



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Children's & Education Select Committee

### Agenda

**Date:** Thursday 3 November 2022

**Time:** 2.00 pm

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

**Membership:** J Ward (Chairman), M Dormer (Vice-Chairman), S Adoh, K Bates, D Blamires, A Collingwood, N Hussain, S James, C Jones, S Kayani, Dr W Matthews, A Osibogun, D Summers, J Towns, P Turner, Z Williams and T Wilson

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
<b>1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	<b>14:00</b>	
<b>2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> For the Committee to disclose any pecuniary or disclosable personal interests.		
<b>3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.		<b>5 - 12</b>
<b>4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS</b> Public Questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in Buckinghamshire to put a question to a Select Committee. The Committee will hear from members of the public who have submitted questions in advance relating to items on the agenda. The Cabinet Member, relevant key partners and responsible officers will be invited to respond.	<b>14:10</b>	

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<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/getinvolved-with-council-decisions/select-committees/>

Mrs Hodges has submitted the following two questions. (These are further to her questions from November 2011 – last year's response below in italics)

1. Could Buckinghamshire Council provide an update on the implementation of an EHC Hub (a digital platform) supporting engagement, contributions and collaboration on EHC assessments, plans and reviews. Parents/guardians, staff and professionals can spend considerable periods of time chasing information which could be accessed online providing up to date information to all parties,

*(Last year's departmental response dated 11/11/21:*

***Digital platform for EHC needs assessments***

*Between April and July 21, we piloted a new online portal for inputting, logging and tracking EHC needs assessments. The idea will be that schools, professionals and families can all input into the system as part of the EHC needs assessment process. We have rolled this out to all schools since September 2021. This is for all new EHC plans. The next phase is to train and roll out with families. A longer term aspiration is to use this system for the annual review process of EHCPs as well.)*

2. Could Buckinghamshire Council provide an update on the continual issues with staff recruitment and/or retention issues within the SEN department and associated support services which causes delay to statutory timescales.

<b>5</b>	<b>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP BOARD 2021-2022</b>	<b>14:15</b>	<b>13 - 48</b>
	To receive the Annual Report of the Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board 2021-2022, presented by the Chair, Walter McCulloch.		
	Contributors: Cllr Anita Cranmer, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services & Education Walter McCulloch, Independent Chair of the Board		
	Papers: Annual report of the Partnership Board Cover report		
<b>6</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE - MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2022</b>	<b>14:45</b>	<b>49 - 64</b>
	For the Select Committee to note the developments in the Children's		

Services Directorate for the period March to September 2022.

Contributors:

Cllr Anita Cranmer, Portfolio holder, Children's Services & Education  
John Macilwraith, Corporate Director of Children's Services

Papers:

Committee report

With links to:

Government White Paper – [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#)

Government Green Paper – [SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time](#)

Independent review of Children's Social Care – Macalister - [report](#)  
[SEND Education Sufficiency Plan](#)

Buckinghamshire Partnership Early Help Strategy - [refreshed strategy for 2022-2025](#)

[Participation Strategy for Young People.](#) -

<b>7</b>	<b>CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION</b> For the Select Committee to receive the report on Children Missing Education in Buckinghamshire.  Contributors: Cllr Anita Cranmer, Portfolio Holder, Children's Services & Education Simon James, Service Director for Education  Papers: Committee report	<b>15:25</b>	<b>65 - 80</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b> For the Committee to note: (i) the work programme and (ii) the scoping document for the Rapid Review of Pathways in to SEND services	<b>16:05</b>	<b>81 - 88</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b> The next meeting of the Children's Services and Education Select Committee will take place on Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 2.00 p.m.	<b>16:20</b>	

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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](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

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Agenda Item 3

# Buckinghamshire Council

## Children's & Education Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.40 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

J Ward, K Bates, D Blamires, A Collingwood, S James, C Jones, Dr W Matthews, A Osibogun, J Towns, P Turner, Z Williams and T Wilson

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

K Dover, S James, R Nash, A Howard and J Macilwraith

#### **Agenda Item**

##### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that Councillors Adoh, Dormer, Hussain, Kayani and Summers had given their apologies for the meeting. Cllr Susan Lewin attended the meeting in place of Cllr Hussain.

##### **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman confirmed their appointment of Cllr Mark Dormer as Vice-Chairman of the Children's and Education Select Committee for the ensuing year.

##### **3 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed John Macilwraith, Corporate Director for Children's Services and Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's and Education to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member introduced the Corporate Director and explained that he would replace Richard Nash, who returned to his role as Service Director for Children's Services. Mr Macilwraith thanked the Cabinet Member for the introduction and advised that he was looking forward to working with the Children's & Education Select Committee.

##### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- Cllr K Bates declared a personal interest as a Chair of Governors for nursery schools in Buckinghamshire.
- Cllr P Turner declared a personal interest as a Governor at Chiltern Wood School.
- Cllr A Osibogun declared a personal interest as a governor at Buckingham Primary School.

- Mr T Wilson declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust.

## **5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions were received in relation to this agenda of the Select Committee.

## **6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Cllr Collingwood requested that an audit log for items discussed in previous meetings be added to the agenda papers going forward.

**Action: KD**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## **7 EARLY HELP STRATEGY & IMPACT OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's and Education, Simon James, Service Director for Education and Early Help, and Gareth Morgan, Head of Early Help, who attended the meeting to speak on this item.

In their presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The two-year-old Family Support Service was a key service in the Council's progress towards improvements suggested in the latest OFSTED inspection. With cases growing in both number and complexity, early intervention and collaboration with partner organisations (schools, health institutions and the voluntary sector) were identified as key factors in meeting children's welfare requirements.
- The Family Support Service supported approximately 400 families, with just over 1000 children, most of which required statutory intervention via social care. In addition, support was also provided at a universal level through the 15 family centres.
- The demand for family support had increased by 25 % since last year. The service had been responding well to the increased demand, and performances had remained good. 85 % of families were able to achieve their desired outcomes. The biggest increase in requests for help has been received by schools. Family support link workers have been placed in all schools, and the use of family support centres and parenting groups were being promoted to reduce unnecessary escalation of work into children's social care.

During the discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- Clarifying how the services provided are dovetailing, and if the increased capacity in accessibility of early health services would help reduce waiting times. It was noted that the children's mental health support teams, which included youth practitioners and family support workers, were an example of a collaborative service between Oxfordshire Health Trust's CAMHS service and the Early Help Service. Simon James explained that mental health teams in schools provided a faster way of accessing diagnostic services for neurodevelopmental conditions than a referral. In addition, specialist mental health workers could also support children prior to or instead of receiving a formal diagnosis. Gareth Morgan added that these teams would also provide opportunities for families to access longer-term support if needed. Although this did not directly impact waiting times, it reduced the impact of mental health issues in young people before requiring clinical intervention, thus resulting in fewer numbers of referrals overall. Furthermore,

parenting courses for parents of SEND children increased the understanding of their needs and the best ways to support their learning.

- Simon James explained that family centres were a key facility for supporting hard-to-reach families and communities. Furthermore, the youth work also connected families with the local community, and increased the understanding of different levels of need across the county, as did work carried out with the voluntary sector. Partnership forums, located in three localities (Wycombe, Aylesbury and Chiltern & South Bucks), were attended by professionals from different agencies and served as a problem-solving mechanism for families who do not fit in one agency or need. Typically, a school might bring a young person and their family forward if work had been done but there was not enough progress, for example, in the student's behaviour or attendance. The group would then establish what additional support could be offered to best support the student and their family.
- A councillor requested the attendance of an officer from the Family Support Service at community board meetings. Simon James advised the member that Gareth Morgan would ensure that an appropriate officer attended.

**Action: GM**

- In response to a member's question, it was noted that the Family Support Service had no waiting lists and adhered to strict timeframes after work had been allocated through the multi-agency safeguarding hub. Requests were usually progressed within 24 hours, with a 72-hour maximum processing window. After progression to the locality team, the family would be contacted within 24 hours and support arranged within 5 days. Gareth Morgan added that monitoring data could be provided to the Committee.

**Action: GM/SJ**

- Family support workers operated within a cluster, averaging 3-5 schools for a link support worker. Additionally, Oxford Health had been awarded funding to increase the number of mental health teams in Buckinghamshire to six by the end of the calendar year, which would include additional youth and family support workers in areas needing the most support.
- Young people in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) were monitored by the team to provide support. The team was also maintaining contact with apprentices who did not complete their training to encourage and enable them to return to employment through an appropriate pathway.
- Due to the success of the family support service, it was suggested that the programme be extended. Gareth Morgan advised that some transformation projects are already underway to reduce caseloads for social workers, in addition to some locality-based work.
- The importance of early health was highlighted, particularly assessment, being joint work between the Council, schools and the voluntary sector. It was noted that the focus should not lay solely on assessment, but on support for young people, for example through, local models and pastoral care in schools. This way, young people would access additional services from professionals in their locality, who would also be aware of increased risks in the area.
- It was noted that Councillors could support the early help partnerships through the community boards and networking with local communities.

**Action: Councillors**

- The timeframe for re-referrals was measured at 6 and 12 months. However, the service had an open-door policy for 3 months, meaning that a family could contact the service directly without having to go through the process again. Some cases were noted to be more complex, for example, if a family had support in the past and returned with a different issue. Statistically, this would be deemed a re-referral. Many families returning for further support were better suited to community-based support. A member

highlighted the importance of also fully understanding the context in which re-referrals happened.

- Before the pandemic, schools were invited to work with the service to understand its mechanisms. The team were keen to re-introduce this with the start of the next term.
- The demands for mental health support had increased by 25 % since last year, and a question was raised as to whether there was sufficient funding to respond to this. Richard Nash advised that there are many different views on what constitutes appropriate support to ensure children's emotional wellbeing, and that an over-referral to mental health services was not a desirable outcome. He emphasised the importance of receiving the right type of support. Health services and social work teams were liaising to ensure the right interventions were in place.
- A Councillor suggested that the service should be given priority if further resources were required due to the notable outcomes achieved for young people.
- The Committee supported the recommendations outlined in the report: The Committee acknowledged the progress of the service, the positive impact the early help family support had on children, and the role the service had in supporting vulnerable families and communities.

The Chairman thanked the presenters for their attendance and participation.

## **8 PARTICIPATION STRATEGY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 2022-2025**

The Chairman invited Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's and Education, Simon James, Service Director for Education and Early Help, and Gareth Morgan, Head of Early Help, to speak on this item.

The recently launched strategy focused on involving young people in decision-making processes in the areas of the service's work affecting them. A key factor in the strategy was the introduction of a properly safeguarded and monitored participation champions' programme. This included children's panels for the recruitment of high-priority senior staff within the Council, the launch of the Youth Voice Hub website (<https://www.youthvoicebucks.co.uk>) and the 'Shout out for SEND' programme. The strategy's success would be measured over the coming months.

During discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- The Councillors welcomed the development of the strategy and expressed their enthusiasm for the programme.
- Gareth Morgan explained that the Council would roll out a programme to identify young people as community board youth ambassadors. The youth voice executive would initially identify volunteers to share opportunities through schools and community-led youth centres. A new website was also in development to ensure accessibility on phones to involve young people in local democracy, recruitment and other activities.
- Simon James advised that the councillor mentoring scheme would be a corporate-wide programme rather than solely run by Children's Services. Councillors would be trained and supported through the corporate team. Chrissy Hatton had recently been appointed as the Participation Coordinator to engage young people and communities. She had been making links with local organisations and also the young carers commissioning service to ensure the inclusion of young carers' views in the programme.
- The Youth Interview Panel was launched as an opportunity for young people to be trained on interview questions. It was noted that the programme was an important priority for both Officers and Cabinet Members, as it could prepare young people leaving school for further education and employment.



- The Youth Voice Hub Website had gone live on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The design and content had been co-produced with children, young people, and Buckinghamshire Council's partners. It was built by the team's identification of best practice, was made fully accessible via mobile phone and would be reviewed regularly. The website would be promoted through social media channels, the Council's Youth Voice Executive and through school bulletins. The team would also include younger employees with significant interest and knowledge in social media.
- Councillors raised suggestions on further promotion opportunities and offered to seek engagement through resident Facebook groups in their own wards.

**Action: Councillors**

- It was also suggested that the programme team could seek contact with families through local housing associations, for example by forwarding links to tenants or advertising the website on their own. Simon James welcomed the suggestions and agreed to implement them.

**Action: SJ**

- In relation to the financial implications of the programme, Simon James noted that the participation work was part of the service budget and not dependent on external grants. A breakdown of the service budget can be found in the Council's budget. A cost breakdown of the participation work could be provided to the Committee.

**Action: SJ**

- Simon James advised that in order to ensure that young people across the entire county would have the opportunity to participate, an event would take place in central Buckinghamshire before Christmas. This would be designed by young people themselves with the aim of ensuring that as many young people as possible could attend.

## **9 WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023**

The Select committee received the draft work programme and made the following suggestions for consideration with the Chairman at the next meeting:

- The Committee had previously agreed that issues around SEND would be prioritised in the forthcoming year for some detailed work. Since the last meeting, a potential scope around this work was being developed, with particular focus on access to services. Evidence gathering on this topic would commence in October. The Senior Scrutiny Officer would email the Committee to identify a working group around this topic. Councillors Blamires, James, Turner and Ward, put their names forward for the group.

**Action: KD**

- Cllr Collingwood expressed interest in attending the working group and highlighted the importance of consistency in SEND offerings across different educational institutions. Simon James advised that a five-year sufficiency strategy for SEND has been published, and would share the link with the Committee.

**Action: SJ**

- Cllr Blamires suggested that the OFSTED action plan be added to the work programme. She further requested that reports around the attainment gap be shared with the Committee prior to January 2023.

**Action: SJ**

- Simon James advised that the team would consolidate a list of the department's achievements in decreasing the attainment gap over the past 12 months before the January Select Committee meeting.
- Cllr Bates noted the importance of the Committee discussing children missing from education in the next meeting's agenda due to the high numbers nationally. Richard Nash suggested that Committee members familiarise themselves with the statutory obligations around this issue prior to it being discussed.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Select Committee would be Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

CHAIRMAN

Children's and Education Scrutiny Committee – Follow up Information

	Date/Committee Item	Action	Update
1.	8/9/22 Minutes	Agreed subject to the inclusion of an addendum action sheet on agendas in future	Completed
2.	8/9/22 Early Help Strategy	Recommendations supported by the Select Committee. Committee thanked for their support	Noted
3.	8/9/22 Early Help Strategy	Cllr Matthews to send details of Community Board meeting to Simon James so that a Family Support Service representative would attend a CB meeting	Completed
4.	8/9/22 Early Help Strategy	Simon James to circulate performance information on meeting timescales to the SC as mentioned by Cllr James	Completed
5.	8/9/22 Early Help Strategy	Councillors to help to raise the profile of the Family Support Service through communication with voluntary groups in ward areas	Councillors - ongoing
6.	8/9/22 Participation Strategy	The website <a href="http://www.youthbucks.co.uk">www.youthbucks.co.uk</a> to be publicised via school planners, schools' bulletins Contact housing associations to add the link to the website on their websites Councillors to publicise in their own wards	Contact has been made with housing associations
7.	8/9/22 Participation Strategy	Simon James offered to provide budget information to the Select Committee	Completed
8.	8/9/22 Work Programme – Task & Finish Group	Cllrs Blamires, James, Kayani, Turner and Ward to be members of the SEND task and finish group Scope to be finalised between meetings and agreed	Scoping document attached to agenda for 3/11 for noting

9.	8/9/22 – Task and Finish Group	Re:Cllr Collingwood comment on consistency of SEND offering across the area: link to SEND Sufficiency Strategy to be circulated to Cllrs	Completed
10.	8/9/22 Work Programme - updates	Ofsted action plan updates to be brought to committee RN to liaise with KD regarding timings relating to Improvement Board work	Update on CS to November committee
11.	8/9/22 – work programme updates	Attainment Gap – request for Member briefing prior to the January Select Committee	Information to be briefed fully at the January Committee



## Report to Children's and Education Select Committee

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022

**Title:** Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Relevant councillor(s):** Anita Cranmer

**Author and/or contact officer:** Author - Jo Stephenson, Safeguarding Partnerships Manager. The report will be presented by the newly appointed Independent Chair, Walter McCulloch who started in post on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**Ward(s) affected:** none specific

**Recommendations:** That the Select Committee note and provide feedback on the contents of the report.

### Executive summary

- 1.1 This annual report captures the work of the partnership in continuing times of strain for public services who are experiencing greater volumes of work in a period of national and indeed international turbulence. It is clear that children, young people and their families, across Buckinghamshire, have required more assistance in the past year than previously. In that context it is very creditable that both the external scrutiny of an Ofsted inspection and indeed the self-assessment carried out by the partnership itself has found that services for children are improving. There is clearly more to be done in this respect but a firm base is being established. Nevertheless it is important to commend staff, managers, and leaders across the partnership.
- 1.2 The work of the board is evident in the contributions in the report from the chairs of the sub-groups and the record of its broader activities. There is good participation across the partnership in these sub-groups, and it is good and appropriate that these are chaired by senior colleagues from across the partners. It is notable that each of the sub-groups has spent time consolidating previous work, and it is a strength that each has identified a need to bring a sharper focus to their work, linking activity to the business plan and driving evidence of the impact of their work in practice. Similarly, the important work that ensures learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews has replicated this consolidation of earlier work.

- 1.3 This recurring theme of sharpening the product of the combined work of partners, ensuring clear and deliverable improvements for children and young people will be an area for my attention in these coming months. The ongoing aim of the is to further strengthen the collaboration with children, young people and families in the work of the partnership.

## Content of report

- 1.4 An introduction from the Chair , demographic overview of Buckinghamshire children's population and reports from the Chairs of Sub groups detailing activity undertaken over the preceding year .

## Other options considered

- 1.5 The meeting is asked to noted that at the request of CMT , a stand alone executive summary is in production using mainly infographics to set out the activity described .
- 1.6 The next annual report will be less text based and more accessible. The Partnerships Manager is looking at best practice in other areas which includes use of video/animation to convey the report.

## Legal and financial implications

- 1.7 The Partnership has met it's statutory obligation to produce this report.

## Corporate implications

- n/a

## Consultation and communication

- 1.8 n/a.

## Next steps and review

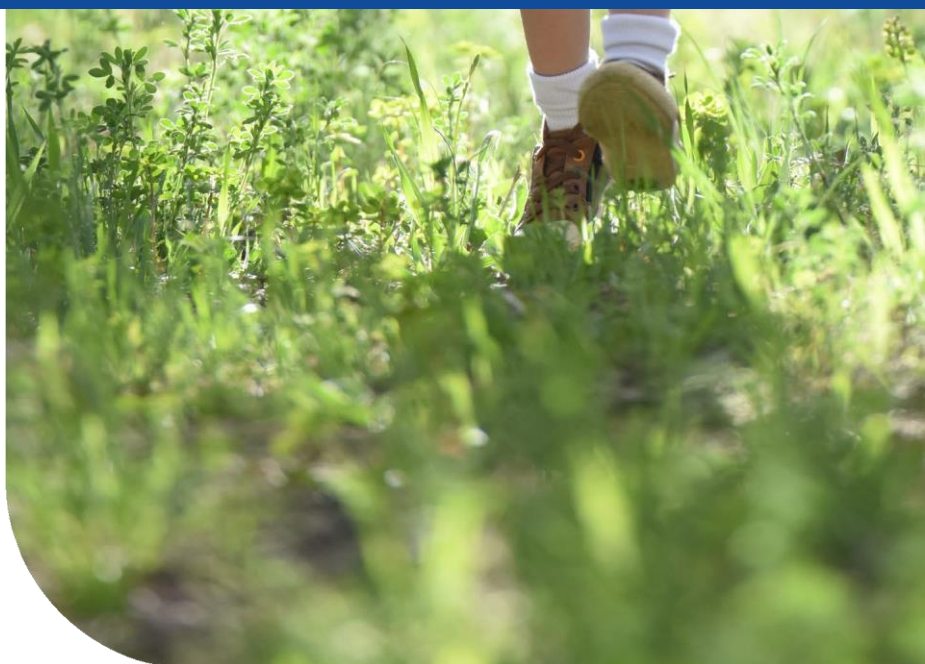
Once comments have been considered, the full report can be published on the BSCP website and the executive summary will be published before the end of December.

## Background papers

n/a



# Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership **Annual Report 2021/22**





# Chair's Introduction

I am Walter McCulloch, the newly arrived Independent Chair of both the Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board. Let me begin by paying tribute to my predecessor Sir Francis Habgood. Francis has provided excellent leadership and brought clear independent scrutiny to the work of both boards over the past three, quite extraordinary years. Furthermore, I am most grateful for his kind assistance on my recent assumption to this role.

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2021/2022 annual report of the Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership. This report captures the work of the partnership in continuing times of strain for public services who are experiencing greater volumes of work in a period of national and indeed international turbulence. It is clear that children, young people and their families, across Buckinghamshire, have required more assistance in the past year than previously. In that context it is very creditable that both the external scrutiny of an Ofsted inspection, and indeed the self-assessment carried out by the partnership itself, has found that services for children are improving. There is clearly more to be done in this respect but a firm base is being established. Nevertheless, it is important to commend staff, managers, and leaders across the partnership.

The work of the board is evident in the contributions in the report from the chairs of the sub-groups and the record of its broader activities. As the incoming chair it is pleasing to see the good participation across the partnership in these sub-groups, and it is good and appropriate that these are chaired by senior colleagues from across the partners. It is notable that each of the sub-groups has spent time consolidating previous work, and it is a strength that each has identified a need to bring a sharper focus to their work, linking activity to the business plan and driving evidence of the impact of their work in practice. Similarly, the important work that ensures learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews has replicated this consolidation of earlier work. It is commendable that with their current work the intention is to compress their conclusions into two or three key findings.

This recurring theme of sharpening the product of the combined work of partners, ensuring clear and deliverable improvements for children and young people will be an area for my attention in these coming months. Likewise, I share the intention many colleagues have expressed to me in my first few weeks in post. That is to further strengthen the collaboration with children, young people and families in the work of the partnership.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the work of the staff of the business office which has been fundamental to the considerable work readers will see in this report.

**Walter McCulloch**

*Independent Chair for Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership*





# About Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership



The BSCP is a statutory, multi-organisation partnership coordinated by a business unit, which oversees and leads children's safeguarding across the Buckinghamshire Council area. The main objective of the BSCP is to gain assurance that local safeguarding arrangements, comprised of partner organisations, are working effectively, individually and together, to support and safeguard children in its area who are at risk of abuse and neglect. The BSCP acts as a critical friend and a champion for best practice.

Over the last year the work of the partnership along with that of its partner agencies has been significantly affected by the Covid pandemic. We have continued to work towards all our key priorities whilst being flexible to the changing landscape in relation to demand for services, impact on children and availability and resilience of the workforce. Along with our partners we are grateful for all the efforts to across the multi-agency arena to continue to drive activity to ensure that we have met or worked towards the key priorities.

Whilst the single business unit, comprising business functions of the Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board, became embedded, we were also adapting to a largely online 'world'. The business unit continues to plan and move forward with joint strategic work, making best use of some of the working practices which have now become business as usual. The former three year business plans for both the partnership and board, which were designed to bring together the two structures and support a move towards contextual safeguarding, will continue. To this end the Executive agreed in April to a revision of the business plan to ensure that we are responsive to the change in needs and demand. In addition, the Executive agreed the joint training, learning and development approach, which we look forward to implementing in 2022.

Quality assurance remains our key driver across all the sub-groups, using frameworks that will measure the impact of subgroup activities and challenge those working in the safeguarding arena. We also continued to ensure that our policies and procedures are embedded in the work we carry out, that toolkits, guidance and procedures draw on the knowledge of subject experts locally and nationally to inform them, and that we can demonstrate the impact of learning that has taken place.

The partnership has an Independent Chair who provides leadership, vision and support and who is responsible for ensuring that all organisations contribute effectively to the work of the BSCP. The Chair provides accountability for the work undertaken by the BSCP by way of reports to relevant strategic committees and boards. Effective communication between the Business Manager and Chair ensures that there is a clear link between the sub-groups and executive group, enabling risks, themes and opportunities to be highlighted at an executive level, and challenge, direction and opportunities to be shared into sub-groups. This is supported by meetings for sub-group Chairs to provide clarity about the role of each sub-group in the priority areas and to raise any process or participation issues with the Independent Chair.

# Our Vision

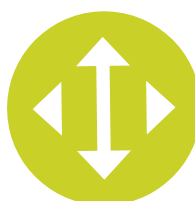
To work together to enable children and young people in Buckinghamshire to live a life free from fear, harm and abuse.

To ensure our approach is focused around ‘talk to me, hear my voice’ and it is central to everything we do.



## **SAFEGUARDING**

Making safeguarding personal and the responsibility of everyone.



## **ENABLING**

Enable children and young people to have choices and control over how they want to live.



## **COMMUNICATING**

Ensure there is effective communication with youth communities in Buckinghamshire.



## **LEARNING**

Learning from our experiences and improving how we work.

# Our Partners

*Working Together 2018* is statutory guidance that provides children's safeguarding with a legal framework, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners.

From a statutory perspective the three legally required bodies are:

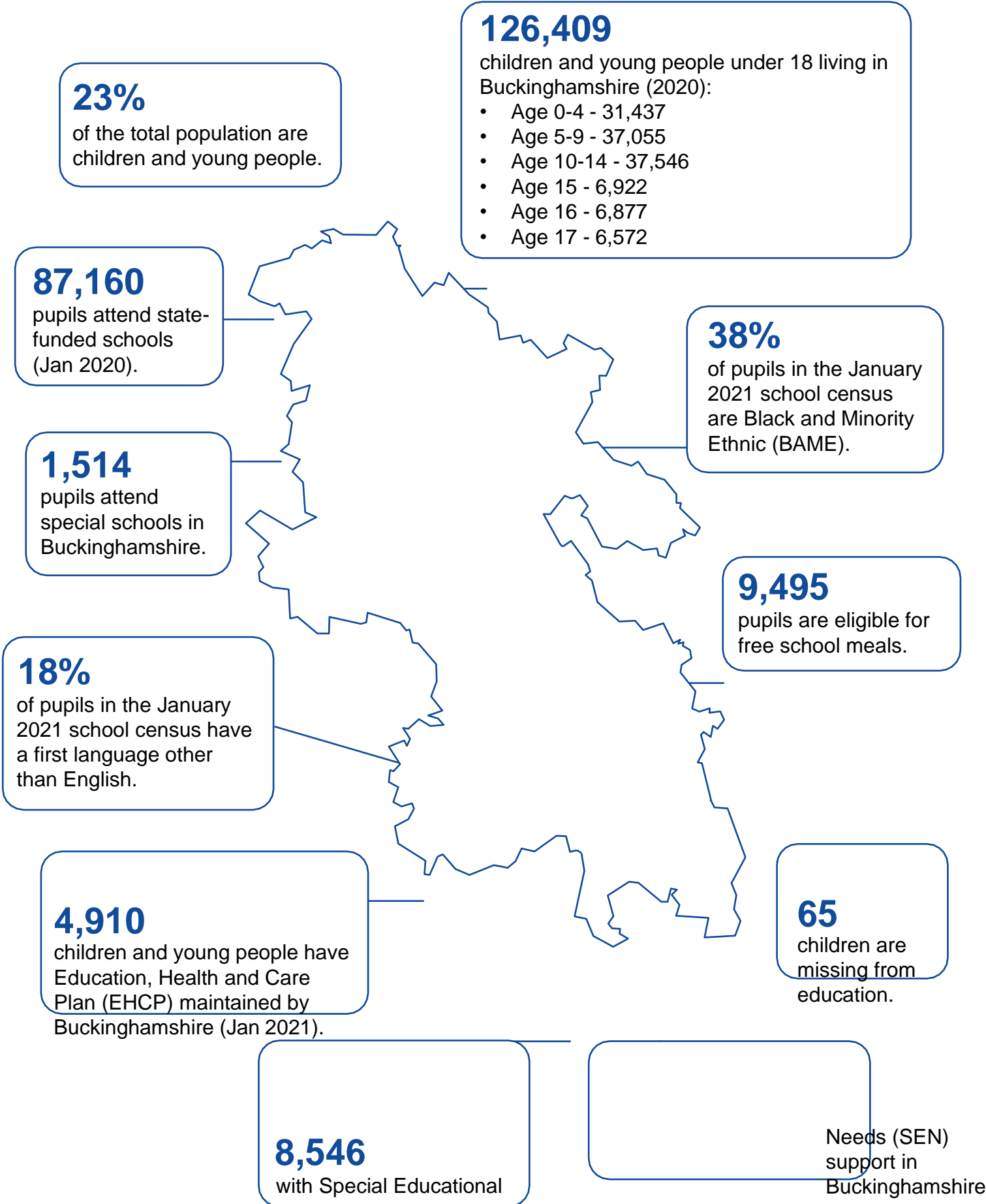
- Buckinghamshire Council
- NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board
- Thames Valley Police

However, we work closely with a range of other partners:

- National Probation Service
- Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company



# Children and Young People in Buckinghamshire



schools(Jan 2021).

**987**

children and young people  
are electively home  
educated (May 2021).





## Schools in Buckinghamshire

**184**

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primary schools (including 36 academies/free schools).  
**38** infant schools  
**23** junior schools (inc. five academies)  
**123** combined schools (inc. 31 academies/free schools)

**34**

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secondary schools.  
**13** selective (all academies)  
**21** non-selective (inc. 16 academies/free schools)  
**123** combined schools (inc. 31 academies/free schools)

**2**

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All Through mainstream schools (including one academy).

**2**

---

nursery schools.

**3**

---

Pupil Referral Units  
(inc. one academy).

**10**

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Special schools  
(inc. two academies).

# Chapter 1

## The work of the subgroups and evidence of impact

The BSCP has a number of sub-groups, whose role it is to undertake the scrutiny work, as well as disseminate and share evidence-based best practice to the wider safeguarding workforce. All of the subgroups experienced changes in Chairs and membership, and some disruption to support provided by the business unit. However, this settled throughout the year.

Please see overleaf for the sub-groups operating in this reporting period, as well as summaries from the Chairs.

# Modern Slavery and Exploitation

Chairperson - Palvinder Kudhail (Interim Service Director, Children's Services, Buckinghamshire Council)

*Formerly the Child Exploitation Sub-group, this merged in the reporting period to become an all-age exploitation sub-group.*

## A message from the Chair

I am the Service Director for Children's Social Care in the Local Authority. I took over the Chair of the Child Exploitation Sub-Group in 2021 and soon realised that there was a need to review both the meeting structure and links with other groups, and address a number of overdue actions on the plan. A wider review took place, and it was agreed that there would be a single sub-group that addressed exploitation for adults and children. All the previous actions were addressed and we started with a clean slate in 2022. The membership, governance arrangements and terms of reference have been revised. Membership includes a parent representative. The sub-group reports into the Safer Bucks Board. Meetings take place six-weekly and there is an Improvement Plan in place that addresses six key objectives:

- Early intervention and prevention for young people becoming at risk.
- Raise awareness of child exploitation.
- Identify and safeguard victims of child exploitation.
- Identify and monitor vulnerable locations across the area.
- Empower those affected by child exploitation by supporting them to identify strategies to exit and withdraw safely.
- Use intelligence to disrupt perpetrators and bring them to justice, using modern day slavery and trafficking legislation.

The Improvement Plan has impact measures and each objective is led by a partner agency.

### Key achievements:

- Successfully created a joint, all-age, exploitation-focused group with balanced representation.
- Increased the opportunity for collaborative working with the Community Safety Partnership and the range of partners working with the group.
- Agreed and commenced work on a measurable action plan.



## Policy, Procedure and Practice

Chairperson - Gilly Attree (designated nurse for safeguarding children and looked after children, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board)

*The role of this group is to ensure that the partnership has an up to date, relevant, and accessible online policy manual, as well as useful resources and toolkits. It is then tasked to scrutinize the impact on practice.*

### A message from the Chair

The Policy, Procedure and Practice Sub-group review the multi-agency policies when they are due for review, or sooner if there are national policy changes or guidance published. The sub-group is well attended by the multi-agency partnership and membership consists of health, social care, police, education and other key agencies. In the year 2021-2022, the sub-group met bi-monthly and reviewed the following policies:

- Pre-birth guidance.
- Escalation procedure.
- Children missing.
- Self-harm guidance.
- Female genital mutilation.
- Abuse of disabled children.
- Bereaved children/young people.
- Bullying guidance.
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Managing allegations against staff.
- Child protection toolkit for schools.

A forward planner assists with identifying when policies need to be reviewed and the multi-agency group take responsibility for supporting specialist input where required.

The sub-group members work closely with the Performance, Quality and Improvement Sub-group to ensure that policies are adhered to and are effective.

### Key achievements:

- Met deadlines for reviews against a backdrop of resourcing challenges.
- Reviewed the policy schedule to ensure it is current and reflects best practice .
- Made good use of subject expertise to inform the work.

## Performance, Quality and Improvement

Chairperson - Aman Sekhon-Gill (Interim Assistant Director, QA, Children's Services, Buckinghamshire Council)

### A message from the Chair

I am Aman Sekhon-Gill, Interim Assistant Director for Quality Assurance for Buckinghamshire Council. I became Chair of this group some way into this reporting period and it was fair to say that, due to staffing issues and the impact of the pandemic, the activity had slowed and the group needed to re-focus. My priorities were to streamline the data coming into the group, making it clear that it was the responsibility of partners to identify potential stressors and strengths in the system and to offer their analysis; this included their narrative on what this meant for children and what specifically needed to improve. We also looked at the audit schedule partners already had within their organisations and agreed that they would bring periodic updates to the group about key areas identified through audits, along with learning linked to this. This enables the sub-group to support identification of themes across the partnership and develop/explore further. In addition, this group receives requests to support bespoke pieces of work and is well connected to the other sub-groups; we may be made aware of 'testing' work required following a review or a policy launch which would benefit from quality assurance. In line with the business plan for next year, my priority is to be clearer about the evidence of impact, to bring user voices to the front and to ensure we have a clear agreed audit plan. Now that both the chairing and staffing issues have been resolved, I am confident that we will go into the new business year on a stronger footing.

### Key achievements:

- Updated and improved data collection, with regular highlight and exception reports going to the executive meetings.
- Understanding partner organisation audit plans and starting to plan for how we might make use of this to inform the partnership.
- Good engagement with the group by partners. The group benefits from the commitment of members as well as their contextual understanding of the organisation.

## Education and Learning

Chairperson - Simon James (Service Director, Education, Children's Services, Buckinghamshire Council)

### A message from the Chair

A bit about me:

- I have worked in education for my whole career and have worked in local government for over 20 years.
- I am a qualified teacher and was the youngest Principal Educational Psychologist in the country.
- I am responsible for all statutory education duties of the council.

Reflections from the Education Sub-group – key points

- The group has good representation and regular attendance. This means that the continuity of the work is strong and all understand their roles.
- Safeguarding in education settings has been a consistent theme.
- Emma's support and organisation has been invaluable.
- Inspections and issues in schools remain a high priority.
- The group aims to keep close to the priorities in the executive plan.
- Crossover and intelligence sharing between sub-groups could be improved.
- Lessons learnt activities could increase in frequency.

# Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Chairperson - Nick Glister (DCI, Child Abuse Investigation Unit, Thames Valley Police)

*The partnership is required to undertake local child safeguarding practice reviews, where the relevant criteria are met. Working Together 2018 states that 'The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'. In addition, the sub-group continues to track the agreed actions from legacy serious case reviews (SCR) and, within this reporting period, undertook a review of outstanding actions - resulting in a SMART tracker document.*

## A message from the Chair

The objectives we set over the last two years were primarily to deal with the SCR legacy cases, which had lengthy reviews resulting in multiple, broad, non-specific actions. We have made some good progress, but we have not fully achieved our target of completion and conclusion, significantly due to the impact of Covid (agency prioritisation) and widescale changes in personnel/standing member group.

This has, however, helped us learn through reflection and consultation, leading to a far more dynamic and timely process being tested and introduced, utilising the strategic objectives to prioritise. The use of an independent chair through Rapid Review, who receives and analyses the agency information in preparation, ensures key learning is identified to aid the discussion and decision making.

Reviews within LCSPR can range from a single agency short term audit, to a large scale author-led process, but we remain determined to influence a smaller number of recommendations based on specific areas which require improvement, with ownership and success measures included as part of the planning

### Key achievements:

- Updated and improved the rapid review process, making use of an Independent Chair and maximising learning at that point.
- Reviewed all the action plans from previous SCRs and pursued outcomes for any that were outstanding.
- Began to capture the lived experience of families in reviews, to ensure their voice is heard.

## Child Death Overview Panel

Gilly Attree (designated nurse for safeguarding children and looked after children, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board)

*Working Together 2018 states that, 'When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned. The responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is held by child death review partners, who, in relation to a local authority area in England, are defined as the local authority for that area and any clinical commissioning groups operating in the local authority area. Child death review partners must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, if they consider it appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area. Child death review partners for two or more local authority areas may combine and agree that their areas be treated as a single area for the purpose of undertaking child death reviews'. Buckinghamshire is paired with neighbouring authority, Oxfordshire. However, we continue to have locally based panels, alongside joint learning and themed events.*

### A message from the Chair

The role of a designated nurse includes, but is not limited to, providing safeguarding, child protection expertise and leadership throughout health and multi-agency partnerships. The role is pivotal to complex case management, improved partnership working, strategic planning, quality assurance and performance monitoring. It is essential when advising on the development and provision of services. It is a statutory post and I work closely with my adult counterparts and designated doctors.

In CDOP, we have reviewed a number of cases where recommendations for further analysis and understanding have been identified and these have been shared locally and nationally. The panel meets on a bi-monthly basis and is attended by the two statutory partners - the Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), as well as other key partners, including education and police. All learning points and modifiable factors are notified to a national database for additional analysis, which facilitates improved understanding of the subject matter and supports wider national changes in practice, where indicated.

The panel have agreed future dates to meet, and cases are being prepared for review, once all relevant information has been returned to the panel administrator.

In CDOP, all child deaths (under 18 years of age) are reviewed. In the year 2021-2022 there were 3068 in England. In Buckinghamshire, there were 30 deaths. The table overleaf demonstrates the number of child deaths by age in Buckinghamshire in 2021-2022.

The table below demonstrates the number of child deaths by age in Buckinghamshire in 2021-2022.

*Death notifications by age group and year*

Age group	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
0-27 days	9	17	13
28-364 days	6		1
1-4 years	2	3	4
5-9 years	2	1	7
10-14 years	4	6	2
15-17 years	1	5	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>

**Key achievements:**

- CDOP has continued to meet and review cases against significant resource implications.
- Attendance by a wide range of relevant professional has been consistent and valued by the partnership.
- The backlog has been recognised, and a plan of action was in place by the end of this reporting period.

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## Learning and Development

*A newly formed joint sub-group between BSCP and BSAB. The primary function is to oversee the implementation of any training plans and undertake a learning needs analysis. This group did not form until early 2022 and then, unfortunately, the Chair left her role. In the reporting period, this group had not progressed the action plan.*

## Chapter 2

# Areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities

In the reporting period, the Independent Chair, supported by the Business Manager, undertook a self-assessment of the partnership. This was based on the document *Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny* by Jenny Pearce. The intention was to measure progress against agreed priorities, as set out in our published arrangements and the current business plan. All the members of the executive contributed their assessment, and it was encouraging to see that there was a consistency in view about which areas of work should be the focus for the coming year. The document detailing the conclusions from the Chair (completed in September 2021) and the RAG rating can be found in Appendix A.

## **Chapter 3**

Decisions and actions taken to implement the recommendations from LCSPRs



During the 12 year period, there were 16 reviews commissioned in Buckinghamshire. Themes include:

- Parental learning difficulties and autism.
- Understanding, response, and management of exploitation.
- Lack of referral/ongoing referrals/pre-birth assessments poor or not carried out.
- Adolescent mental health and suicide.
- Domestic abuse/substance abuse/parental mental health, increasing the risk to children.
- Inadequate assessments/failure to take account of family history to inform assessments and lack of understanding regarding trauma of abuse.
- 'Invisible' men.
- Lack of professional curiosity.
- Lack of leadership and inadequate supervision.
- Missed appointments/difficulty accessing family.
- Lack of understanding of impact of risk factors/vulnerability and no plan as to how to deal with them.
- Cross-border working/communication.
- Planning/assessment incident driven. Requirement for risk management plan for children at risk.
- Lack of/poor recording of social care decision-making processes/CSC records not sufficiently detailed.

During the reporting period there were two referrals submitted to the BSCP, both relating to young people who had taken their own lives. One progressed to a commissioned LCSPR, which is in progress at the time of writing. One did not meet the criteria but, as there were ongoing concerns about the setting in which the suicide took place, this was appropriately escalated to the CQC with LADO involvement.

During this period the partnership considered the learning from a report issued by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. The report, entitled *The Myth of Invisible Men, safeguarding children under one from non-accidental injuries caused by male carers* (accessible on the Government publishing service [website](#)), reflected the findings of historic reviews in Buckinghamshire. The partnership was satisfied that recommendations and actions previously identified locally were in keeping with the findings from this review and work was in progress.

The sub-group also used the LCSPR-related findings of the annual report to inform the changes made to the review process, leadership, and approach to actions and recommendations. Annual review of LCSPRs and rapid review. The annual review of LCSPRs can be accessed on the Government publishing service [website](#).

Locally, one review was published in this period which can be found on the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership [website](#).

There was one serious case review still awaiting publication in this period, with delays due to issues with a mental health homicide review, which forms part of the review.

## Chapter 4

# Ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision

It was recognised as part of the self-assessment that this is the least developed part of the work of the partnership. The work has been affected by staffing issues throughout this reporting period and, therefore, the priority has been to ensure the sub-groups continue to be active. Within this period, the sub-groups were asked to agree a group level plan for the coming year and, within that, to detail how they were going to seek and gain information about experiences of children and their families. This will be the main focus for the next reporting period.

## Next steps for the partnership

Informed by the Jenny Pearce Review, the partnership agreed a new business plan for April 2022-2023, which included clearer reporting expectations for sub-groups. There is an expectation that all partners will be able to account for the impact they are making against the specific business plan priority and practice areas. It is recognised that there have been wide-ranging expectations of the sub-groups and that the impact of the pandemic is still a current issue in terms of resource available to the partnership. Therefore, the partnership is seeking to focus on a more defined set of priorities, which evidence from the sub-groups tells us negatively affects children and young people the most. The plan sets out the overarching priorities that will remain constant. It then sets out the key practice areas, which can be updated once the required impact can be evidenced.

The Business Plan also clearly sets out the intention to reach out more to people who use services, operational staff and to community members so that we can better understand the needs of the people whose lives we are seeking to improve.

The Business Plan can be seen in full below.

# BSCP Business Plan 2022-2023

## Introduction

In 2019 Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) and Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership (BSCP) created a joint business unit while it is maintaining separate Board and sub-group structures. We currently have a business plan running 2020- 2023 however, events of the past year have brought into sharp focus the importance of understanding the needs of our service users, communities and workforce in relation to safeguarding. With this business plan, we are striving to ensure that the Partnership adds value and is better able to evidence the impact of our work on operational staff and people who use our services.

## How we will do this

From 1st April 2022 -1st April 2023 we will work on fewer priorities but in a more focused way. These priority areas are informed by the evidence arising from reviews and from our Board partners. It is proposed that the practice area will change each year; providing we can evidence that the required changes have been achieved and that they are known and understood by relevant members of the workforce. Each sub-group will be required to share a workplan with the Board which evidences how they will impact on the following areas:

## Our vision

To work together to enable people in Buckinghamshire to live a life free from fear, harm and abuse and to ensure a strengthening families approach and contextual safeguarding approach is central to everything we do.

Our aim is that as a Partnership we will:

- Make safeguarding personal and the responsibility of everyone
- Ensure there is effective communication with communities in Buckinghamshire
- Enable people to have choices and control over how they want to live
- Learn from our experiences and improving how we work

Priority	Practice area in focus 2022. Sub groups are requested to scrutinise the current position and drive best practice based on research and evidence on the following areas:
Early intervention and prevention	The first 1001 days. The first 1001 days. Issues relating to multi agency risk enablement and coordination, availability and appropriateness of interventions pre and post birth, insight into the level of demand and need in Buckinghamshire, quality of interventions with male carers

People who use our services	Adolescents – the Board to benefit from the experience of children who have been the subject of assessments, consistency of use, understanding their needs and their context, staff confidence and competence in identifying key issues such as exploitation and neglect .
Contextual safeguarding think family, think community	Transition from children to adult services People with autism diagnoses System issues relating to access to services, definitions of need and professional language, contextual safeguarding, planning and coordination of services, hearing the voice of the child

### How will this be measured

- We will use the Jenny Pearse framework within the sub groups to continually assess our progress in each of the priority areas (see appendix A for baselines assessment). This will be shared with the Executive and will also be used to help us understand the added value of the sub group structures.
- We will gather the views of operational staff to ensure that the work of the Partnership is reaching those who should benefit from it.
- We will gather relevant quality assurance evidence from our partners in our PQ&I sub group.
- We will listen to people who use our services and be accountable for how we use their information.

### Next steps

- Sub groups to create a targeted work plan based on the priority areas.
- Membership of the groups to be reviewed to ensure that the right people, at the right level are actively working together on the multi agency approach to these priority areas.
- A review of the function of the LCSPR sub group to ensure that we are maximising the learning from this work.

## Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding children partnership arrangements

**Comments:** Chair and Business Manager . RAG rating agreed by all Executive Partners.

The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation	The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children	Children, young people and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding children	Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing	There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews	There is an active program of multiagency safeguarding children training
Have the three partners agreed a process for developing, reviewing and funding a child centred strategic	Is the wider safeguarding children partnership, including all relevant agencies and the private and	Are children and young people consulted, inputting into, and influencing the development, implementation and	Are mechanisms in place for the three core partners to collect and analyse relevant data pertaining to safeguarding	Are all safeguarding partners aware of the criteria and process for referral of cases for consideration of meeting the threshold for local or	Is there a transparent and clearly understood process for identifying, providing and evaluating training

safeguarding children plan: identifying agreed desired outcomes in line with national guidelines and recent research findings, including contextual safeguarding?	business sector, appropriately informed of and engaged with the safeguarding children partnership arrangements and safeguarding children plan?	review of the safeguarding plan and related activities?	children?	national review?	needs for safeguarding children with all safeguarding partners, including children, families and communities?
Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green
The Partnership has a 3- year business plan that is currently being updated. The new operational priorities for 2021/22 have been agreed. The actions will include outcomes. The budget for the partnership is agreed. The new plan will be more in line with the	The wider partnership is represented on the sub groups and they are leading on the business plan. Updates are provided to the wider partnership at conferences and in a newsletter but there are gaps in engagement	Young people are involved in specific themes and agency specific work, but there is limited involvement in development of safeguarding plan. This is a priority for 2021/22. It has already been stipulated that actions should	Data is collected and discussed in the P,Q &I sub-group. Audits are also commissioned through this group. The group now gets data from all agencies though the format and analysis is being reviewed. The report is presented to the partnership. There	There were some issues regarding referral of cases to Ofsted / national review in 2021. However, a meeting with the national panel helped to clarify this. The case review sub-group manages all referrals and has revised forms and process to meet	The partnership has revised the training delivery over 2020/21 with more online training delivered by an external partner. The training and development plan was reviewed and agreed at the partnership in June 2021. A specific



test set out above. There is a gap around the evidence and research base for the approaches to be taken, which will be addressed.	(particularly the private / business sector / voluntary sector and faith/independent sector)	document how the voice of the user is captured.	are gaps when the data relates to specific areas of activity e.g. the exploitation VOLT scorecard	national guidance. Partners are more aware about the different ways of reviewing at different points in the process e.g. we have recently updated the process for the rapid reviews to ensure we have better quality evidence coming into them.	strand includes evaluation of impact of training (which is in the early stages). However, the partnership doesn't have a current analysis of training needs, nor is one available from communities /voluntary sector. A decision also needs to be taken as to whether the partnership QAs other agencies' core safeguarding training (to give assurance and also alert to any risks)
Are representatives of the three lead	Is the wider safeguarding children partnership research informed	Is there an outreach (engagement) strategy	Are agencies from the wider partnership undertaking and	Are case reviews adequately resourced to enhance learning, to embrace	Is the planning and delivery of multi-agency

partners strategically placed on relevant partnership meetings, sub groups, and working groups, reviewing progress against the questions within this 'Six Steps' model?	and adhering to national guidelines regarding issues impacting on safeguarding children, including contextual safeguarding?	to ensure that those impacted most by safeguarding concerns are aware of their right to be safeguarded and to play a part in developing initiatives to prevent, respond to and report about safeguarding threats?	sharing their own audits of data pertaining to safeguarding children?	contextual as well as individual and family concerns and to involve the full range of personnel to extract learning?	training informed by the local safeguarding children plan; review of local data; local and national policy; legislative contexts; and up to date research findings?
Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green
Representatives from the 3 statutory partners attend the partnership meeting and sub-groups. However, the level of attendee is not	Partners are well represented on national bodies and at learning events, and bring back good practice and guidance. A	Active engagement with front line users is a key part of the updated requirements of the business plan subgroup (though	Audit activity is discussed in the P,Q and I sub-group. Examples of audits and their impact were outlined in the annual report. CSC	A significant number of SCRs have been published over the last year. Each of these has a detailed action plan for all recommendations.	The training proposal discussed in June partnership meeting set out the priorities (drawn from the plan, reviews and engagement). A full

always at an appropriate level to ensure effective decision making. A light touch review of progress was reported in the annual report (2020/21) and a more substantial assessment done in 2021 (this review). Covid has had an impact in terms of capacity.	conference was held in 2021 on contextual safeguarding with over 150 attendees from across the partnership.	there is limited evidence to date). The partnership do stake part in initiatives e.g. delivering training to staff and users of hate crime projects which would tick the above questions.	carry out significant audit activity and most organisations undertake some form of 'checking activity'. Partnership audits are hampered by resource limitations.	Whilst progress is being made – this needs to be more robustly followed up and reported by partners. Evidence of change and impact are now required before any action is closed. The partnership is also implementing more innovative ways to communicate the learning and expected change and the LCSPR sub is clear that engagement with operational staff is key in terms of info gathering and understanding the systems issues	plan with costings was presented and agreed by the Exec in September. Any training proposals will also be asked to consider the research basis.
Are the three partners	Are all safeguarding partners engaging	Are opportunities in place for children and	Is all relevant data from within the core	Is learning from reviews being	Is the take up and use of

assured that the safeguarding children partnership works effectively alongside other partnerships: for example the safeguarding adults board; community safety partnership; health and wellbeing board?	with safeguarding children information sharing and staff training protocols?	young people to lead or co-lead safeguarding initiatives; safeguarding training for adults and children; and attending relevant meetings, working groups, and sub groups?	and wider partnership being used to review the impact of safeguarding initiatives on desired outcomes for children?	cascaded and used to improve outcomes for children, their families and community?	safeguarding children training reviewed in both core and wider partnership agencies including take up and use of training by children, young people and communities?
Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green
The chair and business unit cover BSCP and BSAB. There is a quarterly meeting which brings together the chairs of the strategic meetings (chaired by CEO of BC). A	ISAs are in place (though some need to be reviewed). These are managed by the P,P &P sub-group. There is good engagement across partners for training with a desire to share	The involvement of young people in partnership activity is limited. The partnership are considering the best way to address this and this is a priority.	At the current time data is scrutinised in several places, given the involvement of Ofsted in CSC. Partners' data is presented to the P,Q & I sub-group but the link between	All recommendation in case reviews now have robust action plans with identified deliverables and outcomes. There is evidence of change (e.g. Baby N changes within housing). The	The business unit manage all training courses. Covid did impact on delivery, though the shift to online has enabled greater access for some. Training for wider groups is

protocol ensures that the partnerships work together effectively and there is evidence of good work across the groups (serious youth violence, DVA). Chairs and business managers have attended other meetings.	training where appropriate. Conferences and learning events are held and are well attended across partners.		initiatives and outcomes needs to be developed further.	reporting process by partners could be improved. All new contracts with authors will require that they produce a 7 minute briefing as part of the set of documents at the end point. The partnership is also going to push out any thematic learning from the rapid review part of the process and establishing action learning sets for staff, some of which will be allocated for learning from reviews.	limited but could be improved as part of the new training proposal. The L&D sub group will oversee and monitor training provision
Are necessary reporting and scrutiny processes in place,	Are all safeguarding partners engaged with identifying and	Do young people play a role in assessing and representing	Is all relevant data shared across the partnership and used	Is there evidence of the integration of learning from case	Are the core partners assessing the impact of safeguarding children

with review of required outcomes, and forward planning procedures?	reviewing safeguarding children priorities: facilitating safeguarding concerns up to and down from the three lead partners?	safeguarding concerns in their transition to adult services?	to inform: an assessment of gaps in data, identification of priorities, and future safeguarding plans?	reviews into future training, policy and practice for safeguarding children, young people and communities?	training (impact on practice and desired safeguarding outcomes) and using this to inform future training needs?
Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green	Red/Amber/Green
There is a 3 year business plan for the partnership which was reviewed early 2021 and is being revised to be more focused on operational outcomes. This will involve engagement of all sub-groups and partners. The sub-groups will then own the plan and report	There are some good examples of the route of information and escalation into and out of the subgroups, and into and out of the Exec . In terms of individual cases, the threshold document was reviewed in 2020/21 and a new process launched in 2021. This should help	The partnership is in the early stages of scrutinising this so young people do not play a role at this time (this might be different for individual organisations). This is a priority and there was a joint audit on this a couple of years ago. A working group about several SCRs	The partnership is in a better position in terms of being able to see the journey of the child through services who are members of the sub-group. However, the gaps are a reflection of the gaps in partner agencies' collection (e.g. the lack of clear exploitation data, the limited data from	There is evidence of how action plans from case reviews are transferred into learning. Specific learning events are held to address these issues and processes / policies have been changed in light of actions. The gap is around the L&D looking at this action from a multi-agency	This is an area that was highlighted at the last partnership meeting. The business unit will look for good practice (the education psychology service are supporting this work).

progress and escalations to the partnership. The revision will ensure actions are SMART and it is clear what good looks like to enable clearer scrutiny. The Chairs of sub-groups meeting will scrutinise whether the assurance process is making sense. There will be a tighter escalation process to minimise drift and delay. The future of scrutiny post Oftsed needs to be considered (plus the role of CYP in scrutiny).	partners with escalation of concerns. There have been some challenging (healthy) discussions between partners about safeguarding cases which help to resolve any issues. Learning probably needs to extend beyond the 3 statutory partners.	(AA /Family T and the new SAR SS) will meet to discuss an action about the assessment practice around parents with additional needs and 2/3 of these explicitly involves transitions.	early help, the overreliance on criminal justice data for DVA reporting).	perspective not just the partnership training plan, this should increase ownership of the dissemination of learning.	
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## APPENDIX A – UPDATED DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ( will be displayed as in infographic).

At the time of writing the report Buckinghamshire had;

- 88942 Pupils attending state funded schools in Buckinghamshire (May22)
- 1594 Pupils attending special schools in Buckinghamshire (May22)
- 19% Pupils with a first language other than English (Jan22 school census)
- 5635 CYP with an EHCP maintained by Buckinghamshire (5<sup>th</sup> Sept22)
- 41% Pupils BAME (Jan22 school census)
- 10892 Pupils eligible for free school meals (May22 school census)
- 67 Children missing from education (Jul22)
- 902 Electively home educated (Jul22)
  
- 237 schools
  - 185 primary schools (including 48 academies/free schools)
    - 36 Infant (2 academies)
    - 23 Junior (7 academies)
    - 126 Combined (39 academies/free)
  - 35 Secondary (26 academies/free)
    - 13 Selective (all academies)
    - 22 non selective (academies/free)
  - 2 all through mainstream (1 academy)
  - 2 nursery
  - 3 PRU (1 academy)
  - 10 special (2 academies)





## Report to Children's & Education Select Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Thursday 3 November 2022
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Update – covering the period March 2022 to September 2022</b>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	John Macilwraith, Corporate Director Children's Services
<b>Ward (s) affected:</b>	All
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>For Select Committee to note the national and local developments across the Children's Services Directorate</b>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The work of Children's Services has always been diverse, demand led and challenging. The impact of Covid-19 has undoubtedly increased levels of demand and need that could not have been predicted.
- 1.2 The child population continues to increase as do the levels of poverty children and families are experiencing. Furthermore, the lasting impact of Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living pressures has added an additional layer of complexity to the work of Children's Services. The performance information available to the Service demonstrates that the unprecedented surge in demand began at the end of 2020 and has continued through to the present day. There are currently no indicators to suggest a return to pre pandemic demand levels.
- 1.3 Given the complex demand challenges within the system there is a need to address increasing financial pressures and ensure affordability and financial sustainability through delivery of better outcomes that cost less. Whilst there has and continues to be significant focus on improving outcomes for our children and young people, the Service wants to refresh its evidence base to fully understand the root causes of the current demand coming into the system. This will inform the way in which services are developed and delivered in the future, especially as the Service looks to build stronger relationships with partners. To support the Service with this work, IMPOWER have been commissioned to develop a single programme of change based around a clear profile of demand, with a plan for delivery. The aim of this plan is to help

maximise the impact and effectiveness of early intervention and prevention, alongside our intention for more locality-based support

- 1.4 In addition to the local challenges alluded to above, on the horizon there are a number of national policy developments that when introduced, will impact on the way in which services are delivered to the children and young people of Buckinghamshire. Whilst many of the reforms currently lack detail, the Council is in support of the Government's proposals.
- 1.5 The Service continues on its improvement journey and our number one priority is to strengthen services for children, young people and their families. Whilst there is more to do, the Service is confident in its understanding and knowledge of what needs to be done.

## **2. National Context**

- 2.1 The following section gives an overview of the key national policy developments relating to Children's Services announced by the previous Administration. At this stage, the Service remains unclear on the future direction and implementation of these policies following the Government changes and the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Education.

### Schools White Paper

- 2.2 At the end of March 2022, the Government published the [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#). This White Paper sets out proposed reforms to the education system focused on providing an excellent teacher for every child, delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child that needs it and a stronger and fairer school system.
- 2.3 The main ambitions of the White Paper are:
  - i. for 90% of primary school children to achieve the expected standard in Key Stage 2 reading, writing and maths by 2030, and;
  - ii. to see the national average GCSE grade in both English language and maths increase from 4.5 in 2019 to 5.0 by 2030.
- 2.4 Within the White Paper a series of new measures to support the delivery of these ambitions include:
  - i. By 2030, all children will benefit from being taught in a school in, or in the process of joining, a strong multi-academy trust, which will help transform underperforming schools and deliver the best possible outcomes for children.
  - ii. Local authorities are to be permitted to establish trusts and gain the legal power to request their non-academy schools join a trust, where that is the right approach for local schools. The intention is to allow greater equalisation in the way schools are treated at national level, whilst permitting the continuation of local authority leadership and

support for those schools that wish to receive it under commensurate Trust arrangements.

- iii. Schools will offer a minimum school week of 32.5 hours by September 2023.
- iv. Ofsted will inspect every school by 2025, including the backlog of 'outstanding' schools that have not been inspected for many years.
- v. At least £100m to put the Education Endowment Foundation on a long-term footing so they can continue to evaluate and spread best practice in education across the country.

2.5 Other plans in the White Paper to deliver on improving children's attainment at the end of primary and secondary include:

- i. 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities by 2024.
- ii. £30,000 starting salaries to attract and retain the best teachers.
- iii. A register for children not in school to make sure no child is lost from the system.
- iv. Every school to have access to funded training for a senior mental health lead to deliver a whole school approach to health and wellbeing.
- v. The introduction of a new arm's-length national curriculum body which will create packages of expert-crafted optional, free, adaptable digital curriculum resources for schools to use.
- vi. New legislation to create new statutory guidance on attendance, including a requirement for every school to publish a clear attendance policy. Legislation to include new rules on recording attendance.
- vii. The school system working as a whole to raise standards with trusts responsible for running schools while local authorities are empowered to champion the interests of children.
- viii. A 'Parent Pledge' that the Government, via schools, will identify children who need help and provide targeted support, including small group tuition. The Government has invested £1 billion to establish the National Tutoring Programme and promises to deliver up to six million tutoring packages by 2024.

2.6 The Council welcomes the government's ambitious reform agenda and the commitment to a stronger, fairer school system. In addition, the Council supports the focus on helping each child meet their potential with the right support at right time. The Service will be watching carefully and respond accordingly as the further consultations to inform the associated future legislation and guidance are progressed, and the Service will provide additional updates as more information comes to light.

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Green Paper

- 2.7 At a similar time to the release of the Schools White Paper, the Government also published the [SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time](#). This consultation sets out proposed reforms for a single, national SEND and alternative provision system that will introduce new standards in the quality of support given to children across education, health and care.
- 2.8 The Green Paper is consulting on ambitious proposals to deliver greater national consistency in the support that should be made available, how it should be accessed and how it should be funded. It sets out plans for an inclusive system, starting with improved mainstream provision that offers early and accurate identification of needs, high-quality teaching and prompt access to targeted support.
- 2.9 Detailed proposals in the SEND and alternative provision green paper include:
- i. Setting new national standards across education, health and care to build on the foundations created through the Children and Families Act 2014, for a higher performing SEND system.
  - ii. A simplified Education, Health and Care Plan through digitising plans to make them more flexible, reducing bureaucracy and supporting parents to make informed choices via a list of appropriate placements tailored to their child's needs, meaning less time spent researching the right school.
  - iii. A new legal requirement for councils to introduce 'local inclusion plans' that bring together early years, schools and post-16 education with health and care services, giving system partners more certainty on who is responsible and when.
  - iv. Improving oversight and transparency through the publication of new 'local inclusion dashboards' to make roles and responsibilities of all partners within the system clearer for parents and young people, helping to drive better outcomes.
  - v. A new national framework for councils for banding and tariffs of High Needs Funding, to match the national standards and offer clarity on the level of support expected and put the system on a financially sustainable footing in the future.
  - vi. Changing the culture and practice in mainstream education to be more inclusive and better at identifying and supporting needs, including through earlier intervention and improved targeted support.
  - vii. Improving workforce training through the introduction of a new National Professional Qualification for school SEND coordinators and increasing the number of staff with an accredited level 3 qualification in early years settings.

- viii. A reformed and integrated role for alternative provision, with a new delivery model in every local area focused on early intervention.
- 2.10 The proposals are backed by new funding to implement them, worth £70 million. This will build on the £9 billion government investment in local authority high needs budgets next year and £2.6 billion for new places for children with SEND over the next three years.
- 2.11 Later this year, following the completion of the consultation, the DfE will publish a national SEND delivery plan, setting out the government's response to the consultation and how the proposals will be implemented.
- 2.12 Whilst some of the proposals lack detail at this early stage, the Council believes that they will help improve the way that SEND support is delivered to the benefit of children and young people with special needs. Further updates will be provided as more information on the reforms becomes available.

#### Children's Social Care Review

- 2.13 In 2021, the Government commissioned an independent review of children's social care in England. This "once in a lifetime" review, led by Josh MacAlister, was published on 23 May 2022.
- 2.14 The outcome of the review is a large and expansive [report](#) setting out an ambitious and wide-ranging review of the present children's social care system, making several dozen recommendations for reform. The key headlines from the review are set out below:
  - i. The Government should develop a National Framework for Children's Social Care that sets out clear objectives for the system and practice within it.
  - ii. The Review asserts that the Funding Formula allocating money to local authorities for children's services is out of date. In the absence of the Fair Funding Review being published, government must urgently reassess how this formula for children's services is calculated so it is fit for purpose.
  - iii. The Review recommends £2.6bn of investment over the period of reform between 2023 and 2027 (comprising £46 million in year one, £987 million in year two, £1.25 billion in year three and £233 million in year four).
  - iv. The Review's primary argument is that loving relationships are what traumatised children need to overcome adversity. The first port of call should be wider family networks followed by care from the state if this is not possible.
  - v. To reduce the number of handovers between services, the review recommends introducing one category of 'Family Help' to replace 'targeted early help' and 'child in need' work, providing families with much higher levels of meaningful support. This would mean the

creation of multidisciplinary teams made up of professionals such as family support workers, domestic abuse workers and mental health practitioners - who, alongside social workers, would provide support and cut down on referring families onto other services. Where concerns about significant harm of a child emerge, an 'Expert Child Protection Practitioner', who is an experienced social worker, would co-work alongside the 'Family Help' Team with responsibility for making key decisions. This co-working will provide an expert second perspective and remove the need for break points and handovers for children and families.

- vi. Services should be community-based and work with and across other agencies such as health visiting, schools and nurseries, employment services, and the police. The services offered will be tailored to meet neighbourhood needs based on a robust needs assessment and feedback from the families.
- vii. The DCS role should be given greater levers to champion the interests of children and families in local areas and hold partners to account – such as “a duty on relevant partner agency strategies that are relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, for instance local mental health plans.” In addition, to ensure all sectors are pulling their weight locally, the Review recommends partner agencies be required to publish details of their spending on child-related services and projects.
- viii. The market for children’s social care must be better commissioned, recruited to, managed and run. Responsibility for this transformation of local children’s care markets should be placed at regional level with new Regional Care Co-operatives (RCC). Local authorities will no longer perform functions in this area themselves but will instead have direct involvement in running of RCCs collectively in a region. Children will continue to be the care of the local authority.
- ix. Ofsted should be empowered to inspect and oversee the operation and functioning of the children’s social care market, including a right to access to provider finances.
- x. Foster care recruitment processes should be streamlined to make the system more accessible, supported by a campaign to recruit 9000 foster carers between 2023 and 2026.
- xi. Kinship care (where a child is allowed to be cared for by an extended family member such as a grandparent, as opposed to foster or residential care) should be extended and these carers receive similar payments and benefits as foster carers.
- xii. Better transition support needs to be put in place for children leaving care to access housing and jobs/apprenticeships.
- xiii. The responsibility of the Virtual School should be extended to support young people from 18 up to 25.

- xiv. The report recommends establishing a National Technology Taskforce to help identify how IT can provide the means to improve efficiency in the system.
- 2.15 During the next 6 months, the Government will publish a White Paper, which sets out a full response to the review; however, the Government's initial response committed to:
- i. Establishing a National Implementation Board, chaired by Ofsted, of sector experts, people with experience of leading transformational change and with experience of the care system.
  - ii. Work with local authorities to boost efforts to recruit more foster carers, including pathfinder local recruitment campaigns and providing more support throughout the foster carer application process
  - iii. Reframing and refocusing the support social workers receive in the early part of their careers, particularly to enhance their skills and knowledge in child protection
  - iv. Joining up data from across the public sector to increase transparency – both between safeguarding partners and to the wider public (more detail will be set out later this year).
  - v. Establishing a new Digital and Data Solutions Fund to help local authorities improve delivery for children and families through technology.
  - vi. Developing a national children's social care framework which will set direction for the system and point everyone to the best available evidence to support families and protect children.
  - vii. The Government's response also committed to funding for family hubs, social workers in schools and designated safeguarding lead supervision programmes.
- 2.16 The report urges Government to introduce legislation to back reform in the final year of this parliament (next year's Queen's Speech), with an expectation of this receiving Royal Assent in Spring 2024.
- 2.17 Many professional organisations have welcomed the report. [The Association of Directors of Children's Services](#) did so while noting the report "doesn't shy away from the big challenges children, families, public services and society faces, in particular the report highlights the need for significant investment in rebalancing the social care system towards early family support."
- 2.18 This report reflects many issues that councils have been raising for some time, including the need to invest further in early help for children and families, better support for kinship carers and making sure that there are the right homes for children in care, as well as ensuring better futures for those leaving care. Whilst the Council agrees with many of the recommendations in this report, there are some significant issues that cannot wait for delivery. In particular, the cost of placements for children in care, placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the current workforce challenges.



As such, the Council has written to Government officials in relation to the above points and is awaiting a formal response.

### **3. Local Context**

- 3.1 The following section gives an overview of the key developments in Buckinghamshire Children's Services.

#### Post Ofsted Action Plan

- 3.2 As reported previously, in December 2021, Ofsted conducted their Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) reinspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. This inspection found that Buckinghamshire was no longer 'Inadequate', and the overall judgement of Children's Services was 'requires improvement to be good'. Ofsted's report highlights examples of strong practice across the service, including the strengthening of performance measures and increased levels of managerial scrutiny and support for staff at every level which has led to demonstrable improvements in the experience of many children. However, the report also highlights areas where improvement is required and made the following recommendations:
- i. The understanding, and reduction of, a high rate of re-referrals and assessments that result in no services being provided for children and their families.
  - ii. The consideration and cumulative impact of earlier interventions and family histories in children and family assessments.
  - iii. The quality of social workers' direct work with children.
  - iv. The support provided to children aged 16 and 17 years who present as homeless.
  - v. The impact of independent reviewing officers (IROs) in decisively escalating children's cases when there is drift and delay in the progress of their care plans.
  - vi. The quality of case supervision for social workers in order that it promotes consistently effective work with children.
  - vii. The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council.
- 3.3 As a result of this continued improvement of services, the revised Statutory Direction issued to Buckinghamshire in July 2018 has been lifted and Buckinghamshire will now enter a period of 'support and supervision', in line with all authorities who exit formal intervention.
- 3.4 The Service was required to submit a post inspection action plan to Ofsted by 25 May 2022 clearly indicating what action will be taken to address the 7 recommendations highlighted above.



- 3.5 Since the inspection, there has been a marked difference in the pace of improvement between teams that have not experienced significant changes in complexity and demand and those that have. However, despite the unprecedented changes in both demand and the recruitment challenges that have impacted almost exclusively on the Assessment and Help and Protection teams, the Service continues to remain safe. The demand and recruitment and retention challenges present a new threat to our ambition to become good or better.
- 3.6 In contrast, the Children in Care and Care Leaving teams have workforce stability and have not experienced significant changes in demand. As a consequence, the trajectory of these teams continues to demonstrate what can be achieved.
- 3.7 The morale of staff and managers remains positive despite the long hours being worked. The interactions with social work teams and management groups from senior managers and HR colleagues continue to prove valuable. The actions of the Senior Management Team to check and double check that children and young people are being protected in line with their presenting risk and that drift and delay does not become a strong feature of casework have been effective. It is vital that the Service continues to ask the right questions, use performance management data to initiate lines of enquiries and where necessary bring in staff from different parts of the service to support front line work.
- 3.8 In our drive towards delivering the council's ambition to achieve consistently good services, the Service will continue to follow a cycle of improvement, reviewing and testing our practice and oversight to ensure that the Service is making progress and creating actions to address our priority areas. In addition, a suite of key performance indicators will be used to track and monitor progress against each recommendation and priority area.
- 3.9 In order to support the required improvements in children's social care and in light of the significant areas of weakness identified during the local area SEND inspection (further detail in section 3.10 to 3.15 below), John Coughlan, CBE, will continue to be the Independent Chair of the Improvement Board. The scope of the Board has been broadened and will now maintain oversight of the progress being made against the 7 Ofsted recommendations (detailed in section 3.2 above) and the areas of improvement included within the SEND Written Statement of Action.

#### Local Area SEND Inspection

- 3.10 Between the 28 February and 11 March 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the services provided for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Buckinghamshire. The inspection team considered how well the local area:
- i. identifies the needs of children and young people with SEND
  - ii. assesses and meets the needs of children and young people with SEND

- iii. ensures positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- 3.11 The inspection team spoke to a wide range of professionals across health, education and social care and met with children and young people of all abilities in education settings and focus groups. They received feedback from over 1000 parents and carers. In addition, inspectors reviewed Education, Health and Care Plans and over 150 documents and pieces of supporting evidence.
- 3.12 The inspection found a number of strengths across the local area, despite the ongoing Covid-19 challenges. It recognises the considerable activity that is happening as part of our SEND improvement programme and confirms that our self-evaluation accurately reflects our progress. That said, inspectors also identified 3 areas of significant weakness:
  - i. The lack of a cohesive area strategy to identify and meet the needs of those children and young people requiring speech and language, communication and occupational therapy
  - ii. Waiting times for assessments on the autism and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder diagnosis pathways and the system-owned plans in place to address this
  - iii. Waiting times to see a community paediatrician.
- 3.13 As a result of the inspection findings, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address significant areas of weakness.
- 3.14 As alluded to in section 3.6 above, the independently chaired Improvement Board will provide, where appropriate, scrutiny and direction in order to secure the improvements required as well as challenge the pace and quality of progress, in terms of both actions and their impact.
- 3.15 The Service will of course focus our efforts on improving the areas of significant weakness identified, while continuing with our broader improvement journey to ensure the support children with SEND receive in Buckinghamshire is high quality and effective.

#### Ofsted Annual Conversation

- 3.16 Under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection framework, Ofsted arrange an annual conversation with every local authority. In Buckinghamshire, the annual conversation was held in July 2022 and in preparation for the meeting with Ofsted, the Service shared the latest self-assessment and performance data for both children's social care and education. Ofsted use the annual conversation as an opportunity to scrutinise performance, service development and progress on any actions set at the last inspection. This assists Ofsted in determining the timing and scope of any subsequent inspection activity.
- 3.17 Feedback received from Ofsted at the end of the annual conversation was positive and the Service's self-assessment was accepted in full.

- 3.18 In line with the current framework, the Service anticipates receiving a focused visit which will evaluate an aspect of service, a theme or the experiences of a cohort of children, towards the end of 2022.

### Demand Pressures

- 3.1 As shown in the table below, when comparing demand levels during 2022 so far to those in the early part of 2020, pre pandemic, there have been some marked changes in the demand across the Service both in numerical terms and the seriousness/complexity of the circumstances children and young people find themselves. The above indicates a new 'normal' for our teams and demand increases for statutory services are highly likely to continue to rise in both the short and medium term. Societal factors such as worsening mental health in our communities and further family pressures driving by the cost of living crisis being the main drivers.

3.2

	Early 2020 (pre-pandemic) monthly average	2022 monthly average	% change
Contacts	1,375	2,088	52
Referrals	902	1,282	42
Section 47 enquires	200	256	24
Initial Child Protection Conferences	55	74	43
Children subject to a child protection plan	512	730	43
Children with an allocated social worker	2,283	4,144	26

- 3.3 Given the complex demand challenges within the system there is a need to address increasing financial pressures and ensure affordability and financial sustainability through delivery of better outcomes that cost less. Whilst there has and continues to be significant focus on improving outcomes for our children and young people, the Service wants to refresh its evidence base to fully understand the root causes of the current demand coming into the system. This will inform the way in which services are developed and delivered in the future, especially as the Service looks to build stronger relationships with partners. To support the Service with this work, IMPOWER have been commissioned to develop a single programme of change based around a clear profile of demand, with a plan for delivery. The aim of this plan is to help

maximise the impact and effectiveness of early intervention and prevention, alongside our intention for more locality-based support.

- 3.4 In parallel to the demand increases in children's social care, the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan continues to increase. In July 2022, there were 5,704 EHCPs maintained by Buckinghamshire, an increase of 10% on the same point in 2021, and a 29% increase on the same point in 2019. The most prevalent primary needs for children and young people with EHCPs are for autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) which have increased by 49% and 37% respectively since January 2019. Primary needs of specific learning difficulty (SLD) have increased by 75%, multi-sensory impairment (MSI) by 60% and profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD) by 59% in the same period.
- 3.5 In response to the growing demand in this area, the Service has developed a [SEND Education Sufficiency Plan](#). In essence, it aims to address the following areas:
- i. The need to increase the capacity of secondary mainstream schools (including alternative provision) for children with Communication and Interaction needs (autism), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) particularly in both Aylesbury and Wycombe. This is linked to the growth in housing in these areas, and the level of need as demonstrated in the table above; higher numbers of children with EHCPs currently live in Aylesbury and Wycombe.
  - ii. The need to increase the capacity of secondary mainstream schools (including Alternative Provision) for children in Aylesbury with moderate learning difficulties.
  - iii. The need to accommodate some growth in numbers of children with SEN in primary and post-16 mainstream schools particularly in Aylesbury and Wycombe.
  - iv. The need for more secondary and post-16 special school places across the county, but particularly in Aylesbury, primarily for children with autism and learning difficulties.
  - v. The need for specialist provision to support children with autism and/or SEMH for whom a high-level academic education offers the best possible foundation for their future.
  - vi. The need for suitable post-16 further education placements across the county to accommodate a range of needs.
- 3.6 This SEND Sufficiency Strategy will be carried out over three phases and within the strategy there is a comprehensive plan, enabling progress to be monitored and changes to be made in line with variation in forecasts in future years. In order to assist with the above, the Service has completed a pre-registration application to the DfE. New schools approved through this process are part of the central free schools' programme and will be delivered and funded as such.

Free schools are legally academies, which are state-funded educational institutions operated by academy trusts. Successful local authorities will be announced late 2022 to early 2023.

### The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Academy

- 3.7 In 2019, the Service created a Social Work Academy to enable the Council to develop Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) through their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).
- 3.8 The ASYE Academy provides a protected and supported environment for the induction and training of NQSWs which helps:
- I. Recruit and retain staff.
  - II. Drive up the standards of social work practice and in turn outcomes for children and young people.
  - III. Enable NQSWs to understand the child / young person's journey through our organisation.
- 3.9 The Academy works to a 6 month model; NQSWs based within the Academy for their first 6 months where they complete a thorough induction and all essential and mandatory professional and systems training. They will also have worked through a range of more complex cases and tasks, with intensive supervision and support. The training follows the young person's journey through the Service with a strong focus on best practice and the voice of the child or young person. Managing a small caseload alongside training helps NQSWs to effectively integrate learning. NQSWs remain in the Academy for a little longer if required and based on individual need which is assessed by our Advanced Practitioners. All NQSW case work held in the Academy is overseen by the Advanced Practitioners including direction and oversight and signed off by the Team Manager. At the end of the first 6 months or when the NQSW is ready, they then join their permanent front-line team for the remaining 6 months of the ASYE with continued support through the programme. This support includes regular reflective supervision from an Advanced Practitioner who has demonstrable skills and experience in developing others. The focus is on learning and developing, critical reflection and supporting the NQSW to understand the links between theory and practice.
- 3.10 Between 2019 and June 2022, 42 of the 60 NQSWs that have been through the Academy remain within the service. Given the success and in order to alleviate some of the significant challenge in recruiting high quality social workers, the Academy has recently been expanded to support a further 60 newly qualified social workers by April 2023.
- 3.11 Having a permanent workforce and reducing reliance on agency staff is one of the main priorities for the Service and achieving this will no doubt lead to better service outcomes for children and young people as well as reducing expenditure.

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 3.12 Buckinghamshire Council has now, along with all other local authorities, been mandated to take Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) when they are referred via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). In addition, the Council is also now required to continue to receive referrals until it reaches 0.10% of the child (0-18) population (127 individuals for Buckinghamshire) compared to the previous ask of 0.07%, 89 individuals for Buckinghamshire. Currently, the Service supports 32.
- 3.13 There are 68 UASC over the age of 18 open to the Service; however, the percentage calculated for each local authority does not include care leavers.
- 3.14 These decisions by central government will have a significant impact directly and indirectly on the Council's budgets. The direct impacts will be on placement costs and on subsistence payments. Indirectly, there will be an impact on placement availability for all children that will decrease supply and enable providers to increase their charges.
- 3.15 The financial burden on this Council is also influenced by the increasing timeframe in which the Home Office make final decisions on each individual's asylum claim. It used to be the case that final decisions on claims would take about a year (average for 2017). Between 2018 and 2020 this slowed to within 2 to 3 three years. It appears since the pandemic and now as a result of the Ukrainian sponsorship scheme, over 4 years is the norm.
- 3.16 A number of commissioning actions are underway to procure increased provision for care leavers including UASC. This includes block purchasing 'semi-independent' provision increase the supply of placements at a lower price. The Service will also continue to work with colleagues from Housing and our Housing Associations to ensure care leavers access their own tenancies in a timely and cost-effective way.

### School Inspections

- 3.17 Since the resumption of regular Ofsted inspections and changes to the inspection methodology and framework introduced in September 2021, 30 Buckinghamshire schools have been inspected (24 primary, 5 secondary and 1 special school).
- 3.18 Overall, our schools have performed well. 4 improved their rating to good or better, 22 maintained their previous judgements (18 maintained their good or better judgement and 4 remained requires improvement) and unfortunately the rating dropped in 4 schools. This was anticipated in light of the changes to the inspection methodology and the length of time since the schools' previous inspection.
- 3.19 Where inspections have been challenging this academic year, a theme of safeguarding is a thread that has been identified in the reports, which is mirrored in feedback across the south east. This is something that the Service is working proactively with school leaders to address and have provided

training and support for all schools as well as bespoke work in schools where this is identified as a vulnerability.

- 3.20 At the end of the academic year 2022, 90% of Buckinghamshire pupils attended a good or outstanding school.

#### The evolution of the Early Help Offer

- 3.21 The Buckinghamshire Partnership Early Help Strategy has recently been reviewed and refreshed. The emphasis within the [refreshed strategy for 2022-2025](#) is focused on two broad areas. Firstly, strengthening the partnership offer and oversight, as the Service looks to expand and streamline access to our increasingly broad early help offer across the county. Secondly, ensuring the offer responds effectively to emerging issues, including minimising the long-term impact of the pandemic on our children, young people, and families in Buckinghamshire.
- 3.22 Early help maintained its service offer with some adaptations throughout the different stages of the pandemic and, as with all Children's Service areas demand has never been higher. Services have been fully operational for some months now and the Service has established the wide range of activities led by the Family Support Service, partner agencies and community groups in our network of Family Centres.
- 3.23 Family Centres were acknowledged by Ofsted during the recent inspection, as key support hubs within communities and the Service continues to develop locally based programmes. In addition, the Service is keen to develop these sites into Family Hubs, in line with the national model, so that they become community access points for a wide range of services and support at a locality level.
- 3.24 The Family Support Service has also launched for the first time, a [Participation Strategy for Young People](#). This strategy describes a new approach to engaging all young people, building their interest and participation in local democracy, working alongside officers so that the Service can develop and design practice, policy, and strategy, enabling the Council to benefit from listening to and acting upon the views and wishes of young people in the recruitment of staff, service improvement and policy development.

#### **4. Other options considered**

- 4.1 N/A

#### **5. Legal and financial implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal or financial implications as a result of agreeing to the recommendations the paper. However, there are significant financial pressures associated with a number of areas detailed within the report, particularly pertinent to the mandated transfer scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, demand pressures faced across the Service and the

reliance on agency staff due to the significant social worker recruitment challenges. The financial pressures related to these areas will feature within the Service's 2023/2024 medium term financial planning process.

## **6. Corporate implications**

- 6.1 Similar to above, there are no specific corporate implications as a result of agreeing to the recommendations the paper; however, changes made to Government policy as a result of the Schools White Paper, SEND Green Paper and Children's Social Care Review will no doubt require additional support from corporate support services such as HR and Finance.

## **7. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views**

- 7.1 N/A

## **8. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 8.1 N/A

## **9. Next steps and review**

- 9.1 The next update will be provided to Cabinet on 11 April 2023.

## **10. Background papers**

- 10.1 N/A





## Report to Children's and Education Select Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>3 November 2022</b>
<b>Reference number:</b>	n/a
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Children Missing Education</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	Anita Cranmer, Joseph Baum
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	Simon James, Service Director, Education
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	none specific

### Executive summary

This paper:

- **recommends that members of the Committee note the content of this report.**
- sets the context of children missing education (CME) and children missing out on education, including those children most at risk and the collective responsibilities of parents, school, and local authorities.
- describes the team structure in place to ensure that children missing education are identified and that suitable provision is made for the child's educational needs.
- details the number of CME involvements and closures for the academic year 2021/22 and processes for supporting the most vulnerable.
- describes the priorities for the next 12 months for supporting children missing education and children missing out on education.

### Content of report

#### 1.0 Context

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to ensuring all children receive an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special

educational needs they may have. Wherever possible education will take place in a mainstream school. However, there are many factors in the life of a child or that of their family that can affect attendance at school.

- 1.1 Children missing education is not the same as a child that goes missing. Legally, children missing education are defined as those not on a school roll and not receiving education other than at school, such as at home. Ofsted, however, uses a wider definition of pupils missing from education in their inspections, which includes those on a school roll but not receiving a full-time suitable education for example those on unsuitable part-time timetables or those that may have been unlawfully excluded. Data on children missing education is not collected at national level, meaning there is not currently a reliable figure for the whole of England. (During the 2022/23 academic year, the Department for Education are piloting the collection of aggregate termly data regarding children missing education (CME) and children who receive elective home education (EHE) from local authorities on a voluntary basis).
- 1.2 Pupils who are known to be most at risk of missing education include those from families who frequently move house; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children; those who are excluded from school; children with parent/carers in the Armed Forces; those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; children with chronic health problems or disabilities; teenage mums; young carers; refugee/asylum seekers; young people affected by domestic violence or sexual abuse; those who have been bullied; looked after children; children with special educational needs (SEN); young offenders; and those forced into marriage.
- 1.3 In Buckinghamshire, as above and in accordance with guidance, a child missing from education is defined as being of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g., at home, in independent schools or in alternative provision) or who have been out of any educational provision for four weeks or more and after reasonable enquiry by the school or Children Missing Education Officer, still cannot be located. Whereas a pupil missing out on education is defined as being of compulsory school age who may or may not be on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g., at home, in independent schools or in alternative provision) or who has been out of any educational provision for four weeks or more, even if they are on roll at a school. Children missing education may not have ever been on a school roll and are differentiated from those children who are on a school roll but not receiving an education.
- 1.4 Why do children go missing from education?  
The most common reasons are:
  - They do not start school when they reach school age and therefore fail to enter the educational system

- They do not transfer to secondary school when they should
- The family move house regularly, or becomes homeless or there are other domestic issues
- The family have experienced domestic violence and have been placed in a refuge
- The child ceases to attend due to exclusion, illness, bullying or other school-based issues
- Parents “withdraw” children from school due to a dispute or disagreement with the school
- The child has behaviour or attendance concerns
- No school places are available when a family moves to a new area
- Parents decide to home educate unofficially i.e., without the Local Authority knowing
- The family move out of area without notifying the school

#### 1.5 Why do some pupils miss out on education?

The most common reasons are:

- They have been permanently excluded and suitable alternative provision has not been put in place
- They have been placed on a reduced timetable
- They are pregnant or are young mothers of compulsory school age
- They have complex needs and no suitable school place is available
- They are returning from custody
- They are new to county and awaiting a school place
- They have moved from another area and a school place has not been secured this may include children who are looked after
- They were previously registered as EHE but now require a school place

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and carers, schools and the Local Authority all have responsibilities in preventing children missing and missing out on education. The Government places a duty on local authorities, through Section 436A and supporting statutory guidance, to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area

who are not registered pupils at a school and not receiving a suitable education at home or by other means than at school.

A suitable education is defined in Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 as: “...efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have...” (Section 437, Education Act 1996).

1.1 As the Local Authority we have a responsibility to:

- have arrangements in place to be able to identify children in the area who are not registered at a school or being otherwise suitably educated
- act promptly to support a child who is not in suitable education to return to full-time education or access an alternative provision
- appoint a person whom schools and other agencies can contact to make a referral about a child who is missing education
- undertakes the statutory responsibility for issuing penalty notices and to prosecute parents for irregular school attendance; and
- consider the reasons for CME and how to promote effective safeguarding of children
- have arrangements for sharing information with other agencies to ensure effective joint working and contribute to wider work designed to improve outcomes of children
- work with schools to make reasonable joint enquiries into the whereabouts of a child who is missing from education
- make a referral to children’s social care (and the police where it is suspected that a crime has been committed) where there is a concern for a child’s welfare.

1.2 Parents have a responsibility to:

- ensure that their children, of school age, are receiving a suitable full-time education
- notify a school where a decision is made to home-educate a child
- if home educating a child with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, provide suitable education that meets the special educational needs of the child.

### 1.3 Schools have a responsibility to:

- follow their safeguarding duty in promoting the welfare of children and investigating any unexplained absences
- maintain an accurate register of student admissions and enter students onto it on the date agreed for them to attend the school
- notify the local authority within five days of adding a child's name to the admission register and provide the information held on the register about the child
- where a child fails to attend school on the agreed date, make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child and consider notifying the local authority
- monitor student attendance through daily registers and take steps to address poor attendance
- The Department for Education released new non-statutory guidance (expected to become statutory from September 2023): [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support.
- To do this, the guidance focusses on managing attendance by:
  - Preventing patterns of absence from developing by promoting good attendance
  - Intervening early by using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent and working with families to remove the barriers to attendance
  - Targeting support for persistent and severe absentees with all local partners working together to reengage pupils.
- inform the Local Authority of any students that fail to attend school regularly, or miss 10 school days or more without permission
- remove a child from the admission register where they have not returned to school after 10 days following an authorised absence, or is absent for 20 consecutive days without authorisation and reasonable joint enquiries between the school and Local Authority have failed to establish the child's whereabouts
- inform the Local Authority when a child's name is going to be removed from the admission register for any of the grounds set out in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)

- arrange full-time education for students who are excluded, from the sixth day of fixed-term exclusion.

1.4 Electively home educated children who are not receiving a suitable education at home are defined as children missing education. Parents have a right, under Section 7 of the Education Act (1996), to home-educate their child, so long as it is suitable to their age, ability and needs. There are many reasons why a child may be electively home educated and may include ideological preferences, health or mental health reasons or previous negative school experiences. Parents should notify the school when they are choosing to home-educate their child. This should normally be in writing and the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the Local Authority. Where a school is notified verbally, they must still inform the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity. Parents are not required to provide a reason for the decision to home educate.

1.5 If a child has an EHCP the parent must contact the Integrated SEND Service when requesting Elective Home Education and if the child attends a special school, the Local Authority must give permission before a child can come off the school's roll.

1.6 To support CME efforts, the Local Authority also has additional duties and responsibilities, these include:

- arranging full-time education for children who are permanently excluded from school after the sixth day of exclusion
- cooperating with other agencies to improve wellbeing and protect from harm and neglect
- requiring parents to provide evidence that a child is being suitably educated, where it is suspected that they are not and issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to provide this assurance
- prosecuting or issuing penalty notices and fines to parents who fail to ensure good school attendance
- delivery of the Fair Access Protocol in partnership with all schools in their area to ensure vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible
- Reduced Timetable Protocol (non-statutory requirement) to establish agreed approaches for all maintained Buckinghamshire schools in the appropriate use of reduced timetables and to identify and track any pupil receiving anything less than a full-time education.

## 1.7 **Children at particular risk of missing education**

- 1.8 For schools, their governing bodies and academy trusts, understanding the factors that affect CME and the roles and responsibilities of professionals is important for ensuring the best outcomes for children and young people. Some factors may place a child at higher risk and should be considered in the planning of preventative monitoring and support by schools.
- 1.9 Pupils at risk of harm/neglect: Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected schools should follow local child protection procedures. Local Authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert children's social care. If there is reason to suspect that a crime has been committed or the child's safety is at risk, the police should also be involved.
- 1.10 Children of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) Families: Research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore vital that schools inform the Local Authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education.

Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly, and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local Authority CME officer will advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education, for example dual registration with other schools. In Buckinghamshire the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Education Officer (non-statutory role) provides outreach support and interventions to GRT families, supports schools with pupil attendance concerns, and helps build relationships between schools and parents of GRT children. The GRT Education Officer also offers support to colleagues where safeguarding concerns have been raised/ identified by undertaking joint visits to Traveller sites and provides up to date advice and guidance to schools and other Buckinghamshire Council departments and agencies to help improve the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller children.

- 1.11 Families of Armed Forces: Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in UK and overseas and often at short notice. Buckinghamshire Council has signed a covenant to the armed forces which contains a number of pledges to the armed forces community. This includes ensuring a smooth transition for children from Forces families, alleviating issues that may be experienced in finding a school place mid-term, when a serving parent has been transferred to Buckinghamshire or surrounding area, then the Local Authority has mechanisms to assist finding a school place for a dependent child. In addition, the

MOD Children's Education Advisory Service provides support to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

1.12 Missing children: Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation, or abduction as well as missing education.

1.13 Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System: Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Buckinghamshire Council Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). Buckinghamshire YOT works with the Local Authority CME Officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education. Where a young person was registered at a school prior to custody, the school may keep the place open for their return.

#### 1.14 **Children Missing Education in Buckinghamshire**

1.15 In Buckinghamshire we are committed to ensuring that all pupils who go missing from one of our schools, or who may have arrived in Buckinghamshire and not attending a school, are speedily located.

1.16 The CME Team is a small team that consists of one 0.5FTE term-time only CME Officer and 1FTE Tracking Officer. In the last year they managed a total of 609 CME involvements.

1.17 Where children have left a Buckinghamshire school with no known destination and are untraceable by professionals, along with children who may have moved from other local authority areas to an unknown destination in Buckinghamshire, our Children Missing Education Officer will liaise with external agencies to trace them, although the responsibility for identifying and supporting CME cases is shared across all agencies and services.

1.18 Buckinghamshire Council is committed to ensuring that all pupils who go missing from schools in the County, or who disappear from other counties and may have arrived in Buckinghamshire, are speedily located, ensuring that:

- The whereabouts are known of all pupils who go missing, who move to other areas or who are lost from schools in Buckinghamshire.
- Partnership is established with other local authorities and agencies to locate missing/lost pupils who may have moved across boundaries.
- Children Missing Education are identified, and that suitable provision is made for the child's educational needs.

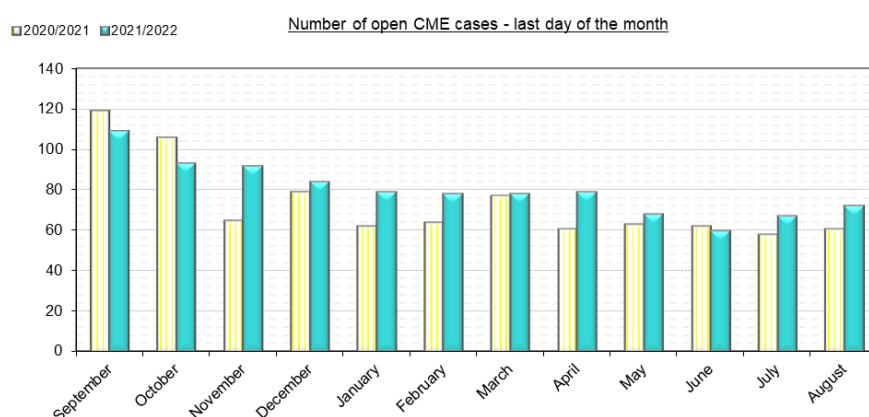


### 1.19 What we do to reduce the number of CME:

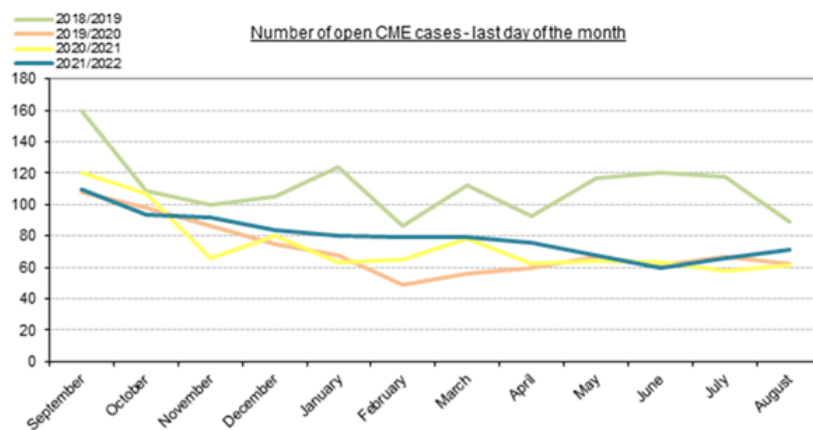
- Encourage schools to carry out their own checks as part of their joint responsibility to locate CME – to reduce number of initial referrals made
- Develop good relationships with other CME teams to facilitate smooth referral processes between local authorities and chase referrals where needed
- Utilise a wide range of agencies/ partnership working to locate families - for example developing links with Revenues & Benefits, existing links with Childrens Safeguarding (health), other local authority data teams, GP's, solicitors, police, Foreign and Commonwealth Office etc.
- Work on improving processes to ensure accurate data to avoid instances where a child may be incorrectly recorded as missing education
- Improving relationships with schools and other teams – to ensure referrals are made when appropriate and to offer advice and guidance, to help resolve referrals quickly

### 1.20 CME involvements for the academic year 2021/22

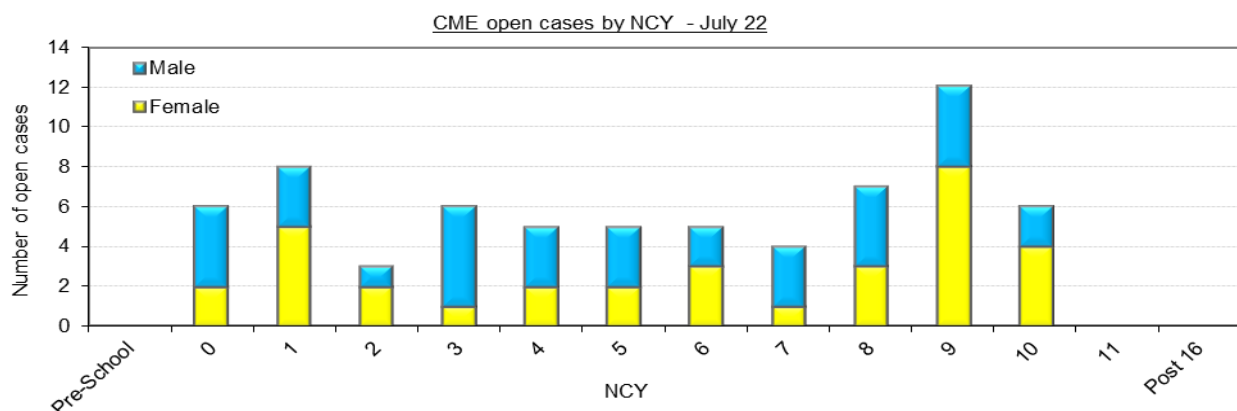
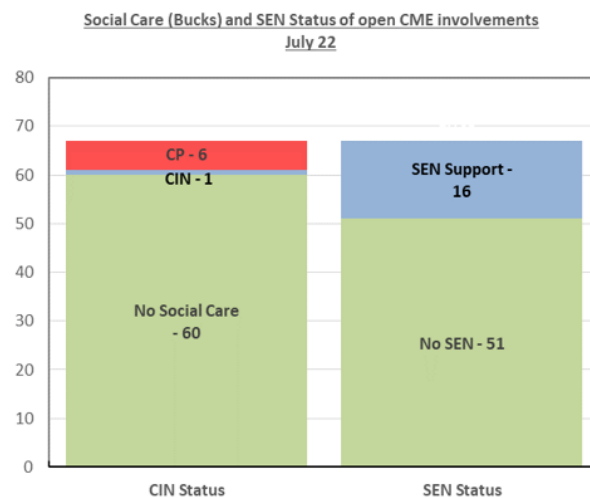
1.21 As of 31<sup>st</sup> July, there were 67 Children Missing Education involvements open. This is 7 more than on 30<sup>th</sup> June and 9 more than on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 (+16%) Month on month data and open cases by school year (NCY), Social Care status and SEN status are shown below.



1.22 CME involvements follow a cyclical pattern, with the high point being in the September figures each year, then broadly declining throughout the academic year. The number of CME involvements remains stable, the increase in figures during 2021/22 reflects the anticipated return to levels that were seen pre-pandemic (see below). The Covid-19 pandemic brought about reduction in families moving home and school, which in turn saw a reduction in the number of CME involvements.



1.23 The diagram below gives a snapshot at the end of July 2022 of the number of CME involvement and Social Care and SEN status.



1.24 Supporting the most vulnerable

When a child has a CME involvement created, checks are carried out to confirm if the family are known to Children Social Care or the SEND Service. Where they are,

contact is made with the team and relevant information shared. Referrals for pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) are not opened to CME, unless the pupil is no longer locatable, but the SEN team is made aware. Monthly reports are sent to the CME team to confirm children who have an open involvement and who are on a Children in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) plan, or who have an EHCP. This ensures that we capture information on the child that may have changed since the involvement was first created.

- 1.25 The children who are open to social care are prioritised in weekly reviews of open CME involvements, to confirm expected actions are up to date. Where the referral is not within the usual remit, but the child is known to social care the team will sometimes open a CME involvement to be an extra support/point of contact for schools, social care, and families. For example, a student on roll at a school but not currently living nearby.
- 1.26 Where a child is known to social care, the CME officer will attend core group and conferences as appropriate, acting as both a support and challenge in terms of education provision. This often involves liaison with colleagues in Elective Home Education, County Attendance Team and Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Education Officer.
- 1.27 The CME Team have also developed relationships with external agencies that support vulnerable families - such as the Wycombe Refugee Partnership and the Women's Refuge. When the CME team are notified of a family that could benefit from extra support in finding school places, we liaise with the agency, family, and admissions (both within Buckinghamshire Council and for individual schools) to help secure school places for these vulnerable children.
- 1.28 A case study is included at Appendix 2 which gives an overview of the work of the team.

#### 1.29 **CME involvements and closures**

Of the 67 open CME involvements, 55% have been open for less than 3 months (37) while 33% (22) have been open for more than a year.

Months since start date	Number of open CME involvements
0	13
1	10
2	14

3	1
4	1
5	2
6	1
7	0
8	1
9	1
10	1
11	0
12-23	9
24+	13

- 1.30 There have been 609 CME involvements open at some point during the 2021/22 academic year (578 children). Following enquiries, most of these involvements will result in a closure and present no significant concerns relating to the child's whereabouts, welfare, and education provision. For example, where parents have yet to accept a school place or where families have legitimately moved out of area, but details of new school have not been provided by outgoing school.

	<b>Total Involvements</b>	<b>Total CYP</b>	<b>New Involvements</b>	<b>Closed Involvements</b>	<b>Average Length of closed involvements</b>	<b>% of closed involvement closed within 2 weeks</b>	<b>% of closed involvement closed within 4 weeks</b>
<b>2021/2022</b>	609	578	547	542	5.9 weeks	48.0%	66.2%
2020/2021	589	561	528	528	8.0 weeks	52.5%	66.7%

- 1.31 There has been a reduction in the percentage of CME involvements closed within 2 weeks between 2021/22 and 2020/21, this is in part due to the increased volume of cases and the speed at which the team are able to respond. However, there can be other factors that impact on closure timeframe, for example, where we are waiting to hear back from other CME Teams to confirm that a child is known elsewhere.
- 1.32 The reasons for CME involvement closure are detailed below. 26% have been closed as OLEA pupils and 40% with an identified school placement.

	<u>July 22</u>	<u>2021/2022</u>	<u>Av length of case in weeks</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	<u>Av length of case in weeks</u>
BUSC: Bucks school	2	114	8.8	84	13.7
IND: Independent placement	0	11	1.9	12	4.9
OLAB: OLEA School, Bucks Res.	0	63	6.3	51	5.1
OLAN: OLEA School, Non-Bucks Res.	3	4	1.5		
SB: School base	1	24	4.9	21	5.3
<i>School placement</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>9.4</i>
NCA: Not CME - Attendance	4	4	6.6		
NCE: Not CME - EHE	2	40	14.4	38	4.7
NCO: Not CME	4	75	1.9	50	6.3
OLCM: OLEA CME	1	143	4.8	164	7.6
OLEA: Other LEA	0	9	3.0	13	1.4
OTAG: Other agency	0	1	5.0	2	1.9
OVER: Overseas	3	49	3.0	39	20.9
SLA: School leaving age	0	1	12.1	2	8.9
All Outcomes	21	542	5.9	528	8.0

- 1.33 The above categories are in the process of being updated to reflect the destinations of CME more accurately. For example, to include whether the independent placement/other Authority school is for a Buckinghamshire resident or not; and adding a category for referring to the County Attendance Team for a School Attendance Order. We are aware that a significant number referred to CME are found to not be true CME - for example they have not been contactable by the school/EHE team but on CME contacting or visiting the family they have not moved, and it is an attendance/communication matter. To try to reduce this number we are encouraging schools to ensure they carry out their own reasonable checks before referring to CME, including the use of methods we have found successful, as well as home visits and talking to friends/other contacts.

#### 1.34 Supporting Children Missing Education

Once a young person has been found and they are without educational provision they will, in most cases, be expected to join a mainstream school via the normal admissions process. Where necessary the Buckinghamshire Fair Access Protocol will be used. This ensures the most vulnerable young persons are offered a place at a suitable school. However, should they be deemed vulnerable, challenging, or hard to place in any way their name will go forward to the Fair Access Board to enable that young person to re-engage with education. Where appropriate an Exclusions & Reintegration Officer will support this process. Where the child has an EHC plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, the case will be referred to the Integrated SEND Service.

### 1.35 **Financial implications**

The total budget associated to the CME Team including salaries is £56,761 and is funded through core budget.

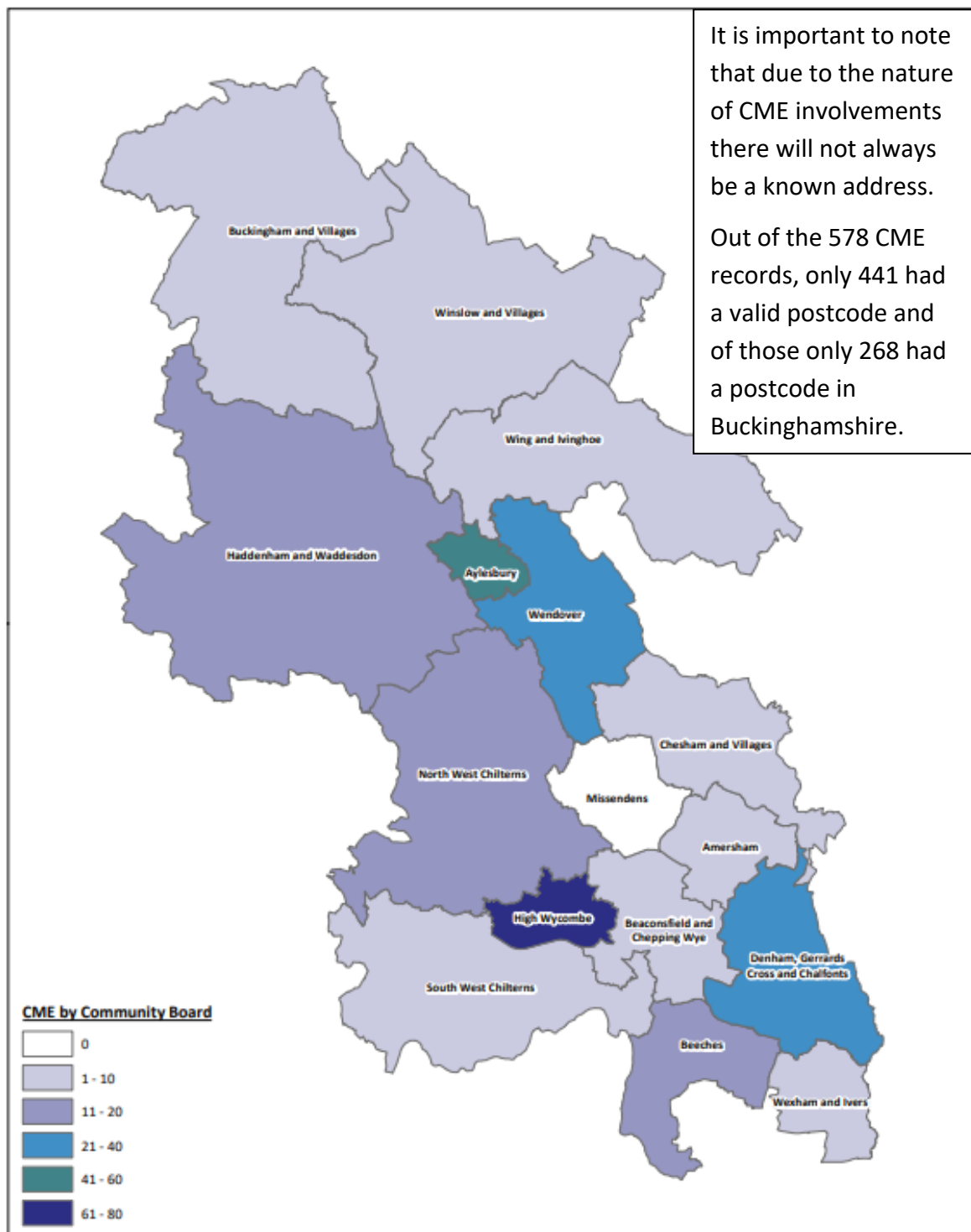
### 1.36 **Priorities for the next 12 months**

- Improve collaborative working across Buckinghamshire Council to reduce potential CME investigations. There are strong partnerships with internal teams like Admissions already in place and since the transfer to Unitary, relationships have been developed with Revenue's and Benefits to support the tracking and identification of children missing education.
- To continue to develop collaborative working across Buckinghamshire Council and with schools to identify potential CME. To raise the profile of CME and to improve understanding of our work, we are focussed on improving relationships with schools and other teams. Headteacher meetings have been attended and regular reminders sent via email and articles in the Schools Bulletin.
- Establish new multi-agency Pupil Missing out on Education Panel that will review all children who are defined as missing out on education, escalate individual cases and support reintegration back into education.

### 1.37 **Background papers**

None

## Appendix 1: Children Missing Education Buckinghamshire locality heat map 2021/22



## Appendix 2: CME Team Case Study

Background	What we did	Outcome
	<i>Week 1</i>	<i>Week 2</i>
Integrated SEND Service requested CME help tracking a child - parents claimed to have moved to Scotland but refused to give details. Conflicting info given by each parent meant there were concerns about the veracity of information provided.	<p>Calls to family - refused to share info</p> <p>Contact with Occupational Therapist ("Scotland"), NHS address check (same Bucks address returned).</p> <p>Contact to all Scots CME teams - no positive response</p> <p>Call to registered Bucks GP.</p> <p>Contacted Primary Care Support England "not registered".</p> <p>Contacted NHS again - told to contact NHS Scotland.</p> <p>Called - given 3 health board contact numbers. Child eventually located to Clyde Area.</p> <p>Call to Argyll and Bute CME, liaised with CME - school name given</p>	Contacted named school who confirmed child on roll of school.



## Select Committee Work Programmes 2022/23

### **Children's and Education Select Committee** (Chairman: Cllr Julie Ward, Scrutiny Officer: Katie Dover)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
3 November 2022	Children's Services Six Month Update report	To receive an update on Children's Services in the months since the Ofsted inspection	John Macilwraith	John Macilwraith
	Children Missing from Education	For the Select Committee to receive a report on children missing from education, and in particular vulnerable children and those with EHCP, traveller children	Gareth Drawmer	Gareth Drawmer John Macilwraith
	Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report	To receive an annual report 2021/22 from the Partnership Chairman	Richard Nash/Walter McCulloch/John Macilwraith	Chairman of the Partnership John Macilwraith
26 January 2023	Education Standards Report	For the Select Committee to receive the assessment outcomes for the years 2021/22 for children and young people in Buckinghamshire	Simon James	Simon James Anita Cranmer John Macilwraith
	Education Strategy 2022-27	To receive an update on the agreed Strategy	Simon James	Simon James Anita Cranmer John Macilwraith
	Update on Children's Mental Health (CAMHS to present)	To receive an update on service provision following the increased demand post-Covid	Richard Nash/John Macilwraith	CAMHS representatives – Donna Clarke? Grant Macdonald/Nick Broughton Anita Cranmer John Macilwraith
	Update on progress of recommendations on Social Worker recruitment & retention report	For the Select Committee to receive an update on departmental progress against the recommendations in the rapid review group's report	Richard Nash	Richard Nash Anita Cranmer
	Update on Progress of	The first update following the report to 30 <sup>th</sup> June	Richard Nash	Richard Nash

	SEND Written Statement of Action	22 Select Committee on the SEND inspection		John Macilwraith
23 March 2023	Fostering and Adoption Service	To receive an overview of the service and hear progress through 2021/22	Palvinder Kudhail	Anita Cranmer Richard Nash John Macilwraith
	MacAlistair report – independent review of children’s social care	Information report update	Palvinder Kudhail	Palvinder Kudhail
	Out of County Placements	To update the committee on the current challenges with regards to out of county placements	Richard Nash/John Macilwraith	John Macilwraith

## Rapid Review Scope

<b>Title</b>	Pathways for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
<b>Signed-off by</b>	John Macilwraith, Sarah Ashmead
<b>Author</b>	Katie Dover
<b>Date</b>	3-11-22
<b>Rapid Review Group Membership</b>	Councillors Blamires, James, Kayani, Turner and Ward
<b>Scrutiny Team Resource</b>	Katie Dover, Senior Scrutiny Officer will manage this rapid review.
<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Anita Cranmer
<b>Lead Service Officer</b>	Simon James
<b>What is the problem that is trying to be solved?</b>	<p>Between 28 February and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022 the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted inspected the services provided for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) in Buckinghamshire. The inspection team considered how well the local area a) identifies the needs of children and young people with SEND b) assesses and meets their needs and c) ensures positive outcomes for them.</p> <p>In response to the inspection, the council had to provide a written statement of action (WSOA), giving details of its plan to address the three areas highlighted as requiring improvement. These were: a) lack of cohesive strategy to meet the needs of children and young people requiring speech and language, communication and occupational therapy, b) Waiting times for assessments on the autism and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder diagnosis pathways and the system-owned plans in place to address and c) waiting times to see a community paediatrician.</p> <p>With regards to the lack of a cohesive strategy in relation to “<i>meeting the needs</i>” one outcome the authority is seeking to achieve is to ensure that:  <i>“Families are well informed about available services and support and report positively on their experience of their child’s needs being identified and met.”</i></p>

	<p>The Local Authority, health colleagues on the newly formed Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Parent/Carer Forum (FACT Bucks) representatives have worked together to develop the WSOA which will be monitored by the SEND Improvement Board and Intervention Unit (SIIU) at the Department for Education, working closely with NHS England.</p> <p>A whole systems approach is being taken to address the issues which span education, health and social care, encompassing needs-led early intervention, assessment and diagnoses pathways, and post assessment/ diagnostic support.</p> <p>Prior to the SEND inspection in December 2021, the Children’s Services department was rated as “requires improvement to be good” by Ofsted. It was noted that the service had improved greatly given the huge increase in demand for services and the difficulties in recruiting social workers. Of the areas requiring improvement, the following were included: a) The understanding, and reduction of, a high rate of re-referrals and assessments that result in no services being provided for children and their families. b) The consideration and cumulative impact of earlier interventions and family histories in children and family assessments.</p> <p>The Ofsted report noted that “improved strategic engagement with partners has secured much greater confidence in the local authority’s decision-making and responses concerning work in the front door. Schools are referring more children when new needs and risks have emerged or intensified during recurrent lockdowns”</p> <p>With these elements in mind, a Select Committee review group is being set up to look at the pathways for children and young people with SEND when first accessing the services provided for them. This will involve looking at case studies of those who have already accessed the services and those who wish to across three different scenarios as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Getting help before a diagnosis of Autism</li> <li>2. Getting help before a diagnosis of ADHD</li> <li>3. Getting help with anxiety and depression</li> </ol> <p>“The action plan of the written statement of action focuses on boosting the capacity of the local area to provide increased levels of early identification and support within universal settings with the aim of</p>
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	<p>improving the timeliness of early support and reducing the level of increase of statutory need being experienced currently within the local area</p> <p>Parents, professionals, and members of the Buckinghamshire community often find it difficult and confusing to navigate through the system that supports children with special educational needs and disabilities.</p> <p>In this piece of work, the Review group will explore how the services are accessed in relation to scenarios 1-3 above, and if these access points are communicated fully and appropriately for service users.</p> <p>The group will also examine better ways to simplify and communicate the help and support that exists for children with SEND in relation to autism, ADHD and anxiety/depression.</p>
<b>What might the Rapid Review achieve?</b>	<p>Key lines of enquiry:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess the pathways to key information on the council website, SEND local offer area, in terms of providing accessibility to services in relation to autism, ADHD and anxiety/depression.</li> <li>2. Identify any potential gaps in the information</li> <li>3. Speak to professionals, such as service commissioners and officers at Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and Oxford Health Foundation to clarify their views on accessibility to SEND services.</li> <li>4. Speak to parents who have been through the process and those waiting to access services, via FACT Bucks. Identify case studies of experience in different SEND areas.</li> <li>5. Speak to school officers and SEND officers to clarify their roles in the process of enabling people to access appropriate SEND services</li> </ol> <p>By investigating the above, outcomes will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved clarity for parents of children with SEND on what help is available and how to access it through appropriate resources and information sources (as per the scenarios outlined above):</li> <li>2. Greater understanding for residents on the roles and responsibilities of professionals working to support children and young people with SEND</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Improvements to the help and guidance available for families on the SEND local offer</li> <li>4. Suggested improvements to the pathways to help shape and inform the development of a more cohesive strategy</li> </ol>
<b>Is the issue of significance to Buckinghamshire as a whole and is the topic within the remit of the Select Committee?</b>	Yes
<b>What work is underway already on this issue?</b>	A SEND Improvement Plan, a SEND Board (which provides governance for SEND activity), and an Improvement Board are in place as well as a written statement of action plan following the SEND Ofsted inspection.
<b>Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SEND Green Paper.</li> <li>• A large increase in demand for education, health and SEND services over the last two to three years.</li> <li>• The Education White Paper</li> </ul>
<b>What are the key timing considerations?</b>	A Department for Education monitoring visit is expected in Buckinghamshire in the next 6 months
<b>Who are the key stakeholders &amp; decisionmakers?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with SEND and their parents</li> <li>• FACT Bucks (The parent-carer forum)</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Health commissioners</li> <li>• Health providers</li> <li>• Education teams</li> </ul>
<b>What is out of scope?</b>	Any suggested policy changes or changes to statutory decision-making frameworks aka Children & Families Act 2014. Information relating to the Mental Capacity Act, Equality Act, Definitions relating to the young people with SEND
<b>What media/communications support do you want?</b>	The Children's Services Comms lead will be available to support any communications matters An officer from the Education Directorate will be allocated to support members

## Evidence-gathering Methodology Outline Project Plan

Stage	Key Activity	Dates
Scoping	Project plan of work to be undertaken	November 2022
Evidence gathering	Ofsted inspection letter. Written statement of Action. SEND Improvement Plan, SEND Code of practice, recent parent-carer feedback surveys. Speaking to parents, officers and schools relating to items 1a to 1c above Assessing information provided on the council SEND local offer in terms of easy accessibility. Reviewing information provided by other local authorities – sharing best practice ideas.	November 2022 – January 2023
Reporting	Report to be drafted by group	February 2023
	Report published for Select Committee	March 2023
	Select Committee agrees report to go forward to decision-makers	March 2023
	Cabinet/Partner considers recommendations	May 2023

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

#### List them here:

- Desktop research including accessing recent surveys
- Meetings
- Discussions with other local authorities

### How will you involve service-users and the public?

Through interviewing parents.

### **Definition of a Rapid Review**

A Rapid Review is a focussed investigation 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.