

# Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board

Annual Report 2020 – 2021



Bedford Borough  
Safeguarding Children Board

[www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB)

## Contents

<b>Safeguarding Partners' Impact &amp; Reflections</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Governance Arrangements</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Snapshot of Bedford Borough 2020 - 2021</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Voice and Lived Experience of Children</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Responding to COVID</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Multi-Agency Achievements 2020 - 2021</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>BBSCB Priorities</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Multi Agency Training</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Engaging with the Voluntary Sector</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Scrutiny of the Bedford Borough Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Looking ahead and our challenges for 2020 – 2021</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix A – Finances 2020 - 2021</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Appendix B - Glossary</b>	<b>63</b>

## Safeguarding Partners' Impact & Reflections

### Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group

The past year has without precedent, been challenging for both BLMK CCG and Safeguarding Partners, in terms of scale and volume of challenges for the safeguarding system, due to the COVID -19 pandemic. During the current Coronavirus COVID -19 outbreak, BLMK CCG, as the commissioner of local health services, has continued to work hard, to maintain business continuity and has remained committed to safeguarding children and young people in Bedford Borough. Over the last 12 months the safeguarding landscape, has continued to be complex, presenting many new challenges, in addition to those faced day-to-day. We have as clinical health commissioners however continued to work collaboratively with partners across Bedford and pan Bedfordshire with a committed focus on ensuring lessons are learned and embedded in future health care practice. We recognise the on-going learning, development and improvements required in areas such as; Graded care profiles (neglect), contextual safeguarding, non-accidental injuries in small children and broader whole system issues such as criminal exploitation of young people. The National Health economy is currently undergoing significant change, as CCGs are stood down, in April 2022, and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), Care alliances and Integrated Care Boards are implemented. This development should further enhance the established partnership working at 'Place' including our Local Authority and Police colleagues, firmly embedding and shaping care delivery for our local collective populations, their health and associated outcomes.



Anne Murray, Chief Nurse BLMK CCG

### Bedfordshire Police

Policing has experienced huge challenges over the last twelve months and we are grateful for the excellent relationship we hold with our partners, which has seen us collectively tackle the coronavirus pandemic. That said, policing has been under the microscope for the behaviour of officers, the culture within policing and the policing response to matters such as 'Violence Against Women and Girls', again matters that we cannot address by ourselves and we will continue to build upon the support provided through existing partnership arrangements. Crime in general saw a reduction during the toughest times under social restrictions, but as these eased so has crime started to increase again, gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. What has been at the forefront of policing has been our commitment to keeping the most vulnerable safe and by default, this includes children – all children. We revised our approach to recognising, identifying and responding to all types of vulnerability, educating our officers to have a keen eye on hidden harm and not just seeing traditional neglect, but having a real focus on a child being able to thrive.



Sharn Basra, Assistant Chief Constable

### Bedford Borough Council Children's Services

This has been a hugely challenging year for all Local Authority Children's Services and Bedford Borough is no exception. Traditional child safeguarding issues have been compounded in complexity by Covid, isolation and financial hardship for many. The Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board has managed to maintain a clear focus on children, their well-being and how the partnership can continue to improve outcomes for those children and their families that need extra support or protection. There has been a sustained focus on safeguarding very young children and babies as we have all become increasingly aware throughout the pandemic that these children are at particular risk. The partnership has also worked hard to build relationships with children and families that have been at risk of falling out of sight to services as access to universal services reduced at times in response to Covid. Not only have we seen an increase in demand for support for families it has become clear that the complexity of need has also increased over the year for some of our most vulnerable children. Together our partnership has worked tirelessly together to support children and families in need in order to prevent harm from happening and to protect children where necessary. We have spent a lot of time this year hearing directly from children about their experiences of life with Covid in schools, at home and from those who experience our safeguarding and looked after services. Listening to the voice and lived experience of children is central to all of our work and plans for the future. Making sure that they have a meaningful say in the services that they receive and directly influence their own plans to meet their ambitions is an ongoing focus for the whole partnership.



Martin Purbrick, Director of Children Services,  
Bedford Borough Council

## Introduction

**This is the second annual report of the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). Our vision and ambition is to keep Children, young people and families central to everything we do now and in the future. In order to achieve this the BBSCB has reviewed their existing objectives and throughout this report there are examples of work and good practice in the last 12 months to demonstrate how the partnership addressed the priorities agreed by the Board.**

**A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout this report.**

## Governance Arrangements

The Board's core objective are to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting children in Bedford Borough who might be or are at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious safeguarding incidents are identified and implemented.

BBSCB has continued to work collaboratively with our neighbouring Safeguarding Children Boards in Central Bedfordshire and Luton to ensure there is a more joined up approach to safeguarding. This is particularly important where agencies deliver services across, and are represented on a number of the Boards. In agreeing a common approach and response to specific safeguarding and child protection issues such as child exploitation, neglect for example Pan Bedfordshire groups are operating across the three Boards.

The BBSCB Strategic Plan was agreed initially in September 2019 and revised annually 2020 and the Strategic Board will focus on the areas of the Strategic Plan via themed Board meetings. This year the meetings have focussed on Emotional Wellbeing/Mental Health, Neglect Safeguarding in Education and due to COVID regular reviews of pressures in the safeguarding system as well as a review of the MASA

The Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services Group has membership from each of the Safeguarding Partners from across the Pan Bedfordshire footprint and are responsible for agreeing Pan Bedfordshire priorities and joint areas of focus.

BBSCB works with other partnership boards including the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

More details about the BBSCB can be found on our [website](#).

### Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board Strategic Plan 2020 - 2021

BBSCB has agreed the following themes to direct its work for 2020 – 2021:

#### Safeguarding children and young people . . . .



Some of these will be jointly across pan Bedfordshire and one area will focus on a place-based approach in a specific area of Bedford Borough.

#### Golden threads throughout this plan

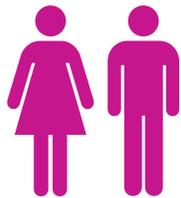


To fulfil the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board's core functions the following will be presented/developed/commissioned.



## Bedford Borough Safeguarding Snapshot 2020 – 2021

Here is a snapshot of safeguarding data that has been provided to the BBSCB over the last year.



**41,173** children under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough

**23.6%** of the total population

**13%** of children and young people are living in poverty



**143** children and young people were subject to Child Protection Plans as of March 2018



**1,306** Early Help Assessments undertaken and **1,605** Single Assessments completed



**100** different ethnic groups live in Bedford Borough



**18%** of children in primary schools are in receipt of free school meals

**16%** of children in secondary schools are in receipt of free school meals



**428** child protection investigations were undertaken



**28%** of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language

**22%** of children in secondary schools speak English as an additional language



**12,758** contacts were made to MASH and **1,777** referrals were made to the Integrated Front Door



**183** Initial Child Protection Conferences were held



**860** open Children in Need cases

Approximately 41,173 children under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough this is 23.6% of the total population. Of those children aged under 16, 4,807 are living in a low income family. Bedford Borough is a relatively prosperous and fast-growing borough, but with areas of significant deprivation. Children from minority ethnic groups account for 29% of all children living in the area, compared to 21% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups of children in the area are Asian or Asian British and Mixed. At 31st August 2021;

860 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist Children's Service. This is a 5% increase from 822 at 31 August 2020.

143 children were the subject of a child protection plan. This is a 7% increase from 134 at 31 August 2021.

264 children were being looked after by the Local Authority, this is a 6% decrease from 280 at 31 August 2020.

Of this number, 135 live outside the Local Authority area.

23 children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

16 live in residential children's homes, of whom 81% live out of the authority area.

Children's Services report that despite high numbers of contacts at the front door, including Sept 2020 seeing highest number for 2 years, assessments completed to time remain very high (94.6% in March 21). Numbers of repeat referrals since the implementation of the Integrated Front Door (IFD) has fallen from 13.2% to 10.8%. There is strong performance data in relation to Child Protection work with conferences to timescale averages over 90%. Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) where a child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) are over 94%. Child Protection (CP) visits by social work teams are consistently over 90%. Revision of the Corporate Parenting Panel have given a more active role to those children looked after and Care leavers. 71% of children cared for by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) live in the borough or a neighbouring Local Authority. Care Leavers strategy and Local Offer revised to help drive forward improvements for children looked after. Care leavers housing protocol agreed with those children being supported to move into their own tenancies. 94.2% of children looked after by the Local Authority were attending a 'good' or 'outstanding' school (March 21). 68.6% of children waiting less than 14 months from entering care to being adopted compared with England average of 56%

## Voice and Lived Experience of Children

BBSCB remains committed to championing the voice of the child and its importance and have embedded this as a central component of all its work. It is recognised that the partnership not only listens to children but also understands their lived experience, the impact of this on their daily lives and how this is evidenced through child centred planning and improved safeguarding. All multi agency training and webinars delivered provide focus on the importance of the voice of the child and recognition of their lived experience as critical to the actions of all agencies involved in assessment, planning, and delivery for children.

Children's Services Engagement and Development team do some fantastic work with children from across Bedford Borough and here are some examples of their creative work during COVID where things often needed to be delivered differently and what Bedford Borough children have said.

- The Youth Cabinet (which includes Looked after Children) supported Bedfordshire Police in the creation of a Child Exploitation Toolkit for workers and production of an inspiring artwork (see page 21) that will be used in the training of workers.
- Care Leavers were involved in the design and creation of the Local Offer for Care Leavers; turning a 37 page document into 10 bite-size postcards which can be given to children.
- Members of the CiCC (Children in Care Council) took part in a pen pal scheme with residents of care homes for the elderly. The children exchanged letters, built relationships and tried to keep the spirits of the residents up during an extremely challenging lockdown.
- At the beginning of lockdown generally children were happy with any practitioner using virtual video calls as a way to communicate. For the majority of children on a plan they felt able to have a private conversation with their worker as needed.

- Some children felt that they are asked too many questions and sometimes this may stop them from openly talking about how they are feeling. They also feel that workers need to slow down when they are talking so this gives them the chance to understand the information and to have time to process it and ask questions if they have any.
- *Some children with SEND get their voice heard through annual reviews and Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) meetings 'they speak to me not just mum, my voice is most important'.*
- Youth Cabinet would like to see more child friendly information about support people can receive in regards to domestic abuse/child line and mental health.
- Children want more awareness in schools around all areas of SEND.

East London Foundation Trust's (ELFT) patient participation group (10 children aged 14-17) sought service user's perspective of safeguarding issues, what they view as risks to their wellbeing and how ELFT staff can help to keep them safe. Some of the themes that arose included those around *Confidentiality and consent* - an understanding of when confidentiality had to be overridden and wanting to be informed before this happened.

*Contextual safeguarding* - Identification of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and county line activity, what consent in relationships should look like and able to identify what to do if exposed to online grooming or online abuse.

*Safeguarding adults' issues* - interestingly none of the children could identify where they would seek help, if they are worried about an adult suffering harm. When explored further there appeared to be a fear of sharing secrets within family, being disloyal to family members and implications of asking for help. In addition families often access ELFT's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and compliments service

sharing their thoughts on recent experiences, both positive and areas for development – this is shared across the service by means of “You Said, We did” boards - one example of this is the implementation of their service video to show children around the clinic in advance of their appointment to ensure they and their families felt safe and comfortable with the clinic given the COVID requirements in place. ELFT have gathered feedback from children and families on their experience of their services throughout COVID and the new ways of working, all of which was positive.

A process has been launched to seek feedback from children around how their criminal investigation has been handled by officers from within the Public Protection. A specially designed postcard is given to the child at the commencement of the investigation and at the end of the investigation to get own words or pictures of any feedback to the police, this can be returned on a postcard or bespoke email address to our Victim Engagement Officers. Feedback is analysed for patterns and trends and early indication shows young children are sending brightly coloured pictures back of flowers and smiley faces, whereby the older children are more accustomed to email and we are getting very detailed feedback that centres around the support that we are providing. (This incentive is going to be picked up and ran by Herts, Kent and Cambridgeshire Police and an evaluation will be undertaken around the process and feedback in 12 months). This is a fantastic way to get the real voice of the victim.

Children’s services involve children in the development of the plans for them and about them. They have used some project work such as ‘welcome to my world’ in the Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service (BYOS). As part of their deep dive on children who have been permanently excluded from school they used feedback from those children, please see page 16 for their report. Children’s services have continued to embed Relational approach and Systemic Model of Social Work in their workforce ad practice. They have focussed on empowering and supporting to



change/reduce risk rather than removing children from their families and communities. Children have told Children's Services that they don't want too many practitioners involved in their lives. For their Practice Week on Voice of the Child in the summer 2021 there was a continued emphasis on hearing, understanding and analysing the day to day lived experience of children

The Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child group (VOC) has continued this year to build on and support children's voices and lived experiences being heard in a timely, effective and appropriate manner. The Voice of the Child group has allowed partners to look at the quality of information available for children and to increase the availability of child friendly information. There has been a focus on Child Friendly Complaints processes and Advocacy following the Section 11 feedback in 2019 - 2020. This resulted in Pan Bedfordshire Advice and Guidance for when Children Raise an Issue and Pan Bedfordshire Advocacy Guidance and Key Principles being developed. (need to add links when uploaded on to the procedures 22.11.21).

The group have mapped multi-agency established groups of children so that we can ensure that there is a spread of children's voices being shared and heard.

Discussion has started to scope how we can incorporate the voice of children to drive and influence the work of the Boards. This resulted in researching models being used around the country and a presentation from Telford and Wrekin in regards to their experience and the development of Safeguarding Children Boards in Schools, a report will be presented to the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children's Services Group in November 2021 with options to take forward Pan Bedfordshire model. The group's membership now includes the voice of 2 young people. A Task and Finish Group are working towards holding a face to face conference with children subject to COVID restrictions.

BYOS shared a piece of work they are doing titled "Welcome to My World" which involves getting together with children and focus on world issues which affect them. This piece of work is done online via Zoom without cameras so each member is anonymous. It was noted that the children involved have engaged well and a number of topics were discussed.

Some agencies have reported that practice is improving and focussing more on the need for children to have a voice and share their lived experiences. This has empowered the children's workforce to challenge other practitioners when it is missing and this can only have a positive impact for children.



## Response to COVID

The Boards priorities were set before the COVID pandemic and the associated safeguarding activities remained in place throughout the pandemic. The work of the Board and its sub-groups continued as expected with the acknowledgement that inevitably the pandemic will have impacted on children, families, communities as well as practitioners personally and professionally. How the pandemic will have impacted and effected children, families and practitioner's long term will not be known for a while. With this in mind any work streams we undertake take account of this and build into future working practices as appropriate.

Partners have continued to work together and further develop new ways of working and systems to support vulnerable children in the last year. A few examples of what has been done to meet the challenges under COVID 19 are listed below:

Public Health have been at the absolute heart of the COVID response and therefore experienced first-hand the extreme pressure COVID has put on children, families and the services that support them. Public Health commission the following services 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing Service, Drug and Alcohol Services, Oral Health promotion, Stop Smoking Service and Healthy Weight Services. During COVID these services have adapted and had to move some services to online but always with a focus on face to face for the most.

The 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing Service have escalated formally the steep rise in safeguarding demand on their services. They have worked tirelessly to redesign their offer in partnership with other services in order to ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of everything they do.

Children have talked about and recognised that lockdown has had a big impact on young people's mental health and feel there should be more support/opportunities to help with this. The Youth Cabinet have shared that they would like to be more involved in the recovery of COVID and communications surrounding COVID.

Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) CCG developed online safeguarding training webinars for GPs. Multi-agency managers met weekly to review children and determine those who were their collective priorities and agreed multi-agency responses.

Bedford College has continued to support vulnerable learners during COVID for example those with Social Worker Involvement, Looked After Children, Leaving Care and previously home-schooled have been given targeted support to ensure that they were safeguarded. The Safeguarding Team maintained a presence on the campus throughout COVID and have also been contactable via Microsoft Teams to ensure that there was no break in service. Additional support and guidance was made available virtually for students and their parents/carers on external agencies should they require help or guidance on how to deal with anxieties etc. outside of College hours. Students continued to review pastoral support from their Personal Achievement Tutors on a regular basis. The College has benefitted well from local external agencies and relationships have been strengthened with these to offer additional support to our students if and when required. During the National Lockdowns, the College remained open to vulnerable students and many attended College. The Libraries remained open on a bookable system throughout the year to support those without IT at home.



## Case Study

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***In 2020 two children were being home educated due to their mother's concerns over friendship groups and COVID. Referral made to Children's services by their school due to concerns for their wellbeing. In 2019 Early Help had previously completed a GCP2 which highlighted health issues and the mother's lack of cooking skills and the involvement ended on a very positive note.***

***By early 2021 there were significant concerns for the attendance of the eldest child and the mother was interviewed and it became apparent that she was struggling to access health support for herself and all her children. The eldest child was not at school and no evidence appropriate education being given to the younger children. Mother declined Early Help again and refused to consider returning her children to school and the family were facing an eviction from their home. A team around the family including housing and Adult Disability Team made a further referral to Children's services.***

***A joint visit was made to the family who were moved to temporary accommodation, the eldest pupil was supported to attend school and a new school found for the younger two children. It was agreed the eldest child would attend their sibling's school, for the last two weeks of term to allow them to make friends and facilitate a good transition to secondary school. The robust team surrounding this family is still in place.***

BLMK CCG has continued to work hard, to maintain business continuity and remained committed to safeguarding children in Bedford Borough. Over the last 12 months the safeguarding landscape, has continued to be complex, presenting many new challenges, in addition to those faced day-to-day. BLMK CCG, has continued to work closely with all partners to scrutinise how safeguarding issues are addressed, gain reassurance that they are dealt with appropriately and provide a forum for sharing best practice across the partnership. It has also ensured that safeguarding children remains a key focus for health agencies across Bedford Borough.

This has included adaption of day to day work to include 'virtual' meetings. BLMK CCG worked with partners to ensure that safeguarding arrangements were as clear and effective as they could be. This included monitoring of Key Performance Indicators to include access, activity and performance levels in relation to children's services and response to health needs. At the height of COVID Managers met weekly to review children's circumstances, safeguarding concerns and determine which children were their collective priorities and agree multi-agency responses. The Designated Doctors and Nurses continued to take a Strategic Lead on safeguarding issues and have seen a rise in complex cases which they support.

ELFT has been able to deliver against its safeguarding yearly priorities and obligations despite COVID. CAMHS staff have developed various creative ways to engage children in services including face to face community visits to virtual/remote sessions to ensure contact is maintained at a pace and place that meet children's needs and preferences. Staff have adopted new ways of delivering therapy, moving away from the more traditional settings – *one good example of this is the virtual remote art therapy sessions where personal art therapy kits have been delivered to homes for children to undertake sessions at home. Positive feedback from children has been received regarding this newer way of working and has reduced our number of DNAs into sessions.*

ELFT reported that the impact of COVID on children is still an emerging picture and the current wave is having a big impact on school attendance. Disproportionate effect for vulnerable families and increased inequalities for children. Dramatic surge in mental health and wellbeing concerns especially for children with other conditions and vulnerabilities. A particular spike in eating disorders and an increase in the numbers of children who have needed intensive mental health care. Demand has also seen increases in the presentation of complexity, late presentation, and numbers requiring paediatric admission Regional capacity for children's mental health beds has been consistently exceeded in Bedford. Clinical Pathways have needed to divert resources to support children in different ways to militate against this. Daily Crisis calls, discharge planning at CCG/LA/Provider level. Successful in a number of bids for additional NHS funding that should have a real impact on their services offer over the coming months and years. Particular reference to Tier 4 provision in Bedford.

Wootton Academy revised their Safeguarding Policy to include a COVID addendum, published on website. All CP/CIN/Looked After Child (LAC)/EHCP students were offered an onsite provision place during lockdown and where these were not taken up, Social workers were liaised with and additional check-ins were put into place with the Trust Pastoral teams. Where circumstances changed e.g. a request was put in for a LAC child to attend onsite, this was facilitated within 24 hours. Home visits completed for vulnerable students who were not engaging in online learning and who had declined a place at our onsite provision. CAMHS have been supportive, sometimes difficult to contact due to their workflow however they are a visible service and work well with our young learners. Our School Link Worker, Marina Sanderson, has been fantastic.

For the Police Public Protection teams it has been business as usual during COVID, there were no changes to the high service they provide and continued to progress investigations. The only exceptions they implemented were if a victim or family did not want to be seen by officers at their home address or police station in full PPE, this was deferred until they felt safer.

Bedford Borough Council's response to COVID has seen increased investment in Children's Services including an increase in and the implementation of LiquidLogic in April 2021 which has been designed to support practice by reducing practitioner time spent inputting data and increasing practitioner time with children and families. The implementation of Liquid Logic drew 3 case management systems into one ensuring improved tracking of the child's journey.

Sharnbrook Academy staff alerted their Senior Leadership Team if pupils did not attend online lessons. Immediate phone calls and visits to the home were made. The food bank from school worked well and they linked with a local business who delivered daily breakfast boxes to 34 homes. The school library (which also included art materials, textbooks, exercise books, stationery) was moved to the staff car park for parents to take resources that would help with their stress levels and anxiety about home schooling. This also helped on getting families out of the home. Personal, regular phone calls were made to vulnerable families to ascertain their needs and resources were provided including electrical devices. Vulnerable pupils were offered places at school throughout lockdown so their outcomes and mental health remained strong. All of this aided communication and alerted them to early intervention if required.

Practice guidance has been continually updated in consultation with Public Health when there have been changes in government guidance. Children's Services have ensured that all staff have had access to

appropriate PPE to enable them to maintain face to face visits where there are safeguarding concerns. Staff well-being has been an even greater priority over that past year and they have held a staff-wellbeing week and encourage their staff to prioritise their mental and emotional well-being as well as their physical health.



## Multi- Agency Achievements in 2020 - 2021

- The Pan Bedfordshire approach to the Board's groups has added strength to a number of priorities for the partnership which can only have a positive impact on the lives of children and their families.
- Continued use and increase in the submission of the Multi-Agency Information Forms to the Police.
- Despite the ongoing challenges agencies have continued to deliver services and safeguarding has remained as a critical element of the work undertaken.
- Continued to make use of digital communications, which has been beneficial in terms of securing attendance at meetings and supporting information sharing
- Ensuring information sharing happens effectively and efficiently will be a continued area of focus as we move forward.
- BLMK CCG and ELFT were successful in receiving additional funding to develop more local services for Tier 4 Beds and for eating disorder services.
- Implementation in Bedford Borough of the Child Protection Information Sharing (CP-IS) the NHS project helping health and children's social care staff to share information and better protect society's most vulnerable children.
- Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) cross locality working of safeguarding supervisors, working within multi-disciplinary context advantageous for information sharing and professional development and helps CCS professional's 'see' the child and family through different specialism lenses.
- CCS pilot for co-working complex cases safeguarding cases (named practitioner and safeguarding supervisor)
- Introduction of the ICON programme, working with partner agencies and external agencies to promote.
- Embedding professional use of 'Dad Pad' – An app to engage young fathers with knowledge and practical skills for parenting (Dadpad.co.uk)
- Multi-agency audits in respect of Domestic Abuse and Neglect provided agencies with joint learning and an opportunity to view the context of cases from the perspective of other agencies.
- Practitioner Events for multiple learning Reviews or Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have given front-line professionals an opportunity to network with other professionals and understand what was known and not known about a family. These events have been well received by front-line professionals who have provided feed-back that they have found them helpful from the perspective of their own learning.
- The revision of the Pan Bedfordshire pathway for bruising to an immobile baby or child has led to an enhanced joint understanding of what should be done by agencies under such circumstances.
- There is a shared goal of multi-agency training for Neglect cases. Agencies are working together in a task and finish group to ensure that the development of a training package meets the needs of all agencies.
- The UnBorn Baby Multi-agency Group Supervision, chaired by Bedford Borough Local Authority – is a reflective space where partners can strengthen professional relationships, reflect on their working with families and care planning for unborns. The aim being to improve multi-agency involvement in the pre-birth assessment, ensure compliance with the pre-birth protocol and achieve consistency of thinking/information sharing/planning and intervention. This has been highlighted to the East of England Safeguarding Leads Midwives forum as good multiagency practice.
- ELFT safeguarding team have continued to deliver safeguarding support across a wide range of services and embed a Think Family approach.

- The first year for the Bedfordshire Hospital Trusts has been incredibly challenging but despite this they have already seen the benefit of the two hospitals working together, supporting and exchanging ideas as a bigger and stronger organisation. This has supported the organisation to build resilience to maintain essential services during a time when so many patients have depended on them. The newly formed 'Trust' has created an opportunity to strengthen both hospital sites safeguarding teams and has given an opportunity to develop and share practice, policies and procedures. The development of a Joint Trust Safeguarding Board incorporates both safeguarding adults and children agenda for both hospital sites.
- Regular meetings between health and BBC Children's Services to discuss changes to working especially in light of the COVID. This has allowed for improved communication across agencies.
- The continued collaboration between adults' and children's safeguarding teams and safeguarding Midwifery teams is supportive of a 'Think Family' ethos. This includes the co-location of teams on both sites, allowing a greater opportunity to share good practice and develop our safeguarding skills.
- ELFT consider people participation and co-production at the essence of what they deliver and are currently exploring an appointment of a Parent/Carer rep to join each local Senior Management Team to ensure their voice of the family is heard in all decision making of the service.

During the development of ART, the team have worked hard to draw upon the wider support available to them outside of Children's services including clear working arrangements with Police (Boson guns and gangs team/CCE Missing team), Aquarius and Pupil Referral Units as examples. Their interventions include moving vulnerable families at short notice, disruption of exploitation and joint care planning to maximise interventions and reduce family confusion as and when a number of

services are involved in family's lives. Within the following case studies they highlighted particular situations which have enabled success and positive change.

***“The strong relationship that ART have with children has shown to me, the importance of their role. It has enabled officers like myself to have an additional point of contact for someone and there hasn't been any time when I haven't had the phone picked up when I have called. The regular contact that I have had via emails and calls means that I have been able to support ART far much more as their immediate focus has been meeting the immediate needs of the child.”***

David Gordon Detective Constable BOSON North Team

A case example highlighted below gives a snapshot of a typical situation for the team on a weekly basis.

***As there is a space here I have altered the text so please replace with the following - Call from a parent stating the weekend has seen an arrest and physical altercations within the family home. The ART team visit to find the parent in a state of despair asking for their child to be taken away as they are struggling to cope with their behaviour.***

***Mediation session takes place between family members to establish a plan moving forward. The outcome is there is no need to place the child outside of the family home and there will be daily check in's both virtual and face to face with the parent supporting them to work with the situation rather than reacting. Daily work with the young person to take place to keep them safe.***

***ART will also liaise with other services to coordinate wider support for the family.***



***“I really can’t put into words the support we have received from Chris and how much we appreciate it. It really has been a lifeline & I really can’t imagine what would have happened to my son, or us as a family, if we hadn’t been able to access it.”***

Feedback from a parent.

***“He helped my family function and thrive and helped me too; he was amazing with my parents and brought us together and created an open and trusting environment for us. I’m sure my work ethic or results would not be what they are now if it wasn’t for him, he taught lots more than how to keep safe.”***

Feedback from a Young Person.

## BBSCB Priorities.

### Neglect

National statistic 15% of children in the UK are living in poverty (and rising rapidly). Which equates to...

- Nine children in a class of 30.
- 49% from lone parent homes.
- 46% from black and minority ethnic groups (26% children of White British Families).
- 75% in a household where at least one person works.
- 47% of families with 3 or more children.
- Childcare and Housing taking the biggest toll on household budgets.



60% of open CIN (1,114 children) are for abuse or neglect. This is comparable with England data; slightly higher than SN data and Bedford Borough Council (BBC) 19/20. In last 6 months 68 Child Protection plans started – the initial category of abuse was neglect for 63% of them this is slightly higher than England data, SN and BBC 19/20.

The Quality Assurance Board carried out audits of cases of neglect and had developed a forward plan to include training and an overall audit of the entire year's cases of child neglect to review the cumulative effect of neglect in large families and work is also being carried out with children under 2. Of the 134 children currently subject to CP plans 60 % have a category of neglect (same as BBC 19/20 and a little higher than England and SN). 34% have a category of emotional abuse (which is comparable with other three data sets).

A multi-agency Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group reports directly to the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group and the BBSCB Strategic Board received updates on the groups work. This group has developed a Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy and a Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Action Plan. The strategy breaks down neglect into the following categories;

**Physical Neglect;** failure to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter.

**Emotional Neglect;** the omission of love, failing to nurture or stimulation through ignoring, belittling, intimidating, isolating or exposing a child to abuse and violence. Educational Neglect; failure to provide a stimulating environment, support learning or ensure school attendance.

**Medical Neglect;** failure to provide appropriate health care (including dental care), not bringing the child to appointments, refusal of care or ignoring medical advice.

**Supervisory Neglect:** failure to supervise a child or provide for their safety, e.g. monitoring online activity or whereabouts when out alone.

**Nutritional Neglect:** failure to provide food leading to child becoming underweight/overweight. Obesity can become a child protection concern.

**Adolescent Neglect:** is different to neglect of younger children and often overlooked as children grow older. The boundaries between neglect and maltreatment are often more problematic: e.g. when a young person is forced to leave home through abuse and finds themselves 'neglected', hungry and homeless. Unrecognised neglect from childhood can manifest itself in adolescence: research tells us there are links between neglect and child sexual exploitation.

Some examples of the work the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group has undertaken;

- Revised the Neglect Strategy and a gap analysis carried out on the action plan.
- [ICON Programme](#) launched to support parents when their baby cries.
- Ongoing discussions around CP medicals for neglect cases and data.
- Neglect procedure and practice guidance revised to include reference to the adult Hoarding Policy and learning from local reviews.
- Collation and analysis of GCP2 data and exploration as to how it can be used with adolescents and emotional neglect.

Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) through analysis of a chronology of significant events in a child's life can assess neglect quicker and more comprehensively. They have embedded a 'Significant Events View' within their electronic health records system. This records of all significant events are in one place for example incidents when a child 'was not brought' to a health appointment. Changes in levels of service provision (either increase or decrease) would also be recorded here.

Through a recent Review it was identified that some of the children were young carers, so in response the Pan Bedfordshire Policy/Procedures Group have developed some practice guidance to support practitioners identifying and working with young carers.

From July 2020 to July 2021 Families and Children Early Help Services (FACES) worked with 31 cases where neglect had been identified as a primary factor during early help assessments. The majority of referrals were made by school practitioners who did not have access to see the home environment in order to assess neglect. FACES felt that more effort needed be made to hear from children about their lived experiences and

how neglect affected them. FACES were often seeing school absences as an indicator of neglect which was often a generational matter.

In the same reporting period the Early Help and Intervention Service (EHIS) also worked with 31 cases where neglect had been the primary feature. 27 of those cases were maintained by EHIS or significant improvements had been made and the case was stepped down to the school to lead the Team Around the Family meetings. 4 cases were stepped up to Children's Services due to limited or no progress being made and GCP2's completed. 28 GCP2 assessments were completed by health staff from January to December 2020 and 16 completed from January to June 2021.

Front line officers are recognising neglect at the earliest opportunity and being more curious and inquisitive and if in doubt are seeking advice rather than doing nothing at every opportunity. A dip sample of child neglect across Bedfordshire Police intelligence logs suggests instances of children being physically beaten, deprived of food and water, looking unclean and unkempt, drink and drug driving with child in the car sometimes without seat belts and of leaving children along in properties for extended periods of time to fend for themselves. The Think Child campaign has been a recent positive development helping to partially rectify previous recording lows and increase public awareness. But with many reports still continuing to be received as concerns for safety, fostering the curiosity of frontline officers attending residential scenes remains key. The Child Neglect Scrutiny Panel presents an Opportunity for learning and identifying best practice by reviewing body worn video alongside relevant partners. Bedfordshire Police set up a group to look at body worn videos to see what officers see as neglect for learning. Learning from has been that Police are now asking to see other rooms in the house as we have learnt that the worse conditions in the home are often hidden.

Cambridgeshire Community Services					
Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22
1	15	7	5	14	5

The GCP2 is a widely used assessment tool designed to help frontline professionals identify when a child is at risk of neglect. It assists to measure the quality of care being given to a child in respect of physical care, safety, love and esteem on a graded descriptive scale. EHIS has a strong relationship with NSPCC and has supported the move online of the GCP2 training. From June 20 to July 21 60 practitioners attended GCP2 training. There is a need to keep providing the training as the turnover in some practitioners can be high. Recording how many GCP2s have been completed has always been a challenge as the case management system did not support this, however the move to LiquidLogic is a massive step forward and this information across Early Help/Children’s Services will now be available. There will be a focus on ensuring that Social Workers are aware of and confident in using the GCP2 to appropriately support assessment and intervention.

CCS have reported an improvement in frequency and use of GCP2 across services. BLMK CCG, continues to work with BBSCB, in its approach to raising awareness about neglect and are supporting frontline health practitioners to identify and tackle neglect issues at the earliest opportunity by using the GCP2.

The [Day in the Life tools](#) aims to gain a solid understanding of a child or young person’s daily routine, identify positives or strengths as well as highlighting areas of concern or risk in respect of neglect. Look at parenting capacity in relation to daily life, especially thinking about expectations of the child from a developmental perspective. By talking

to each family member and cross-referencing their experiences of the same day, practitioners are able to make the experiences of each neglected children visible and begin to understand their daily lived experience.

For those health practitioners with access to the safeguarding view on SystemOne (patient database) this enables identification of those [children who have not been brought to appointments](#) and other patterns of behaviours.

Annual audits are completed to review the management of Universal Partnership Plus (UPP) families and partnership working with key partner agencies. This was completed in January 2021 and identified areas for improvement, which have been completed and staff training delivered at the 0-19 learning forum. The audit identified fathers, who are an important part of their children's lives, were not included in all UPP records and SG meetings were not recorded on both parents’ records routinely. All the teams have now been advised to do this routinely to ensure the full picture and strengths and risks of the family is on the record and can be included in the analysis by the practitioner.

Adult services have undertaken work on setting up a Hoarding Panel following developing a Hoarding Policy and the learning from a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR). This piece of work raises awareness of children living in families that hoard and the impact this can have on their life. This Hoarding Policy is now part of the recently revised [Neglect Procedures and Practice Guidance](#).

In August 2020 a Pan Bedfordshire Multi-agency Virtual Audit looked at current working practices due to COVID for under 1 year olds subject to a child protection plan for Neglect. The aim of the audit was to consider practice across the three local authority areas during COVID with the

purpose of providing assurances on current working practices to identify risks and safety planning during COVID - strengths of the assessment - any substance misuse indicators identified - engagement with the family - what has worked well and areas of development.

### Some of the key themes from the Audit;

- Some good examples of creative virtual meetings and contact with families during COVID.
- Age difference between some of the parents and this has come up in other audits but was not explored to consider possible grooming, exploitation or control issues in this audit. This learning has been shared with the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Group.
- Pre Birth processes needed to be more robust - The Pre Birth Assessment procedures have been revised.
- Some examples of good and poor information sharing.
- Gender, culture and diversity was not explored fully and the impact on the child not assessed.
- Some good evidence of engagement via virtual tools however it is recognised that this does not work for all families, blended approach needed for some.

Children's Services dip sampled some LAC cases from June and August 2020 to enhance understanding and find out whether the placements were planned or emergency. What they found in respect of neglect was that;

- Neglect was by far the most common reason for children to become looked after, with parents unable to make the necessary changes for their children due to their mental ill health, learning disability/difficulty or a combination of factors.
- Several cases featured longstanding neglect that had not been fully dealt with in the past – this was particularly the case with the large families.

- Families were more frequently experiencing stability in their social worker, meaning that workers are able to develop good relationships with parents, carers and children and understand the issues that they are facing. In the cases where there was chronic, longstanding neglect, cases had previously been characterised by changes in worker. In these cases, a more intensive, holistic approach at an earlier stage might have prevented the children becoming looked after, however, these children had experienced drift and had been at risk of significant harm for too long before the issues were fully grasped.



In March 2021 Children's Services completed collaborative learning discussions (CLDs) around Neglect. Overall 86% were graded as good or outstanding. 100% were graded as good or outstanding re improved outcomes for children and families and for management supervision. Here is some multi-agency learning from the CLDs:

- Understanding more about the father's issues.
- Remember that individual children (in a sibling group) have different needs and must be assessed as individuals.
- Plans for families need to be practical and detailed with clear actions and instructions for parents, children and professionals to take.
- Role of professional curiosity and confidence in challenging families and other professionals in a way that strengthens working relationships.
- To be more explicit in assessment about the grey areas/unknowns - what we would like to know.

For Bedford Borough Council Children Services the learning from audits on CP numbers and well as reports and analysis for learning reviews has indicated a need to focus on response to large families known to services over time. In June 2021 Children's Services held a Learning event on NAI and under 2s to share messages from research and reviews. There is a planned event in respect of two multi-agency learning reviews re issues of neglect for Sept 21. There will also be a focus on ensuring that Social Workers are aware of and confident in use of range of tools to appropriately support assessment and intervention: for example GCP(2); DASH; Drug and Alcohol assessment framework.

## Early Help

The Early Help and Intervention Service (EHIS) has continued to safeguard children and together with face to face direct work the service has increased the use of technology to expand service delivery and reach. The primary reason for children and their families working with the service is to address issues of mental health and wellbeing and in particular children who are anxious about education and next steps into further education. Overall the numbers of children and families who are working with the EHIS has increased significantly in 2018/2019 - 2190 and then 2019/2020 - 2788. Between 90% - 95% of cases supported by EHIS never need the intervention of Children's Services. The service has also continued to meet its Strengthening Families target "turning around" 154 families with the most complex needs.

EHIS has maintained its focus on working in partnership with other agencies to ensure the needs of families have been supported. In particular the service has led the work with other council teams and voluntary sector organisations to deliver the "Say No To Hunger" campaign and the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF). Regular meetings of a multi-agency steering group have been held to mobilise the sectors ensuring families get the help they need to address issues of poverty and neglect.

The Slow Cooker Campaign was established with the ambition of reaching families struggling with food poverty. One Hundred and Eighty Five (185) slow cookers have been distributed to households reaching over 326 children. Many families have been additionally supported with vouchers, clothing and technology. The partnership with some schools in the Borough has supported the development of the project with cooking demonstrations and live cooking sessions to support the use of the slow cookers.



An In-Depth Review of Permanent Exclusions of Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has taken place over the past year to review permanent exclusions in Bedford Borough and the representation of children with SEND within those that are excluded. This local review followed The National Panel Review published in 2020 which found that 17 of the 21 children who died or experienced serious harm – where the case was notified to the panel between July 18 and March 19 – had been permanently excluded from mainstream school. The review stated that exclusion from mainstream is ‘a trigger point for risk of serious harm’. It maintains that ‘it results in a lack of structure or sense of belonging and a subsequent, significant escalation of risk’. Only 1 of the 21 children had been formally identified as SEND. The national data on children known to the Criminal Justice System finds that over 50% of children known to Youth Offending Services (YOS) are SEND; of that 50% half will be undiagnosed at the point of becoming known to the YOS.

The local review made nine key findings and thirteen key recommendations which will be the responsibility of the Behaviour Strategy Group to address. The review as part of its methodology heard from children who have been excluded. They told the review group about the impact of being excluded. The feedback from children is powerful. They were extremely open and honest with sharing their experiences and reflections.

***“I was glad to get away from the other school.”***

***“I feel happy because my mum is not suffering anymore... My mum had to sit in reception for half an hour listening to me cry; I circled angry, happy and hopeless.”***

To make school ‘good’ for them, children commented that they need;

***To be treated like a human, people to understand them/ their needs, time and space to deal with anger or emotions and/or to calm down and smaller groups and a more manageable pace of work.***

***When CYP have a good day they feel happy, ‘normal’ and like they got lots of work done. One young person commented that they feel surprised when they have a good day and another reflected.***

***“I feel a bit better about myself, but I always know a bad day is around the corner.”***

A majority of the children spoke about feeling sad and and/or angry when they have a bad day. Some were able to recognise what a bad day looks like, whilst some reflected they feel “upset and hopeless” with shorter tempers. There is a feeling that they are judged for their reputation or historical behaviours; this makes them feel like adults sometimes do not care.

***“I felt like my old school were trying to get rid of me.”***

***“I felt like my old school judged me on my reputation i.e. being known as the naughty one.”***

There was a sense that children feel like they are punished for their behaviour, when their behaviour may be a result of feeling angry/ scared/frustrated.

School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap - with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and are more likely to experience social isolation and risk.

The Bedford Borough HAF programme has been co-ordinated by EHIS and colleagues in Education. The programme has provided hundreds of children with opportunities for paddle boarding, music taster sessions, football, arts and crafts etc. The HAF grant also supported superb partnership working between Bedford Blues, FACES, EHIS and Children's Centres to put in place a support programme for Eastern European Families reducing neglect by supporting the families to sign up to GP Surgeries, get much needed Ante-natal care and support with housing and benefits. 102 children open to Children's Services, 48 children open to EHIS and 67 children with EHCP's and 126 who are SEN support attended activities.

Want to know more about Early Help and its work then please click on this [link](#). For the information on the Bedford Borough Local Offer please go to this [link](#), where you will find up-to-the-minute information about what is going on in the area and how to access services.



## Safeguarding online

The Pan Bedfordshire Digital Safeguarding group during the last year have focussed on the following examples of issues identified and actions to address the strategy and action plan;

- The voluntary sector identified an increase in referrals re digital safeguarding and questioned if children feel supported online.
- Strategy and action plan reviewed
- Engagement with Youth Services colleagues are gathering feedback from children about what key messages we should be promoting and how.
- Reviewed the Safeguarding Children Online set of procedures.
- A survey has been produced and planned to take forward to schools but this is on hold due to COVID.
- Presentation from the Police Internet Child Abuse Investigation Team on how they engage with schools/colleges on Prevention and Protection and they noted some success in diversion especially around children being attracted into cybercrime. Over the last year the team have seen the following trends:
  - Fewer online child abuse activist groups (also known as Paedophile hunting groups)
  - Material being stored in the Cloud
  - They have safeguarded 396 children
  - An increase in contact offences.
- A potential trend/concern has been identified whereby some children are being encouraged or see selling indecent images of themselves as a way to earn money. Whilst they are few in numbers this could become a bigger trend/concern given wider demographic trends related to poverty, opportunities to be successful and generate income, and the normalisation of pornography. Children may find it hard to see past

the money they could earn and the risks this poses to them. They may see this as purely a commercial exchange, no one is harmed and some celebrities are engaging in similar practices.

- Further guidance being developed to support remote meetings/teaching with children through a safeguarding perspective
- Briefing documents produced for 0 - 5 children and received positive feedback. The group will focus on quarterly briefings with different key messages and relevant materials for different age group
- A communication plan is being developed and linked with the work of the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Communications Group
- Planning for safer internet February 2022 has commenced.
- Towards the start of the COVID and during the initial lockdown period the BBSCB provided guidance through its website in relation to how to keep children safe online during this time, access [here](#).

Wootton Academy have addressed digital safeguarding by appropriate filtering/monitoring software and follow-up has been as per their Peer on Peer Abuse policy. Where online abuse has occurred outside of school/college, they liaised with Police (where appropriate) and put in supportive measures for the victim and sanctions for the perpetrator. They constantly review their practice in response to situations for their children and in 2020 implemented a Peer on Peer review policy which has ensured consistency from their wider pastoral team about dealing with incidences of self-generated images for example.

## Domestic Abuse

On April 29th 2021, a key piece of legislation - the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent. The Act has placed some statutory duties on Local Authorities which have included setting up a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, completing a Needs Assessment to identify gaps in support and in particular for those who are in specialist domestic abuse accommodation having left an abusive relationship. The statutory duties has provided Bedford Borough Council with the opportunity to review its existing Strategy and work in collaboration with partners, the Local Partnership Board and take on board the voices of survivors of domestic abuse to bring together their next strategic plan, which reflects what they have learnt from their needs assessment, service mapping, gap analysis and a whole system review conducted on their behalf by SafeLives.

The Bedford Borough Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board is already in operation and the Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026 has already been drafted and has gone out for consultation. It will be monitored by the Bedford Borough Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and reported on to the Bedford Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Boards, Health and Wellbeing Board and Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards

### Local Picture;

- 2317 Domestic Abuse incidents (crimes and non-crimes) reported to Bedfordshire Police
- Of incidents reported to Bedfordshire Police, 1794 victims were identified as women and 628 victims were identified as men, 116 referrals into housing where 107 were women and 9 were men and in adult safeguarding referrals 153 were women and 23 men.
- 329 cases heard at the local Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), 104 cases had been previously heard at the conference
- 498 children living in these households
- At police callouts, 1777 children identified as present/living in the home
- Of the Single Assessments completed 37.8% identified Domestic Abuse as a presenting factor  
(Source Bedfordshire Police, BBC children & adult services and housing)

A Pan Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse audit was completed in Jan/Feb 2021 all the cases were MARAC cases with one case being a repeat case at MARAC and all the cases had children within the family. The learning and findings centre around the following;

- Support for young parents, seeing them as young people
- When should Early Help be involved?
- Safety planning not being recorded on files
- Missing engagement with fathers/partners
- Extended family and impact on parenting
- Understanding culture

Bedford Borough currently operate the DANS (Domestic Abuse Notification Scheme) for informing schools when a child has been exposed to domestic abuse within the previous 24 hours. Discussions are underway for this to move to a pilot of the Op Encompass process in which the police make direct referrals to the schools. Children's Services have commissioned a change project for perpetrators of domestic abuse called 'The Bridge Project'

Adult services to develop an understanding on how the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill impacts on children including the changes that have been brought in around the age being lowered from 18 to 16, to recognise that children can experience abuse in their relationships, and the Act recognising that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse and it treats such children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right where they are related to either the abuser or the abused. This will have particular relevance for the adult safeguarding team who receive referrals that include children and young people.

For more information please go to the [Bedfordshire DA Partnership \(BDAP\) website](#)



## Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Public Health participate in all aspects of emotional wellbeing and mental health arrangements across Bedford Borough and have completed the Mental Health needs assessment for children which has helped to drive the current direction of travel. They are also responsible for providing the guidance and co-ordinating the support of any suspected suicide of a child in an educational setting. Their Drug and Alcohol services and leads have worked extensively within this arena and as an example have just provided educational settings with polices to support their drug and alcohol education. They have been early drivers of the work in relation to childhood adverse experiences and trauma and continue to drive the evidence and good practice surrounding this across the partnership.

**KOOTH** is commissioned as part of a joint commissioning piece of work across BLMK and through Public Health commissioning and monitoring they ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of these services. An audit has been conducted with KOOTH over the last 6 months to look at their responsibilities to safeguarding those children using the app. A report is pending but Public Health and partners have been assured that KOOTH is addressing all safeguarding concerns appropriately and within their limitation and any learning from the audit has been taken on board by KOOTH and is being addressed.

EHIS has delivered 2-hour workshops titled Teen Brain Matters for parents, bringing together the latest understanding of neuroscience and development psychology. The workshop helped parents to learn more about the changes their children are going through in adolescent brain development so that they can help them to motivate and support their children in an emotionally healthy context.

Bedford College rolled out Mental Health First Aiders, working with CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner, linking with the local Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services to bring onsite support as well as ensuring their pastoral team received enhanced training around Personal Education Plan (PEPS), safeguarding etc.

ELFT is able to demonstrate effectiveness of its think family model – around two thirds of all child safeguarding concerns discussed with the safeguarding children team from ELFT services within Bedford Borough services originate from adult facing teams. CAMHS have developed a local escalation policy in partnership with key agencies across the system to ensure children presenting in acute crisis are managed jointly where complex/multiple needs are present. This escalation protocol is being shared across Pan Bedfordshire to ensure services have clear processes in place to safeguard children's needs where there may be a difference in professional opinion whilst occupying acute paediatric beds to enable a swift and safe discharge package of care.

***CAMHS have a strong working relationship with BBC Children's Services and a recent case example of using the above protocol enabled a child to be supported intensively at their home address without the need for admission to a tier 4 facility; this was the least restrictive option with far better outcomes than an inpatient admission to a unit out of area.***



## Case Study

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***The Education Welfare Service (EWS) worked with a boy and girl, aged 15 years at risk of exclusion from school, which would have impacted on their educational attainment and future prospects. They were exhibiting difficult behaviours, including fighting with peers and disrupting their classes, impacting them and the class.***

***The EWS worked with them individually on their anger management skills and both quickly recognised that they were over reacting to events and comments from peers and teachers and they understood how this happened and how to control it. They engaged well and made positive changes to their behaviour and reactions, which has had a positive impact on their learning. Teachers commented on how the work had turned them around and provided them with the tools for a positive future***

The Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME) meeting convenes quarterly to review and implement safeguarding strategies to improve service provision to those children not in state/private education. We have implemented provisions to record the VoC and provide information available to those in formal education provisions regarding education, health, emotional wellbeing/mental health and safeguarding services to EHE children through the EHE Website. We have provided a one-page guidance document to distribute to frontline workers explaining the legislation and provisions under EHE and the need to be more professionally curious. We collate data from each LA to ascertain the number of EHE known to the LA.

For Wootton Academy mental health and wellbeing has been (and continues to be) an area of focus for the Trust as this has been an area where they have seen a rise in need. Early intervention in the form of signposting (Local Offer services and KOOTH etc.) through assemblies, PSHCE curriculum, 1:1 staff interaction and communication with parents/carers. Additional support through Trust counsellor and Pastoral team. They have noted an increase in mental health concerns this year and as of June 2021 89 students had accessed CAMHS, that they are aware of, in comparison to 57 students in the 2019-2020 academic year.

Ongoing work has been started this year with adults' and children's services to raise awareness of the upcoming Liberty Protection Safeguards legislation currently due to come into force in April 2022 and will replace the existing Deprivation of Liberty legislation. The Liberty Protection Safeguards will provide protection for people aged 16 and above who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty in order to enable their care or treatment and lack the mental capacity to consent to their arrangements. There will need to be a focus on and have a joint approach with Adult services to ensure appropriate processes are implemented in line with the new legislation and ensure that childcare staff are trained and aware of the new legislation.





## Case Study

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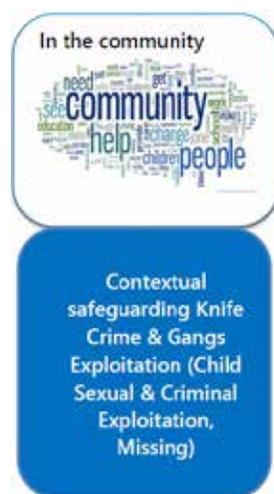
*Reuben was referred to Children's Services before he was born and made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) due to concerns about his Mum's mental health and how she would cope when he was born. Reuben's was the parents' first child and both wider families had not had involvement with Children's Services before. This meant they were anxious with little knowledge about processes and needed to have everything explained in detail as to what was taking place and why. Just before Reuben was born there had been a decision to enter Public Law Outline (PLO) which is pre-proceedings because there was a very high level of concern about Mum's mental health and what this could mean for Reuben and how his parents were able to look after him. However, the multi-agency group of workers working with the family invested considerable time in reviewing assessments and undertaking new ones in a short period of time to look again at what could be put in place to keep Reuben living at home.*

*This multi-agency approach included professionals from Peri-Natal team, Health visiting, Social Worker, adult mental health and EHIS working closely with parents and the wider family network on both sides. There was commitment from practitioners to working to a tight timeframe in relation to comprehensive assessments and attending numerous meetings. A worker who had formed a strong working relationship with Mum continued to offer support and contact simply because Mum had a good relationship with her. This investment in time and detail led to the drawing up of a very detailed safety plan with parents, family and practitioners as to how Reuben could live at home.*

*Reuben continued to be subject to CPP but was exited from PLO in a timely way. There had to be lots of communication about the legal and statutory framework so the parents and family were clear at all times why things were being done, what it meant and what happened next. Reuben went home with his parents from hospital and stayed with them. The multi-agency network provided a 'wrap around' with plenty of oversight and shared communication so they were confident Reuben was safe but that his family had him at home.'*

## Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation

The current picture of exploitation is an increase in referrals and these are often referrals about already established concerns and the issues are more complex. Some of the children being referred in have had limited involvement with Children's Services. A recent mapping exercise has demonstrated a significant rise in females at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE) including child sexual exploitation (CSE). Plus an increase in the links between children placed by other Local Authorities (OLA) at risk with Bedford children. As identified by YOS the links between children and how they meet/associate/offend when they are living in different areas/attend different schools needs understanding and addressing. Bedford Borough is currently an exporter and importer of children involved in county lines.



The strategic and operational structure around these children includes the following

- Bedfordshire Exploitation and Missing Strategic group
- Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Strategy and Pan Bedfordshire Action Plan
- VERU Strategic Oversight Board
- Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit – Launch Pan Bedfordshire
- Pan Bedfordshire Child Exploitation and Missing Reduction group
- SPOC meetings Pan Bedfordshire
- Serious Youth Violence Panel for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire

- Bedford Contextual Safeguarding Meetings (Recognised as an area of good practice)
- Planned work to deliver the ‘Salford Model’ for children at risk of significant harm where that harm is extra familial.

The work of the above has helped to educate and inform children of the risks of CCE, Investigate the cause and risks of children’s involvement and therefore minimise harm, whilst helping them to extricate themselves from criminal/gang activity. Specifically the Serious Youth Violence Panel is evidencing a number of successful outcomes following this bespoke work with identified children who can now be shown to be engaging with services, education and improving their family dynamics.

There is a co-ordinated multi-agency response to prevent, protect; and support children involved in, or at risk of, exploitation. This includes the disruption, arrest and prosecution of offenders. Taking a **“whole systems multi-agency approach”** to preventing and reducing violence and exploitation refers to how the partnership view the issue and how working together can prevent violence and exploitation across Bedford Borough.

The work of the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) is underpinned by analysis and data and their team has led the development of both the [Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Rapid Strategic Needs Assessment](#), to better understand these issues in the county, as well as the [Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response](#). Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Action Plan has been developed to include the findings from the VERU Needs Assessment & strategy and has been shared with partners across Bedfordshire. The governance of the action plan sits with the Pan Bedfordshire Child Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group.



A key piece of work is the further enhancement of the approach to managing extra familial risk with the planned roll out of Safety Conferences for those children who are at risk of significant harm but that risk is predominantly or exclusively outside of the home – Contextual Safeguarding. Currently those children are managed either through a CP model or as Child In Need (CiN). Often those approaches are not quite what is needed so Children’s Services are utilising a model developed by Salford which will ensure that there is a flexible offer that meets the needs of this group of children. Work is in progress to develop the Salford Model in conjunction with the development work tasked by Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Group to the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Co-ordinator.

The Police Children’s and Young people Board meets quarterly to discuss how they can reduce the criminalisation of children and review for example children kept in custody overnight, safeguarding arrangements for those who are fixed term or permanently excluded and work with BYOS regarding the provision of secure and non-secure placements.





## Case Study

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**Concerns raised at a SPOC (Single Point of Contact) meeting re CSE Risk to 3 female children residing at a care facility. The CSE Disruption Team worked with the Community Police Teams, BBC Children's Services, Trading Standards and Licensing to form a safeguarding plan to minimise their risk of exploitation with the care facility and the females' placing Children Services. The plan involved building a working relationship with the care facility to ensure their staff had all the appropriate training and knowledge regarding their responsibilities. This has resulted in improved reporting of missing persons at the care facility and an increase in the submission of the Multi-Agency Information Submission Form.**

**Following this a SPOC from the CSE Team worked with Children's Services to engage with the females and build relationships to enable open discussions regarding their thoughts/feelings and ensuring their voice was heard. Every time one of them returned from a missing event, the SPOC would visit to complete their Prevention Interview. The CSE Team liaised with Community Police to accompany them on their operational activities in the area around the care facility and promote Op Makesafe to fast food outlets and taxis firms. Through this work they identified a particular fast food outlet where the female's congregated and adult males frequented. On a Trading Standards inspection visit the CSE Team re-enforced the safeguarding responsibilities under Op Makesafe for the outlet. The outcome resulted in;**

- **Reduced missing episodes and increased belief that their voices were being heard.**
- **Improved safeguarding and information sharing with the care facility.**
- **Improved understanding of safeguarding and child exploitation within the community.**

**Cuckooing**

Drug dealers will take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for their criminal network.

**Signs to spot**

- People entering the property or lots of cars and bikes outside
- Anti-social behaviour and litter outside
- People coming and going at strange times
- Damage to the property door, or the door being propped open
- Unknown people pressing buttons to gain access to the building
  - You have not seen the resident recently, or when you have, they have been anxious or distracted
- No engagement with family or services
- The resident will not open the door of their property
- Phone disconnected



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**Labour exploitation**

People can be trafficked into forced labour in a variety of typically low paid jobs. This includes manual labour on farms and construction sites, in factories or at nail bars, restaurants and car washes.

**Signs to spot**

- No or limited access to wages
- Relies on employer for transport and accommodation
- Paying for tools, food and accommodation via wage deductions
- Forced to live in a certain place
- Poor or cramped living conditions
- Long hours or working seven days a week
- Lack of documentation by their employer



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**Serious and organised crime**

Organised crime is the driver for much of the violence, exploitation and anti-social behaviour which damages our communities in Bedfordshire. If we can stop organised crime, we would all be a lot safer.

**Signs to spot**

- Wealth and expensive possessions beyond what someone can afford
- Multiple mobile phones or specialist 'encrypted' phones which look similar but slightly different to normal handsets
- Large amounts of cash
- Luxury items such as jewellery and clothes which can be easily paid for using cash
- Hidden weapons of their home
- Businesses or financial services being used to hide or launder money



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# Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation (BAVEX)



- Partnership brand / campaign to speak out with one voice against violence, exploitation and organised crime
- Financial support from Bedfordshire Police, three local authorities, the CCG, Police and Crime Commissioner and Beds VERU
- Overseen by the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Communications Group – comms officers and professionals from a range of different organisations in Bedfordshire
- Standalone website – [bavex.co.uk](http://bavex.co.uk) – outlines the partnership response to organised crime and how to report concerns
- Focus on six types of exploitation – child criminal exploitation; cuckooing; child sexual exploitation; labour exploitation; sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation

**Sexual exploitation**

People can be coerced into sexual activity such as sex work in brothels or stripping on web cams. Victims can be trafficked into the UK from places like Eastern Europe or the Far East.

**Signs to spot**

- Advertises offering sexual services from a particular nationality
- Victims may own very few items of clothing
- Only knows 'sexual language' in English
- Tattoos or other marking indicating 'ownership' by their exploiters
- Victim of crimes such as abduction, assault or sexual offences
- Money from clients goes to someone else
- Many men coming & going from the same address
- Curtains always being closed and a door entry security camera



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**Child criminal exploitation**

County lines gangs will target children to sell drugs and carry weapons. They can be sent across the country, travelling by train, bus or taxi.

**Signs to spot**

- Regularly going missing
- Having expensive items like clothes, cash and trainers
- Lots of different mobile phones
- Relationships with older people
- Unexplained injuries
- Phrases like going country, going cunch, trap house, plugging and bands
- Lots of train and bus tickets



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**Child sexual exploitation**

Children and young people can be sexually abused for money, power or status. They may receive things like drugs, alcohol and gifts in return for sexual activities, or be sexually exploited online.

**Signs to spot**

- Lots of phone or online messages they are secretive about
- Regularly drinking and taking illegal drugs
- Gifts they can't afford, such as clothes and jewellery
- Sudden and unusual mood changes
- Trying to hide injuries
- Older friends
- Going missing or frequently returning home late
- Changes in friends, tastes or behaviour



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**Criminal exploitation**

Vulnerable adults such as those with drink or drug addiction and poor mental health are targeted by criminal gangs to commit crime. This can include begging, shoplifting or benefit fraud.

**Signs to spot**

- Won't talk to anyone
- Living in poor conditions with many other people
- Mental health issues and self harm
- Signs of injury and abuse
- Fear and mistrust of people like doctors and the police
- Can't explain where their money comes from
- No identification documents



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There has been a significant rise in the number of cases where charges have been obtained to prosecute offenders for rape and serious sexual offences committed on children, both recent and historical, this has seen the overall ranking for Bedfordshire Police risen exponentially.

Disruption of perpetrators is key to safeguarding children and is being undertaken by the following as examples - BBC Contextual Safeguarding Meeting, a Community Safety led tasking meeting which the National Working Group (NWG) identified as best practice. A detached youth worker is to be tasked re 'hotspots' and particular areas of risk. Disruption is seen as a collective multi-agency responsibility and partners work closely with the relevant Police teams and the promotion and collation of the [multi-agency information submission forms](#) are key to this work.

[Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation \(BAVEX\)](#) campaign was launched across Bedfordshire on March 18th 2021, National Child Exploitation Awareness Day.

Bedfordshire Child Exploitation Tool & Bedfordshire CE Practitioners guidance have been developed. All tools available on VERU website.

The CSE and Missing Team complete prevention interviews with all missing persons on their return. Part of this discussion is a review on the reasons they went missing and how they were treated by Police on their return. This has led to the increased use of communication platforms taking regard for the preferred use of technology and a communications tool. CMIT have Care Home SPOCs who visit on a regular basis to meet with the staff and provide training and also get to know the LAC resident to provide open lines of communication between them and the Police.

The VERU 'Parents as Partners' free virtual conference was held in February 2021 with over 200 people in attendance.

The Child Exploitation Needs Assessment Task & finish group has been organised and table of contents has been developed & shared with partners, the first chapter completed will be CSE. Current issues are with receiving data from specific partners.

A practitioner within the Adult Safeguarding Team has undertaken Train the Trainer in relation to the National Referral Mechanism for modern slavery and will continue to provide training to adult services to highlight this issues and the involvement of children, so practitioners are better equipped to identify and report concerns.

The VERU has worked with Dr David Kirby from Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gangline to devise a training package for frontline healthcare professionals around gangs, county lines and child criminal exploitation.

[To view more information about the training visit the Gangline website.](#)

For Wootton Academy they have delivered Exploitation and CountyLines training to their staff as part of safeguarding training and it is also delivered as part of the Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Where students are identified as at risk of CCE, they participate in multi-agency processes and where students have been felt to be at risk, they have requested Police to come and speak with them and made parents/carers aware.

The new Education and Diversion team from Bedfordshire Police are working more closely with the College to deliver awareness and prevention work around Gang and Youth violence, knife crime etc. In light of the current KCSIE and OFSTED report, a more focus on sexual consent and violence which can also be interlinked with gang violence, grooming and youth crime.

# WORKING WITH GANG MEMBERS IN HOSPITAL

You will come into contact with young people involved or at risk of gang activities when they are the victim of serious youth violence:

- Stabbing
- Shootings
- Drug Abuse
- Attempted Suicide

1.

## You Need...

- An Understanding of Street Culture
- To provide Empathetic Support
- To use Age Appropriate Language
- To keep Conversation Simple
- Give Parents Advice
- Knowledge of Agencies
- Engagement plan
- Awareness of Cultural Differences

2.

All engagement will be challenging because the gang member's thoughts are invested in:

- Fear
- Revenge
- Anger
- Confusion
- Escape
- Facing Consequences

3.

Use your environment to determine an appropriate time to start an engagement:

- Applying Treatment
- During Rounds
- When Discharging
- If you notice Physical Distress
- Mental Distress



## Case Study

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***Three children aged 13/14 years were being monitored through the SPOC meeting since April 2021 due to concerns that they were being criminally exploited. In August 2021 they were reported missing and information indicated that they were victims of suspected trafficking and had travelled to an area outside Bedfordshire in which they had to deal drugs in order to pay off a debt.***

***Joint work was completed between the CSE Disruption Team, Missing Persons Team, BOSON and the Local Authority to locate them. With the assistance of the relevant Police Force, they were quickly located at a location associated with drug dealing. The Missing Team assisted in speaking to them to identify any intelligence regarding the drug dealing/exploitation risks. One of the males said he wanted to escape the hold the criminal group had on him. Working with his Social Worker enhanced safeguarding measures were put in place and NRMs (National Referral Mechanisms) were completed for all 3 children.***

***Following a review, good practice and learning was identified regarding the processes for joined up working across the Police and Children's Services from this incident. Since this incident these children have continued to be monitored through the SPOC meeting and 2 of the 3 children have not had any missing episodes reported since this event.***



The following have been identified as some challenges for the Partnership to address moving forward;

- Earlier use of NRM and collective clarity on what this looks like in Bedford
- The change in provision when a young person turns 18
- Establishing a clear Gang exit programme and offer and work across agencies.
- Focus on Disruption at an earlier stage with children and those adults seeking to exploit them
- Disproportionate representation within the Criminal Justice system of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) children who are exploited



Luton



# Contextual Safeguarding



## What is 'Contextual Safeguarding'?

'Contextual safeguarding' is a theory devised by Dr Carlene Firmin. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and Carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.



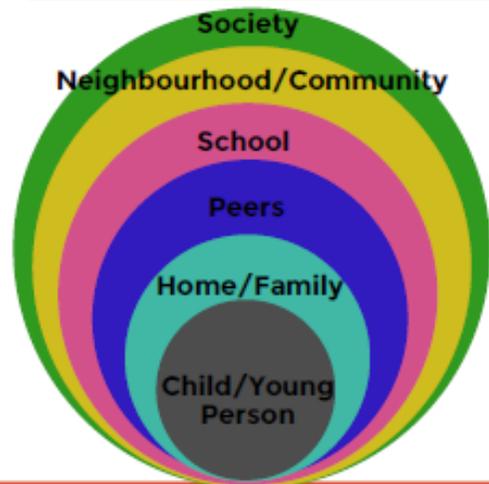
## What can we do?

Children's social care practitioners, child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors. A Contextual Safeguarding Approach supports the development which disrupt & change harmful extra familial context rather than move the concern elsewhere. Parents and Carers can be critical partners in this Safeguarding approach.



## What are the risks?

There are a wide range of potential risks where the prime cause of the harm is outside of the family and includes; Peer on Peer abuse, on line abuse, missing episodes, gang involvement, county Lines, trafficking and modern slavery.



## Partnership Approach

Contextual Safeguarding is the ability of local areas to work with multiple partners to safeguard and protect children. The ability to work with, share information and develop interventions across all partnerships.

Contextual safeguarding provides a framework to advance child protection and safeguarding responses to a range of extra familial risks that compromise the safety and well-being of young people. It can be illustrated as; (see attached illustration)  
Contextual Safeguarding Network:  
<https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>



## Contextual Safeguarding

Click the title above to visit the contextual safeguarding website. You will gain access to latest publications, video links and further information.

## Transition

This is an area that has been assessed and developed and in the last year particular in respect of contextual safeguarding and exploitation. Adults' and Children's Services have identified that this as ongoing work on areas of transition to adult services for key groups including children with disabilities and those at risk of exploitation

The Serious Youth Violence Panel and Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation strategy cover those up to the age of 25. Some children will receive ongoing support if they have been a LAC. There is established transition work between BYOS and Probation.

Children's Services are leading on a piece of work on transition between Children's and Adults' Services and as part of this they will be looking at the issues for children where exploitation is the predominant risk. Children's Services focus on exit planning – thus transitions from open to case closure and what that looks like for children and their families

Research in Practice has conducted a Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme project across Bedfordshire to support and develop an effective strategic response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. The report for Bedfordshire has been completed and can be accessed [here](#). This transition work will be developed moving forwards and a section on the transitions will be added to the [BAVEX website](#).



The Preparation to Adulthood Worker manages the quarterly tracking meetings which tracks and plans individual's transitions from children's services to adults' services, to ensure a coordinated multi agency approach. The meetings are paper based and updated with the intelligence and information from partners and the final minutes distributed.

The Transitions process from children's services to adults' services remains a topic very much on the agenda of the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB). Following on from a recent Central Bedfordshire case, the SAB is undertaking a Serious Adult Review (SAR) to look at the learning, and to identify how improvements for young adults can be made in the transition process, to support them to be safeguarded as they move on from support from children's services to accessing adult's services. As a result of the SAR a Task and Finish Group has been identified between the Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards with the main aims to:

- Review current local practice and identify any immediate gaps
- Review emerging best practice, including as outlined in [Bridging the Gap](#) report.
- Consider any future service developments that could be put in place to offer assurance of effective safeguarding through transitions.

Sharnbrook Academy have had some useful information sharing discussions to aid smooth transition to secondary school, as it was not possible for pupils to visit. For more vulnerable pupils, they arranged tours of the new school and 1-1 face-to-face meetings. Early reports are that pupils have settled well in their next school.

## Policy and Procedures

All new and revised policy, procedures and guidance documents can be viewed at this [link](#).

## Thresholds to services

During this year the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders Children's Services made a decision to develop an overarching Pan Bedfordshire Thresholds of Need Principles which will have more impact as each Local Authority area have their own standalone multi-agency threshold document. In August 2021 the group signed off the [Pan Bedfordshire Multi Agency Thresholds of Need Principles](#) 'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility'. The current [Bedford Borough A Child Centred System: Understanding Thresholds Information on early help](#), prevention, and statutory services for everyone working with children and families requires revision and will be reviewed in 2021/2022.

## Section 11 Self Assessments

Following completion of the Section 11 self-assessment three peer review workshops were held in November/December 2020, offering opportunities for challenge across the partnership in respect of the following;

- Standard 5 – There is effective training/learning & development on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children and families
- Standard 7 – There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Standard 8 – There is effective Information Sharing



The Section 11 self-assessment tool developed enabled agencies to evidence compliance with the identified standards. The self-assessment tools received provided the Board with good assurance regarding the quality of safeguarding practice across the partnership. Where agencies assessed that standards were not met there were, in most cases, action plans, with clear timescales and named persons to address this. National or regional services (such as, CAFCASS and Probation) submitted more 'global' self-assessments to ensure that there is an addendum which gives assurance for BBSCB. Findings show that:

- COVID is impacting on face to face training
- Theme highlighted around auditing and evaluation training
- Question raised around refresher training and what practitioners need in terms of a refresher session
- Robust escalation was identified across the partnership and the different aspects of escalations.
- How and do children get asked about their view on interagency working?
- Ensuring the involvement of relevant agencies
- Some issues for health practitioners in the community and what they can share from the SystemOne records
- A delay or not receiving minutes etc.

The 2021 Section 11 self-assessment will focus on Standard 8 – There is effective Information Sharing in December 2021 with a clear instructions the partnership to report back on the impact and difference information is making to children they work with.

**Further information about Section 11 can be accessed [here](#) Chapter 2 Organisational Responsibilities.**



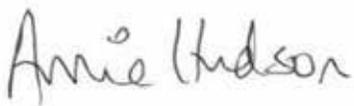
Feedback from Section 175 Audits from Bedford Borough Council showed that schools were raising the following as areas for their attention – Supervision, Prevent training, Review staff induction, DANC. In response the Council have established Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) supervision via St Thomas Moore School and will be developing supervision in schools further. Virtual safeguarding audits have continued to be undertaken during COVID. Provided train the trainer sessions and other prevent training plus delivered training to schools and governors. Created and shared model policies

The learning and questions from Pan Bedfordshire Audits is monitored by the Pan Bedfordshire Learning, Improvement and Training Group.

## Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Practice Reviews continued to be undertaken despite the strain placed on the partnership by COVID and all agencies have shown a significant commitment to ensure Reviews are completed within timescales and that the need to identify the learning is paramount in their thinking. The BBSCB undertook and completed a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) and a Learning Review plus six Rapid Reviews. One lead to the LCSPR, one the learning is being incorporated into the ongoing work re Serious Youth Violence and four will be part of the Pan Bedfordshire work in regards to Non Accidental Injuries (NAI) and under 2s. All the Rapid Reviews have been well received by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel;

***“We felt this was a good rapid review which provided a full family background and ethnicity and cultural considerations. There was a good focus on the child’s lived experience and his voice comes through strongly. Your review has identified learning and there is a plan in place to deliver. We were pleased to see that your analysis included our national review on child criminal exploitation, along with your own work undertaken in this area and that you have bench-marked against our national review.”***



Chair Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

The Jason Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (unpublished 2021) was undertaken following Jason (under 2 years) suffering NAI life threatening head injury with life changing implications and abuse was suspected. On investigation immediately following the incident, the family home was found to be in a neglected state. By way of a summary, the following findings have been captured as a result of the Review;

- Concerns about the children’s welfare had been known about by agencies for 12 years. Past efforts to engage and improve the situation for the children were not sufficiently evaluated, resulting in limited recognition about the cumulative impact of current circumstances on the children’s’ safety and welfare.
- Assessment, planning and interventions were mostly incident led, resulting in a collective response to behaviours displayed by the oldest child associated with the household; this, in turn, resulted in less of a focus on the younger and more vulnerable children in the household. The eldest child was dealt with separately from his younger siblings and they were not dealt with as a family.
- Due to the persisting nature of concerns over a 12-year period, professionals unwittingly became somewhat desensitised or diverted away from recognising the impact on the children’s day to day experiences. This resulted in over-optimistic decision making despite there being very limited evidence to confirm the parent/s had made positive and sustained change or, that the professional network had achieved meaningful change, despite best intentions.
- Management oversight and management support are areas the review has noted need strengthening especially for those workers who have a lead role in working with the children.
- Stress caused in the family household, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, may have had an impact on the incident occurring however

there is no indication that this influenced decision making at the point of agencies stepping down their involvement just prior to the first national lockdown restrictions.

A Pan Bedfordshire Task and Finish Group have been meeting to address NAI and under 2 year olds and an action plan and briefing document have been produced and here are some of the areas that are being worked on;

- To raise awareness of Claire's law.
- Training around Tube of Life for Bedford Borough
- To revisit the Pre-birth assessment procedures in light of the learning from the audits and Rapid Reviews undertaken in respect of this issue.
- To develop a Voice of the Unborn baby tool to sit alongside the Pre Birth Assessment procedures
- Work around fathers/male carers
- Work around Strategy meetings and contingency planning
- To develop and enhance Professional curiosity

An example of learning from our reviews, includes the implementation locally of [ICON: Babies Cry, You Can Cope](#), which aims to reduce the numbers of babies being admitted to hospital with and suffering from head trauma as a result of being shaken. ICON is based on four simple messages before birth and in the first few months of a baby's life: ICON is an evidence based programme consisting of a series of brief 'touchpoint' interventions that reinforce the simple message making up the ICON acronym. ICON was conceived following years of study and research into prevention of Abusive Head Trauma (AHT). ICON provides information for parents about infant crying and how to cope. Arrangements are in place to monitor effectiveness of this initiative.



Significance of fathers in assessing risk has come out of a number of local and national reviews. This has led to a revision in CCS record keeping policy to clarify that for professionals working with families, it is appropriate to refer to and record in the records of 'significant' others in the child's life. Those involved in the care of the child. Children's Services undertook a review of all cases of a child under 2 closed to Children's Services within 6 months of the start of the pandemic (154 cases reviewed of which 112 were subject to an assurance audit to ensure any follow up or work as needed)

The Board commissioned a Learning Review in 2020 on a large sibling group who had experienced chronic neglect spanning the entirety of their lives. Over a ten-year period, there was intensive family support, which addressed the practical needs of the parents and their need to engage with service providers. There was an absence of very basic parenting skills and the children received neglectful caregiving from their parents. The cumulative impact of this neglect on the children's health and development, resulted in serious consequences and they suffered significant harm and led to the children being removed into local authority care. The report will be signed off at the Strategic Board in October 2021.

The learning and recommendations from a number of SCRs, Thematic and Learning Reviews continue to be reviewed and monitored and are part of a number action plans to meet the priorities identified above. The learning from Reviews and other pieces of work has meant that the number of neglect concerns being raised to the Police and the Integrated Front Door are increasing and the number of CP medicals for neglect have risen significantly.



In March 2021 a Learning from Reviews webinar was held and focused on the learning from recent case reviews. The aims of the webinar were to:

- Highlight the types of Domestic Abuse and how these may be recognised and responded to
- Explain the referral process and support available.
- Reflect on messages from Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews and impact for practice.
- Offer an opportunity to ask questions of local practitioners.
- Signpost to further training opportunities

The Case Review Group monitors the learning and actions from all Reviews commissioned by the Board.

## Multi Agency Training

45 training sessions were delivered in 2020 - 2021 with 439 delegates attending. In response to 'lockdown' training was cancelled in Q1. The time was used to identify a virtual learning platform and review training content in preparation for a virtual delivery during Q2-Q4. Over the period 2020 - 2021 there was a 74% reduction in attendance compared to 2019 - 2020, highlighted at Pan Bedfordshire Learning, Improvement and Training Group. Satisfaction rates reached 99% overall during the period, with delegates highlighting benefits (reduced travel, focused time to learn, updated content to reflect working within COVID restrictions) and challenges (technical issues, lack of networking opportunities) of virtual classroom learning.

The eLearning offer proved popular with 14,191 courses completed (65% increase on 2019 - 2020) and a satisfaction rating of 95%. All titles were updated by Virtual College during 2020 - 2021 with new titles including Introduction to Designated Safeguarding Lead, Self-Harm, Suicidal Thoughts, Gang Related Issues & County Lines, Child Poverty, Fabricated Illness, LGBTQ Awareness and Understanding the Impact of Hate Crime. In partnership with Marie Collins Foundation, Path to Protection free eLearning was launched, focusing on raising awareness of, and improving responses to, online sexual harms.

Working Together to Safeguard Children was fully updated to reflect the local and national picture following discussions with education, social care and police teams, safeguarding reviews, and local audits and to reflect changes in Working Together. It now includes a wider range of case studies to promote discussion around support levels and partnership working. Training providers adapted content and delivery to reflect the changing needs and circumstances practitioners were working with. National Referral Mechanism training was launched; delivered free by local practitioners

'Domestic Abuse: Learning from local reviews and audits' was attended by 79 practitioners via Teams. 5 Violence & Exploitation Reduction Unit events hosted, including briefings and 'Exploitation through the Lens of Parents' conference.

The new website [Safeguarding Bedfordshire](#) and learning management system launched. The website acts as a front door to Learning Central booking system and is regularly updated with news and events. It has received 25,004 unique views.



Some feedback highlights from end of day evaluations;

Working Together to Safeguard Children

***“It's good to be in training with people from various job roles. To gain understanding and insight into other roles. The information about the websites to visit for all the information we need.”***

Faith Group- Bedford

***“I can understand the escalation process more clearly now. I recently had a safeguarding concern, but previously did not understand if I should escalate to MASH, but after the training, I reported it straight to them.”***

Voluntary Sector- Pan Bedfordshire

eSafety

***“The most useful parts were the wealth of resources to support the school, children and parents, the up to date information regarding digital safeguarding and the acronyms children are using and their meaning. For further learning, I need time to explore all the useful resource links that we were provided so that I can feedback to staff and then communicate with parents via the website. The least useful part was not having time to explore these links as part of the course.”***

School - Bedford



### Contextual Safeguarding

***“I have recently started a new role within CAMHS having been based with the youth offending service prior to this. I found the training supported the contextual practice that already unpins the work carried out by YOS Teams in relation to the context that young people are in and contextual safeguarding in practice. I have been able to share this experience of practice within my new role.”***

Health – Pan Bedfordshire

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

***“It made me far more aware of how I can reach children and discuss the issues with other agencies. Pre-COVID I was planning workshops in schools to raise awareness of the issue.”***

Bedfordshire Police

### Domestic Abuse: Learning from Local Reviews and Audits (Webinar)

***“The links to services for referrals will be particularly useful. Reviewing the case study was also extremely beneficial.”***

Probation, Bedford

***“I am very new to my role with no knowledge/ experience in working in a school prior to taking it on. Since starting my role, I have read family files and seen many times the word MARAC. After taking part***

***in the DA webinar, I now feel I have a much better understanding on what MARAC is and now have a better knowledge if I need to complete a MARAC assessment.”***

Education, Bedford.

Training for GP’s regarding safeguarding children has been provided over the last year and GP briefings on the Pan Bedfordshire response to Child Exploitation were delivered in March 2021 and scheduled for November 2021. All ELFT staff receive safeguarding children training as appropriate to their role and all staff are now mapped to receive training around the safeguarding issues outlined as priorities in the BBSCB business plan. Response to Child Exploitation (CE) Virtual Sessions have been organised from September 2021.



## Engaging with the Voluntary Sector

BBSCB has representation for the voluntary sector on the Board and as part of its structure. The Voluntary Organisations for Children, Young People and Families (VOCypf) is a network of over 130 voluntary and community organisations who work with children and families in Bedfordshire. The network is supported by Community Voluntary Service (CVS) which provides infrastructure and staff support to the network and VOCypf officer. At the Board in February 2021 the voluntary sector raised their concerns on the potential impact on voluntary services and impact on not only children and their families but the recruitment and staff well-being over the next 12 - 24 months. The Board commissioned the VOCypf to bring a report back to the Board for further discussions. As part of this work a survey sector to map provision/funding went out to the voluntary sector in the VOCypf newsletter with a follow up article. There has been a low response rate to date so the VOCypf will do some targeted emails/ phone calls to specific people in organisations to encourage them to complete the survey.

## Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Working Together 2018 (Statutory guidance), identified that the responsibility for reviewing child deaths now lies with CCGs and Local Authorities as they have through new legislation, been identified as child death review partners. The footprint of CDOP remains the same in Bedfordshire and Luton, but there is an agreement in place with geographical neighbours in Milton Keynes, to work in partnership to share any lessons learnt. In practice, this means that arrangements are in place to share the annual reports, across BLMK CCG and Local Authority areas, where members of CDOP and the Safeguarding Children Partnership can explore opportunities for collaborative working.

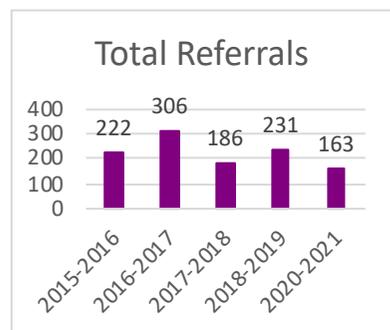


There were **19** Bedford Borough child deaths during the period April 2020 – August 2021, with none meeting the threshold for consideration for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review. About half of all child deaths during this period, were in Neonatal age group (0-28 days of age) and were due to congenital abnormality and life limiting conditions. The majority of deaths over 5 were mainly chromosomal conditions which were life limiting or due to Medical Conditions. There has been no COVID-19, related child deaths reported during this period.

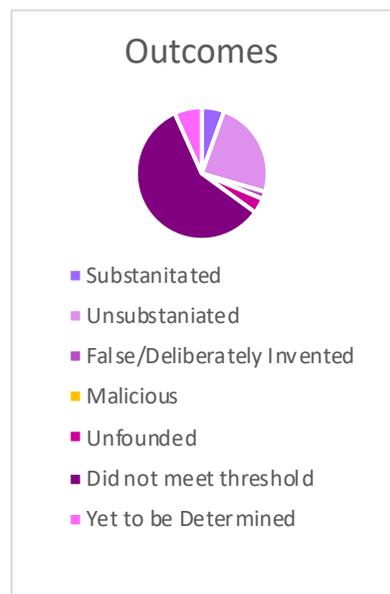
The Annual Report of the CDOP function will be published in Autumn/ Winter 2020. For more information on CDOP please access guidance [here](#).

## Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The following data and narrative are taken from the LADPO Annual Report 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021. This chart below indicates, there has been a steady rise in referrals over the years however this year there has been a decrease. This is expected due to the impact of COVID and in particular due to children being home-schooled as previously LADO



received a high number of referrals from schools. The data review highlighted that most referrals came from Children’s Services. It is interesting to note when reviewing this data; many of the referrals linked to private life matters such as substance/alcohol misuse and domestic violence. This is an increase compared to last year’s referrals which may also indicate an impact of COVID-19 and lockdown.



In contrast with last year’s figures based on the referral rate, the allegation outcomes have remained relatively consistent. However as with previous years, the large majority of cases remain at not meeting the LADO threshold.

The LADO along with neighbouring authorities has previously targeted health sectors and referrals. This is an area which requires further ongoing development. Furthermore work is needed within the

Faith Organisations in the area particularly ones which are not regulated by a safeguarding team. This is an area which has not developed as much due to COVID-19 and places of worship being closed. The LADO has undertaken bespoke sessions with certain sectors around the importance of referring and the process. There has been a recent concern regarding LADO cases not being referred in by one of the partners in the area. The LADO along with the senior leadership team for the organisation arranged an awareness session with staff members to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities around allegations. The new Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) has been an area which has been discussed at length regionally and nationally. The changes include schools managing low level concerns internally. It appears there is not one consistent approach in how this is managed amongst Local Authorities. In Bedford it has been decided that schools are aware of the guidance however should they be unclear in how to manage a case and thresholds then they must contact the LADO. This is an area of further development jointly with Education to enable schools to manage the ‘lower level of concerns’ internally as highlighted in KCSiE

An area which requires ongoing oversight and development is semi-independent 16+ provisions. This is an area which is remains of concern nationally as these homes are not regulated by governing bodies. It is also important to note that if the Local Authority is not using the semi-independent provision in their area then they do not have a responsibility to go out and quality assure the home or provide training/support. It is the placing Local Authority of the young person’s responsibility to ensure the provision meets the standards required. The LADO aims to offer allegations management sessions to these provisions in the area to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities when managing allegations. Further information about the LADO role can be accessed [here](#) Chapter 2 Organisational Responsibilities - People in positions of trust.

## Independent Scrutiny.

I was appointed as Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) Independent Chair and Scrutineer taking up my post from the autumn of 2020, shortly after the publication of the previous Annual report for 2019-2020 and part-way through the financial year 2020-2021 on which this report reflects.

I took over the role from a very experienced and effective Chair and Scrutineer Jenny Myers, to whom I am grateful for her steadfast and clear leadership of the agenda during her 8 years as Chair of the former LSCB, and inaugural Chair and Independent Scrutineer of the Board which began operating in the first period after LSCBs stood down, being replaced by partnerships under the 2017 Children and Social Work Act and the Statutory Guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Nationally there remains a wide variation in how independent scrutiny is taking place. In 2019 as the new Partnerships took shape, across Bedfordshire it was agreed by chief officers in all partner agencies that each area would retain the position of independent Chair, held by one person who continues to ensure objectivity in chairing, and to provide the necessary scrutiny and judge the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The same statutory partner bodies' and relevant agencies' strategic leaders also agreed to continue to do as much work on safeguarding children as possible, taking place in the Boards' subgroups, on a Pan Bedfordshire basis. These Pan Bedfordshire arrangements operate with adjustments and nuances taking into account the differences between, and local needs of, the three Bedfordshire Local Authorities and their partner bodies.

The purpose of Independent scrutiny is to provide assurance, monitoring & challenge to the quality of agencies' work and to:

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard & promote the welfare of all children, including appropriate arrangements to identify & review serious child safeguarding cases
- Act as their Board's constructive critical friend, in which role the scrutineer will remain a key driver to promoting reflection which will ensure continuous improvement in how well children are safeguarded
- Judge how effectively the arrangements are working for children and their families as well as for practitioners
- Judge and report on how well the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies are providing leadership in this crucial area.

My approach to this work has picked up the reins from my predecessor, and has continued to involve:

- Chairing the BBSCB Strategic Board.
- Chairing the BBSCB' Case Review subgroup to ensure the effectiveness of arrangements, and the necessary objectivity and distance from the work involved in service delivery to ensure such reviews identify and seek to address serious child safeguarding cases which can highlight a need for development in practice and in leadership.
- Attending the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic leaders' group, and the wider East of England regional group of Chairs, Scrutineers, Board and Partnership business managers; and of late, seeking to establish regular briefing sessions with the main Strategic and statutory Partner bodies' representatives.
- Attending the Bedford Borough Council's Children Services Improvement Board.

- Taking a lead in Section 11 and schools’ Section 175 audits and challenge events, which run on a Pan Bedfordshire basis and are considered vital and positive sources of learning.
- Reviewing reports into multi-agency audits, training and performance data.
- Commissioning, and ensuring partners are taking follow-up action and pursuing business on previously commissioned thematic reviews around contextual safeguarding, serious youth violence, criminal exploitation of children and young people, radicalisation and dark web issues, and other causes for concern in both Bedfordshire and further afield
- Incorporating feedback from and reports by the National Safeguarding Children Practice Review Panel into practice in Bedford as the need arises and common issues arise, such as the increase during the Covid 19 pandemic in serious non-accidental injuries in non-mobile and non-verbal babies aged under two – a local, regional and national issue.
- Being involved in the escalation and conflict resolution process.

Following the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children’s Services meeting on 22 June 2020, it was agreed that the independent chairs would consider a self-assessment of the Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements based around the ‘Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements Report 2019, undertaken by my predecessor Jenny Myers.

The six steps in the model below were not intended as a checklist for inspection or external regulation, but as a tool for partners to use both separately and together to develop and reflect on the safeguarding children plan. The Board, alongside the others in Bedfordshire, has reviewed and presented its “state of the nation” self-evaluation as part of the developments involved.

<p><b>Step 1</b> - The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation</p>	<p><b>Step 2</b> - The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children.</p>
<p><b>Step 3</b> - Children, young people and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding Children</p>	<p><b>Step 4</b> - Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing.</p>
<p><b>Step 5</b> - There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews.</p>	<p><b>Step 6</b> -There is an active program of multiagency Safeguarding children training and workforce development.</p>

[Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny, Safeguarding children partnership arrangements, Jenny Pearce \(2019\)](#)

As incoming and now somewhat more settled Independent Chair and Scrutineer, my assessment is that the partnership in Bedford Borough has continued to work effectively together to safeguard children. There is strong leadership, continuity of presence by senior decision maker level representatives of the key bodies working across Bedford, and when the dialogue involved this can be difficult, and partners stay with it until resolutions are reached. This demonstrates that there is a growing degree of shared professional confidence that concerns will be taken seriously, acted on in a timely way, and children's welfare put ahead of the concerns or preoccupations of an individual services or agency.

The year on which this Annual Report reflects has been almost entirely worked through the global pandemic created by the spread of, and the nation's responses to, the Covid 19 virus. A key strength in the Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding arrangements has been the formation of Pan Bedfordshire subgroups. These subgroups have helped the wider partnership be more efficient and have helped to develop standardised policies and procedures. The subgroups are well attended with good representation from the three lead partners. The Section 11 assurance days (also Pan Bedfordshire) and agency reports continue to hold the wider partnership to account for ensuring their compliance with safeguarding.

As the report is published in the autumn of 2021, it looks back over a financial year that closed half a year ago, through a lens that is still heavily influenced by a disease that has by no means gone away, and that is as this report is cleared and published is affecting children perhaps more, and in some cases worse, than the ongoing effects still being seen in the adult population. As elsewhere, in Bedford services came together round the issues and the challenges, rather than being overly concerned with the boundaries between them. A serious disease outbreak such as this one, now over 20 months into its all-society, all-age development and effects, has meant that traditional boundaries between services, a need to meet face

to face and travel to do so, and a need to follow sometimes lengthy and convoluted bureaucratic processes at the interfaces between organisations, were stood down in order, as many in Bedford have expressed, "to simply get the job done for the people of this place, and come out safe and whole on the other side." Partners are now discussing what, from all of this boundary dismantling that has eased progress and made responses both more focused and speedier, should now be retained, as life returns to "business as close as possible to the pre-pandemic normal." They are all also recognising that running at the speed they have had to move at, for so long and in such a sustained fashion, for almost two years as this 2020-2021 report is published, has left all concerned tired, stretched and at times traumatised by what they have witnessed, including for some staff suffering the grief of losing a family member, friend or close colleague, and yet having to carry on with their own work in the public's service. They are keenly aware that this state of tiredness and personal challenge is not sustainable for all concerned in the longer term, and that staff as well as client and service user wellbeing must be addressed.

In this second full year of the new Board/Partnership arrangements, I have chaired the elements of BBSCB's business that fall to me, but have also dropped into, taken part in and offered Scrutineer's assurances on the work of the Pan Bedfordshire subgroups of the three Bedfordshire Boards or Partnerships which have worked hard to find common themes and ways of working, not least because so many agencies and partner bodies work across all three local authority areas concerned and need consistency whenever it can be achieved. I am pleased to report that both on Bedford-only and a Pan Bedfordshire basis, I have seen the continuation of effective engagement of partners and relevant agencies in both strategic planning and implementation of safeguarding for children, despite the undoubted challenges inherent in demand continuing to rise across the piece, yet resources not expanding or increasing to match or meet it.

In Bedford, at both strategic and operational levels, there is representation from and involvement by statutory commissioning bodies, providers, and voluntary organisations. I also witness appropriate and willing engagement of schools of all types and Further Education (FE) colleges in the crucial work of safeguarding children and young people. These agencies continue to demonstrate their commitment by attending remains central to the ways in which the partnership has gone on developing its understanding of the lived experiences of children who receive services across a wide range of provision. Bedford's work on the voice of the child is a strength in the borough's practice, and should be continued as a vital strand of activity. It is my wish, across the 2021-2022 period, to build stronger links between the Board's statutory partners and education safeguarding forums to ensure stronger links are made with all agencies on the Board, reaching more widely than the local authority, though the pandemic period has meant that schools and other educational settings have not been able to welcome visitors such as myself.

Strategic oversight and a joined-up approach is provided across all three Boards, by the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services group, well attended by senior managers of the 3 statutory partners and the independent chairs/scrutineers from each of the 3 LA areas. I have been, as I know from last year's report my predecessor was, impressed at how quickly issues are resolved and initiatives taken forward in a way that would have taken months or years previously. That the three Partnerships share common approaches to a great deal of what is done, and to its auditing and the expectation that learning will follow, means that where an agency or service provider works across boundaries, their practice does not have to change to fit entirely different ways of working from one side of a street or major road to the other. It also means that professionals can and do exchange ideas and learn from each other's practice and leadership. A key strength in Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding arrangements is shown through the work of the Pan Bedfordshire subgroups. These help



the partnerships concerned to be more efficient than would three separate structures of subgroups from borough to borough, and the Pan Bedfordshire way of working has helped to develop, embed, and train professionals in the uses of, standardised policies and procedures. The subgroups are well attended with good representation from the three lead statutory partner bodies in all three local authority areas. The Pan Bedfordshire Section 11 assurance days and agency reports continue to hold the wider partnership to account for ensuring the compliance with safeguarding requirements remains front and centre in all partner bodies and relevant agencies.

Safeguarding Partners must identify serious safeguarding incidents at a local level, and review them formally, working together to do so frankly and transparently so that improvements can be made. Serious incidents notifications and Rapid Reviews have been carried out as per government guidance and where necessary single/multi-agency reviews or audits are commissioned. The end of the previous system of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), and their superseding by Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews (LSCPRs) overseen by a National Panel, together mean that Bedford continues to learn from when things have gone wrong for a child in receipt of services across health, education, social care, the police and other agencies. This work is not undertaken on a pan-Bedfordshire basis except insofar as it strongly informs evidence-based learning. BBSCB runs its own Case Review Sub-Group, which I chair and into whose discussions I bring the Scrutineer's gaze and approach, seeking assurance that practice can and will improve and learn from mistakes or tragedies in the lives of children and young people. There is determined and detailed, transparent and professionally honest scrutiny by the BBSCB of how partners embed lessons from reviews and audits into practice and their own training. It has been clear to me as incoming Scrutineer that a good deal more work is still needed to evaluate the impact of reviews and to ensure that the focus of learning includes both local and national reviews, and can be outlined and proven, rather than stopping at sincere pledges to learn lessons and

improve practice whenever something goes wrong. Partners at both Bedford and Pan Bedfordshire levels are committed to creating that sharper focus on the differences being made for children and young people, and work is ongoing on ensuring lessons are really learned and practice can be shown to improve as a result.

Performance Monitoring that leads to a data and evidence informed approach to practice development and improvement remains a challenge at times. My attendance at the Bedford Borough Council Children Services Improvement Board, and the onward transmission of that Board's reports to the BBSCB has ensured that the wider partnership is informed of trends. All key partners have presented assurance reports post any inspection. The partnership has worked hard to reduce and simplify the data presented to subgroups and the Board as a whole. During 2020 - 2021 data was continually reviewed, across all themes by a Pan Bedfordshire Performance Subgroup, and reported to the wider strategic board. As this report is published, given two of the three Partnerships has set up a locality-focused data and performance subgroup for that locality only that Pan Bedfordshire subgroup has stood down. Bedford has not set up a locality focused equivalent, partners asking instead that each statutory partner and relevant agency, the other subgroups and the Board as a whole, will take an interest in and maintain a monitoring function on Bedford's data. My advice as scrutineer is that the decision not to form a Bedford specific subgroup may mean that some data is not properly overseen in such an "everybody's business" approach to vital information sharing and data analysis, and that the decision should be open to being revisited should my concern come to fruition that "everybody's business means it's nobody's real concern" could result.

## 2021-2021 continued developments

Innovative practice and forward thinking have continued around at least the following:

- Developing approaches to contextual safeguarding that approaches troubled or vulnerable young lives by looking at what contributes to those troubles or vulnerabilities from the widest possible range of settings in which those lives are lived,
- the ongoing development of a systemic practice model in children's social care services that can then be used with greater ease and effectiveness in a more rounded and multiagency approach to safeguarding children and young people,
- the move from an ICT system in Children's Services to another that is expected to be more fit for purposes and should be more responsive, more partnership-friendly, and therefore more comprehensive and useful,
- the roll-out of the Graded Care Profile (2) in response to or working with families affected by a wide range of types and manifestations of neglect,
- the 2021 news that mental health bed capacity growth has been given the go-ahead in Bedford and will continue into the coming years in an area of provision that has been and remains seriously challenged,
- the borough's determined responses to serious youth violence,
- non-accidental injuries in non-mobile babies and children under 2,
- complex issues in "blended" families where several groups of overlapping and interlocking adults are responsible, or could be found to be so, for the danger in which a child might be placed or the harm that could result,
- the whole system response to the challenges of addressing criminal exploitation of children, and

- the added complexities in some children's lives when neglect is endemic, sibling groups very large, and the living circumstances of some families precarious, allowing some issues to remain in place for a long time without effective means of addressing them for the vulnerable children concerned.

In 2021-2022 and beyond, both statutory partners and relevant agencies should work with me to focus the scrutiny part of my role as both independent chair and scrutineer on ensuring that all of us receive, and having received act on, more direct feedback from children and families, and from front-line staff who work most closely with them, whether they are in universal services and living comparatively straightforward and balanced lives, or are facing more challenges and in need of greater support. The voices of Bedford's children, young people, families and their lived experience, and those of the people who work with them, should come to lie at the heart of all aspects of scrutiny. It also remains the case that more could be done to ensure the BBSCB works as effectively and seamlessly as possible alongside Bedford's other partnerships, including the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) the Health and Well Being Board (H&WBB) and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Crime Panel where relevant, so that there is more focus on the whole system response to some of the issues that affect each group. This need to ensure that where agendas overlap or interlock is particularly pertinent both as Covid 19 recovery and reset continue, and for example given the passage, in late April 2021, of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to which there is now both a Pan Bedfordshire and Bedford-specific response required of all agencies. Such cross-partnership working also remains clearly pertinent to, indeed vital in the completion and success of work on, issues of exploitation and substance misuse, adults in a home where there are children and there are mental health issues, the lives being lived by children who are also carers for others at home, and a good deal more besides.

As Scrutineer, it is my statutory duty to state formally, in line with the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) that the BBSCB complies with the law on the organisation and operation of safeguarding arrangements working in partnership across all agencies in the borough. It is my professional and personal pleasure to present that assurance, knowing as I do that agencies and partners will not rest on their laurels having had it, but will go on striving for continued and proven improvement in the ways they work both in their own separate settings, and together as partners.



Professor Maggie Atkinson, Independent Chair and Scrutineer,  
Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB)

## Looking ahead and our challenges for 2021 – 2022

Following a review of the partnership's progress the Board has agreed the priorities above will continue to be worked on and addressed from September 2021 to August 2022. The voice and lived experiences of children remains at the heart of what the Board does and will proactively seek and utilise their voice and lived experience at every opportunity to assure itself that they are fully embedded in practice and service planning. In order to respond effectively to prevent harm we now must identify where we can have the greatest impact to prevent future problems and ensure better outcomes for children and young people. Develop a robust shared understanding of the safeguarding threats to children and young people through data / information sharing and routine multi-agency analysis to inform partnership activities.

Underpinning all the above priorities are that:

- Children in Bedford Borough are safeguarded and protected from harm, including abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Learning from reviews is embedded through the delivery of robust action plans which enable early and appropriate intervention.
- Listen and Hear: Children are proactively consulted with as part of engagement activity, through audit and through relevant forums and the potential development of Safeguarding Children Boards in schools.
- Improve understanding: Partners, agencies and staff have a better understanding of what the voice of the child is and how it should be used to improve the effectiveness of service delivery.

Further work to engage with all schools and develop stronger links between the Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements is already

underway following the successful funding bid from the Department of Education, Multi-Agency Safeguarding: Implementing the Reforms.

The multi-agency training offer will continue to utilise virtual classroom platforms, moving to a blended offer for some titles as COVID restrictions ease. Increase the opportunity for Learning Disability/Difficulties awareness training through e-learning packages and Face to face training. There will be a focus on building attendance and evidencing the impact of learning. New training sessions and webinars in development on themes including Neglect, Digital Technology & Safeguarding Young Children, Non-Recent Sexual Abuse, The Dark Web and Child Protection Medicals.

There is already following a Serious Adult Review (SAR) in Central Bedfordshire of a Care Leaver a focus on transition arrangements from children's to adults' services for key groups including children with disabilities and those at risk of exploitation.

A review of the adultification, disproportionality and diversity issues and the effects on the criminalisation of children in the Youth Justice system will be looked at by the Board.

In January 2022 the Board will be focussing on Safeguarding in Education and one of the issues to address is the increase in home education. The Board to consider how the partnership is effectively safeguarding children who are not part of the education system and therefore not routinely seen by practitioners. Permanent exclusions will also be on the agenda for the Board.

Children's and adults' services to continue to develop an understanding on how the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill impacts on children.



## Appendix A

### Finance 2020 - 2021

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 2020/2021 as at the same level for the last 5 years.

Agency	Agreed Contribution
Bedford Borough Council	£114,090
Bedfordshire, Luton And Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group	£62,663
Bedfordshire Police	£18,300
CAFCASS	£550
National Probation Trust	£800
BENCH	£800
<b>Total</b>	<b>£197,203</b>

## Appendix B - Glossary

**AHT** – Abusive Head Trauma

**ART** – Adolescent Response Team

**BAME** – Black Asian Minority Ethnic

**BAVEX** – Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation

**BBC** – Bedford Borough Council

**BBSCB** – Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board

**BDAP** – Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership

**BLMK CCG** – Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group

**BOSON** – Bedfordshire Police Team dedicated to tackling gun and gang activity.

**BYOS** – Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service

**CAFCASS** – Children/Family Court Advisory and Support Service

**CCS** – Cambridgeshire Community Services

**CAMHs** – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

**CCE** – Child Criminal Exploitation

**CDOP** – Child Death Overview Process

**CE** – Criminal Exploitation

**CiCC** – Children in Care Council

**CIN** – Child in Need

**CLDs** – Collaborative Learning Discussions

**CME** – Children Missing Education

**CMIT** – CSE and Missing Investigation Team (Police)

**CP** – Child Protection

**CPP** – Child Protection Plan

**CSE** – Child Sexual Exploitation

**CSEM** – Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing

**CSP** – Community Safety Partnership

**DANS** – Domestic Abuse Notification Scheme

**DASH** – Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence

**DSL** – Designated Safeguarding Lead

**EHCP** – Education Health Care Plan

**EHE** – Elective Home Education

**EHIS** – Early Help & Intervention Service

**ELFT** – East London Foundation Trust

**FACES** – Family and Children’s Early-help Services

**FE** – Further Education

**GCP2** – Graded Care Profile 2

**HWBB** – Health & Well-Being Board

**IAPT** – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

**ICON** – *I* – Infant crying is normal *C* – Comforting methods can sometimes soothe the baby *O* – It’s OK to walk away *N* – Never, ever shake a baby

**ICPC** – Initial Child Protection Conference

**ICT** – Information & Communications Technology

**IFD** – Integrated Front Door

**KCSIE** – Keeping Children Safe in Education

**LA** – Local Authority

**LAC** – Looked After Child

**LADO** – Local Authority Designated Officer

**LSCB** – Local Safeguarding Children Board

**LSCPR** – Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

**MARAC** – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

**MASA** – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

**NAI** – Non Accidental Injury

**NRM** – National Referral Mechanism

**NSPCC** – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

**NWG** – National Working Group

**OFSTED** – Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills.

**PALS** – Patient Advice and Liaison Service

**PEPS** – Personal Education Plan

**PLO** – Public Law Outline

**PSHE** – Personal, Social and Health Education

**SAB** – Safeguarding Adult Board

**SAR** – Safeguarding Adults Review

**SCR** – Serious Case Review

**SEN** – Special Educational Needs

**SEND** – Special Educational Needs and Disability

**SPOC** – Single Point of Contact

**SPoE** – Single Point of Entry

**UPP** – Universal Partnership Plus

**VERU** – Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit

**VOCypf** – Voluntary Organisations for Children, Young People and Families

## Finding out more

This report is available online on the BBSCB website at

 [www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB)

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

 [LSCB@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:LSCB@bedford.gov.uk)

or send a letter to

 **Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board**  
**Room 509,**  
**Borough Hall**  
**Cauldwell Street**  
**Bedford MK42 9AP**

Or alternatively telephone

 **01234 276512**

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