



Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
Annual Report 2019/20



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Introduction



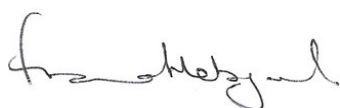
I was delighted to be appointed as the Independent Chair of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership in August 2019 and to continue the work of my predecessors. There can be no greater priority for organisations, communities and individuals than ensuring that people, particularly children and young people, are protected from abuse.

Buckinghamshire took the decision to appoint a single Independent Chair for both the adults' Board and children's partnership to ensure opportunities of working together and managing the transition between childhood and adulthood are realised.

In 2019 Buckinghamshire made the transition from the Children's Board to the Partnership. The new arrangements place the joint responsibility for safeguarding children and young people on the Council, the police and the Clinical Commissioning Group. It is vital that the changes are more than just a change of name as we seek to strengthen our local delivery and build on the improvements that have been made in recent years. There has been a review of the subgroups across the children's and adults' partnerships – these have been aligned, new chairs have been appointed and more focused terms of reference agreed. I have also worked with the Partnership to ensure that it has clear priorities, an effective performance framework and adds value.

The 2019-20 year ended with the emergence of the Covid-19 virus sweeping across the world. Protecting children and young people was a key priority during the crisis and organisations have responded to this with new working practices and with greater sharing of information. Whilst this period has inevitably highlighted major challenges it has also brought some benefits that must be embedded.

The annual report is an opportunity to highlight the progress that has been made through the year in delivering against the business plan. This year we have decided to produce a shorter report that highlights the key performance data and the activity of the board. We have already published our plan for 2020-23 and this sets out the priorities for the future and has picked up on those issues that remain priorities from this period. One of the key activities for the future is the launch of a new website where further updates about the activity of the BSCP will be posted.



Sir Francis J S Habgood, QPM
*Independent Chair for Buckinghamshire
Safeguarding Children Partnership*



About Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

In 2018 a review was commenced to consider new local safeguarding arrangements in line with the revised *Working Together 2018* statutory guidance. The arrangements have been developed by the statutory safeguarding partners following initial work by the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) and from ongoing collaboration with relevant agencies and partners. This review has resulted in the implementation of the Buckinghamshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, which were agreed and signed off by the Statutory Partners in June 2019, changing the Safeguarding Children Board into the Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP).

The BSCP is a statutory, multi-organisation partnership coordinated by the local authority, which oversees and leads children safeguarding across the Buckinghamshire Council area. The main objective of the BSCP is to gain assurance that safeguarding arrangements locally, and its partner organisations work effectively, individually and together, to support and safeguard children in its area who are at risk of abuse and neglect.

The BSCP has worked over the last year with our partners across the multi-agency arena to drive activity to ensure that we have met or worked towards the key priorities. As a result of the business functions of the Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board becoming a single business unit, we will be seeking to undertake some joint strategic work over the next two years. The focus of this work will be to streamline and align the new three year business plans for both the Partnership and Board to demonstrate closer working together and a whole-family approach to our work. We are seeking to provide a joint learning and development plan to again provide closer training and learning opportunities across all our multi agencies, voluntary and charity sectors. Through the work in our subgroups we are seeking to produce quality assurance

frameworks that will support the subgroup activities and challenge those working in the safeguarding arena to ensure that our policies and procedures are imbedded in the work we carry out 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.

2019-2020 saw the Safeguarding Children Board change into the Safeguarding Children Partnership halfway through the year. One of the leading strategic aims was to complete this transformation with a new executive body and a new overarching chair and management structure to support the business unit functions of both the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children Partnership. The transformation also included a revision of Partnership participation at the executive level. Alongside this work, the strategic priorities for the BSCP during this period have been:

- Domestic Abuse
- Child Exploitation
- Neglect
- Commitment to a high level Improvement Plan

The Board is currently supported by five subgroups that carry out the day to day work in order to help deliver the Board's objectives and Strategic Plan. The new partnership arrangements advocate for a new Learning and Education subgroup to support the ongoing multi-agency work with children and young people. This subgroup will work closely with them in their educational years, seeking to deliver positive outcomes that have a lasting effect on their lives.

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.



COMMUNICATING

Ensure there is effective communication with youth communities in Buckinghamshire.



ENABLING

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



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:-



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

- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
- National Probation Service
- Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company



Children and Young People in Buckinghamshire

23%

of the total population are children and young people.

125,734

children and young people under 18 living in Buckinghamshire (Aug 2020):

- Age 0-4 - 32,239
- Age 5-9 - 36,999
- Age 10-14 - 36,562
- Age 15 - 6,840
- Age 16 - 6,552
- Age 17 - 6,542

86,588

pupils attend state-funded schools (Jan 2020).

37%

of pupils in the January 2020 school census are Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

1,468

pupils attend special schools in Buckinghamshire.

7,442

pupils are eligible for free school meals.

18%

of pupils in the January 2020 school census have a first language other than English.

4,705

children and young people have Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) maintained by Buckinghamshire (March 2020).

59

children are missing from education.

8,421

with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in Buckinghamshire schools (Jan 2020).

734

children and young people are electively home educated (March 2020).

Schools in Buckinghamshire

184 primary schools (including 36 academies/free schools).

38 infant schools.

23 junior schools (including 5 academies).

123 combined schools (including 31 academies/free schools).

2

All Through mainstream schools (including one academy).

2 nursery schools.

34 secondary schools.

13 Selective (all academies).

21 Non-Selective (including 16 academies/free schools).

10

Special Schools (including two academies).

3

Pupil Referral Units (including one academy).



What We Achieved 2019/2020

This year was a significant one for the safeguarding children's world as the Children's Board was reformed into the Children's Partnership following guidelines laid out in *Working Together 2018*. A number of objectives set out in the previous Annual Report have been achieved this year. Of note, in August 2019 the business functions of the Safeguarding Adults Board merged with the Safeguarding Children Partnership to form one business unit. The business unit now has one Safeguarding Partnership Manager to oversee the daily operation of the Safeguarding Children Partnership and one Joint Independent Chair. This has streamlined the business processes but not impacted on the valuable work the Safeguarding Children Partnership carry out to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people in Buckinghamshire. A review was undertaken with regards to the membership of both the Partnership and subgroups which led to a more focused membership, ensuring that work of the subgroups was sufficiently supported from our multi-agencies and third sector volunteer and charity sectors.

The joint protocol that exists between the Safeguarding Adults Board, Safeguarding Children Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Safer Stronger Bucks Board has been under review leading to a new but slimmed down joint protocol that will be published in 2020. This document will set out defined structures for joint working between these four groups, leading to more cohesive strategies to support our local communities.

The Partnership, through the Serious Case Review subgroup, commissioned a thematic review into serious youth violence in Buckinghamshire after the report of a serious incident in the County. The commissioning decision sought to take the opportunity to review serious youth violence in a national context to provide the best possible learning outcomes and ensure that learning was fully understood, and had an impact on the lives of children and young people. This approach involved a practitioners' learning event in November 2019; the full report will be published in 2020. Some feedback from this event included that the conference was 'invaluable' and 'it will change the way I work with children subject to serious youth violence moving forwards'.

Safeguarding Children Subgroups

The Safeguarding Children Partnership has five subgroups that lead on various areas of business and help the Safeguarding Adults Board deliver on a range of priorities identified in the strategic and business plan. Each subgroup has a nominated chair and representatives from across the multi-agencies.

Safeguarding Serious Case Review Subgroup

Working Together 2015 states that a Serious Case Review (SCR) must be undertaken by the Safeguarding Children Board/Partnership where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and either the child has died or the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concerns to the way in which the Authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child. To support the changes from safeguarding children boards to safeguarding children partnerships, the Government produced a document called *Working Together Transitional Guidance* which was published in July 2018. This document provided guidance with regards to SCRs that had already been underway at the time the board was to change to a partnership.

The overall purpose of a Safeguarding Child Review is to promote learning and improve practice, not to re-investigate or to apportion blame.

Safeguarding Child Review Reports are published on our Safeguarding Children [website](#).

During the period 2019 to 2020 the subgroup completed three safeguarding reviews that had been commissioned in 2018. These reviews related to Baby N, Baby V and Child AA. The subgroup have also been working on the completion of a thematic review into serious youth violence across Buckinghamshire that will be due for publication in 2020.

Learning from all reviews undertaken is shared within the multi-agency arena to develop and inform working practices and improve services to children, young people and their families who need support.

Some key learning themes have been taken from the SCR's during this period of time:

- The need to ensure that we work closely with agencies from other Authorities when there are cross border concerns in any safeguarding enquiry.
- To ensure that the voice of the child or young person is heard and listened to and take their views forward into developing better working practices that support families as a whole.
- Ensure that learning from SCR's is shared across the whole multi agency system so that it can be embedded in working practices. This will ensure that subsequent reviews are not making the same recommendations.
- To support the needs of unborn babies and have adequate pre-birth assessment processes in place.

Feedback from families who were involved in the serious case review process was positive in the fact of a safeguarding enquiry being undertaken and that the main focus would be to develop better learning practices. A common observation being that they wanted to support the work being undertaken to ensure that others would benefit from improved understanding of the needs of children, young people and families.

The SCR subgroup have one remaining review underway with regards to Family T and a Practice Review that supports the learning from the lived experience of Family T.

Quality Performance and Improvement Subgroup

The subgroup was renamed Performance, Quality and Improvement as part of the transition to the new safeguarding partnership arrangements. The group has been chaired by Children's Services Head of Quality, Standards and Performance and enjoyed consistent multi-agency input over 2019/20. The redefined purpose of the group is to co-ordinate and embed quality assurance and to produce an analysis on the effectiveness of what is being done by partner agencies, individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It has oversight of all multi-agency and single agency audits, and analyses performance data and qualitative information relevant to safeguarding children that is produced by individual agencies.

Notable achievements over the year include the refresh and update of the performance dashboard. Each agency has agreed a set of key performance indicators relevant to the services and interventions they provide to children and families. This is discussed on a quarterly basis and a narrative produced for the Executive Group on what is working well and achieving good outcomes, and known or potential risks that could have or are having an adverse impact on safety and welfare of children and families. This led to changes by Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust to the training they deliver to their staff on domestic abuse to improve awareness and understanding; and in Children's Services there has been a focus on improving the quality and input from partner agencies to child protection plans.

The subgroup has continued with its multi-agency audit plan and this included domestic abuse and child protection; this audit found that the voice of the child isn't consistently being heard over the parents' voices, plans are too adult focused, there is not consistently enough support and intervention prior to an initial child protection conference and there needs to be greater awareness of coercive control. There was also a deep dive audit completed that looked at services, procedures and practice regarding children at risk of sexual exploitation. The key recommendation's arising from this audit were that children should be encouraged to write their views down to give them an opportunity to agree or disagree with professionals reports, and the referral pathway across commissioned and non-commissioned services should be improved to avoid delay for families in receiving support.

The subgroup sought assurance around the board's strategic priority of sexual exploitation through a targeted practice audit activity that assessed the quality and timeliness of return home interviews for children who had been missing. The findings from this audit contributed to informing the introduction of the exploitation hub and the commissioned service return home interview service and support delivered by Barnardo's.

The multi-agency audit plan for the 2020/21 will be focusing on neglect in adolescents, the effectiveness of the local pre-birth procedure and introducing a targeted section 11 audit specifically picking up themes from recent serious case reviews.

Policy, Procedure and Practice Subgroup

The Policy, Procedure and Practice (PPP) subgroup, formerly Policy and Practice, have continued to work closely with the performance, quality and improvement sub group. There are natural links between these two groups, with agendas that complement each other well.

The PPP group have reviewed and updated many policies and procedures, including but not limited to pre-birth procedures, anti-bullying, and individuals who pose a risk. The group have welcomed a newly appointed principal social worker and a new education representative to support this work stream, and received welcome input from the local early help service. The

terms of reference have been revised and updated and the forward planner is maintaining focus on future work. It is anticipated that much activity will take place next year to support the recommendations from recent serious case reviews.

Local resources have been added to the safeguarding partnership website, including the exploitation toolkit, which supports the work of the exploitation subgroup. Further work to support this agenda is being undertaken via the PPP subgroup, with a suite of documents supporting the management and addressing of the exploitation activity affecting young people.

The electronic MARF was introduced and following a pilot is now being utilised routinely.

Priorities for next year include the neglect strategy and the work from the serious case reviews, as well as adhering to the forward planner.

Child Exploitation Subgroup

The Children and Young People's Exploitation subgroup is a multi-agency forum that aims to support the strategic development of an effective and coordinated multi-agency response to all forms of child and young people's exploitation, including actual or likely significant harm due to child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation ('county lines'), modern slavery, trafficking, radicalisation, exploitation as a result of being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and in respect of being a missing child/young person. The subgroup also provides assurance about the way agencies are working individually and collectively to safeguard and support children and young people at risk of exploitation. The subgroup oversees and monitor the delivery of any multi-agency action plans and recommendations designed to safeguard and protect children, including children and young people with disabilities, who are at risk of harm as a result of exploitation.

Child Death Over Panel

The death of a child is always tragic and leaves families with a sense of shock, devastation and loss. However, it is important that we review child deaths to see whether we can learn any lessons to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of other children, or to improve the support for bereaved families. As set out in *Working Together 2015*, the BSCB has a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) which fulfils this function.

In the period 2019-2020 the Panel reviewed 22 child deaths. None of these were referred to the Children Safeguarding subgroup for consideration of a serious case review. 12 deaths have now been closed and 10 remain open. Of those remaining open there are ongoing processes that are being concluded to allow closure to take place.

The below data provides a very brief overview of child death. CDOP will provide their own annual report that will be available in 2020:

- 24 deaths in 2019/2020.
- 48% male, 52% female.
- 19 deaths between the ages of 0-9 and 5 deaths between 9-17.
- 19 cases involved white children.
- No cases were referred to the Safeguarding Children Partnership for consideration of a serious case review.

Budget for BSCP for 2019-2020

£293,565.00 was received from partner's contributions, training courses brought an income of £42,359.00 and £37,136.00 was transferred from reserves to help cover redundancies and agency staff.

Board costs	Actual Year End 2019-20
Partners contribution	-£293,565.00
Training	-£42,359.00
Total	-£335,924.00
Expenditure	£373,060.00
Total	£37,136.00
Transferred from reserve account	-£37,136.00
Accounts total 2019-2020	£0.00

What's Next For 2020/21?



Review plans for a joint training provision with the Safeguarding Adult Board.



Provide a new website for the Children Safeguarding Partnership.



Develop a new three year business plan.



Deliver two themed conferences.



Establish a Learning and Development subgroup