



Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
Annual Report 2023/24**

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (CBSCP) Annual Report 2022/23

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Introduction by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer

The Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Partners as part of their arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare are required to demonstrate that they are open to independent scrutiny.

I have been appointed to take on the role of independent chair and to offer independent scrutiny of the Central Bedfordshire safeguarding arrangements and this is my assessment of how effective these arrangements have been in practice over the past 12 months. I will highlight where I feel the arrangements are performing well and where I consider further development is required.

As an independent scrutineer, it is my role to review the annual report for the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. This report highlights the commendable work carried out by the partnership, reflecting its unwavering commitment to the safety, wellbeing and development of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.

The partnership has successfully prioritized the voice of children, actively involving them in decision-making processes and leveraging their insights to improve co-ordinated service delivery. By placing children at the heart of their work, the partnership has demonstrated its dedication to understanding and addressing their unique needs.

This report highlights the priority issue of 'neglect'. Neglect continues to be the most common form of child abuse across the UK, which reflects the position in Central Bedfordshire. It is vital that as a partnership, there is early recognition of neglect to ensure a consistent and timely response.

The Pan Bedfordshire partnership has adopted a single countywide child neglect assessment tool, called the Graded Care Profile (GCP2). GCP2 has been adopted by all partners, however, as I mentioned last year, returns using this tool were low. Whilst we have seen an increase in its use, by local authority staff, the numbers completed from the wider partnership are still disappointingly low. I will continue to challenge agencies to use GCP2 to identify children at risk of neglect and hope to see further increases in returns and an early intervention to improve the lives of children who are at risk of neglect.

Following last year's safeguarding adult review of 'Max', a key focus of the partnership this year has been transitional safeguarding, ensuring a smooth and coherent journey for young people as they navigate the complexities of adolescence and transition to adulthood. The collaboration between agencies is improving in this area, creating a strong safety net for these vulnerable young individuals. This continues to be complex and challenging work, particularly for those children who have been experiencing abuse and exploitation. As they reach 18, the services available to them are limited. Abuse and exploitation doesn't end at 18 years of age and yet many services for adults are designed only to support those people with ongoing care and support needs. This important work needs to continue to enable the partnership to develop effective 'Transitional Safeguarding' arrangements.

Operation Encompass is now well embedded in Central Bedfordshire. In short Operation Encompass is a police and education early information sharing safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse. This partnership has now extended to capture information on missing children. This information is shared with the relevant school to ensure appropriate support and monitor risks of exploitation. Return Home Interviews from children who go missing can provide the partnership with a rich picture of intelligence which highlights key themes or trends and assists with activities to prevent further missing episodes. Whilst this is challenging work, I would like to see an increase in the successful completion of RHI's and will provide added scrutiny to this area in the following year.

The comprehensive Section 11 reports from relevant agencies and schools across Central Bedfordshire demonstrate a strong culture of safeguarding, accountability, and continuous improvement, essential in maintaining a high standard of child protection. The partnership in Central Bedfordshire has displayed real vigour when it comes to learning from serious cases. The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Such reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Partners to identify serious safeguarding incidents at a local level and then to review them as appropriate so that improvements can be made.

This report includes highlights that four Rapid Review that were undertaken, which led to the commissioning of three Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Partners have a well organised group of multi-agency professionals that oversee reviews and ensure there is a culture of learning and continuous improvement. The group are very keen to see that the recommendations from reviews improve outcomes for children and that lessons learned are embedded into practice. Furthermore, the partners have created a robust audit regime which ensures that the learning is revisited and embedded. I will closely monitor the audit process to confirm that learning is indeed embedded, and practice is improved.

Working Together 2023 (WT2023) was published during this reporting period, which will bring significant changes to the way the partnership is structured and managed. The partnership is working well together to make sure it will be compliant with the requirements of WT2023 and will ensure that the multi-agency partnership arrangements will be published, as required, in September 2024. As scrutineer I will monitor the transition to the new arrangements and provide more detail in next year's annual report.

Lastly the partnership's Safeguarding Training has received excellent feedback from delegates, highlighting its effectiveness in fostering a collaborative approach among professionals and empowering them with the knowledge and tools needed to safeguard children. There are many strengths to the safeguarding children's arrangements across Central Bedfordshire. I have found a partnership that is open to scrutiny and challenge and one that strives to continually learn and improve practice.

There is strong leadership and a clear sense of joint and equal responsibility from the three safeguarding partners. The partnership is one that is built on high support, high challenge and where difficult conversations are encouraged.

In conclusion, this annual report showcases the outstanding work carried out by the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in the past year. Their dedication, collaborative spirit, and unwavering commitment to child protection have yielded excellent results, and I am confident that they will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the children and young people they support.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals in the public, voluntary and private sectors who work tirelessly across Central Bedfordshire to improve the safety and quality of life of our children, young people, and families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Caton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Alan Caton OBE
Independent Chair and Scrutineer
Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Partnership

Statutory Partners Overview

Hayley Griffin, Interim Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council

It is my pleasure to introduce to you this year's Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report.

You will be able to see the hard work that has gone into creating the report which is a celebration of all the hard work that practitioners across the multi-agency partnership have carried out this year, supported by a real collaboration from partners at a strategic level.

Whilst there is much to celebrate it is, of course, important to remember that there are things that we have learnt this year too – as detailed in our rapid reviews and safeguarding practice reviews. It will be important that we all put in continued effort to ensure that the learning is embedded.

Looking ahead and in response to Working Together 2023 the partnership plans to invest together in data analytics and really wants to focus on leadership to unstick the sticky issues alongside supporting our practitioners to have the capacity to practice well to ensure that children in Central Bedfordshire are safeguarded.

John Murphy Assistant Chief Constable, Bedfordshire Police

Over the past year, we have seen a steady increase in demand, which has placed additional pressures on policing and our partners. We recognise that these pressures can be most effectively managed through collaboration and multi-agency working arrangements, which we remain committed to evolving to best meet the needs of our communities.

The policing workforce continues to grow and gain experience. We are dedicated to training and developing our staff, embedding learning, and implementing more modern working practices. We remain focused on creating a victim-focused culture in which professionals can identify vulnerability, including in circumstances where it may not be obvious. Our staff are trained to be empathetic and to consider the lived experiences and wishes of vulnerable people, especially children.

In line with our 2024-25 priorities, Bedfordshire Police continues to invest in dedicated teams responsible for protecting vulnerable people, both children and adults. We also have a dedicated Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Investigation team and a well-established Cyber Hub capable of managing online and digital threats. Additionally, we benefit from experienced partner-supported mental health and wellbeing services to support colleagues and ensure an effective response to mental health incidents at the earliest opportunity. We are committed to improving performance and delivering productivity improvement initiatives in conjunction with partner agencies.

Sarah Stanley, Chief Nurse, Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, Integrated Care Board

The ICB along with our health partners in CCS and ELFT continue to work with our system partners to ensure the health needs of our babies, children and young people are met and that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's minds.

Our teams of Designated Professionals and Named Professionals provide the expertise, support, and guidance across our systems, and have contributed to the development of and implementation of strategies, processes, and policies not only at Central Bedfordshire place, but across the Pan-Bedfordshire footprint.

Population health and health inequalities continue to drive our priorities across the health system. Understanding and shared learning from our CSPR's, SAR's, DHR's and Rapid Reviews tell us that there is more to do to safeguard adults and children especially around Neglect, Serious Youth

Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls and Mental Health and Learning Disability and Autism, however, our safeguarding arrangements allow us to explore and develop solutions collaboratively.

Section 1: Introduction

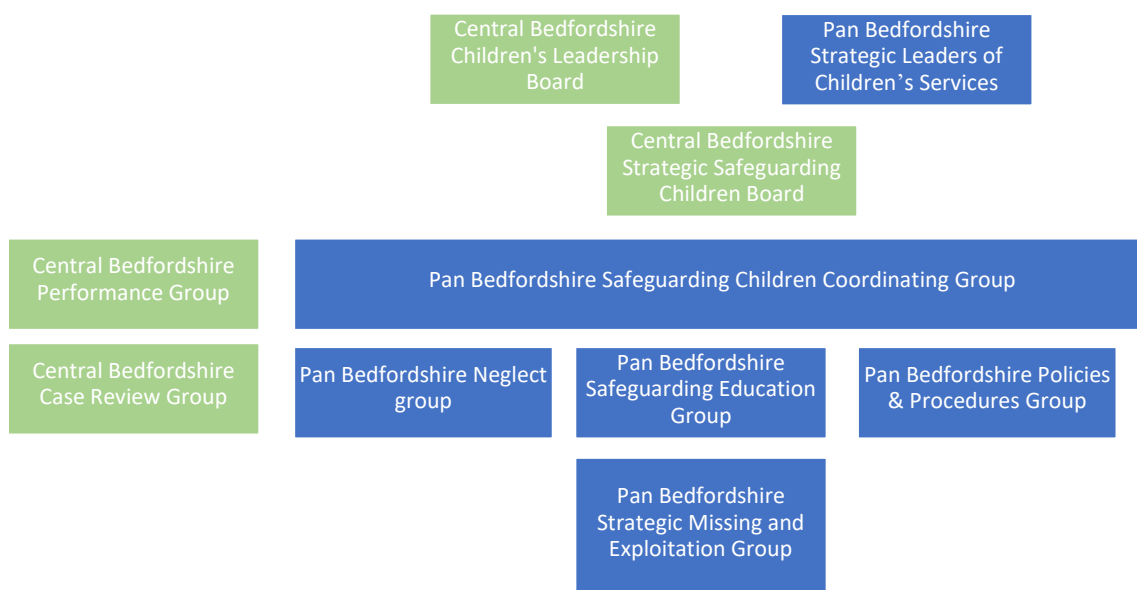
The 2023/24 Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Annual Report summarises the work of the Partnership throughout the year, highlighting how the safeguarding arrangements have been effective including evidence of impact. The report also identifies any areas for future development.

Central Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements:

The Central Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements cover the Local Authority area of Central Bedfordshire. The three Safeguarding Partners are Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Bedfordshire Police

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership work closely with neighbouring Partnerships in Bedford Borough and Luton. As such, our structure includes a number of Pan Bedfordshire groups. Central Bedfordshire Children’s Leadership Board acts as an Executive for the arrangements. Independent Scrutiny for the arrangements during 2023/24 was provided by our Independent Chair and Scrutineer, Alan Caton.

Central Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Structure During 2023/24:



***This structure will be updated following Working Together 2023**

Central Bedfordshire Demographics:

Central Bedfordshire has a growing population of 294,300. It is a largely rural area with over half the population living in the countryside and the rest in a number of market towns. The area is generally prosperous, with above average levels of employment, however there are pockets of deprivation and greater need.

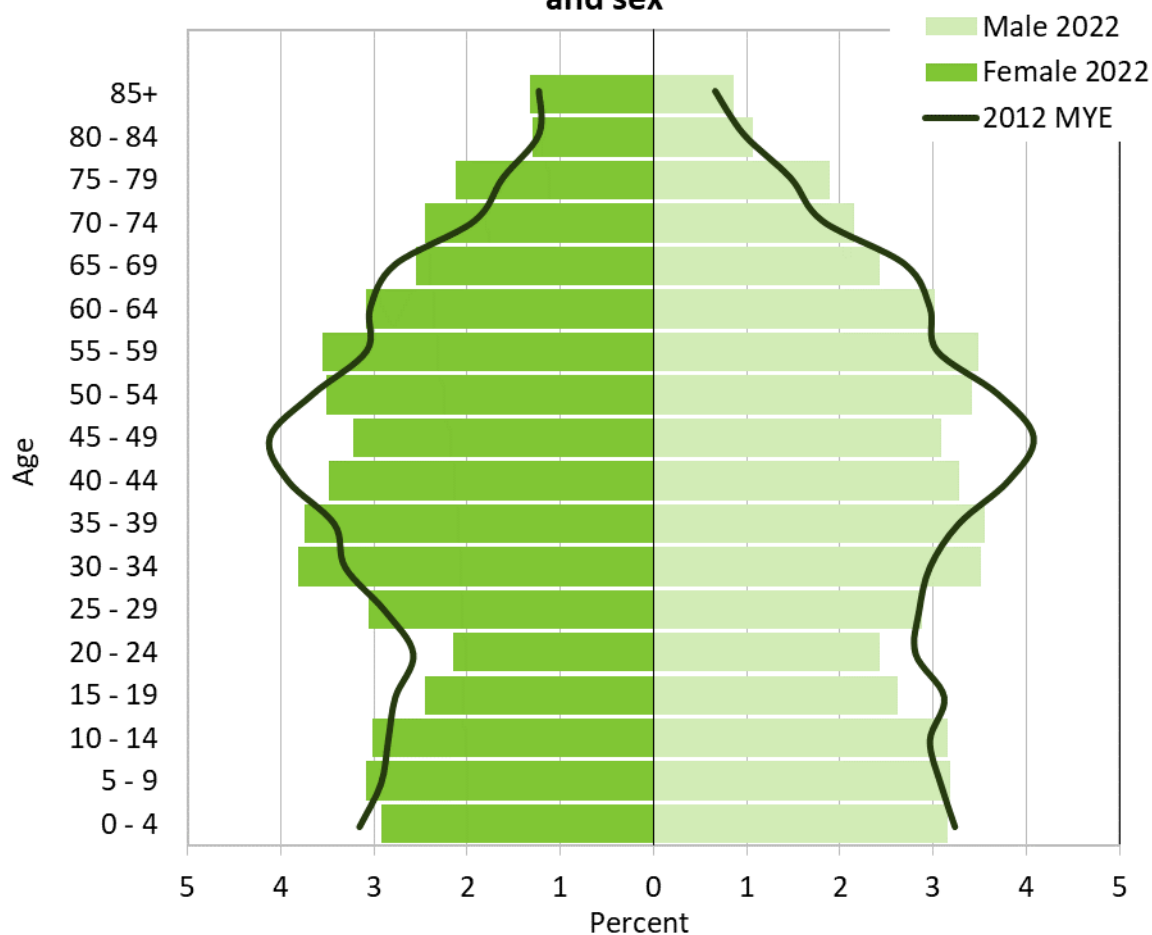
Between 2011-2021, Central Bedfordshire’s population rose by 15.7%, this is above the average rate for England (6.6%) and among the fastest-growing areas in the country. The Census ([2021](#)) records a 32.6% increase in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 11.5% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 16.7% in children aged under 15 years.

Central Bedfordshire's [Census 2021 factsheet](#) provides information on the ethnicity of residents; White British (83.5%), White- Other (5.3%), Indian (1.6%), Black African (1.3%) White Irish (1.2%), and White/ Black Caribbean (1.1%). Over 95% of pupils of compulsory school age speak English as a first language. However, more than 60 different first languages are recorded among the remaining children.

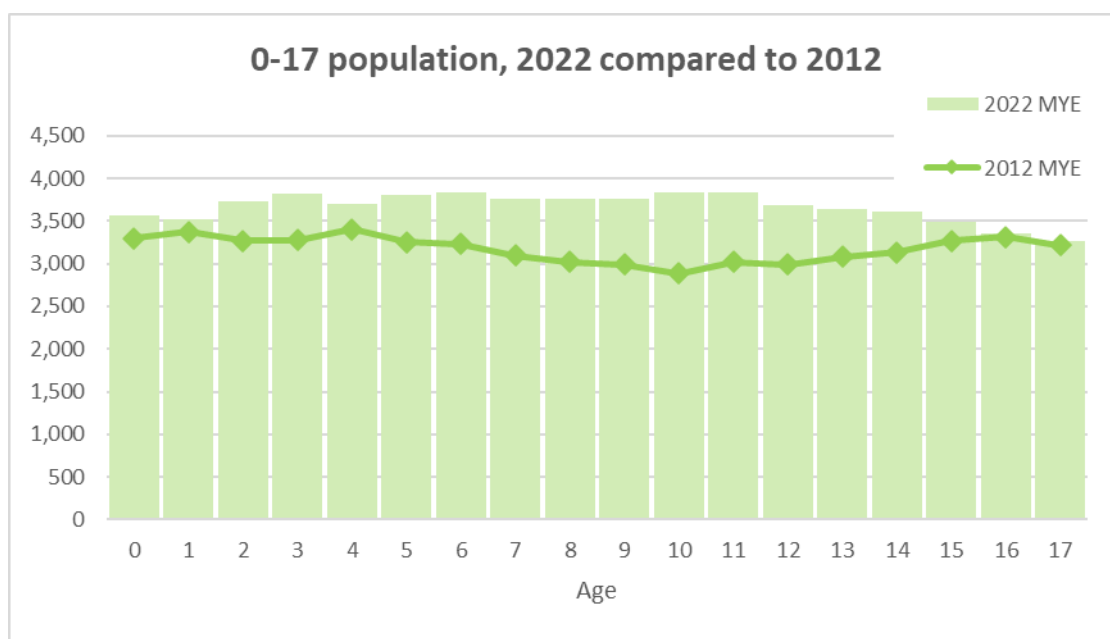
In 2021, the crime rate in Central Bedfordshire was lower than the average across similar areas. (Source: [Police UK](#)). Life expectancy and overall health are both slightly better than the national average, and children are less likely to be obese. (Source: [Central Bedfordshire Insight](#), May 2022)

Children and Young People:

Population of Central Bedfordshire in 2022 and 2012, by age and sex



Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid Year Estimators of Population, 2012 and 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of population by single year of age, 2012 and 2022

Children in low-income households (relative):

| LAs | 2021/22 (p) | 2022/23 | 2022 MYE population aged 0-15 | 2021/22 rate | 2022/23 rate |
|----------------------|-------------|---------|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Central Bedfordshire | 7,416 | 7,093 | 59,323 | 12.5% | 12.0% |
| Luton | 19,124 | 19,115 | 52,929 | 36.1% | 36.1% |
| Buckinghamshire | 18,312 | 16,472 | 111,922 | 16.4% | 14.7% |
| Bedford | 7,082 | 7,148 | 37,838 | 18.7% | 18.9% |
| Southend-on-Sea | 6,305 | 6,248 | 34,384 | 18.3% | 18.2% |
| Huntingdonshire | 4,576 | 4,372 | 33,479 | 13.7% | 13.1% |
| Dacorum | 3,944 | 3,812 | 31,633 | 12.5% | 12.1% |
| North Hertfordshire | 3,160 | 3,079 | 25,627 | 12.3% | 12.0% |
| South Cambridgeshire | 2,929 | 3,037 | 32,714 | 9.0% | 9.3% |
| St Albans | 2,979 | 2,860 | 31,972 | 9.3% | 8.9% |

Sources: Department for Work and Pensions, Children in low-income families (relative) and Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of Population 2022. Note that the rates are a local calculation based on these published figures.

| Wards (2022 wards) | 2021/22 (p) | 2022/23 | 2022 MYE population aged 0-15 | 2021/22 rate | 2022/23 rate |
|--------------------|-------------|---------|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Leighton Buzzard North | 468 | 440 | 2868 | 16.3% | 15.3% |
| Dunstable-Northfields | 489 | 414 | 2584 | 18.9% | 16.0% |
| Houghton Hall | 369 | 397 | 2481 | 14.9% | 16.0% |
| Leighton Buzzard South | 348 | 383 | 3757 | 9.3% | 10.2% |
| Stotfold and Langford | 387 | 362 | 3693 | 10.5% | 9.8% |
| Sandy | 408 | 360 | 2548 | 16.0% | 14.1% |
| Arlesey | 343 | 344 | 3379 | 10.2% | 10.2% |
| Cranfield and Marston Moretaine | 383 | 334 | 3702 | 10.3% | 9.0% |
| Biggleswade North | 264 | 261 | 2775 | 9.5% | 9.4% |
| Biggleswade South | 293 | 255 | 1925 | 15.2% | 13.2% |
| Dunstable-Manshead | 267 | 252 | 1213 | 22.0% | 20.8% |
| Dunstable-Icknield | 286 | 250 | 1781 | 16.1% | 14.0% |
| Tithe Farm | 252 | 244 | 1329 | 19.0% | 18.4% |
| Flitwick | 257 | 234 | 2435 | 10.6% | 9.6% |
| Parkside | 210 | 230 | 1136 | 18.5% | 20.2% |
| Shefford | 221 | 229 | 2343 | 9.4% | 9.8% |
| Eaton Bray | 228 | 225 | 703 | 32.4% | 32.0% |
| Caddington | 246 | 224 | 1677 | 14.7% | 13.4% |
| Amphill | 193 | 211 | 2671 | 7.2% | 7.9% |
| Potton | 207 | 211 | 1615 | 12.8% | 13.1% |
| Linslade | 164 | 171 | 2093 | 7.8% | 8.2% |
| Dunstable-Watling | 154 | 158 | 1499 | 10.3% | 10.5% |
| Toddington | 186 | 153 | 1676 | 11.1% | 9.1% |
| Heath and Reach | 132 | 128 | 1017 | 13.0% | 12.6% |
| Northhill | 108 | 123 | 735 | 14.7% | 16.7% |
| Dunstable-Central | 148 | 121 | 973 | 15.2% | 12.4% |
| Houghton Conquest and Haynes | 88 | 93 | 1033 | 8.5% | 9.0% |
| Silsoe and Shillington | 85 | 87 | 1232 | 6.9% | 7.1% |
| Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield | 99 | 85 | 889 | 11.1% | 9.6% |
| Barton-le-Clay | 68 | 68 | 811 | 8.4% | 8.4% |
| Aspley and Woburn | 66 | 48 | 750 | 8.8% | 6.4% |
| Central Bedfordshire | 7416 | 7093 | 59323 | 12.5% | 12.0% |

Sources: Department for Work and Pensions, Children in low-income families (relative) and Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of Population 2022. Note that the rates are a local calculation based on these published figures.

Note that new ward boundaries were introduced in 2023, but this data is currently only available for the old wards.

Education Information:

| Education Information January 2024 census | |
|--|-----------------------|
| No. pupils in Central Bedfordshire schools | 48906 |
| % of minority ethnic background | 24.1% (England 37.0%) |
| No. of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) | 13.7% (England 24.6%) |
| No. of pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM) | 6701 |
| No. of children with SEN Support | 5691 |

No. of children with Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

2772

Source: School Census Data (January 2024)

Participation in Education, Employment and Training:

- At the end of February 2024, Central Bedfordshire reported a three-month average cohort size of 6726 of young people with an academic age of 16 (year 12) or 17 (year 13). There was an increase of 408 young people from the previous 2023 cohort size of 6318.
- Of the current cohort, an average of 3.4% or 232 young people were classified as having NEET destination. This was slightly higher than the national (3.2%) average but lower than the regional (3.7%) average. The overall percentage of Young People who are NEET in Central Bedfordshire has increased by 0.9% to 3.4% or 59 young people from last year.
- Central Bedfordshire reported a three-month Not Known average of 0.3% at the end of February 2024. This figure was lower than the national (2.2%), the regional (1.4%) and the February 2023 average of 0.6%.
- An average of 96.3% young people aged 16 and 17 were in a positive destination during the 3-month period of December 2023 to February 2024. This was higher than the national (94.6%) and the regional averages (94.9%).
- At the end of February 2024, Central Bedfordshire reported a three-month average of 93.1% for young people who were participating in some form of learning programme (Education or Training). This was higher than the national (92.0%) and regional (91.5%) averages.

Source: Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service

Vulnerable Children:

The majority of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire enjoy safe and healthy lives within their family networks and communities, however, there are a proportion of vulnerable children who are at risk of poorer health and well-being outcomes. This section of the Annual Report sets out those categories of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire who have been identified by the local authority and other agencies as in need of help or protection to promote their welfare.

Children's Services Front Door:

Access and Referral is the front door for anyone seeking information and/ or services for children, young people, and families, or to make a safeguarding referral. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is based here. In 2023/24, Access and Referral received 17,278 enquiries, and 2,100 referrals into Children's Social Care. Out of the 2,100 referrals 99.2% of these received a Social Care Service.

The high and stable percentage of referrals leading to a Social Care Service suggests that professionals know when to refer children for help and are making appropriate referrals.

| Year | 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| No. of enquiries | 17,247 | 17,278 | 16,291 | 15,212 | 13,858 | 12,319 | 10,859 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| Number of Referrals into Children's Social Care | 2,100 | 2,235 | - | - | - | - | - |
| % of referrals leading to provision of a Social Care service | 99.2% | 100% | 100% | 99.8% | 100% | 99.8% | 100% |

Early Help:

Central Bedfordshire's Early Help Locality Teams are integral to the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Central Bedfordshire multi-agency partnership early help offer. Early Help has been at the forefront of Children's Services Transformation and is a responsive locality focused service to support children and families who without support are likely to require statutory social care intervention with the aim of reducing demand on Children's Services. The two service areas work together to develop a positive partnership between professionals and families that empowers families of children and young people and builds resilience and wellbeing in individuals, families, and communities.

Central Bedfordshire's Early Help Offer identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as problems emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood they will emerge in the future, offering 'the right help at the right time'. The Early Help Offer includes universal and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

Early Help support can be grouped into 3 main areas:

1) Universal and targeted support through community-based services:

- Childcare and School Readiness support (0-12's)
- Gypsy Roma and Traveller Support
- Children's Centres offering support (0-12's)
- Early Years SEND Support (0-12's)
- Reducing Parental Conflict Programme (0-12's)
- Holiday Activities and Food Programme (0-12's)
- Health Teams – Midwifery, 0-19 Team, Early Communication and Support Team.
- Home-start and other VCS Partners

These services provide the first line of response to families from pre-birth onwards.

The 0-12's Family Service (established in April 2019) brings together Childcare, School Readiness, Children's Centres and Early Years SEND along with Home-start, Early Communication Support Team, 0-19's Health Teams and other key partners working from and with Children's Centre Hubs to deliver a comprehensive offer that meets the growing and changing needs of children aged 0-12 and their families. The service supports children and their families at all levels/ tiers of need from universal support to working alongside professionals supporting children and families open to early help, social care, and specialist services.

2) Multi-agency support which is co-ordinated by a range of professionals:

Support for families:

- Building resilience in families meetings
- Early Help Parenting Groups

Building Resilience in Families (BRIF) meetings are held weekly across all 5 localities to support (with their consent) families that are not open to Early Help or statutory Children Services. The panel is a multi-agency team working together to offer very early intervention to children and their families, to prevent and reduce the escalation of incidents or issues. The BRIF Panel consists of a core group including Housing, 0-19 Service, Police, Adult Mental Health, Children Centres, and other key partners/agencies relevant to families or to the issues prevalent in the locality.

Examples of support provided through BRIF include Homestart provided free school shirts, one off payment that can be used towards fuel costs, information about local stores providing free toothbrushes and toothpaste for children under 5, free personal hygiene products and where families can access free nappies. DWP have also shared links to receive support and discounts on household fuel costs as well as current benefit information.

Support for practitioners:

- Community partners supporting schools and health professionals
- Locality newsletters and meetings
- Professional insight – thematic information
- Building resilience in families information sessions
- Early Help Assessment and Team around the Child Training Sessions
- Family Information Directory
- Early Help Parenting Groups Information Sessions
- Early Help Information Sessions
- School readiness and childcare and Early Years SEND staff supporting Early Years settings.

3) Targeted Early Help assessment and support for higher levels of identified need e.g. Early Help Plus

- Targeted Early Help and Casework Teams
- Walking Alongside You Practitioners (PAUSE)
- Young Carers Work
- Support through Wellbeing Practitioners
- Community Partners
- Early Help CAMHS Worker
- Employment Advisor
- SEND Advisor

These practitioners work together to assess and support children in families with higher levels of need from pre-birth and onwards.

The 2022/23 Early Help Localities and 0-12 Family Service Annual Report was presented to the Safeguarding Children Strategic Board in September 2023, providing assurance on the support provided to children, young people and their families. The report highlighted the following things:

Children's Centres:

- 4,580 new families registered at one of our children's centres
- Approximately 800 parents attending midwifery appointments at centres each month
- Approximately 500 families attending child development reviews at centres each month
- 8,833 families had contact with one of the children's centres
- 8,076 families accessed a specific session or activity either at the centre or virtually

- The numbers of families accessing a specific session of activity has increased from 6647 in 21/22
- 99% of all activities now delivered in person in Children’s Centres and outreach venues

Integrated Early Year approach – best start in life:

- Midwifery clinics are delivered within Children’s Centres enabling new parents to build relationships with Children’s Centre staff families are more likely to seek help.
- Midwifery, health visiting, and children’s centres teams jointly deliver a universal antenatal programme: bumps, birth and beyond – mix of virtual and face to face.
- The centres contact all new parents following the birth of their child introducing parents to what is available and letting them know who to contact if they need help.
- All early year’s services are trained to support with infant feeding advice including breastfeeding support and there are also parent breastfeeding buddies able to offer peer support.
- Health visitors meet with families within centres to complete health checks and spend time with Children Centre managers to identify families in need of additional support.
- Peri-natal mental health teams have started to meet with families at some Children’s Centres and drop in to groups to introduce themselves and offer informal advice.
- Children’s Centres co-deliver SEND stay and play in your own way in conjunction with the Early Years SEND team, resulting in families accessing the Children’s Centres and seeking early support
- Safeguarding is a core focus for all early year’s services and there are strong links with statutory social care services with timely contact made where there are concerns around individual children. Timely initiatives for example the ICON programme raise awareness of crying babies, ensuring parents receive information at key contacts and know where they can go to get support, and the reducing parental conflict programme focusing on healthy relationships

Targeted Early Help (Early Help Plus):

In 2022/23

- 1,058 new referrals were received for targeted Early Help support
- 242 children and young people accessed targeted early help following support from statutory services (step down)
- 317 children and young people’s support and safety needs required an escalation to intervention by statutory teams (step up)
- 40 families were stepped down to community-based support
- 1,078 families closed to targeted early help with the majority due to successful completion of support
- 6,340 visits were made to children, young people, and their families
- 1,898 TAC (team around the child) meetings were held
- 651 early help assessments were completed by Children’s Services (EHA).

Parenting Support:

There are a range of parenting groups and evidence-based programmes to meet different ages and stages and needs, including:

- Mellow programme
- Baby Days

- One Plus One
- Parents as First Teachers
- Parenting Puzzle
- Keeping the Child in Mind
- Empowering parents, empowering communities
- NVR Parenting
- Kidstime

As well as parent bulletins, parent space and a whole range of needs led webinars.

Responding to Community Needs – Cost of Living Crisis:

The Children’s Centre delivered the Crisis Fund programme between October and end of March 2023, supporting 274 families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

- 53 appliances for families, replacing broken items, including fridge freezers, washing machines and cookers
- 169 payments to support families with winter fuel costs
- 17 beds for children
- 366 vouchers to support families to purchase food, winter clothing and shoes and other essential items

Impact:

Children’s Centres surveys were introduced in September 2021 to measure both user satisfaction and impact. Between April 2022 and end of March 2023, a total of 577 families provided feedback (this represents 7% of total families accessing a specific session/activity):

- 99.5% stated that the children’s centre helped with their problems/needs
- 99.5% stated that they were treated well by the staff at the children’s centre.

Families fed back on key areas that had improved as a result of support:

- 139 families stated that their relationship with their family had improved.
- 224 families stated that their own and their family’s health and wellbeing had improved.
- 238 families stated they had a better understanding of how their child learns and develops
- 250 families stated that they had a better understanding of supporting their child’s needs and behaviours
- 253 families stated that their confidence as a parent had improved.

Families accessing the Holiday Activities and Food programme provided the following feedback:

- 100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the activities were worthwhile for their children to attend
- 100% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the provision
- 43% of families responding had accessed a food bank in the last 12 months

Children told us:

- 79% of children said it made them feel happy, 36% said confident, 37% safe, 27% said creative and 29% said excited to learn (children were able to tick more than one box).
- 85% of the children reported that attending helped them make friends.
- 97% of children and young people

| Year | 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total No. of EHA completed | 1,063 | 1,616 | 907 | 1,061 | 1,202 | 1,279 | 1,404 |
| No. of Children in Need (at the end of the year) – including CIN, CPP, LAC | 1,595 | 1,397 | 1,422 | 1,248 | 1,176 | 1,316 | 1,356 |

Children with a Child Protection Plan:

Children who have a child protection plan are considered to be in need of protection from either neglect, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or a combination of one or more of these. The child protection plan sets out the main areas of concern, what action will be taken to reduce these concerns and by whom. The plan will also set out how we will know when progress is being made.

| Year | 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total No. of referrals to Intake & Assessment Team (CSC) | 2,100 | 2,235 | 2,118 | 1,565 | 1,776 | 1,556 | 1,811 |
| No. of children subject to Child Protection Plans (at the end of the year) | 224 | 212 | 225 | 147 | 156 | 189 | 223 |

Children in Care:

Children in care are those looked after by the local authority. Only after exploring every possibility of protecting a child at home will the local authority seek a parent's consent or a court's decision to move a child away from his or her family. Such decisions, whilst very difficult, are made in the best interests of the child.

| Year | 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| No. of children in care (at the end of the year) | 384 | 380 | 327 | 303 | 310 | 320 | 314 |

Looked After Children assurance reports were presented to the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Partnership Strategic Board as follows:

- Children's Social Care: Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2022/23 (December 2023)
- Looked After Children: Virtual School Interim Annual Report 2022/23 (December 2023)
- Health: Looked After Children Annual Report 2022/23 (June 2024)

Equalities Information:

The Equality Act 2010 puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is keen to ensure that no child or group of children are treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular need, as a consequence all reports received request agencies to identify any equalities implications.

The CBSCP reviews equalities information as standard practice. This includes in exploitation and missing data, case review groups, examples include CSE, Missing Children, Looked After Children, Neglect, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Abuse, FGM and youth offending data.

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership recognised the need to strengthen practice in this area; and cultural competence became a golden thread throughout the Partnership's work and sub-groups. The Partnership has also developed some Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Faith Guidance.

Section 2 – Effectiveness of the Arrangements

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership priorities were reviewed and revised as part of their multi-agency Development Session in May 2023.

PRIORITY: Neglect

Neglect continues to remain the most common form of child abuse across the UK. Partners across Central Bedfordshire aim 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 responses to need across all agencies.

The CBSCP works closely with neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough and Luton, taking a county wide approach to raising awareness of neglect and helping frontline practitioners to identify and tackle neglect. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group is guided by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy which oversees the annual workplan.

The following were our objectives/areas of focus for 2023/24:

- Developing a poverty aware workforce
- Understanding neglect through a dataset
- Relaunching and embedding the GCP2.
- Raising awareness of the Neglect Screening Tool and Day in the Life Tools
- Continuing to offer and push attendance at multi-agency neglect training.

Neglect Guidance:

The following Practitioner Guidance is available:

[Chronology Guidance 2022](#)

[GCP2 Principles \(November 2022\)](#)

[Think Family Briefing \(March 2023\)](#)

[GCP2 Practitioner Briefing \(March 2023\)](#)

[Neglect Practitioner Briefing \(March 2023\)](#)

Neglect Conference:

Our one-day Pan Beds Neglect Conference took place in February 2024 and aimed to raise practitioners' awareness of Neglect; increase their confidence and skills to respond effectively; and to understand the tools and support available to them. The objectives of the conference were to:

- Understand the impact of Neglect on Children, Young People, and their Families.
- Learn from the lived experience of child neglect.
- Reflect on national developments and local learning.
- Identify key tools/ resources for effective intervention.
- Consider your own skills in identifying and responding to child neglect.
- Network with colleagues who are working to safeguard children from neglect.

The event took place at Kings House, Bedford with a keynote presentation from Jenney Malloy (aka 'Hackney Child'). It was supported by the NSPCC and local practitioners to share national and local picture of Neglect, highlight the Pan Beds Neglect Strategy, promote effective multi-agency practice including awareness of resources such as GCP2, Day in the Life Tools and multi-agency chronologies.

Attendance: Our conference attracted 165 bookings, with 148 people (90%) attending on the day. Attendees represented a range of agencies, including Local Authority (43%), Police (8%), Health Services (18%), Early Years (1%), Education (20%), Independent (1%) and Voluntary Sector (10%).

Evaluations: The event received excellent feedback; 122 (82%) evaluations were returned. 98% attendees felt the event completely (75%) or mostly (23%) met their expectations, with 121 (99%) attendees stating they would recommend. Feedback on keynote speakers was positive with Jenny Molloy noted for the impact of her presentation; 'Jenny was honest, brave and totally inspirational!! The whole day has made me reflect on my practice!'

Attendees were asked to self-rate their knowledge of neglect; those rating themselves as 4 or 5 (out of 5) rose from 62 (51%) before the event to 114 (93%) after, indicating the positive impact of attending.

For the majority of attendees, the case study activity and workshops were opportunities to consider specific areas of neglect, network with other professionals and increase knowledge of local resources and support. There were some 'poor' ratings, but this is attributed to sessions feeling too rushed and the rooms not feeling welcoming/ comfortable.

The evaluation was also an opportunity to gauge people's knowledge of local neglect resources. There was a strong appetite (94%) for a Pan Bedfordshire Practitioners Neglect Forum, whether online or in person. The majority of practitioners had heard of GCP2, neglect screening tool and Day in my Life tools, yet had not used them.

Neglect/Child in Need Audit:

In October 2023 we completed a Pan Bedfordshire Audit focusing on Child in Need neglect cases, more information regarding this audit can be found in the Learning from Experience section on page 34.

Multi-Agency Chronologies Pilot:

Since January 2024, we have been piloting the use of Multi-Agency Chronologies within Core Groups, for cases where neglect is a concern. 5 cases were selected in January, and we are currently in the process of collating feedback on how this pilot has gone.

Development of a Neglect Dataset:

A multi-agency neglect dataset has been developed to help identify themes and target multi-agency actions that are required.

Partnership Work:

BLMK ICB is actively engaged with the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect work streams, to ensure consistency of approach across the county and partnership systems.

CCS highlight Graded Care Profile in training and supervision when there are any identified issues of neglect. Staff have all been offered training for GCP2 within children's services and there is an emphasis on using this tool to support ongoing assessment of need and referrals as part of multi-agency working. There is also now a GCP2 tab reference point within the CCS neglect template to also encourage use of the tool. Assessment tools such as 'A Day in the Life of....' are available for staff on the intranet and are equally advocated within training and supervision to support maintenance of focus on the lived experience of a child. The Neglect Screening tool has also been embedded into System One.

ELFT promotes the Safeguarding Bedfordshire Neglect Page and actively encourages the use of the tools on the page such as the Day in the Life Tools and the Neglect Screening Tool, they have also devised an aide that ELFT practitioners can use to help with identifying Neglect. Neglect is discussed in their Level Three training and also within supervisions with the adult and children's teams.

Bedford Hospitals Trust describe the standard practice, when a child/ young person is admitted to hospital, of recording their presentation, weight, height, and any developmental delay. The names of those with parental responsibility are also recorded alongside who is accompanying the child at the time. The Safeguarding Children Team 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 CSC or the Emergency Duty Team out of hours. The Safeguarding Team review this information, gather information and take action. 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 Children's Social Care. 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 0-19 service including their safeguarding team with the aim of leading to better outcomes for children.

Police SHARED Project:

Bedfordshire Police are currently in the process of developing a neglect tool in collaboration with the NSPCC, which will be reported on next year, once it has been implemented.

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2):

There is a single countywide child neglect assessment tool in place, the Graded Care Profile (GCP2). This is a nationally recognised tool, which has an established research basis. The tool was introduced across Pan Bedfordshire as a series of workshops. The Partnership has continued to monitor how the tool has been embedded in practice. Professionals and agencies report usefulness, through both feedback and training. It has been identified, that whilst the GCP2, is being used within agencies, further consistency, across the partnership needed to be addressed. A Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy & Delivery Plan is currently being developed, in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton (Pan Bedfordshire) to address this need. The aim, as the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships, is to work together to strengthen, support and develop the workforce and practice to improve outcomes for all children. This strategy will help and support practitioners to identify indicators of neglect.

The GCP2 is an assessment tool, developed by the NSPCC to help frontline practitioners measure the quality of care a child is receiving. Within Central Bedfordshire GCP2's are completed by Central

Bedfordshire Council Children’s Services staff along with colleagues from Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS).

The number of GCP2’s being completed had fallen during the last few years, therefore during 2023/24 there was a push to train more staff, raise awareness and produce further guidance in relation to the GCP2. Increasing the use of the GCP2 remains a priority for the year ahead.

| GCP2 completions by agency | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 | 2019-20 |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Children’s Services | 105 | 24 | 38 | 12 | 10 |
| Cambridge Community Services | 10 | 12 | 37 | 15 | 59 |
| Total | 115 | 36 | 75 | 27 | 69 |

Central Bedfordshire Council provides free GCP2 training to practitioners based within the local authority area. In October 2023, 17 staff attended GCP2 'train the trainer' and formed a training pool, allowing increased delivery of GCP2 training to practitioners, including those from Education. GCP2 Refresher training was attended by 21 staff who had not used GCP2 assessment for some time. This has resulted in an increased number of practitioners being GCP2 trained.

| GCP2 training | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 | 2019-20 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| GCP2 training completed * | 107 | 41 | 74 | 12 | 111 |

* This represents those attending multi-agency training. This data does not reflect in house training agencies may provide.

Neglect Training:

Safeguarding Bedfordshire offers free Child Poverty eLearning to practitioners working with children/ young people in Bedfordshire. This course is relevant for all working with children who may be in poverty, such as social workers, teachers or health workers. It gives information on the reasons for poverty, how to help children and their families, and guidance on multi-agency working and your role as practitioner.

| | 2023-24 | 2022-23 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|
| Child Poverty eLearning | 110 | 49 |

Understanding Neglect (one day training)

Our Pan Bedfordshire ‘Understanding Neglect’ training course is delivered by a small training pool made up of local practitioners. 30 practitioners attended in 2023/24, up from 23 in 2022/23.

Feedback on the training.

'Working with different professionals from different sectors/ local authorities was beneficial in finding out others knowledge and expertise around 'neglect'. Sharing different working experiences was very informative.'

'Having the professional dialogue with colleagues so that I was able to feel reassured that my judgements were robust was very useful. Learning more about neglect tools and CGP training has given me more to think about. Good to hear anecdotes/insight from other sectors eg. social workers, Doctors etc.'

'The knowledge I have gained will impact my future assessments where neglect is present.'

'I really enjoyed this course; I thought the way the trainers worked together was really informative and well done. Online learning can be tricky, but this was a good group size and the breakout rooms worked well. I found the group interactions very interesting. I will be more vigilant with our residents.'

'At one point, Martyn put his mobile phone case in front of his face blocking out our ability to see him; I felt that was really powerful, alongside the video of the parent looking at her child with a blank expression. As Head of Early Years, I will add something similar to my presentation to new Reception parents (of children due to start in September 2024) to highlight the impact that the lack of back-and-forth interactions can have on attachments as well as speech and language. I also feel more confident with my overall understanding of Neglect and will look at the Neglect Screening Tool. A colleague of mine, was also on the same course and we will talk about how to implement the tools to gather evidence within the school.'

'The course was well delivered, with opportunities given to everyone to make a contribution. it was relaxed and interactive and key points clearly identified. The group activities gave individuals to think about and give their point of view. The information given by the instructors reaffirmed what I knew already. The course was well run, and the people attending from all different agencies were great- a good mixture of people with different views and experiences. It will help me in making referrals and looking for resources outside of school to support me.'

'This course was very interesting and the information I learned can be used in my daily job role. I like the case study and how we picked it apart and going into breakout rooms really helped. I feel like I will know the signs and what to look out for.'

'Tutor was accessible to talk through any questions. The module was so well put together that it is really difficult to take out any part as the most useful. To me, the entire course was useful with all the elements that were offered. In my daily role, I work with women and their children who are already involved with different services. The training will enable me to be more aware and not just brush things aside thinking someone else would already know that but instead question things that I may think do not add up and act on them. I will also be informing my colleagues of this and sharing the slides with them.'

'Different types of neglect that I hadn't been aware of before, including disorganised neglect and nutritional. As I do not work closely with children more the GPs and professionals it's given me a better insight into the different neglects.'

'Variety of people with different knowledge levels. Trainers were really knowledgeable. Explained the different parts of neglect e.g., financial neglect, emotional neglect.'

'Helpful to be part of multidisciplinary group of learners. Using a Case was very helpful, esp. as enough time as given to tease out complexities and practical bits- ie WHAT info do you now need and how will you obtain that re this family? Reminder about the impact of NEGLECT on children and society-was excellent.'

'Currently supporting two children we have concerns about. So will be very useful to ensure we can support them and families.'

'I think the case study was really useful. I enjoyed talking to the other attendees in the 'room' and found their comments helpful. I have spoken with other members of staff within our pastoral team about the course and discussed the different avenues of help that are available to our vulnerable families.'

'As a family support worker, I found the session to be incredibly enlightening. I was particularly impressed with the diverse array of resources that were provided to us. The interactive nature of the session was also a highlight, as it allowed for meaningful engagement and lots of discussions among professionals from various positions and backgrounds in the field of safeguarding. The discussions definitely contributed to an enhanced understanding and awareness of many aspects within safeguarding and around Neglect.'

Private Fostering:

Parents may make their own arrangements for their children to live away from home or with other close family members, this is known as privately fostering children. The local authority must be notified of these arrangements. As numbers remain low, CBSCP continues to raise awareness of the need to identify and report cases to Children’s Services using [promotional campaign materials](#) and via newsletters.

| Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No. of private fostering placements identified/ in place in Central Beds (at the end of the year) | 3 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 7 |

PRIORITY: Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation

Partners have continued their to work ensure that children and young people in Central Bedfordshire are protected from extra-familial harm and reduce episodes of missing. The contextual safeguarding approach promotes thorough assessments and safety plans around children and young people who are at risk of significant harm beyond their own family.

This strong partnership approach has identified adults and locations of concern and a prompt response of community safety patrols, youth worker outreach, visits to premises, and seen perpetrators of exploitation served Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN), along with warning notices and convictions for Modern Day Slavery offences.

Bedfordshire Police have expanded the use of Operation Encompass to capture information on missing children and share with the relevant school to ensure appropriate support and keep track and monitor risk of exploitation.

Central Bedfordshire Children’s Services identify strong relationships with Bedfordshire Police in information sharing and joint working, along with support from agencies such as Link to Change. Their dedicated Child Exploitation Co-ordinator ensures consistent guidance on best practice and support to service delivery who shares weekly updates with Independent Reviewing Officer and Child Protection Chairs. The Missing Protocol and return home interviews support prompt engagement with children and families to provide support and high rates of completion of return home interview.

Child Exploitation Strategies and Guidance:

Exploitation is addressed in Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response and Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Strategy. This uses a whole systems approach to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation. A child friendly version of this document is in development.

'Power to Parents' workshops continue to be delivered by Children's Services with Partner agencies, the workshops aimed to educate parents/ carers on the signs of exploitation, discuss the highlights challenges of parenting adolescents and signpost a range of local support services. Sessions were held in November and July.

BLMK ICB is actively involved in the workstreams in relation to contextual Safeguarding & Exploitation and has identified a lead officer who engages with PREVENT and the CHANEL panel. Preventative work through awareness raising activities or therapeutic outreach, including appropriate literature to target vulnerable young people (e.g. missing young people) and people whose workplaces them in a position to recognise and report worrying behaviours; codes of practice for staff with direct contact with children/young people at risk of child exploitation; procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns specifically mention child exploitation.

BLMK;

- ensure that the organisations providing health and care services have the right policies, procedures, and guidance in place to keep people safe from abuse and neglect.
- ensure we learn lessons from cases, where adults and children come to serious harm and abuse and neglect was already known about or suspected.
- ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for sharing information between organisations where someone might be at risk of being harmed.
- employ clinical experts, who can provide safeguarding advice, to those who work with and in local health and care services
- have 'designated professionals' who specialise in safeguarding adults, safeguarding children and safeguarding looked-after children (children in care).

Exploitation Training Summary: (April 2023- March 2024)

Contextual Safeguarding (3hrs): Three sessions delivered in 2023/24, with 35 practitioners attending. The session has 100% satisfaction level; training is the right level, trainers are engaging/ motivating, and all attendees would recommend. Knowledge shift is good; 21% attendees self-rate knowledge as high/ very high at start of session, increasing to 97% at the end of the session.

'Even though it was a virtual session there were opportunities for group discussion which I found valuable. I found the course very informative with great examples. The channel 4 documentary that was suggested was a great insight into why Contextual safeguarding is so important. I have already cascaded some of the knowledge I have learned by delivering training.' **Family Worker (Education), Luton**

'Useful links and resources to use in school- looking forward to doing some safety maps with children.' **Designated Safeguarding Lead (Education), Central Bedfordshire**

'Really interesting presentation and both facilitators were helpful, knowledgeable and evidently passionate about their subject. When assessing young people for psychosis or at-risk mental states,

this is another element to consider. The resources are excellent, lots of services that I had not previously been aware of pointers to resources and case studies.’ Manger (ELFT), Bedfordshire

‘I did not fully understand what Contextual Safeguarding was, this helped me have a greater understanding to support and recognise risk with the students I work with.’ Counsellor (Vol. Sector) Bedfordshire

‘It enabled me to understand extra familial harm in a wider context. Information gained would be passed on to staff, so that as they support adults, they can also think of the support needs of other family members children, and teenagers alike.’ Review Manager, Luton

MA Form Awareness Sessions (3hrs) These sessions have been designed and are co-delivered by Community Safety leads from each local authority area and Police Exploitation Lead. 158 practitioners have attended since Jan 2024. Again, the satisfaction levels are high, and all attendees would recommend to a colleague. Knowledge increases from 24% (before) to 96% (after) of attendees self-rating as high/ very high. The training pool are meeting in early June to update training content.

‘Use of MA form is promoted in training in my organisation but now I understand the types of information that is relevant to be shared by frontline staff I can advise staff about using the form when they come for advice on cases.’ EFLT, Bedfordshire

‘Good to know what I can do within our community to possibly help put a stop to ASB. I plan on cascading this learning back to my team as we serve a community where ASB is present. Knowing there are channels we can go down will be helpful.’ Early Years, Bedford

‘It was really good as it talked through example scenarios, talked about reasons for completing the form, the bigger picture of other tools and mechanisms that are in use. I’ve suggested to my managers and colleagues to attend this training.’ Student Support Team (University), Bedfordshire

‘It has given me more confidence in my understanding of what resources available to me. It will help me be able to gauge my response to certain situations better by understanding the types of scenarios an MA form will be used for.’ Housing, Central Bedfordshire

‘The training was very thorough and informative. It was only last week I was advised of an MA form, and I was thinking "what is that?" Now I am confident on how to write it too.’ Personal Advisor, Bedford

Mind Your Language (3hrs): Jointly funded by the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation, 6 sessions (120 places) have been provided free (on the condition of completing evaluations) to practitioners in Bedfordshire. Evaluations and follow up impact conversations for the January and March sessions have shown this to be an effective learning event. Two sessions will be delivered in May (full).

Child Exploitation & Home Office Disruption Toolkit Briefing (2.5hrs): Delivered by CYP First and funded by BAVEX, this free briefing (12/07/23) was attended by 98 practitioners, representing a range of sectors, including Social Care, Police, Drug and Alcohol Services, Housing, Education and Voluntary Sector.

Safeguarding Bedfordshire’s Free eLearning includes ‘Child Exploitation’, ‘Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation’, ‘Gangs & County Lines (L1)’ and ‘Modern Slavery & Trafficking’. 1868

practitioners completed exploitation themed eLearning between April 2023- March 2024; the independent sector is the largest consumer (779 completions)

Tackling, Reducing and Ending Exploitation (TREE) project:

The TREE project has continued to tackle the root causes of exploitation. This year, the project worked closely with schools in areas where higher risks were recognised.

TACKLING, REDUCING AND ENDING EXPLOITATION

PROUD SUPPORTERS OF THE TREE PROJECT

The **TREE** project is a unique partnership between different agencies in Biggleswade and Shefford with one mission: **To keep children and young people safe.**

Youth workers will be out across the towns over the coming months to engage with young people and the wider community, address any concerns and help put an end to things like violence, exploitation and organised crime.

Please speak to us if you want any help or advice, or make contact with any of the partners involved in the project.

We are all here to help and support you.

Tackling Reducing and Ending Exploitation
A Bedfordshire Partnership

Partners: Aquarius, BYOS, Central Bedfordshire, AGAINST, Bedfordshire Police, FACES, Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit.

Exploitation Communications Campaign:

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership continue to support the work of [Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation](#) (BAVEX) is the countywide campaign to raise awareness and reporting on all forms of exploitation, including county lines, modern slavery, cuckooing, human trafficking, and child sexual exploitation.

| Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency training: Exploitation themes | 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Exploitation themed (classroom) | 98 | 21 | 18 | 6 |
| Contextual Safeguarding (classroom) | 50 | 11 | 32 | 17 |
| Radicalisation, Extremism & Prevent eLearning | 1111 | 488 | 605 | 237 |
| Exploitation & Modern Slavery themed eLearning | 1868 | 472 | 692 | 135 |

Exploitation and Missing Annual Reports:

Central Bedfordshire’s Exploitation Annual Report was presented to the Safeguarding Children Partnership in March 2024, providing the partnership with assurance that the local response to those vulnerable to exploitation and/ or missing from home/ care continues to advance. Highlights included review and updating of the Child Exploitation Tool and Practitioners Guidance, multi-agency practitioner learning events, BAVEX Communications work and some critical friend review work with the National Working Group for Exploitation.

The Children Missing from Education Report and School Exclusion Report were presented to the Partnership in June 2023, followed by the Virtual School and IRO Annual Reports in December 2023.

PRIORITY: Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience within Families

CBSCP shares guidance, advice, and resources from partners in relation to the mental health and wellbeing within families, in particular we have shared resources through our website, newsletters and email circulation/distribution lists. Mental Health and well-being is recognised as a concern locally (and nationally) due to rising numbers of children, young people and adults needing to access services.

Feedback from young people, in March 2023, we were privileged to have 3 young people from CAMHS Participation Group share their journey from initial support to transitioning to adults' services. They spoke of what made a positive impact on their mental health; adults who listen, explain what's happening and why, and communicate well but highlighted Transitions, delays to EHCP's and placements out of area/ on adult wards as particularly difficult times. These themes formed discussions at the June 2023 Strategic Board meeting.

We have supported local initiatives including [Better Days](#), inviting the project leads to present at our Board meeting. Toolkits and useful resources were shared as part of Mental Health week 2023. Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership promotes Reflect (replacing Kooth) across the partnership and shared updated support service list and a wide range of emotional wellbeing related training provided by the local authority.

BLMK ICB commissions Mental Health Services, from East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and works with ELFT and CHUMS to support the integrated pathway for children and young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. BLMK ICB lead the Bedfordshire Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Network Meeting which provides the opportunity for key stakeholders to understand developments in relation to these issues. They also supported the development of the MH&WB hub within the Local Offer website. BLMK ICB have led the Clinical Reference Group for Children's Eating Disorders focusing on the national ambitions. This has led to the development of Integrated Clinical Guidance for the management of Children and Young People with Eating Disorders providing care before, during and post admission to medical ward or CYPMH unit.

In partnership with Caraline Eating Disorder service and Mental Health School Teams the ICB is supporting a Body Project Pilot to support prevention and early identification. ELFT provide an intensive support service-offering intensive outreach, in-reach during admission or home treatment when required.

BLMK ICB and ELFT are leading a series of workshops across the system entitled "Using I Thrive to improve our Mental Health system for Children and Young People in Bedfordshire & Luton."

In February 2023, a new digital text messaging service was launched. Children and young people in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes young people can text REFLECT to 85258 if they need advice or support. The service is free and confidential and delivered in partnership with Shout.

In March 23, Mind BLMK & ELFT CAMHS opened a Young Person's Sanctuary in Luton, a Bedford Sanctuary followed in May and a Central Bedfordshire service will be launched shortly. The Young Person's Sanctuaries are safe, non-judgemental spaces that young people can come to if they find themselves in crisis or mental distress in the evenings. There is no need to call and book an

appointment, they simply drop in and will be met by a trained mental health worker who will listen and help them identify ways to address the problems they are facing. The teams will also be able to refer and signpost to other services if required. The Young Person's Sanctuaries were identified as the preferred support option during a round of public focus groups to shape a new 24hr extended mental health crisis care across Bedfordshire.

Children's Services appreciate that schools offer good support for emotional wellbeing and self-esteem, evidenced in PEPs and LAC Reviews. They are using creative tools e.g.: dogs in a school, alternative emotional wellbeing services to support emotional wellbeing. CAMHs representatives visit schools and CHUMs offers support for children with emotional needs in the community. There is acknowledgement that there is an issue re emotional/mental health support and services available. The potential detrimental impact on young people with significant emotional/ mental health needs escalating to a stage where they require a Tier 4 mental health response, this may be linked to neuro development needs. Action is underway, including attendance of Hospital crisis 'huddle' meetings, LAC CAMHs and CBC strategic meeting to review commissioning arrangements and LAC CAMHs weekly consultation.

SHUE Survey:

Central Bedfordshire has a clear commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people and in particular, to ensure good mental health, wellbeing and resilience. These priorities are expressed in the current Central Bedfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young People's Plan. Surveys provide an ongoing body of longitudinal data and information, as to the developing trends and changing nature of the health and wellbeing needs of the local population of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.

The results in this survey were collected in the academic year 2023-2024 from pupils in lower, middle and upper school settings, as well as primary and secondary school settings including special schools, in Central Bedfordshire.

A total of 8384 pupils took part in 76 schools. This is a decrease in the number of schools that participated in the previous survey in 2021 however, represents a 5% increase in the number of young people that participated.

A separate special school version of the survey was used as required.

The results in the report are the highlights/significant findings from a survey of up to 91 age-appropriate questions covering a wide range of children and young people's health related behaviours and perceptions.

5 similar surveys have been conducted in previous years: the health and wellbeing surveys in 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2021, and the emotional wellbeing survey in 2015. The survey was commissioned from the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU), Exeter. Questions were devised by a local group of public health leads and partners, in collaboration with SHEU.

Areas covered:

- Resilience
- Emotional wellbeing
- Bullying
- Staying safe
- Substance use

- Relationships
- Physical activity
- Healthy Weight 5-A-Day
- Enjoying and achieving

| Comparison with 2021 | |
|---|---|
| Good News | Not so Good News |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Bedfordshire secondary pupils in 2023 are more likely to have high self-esteem than in 2021. • Secondary pupils are less likely to have smoked than in previous years. • Primary pupils in 2023 are less likely to worry about family than in 2021. • Primary pupils are less likely to say their parents smoke in 2023. • Secondary pupils are more likely to be happy with their weight than in 2021. • Secondary pupils are less likely to self-harm when worried than in 2021. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils in Central Bedfordshire are less likely to say they get enough sleep to concentrate at school compared with previous years. • Pupils are more likely to have tried vaping in 2023 compared with previous years. • Secondary pupils are less likely to say their school has helpful, clear rules about bullying than in 2021. • Secondary pupils in Central Bedfordshire are less likely to have high resilience in 2023 than were pupils in 2019 but similar to 2021. • Secondary pupils are less likely to say they know where to get free condoms in 2023 than in previous years. • Secondary pupils in 2023 are less likely to say their safety at school is 'good' or 'very good' than were pupils in previous years. |

| Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency training: Mental Health themes | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Self-Harm & Suicidal Themed eLearning | 540 | 143 | 124 | 102 |

Voice of Children, Young People and Families

In November 2023 the Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Partnerships held a Voice of the Child Conference focusing on Healthy Relationships and Bullying. The event was aimed at year's 5, 6 and 7 and 3 schools from each local authority area were invited along with some Service Users from our local CAMHS Service and a volunteer from our local Health Watch Service. The aim of the event was to help our partnerships to better support our children and young people. The Luton Youth Partnership led the Healthy Relationships session and then we had some young speakers presenting about their experiences of bullying.

Some Feedback from our local Healthwatch Volunteer:

“Attending the Voice of the Child Conference was an enjoyable and eye-opening experience; evidently, focusing on providing children the courage to speak up and stand up to bullying and unhealthy relationships. As someone interested in pursuing a career in Paediatrics, gaining an insight in how children’s services want to empower and allow young people to have a voice in how they’re supported, gave me exposure to a vast array of paediatric services and support programmes.”

The conference consisted of students, from many different schools, and different ages. Facilitators sat with the pupils and discussed the various topics presented, and many staff members representing various children's services, including NSPCC and CAMHS.

The primary topics discussed were regarding bullying and, how to differentiate and identify, healthy and unhealthy relationships. I was able to work with one of the facilitators who managed Bedford and Luton & Dunstable Hospital paediatric services. We assisted with various activities from categorising if a scenario belonged to a healthy or unhealthy relationship, to questions like, 'what would you do if you saw someone was bullied'?

Students wrote down and verbally gave their feedback regarding the topics; furthermore, all the various stations of: NSPCC, CAMHS, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and the Police, gave a wealth of information on the support that young people can access.

Overall, the conference was successful in providing young people a voice that they knew would be heard. Also, the conference empowered all the students to understand that their opinion matters and there would be action based on their discussions and ideas"

Our Response:

- The Safeguarding Children Partnerships will assure themselves that all local schools and colleges are meeting their key statutory safeguarding obligations in protecting and keeping safe children and young people by working with the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education group to support the three Local Authorities in their annual S157/175 audit of these statutory obligations. To include the following
 - Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues are more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
 - Schools/college staff, their Governing bodies and proprietors need to know and should be aware of systems within their establishments which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of their induction. This should include a behaviour policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
 - Schools/colleges should have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school/college life. There should be planned programme of evidence based RSHE which is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities).

Voice of the Child Training:

| | 2023-24 | 2022-23 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Voice of the Child training (classroom) | 40 | 12 |

'This was a really powerful training session that helped me to consider my practice from a different perspective and how I can promote and advocate the voice of the child. I will be putting this training into practice going forward to achieve better outcomes for the children I work with.'

'(The most useful aspect was) information about legislation. I will use this to ensure that I support residential children's home managers to understand it.'

'I visit families with very young children on a daily basis, the training has given me some tools to be able to understand the child's voice without assuming and gaining their voice through the parent communication. I will use the training to improve my visit notes, I visit families with young children on a daily basis so thinking about how I can get this across in my notes in order for the voice of any children in the home to be noted and their needs expressed.'

I have witnessed the "writing to the child" model during meetings and find this impactful. I will continue to use this in my practice and share this with my colleagues.'

Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding in Education Sub-group that is chaired by the 3 Bedfordshire Local Authority Chief Officers for Education (on a rotating basis) and has representatives from schools across Bedfordshire. The purpose of the group is:

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group is a strategic group, tasked to bring education as the fourth safeguarding partner and reporting directly to the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group. It will ensure that the voice of the education sector within Bedfordshire is heard and represented across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership structures, building a shared understanding of priorities.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group will actively work with the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships to perform their duties in safeguarding by monitoring safeguarding activities across the county to improve outcomes for children and young people.

This group provides a communication channel between education settings, including Governors, local Designated Safeguarding Lead forums and the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships. It provides support and Governance to the local cluster/ hub arrangements as they share themes, challenges, and good practice in their safeguarding work.

There is a dedicated section of the regular Schools Designated Leads (DSL) Forum, where schools can raise issues or information that they would like feedback to the Safeguarding in Education Group.

Some key issues raised and discussed during 2023 were Harmful Sexual Behaviours, Sexism in Schools and online safety. In response to Schools requesting more support around Harmful Sexual Behaviours, the partnership commissioned some Brook Traffic Light Training for DSL's.

Brook Traffic Light Tool – Evaluation Summary:

The Brook Traffic Light Tool training was commissioned in response to information gathered via the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group. Schools were surveyed on healthy relationships and responses highlighted the need to develop knowledge and skills around Sexually Harmful Behaviours. The cost of commissioning Brook to deliver 4 x 3hr sessions was fully covered by attendees, at £37.50 per place.

Attendance 72 practitioners attended across the 4 sessions. As expected, attendees were predominantly (89%) from education settings, with local authority (7%), independent (3%) and early years (1%) making up the remainder.

Evaluations Feedback on this training has been positive; attendees valued the opportunities to share their observations of young people's relationships and sexualised behaviours within the training space and with Brook experts. These discussions, along with case study activities in breakout rooms and the toolkit were identified as the most useful aspects. 57 evaluations (79%) were returned, with 55 (97%)

stating that the event was completely (60%) or mostly (37%) met their learning aims. 55 (98%) attendees would recommend the session to colleagues. Where the course was not recommended, this was due to 2 delegates who expected the training to be at a higher level, specifically covering strategies for working with high level Sexually Harmful Behaviours. Attendees were asked to self-rate their knowledge of exploitation; those rating themselves as 4 or 5 (out of 5) rose from 23 (40%) before the event to 56 (99%) after, indicating the positive impact of attending.

Section 3: Learning from Experience and Evidence of Impact

Section 11 Audit

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations, agencies, and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These duties are also outlined in the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance.

Each year the partner agencies within Bedfordshire self-assess themselves against all or some of the following 8 Standards:

- Standard 1 – Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare.
- Standard 2 – There is a clear statement of the agency’s responsibility towards children, and this is available to all staff.
- Standard 3 – There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare.
- *Standard 4 – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families*
- *Standard 5 – There is effective training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency’s primary functions, in contact with children and families.*
- Standard 6 – Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place.
- Standard 7 – There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Standard 8 – There is effective information sharing.

The 2023-24 the Pan Bedfordshire Section 11 Audit focused on Neglect. Agencies presented their self-assessments at an online Section 11 event (January 2024), each agency identified a number of key areas within their organisation which needed further development. These areas of development have been collated into an action plan monitored through the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group.

Learning from Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The Partnership carried out 4 Rapid Reviews during 2023-24 and as a result has taken forward 3 Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, 1 of these reviews has now been published and the learning is outlined below. The other two reviews are currently on-going.

CSPR Case 1 – Daniel and Sophie (this review is published and available on the Safeguarding Bedfordshire website)

Summary:

- In June 2023 an 8-month-old child died, and abuse and neglect were suspected. A range of agencies had been involved in the child's life, having also had considerable previous involvement with an older sibling.
- Information from agency records highlights that the mother experienced significant difficult times prior to becoming a teenage parent, including experiencing abuse and neglect as a child, exploitation, drug misuse and self-harming.
- The children's father also had a history which indicates concern, notably, being a former child in care, having a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), drug using, being involved in gangs, and criminality.
- There is a pattern of the mother being inconsistent in her engagement with professionals.
- The mother moved three times during the timeframe under review, all within the Bedfordshire region (between Bedford Borough, Luton Borough, and Central Bedfordshire).
- There is a dominant theme of the mother continuing her relationship with the children's father despite the risks to herself and her children.

Learning Points:

- Gaining knowledge through assessment activity about how earlier life experiences, affect current functioning as an adult are important steps to evaluating risk to children.
- The use of working agreements with parents as a means of encouraging compliance have limitations and should not be relied on as the sole safety measure.
- A child's first year of life is so uniquely vulnerable, pre-birth assessments, whenever possible, need to be planned, be multi-disciplinary, engage with the parents and provide a sound, objective analysis of information gathered.
- The formation of bias (e.g. sympathy, gender, non-professional referral) is often an unconscious process that can unwittingly creep into one's practice.
- Being professionally curious, and alert to the reasons why a victim of an abusive relationship might maintain contact with someone who is abusive is important, even more so, when small children are part of the dynamic.
- Dealing with inevitable levels of uncertainty, whilst hoping for certainty, can be hugely challenging and stressful for practitioners - Ensuring sufficient capacity within the decision-making process, which is supported by allowing reflective space for those dealing with this emotional tension, is critical to reducing the burden.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that women are at much greater risk of assault and violent crime than men where a mother's history clearly shows she has experienced significant abuse, neglect, and trauma in her own past, it will be important to assess her parenting capacity as much as the father/adult male. Exercising healthy scepticism and thinking the unthinkable is an important part of protecting children from harm.

Recommendations included:

- Disseminate the learning from this review to the workforce in all three local authority areas involved in this review.
- To refresh and update the East of England region Children's Services joint protocol on children subject to child protection plan moving between local authority boundaries, version 6, 05/07/2021, and to include children that are subject to Child in Need processes. Further guidance should also be provided that sets minimum expectations about the quality of transfers.

- Promote the use of ‘day in the life’ assessment tools to help practitioners of all disciplines, gain a better understanding about a child’s experiences, and the quality of care they are receiving from parents/carers.
- All practitioners, but especially those working in settings that deal with referrals about risks to children’s safety and welfare i.e. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs, should be reminded about the importance of assessing a child’s age and stage of development to make an informed decision about whether a child for whom concerns have been raised, are spoken with to gain their views.
- All three Partnerships (Central Bedfordshire, Luton & Bedford Borough) should promote awareness about the Pan Bedfordshire Procedure and Guidance in relation to Pre-Birth Planning and Assessments. Use of the guidance (frequency and quality) should be monitored and scrutinised on an annual basis.

Learning from National Practice Reviews:

During 2023 the partnership reviewed the learning from a CSPR carried out by Kirklees called Paul, a briefing outlining the learning was produced and circulated across Bedfordshire.

Our training offer was reviewed to ensure learning from local and national reviews was incorporated.

Multi-Agency Audits:

In October 2023 the Partnership carried out a Pan Bedfordshire **Multi-agency Audit in relation to Neglect Child in Need cases.**

Aims of the audit:

Neglect has been identified as an area in which the 3 Safeguarding Children Partnerships would like to seek assurances that partners are appropriately identifying and responding to the needs of children and young people who experience neglect in all its forms. The Partnerships will capture any learning that supports improvement in practice and strengthening the safeguarding of children and young people experiencing neglect.

Methodology:

- Local Authorities identified 9 Neglect cases (3 from each area) from the last 12 months; One CIN case that stepped down to CIN from CP. One CIN case where there has been more than one referral into Children’s Services. One CIN case where there are more than THREE children.
- Prior to the audit a template was sent out to all the agencies involved in the cases, and they were invited to attend the event.
- A face-to-face audit was facilitated by the Business Managers and attended by members of the Pan Beds Neglect Group.
- On the day attendees were separated into three groups and discussed a case from each local authority area.
 - The audit asked a number of questions linked to the national and local learning from Reviews; Was Not Brought identified and addressed?
 - Was there a ‘Think family’ approach?
 - Engagement of Fathers and male carers - New Partners - Invisible and unseen Men?
 - How was the Neglect Screening Tool - GCP2 - Chronologies - Multi-agency Chronologies - Stop and Review Meetings and Cluttering and Hoarding – used in the cases?
 - If there were disagreements, how and where were they escalated?

What went well:

- Prompt move by Housing identified as good practice.
- Opportunities taken to involve Housing (or other 'non-safeguarding' agencies) to engage with families/enter the home.
- Examples of escalation in some cases.
- Generally good info sharing in most cases.
- Some cases evidenced loads of good support/interventions over the years.
- Some good communication and information sharing across current schools.
- Some evidence of the GCP2 being used.
- All participants reflected on the elements of good practice and identified any gaps at a practice, organisational or system level.

Some examples of learning and areas for improvement:

- A few assessments were undertaken on children known to Children's Services for some time – but there had been no sustained change.
- The role of the birth father was a common theme with limited information on them. In several cases GPs had not been invited to meetings or information shared with them. GPs need to access records for all the family when presented with a safeguarding concern for a parent or child.
- The use of chronologies was not evident on many of the cases.
- No clear evidence of the children's lived experience in most of the cases. If a child says no to help, then this was being seen as having listened to them. No evidence of the and Day in the Life tools being used on any of the cases, Focus was on the parents needs rather than the impact of the parent's behaviours and parenting on their children.
- Would have been good practice to note 'condition/presentation' of any children present during meeting with parents, for example: the children appearance, interaction, home condition.
- Some limited evidence of the GCP2 being used but missing from file. Practitioners to be mindful of being over optimistic; using a GCP2 and reviewing helps take judgment out of assessments.
- Completing a GCP2 was not standard practice in most of the cases. GCP2 should be part of referrals to Children's Services where neglect is the concern and on a plan. Where a GCP2 had been completed, it had not been reviewed or seen as an ongoing assessment tool.
- Value of schools and early years linked into all other agencies as they often have more knowledge of child and family but can be overlooked by services.
- In two cases a child underwent an assessment, but domestic abuse was not considered as a possible factor for the child's behaviour.
- Impact of history and lived experience on child's behaviour rather than a medical reason – prevent labelling.
- Some cases evidenced lots of good support/interventions over years but no evidence of sustained impact – work was disconnected and disjointed.
- No Lead Practitioners identified in the cases.
- Cost of living and poverty, the impact on families was not fully assessed in most cases.
- Limited evidence on assessing parental capacity.
- Medical neglect not recognised, and child not supported to access dentist, optician.
- Potential parental learning difficulties not being identified or assessed.

- Professional curiosity around parent's history, trauma, and impact on their parenting missing. In some cases, it was difficult to identify neglect based on the info shared.
- When joint visits are declined how is this being escalated and challenged?
- There needs to be more focus on ethnicity, culture, faith, and religion in casework.
- Some cases there was a lack of CIN minutes and/or no reports from conferences on the case records. In some of the cases there was drift or delay in meeting timeframes for meetings.
- The need for more regular meetings around the reported safeguarding issues to keep on top of them, share information with and multi-agency decision making would have been beneficial in a few cases.
- Better understanding of parental substance misuse is needed and the potential impact on parenting, children, and young people.
- There should have been early intervention to address educational needs and neglect.
- Early opportunities to involve Housing, they can property check if others cannot get in.
- How can Housing support safeguarding services along with Beds Fire & Rescue through their home safety checks? These teams can get in to houses where families may be resistant to other agencies. These teams can also offer support with safety equipment, etc.)
- Some children were Young Carers so is there any consideration of adultification. Think Family discussed but voice of child was limited, little voice/ engagement of fathers. There were examples of actions not being timely.
- Episodes in some families where they were non-compliant, or the practitioners were struggling to engage with them.
- Incomplete assessment of sexual abuse allegations in one case.
- Could the use of Family Group Conferences have been good practice and an early intervention? Raise awareness of dangerous dog's guidance.
- Missed opportunities in all the cases.

The following actions to be monitored and addressed by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group:

- Partners need to assure themselves that their practitioners are gathering and recording the daily-lived experiences of children and young people and further
- promotion of Day in the Life tools to be undertaken. All partners to think about how their practitioners are assessing relevant milestones in a child's life and
- their lived experiences.
- GCP2 - all Partners to emphasize its use as an important ongoing assessment tool. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect group to monitor the use of GCP2. What is the
- expected practice around reviewing GCP2? How clear/confident are practitioners on when to review a GCP2? What is the impact on families if there is no review
- of the GCP2?
- Earlier interventions to address educational needs are crucial and to be discussed and addressed by the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group.
- Practitioners need to be child focus and assess how the parents' behaviours/needs impact on their child(ren) and parenting.
- All partners to promote the use of multi-agency chronologies in all cases of Neglect – to identify/assess the family history and consider trauma in both the
- parents and child(ren)s lives and impact on the here and now.
- All agencies to address better use of recorded ethnicity, identity and cultural differences in all assessments and interventions.

Pan Bedfordshire Training Unit:

Safeguarding Bedfordshire provide a multi-agency programme to meet the priorities of the three local safeguarding partnerships (Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton). Our Annual Training Report summarises attendance and impact. The full training report can be found in Appendix C.

Key Performance Indicators

| Impact of the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership during 2022/23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Issue & Actions | Impact | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intelligence Forms The CBSCP has continually raised awareness with partners with regards to completing and submitting the local multi-agency information/intelligence forms to the police in relation to safeguarding concerns and in particular CSE information. | The number of forms being submitted each year, whilst Central Bedfordshire Council submissions have dropped, they remain the highest information provider. Central Bedfordshire schools have also increased. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | CBC | BBC | LBC | NHS | Beds YOS | Luton YOS | School CBC | School BBC | School LBC | Link to Change | Other | Total |
| | 23-24 | 555 | 118 | 276 | 92 | 136 | 56 | 360 | 166 | 281 | 46 | 41 | 2127 |
| | 22-23 | 876 | 161 | 388 | 96 | 73 | 21 | 444 | 120 | 299 | 144 | 28 | 2650 |
| | 21-22 | 1064 | 154 | 302 | 67 | 79 | 62 | 274 | 103 | 161 | 116 | 728 | 3110 |
| | 20-21 | 1482 | 268 | 392 | 89 | 53 | 140 | 267 | 46 | 64 | 113 | 545 | 3459 |
| | 19-20 | 805 | 288 | 478 | 104 | 59 | 211 | 242 | 129 | 161 | 27 | 256 | 2760 |
| | 18-19 | 627 | 310 | 320 | 78 | 102 | 89 | 142 | 108 | 137 | - | - | 1913 |
| 17-18 | 227 | 231 | 288 | 13 | 90 | 176 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | 1025 | |
| Domestic Abuse Referrals Throughout the year the CBCSP has continued to work with the Domestic Abuse Team to promote the reporting of domestic abuse incidents. | | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | | | | | |
| | No. of Domestic Abuse Incidents reported | 4629 | 4605 | 4937 | 2815* | 4838 | 4408 | 3722 | | | | | |
| * Data shows reports where victim is a resident of Central Bedfordshire, and the incident has taken place in Bedfordshire. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Radicalisation/ PREVENT Training CBSCP has supported the training unit to promote free eLearning on this topic. (Pan Bedfordshire training totals) | Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency training: | | | | | | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 | | | |
| | No. of completions | | | | | | 900 | 963 | 605 | 692 | | | |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Evaluation from conferences and training</p> <p>No large-scale learning events have been held this year in response to workforce feedback about capacity to attend non-statutory training.</p> | <p>Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Partnerships share a priority theme around Neglect. A free one-day Pan Beds Neglect Conference aimed to raise practitioners' awareness of Neglect; increase their confidence and skills to respond effectively; and to understand the tools and support available to them. The objectives of the conference were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the impact of Neglect on Children, Young People, and their Families. • Learn from the lived experience of child neglect. • Reflect on national developments and local learning. • Identify key tools/ resources for effective intervention. • Consider your own skills in identifying and responding to child neglect. • Network with colleagues who are working to safeguard children from neglect. <p>The event took place at Kings House, Bedford with a keynote presentation from Jenney Malloy (aka 'Hackney Child'). It was supported by the NSPCC and local practitioners to share national and local picture of Neglect, highlight the Pan Beds Neglect Strategy, promote effective multi-agency practice including awareness of resources such as GCP2, Day in the Life Tools and multi-agency chronologies.</p> <p>Attendance: Our conference attracted 165 bookings, with 148 people (90%) attending on the day. Attendees represented a range of agencies, including Local Authority (43%), Police (8%), Health Services (18%), Early Years (1%), Education (20%), Independent (1%) and Voluntary Sector (10%).</p> <p>Evaluations: The event received excellent feedback; 122 (82%) evaluations were returned. 98% attendees felt the event completely (75%) or mostly (23%) met their expectations, with 121 (99%) attendees stating they would recommend. Feedback on keynote speakers was positive with Jenny Molloy noted for the impact of her presentation; 'Jenny was honest, brave and totally inspirational!! The whole day has made me reflect on my practice!' Attendees were asked to self-rate their knowledge of neglect; those rating themselves as 4 or 5 (out of 5) rose from 62 (51%) before the event to 114 (93%) after, indicating the positive impact of attending. For the majority of attendees, the case study activity and workshops were opportunities to consider specific areas of neglect, network with other professionals and increase knowledge of local resources and support.</p> |
| <p>Exploitation Communications</p> | <p>Some Key Activities:</p> |

The CBSCP and multi-agency partners work closely with the Exploitation Communication group and Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation (BAVEX) to raise awareness of exploitation.

- National Child Exploitation Awareness Day, End Child Exploitation, 16 days of action (DA/gender-based violence) MVAWG
- 'Just Drop It'
- Right Care Right Person launched in Bedfordshire
- Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit continues to be promoted across Bedfordshire.
- Pan Beds Multi Agency briefing sessions have been attended by over 800 practitioners.
- The Safer Streets booklet being delivered to every household in the county and significant amounts of digital and out of home marketing.
- Vulnerability Campaign – Focused on perpetrators & Sextortion.
- Child Exploitation Tool & Practitioners guidance updated for 2023.
- Pan Beds MA Briefings – Adult Exploitation; included SOC, OCG, County Lines, Sexual Exploitation.

Outcomes:

- Increase in Pan Beds MA Form submissions when campaigns & training have been delivered.
- Facebook advertising targeted into 'hotspot' areas for Cannabis factories led to an increase in Pan Beds MA information submission forms on cannabis related crime.
- Partnership webinar on tackling forced marriage was attended by more than 500 people.
- Increase in the use of the Pan Beds Child Exploitation Tool.
- The VERU website continues to perform above average since relaunching last year – Just Drop It campaign remains the most visited page.
- BAVEX website continues to be utilized by Practitioners across Bedfordshire.
- Increase in domestic abuse and wider VAWG reports potentially linked to our 16 Days of Action campaign as well as our wider comms work around male violence against women and girls.

- Tribute video to victim in the Op Version fatal stabbing, which was delivered in the brand of our Just Drop It campaign, became our second most liked post on Instagram over the past 12 months. Interest in the VERU continues to be high off the back of the campaign, with around 3,000 visits across the unit's website in December – three times the average.

| | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three different approaches to drug dealer sentences led to high performing content on social media as well as a follow up piece with Police Oracle. • A significant focus on male violence against women and girls, including several high-profile court cases, activity in support of 16 days of action and the return of 24 Hours in Police Custody. • A separate evaluation report on the Just Drop It campaign, which has helped drive a significant increase in the number of weapons being handed into police weapons bins. |
|--|---|

| On-going CBSCP Challenge of Key Performance Indicators: | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Indicator, Issue and Challenge | Outcome/Impact | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC's) conducted within 15 working days of a Section 47 starting.</p> <p>Monitoring ICPC's conducted within 15 days is part of the CBSCP Performance Framework.</p> | Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | 15/16 |
| | Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC's) conducted within 15 working days of a Section 47 starting. % (year-end average) | 81.1% | 95.4% | 85.9% | 82.7% | 95.9% | 88.8% | 96.4% | 96.4% | 82% |
| <p>The percentage of care leavers in education, employment, or training.</p> <p>CBSCP monitor and challenge performance and outcomes on a quarterly basis. For the second year running, the 65% target was exceeded, and monitoring continues.</p> | Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | 15/16 |
| | Care leavers in education, employment, or training. % (year-end average) | 68% | 68.7% | 67.7% | 61.6% | 61.7% | 64.1% | 66.7% | 70.2% | 70% |
| <p>Percentage of referrals leading to a provision of a Social Care Service.</p> <p>CBSCP challenges and monitors the use of Thresholds within Central Bedfordshire on a</p> | Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | 15/16 |
| | % of referrals leading to provision | 99.2% | 100% | 99.8% | 100% | 99.8% | 100% | 99.6% | 93.2% | 85.9% |

| <p>quarterly basis. Since 2017/18, this has consistently been above 99% suggesting that professionals know when to refer children for help and are making appropriate referrals.</p> | <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="763 193 1032 268">of a Social Care service</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table> | | | | | | | | | | of a Social Care service | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|---|-------|-------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| of a Social Care service | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Initial Health Assessments for Looked after Children completed within 28 working days.</p> | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="763 378 992 416">Year</th> <th data-bbox="992 378 1108 416">23/24</th> <th data-bbox="1108 378 1225 416">22/23</th> <th data-bbox="1225 378 1341 416">21/22</th> <th data-bbox="1341 378 1458 416">20/21</th> <th data-bbox="1458 378 1574 416">19/20</th> <th data-bbox="1574 378 1691 416">18/19</th> <th data-bbox="1691 378 1807 416">17/18</th> <th data-bbox="1807 378 1924 416">16/17</th> <th data-bbox="1924 378 2040 416">15/16</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="763 421 992 740">Initial Health Assessments for Looked after Children completed within 28 working days. % (year-end average)</td> <td data-bbox="992 421 1108 740">73.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1108 421 1225 740">63.6%</td> <td data-bbox="1225 421 1341 740">57.6% *</td> <td data-bbox="1341 421 1458 740">81.4%</td> <td data-bbox="1458 421 1574 740">80.4%</td> <td data-bbox="1574 421 1691 740">52.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1691 421 1807 740">76.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1807 421 1924 740">79.3%</td> <td data-bbox="1924 421 2040 740">61.1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="763 783 2031 1066">* In Bedfordshire, Initial Health Assessments (IHA) for Looked After Children are completed by Paediatricians. In 2021-22, 69 out of 102 (67.6%) assessments were completed within 28 days. Reasons for assessments completed out of timeframe include; an increase in demand, paediatrician capacity, reliance on other health teams where children placed out of area. On occasion, delayed consent from birth parents, or missed appointments by Foster Carers has been a factor. Where there are delays, BLMK CCG and social care have taken action including exception meetings to investigate reasons for delay and escalation with out of area health teams via the Designated Nurse. Remedial action includes cover for annual leave and foster carers training by health to include importance of IHA.</p> | | | | | | | | | | Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | 15/16 | Initial Health Assessments for Looked after Children completed within 28 working days. % (year-end average) | 73.8% | 63.6% | 57.6% * | 81.4% | 80.4% | 52.5% | 76.5% | 79.3% | 61.1% |
| Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | 15/16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Initial Health Assessments for Looked after Children completed within 28 working days. % (year-end average) | 73.8% | 63.6% | 57.6% * | 81.4% | 80.4% | 52.5% | 76.5% | 79.3% | 61.1% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days is routinely monitored by the CBSCP as part of its Performance Framework.</p> | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="763 1109 943 1147">Year</th> <th data-bbox="943 1109 1077 1147">23/24</th> <th data-bbox="1077 1109 1211 1147">22/23</th> <th data-bbox="1211 1109 1346 1147">21/22</th> <th data-bbox="1346 1109 1480 1147">20/21</th> <th data-bbox="1480 1109 1615 1147">19/20</th> <th data-bbox="1615 1109 1749 1147">18/19</th> <th data-bbox="1749 1109 1883 1147">17/18</th> <th data-bbox="1883 1109 2018 1147">16/17</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="763 1152 943 1359">Assessments completed within 45 days. % (year-end average)</td> <td data-bbox="943 1152 1077 1359">90.9%</td> <td data-bbox="1077 1152 1211 1359">96.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1211 1152 1346 1359">97.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1346 1152 1480 1359">97.1%</td> <td data-bbox="1480 1152 1615 1359">96.2%</td> <td data-bbox="1615 1152 1749 1359">95.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1749 1152 1883 1359">93.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1883 1152 2018 1359">92%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | | | | | | | | | Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | Assessments completed within 45 days. % (year-end average) | 90.9% | 96.8% | 97.5% | 97.1% | 96.2% | 95.8% | 93.8% | 92% | | |
| Year | 23/24 | 22/23 | 21/22 | 20/21 | 19/20 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 16/17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assessments completed within 45 days. % (year-end average) | 90.9% | 96.8% | 97.5% | 97.1% | 96.2% | 95.8% | 93.8% | 92% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Missing children.

Between 2019-2021, missing children and number of episodes reduced; this is likely to be due to COVID restricting young people's movements.

| | 2023-2024 | | | | | 2022-2023 | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| No. of missing children (episodes) | 47 (160) | 13 (61) | 12 (42) | 10 (20) | 12 (37) | 44 (184) | 11 (24) | 10 (52) | 12 (48) | 11 (60) |
| No. of missing Looked After Children (episodes) | 23 (94) | 6 (40) | 9 (25) | 5 (13) | 3 (16) | 12 (83) | 4 (13) | 2 (40) | 4 (28) | 2 (2) |

| | 2021-2022 | | | | | 2020-2021 | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| No. of missing children (episodes) | 356 (828) | 95 (217) | 92 (248) | 77 (171) | 92 (192) | 67 (266) | 22 (70) | 22 (111) | 13 (54) | 10 (31) |
| No. of missing Looked After Children (episodes) | 63 (302) | 16 (54) | 18 (112) | 18 (66) | 21 (70) | 27 (152) | 6 (36) | 8 (57) | 7 (37) | 6 (22) |

| | 2019-20 | | | | | 2018-19 | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| No. of missing children (episodes) | 268 (398) | 70 (174) | 82 (139) | 64 (105) | 52 (80) | 351 (593) | 100 (23) | 89 (247) | 83 (175) | 79 (148) |
| No. of missing Looked After Children (episodes) | 78 (161) | 21 (58) | 26 (49) | 19 (32) | 12 (22) | 65 (309) | 20 (90) | 18 (119) | 15 (47) | 12 (53) |

Section 4: Areas for Development

The Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is working well, with a strong commitment from its partners.

Areas for development are identified as:

- Neglect: Continue embedding GCP2 assessments in practice.
- The Voice of Children and Young People is evident in our work.
- Review and strengthen our partnership arrangements for exploitation.
- Strengthen our partnership response to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Ensure that practitioners are learning from our case reviews.

| Priorities for 2023/24 | |
|---|---|
| <p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Strong Leadership with our Partners • Effectively learning from our Case Reviews • Back to basics training • Effective Assessments <p>Key topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect • Child Sexual Abuse • Exploitation • Mental Health and Wellbeing <p>Golden Threads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications – how do we talk about safeguarding. • Information Sharing • Voice of the Child • Transitions • Early Help • Good Quality Assessments • Learning from our Case Reviews | <p>Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership held a development session on 13th May 2024.</p> |

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)

The CBSCP's published MASA document was first issued in May 2019 in line with the requirements set out in the then Working Together 2018 and were last updated in December 2022. As part of its work programme for 2024/25, and in line with the Department for Education's timetable for compliance with Working Together 2023 the CBSCP has revised its MASA document which will be published in

December 2024. The CBSCP yearly report for 2024/2025 will report on any revisions and the current document can be found here.

In strengthening all our education settings given their importance to the developing lives of children and young people and how they are kept safe, the CBSCP sees them as our fourth safeguarding partner with equal status in its arrangements. Education settings have a wealth of knowledge and breadth of practical experience in safeguarding, care and needs of Central Bedfordshire communities.

Education colleagues from early years to further education colleges have continued to support the work of the CBSCP and are proactive representatives within the partnership structure. There is a continued focus across all education settings to improve effective joint working with wider partnership agencies. Currently on our Strategic Board we have the Assistant Director for Education and SEND along with senior representatives from local secondary and primary schools, and our local college. Officers from the Local Authority School Improvement Team also sit on the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect and Voice of the Child groups and the Central Bedfordshire Performance and Case Review Groups.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group was established in 2022 to support, strengthen and inform the vital work of the CBSCP. It is chaired by the three Bedfordshire Local Authority Chief Officers for Education (on a rotating basis) and has representatives from schools across Bedfordshire. This is a strategic group, tasked to bring education as the fourth safeguarding partner and reporting directly to the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The group provides a communication channel between education settings, including Governors, local Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) forums and the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships. It provides support and Governance to the local cluster/hub arrangements as they share themes, challenges, and good practice in their safeguarding work.

As part of the groups standing agenda there is a dedicated time for the DSL and Cluster Forums, where schools can raise issues or information that they would like feedback to from the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group. Local schools and colleges are invited to take part in audits and case reviews where relevant and the CBSCP communicates with schools via a local monthly newsletter dedicated for schools.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education group will support the CBSCP in its establishment of data and impact analysis and continue to develop the communication between, and contribution to, the various other groups within the CBSCP and Pan Bedfordshire structures. In 2025 the CBSCP will be supporting the S157/175 self-assessments and assist in addressing the safeguarding themes that transpire.

Appendices

Appendix A: Financial Summary

Business Unit Costs:

| Income | Amount | Expenditure | Amount |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Bedfordshire Police Authority | £16,373.61 | Staffing | £137,241.68 |
| NHS Bedfordshire | £44,905.84 | Overtime | £29,400.00 |
| Probation | £1,802.00 | Car mileage | £1,060.20 |
| Central Bedfordshire Council | £110,793.98 | Training | £300.00 |
| Secondment Income | £6,187.94 | Venue hire | £2,280.00 |
| Carry forward from 22-23 | £96,629.27 | Website development | £3,500.00 |
| S31 IMPLEMENTATION | £47,300.00 | Recharges | £5,527.00 |
| Other Income | £1,606.80 | Ad hoc / Minor General Expenses | £925.00 |
| Total income | £325,599.44 | Subscription | £815.00 |
| | | S31 IMPLEMENTATION | £47,300.00 |
| | | CSPR's costs | £12,000.00 |
| | | Additional CDOP Costs | £5,313.76 |
| | | Carry Forward | £79,936.80 |
| | | Total | £325,599.44 |

The total CDOP costs for the year were £12,313.76 – as noted above a contribution of £5,313.76 came from the partnership budget, with the remaining £7,000 paid for by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partners have agreed for the underspend (£79,936.80) to be carried forward to fund future learning events, awareness campaigns and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Safeguarding partners also make a financial contribution to the Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training Unit.

Training Unit funding:

- Bedfordshire Police £3,618.48
- Central Bedfordshire Council £16,059.12
- BLMK ICB £9,924.20
- Probation £398.20

Appendix B: Strategic Board Membership/ Relevant Agencies

- Independent Chair/ Scrutineer
- Bedfordshire Luton & Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board
- Bedford Hospital NHS Trust
- Bedfordshire Police
- Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service
- CAF/CASS (Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service)
- Cambridgeshire Community Services
- East London Foundation Trust
- Education, including schools and college
- Lay Members (1)
- Local Authority, including Adult Services, Children's Services and Public Health
- HM Prison and Probation Service - Bedfordshire
- NHS England (via the ICB)

- Representation from the Voluntary Sector (Voluntary Organisations for Children, young people & families, VOCypf and Central Bedfordshire Homestart)

Appendix C: Pan Bedfordshire Training Annual Report:

Safeguarding Bedfordshire is the multi-agency training provider for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Training is aimed at those working or volunteering with children and young people. Our multi-agency approach ensures a shared understanding of the priorities held by each of the Partnerships and promotes partnership working in order to safeguard children and young people with the ambition that they will lead safe, happy and healthy lives, with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential.

Key messages

- Safeguarding Bedfordshire delivered 58 training courses in 2023/24; with a significant attendance increase compared to 2022/23. This rise is partly attributed to a new offer of free places on Working Together for our Partners Agencies. In Q4, high demand for Working Together was accommodated through extra capacity in online sessions; again this was due to demand from Partner Agencies.
- Satisfaction rates remain high. Attendees commonly report the following benefits of attending our training; increased confidence in own safeguarding practice/ responsibilities, importance of capturing the voice/ lived experience of the child/ young person, confidence to share information and challenge/ escalate where practice is not effective, networking opportunities and knowledge of other agencies, local resources/ procedures.
- Reduction in cancelled courses, however, non-attendance/ late cancellation has been monitored and will be a focus area for 2024/25.
- eLearning uptake has also risen beyond that predicted. We have focused on improving completions rates (now 87%, up from 72%) and will continue to increase this in the coming year. The high demand has placed pressure on remaining licences, meaning we will need to review the offer and agree purchase of additional licences to see us through to Sept 2025 (end of contract).
- Continuing our close working relationship with Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation (BAVEX), we supported with the delivery of a series of exploitation themed events including 'Mind your Language: Exploitation and Victim Blaming' and 'Child Exploitation & Home Office Toolkit' webinars (funded by BAVEX).
- Our first conference since 2019 focused on Neglect. 148 practitioners attended with excellent feedback.

| Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training 23/24 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL 2023/ 24 | TOTAL 2022/ 23 |
|---|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Courses delivered | 14 | 6 | 19 | 19 | 58 | 56 |
| Delegates booked (inc. non-attendance) | 168 (17) | 98 (3) | 350 (35) | 470 (84) | 1086 (139) | 733 |
| Places Filled % (based on 20 per course) | 60% | 82% | 92% | 124% | 94% | 86% |
| Satisfaction % | 95% | 99% | 98% | 100% | 98% | 99% |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|--------|--------|
| Cancelled | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 11 |
| eLearning Registrations | 3101 | 4805 | 3289 | 4315 | 15,510 | 12,784 |
| eLearning Completions | 2525 | 4315 | 2890 | 3783 | 13,513 | 9,264 |
| Completion rate % | 81% | 90% | 88% | 88% | 87% | 72% |

Working Together to Safeguard Children: Impact of attending training

‘Information on useful terms to include in a referral and those which are too ambiguous. I feel that I will now be able to **have more of an input into the referrals** we make and hopefully **alleviate some of the workload pressure** on other staff members.’ *Education Central Beds*

‘I feel this training was very useful in my role, we daily deal with young vulnerable missing children that need safeguarding. It was interesting to **know what all other agencies do when we raise referrals** & all the different models they work from. I can **pass on the knowledge** to the rest of my team.’ *Bedfordshire Police*

‘The course helped me to build upon my current safeguarding practice, enabling me to **be clear about what is required** to keep children safe. It was very useful to be reminded of the safeguarding systems in place in Bedfordshire. I have been **well equipped with tools to use** when I work with children to make sure their **voice is heard and to understand their lived experience**. It was good to **learn of the new legislation** in place.’ *Social Care, Luton*

‘The case studies looked at, in terms of **producing high quality referrals** to the IFD. This will impact the young people I work with as it will **ensure that they get the right support**. I have **booked the DSL training** recommended.’ *Education, Bedford*

‘The information about EHA/ FSP/ STRAT/ S47 really **helped me to distinguish between early help and what that involves, as opposed to child protection**. The different scenarios helped me consider what my next steps would be in a safeguarding role and **will directly have a positive impact on the children I work with**. The **viewpoint of a police officer and social worker** in our training group was also useful and the course facilitator really used these people to help explain some of the more technical aspects of child protection.’ *Education, Luton*

‘It was useful to meet trainees from **a range of different professions**. In my work we do not come across many safeguarding issues due to spending limited time with the same children and families, but it has helped me think about how we need to **store information** we gather and also additional information that we need to include in our **new safeguarding policy** for children and vulnerable adults.’ *HMP Bedford*

‘Knowing exactly **how to make a safeguarding referral** and what support I can obtain from who and where when making decisions regarding the process and level of concern being raised. This will **empower our service to better serve** high risk and vulnerable YPs.’ *Drug & Alcohol Services, Pan Beds*

‘The training and scenarios given were very good and clear and actually shows how **important effective communication** is in safeguarding. Will apply all the aspects of effective communication in my work as we work as a hub with Care homes, social worker, and different local authorities.’ *Independent, Pan Beds*

‘At different points during the training, I was able to **reflect and consider how to I can improve practice and my communication** with the other agencies I work alongside. This training **encouraged me to take the initiative** and have conversations with other colleagues, for the benefit of the children

and families we support. I also have a **clearer understanding of the escalation processes** and where I can go to read up on policies and procedures.' *ASYE, Central Beds*

... feedback from other training courses

'I visit families with very young children on a daily basis, the training has given me some tools to be able to understand the child's voice without assuming and gaining their voice through the parent communication. I will use the training to improve my visit notes, thinking about how I can get this across for the voice of any children in the home to be noted and their needs expressed.' *Social Care, Central Beds - Voice of the Child*

'(It was) helpful to be part of multidisciplinary group of learners. Using a Case was very helpful, especially as enough time as given to tease out complexities and practical bits- i.e. WHAT info do you now need and how will you obtain that re this family? Reminder about the impact of Neglect on children and society- was excellent.' *GP, Bedford - Understanding Neglect*

'When assessing young people for psychosis or at-risk mental states, this is another element to consider. The guidance for the resources available will be useful in developing services for young people at my service.' *ELFT, Bedfordshire - Contextual Safeguarding*

'The biggest thing I took from the training is how to ensure we use the voice of the child in all aspects of what we do. There were extensive resources made available to us which I intent to use in daily practice of my work with children.' *Youth Offending Team, Bedfordshire - Voice of the Child*

'Overhaul of our safeguarding governance arrangements and reviewing all my supervision agreements with my supervisees.' *Vol Sector, Luton - Safeguarding Supervision*

'The session has led me to reflect on current meetings within the organisation and with external partners where we are at risk of this occurring. The session has increased my confidence in asking curious questions and also challenging timeframes for assessments and other actions from the multiagency teams.' *Nurse, Bedfordshire - Working with Professional Challenge*

'Having completed this accredited training and sharing learning/ the toolkit in a staff meeting, I am now the designated contact for concerns/ questions around sexualised behaviours.' *Pastoral Support Officer, Central Beds - Brook traffic Light Tool*

Reflections on 2023/24

Achievements:

- Increased attendance across agencies
- Increased Partner attendance on Working Together training
- 'Understanding Neglect' training pool is running well
- Increased eLearning completions
- Income generation funded Neglect Conference & co-funded 'Mind Your Language' webinars
- Budget carry forward for 2024/25
- Strong links with Safeguarding Education Teams in Bedford, Central and Luton- attendance of DSL Forums, regular information sharing. Developing links with Early Years Teams.
- Engagement with 16+ provider forum event (Bedford/ Central)
- Working with local authority Community Safety Teams to coordinate Pan Beds MA Form briefings
- Working with Pan Beds Exploitation Lead to coordinate Exploitation themed briefings (funded by BAVEX)
- Pan Beds SCP/ SAB website
- Themed Resource lists

Even better if:

- eLearning uptake converted into training attendance
- Improve uptake of Bedfordshire ICB allocation of free Working Together places
- Improve training engagement with Early Years practitioners and Independent Provision (Alternative Provision, Residential Care Homes, CIC, etc)
- Connect with Luton 16+ Providers Forum
- Increase opportunities for face-to-face training
- Bite size webinars on key themes from CSPR's
- Increase dip sampling for impact case studies
- Improve eLearning completion rates to 90%+
- Launch eLearning evaluations (Virtual College)
- Explore opportunities to engage with Adults workforce

Impact Reports 2023/ 24 *Copies available on request*

- **Quarterly Training Reports** presented at Pan Beds Co-ordinating Group
- **Neglect Conference Report** & follow up **Impact Report** presented at Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group
- **Neglect themed training Report** presented at Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group
- **Exploitation Training Report** presented at Pan Beds Exploitation Group
- **'Transitions to the Max' Report** (SAB Learning Event)
- **Brook Traffic Light Toolkit Report** presented to Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group

Appendix D: Independent scrutiny:

89. Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.

90. Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently, add value to the work of local agencies.

91. Scrutiny should be evidence-based, and feedback should be considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners. Scrutineers should consider the impact that the LSP and DSP make through their strategic oversight, if they are providing strong leadership, and the functioning of local arrangements.

92. Independent scrutiny contributes to the wider system of accountability which includes the independent inspectorates' single agency inspections, including Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS), and Police Forces assessment of their effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), as well as Joint Targeted Area Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and annual reporting arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

93. The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to

objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

94. Statutory partners and relevant agencies should review progress against agreed priorities and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving outcomes for children.

95. Scrutiny should be based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence, and information. This could include the development of multi-agency dashboards, joint needs assessments, multi-agency audits, reviews, and mapping of what is already being scrutinised by the statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, identifying the gaps and aligning with agreed priorities.

96. Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures. Local areas may choose to have an individual or an externally commissioned group delivering their scrutiny. Furthermore, scrutiny may be embedded within the structure of the arrangement or set apart from it. Scrutiny work can be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, observations, and peer review. Scrutiny should take account of the voice and experience of children and their families.

97. The approach to independent scrutiny should be clearly set out and accessible. The published arrangements should state how independent scrutiny is delivered locally and by whom, how the arrangements are reviewed and how regularly, which areas will be scrutinised, and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This might include the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements, and the effectiveness of learning following serious incidents. In the yearly report, the LSPs should review the impact and learning from scrutiny and how they are responding to the findings to improve the effectiveness of arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting)

Functions of independent scrutiny role:

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

(Source: Working Together 2023)

