



Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board

Annual Report 2016 - 2017



Contents



This annual report has been written with contributions from the BBSCB members, who were asked to demonstrate how they have contributed to safeguarding and the work of the BBSCB during 2016 - 2017. Jenny Myers, BBSCB Independent Chair and Sally Stocker, BBSCB Business Manager have also written some sections of the report and have edited the final document. This report was signed off by the BBSCB in August 2017 is available on the BBSCB website at www.bedford.gov.uk/lscb. This gives an opportunity for strategic partners at all levels and the public to assess whether the BBSCB is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities effectively and prioritises according to local issues and demands.

Any comments about this report can be made to the BBSCB on LSCB@bedford.gov.uk

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Foreword from the Independent Chair

Jenny Myers



Welcome to the Annual Report of Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board. “Safeguarding children is everyone’s business” these words were first part of previous government strategy but they still ring true today.

At the heart of this annual report is a commitment from all partner agencies to work together to achieve the best outcomes for children including those who are most in need of protection. The growing effectiveness of the multi-agency partnership in the Borough was evidenced by the Ofsted inspection of our LSCB and report published in April 2017 that rated the BBSCB as good “Effective leadership by the independent chair has led to the development of a strong partnership and a shared commitment to improvement. Robust governance arrangements support effective partnership working in Bedford Borough.

I have now been the independent chair BBSCB for four years and am proud that this report gives some great examples of the difference we have made to safeguarding children and their families. We revised our strategic priorities to focus on the three things we think are essential and that provide a golden thread of safeguarding across the wider partnership. These are reflected in both the Joint Strategic Needs assessment and Aiming for the Best a report by the Director of Public Health www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/bedford_borough_jsna.aspx

This year we again got some great feedback from children and young people, through their evaluation of Chelsea’s Choice and In the Net. We have continued to improve our Pan Bedfordshire work with our partner LSCBs in Luton and Central Bedfordshire with a joined up approach to our communal response to CSE, missing and trafficking, multi-agency training and FGM and forced marriage. We have also worked collectively on raising awareness of Neglect and launched the Neglect strategy in August 2016.

This year, I have commissioned two serious case reviews and a multi-agency review. More details of this work and the learning coming out of them can be found on www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/serious_case_reviews.aspx

I am grateful for the continued commitment of senior managers to ensure that the Board is well represented and for the challenge, scrutiny and support they provide to ensure that safeguarding continues to be a priority. Going forward we need to continue to work together through significant changes to public policy and the statutory framework, to ensure that the best interests of vulnerable children and their families in Bedford remain at the heart of services change and transformation plans.

Many thanks for taking time to read our report.

Jenny Myers
Independent Chair

Introduction

What is the LSCB?

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a multi-agency body whose role is to oversee, coordinate, challenge, and scrutinise the work of all professionals and organisations in Bedford Borough to protect children and young people in the Borough from abuse and neglect, and to help all children to grow up safe, happy, and with the maximum opportunity to realise their potential. It is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. Under the Act, every Local Authority in England is required to establish a LSCB with two primary purposes:

- To co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the Local Authority area; and
- To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

Every LSCB is required to publish an Annual Report to provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. Legislation, regulations, and guidance set out the minimum requirements of LSCBs. However, Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) is ambitious to go beyond minimum requirements, in order to ensure that safeguarding services in Bedford Borough achieve the highest standards and that all children in Bedford have the best possible life chances and opportunities.

For more information in regards to the role and function of LSCBs please visit www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk



What does Bedford Borough look like?

What is the LSCB?

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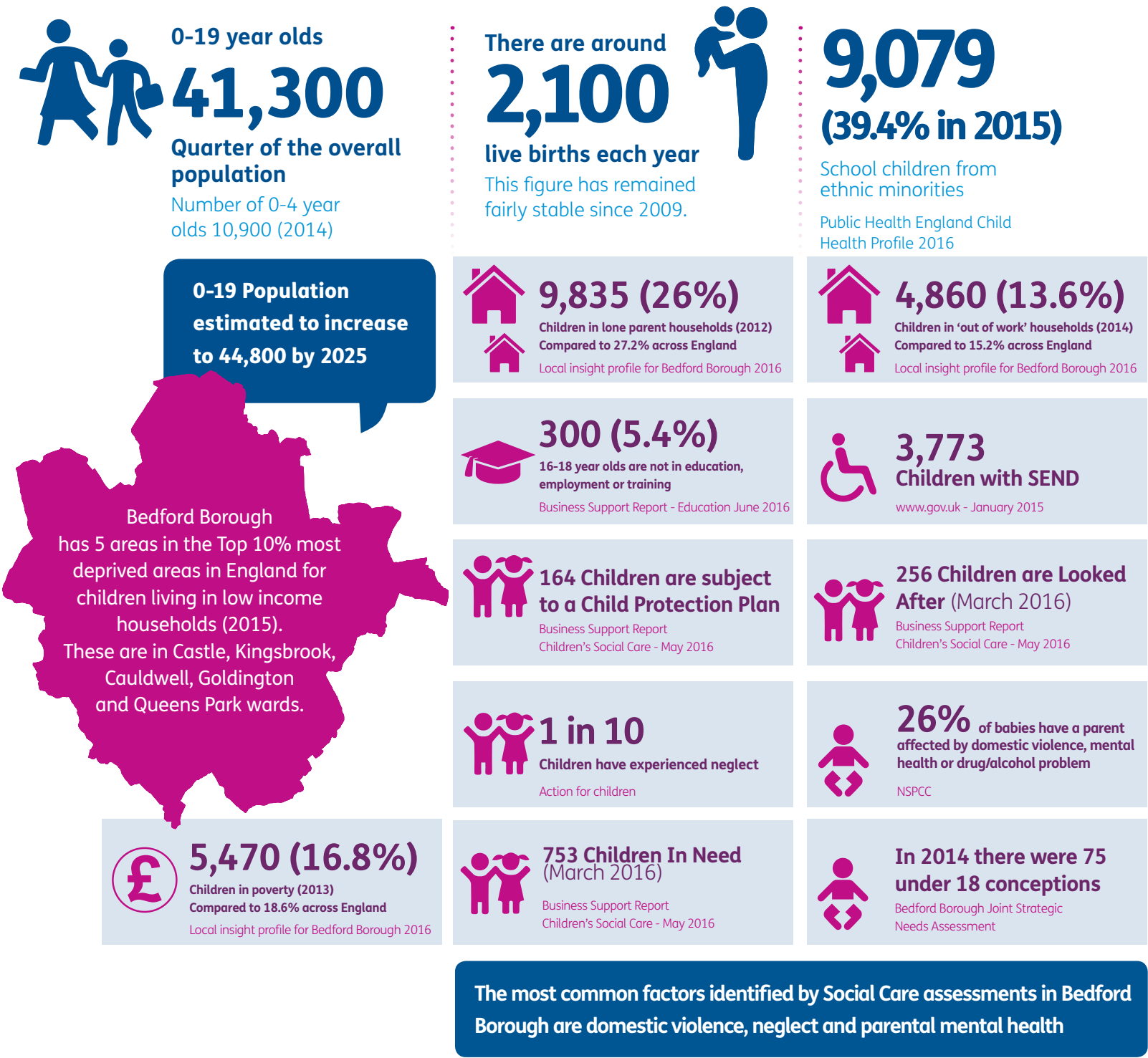
What does Bedford Borough look like?

Bedford Borough is situated within the geographical county of Bedfordshire and covers an area of 476 sq. km. It lies within the East of England Region but enjoys close geographical proximity and economic links with the South East, London, and the Midlands. Within Bedford Borough there is a mix of urban and rural areas, with Bedford being the central urban town and largest area of population. Bedford Borough is a relatively prosperous and fast-growing borough, but with areas of significant deprivation. 166,250 people live in Bedford Borough (2015) with approximately two-thirds of the population living in the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston and one-third living in the surrounding rural areas.


The Borough ranks in the Top 100 of 348 English Local Authorities in the proportion of its population in 15 of the 17 minority ethnic groupings. Up to 100 different ethnic groups live in Bedford Borough with more than 1 in 3 people in Bedford and Kempston from minority ethnic groups, compared to less than 1 in 8 in rural areas. Bedford Borough has a very ethnically diverse population, with up to 100 different ethnic groups living within its boundaries. The 2011 Census indicates that 28.5% of the population was from minority ethnic groups (BME), compared to 20.2% nationally (only 13.9% when London Boroughs are excluded). The BME population increased by 16,400 between 2001 and 2011, whereas the White British population declined by 6,900. The languages most commonly spoken in the Borough as a main language are Polish, Panjabi, Bengali and Italian.

Nationally, Bedford Borough ranks 148 out of 326 Local Authorities in England for deprivation. However, this average ranking masks pockets of significant deprivation that fall into within the 30% most deprived areas in the country. All 25 of these Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in Bedford or Kempston Towns, with the greatest deprivation centred on Castle, Cauldwell, Goldington, Kingsbrook and Queens Park wards.

Here is a snapshot of safeguarding data that has been provided to the BBSCB over the last year. This report will provide some context and analysis of that data and demonstrate what challenges has been made and how effective services and support to children, young people and their families has been during 2016/17




Bedford Borough Safeguarding Snapshot 2016/2017




37,911 children and young people under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough

22.8% of the total population

18.4% of children and young people are living in poverty




100 different ethnic groups live in Bedford Borough




32% of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language

19% of children in secondary schools speak English as an additional language




12% of children in primary schools are in receipt of free school meals


10% of children in secondary schools are in receipt of free school meals




8,265 contacts were made to MASH and **1,155** referrals were made to Bedford Borough Children's Services




938 open Children in Need cases as of March 2017



520 Early Help Assessments undertaken and 1,878 Single Assessments completed




531 child protection investigations were undertaken



283 Initial Child Protection Conferences were held




197 children and young people were subject to Child Protection Plans as of March 2017



266 children & young children people were looked after as of March 2017



Fewer than 5 children and young people were in a Private Fostering arrangements



20 children & young people were identified as being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or had been sexually exploited



1,128 incidents of children & young people going missing



2,355 domestic violence notifications made to the police where children and young people were in the household



222 Allegations against staff working with children and young people were made

Children living in this area:

Approximately 37,911 children and young people under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough this is 22.8% of the total population. Of those children and young people just under 7,000 are living in poverty. Bedford Borough is a relatively prosperous and fast-growing borough, but with areas of significant deprivation.

There are around 400 young carers known to the carers support service in Bedford Borough. The Borough's young carers are known to be as young as 4 years old.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 36.3% of all children and young people living in the area, compared to 22% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian or Asian British and Mixed.

At 31st March 2017;

- 938 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist Children's Service. This is an increase from 889 at 31 March 2016.
- 197 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 159 at 31 March 2016.
- Fewer than 5 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is a decrease from 5 at 31 March 2016.
- 265 children were being looked after by the Local Authority this is an increase from 253 at 31 March 2016.
- Of this number, 124 live outside the Local Authority area.
- 24 children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- 29 live in residential children's homes, of whom 13 (45%) live out of the authority area.

In the previous 12 months:

- 14 children have been adopted.
- 14 children became subject of special guardianship orders.
- 132 children ceased to be looked after, of whom 8 subsequently returned to be looked after.
- 10 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living.
- 22 children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple-occupation.



Governance and Accountability Arrangements

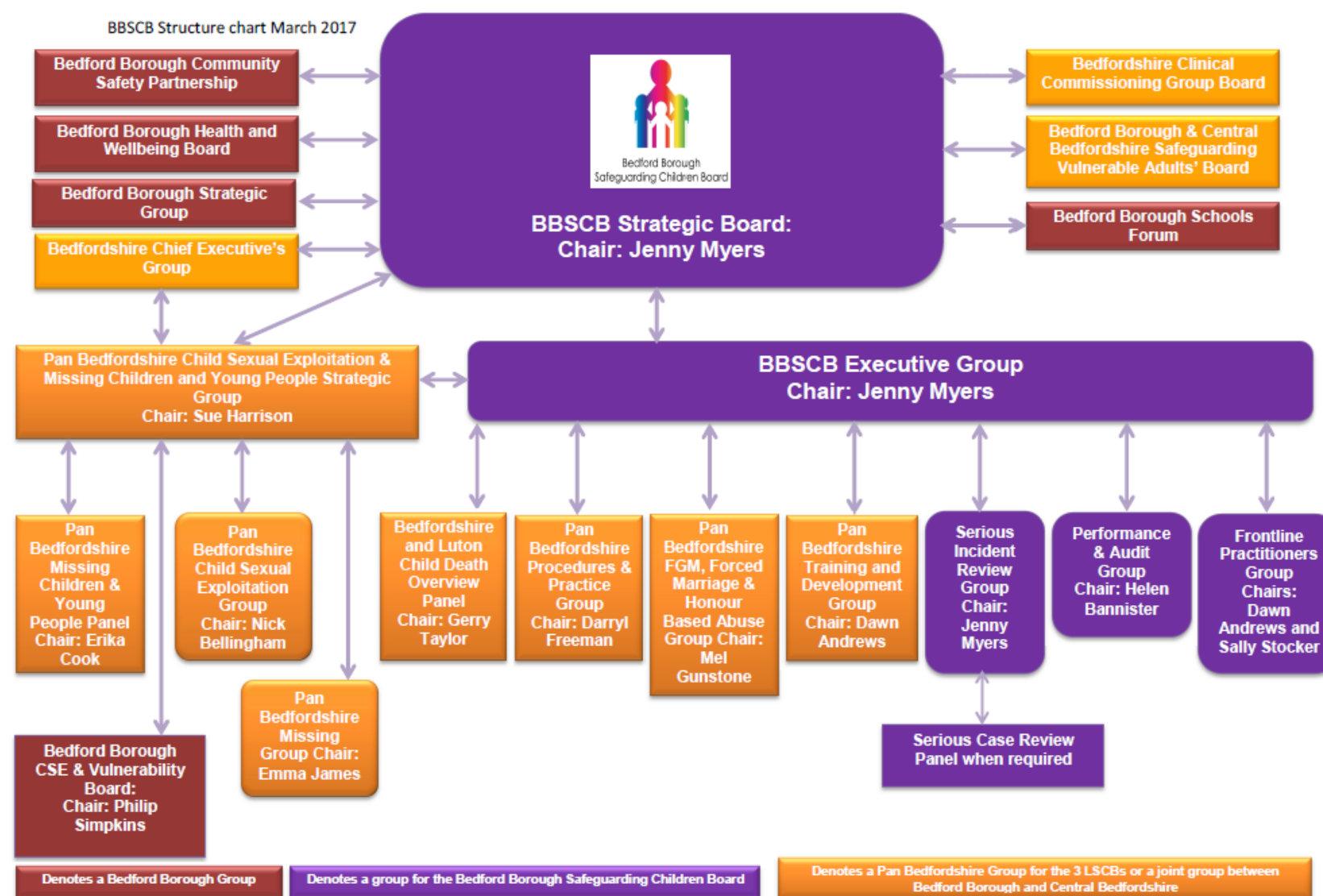
Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that the BBSCB meets its statutory functions as outlined in Working Together 2015, the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the BBSCB is to co-ordinate local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and evaluates the effectiveness of these arrangements. Over the last year we have strengthened our governance arrangements and restructured some of the sub groups to ensure better join up with the wider strategic partnership both in Bedford Borough and across the county including Central Bedfordshire and Luton LSCBs. Our structure chart is on the next page shows our current formation and link to other strategic groups across the partnership and in Bedfordshire.

We have had in place for the last 3 years an inter-board governance protocol between Bedford Borough Council and partners which sets out the principles underpinning how the Boards will work across their defined remits, how communication and engagement will be secured across the Boards and the practical means by which effective co-ordination and coherence between the Boards will be secured. There are four underpinning principles:

- Safeguarding is the business of all Boards.
- It will enhance the work of each Board if members know and understand the business of the other Boards.
- A culture of scrutiny and constructive challenge will exist across the Boards.
- The Boards will work together to avoid duplication and ensure consistency.

The BBSCB includes senior members of staff from Local Authority Children's and Adults' Services, Police, Health Services, Education, Voluntary Sector, Probation and Lay Members. Adult Services attend the BBSCB on a regular basis and work has begun to strengthen those relationships and working practices. An attendance chart is in appendix 2 on page 57.

The Strategic Board maintain a Risk log which is monitored at each meeting, minutes are also kept as evidence of more formal challenge to partners. These have resulted in the Chair calling to account particular areas of practice resulting in improved outcomes, for example around the multi-agency response to disabled children, an improved performance dataset and analysis. Where partners have received internal inspections or conducted internal safeguarding audits they are asked to report back to the BBSCB on the outcome of such inspections and any improvements required. The continuing challenge for the BBSCB is being able to evidence "So what?" relating to positive outcomes for children and young people as a result of the work of the BBSCB.



Finance and Staffing 2015 – 2016

The work of the BBSCB is funded through contributions from partner agencies in line with a funding formula agreed by agencies in 2010 and adhered to since that time. Partner agencies agreed to maintain their budget contributions in 2016/2017 at the same level of 2015/2016.

Income April 2016 - March 2017;

Bedford Borough Council	£108,240
Bedfordshire Police	£18,300
CAFCASS	£550
Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group	£62,663
Early Help	£8,910
Total	£199,463

Ofsted Inspection 2017

This year Ofsted conducted an Inspection of Bedford Borough services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers at Bedford Borough Children’s Services during January and February 2017 and concluded that overall the service requires improvement to be good and that adoption performance and the experience and progress of care leavers were good. This was very much in line with the self-assessment of the service and was considered by the service to be a fair reflection of where they were in the improvement journey that was commenced in December 2014.

Ofsted inspectors noted that the senior leadership team had ‘worked purposefully to implement systemic changes in order to improve outcomes for children...’ and that there was ‘an effective multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and strong Early Help services.’ The report goes on to state that the ‘leadership team has set clear expectations and maintained its focus on improving the quality of frontline practice’.

There was further good feedback about the MASH too, noting that there was ‘enhanced partnership working’ in place and that ‘thresholds are applied appropriately and result in a timely and proportionate response to children’s needs.’

Ofsted made ten recommendations but noted that the senior management team ‘know what good services look like and how outcomes for children and families need to be improved. They know the strengths and weaknesses of Children’s Services, having already identified almost all of the deficits seen in this inspection’ and having put in place a robust improvement plan. The service has developed an action plan in response to the recommendations made by Ofsted and progress against this will be monitored by the Children’s Services Improvement Board. More details on the outcome of the inspection are included in later sections of the report.

Ofsted also reviewed the effectiveness of the BBSCB and judged it to be Good.

The Independent Chair

The Board maintains a clear line of sight to frontline practice helped by a proactive and visible chair who engages directly with frontline staff.”
(Ofsted April 2017)

BBSCB continues to be independently chaired by Jenny Myers, a crucial role ensuring the Board operates independently, to challenge senior representatives and agencies whilst scrutinising services to seek continued improvement. The Chair is accountable to and meets regularly with the Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council (BBC). The Chair also meets frequently with the BBC Director for Children’s & Adults’ Services and has full access to director level representatives from other partner organisations and the Lead Member. The Chair is a member of the Bedford Borough Children’s Improvement Board and has also undertaken a schedule of meetings with other partner agencies over the last year.

The Ofsted report identified a range of strengths including:

- BBSCB has given priority to engaging with children and young people more effectively in its work.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of frontline practice.
- Access to a range of training opportunities which enhance knowledge, skills and confidence.
- A culture of scrutiny and challenge that secures improvement.
- Effective identification of learning from serious case reviews and pro-active action to address recommendations arising from these and other reviews.
- Effective work in a number of key safeguarding risk areas including: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Early Help, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Disabled Children.
- A sophisticated process of evaluating the impact of multi-agency training.
- A comprehensive evaluation of effectiveness in the BBSCB Annual Report.

Ofsted has made two recommendations for BBSCB to support continued development and improvement in the future:

- Ensure rigorous analysis of performance information received by the BBSCB across the partnership, to inform impact evaluation.
- Ensure that action plans arising from multi-agency audits are monitored so that the BBSCB understands their effectiveness and impact on practice.



The Board continues to change and develop with a greater focus on outcomes and aims to encourage greater discussion and debate to influence and where necessary change or modify multi-agency practice. All this is taking place in an environment of significant change across the multi-agency partnership both nationally and locally, with key agencies reporting an increased pressure on capacity, alongside fewer resources and increasing scrutiny by inspection bodies. BBSCB has two lay members who provide additional scrutiny and challenge to the Board.

“Well what a good year it has been, from the joys of Ofsted to the rigorous practices in the sub-groups of the board. I feel very lucky to have been able to attend the Frontline Practitioners Group and to have witnessed such challenge and purpose between professionals with a common aim. I also attended the Pan Bedfordshire Procedures and Practices Group which was clearly focused on its aims and chaired efficiently with valuable input from colleagues around the table. I think for me this year it has been a real pleasure to see the collaborative working practices truly develop through the commitment of the members of the board and the drive of its Chair - two things that Ofsted could not fail to see!” **Susannah King (Lay member)**

Joint Working

“The Board works well with other strategic partnerships, providing particular challenge to the Children’s Services Improvement Board, Community Safety Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board. Priorities align with other strategic plans, and partners are clear that these drive plans in their own agencies. An ambitious business plan contains clear progress measures, but is not yet effective in consistently evidencing what difference is being made for children. (Ofsted April 2017)

Joint working with Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Boards has continued to be a particular feature of BBSCB reflecting the practicalities for many partners, such as the Police, Probation and Health organisations who work across the three Safeguarding Boards areas. In the past year the work of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), Pan Bedfordshire Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategic Group, CSE Group, Missing Children and Young People Panel, Female Genital Mutilation Group, Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Neglect are examples of successful joint working.

The BBSCB has been involved again in the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Bedford Borough Children, Young People and their Families Plan 2016 - 2020 which addresses safeguarding issues for children and young people in Bedford Borough.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been actively involved in the Pan Bedfordshire work around Domestic Abuse (DA), FGM and CSE. The CSP recognises that every member of the community has a role to play in reducing the negative impacts caused by crime and disorder. Therefore during 2016 - 2017 they will ensure that their partnership engagement involves communities more.

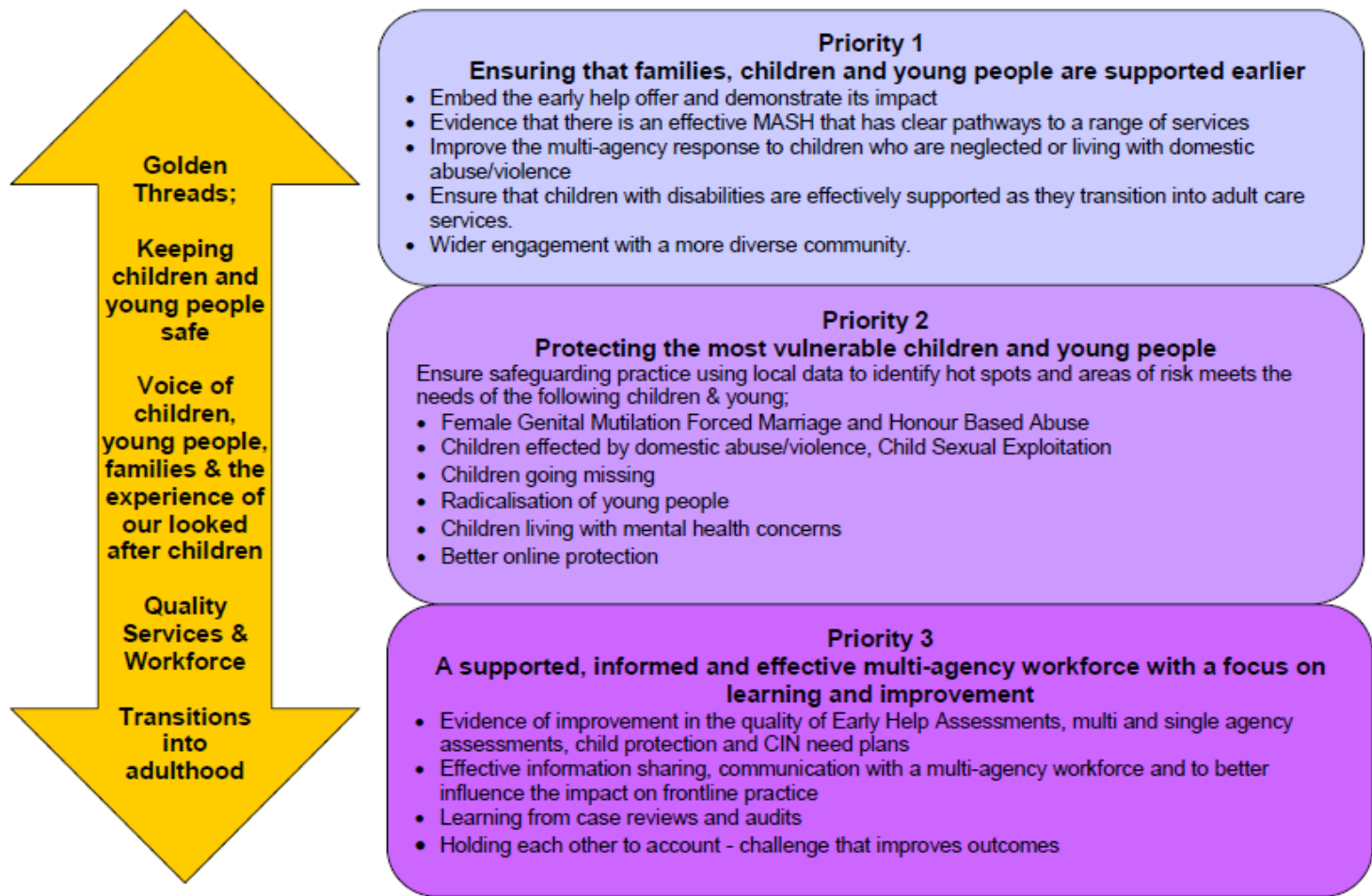
More details about the BBSCB can be found on the website www.bedford.gov.uk/lscb

Achievements in 2016 – 2017

- Ofsted awarded the Board a GOOD judgement.**
- Revised the structure of the BBSCB and a new Executive Group created under the Strategic Board.**
- 570 Early Help assessments received and over 500 families supported by Early Help and Intervention Service.**
- 2 Serious Case Reviews commissioned.**
- 2 Serious Case Reviews and a Learning Review completed and signed off by the Board.**
- Chelsea’s choice a CSE awareness production, delivered to all secondary schools, 2486 pupils from Year 8 to Year 11.**
- In the Net an online safety production delivered to 47 lower/ primary/middle schools – 1868 pupils.**
- Risk logs implemented and updated regularly to provide regular progress on identified concerns.**
- Focus on disabled children cumulating in a Pan Bedfordshire spotlight event.**
- Pan Bedfordshire work around Neglect established and agreement for the NSPCC licenced Graded Care Profile to be trialled.**
- A more effective multi-agency dataset has been implemented to routinely scrutinise operational partner’s performance, challenge and audit where necessary.**
- Pan Bedfordshire FGM Group’s remit widened to include Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse.**
- Revised the FGM Strategy to include Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse.**
- Revised LSCB training structure.**
- Strengthened Pan Bedfordshire working including agreeing a joint training unit and strategy across the three LSCBs.**
- We have raised the profile of Bedford Borough LSCB by; disseminating LSCB newsletters and establishing a presence on Twitter.**

BBSCB has worked hard at trying to evidence improvement and impact over the last year. The Board agreed to continue with the following priority areas due to either their prevalence in the cases agencies see or because the BBSCB believed them to be unseen or hidden forms of abuse which the BBSCB needs to work together to tackle. BBSCB also identified that help given to children and young people before they suffer abuse, is a key area to develop. Early Help ensures that all children, young people and their families, who are experiencing problems, get the support they need from a range of agencies before it's too late.

On the following pages are the BBSCB strategic priorities and some of the Board and partner's achievements this year.



Priority 1: Ensuring that families, children and young people are supported earlier

“Significant work has been undertaken in the last two years to put in place a comprehensive Early Help offer to families and to ensure a robust initial response to concerns about children and their families through a MASH. Early Help services are well targeted, coordinated and effective which ensures that children and their families benefit from appropriate support and help when they need it. When Early Help is not improving children’s circumstances, step-up to statutory social work services is timely. The Local Authority’s focus on developing an Early Help offer since the last inspection in 2013 has resulted in a substantial increase in the volume of early help assessments completed across the partners.

Agencies demonstrate increase confidence in supporting Early Help delivery, facilitated by training. Early help officers or family support workers attached to every school, general practitioner (GP) and children’s centre, as well as access to named CAMHS’s professionals, enable children to benefit from specialist support before their needs escalate. The Early Help worker based in the MASH ensures a timely response to children and families who need Early Help provision. Strong partnership arrangements, led by the Early Help and intervention service, ensure that support for children and families are effective. Early help plans feature specific, measureable targets and are regularly reviewed and overseen by managers. (Ofsted April 2017)

Early Help Assessments

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) is widely used across all partners with 570 assessments having been received through the front door in the period April 16 – March 17. 2016/17 has seen a significant increase in GP’s using the Early Help contact to refer families for an Early Help Assessment. All EHAs are screened within the MASH and then considered at the Early Help allocations meeting. The allocation meeting meets at least three times a week and uses multidisciplinary input which enables a decision to allocate support at level 2 and 3 (Bedford Borough Threshold Framework).

Bedford Hospital NHS Trust has worked with the Early Help Team to support the development and use of a one page Early Help referral form for children and families identified by practitioners as requiring Early Help services. Internal information sharing has increased and has seen liaison take place with community partners across health and other services to support families who may require additional support or an Early Help Assessment.

Child’s Journey

In the period April 2016 to March 2017 the Intensive Family Support Service has worked with 103 cases. The case transfer protocol has been reviewed in 2016/17 and is now working more effectively. In 2016/17 the number of cases stepped up to social care from Early Help was 23 with 20 moved to a Single Assessment being completed.

A teenage parent’s support pathway has been agreed across the partnership and ensures connectivity with the specialist Early Help Professional and the Parents As First Teachers Parenting programme. Currently 43 teenage parents are known to the Early Help and Intervention Service.

Quality and timeliness of Assessments

The quality of Early Help Assessments continues to improve. The trajectory of improvement has been supported with a further enhancement of the assessment paperwork which supports practitioners to obtain the child's and parents/carers wishes by using strength based questioning. Timeliness continues to be an issue which needs to be improved if exclusion figures for persistent disruptive behaviour are to be reduced.

Significant work has taken place in 2016/17 to develop mental health provision within Early Help. A senior mental health Practitioner is embedded within the Early Help staff team providing case work and the leadership of the school based mental health practitioner programme which enables young people to access timely support for anxiety and low mood. Mental Health Training programme has been delivered for 6th Formers across Bedford Borough secondary schools. Developing clearer relationship with Early Help but also BYOS intervening earlier where appropriate working with other agencies on those at risk (where they have been arrested but no further action; where there is Police intelligence and concerns by other agencies).

Case study

Family referred to FACES (Family and Children's Early-help Services a local charity offering practical and emotional Early Help support to families) for practical and emotional support. Essential baby equipment was donated and the FACES worker supported the family at One Support drop-in. The mother was helped to bond with her new baby through baby massage and practical advice. The mother was very grateful for the support given and mentioned several times that she would like to volunteer for FACES when her baby is older. "I would like to thank my Early Help worker for her support". A lot of mothers are anxious about the birth of their child and are worried how they are going to cope with the baby and other children they might have and it is important to have someone like an Early Help worker to visit them, give advice and offer practical and emotional support.

The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is part of the Teenage Parent Support Pathway. The Family nurses provide support to eligible teenage parents to help to ensure that every baby, child and young parent can thrive, fulfil their aspirations and contribute to society. They work in partnership with key agencies, to improve the health, social and economic wellbeing of babies, mothers and fathers to achieve long lasting change. Those teenage parents who are not eligible or do not wish to be part of the FNP programme are supported via the Early help team to ensure all their needs are met.

Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT) 0-5 Service (was SEPT) is routinely offering the five mandated visits to children and families, to ensure optimum school readiness and support for parental mental health well-being. 0-5 Service professionals take the Lead Role responsibilities for families requiring additional tailored assessment and intervention as part of the agreed Multi-agency Thresholds, at universal plus and universal partnership plus levels. The service works collaboratively with the Bedford Children Centres and General Practice.

Priority 2: Protecting the most vulnerable children and young people

As identified by Ofsted the work to protect the most vulnerable children and families is still inconsistent. The BBSCB has received regular assurance reports to understand more about the quality of practice and had had a particular focus on neglect, disabled children domestic abuse and CSE and Missing.

Contacts and referrals to Children Services;

Bedford Borough Council Children's Services received 8,278 contacts in this year and 1,132 referrals. The greatest deprivation in the Borough centres on Castle, Cauldwell, Goldington, Kingsbrook and Queens Park. The conversion rate of contacts to referrals was 13.9% in 2016/17 which is a reduction from 19.9% in 2015/16.

Child in Need

"Social workers ensure that children in need of support have plans in place to improve their lives". (Ofsted April 2017)

At 31st March 2017, 938 children were open to Children's Social Care services as children in need (excluding CP and LAC) an increase from 889 as of 31st March 2016.

BBC Children's Services have identified workforce pressures in the Children with Disabilities team which impact on practice. Recording the voice of the child remains an area of practice that requires improvement. It is clear from speaking with social workers and with families that some direct work is taking place but audit activity indicates that practice is inconsistent and is not generally well recorded. A range of direct working tools have been developed these have been promoted through drop-in sessions, workshops and team champions.



Single Assessments

“The timeliness of assessments has improved considerably over the last 12 months. The Local Authority has begun to develop systems and processes in order to ensure that assessment timescales are proportionate to children’s individual needs. Assessments are of variable quality; they focus on need and risks but do not consistently take account of children’s ethnic or cultural identities and many lack sufficient analysis. Most demonstrate an understanding of the impact of issues such as domestic abuse, neglect, substance misuse and parental mental health but many lack focus on the experience of children living in the household”. **(Ofsted April 2017)**

The Single Assessment provides an opportunity for Social Workers and partner agencies to focus on the specific needs of and allow appropriate time within the Assessment for reflection and direct work with the child/ young person to ensure a robust and analytical Assessment. The number of Single Assessments started during 2016/17 decreased by 238 compared to the previous year. The timeliness of completion of assessments has improved considerably meaning that families are not waiting so long for the completion of their assessment (or the commencement of an intervention). 1,785 assessments were completed during 2016/17 and of these 1,242 (69.6%) were completed within 45 working days.

Quality Assurance activity is indicating an improvement in the quality of assessments with increased evidence of the voice of the child being captured as well as contributions from family members and from partner agencies, which in turn is contributing to more SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) plans.



Child Protection

“Children who are at risk of harm are identified appropriately and swift action is taken to make sure that they are safe. Strategy meetings are thorough and make the right decisions that lead to robust child protection enquiries and when necessary initial child protection conferences”. **(Ofsted April 2017)**

The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans during the year has increased by 23% and currently stands at 196 at the end of March 2017. Three children remain subject to a Child Protection Plan for longer than 2 years however in the year to date, 9% have become subject to a CP plan for the second or subsequent time (having previously been CP at any point in the last 2 years).

- 285 ICPC's were held within the year, 22 of these were held outside the 15 day timescale from s.47 investigation.
- 242 ICPC's progressed to a Child Protection Plan and 43 did not do so.

New guidance was issued by the Local Authority in April 2016 to all staff requiring that all children subject to Child Protection Plans must be visited at a minimum of 10 working day intervals (previously 6 weekly). This will ensure that any safeguarding concerns will be identified at an earlier point so that children can be appropriately safeguarded. Performance at the end of March 2017 showed 86.4% of all children subject of a Child Protection Plan had been visited in the previous 10 working days.

Looked After Children

“The Local Authority looks after children when this is necessary. Almost all children looked after live in good quality placements that meet their needs. Some care plans lack focus, which can dilute their effectiveness and result in delays in completing essential work. Planning notably improves once decisions are made about children’s plans for permanence. Plans for children who return home from Local Authority care to live with their families are carefully considered in order to mitigate the likelihood of risks recurring. These children are well supported.

Care leavers receive a good service. Young people make progress in education and training and are prepared well for eventual independent living. Young people hold their leaving care workers in high regard. The large majority of pathway plans are of good quality, but they are not always reviewed regularly enough or signed off promptly by managers.

The corporate parenting panel closely scrutinises performance and outcomes for children looked after, but its links with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) are underdeveloped. Evidence of impact of the panel is limited”. **(Ofsted April 2017)**

In the year April 2016 – March 2017, 135 children became looked after which is an increase on the previous year’s figure of 106. This will in part be due to a clearer decision-making framework for admitting children into care. Overall numbers of looked after children (LAC) have risen by 5% from 253 at March 2016 to 265 at March 2017. The number peaked in February 2017 when 273 children were looked after.

At March 2017, 55% of LAC were placed within BBC boundary and a further 22% were placed in neighbouring authorities. The vast majority of LAC live in family arrangements either through BBC arranged foster care or in a family and friends / connected persons arrangement. Just 11% of the LAC population reside in specialist children's home provision.

Ofsted gave Bedford Borough Council requires improvement in regards to the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence. They said that almost all children looked after live in good-quality placements that meet their needs but that some care plans lack focus, which can dilute their effectiveness and result in delays in completing essential work. Plans for children who return home from Local Authority care to live with their families are carefully considered in order to mitigate the likelihood of risks recurring and these children are well supported.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) completion figure dropped from 94% in March 2016 to 86.2% in March 2017. This improvement in timeliness of completion and additional rigour of the Virtual School should lead to further improvements in the educational attainments of LAC. The Children In Care Council (CICC) have been consulted in developing some services such as the letter that Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) send to LAC following their reviews which is now written in a more child friendly way and which has had positive feedback. IROs continue to have time dedicated to meeting with the children whose care they are reviewing which was introduced in 2015.

On 9 December 2016 the Virtual School moved into the Requires Improvement category from special measures. The authority's clear and deliberate policy ensures that LAC mostly attend schools that are judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding. The Virtual School monitors and intervenes when necessary to ensure that school placements are appropriate. As at 28th February 2017 89.5% of LAC attend schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. The Virtual School is consulted on all school admissions to ensure the most appropriate schools are applied to and that admissions are timely.

If a school is deemed not to be meeting a child's needs the Virtual School will intervene and provide challenge as well as support and guidance. As a last resort a school move would be considered. All children in schools which have been judged to be less than Good by Ofsted receive additional monitoring by the Virtual School. The Virtual School are aware of any child missing education and the reasons why. If there is ever any delay in securing a school place, one to one tuition is put in place as an interim measure. The majority of LAC are making at least expected progress as a result of the better support that they are receiving.

The Virtual School ensures that children who do not attend school are placed in registered alternative provision and receive full time education or receive 1:1 tuition from an appropriate qualified teacher. LAC placed in alternative provision receive the same level of scrutiny and support from the Virtual School as those who are not. Their progress is reviewed on a termly basis and the Virtual School ensures appropriate interventions are put in place where necessary. Termly attendance rewards have been implemented by the Virtual School for 100% attendance in the first instance. Improved attendance will also be rewarded where there has been at least a 10% improvement.

As at the end of March 2017 88.6% of LAC attend Schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. The Virtual School is consulted on all school admissions to ensure the most appropriate schools are applied to and that admissions are timely. If a school is deemed not to be meeting a child's needs the Virtual School will intervene and provide challenge as well as support and guidance. All children attending schools judged to be less than Good by Ofsted receive additional monitoring by the Virtual School. The Virtual School are aware of any child missing education and the reasons why. If there is ever any delay in securing a school place, one to one tuition is put in place as an interim measure.

91.2% of care leavers aged 17 – 21 years were assessed as living in suitable accommodation which is above our statistical neighbour and national performance. Living in suitable accommodation is clearly identified as being key to having a successful transition from care to independence and the Leaving and After Care Team are strong advocates for the young people they work with. The majority of care leavers are allocated to a qualified social worker although the team now also uses the skills of a Personal Adviser.

Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) commission South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) to deliver a service for LAC in Bedfordshire. The LAC Health Team co-ordinates all statutory LAC health assessments for in county and out of county placements. The BCCG have identified a number of GP's and Paediatricians to carry out health assessments of LAC placed in Bedfordshire from other Local Authorities to ensure LAC placed in Bedfordshire have access to health services in a timely manner when difficulties arise. There is evidence of good partnership working between the BCCG, BBC and Health Services, good communication processes have been established including monthly meetings.



The BCCG is working in partnership with the Local Authority on developing the Children in Care Council Pledge relating to the health section. Following a workshop with LAC, one area that was identified by the young people was they would like a comprehensive health passport when they leave care. The BCCG has been working with NHS England on developing a Health Passport. The passport was presented to the LAC NHS England sub group with good feedback.

To improve the quality and timeliness of health assessments for children and young people placed out of area, Bedfordshire CCG has implemented a new service level agreement in November 2016. It was put into place to ensure that out of area providers commissioned by Bedfordshire CCG to undertake health assessment for Bedford's Looked after Children, receive a high quality service. A full annual report for 2016/17 will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel this summer (2017) and when published will be available on the BBSCB website.

EPUT (was SEPT) professionals continue to undertake their responsibilities to safeguard children and adults, 0-5 & 5-19 Service professionals take on the greater proportion of responsibilities to ensure health is represented in Early Help & safeguarding processes. They are supported with effective supervision providing management line of sight. This year professionals have appropriately escalated a number of safeguarding cases to Children's Services Senior Managers for unresolved professional differences of opinion. These escalations resulted in immediate review by Children's Services Senior Managers and professional differences were explored, ensuring well informed decisions and actions were taken in the best interest of the individual children & families

Bedfordshire Police hosted a partnership event with Children's Home Managers in order to work together to prevent incidents of missing and help protect young people from harm.



Neglect

“There has been significant work by the Local Authority, supported by the LSCB, to strengthen the response to children exposed to chronic neglect. This has included a comprehensive response to neglect of children with disabilities, following two serious case reviews. This work is beginning to see impact, with improved assessment and planning evident for this cohort of children. (Ofsted April 2017)

Bedford Borough Council launched the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP) a tool for Social Workers and Health practitioners to use when they visit families at home to do an assessment. It looks at different aspects of family life which are ‘graded’ on a scale of 1 to 5. Questions are broken down into 4 areas:

- physical, such as quality of food, clothes and health.
- safety, such as how safe the home is and if the child knows about things like road safety.
- love, such as the relationship between the carer and child.
- esteem such as if a child is encouraged to learn and if they are praised for doing something good.

GCP2 is designed to be used with families where someone is concerned about the care of a child. The number of visits needed depends on the family. After all the visits, practitioners put the results together and talk it through with the family. The Early Help Team has a series of training sessions planned. EPUT children service professionals have worked collaboratively with BBC Early Help Team to implement the GCP2 training and offer support to professionals using this tool to measure neglect. Feedback from a professional “I found the tool to be very comprehensive and it was a way to methodically complete the assessment and highlight areas where without it, vital areas of identifying neglect could have been overseen”

The Pan Bedfordshire Training Group developed a neglect training offer with 3 levels of training and Pan Bedfordshire Neglect practice guidance and procedures were developed and launched. In September 2016 a Pan Bedfordshire event was held about Youth and Neglect to look at safeguarding young people during adolescence as well as violence and abuse in teenage intimate relationships and the prevention and intervention of this. The event concluded with an insight into the local picture of youth neglect across Bedfordshire. A Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency Neglect conference was held in March 2017 and was well attended by 309 delegates. The Conference was put together based upon local identified learning need and feedback from professionals.

Bedford Hospital NHS Trust has developed a new Maternity risk matrix to aid identification of those unborn babies at risk of abuse and neglect. Plus the inclusion of a shorter risk assessment, taken from the Pan Bedfordshire CSE risk assessment tool which includes prompts around CSE, FGM, DA, 4 level of abuse and neglect, parental factors and young carers on the A&E record card for all children and young people.

Domestic Abuse

“A good range of services is available, and these are improving outcomes for children, including those who have experienced domestic abuse. The ‘relay’ scheme supports the early identification of children living in households where domestic abuse is present, ensuring that services are provided before needs escalate. The Space programme provides group support for children affected by domestic abuse. Children have given positive feedback on the impact that this service has had on their ability to cope with their home situations. Multi-agency public protection arrangements and multi-agency risk assessment conferences are effective in protecting children who have contact with individuals who are considered to be the highest risk”. (Ofsted 2017)

The BBSCB received assurances in March 2017 from the Chair of the Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (BDAP) about how improvements and services around domestic abuse (DA) are being effectively joined up and taking account of risks and support needs of children and their families.

The role of BDAP is to be a strategic lead promoting good practice in delivering service to victims and perpetrators of DA. This is achieved through a number of specific functions including the delivery of training, coordination of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), and delivering a DA specific communications plan which includes the beds.dv.org website and social media accounts. The BDAP is also responsible for delivering the DA Forum, the DA Champion scheme, the GP training programme and coordination of GP Champion pilot scheme. The BDAP service is a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council which has a formal Service Level Agreement that covers the shared service.

Bedford Borough Council has just finished a consultation on a new Domestic Abuse strategy 2017 – 20 which outlines 6 key themes that are specific to Bedford. A business plan agreed in January 2017 has 3 overarching strategic aims:

1. To provide leadership and governance in relation to DA.
2. To ensure a quality response is provided by a wide range of agencies for victims, perpetrators and children including robust and consistent early identification, intervention and prevention of DA.
3. To coordinate commissioning arrangements and funding opportunities where possible.

To compliment the work of the BDAP, Bedford Borough Council has appointed a DA Coordinator within the Early Help team to provide a point of contact for Children’s Services on DA issues.

Bedfordshire Police reported that DA is a core Police business and are committed to tackling this crime – from first response, to the investigation and subsequent action to protect victims. They are working hard to ensure that they provide the best possible service for victims working with a range of partner agencies from health, social care, probation, education and housing.

A commitment outlined within the current Police and Crime Commissioner’s (PCC) Police and Crime Plan is to champion services that meet the needs of the most vulnerable within our society. Aims underpinning this commitment place victims at the heart of their approach to DA by encouraging reporting, supporting early intervention and improving access to support services.

The Early Help service continued their SPACE scheme which offers a place where children and young people can attend, meet others impacted by domestic abuse, talk about their experiences or simply just have fun in a safe and enjoyable environment. They offer a range of therapeutic and physical activities available for children and young people to engage in as well as free play using the facilities available at the centre. Supervised ‘free time’ is included in the sessions. There is no cost for children and young people to attend and there is also the option for parents to stay for a coffee before sessions start.

VOCypf has worked with BBC Children’s Services to map services provided by voluntary sector organisations for adults and children affected by domestic abuse. In Bedford Borough there are 5 voluntary sector organisations providing such services.

Bedfordshire Police has strengthened its dedicated team for investigating DA crime and supporting victims with a further 29 Constables and 5 Sergeants so that all victims of DA have a specialist officer investigating their crime. Independent Domestic Violence Advisor staff also work co-located with this team once a week to ensure improved victim care.

More information about DA please visit add the BDAP website: <http://www.bedsdv.org.uk/>

Child Sexual Exploitation

The work on Child Sexual Exploitation, (CSE) Missing and trafficking is led by a Pan Bedfordshire Strategic CSE and Missing group chaired by a local Director of Children’s Services. The group reports quarterly to the respective LSCBs on progress against the agreed action plan. The recent Ofsted inspection in Bedford Borough commented that:

“Children at risk of CSE are identified, protected and supported. Interventions are based on robust assessments that identify risk and services offered respond to children’s needs. Engagement with children and their carers has resulted in reduction of risk and in children making good progress. The Local Authority together with its partners are able to identify and improve outcomes for children at serious risk of CSE.

Political and professional leaders demonstrate a commitment to further strengthen practice in respect of CSE. Work has been undertaken under the Pan Bedfordshire CSE & Missing group to develop a local CSE problem profile and strategy. The Local Authority Chief Executive chairs a Bedford Borough Vulnerabilities Board which ensures multi-agency ownership to tackle CSE in Bedford Borough.

There is active awareness raising about CSE, including training of taxi operators and drivers. Disruption work has been undertaken with hotels, fast food outlets and licensed premises across Bedford Borough.

Risk assessments inform ongoing planning, with complex strategy meetings ensuring comprehensive multi-agency involvement. However, not all risk assessments are updated with sufficient regularity or used effectively to inform analysis. (Ofsted April 2017)

At 31st March 2017, a cohort of 22 children and young people were identified as being vulnerable to CSE and were being monitored and supported by Bedford Borough Council.

The National Working Group (NWG Network) were asked by partners in Bedfordshire to undertake a further CSE 'health check' in November 2016 covering the county of Bedfordshire, with specific emphasis on six strategic recommendations which were made during a previous CSE review in 2015.

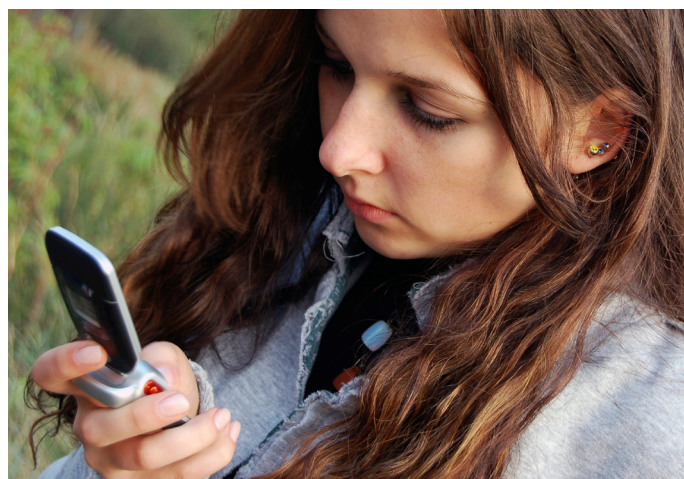
Recommendations were made in their report to assist the Pan Bedfordshire CSE & Missing Strategic Group in focusing on the next pieces of work and where further improvements can be seen. The full report can be accessed via http://www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/practitioners/child_sexual_exploitation.aspx

In 2016 a communication campaign promoted the revamped Bedfordshire Against CSE website www.bedfordshireagainstcse.org. The same campaign, through targeted Facebook advertising reached 48,000 people across Bedfordshire and more than 200,000 people were reached via twitter. Facebook adverts were targeted to 13-17 year olds, 19,000 individuals within this age bracket viewed them with a total number of views 28,000.

The CSE Group (CSEG) has now been operational since May 2016. It moved away from discussing individual young people in detail (this role is now taken up within the MASH) and focuses on the wider intelligence, looking at recurring patterns and themes, including particular hot spots, people or areas of concern. The group is constantly under review and a formal review will take place to ensure that it is fit for purpose in May 2017; this is being led by Bedfordshire Police.

The Bedfordshire CSE Disruption Toolkit has been developed and has been launched with the practitioner's toolkit. There continues to be an increase in the submission of intelligence to the Police and this may be due to the amount of training that has taken place with practitioners regarding the multiagency intelligence form. Bedfordshire Police continue to play a leading role in the CSEG and daily, weekly and monthly meetings take place with partners to share information about CSE and to ensure they prioritise support for CSE victims as well as targeting those believed to be perpetrators.

Bedfordshire CCG secured funding for a specialist CSE Lead to work with clinicians, health services and staff from a wide range of settings to raise awareness, recognise and refer children at risk of CSE. The work undertaken as part of this role has contributed to a greater understanding amongst health staff of how to identify the potential signs that a child may be at risk or, or have experienced CSE, as well as an increased knowledge of the context in which CSE happens and what the long term health effects can be for victims.



Case Study

During the Youth Offending Service (BYOS) initial assessment process, it was identified that a young person was vulnerable to CSE due to various risk factors such as being regularly missing from home, a turbulent relationship with parents and contact with older males who were providing her access to various substances. The young person frequently returned home after being missing appearing dishevelled, losing weight and having been transported to various locations in and out of the county. She presented as having little awareness of how the risks above, in particular the older males, were making her extremely vulnerable. The BYOS Drug, Alcohol and Sexual Health worker put together work as part of the overall intervention plan with the aim of increasing her understanding and awareness of how power can work within relationships, how young people can be targeted and exploited to meet the needs of predatory individuals, what coercion can look like and how predatory males often make use of drugs and alcohol to reduce a young person's capacity to identify risks and consent within sexual encounters. Protective behaviours work and exploring and developing resilience also formed part of the work to improve the young person's ability to manage her vulnerabilities. Relevant interventions were also delivered regarding substance misuse, to reduce associated risks within this area of concern. Currently this young person has a stable lifestyle which developed gradually before the end of her interventions. She is now in full time employment, has improved relationships with her parents and has severed the risky contacts in which she was previously exploited.

'Chelsea's Choice'

BBSCB with support of Early Help services were really pleased to support and commission 'Chelsea's Choice' for another year to all upper schools in Bedford Borough including 4 independent schools and some special schools. This play shows how young people are groomed by adults for the purposes of sexual exploitation and is based on a true story. Bedfordshire Police supported every performance of 'Chelsea's Choice' and provided support for those wanting advice or making disclosures following the performances. They were asked how they would like to be informed about CSE in the future and the young people clearly expressed a view to see more plays as a way of informing them. 19 young people either made a disclosure or raised a concern re CSE following the performances.

'In the Net'

In January 2017 the BBSCB commissioned 10 performances of 'In the Net' about staying safe online and aimed at pupils in Years 4 and 5. With no cost to the schools 47 lower/ primary/middle schools attended, resulting in 1868 pupils watching a performance. We asked each school that attended a performance to provide us with some feedback and out of the 47 schools asked, 44 provided feedback, a return rate of 94%.

The feedback from these performances was very positive. No one said that it was aimed at the wrong age group; some even said that their Year 3 pupils watched it and was suitable for them. The pupils found it engaging and very useful. It covered a range of online safety advice that many schools have taken back and done further work and can relate to the characters in the performance.

Services for children and young people who have been sexually exploited

In January 2017 the BBSCB received a report from Link to Change an independent charity offering support for children and young people aged 12 – 26 involved in or at risk of CSE in Bedford Borough. Link to Change has continued to raise awareness of CSE with numerous professionals including foster carers and supported almost all of the ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ performances and spoke to many young people about risky behaviour and keeping safe and a disclosure was shared and a referral to the MASH was made

Their work has resulted in children and young people;

- having an increased knowledge of internet safety.
- setting their social media profiles at the highest security setting.
- attending a 12 weeks education course, weekly volunteering and resitting exams.
- reduction in missing incidents.
- improved self- esteem and confidence.
- having a better understanding of safe relationships and being able to reflect on past situations recognising risky indicators.

More information about CSE please visit Bedfordshire against CSE website: www.bedfordshireagainstcse.org

Missing children and young people

“Through its multi-agency performance dataset, the LSCB monitors the incidence of children going missing from home or care, return home interviews with children and numbers of children missing from education. There is a high level of ongoing scrutiny and challenge by the LSCB in relation to missing children. The chair is proactive in holding the Police and others to account in relation to their response to missing children. However, despite monitoring evidence of progress, return interview rates remain low”.

A commissioned service provides return home interviews, but there is a lack of persistent follow-up to encourage children’s engagement. This has resulted in a low rate of return interviews. Senior managers have acted to address identified weaknesses in respect of the response to missing children. Guidance has been refreshed and updated training provided to staff. Work is under way to review the contract with the commissioned provider for return home interviews. Escalation has taken place with strategic leads in the Police.

(Ofsted April 2017)

The multi-agency response and management of missing has been a priority for BBSCB who have continued to challenge the Police practice of recording children as absent, rather than missing and the low number of return interviews. Bedfordshire Police have ceased using the category of absent in recorded an incident in relation to a child or young person and this is now used as a risk category. In response to the Ofsted Inspection procedures for Children’s Social Care in relation to children and young people who are missing are now being further updated to ensure that they are congruent with the Pan Bedfordshire Interagency Child Protection procedures.

In the period June 2016 to 2nd March 2017, there were 50 intelligence forms sent to the Police from MASH reporting on information received from a range of agencies. This is a significant increase in reporting than has been noted previously. The intelligence passed on through this process included information relating to drug running, gang involvement, suspected criminal activity and CSE. Out of 50 intelligence forms, 19 had defined concerns relating to CSE. Intelligence will continue to be shared, monitored and analysed in order to best protect vulnerable young people. Data collation has recently been developed to include return interviews commissioned by MASH related to children whose circumstances do not currently meet the threshold for social care intervention.

All children and young people who are not looked after will also be offered a return interview and the CSE/Missing social worker in MASH supports social workers to ensure that return interviews are being undertaken and where helpful they may undertake the interviews. The return interview format has recently been changed to a more user friendly approach and is in the process of being incorporated into Children’s Social Care client database.

When a child or young person goes missing a pro-forma is completed, which includes information on when the child/young person has returned and whether they have received a missing interview.

Current strategies are in place to support improvements in the completion of return interviews. These include the CSE/Missing social worker in MASH actively working on supporting the completion of return interviews, the improvement of data collation and refresher training through One Hour Workshops, to all staff. Additionally a new service, Barnardo’s, has been commissioned and is now offering an independent Return Interview service. The Barnardo’s worker has been introducing himself and the service offered to all teams, during late April and early May, 2017.

Bedfordshire Police risk assessment process and IT system has been improved in order to provide greater accuracy in identifying risk. A Monthly Missing audit process reports to the Gold Group for scrutiny. Bedfordshire Police have invested an extra 2 Detective Sergeants, 18 Constables and an Analyst targeting CSE & finding missing children.

In September 2016 Bedfordshire Police launched the CSE and Missing Investigation Team (CMIT). This combines and expands the former CSE Unit and Missing Person Co-ordinators. The Team is responsible for medium and low risk missing person investigations, CSE crime investigations, disrupting perpetrators, supporting those who have been subjected to or are at risk of CSE and raising awareness across policing as to the signs of CSE. At the same time the Emerald Team was launched to be a centre of excellence, responsible for managing DA, rape and serious sexual offences, cases which often share similar characteristics. Emerald and CMIT together respond to HMIC’s concerns that the Force was missing investigative and immediate safeguarding opportunities.

Since November 2016 the average time that a person is reported missing has reduced from 71 hours to 29 hours, and the repeat rate has fallen from 47% to 31%. These are significant improvements, which they will improve upon further. The Police continue to review missing and absent risk assessment processes. They are conducting further independent dip sampling around risk assessment of missing incidents, following the specific concerns identified in HMIC's dip sampling.

The Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency missing children and young people panel (MCYPP) has continued to hold regular meetings to look at individual children and young people who present the most concern. The MCYPP chaired by the Police shares information, promotes multi-agency working to protect children and young people from harm. The MCYPP provides the Pan Bedfordshire CSE & Missing Strategic Group with data regarding the number of children and young people who go missing and escalate cases where the single or multi-agency response has fallen short of the required standard.

All occurrences of missing and absent children and young people are now referred by Bedfordshire Police to BBC to ensure they have the complete picture in terms of the numbers of times these children and young people are absent/missing and any associated risks. This extensive sharing of information assists in the decision making process around courses of action to be taken such as Strategy Meetings, referrals to the MCYPP or the CSEP. It enables BBC Children's Services to identify those children and young people that require 'Return Interviews'. The Police Missing Person Co-ordinator has been linked to the children's homes in Bedford Borough to ensure that there is a regular dialogue and visits to build relationships with the Managers, Staff, children and young people. More information about Missing Children and young people please visit our website: www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/professionals/missing_children_young_people.aspx

Disabled Children

"The Board has given safeguarding children with disabilities a high priority in the past 12 months hosting a spotlight event on safeguarding children with disabilities and providing challenge to the Bedford Borough Council's Children's Services Improvement Board is resulting in improved practice. A system of assurance reporting is employed by the Board to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of frontline practice. Assurance reporting continues until the Board is satisfied with progress. Examples of where this has led to improvements include the challenge to the Children's Services Improvement Board resulting in work to strengthen capacity and the quality of work in the children with disabilities team. Actions taken to respond to concerns about practice include a thematic review, practitioner briefings, training and a recent spotlight event on safeguarding children with disabilities. The Board receives ongoing assurance reports on the work of the children with disabilities team and triangulates information from other sources for example the chair of the Board 'walking the floor' and speaking directly to social workers to maintain challenge to improving the quality of services. This coupled by challenge to the Children's Services Improvement Board has resulted in improved capacity and timeliness and quality of assessments in the children with disabilities team" (Ofsted April 2017).

At 31st March 2016, there were 852 children in need in Bedfordshire with a disability recorded, representing 17.8% of all children in need compared to 12.7% nationally¹ - Bedford Borough (13.2%). DfE provide 12 disability categories, of which more than one can be selected. Bedford Borough has a higher proportion of 'Autism/Aspergers Syndrome' and 'Communication' than the England average.

The Board has received assurance reports from Children's Services on a regular basis to the increased stability of the children with disabilities team with the appointment of a permanent team manager plus the direction of travel and improved effectiveness of multi-agency working for this group of children and young people. The feedback from partners and families is that they have experienced an improved difference in the service they are receiving. The Team Manager and Advanced Practitioner are building positive relationships within the community. There are regular meetings with the parent carers' forum and the relationship here is reported to be much better and much more consistent by the parent carers' manager and chair which is a positive.

The CWD team has been on a journey and in the next year they will be focussing on Education, Health and Care Plans, ensuring that they are timely and are being contributed to appropriately and not duplicating meetings. Children's Services management team are involved in a number of work streams with partners and the parent carers' forum on how they can improve and maximise their input into these. They will continue to encourage and contribute to the recruitment strategy as they feel it is imperative to have a stable work force with the right skill set to continue to embed and promote good practice. Their focus on key performance indicators will be consistent to ensure that the quality of the work they do is done well and is evidenced based on a clear focus on outcomes for children. Work continues to prepare for the possible SEND inspection and a lot of work is ongoing with partners and within children services.



In January 2017 a joint spotlight event was held to help us understand how many disabled children are receiving Early Help and safeguarding services; what is working; and the barriers and enablers for promotion, identification, and safeguarding the wellbeing of disabled children. Participants at the spotlight event provided their conclusions and suggestions for improvement under three headings: How are we doing? What are the barriers and enablers? How can we improve? The responses were based on their own expertise and evidence presented, and as with any event of this nature, the ‘what can we do better’ always outweighs ‘what are we doing well’.

- From evidence provided – need to do better, but learn from pockets of good practice. Bedfordshire appears to be in line with rest of country as far as we can tell from the evidence provided.
- Professional relationships and joined up working are critical, there are some good examples, but inconsistent. Working between organisations and voluntary sector could be better in some cases. There is still a way to go in terms of good working together but when it works well, it works really well.
- Why do Authorities work in different ways? There appears to be a difference across the three Local Authorities in terms of thresholds, and the way they work, including clear advice when referrals don’t meet threshold. This can be an issue for Pan Bedfordshire organisations.
- Early Help is really important, but are funding cuts impacting in some cases.

The evidence from the spotlight event and report has been considered by the Strategic Board to address the recommendations and share the learning from the spotlight event and report to safeguard all disabled children and young people in Bedford Borough.

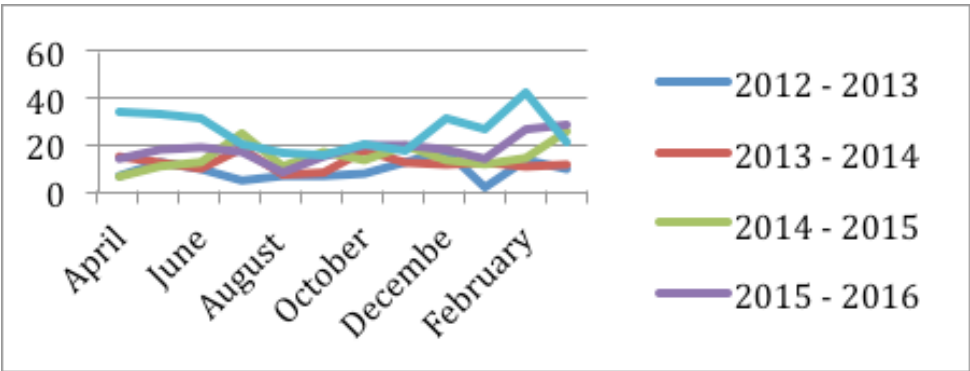
More information about Disabled Children and the Spotlight event please visit our website: _

www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/practitioners/disabled_children.aspx

Investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children and young people

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has overall responsibility for the management of allegations of abuse by adults who work (or volunteer) with children and young people. The LADO provides advice and guidance, liaises with the Police, Children’s Services, Regulatory Bodies such as Ofsted and other organisations as needed and ensures a consistent, fair and thorough process for both child and adult.

There has been an increase of nearly 38% in the total number of contacts with the LADO service from 222 in 2015 – 2016 to 306 this year, continuing the year on year increase since 2012. The total number of contacts in the year has more than doubled since 2013-14. As a consequence, the average monthly referral rate in 2016/2017 also rose considerably, from 18 to 25 per month.



The data continues to be recorded in line with the case management model outlined in the Pan Bedfordshire Practice Guidance document and a rising proportion of these contacts, now 65%, are recorded as Consultations. In these cases the contact is recorded as a consultation which does not meet the threshold for a Joint Evaluation Meeting (JEM). The numbers of JEMs have remained relatively stable but there has been an increase in referrals that meet the criteria but are best managed by the employer.

This year our figures are 61% of cases completed within one month and 85% within three months, though these figures were considerably damaged by long-term sickness to the LADO in the year. In terms of outcomes, of those contacts meeting the LADO threshold, 28% were recorded as substantiated, 43% as Unfounded or False with 19% unsubstantiated and 10% as yet unresolved – at the time of writing. The source of referrals has remained relatively consistent with most referrals coming from educational establishments. However, contacts come from a broad cross section of settings and agencies which would reflect that the role is well established in Bedford Borough.

Private Fostering

The Children Act 1989 (section 66) defines Private Fostering as occurring when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for and provided with accommodation, for 28 days or more by somebody other than a close relative, legal guardian or someone with parental responsibility. Close relatives are defined within the Act as step parents, siblings, brothers or sisters, aunts and uncles and grandparents by birth or by marriage. A private fostering arrangement is one which is made privately without the involvement of the Local Authority. The Local Authority has a duty to complete an assessment to make a recommendation as to whether the private fostering arrangement is appropriate. In order to do this the wishes and feelings of the child are taken into account and support offered to private foster carers as appropriate.

During the reporting year, there were 9 notifications received, of these 8 were confirmed as new private fostering arrangements and one young person returned to the care of a family member before the assessment was completed. Of these none were as a result of notifications received direct from the carer, 2 were notifications from Bedford Borough social workers and 7 were from local host family exchange programmes. None of the private fostering arrangements coming to the notice of the service were referred in advance of the placement being made. Ofsted found that the response to children who live in private fostering arrangements was not sufficiently robust. Notification of new arrangements identified by partner agencies has been consistently low, suggesting that knowledge and awareness are not widely prevalent. There was no lead worker responsible for these children, and this weakens promotion and awareness raising. Most assessments seen provided a coherent picture of children’s needs and the carer’s capacity to meet them, but important safeguarding checks are not always completed for all children.

During this year Bedford Borough Council Fostering Team and BBSCB have continued to raise awareness within Bedford Borough about private fostering. Leaflets have been sent to all schools within the Borough and there has been ongoing attendance at frontline practitioners groups in order to promote awareness.

More information about Private Fostering please visit our website: http://www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/professionals/private_fostering.aspx

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse

“There has been focused activity to raise awareness of female genital mutilation over the past 12 months, including the development of leaflets and online training. In cases they sampled, inspectors found that agencies’ responses to concerns regarding female genital mutilation are appropriate. New procedures for forced marriage and honour based abuse are in place, but there is limited understanding of the scale of these issues in Bedford Borough. The Board has recognised this and is reviewing its dataset to include information on these issues, in order to target awareness raising”. (Ofsted April 2017)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse which involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or injury to external female genitals for non-therapeutic reasons. In line with the national picture, it is hard to establish a picture of the prevalence of FGM, as there are low levels of reporting.

Forced Marriage is where one or both people do not consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. Pressure can include threats, physical or sexual violence, and financial pressure. This is different to an **arranged marriage**, where both people have consented to the union but feel free to refuse if they want to. **All child marriages are forced**, because a child cannot provide informed consent, and are therefore a violation of children’s rights.

Honour Based Abuse (violence) is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and / or community by breaking their honour code. For young victims it is a form of child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members. Women, men and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse.

The Pan Bedfordshire FGM group now incorporates Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse in all its work. Over the last year the group has completed the following work;

- Free online training disseminated to partners and on the BBSCB website.
- Revised the Pan Bedfordshire FGM Strategy to include Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage.
- Profiling the issues within Bedford Borough.
- All Health Care providers are now collecting data for FGM Prevalence.

More information about FGM, Forced Marriage and Honour Based abuse please visit our website: http://www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/professionals/female_genital_mutilation_fgm.aspx

Priority 3: A supported, informed and effective multi-agency workforce with a focus on learning and improvement.

“Frontline professionals have access to a range of single-agency and multi-agency safeguarding training, which enhances their skills, knowledge and confidence. The detailed approach to training evaluation and quality assurance evidences the Board’s continual efforts to improve course content and relevance. A wide range of training opportunities are on offer, including e-learning, which is well embedded with increasing uptake and completion over the past year and high satisfaction ratings from partners. The training offer clearly links to the Board’s priorities, reflecting themes from serious case reviews and audit activity. There is a sophisticated process of evaluation and impact analysis in place that takes the form of a three-stage process: feedback on the day, at day three and six months post-training. Direct interviews with staff and managers held after six months show positive and sustained impact on trainees’ skills, knowledge and confidence. A clear system of quality assurance of the training provided is in place, which is reviewed regularly to inform the training plan and to improve content”. (Ofsted April 2017)

The Pan Bedfordshire Training Unit provides a quarterly training report to the BBSCB, reporting on highlights, training uptake and evaluation. Regular observation of course delivery, with focus on new training/trainers and training that has been updated or refreshed. Key performance measures show that at the end of March 2017:

- 79 courses were delivered to 1885 delegates
- 94% of places were filled
- 95% satisfaction with face-to-face learning
- 5281 learners registered to complete an e-learning course and 4734 completed (89%)
- 97% satisfaction with e-learning

The training unit continues to be challenged to ensure a good mix of agencies on training, however there has been a significant improvement of this within recent months. Briefing events have been opened up to larger audiences and have attracted the number of applications expected. A large scale annual conference was introduced and this was available to all agencies across Bedfordshire including Luton.

Whilst satisfaction rates for the Working Together modular training programme continue to remain high, services have identified the challenge of releasing staff for two days of learning. This has resulted in developing a one day intensive delivery that relies upon organisations ensuring that staff have been properly inducted and have received appropriate single agency training prior to attendance. Other further developments to the training programme has secured a more specialist workshop approach to learning, ensuring the skills of new learners and experienced learners are met in a range of innovative and creative ways.

The BBSCB has been provided with a robust approach to evaluating the learning/training delivered through the Pan Bedfordshire Training Unit, measuring both the quality of the training delivered and to evidence the impact on practice.

EPUT professionals are supported by a dedicated team of safeguarding professionals to facilitate community health professionals to gain competencies and confidence to take on their role appropriate responsibilities to promote the well-being and protection of children & young people. EPUT professionals have participated in a number of additional learning opportunities above the required mandatory safeguarding children & adult training. This has included completion of E-learning, notably CSE, and face to face multi-agency training provided by the Pan Bedfordshire LSCB Training.

As a result of an increase in demand for community health professionals to provide statements and witness as part of child care proceedings, professionals have attended a number of workshops to support statement writing and court attendance. Professionals are now reporting that they feel prepared and confident to provide factual statements to inform child best interest decisions made by the court. Health professionals are provided with structured formal safeguarding supervision which allows learning through reflective practice, in a supervision environment of constructive challenge, where individual cases are viewed by the supervisor providing a fresh pair of eyes and playing devil's advocate.

Comments from staff, "Training has given me greater confidence to challenge other professionals appropriately and has changed the course of an investigation" (Health Visitor). "The Named Doctor was very helpful and gave me excellent advice and support with this issue. He had good insight into the issue that I presented to him and offered to make himself available to the social worker for discussion either in the process of a strategy or to support the decision making around this issue" (Family Nurse).

Internal & external case review and audit has highlighted a number of learning opportunities which have been cascaded to frontline professionals and managers. The key messages have been reiterated at professional forums and supervision processes.

Thresholds

"The majority of partner agencies understand and apply thresholds for statutory intervention effectively."

Thresholds for accessing support from Children's Social Care are appropriate and as a result, children only come into care when it is in their best interests to do so".

(Ofsted April 2017)

Two joint Thresholds/Early Help events were held in July and November 2016 and attended by over 150 practitioners. The events gave practitioners the opportunity to hear about the thresholds and Early Help offer. The outcome of these events has been that there has been improved threshold understanding and quality of referrals to the MASH, and partners' understanding and joining up of services concerning domestic abuse.

BBSCB through multi-agency audits have checked that there is consistent understanding and application of thresholds.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

"An effective multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where families in need of help benefit from a wide range of well-coordinated support to prevent their needs from escalating. The MASH has enhanced partnership working. Thresholds are applied appropriately and result in a timely and proportionate response to children's needs. When statutory thresholds are met there is a timely and effective response by staff in the MASH. Information is shared appropriately and leads to sound decisions and oversight by managers. As a result children receive the right support at the right time. The majority of partner agencies understand and apply thresholds for statutory intervention effectively."

The Early Help worker based in the MASH ensures a timely response to children and families who need Early Help provision. Strong partnership arrangements led by the Early Help and intervention service ensure that support for children and families is effective."

(Ofsted April 2017)

The MASH provides the gateway to secure safeguarding services for children and young people and a multi-agency triage service supports the children's workforce in delivering effective Early Help and safeguarding intervention for vulnerable children, young people and families. The MASH is made up of professionals from across the children's workforce and each member of the team is able to use their shared knowledge, skills and networks to ensure that children, young people and families have access to the right services at the right time. Development of robust processes and engagement with referring agencies and practitioners enhance the understanding of thresholds and improves the quality of referrals.

Evidence from the MASH indicates a lower and more appropriate number of referrals going forward for a social work assessment. With caseloads in social work teams reducing there is improved timeliness in the response to referrals and in completing single assessments within 45 days. The quality of assessments has gradually improved but overall it remains too variable.

BCCG and Public Health has financially supported the health provision in MASH. These arrangements have been reported as beneficial for prompt information sharing, greater area engagement and facilitating the culture of joint working as working together in the same place fosters mutual respect among different agencies and builds trust. Bedford Hospital NHS Trust has forged close working relationships with the MASH and there has been a notable increase over the year in the number of requests for information from the MASH. The information sharing process has seen an improved working relationship across services for children and young people who were under the care of Bedford Hospital NHS Trust.

Daily lived experiences of children and young people

“There is evidence that the activity of the Board in awareness raising of safeguarding issues is having a positive effect on young people feeling safe and knowing where to go to ask for help. The Board has established an ongoing relationship with a social enterprise to support the influence of children and young people on its business. It is planning a participation strategy to strengthen this further.

The LSCB has given priority to engaging children and young people more effectively in its work, commissioning a voice of the child report to inform its business plan and priorities. As a result, the Board has commissioned a new theatre production (“In the Net”) focusing on online safety and cyber bullying.” (Ofsted Inspection 2017)

BBSCB recognises the importance of listening to children and young people, and taking their views into account this being one of the agreed BBSCB values. As discussed above the voice of children and young people was heard through the commissioning of ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ which will be commissioned again in 2017.

In January 2017 the Board held a development session to consider how the Board engaged more effectively with children and young people, listened to, heard and acted upon what they said. The Board will be developing an Engagement and Participation Strategy, propose holding a conference with children and young people and develop mechanisms for ongoing communication with children and young people.

Early Help undertook Healthy Relationships and Tobacco, Alcohol & Drugs survey’s in schools in 2016 and their findings were reported back to the Board. The survey’s findings have influenced the development of education and prevention services available to children and young people. Due to the high number of children and young people reporting in both surveys the prevalence of sexting and the sharing of nude messages via social media, it was agreed to undertake further work to explore the impact of social media on young people and how best to support services in reducing the impact this may cause on young people’s lives.



The Children in Care Council (CiCC) re-launched in January 2017 with two new age groups (junior; 8-12 and senior 12-16). CiCC now meet each month and have decided on themes to ensure the meetings cover topics most important to children and young people. Membership has increased and the children and young people have been heavily involved in the creation of the new Corporate Pledge.



The Youth Cabinet have a newly elected committee; Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and two Publicity and Events Officers. The committee (with staff support) will co-ordinate meetings and lead on the creation of a new constitution. The Youth Cabinet has over 30 members who have voted on three key campaigns for the year ahead; Improving Mental Health Services for children and young people, transport costs and quality and tackling racial and religious discrimination. Three additional young people have been elected to serve as a Portfolio Holder to lead on the developments within the three campaigns.



Bedford Borough has a newly elected Member of United Kingdom Youth Parliament, 15 young people from nine different schools were candidates in the elections in April 2017 with 4175 votes being cast. The Member of Youth Parliament is Lilianna Horvath, a 16 year old Looked After Child, Lilianna will serve a two year

term. In September 2016 4417 children and young people across Bedford voted in the British Youth Council – Make your Mark Campaign to pick the most important National issue. The top five results for Bedford are:

1. Tackling racial and religious discrimination with 645 votes.
2. Votes at 16 with 541 votes.
3. Curriculum to prepare us for life with 516 votes.
4. First aid for all children and young people with 470 votes.
5. Transport with 455 votes.



LINK; young inspectors, young recruiters and young commissioners re-launched in February 2017 with 17 young people (including 7 looked after children) attending a training residential to learn the skills needed for inspecting services, commissioning, monitoring and evaluating contracts and supporting the recruitment and selection of staff. Members of LINK have since:

- Supported the recruitment and selection of staff within Early Help Services.
- Supported the recruitment and selection of the NQSW Academy Team, Team Manager.
- Inspected SPACE youth group.
- Set and evaluated questions within three newly commissioned contracts; advocacy, supervised contact and Independent Visitors.
- Supported the recruitment and selection of the new Engagement and Development Officer.
- Supported the recruitment and selection of the MASH Team Manager Post.
- Have supported the preparation for the new 16+ supported accommodation contract.



MOMO is a digital platform designed to make it easier for children and young people to keep in touch with their workers and share information that is important to them. Since its launch in April 2017, 87 children and young people have registered to have a MOMO account, over 200 MOMO statements have been sent by children and young people and 105 workers have attended MOMO training with accounts. 28% of the MOMO statements received are in the category of ‘my worker is visiting’, 18% share my good news, 18% get ready for my Child Protection Conference and 17% prepare for a meeting.



The Pupil Voice Network is a new project to bring together and support School Councils and the staff that support them. The Pupil Voice Network aims to:

- Provide support for Pupil Voice / School Council leads or coordinators in schools.
- Offer training for staff on engagement and the best ways for children and young people to be involved throughout school and school systems.
- Training for pupils on the role of School Council Member and being representative and inclusive.
- Access to resources, information, advice and guidance.
- Coordinated Bedford wide projects and partnership working i.e. United Kingdom Youth Parliament.

In November 2017, the Engagement and Development Team facilitated the first ever Pupil Voice Conference in Bedford, attended by 39 children and young people from across 11 middle and upper schools. The conference focused on 4 key themes; growing up in Bedford, Make your Mark, Health and Health Services and a school council audit. The Engagement and Development Team would like to support a Pupil Voice Conference every academic year.

A new Engagement and Development Strategy is being created for Children's Services. Written in partnership with staff, managers and children and young people it is hoped the Strategy will:

- Establish a shared understanding of what participation and engagement means.
- Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in existing structures/ processes within Children's Services in Bedford Borough.
- Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Children's Services.
- Establish methods to evidence how the voice of children and young people have been listened to, respected and acted upon.

A two tiered piece of work to support the engagement of children and young people throughout their time on a Child Protection Plan is taking place to support children and young people to share their views and opinions via consultation and team building activities. To support this work will take place with staff to embed an engaging culture for children and young people.

There has been a relaunch of tea with a twist for social workers on a fortnightly basis where the sessions will be themed to introduce tools and methods for direct work with children and young people, build confidence, discuss tricky cases and develop new ways of working. Team champions are nominated representatives from Children Service's teams to lead on 'voice of the child'. The team champions will be the link between Engagement and Development Team and their teams; sharing practise, developing policy and practise and considering legislation and guidance. A training package is being created to support staff to understand participation and why it is important, alongside the benefits of positive engagement and methods of effective direct working with children and young people.

Serious Case Reviews

"The Board is rigorous in ensuring that lessons are identified and learned from SCRs. Healthy debate is evident and learning reviews are used to good effect when a case does not meet the SCR criteria. Practitioner briefings are produced following reviews and two have been published in the last 12 months providing comprehensive coverage of learning points and offer links to further support and training opportunities. The LSCB training programme includes termly half-day briefings, which draw on learning from both local, national SCRs and audit activity. Social workers spoken to are aware of the key messages from SCRs and thematic reviews. Inspectors saw how this learning had influenced the social work approach to assessment and case planning. All improvement plans following a SCR need to evidence impact before sign-off and are reviewed at six and 12 months. Governance of these plans sits with the Executive Group of the Board to ensure robust review, and, if the group is not satisfied with progress, escalation of challenge is swift. (Ofsted April 2017)

BBSCB is required to consider whether to initiate a Serious Case Review (SCR) when a child/young person dies (including death by suspected suicide) or is seriously injured, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor. The main purpose of an SCR is to learn lessons to improve the way in which agencies and professionals work both individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

There has been significant amount of work through our SCR activity this year with two new SCRs being commissioned, Sama SCR published in April 2017 and the Adam SCR signed off by the Board and publication on hold due to ongoing criminal proceedings. The Board also commissioned a Learning Review for Malika and Rosza and following consultation with these 2 children the full Learning Review report will not be published however the learning from the Review will be published. The reviews we have conducted have utilised a range of methodologies and provided valuable learning. Partners are reporting evidence of impact and improvement.

Though it must be acknowledged that the increased SCR and other audit activity across all the three LSCBs in Bedfordshire has put partners under pressure to resource them. The learning from the following SCRs will be used to inform safeguarding practice in Bedford Borough:

- Sama SCR
- Malika and Rosza Learning Review
- Adam SCR

The improvement plans from these SCRs and Learning Review will be monitored via the Executive Group and reported back on a quarterly basis to the Strategic Board.

The full reports can be accessed when published via www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/children_young_people/safeguarding_children_board/serious_case_reviews.aspx.

Performance and Audit Group

"There is an established multi-agency audit programme. Findings from audits are disseminated effectively to subgroups to inform work plans. Multi-agency audits link with LSCB priorities and are informed effectively by learning and issues arising from other subgroups. All key partners contribute to audit, despite capacity issues. To ease the burden on partners who service all three LSCBs in Bedfordshire, there is some coordination of audit and shared learning. Single agency audits complement the programme of multi-agency audits and link to performance information and findings from learning and serious case reviews. Findings from audits feed into the Executive Group of the Board that identifies themes and ensures that learning is disseminated to the other subgroups to inform their work plans. Action plans arising from multi-agency audits are not currently monitored.

All key partners contribute to, and provide quarterly commentary on, a comprehensive dataset. There is evidence that this has led to improvements in practice. For example, the decision made, in response to increased incidence of self-harm presentations, to locate a CAMHS worker in the local accident and emergency department is ensuring quicker access to children's mental health support. Through its multi-agency performance dataset, the LSCB monitors the incidence of children going missing from home or care, return home interviews with children and numbers of children missing from education".

(Ofsted April 2017)

The remit of the Performance & Audit Group (PAG) is to ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people is the second of the BBSCBs core functions. Measuring effectiveness across the whole safeguarding agenda is very complex and contains a whole range of performance information. The BBSCB Learning and Improvement Framework promote a culture of continuous improvement across the partnership. The BBSCB uses a range of sources to assess the performance and quality of safeguarding work with collation and analysis undertaken through regular highlight reports.

The focus has continued to be on strengthening the governance arrangements to enable the Board to properly scrutinise the work of the partnership and ensure that, when it comes to performance and quality, there is sufficient transparency across the partnership so that priorities and risks can be identified and addressed. The PAG comprises of key agencies across the partnership and its role is to promote high standards of safeguarding work; foster a culture of continuous improvement and ultimately to provide assurance to the BBSCB.

PAG has continued to develop the performance dataset and highlight reports which provide an opportunity for the Board to ask the pertinent questions in relation to how performance is being managed and the key targets the partnership needs to achieve. This includes developing an understanding of the cohorts of children and families we are working with, who are we trying to safeguard, measuring the quality of the services we provide, the difference we have made and what 'good' looks like.

PAG has moved the focus on from just providing single agency data to providing a performance report that covers the partnership as a whole and addressing themes within the Business Plan. Challenging and driving service improvement whilst providing meaningful analysis and tracking progress are essential, it is just one part of effective performance management. For example the PAG scrutinise underlying reasons for re-referrals to establish key patterns and testing the arrangements for identifying children missing and children missing education. With this approach, the role of the PAG will be as much to identify emerging issues and possible future priorities, as well as dealing with the immediate work programme. PAG provides regular reports back to the Board with the analysis of the multi-agency data to support the discussion in relation to the theme of the Board meeting.



PAG undertook a multi-agency CSE and DA audit to identify areas of good practice; areas for development or areas of concern in relation to the way in which agencies are working together to help keep children safe. Learning and actions following this audit have been addressed by the PAG and shared with the Board.

To assure the Board that members are monitoring their own safeguarding practice effectively single agency audits were presented to provide independent scrutiny of targets and performance. Audits presented to the PAG identify performance areas which might be of concern to the Board, together with actions being taken by the agencies. We have received the following reports from partner agencies;

- Bedford Borough Council Children Services - voice of fathers.
- ELFT - Referrals to Children's Social Care from Bedfordshire & Luton Mental Health & Wellbeing Services.
- SEPT - Re-audit of compliance with Child Protection Medical Pathway - referral documentation and reporting processes.
- SEPT - Management of children and young people who miss their clinical appointments.
- Bedford Borough Council Children Services - Children subject to Child Protection Plans 18 Months +.
- A programme of single agency audits has been agreed for 2017 – 2018.

Practice and Procedures

"A significant amount of work has been completed by the Pan Bedfordshire procedures and practice group, chaired by the assistant director (chief social worker) in Bedford Borough, to ensure that there are effective procedures in place. Gap analysis has informed its work plan, and the ambition is to have one set of Pan Bedfordshire procedures. Each agency has a single point of contact to cascade Board messages and learning. Individual agencies are responsible for ensuring that their frontline staff are up to date with key LSCB messages and know how to access policies, guidance and training. The Board satisfies itself that this is happening through the frontline practitioners' group, asking the 'Have you heard...?' question. Inspectors found that social workers were aware of these important messages and know how to access policies and procedures through the LSCB". (Ofsted April 2017)

The Pan Bedfordshire Practice and Procedures Group is responsible for keeping these procedures up to date. Following some work to analyse the use of the procedures it transpired that practitioners are not utilising the procedures as much as they should be. The BBSCB has therefore promoted the procedures and advised practitioners they should add the link into work related technology. Practitioners should register for updates and then they will be automatically updated on any future child protection procedural changes and any new national or local guidance.

In the last year 17 documents were either revised or developed please see the Pan Bedfordshire Interagency Child Protection Procedures for full details <http://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

Section 11 2016 – 2017

“Agencies value the scrutiny provided by the Board through the Pan Bedfordshire Section 11 audit processes. The use of multi-agency challenge events ensures dynamic discussions and rigorous overview of individual agencies’ self-assessments, informing the multi-agency action plan monitored by the Board.” (Ofsted April 2017)

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions and any services that they contract out to others are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. A key task of the BBSCB is to monitor and evaluate what is done by BBSCB partner agencies individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Where necessary the BBSCB will advise partner agencies on ways to improve.

The BBSCB began an audit of partner agencies in September 2015, all agencies presented their self-assessments to Panels made up of Pan Bedfordshire LSCB members in June 2016 following the completion of their self-assessments against the eight standards. Following this a multi-agency improvement plan was developed and agencies will report back on their action plans in October 2017.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

“There is an effective Child Death Overview Panel, which covers all three LSCB areas in Bedfordshire. Referrals to the Serious Incident Review Group are timely, and outcomes and learning from serious case or learning reviews are shared across both groups. The annual report provides an overview and includes Bedford Borough specific information, but the analysis is underdeveloped, and information on the previous five years’ data is limited. There is some analysis of modifiable factors, but this would be strengthened by ensuring that patterns and trends are identified locally. Work carried out by the group in response to concerns regarding safe sleeping has led to increased awareness and consistent advice being given across partners”. (Ofsted April 2017)

The Child Death Overview Panel work continues to be co-coordinated by the CDOP Manager. The post is jointly funded by Health and Local Authority commissioners, and is hosted by BCCG. The CDOP function provides a clear interface between the work of health to review neonatal deaths, understanding of medical issues and improving the Public Health focus of the CDOP work. CDOP continues to report to the LSCB and links with the other subgroups to ensure that safeguarding issues are fully addressed and learning achieved to prevent future deaths. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is required by the statutory guidelines to review how and why children/young people in Bedford Borough die and to ensure that agencies learn from these deaths, where it is appropriate that lessons be learned.

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) reviews specified child deaths, drawing on comprehensive information from all agencies on the circumstances of each child’s death. Particular consideration is given to the review of sudden unexpected deaths in infancy and childhood; accidental deaths; deaths related to maltreatment; suicides and deaths from natural causes where there are lessons to be learnt.

From April 2016 to 31st March 2017, Bedfordshire CDOP received referrals relating to 12 child deaths in Bedford Borough; of these, 3 were unexpected deaths but not suspicious. None of these deaths met the thresholds for referral for consideration for a Serious Case Review.

Bedfordshire CDOP also informed the Public Health/Police agenda on the dangers of drivers using mobile telephones when driving and has continued working with Maternity Services to ensure that messages surrounding smoking in pregnancy and maternal health continue to be promoted. Pan Bedfordshire CDOP produces both a regular information sheet and an annual report which is disseminated widely across the partnership and can be accessed on the LSCB website.

Engaging with Frontline Practitioners

There is a clear line of sight from the strategic Board to frontline practice. Particular strengths are the introduction of a frontline practitioners’ group and a proactive, visible chair who engages directly with frontline staff to assure herself of practice and to fully understand any barriers to improvement. The Board’s system of assurance monitors and evaluates frontline practice effectively. Frontline professionals have access to a range of single-agency and multi-agency safeguarding training, which enhances their skills, knowledge and confidence. The detailed approach to training evaluation and quality assurance evidences the Board’s continual efforts to improve course content and relevance”. (Ofsted April 2017)

We have made improvements in engaging with frontline practitioners through a core group of frontline practitioners from voluntary and statutory agencies. The meetings give members the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their own and multi-agency experiences of working in Bedford Borough but also find out more about local safeguarding issues/practices and current initiatives across Bedford Borough. Frontline workers are encouraged to suggest ways in which improvements can be made to support them in delivering high-quality services for children, young people and their families. At each meeting there is an update on the work of the BBSCB. Some of the topics covered at the meetings in the last year included the implications of SCRs, audits, information sharing, mental health and Early Help services, CSE and FGM.



Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service



Children and young people in the criminal justice system

are far more likely to experience mental health problems than their peers

Department of Health (2014)

Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service (BYOS) is a multi-agency service covering the boroughs of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. It has staff from the key statutory partners: Police; Health; Probation and the Local Authority as defined by

legislation. The governance of the Service is through the Chief Officer's Management Board, the membership of which reflects both statutory partners and others appropriate to the oversight and monitoring of work with children known to the criminal justice system. The BYOS has working relationships and liaison with relevant strategic and operational boards within the Boroughs including those in relation to CSE; Missing; Channel and Prevent; Local Safeguarding and Community Safety and the Local Criminal Justice Board.

BYOS works with children, young people and their families as well as the victims of those children and young people known to the criminal justice system. There is a range of interventions from early Prevention; Diversion programme; out of court disposals and court orders including the management of children and young people on remand within custody. A Domestic Abuse Champion has been identified and trained within BYOS. Many of the children and young people the BYOS works with are already known to Children's Services through Early Help, being Child in Need, subject to a Child Protection Plan or Looked after (LAC). The following are the BYOS achievements over the last year;

- Development of Triage approach within Police custody aimed to impact on outcomes to detention and increasingly focused on length of time in detention.
- Stronger links developed with Early Help.
- Restorative Justice interventions with young victims.
- BYOS work with strategic oversight and delivery in relation to CSE and Missing.
- Work with parents and carers including parenting group work.
- Strengthening the role of the seconded Police officer in the way that intelligence and information is fed back and also in to BYOS.
- Daily briefing in BYOS which has focus on children and young people in custody and missing.
- Ensuring the BYOS is a service which has an equal emphasis on safeguarding and public protection.
- BYOS - Clear information sharing and input in to MASH.

Feedback from parents at 2 recent Child in Need meetings:

"The (parenting) support received from BYOS has been the most helpful and consistent".

"We have been implementing the strategies at home with our son and although life isn't perfect things have improved at home".

Fortnightly Risk and Safeguarding Panel meetings are held to monitor and review all high risk cases of harm and vulnerability (re safety and well-being concerns); this involves partners outside of BYOS as well as the multi-agency approach within the Service.

As part of its work with children, young people and their families BYOS delivers accredited parenting programmes to the parent/carers of the young people known to the Service. Research indicates that families of children where there are difficulties are often resistant to engage with

services (Forrester et al 2012). As a result practitioners in the BYOS have to think outside the box in order to work creatively and effectively with parents and carers who have often experienced discrimination, oppression and disadvantage.

The Parenting Programme used is a comprehensive evidence-based parenting programme for use when working with groups of parents of 10-18 year-olds, and especially with parents of at-risk or vulnerable young people. The Programme has been independently positively evaluated and is validated on the Government's Commissioning Toolkit. Recent programmes have been run with attendance from both male and female parents/carers including some foster carers.

Individual partners have reported the following priorities and challenges for them in 2016 – 2017;

For most partners the increase in work, reduced resources, training requirements, recognition and identification of concerns in expanding categories of abuse and vulnerabilities impacts on their capacity significantly.

For Bedfordshire Police their main challenge has been in relation to negative HMIC reports concerning their ability to protect Missing LAC. As a response they hold regular Missing Gold Groups chaired by the ACC, have monthly audits, adopted new national guidance, provided enhanced training to Control Room staff and put in place a rigorous management review process. These changes have all contributed to improved consistency when assessing risk and conducting the initial response. HMIC have since re-visited (April 2017) and following an audit of 16 additional cases were cautiously optimistic significant improvements were starting to improve frontline service delivery.

BYOS report challenges in respect of the detention of children in Police custody overnight post charge where there should be a transfer in to other accommodation. There has been progress and there is a willingness to find solutions. The partnership response to and the critical role of BYOS regarding identified issues of serious youth violence and 'gang'/group risk activity and offending is an area where there appears to be an increase in concern linked also to issues of County Lines (drug-dealing); CSE and Missing. There remains a challenge about how BYOS and Children's Services work well in ensuring joint decision making with custodial establishments whilst Bedford children are in them.

Engaging smaller voluntary organisations and community groups to become members of VOCypf, attend voluntary sector forums and LSCB training and events, may prove to be a challenge.

For Bedford Hospital NHS Trust the Pan-Bedfordshire CSE Risk Assessment Tool remains a key challenge given the way in which it needs to be completed. It is recognised that areas like A&E, Paediatrics have a high turnover of children and young people through their services and staff have a very short period of contact making a lengthy tool very difficult to complete. This has been considered and discussed widely across partner agencies and prompts has been agreed to ensure that staff consider the CSE risk and they are sign posted to the tool.

EPUT see information sharing within the health economy as continuing to present a challenge as local electronic client record systems do not support timely information sharing. Work is currently being undertaken to review a common flagging system in Primary and Community Care, and will continue to work with General Practice to facilitate improved sharing of client records. EPUT support of health professional in MASH, health commissioners have now agreed to formalise the

health professional position in MASH as part of on-going contractual arrangements. However, due to the large increase in demand the capacity of the funded provision is under review in order to provide sustainability of this provision.

Publication of the Director of Public Health report on Children which very extensively outlines where they are doing well and where they need to improve compared to the best performing Local Authorities. The report clearly outlines specific calls to action and can be accessed via www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/bedford_borough_jsna.aspx

Challenges and Priorities for BBSCB for 2016 – 2017

BBSCB has made significant progress over the last year and continues to hold partner agencies to account and provide constructive challenge and scrutiny of the multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children and families. However, there is still much to do and as the increase in demand for services continues to rise, it puts additional strain on already stretched agencies; I am concerned that we may inadvertently put children and young people at risk by a lack of capacity to respond early enough, and recruit and sustain a stable and supported children's workforce.

I am grateful for partner agencies continued commitment to the BBSCB at such difficult times. The changes in legislation as a result of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 could potentially weaken the multi-agency arrangements to safeguarding children and young people as the requirement to have an LSCB is abolished. Over the next year new government guidance will outline the changes in more detail but I am committed to championing the need for robust and accountable safeguarding partnerships to ensure that whatever changes, the safeguarding of children and young people in Bedford Borough continues to remain the priority.

The BBSCB has continued to develop multi-agency arrangements in order to improve the safeguarding of children and young people in Bedford Borough over the last twelve months. The BBSCB continues to collaborate with both Central Bedfordshire and Luton LSCBs on a number of different issues already highlighted in their report and will develop opportunities to work collaboratively with the Safeguarding Adults Board and other partnerships in the next year.

Now that Early Help & MASH arrangements have become embedded, the BBSCB needs to build an improved understanding of the effectiveness of Early Help and interventions. To be assured that the provision of Early Help is being delivered in a timely way and that the BBSCB and partners can evidence the difference for children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, in making sure they receive the help they need before things escalate to child protection.

There continues to be further work to be done to improve information sharing regarding our vulnerable children, young people and families. This is a consistent theme within SCRs and inspections. The Information Sharing Protocol is being revised in line with the new CSE Information Sharing protocol.

The BBSCB has to strengthen children's engagement and participation in the work of the Board and member agencies. The board has agreed to make this an integral feature across the work programme. Discussions need to be had with our neighbouring LSCBs in regards to creating a Pan Bedfordshire Children's Engagement and Participation Group to promote children's influence on the work of the Boards.

Our Business Priorities will remain the same but outlined below are some of the key challenges we want to address:

- Understanding more about the quality of the response to children and young people with emotional and mental health issues.
- The partnership response to and the critical role of the BYOS regarding identified issues of serious youth violence and 'gang' /group risk activity and offending. This is an area where there appears to be an increase in concern linked also to issues of County Lines (drug-dealing); CSE and Missing.
- Ensuring that no child under the age of 18 is detained overnight in Police custody post charge.
- The safety and well-being of children and young people in custody within the Criminal Justice Secure Estate. Children and young people from Bedford may be placed far from home in an institution as well as with a population that are highly vulnerable. There remains a challenge about how BYOS and Children's Services work well in ensuring joint decision making with custodial establishments whilst Bedford children are in them.
- A continued improvement to partner's response to Missing children and the number of return interviews carried out once they return home.
- Obtaining evidence that learning and improvement is being embedded in frontline practice.
- Enabling change and being assured that lessons are being learnt from SCRs, reviews and audits and that practice and outcomes are improving as a result.
- Empower children and young people to recognise abuse, feel confident to report concerns.
- Build a culture where by the daily lived experiences of children and young people are clear in all assessments.



An estimated
2,220 children
in Bedford Borough aged 5-16 years
have a mental health disorder and
1,130 of 16-19 year olds



Appendix 1: Glossary

A&E	- Accident & Emergency
ACC	- Assistant Chief Constable
ACE	- Adverse Childhood Experiences
AD	- Assistant Director
BBC	- Bedford Borough Council
BBSCB	- Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board
BCCG	- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
BDAP	- Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
BeNCH	- The Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire Community Rehabilitation Company Limited
BME	- Black Minority Ethnic
BYOS	- Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service
CAFCASS	- Children/Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS	- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDOP	- Child Death Overview Panel
CIN	- Child in Need
CMIT	- CSE and Missing Investigation Team
CP	- Child Protection
CSE	- Child Sexual Exploitation
CSEG	- Child Sexual Exploitation Group
CSP	- Community Safety Partnership
CWD	- Children with disabilities
DA	- Domestic Abuse
DfE	- Department for Education
EHA	- Early Help Assessment
ELFT	- East London Foundation Trust

EPUT	- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
FGM	- Female Genital Mutilation
FNP	- Family Nurse Partnership
GCP2	- Graded Care Profile
GP	- General Practitioner
HBA	- Honour Based Abuse
HMIC	- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
ICPC	- Initial Child Protection Conference
JEM	- Joint Evaluation Meeting
JSNA	- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LAC	- Looked After Child / Children
LADO	- Local Authority Designated Officer
LSOA	- Lower Super Output Areas
LSCB	- Local Safeguarding Children Board
MASH	- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MARAC	- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MCYPP	- Missing Children and Young People Panel
NHS	- National Health Service
NSPCC	- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OFSTED	- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAG	- Performance & Audit Group
PCC	- Police Crime Commissioner
PEP	- Personal Education Plan
SCR	- Serious Case Review
SEND	- Special Educational Needs and Disability
SEPT	- South Essex Partnership Trust
VOCypf	- Voluntary Organisations for Children, young people & family

Appendix 2: Strategic Board attendance

Agency	Meeting dates						Total Attendance		
	19 th May 2016	14 th July 2016	15 th Sept 2016	17 th Nov 2016	24 th Jan 2017	28 th March 2017	Total number of meetings held	Number attended	%
BBSCB - Independent Chair	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
BBSCB - Business Manager	1	1	1	1	0	1	6	5	83%
BBC – Assistant Director Education	1	1	1	0	1	0	6	4	67%
BBC - Assistant Director for Children’s and Young People’s safeguarding	1	0	1	1	0	1	6	4	67%
BBC - Portfolio Holder for Children’s Social Care	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
BBC - Director for Children and Adult Services	1	1	1	1	0	0	6	4	67%
BBC - BYOS	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	1	4	2	50%
BBC - Public Health	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
BBC - Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	0	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	83%
BBC - Head Of Early Help & Intervention, Early Help	n/a	n/a	1	1	0	0	4	2	50%
Bedfordshire CCG	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
BeNCH	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	1	17%
Bedford College	0	1	0	1	0	0	6	2	33%
Bedfordshire Police	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
Bedford Hospital	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
CAFCASS	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	1	17%
East London NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	0	1	1	1	6	5	83%
Lay Members	1	0	0	1	1	1	6	4	67%
Probation	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0%
Representing schools	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
EPUT (was SEPT)	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%
Voluntary Organisations for Children, young people & families	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100%

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

Finding out more

This report is available online on the BBSCB website at

 www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB

Copies can also be requested by emailing the BBSCB Business Support team at

 LSCB@bedford.gov.uk

or send a letter to

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