



# Report to Audit and Governance Committee

<b>Date:</b>	6 March 2024
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Risk Management Group Update</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	Maggie Gibb, Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor)
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>Members are recommended to note the report.</b>
<b>Reason for decision:</b>	N/A

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Risk Management Group meeting held on 18 December 2023.
- 1.2 The Council's Risk Management Framework, including the Terms of Reference for the Risk Management Group, was approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in June 2021.

## 2. Content of report

- 2.1 For the Risk Management Group meeting held on 18 December 2023, the group considered the Children's Services Register. This was presented by the Corporate Director for Children's Services, the Assistant Director for Strategy and Performance and the Head of Finance for Children's Services.
- 2.2 The key risk themes were as follows:
- 2.3 **CS-CSC-03 Recruitment & Retention** - IF we are unable to attract, retain and develop a workforce that is competent, confident, motivated and works together in business-critical roles THEN children will not receive the support they need leaving vulnerable

children at greater risk of poorer outcomes. In addition, capacity to improve services will be compromised and may hinder our ambition to be good.

- 2.4 **CS-CSC-14 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children** - IF the government continues to direct the Council through the mandated National Transfer Scheme, THEN this will place further pressure on our children in care and leaving care teams and as a result will hinder our ambition to be good.
- 2.5 **CS-E-04 SEND Placements** - If we do not reduce the demand for out of county special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) placements THEN we will create an unsustainable budget pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant and we will not be supporting young people to remain within their local community and close to their families. If this is not addressed young people could become isolated and dependent on support when they enter adulthood.
- 2.6 **CS-E-13 School attendance responsibilities** - IF we do not increase the capacity of our school attendance team THEN this will mean that we are unable to meet relevant duties within the DfE's school attendance framework, additionally this will affect our ability to deliver and monitor in accordance with the legislation leading to poorer outcomes for our children. This lack of oversight of pupil attendance is likely to result in an increase in persistent and severe absence rates, increase in associated risk and safeguarding factors and the likelihood of children and young people needing more specialist and expensive intervention in future.
- 2.7 **CS-KF-01 Debt Management** - If there is an inability to implement efficient debt recovery then this will create a pressure on service budgets. This includes debts that are incorrectly raised to the wrong debtor or for incorrect amounts and debts raised with other public sector agencies such as other LAs and the CCG.
- 2.8 **CS-KF-02 Children's Social Care increased demand and unit costs** - If increased demand for Children's Services continues at a rate which outstrips demand growth built into future budgets, then this will create additional budget pressures leading to requirements to reduce services in other areas. Increased costs may arise due to increases in demand and/or increases in average unit costs.
- 2.9 **CS-KF-03 SEND increased demand and unit costs** - Numbers of pupils needing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are projected to increase over the medium term. If demand for placements in specialist provision continues to increase, there is a risk that the High Needs Budget will continue to overspend and the DSG deficit will increase.
- 2.10 **CS-KF-05 Maintained schools' financial issues** - If schools get into financial difficulty, then there is a risk that the LA will need to write off any deficits for schools that are

rated Inadequate by Ofsted and are required to convert to academy status with a sponsor.

- 2.11 **CS-KF-06 Financial Management Culture** - If a strong financial management culture is not in place within Children's Services, then there is increased risk of overspend.
- 2.12 **CS-KF-09 Payment Performance** - If invoice payments are not made in a timely way there will be an increase in complaints and reduced reputation with external suppliers.
- 2.13 **CS-KF-10 Agency Staffing Costs** - IF we are unable to attract and retain permanent staff THEN our reliance on agency staff will continue to create pressures within staffing budgets.
- 2.14 **CS-KF-11 Loss of School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant** - IF the council is unable to agree de-delegation of funds from maintained schools, THEN there is a risk that the council will not be able to fund core school improvement activity.
- 2.15 **CS-KF-12 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children** - IF the government continues to direct the council under the National Transfer Scheme, THEN this will increase the financial burden on the council.
- 2.16 The risks were discussed in detail, as well as the mitigating actions being challenged by the members.
- 2.17 Strategic risks relating to Children's Services, new risks, risks which had been de-escalated or closed and a sample of non-escalated risks were included in the report from Children's Services.
- 2.18 The Group also received an update on the Secondary Transfer Test (11+) Results Release Feedback from Children's Services. This followed the group having discussed at length the transfer results system failure that had occurred in 2021. The group were assured that lessons had been learnt from the previous failure and that the leadership team had put the appropriate measures in place to ensure a robust system for issuing results was now in place.
- 2.19 The Group also received an update on emerging risks, noting the process for identifying and considering risks as they emerged. Emerging risks include: Climate Change; Large Scale Involuntary Migration; Terrorism or large scale violent / target criminal activity; Artificial Intelligence; Office for Local Government (OFLOG); Social Care; Extension to free childcare for working parents; and UK National Policy Reforms and Changes.

### **3. Other options considered**

- 3.1 N/A.

#### **4. Legal and financial implications**

4.1 None.

#### **5. Corporate implications**

5.1 None.

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

6.1 N/A.

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

7.1 N/A.

#### **8. Next steps and review**

8.1 The next meeting of the Risk Management Group is to be held on 11 March 2024. An update from this meeting will be provided at the next Audit and Governance Committee meeting.

#### **9. Background papers**

None.

#### **10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).