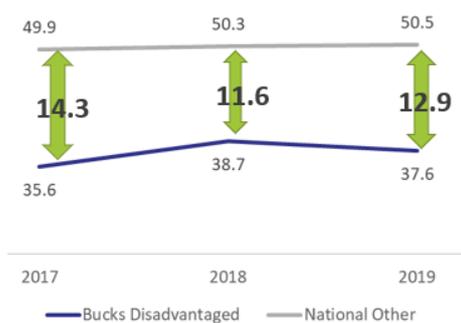
This chart demonstrates the attainment gap between eleven year olds in Buckinghamshire eligible for FSM against the attainment of all pupils nationally for the last three years. Whilst the gap decreased between 2017 and 2018, it grew slightly 2019.

GCSE 2019 - Attainment of key pupil groups



This chart shows the average point score for children at GCSE for the last academic year where we have data. This demonstrates that pupils in Buckinghamshire who were eligible for FSM performed better academically than equivalent pupils, both nationally and in relation to our statistical neighbours.

GCSE 2019 - Attainment Gap



This chart demonstrates the attainment gap between GCSE entrants in Buckinghamshire eligible for FSM against the attainment of all pupils nationally for the last three years. Whilst the gap decreased between 2017 and 2018, it grew slightly 2019 but was still below national figures.

2.3 Current action being taken to address the attainment gap in Buckinghamshire

Strategic responsibility for actions relating to the attainment gap is held by the Buckinghamshire Challenge Board (named after the successful programme of the 'London Challenge' that had a similar aim). The work of the group is defined as to:

- Review and reflect on the reasons for the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and all pupils within Buckinghamshire, including the effect of the covid-19 pandemic.
- Identify best inclusive practice in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to achieve nationally and locally.
- Review research and literature with regard to identifying accelerated and sustained achievement for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.
- Work with the community of schools within Buckinghamshire and other agencies to develop programmes of support and challenge, inclusive practice and early help for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

The board was initially created after discussion between the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Headteachers in 2019. It is open to a representative number of Head Teachers and governors from all groups of schools and Local Authority officers. It has met regularly and developed a programme of work that is being delivered free of charge to all schools in the county.

The board is working to the principles set out below which have been established through experience and evidence of working in schools which perform well for their disadvantaged pupils.

Key Principles

- Pupil need and focussed assessment inform our approach to tackling disadvantage.
- Schools need to adopt and embed a culture where all staff hold disadvantaged pupils in high regard, and believe they can attain well, irrespective of background or barriers to learning.
- Everyone needs to feel an ownership and responsibility for the strategy.

Methodology

Schools should start off with diagnostic assessment around pupil need:

- What is the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on learning?
- How does it present in the classroom?

This is not just testing (diagnostic assessment) but also a mixture of pupil voice, teacher voice and observations to create a wholistic view of the child. This has to happen over time as the impact of disadvantage on learning is a process, not an event.

2.4 Key Issues

a) How to create a sense of belonging for all pupils, in and out of the classroom

Relationships are key, and a collective ownership of the school's strategy by all. All those in school have to believe that disadvantaged pupils can attain well, from governors to midday supervisors and everyone in-between. Unconscious bias towards these students is addressed openly and robustly.

b) How to address pupil needs

Strategies need to address common issues amongst these learners, including language comprehension, feedback and self-regulated learning.

The most effective strategies focus on improving learners through early intervention and a focus on keeping them in the classroom. Schools should reflect on the experience of our less fortunate pupils in lessons.

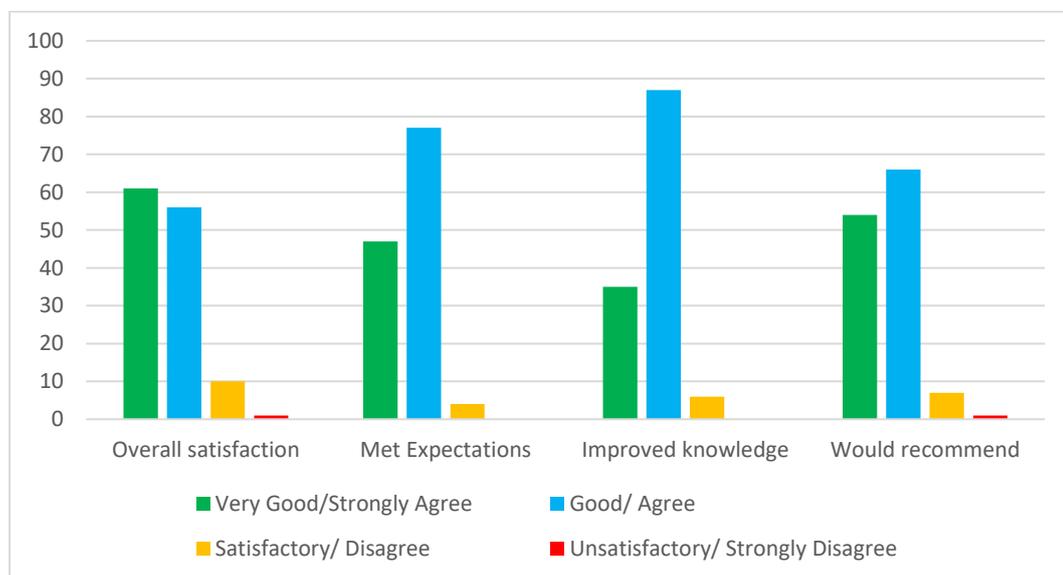
2.5 The Evidence Based Approach in Buckinghamshire

The five points below outline the key pillars of activity to narrow the gap:

1. A tiered model, focussed on Teaching, Academic Intervention and Pastoral Approaches (that are intertwined), and a long-term view underpinned by early intervention is critical.
2. Effective, inclusive teaching is the best lever for improving school and disadvantaged pupil outcomes.

3. New habits, behaviours, routines and approaches are likely to make teaching more difficult in the short term – e.g. mixed attainment teaching, collaborative learning, modelling, metacognition, emphasis on subject knowledge.
4. Meaningful assessment is part of great teaching, identifying the need for intervention and monitoring implementation.
5. Robust impact evaluation – about whether the strategy is working, not setting out to prove that it is – is fundamental to securing better outcomes / making changes where necessary.

In response to the five points above, a series of engagement sessions, open to all schools at no cost, was developed and delivered throughout the academic year 2020-21. Due to the pandemic, this programme of work for the Buckinghamshire Challenge Board was delivered virtually, through conferences and workshops. They were recorded and remain online for all schools to access. The chart below shows that feedback from evaluation forms for all of the sessions across the year has been very good, with the vast majority of delegates engaging positively with the programme. We can see that there has been widespread engagement with the project, with over 70% of schools engaging with our workshops and conferences. Feedback has been positive with school leaders taking information and strategies back to their schools to implement.



2.6 Outcomes for the academic year 2020-21

There have been no comparable assessments in primary schools this year due to the pandemic, and the methodology for awarding GCSE grades is significantly different to previous years, so comparisons are not useful.

3. Next steps and review

3.1 Future plans to address the attainment gap in Buckinghamshire

From Mitigation to Success: Tackling Educational Disadvantage

Over the last year, Buckinghamshire schools who have engaged with our ongoing online training have developed a strong knowledge about tackling educational disadvantage. In order to maintain this momentum, we have devised a new and bespoke programme that will enable us to continue to build on this. We have made progress, but there is still much to do.

The programme will be rooted in research evidence and provide opportunities to learn from successful practitioners and schools. By focusing sharply on schools' own strategies, we will consider: *what is the impact of educational disadvantage on your pupils and what is within your gift to address this?* These sessions are online and available to all. Some schools may be targeted for attendance. They will last two hours each, run as twilights. Schools should book and sign up for the whole programme. The sessions will include input from the project board team and case studies from local and national schools.

3.2 Anticipated outcomes of current and future work

It has been widely recognised that the academic impact of the pandemic has widened the disadvantaged gap on a national level. Our aims are therefore:

- To maintain the attainment gap at 2019 levels for exam outcomes in 2022.
- To engage 90% of schools in the universal training offer for the academic year 2021-22.
- To have 100% attendance from focus schools in support sessions.
- To see a 0.5% reduction in the attainment gap for exam outcomes in 2023.
- To further develop programmes, meeting need, to support schools in closing the attainment gap for the next five years.

4. Appendices

4.1 Education Standards Report November 2020



Education
Standards Report Ac

5. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 5.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone [] or email []

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Report to Children’s and Education Select Committee

Date: 9th September 2021

Title: Select Committee Work Programme

Relevant councillor(s): All

Author and/or contact officer: Katie Dover, Senior Scrutiny Officer

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Recommendations:

- i. That the Children’s and Education Select Committee agrees the draft work programme for the 2021/2022 municipal year.
- ii. That the Select Committee identifies a subject for a more focussed and in-depth piece of work.

Introduction

- 1.1 Every municipal year, each of Buckinghamshire Council’s Select Committees will draft and agree a work programme for the ensuing year. The work programme will detail the subject of reports to be presented at each committee meeting during the year. The work programme will come back to each committee and may be amended or developed during the year.
- 1.2 The work programme may also include suggested topics for in-depth pieces of scrutiny work, which can be undertaken outside of the formal webcast committee meetings.

Options for In-Depth Scrutiny Work

- 1.3 The Select Committee may identify a particular issue which they would like to investigate in more depth than a committee item allows. The Select Committee can commission an in-depth piece of work which will be undertaken by a smaller group of members, supported by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

- 1.4 **Rapid Review** - This is ideal for a focussed review with fairly narrow parameters, that can be conducted in a relatively short time scale. For example, you may hold three or four meetings as a review group – one to establish and understand what the key issues are, one or two to gather evidence from service users or other authorities to gain insight into best practice and a final meeting to discuss what members have heard and identify any useful recommendations. A rapid review format will be useful when considering less complex issues and may be helpful in delivering ‘quick wins’ for the Council’s service users and residents.
- 1.5 **In-depth Inquiry** – An in-depth inquiry is more suitable when the topic identified for investigation is more complex or there are a number of different lines of enquiry that the Select Committee wish to consider. An Inquiry group will still consist of a smaller group of members, but a significant number of evidence gathering meetings may be undertaken, perhaps including visits to partner agencies or other local authorities or discussions with subject matter experts, over a longer period of time.
- 1.6 With either of the two approaches outlined above, a scope for the piece of work will be agreed by the Select Committee and members who wish to participate will be drawn from the Select Committee, ensuring cross party representation. As a guideline, a maximum of 6-8 members would be ideal.
- 1.7 The Select Committee Chairman may chair a Rapid Review or an In-depth Inquiry, but they can also choose to appoint another committee member to act as Chairman if they wish.
- 1.8 The outcome of either a Rapid Review or an In-depth Inquiry will be a report, which will outline members’ findings and include recommendations for Cabinet and partner agencies to consider. Once the final report has been agreed at Select Committee it will then be presented at Cabinet and Cabinet will provide a response to the recommendations.
- 1.9 When considering undertaking a Rapid Review or In-depth Inquiry, members are asked to be mindful of the resource implications for both the Scrutiny team and other Council officers who will support these pieces of work. The Select Committee Chairmen meet regularly, which will enable co-ordination of in-depth pieces of work and consideration of timeliness, possible areas of duplication and cross-cutting issues.

Next steps and review

- 2.0 The work programme will be included on the agenda of each Select Committee meeting and any necessary amendments can be discussed.

Once the Select Committee have identified a topic for a more in-depth piece of work, the most appropriate approach and timing for the work can be discussed and agreed and a scope will be developed by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Background papers

Children's and Education Select Committee draft work programme.

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DRAFT Select Committee Work Programmes 2021/22

Children’s and Education Select Committee (Chairman: Patricia Birchley, Scrutiny officer: Katie Dover)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
9 September 2021	Schools: 1. Attainment Gap	For members to understand issues around the attainment gap in Bucks.	Simon James	Anita Cranmer, Simon James, Richard Nash
	2. Mental Health Support in schools	Mental health in children considered to be a priority by the committee – members to hear of work ongoing in this area and provide input in to plans.	Simon James	Anita Cranmer, Simon James, Richard Nash
11 November 2021	SEND (including preparing for adulthood)	To understand the SEND provision and improvement plans and to provide input in to support given to children.	Simon James	Anita Cranmer, Julie Ward, Simon James
	Sufficiency of Places Issues	For members to understand issues around the sufficiency of schooling places in Bucks and provide feedback.	Simon James	Anita Cranmer, Simon James
20 January 2022	Buckinghamshire Safeguarding and Children’s Partnership Annual Report	To receive and to give feedback on the annual report of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding and Children’s Partnership.	Palvinder Kudhail	Anita Cranmer, Palvinder Kudhail
	Fostering, Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders		Palvinder Kudhail	Anita Cranmer, Palvinder Kudhail

10 March 2022	OFSTED inspection update TBC	<i>Timing of this item to be confirmed</i>	Richard Nash	Anita Cranmer, Richard Nash
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