

Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2021 – 2022



Worried about a child?

If you're worried that a child is at risk of neglect, harm or abuse, it's important that you tell someone. You are not being asked to make judgements or interfere unnecessarily in other people's lives, the Partnership just want to make sure that the child gets the help, support and protection they may need.

Who to tell?

If you think the child is in immediate danger, call

Bedfordshire Police - 999 or 01234 841212 or

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

If the child's not in immediate danger, but you're still concerned about them,

please contact us online: [Report a concern about a child](#)

If you are unable to use the online form you can phone

Bedford Borough Council Children's Integrated Front Door - 01234 718700 (office hours) or

Emergency Duty Team on 0300 300 8123 (out of hours)

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Safeguarding Partners' Impact & Reflections

Bedfordshire Police

“The past year has seen yet another new challenge. Previously we were faced with dealing with the national pandemic and the societal restrictions imposed, whereas this year we were faced with coming out from these unprecedented times to a new normal, but we did so as a cohesive partnership with all totally committed to keeping children safe. The summer period was of particular concern as it was the first full summer with local events taking place. Families were able to enjoy such events, whilst children were unleashed into ‘playing outdoors’ and being children once again, but with this came added potential risk and threats from those keen to prey on the vulnerable. Together we supported several local initiatives targeting locations where those threats were considered to be more prominent seeking to intervene, divert and ultimately prevent children coming to harm and it is fair to say the summer came and went with the overwhelming outcome of one where children and families were able to enjoy the outdoors.

We are committed to learning and are always seeking to improve our service both from the experiences of lockdown whereby our front line teams continue to look at vulnerability through the eyes of children and are professionally curious as to whether the environment is right for a child to thrive, working in partnership to identify the best intervention.

We have also been active in ensuring we learn from wider reviews and recent tragic events demonstrate both the strategic and operational approach to getting things right. With regards to the 21-22 priorities, Bedfordshire Police continue to align its policing response to these and has dedicated teams responsible for Child Neglect, Child Exploitation and Domestic Abuse as well as a Cyber Hub and a well-established, partner supported Mental Health and Wellbeing Service from professionals housed within specialist units to a Mental Health Street Triage Team dealing with incidents at the earliest opportunity”.



Sharn Basra, Assistant Chief Constable

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)

The last 12 months has continued to see the CCG supporting our system partners in its recovery and restoration programme since the COVID-19 Pandemic. We know that as Professionals continue to see more Children and Young People and their families face to face we are likely to see an increase in the level of support that is required to meet those needs.

BLMK CCG has remained engaged in all Pan-Bedfordshire work streams at a strategic level and continue to ensure policies, procedures and pathways have been developed following learning from individual practice reviews and interagency working.

Neglect has remained the most common form of child abuse across the UK, with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and partners working together to ensure that there is early recognition of neglect cases, and that from early help to statutory intervention, there remains appropriate, consistent and timely responses across all agencies.

The emotional well-being and mental health of our children and young people across BLMK continues to provide us with challenges, with increasing numbers of children and young people presenting in our acute hospitals and to specialist services. The CCG has worked with our providers and voluntary organisations to ensure that early intervention and crisis support is available, along with providing strategic safeguarding oversight for some of the more complex cases.



Anne Murray, Chief Nurse

Bedford Borough Council Children's Services

2021 – 2022 was a year of tremendous challenges for the safeguarding partnership. As we emerged from the pandemic the strength of our multi-agency work was critical in ensuring that children were kept safe. New hybrid working arrangements had ensured that partnership working had continued and in fact had increased over this period which meant that planning to protect our most vulnerable children continued.

In November 2021 Bedford Borough Council's Children's Social Care was inspected by Ofsted as part of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. The outcomes were an overall grading of "Good", the first time Bedford Borough has achieved this grade. The Inspectors said: - "Effective communication and strong commitment to joint working are evident in senior leaders' relationships with key partners.

Education providers, adult social care, housing, police and health services are all engaged strategically and practically in the provision of services to children and their families. Cafcass and the judiciary speak positively about strengthened communication with senior managers and the quality of social work practice". The positive engagement of all strategic partners was clearly evidenced and the strong partnership focus on our priorities for 2022-2023 continues as our skilled and knowledgeable practitioners work tirelessly to support children and their families.



Martin Purbrick, Director of Children Services,
Bedford Borough Council

Introduction

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

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday and throughout this report the term child(ren) will be used and this includes young people.

Review of last year's challenges

The voice and lived experiences of children remains at the heart of what the Partnership does and examples in this report evidences that through the work of partners, the Partnership's conference with children in July 2022, the project to have Safeguarding Children Boards in each school, etc.

Whilst the Partnership does not have a designated Board that scrutinises and analyses data this is captured through all other work streams and themed meetings which have helped the Partnership to have a shared understanding of the safeguarding threats to children. The Learning from Reviews has continued in the last year and more information can be found on page 52.

Work to engage with all schools and develop stronger links between the Partnership has been completed and resulted in a Pan Bedfordshire

Safeguarding Education Group being created who are working on a Strategy and various work streams, more information can be found on page 54.

The multi-agency training offer has continued to deliver safeguarding training via both virtual and now face to face classrooms and more information can be found on page 47.

The [Max Serious Adult Review \(SAR\)](#) has led to a new Pan Bedfordshire Transitional Safeguarding Group whose focus is on the 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 was responded to by the Partnership with the creation of a Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competency Group, assurances from Bedfordshire Police on their local practices along with a briefing document in regards to the case of [Child Q](#) to support practitioners in their practice.

Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) has increased their safeguarding team and resources to meet current demands across the BLMK ICB landscape, including a new head of safeguarding role and specialist safeguarding roles incorporating primary care, Integrated Front Door (IFD) and LAC. They ensure that safeguarding children remained a top priority during the transition period from the Clinical Commissioning Group to ICB. BLMK ICB have good working relationships with partner agencies and regularly meet for discussion, peer support and review.

What does Bedford Borough look like?

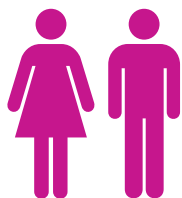
Approximately 41,173 children under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough this is 23.6% of the total population. Of those children aged under 16, 5,494 are living in a low income family. Bedford Borough is a relatively prosperous and fast-growing borough, but with areas of significant deprivation. Children 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 2022;

- **620** children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist Children's Service (note this is not comparable with previous years as short breaks children are now reported separately).
- **199** children were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP). This is a **39% increase from 143 at 31 August 2021**.
- **266** children were being looked after by the Local Authority, this is a **5% increase from 253 at 31 August 2021**.
- Of this number, **142** live outside the Local Authority area.
- **26** children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- **24** live in residential children's homes, of whom **92%** live out of the authority area.



Bedford Borough Safeguarding Snapshot 2021/2022:



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

23.6% of the total population

14.9% of children are living in low income families



100 different ethnic groups live in Bedford Borough



27.5% of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language

22.9% of children in secondary schools speak English as an additional language



199 children were subject to Child Protection Plans as of August 2022



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



19.2% of children in primary schools are in receipt of free school meals

17.3% of children in secondary schools are in receipt of free school meals



12,285 contacts were made to Integrated Front Door (IFD) and **1,562** referrals were made to Bedford Borough Children's Services



931 Early Help case episodes started and **1,514** Single Assessments completed



490 child protection investigations were undertaken



232 Initial Child Protection Conferences were held



620 open Children in Need cases as of August 2022

Engaging Children to hear their views and lived experiences:

“The Referral and advice officers work tenaciously to ensure that the views and voices of children are represented at this early stage, enabling a fuller understanding of the impact of their circumstances.”

“Leaders seek to ensure that the voice of children is reflected in the broader range of the council’s work. Children’s views are considered at the council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This good practice informs and engages members and ‘closes the loop’ in terms of information and accountability across the organisation.”

Ofsted Inspection November 2021

Children’s lived experience is demonstrated through the ‘Voice of the Child’ in the Children Social Care (CSC) monthly Quality Assurance (QA) report and Board. CSC hold monthly Voice of the Child Team Champions meeting where feedback is turned into actions and planning and disseminated across teams in an organised way. CSC commissions Barnardos to undertake issue based independent advocacy as well as the Independent Visitor offer for children who are looked after and complete Return Home Interviews with children who are looked after who have had a missing episode. There is a specific framework within Conference and Review for feedback from children, their parents/carers and practitioners in relation



to the delivery of Child Protection Conferences(CPP) and this is presented to the CSC QA Board. Mind Of My Own, a direct app for children to provide feedback, share information and ask

questions which can be responded to directly as well as used accumulative information is used for the development of their service. Early Help gather specific feedback using on-line tools to gather information to enable shaping of current and future services.

The Children’s Services Engagement and Development Team (see more information below) have shared their excellent and extensive work with the BBSCP. Their work aims to focus on the voice, views, opinions, ideas and experiences of children and how these can be used to influence change at an individual and service wide level. The team supports a wide range of forums or projects for children, a majority of their provision is ‘targeted’ for children known to or open to children’s services. They also support a number of ‘universal’ groups, accessible to all children across Bedford Borough. Here are some examples of their excellent work;



SHOUT is their newest provision (starting March 2022), aiming to bring children from all cohorts (within social care) together for a ‘youth club’ style provision. Split across two age ranges (8-12 and 13-16), each group meets once a month for free-time/organised activities, eating dinner together and a consultation exercise. The group continues to grow and has an established core of attendees. All themes of consultation are decided by the children and this year have included; hopes and dreams, is school a safe space and planning the celebration events;

Youth Cabinet is an open forum for any child aged 11-18 living in Bedford Borough. The Youth Cabinet focus on important issues, opinions and ideas of children and in the last year their focus has been on four priority campaigns that are determined by the results of Make Your Mark.

The current campaigns include; safer and accessible school toilets, raising awareness of the dangers of vaping and mental health and well-being. Bedford Borough has one elected Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) and one elected Deputy Member of Youth Parliament (DMYP).



Their role is to ensure the voice of Bedford Borough's children are heard on a national level, this includes an annual debate at the House of Parliament. LAC, Care Leavers and members of the have been involved in the recruitment process for many Manager roles in CS including the appointment of the Director of Children's Services. Care Leavers and members of the Youth Cabinet were also involved in several commissioning projects, including the new Supervised Contact (family time) Contract, the Advocacy Contract and the 16/18+ supported accommodation contract. Their role has included; writing part of the specification and evaluating a specific child's question in the tendering process. 16 children met with three Ofsted inspectors during their inspection in November 2021.

Pupil Voice network aims to bring together school councils from Primary and Secondary Schools across Bedford Borough. There is an annual conference for staff and children and are in the process of producing a guide/self-assessment guide for setting up a perfect school council alongside training. COVID meant the conference was online in 2021, with a week of consultation sessions, training sessions and networking opportunities with over 100 children attending.

Welcome to my World is designed to support children who experience additional barriers to have their voices heard and projects have included SEND children who had been permanently excluded, young carers and the siblings of children with disabilities.

Autism in Schools project includes 17 Primary and Secondary Schools, with partners including the Parent Carer Forum, Open Door and Children's Services colleagues. The project includes facilitation of the 'student voice' via conferences, workshops in schools, creation of resources to raise awareness and challenge/dispel myths of life with Autism and designed for children with Autism and those working with them. To support this project, an Apprentice with lived experience of Autism will work alongside officers to support and empower children's voices, as well as sharing their experiences to enhance learning and deliver training. They will also deliver lunch-time drop in sessions across the 17 schools.

Corporate Parenting Network: following Ofsted feedback and recommendations the Corporate Parenting Network (CPN) has bene launched. The CPN is made up of 'champions' from each Directorate and aims to raise awareness of Corporate Parenting responsibilities and creating an offer of support across the Local Authority. Session themes have been based on sharing and understanding the local picture, learning about the journey children take and introducing the seven core principles of Corporate Parenting. An Apprentice with lived experience of being in care/leaving care had been appointed to work alongside officers across the Directorates to share experiences and enhance learning of the importance of Corporate Parenting. The Apprentice also work with Care Leavers to increase involvement and engagement.

Team Champion for voice of the child: Each team in CSC has a nominated Team Champion and they meet every 6 weeks and here are some of the Themes from recent meetings:

- How to make sure virtual engagement is meaningful and effective.
- Working with children on an SGO.
- Embedding the Pledge into CSC day-to-day work.
- Ensuring meetings are child friendly and child focused.
- Considering the language used directly to children and in the notes written about them.



12 months of engagement seeks to challenge misconceptions about voice of the child and highlight that the voice of the child is a golden thread that runs throughout and adds value to all elements of their work. Feedback from children have contributed directly into the creation of policies and strategies across Children's Services. The co-produced tagline across policies is **"if it's about you, we don't want to do it without you"**. The Participation and Engagement Strategy is due for renewal in 2022 and will focus on ensuring the voices of children are directly influencing service design and delivery.

To ensure the voice of the child is influencing service design and delivery alongside strategic decision-making ED have continued to support a **You Said – We Did** feedback system. This has introduced a layer of accountability for children who are able to see the impact of their engagement.

Through the Engagement and Development team feedback from children continues to be predominantly broken down into three broader areas; communication, information and relationships;

Communication:

- Children shared that there can be a fear of talking about feelings as they are concerned it will lead to being asked more questions (workers being too nosy) and the information being shared wider.
- Looked After Children (LAC) shared the mixed feelings they have regarding people being aware that they are in care (especially in school) and the impact this has on their lives; having a lot of emotions to deal with/being targeted by teachers/being treated differently.
- Children want a space to talk about 'wider issues' more; the biggest issues were climate change, feeling and being safe, COVID and mental health.
- Care Leavers who live out of Bedford Borough can feel out of sight and that it is not always easy to access support.
- Children with SEND want to raise awareness of how people understand different SEND and respond to them i.e. bullying.

Information:

- LAC said that transferring from the Permanency Team to the Leaving and After Care Team at young ages caused them anxiety and worries. The "scary" team name and a fear of leaving care at 14/15. They also shared how important it is that they are confidently independent and "fed-up" of sharing their story again/starting a new relationship with another worker.
- Children with SEND want their teacher's carers and social workers to understand their specific needs; giving them time and space when needed and not punishing them for coping mechanisms.
- The journey into care is crucial for children and they shared that

information about it needs to be appropriate and based on their age, situation and understanding.

Relationships:

- Children feel there is a fine line between workers asking lots of questions to find out and workings being nosy. They feel this feeling is based on the relationship and reasoning i.e. do workers want to know because they care or because they have a form to fill in.
- The transfer of children between teams/new workers and workers leaving is an issue; Children understand why it happens, but still feel sad. They want the chance to say goodbye properly to those they have been through a lot with or have worked with for a long period of time.
- Some children feel workers sometimes rush visits/arrive late/don't have enough time to properly talk or come with an agenda they need to get done.
- Care Leavers spoke about the impact of their workers being part time and knowing who to contact when they are not in. They feel the duty desk is not always helpful/don't know them.

Voice:

- Children feel the best way to have their voices heard at meetings is to; attend and speak themselves or talk to someone they trust beforehand so they can share it for them.
- Children feel meetings can be boring; they are often too long, there are too many adults and it can get embarrassing when personal information is shared.
- Children feel meetings should take place in different ways, they don't have to be in scary buildings with lots of people.
- When Children are asked for their views, they feel it is important they get feedback as they like to know; what is happening, what has happened and if not, why not.

The Team Manager of the Engagement and Development Team met with Maggie Atkinson the Chair/Scrutineer of the Partnership twice this year to inform the key themes and messages from children and to 'close of loop' of feedback, ensuring consistency of messages and allowing Maggie in her role to advocate the wishes and feelings of children at a strategic level. The involvement of children in strategic areas, such as recruitment and commissioning puts children at the heart of these processes and ensures they are heard and considered.. It also sends a very clear messages to perspective colleagues and those awarded contracts that children matter here.

Seeking to understanding and record the Voice of the Child is a clear driver for [Bedfordshire Police](#) through their victims and witnesses' engagement board, but also through a Task and Finish Group. Bedford College undertook some surveys to gather student's views on safeguarding and feeling safe. They also ensure through referral processes that they capture the voice of the child and a full 'picture' of their lived experience so this information can be shared with partners. Also ensuring that information regarding concerns for a child, and information held, in respect of a child's emotional wellbeing and mental health is captured by front line staff and then conveyed in the referral process.

[BLMK ICB](#) through the Health provider quarterly reporting arrangements the voice of children and their families are included and this is monitored through Quality Assurance meetings with the health providers.

[Bedfordshire Hospital Trust \(BHT\)](#) ensure that all information relating to a child's interactions, views and wishes are recorded within their existing medical records. This information is also shared with the practitioners involved in a child's care to ensure robust risk assessments and care plans are created that allow the voice of the child to be at the centre of their involvement. Hospital staff have been involved in meetings with children

in relation to the 'Better Days Campaign' and are currently in the process of completing a Mental Health Strategy with support of [East London NHS Foundation Trust \(ELFT\)](#) and other services. Children and their parents/carers who have accessed hospital services for this reason have played an active role in the co-ordination of this, alongside representing their peers at meetings. BHT actively seeks feedback from all patients that have accessed hospital services. This includes parents and children whereby they would be able to give feedback independently. This information is then collated and used to improve services in the future as well as identifying good practice that could be replicated elsewhere.

[Cambridgeshire Community Services \(CCS\)](#) through their PALS team gather a range of feedback and also feedback from complaints to review practice and modify. For example, a complaint about a safeguarding report led to some input for all staff on the use of language and how that may be perceived by parents. ELFT gather feedback from adult and children service users, directly influences service design and this

is collated in a variety of ways but includes Patient outcomes. Learning from Compliments and Complaints is tracked and shared at their Senior Management Teams who have parent/carer representation and disseminated across the organisation. Bedfordshire and Luton CAMHS Parent Partnership Forum also invites parents/carers to feed into details of current service developments and to raise any important issues to help influence change.

[Bedford Inclusive Learning Training Trust \(BILTT\)](#) send out questionnaires twice annually to parents/carers, pupils and staff on Safeguarding. In the responses from parents/carers 90% felt their children are listened to, supported and safe in school. The response from pupils was 80% feel safe at school. Staff said they feel 100% confident in identifying and raising Safeguarding concerns/issues with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in their school. Governor visit take place at least termly and have reported that they feel that Safeguarding is a strong area within BILTT schools.

“Child protection strategy meetings are held in a timely manner, and are well attended by relevant partners. Records of strategy discussions are detailed, capturing the multi-agency discussions which inform outcomes and next steps. Concerns and issues are thoroughly explored. Clear plans ensure that investigations proceed with the right steps taken to ensure that children are seen and action is taken to protect them. When necessary, child protection medicals and Achieving Best Evidence interviews are arranged promptly, to clarify risks and inform safety planning.”

Ofsted Inspection November 2021

The Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child group (VOCG) has continued in 2021/2022 to review, create, action and recommend processes for ensuring that the voice of children and their lived experience is heard in a timely, effective and appropriate manner. In July 2022, the VOCG held a consultation with 76 children, aged 7-14yrs, representing 10 Bedfordshire schools to discuss 'How can we help you to feel safe?' The event was chaired by Alan Caton, Independent Chair and Scrutineer for Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Boards. In summary, the children told us they do feel safe growing up in Bedfordshire and having kind and trusted adults at home and in school helped this. They identified people in uniforms (police, fire, lollipop man) were trusted people in the community. Many described how seeing friends helped cheer them up and having adults who know you well and check in with you. A pupil from our youngest group described safe as 'just normal, it's what you should feel like all the time'. The oldest attendees told us about the need for open, honest communication with adults who spend quality time with them, and for more education around emotions and wellbeing. Across all ages, children wanted autonomy; younger children spoke about adults who helped them to learn but also wanting to be listened to. One said, 'Respect us and what we do or look like, no matter what', another 'teach me basic skills'. The older group talked about being trusted to make decisions.

Pupils also described not feeling safe, with COVID related factors playing a significant part; not seeing friends, wearing masks, not being able to go outside and missing friends, wider family and teachers. There were examples of positive experiences of the 'lockdown' with children reflecting that they spent more time with family and got to see younger siblings grow up which wouldn't have happened if they were in school. Technology, notably mobile phones and CCTV played a part in children feeling safe, many talked about having a phone when out and about; using location tracking apps so people knew where they were and use

of CCTV in the streets and in their home. Discussions suggest many of the Yr4-6 pupils had mobile devices. Few concerns were raised about online safety; children talked about not sharing personal information and talking to adults if they were worried. During discussions, pets, particularly dogs, were named as things that helped children feel safe- there was a distinction between dogs and guard dogs in some examples.

Many of the children showed awareness of socio-economic, political and global issues. During discussions about feeling safe, children shared thoughts on injustice in the world; the war in Ukraine, families needing to use food banks, racism within the police. Some children showed suspicion of motives and concern of who was around them; 'you need to be wary, you don't know people's motives', 'curtains make me feel safe, there can always be that 1 stalker in the bushes'.

Safety in their local communities was explored; feeling intimidated by older children in the park, the need for zebra crossings so they could walk to school independently and softer surfaces in play areas in case they fall over. Children identified feeling safe if they knew those around them but many also felt confident that if they needed help whilst out, this would be provided by the people around them.



The children shared their thoughts on feeling safe;

“I feel safer at home than when I’m out and about because I’m wary of people I don’t know.”

“CCTV cameras around my house make me feel safe.”

“When I walk to school the lollipop man Geoff makes me feel safe.”

“Knowing windows and doors are locked helps me feel safe.”

“Adults help because they always stick with you.”

“Safe is when you don’t need to worry about your family or yourself.”

“It feels good when I can express myself.”

“Friends because we all care about each other.”

The event was also an opportunity to hear from the 20 school staff who shared positive feedback about relationships and support for safeguarding within their schools and wider communities. Opportunities to come together as localities were beneficial and the DSL meetings were working well. Many recognised improvements in communication with other practitioners but felt there was still progress to be made; a common area was around feedback and updates when referrals are made to children social care. There was notable feedback on understanding of the role of the safeguarding partnerships and their work; asking the Partnerships to consider how updates, information and resources can be better communicated to schools, and highlighting that information is spread across multiple websites making it harder to locate. There was support for a ‘one stop’ Pan Bedfordshire website with an overview of local pathways and offers.

The VCG identified following the event that although the children responded positively about feeling safe, there were many examples of anxious comments. For some of the children’s emotional wellbeing they were very alert to perceived dangers and social issues, could this be as a result of COVID and spending more time around adults during lockdown. Could it be that children are accessing information presented at a level that is harder for them to process? VCG acknowledged that childhood has often included ‘big issues’ but there would have been few opportunities such as this event for children to express their views in the last 2 years. VCG reflected that for future events having a focus on support and strategies to build confidence was a must. The VCG have developed a response and strategic action plan and working with the schools who attended, work is already underway in the development of a Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership’s website and regular newsletter.



BBSCP Strategic Priorities 2021-2022

Safeguarding children in the home Neglect:

“Neglect continues to be the most frequent reason for children being on a child protection plan in Bedford Borough. Practitioners demonstrate an excellent understanding of its long-term corrosive nature and its effects on children. Actions that are well coordinated through multi-agency child protection planning help to improve children’s circumstances. Where progress is not evident, decisive action is taken.”

Ofsted Nov 2021

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across Bedford Borough and the BBSCP’s aim is to ensure that there is early recognition of neglect cases and that from early help to statutory intervention there should be appropriate, consistent, and timely response across all agencies. Neglect has been a priority for the BBSCP for the past five plus years and we know we need to do more so that children have their needs met by their parents or carers, and support is provided where this is not the case. The BBSCP wants to ensure that practitioners identify and prevent unmet needs from escalating. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy sets out the strategic aims to improve the early recognition of neglect in families; to improve agencies’ responses to these families; and to ultimately improve positive outcomes for children and their families.

- Neglect is the highest category for referrals and child subject to CPPs and demonstrate that neglect is being identified by practitioners
- Neglect is a key component of multi-agency and single agency training.
- Bedfordshire Police hold multi agency Neglect Body Worn Video meetings

Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Plan 2020 - 2023

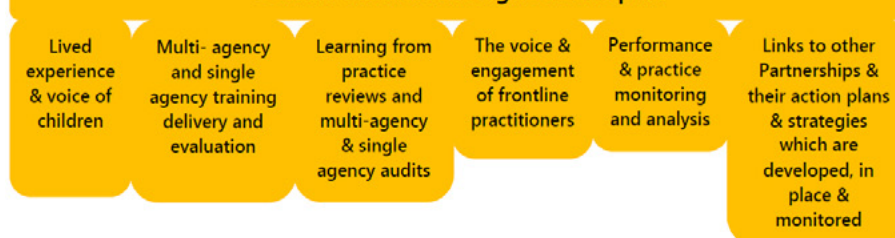
BBSCP has agreed the following themes to direct its work for 2020 – 2023:

Safeguarding children and young people



Some of these will be addressed via Pan Bedfordshire work streams and groups.

Golden threads throughout this plan



To fulfil the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership’s core functions, the following will be presented/developed/commissioned.

Annual Reports;
 Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

Assurance Reports;
 Safeguarding in Education, Children with Disabilities, Looked after Children, Child Exploitation, Domestic Abuse, Voice and Lived experience of children

to identify through partnership working best practice and areas of improvement around Neglect.

- If a child presents to hospital and staff have concerns about neglect of a child or their safety or wellbeing, then contact will be made with the IFD or Emergency Duty Team (EDT) to discuss the risk and obtain any relevant history.
- Bedfordshire Hospital Trusts advises that when a child is admitted to hospital it is standard practice to record their presentation, weight, height, and any developmental delay. They have a system of 'information sharing' electronic forms for all hospital staff to share a concern about a child 24/7. This allows staff to share any level of concern with the Safeguarding Team which would include concerns that would not meet the threshold for the IFD or EDT. These forms are picked up in office hours by the safeguarding team. A number of these forms will raise concerns that potentially could be signs of neglect, (for example an unkempt child, a child with unsuitable clothes for the weather, very underweight child, developmental delay without known cause, poor interaction between child and parent etc.). The Safeguarding Team review this information, look at the history for any previous concerns known, liaise with Health Visitor (HV)/School Nurse etc. and check if the child is known or open to CSC and the [Child Protection Information Sharing System \(CP-IS\)](#) is checked for all A&E attendances of children). When some context is gained, a decision will then be made on what action is needed – i.e. HV input, Early Help, CSC Referral etc. The Safeguarding Team can also provide supervision to staff that raise concerns to promote good practice. All concerns around neglect are raised through the information sharing pathway and where threshold is met referred to CSC. Many cases generate robust discussions with partner agencies such as the 0-19 service to explore wider health information to support a referral and assure follow up on discharge from hospital. There are effective working relationships with the

15% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN POVERTY

0-19 service including their safeguarding team with the aim of leading to better outcomes for children. For BHT neglect features as part of the Level 3 safeguarding children training day, this includes definitions of neglect, how that presents in practice and the response required. In addition, the Safeguarding Team use local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR's) as case studies within the training programme for the Trust.

- The [Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\)](#) Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) assessment tool has previously been launched and is fairly well embedded into practice. This is a widely used assessment tool designed to help frontline practitioners 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.
- Practitioners who are already using and embedding the GCP2 have said that referrals are clearer and more likely to lead to actions that would support the child, enabled parents to better understand practitioners concerns and that some families reported that the GCP2 helped them make positive health and lifestyle choices as a result.
- Current key activities include revising the Neglect Communications Campaign, to link in with local voluntary organisations such as Foodbanks to help services build a better understanding and recognition of neglect, to engage with schools to help offer guidance and advice when they are supporting children facing neglect.
- Procedures, guidance and Briefings are available for all practitioners when dealing with cases of neglect.
- The Partnership has developed some guidance around the development of [multi-agency chronologies](#) to sit alongside the general guidance around the use of chronologies is already available).
- BBSCP has also development some guidance around [Stop and Review meetings](#) to be used to safeguard children. They are a tool to support practitioners who may need the opportunity to talk with other practitioners without the parents/carers being present.

Early Help

“Children and their families who need help have easy access to the right level of support through the Integrated Front Door (IFD). Close alignment and joint working between social workers and early help services enable most children and families to be helped and have their needs met at the lowest threshold level.”

“Effective partnership arrangements and the council’s continued investment and commitment to early help services have strengthened the support and programmes available for children and their families. Early help practitioners engage family and professional networks successfully, ensuring that children quickly get the help they need for their situations to improve. Specialist caseworkers and, more recently, the adolescent response team within the early help service provide more intensive support to families with more complex needs, avoiding the need for families to go through the statutory assessment process unnecessarily.”

Ofsted November 2021

Children’s Services (CS) work closely strategically and operationally with partners to help shape what can be offered to prevent a need to access Children’s Social Care. There is a comprehensive Early Help offer that includes parenting programmes, training and support for staff and schools as well as individual and group work with children and their families. Early Help and Children’s Services strategies for 2022-25 (link to be added) have been consulted on with the Partnership and signed off, they provide a clear strategic and operational focus on early, timely and proportionate

responses to the needs of children and their families and are intrinsically linked to the work of the Partnership.

“By working in a relational way, across all contexts from individual to the wider community, schools, partners and being always professionally curious helps catch concerns early on. Early Help is in a great position to be able to do this.”

Early Help practitioner

The following Early Help Case studies speak for themselves about how responding effectively to need in the right way and at the right time is preventing further escalation of concerns for the child.





Case Study

Simon was referred into Early Help as a case stepped down from Children's Social Care. He was on the verge of permanent exclusion. There was extensive trauma in his life including a fire when he was very young which left him with extensive burns, a history of witnessing domestic violence and parental substance misuse. All of which had meant a lot of intervention from statutory services. At the point of step down he had a positive adult for the previous 6 months and work could build on and support this. Some of the interventions used included: Trauma informed practice through the arts/play, meeting Simon where he felt comfortable and psychoeducation with school around neuroscience and the impact of Simon's early experiences on him to help them to understand Simon better.

This was delivered to 30 teachers at his school. He now has a closer relationship with teachers as a result. This has encouraged school to think differently about how they respond to Simon. At the beginning of this piece of work Simon was leaving lessons, wandering the school, leaving the school grounds, being disruptive, getting detentions, not communicating his needs at all. Missing education in this way makes him more vulnerable to other safeguarding concerns in terms of exploitation. Now Simon no longer wanders the school, detentions are not as common, he isn't going to be excluded any time soon. He will also go the house office when he is struggling with lessons, school are really supportive and will help him with these issues. This is a huge achievement for him and he is much happier in school as a result and is now engaging with education at his pace and school are working with his needs.

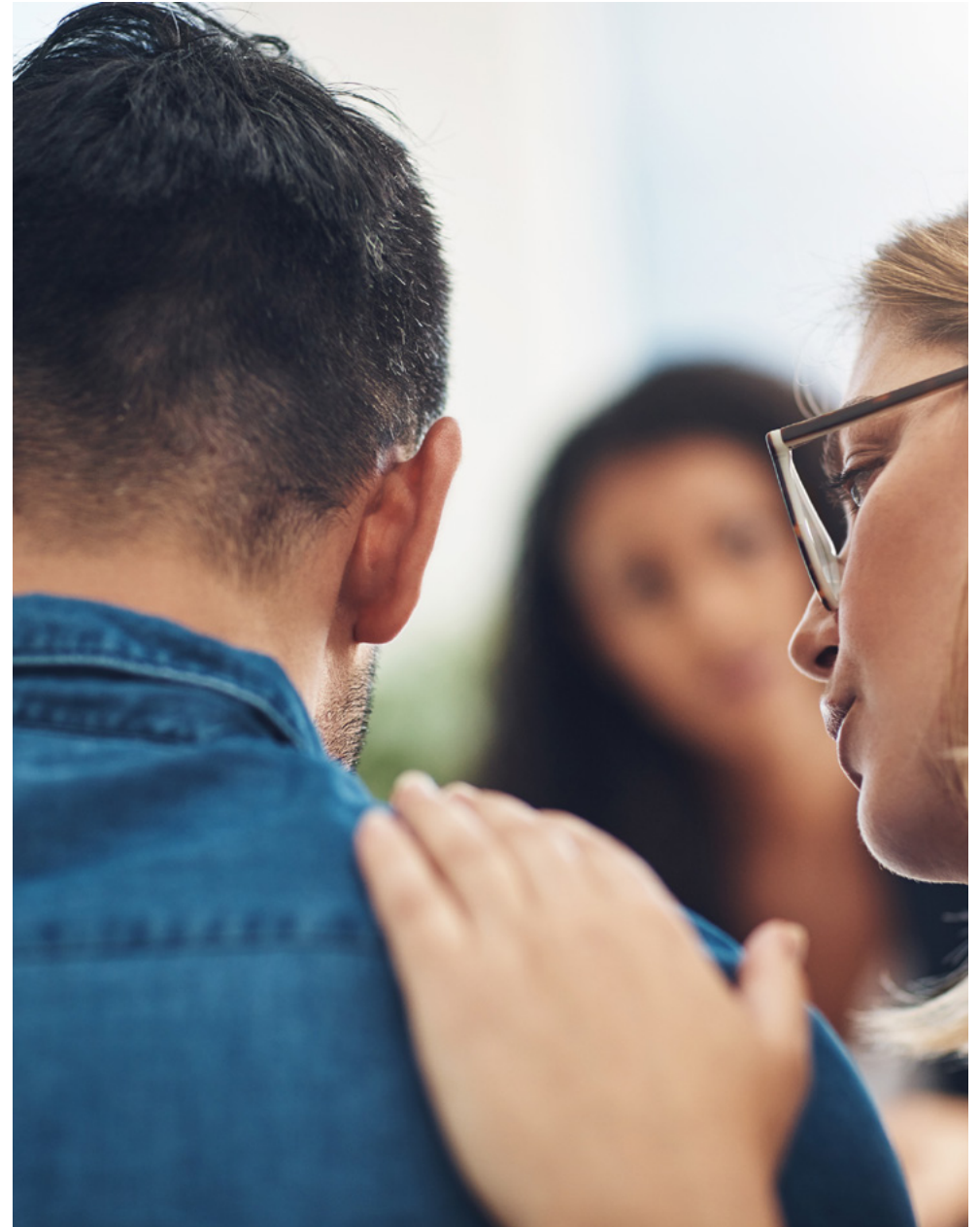


Case Studies

Katia was referred to Early Help by school when aged 11, presenting with anxiety, panic and thoughts of not wanting to be here. Although she was awaiting CHUMS intervention and on the waiting list, evidence tells us that anxiety can get worse, if the cycles of anxiety are not disrupted and supported and this can lead children to harm themselves. The Early Help Practitioner worked with parents and delivered parent led interventions over 6 sessions. This was to help parents support and manage anxiety based issues. Through this work parents now feel really confident in supporting their daughter. They have also used some of the skills and techniques to support Katia's brother with some of his fears and worries at bedtimes. Katia has started a successful transition to secondary school, she is making new friends, joining clubs and engaging with activities outside of school. Katia and her parents now feel that they do not need the support from CHUMS, which has the effect that CHUMS can be able to help another child.

Emily following the loss of both her father and grandfather, as well as watching her mother endure cancer treatment, Emily had spent 6 months more or less hidden away in her bedroom. Emily's school attendance was 0% during this time and her mother and nan explained that she wouldn't even leave the house during daylight hours. Both family members and other practitioners were sceptical of Early Help's chances of engaging with Emily. Through gradual persistence, many home visits, text messages and written letters, Emily was gradually coaxed out of the family home. She is now regularly attending her Therapy sessions with Early Help practitioners out in the community and has also begun attending Tuition session at Marvellous Minds in the Bedford town centre.

Working with Afghan and Syrian families, Early Help completed Early Help Assessments (EHAs) with every family arriving in Bedford Borough under UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme), ARAP (Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy) and ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). Following an initial EHA a minimum of 3 TAF (Team Around the Family) meetings are held with each family, relevant practitioners, schools and agencies. These TAF meetings are 6 weeks apart, and act as a safety net to ensure smooth integration into the Bedford Borough community for these families and children. Out of the TAF meetings come identified needs and relevant actions have been identified: Referrals to wellbeing services, protective behaviours work, and support accessing Free School Meals and the Holiday Activities and Food programme are just some examples. Where specific requirements are identified that affect a number of resettled families, then projects are created or commissioned in response. Early Help have worked with Children's Centres and CHUMS to provide Trauma Groups and Workshops, Bedford College and Kings Arms Project to provide English Language Lessons, and Marvellous Minds to provide additional English, Maths and Science tuition to secondary school aged children.





Case Studies

Reece following the separation of his parents and moving with his dad into temporary accommodation, Reece's behaviour at home and school started to deteriorate. He would regularly throw huge tantrums which caused his dad to feel incredibly overwhelmed and depressed. 1:1 Parenting Support and Solution Focused counselling sessions were provided for his dad.

"Just thought I'd give you a little update on Reece. Reece has turned into such an amazing boy, I have no tantrums, bed times I can't fault. Even nights away with his mum, he is as good as gold." Reece's Dad.

Nadia arrived in Bedford Borough with her husband and 3 children after fleeing the conflict in Syria. Her husband had suffered torture whilst in captivity, which included his back being broken. The children were suffering with trauma which manifested in various forms including night terrors and the re-enactment of their father's torture. Neither Nadia or any of her family members spoke English.

Working with colleagues from BLMK ICB and CHUMS 'Trauma Workshops' for resettled families were to designed, implemented and delivered via a local Children's Centre. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes were arranged and both parents attended. The children were supported in school and Early Help ensured that the 'education tariff' awarded to the schools as part of the resettlement schemes was spent appropriately. English language classes were delivered over the holidays for the children and helped the eldest to set up a new football team for refugees, Early Help support him to buy footballs and sports kit. The family have now been settled in Bedford Borough for over 5 years, their English has improved dramatically and the boys are continuing their education.

Bedford College access relevant information and training to help keep their students safe via their linked person from the Early Help Team. They have also disseminated information to pastoral staff on a regular basis to help support students and their families as well as increase awareness around other agencies such as [Link to Change](#) that may be able to help support.

Public Health's work has a key focus upon prevention and early intervention and their refreshed [Children and Young Peoples Plan 2022 - 2027](#) has been written by and for children and reflects the experiences of children and their families during and after COVID. Public Health has played a key role in co-ordinating the support where there has been a suspected suicide within an educational setting. This has involved ensuring that all support is considered and utilised, preventative learning is captured and disseminated and that settings feel empowered to support not only their own students but also themselves. Settings are then able to help others and put every measure possible in place to ensure that children have avenues of support when they feel their lives are not travelling smoothly and they need immediate help. This particular year has been more difficult to evidence impact due to COVID and the role that Public Health had to take on. Public Health have worked in partnership with the safeguarding structures to ensure that children are fully informed of how to access support at any time and ensuring that partners work together collectively to support this. The relationships that have been built during this time with educational settings has been very positive and will help move future work forward.

Across BILTT schools have access to a number of organisations such as foodbanks, foodshare scheme, carers in beds grants and uniform scheme for those parents that are struggling financially, this enables parents to provide the basics for their children. By being able to provide the basics for their children they are targeting low level neglect and ensuring they are being proactive when it comes to recognising the early signs of neglect,

although often closely linked to poverty. Families feel better supported as a result and know that schools are not there to judge but to work with them, when families find themselves in hardship. BILTT schools each now have a Family Support Worker; this has had a huge impact in their families better communicating with the schools when they are struggling. By being able to offer internal parenting support they are able to work closely together to better support their pupils in their homes. The Family Support Workers are able to research different charities and grants that can support pupils to be better supported at home. Parents/Carers are often otherwise unaware of what's available for them outside of their current benefits. BILTT work closely with Carers in Beds to whom their families can be referred. If parents/carers and young carers are being supported and accessing services which positively impede on their wellbeing, then they are in a better place to support their children, which means children have better outcomes and are being cared for by their families who are the best placed to meet their needs.

ELFT as an NHS Mental Health Foundation trust, has a strong focus on public health, underpinned by prevention and Early Help. Through their CAMHS Early Help, the targeted team provide rapid access to targeted interventions for children which will be facilitated at an early stage of need. This will include joint health and social care assessments and consultation for the Team Around the Child, focusing on the principle of strong, collaborative partnership working between agencies. ELFT's schools programme includes a targeted group of specialist CAMHS Mental Health Practitioners who are embedded in each of the secondary schools and Colleges within Bedford Borough providing specialist emotional health training to staff, case consultation and where appropriate direct assessment if required. The named lead in schools are responsible for mental health, developing closer relationships with CAMHS in support of timely and appropriate referrals to services. The Early Intervention Psychosis service is a specialist service working with those aged 14 - 64

inclusive who are experiencing their first episode of psychosis, no matter what the cause of symptoms, whether it is drug-induced or related to a bipolar disorder or a primary psychotic illness. This intensive service is available to people with psychosis and their carers for a maximum of three years. **For more information please access [here](#).**



Digital Safeguarding

A decision was taken to disband the Pan Bedfordshire Digital Safeguarding Group due to the size and changing nature of the digital agenda. Moving forward all Pan Bedfordshire Groups would have a standing agenda item to address digital safeguarding issues. The Partnership will continue to support the Safer Internet Day and liaise with schools to support them. Digital Safeguarding will be a golden thread throughout all work streams to address any concerns raised in a much more focussed way.

Bedfordshire Police's Cyber Protect team's (CPT) aim is to help the communities in Bedford Borough o protect themselves against cyber criminality through education, awareness, and building a strong and positive culture of good cyber security practice. The CPT delivers digital safeguarding presentations to schools and colleges in regards to the sharing of images, social media safety, security online, money mules, hate crime and malicious communications. Members of the CPT attend safeguarding meetings where appropriate. They deliver teacher training which has built up a strong connection with schools across the Borough alongside numerous online safety 'Coffee mornings' with schools and parents as a means of education and reaching the proposed target audience.

The Cyber Prevent remit is to deter children with an interest, talent or curiosity in computers, coding, gaming, and cyber related disciplines from finding themselves in a position where, unknowingly or otherwise, they have broken the law.

They aim to do so in environments where children are learning or exercising cyber related skills by;

- raising awareness of offences covered by the Computer Misuse Act 1990

- informing of the potential consequences of offending
- providing early intervention and positive diversions for those on the cusp of committing cyber dependent offences, be that via police investigations or referral by others, including;
 - promoting environments where such skills can be exercised legitimately
 - raising awareness of the wealth of opportunities in the information security
 - and other relevant sectors.

The remit includes engagement with schools, colleges, universities, code clubs, STEM events (Cybercrime/security training) and similar providing advice, resources and a referral route to identify people in the region who are on the cusp of committing cybercrime offences. Attendance at public and education sector events is intended to contribute to raising awareness of Computer Misuse Act offences, deliver Cyber Prevent messaging and to building on partnership-working opportunities.

BILTT offers parents online safety events throughout the year run by the Education and Diversion team, which means by educating parents/carers they are better able to educate and protect their children. They also have a specialist digital literacy lead who will also be able to work individually with parents/carers when there are online safety issues raised across BILTT. CAMHS Mental Health Schools teams work closely with Public health and Education to promote safe use of the internet and social media.

For more information please visit our [website](#).

Domestic Abuse

Children who live in homes where domestic abuse (DA) is happening are greatly impacted in terms of their health, wellbeing and development.

This is not just the children who actually witness DA, it is all children living in the house who may hear the arguments, items being smashed and see the injuries or damage to the house the next day. Some children are also verbally or physically abused too and may try to intervene and get hurt. Other children come to accept the behaviour as normal and behave in a similar way towards the non-abusive adult or grow up to be abusive in their own relationships.

“Families who are experiencing domestic abuse are supported well. Practitioners work to understand the impact this has on children and offer tailored support to meet their needs. When it is considered safe and in children’s best interests, attempts are made to also speak to the alleged perpetrator to seek their views and involve them in the work going forward to keep children safe. Parents are encouraged to engage with specialist community services available for both victims and perpetrators.”

Ofsted November 2021

Domestic Abuse (DA) work is led and governed by the [BBC Community Safety Partnership](#), [Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership \(BDAP\)](#) and the Bedford Borough Local Domestic Abuse Board. [The Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026](#) was consulted on with the BBSCP and will focus on children through the following objectives;

Of the Single Assessments completed:

37.8% identified Domestic Abuse as a presenting factor

Justice, Recovery and ongoing Protection: Adopt a culture amongst professionals where responsibility for the abusive behaviours is placed firmly with the abusive partners, and the burden of responsibility for

wholly protecting the children from the abuse is removed from the non-abusive partner. Improved healthy and safe relationships between those who use harmful behaviours and their children.

<p>PROVISION OF SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY</p> <p>Diversify the range of support available to survivors and their children to ensure that the right support is available at the right time taking into account age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race and nationality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate survivor voices into Local Partnership Board, commissioning process and domestic abuse consultations. • Hold survivor voice focus groups incorporating individuals from protected characteristic communities. • Engage and consult with children & young people to seek their views on what support they need. • Commissioning of trauma informed services who can support long term recovery, as well as crisis support. • Developing a data dashboard which assists in identifying need for future provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with protected characteristics have a voice and access to support services that meet their needs rather than a one size fits all service. • Children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse receive appropriate support to recover and thrive. • Positive feedback from survivors and children and young people on the services they have accessed. • Services are effectively commissioned and are informed by the dashboard which includes performance data and service user experiences.
<p>EARLY EDUCATION & INTERVENTION</p> <p>Support education settings to ensure that they have implemented statutory relationships and sex education into the curriculum and confidently incorporate discussions on domestic abuse and violence.</p> <p>Early identification & support for children and young people living in households with domestic abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain our close working relationships with education settings through Early Help Professionals, Safeguarding Leads Forums, School Improvement Team. • Implement Operation Encompass to ensure children receive support as early as possible via a formal Police partnership where this is available. • Access to adolescent child on parent abuse programmes. • Evidenced based recovery programme for child victims of Domestic Abuse. • Work with the voluntary sector to create a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and children are able to identify the dynamics of unhealthy relationships and know how to access support. • Young people are able to make informed decisions about their relationships as they transition into adulthood. • Increase in accessing early help and advice services. • Reduction of children & young people experiencing adverse effects of domestic abuse leading to school exclusions, criminality, exploitation and poor health.

BBC have successfully complied with the statutory Requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act by creating a Local Partnership Board, completed a Needs Assessment, published a Domestic Abuse Strategy (above), commissioned refuge accommodation and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic support worker for women in the refuges. Additional posts of two IDVAs have been created to support vulnerable adults referred into Adult Social Care and Housing, and workers to support those needing accommodation to encourage them to stay in the accommodation rather than return to the perpetrator. Funding has also been secured for 2022/2023 to incorporate Survivor Voice Work to inform service need and future commissioning. Specialist domestic abuse training for staff and awareness raising campaigns are in place.

The following are examples of other Partnership work to support those who experience DA:

Support for children: one of the Statutory duties of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) is to ensure that there is support in place for children & adults who have left an abusive relationship and are accommodated in Government defined safe accommodation. Utilising some of BBC grant funding, they have commissioned [Early Childhood Partnership \(ECP\)](#) to employ a Trainee Play Therapist & Protective Behavioural Worker to work with children who are in the Refuges in Bedford Borough and other forms of Safe Accommodation. Putting this work in place provides an opportunity for children to talk about their experiences of DA within the home, in a safe environment and one where they can be free to talk without feeling guilty or needing to protect either parent. By sharing their experiences through play will help to build their confidence and self-esteem and support their recovery. The Protective Behaviour work can help older children understand how to keep themselves safe from DA.

Safe space work: During COVID the BDAP worked together to ask pharmacies and shops in Bedford Borough to become a safe space where someone who was experiencing DA and had limited opportunity to report it could potentially access a designated safe space to seek help. This local scheme was set up independently of the National scheme that was organised by Hestia through Boots stores and continues to grow with all Bedford Borough libraries and children’s centres signed up to be a safe space.

The approach of MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences – Domestic Abuse):

continued to run monthly during COVID. Whilst at the heart of MARAC is safety planning for the adult victim of the abuse, the meeting also considers the safeguarding of the children and what can be done to address the perpetrator behaviour. In terms of safety planning and practitioners being able to access children and adults who needed support, required MARAC to be more creative due to children not regularly attending school. Whilst multi agency working and information sharing is key to MARAC, it became even more crucial to be able to identify a practitioner who had some contact with the family who was in a position to make contact with the non-abusive parent without raising suspicion and placing them at further risk, to advise them of support that was available or to pass on a message that a safeguarding practitioner was trying to get in touch with them.



The Pan Beds LITG followed up on the findings and the learning from a Pan Beds MARAC audit completed in 2021 and worked with BDAP to collate responses from a number of agencies (this work is still being progressed). To date in response to what the Third Sector and Early Years have shared BADAP have been asked to seek assurances on the following issues;

- How can practitioners be supported to feel more confident talking to perpetrators about their behaviours?
- How can information be shared with partners more effectively when a perpetrator is in custody so these opportunities are being fully utilised to engage with the victims and their children?
- How can partners disrupt perpetrators behaviours? Are there tools similar to the Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit?
- Whist the majority of third sector have access to interpreting services not all do and one partner made a recommendation that to overcome concerns and grow confidence is to have an interpreting service across Pan Bedfordshire who understand DA and are willing to work with that individual or family for the duration of the support needed.
- Is there any work being undertaken Pan Bedfordshire to address healthy relationships and DA are aware of?

The Pan Beds LITG will be discussing and developing some myth busting social media communications with clearer information about the role of children social care.

[Operation Encompass](#) was launch in February 2022 in Bedford Borough and has meant that schools are getting timely notification of children subjected to DA or have been missing in the previous 24 hours. Children in these circumstances have often experienced some level of trauma so this early reporting to schools is imperative to their emotionally wellbeing and mental health. The feedback from schools in respect of Op Encompass from Bedford Borough so far has been very positive and has enabled schools to implement strategies to help the child concerned, providing support, and understanding thus having a



positive impact of their emotional wellbeing and mental health. BILTT has seen Op Encompass have a positive impact on their pupils, by getting the information in a timely manner, means that they are better placed to support pupils when coming into school, offering them a safe place to talk and feel supported. Referrals are then made by BILTT if needed to external agencies to better support the pupil.

Bedford College has worked with [Safer Streets](#) during the academic year to raise awareness around Violence Against Women and Girls, Keeping safe and personal safety. This has included promoting the [Hollie Guard app](#) as well as distributed personal safety alarms to students. Similarly, there are links with the [Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit \(VERU\)](#) to promote [Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation \(BAVEX\)](#) early in the academic year. Bedford College has via the Pan Bedfordshire Harmful Practices group links with other relevant agencies to increase awareness amongst staff on domestic abuse, Honour Based Abuse (HBA), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages.

BHT's safeguarding teams have a designated lead for safeguarding within Adults, Midwifery and Paediatrics and in addition to there are 3 [Independent Domestic Violence Advisors \(IDVA\)](#) in place.

One victim support IDVA on each site and a hospital staff IDVA based on the L&D site. DA training is available in various forms. This can be completed as a standalone training package online, face to face or via generic safeguarding training at all levels. The Trusts safeguarding teams have individuals trained whom complete risk assessments and protection planning with individuals suffering from DA. In addition to this, staff are also trained on how to respond to DA with certain areas such as Maternity and the A&E department receiving a higher level of training due to increased numbers of DA cases seen in those areas. DA packs are readily available in all clinical areas. These packs are to supports staff with

Case Study

Liam a teenager was referred to the Early Help service due to violent behaviour towards his mother. His mother was undergoing Chemo treatment at the time, and Liam would push and hit her, harm the family cat, and pour his mother's medicine down the sink. His mother was most concerned that one day he might deliberately, or even accidentally, push her down the stairs. Non Violent Resistance techniques were taught to mum, including the writing of an 'announcement letter'. Mentoring sessions with Liam (using badminton together while I spoke with him). Partnership working with police; a 'SIG' marker was placed on property, Liam's mum was given an alarm that she placed around her neck to press if needed, and police officers were asked to speak with Liam about the possible consequences of his actions. Liam was referred to the SPACE programme (youth club for children who had witnessed domestic abuse).

"Glad to report Liam and I are doing well and much better than before. I am grateful for your and other people's support... It's got me thinking and looking for alternative future employment... all this experience at home and with schools has got me thinking I may have more to offer towards supporting people going through similar situations. And let's face it, I am definitely a fine example of coming through and being stronger." Liam's mum

materials/risk assessments and contact numbers etc. they may require when dealing with a case. These packs also include fact sheets/ supportive advice for staff on how a victim can stay safe within a domestic abuse relationship or if they chose to leave relationship. In addition to this, the Trust commissions the use of Lip Balms that are stocked in various areas of the hospital such as the safeguarding office, A&E, Maternity and paediatrics. These Lip Balms have the number of the national DA helpline secretly embedded into the bar code of the product and are given to victims that may return to an area whereby they are suffering from DA. The team are also in receipt of mobile phones whereby one can be given to a victim fleeing from abuse as a mode of maintaining contact with professionals and family etc. The Trust has a DA Clinic available each week which commenced as a pilot in June 2021 in response to the Trust safeguarding teams not being able to access victims that attended hospital out of hours. An appointment is made with the individuals consent by the treating practitioners for them to return to hospital. During this appointment and if safe to so, they would be met with a safeguarding practitioner, a clinician and IDVA (if consent gained). A full assessment/ review can take place with appropriate risk assessments and onwards referrals completed. The DA Clinic and the team have received recognition by NHS England and BDAP for their safeguarding practice.

BLMK deliver sessions regarding recognising and dealing with families undergoing DA to GP's during their safeguarding training and the Designated Children's professionals link with adult colleagues in the ICB where specific cases require intervention. CCS have developed a package of training on DA as part of their training offer at Level 3 which reflects the changes in legislation and learning about the impact of DA on children.

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



Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

“Children’s and care leavers’ health needs are assessed, addressed and well supported. Support for their mental health is particularly good, with therapy and emotional support to help them to make sense of their previous experiences and current living situations. Children are given information about their health histories before they leave care. Where children are placed out of area, the advantages and disadvantages are carefully considered, to ensure this is the best option for them. Workers build strong relationships with professionals in other areas, working creatively with them to access relevant services and meet children’s needs.”

Ofsted Inspection November 2021

At the BBSCP Strategic Board in July 2022 the theme of the meeting was Partnership response to safeguarding and the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children. Each partner presented an assurance report and here are some examples of what they shared;

ELFT reported that children were being seen when necessary. A ‘Crisis Huddle’ takes place twice a week to consider the very large numbers of children presenting in crisis. Several initiatives were being implemented including the [‘Better Days’ campaign](#) with the aim of broadening access. Current challenges are the lack of sufficient Tier 4 beds however a Tier 4 interim unit was to open in September 2022 with 8 beds and a long term 18 bed unit at the Health Village was in the pipeline for future delivery. The more important work was to avoid admission.

BLMK ICB reported that a high-level dashboard was being developed to supplement data. The challenges of demand and capacity were not diminishing and it was clear that children wanted a modern service. Scoping work is being carried out in relation to children and autism. There is also work being undertaken following a recent report relating to health and inequality in perinatal services.

Bedford College: reported that anxiety amongst students was a significant issue. Staff training in this area had been increased and all staff had been trained to be mental health first-aiders and refer students to appropriate services as necessary. Students are encouraged to review the quality of their own mental health.

BBC Early Help are receiving an increase in requests for support from those attending Accident & Emergency and assessments are carried out where consent was given. A lot of anxiety was school-based with increased levels of exams and tests. There is an increasing focus on perinatal mental health. They observed that the partnership was working and highly valued.

BBC Children Social Care provide rich data which demonstrated an overall picture of complexity of need for children they are working with. They are reviewing the lived experience of children and their relationships to assess how this impacted on their mental health.

CCS reported that 80% of referrals to School Nurses were related to emotional health and wellbeing. The main areas of focus for the service were perinatal support and strengthening the relationship with ELFT and safeguarding teams. The Better Days campaign was very much at the heart of their work with the aim of developing a system that was led by children. They recognised that children needed to be assisted in their use of phones and computers well, with regular ‘time out’ and an ability to consider intelligently what they read online and on social media.

Public Health are undertaking further work in relation to child suicide and working with the partnership to provide support following a child taking their own life. Learning from recent deaths showed that the children had been in crisis and had more likely spoken to their friend than a practitioner about how they were feeling. It had also been acknowledged that an element of youth culture on social media idolised celebrity suicides and those with a mental health diagnosis. Starting from September 2022 schools will be asked to carry out self-reviews of staff wellbeing.

Bedfordshire Hospital Trust reported that numbers of children attending hospital was increasing and service level agreements were being implemented. A perinatal assessment service at Bedford Hospital was also being set up.

There was some challenge for the partnership in respect of the increasing pressure on students and there was a need to lobby Government to reduce testing as data showed that it was the education system as a whole creating pressure and not individual schools. The [Education White Paper](#) in March 2022 pushing schools to increase attendance while much research showed that a large number of children had better mental health when they weren't in school during the pandemic.

For the BBSCP following these discussions there will be follow up on the work around perinatal mental health as this was flagged by a number of partners as an area of work alongside the support and advice given to children who might have friends who are talking to them about struggling with their mental health, self-harm or taking their own life and what they can do.

ELFT provides community health, mental health and primary care services to a population of around a 1.8 million people including Bedford Borough and their vision is to make a positive difference in people's lives.

From a safeguarding perspective ELFT work hard to embed a 'Think Family' response. Safeguarding children and adults is not done in isolation and they work collaboratively and restoratively with partner agencies to '[Think Family](#)' and protect all those at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. Examples of this include: Discussion of the [Myth of Invisible Men Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers](#) (Sept 2021) report in their Level 3 training package; through their perinatal support groups for all new parents, including fathers/mothers and safeguarding supervision. They have plans to develop joined up child and adult safeguarding supervision. Assessment templates for CAMHS always take detailed familial health and social history, including parental responsibility status of significant adults. They hold quarterly adult/child Think Family learning sessions. Working with men and engaging fathers / male carers has also featured as a standing item on the safeguarding newsletter, distributed to all staff quarterly. Other positive examples include Transition pathways from child to adult services; Discovery College Parent/Child support – examples include in the wake of recent child deaths, school support being offered to parents, staff and children from ELFT services. This is also reflected in their safeguarding governance arrangements which include a joint corporate safeguarding team annual report and the recent move to a joint safeguarding committee.

Case Study

Eddie is 17 years old with complex health and development needs. He requires a great deal of support with his personal care and attends a specialist school. Eddie was in the care of his step-father who was struggling to keep him safe. As a result of concerns about how this was being managed, the health team became concerned and liaised directly with the Local Authority, Police and BLMK ICB about the need to urgently find an alternative way to keep Eddie safe. Steps were being taken to secure Eddie's safety but were not progressing at a rate considered to be commensurate with the level of risk. Successful escalation, challenge and discussion between agencies secured a different care package for Eddie.

BILTT's Family Support Workers are trained in Talking and Drawing therapy and Lego therapy, meaning that pupils can easily access support when required for their mental health, emotional wellbeing and behaviour management, as this is all in house there is no lengthy referral process and form filling, which often puts parents/pupils off as the service is in house and so pupils can get seen quickly.

Bedfordshire Police include screen time and mental health and cyberbullying as part of their digital safeguarding inputs both to students and parents/guardians and professionals and raise the risks around this area in their internal training to new Police Constable's, Police Constable Special Officers and Force Control Room staff. Funding received for onward referrals for Children and adults agreed for a 3-year period will see referral pathways for children who are victims or witnesses of DA, sexual abuse or other emotional or physical abuse. As part of the work around victim engagement there are clear work streams around engagement with schools through 'reading time' and feedback loops with children and vulnerable adults captured and collated by the Victim Engagement Officers. Regular audits around investigation involving children take place. They now have a victim and witnesses' engagement board which enables the tracking of work around the most vulnerable but also an ability to collate data around children at the scenes of DA jobs. The Police business process and standards lead has implemented strategies around capturing the voice of the child and ensuring that there is consistency across the force areas. There is also the incorporation of a referral to be completed once a child is stopped by the police and an encounter takes place. This has now been authorised through IT systems for inclusion on TUSERV (system used by front line officers) so that they can capture information around children signposting them to help if required. Through their Education diversion work they have a number of children with emotional and mental health issues and in addition as part of the day to day engagement with students they often encounter children that disclose concerns. As the team are not trained around this area then children and their families are signposted to more appropriate agencies. As part of their work they support a lot of children who are victims of crime and through support and engagement are often told they have made that individual feel more positive about things. Bedfordshire Police offer training for front line staff and crime teams in respect of 'voice of the child' and identifying concerns such as emotional wellbeing and mental health.



BILTT's Greys Education Centre have access to a CAMHS worker one day a week, this support allows us to identify pupils who have issues with their Mental health but don't meet the criteria for mainstream CAMHS. They are able to offer pupils up to 6 sessions working on building their emotional resilience, managing their emotional wellbeing, managing their anger, strategies for coping in a crisis and general tips to manage everyday life. This means pupils are not having to wait for support, the early intervention means that pupils are better supported earlier on in their difficulties to prevent things getting to crisis point for them.

BHT recognises that the mental health of children and their families is a huge concern locally and nationally due to rising numbers of adults and children needing to access services. In response they have developed Mental Health operational and strategic groups which are in the process of developing new policies and a Mental Health Strategy for the Trust. BHT have supported and trained their staff in readiness of the new Liberty Protection Safeguards commencing in the coming year. They have also provided an increased opportunity for both Learning Disability Awareness and Peri-Natal Mental Health training through e-learning packages and face to face training for their staff. All children who present to the Emergency Department with an acute mental health issue will have a CAMHS assessment ([Nice Guidance 134 published June 2019](#)). Depending on the risk assessment, a child will be either discharged from the department and followed up in 7 days, or admitted if further assessment or medical treatment is required. BHT Safeguarding Team tries to engage the children that are complex, or frequent attenders and build a rapport with them. CAMHS and the safeguarding children team/Paediatrics have a good working relationship and regularly review cases whereby learning has been identified. In addition, the paediatric team hold a daily meeting with CAMHS to discuss children who are admitted and also those that may present as an admission. This supports a pathway to ensure that the professional teams have a greater understanding of care planning and in

turn achieves better outcomes. These meetings include those aged 16-18 in adult areas who the ward may be able to support.

BHT's Perinatal Mental Health Team provides regular perinatal mental health study days to aid the understanding of how mental health issues can impact parenting and pregnancy. Women where perinatal mental health concerns have been identified during pregnancy are offered a referral to the perinatal mental health team for ongoing support. The perinatal mental health midwives support with all pregnant women known to have mental health concerns. Women also have access to the OCEAN service (Offering Compassionate Emotional Support for those Living Through Birth Trauma & Birth Loss) an integrated maternity and mental health service providing support for those affected by birth loss or birth trauma. Woman do not have to be under maternity services to engage in this service.





Case Study

Ella is 20 y old heavily pregnant woman and came to the attention of adult and child safeguarding due to non-engagement of antenatal and substance misuse services. P2R had numerous concerns regarding Ella and when she was 30/40 weeks pregnant there was no engagement with any statutory or non-statutory services including: midwifery, perinatal, P2R, CSC or Adult Mental Health services. Ella's unborn baby was on a CPP. Ella was presenting in a paranoid nature and with a significant mental/physical health history. Ella was using heroin and crack cocaine but would not disclose her location. Concerns that the baby would be born dependent on opiates, and likely to be underweight. Actions: All statutory partners from both child and adult safeguarding services worked cohesively together – police, health, children and adult services. Section 42 meeting held to discuss options to safeguard Ella and her unborn baby.

It was concluded that Ella required an admission to a psychiatric hospital to allow for a period of assessment to ensure her mental health is assessed fully due to the risks of her masking symptoms and her lack of engagement with community services, alongside her being of homeless. The admission would also be to provide safety Ella and her unborn baby as she is currently presenting with suicidal thoughts. Ella whilst still pregnant was admitted to a mother and baby unit. The baby was delivered and both Ella and her baby are reported to be making really good progress. This is a good example because Ella's case was discussed at the Bedford Borough Unborn Baby multi-agency safeguarding supervision pilot when Ella's pregnancy was first known to partners.

Parents with Mental Health Issues are embedded into BHT's training that various parental issues may affect their parenting capacity and that mental health may be an area where this can happen. The "Think Family" approach is embedded into practice. If an adult attends/ is admitted into hospital due to a mental health crisis, they will be asked if they have dependent children and what support they have from family and services. Information sharing forms will also be sent to the safeguarding team, and a CSC referral will be made if necessary by the appropriate practitioners. The emotional wellbeing of children via case scenarios are discussed in Level 3 Safeguarding Children's Training. The trainers also link mental health scenarios to possible exploitation, and remind staff that many children attend hospital with suicidal ideation, self-harm or overdose as a result of trauma.

BLMK ICB commissions ELFT to provide local Mental Health Services for adults and children. They have clear reporting arrangements in place, which includes data for key performance indicators, service quality performance and activity reports, including compliance with standards of [section 11 of the Children's Act](#). Meetings are held to consider all of the above plus themes, areas of concern, trends, and service improvements. BLMK ICB works in partnership with ELFT to support the CHUMS contract and service development, CHUMS provide quarterly reports which are used to strengthen integration across the patient pathways. BLMK ICB are the commissioning lead for the [KOOOTH](#) contract in partnership with BBC Public Health and KOOOTH also provide quarterly performance reports. BLMK ICB work closely with ELFT and CHUMS to support the integrated pathway for children with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs

Bedford College have strengthened the links with external agencies which has meant that a Bedfordshire Wellbeing Services now have a linked Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner linked to the College and offer assessments for their services. This was a gap in their service as there

was limited support for those learners at the cusp of turning 18. They have continued to be supported by the CAMHS School team though staffing shortages in the school's team and COVID restrictions at the start of the start of the deadline meant that there was a reduction in referrals being made and face to face meetings. For this academic year, the Connolly Foundation has provided the College with additional funding to employ 2 staff to support student's mental health on a 12 months' project with the scope to extend to 2 years, recruitment is underway. Counselling services have grown with the use of trainee counsellors to support the service. Students had greater flexibility in accessing the service through MS Teams, phone and face to face. Students were also able to self-refer or ask their Personal Achievement Tutor to refer them into the service. There has been a total of 494 counselling referrals made, equating to 436 unique learners. Of those that were referred to counselling, 34% engaged with either an initial assessment or counselling sessions. 100% of students were contacted for an initial assessment. 569 counselling sessions were delivered to students by the counselling team which included initial assessments. Main presenting issues has remained at 62% for Anxiety/ depression. Students attending counselling session have commented that if they hadn't received the counselling support, they may have left their course. In addition to the counselling service, all students undertook a short mental health awareness course when returning to college. This was to raise awareness around Mental health as well as provide proactive strategies.

Bedford College's Fitness to Study policy has helped those students with mental health difficulties access support through a support management plan. This is a holistic approach to supporting students with their mental health identifying support networks, triggers as well as both proactive and reactive strategies to support the student. This has helped capture students voice in terms of how they would like to be supported at College as well as identify safe places should they need it. Bedfordshire Wellbeing

Services and CAMHS have also had a presence on campus which has enabled students to access support at College whereas otherwise may have struggled to go to the GP. [Yourspace Online](#) has continued to be updated with useful helpline and self-help guides to support learners, this is accessible from home so that students are able to access support in their own time. An anonymous reporting webpage has been set up, and promoted at the College to allow people to anonymously report incidents such as bullying and harassment, sexual misconduct and mental health and illness support. Student can choose to just anonymously report, or can access further personal support from a member of the safeguarding team. Bedford College's Student Services website continues to be developed to include self-help guides, helplines and useful information. This is an external website so can be accessed by both parents and students. Early identification of safeguarding and wellbeing concerns continues to be good for the teams and this is leading to early intervention to ensure that things do not escalate.

All Bedford College Personal Achievement Tutors and Student Services staff have undertaken Youth Mental Health First Aid training. They are all also Level 2 safeguarding trained in addition to the normal safeguarding training that all staff undertake. Safeguarding and wellbeing continues to be a key task for the Student Services/Careers and Personal Achievement Tutor Teams. All safeguarding team members have taken additional training this year with the NSPCC for Designated Safeguarding Leads.

The BBC Adult Mental Capacity Lead and Deprivation of Liberty Lead regularly provides advice ongoing support, advice and information to both childcare practitioners and teams around capacity and deprivation of liberty issues. This can be for an individual case or about the statutory legislation and processes. This enables practitioners to ensure that all those involved in supporting children have an understanding of the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice and be compliant with the statute

and guidance, supporting children to make their own decision whenever possible or to make decisions in their best interests. The Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) were introduced in the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 and they will replace the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) system. The new Safeguards have been designed to put the rights and wishes of the relevant person at the centre of all decision-making on deprivation of liberty; with support and representation being a legal requirement during the whole process and any authorisation period. LPS applies to people aged 16 and above who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty to enable their care or treatment and lack the mental capacity to consent to their arrangements. There will be a new role of an Approved Mental Capacity Professional (AMCP) to uphold the rights of people in complex case and a new role of Appropriate Person to represent and support the person with a new duty to consult the person, and those interested in their welfare, to establish the person's wishes and feelings. The LPS will provide protection for people aged 16 and above who are or who need to be deprived of their liberty in order to provide their care or treatment and lack the mental capacity to consent to their arrangements. There will need to be a focus on a joint approach between adult and children's 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. Work has started to consider how these legislative changes will be implemented and how adult and children's services can work together.

For more information please access [here](#).

Safeguarding children in the community

Child Exploitation

- In October 2021 the Partnership held a discussion in relation to the work that had been taking place around contextual safeguarding and exploitation. A summary of the representations made were as follows:
- A substantial mapping exercise had taken place to ensure that the correct people were attending the various established meetings, as well as making sure that there was no duplication in regards to discussing exploitation;
- Briefings were going to be run in hospitals as well as the Neon project. This was to be led by the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit and was specifically for hospital staff to have training on serious youth violence (SYV) and how to tackle exploitation. Over 100 health practitioners had signed up for this training;
- There was an Independent Child Trafficking Service in Bedfordshire, as well as a CSE Disruption Team and the dedicated Guns and Gangs Team which were run by Bedfordshire Police. These teams had conducted a significant amount of work around those that had posed a risk to children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults;
- A Pans Bedfordshire child exploitation specific needs assessment is being conducted, and it was hoped that this piece of work was to be completed by the end of 2021;
- BBC was scheduled to take part in a research project being conducted by the University of Bedfordshire regarding contextual safeguarding and this was to be shared with the Board once it had been completed;
- BBC was to roll out an approach whereby safety conferences were to be run. These conferences were to look at safety plans as well as safety reviews. In addition, a piece of work with conference Chairs was being conducted in relation to the Salford model, the existing practices and guidance, and the journey that they had been on. Conferences were scheduled to start taking place after Christmas 2021;
- There were increased links between Out of Authority (OLA) placed children and children at risk of exploitation within the Borough. This was considered to be relatively new, as previously OLAs were usually quite independent to those concerns around Bedford Borough's children;
- In regards to disruption, contextual safeguarding meetings were taking place and had been identified as good practice through the utilisation of the previous framework of the Community Safety Partnership;
- Gathering and acting upon the lived experience was integral to the work that was being conducted. Children and their families were put at the centre of the issue and were supported to be the experts in their own world. It was recognised that every family was different and had varying complexities;
- Focus had been applied to empowering as well as supporting children to get involved in identifying their own safety plans;
- Feedback was continuously being received from national and local thematic work and it was felt that listening to young people was extremely important;
- The Salford model had allowed for the start of identifying parents who were at a loss and did not know what to do. Therefore, a whole family approach was utilised. This had ensured that parents were supported effectively to understand underneath the behaviour of their child, their son and daughter was still theirs. Support on managing the impact on siblings was also conducted, and this had included, for example, access to extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, work was taking place to introduce a parent peer support group;
- Children were victims and it was understood that children were pushed

into the essence of exploiting. Therefore, a number of mapping meetings were held to try and understand the relationship between peers as well as identifying children as quickly as possible that were at risk of being drawn into exploitation by other children. Intervention measures had been put into place across a range of partners to stop children from becoming exploiters themselves;

- The consistent utilisation of the multi-agency form was being ensured. As soon as information was provided, it was fed into the system so that Police could have acted accordingly;
- There was a link between SEND children as well as those children that had been excluded from school. A deep dive in regards to this link had been conducted and shared with senior education leaders. There was also an action plan that was being put together to tackle this issue;
- Transition was considered to be very important and established transition work within the Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service (BYOS) had taken place. It was also recognised that children were viewed as adults when they were 19/20 years old and therefore an offender, when two years previous to that they would have been deemed to be a victim of exploitation. This was a big challenge for Children's Services and an overall piece of work was being conducted in relation to transitions to Adult Services and how support could have been provided to the vulnerable during this period. Exit planning and contingency planning was a focus for the Service and was an extremely important factor when assisting care leavers with transitioning;
- There was a wide range of support services across the voluntary sector and there was extremely good partnership work taking place across Bedfordshire in the area of exploitation, that had a common purpose and aims;
- There was a desire to develop a good clear offer around an exit programme, that had included the housing department, other key partners, as well as the child's voice;

- There was a lot of disruption activity that had been taking place; however, there was still a challenge around devising a parallel plan around specific exploitation of those children that were being worked with; and
- Referrals from schools into [Family and Children's Early-help Service \(FACES\)](#) had significantly increased and the organisation had worked very hard to build relationships with schools. Accredited Escape the Trap programmes were being offered to children, with fantastic feedback having been received as a result. FACES are working in partnership with [Link to Change](#). Link to Change was the organisation that predominately conducted the work with children and FACES worked with the parents and siblings; The relationship with the local authority was considered to be great; however, frontline staff at FACES were still struggling to be included with meetings as well as obtain the key information prior to them making visits to people's homes. Therefore, it was requested that this be worked on further across the board; and The Changing FACES service was scheduled to end on 31st March 2022, as there was no further funding available from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to maintain this.
- BYOS have been working with girls and young women who had been involved in organised gangs with the support of partner agencies. The disproportionality between black and minority ethnic backgrounds and the white population had been identified.
- There was a significant push on contextual safeguarding across Bedford college, with their staff being made aware of any relevant changes to contextual safeguarding plus providing an opportunity for students to develop awareness of exploitation and raise any concerns that they may have. Vulnerable students are monitored and as a result they were achieving successful outcomes. Students who had experienced trauma were found to be more likely to be exploited.
- A group had been setup to look at permanent exclusions, which had

included educational leaders and colleagues from across BCC. The group were looking to obtain relevant learning as well as establish whether there was any data or information that could have been utilised to form a pre-exclusion panel. A dashboard had been created and introduced to schools that provided information on, for example, early help assessments and fixed term and permanent exclusions; and any permanent exclusion known to BBC is escalated through Officers, as well as challenged if necessary.

“Good multi-agency communication and information-sharing supports work to safeguard children at risk of extra-familial harm. The adolescent response team has a good understanding of the risks that young people face; this helps the team to deliver intensive, focused support. Risks are understood and interventions managed within effective multi-agency plans. Children and families are seen regularly and trusting relationships built to safely divert children from harm. Whenever possible, children and their families are involved in the creation of safety plans, and work with them is regularly reviewed and plans adapted in response to changes in their lives. Children have been successfully supported to reduce missing episodes, change friendships and return to education. Safety planning is not always evident in case summaries and care plans.”

Ofsted Inspection November 2021

All forms of exploitation are being addressed through the refreshed [Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response](#) and [Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Strategy](#) which have been developed to take a whole systems approach to prevent and reduce

violence and exploitation. Plans and developments are in place to develop a child’s version of this document with consultation with children regarding their priorities for tackling violence and exploitation; this consultation has commenced. The Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Action Plan is being evaluated for impact and this commenced in September 2022.

The [Bedfordshire Child Exploitation Tool](#) was developed with children from across Bedfordshire and was refreshed in 2022 with feedback from speech & language therapists to ensure inclusion. [The Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#) was launched across Bedfordshire in 2019 and in 2022 Pan Beds multi agency practitioner briefings have been organised in October & November for the updated version of the toolkit.

A Bedfordshire paper was developed regarding Young Person Plans (YPP) following the Salford model; specifically, when responding to children who are being exploited or at risk of exploitation where the harm is extra familial. This was presented to the Pan Beds Strategic Leaders of Children’s Services Group and the Bedfordshire Exploitation Lead supported BBC to develop their response. Pan Beds multi agency briefings were developed and delivered in partnership with the National Working Group (NWG). This was for practitioners to explore victim blaming language and terminology used around child exploitation.

The Bedfordshire Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group monitors the Bedfordshire Violence & Exploitation Strategy & Pan Beds Violence and Exploitation Action Plan and includes the [Bedfordshire against Violence and Exploitation \(BAVEX\) Communication Plan](#). The group also delivers on the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategy and action plan on behalf of the [Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit \(VERU\) Partnership](#) and will regularly review the strategy. BAVEX was launched on March 18th 2021, National Child Exploitation Awareness Day. BAVEX is the partnership campaign supported by a variety of different agencies across

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



bavex.co.uk #BAVEX

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



bavex.co.uk #BAVEX

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 'assisted' 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 in their home
- Businesses or financial services being used to hide or launder money



bavex.co.uk #BAVEX

BEDFORDSHIRE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

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 – 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

- Adverts offering sexual services from a particular nationality
- Victims may own very few items of clothing
- Only knows 'sexual language' in English
- Tattoos or other markings indicating 'ownership' by their exploiters
- Victims of crimes such as abduction, assault or sexual offences
- Money from clients goes to someone else
- Money 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
- Missions like going country, going catch, trap houses, plugging and bonds
- 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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Bedfordshire to raise awareness of the various forms of modern slavery and exploitation that take place in the county. The campaign particularly focuses on those forms of exploitation linked to organised crime. This includes child criminal exploitation through county lines, child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation through things like forced begging, shoplifting or money laundering, sexual exploitation in places like brothels, labour exploitation in different industries as well as the cuckooing of vulnerable people's homes. BAVEX worked with a number of local groups and organisations to produce and publicise videos and graphics which raise awareness of these issues among communities, encouraging people to come forward with any information and for potential victims to seek help. The launch featured on Look East and ITV News.

The BAVEX Communication Group has developed communication campaigns with the support of the partnership over the last year. The Child Exploitation & Missing Reduction Group (CEM) is an operational/tactical group looking at victim, offender, locations, data/analysis, disruption, current concerns, hotspots (not individuals; this will continue within the weekly Single Points of Contact (SPOC) Meeting) and will deliver, meet the needs/review of the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Action Plan. This group oversees the Pan Beds SPOC Meeting.

The Adolescent Response Team (ART) works across Children's Services. Together with close collaboration with Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service both are key to working across the spectrum of Child exploitation and extra familial-harm. In April 2022 Children's Services launched a pilot pathway to support children where there is 'significant' risk from extra familial harm. This is the status of a CPP but called a Young Person's Plan (YPP) and YPP conferences instead of Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences. This is an example of a more flexible and responsive approach to issues of Contextual Safeguarding impacting on adolescents and their families. Issues such as Drugs, Gangs, Criminal and financial exploitation, Radicalisation and Extremism, CSE.

Ofsted said that ART

'provides more intensive support to those with more complex needs, avoiding an unnecessary statutory response'

Within Children's Services overall Ofsted:

'good multi-agency communication and information sharing supports work to safeguard children at risk of extra familial harm'

Forward Plan

Cannabis campaigns

Support national Crimestoppers campaign


Deliver our own local version including targeted advertising and briefings for potential facilitators of cannabis factories i.e. lettings agencies, electricians, skip hire firms

Safe to Play

National campaign targeted at sports clubs and leisure facilities

Video highlighting the importance of safeguarding

Cards and BAVEX comms materials to be disseminated to clubs, leisure centres etc



Op Costello marketing plan

Out of home advertising to promote the work of Costello – billboards, shopping centres etc

Leaflets to be handed out to local areas following warrants

Knife crime campaign

Working on major knife crime campaign which will focus on those with lived experience

Will form the basis of education inputs, redesigning our weapons bins and wider comms materials

Initial planning meeting attended by 20 people in March

Joint Fearless & VERU products - VERU Village directory of support services and commissioned projects - VERU Youth Voices podcasts and radio

Google key word advertising on 'gangs', 'drugs' etc - Briefings on exploitation for welfare services - Reimagine guidance documents

Monthly briefing on exploitation and organised crime - New Bedfordshire drugs strategy



Case Study

“Rob” aged 15 years, disclosed to his school that he was being exploited by a gang to run drugs for them and wanted to stop. School contacted the BBC Adolescent Response Team (ART) for support. Initially they worked with him on his confidence to share with his parents his situation. Then ART and Police worked in partnership to support a safety plan and strategies for Rob to remove himself from the current situation. The range of work included:

- Parental support to overcome the enormity of the disclosure and implement strategies to keep Rob and their family safe.
- Support school to maintain Rob’s education rather than exclude him if his behaviour caused problems within school.
- Support Rob to cope with the stress he was experiencing following the disclosure
- Self-esteem work with Rob so that he could identify a positive future for himself
- Educate Rob about the process of grooming and exploitation.
- Support Rob to understand how he can rebuild trust and the relationship within the family.
- Support the whole family to come to terms with the situation and not to see Rob as a victim but to focus their support on keeping him close to the family and reduce family breakdown.

This year Rob’s A level results were 1 A* 1 A and a B and he is taking a gap year to travel and will start University after his travelling.

For Bedfordshire Police vulnerable children flagged and discussed at various meetings including missing, SPOC, county lines and a silver group, which are attended by partners. The CSE SPOC document is circulated to all analysts working on County Lines so CEM can see where there are crossovers and flag up anyone falling through the gaps. Their Missing Team complete Athena records for dedicated SPOC work with individual children exposed to CE and increased missing events. Continued training is taking place to ensure officers are correctly identifying all types of CE risk to children and the appropriate markers are completed. The CSE Detective Sergeant completes a review of all markers to ensure applied correctly. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process is reviewed and monitored to enable the tracking and capture of all NRM applications and assurance they are dealt with in a multi-agency manner.

Bedfordshire Police's Operation Makesafe is an initiative to educate hotels, bars, clubs, fast food outlets and taxi companies about how to spot the signs of CSE and know how to report it and is embedded within the work of the CSE Disruption Team. Operation Innerste is a multi-agency response to better safeguard unaccompanied migrant children and embedded within the Police and managed through the Missing Person Team. Support has also been provided for joint working with the Road Policing Unit for operations at Toddington motorway Services.

Greys Education Centre sit on the Serious Youth Violence Panel (SYVP) which is a great opportunity to gather information about what is happening within their local area, and be mindful of the areas pupils are going to outside of school, and who they are mixing with, and whether there is a link. BILTT schools will then send off any intelligence via the [Multi-Agency Information Submission Form](#), where this information is collated and disruption can take place. BILTT schools work closely with the Education and Diversion Team, and Greys Education Centre receive weekly sessions from them to all pupils on a variety of safeguarding

issues identified as being relevant and appropriate to educate them on and keep them safe within their community. Greys Education Centre also work closely with the ART Team and this works well in giving their pupils someone who they can talk to, that can educate them on the safeguarding issues and all forms of exploitation as well as being educated on these areas within the school curriculum. BILTT is committed to equipping all their pupils with the character and knowledge they need for a happy and successful life. Pupils are taught the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and build their self-efficacy through the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum. Each lesson is designed to ensure that pupils are educated about both within school and local safeguarding issues appropriate to their level of need. The introduction of the ART team has had a huge part to play in the prevention of exploitation specifically with their workers engaging with pupils at Greys Education Centre. Pupils have educated about the signs of exploitation and when being exploited been supported to come away from it.

BILTT work closely with the Police Education and Diversion Team in educating the pupils at their schools about the signs and symptoms of safeguarding, all forms of exploitation and bullying. The pupils benefit as a result and will share intelligence with staff about what they know and see without fear as they know the school will support them. The work has often made changes to that pupil's life and where they were on the edge of criminal activity, they have made better choices about who they engage with outside of school. 20 of Greys Education Centre pupils were moved back into mainstream settings last year with a 90% success rate, which is as a result of excellent work from staff and external agencies such as the ART and Police Education and Diversion team. By working together to safeguard pupils and educate them on safeguarding issues, all these partners are empowering children to make better choices which result in better behaviour which means they are better equipped to be returned to

a mainstream setting where their needs can be met and they are more likely to achieve and move forward in a positive way by working towards their GCSE's achieving grades which then enable them to have more post 16 options available to them.

When children attend A&E with assaults, or signs of exploitation (such as a serious injury, a stabbing or gunshot wound) then the Police are informed and information shared with CSC. In addition, checks would be made with IFD to find out if the child is known or open to CS. All children who present to A&E with an assault under 18 years have their information shared with the hospital's safeguarding team. Each case is looked at by the safeguarding team, and shared with the school nurse, school DSL, BYOS, or support worker as appropriate along with GP. BHT staff attend the SYVP which enables good networking with key practitioners and sharing of relevant information regarding any contacts a child may have had at the hospital. This supports a robust risk assessment and joint decision making using a multi-disciplinary approach and contributes to better outcomes for children. Exploitation is part of the safeguarding teams regular training programme and they have also delivered Exploitation Study Days which included outside speakers from BOSON (Police guns and gangs team) and survivors of CSE. This powerful method of training had a big impact on staff, and plans for this to continue will recommence in 2022. Non clinical staff who attended commented it was useful in keeping their own children safe also. Front line staff regularly access the safeguarding team for advice and supervision regarding cases of possible exploitation that they deal with in practice.

BBC Adult Services will respond to any referral for young adults over the age of 18 deemed to be at risk and each case is risk assessed and includes issues such as cuckooing, county lines and drug related exploitation, forced marriage, honour based abuse and DA. If the individual has care and support needs, the person is experiencing abuse or is at risk



of abuse and as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves then a S42 Enquiry will be undertaken. The adult safeguarding team continue to attend CPC's where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult as a parent or involved in the case. The team has continued to attend various multi agency meetings such as the Contextual and Safeguarding meetings and Anti-Social Behaviour Meeting to share information.

The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation and Missing Strategic Group meets on a quarterly basis, receives updates on all the above work, monitors and scrutinises the work partners do to safeguard children at risk of all forms of exploitation. One work stream the group are in the process of finalising is partners response to the [It was hard to escape report](#) Learning Points (page 44).

For more information please [access here](#)

Safeguarding children through effective systems and processes

“Children’s plans are detailed and relevant. They set out the range of services available to support successful change. Child protection plans and child in need plans address concerns clearly and are regularly reviewed. Good partnership involvement and attendance at meetings ensures effective support for families, and a clearer picture of progress made for children. Professionals use these meetings well to break actions down into workable stages for families and develop further actions as required. Open and honest conversations take place with families, focusing on change required and challenging false compliance. This enables families to have a clear understanding of expectations and the work that they or others must complete.”

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Transitional Safeguarding

This is being taken forward by the new Pan Beds Transitional Safeguarding group which has come out of a SAR on a young man called Max who died in May 2020 of an accidental overdose. The group will be addressing the Bridging the gap: Transitional Safeguarding and the role of social work with adults (publishing.service.gov.uk) report and here are some examples of other work streams; developing some Pan Bedfordshire Principles around Transition and Scoping exercise to ascertain what children’s and adults’ services have done, are doing or need to do in regards to Transitions. The work is considering what is the shared understanding of ‘transition’, scrutinising the local pathways and processes., work needs to be co-produced with children, consider any funding implications and what happens when a child may not meet threshold for statutory services- what other provision is available. Pan Bedfordshire Principles around Transitional Guidance were developed.

As a result of the Max and a recent SAR notification the Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) will be seeking further assurances and a task and finish group has been set up to undertake wider analysis and scrutinise local processes, procedures practices and outcomes for children transitioning to adult services. The group have agreed Pan Bedfordshire Principles for children transitions to adult services for roll out, and are pulling together the outcomes of national and other areas transitions reviews and work streams to progress any applicable learning. The group will also consider the learnings from other Safeguarding Adult Reviews, again, to consider applicable learning. This means that transitioning to adulthood will remain an ongoing consideration for the SAB during 2022-23.

BBC have a dedicated role of Advanced practitioner for ‘Preparing For Adulthood’ in place to support the transition focus of the Adult Learning Disability Team, and feed into the wider strategic plans of BBC to support the demand for services going forward. Planning and scoping work starts

at 12-14 years through robust tracking and monitoring, supporting colleagues in CSC, education, leaving care services and health to plan, prepare and implement support in time for the child's 18th birthday. Bedford Borough adult services have been involved and contributed to in the launch of a [Pan Beds Hoarding Guidance](#), and panel. Part of this work is to identify where children are part of households where hoarding is an issue and the impact it has on their lives. Work will continue into the next year with an aim of raising more awareness of prevention and early intervention. Developments and improvements in the area of transitions includes attendance at Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) meetings for children 12 years and onward who attend a special school, quarterly tracking meetings with a full multi-disciplinary team to oversee cases, plan and progress the transition process. Transition events are held such as open days twice yearly for day opportunities, and respite and supported living, to engage with individuals and families and support planning. Participation in the Parent Carer forum to jointly produce with children a Preparing for adult guide and developing an easy read guide for children with a learning disability. Ongoing development of strategic plans for BBC to support the need for future transition services. Established robust links with CS to develop the local offer and key work streams such as direct payments and employment opportunities.

BHT place children aged 16 plus outside of paediatric units onto adult wards/departments, however they remain under the Safeguarding Children's Team as they are children until their 18th Birthday (The Children Act 1989). It is evident from audit and data that a number of these children are perceived as adults. This means that information has not always been shared with The Children's Safeguarding Team, or other agencies. This is an on-going area for development. There is an active piece of work in progress with the Bedford A&E department to identify children between the ages of 16-18 that present with identified needs and/or concerns around risk and the Paediatric Matron will also alert the Safeguarding Team to under 18's that are admitted to an adult area.

Policy and Procedures Group

This has been another busy year with the group providing 77 new and/or revised procedures and guidance which can be accessed at this [link](#).

CCS have implemented a new safeguarding supervision model which is mandated for case load holders (which has received positive feedback from staff). This has enabled staff to raise concerns earlier and be supported in taking forward appropriate actions. They are also reviewing annually to ensure effectiveness. There is regular discussion and collaboration with the IFD and senior managers across partners as required to manage concerns and professional disagreements. Conversations are used to manage professional disagreements and the [escalation procedures](#) is used. There is positive challenge from all partners and whilst this can be difficult, ultimately it has led to reducing risk in those cases.



Thresholds

“Thresholds for child protection planning are appropriate and multi-agency partners are fully engaged in the work with children. Whole family involvement and considerate exchanges with parents help them understand professionals’ concerns and what change is required to achieve positive outcomes for their children. Neglect continues to be the most frequent reason for children being on a child protection plan in Bedford Borough. Practitioners demonstrate an excellent understanding of its long-term corrosive nature and its effects on children. Actions that are well coordinated through multi-agency child protection planning help to improve children’s circumstances. Where progress is not evident, decisive action is taken.”

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At the March 2021 Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children’s Services Group there was a decision to develop an overarching Pan Bedfordshire set of principles and sitting under it will be each Local Authorities multi-agency threshold document. This document has been finalised and can be found at this [link](#).

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](#) launched in July 2015 are being rewritten by a multi-agency Task and Finish Group and there has been consultation throughout the Partnership on the new Thresholds of Need Guide Effective Support for Children and Families in Bedford Borough which will be launched in January/February 2023. A number of webinars will be delivered to launch the new Thresholds document and provide practitioners with opportunities to ask questions.

Information Sharing

“Effective communication and strong commitment to joint working are evident in senior leaders’ relationships with key partners. Education providers, adult social care, housing, police and health services are all engaged strategically and practically in the provision of services to children and their families. Cafcass and the judiciary speak positively about strengthened communication with senior managers and the quality of social work practice.”

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In January 2022 the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships came together to seek assurances on Standard 8 – Effective Information Sharing. Here are some examples of what is working well;

- Partnership arrangements present as very strong resulting in good and clear information sharing.
- Good information sharing meetings between senior Police and CSC colleagues to resolve issues in cases.
- There have been good conversations across the partnership with practitioners being able to resolve escalations at the earliest stage and this the follow up and focus remains on the child.
- All agencies assured the Boards that the appropriate Information sharing policies/procedures were in place
- Information Sharing Agreements with partners are in place.
- BBC have well established working relationships with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) around contextual safeguarding with high attendance from staff in complex strategy meetings.
- BBC reported that their new electronic case system has really helped

with recording things in the most effective way and track things. They have reviewed their consent documentation so that they are clear about working with children and families and that consent is their first aim but there are circumstances where they will progress things without that direct consent or informed consent. Sharing information with children and families is very much part of the approach.

- There were good examples of information sharing across all the statutory partners from tracking those children placed here from other Local Authorities when they go missing to good information sharing at MAPPA.
- Some agencies talked about their internal systems prompting and reminding their staff re information sharing through relevant information, guidance, process maps, checklist, etc.
- Agencies shared their approaches to training that was in place and how they promote, monitor and evidence the impact on frontline practice.

“It’s all about working together and sharing information. There has been some really good networking & examples. The question is being as pro-active as we can be. Should we be asking for information to be passed to us rather than waiting for it to come to us? These are very useful conversations and there will be action planning material coming out of this and we have got some good content to take this forward”.

Maggie Atkinson, Independent Chair and Scrutineer

Action plans from partner’s individual self-assessments will be reported back on at the next Section 11 event in January 2023 when partners will also be presenting their new self-assessments in regards to **STANDARD 4** – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children, & young people & families and **STANDARD 5** – There is effective training on safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency’s primary functions, in contact with children & families.



Integrated Front Door.

“Children and their families who need help have easy access to the right level of support through the Integrated Front Door (IFD). Close alignment and joint working between social workers and early help services enable most children and families to be helped and have their needs met at the lowest threshold level.”

“Managers oversee, review and prioritise all contacts that come into the IFD to identify children in need of help and protection. Where safeguarding concerns are evident at the point of referral, or become clear during information gathering, children’s casework is swiftly passed to the assessment team to ensure a timely response. Parental consent is appropriately sought; when it is dispensed with, the reasons for this are proportionate to the level of concern and are clearly recorded. Highly skilled and experienced practitioners provide timely and thorough help for children who require an emergency response outside of normal office hours. Practitioners record their involvement well and ensure effective follow up by the IFD or the child’s allocated worker.”

“Referral and advice officers (RAO) are thorough in their approach to information gathering, working respectfully with parents, appropriately seeking information from partners and summarising historical information. RAOs work tenaciously to ensure that the views and voices of children are represented at this early stage, enabling a fuller understanding of the impact of their circumstances.

There has been a substantial increase in the numbers of contacts and referrals into the IFD in the last six months. Consequently, the follow-up response for a small number of less urgent referrals has not been Inspection of Bedford Borough local authority children’s services completed within allocated timescales. Leaders are aware of the pressures within IFD and are actively recruiting additional workers.”

“Agencies referring allegations and concerns about adults working with children receive appropriate and proportionate responses to protect children. The designated officer for the local authority ensures that most allegations are promptly concluded. Good collaboration with partner agencies and neighbouring designated officer services helps identify concerns and ensures consistent threshold decisions and responses.”

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The IFD is considered strong which means contacts have access to the consideration of a response from across Children's services. It promotes a consent based referral approach to the IFD and there is always advice and consultation available to support a contact being the most effective and purposeful it can be. IFD works closely strategically and operationally with partners to help shape what can be offered to prevent a need to access Children's Social Care. They have a comprehensive Early Help offer that includes parenting programmes, training and support for staff and schools as well as individual and group work with children and their families.

Throughout 2022 there has been a consistent increase in numbers of contacts to the IFD. CSC audit work tells us is that the Partnership needs to continue to support and focus on how partners can engage and work with families prior to a need to making that referral to the IFD. For those children reaching the threshold of CSC intervention the Partnership needs to ensure that they have been afforded the right support at the right time to reduce or mitigate the need for an intervention by CSC.



Learning from Reviews

During this last year there were 4 notifications of Serious Incidents to the Case Review Group (CRG) to consider and involved 4 children. From the 4 notifications, 2 Rapid Reviews were completed and submitted to the National Panel. Notifications were received from the Police, CSC and BYOS which demonstrates a commitment to learning and safeguarding effectiveness by partners. The categories of these notifications ranged from suicide, attempted murder and neglect. The number of referrals for Non-Accidental Injury have reduced to zero this year after spiking during the pandemic last year when there were 4 in a few months.

In September 2021 the Partnership signed off the Jason LCSPR due to a non-accidental injury however this has not been published due to ongoing criminal proceedings. The Board commissioned a Learning Review in 2020 on a large sibling group who had experienced chronic neglect and resulted in the children being removed into local authority care. This Review was signed off in October 2021. Learning arising from the above Reviews and past multi-agency reviews are scrutinised at the CRG. Agencies are held to account for their actions and asked provide assurances to explain how their actions and the learning have been shared, achieved, provide evidence, and demonstrate how practice has changed.

In response to the learning from the above Reviews and other Rapid Reviews the following has been developed to support practitioners and their practice; [Multi-agency/integrated chronologies](#), [Lead Practitioner](#), [Recognising and responding to cases of child neglect](#), and [Working with Large sibling group families](#), [New Partners](#), a suite of documents for Working with Parents where Improved Outcomes for Children are not Achieved including [Professional Curiosity](#) and [Was Not Brought](#).

For those entrenched cases with persisting concerns and the practitioners have unwittingly become stuck then the development of a '[Stop and Review](#)' process is hoped to help in those cases where cycles of practitioner contact reveals a pattern of stepping up and down over a period of time and where parental non-engagement is apparent and those cases where, despite best efforts, little positive and demonstrable change can be evidenced. Further development and embedding of the [GCP2](#) and '[Day in my life](#)' tools as part of baseline assessments. Revision of the Professional Escalation Procedure can be found [here](#). The impact of this learning and actions on individual families will be tested within 12 months to establish if there has been a sufficient shift in practice and culture. Assurances will also be requested from CSC to ensure that large sibling group neglect cases are being worked in effectively.



In September 2021 the National Panel published its third national review: [The Myth of invisible Men - Safeguarding children under 1](#) from non-accidental injury (NAI) caused by male carers and in response to this national learning a briefing on [Invisible/Unseen men](#) has been developed and disseminated. As part of the Pan Bedfordshire NAI and Under 2s group guidance for practitioners has also been developed to assist practitioners [Engaging with fathers, male partners and other carers](#).

An example of learning from reviews, includes the implementation at local level of the national programme, [ICON: All Babies Cry \(ABC\), 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). It is a programme that provides information about infant crying and how to cope. This is enabling a consistent message and one that is also aimed at male parents /carers. CCS has championed the use of the DadPad an app for fathers which gives dads to be the knowledge and practical skills necessary to support themselves and their partner, so that babies get the best possible start in life. Implementation of the ICON programme commenced in 2021 and a report on effectiveness after 1 year, is to be available in the autumn 2022 and arrangements are in place to monitor effectiveness of this initiative.

The BBSCP supported the delivery of the [Tubes of Life](#) training to Children's Centre Staff. Tubes of Life focusses on how a baby receives oxygen through the umbilical cord (Tube of Life) whilst pregnant, and then through their own airway once born (Tube of Life). These Tubes of Life support a baby's needs for healthy growth and brain development. The aim of the training is for the delegates to have increased confidence sharing learning with colleagues and parents, ways to ensure families have the correct information (evidence based), increased awareness of product safety & compliancy and understanding their role in delivering and sharing safer sleep and child safety messages

Learning from our local case reviews indicate that COVID has affected the emotional health and well-being of children through missing school and social isolation. The challenges of COVID on the workforce, their families and their own sickness has been significant, however the Partnership remains vigilant to the potential for 'hidden' harm. Findings from child practice reviews indicate the importance of face-to-face contact with a trusted consistent practitioner for children. The BBSCP continues to recognise the need to better engage with children to hear more about their views and 'lived' experience to help practitioners continuously improve what they do. Additionally, the importance of professional curiosity and challenge

when cases are considered by partners to be closed too early and that the [escalation procedures](#) are understood and implemented by all partners.

In response to [National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson](#) a briefing was developed and disseminated across the partnership with the learning. In regards to learning from this review about referrals not being deemed malicious a practitioners briefing was developed [Referrals from Family, Friends and Neighbours Practitioner Briefing](#). The other key messages for Safeguarding Partners from this Review have been addressed and assurances given that the issues identified are not prevalent in Bedford borough.

For [Child Q LSCP](#) was presented and discussed by the CRG and a practitioner briefing document developed and disseminated to share the learning across the Partnership. Learning from this Review is being addressed by the new Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competency Group. As part of the Section 11 Self-Assessments currently being worked on partners have been asked to respond to the [NSPCC Best practice for strategic decision makers](#), a framework to identify what their agency already has in place or needs to address at an organisational level to ensure children from black and minoritised ethnic communities are supported and protected more effectively.

The full SCR reports and Learning briefings can be found [here](#).

Multi Agency Training

Training the BBSCP workforce is crucial and are committed to them being provided with high quality training to support practitioners and volunteers to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Virtual and e- learning has continued to be the main medium in how training is delivered, however, hybrid and face to face are regularly reviewed on the needs of individual training courses.

There has been a good level of uptake of e-learning; however, the completion level has dropped and this is being explored however, satisfaction has risen to its highest level this year at 95%. There is a review being completed on the e-learning offer to ensure that the courses on offer are relevant to practitioners. The top 5 courses over the year were Safeguarding Children level 2, Safeguarding Children Level 1, E-safety, Safeguarding in Education and Gang Related Issues and County Lines. Partners raised issues re the training booking system and this led to a decision to move to a system that is developed specifically for an external workforce and will provide the quality and access that is needed to support partners and their workforce. The new system was launched from 1st October 2022.

A series of 'Mind your Language: Exploitation and Victim Blaming' webinars were delivered by the [NWG](#) and funded by Bedfordshire Police. The sessions promoted discussion on the language practitioners use when working with and reporting about children who are victims of exploitation and the impact this can have, for example if records were used as evidence in a court case or if an adult were to access their records from their childhood. One attendee said:

'Excellent professional presenter, great pace, and so much interesting points and food for thought - thank you'

Another said:

‘Thank you-that was really good, hard hitting at times which is essential to make us think about our practice, we will be thinking about training and the language we use.’

Safeguarding Bedfordshire has been carrying out a review of the service and working with the BBSCP to agree a way forward. This has resulted in a reduced offer with a focus on Working Together to Safeguard Children. Whilst most courses are delivered virtually, the first in-person course since the COVID was delivered in and was well received. A survey of practitioners has gathered their views on the training offer and their training needs and this is being used to inform service development. The full report can be viewed here [SGB Survey Report](#). The maximum number of spaces on many courses has increased so this will mean that the percentage of places filled measurement may not match with last year’s.

Impact of attending training

The Working Together course continues to be praised for use of interactive case studies and opportunities for multi-agency discussion. Voice of the Child training has built confidence in ways to record the lived experience of the child, especially where SEND is a factor.

“I attend ICPCs and work closely with children services and this information has enhanced my knowledge, I have also been able to understand the role of each of the different agencies with more clarity”

Working Together to Safeguard Children course, Victim Engagement Officer, Bedfordshire Police

“I have used the learning to further inform staff of the

importance of safeguarding and their roles and they are now aware of exactly what their role is and what to do if they have any concerns.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children course, Deputy DSL, Primary School, Bedford

“As a result of the learning, we have now made changes to the system of recording safeguarding concerns.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children course, Pastoral Lead, Secondary School, Bedford

The following feedback highlights the benefits of learning in the multi-agency environment and actions taken as a result of attending ‘Digital technology & Safeguarding Young Children’.

“My manager was updating the eSafety policy and invited me to help her. She asked to be eSafety officer as I do a lot of the tech work in pre-school. I am interested in this area but needed some proper training to feel confident in the named role. I really enjoyed the training- lots of info that confirmed good practice already in place. My main learning was around keeping children safe online and how to educate the children around online safety. Really interesting course- the scenarios and resources were great- I have shared these with colleagues and added links to pre-school policies. After the training, I emailed the staff after with some key learning points. (XX shared a copy of this email- it emphasised the roles of Early Years staff in educating and laying good foundations for online safety.) I have also shared info with parents and created

a display for them. I took on board the suggestion of drip-feeding info through rather than just one-off events. I decided that our newsletter will now feature a regular section about digital safety. I loved that the course had a positive spin- some courses just talk about the bad side of being online. I shared the final video with staff to help them see how technology keeps us connected but also to remind them that children live in a digital age, and we have an important role in early education. I reminded staff that we need to make sure that the eSafety books are in continuous provision rather than just brought out for special days. That way we can regularly be talking about online behaviours. Our pre-school staff are on board- they do have some worries because things move fast and they don't want to make a mistake. I have identified this is a gap in staff skills as they feel quite overwhelmed by the pace of tech so I'm looking for ways to upskill them and build confidence. I am also interested in training on how, as an organisation, we can ensure we are being safe with our tech provision. EG: setting to YouTube Kids not standard YouTube."

Bedford Borough Early Years, Early Years practitioner

A free 'Dark Web' webinar was delivered in December 2022 by Bedfordshire Police Cyber Crime Team and designed to raise practitioners' understanding of what the 'Dark Web' is, how it is used and the risks that it can present to children. 38 delegates attended, and feedback shows that participants gained knowledge of how to access the Dark Web and improved understanding of the risks.

BLMK ICB have recently developed a safeguarding assurance audit for GP practices and there is a comprehensive GP safeguarding training package in place over two full days. BLMK ICB now have a Designated Safeguarding GP in place across the organisation, providing primary care expertise and links with GP practices. Designated professionals participate in all Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Partnership meetings and in disseminating learning from reviews.

To access the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Training please access it [here](#).



Governance Arrangements

The Partnership's core objective is 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.

BBSCP has continued to work collaboratively with our neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships 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 Partnerships. 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 Partnerships.

The BBSCP Strategic Plan was agreed initially in September 2019 and revised this year and the BBSCP will focus on the areas of the Strategic Plan via themed Board meetings. This year the meetings have focussed on Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation, Pressures on the Safeguarding System, Safeguarding Education and Working in partnership to meet the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and their families in Bedford Borough. These meetings regularly review the impact of COVID, on 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. BBSCP works with other partnerships including Bedford Borough's [Health and Wellbeing Board \(HWB\)](#) and [Community Safety Partnership \(CSP\)](#).

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

COVID

COVID has and is still having a huge impact in children especially with missing a lot school, seeing their families and being with friends (doing hobbies and activities). Online working and isolating from school is a challenge. The work is varying in levels of engagement and children can often feel lonely. Children feel anxious about COVID misinformation and can sometimes feel they don't know who or what to trust. There is a feeling sometimes the news is inaccessible to them (they don't understand). Children want to be involved in COVID recovery; they want their ideas to be considered and their experiences considered. A majority of children have a 'connection' to someone who sadly died during COVID (directly and indirectly). Children feel this needs to be remembered in the bigger picture.

BBCCS continued to see children face to face from March 2020 where needed and have not changed that approach. There has been processes of risk assessment in place, a requirement to evidence health and safety in decision making with overarching operational guidance. Hybrid CPC's and Child Looked After Reviews were put in place by August 2020 with the emphasis on effectiveness for the child and their family. Children's Services have and continue to work closely with public health to support both staff and the families they work with. They consider how the building is staffed, how professional's meetings are held but contact with children and continuing to work effectively has been the clear demonstrable priority as acknowledged by Ofsted.

The work of Public Health during this time, focused almost entirely on supporting the management of COVID. This included working with a wide range of settings to keep as many children and their families as safe as possible during the pandemic. They helped settings to understand the nature of the virus, how best to prevent its spread and ultimately how to keep as many children in their settings. Commissioned services

continued to operate throughout the pandemic providing vital support to children and their families. Many of these services had to adapt their delivery with a large number of staff moving to work on the frontline to help the management of COVID. From April 1st 2022 with the step down of government policy, Public Health was able to begin to reinvigorate the work planned prior to the pandemic, these included for example; academic surveys, evaluation of universal digital mental health support, the refresh of the Children and Young Peoples Plan, educational settings health and wellbeing self-review.

From September 2021 to April 20 22 Public Health were in correspondence with families and educational settings on a daily basis, including weekends to ensure that they were able to respond to the COVID needs of all communities. This included for example; personal follow up calls to residents to understand their needs and how to best help them manage COVID, how to take up their COVID vaccinations, providing personal support to education settings to really understand what their day to day lives were like, help them manage their COVID positive cases and feed this information back to both the DFE and Public Health England (now UKHSA).

BILTT schools remained open to a majority of their pupils during COVID as they had an EHCP and complex SEND needs. For those pupils that did not attend, staff completed welfare visits, weekly telephone calls, delivering of food vouchers, provided lesson resources, online learning where appropriate and provided laptops to those pupils who didn't have one through the laptop scheme. Risk Assessments were completed on each pupil considering their safety at home whilst not in school, and referrals were made through the IFD where safeguarding concerns were raised. Families fed back that they mainly felt supported through this period and that the schools were continuing to do everything they could to keep all the pupils safe.

COVID has continued to be challenging to manage within the BHT, staffing shortages and pressures continued whereby the Safeguarding Team had to increase their support to clinical areas to support the safeguarding agenda. This proved to be invaluable as increased numbers of referrals continued to be made into the Safeguarding Team.

An extraordinary meeting of the Partnership was held in January 2022 to consider the continuing impact of COVID on safeguarding services. Here is a summary of those discussions;

- Strategic communications were taking place across health, CS and the police to make sure information sharing around children was taking place effectively. Meetings with partners were taking place to share information and flagging any issues through internal systems. It was highlighted that during COVID the Police operated a RAG rating system with partners, which had included children that were on plans or were in the Children in Need category. Furthermore, the Police had assurance from safeguarding leads in schools that children who were absent were being flagged.
- Operation Encompass strategy was being implemented in Bedford Borough
- Where thresholds were not met, but there were still issues, there was the well-established Pan Beds escalation process that could have been utilised to challenge one another across the partnership. It was recognised that it was vital to hear what the disagreement was amongst partners and what could have been done to devise a plan that met the needs of the child.
- It was recognised that whilst there may be some children that partner agencies do not know about or were on their radar it was impossible to know everything about every child.
- The strong partnership relationships and discussions amongst partners

Case Study

Ahmed was excluded from mainstream school following very aggressive behaviour. He had a very disjointed school background that had been disrupted by COVID. He had one other Primary school that his mum had pulled him out of. When he arrived at Greys, he was very angry and demonstrated aggressive and threatening behaviour. Greys worked very hard to build a positive relationship with mum and this was really important when Children Social Care became involved. Through Mum's trust in the school and eventually CSC, she became more open to working with agencies to support all of her children. She spent a lot of time with us completing SEND paperwork and started to open up about the difficulties that Ahmed has as previously she had denied he had any challenging behaviour at home. The joint working of School, CSC and the Welfare Service meant that Greys were able to get positive engagement from mum and Ahmed who is being assessed by the SEND team.

Case Study

Mark was referred in year 8 to Hospital Education Outreach service (HEO) for Mental Ill Health that had been exacerbated by COVID. He and his twin had moved to a number of schools in the local authority before moving to Secondary school. Mark was already in the process of receiving an EHCP and a referral had been made for an Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) assessment to be completed by the CDC. During the time of Mark receiving lessons from Hospital Education, mum's views of him 'reclusive, wouldn't speak to people he didn't know, fearful of catching COVID etc.' were very different to the child that HEO staff saw - he was polite, chatty, initiated conversations and engaged in lessons. Several attempts were made by the CDC to meet with mum and Mark to complete the ASC assessment which were all declined by mum despite mum insisting he was autistic. HEO staff raised concerns regarding the information Mark was sharing about mum and how happier he was when he spent time with Dad. There were sudden changes to home circumstances, that mum said prevented Mark from attending lessons. Colleagues then saw a period of time of receiving incoherent emails on a daily sometimes hourly basis from mum. A strategy meeting was held, and it was agreed that he should be placed on a Child Protection Plan. Mark's mum put in many barriers to prevent him from attending lessons. Collaborative working from Social Care, Education Welfare, Health, HEO and the SEND Team, saw his attendance very slowly increase towards the end of the academic year. On the last day of the school year his mum had made a freedom of information request to HEO. Given the nature of what Mark had shared about his mum and his worry that she would find out what he had shared, the Head of HEO liaised with the DPO who advised that consent should be sort from Mark to share his information. Mark did not give consent. At the beginning of the new academic year HEO had been told by Social Care that over the summer Mark and his twin had gone to live with their Dad and Step Mum in a different local authority. A move that both children wanted.

were ongoing, for example the Police and CS liaised regularly and any cases flagged up were dealt with quickly utilising the processes that were in place.

- Community health services knew their children well and were in a prime position to pick up the at risk children, as well as determine how this information was shared. It was recognised that it was about how the partnership had worked together and feedback had highlighted the strength of this collaborative working. The CPIS at the hospital also flagged all of the at risk children, which provided further intelligence, and in addition an effective MASH was in operation. Furthermore, there was a dynamic risk register for transforming care for those children with significant complex needs. Around this, work was taking place with BBC and there were key workers at the CAMHS services that further supported early intervention. Any adaption needed for partnership working in the NHS was welcomed so that effective change could have taken place where needed;
- When children were presenting to A&E the teams had eyes on the ground and assisted with following the children through the pathways and organisation. In addition, work was taking place with clinical teams to ensure that no one was falling within the cracks, the appropriate questions were being asked of the children, and these were being followed through
- School funding stretched, and this had included funding for children with additional needs. Currently Bedford Borough were one of very few Councils that were not overspending their High Needs Block funding and this was only believed to be because of the amazing work that was taking place by colleagues.

Safeguarding Education

“Senior leaders are aware of their statutory duties for children who are home educated. Their high ambitions ensure that children’s needs are accounted for and children are supported to stay in education. Improved communication and early intervention have reduced the number of children leaving school and becoming home educated, or children missing education. The local authority, through PLACE, the parent-led and community-based education service, provides effective educational and social support to parents and children who are on the home education register. Professionals work collaboratively to identify children who are missing education. They take appropriate action to support children back into school.”

Ofsted Inspection November 2021.

In January 2022 the Partnership focussing on Safeguarding in Education and one of the issues to address is the increase in home education. The first COVID lockdown presented the schools with new challenges in their attempts to engage with those children they believed to be at risk who were no longer present at the school site. During the COVID safeguarding has remained the top priority for schools and in the School Improvement Strategy and great efforts were made to provide guidance and support to schools to improve practice. Five main safeguarding risks during COVID were identified: mental health and wellbeing, risky behaviours, attendance, DA and online safety (and any resulting inappropriate behaviour arising from this). Support for children was being provided in a number of ways, including quality first teaching, in school CAMHS services, Early Help referrals and the provision of information on online safety to parents and carers. School Leaders have had during COVID become

experts in a wide variety of new areas, and open their schools to become testing centres, holiday clubs etc. 9 schools in the Borough, out of a total of 75, had been inspected by OFSTED since the start of COVID. During these discussions It was recognised that the education system in Bedford Borough was bolstered by strong partnership working and the sharing of relevant information where possible to keep children safe.

The significant impact of COVID for SEND children resulted in an increase in safeguarding referrals to CSC. CS sought to provide a high level of support and that a punitive approach to student absence was not being taken as it was recognised that the number of COVID cases at that time were very high. Bedford Borough is lucky to have [The Place](#), a provision to support students who were electively home educated and their families.

Establishing a Head Teacher Reference Group at the start of COVID had proven very useful and BBC had been supportive throughout. In relation to school staff welfare, BBC regularly met with trade union representatives and provided updates for school leaders on a variety of matters.

An in-depth Review of Permanent Exclusions of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) had been undertaken and shared with the Partnership in January 2022. There were nine key findings within the draft report, including the importance of recognising and addressing Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and the request from schools for the provision of additional support from specialists to support certain students. Persistent and general disruptive behaviour was identified as the most common reason for exclusion. The constant pressures on the system resulted in opportunities for intervention being missed. Relationships mattered- those with a relationship with a trusted adult at the school were less likely to be excluded. There was a lack of special school places and some children needing specialist provision were being educated in mainstream settings. BBC sought to co-produce the

final document with school leaders, who had been very supportive of the process to date. The Parent Carer Forum (PCF) and other departments within CS had also been involved in the preparation of the draft report. Funding had been provided to allow BBC to engage an experienced Head Teacher to do a time limited piece of work on the reduction of exclusions for the SEND cohort. A number of recommendations arising from the report were being addressed and will be brought back to the Partnership with assurances.

A concern was raised about the high rate of exclusion amongst boys and young men of black Caribbean heritage with SEND (a long-standing issue) and the Chair expressed the view that this was not about the boys and was a problem with the system that needed to be continually challenged, with additional support needing to be provided to the parents and carers of these children. This was also a training and professional development issue.

Like all schools BILTT completes a self-audit section 175 each year for all their schools and this ensures that the systems, processes and policies they have in place for safeguarding are in place and effective. The Head of Safeguarding for BILTT completes a safeguarding audit on each school annually too and this ensures that each school has the appropriate policies, processes and systems in place to keep pupils safe whilst in school. BILTT schools have a majority of SEND pupils and so work closely with the CSC SEND team ensuring that each pupils' EHCPs is relevant and appropriate to the pupil's level of need in each area. By getting the right support in place, pupils are less likely to be excluded and thus less vulnerable to the vulnerabilities they know exclusion can bring for their children.

The Bedford Schools Forum would be approached to release additional funding to support the recommendations arising. Bedford Borough featured as an area of best practice in relation to the work of BBC and Bedford Borough Learning Exchange (BBLE) in decimating research and learning for school leaders to improve practice in the Borough's schools, ensuring that the latest research was influencing practice in schools in a book by Sir Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters "About our Schools: Improving on previous best.". A wide range of approaches towards exclusions that had been adopted by schools in Bedford Borough, including the use and length of fixed term exclusions and the effect that this had on both the children and their families. It was important to continue to challenge unconscious bias and to have difficult conversations at Partnership level.

Currently 418 (Sept 22) children are registered as being electively home educated. The number of electively home educated children is still higher than pre-pandemic figures (this is the case nationally). Although the majority of parents who initially removed their children in BBC due to anxiety over the likelihood of COVID transmission in school have now returned them to school. 81 of the home educated pupils benefit from being registered with the 'PLACE Programme', which is funded by BBC in order to support learning and safeguarding outcomes and ensure that the children are 'seen'. They have recently worked with the Programme Management Committee and Biddenham International School (the scheme's administrators) to appoint a new manager, making support for pupils from vulnerable backgrounds a priority. In addition, there has been work with Police and Health colleagues as part of a Pan-Bedfordshire project to ensure that colleagues in Children's Social Care, Health, the Police and other partner agencies are aware of the fact that home-educated pupils very often have no practitioners' 'eyes' on them, and signposting what support is available.

"Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) have access to interpreters and to information which helps them understand the services and support they will receive. There is good consideration of their holistic needs, especially a focus on their emotional and physical well-being given their experiences and journeys travelled. UASC and former UASC are quickly supported to engage in education."

Ofsted Inspection November 2021

The Department of Education awarded the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships funding to undertake a project to develop Education as the 4th Safeguarding Partner. Expressions of interest were received from schools and a Panel identified representatives from two schools from each Local Authority area. This resulted in representatives from Primary, Secondary, Alternative Education Provider and Academies and their roles ranged from Assistant/Deputy Head Teachers, DSLs to Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). A Project Group was established and had a project plan which included seeking examples of good practice nationally with education settings via all Safeguarding Children Partnerships, and undertook a local survey with schools. The Project Group developed a school engagement statement of intent. They discussed and reflected on potential structures and established that current structures could be utilised to meet the need of engaging and communication with the Partnerships. Prior to this piece of work there had already been some discussions between the three Safeguarding Partnerships about establishing an Education group in our Pan Bedfordshire group structure to bring schools and education providers to the Partnerships as the 4th Safeguarding Partner, so this project was very timely. The Project Group developed and presented their Strategy and accompanying report to the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children's Services Group in September 2022 and the new Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group will meet for the first time in November.

“When the email came asking for school staff who may want to be part of a working party to devise a strategy to support schools becoming the fourth safeguarding partner, I replied keenly! The conversations, challenges and teamwork that came out of this was beyond measure. Our outcomes were achieved and shared with the local authorities and we are now beginning phase 2 – implementation. I look forward to schools becoming more integral in multi-agency work via the system and structure created and fulfilling their roles as the fourth safeguarding partner, bringing challenge to, and working alongside, others”.

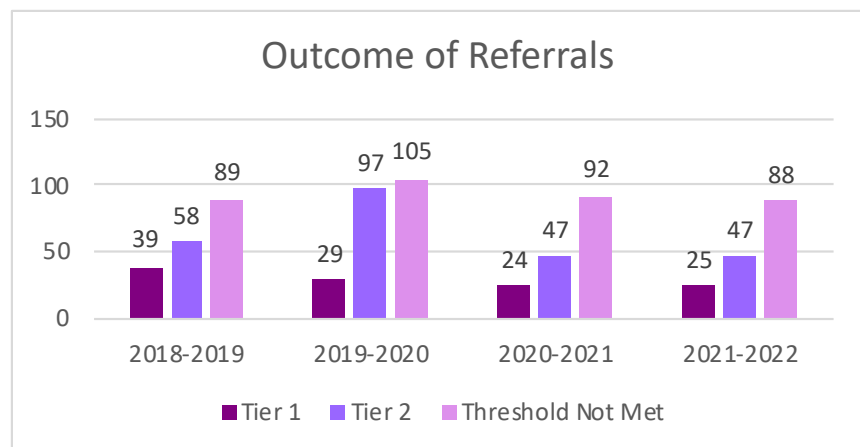
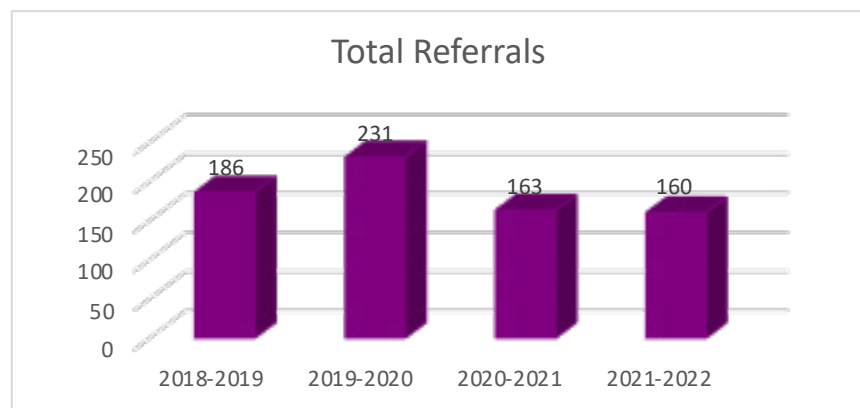
Susannah King – Deputy Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Alongside all the above project the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships via the Pan Bedfordshire Voice of the Child Group have a project running in parallel to look at establishing individual Safeguarding Children Boards in schools and these would be led by the children. Briefly the role of these Children Safeguarding Boards is to give a platform for a preventative curriculum that can protect children from abuse by sharing knowledge with them that is age appropriate.



Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The referral rate over the last two years has been relatively consistent with similar incoming contacts with the LADO service.



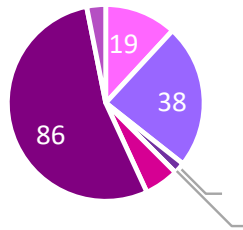
The number of meetings held and stage 2 monitoring for internal investigations has also remained consistent from 2020 onwards. Contacts at Threshold Not Met has always been the highest as evidence above and this is consistent with regional and national figures. LADO is often the first point of contact for organisations particularly schools in gaining advice often before HR has even been contacted therefore it is expected some cases may not necessarily always meet the ‘allegations’ threshold.

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 and these would be more conduct issues that need to be managed internally or lower level concerns such as a staff member raising their voice at a child- cases such as these would be managed under HR procedures rather than allegations management.

From the data the percentages have been calculated based on 156 cases referred into the LADO service as 4 cases remain ongoing. Therefore 80% of referrals were concluded within the one-month timescale and 94% of referrals were concluded within 3 months. These are largely led by organisations which need to take into consideration the complexities of the investigations but also note the difficulties surrounding COVID organisations have managed to maintain and progress investigations as the figures are not too dissimilar from last year. This is positive to note that despite the difficulties a level of consistency has remained in this aspect around employer responsibility and investigations. Investigations can be stressful for all concerned and clearly the quicker they can be concluded the better it is for the individuals involved.

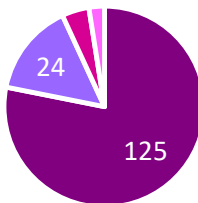
The LADO has been in the current role since 2018 and as such as built up positive working relationships with colleagues within the council but also outside agencies including transport/police. This enables a positive

Outcomes



- Substantiated
- False/Deliberately Invented
- Unfounded
- Yet to be Determined
- Unsubstantiated
- Malicious
- Did not meet threshold

Case Conclusion



- Concluded within 1 month
- Concluded within 12 months
- Concluded within 3 months
- Ongoing

multi-agency approach in management of cases. Feedback from partners has always been positive. The LADO service is in process of compiling a feedback form which will be sent out at the point of case closures to further improve the service. The LADO service was inspected during the Children’s Social Care Inspection in November 2021 and the verbal feedback from OFSTED indicated the LADO service functioned positively. Internal auditing of the LADO work was carried out in August 2022. An area which requires ongoing oversight and development is semi-independent 16+ provisions as this remains an area of concern nationally as these homes are not regulated by governing bodies. The LADO aims to offer allegations management sessions to these provisions in Bedford Borough to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities when managing allegations. In terms of ongoing developments, the LADO has continued to deliver information sessions regarding Allegations Management which historically has been well received and these sessions continue to help develop the LADO role within Bedford Borough.



Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

CDOP has continued to review the deaths of children from across Bedford Borough including embracing technology to discharge the duties of the panel, in a safe and appropriate way, giving due consideration to each child and their family and carers, so that any lessons learned, and recommendations may contribute to mitigating risks to children where possible. The CDOP Annual Report, is shared with BBSCP to inform wider learning. The aim of CDOP, is to review all child deaths in Bedford Borough, to seek to drive improvements, improve the health, safety and wellbeing of children in the area.

There is a statutory requirement, to produce an annual report, outlining the work of the CDOP Panel and relevant learning from the cases reviewed, to inform the priorities of the Child Death Review (CDR) Partners, the Safeguarding and Public Health agendas. It is produced, using data collected by a number of resources including Information collected via manual notifications and by e-CDOP, which is a secure, flexible, and web-based solution which allows the Child Death Review (CDR) process, to be fully managed efficiently, with effective sharing of multi-agency information. The system provides a secure way of connecting the network of partners in the CDR arrangements.

The eventual CDOP multi-agency dataset is extremely comprehensive. The annual report includes data, to help reduce year on year variations associated with child deaths. This allows better identification of longer-term trends or key themes, which may not have been as apparent within a single year of data. All datasets feed into the National Child Mortality database (NCMD), which began collecting data on all children who die in England, on 1 April 2019, as part of the [Child Death Review process](#) and through a multi-agency information gathering process. There are two ways in which child death data is analysed by NCMD: Real-time

surveillance of deaths as they occur, and analysis of reviewed data (comprehensive information collected as part of a review undertaken by local Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs). Since April 2008 all deaths of children up to the age of 18 years, excluding still births and planned terminations are reviewed by the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), to accommodate the national guidance and statutory requirement set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Child Death Review partners, the Local Authority and BLMK ICB, continue to hold responsibility for the delivery of the Child Death Review Process in Central Bedfordshire set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The CDOP is multiagency, with differing areas of professional expertise. This process is undertaken for all children who are normally resident in the area.

The footprint of CDOP remains the same in Bedford Borough, Central 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 ICB and Local Authority areas, where members of CDOP and the Safeguarding Children Partnerships can explore opportunities for collaborative working. The CDOP Annual Report provides an in-depth analysis of all child deaths and will be available in the autumn 2022.

Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG)

Bedfordshire Police and partners are working together to tackle perpetrators of violence or abuse against women and girls. Crimes which disproportionately affect females include [rape and sexual offences](#), stalking and [domestic abuse](#). There are a whole host of projects now underway which will help better tackle violence against women and girls and ensure they are treated with respect. Bedfordshire Police have chosen to have an explicit focus on male perpetrators as the large majority of cases the violence is perpetrated by men. Improving investigations into offences which disproportionately affect women and girls, such as rape, sexual offences, stalking and domestic abuse, is a key part of the strategy. However, there are other behaviours which affect women and girls, including cat-calling, inappropriate contact, misogyny, explicit messaging and groping, to name a few. These behaviours may not all meet a criminal threshold, but they could be precursors for further offending. Either way, they make women and girls in Bedford Borough feel unsafe and must be tackled. As part of the work there is a commitment to educate the workforce by making it clear that inappropriate conduct is not tolerated, and providing a safe space for colleagues who have witnessed or experienced sexual misconduct to come forward and report.

Male violence against women and girls has recently been added to Bedfordshire Police control strategy as an overarching force priority and sits alongside other areas such as domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, rape and sexual offending which remain force priorities, with determined and relentless work to protect and achieve justice for those affected. Improvements will be made in regards to the experiences of women

Our Strategic

Our Delivery Plan

and girls through the criminal justice system, as well as the approach to offender management.

All this work is in parallel with the Safer Streets project which is work around prevention, education and raising awareness of violence against women and girls across the county led by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

More information can be found at this link [MVAWG work](#).



Scrutiny of the Bedford Borough Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

This is the second Annual report to which I have contributed since being appointed as Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) Independent Chair and Scrutineer as from Autumn 2020 after Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) stood down, being replaced by Partnerships under the 2017 Children and Social Work Act and the Statutory Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). In 2019, across Bedfordshire it was agreed by partners that each area would retain an Independent Chair, who both ensures objectivity and provides scrutiny, judging the quality and effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The same statutory partner bodies' leaders also agreed to continue to do as much work on safeguarding as possible, through the three Bedfordshire Partnerships' groups, on a Pan Bedfordshire basis. These arrangements continue operate, with adjustments and nuances that take into account the differences between, and local needs of, the three Local Authorities and their partner bodies. Given many partner agencies work across all three local authority areas, in the Scrutiny elements of my role in Bedford Borough I continue to consider this Pan Bedfordshire way of working is appropriate. It ensures that those bodies working across all three areas are not constantly adjusting what they don on the operational level, and that the three areas learn from as well as with each other on crucial safeguarding matters for children, their families and thereby their communities.

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

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

- Provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, including appropriate arrangements to identify & review serious child safeguarding cases.
- Act as their Partnership's constructive critical friend, in which role the scrutineer is a key driver in promoting reflection to 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.

Framed by these broad and wide-ranging requirements my approach to this work, as both Independent Chair and Scrutineer, has continued to involve:

Chairing the BBSCP Strategic Board, whose work is led by the senior representative leaders/managers of the Statutory Partners and their leadership teams;

- Chairing the BBSCP CRG whose job is to ensure the effectiveness of arrangements for undertaking case reviews when there has been a failure in practice or a need to question effectiveness. The Group also works to ensure the necessary objectivity and distance from the work involved in service delivery, as a means of ensuring reviews identify, and ensures practice seeks to address, serious child safeguarding cases. These always highlight a need for development in particular areas of both practice, and policy or decisions making leadership.

- Attending the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic leaders' group, and the wider East of England regional group of Independent Chairs, Scrutineers, and Business Managers; and during 2021-2022, hosting regular briefing sessions with Bedford Borough's three statutory partners' representatives.
- Attending and helping to steer the business of the BBC's Children Services Improvement Board, which since Ofsted's declaration that they are now Good, has somewhat changed the nature of what it covers and reflects on.
- Taking a lead in Section 11 and challenge events, which run on a Pan Bedfordshire basis and are considered vital and positive sources of learning.
- Reviewing reports into, and reflecting back on the quality of, multi-agency audits, training and performance data.
- Commissioning, and ensuring partners are taking follow-up action and pursuing business on, a number of thematic reviews around contextual safeguarding, SYV, criminal exploitation of children, radicalisation and dark web issues, and other causes for concern in both Bedfordshire and further afield.
- Attending and contributing to the direction of work of the BDAP, from both a Bedford Borough - specific and a countywide basis.
- Incorporating feedback from and reports by the National Safeguarding Children Practice Review Panel into practice in Bedford Borough as the need arises and common issues arise, such as the increase during the COVID 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.

In 2020, it was agreed that the Independent Chairs/Scrutineers would lead on a self-assessment of the Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements based around the ‘Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements Report 2019. The six steps are not strictly a checklist for use in responding to the requirements of inspection or external regulation, but a tool for partners, separately and together to develop and reflect on safeguarding children plans and activities. The Board sees these six pillars as sound self-evaluation aids, becoming part of the developments involved.

As BBSCP’s Independent Chair and Scrutineer, my assessment is that the partnership in Bedford Borough has continued to work together effectively to safeguard children. There is strong leadership across services, and a welcome continuity of presence by senior level representatives of the vital key bodies across Bedford Borough. A strong feature is that when the dialogue involved becomes challenging or difficult, partners stay with it until resolutions are reached. This demonstrates a high and continued degree of shared professional confidence that concerns will be taken seriously, acted on, and children’s welfare will be put ahead of the concerns or preoccupations of an individual agency.

The year on which this Annual Report reflects has been affected by the after effects, or as some categorise it the “long tail” after the worst of, the global pandemic created by the spread of, and the nation’s responses to COVID. As this report is published, it is vital also to recognise that Bedford Borough, like every locality, has been affected by stringent and difficult challenges to the economy at large, and the effects of these on the incomes and the ability to thrive of many families – the most vulnerable among them being the worst affected. One already recognised challenge for 2022-2023 and beyond is likely to be the effects of this economic and cost of living crisis on families’ and communities’ life chances.

A key strength in the Pan Bedfordshire safeguarding arrangements was, and remains, the formation of Pan Bedfordshire groups. These help the wider partnership to be more efficient, including in their work to develop standardised policies and procedures that, with adjustments for the localities concerned, can be applied across the county’s three boroughs. The Groups are well attended with good representation from the three lead partners. The Section 11 audit, accountability and assurance days (also run on a pan Bedfordshire basis) and agency reports continue to hold the wider partnership to account for ensuring their compliance with safeguarding.

As the report is published in late 2022, it looks back over a financial year that closed over half a year ago, through a lens that remains influenced by the long and difficult recovery from the effects of a novel disease arriving in early 2020, that has by no means gone away but continues to change its nature. The “long tail” of COVID, including the effects of Long COVID, is affecting children, medical research indicates perhaps worse than the ongoing effects still being seen in the adult population. As elsewhere, at the height of the pandemic’s worst periods, Bedford services came together round the issues and the challenges, rather than being overly concerned with boundaries between them. A serious disease outbreak such as COVID meant that traditional boundaries between services, and the imperatives on all services to follow sometimes bureaucratic processes at interfaces between organisations were stood down in order “to simply get the job done.” Partners during 2021-2022 found the time to discuss what eased progress and made responses more focused and agile. The discussions led to decisions on what should be retained as life returned to doing business as it was done in a pre-pandemic normality and what should retain the new ways of working found since 2020. All involved recognised that running at the speed they attained during the pandemic’s worst times left all concerned tired, stretched, at times traumatised including suffering the loss of family members, friends or

colleagues. They also reflected that the work they had done to answer COVID's challenges went on whilst carrying on with their work in public services that were also challenged by strategic, governance, structural, staffing and other changes.

The partners' leaders are keenly aware that this state of tiredness and personal challenge is not sustainable in the longer term, and that staff, client and service user wellbeing must be addressed. Deciding how, when resourcing is unlikely to expand to meet needs, remains a major challenge.

In the year covered by this Annual Report I have chaired the elements of BBSCP's business where chairing falls to me, and have dropped into, taken part in and offered Scrutineer's assurances on the he Pan-Bedfordshire subgroups which work 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 and need consistency. I can report that both on Bedford Borough and a Pan-Bedfordshire basis, I have seen clear evidence of outcomes focused, effective engagement of partners and relevant agencies in strategic and implementation for children, despite the challenges in demand continuing to rise whilst resources are not expanding to meet or satisfy it. As this report is published, as Scrutineer I must record here, for all readers' notice, that there is little if any sign that future funding settlements for publicly funded services will enable services to do what their staff are keenly aware people in their localities need. This is by no fault of the policy makers, budget holders or services concerned, none of whom can insist that central funding rises to meet what communities require or are asking for.

In Bedford Borough, at both strategic and operational levels, the Board and the Pan Bedfordshire groups feature good representation and involvement by commissioning bodies, providers, and voluntary organisations. I also experience appropriate engagement of schools and Further Education Colleges in safeguarding children, and note here that there is a firm intention, in 2022-2023, to involve them as the 4th Safeguarding Partner in both single borough and countywide safeguarding activity on a more formal footing than as Relevant Agencies under Working Together 2018. They already demonstrate their commitment, and this remains central to the ways in which the partnership continues to develop 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, and continues to be a vital strand of activity. I am pleased to note the intention to build ever stronger links between the Board's statutory partners and education safeguarding forums to ensure stronger links with all agencies.

Strategic oversight and a joined-up approach are evident across all three Partnerships, and in the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services group which is well attended by senior managers of the 3 Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the Independent Chairs/Scrutineers. I remain impressed at how quickly issues are resolved and initiatives taken forward in these forums. That the three Partnerships share common approaches to what is done, and to its auditing and the expectation that learning will follow, means where a service works across geographical boundaries, their practice does not have to change to fit different ways of working from one side of a road to the other at the boundaries between one Bedfordshire Local Authority and another. It also means practitioners can exchange ideas and learn from each other's practice. A key strength is seen in the work of the Pan Bedfordshire groups. These help the partnerships to be more efficient than would three separate sets

of groups, borough to borough. This Pan Bedfordshire work has helped to develop, embed, and train practitioners in a range of standardised policies and procedures. The Groups are well attended with good representation from the statutory partners in all three local authority areas. As part of this way of working, Pan Bedfordshire Section 11 assurance days and reports hold the wider partnership to account for ensuring the compliance with safeguarding requirements

Safeguarding Partners in Bedford Borough readily identify serious safeguarding incidents and review them formally, 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 system of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), and their superseding by Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews (LSCPRs) overseen by a National Panel, mean Bedford Borough continues to learn, and to apply that learning, when things have gone wrong for a child in receipt of services across health, education, social care, the police and other agencies. This includes in responses to the difficulties placed in the system if a child sadly dies and the Coroner is involved and passes judgements that single out particular practice or services. The sense of partnership working that arises is positive.

Case Review work is not undertaken on a Pan Bedfordshire basis except insofar as it informs evidence-based learning. BBSCP's own Case Review Group, which I chair and into whose discussions I bring the Scrutineer's gaze and approach, seeks formal assurance that practice will improve and practitioners will learn from mistakes or tragedies. There is determined, detailed, transparent and honest scrutiny by the Strategic Board of the BBSCP on how partners embed lessons from reviews and audits. It is clear that a good deal more work remains needed to evaluate the impact of the learning that arises from such reviews and audits, and to ensure all

learning includes both local and national reviews and can be outlined and proven, rather than services making pledges to learn lessons and improve practice but not then always being able to prove positive change has resulted. Partners at both Bedford Borough and Pan Bedfordshire levels are committed to creating that sharper focus on differences made. Work continues on ensuring that 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. My attendance at the BBC Children's Services Improvement Board, and the onward transmission of that Board's reports to the BBSCP, ensures the wider partnership is informed of trends. All key partners have presented assurance reports after any safeguarding-relevant inspection. The partnership has worked hard to simplify, and more importantly to ensure the relevance of, the data presented to Groups, and to the Board as a whole. My advice as Scrutineer is that the previous year's decision not to form a Bedford specific data and performance group continues to mean that some data is not properly overseen in an "everybody's business" approach to sharing and data analysis. The decision not to have such a Group should be open to being revisited should my concern come to fruition that "everybody's business means it's nobody's real concern" has resulted.

Partners have seen a year of considerable change in agencies' governance, staffing and structures, not least the immense change entailed in moving from a single Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) that served only Bedfordshire, to a Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System and Board, with all the considerable change that has accompanied that governance and structural change. As this report is published, that change continues to settle. Luckily many of the very senior practitioners who have for many years been integral to the safeguarding

agenda from a health services perspective remain as key contacts and partnership members, meaning continuity as well as change are to the fore. The determination that Place will drive what the ICB and provider Alliances will now do lies at the centre of the work now going forward into 2022-2023.

Forward thinking approaches and professional thinking have continued to feature in much of the work done in Bedford Borough, as the main body of this report captures and publicises. Service leaders however are clear that there is always more to do. The development of contextual safeguarding that includes schools as a key partner in the context of a child's life is something asked for by schools, and the 2022-2023 development of their presence as the 4th Safeguarding Partner should actively facilitate this. There are several other areas of challenge that continue, and are likely to reach into the 2022-2023 year that has already begun. These include:

- The need to capitalise on the ongoing development of a systemic and contextual practice model in children's social care services, a model that can then be used with greater ease and effectiveness in a more rounded and multiagency approach to safeguarding children than only in social care services.
- Ensuring that the embedding of the GCP2 in response to or working with families affected by a wide range of types and manifestations of neglect is pressed home, given that in 2021-2022 there seems to have been something of an easing off in its implementation and embedding in the practice of all agencies working on neglect.
- There remain significant challenges in children accessing the right levels of support for their emotional and mental health wellbeing, at the right time and early enough in their experience of problems or distress. The 2021 news that the mental health bed capacity growth gained the go-ahead in Bedford Borough was good news, but all in the system recognise that this area of commissioning and provision remains

seriously challenged, especially at points in a child's journey that is a long time before a medical diagnosis is given or a bed is needed.

- Bedford Borough's determined responses to SYV, county lines, gangs and related issues remains a key focus, and all concerned are aware that the coming economic challenges of the cost of living crisis unfolding as this report is published may present still further challenges to keeping children safe from the levels of exploitation involved in serious crime.
- Non-accidental injuries in non-mobile babies and children under 2 remains a challenge in Bedford Borough as they are elsewhere and the current levels of concentration on helping parents to cope with the challenges of raising very young children remain a vital part of the Partnership's business
- The 2021-2022 year featured reviews of complex issues and difficulties found in "blended" families where several groups of overlapping and interlocking adults were responsible for danger to children, resulting in proven harm.

In 2022, partners and relevant agencies have decided that the body concerned will be renamed the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (BBSCP) as per the terms of the 2017 Act. The work will continue as it has to date, though all three boroughs are reviewing structures, numbers of meetings and groups, and how much more efficiently some things could be done as agencies remain busy, pressured and ever more stretched. All are determined to work with me to focus my scrutiny on ensuring that all of us receive and act on ever more direct feedback from children and families, and from front-line staff in universal, targeted and specialist services. The voices of Bedford Borough's children, their families and those who work with them lie at the heart of effective and change-driving scrutiny. It remains a challenge to ensure the BBSCP works effectively and seamlessly with partnerships including the SAB, CSP, HWB and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Crime Panel so as to

ensure ever more focus on system-wide ways of working. Cross-and-inter-partnership working also remains vital in the completion and success of work on exploitation and substance misuse, children living with adults who have mental or long-term physical health issues that mean children become carers long before they are mature enough to be so, and those already living in poverty or disadvantage who can only become ever less likely to succeed without support as the cost of living crisis deepens and endures.

As Scrutineer, it is my statutory duty to state formally, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) that the BBSCP 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 pleasure to present that assurance, knowing Bedford Borough's partner agencies will go on striving for continued and proven improvement in their own settings, and together as partners.



Professor Maggie Atkinson

Independent Chair and Scrutineer,
Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (BBSCP)

Looking ahead and some of our challenges for 2022 – 2023

- The ongoing monitoring and completion of GCP2 assessments to support good practice. At the point of referrals for neglect then they are accompanied by a GCP2 and chronologies. For all partners Supervisors to confirm that a GCP2 has or is being completed, where relevant. That all ICPCs for neglect a GCP2 has been completed and a CP Medical undertaken as appropriate.
- The Neglect Screening Tool is launched and embedded.
- The Partnership to continue to ensure and support the engagement of children is meaningful and makes a difference.
- Launch and embed the new Thresholds of Need Guide - Effective Support for Children and Families in Bedford Borough
- Resources and capacity are limited and therefore there is a need to consider the whole holistic system approach across the Partnership.
- Continue to develop robust multiagency audits that scrutinise how the Partnership works together and what can be learnt from specific cases.
- The Partnership faces increasing demands as the challenges of a landscape and impact of COVID on children and families as well as austerity and financial issues are reflected in the presenting and needs and vulnerabilities of families.
- To ensure that those children reaching the threshold of social care intervention have been previously afforded the right support at the right time and where partners can reduce or mitigate the need for an intervention by the state that partners can say they have taken those opportunities.

- Impact of the economic and cost of living crisis on families' and communities' life chances.
- As part of the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance schools need to consistently transfer safeguarding records when students transfer to other schools and Colleges.
- The Partnership to support all education settings to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- The Partnership along with Public Health needs to focus upon where children are now rather than during COVID.
- There is also the need to ensure that those aspects of good practice and prevention that stopped things escalating in the wrong way are captured and celebrated.
- To work with the DA Partnerships and services to address the gap in capacity of therapeutic services to support children impacted by DA and trauma.
- Continue to develop robust information sharing practice from how partners share information between each other; to how the Partnership shares learning across Bedford Borough and wider.
- Transitional Safeguarding to develop and address a response to those children who do not have care and support needs, but many have EHCPs and the lack of team/service to support these needs in Adult Services. Continue to develop impactful and collaborative children to adult services transition pathways and practice.



Appendix A - Finance 2021 – 2022

The work of the BBSCP is funded through the following partner agencies in line with Working Together 2018 and a funding formula agreed by agencies in 2010 and adhered to since that time. Partner agencies agreed to maintain their budget contributions in 2021/2022 as at the same level for the last six years.

Agency	Agreed Contribution
Bedford Borough Council Children's Services	£114,090
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	£62,663
Bedfordshire Police	£18,300
Bedfordshire Probation Service	£1,600
Total	£196,653

Appendix B – Glossary

A&E – Accident and Emergency Department

ART – Adolescent Response Team

BAVEX – Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation

BBC – Bedford Borough Council

BBLE – Bedford Borough Learning Exchange

BBSCP – Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership

BDAP – Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership

BHT – Bedfordshire Hospital

BILTT – Bedford Inclusive Learning Training Trust

BLMK ICB – Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board

BYOS – Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service

CAFCASS – Children/Family Court Advisory and Support Service

CAMHs – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CCS – Cambridgeshire Community Services

CDOP – Child Death Overview Process

CEM – Child Exploitation Meeting

CIN – Child in Need

CP – Child Protection

CP-IS – Child Protection Information Sharing

CPP – Child Protection Plan

CS – Children’s Services

CSC – Children Social Care

CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation

CSP – Community Safety Partnership

DA – Domestic Abuse

DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead

EHCP – Education Health Care Plan

ELFT – East London Foundation Trust

FACES – Family and Children’s Early-help Services

GCP2 – Graded Care Profile 2

ICPC – Initial Child Protection Conference

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advisors

JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

LAC – Looked After Child

LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer

CSPR – Child Safeguarding Practice Review

MASA – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

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

PCC – Police Crime Commissioner

QA – Quality Assurance

RSHE – Relationships, Sex and Health Education

SAR – Safeguarding Adults Reviews

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

SPOC – Single Point of Contact

SYV – Serious Youth Violence

SYVP – Serious Youth Violence Panel

TAF – Team Around Family

VERU – Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit

VOCG – Voice of the Child Group

YPP – Young Persons Plan

Finding out more

This report is available online on the BBSCP website at

 www.bedford.gov.uk/LSCB

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

 LSCB@bedford.gov.uk

Or alternatively telephone

 **01234 276346**

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