



Bedford Borough  
Safeguarding Children Partnership

# Impact Report

## September 2022 – March 2024

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# Worried about a child?

If you're worried that a child is at risk of neglect, harm or abuse, it's important that you tell someone.

You are not being asked to make judgements or interfere unnecessarily in other people's lives, the Partnership just want to make sure that the child gets the help, support and protection they may need.

## Who to tell?

If you think the child is in immediate danger, call **Bedfordshire Police - 999 or 01234 841212 or NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000**

If the child's not in immediate danger, but you're still concerned about them, please contact us online:

## [Report a concern about a child](#)

If you are unable to use the online form you can phone **Bedford Borough Council Children's Integrated Front Door - 01234 718700 (office hours) or Emergency Duty Team on 0300 300 8123 (out of hours)**

## **CONTENTS:**

**Safeguarding Partners' Reflections – pages 3 - 4**

**Introduction - page 4**

**Highlighted Activity in the last 18 months – pages 4 - 8**

**What does Bedford Borough look like? – page 9**

**Snapshot of Bedford Borough 2023 - 2024 - pages 10 - 11**

**Engaging children to hear their views and lived experiences – pages 12 - 20**

**Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) – pages 20 - 21**

**BBSCP Strategic Priorities -2022 – 2024**

- **Safeguarding children in the home – pages 22 - 49**
- **Safeguarding children in the community – pages 49 - 60**
- **Safeguarding children through effective systems and processes – pages 61 - 67**

**Learning from Reviews – pages 67 - 72**

**Safeguarding Training – pages 72 - 74**

**Governance Arrangements – pages 74 - 75**

**Scrutiny of the Bedford Borough Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements – pages 75 - 81**

**Looking ahead and our challenges for 2024 – 2025 – pages 82 – 83**

**New Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) 2025 – pages 83 - 84**

**Appendix A – Finances 2022 - 2024 – page 85**

**Appendix B - Glossary – page 86**

**Appendix 3 - Bedford Borough Council Children's Services Engagement Group/projects – page 87**

**Appendix 4 – BBSCP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026 – page 88**

**Appendix 5 – BBSCP Structure 2022 – 2024 – page 89**

# **Safeguarding Partners' Reflections on this reporting period;**

## **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.

Our 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.”

**John Murphy, Assistant Chief Constable**

## **Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board**

“The ICB along with our health partners in Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) and East London Foundation Trust (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 Bedford Borough 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 Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR), Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) 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.”

**Sarah Stanley, Chief Nurse.**

## **Bedford Borough Council Children’s Services**

“Our mission in Bedford Borough is simple, ‘for every child we work with, life gets better’. This is only achieved through close and effective partnership working. This report highlights the effective partnership work completed over the past 18 months and the difference this has made in keeping children and young people safe.

The Bedford Borough Partnership has continued to maintain an absolute focus on safeguarding children and young people and improving their outcomes within our Borough supported by the services there-in. The commitment from the multi-agency partnership is truly valued and the strength of the relationships within the partnership gives me confidence that we will collectively continue to both discharge our statutory duties effectively and be aspirational about improving outcomes for all children and young people within Bedford Borough.

The report is published at a moment of change as we usher in Working Together 2023 and begin to work differently. This is also a moment of change for our Independent Chair and Scrutineer, Professor Maggie Atkinson, who steps down in December 2024. I would like to thank her personally and on behalf of the Partnership for the invaluable contribution she has made during her tenure.

Looking forward to 2024-25, I’m confident that Bedford Borough Council and the wider Partnership will continue to develop an integrated system around children and families, so the right help, protection and care arrives at the earliest opportunity.”

**Harmesh Bhogal, Director of Children’s Services.**

## Introduction.

This is the third annual report of the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (BBSCP) [Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA\)](#) and covers the period from September 2022 – March 2024 this will bring the BBSCP reporting arrangements in line with Working Together 2023 requirements as previous reports had a reporting period from September to August. Our vision and ambition is to keep **Children, young people and families central to everything we do now and in the future**. To achieve this the BBSCP has reviewed their existing objectives and throughout this report there are examples of work and good practice in the last 18 months to demonstrate how the partnership addressed the priorities agreed by the Partnership.

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

The Bedford Borough Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements cover the Local Authority area of Bedford Borough. The three Safeguarding Partners are Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board and Bedfordshire Police. Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership works closely with its neighbouring Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Luton. As such, our structure (see Appendix 5 page 89) includes several Pan Bedfordshire groups. Scrutiny for the arrangements is provided by the BBSCP Independent Chair and Scrutineer, Maggie Atkinson. The Yearly Report details the Partnership's work and achievements for the reporting period and evaluate impact and identify current and future priorities, evidence has been collated from a range of sources including data, inspections, multi-agency audits, workforce feedback, and the views of children, young people and families in Bedford Borough. This report focuses on multi-agency work its impact, assurance and learning and provides evidence that multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have been effective for Bedford Borough children. A critical overview of the strength of the local safeguarding arrangements is provided, including a review of those aspects where limited or no progress has occurred.

## Highlighted Activity in the last 18 months.

- February 2023 there was a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) for Early Help with the purpose to test how effective our local arrangements were supporting children, young people and families who require early help support. The letter of findings following the inspection was positive and highlighted the following strengths:
  - Most of the early help support is provided to children, young people and their families at the right time, and this is making a positive difference for them.
  - Children, young people and their families receive a comprehensive range of targeted services to meet their needs. Services are identified through a range of daily early help allocation meetings, which are effective in sharing information between professionals.
  - Children young people and the identity and culture of their families are considered well, and this helps to support early identification of their needs. This includes a swift response to support refugee families to help them resettle in Bedford.

- Children and young people have good access to emotional well-being and mental health support through education and a range of targeted services.
- Interventions by the early help workers in the Adolescent Response Team (ART) and effective working with partner agencies are leading to positive outcomes for children.
- The Police Education and Diversion Team deliver a broad range of age-appropriate education to children and young people aimed at keeping them safe. This includes work with the brothers and sisters of children and young people discussed at the Serious Youth Violence Panel.
- The Inspection also identified that neither individual agencies nor the BBSCP had sufficient oversight of the effectiveness of early help and the IFD, given the increase in children's contacts and the need for help and support. However, the BBSCP had already prior to notification of this inspection programmed into their Strategic Board agenda the theme of Early Help for their meeting in January 2023
- Following the inspection the BBSCP developed an action plan to build on the identified strengths and to develop the areas for improvement.



In 2023 two Family Hubs in Bedford Borough were opened in [Queens Park](#) on Marlborough Road and [Pine Cones](#) on Slade Walk. Family Hubs are spaces where families can easily access a wide range of non-judgemental support to help them live well in Bedford Borough. They bring together maternity services, health visitors, library and foodbank services and children's centre activities. This followed the completed of a [local Needs Assessment](#) in the summer of 2023 to find out. This meant working with lots of local families and organisations through conversations, surveys and focus groups. This was used to help us shape the vision for Family Hubs and local family services moving forward. Family Hubs are for all families from pregnancy until a child turns 19 or, if they have special needs, until they turn 25. There are activities and support for all ages. A chance for parents to meet other parents, do something fun as a family or just need some advice.

Education is a priority area for the BBSCP and our neighbouring Partnerships, and during 2023 we took steps to strengthen our relationship with the education sector and to make sure it is 'front and centre' in all safeguarding activity. To support the strengthening of arrangements a dedicated Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education group, chaired by our three local authority Child Education Officers. The Bedford Borough Cluster groups led by Susannah King and Vicky Hayward have grown from strength to strength for schools to be sighted on and involved in local safeguarding practice.

BBSCP undertook two types of audits throughout the year. The Section 11 safeguarding compliance audit tests how well organisations are meeting their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. The Section 11 audits also show the quality of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the partnership. The case file audit of 9 Neglect cases (3 from each area) from the last 12 months; One child in need (CIN) case that stepped down to CIN from child protection (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. Further details of this can be found on pages 70 – 71. The audits illustrate a very strong commitment to safeguarding, and where action is required in any partner organisation, this is addressed very swiftly. A summary of the Section 11 findings for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 are presented in this report, see pages 63 - 67.

The BBSCP also undertook a Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency audit on neglect 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. These attempt to 'shine a light' on the quality of practice by focusing on a small number of cases. Some positive learning from the audit was the prompt moves and opportunities taken by Housing and other 'non-safeguarding' agencies to engage with families on safeguarding issues. There were examples of escalation by practitioners in some cases with generally good info sharing in most cases. Some cases evidenced loads of good support/interventions over the years. There was evidence of good communication and information sharing across schools. All participants reflected on the elements of good practice and identified any gaps at a practice, organisational or system level and more information on this audit can be found on pages 70 – 71.

In December 2023 the government published an updated version of its statutory guidance: [Working Together 2023](#), and a new [Children's Services National Framework](#). Both documents introduced changes that will be required by Safeguarding Children Partnerships during 2024 and introduce ways in which established practice can be changed. The BBSCP has been working with our partners throughout 2024 to make the required changes and more information can be found on pages 83 - 84.

BBSCP communicates with partner agencies and Bedford Borough residents primarily via the [Safeguarding Bedfordshire website](#). The new Partnership website was published in September 2022 and the Children's information pages went live in March 2023.

Increased use of safeguarding supervision, escalation and increased professional curiosity. Wider conversations to support challenge and respectful challenge is evident and as a result there are improved interprofessional relationships at a senior level. There is more willingness to share risk across partner agencies, evidence of multi-agency collaboration and problem solving and listening to children and young people and advocating for changes at higher levels.

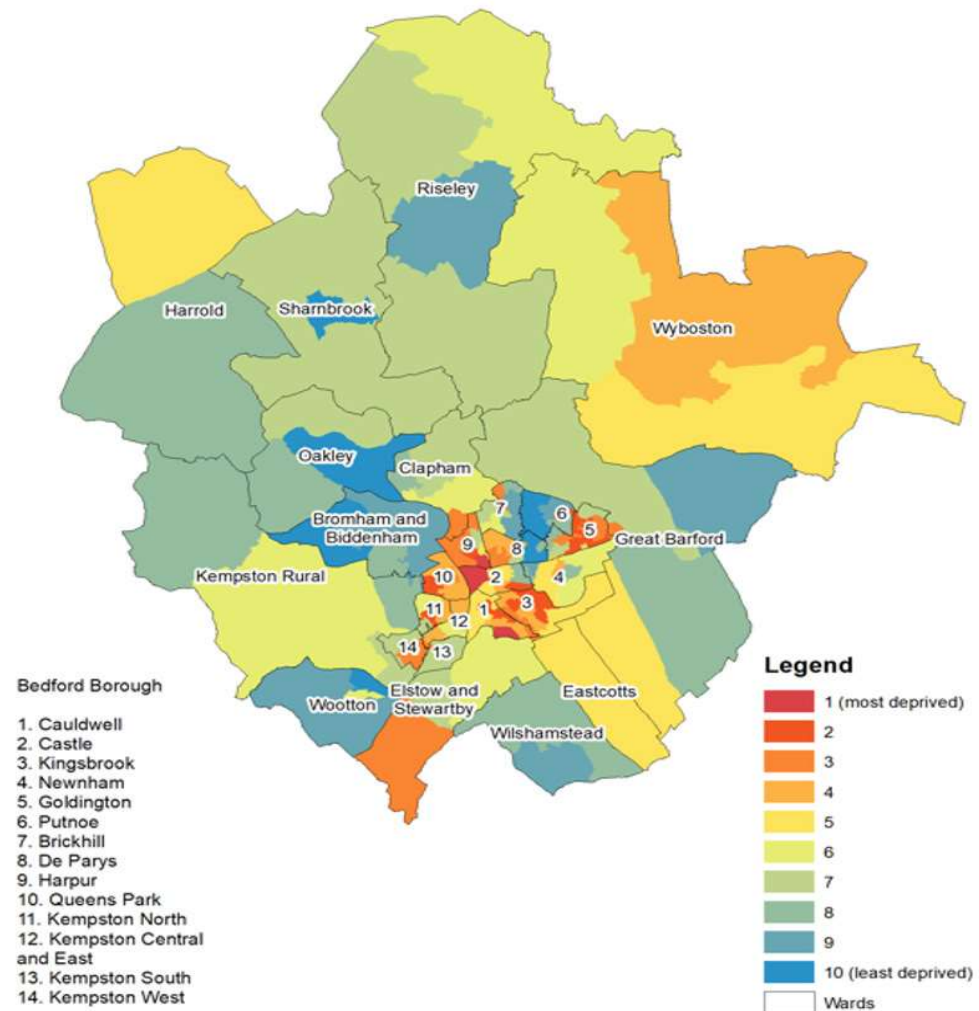
Safeguarding Training achievements are.

- Increased attendance across agencies and on the Working Together training.
- 'Understanding Neglect' training pool is running well and an increase in eLearning completions and income generation funded Neglect Conference & co-funded 'Mind Your Language' webinars.
- Strong links with Safeguarding Education Team in Bedford with attendance of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Forums, regular information sharing and developing links with Early Years Teams. Engagement with the Bedford Borough 16+ provider forum event and working with the Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Community Safety to coordinate Pan Beds Multi-Agency Information Submission Form briefings.

## What does Bedford Borough look like?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates the population of Bedford Borough mid-year 2023 was **189,891** with two-thirds living in urban areas and one-third in rural with the total population of **43,070** under the age of 18, **22.7%** of the total population. Most of the population live in the urban centres of Bedford and Kempston surrounded by a large rural area consisting of many villages. Bedford Borough stands out for having unusually large differences in deprivation, particularly between its urban and rural areas. As the map below shows, areas of highest deprivation are mostly located in Kempston and Bedford town centres. This map shows the overall deprivation of an area based on seven individual indices which are combined to form the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)<sup>5</sup>. Of the seven individual indices, the ones which mostly contribute to deprivation in Bedford and Kempston are health and disability, income, employment, education, skills and training, and crime. However, the surrounding rural areas also experience deprivation. In rural areas, this is mostly due to deprivation in the living environment (a measure consisting of housing quality, air quality, and road traffic accidents) and barriers to housing and services. Of the children and young people aged under 16, **5,711** are living in a low-income family. Bedford Borough is a relatively prosperous and fast-growing borough, but with areas of significant deprivation.

Bedford Borough IMD 2019



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## Bedford Borough Safeguarding Snapshot 2023/2024:



**43,070** children under the age of 18 live in Bedford Borough

**22.7%** of the total population

**15.1%** of children are living in low income families



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



**27.8%** of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language

**24.1%** of children in secondary schools speak English as an additional language



**161** children and young people were subject to Child Protection Plans as of March 2024



**20.5%** of children in primary schools are in receipt of free school meals

**20.6%** of children in secondary schools are in receipt of free school meals



**12,043** contacts were made to MASH and **1,706** referrals were made to Bedford Borough Children's Services



**844** Early Help case episodes started and **1,407** Single Assessments completed



**420** child protection investigations were undertaken



**183** Initial Child Protection Conferences were held



**499** open Children in Need cases as of March 2024

**As of January 2024 49.8%**, of all children and young people attending maintained schools and academies in Bedford Borough are from minority ethnic groups, compared to **37%** in England as a whole. The largest minority ethnic group of children and young people attending in Bedford Borough is Asian – which accounts for **16.2%** of children and young people compared to **13.3%** in England as a whole.

#### **As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

- **499** children and young people had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist Children's Service.
- **161** children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is **a 26% decrease from 217 at 31 March 2023**.
- **262** children and young people were being looked after by the Local Authority; this is **a 4% decrease from 273 at 31 March 2023**.
- Of this number, **164** live outside the Local Authority area.
- **33** children and young people were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- **22** live in residential children's homes, of whom **100%** live out of the authority area.

#### **In the previous 12 months:**

- **15** children have been adopted.
- **8** children and young people became subject of special guardianship orders.
- **85** children and young people ceased to be looked after, of whom **1** subsequently returned to be looked after.
- **13** young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living.
- **5** young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

Through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Bedford Borough is focused on tackling local health inequalities that start before birth and accumulate throughout life. It understands that these inequalities are preventable and to achieve the best outcomes it is necessary to focus on the complex influences affecting children and young people's health, including their family, environment, life skills, knowledge and experience. Preventing or minimising the impact of risk factors, including adverse childhood experiences, is vital. It is equally important to strengthen the protective factors, particularly the resilience (ability to cope) of your children, young people, and their families.

## Engaging children and young people to hear their views and lived experiences

The BBSCP's continuing commitment to hear the voice of children, young people, and their families is demonstrated in the 2022/23 Section 11 audit included **Standard 4 - Requiring agencies to evaluate how service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children, young people and families** (see page 63 - 67).



A voice of the child conference was held in November 2023 focusing on Healthy Relationships and Bullying. The aim of the conference was to hear the views from children and young people about these issues and how they can be better supported by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. Eight schools attended with years 5, 6, 7 and 8 and a diverse mix of their students. Some of the children and young people had been directly impacted by the issues being discussed, and their feedback was crucial in shaping discussions on the day and actions following the event. In preparation for the event the children and young people were asked to discuss these topics with other students from their school and feedback their views at the conference so that the Safeguarding Children Partnerships could hear the views from as many children and young people as possible.

Alfie (@shinealightwithalfie) presented his Anti Bullying & Mental Health Campaign. Alfie shared his own experience of bullying in Year 5 and has been campaigning for the last 2.5 years. His campaign has received support from a wide range of organisations & key people including the Childrens Commissioner, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Alex Holmes OBE, Jack Grealish, Declan Rice, Luton Town footballers and many more! He recently created a documentary with CBBC regarding his campaign where he had the chance to discuss anti bullying with Jack Grealish and Declan Rice. Alfie is a Anti Bullying Ambassador for the Diana Award and at his school. His documentary is available on IPLAYER '[My Life -I was bullied](#)'



4 young people from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) attended to share their stories of being bullied and how they are addressing this through their Anti Bullying project. Their messages included the following. **There is no one definition of bullying, it can take a lot of different forms and there can be a lot of different methods.**

**A lot of the resources available for schools, parents and young people do not reflect this, they are outdated and sometimes unhelpful.**

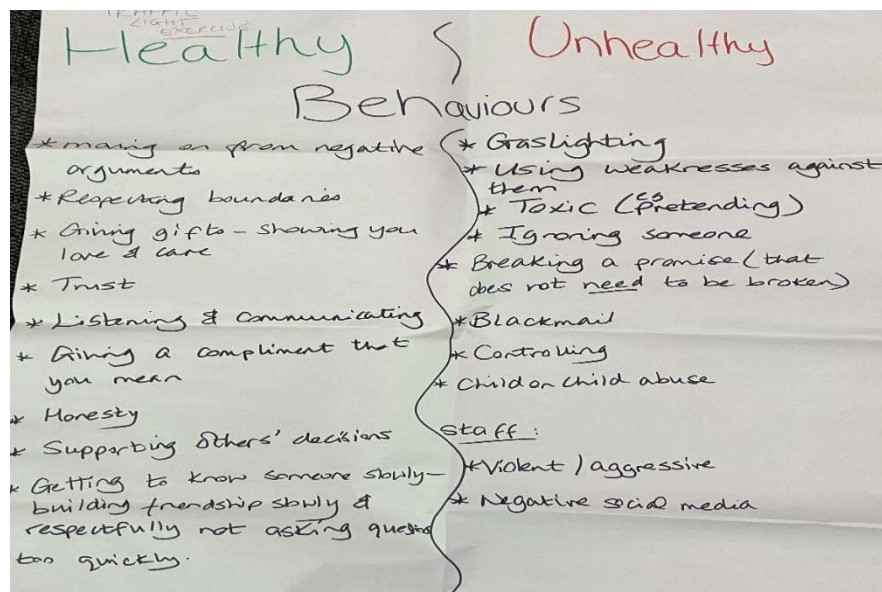
**The biggest piece of advice is to share it with a trusted adult.**

**People bullying is a reflection of them, not of you.**

The following was shared by Jeevan, a Young Healthwatch volunteer wrote about his attendance at the Voice of the Children Conference.

**"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 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."**

Here are some examples of what the children and young people said about Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships and Bullying.



How does some being bullied feel?

- Unwanted
- Isolated
- helpless
- Sad
- closed off
- Worthless
- trapped
- Angry
- Left out
- Useless
- Neglected
- depressed
- alone
- embarrassed
- scared
- defenceless
- worried
- quiet
- anxious
- aware
- unworthy
- suicidal
- aggressive
- silent
- selfharm
- selfharm
- emotional
- unhygienic
- stressed
- annoyed
- sleepless nights
- uncomfortable
- disrespected

**What will the Safeguarding Children Partnerships do in response to the Voice of the Child Conference?** They 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 and young people 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 Relationships, Sex and Health Education (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).
- Will raise awareness of the Government's [Guidance for schools on preventing and responding to bullying](#).

From April 2023 the Pan Bedfordshire Voice of Child Group was stood down and the remit of the group became a golden thread across the BBSCP and Pan Bedfordshire partnership structures. This was seen to ensure the voice of the child is embedded in all partnership work. An 'annual conversation' was held in April 2024 to review, and evidence, how the voice of the child has remained a key theme in our work.

**BBC Early Help Services** feedback from children, young people and families is gathered at the beginning through the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and then throughout the work through the Team Around the Family Meetings (TAF). The Outcome Star is used to measure the child and families view on the distance travelled and the improvements seen and felt by the child and family. Currently over 80% of families who are supported by the Early Help service have their outcomes met. Feedback from parents through the Parent Carer Forum highlighted the need to improve communication about the Early Help and Family Support offer. Over the summer work was commissioned to communicate more effectively to parents and professionals what the Early Help Service is and the support that can be provided to children, young people and families.

**East London Foundation Trust (ELFT)** see the voice of the child and individual is integrated into all aspects of the safeguarding supervision and training. CAMHS has a comprehensive people participation strategy which is very well established, the workforce establishment consists of senior





leads, parents/carers and young people who are all part of their CAMHS workforce. The team members are actively involved in a variety of service development opportunities/initiatives to ensure the voice of young people and families is considered at all stages of the planning and mobilisation. The team are fully integrated into the service with representatives at the senior manager meetings to ensure communication is shared. ELFT's people participation teamwork with a range of young people who access services to ensure all their needs are considered when planning services. Children and young people from a diverse range of ethnicities and backgrounds, children and young people with special needs and vulnerable young children are represented within the people participation. Their people participation team and members are involved in the local and Trust wide equalities networks and work stream and have shaped services based on suggestions (i.e.: LGBTQI training/record keeping on RiO). All ELFT services are equipped to conduct a holistic risk assessment, which always includes the voice of

the child, exploring the contextual, home environment, and online risks. The Trust has clear expectations and guidance for staff to follow the NHS and local safeguarding children partnership recording keeping policy and requirements. Individual care plans are regularly reviewed and updated within the team, MDT, and multiagency network. When emerging specific issues and concerns arise, all practitioners know what to do, i.e., escalating concerns via the Local Authority. Depending on the individual case, staff could seek managerial and safeguarding support and guidance. If necessary, health would challenge other agency decisions to promote the best interest of the children and young people. It is sometimes difficult to work with a plan as some families are hard to engage and it depends on network groups to work together for better outcomes. Co-production remains at the heart of all ELFT do. A recent campaign "Better Days" marks a year of creative workshops being co-delivered by young people to help influence change and create services that meet the needs of their growing and changing communities.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services** provide support for anyone under 18 who is affected by substance misuse via [Aquarius service](#) who use an outcome tool to assess effectiveness of intervention. They also contact the child or young person 1 month after completion of intervention to assess continuing impact. Co-production is at the heart of service design and delivery. Bedfordshire and Luton Children's services employ a co-production team that work with staff, partners and service users to ensure co-production and the voice of children, young people and families is heard and acted on. Bedfordshire and Luton Children's community health service has a strong commitment to co-production with children, young people, and their families. Their trust 'People Participation and Involvement Strategy' demonstrates the approach taken; in ensuring service developments and improvements as well as strategic decision making are made collaboratively with the people who use their services. This can be evidenced via a variety of documentations including but not limited to their co-production tool-kit, which includes a co-production training package for staff, case studies on a number of co-produced initiatives they have undertaken with young people and families, as well as the trust co-production ladder which is used as a self-assessment tool to measure the level of engagement adopted within their programmes and projects as reviewed regularly by their programme board. Data monitoring of both patient feedback and patient participation is in place to review and ensure engagement activity is representative of the diverse communities that they service. An example of feedback gathered from children and young people who have received

a safeguarding intervention to inform service improvements is the co-production review of the Children in Care Initial Health Assessment. 6 young people aged 7 -17yrs, male and female, including 2 ethnic minority participants and 1 non- English speaking asylum seeker (using translation services) took part in the review in the form of an interview style 1:1 discussion with the co-production lead to share feedback on their experience of the initial health assessment process. The research was further expanded by working with SHOUT youth participation group for children in care. A result of the feedback gathered is the co-production of new resources and materials to be sent to the young person in preparation for their Initial Health Assessment (currently in development), including a personalised appointment letter addressed to the young person, and a short film animation giving information on what to expect in the initial health assessment. The impact of this work is that the service has a greater understanding of the needs of the young people throughout the Initial Health Assessment process, and once the resources have been finalised, the young people will feel well informed, prepared and more in control of the assessment they are undertaking. Quotes from young people on the Initial Health Assessment process **'[The paediatrician] was so nice, you guys are so kind to me'. 'I like being weighed and measured. I liked being asked about how I was'. 'I had no idea what the appointment was going to be about, it would have been helpful to know more'.**



**ChatHealth** is a confidential text messaging service for 11–19-year-olds to enable them to contact a 5-19 school nurse and discuss any worries or concerns. This has been an offer for some time and is now well embedded and utilised. Feedback from young people and parents/carers is gathered via the CHI-ESQ (Children's Experience of Service Questionnaire) which are a series of survey questions based on the NHS Family and Friends Test and BLMK 'I Statements' following any contact with the service. Bedfordshire and Luton Children's community service receives an average of 265 responses per month (2022-23), and the feedback has a well embedded monthly review, analysis, and escalation process, resulting in quality improvement initiatives and annual 'You Said, We did' summary reports. Feedback on the school nursing service (2022-23) includes **'Really listens and I feel better after seeing her.'** **'She gave me alternatives for self-harming.'** **'I felt [the school nurse] listened to me, she was really helpful with my worries'** **'They are understanding.'** **'They didn't judge me.'**

Voice of the child is captured within assessment templates and there is a specific voice of the child training which is deemed as essential to role for certain services across CCS. Teams across CCS are expected to direct any communications whether verbal or written, through the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) teams (complaints). All complaints follow strict processes for investigation, and this includes timescales for response. There is an expectation that learning may also arise for the individuals and services from this process. CCS is a values-based organisation and as such all processes from recruitment through to management across the Trust expects to base interactions and service delivery in this foundation. These values are honesty, ambition, respect, empathy and as such interactions in the safeguarding arena would be measured against these values. Consideration of how information is gathered from children, young people and families who have experienced safeguarding would need to be



informed by a clear rationale for seeking this information and assurance that there is a possibility of using this to underline or change practice effectively.

**BBC Children's Social Care** work with children and young people so their intervention is shaped and driven by them and are safeguarded. Examples of Feedback:

- Children and young people who are looked after through the work of the fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) looking specifically at their experience of being fostered
- Children and young people subject to CP
- From the commissioned Advocacy Service
- From Return Home Interviews – collated themes and information

All feedback is fed into other meetings and Boards and actions set from this work of the Quality Assurance (QA) Board and the work of Corporate Parenting Panel. Below are examples of work with our children and young people which involve gathering their views and feeding that back into service development. All engagement work is impactful in the involvement it gives children and young people in the direct project and activity and the meaningful nature of the feedback and information gathered.

As detailed below Children's Social Care have clear forums and mechanisms for acting on the feedback from children and young people they work with and for and could be Looked After/on a CP or CiN plan/adopted, etc. **SHOUT Junior & Senior** is a forum for children and young people known to Children's Social Care so can include They meet once a month and focus on different topics some examples are identify, mental health, staying safe, pride, my things matter, health checks and lots more. **Care Leavers Forum** meet once a month and focus on different topics some examples are mental health, hearing all voices and how they feel about their futures/what support do they need. **Soft play** a monthly stay and play soft play sessions. **Brilliant Activities in the School holidays (BASH)** are fun activities with an element of consultation on themes such as, I am happy when... I need help with... I want to stop...feeling valued and respected, seen and heard, build a worker and top tips for other children and young people. During summer BASH 2023 they started a volunteering project where young people were trained to help volunteer at BASH sessions. **Young people taking part in interview panels** for management positions. **Young people presenting at Skills to foster training** to potential new foster carers. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Group** is a group of young people prepare and present at the Corporate Parenting group. Some of the topics they have covered are health & feeling safe/supported/space. Coproduced skills for life booklets for Care Leavers. **Alternative provisions** have gathered views from children and young people who attend alternative provisions to hear how they feel at the provision/what support they receive/how children and young people feel about mainstream schools/being a young person in Bedford.

Bedford Borough Council Children's Services Engagement and Development Team's focus is on the voice, views, opinions and ideas of children and young people and how these can be used to bring about positive change. Here are some of their achievements:

- Creation of four interactive workbooks to support Children Looked After and Care Leavers into independence. These booklets were co-produced with young people and foster carers.
- Creation of resources for the Autism in Schools Project, including a story book for primary school children, a magazine for secondary school children, letters from children to teachers and a Borough Wide poster for Anti-Bullying week.
- Creation of a school toilet kite mark scheme to assess the safety and cleanliness of school toilets.
- Children and young people involved in the commissioning processes for contracts across the local authority.
- Children and young people involved in the interviewing of staff, including Director of Children's Services, Chief Officer and Heads of Service.
- Staff and development:
- Tea with a twist continued with fortnightly themed sessions to introduce social workers to tools and methods for direct work with children and young people. To build confidence, discuss tricky cases and develop new ways of working. Every month a different team within Children's Services leads a tea with a twist session to further share learning.
- Team champions: nominated representatives from each team to lead on 'voice of the child'. The team champions will be the link between Engagement and Development Team and their teams, sharing practice, developing policy and practice and considering legislation and guidance.
- Direct work and resources: the team continued to create direct work tools for workers to develop their practice with children and young people. Special packs themed around Marvel, Disney and Harry Potter are coming soon.
- The team have delivered voice of the child training to new SENDCOs, teams in schools, social workers and foster carers as part of the skills to foster programme.
- Hearing Children's Voice Podcast – Bedford Borough Councils Hayley Mills, Team Leader Engagement and Development, took the time to sit down with some of the young people who are all Corporately Parented. In the interview with our children and young people, they share their experiences, talking about how they feel about the term Corporate Parenting and their hopes and dreams for the future. A real-life insight into what their lives are like, and the help and support children and young people need to be the best versions of themselves!



**Bedfordshire Police** Public Protection Unit (PPU) Hub when making referrals ensure they capture the voice of the child using the AWARE principles (Appearance, Words, Activity, Relationships and dynamics, and Environment). This information can be shared with partners, so they have a full 'picture' of the lived-in experience of that child. Their business process and standards lead has implemented strategies around capturing the voice of the child and ensuring that there is consistency across the service. There is also the incorporation of a referral to be completed once a child is stopped by the

police and an encounter takes place. this has now been authorised through their IT systems so that they can capture information around young people signposting them to help if required.

**Bedford College** through the Adolescent Response Team (ART) they are looking at re-establishing links with the Early Help Practitioners to ensure that Early Help Assessment (EHA) training is delivered to key staff, and they can complete EHA's especially where students do not meet safeguarding thresholds but there are emerging issues where needs/support could be offered through more universal services.

**Bedford Borough Public Health** have produced a comprehensive and collaborative [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#) chapters that allow all users to access extensive information across a wide variety of topic areas. Partners across the system can access data quickly. Moving forward this will form part of a more comprehensive web platform where users will have support and training to make best use of its functions. The **Children,**



**Young People and their Families Plan** was created completely through the voice of children and young people, this has prompted partners including schools to demonstrate that their work is centred around this feedback and the next stage is to improve the ways in which they feed this back to children, young people and their families. Public Health have commissioned a worker to be based within 6th form settings to provide Early Intervention support to young people, the impact if this intervention will be shared over the next financial year. They have developed, implemented and monitor a [teen parent pathway](#) to ensure teen parents are supported in an integrated way across the workforce and beyond. This has been seen as an example of good practice and now needs to further develop to better understand the experiences of the young people on the pathway.

Within the remit of public health, direct feedback from children, young people and families must take a broader sweep approach and so Public Health have administered a series of health and wellbeing surveys across education settings to gain a greater understanding of views and experiences which include for example healthy relationships and Emotional Wellbeing. The results to date from the 7 yrs-11yr group are now being analysed to determine how best to utilise the information and ensure that relevant services demonstrate that they are taking account of what is being said. Schools receive individual reports specific to their setting to assist in their own self review of their health and wellbeing provision. This is then reflected in the settings biennial Education Settings Health and Wellbeing Self Review, where settings are supported to reflect and implement change accordingly. Settings also have an opportunity to request guidance and support. Previous feedback from a wide range of young people has been instrumental in the creation and implementation of the Children, Young People and Their Families Plan. As a result, a strategic action plan has been developed to determine areas to watch, focus and sponsor. Examples of this are:

- The Youth Offending service have created an engagement and participation post
- Early Help have open access youth clubs

- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) clubs are run over the holidays in partnership with Early Help and Public Health
- Social value elements are included in all contracts

The actions are not all held by Public Health but are monitored and fed into the Health and Wellbeing board.

### *What has the impact been?*

- **By hearing from young people directly this influences the support provided locally by people that they know.**
- **Partners have described children and young people being involved in making choices and influencing decisions about their own lives, for example co-producing their education, health and care plan or a child working with their teacher to agree their learning targets.**
- **Section 11 2022/2023 focussed on the voice and lived experiences of children and young people and assured the BBSCP that co production was a focus of work for some agencies whilst others employed Engagement Leads and were undertaking specific audits to ensure their practitioners are collating and acting on the voice and lived experiences of children and young people.**

## Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND)

[Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum \(BBPCF\)](#) are now members of our Strategic Board. Kerrie Rennie as the BBPCF Chair takes every opportunity to hear from many different views and experiences so that she and BBPCF can seek further improvements in all areas of support for Bedford Borough SEND children, young people and their families. Their focus continues to be on the 'Lived Experience' of families so that improvements can be made now and for future generations. In their recently published [Annual Report](#) they celebrate their achievements and we share in few of these below. BBPCF hold regular events which provide them with feedback from parent carers on how services are working for them. They introduced SEND Forum Ten-minute bookable slots which allow parent carers to meet with professionals and service providers to discuss their individual cases. Over the past year, they have had the following services attending these slots - Tim Long (Head of School Support Services), Chris Morris (Chief Officer –Education, SEND& School Infrastructure), Christian Weatherly (Principal Social Worker), Michelle Docking (SEND Team Manager), among others. Also launched were stronger beginnings, drop-in sessions tailored to strongly signpost and support families that are just starting out in the complex world of SEND or those who have some concerns about their child's development.

*"The strategies I learned from the HPC program have enabled me to better support my well-being. I am forever grateful!"*

*"I would highly recommend this program for anyone looking to better their well-being."*

*"I wasn't sure what to expect from this program but it's quite relaxed and I learned a lot!"*

The Healthy Parent Carer Programme was attended by over 100 parents which is designed to improve parent carers' health and wellbeing by promoting emotional balance through understanding, empowerment, confidence, and resilience.

## Achievements over the last year.....

- Delivered 5 Healthy Parent Carer Courses (now completed courses with over 100 participants)
- Facilitated a craft wellbeing workshop for parent/carers and increased membership to over 1800 including all areas of the SEND Community
- A variety of FREE training (Sleep Training, ADHD Training, Anxiety, and much more)
- Co-produced the new [Neurodiversity Support Pack](#) to support parent carers.
- Attended keeping in touch schools SENCO events
- Continued promotion of BBPCF within Education, Health and Social Care
- Hosting various focus groups to ensure the parent carer's voice is heard
- Coffee mornings changed to SEND Forum ten-minute bookable slots and information sessions
- Organised Family Participation events attended by over 1000 families.



The BBPCF have recommended that Bedford Borough Council promote a culture of zero tolerance of bullying of children with SEND and they should consider the following.

- involving the Local Area Designated Officer for Safeguarding in bullying concerns where appropriate
- re-running the legal training for schools previously offered with a focus on equalities duties
- gathering data for reports of bullying in schools
- informing parents of the most effective ways to seek redress in these cases and led by BBPCF.

At the Shout Out to SEND Conference in November 2023 young people got together to discuss how bullying makes them feel, they designed anti bullying posters and co-produced a workbook for adults with top tips on how they can support young people. There was also an anti-bullying workshop at the Preparing for Adulthood Festival in November 2023. Young people will design resources to be used in school in the new year.

**Bedford Borough Council Early Help** Autism in Schools Project is in its third year and has delivered training for school staff, parents and carers, children and young people to improve understanding of how best to support young people with Autism in schools and improve their educational experiences. The project has expanded to involve all schools and will widen its scope from Autism to SEND. Resources have been developed that will be used across all school.

**For more information on SEND please go to these links [Bedford Borough Council](#) and [BBPCF](#)**

# BBSCP Strategic Priorities

Work has been undertaken to further the strategic priorities, covered in this report and despite a clear desire to measure change and impact of the priorities, in practice these have not been as robust or illustrative as intended but do provide a good foundation to build upon in the upcoming year. For a readable format of the BBSCP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026 please see Appendix 4 on page 88.

## Safeguarding children in the home

### Neglect

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across Bedford Borough and the BBSCP's aim is to ensure that there is early recognition of neglect cases and that from early help to statutory intervention there should be appropriate, consistent, and timely response across all agencies. Neglect has been a priority for the BBSCP for the past five plus years and we know we need to do more so that children and young people have their needs met by their parents or carers, and support is provided where this is not the case. The BBSCP wants to ensure that practitioners identify and prevent unmet needs from escalating.

The BBSCP works closely with neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Luton, taking a pan Bedfordshire 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 2023-2026](#) with oversight of the annual workplan. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group met bi-monthly themed meetings. 2022/23 themes included learning from local and national practice reviews, emotional neglect, poverty informed practice and Think Family, informing a number of new practitioner guidance documents which can be found at this [link](#).





The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy sets out the strategic aims to improve the early recognition of neglect in families; to improve agencies' responses to these families; and to ultimately improve positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. Neglect is the highest category for referrals and child subject to CPPs and demonstrate that neglect is being identified by practitioners and a key component of multi-agency and single agency training.

A Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Conference was held on the 14.02.24 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 keynote speaker was Jenny Malloy (aka 'Hackney Child'), and it was supported by the NSPCC and local practitioners who shared the national and local picture of Neglect. The conference highlighted the Pan Beds Neglect Strategy, promoted effective multi-agency practice including raising awareness of resources such as GCP2, Day in the Life Tools and multi-agency chronologies. The conference attracted 148 people attending on the day. Attendees represented a

range of agencies, including Local Authority, Police, Health Services, Early Years, Education, Independent and Voluntary Sector. The event received excellent feedback with 98% of the attendees feeling the event completely met their expectations. Jenny Molloy was 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. The evaluation was also an opportunity to gauge people's knowledge of local neglect resources. Most practitioners had heard of GCP2, neglect screening tool and Day in my Life tools, yet had not used them.

#### Recommendations:

- Undertake one month post attendance impact sampling and consider further evidence of impact on practice.
- Increased uptake in GCP2 training.
- Increase in GCP2 assessments and use of Neglect Screening Tool and Day in my Life tools.
- Develop a Pan Beds Practitioner Neglect Forum.
- Annual Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding conference and increased joint learning opportunities for children, young people and adult workforce.

A Task and Finish group are working to create a dataset that will support the countywide work on Neglect.

For the 2023/24 Section 11 self-assessment process Neglect was the focus as its key theme across all standards, see pages 63 – 67 for more details.

The **Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2)** assessment tool is designed to help frontline practitioners identify when a child is at risk of neglect. It assists to measure the quality of care being given to a child in respect of physical



care, safety, love, and esteem on a graded descriptive scale. The GCP2 has been adopted as the single countywide child neglect assessment tool by all partners, however, returns using this tool are low and disappointing. This is a standing agenda item for the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group and data collection is starting to tell a picture and identify a gap in its usage. The BBSCP is clear that a GCP2 should be started when neglect concerns are first identified to work with the family on the areas that they need to improve on but are also doing well. If referrals are made to Children's Services for neglect, then it is good practice for a GCP2 to accompany the referral and be reviewed as part of any ongoing work. The BBSCP will continue to challenge agencies to use GCP2 to identify children and young people at risk of neglect and hope to see an increase in returns and an early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk of neglect.

Understanding Neglect: new training course launched Following a successful pilot session, a new one day 'Understanding Neglect' training course was launched by Safeguarding Bedfordshire. Partner agencies, including Bedfordshire Police, Children's Social Care and CCS committed staff to support with the development and delivery of this course.

**'Knowledgeable trainers from different backgrounds which meant they could share different experiences and perspectives. I really enjoyed this course. There was a good level of interactive learning... enough time was allocated to answer questions and discuss.'**

**'The course was well delivered, with opportunities given to everyone to make a contribution. It was relaxed and interactive and key points clearly identified. Having the training completed over Teams allowed me to still be available in the office during my breaks to meet the needs of my clients. Some Teams training can be boring however this was to the point, and interactive with everyone given the opportunity to make a contribution. 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.'**

**BBC Children's Services** use of the [Graded Care Profile 2](#) (GCP2) is emphasised within training and supervision when there are any identified issues of neglect. Practitioners 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, referrals as part of multi-agency working. Use of assessment tools e.g. ['A Day in my Life'](#) tools 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. Antenatal assessments are targeted to those assessed as vulnerable and have continued with a focus on how to improve the quality of these assessments.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS)** have participated in development of a Think Whole family level 3 refresher training package for poverty this is delivered jointly by their Child & Adult Safeguarding teams and



have contributed to a multi-agency Pan Beds training package for neglect. The role of birth father/male carers is part of their standard operating procedure produced to reflect the clinical need to access male carer records if there is a reason to do so and to embed this issue to all critical thinking and assessments. A one-page guide for housing issues was developed alongside a Padlet to offer suggestions to practitioners about how they can support families, the Padlet can be shared with families with multiple links to support available. An obesity risk assessment tool has been shared with practitioners and available on their electronic recording system and safeguarding Padlet. This tool has been promoted via the Trust's safeguarding champions and the safeguarding team newsletter. Lived experiences via ['A Day in my Life'](#) tools are used in clinical practice and linked through all electronic recording systems to reflect the child's voice, highlight their development and their lived experience within assessments and actions taken to support them and their families. They are promoted within CCS training and supervision sessions. 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, referrals as part of multi-agency working.



supports parents with appropriate advice to support care of their infant with its fundamental aim to reduce abusive head trauma. This has been supported by CCS as the lead provider of services and has allowed for the development of a system wide approach to be embedded into practice; including system wide agreed messages and learning delivered to parents. Barriers – capacity of staffing to offer full universal service across Luton and Bedfordshire related to mandated health contacts and capacity to support universal workloads (early identification of support needs).



**Bedfordshire Hospitals** advised that when a child is admitted to hospital it is standard practice to record their presentation, weight, height, and any developmental delay. They have a system of 'information sharing' electronic forms for all hospital staff to share a concern about a child 24/7. This allows staff to share any level of concern with the Safeguarding Team which would include concerns that would not meet the threshold for the IFD or EDT. These forms are picked up in office hours by the safeguarding team. A number of these forms will raise concerns that potentially could be signs of neglect, (for example an unkempt child, a child with unsuitable clothes for the weather, very underweight child, developmental delay without known cause, poor interaction between child and parent etc.). The Safeguarding Team review this information, look at the history for any previous concerns known, liaise with Health Visitor (HV)/School Nurse etc. and check if the child is known or open to CSC and the [Child Protection Information Sharing System \(CP-IS\)](#) is checked for all A&E attendances of children). When some context is gained, a decision will then be made on what action is needed – i.e. HV input, Early Help, CSC Referral etc. All concerns around neglect are raised through the information sharing pathway and where threshold is met referred to CSC. Many cases generate robust discussions with partner agencies such as the 0-19 service to explore wider health information to support a referral and assure follow up on discharge from hospital. There are effective working relationships with the 0-19 service including their safeguarding team with the aim of leading to better outcomes for children. For BHT neglect features as part of the Level 3 safeguarding children training day, this includes definitions of neglect, how that presents in practice and the response required. In addition, the Safeguarding Team use local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) as case studies within the training programme for the Trust.

**Bedfordshire Police** through their training and awareness raising have increased the identification of neglect and referrals for safeguarding of the child. Their Body Worn Video (BWV) scrutiny panel provided opportunities for a multi-agency panel to scrutinise BWV footage of neglect cases. The panel met twice in 2022/23 and was an opportunity to highlight any development opportunities in gaining the voice of the child/ren present and to further professional curiosity. Bedfordshire Police have identified and shared learning because of this panel as part of their ongoing development work to support officers and staff to accurately record cases of neglect.

**Bedford College** through their discretionary bursaries have seen an increase in thresholds from £30,000 to £37,500 post pandemic in recognition of the impact that cost of living is having on families. This has meant that more students have been able to access support where they previously may not have met the eligibility criteria due to household income. The College also continue to issue Foodbank vouchers to students/families where they have been financially struggling.

In 2024 work commenced with the NSPCC to revisit a Neglect Communications Campaign, to link in with local voluntary organisations and practitioners to help services build a better understanding and recognition of neglect, to engage with schools to help offer guidance and advice when they are supporting children and young people facing neglect.

### *What has the impact been?*

- Tools such as '[A day my life](#)' provide a rich, granular understanding of the impact of neglect and the BBSCP is starting to see evidence of the use of this tool and other tools in case reviews/audits.
- Partners have shared that their practitioners are delivering the key messages from the ICON programme on home visits, and within parenting groups, etc and that the appropriate staff are regularly reminded of the messages to ensure information remains current and the messages are not forgotten.
- The revised [Injuries and Bruising Protocol for Immobile Children 0-18 years](#) guidance is firmly embedded in practice, following the refresh of this guidance this year and there have been no further notifications of serious incidents of Non Accidental injuries to under 2 year olds.
- The BBSCP has clear expectations on when the GCP2 is used and there are mechanisms being put into place to monitor its usage and impact.
- Here is a sample of the feedback/impact received from the Neglect Conference.

*'I am going back to school to really consider how we can further support our families and children.'*

Education, Bedford

**'The presentation from Jenny was so powerful and made me really reflect on my own practice around neglect and how I support practitioners when working with neglect. I want to explore the importance of consistent practitioners where neglect is identified within our universal health pathways.'**

**CCS Bedfordshire**

**'Jenny made me think about my work with tricky parents and the importance of the relationship in trust building and REALLY listening.'**

**Early Help, Bedford**

**'I thoroughly enjoyed the day. Great range of agencies. Jenny Malloy was the standout speaker. It made me reflect on my practice and the difficulty advocating for children and their families when others don't see positive outcomes. Maggie also spoke candidly which also made me reflect. I enjoyed her talk. All the speakers and workshop leaders did a fantastic job. I hope this is done once a year, at least. As I'm not frontline children's staff, information of tools and learning isn't as accessible so I'm contacting teams to close gaps.'**

**P2R, Bedfordshire**

**'Jenny was incredible. Maggie for her reassuring messages to keep shouting up for the sake of these kids. I feel I spend too much of my life in conflict arguing. She made me feel it was worth every ounce of effort. As did Jenny. This training was incredible and essential for some who I see making decisions without using the tools. If they used the tools and said no this is not neglect because the tools suggest that the child's needs are met, I would be a happy practitioner. This gives me a point to make when challenging. I can give support and direction to those poor decision makers. Awesome work team.'**

**Bedfordshire Police**

**'The speakers were great in showing real life impact of multidisciplinary work and its benefits. I have requested a place on GCP2 and have been accepted. This event has expanded my understanding of neglect and how to identify. I have more confidence to speak up and engage in conversations with other agencies.'**

**Voluntary, Bedfordshire.**

For more information on neglect please visit our [Safeguarding Bedfordshire](#) and [NSPCC](#) websites.

## Early Help

**“Despite growing demand and need, senior leaders across the partnership continue to invest in early help services. This broad early help offer ensures that most children receive the right help when they need it”.**

**“Children and their families benefit from a comprehensive range of universal and targeted early help services and the majority of children have timely early help support when they need it”.**

**“The early help family support service practitioners, with partner agencies, provide a swift and comprehensive response to help resettle refugee families in Bedford. They provide wraparound support to families and children, financially, practically and emotionally, and have been creative in the services they provide.”**

**“Children receiving early help support build positive and trusting relationships with workers across all agencies. The majority of professionals demonstrate tenacity and creativity in how they build relationships with children.”**

**“Early help assessments are effective in identifying children’s needs. Those completed by school are particularly comprehensive”.**

**JTAI February 2023**



Early Help is about taking action early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families. Early Help means providing support as soon as possible to help families cope with difficulties and working together with other services to prevent bigger problems emerging. Support can come from a range of services and organisations, for parents, children and young people of any age. Our aim is to provide the right action at the right time with the right support.

**Bedford Borough Early Help services** continue to be strong and recognised as such by Ofsted above. Bedford Borough Early Help and Family Support service supports families through a range of interventions to build on their own strengths and find their own solutions. The Early Help Service works to support families who have a child aged 0-19 (25 with SEND). In addition to running many services “in house” the service also commissions a range of services to enhance the “in house” offer and widen the service and reach. The main partners who are commissioned to provide services are: Relate, Early Childhood Partnership, 4YP. A number of other services are commissioned through the Family Hubs to deliver on the key priorities. The service works in partnership and the diagram below illustrates those partnerships with supporting families being at the heart of everything we do.

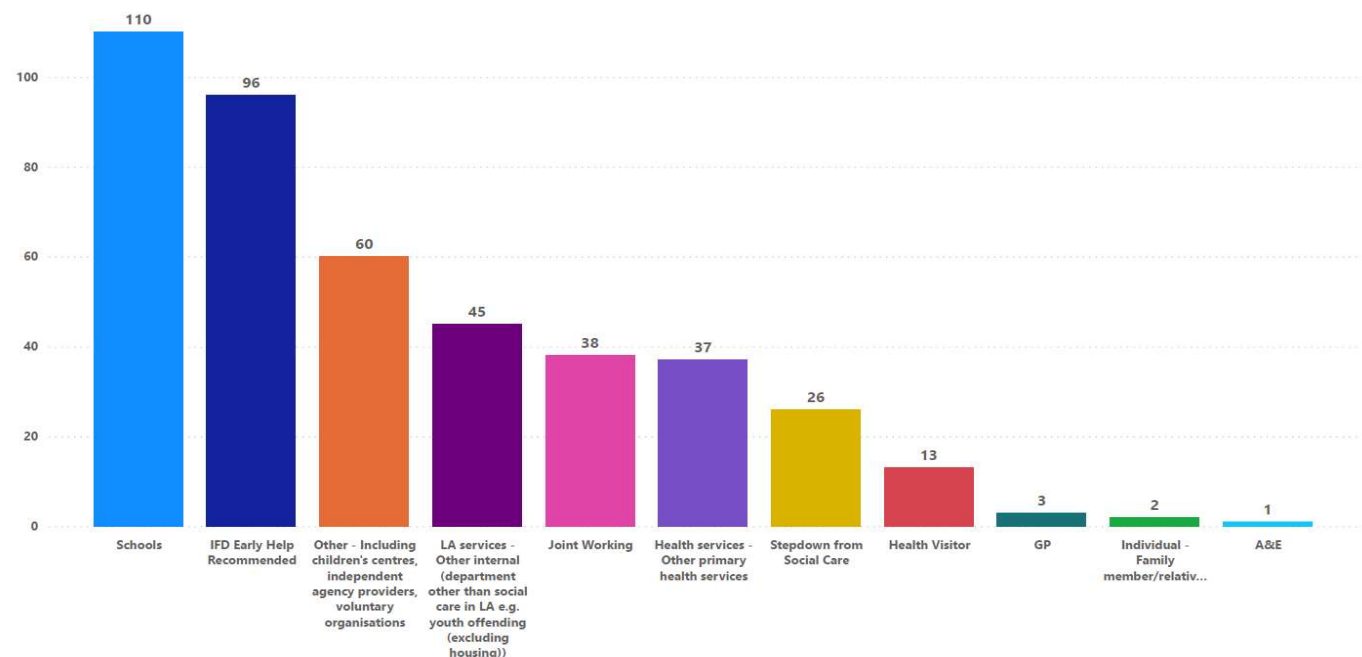
A new Early Intervention Hub has been established within Early Help to address the increasing demand for short-term (under 3 months) interventions, particularly for school-based issues such as attendance and behaviour challenges. The team now includes two Child Wellbeing Practitioners, and

these practitioners increase workforce capacity, working alongside existing Embedded CAMHS Practitioners to offer guided self-help to children, young people and families dealing with mild to moderate anxiety, low mood, and common behavioural problems.

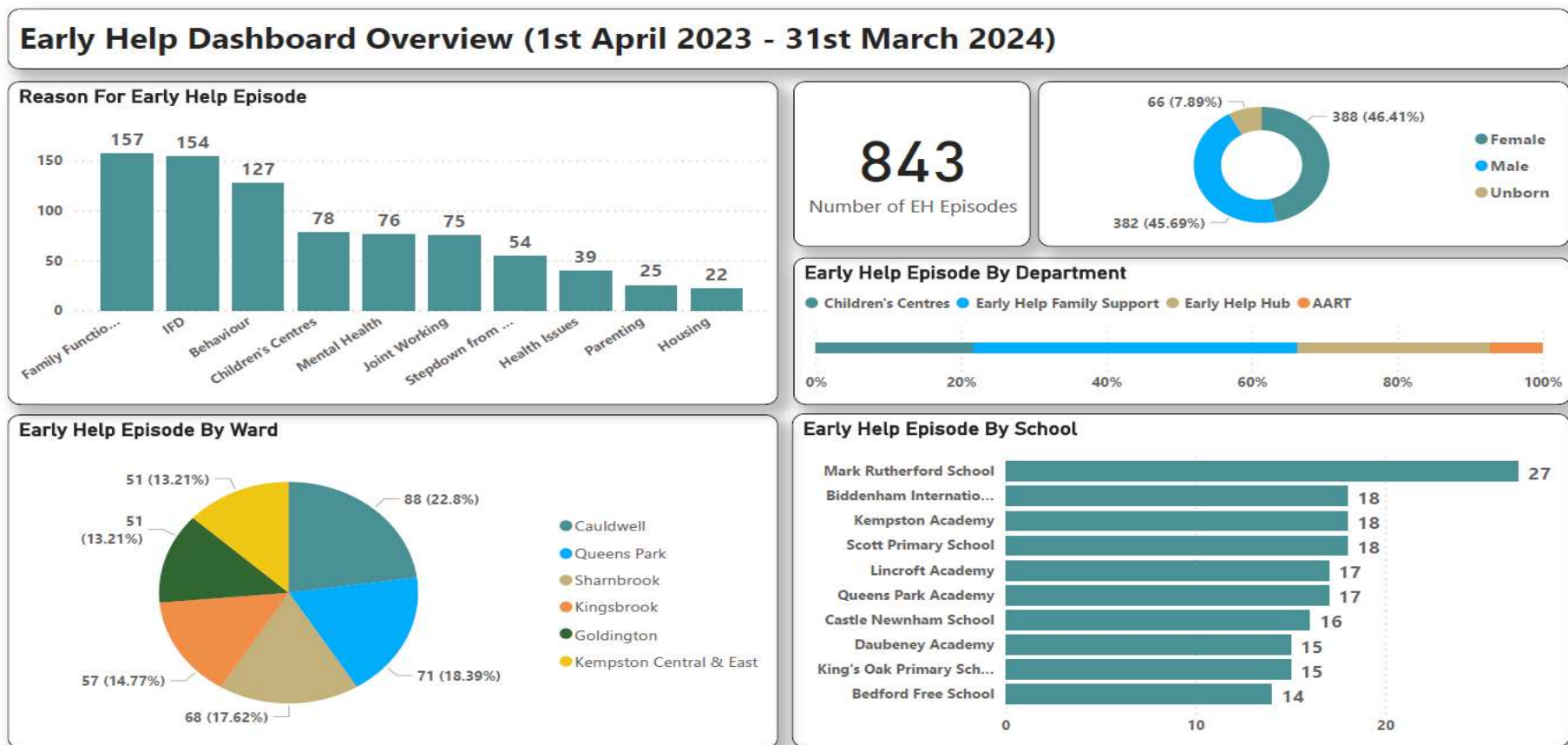
Providing Early Intervention at the earliest point for children, young people and families and stopping issues escalating is a key priority for Children's Services. Early Help practitioners work in partnership with colleagues across other services and teams to provide support and interventions which make a difference and improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Early Help practitioners contribute to a range of meetings including Strategy Meetings, Children in Need meetings and Child Protection Conferences.

The performance of Early Help services continues to be a key component of the management of demand in Children's Social Care with increased and effective joint working of cases allowing a more flexible and creative response to very entrenched needs. Through a much closer alignment between Early Help and Children's Social Care children and families are more smoothly stepped up and stepped down when required. The picture below shows the service origin of Early Help Assessments. It shows that the majority of Early Help Assessments are completed by schools, although only 10 schools exceed the target of 220 per 10,000 population.

Source of Early Help Episodes - January 2024 - June 2024



The picture below summarises some of the other key data for the service.



In addition:

- 309 parent(s) have completed a parenting intervention in past 12 months
- The number of re-referrals for families closed within 12 months is 4.5% against regional neighbour re-referral figures of (Hertfordshire 17% / Norfolk 15.4% / Luton 14.6% / Essex 10%)
- Between April 2023 and March 2024, 241 cases stepped down to Early Help from Children's Social Care with only 33 cases stepped up to CSC due to the level of need and risk.

The Adolescent Response Team (ART) is an embedded team which is highly regarded by professionals across partner agencies. The multi-agency team work intensively within an evidence-based framework to keep families together. In the February 2023 JTAI Ofsted found that “Interventions by the early help workers in the ART and effective working with partner agencies are leading to positive outcomes for children”.



***“Our shared vision is to give all children and young people firm foundations in life, through a strong network of family, friends and communities, with the earliest and best support that can be offered to build capacity and resilience.”***

More widely Early Help services are very well regarded by partners across Bedford Borough particularly with health professionals where work has been undertaken to improve the engagement of health professionals and in particular midwifery and GP’s. This has seen a marked increase in children, young people and families who would benefit from Early Help service being identified early. Most of the Early Help Assessments are completed by schools where parents have approached schools to ask for support or where schools have identified a need for additional support. All school have a linked Early Help Professional that provides support and advice with the completion of Early Help Assessments.

In March 2023 they launched their [Best Start Bedford Borough website](#) which provides cohesion for all those who work as part of the early years’ partnership and a “one stop” advice and information site for all parents with an under five. The site

links to the [Local Offer](#), the [Family Information Service](#) partner agencies web pages ensuring up to date, evidence-based information is available to parents 24/7.

Partnership working between health and children’s centres has been strengthened following the reorganisation of provision to align to the Early Years hubs. Mapping of the Universal Plus pathway has also taken place. and in the February 2023 JTAI Ofsted found that **“Health visitors are clear about the range of services which can be referred to, to help meet children’s needs at the earliest opportunity.”** The Partnership working between Early Help, Children’s Social Care, School Improvement, Police and schools has seen the Designated Safeguarding Leads Forums go from strength to strength with most schools regularly attending the meetings to hear updates, share practice and get support for local and national issues. This forum has worked closely with the Police to implement [Operation Encompass](#) across all Bedford Borough schools.

Effective partnership working between Early Help, other council departments, voluntary sector partners and schools has ensured that their most vulnerable children and young people are supported. They are currently working to support 163 Ukrainian children, young people and their families

who have arrived as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme or on the family visa scheme. 26 asylum seeking families who are being accommodated locally in a resource that was previously a hotel (58 children, young people and 4 unborns). 34 from Afghanistan and Syria who are being resettled in Bedford Borough.

Reducing exclusions continues to be a focus of work for schools and the local authority. Early Help are continuing to work with the University of Bedfordshire to undertake a piece of extensive research which will investigate how some schools elsewhere in England with similar demographics do not exclude and/or have achieved much lower exclusion rates. Elicit the views and personal narratives of excluded students and their families, together with perceptions and experiences of staff in school, about reasons for exclusions and what might be done to avoid exclusion. Analyse the collated information to draw out lessons about potentially effective ways to address the issues that are raised. As a result of this ongoing piece of work new approaches are being trailed including a Preventing Exclusions Panel. Primary schools have made effective use of this multi-agency meeting which has worked effectively to ensure most children and young people have the support and approaches they need to remain in school and made progress. The partnership working between Early Help, schools and our alternative providers remains robust with a focus on quality and reintegration.

Developed partnership working to support the delivery of HCP with a focus on Family Hubs development. CCS continue to be a key part of the working together with other agencies to support the roll out and development of Family Hubs across Bedfordshire. A digital offer has also been a focus including the use of [Padlets](#) and [Parent line](#) have enhanced the delivery of information using alternative medium to increase accessibility.

### ***Kelly and Harry's story***

**Referral for first-time parents Kelly and Rob who were child looked after and living together. Rob left Bedford to start a new life and no longer wanted to be with Kelly or play a part in his unborn child's life. An Early Help Assessment was completed with Kelly for multi-agency support. Kelly was living in Rob's flat and was not on the tenancy agreement so was placed into emergency accommodation. Harry was born, and they moved into permanent accommodation, and they were supported with the setup of their home e.g. bills, food bank and furniture. Through Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings with Kelly there was a great multi agency approach in place due to Kelly being looked after and having support from her Advocate/Personal Advisor. One to one work was completed with Kelly, who attended groups at the Children's Centre and Family Centre. Through these Kelly and Harry were able to socialise and interact with others building on his development/social skills. Through the early help support Kelly disclosed that she had been in an abusive relationship with Rob and reported the domestic abuse to the Police, she accepted support and completed the My Choice programme. Due to the trauma, she had experienced in her life she was supported by her GP with medication and received counselling. Harry is now 10 months old, and they are both thriving. Kelly has taken on board advice/support from practitioners and reports to be happy and much more confident with herself, life, and parenting abilities. Kelly cannot believe the difference in her life now compared to a year ago and her life outcomes have improved immensely, and she will continue to be supported until she is 21 and the Health Visitor will also continue to support them both as part of their universal plan.**

Where an Early Help Assessment is needed the service, in co-production with feedback from service users and parents from the Parent Carer Forum work developed the Early Help Graduated Response which is set out below.





## Building strength within families so they can support themselves

 Bedford Borough Early Help



### An Early Help Assessment identifies your family's strengths and weaknesses

To receive support an Early Help Assessment (EHA) must be completed. An EHA is designed to help a family receive the right support at an early stage.

For more information and to complete the EHA visit: [bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/early-help-families](https://bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/early-help-families) or scan below.



Scan me



### We offer information, advice and guidance to help identify options to support you and your family

In Bedford Borough every school is connected to an allocated Early Help Professional who can provide specialised advice.

For more information about the service, advice and what we offer email: [EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk) or call: [01234 718700](tel:01234718700)



### Support for all parents through a universal evidenced-based parenting offer

Early Help offers a broad range of FREE universal evidence-based parenting programmes, such as Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) and Teen Brain Matters.

To find out more email: [parenting.programmes@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:parenting.programmes@bedford.gov.uk)

For more information and to see all the programmes available visit: [localoffer.bedford.gov.uk](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk) or scan below.



Scan me



### Allocating professional support to coordinate and build strength within your family

Early Help provides a broad range of evidence-based interventions, such as Solution Focus Therapy, Protective Behaviours and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

For a full overview of the interventions and services provided visit: [bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/early-help-families](https://bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/early-help-families) or email [EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk) or scan below.



Scan me



### Assigning specialist action and intervention for your family

At times more targeted and specialist intervention might be required to support a young person or family.

This could be identified in the EHA or through ongoing engagement with Early Help Professionals or partners.

For more information email: [EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk)





**BBC Children Services** overall strategy is clear about the need to have an effective Early Help and Early Intervention offer. That offer is working together with our partners and sits across the work of their Early Help service and Children's Social Care (CSC). In February 23 launch events were held for the new **Threshold of Need: Guidance for Effective Support for Children & Families in Bedford**. The Thresholds guidance outlines the way that prevention and early intervention is so critical in working with families and the onus on all those working with children, young people and families to ensure that there is timely intervention. The aim would always be to reduce the need for statutory intervention in working meaningfully and jointly with families when issues are first identified. A 6 month catch up with the practitioners using the Thresholds Guidance was held in October 2023. Practitioners shared positive feedback to how clear the guidance is, and no concerns shared. Following the Early Help and Front Door

JTAI a multi-agency action plan has a range of actions and activity for partners separately and together. This has enhanced the work already taking place and the scrutiny of external inspection has enabled BBCCS as a partnership to work on some key areas including the co-location of practitioners within IFD and a pilot with Bedfordshire Police on their thresholds of referral to the IFD. The action plan and findings from the JTAI has also influenced conversations about the internal interface between Early Help and Children's Social Care as well as informing wider discussions on the shared use of screening tools such as for neglect. Their Family Group Conference Service (FGC) is now situated within Early Help and have undertaken training with Early Help colleagues to ensure the effectiveness of the offer of an FGC at an early stage. They continue to use FGCs across the service where appropriate, however have identified that more use of this intervention alongside other support and targeted intervention would add robustness to the early intervention offer

**Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS)** have communication systems in place to facilitate timely communication and information sharing. This is enhanced by the Bedford & Luton Children's Health Hub which acts as a single point of contact with both service users and other agencies. CCS staff have access to interpreting services through DA Languages as support for translation for those service users who do not have English as their first language. CCS website offers users the opportunity to access Recite facility, which enables enhanced understanding using their first language of their available resources. Information can be read aloud or made into Easy Read for service users accessing Recite. Introduction of electronic health needs assessment in Year R (reception aged children) has been commenced with a view to ensuring that there is early identification of need at school entry.

**East London Foundation Trust (ELFT)** offers ad hoc safeguarding supervision and planned supervision where the practitioners would be advised to consider offering early intervention/help to the families and individuals. Staff is being encouraged to consider the use of voluntary early intervention such as Link to Change, FACES, etc. to prevent escalation of risk. Advice all staff to continue to work closely and involve schools in building individual and contextual resilience. Promoting a safe transition from childhood to adulthood, to ensure that individuals are supported and safeguarded from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. The Central Bedfordshire Adult and Children Social Care, ELFT CAMHS, CMHT, Safeguarding Children, and adult team and the housing department is in the final approval stage of the co-operational between teams' protocol and will be used

across Pan Bedfordshire. ELFT practitioners are encouraged to access the Integrated Front Door and or ELFT safeguarding team for any professional discussions before a referral is submitted, which helps in formulating concerns and actions. Cases are either signposted or accepted into treatment according to risk and need. CAMHS have established relationships with key stakeholders, who together work creatively to help address some of this demand with the introduction of the Mental Health in Schools Teams (MHSTs), additional in-reach into Primary Care, partnership offer with CHUMS and the digital offer. Working under the I-Thrive framework the system explores ways of increasing access and engagement particularly for the vulnerable communities and groups of young people waiting for support to ensure they receive care appropriate to their level of need. The safeguarding training and supervision data are regularly populated and analysed. Any identified learnings, emerging trends and themes would then be integrated into the safeguarding training strategy and Trust policies and procedures.

**Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Board** have set their long-term ambitions in their [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) for every child in Bedford Borough to achieve the best start in life, to have access to early years provision and schools that are inclusive and support their health and wellbeing, and to ensure that every child has a successful transition to school. Within the timeframe of this strategy, their ambitions are for children and young people to: build strong parental relationships; have positive early educational experiences; understand how to stay mentally and physically healthy; and have their voices heard. The actions proposed to take to achieve these ambitions include:

- Continuing to implement the [Bedford Borough Children, Young People and their Families Plan 2022-2027](#).
- Promoting and supporting families to access the new Family Hubs at the Queens Park and Pinecones Children's Centres.
- Encouraging families to access the ['Best Start Bedford Borough'](#) information portal, to ensure the advice and guidance they receive is of a high quality.
- Increasing the number of schools in areas of deprivation that deliver school-wide physical activity and access to healthy food initiatives.
- Incorporating oral health promotion within relevant services for all children and young people at high risk of poor oral health.
- Communicating and engaging with families, ensuring they have access to relevant and timely information, particularly at the early years stage.
- Ensuring every child has access to an early year setting, experiences a smooth transition to school and has access to high quality and inclusive education that meets their needs.



**Bedford College** have updated Yourspace Online (Student Services website) with some self-help guides and useful contacts so that these are accessible both at college and externally. This has also proven helpful to parents who have wanted to seek support externally for their child and have been able to access the information. Early identification of safeguarding and wellbeing concerns continues to be good for the teams and this is leading to early intervention to ensure that things do not escalate, and support can be initiated and put in place such as Individual Support Plans and Support Management Plans.

## What has the impact been?

Parental feedback and case studies shared by Bedford Borough Council Early Help Service here are some examples of impact of their and partner's work.

- 'The support and care shown to us has been amazing. The Early Help professional has given me understanding and confidence to get through the last year. My children loved working within school with the Early Help professional, we have all become more knowledgeable and understanding of Franks condition. The Early Help professional has given me confidence to go out with the family. I am so grateful to have received this support.
- 'Ross's behaviour at home has been much more manageable. He started to verbalise how he feels instead of screaming, his siblings understand him better and give him time to himself after school. He joins the family when he is ready, and this has reduced the number of meltdowns and conflicts with other siblings. Early Help intervention has given me confidence and strength to keep going for the past year".
- **Holding TAF meetings was beneficial for everyone, as the father usually communicated with the nursery mother and was not always aware of decisions that had been made. The mother reported that it felt good to understand what was happening with her eldest daughter, especially with school choices. Input from the Early Years Advisor allowed practitioners and the mother know what support had been offered by other teams, i.e., speech and language, and this ensured that the parents completed tasks on time to ensure the daughter received the support being offered. The Early Years Advisor also provided support around school choices and supported the child with the transition to a new setting. Regular food parcels were a lifeline for one family providing food at times of crisis and permitted the family to focus on paying for utilities and keeping a room warm for the children. Through [Early Childhood Partnership & FACES](#), the children and young people have been supplied with clothes as they grow through the seasons, ensuring they are appropriately clothed for the weather. FACES provided a volunteer which the mother has found very supportive and enabled her to complete tasks she would normally struggle to do without another adult in the home to supervise the children.**
- Kane was in school every day for whole of the last term of school and completed 3 GCSE options. There were no longer safeguarding concerns for him and his whole attitude changed. Kane is planning his future, and his Nan was grateful for the support given and has built up brilliant relationships with the schools and knows in the future where to go if she needs help.
- Carly's school attendance has increased from 34% to 68%, she has built improved relationships with peers and has identified two staff members she trusts and seeks support from when required in school. Carly is receiving specific intervention in school to support the academic gaps created through severe absenteeism.

For more information please access [Early Help for Families](#) and [Best Start Bedford](#)



## Domestic Abuse

Children and young people who live in homes where domestic abuse (DA) is happening are greatly impacted in terms of their health, wellbeing and development. This is not just the children and young people who witness DA, it is all children living in the house who may hear the arguments, items being smashed and see the injuries or damage to the house the next day. Some children are also verbally or physically abused too and may try to intervene and get hurt. Other children and young people come to accept the behaviour as normal and behave in a similar way towards the non-abusive adult or grow up to be abusive in their own relationships.

DA work is led and governed by the [BBC Community Safety Partnership, Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership \(BDAP\)](#) and the Bedford Borough Local Domestic Abuse Board who have developed a [Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026.](#)

For Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Domestic abuse remains one of the single highest risk factors identified at point of contact and is a common feature in cases where there are other identified risk factors. With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people living in households where DA is happening are classed as victims in their own right due to the trauma that they experience. BBC work closely with the voluntary sector partners to ensure there is provision of support for victims and their children and they have re-commissioned additional play therapy and protective behaviours for children and young people who have experienced DA. BBC have re-commissioned a Resettlement Project to support families to secure accommodation when leaving an abusive relationship and provide flexible funding to ensure that the family's needs are met (where no other source of funding is available) and lessen the likelihood of returning to the perpetrator. There has been increased of their DA training offer and rolled out online bite size sessions to staff in Children's Services and are working with BBC Housing to ensure earlier identification of DA and enable them to offer appropriate support and guidance and make referrals to assist the family to seek help sooner. The monthly MARAC meetings consider safety planning for both adults and children who are victims of DA as well as looking at ways of addressing the perpetrator behaviour to reduce incidents both in terms of severity and frequency. Raising public awareness of DA is an important piece of work to ensure that those who experience it, or know of someone that is, can access help and support. BBC have increased our public engagement activities to help reach a wider audience within Bedford Borough.

In the last 12 months, 14.5% of Social Care contacts were for DA and of 1420 assessments completed, 535 (37.7%) had DA identified as a factor. This is further broken down to 142 children identified as the subject, 493 parent/carer identified as the subject and 42 where another person is identified as the subject. In some assessments, all 3 have been recorded as being identified as the subject which explains the person identified as the subject figure being higher than the number of assessments completed with DA as a factor. 47 sessions of 1-1 Protective Behaviour Work and 26 of 1-1 Play Therapy were taken up by children residing in refuges in Bedford. Whilst 218 children attended a variety of after school drop-in support sessions. An

8-week specialist sensory group was provided for children with SEND and this was attended by 4 children. Case studies were provided to show the impact of therapy on the children receiving it. In the last year, the Resettlement Project have started working with 141 adults who have needed support around leaving an abusive relationship and 120 children were identified to those adults. A high proportion of adults who are referred to the Resettlement Project have either diagnosed or are experiencing mental health issues. BBC have therefore commissioned the project to employ a mental health wellbeing worker to provide additional support to help the adult recover. This in turn will assist in having a positive impact on the relationship between the parent and child.

In the last year, 5 online bite size sessions around DA have been completed with staff in Children's Social Care. These have included understanding MARAC and DASH risk assessments, Jane Monkton Smith's Domestic Abuse Homicide Timeline and risk assessment, recognising DA & spotting the signs, working with perpetrators of DA and reframing the narrative when working with non-abusive parent. On average 30 staff have attended each of these sessions. The Assessment Team Manager consistently attends MARAC which enables better information sharing, improved assessment of risk and swifter escalation to statutory assessment and intervention where required. 319 cases heard at MARAC and of those cases, there were 425 children identified within the family. These figures do not reflect how many were living in the household, and in the past 3 months BBC have started to record this also to give a more accurate picture.

The Chrysalis Centre runs a variety of programmes for perpetrators rather than one size fits all. These include an Early Intervention programme, a standard to medium risk programme and a high-risk programme, all of which are available as group work or 1-1. There is a programme for child to parent abuse, and an adult child to parent abuse as well as For Baby's Sake which is for the whole family from pre-birth until the child is 2. As well as addressing the harmful behaviour, the centre also assesses the client's needs in relation to drugs, alcohol and mental health and make referrals for support where needed, to provide a more holistic approach to gaining compliance and retention to the service. These approaches will be reviewed by a research team to establish the effectiveness of programmes and gaps in service for future commissioning.

BBC have increased our reach of support hubs within the community to include GP surgeries, Libraries, Schools, Children's Centres and Family Hubs, Leisure Centres, and businesses within the Borough. This means that anyone who is concerned about DA can go into any one of these places that has a support hub sticker on display and use the phone or internet or look at leaflets in a safe environment and report the abuse or ring one of our local services to ask for support. BBC have a presence at major events within Bedford which has included the Kite Festival and organised public events such as our County wide campaign Too Many Names - reading out all of the names of women who have been killed by current or former partners in the past year.

**Early Help** undertake DASH assessments completed as part of visits when there is an identified risk of domestic abuse disclosed or suspected. These are used to support referral to MARACs and for safeguarding referrals to the local authority social care, early help and to support ongoing universal support for children, young people and families. Their commissioning of DA services funds Victim Support to recruit IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) and there is an embedded IDVA in Housing with plans to recruit a further embedded IDVA in Children's Services. In

commissioning Relate this allows children, young people and families to access 1 to 1 and family counselling services. This service is well used with good outcomes for those who access the counselling. Children and young people who have been impacted by domestic abuse can also access play therapy.

**CCS** have developed and launched a Think Whole Family Domestic Abuse policy to all staff in accordance with best practice guidance from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Reducing parental conflict training is being promoted and attended by staff in addition to other safeguarding training packages. Delivery of a Think Whole Family domestic abuse level 3 training package has been delivered throughout the year as a refresher package for both adults and children. MARAC information is provided as requested and participation in MARAC process is actively undertaken. Policy is in place and reviewed alongside the reviewed and updated policy Supporting staff who are experiencing domestic abuse in their own lives. For Baby's Sake – are presenting at Learning Forum and now have a referral form for the service that is available to Bedfordshire and Luton. There are links to Bedfordshire's Domestic Abuse webpage on their electronic recording system to allow easy access to the DASH risk assessment.

### ***Tanya and Tabi's Story***

**A joint working request was received requesting support for parenting as a first-time mum, routines, isolation due to having fled Domestic Abuse (DA) & emotional wellbeing support. Tanya was expecting her first baby and initially was living in a safe house. Following the birth of Tabi, they were relocated to Mother & Baby Unit. Tanya has a history of drug use, but nothing recent. previous DA relationships, however, Tanya was not in a current relationship and was being supported by the perinatal mental health team as she had Post Traumatic Stress disorder. A Psychological assessment was completed alongside a parenting assessment at the mother and baby unit. Tabi is a child looked after (CLA). Tanya agreed to complete [Parents as First teachers](#) (PAFT) 1:1 and other activities and as she progressed positively through her parenting assessment, she was allowed to leave the unit unattended. Regular CLA meetings highlighted how well Tanya was progressing and meeting Tabi's needs. DA support was requested, and Tanya attend the My Choice programme virtually. Tanya completed a childcare course whilst PAFT sessions were being completed and used this learning to support Tabi's development and their bond. Having successfully passed her parenting assessment housing would not offer a home to the family until she was homeless, and they were moved to temporary accommodation which came with its own challenges such as limited space and no cooking facilities. A visiting matrix with practitioners was developed to support the family and monitor the impact of this move on Tanya and Tabi. The family then moved to a permanent flat and were given the necessary equipment etc. Tanya feels empowered to make decisions to live her life independently and how to care for Tabi and meet his needs.**

**Bedfordshire Hospitals** has two IDVAs in place and one Victim Support IDVA on each site. Domestic abuse Training is available in various forms. This can be completed as a standalone training package online, face to face or via generic safeguarding training at all levels. The Trusts safeguarding teams have individuals trained whom complete risk assessments and protection planning with individuals suffering from Domestic Abuse. In addition to this staff are also trained on how to respond to Domestic Abuse with certain areas such as Maternity and the Emergency Department receiving a higher level of training due to increased numbers of Domestic Abuse cases seen in those areas. Domestic Violence packs are readily available in all clinical areas. These packs are to support staff with materials/ risk assessments and contact numbers etc. they may require when dealing with a case. These packs also include fact sheets/ supportive advice for staff on how a victim can stay safe within a domestic abuse relationship or if they chose to leave relationship. In addition to this, the Trust commissions the use of Lip Balms that are stocked in various areas of the hospital such as the safeguarding office, A&E, Maternity and paediatrics. These Lip Balms have the number of the National Domestic Abuse Helpline secretly embedded into the bar code of the product and are given to victims that may return to an area whereby they are suffering from Domestic Abuse. The team are also in receipt of mobile phones whereby one can be given to a victim fleeing from abuse as a mode of maintaining contact with professionals and family etc. The Trust has a DA Clinic available each week where an appointment can be made with the individuals consent by the treating professionals for them to return to hospital. During this appointment and if safe to so, they would be met with a safeguarding professional, a clinician and IDVA (if consent gained). A full assessment/ review can take place with appropriate risk assessments and onwards referrals completed.

**Bedfordshire Police** Op Encompass has been in place in Bedford Borough since February 2022 and has meant that schools are getting timely notification of children and young people subjected to DA or have been missing in the previous 24 hours. Children and young people in these circumstances have often experienced some level of trauma so this early reporting to schools is imperative to their emotional wellbeing and mental health. The feedback from schools in respect of Op Encompass has proven to be successful. It has enabled schools to implement strategies to help the child concerned, providing support, and understanding thus having a positive impact of their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Weekly meetings within the Bedford Borough IFD have set up a process for streamlining DA incidents with agreed thresholds being reviewed. Legislation has changed the status of child witnesses of DA, who are now deemed as victims and are now treated as victims. Funding received for onward referrals for Children, young people and adults agreed for a 3-year period will see referral pathways for children and young people who are victims or witnesses of DA, sexual abuse or other emotional of physical abuse through working in partnership with **EMBRACE**. As part of the work around victim engagement there are clear work streams around engagement with schools through 'reading time' and feedback loops with children, young people and vulnerable adults captured and collated. Regular audits around investigations involving children and young people take place. The Police now have a victim and witnesses engagement board which enables the tracking of work around the most vulnerable but also an ability to collate data around children and young people at the scenes of DA jobs.



**Bedford College** have worked with [Luton All Women's Centre](#) to deliver training around domestic violence, honour-based violence and violence against women and girls. They have also undertaken train the trainer on public sexual harassment to then deliver these sessions to students across the Bedfordshire group.

**Bedfordshire Luton, and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)** provided to GP's during their safeguarding training with sessions about recognising and dealing with families undergoing DA. Published case examples are used to explore the complex issues within DA situations such as same sex relationships. Safe spaces - the ICB continues to support the GP safe space scheme started during Covid19. This support is embedded within safeguarding training and is offered on a 121 basis when required.

### ***What has the impact been?***

- The Police & Crime Commissioners of Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire were successful in securing government grant funding to implement a perpetrator hub – The Chrysalis Centre. This Centre takes a holistic approach to perpetrators of DA.
- Feedback from the Cluster Groups is that [Op Encompass](#) is useful for individual pupils. There has been a reported increase in Op Encompass notifications and DA incidents, possibly down to increased use of system. Schools have reported very positively and valued, working well with information shared in a timely manner re Op Encompass. They agreed that it is a much better than the previous D.A.N.S scheme.
- Initiatives like Bedford Hospitals DA Clinic available give victims of DA a safe where appropriate opportunity to disclose and discuss any concerns.
- MARAC identifies the number of children identified in the case they hear, and Children's Services are regular attendees at the MARAC so can address any ongoing safeguarding concerns for the children. Their attendance enables better information sharing, improved assessment of risk and swifter escalation to statutory assessment and intervention where required.
- BBC Children's Services and Housing have been working more closely together to ensure earlier identification of DA and enable them to offer appropriate support and guidance and make referrals to assist the family to seek help sooner and prevent homelessness.
- BBC Early Help service in commissioning Relate to offer children, young people and families to access 1 to 1 and family counselling services and play therapy has meant that that this service is well used with good outcomes for those who access the counselling.

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



## Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

**East London Foundation Trust (ELFT)** provides community health, mental health and primary care services to a population of around a 1.8 million people including Bedford Borough and their vision is to make a positive difference in people's lives. From a safeguarding perspective ELFT work hard to embed a ['Think Family'](#) response. The Think Family approach is actively being promoted during all planned and ad hoc safeguarding supervision, safeguarding training and quarterly safeguarding newsletter. Safeguarding children, young people and adults is not done in isolation, and they work

collaboratively and restoratively with partner agencies to 'Think Family' and protect all those at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. ELFT promote safe transition from childhood to adulthood, to ensure that individuals are supported and safeguarded from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. ELFT's Safeguarding team has a yearly audit cycle, and learnings, findings and action plans are shared within the Trust Safeguarding Committee and highlighted in the department's annual report. The audit themes included: professional practice, supervision and training evaluation. ELFT participates to the partnership audit and the Section 11 audit when required.

Mind BLMK & ELFT CAMHS opened a Young Person's Sanctuary in Bedford on 15th May 2023. [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 held to shape a new 24-hour extended mental health crisis care for young adults across Bedfordshire and Luton.

[The Evergreen](#) facility was opened during February 2023; this Tier 4 inpatient child and adolescent mental health unit consists of 8 general adolescent beds. The service provides specialist, short-term care for children and young people aged 13-17 with severe or complex mental health difficulties. Young people helped ELFT plan the ethos of the unit, recruit the staff and think about how they will deliver the best care to these children and young people and the name of the unit.

At [Pathway 2 Recovery \(P2R\)](#) have been promoting ['a day in the life' practice tools](#) to understand more appropriately any ongoing concerns. For any specific case review and serious incident learnings if deemed appropriate a reflective session will be offered to the targeted team. For example: Reflective sessions were offered on May/June 23 to a Pan Bed Perinatal Team, CAMHS and other teams following a Bedford Serious Incident (Zara) and the learning were shared.

Safeguarding advice, support and guidance for trust staff has been supported by the wider safeguarding team members as necessary. Any emerging safeguarding themes or trends, the safeguarding team will share with the wider professional network. Safeguarding training and supervision data are regularly populated and analysed. Any identified learnings, emerging trends and themes would then be integrated into the safeguarding training strategy and Trust policies and procedures. Practitioners are encouraged to access the Integrated Front Door and or ELFT safeguarding team for any professional discussions before a referral is submitted, which helps in formulating concerns and actions.

There are a growing number of ways young people can access self-help and online support using a range of self-help apps such as [REFLECT](#) or [Lumi Nova](#). With the launch of the [CAMHS Discovery College \(DiSCO\)](#) an educational project, focused on improving young people's wellbeing. DiSCO welcomes any young person aged 13 to 18-years-old living in Bedford Borough to join free workshops held online and face-to-face to support them to explore their potential, learn new skills and flourish within their community. All the workshops are co-produced in a culturally sensitive way with young people or volunteers. to promote resilience within local communities.

P2R jointly deliver an accredited programme [MPACT \(Moving Parents and Children together\)](#) twice a year with [Aquarius \(YP drug and alcohol\)](#). Part of P2R referral process is to check Rio (ELFT database) to record on Carepath if the new client is also known to Mental Health teams – Keyworkers at Path to Recovery have access to Rio and are able to see all records – should further information be required about the Adult or any children or young people in the family home.

ELFT has a Safeguarding Supervision policy in place and the safeguarding team offers team specific 3 monthly group supervision for all children facing service, 1:1 ad hoc safeguarding supervision for all staff and every 4 monthly joint children and adult supervision for non-children facing services.



**Cambridgeshire Community Services** 0-19 service continues to offer confidential texting service called [ChatHealth](#) for children and young people in school years 7-13, and [Parentline](#) for parents with children of any age. Perinatal mental health pathway has specialist health visitors in post to support this pathway and to support other frontline staff which is continuing to be developed. IHV emotional wellbeing training has been offered across the CCS services. [Anxiety focused Padlet for teenagers](#) being offered as a link, transfer in letters, [ChatHealth](#) and via QR codes on posters in schools. CCS practitioners are signposted to make referrals to 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations such as [CHUMs](#). The school nursing team offer support to children and young people with emerging emotional health needs. The following feedback is from young people on the support from the school nursing team ***'I had contacted the school nurse once and she straight away started the ball rolling and helped with all the issues.' 'I feel like they actually care and are taking time to listen to you and your feelings'.***

## *Lilly's Case Study*

Becky (mother) had had three children removed from her care previously and she was now in a relationship with Eddie and their had a baby called Lilly. A referral was made to the Children Centre for parenting support and to complete the Parents as first teachers (PAFT) programme. Becky's other children are in care or with other members of her family and she has little contact with them. Due to this history Lilly was placed on a CIN plan once Becky found out she was pregnant, and this was Eddie's first time as a father. Eddie suffered with anxiety/depression and struggled to leave the house due to these issues which could affect his mood, he was being supported separately for this. Practitioners worked closely together, and CIN meetings were held regularly. The Health Visitor worked closely with the parents due to the health needs of Lilly. The PAFT programme was completed, and the parents engaged well with the course. Within each session it was noticed that Eddie's mood would sometimes drop but he was open to discuss this and stated he had good and bad days. Becky would attend stay and play sessions weekly with Lilly, but Eddie found this too much, so maternal grandmother would often attend with Becky. The family were provided with equipment and clothing for Lilly as she grew older and supported in receiving child benefit. The parents developed a better understanding of Lilly's development over the months and Eddie benefited and enjoyed learning new skills that he knew would benefit Lilly. The parents had a good attachment with Lilly and were on board together with Lilly's routine and worked well as a team. The family achieved all outcomes on the CIN plan, and a plan is no longer in place. Becky has become more confident since attending stay and plays with Lilly and the parents ask for support if needed and implement the strategies given.

**Bedfordshire Hospitals** report that where children/young people present to their Emergency Department with an acute mental health issue, they will all have a CAMHS assessment. Depending on the risk assessment, a child/young person will be either discharged from the department and followed up in 7 days, or admitted if further assessment or medical treatment is required. The Safeguarding Team tries to engage the child/young person especially for those that are complex, or frequent attenders and build a rapport with them. CAMHS and the safeguarding children team/Paediatrics have a good working relationship and regularly review cases whereby learning has been identified. In addition, the paediatric team hold a daily meeting with CAMHS to discuss children and young people who are admitted and those that may present as an admission. This supports a pathway to ensure that the professional teams have a greater understanding of care planning and in turn achieves better outcomes. These meetings include those aged 16-18 in adult areas who the ward may be able to support. The emotional wellbeing of children/young people via case scenarios are discussed in Level 3 Safeguarding Children's Training. The trainers also link mental health scenarios to possible exploitation and remind staff that many children and young people attend hospital with suicidal ideation, self-harm or overdose because of trauma. The Hospitals Perinatal Mental Health Team provides regular perinatal mental health study days aid the understanding of how mental health issues can impact parenting and pregnancy. It is embedded into training that various parental issues may affect their parenting capacity and that mental health may be an area where this can happen. The "Think Family" approach is embedded into practice. If an adult attends/is admitted into hospital due to a mental health crisis, they will be asked if they have dependent children and young people and what support they have from family and services. Information sharing forms will also be sent to the safeguarding team, and a CSC referral will be made, if necessary, by the appropriate professionals. Women where

perinatal mental health concerns have been identified during pregnancy are offered a referral to the perinatal mental health team for ongoing support. The perinatal mental health midwives support with all pregnant women known to have mental health concerns. Women also have access to the [OCEAN service](#). This supports emotional and psychological support for those that have suffered pregnancy/birth trauma or loss. Women do not have to be under maternity services to engage in this service.

**BLMK ICB** commissions Mental Health Services, from East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) for both adult and children's services. BLMK ICB 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 & Emotional Wellbeing Group which provides the opportunity for key stakeholders to understand developments in relation to these issues. 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 Children's or Young People's Mental Health unit. In partnership with Caraline Eating Disorder service and Mental Health School Teams the ICB are 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. There is also a national target to support access – ensuring swift access to evidence-based treatment as soon as an eating disorder is suspected, and a digitisation workstream that supports this ambition. BLMK ICB supported the development of a web based Mental Health & Well Being hub within the Local Offer. BLMK ICB and ELFT have led a series of workshops across the system entitled [“Using ‘I Thrive’](#) to improve their mental health system for Children and Young People in Bedfordshire & Luton” and this new digital service is available to young people in Bedford Borough. In February 2023, a new digital text messaging service was launched for children and young people in Bedford Borough who can text [REFLECT](#) to 85258 if they need advice or support. The service is free and confidential and delivered in partnership with [Shout](#). This change of digital service was completed following a review of Kooth provision.

**Bedford College** have continued to ensure that all key staff are trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid and Level 2 Safeguarding as they are the key staff in working directly with student. They continue to work with CAMHS, Bedfordshire Wellbeing Services and now the Anna Freud Centre to support early intervention in students with mental health difficulties and low mood. The CAMHS Provision will be increasing to fortnightly, and this support has meant that rather than initial assessments being completed off-site, the students are able to see the Practitioner at College which is often their safe place. Mental Health is the main presenting issue at the College so they secured 2-year funding from Connolly Foundation to employ two Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioners who have been able to offer support where students may not have wanted to access counselling and may not have met thresholds for external agencies. They offer more bespoke group works on Mental health topics such as managing anxiety and resilience. The team has also been able to offer guided self-help on low mood and confidence. There have been 68 referrals in the



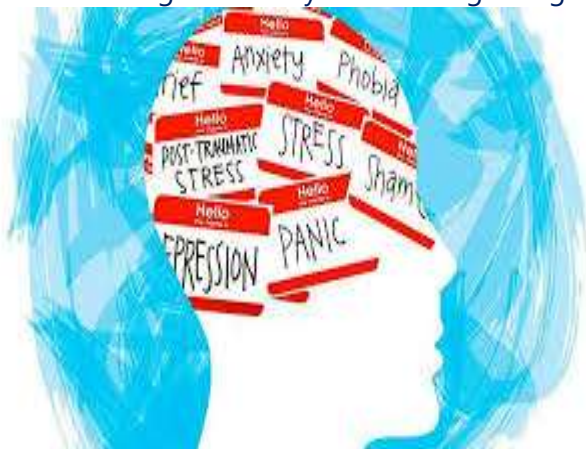
summer term since they have started in post and 168 interventions took place, this funding was specifically aimed at supporting learners with mental health difficulties following the pandemic.

Working with St Giles Trust on a project where one of their team is based at the Sixth Form two days a week offering a mentoring programme. In addition to the 1:1 support St Giles can offer engagement with parents via webinars, training sessions for staff, 5 assemblies to reach wider student body and targeted group work sessions. This has been supported by Public Health and Bedford Borough Council. Following the tragic death of 2 students in 2021-22 (unrelated), the College worked with several external agencies to deliver a successful Health and Wellbeing Roadshow at Bedford College, Shuttleworth College and Bedford Sixth Form. Student engagement was high, and talks were also delivered on a range of mental health topics. 30% of the referrals made to safeguarding related to mental health, this is lower than the previous year by 10% and this is the impact of the Mental Health support they have in place and the effective use of Support Management Plans.

Snapshot surveys and 1st impression, Spring surveys are carried out to gather students views on safeguarding and feeling safe. Through the counselling and Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioners, the team work on supporting young people with either guided self-help or counselling. This early intervention is aimed at supporting students to manage their emotions as mental health concerns is the main presenting issue for safeguarding concerns. The College gather feedback from students accessing counselling intervention however this is not mandatory. The CORE 10 score is a standard questionnaire covering a range of common mental health issues and one is done at assessment and where possible on the final session. Of those completed 85% showed a reduction in the CORE score meaning that things are feeling better. 12% were the same and 9% slightly increased. Through the work that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioners do, they gather feedback from both group and 1:1 intervention. To measure impact, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale has been utilised to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing before and after interventions. 86% of learners reported low wellbeing before intervention with 14% reporting moderate wellbeing. After intervention there was a 53% decline in those reporting low wellbeing (33%) to moderate wellbeing (67%). 89% of students who completed wellbeing scale saw a meaningful positive change with only 5.6% seeing a negative change. It has also been noted that males saw the biggest change in their mean score which on

average increased by 12.67 in comparison to females who saw it increase by 10.34. A Health and Wellbeing Roadshow took place in November 2022 with the support of CAMHS and Public Health and the College also offered a mixture of fairs and talks to students with student engagement being very high.

**Bedford Borough Public Health** contribute to the financial envelope to commission **Shout** to deliver online emotional support to all children and young people. The impact of this is still in its infancy but has a review process built in to understand this. The team provide a response to cases in the event of a suspected suicide of a young person which through feedback from partners has shown to provide excellent and valuable support. It has also contributed to more support being offered to settings from an early intervention perspective. They ensure children and young people



in education and beyond have a good understanding of Mental Health support available to them and continue to provide this at key pressure points of the year. Public Health provide settings with health protection infection control information, which is well received, and this supports settings to navigate the often-confusing information available to them in a timely manner. All education settings have a policy to guide them through the help and support available should a suspected suicide occur within their setting. Public Health will co-ordinate all support as per the pathway and will ensure that all services work collaboratively at the time and moving forward. This also includes ensuring that any learning is always cascaded through the prevention agenda to ensure that every possible aspect of early intervention is embedded into services and settings to prevent any further deaths. Public Health have commissioned the St Giles Trust to deliver a bespoke project in settings to provide support on a group or individual basis to young people under 20 years of age resident in or attending an educational setting. This is to help young people who are struggling to engage positively with their educational placement within 6th form aged settings and to ensure that they have individual support from an experienced worker to support them.

**Bedfordshire Police** Public Protection Unit (PPU) Hub when making referrals ensure they provide information regarding concerns for a child, and information held, in respect of a child's emotional wellbeing and mental health is captured by front line staff and then conveyed in the referral process. Internal process change has allowed for the sharing of captured video footage with partners for a better understanding of the risks to the young child. The Police have supported events alongside a suicide prevention charity in Bedfordshire and have undertaken projects with the Samaritans school service and PAPRYUS (Prevention of Young Suicide).

**CHUMS** provides a universal offer of workshops, groups and 1-1 support for young people and their families for mild to moderate emotional wellbeing needs across Bedford Borough. Over the last year CHUMS has worked very closely with the CAMHS schools' team and the MHSTs (Mental Health Support Teams) to endeavour to move towards parity of early intervention mental health support across schools by identifying schools that may not have a specified MHST offer. Whilst CHUMS continues to offer support to children/young people in any school in the borough, they have established links with identified schools to help them understand the CHUMS offer by discussing what kinds of presenting need they might work with, at what level and how they can refer e.g. they have created a school referral process for anxiety groups, and provide training for school staff about this offer. This allows a space where they can also ask any questions and have discussions about what the early signs of need might be. They provide reminders to these schools of their workshop timetable and of any upcoming groups that they may wish to refer into. Their child wellbeing practitioners have also attended ad hoc school assemblies or set up stalls at open days for staff and families to come and chat with them.



## What has the impact been?

- The development of the Evergreen unit is in direct response to the gap in provision for specialist, short-term care for young people aged 13-17 who are experiencing complex mental health difficulties that cannot be managed in the community. Its development was completed in partnership with service users and carers, who chose the name 'Evergreen' for the unit.
- Early Help have a robust partnership with CAMHS and have funded an embedded CAMHS worker in the service. Key Early Help Staff have regular meetings with CAMHS professionals and attend the weekly SPOA meeting to discuss cases and interventions.
- The Early Help Service is developing its "in house" early intervention mental health capacity by accessing Health Education Funding and recruiting two Children's Wellbeing Practitioners.
- Excellent evidence of Public Health led support for both families and practitioners when a child or young person has taken or tried to take their own life. Learning from these incidents is shared with partners to address any gaps in process or services.

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

## Safeguarding children in the community

### Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation

Partners have continued to work together to ensure that children/young people in Bedford Borough and across Pan Bedfordshire are protected from extra-familial harm and reduce episodes of missing. The contextual safeguarding approach promotes thorough assessments and safety plans around children/ 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, youth worker outreach, visits to premises, and perpetrators of exploitation served with Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN), along with warning notices and convictions for Modern Day Slavery offences. Exploitation is addressed in the [Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response and Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Strategy](#) which uses a whole systems approach to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation. A child friendly version of this document is in development.

**Emergency Department Navigator Service** is in place in Bedford Hospital to support young people aged 12-25 presenting at hospitals with injuries and emergencies arising from involvement in violence and criminal



exploitation, including gangs and county lines and help them to move away from this activity. The service will aim to reduce presentations at emergency department services for violence/exploitation related issues, reduce involvement with the criminal justice system and encourage positive engagement with other services. The service will use a trauma informed approach that will involve building a relationship of trust, beginning in the 'reachable moment' and continuing until the young person has reached sufficient stability, confidence and motivation to engage fully with other services (statutory and voluntary sector) that can provide further support. The length of engagement with each young person will vary, depending on the complexity of their needs.

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation Communications group** focus is on a wide range of exploitation, but a central theme will be those exploitative practices linked to organised crime, such as county lines and other forms of exploitation linked to drug dealing, modern slavery, gangs, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. **Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation (BAVEX)** use a wide range of innovative and well-planned interventions to try and improve the response to these issues, with a view to increasing awareness and resilience in our wider community, improving knowledge among frontline practitioners, as well as targeting interventions at potential victims and those communities most at risk to encourage them to come forward. The group has created a cohesive and overarching brand to badge all activity in this area, resulting in a more coherent and joined-up message being presented to both professionals and the public. Tackling exploitation is identified as a priority in all three of the counties. The plan is led by the Pan Beds Exploitation Communication Group who meet on a 6-week basis and are overseen strategically by the Pan Beds Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group on a quarterly basis, and the Pan Beds Serious Harm Board.



**Bedfordshire Police** have expanded the use of Operation Encompass to capture information on missing children and young people and share with the relevant school to ensure appropriate support and keep track and monitor risk of exploitation. There are meetings where Vulnerable children and young people are discussed these include, Missing, Single Points of Contact (SPOC), County Lines Silver Group and contextual safeguarding, which are attended by partners. The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) SPOC document is circulated to all analysts working on County Lines/CSE to help establish where there are crossovers and flag up anyone falling through the gaps. The Missing Team complete Athena records for dedicated SPOC work with individual children/young people exposed to child exploitation (CE) and increased missing events. The Missing team also have a dedicated SPOC for each residential placement for children and young people which aids better partnership working through a greater understanding of roles and responsibilities. Continued training is taking place to ensure officers are correctly identifying all types of CE risks to children/young people and the appropriate markers are completed. The CSE Detective Sergeant completes a review of all markers to ensure they are applied correctly, and information has been shared with partners. The Police review and monitor the **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** process to enable the tracking and capture of all NRM applications and assurance they are dealt with in a multi-agency manner through the SPOC and Child Exploitation Meetings (CEM). The Police **Op Makesafe** programme is embedded within the working of the CSE Disruption Team managed by CSE Co-Ordinator who is also a member of the regional and national working group. Training has been provided to hoteliers, licensed Taxi companies and local shops raising



awareness of exploitation. Training is being provided to all frontline police officers when stop and searching children and young people with the focus on Bedfordshire Police have embedded the Voice of the Child using the AWARE principles - **Appearance - Words - Activity - Relationship and Dynamics – Environment**. These principles are a guide of things to be aware of identifying small details to add to the bigger picture. This is not only used in investigations but in every interaction with a child. [Op Innerste](#) is now embedded within Beds Police and managed through the Missing Person Team. Also embedded is an unaccompanied migrant children procedure and provided support for joint working with the Roads Policing Unit for operations at Toddington Services. Bedfordshire are looking to establish a Mini Mace (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting) which will enhance multiagency efforts to safeguard children and young people from exploitation and violence. Mini MACE is an information and intelligence sharing meeting between the Police, Children's Services and support services which meets three times a week. All information, intelligence and concerns about children and young people missing and at risk of

exploitation are channelled to the meeting by the Police. They would coordinate timely and proportionate responses to vulnerable children and young people including signposting active cases to lead practitioners, and ensuring referrals to children's services are made where there is known or suspected significant harm. The information shared in this meeting will be children and young people who are identified as at risk of Exploitation/subject to Exploitation & Children who are reported missing. The Police Missing team conduct return home interviews and prevention interviews for missing people. Processes have been developed to acquire learning from incidents involving children and young people who are high risk and gone missing, through a structured de-brief. Operation Roster is a good example of this when a vulnerable young person linked to an Organised Crime Group (OCG) was criminally exploited and was coerced to run away from home to pay off a drugs debt. Good work, early engagement and partnership working located the vulnerable young person in Lincolnshire with two people arrested and the victim safeguarded. There have been no repeat episodes with this young person who is now safely attending college.

**Bedford Borough 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 CSE 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, young people and families to provide support and high rates of completion of return home interview. Where children and young people are reported missing, there is a collaborative response in terms of understanding the risk for that child and safety planning. A range of services are available to support children/parents, from statutory services to referrals to funded/voluntary programmes available in the community. Single Point of Contact (SPOC) meetings take place monthly which look at the most frequent and highest risk missing children and young people in Bedford Borough. Service providers think collaboratively as to how we can best support each child and their family to reduce

the risk and disrupt future missing episodes. A monthly contextual safeguarding meeting takes place where a range of practitioners look at hot spots in the community that could benefit from additional support. This could include solutions such as increased lighting, cameras, visits from the TREE project, increased community police presence etc. Police will support with a range of disruption techniques such as CAWNS, property closure notices etc. The Contextual Safeguarding group will also look at intelligence and reports of cuckooing in specific addresses and areas, or anti-social behaviour and put in place disruption plans to make these areas safer. Ensuring that National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals are made for those children and young people believed to be a victim of exploitation which offers an extra level of protection. Where children, young people and their families are at risk of violence/repercussions, safety plans are out in place. This includes markers on properties (to ensure priority response if emergency call made), briefing to CCTV team, briefed to community policing and increased patrols. Personal alarms are made available for young people, provided by community safety and have been provided in particular to young people at risk of CSE.

**BLMK ICB** is actively involved in the workstreams in relation to contextual Safeguarding & Exploitation and has an identified lead 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.

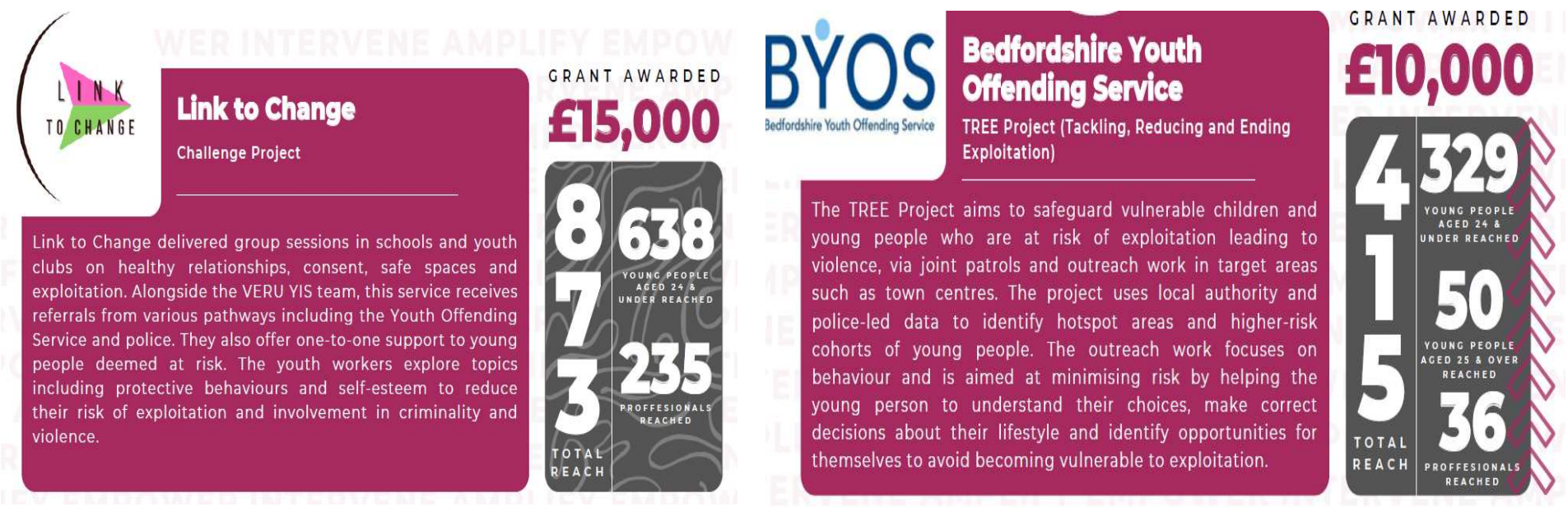
**CCS** delivery and development of a Think Whole Family CSE package in-house training. Delivered jointly by their child & adult Safeguarding teams. CCS has two youth partnership specialist school nurses and they input into several meetings. Their role is to identify any current or unidentified health needs. Links on their clinical recording system to the exploitation tool kit is readily available to their practitioners and has also been added to the safeguarding Padlet and continues to be spoken about in training and supervision.

**Bedford College** have ensured that staff in Estates and Safeguarding including the Principal at Bedford have undertaken awareness on how to submit [Multi-Agency information submission forms](#) to the Police through the Adolescent Response Team and the college will be working further to roll this out to more key staff, The importance of information sharing and it being everyone's responsibility was stressed. A campus security group was set up in the last academic year to share intelligence and ensure that information sharing was taking place. This consisted of the Senior management team, Estates, Health and Safety and Safeguarding with the key objective of the group to keep the campus safe and share information. Due to concerns around gang associations and drugs, the group have worked with the Police Education and Diversion team in delivering awareness sessions on Knife crime and held an unannounced knife arch at college. The College recognises that being in the centre of Bedford and the largest hub in Bedford for 16 -19-year-old students that they carry out a physical security review which highlighted some issues. Work has taken place to ensure any blind spots have been removed by moving signage or reducing shrubbery. In addition, the upgrade to the Tower block has meant a new entrance from the river with ID card access required to enter the site. Further work on increasing the height of fencing is currently being carried out



at the Cauldwell Street campus. They have also secured 3 mobile knife arches so that they are able to run future knife arch events more frequently and have also linked in with the [VERU](#) (Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit), [iCASH](#) and [Link to change](#) to arrange more regular drop ins to promote awareness and early help.

[Link to Change](#) held their first ever two-day Youth Empowerment Event, which allowed them to witness the incredible power of young voices and the spark of creativity. From music production to arts and crafts to sharing input on current issues, the children and young people were able to use their voices to participate freely without judgement. As part of March’s National Exploitation Awareness Day, the group created a helping hands canvas which served as a platform for team members to express their commitments to safeguarding young people from exploitation.



## **Katie's Story**

**On Katie's initial visit with Link to Change the practitioner explained their role in detail and talked about confidentiality and consent. At the beginning of the 1 2 1 session Katie was reluctant to engage and it took time to build a rapport and trust. Katie had little understanding of exploitation and the risks around her. She spent time talking with her practitioner about topics including self-esteem, consent and healthy relationships. Katie continues to engage positively with Link to Change, and in the last six months has shown huge improvements across a range of aspects, including home, life, education and behaviour. Katie has been closed by social care and is to be reviewed in three months by her allocated social worker. There has been no further missing episodes or sightings since being referred to Link to Change, and Katie continues to engage very well with both social care and Link to Change.**

Link to Change's BBC Children in Need Boys and Young Men project, focuses on supporting those who are victims of Child Exploitation. The project is designed to help boys/young men develop the awareness, skills and confidence, to empower them to make safe and healthy choices. The boys/young men engaged in positive diversion activities to increase their wellbeing and assist them in living a life free from exploitation. Many of the boys and young men supported through this project are not in full time education and were experiencing concerns around their mental wellbeing. They have been disadvantaged due to their social environment, economic background, family dynamics and/or other influencing factors. Despite this Link to Change have seen positive behaviour changes, increased engagement with other services and increased educational aspirations, improved family relations, reduced missing episodes and offending behaviour. Many of the boys and young men supported have worked to actively withdraw from negative peer influences and sought pathways to change their environment for the better.

## **Lewis's Story**

**Lewis was a frequently missing young person with a history of self-harm and substance misuse. It was feared that due to his vulnerabilities that he was being sexually exploited by older men and that his friendship circle was toxic. At the time of closure by Link to Change Lewis was no longer going missing, was receiving support from CAMHS and the local substance misuse team. Lewis also enrolled in college and is living semi-independently. Link to Change continue to have regular contact with Lewis as an active member of their participation group.**

**Bedford Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** brings together agencies concerned with tackling and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Bedford Borough. The CSP's key actions are detailed in the [\*\*2024-27 Community Safety Partnership Plan\*\*](#) (PDF). The Partnership's priority work areas, are set out in the recent crime and disorder [\*\*Strategic Assessment 2023\*\*](#).

## What has the impact been?

- Increase in [Pan Beds Multi Agency Information Submission Forms](#) when campaigns & training have been delivered.
- Facebook advertising targeted into 'hotspot' areas for Cannabis factories led to an increase in [Pan Beds Multi Agency Information Submission Forms](#) on cannabis related crime.
- Increase in the use of the [Pan Beds Child Exploitation Tool](#).
- [VERU website](#) continues to perform above average with their [Just Drop It campaign](#) being the most visited page.
- [BAVEX website](#) continues to be utilised by Practitioners across Bedfordshire.
- Increase in domestic abuse and wider Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG) reports potentially linked to the 16 Days of Action campaign as well as their wider comms work around male violence against women and girls.
- A significant focus on male violence against women and girls, including several high-profile court cases, activity in support of 16 days of action.
- 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.
- Contextual Safeguarding Training evaluation '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 Practitioner.



For more information please access [Bedford Borough Council](#) or [BAVEX](#) or [Bedfordshire VERU](#)

## Safeguarding Education.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group was created as an outcome of Department of Education funding to develop Education as the fourth safeguarding partner. A Project Group developed and presented their Strategy and accompanying report to the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children's Services Group in September 2022 and the first meeting of the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group took place in November 2022. The group has supported and influenced the safeguarding agenda from Cluster groups sitting under the DSL Forums up to a strategic level within the BBSCP. 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 building a shared understanding of priorities. The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group will actively work with the three Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPs) 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. The work of this group is recognised as important by all partners as education settings spend the most time of all partner agencies with children and young people. The group initially met twice a term for themed meetings based on emerging local concerns, or direct requests from education. The groups first theme looked at Sexual Harms following a wave of concerns around Andrew Tate, misogyny and 'banter'. Questions are agreed by the group and taken back to local cluster meetings via the Cluster Leads. There is greater representation from education across all aspects of the BBSCP and mechanisms exist to ensure effective communication to share messages both from and into the partnership. Membership reflects a variety of sectors including primary, secondary, special, further and independent education.



**Bedford Borough Council** have been undertaking work around being ready for school which needs everyone to work together and involve the child. Families, private, voluntary or independent schools, childminders and schools to support the child to be ready for the transition to school. In Bedford Borough they have encompassed the (UNICEF) model for readiness for school ensuring all children get the best start and successful transitions can support this. The United Nations World Fit for Children (WFFC) reinforces the importance of ***"A good start in life, in a nurturing and safe environment that enables children to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn"***. Smooth transitions within the Early Years depend on a commitment from all professionals involved to develop positive communication relationships. Imperative was to ensure that we heard and respected parents "views, wishes and feelings". Therefore, parent and child voice is captured and celebrated within their



resources which can be found at this [link](#). Following the success of the [Autumn 2023 Behaviour, Learning and Inclusion Support Strategy \(BLISS\)](#) week Bedford Borough Council Behaviour Strategy Group delivered a Spring 2024 BLISS week to include colleagues from across Bedford Borough Children's Services. This was to support all practitioners to have the opportunity to engage with the BLISS strategy and its ambitions and learn more about services and approaches that support children and young people's learning and behaviour.

In Bedford Borough, it is recognised the intense stresses head teachers continue to be faced with and so the Council have developed a robust, evaluated peer-to-peer coaching 'Professional Wellbeing' programme. This high-quality programme, now in its second wave, allows head teachers to explore the links between their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their staff, children, young people and the families they serve. Coaches can use a range of tools to support this work, including the wellbeing wheel (now also used by many schools for all staff and across children's services to aid the PDR process). To date, 16 head teachers have benefited from this programme, either as a coach, coachee or both. The plan is to continue to offer this programme to all head teachers, especially those that are new to headship or new to Bedford Borough.



Using the principles of the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing model, an audit was created to take account of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This audit helped schools quickly identify strengths and address gaps in their provision, resources and support available to staff, children, young people and the wider community. Schools are continually encouraged to revisit the audit regularly, and it continues to be a valued tool. School Improvement in collaboration with the NHS provided settings with a conference Looking ahead: Mental Health and Wellbeing, Behaviour and Attendance, which included: How to support ourselves, Behaviours we may expect, A model for promoting psychosocial care, Attachment and how school can be a secure base, Mental Health toolkit. This was very well attended.

Education settings are invited to take part in a series of health and wellbeing surveys for young people. The data collected from these surveys is not only sent back to the setting so they can really understand the thoughts, views and feelings of their school/college community but also used on a wider basis to inform future work for young people. The surveys are: Emotional Health and Wellbeing/Physical Activity and Food/Healthy Relationships/Community and Environment and Substance Misuse.

In response to the pressures felt by schools and settings during the pandemic, initially Children's Services funded 40 practitioners to become Mental Health First Aiders through MHFA England, there are now over 100 practitioners in Bedford Borough schools, preschools and nurseries. Mental Health First Aiders are trained to spot the early signs of a mental health issue, including warning signs of mental health crises, how to offer and provide initial help, and how to guide a child/young person towards appropriate treatment and other sources of supportive help. They are approachable, non-judgemental, kind and supportive and their skill set will benefit the mental health of all staff within schools', preschools and nurseries as well as parents and local community.

The Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Self Review for education settings supports education settings to review the health and wellbeing provision across their establishment and supports in planning a whole school/college/setting approach to improving the health and wellbeing for the children, young people and staff. The process guides settings to review progress, plan for further improvements and seek advice and/or support if needed. Education settings are asked to evidence the health and well-being work across their setting community for the key areas of behaviour and attitudes, personal development, including the delivery of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE); leadership and management which are in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2021). They are also supported to identify areas of need and to consider the priorities within the children and young people plan.

**Bedfordshire Police** Education and Diversion team link in with several partners, both statutory and charity based in Bedford Borough. Engagement is in place with schools to establish a process to provide support to children and young people who are on a reduced timetables or excluded from school. The team attend professional meetings, strategy meetings and child protection conferences when appropriate. Through this diversion work they have a number of children and young people on their caseload that do have emotional and mental health issues and in addition as part of their day-to-day engagement with students they often encounter children and young people that disclose concerns. The Education and Diversion team are not trained around this area, so they tend to signpost to more appropriate agencies. Some of the team's work is driven by Bedford Borough Council's SHUE (School's Health and Wellbeing) surveys. In more general terms their work includes addressing issues/concerns around screentime and mental health and cyberbullying as part of digital safeguarding inputs both to students and parents/guardians and practitioners and raise the risks around this area in the internal training to new Police staff.

### ***What has the impact been?***

- **The development of Cluster groups to provide feedback from Bedford Borough schools at each meeting of the Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group.**
- **Education representation has increased at the BBSCP Strategic Board meetings.**
- **Multi-agency open and honest discussions leading to resolutions about the issues that affect schools, for example in respect to thresholds or the use of the GCP2.**
- **The Police Education and Diversion Team have received positive feedback for the work/support they provide to a lot of young people who are victims of crime who report back that this work/support has made them feel more positive about things.**
- **Public Health work within education settings has supported both children, young people, staff, parents and the community in respect of mental health issues.**

More information about Education can be found [here](#).

## Cultural Competence

BBSCP responded to the review of the adultification, disproportionality and diversity issues and the effects on the criminalisation of children and young people in the Youth Justice system by bringing together a multi-agency Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group for 2022/23. The group received assurance from Bedfordshire Police on their local practices and ensured the multi-agency training programme content did not carry bias messaging and addressed adultification. The National Panel included 'Intersectionality' in their updated guidance to safeguarding partnership. From April 2023 the Pan Bedfordshire Cultural Competence Group was stood down and the remit of the group became a golden thread across the BBSCP and Pan Bedfordshire partnership structures. This was seen to ensure that cultural competency was embedded in all partnership work. An 'annual conversation' was held in April 2024 to review, and evidence, how cultural competency has remained a key theme in BBSCP and Pan Bedfordshire work.



As part of this workstream the following guidance has been developed - [\*\*Becoming Culturally Competent - Effective Safeguarding of Children from Minority Ethnic, Cultural and Faith Communities, Groups and Families, Practitioner Briefing 'Heritage' = race, language, religion, and culture and Practitioner Briefing Cultural Competency\*\*](#)

**BBC Children's Social Care** through a systemic approach has enabled the more embedded use of Cultural genograms which support better understanding of competing needs and issues for a family network both now and previously and how these experiences and aspects shape presenting safeguarding concerns.



Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is defined by the Home Office as acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Most of these offences are committed by male perpetrators. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse, as well as many others, including offences committed online.

**Bedfordshire Police** differs from other forces in that their focus is on male perpetrator violence, naming it 'MVAWG' and is in their control strategy and an overarching force priority. They have been working internally to create a 'call it out' culture and formed a support group in Bedfordshire Police to call out sexual misconduct and inappropriate behaviour. This support network is called 'Blue Bell', we support victims and witnesses through the process of reporting misconduct, in turn rooting out individuals who do not reflect our standards.

Bedfordshire Police are driving the agenda around these issues to get a better understanding of how practitioners can be equipped and educated to deal with some of these rapes and serious sexual offences, investigations that are taking place. The pillars themselves are concentrated on three areas, the pursuit of perpetrators, the second part is safe spaces, working with our nighttime economy, and building trust and confidence within the system. The Police are looking at their own vetting systems to make sure that they have the right people policing our communities and streets, but also fully understanding that the people that are in the Police want to protect people. Forces are now being truly held to account for how they address these issues but also how they do that with the support of our partner agencies. Project Flyer Fly continues and aims to be that light in the dark; to give residents better protection from all forms of violence in the nighttime economy setting. The operation aims to:

- Provide dedicated officers in night-time hotspots such as bars and clubs at weekends and other busy periods.
- Train our officers and use overt patrols to stop opportunities for would-be offenders to commit violent and sexual offences.
- Educate would-be male offenders and bystanders to misogynistic and abusive behaviours about the impact of their choices.
- Provide training to licensed premises and businesses to educate them on the signs to spot and support available
- Work with partners to increase support to women and girls in Bedfordshire's night-time economy.
- Signpost ways for victims to report incidents and seek support.

Project Firefly's approach is based on improving safety and confidence of women and girls in Bedford Borough, while relentlessly pursuing those who commit the most serious crimes and engaging with and deterring those whose behaviour falls short of what is respectful and acceptable. Utilising plain clothes officers to spot those individuals that may be lone males in bars frequenting or isolating or picking out young females. Scrutiny panels will look at one child investigation case per panel to look at the quality and where we can make improvements. There has been a significant increase in Claire's law applications, a 300% increase due to changes made by the Police in their front door processes. The use of Claire's law is being utilised far more, more confidence in reporting and there's training that's going out for that as well.

**Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership** through the Police and Crime Commissioner funding through the Home Office 'Safer Streets' fund helped develop over the last two years focused activities and engagement in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls. In that period the Community Safety Team at the council has delivered a schedule of over 60 pop up engagement events across the Borough to raise awareness of support services and provided particle advice and materials to help those in communities that feel less safe in the local area. Many women engaging with Community Safety Officers at the events suggest that they have previously been a victim of VAWG but have chosen not to report to the Police. As part of this work a programme of work, a toolkit and training on tackling sexual harassment in public places has been made available to every middle, secondary and upper school in Bedford Borough, as well as colleges. The toolkit has been developed in conjunction with the national charity Our Streets Now and includes lesson plans, assembly packs, posters and wider topical and safeguarding information for teachers. These have been created with guidance from teachers, parents and secondary school pupils.

**More information can be found at this link [MVAWG work](#) and the [Police and crime Commissioner](#)**

# Safeguarding children through effective systems and processes.

## **Transitional Safeguarding**

In November 2022 [Transitions Guidance](#) was agreed and in May 2023 a new [Pan Bedfordshire Principles for children transitions to adult services briefing](#) was signed off.

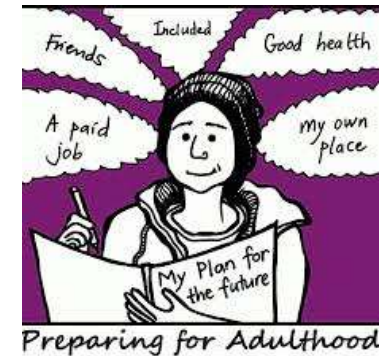
**BLMK ICB's** Children and Young People Transformation Board identified preparing for Adulthood/Transitions as a key priority for them. An initial scoping exercise was completed to understand how current system partners were addressing Preparing for Adulthood/Transition with an overall purpose of developing system-level principles which could be adopted by partner organisations across BLMK. To support this work, the BLMK ICB Preparing for Adulthood Steering Group was established in December 2022 with the purpose to determine the following for children and young people:

To understand the population needs of children and young people moving from children to adult services.

- To map how current systems are delivering Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions and identify any gaps in service provision.
- To identify the aims and purposes of various partners involved in delivering a Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions offer
- To develop shared principles for Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions
- Identify local best practice guidance and how to achieve national NHS Long Term Plan ambitions and recommendations.
- Identify areas where joint working is possible.
- Establish priority sub-groups to lead on the development of place-based Preparing for Adulthood/Transition workstreams.

BLMK ICB held two Preparing for Adulthood/Transitions summits in May 2023. These summits were open to professionals from health, social care, education, youth justice, parents, carers and children and young people. The summits provided updates from National and Regional SEND teams, children and young people and adult mental health, safeguarding children in care, youth justice, learning disabilities and Autism along with workshops on these issues that have led to the development of a forward plan.

**Bedford Borough Council Early Help** have updated the [Preparing for Adulthood section of their Local Offer](#) to include information on Staying Safe in the Community.





## Policy and Procedures Group

This has been another busy year with the group providing **93** new and/or revised procedures and guidance which can be accessed at this [link](#). There has been a number of one-page briefing documents developed on issues arising from Reviews that practitioners have feedback have been helpful in raising awareness of safeguarding issues, for example.

[The importance of history to safeguard children and young people.](#)

[Working with large sibling group families](#)

[Impact of poverty on children.](#)

### *What has the impact been?*

- The development of a suite of briefings has provided practitioners with quick, concise, awareness raising opportunities on a number of subjects for example see above with positive feedback from Partners that practitioners are using the documents in daily practice and finding them user friendly.
- The Pan Bedfordshire [Injuries and Bruising Protocol for Immobile Children 0-18 years](#) pathway/protocol has supported a more combined and collective approach to guidance.

## Thresholds

The current [Thresholds of Need Guide Effective Support for Children and Families in Bedford Borough](#) were launched in February 2023 and a number of webinars were delivered to launch the new Thresholds document and provide practitioners with opportunities to ask questions. These were followed up in September 2023 with a further practitioner's webinar to seek their views and experiences of using the new guidance. These were positive and no further amendments were needed to be made to the guidance.

### *What has the impact been?*

- Shared multi-agency understanding of thresholds.

## Information Sharing

**“When Referral and Assessment Officers (RAOs) do request information about children as part of MASH checks, from IFD health practitioners, the responses provided are detailed and analytical. Information provided by some of the key health providers, such as the 0 to 19 service, Primary Care and the acute trust, shows good analysis of the current risk and protective factors for children and offers helpful suggestions about what the next steps should be based on agreed threshold criteria. A revised [Threshold of](#)**

**need guide – Effective Support for Children and Families in Bedford Borough** is currently being implemented. The implementation includes workshops on the changes, for all relevant professionals.”

## Joint targeted area inspection of Bedford Borough (February 2023)



**Bedford College**, their biggest challenge is that they do not always get information on which students have allocated Social Workers. They have built good working relationships with the Virtual Schools and the information on who are children looked after and Leaving Care students. However, Bedford Borough Council Children's Services provide a more consistent response and provide the names of Social Workers. This enables the College to work on a multi-agency level as soon as possible and helps improve the access to students in terms of education. When it comes to those students on CP or Child in Need plans, this information is not as forthcoming, and it is often only when things escalate that the College are made aware that they open to Children's Services. Being alerted to which students are subject to a plan and what their plan consists of, may ensure that they are supporting the students from Day 1.

**Further guidance on information can be accessed [here](#).**

## Section 11 Self Assessments

The BBSCP seeks assurance on performance as part of the safeguarding system via the use of the Section 11 self-assessments. BBSCP in conjunction with the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Partnerships has historically collaborated and asked all partners to undertake a self-assessment on specified standards.

The Section 11 self-assessment for **2022 – 2023** focused on two of the standards, voice of the child and training as below.

- 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.

From the presentations in January 2023 here are some examples of areas that are working well.

**Standard 4: Views of children, young people & families:**

**Bedfordshire Police** are consulting with the community (with children, young people and families) with six key themes – young person crime, parenting support, violence against women and girls and community space. Operational leads for each of these themes are working with the community. The use of postcards given to every child/young person the Police engage with to seek their feedback and themes are being collated. **Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board** recruited 2 Engagement Leads to help engage with children - Children and Young People's Transformation Programme.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services** demonstrated that co-production is at the heart of their service, both in design, delivering and monitoring feedback. Developed top tips for practitioners in relation to Neurodiversity and using Recite Me, leading on the ICON programme.

**Bedfordshire Hospital Trusts** had nine young people from Healthwatch review their services with recommendations for Paediatric wards and outpatient clinics. Voice of the child is recorded within clinical notes/safeguarding records. The use of 'All about me' documents for those with complex needs.

**East London Foundation Trust** Supervision Audit identified safeguarding supervision keeps practitioners focus on the voice/lived experience of children/young people and to think family. Quarterly learning events and supervision sessions across adult/children services embeds the Think Family approach. In recent audits all cases captured the child's voice/lived experience. Participation work is good and led to young people being able to self-refer. Transition into adulthood work, looking at how the voice of children and young people with neurodiverse needs can help develop this work.

**Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service's** children/young people on longer term orders have review meetings every 3 months, this gives them and their parents/carers the opportunity to speak about the order and anything they would like to change. Their Engagement and Participation Worker has developed meetings with children and young people to discuss what they would like to see, what interventions would be suitable for them and what isn't working. Participation work is taking place with children and young people who are black/brown around their experiences of the criminal justice system so they can look at how they can adapt and change their services to meet these children and young people's needs.

**Bedford Borough Council's Children's Services** Strategy has been revised and clear around the voice of the child. Strong Engagement and Development Team with three apprentices, one has lived experience of autism. All tendering, commissioning and recruitment, children and young people are involved to hear their voice and views. Audit/quality assurance work includes the views of verbal and non-verbal children. SEND agenda is co-produced. Voice of the Child Team Champions across Children's Services directly feeding into Quality Assurance Boards and development of their work.



**Standard 5: Safeguarding Training Practitioners:** All agencies reported delivery of safeguarding training.

**Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board** new staff have mandatory safeguarding training, which is recorded.

Safeguarding training is part of everyone's job description. Training includes learning from all types of safeguarding reviews. Monthly GP training held.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services** training and development is competency focused and over the last 2 years have focused on imbedding the use of these competencies through annual appraisals/one to one's.

**Bedfordshire Hospital Trusts** has done a lot of work around training following COVID's impact on compliance and the merger of the two hospitals. The need to align training has been an opportunity to look at training as a whole and the training needs analysis is under review. They deliver specialist days, and a Domestic Abuse Day is coming up. Level 3 training captures learning from both child and adult Reviews.

**Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service's** diversity training is standard for their practitioners and will be delivered across BBC. **Bedford Borough Council's Children's Services** do a lot of support/development for safeguarding across the Council to support and advise on training, policies and processes. Recently, working with transport and licensing to pull together policies for schools to utilise, etc. Using a systemic model of social work really helps promoting children's welfare.

The Section 11 self-assessment for **2023 – 2024** partners presented their response to the following 8 Section 11 Standards with a focus on neglect.

- 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.

All Partners were asked to consider the following questions:

- What areas in your Section 11 do you want to highlight as good practice?



- What areas in your Section 11 do you need to improve on?
- What would be helpful from other agencies to help you meet these standards?
- What evidence do you have that there are improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families where neglect is a concern?

From presentations in January 2024 here are some examples of areas that are working well.

**Bedford Borough Council's** early help Offer is well established and with good links to schools. Multi-agency complex case discussions are well embedded and effective. Good Family Group Offer and Training Offer.

**Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board** highlighted the challenges for health and how it fits into multi-agency audits. Uptake of safeguarding training from GPs good. Evidence that providers are escalating neglect issues which are resolved. Through contract meetings ensuring that providers returns/policies reflect

neglect and frontline practitioners are recognising Neglect and are working to improve situations for families. Supporting GPs to recognise Think Family Approach.

**Bedfordshire Police** has a Force Lead and lots of governance in place re how they deal with neglect and how they ensure they are training and educating Officers in respect of neglect. Have own policies, procedures, and guides. An increase in understanding neglect has led to an increase in neglect Investigations and levels of PPO powers taken out.

**Bedfordshire Hospital Trusts** has a dedicated Safeguarding Team which has great oversight. Staff are asked to refer any incidents/concerns to the Safeguarding Team which are marked and filed. If further incidents received (child looking unkept etc) they have all on file and have that flag. All information goes to the Specialist Safeguarding Team and would look at this in the entirety. Increased focus on neglect and training offer. Internal Day re neglect planned for Hospital staff. Peer Reviews include neglect cases. Encourage staff to complete complex chronologies to look at what the Trust can do. Support the GCP2 and are looking to use the Screening Tool.

**East London Foundation Trust** provide joint supervision which has helped with Think Family and escalation. Neglect is part of Level 3 training and provide additional training to staff. Complete Audits across cases. Updated policies and training course. Review of incidents help identify early on and referral in a timely manner.

**Cambridgeshire Community Services** ensures there is the correct attendance at external meetings. Robust Supervision Model (standalone and overarching policy) and access to robust, dynamic supervision (looking at human interactions) which have annual survey and action plans come out of this. Embedding Think Family- on Strategic agenda to embed across the Partnership. Aligning job descriptions and regular communication (7-minute briefings). Putting in place Patient Safety Framework. Collaborative working- 0-19 and 5-19 have joint Away Days building relationships and staff knowing each other.

Partners identified, as appropriate, key areas which they may need to further develop. These areas of development have been collated into an action plan and are being monitored through the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group.

### ***What has the impact been?***

**The Safeguarding Children's Partnerships Scrutineer's concluded that the January 2023 Section 11.**

**"Working in partnership is key to ensure effective safeguarding. This year's Section 11 event gave agencies the opportunity to reflect on their own effectiveness by looking at the above two standards. As in previous years, the event was well attended and enabled some really constructive conversations. The event was able to capture some key areas of good practice as well as highlighting areas that need further development. We all recognised that in order to continue to develop and improve as partnerships, we need effective multi-agency safeguarding training and to ensure we hear the voices of children, young people and families when we are developing our services. Following this year's event, action plans will be developed. The action plans will be scrutinised at next year's event to ensure they have been progressed."**

**• The Safeguarding Children's Partnerships Scrutineer's concluded that the 2024 Section 11.**

**"This year's Section 11 assessment highlighted some really good collaborative and partnership working to target neglect. Agencies were able to show how they are developing and improving their services to better meet the needs of children who are suffering from all forms of neglect. This year's assessment also emphasized that we must never be complacent in this area and recognised some areas that needed to develop and improve. During the next year, we will be seeking assurance that those areas of development have been progressed."**

- Understanding of common areas of need across the safeguarding children system in Bedford Borough.**
- Good examples of robust supervisions models and use of escalation.**
- An increased understanding of neglect and its impact on practitioners.**
- The use of the Think Family approach**

### **Learning from Reviews**



Undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) for cases where a child has died or been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected, is a statutory responsibility of the BBSCP. During the period of this report the BBSCP did not commission any Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. During this last year 18 months there were 3 notifications of Serious Incidents to the Case Review Group to consider involving 10 children. From these notifications, 1 Rapid Review was completed and submitted to the National Panel who confirmed that they agreed with the Case Review Group decision not to initiate a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. One of the Notifications regarding 5 children and chronic Neglect was looked at in depth by the Case Review Group and agreed that the learning reflected a similar case undertaken in 2022 case so a decision was taken not to review

the case further but to work on raising awareness of the following tools and practice - Day in My Life - Neglect Screening Tool - GCP2 – Multi agency chronology - Stop and Review Meetings and Working with large sibling group families. Plus, to share the learning with the Pan Beds Neglect Group and look at cross cutting themes. The third Notification involved 4 children and there were neglect and physical abuse concerns



The 3 Notifications were received from the Police and Cambridgeshire Community Services which demonstrates a commitment to learning and safeguarding effectiveness by partners. The categories of these notifications were suicide, neglect and physical abuse. The number of referrals for Non-Accidental Injury have reduced to zero this year after spiking during the pandemic when there were 4 in a few months. Learning arising from the above Notifications and Rapid Review and past multi-agency reviews are scrutinised at the Case Review Group. Agencies are held to account for their actions and asked provide assurances to explain how their actions and the learning have been shared, achieved, provide evidence, and demonstrate how practice has changed.

Practitioner Briefings identifying the learning in these 3 cases can be found at this [link](#).

The Case Review Group were also involved in two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) undertaken by Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Hertfordshire are completing a joint children and adults Partnership Review for a young person who was aged 18 at the time of the referral but had been a child looked after and was open to their Children's Services Care Leavers team. The young person was living in Hertfordshire at the time of the incident but had been placed in Bedford between July – November 2021. Bedford Borough Council Children's Services, Bedfordshire Police and East London Foundation Trust have provided information for this Review to date. The Review is ongoing.

Central Bedfordshire have completed their CSPR on [Sophie and Daniel](#) which was published in March 2024. The BBSCP will be working with Central Bedfordshire on the recommendations as appropriate.

The BBSCP consider and learn lessons from individual local and national cases to enable the BBSCP to think proactively about how to help practitioners work differently so that serious incidents do not happen. In response to the learning from the above Reviews and other Rapid Reviews resources have been developed to support practitioners and their practice and can be accessed [here](#). Here are some of the many themes identified in this reporting period.

- **Professional Curiosity** - The best and worst cases seen either highlighted exceptional curiosity or a complete lack of it from practitioners, and this dramatically changed how safe a child or young person was. To be professionally curious means to see past the surface and be inquisitive about what else may be happening that puts someone at risk. [The Practitioner Professional Curiosity and Challenge Resources](#) were revised.
- **Sharing Information** - Gaps in sharing vital information can mean that those practitioners working closely with a child, young person or family do not have the full picture to manage risks adequately or that someone slips through the net of help entirely. A suite of guidance documents is available at this [link](#) for practitioners covering consent, a joint working protocol and Gillick/Fraser Competency, etc.
- **Importance of history and traumatic childhoods** – Practitioners need to consider trauma-informed practice in every contact. Practitioner Briefings developed to address [The importance of history to safeguard children and young people](#) and [Impact of Trauma](#).
- **Long term Neglect** - For those entrenched cases with persisting concerns sometimes practitioners have unwittingly become stuck so the [‘Stop and Review’](#) process was developed to help where cycles of practitioner contact reveals a pattern of stepping up and down over a period of time and where parental non-engagement is apparent and those cases where, despite best efforts, little positive and demonstrable change can be evidenced.
- **Voice and lived experiences of children and young people** - Further embedding of the [GCP2](#) and [‘Day in my life’](#) tools as part of baseline assessments.
- **Professional disagreement or challenge** - Revision of the Professional Escalation Procedure can be found [here](#).
- **Capacity** - Consideration for a person with fluctuating capacity (sometimes they can make decisions and other times they cannot) is often missing from assessments. This means people who make bad decisions because they are mentally unable to care for themselves can end up in harm's way. Further work is being done to revise the guidance around [Children of Parents with Learning Disabilities](#).

Bedfordshire Youth Offending Services (BYOS) presented three notifications to the Case Review Group that they were obliged to make to the Youth Justice Board. The notifications led to multi-agency Learning Reviews of the three cases cumulating in several meetings to consider how to take the learning forward and linking in with the 2021 Serious Youth Violence Thematic Review. The report from the Learning Reviews of the three cases above along with the 2021 Serious Youth Violence Thematic Review have been shared with the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership who are leading on the preparation for a possible [Joint Targeted Area Inspection to focus on serious youth violence](#).

## Learning from national reviews

The following national reviews and reports have been shared and informed the BBSCP's during this reporting period:

[‘Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: 2022-23 annual report’](#) is the fourth annual report from the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. It looks at the child safeguarding system, based on serious child safeguarding incidents occurring between January 2022 and March 2023. It sets out patterns in practice for national government and local safeguarding partners to better protect vulnerable children.

**'Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings'** (phase 1) looked at allegations of abuse and neglect of children and young people in private residential settings in Doncaster that were operated by the Hesley Group. This was discussed and addressed by the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders for Children's Services group

## **Safeguarding Adult Reviews**

The BBSCP supported Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) to undertake a **Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) following the death of 'Max'**, aged 18yrs. Learning from this SAR led to a new Pan Bedfordshire Transitional Safeguarding Group whose focus is on the transition arrangements from children to adults' services for key groups including children, young people with disabilities and those at risk of exploitation. Promoting a safe transition from childhood to adulthood, to ensure that individuals are supported and safeguarded from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Partners including Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Children and Adult Social Care, ELFT CAMHS, CMHT, Safeguarding Children, and adult team are working together in reviewing the co-operational between and escalation protocol. BBSCP supported the



SAB to develop their 'Transitions to the Max' learning event in late 2023. ELFT shared that, as appropriated, a reflective session will be offered to the targeted team. For example: In the December 2022 ELFT Safeguarding Quarterly newsletter, the learning from SAR Max was shared. It highlighted that all ages approach to exploitation, strengthened transitions processes and understanding of transitional safeguarding needs, and development of a housing pathway and protocol to ensure vulnerable young people are not placed at even greater risk because of unsuitable housing and rapid multiagency response to ensure risk is assessed and managed. Other recommendations included improved transition planning and understanding of mental capacity, including the concepts of executive and fluctuating capacity.

In March 2020 the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board agreed to undertake a Serious Adult Review on a young person as there was reasonable cause for concern about how the SAB, members of it or other persons with relevant functions worked together to safeguard the adult. The adult is still alive, and the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect. This is ongoing and the BBSCP will support the Serious Adult Review as appropriate

## **Multi Agency Audits**

The three 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. The Partnerships will capture any learning that supports improvement in practice and strengthening the safeguarding of children and young people experiencing neglect. The audit asked 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 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.

The actions from the audit will be monitored and addressed by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group.

**Early Help and Family Support Service** has a Quality Assurance Framework and the monthly case audits are conducted across all Early Help teams, focusing on recently closed cases, cases open for more than 12 months, and specific team audits. These audits have improved case oversight and highlighted significant strengths in direct work with children, young people and families, as well as in partnership working with other practitioners. In the last 6 months 21 cases were audited with internal moderation by the Team Manager for Supporting Families. Of the cases audited 2 were judged as Outstanding, 13 were Good, 4 Required Improvement, 1 Satisfactory and 1 was Inadequate.



## Themes from the Audits

- Evidenced based tools to hear the voice of the child are now always used however it is evident that active listening and recording their wishes and feelings is evident in case work.
- Evidence based approaches and the distance travelled tools they used can be evidenced in most case audits.
- Increased case complexity is evident; however, most audits show active engagement, good progress and improved outcomes.
- The case audit framework needs to be shared with practitioners and feedback from the last 6 months to be shared with along with the learning.

The quality of Early Help Assessments has been undertaken twice in the last 6 months and the analysis of the completed audits demonstrate that whilst the majority had all basic information completed the majority of Assessments do not record the voice of the child authentically but rather an adult speaking for the child or young person.

## What has the impact been?

- **The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel provided feedback to the BBSCP that our Rapid Review report was of a good quality.**

- **Reduced duplication of learning in multiple Rapid/Learning Reviews, leading to time and capacity being spent on addressing the learning rather than undertaking a LSCPR.**
- **The BBSCP sought from the Safeguarding Partners their responses and evidence of impact to the recommendations from 3 practice reviews into measurable actions.**
- **Embedding a proactive approach to the engagement of fathers and male carers in all cases.**
- **Revision and learning from the application of the [Injuries and Bruising Protocol for Immobile Children 0-18 years](#) pathway and protocol.**
- **Continued parity between the Safeguarding Partners and a more shared responsibility for learning and practice improvement.**
- **An avenue for the Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service to share with the BBSCP serious incident notifications that they have made to the Youth Justice Board and the learning from the cases.**

## Safeguarding Training

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 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 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 <i>(inc. non-attendance)</i>	168 (17)	98 (3)	350 (35)	470 (84)	1086 (139)	733
Places Filled % <i>(based on 20 per course)</i>	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%

### What has the impact been?

This year's learning has been reflected on and used to inform future developments to ensure training continues to be relevant and positively impact the practice of practitioners.

**Impact Reports 2023/24 (Copies available on request for the following).**

- 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.

### Working Together to Safeguard Children: Impact of attending training

'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 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*

'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 additional information that we need to include in our **new safeguarding policy** for children and vulnerable adults.' *HMP Bedford*

### ... feedback from other training courses

'(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.*

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

## Governance Arrangements

The Partnership's core objective is to coordinate and hold partners to account to make sure they are protecting children and young people in Bedford Borough who might be or are at risk, and to ensure that timely learning from serious safeguarding incidents is identified and implemented. The BBSCP has continued to work collaboratively with our neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire and Luton to ensure there is a more joined up approach to safeguarding. This is particularly important where agencies deliver services across and are represented on

several Partnerships. In agreeing a common approach and response to specific safeguarding and child protection issues such as child exploitation, neglect for example Pan Bedfordshire groups operate across the three Partnerships.

The BBSCP Strategic Plan was agreed initially in September 2019 and has been revised and will be reviewed in September 2024. The BBSCP has focussed on the areas of the Strategic Plan via themed Strategic Board meetings. In the last 18 months the meetings have focussed on Working in partnership to safeguard children and young people with SEND and Young Carers in Bedford Borough, Safeguarding in Education, Neglect and Poverty, Front Door, Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation, Implementing Working Together 2023, Children Looked After.

The Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services Group has membership from each of the Safeguarding Partners from across the Pan Bedfordshire footprint and are responsible for agreeing Pan Bedfordshire priorities and joint areas of focus. BBSCP works with other partnerships including Bedford Borough's [Health and Wellbeing Board \(HWB\)](#) and [Community Safety Partnership \(CSP\)](#).

The three Safeguarding Partners come together on a quarterly basis with the BBSCP Independent Chair and Scrutineer to debrief the last Strategic Board and agree the agenda for the next Strategic Board whilst also reviewing the BBSCP [MASA](#) and discussing any localised issues.

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

## **Scrutiny of the Bedford Borough Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.**

This is the second Annual report to which I have contributed since being appointed as Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) Independent Chair and Scrutineer from Autumn 2020 under the 2017 Children and Social Work Act and the Statutory Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). As I will stand down into fulfilling my wish to live in "active retirement" at the end of the calendar year 2024, this is also my final Annual Report for the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (BBSCP). My successor will undertake Scrutiny only, including by chairing the Partnership's Case Review Group and contributing to oversight of and quality assurance on the three Partnerships across Bedfordshire, under renewed Statutory Guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*.

As Chair and Scrutineer under the current arrangements, it is my duty to ensure a degree of objectivity through my independent status; and to provide scrutiny, judging the quality and effectiveness of Bedford's multiagency safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. The three statutory partner bodies' leaders continue to do as much work on safeguarding as possible through the three Bedfordshire Partnerships' subgroups, most of which continue to run on a Pan Bedfordshire basis. Whilst they concentrate on matters held in common across Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough, these Pan-Bedfordshire arrangements also allow for the differences between, and local needs of, the three Local Authorities and their partner bodies.

Given many agencies work across all three local authority areas, in the Scrutiny elements of my role it remains clear this Pan Bedfordshire way of working is appropriate. It ensures bodies working across all three areas are not constantly adjusting what they do operationally, and that single-authority-specific teams in all three areas learn from and with each other on safeguarding in their communities. It is equally clear that the BBSCP operates in ways that largely meet the 6-step processes covered elsewhere in this report. These steps are:

Step 1 - The three core partner leads are actively involved in strategic planning and implementation.

Step 2 - The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are actively involved in safeguarding children.

Step 3 - Children, young people and families are aware of and involved with plans for safeguarding Children.

Step 4 - Appropriate quality assurance procedures are in place for data collection, audit and information sharing.

Step 5 - There is a process for identifying and investigating learning from local and national case reviews.

Step 6 - There is an active program of multiagency Safeguarding children training and workforce development.

The purpose of independent scrutiny, which has been one part of my dual role, is to provide assurance, monitoring and challenge to the quality of agencies' work. I am also required to:

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

Framed by the six principles and these requirements on any Scrutineer, my approach to this work, given I have undertaken it with a Scrutiny mindset in both parts of my role as both Independent Chair and Scrutineer, has involved all of the following throughout the period covered by this report.

- Chairing the BBSCP Strategic Board, whose work is led by the senior representative leaders/managers of the Statutory Partners and their leadership teams;
- Chairing the BBSCP Case review Group (CRG) whose job is to ensure the effectiveness of arrangements for undertaking case reviews when there has been a failure in practice or a need to question effectiveness. The Group also works to ensure the necessary objectivity and distance from the work involved in service delivery, as a means of ensuring reviews identify, and ensures practice seeks to address, serious child safeguarding cases. These always highlight a need for development in particular areas of both practice, and policy or decisions making leadership.
- Attending the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic leaders' group, and the wider East of England regional group of Independent Chairs, Scrutineers, and Business Managers.

- Hosting regular briefing sessions with Bedford Borough's three statutory partners' most senior representatives, who under Working Together 2023 will become the Lead Safeguarding Partners.
- Taking a lead in Section 11 and challenge events, which run on a Pan Bedfordshire basis and are considered vital and positive sources of learning.
- Reviewing reports into, and reflecting back on the quality of, multiagency audits, training and performance data.
- Commissioning, and ensuring partners are taking follow-up action and pursuing business on, Localised Learning Reviews, and under national regulations both Rapid Reviews (RRs) and Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews (LSCPRs) which are forwarded to and judged by the DfE hosted National Panel, and which also then lead to proven and monitored learning across partner agencies
- Following up on several long-standing Pan-Bedfordshire and local thematic reviews, ensuring the borough's partners continue to take account of learning from Contextual Safeguarding, Serious Youth Violence, the risks and results of the criminal exploitation of children, radicalisation and dark web issues, and other causes for concern, arising in both Bedfordshire and further afield.
- Following up on serious concerns about the issue of Neglect (physical, emotional, developmental, psychological, educational, and at all ages) lying at the heart of a high percentage of children's cases being referred into targeted and specialist levels of services. This has included ensuring the instigation of a pan-Bedfordshire Neglect subgroup that reports into all three partnerships at Board level, and is chaired by an senior representative from the NSPCC, given the need to continue to press all agencies to using the Graded Care Profile (2) as a tool for working across agencies, and with families as partners in problem solving for their own families' needs where neglect is either believed, or proved, to be a feature in their difficulties.
- Attending and contributing to the direction of work of the Bedfordshire strategic level Domestic Abuse Partnership, from both a Bedford Borough-specific and a countywide basis. This has included a strong focus on strengthening agencies' approaches to tackling violence against women and girls – in all communities, and including through an educational response via Personal Social and Relationships Education in schools and colleges across both the borough, and the wider footprint of the Police and other agencies which work across all three localities in Bedfordshire

As BBSCP's Independent Chair and Scrutineer, my assessment is that the partnership in Bedford Borough has continued to work together effectively to safeguard children. There is strong leadership across services, and a welcome continuity of presence by senior level representatives of the vital key bodies across Bedford Borough.

A strong feature is that when the dialogue involved becomes challenging or difficult, most often though not exclusively seen in the work and the meetings of the Case Review Group, partners stay with it until resolutions are reached. This demonstrates a high and continued degree of shared professional confidence that concerns will be taken seriously, acted on, and children's and young people's welfare will be put ahead of the concerns or preoccupations of an individual agency.

A significant challenge across 2022-2024, the period on which this report reflects, has been the effects of a prolonged cost of living crisis on families' and communities' safety, wellbeing, and in some cases, life chances. There are clear safeguarding implications for some children young people and families, as this report captures.

A key strength in Bedford's safeguarding arrangements remains the Pan-Bedfordshire subgroups. These help the wider partnership to be more efficient, including in their work to develop standardised policies and procedures that, with adjustments for localities' needs, apply across the three boroughs. These Groups are usually, and despite pressures on and capacity issues in all services, are well attended by representatives from the three lead partners.

Section 11 audit, accountability and assurance days also run on a pan Bedfordshire basis. These take single-agency reports and the results of them continue to hold partners to account for ensuring compliance with safeguarding requirements.

In the longer than average period covered by this Annual Report – a longer period so the BBSCP can encapsulate the changes coming under *Working Together 2023* - I have chaired the elements of BBSCP's business where chairing falls to me, and dropped into, taken part in and offered formal assurances on the Pan-Bedfordshire subgroups which highlight common themes and ways of working. Both on a Bedford Borough and a Pan-Bedfordshire basis, I have seen clear evidence of outcomes focused, effective engagement of partners and relevant agencies in strategic work and operational implementation to support children, despite the challenges in demand continuing to rise whilst resources are not expanding to meet or satisfy it.

As Scrutineer I must record here, for all readers' notice, that under a new government in place for only a few months as this report is published, there is little sign that future funding settlements for publicly funded services to children young people and families will enable them to do all that their staff are keenly aware people in localities need. This is not the fault of policy makers, budget holders or services in the borough, none of whom can insist central funding will help them deliver all that communities need. In Bedford Borough, the Board level Partnership and the Pan-Bedfordshire subgroups feature good involvement by commissioning bodies, providers, and voluntary organisations, all of them seeking to make the best use of increasingly scarce resources.

I also experience the appropriate engagement of schools and Further Education Colleges in safeguarding children and young people including through the pan-Bedfordshire education subgroup which reports to and enhances the work of all three Bedfordshire Partnerships. There is a firm foundation, as *Working Together 2023* requires, to involve education bodies and their leaders in both single borough and countywide safeguarding activity on a more formal footing. as Relevant Agencies which will have representation in strategic decision making, and contribute to reflective reviews and the learning coming from them. Educators already demonstrate their commitment, and this remains central to how the partnership continues to develop its understanding of the lived experiences of children and young people receiving services across a wide range of provision.

Bedford's work on the voice of the child also remains a strength and continues to be a vital strand of safeguarding activity, including in all partners asking how partner bodies ensure their voices are listened to, and where possible acted on.

Strategic oversight is evident across the BBSCP and is replicated in the Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services group which is well attended by senior managers of the 3 Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the Independent Chairs/Scrutineers. I remain impressed at how quickly issues are resolved and initiatives taken forward in these forums.

That the three boroughs' Partnerships share common approaches to much of what is done, and to its auditing and the expectation that learning will follow, means where a service works across geographical boundaries practice does not have to change to fit different ways of working from one side of a road to the other at the boundaries between one Local Authority and another. It also means practitioners can exchange ideas and learn from each other. This Pan Bedfordshire work has helped to develop, embed, and through a shared training platform and face-to-face offer of events and training sessions, to train practitioners in a range of standardised policies and procedures.

Bedford Borough agencies continue to learn, and to apply that learning, when things have gone wrong for a child in receipt of services across health, education, social care, the police and other agencies, and any degree of review is needed. This includes responses to the difficulties faced if a child sadly dies, and the coroner is involved and passes judgements that single out particular practice or services. The sense of partnership working that arises from facing extreme challenges is positive. BBSCP's Case Review Group, into whose discussions I bring the Scrutineer's approach, seeks formal assurance that practice will improve, and practitioners will learn from mistakes or tragedies. There is determined, detailed, transparent and honest scrutiny by the Strategic Board of the BBSCP on how partners embed lessons from such reviews, and from regular practice audits.

It is equally clear that more work is needed to help services critically to evaluate the impact of their learning, and to ensure that all learning includes lessons from both local and national reviews and can be proven, rather than services making pledges to learn and improve practice but not always being able to prove positive outcomes for children and young people have resulted. Partners at both Bedford Borough and Pan Bedfordshire levels are committed to creating a far sharper focus on the differences made by improved practice in all services. 2024-2025 will see a redoubled commitment to that challenge.

Performance Monitoring that leads to a data and evidence informed approach to practice development and improvement also remains a challenge. Under *working Together 2023* arrangements, this will be addressed both at a borough level, and across the Pan-Bedfordshire footprint, as agreed by all Partner agencies during the first half of 2023. All key partners have presented assurance reports after any safeguarding-relevant inspection. The partnership has worked hard to simplify, and more importantly to ensure the relevance of, the data presented to Groups, and to the Board as a whole.

This bodes well for the arrangements that will be in place from the end of 2023. Data will properly be overseen in an “everybody’s business” approach to data sharing and analysis.

Partners have, in the period covered by this report, seen ongoing change in agencies’ governance, staffing and structures. Luckily many of the very senior practitioners who have for many years been integral to the safeguarding agenda remain as the BBSCP’s key contacts and partnership members, meaning continuity as well as change have been to the fore.

### **Looking forward:**

Forward thinking approaches and professionally creative thinking have continued to feature in much of the safeguarding work done in Bedford Borough, as the main body of this report captures and publicises. Service leaders and their teams, however, are clear that there is always more to do. As part of this, the development of contextual safeguarding that includes schools as a key partner in the context of a child’s life is something often asked for by schools. Work towards compliance with *Working Together 2023* will continue actively to facilitate this.

Ensuring the embedding of use the GCP2 in response to or working with families affected by a wide range of types and manifestations of neglect needs to continue to be pressed home as a requirement, given despite many agencies’ teams having been trained in and committed to it, its implementation and embedding in the practice of all agencies has been slower than should have been the case. I remain clear that there is no better professional tool for use in working with families on issues of neglect; that expenditure on training and a growing number of those who could use it are both realities; and that having committed to it, leaders and managers in all services should now ensure it is use, and its use is audited and evaluated.

There remain challenges in children and young people accessing the right levels of support for their emotional and mental health wellbeing, at the right time, early enough in their experience of problems or distress. This has been a real challenge throughout my time with Bedford since 2020, and sadly remains one as this report is published. The need if anything has continued to grow, whilst capacity has remained deeply challenged to the frustration of all concerned.

Bedford Borough’s determined responses to Serious Youth Violence (SYV,) Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG,) children and young people being groomed and exploited into involvement in organised criminals’ county lines, and the continued presence of gangs with all their related issues, will all need to remain key focuses for 2024-2025, and possibly beyond. All concerned are aware that the ongoing “long tail-end” challenges of the cost of living crisis still present challenges to keeping children and young people safe from the levels of exploitation involved in serious crime. Non-accidental injuries in children, including in those who are very young, remain a challenge in Bedford as they are elsewhere and the current levels of concentration on helping parents to cope with the challenges of raising very young children remain a vital part of the Partnership’s business.

The period on which this Annual Report focuses also featured reviews of complex issues and difficulties found in some Bedford Borough families, and particular children or young people, suffered serious harm, tragically including some children and young people who lost their lives. Such instances deeply affect practitioners from all services concerned, and the Case Review Group has had a good deal of work to do not only to explain and report on what has happened, and to pass to all services the key learning that needs to follow and be proven in improving practice.

In preparation for the implementation of requirements in *Working Together 2023*, the BBSCP's work has continued under the terms of the 2017 Act and the 2018 version of that statutory guidance. All three boroughs have now reviewed their Partnerships' structures, numbers of meetings and groups, and how much more efficiently some things could be done. All are determined to focus what they do on ensuring that all LSCPs act on ever more direct feedback from children, young people and families, and from front-line staff in universal, targeted and specialist services. The voices of Bedford Borough's children, young people and their families and those who work with them lie at the heart of effective, and change-driving scrutiny.

It remains a challenge to ensure the BBSCP works effectively and seamlessly with other Bedford Borough partnerships including the SAB, CSP, HWB and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Crime Panel so as to ensure a closer focus on system-wide ways of working. Cross and inter-partnership working will, under the new version of *Working Together*, will remain vital in agencies' work on exploitation, substance misuse, children and young people living with adults who have mental or long-term physical health issues that mean children and young people become carers before they are mature enough to be so, and those living in poverty or extreme and worsening disadvantage.

As Scrutineer, it is my statutory duty to state formally, in line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)* that the BBSCP complies with the law on the organisation and operation of safeguarding arrangements working in partnership across all agencies in the borough. It is my professional pleasure to present that assurance, knowing Bedford Borough's partner agencies will go on striving for continued and proven improvement in their own settings, and together as partners. I can equally assuredly state that, as copy elsewhere in this report makes clear, the requirements of *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)* will be fulfilled in their entirety by the all-partners agreed framing of governance and practice across the Partnership as from the end of this calendar year. That compliance will apply both at Borough level, and in the work that will be done across Pan Bedfordshire.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M Atkinson', with a stylized, flowing script.

**Professor Maggie Atkinson, Independent Chair and Scrutineer, Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership**

## Looking ahead and some of our challenges for 2024 – 2025.

- The voice of children and young people is at the centre of all the work undertaken by the BBSCP.
- The BBSCP had continued to work hard to maintain its effective oversight of the safeguarding arrangements in Bedford Borough and to transition from its former arrangements to reflect the requirements of the Working Together 2023.
- The BBSCP has continued to develop and sustain its strong leadership providing constructive and critical challenge of practice with the three statutory partners and across its structure to provide greater oversight, evidence impact and outcomes and drive on priorities and to evaluate risk, resource and capacity in the system.
- To continue to work with the Safeguarding Adult Board to address shared activities and learning as appropriate. There is more focus and join up on the whole system response to some of the issues that affect each group such as domestic abuse, exploitation, transitional safeguarding, substance misuse, and mental health.
- The ongoing monitoring and completion and review of GCP2 assessments to support good practice.
- To embed in practice the Neglect Screening Tool, development of multi-agency chronologies and Day in My Life Tools.
- The Partnership to continue to ensure and support the engagement of children and young people is meaningful and makes a difference.
- Resources and capacity are limited and therefore there is a need to consider the whole holistic system approach across the Partnership.
- Continue to develop robust multiagency audits that scrutinise how the Partnership works together and what can be learnt from specific cases.
- To ensure that those children and young people reaching the threshold of social care intervention have been previously afforded the right support at the right time.
- To continue to identify and consider the impact of the economic and cost of living crisis on families' and communities' life chances.
- To support all education settings to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- There is also the need to ensure that those aspects of good practice and prevention that stopped things escalating in the wrong way are captured and celebrated.
- To monitor and support robust information sharing practice from how partners share information between each other; to how the Partnership shares learning across Bedford Borough and wider.
- Transitional Safeguarding to be addressed and develop impactful and collaborative children to adult services transition pathways and practice.

- The number of referrals for children and young people requiring an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) have significantly increased in the past 12 months, and this has created pressure across the system. The Partnership will need to monitor this situation to assure itself that there is a multi-agency response, and that children young people needs are being addressed.
- To continue to work on a Think Whole Family approach to safeguarding and service provision.
- The Partnership is assured that independent scrutiny arrangements are in place and fit for purpose.
- Renewed focus on access to relevant safeguarding data and develop a dataset dashboard to support the Strategic priorities.
- As part of the training provision to convert eLearning uptake into training attendance, improve training engagement with Early Years practitioners and Independent Provision (Alternative Provision, Residential Care Homes, CIC, etc). Increase opportunities for face-to-face training. Develop bite size webinars on key themes from CSPR's. Increase dip sampling for impact case studies.

## Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) 2025

The BBSCP'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 BBSCP has revised its MASA document which will be published in December 2024 at this [link](#). The BBSCP 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 BBSCP 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 Bedford Borough communities.

Education colleagues from early years to further education colleges have continued to support the work of the BBSCP 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 Chief Officer for Education, SEND & School Infrastructure along with senior representatives from local secondary and primary schools, nurseries, and college. Our 2 Lay members are employed in a Private Independent School and an Alternative Education provision. Officers from the Local Authority School Improvement Team also sit on the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect and Voice of the Child groups and will attend the BBSCP Performance Group.

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group was established in 2022 to support, strengthen and inform the vital work of the BBSCP. 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 BBSCP communicates with schools via a local monthly newsletter dedicated for schools.

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

## Appendix 1 - Finance 2022 – 2024

The work of the BBSCP is funded through the following partner agencies in line with Working Together 2023 and a funding formula agreed by agencies in 2010 and adhered to since that time. Partner agencies agreed to maintain their budget contributions in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 as at the same level for the last 14 years.

Agency	Agreed Contribution
Bedford Borough Council Children's Services	£114,090
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	£62,663
Bedfordshire Police	£18,300
Bedfordshire Probation Service	£2,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£197,253</b>

## Appendix 2 – Glossary

A&E – Accident and Emergency Department	GCP2 - Graded Care Profile 2
ART – Adolescent Response Team	JSNA – Joint Strategic Neds Assessment
BAVEX – Bedfordshire Against Violence & Exploitation	IDVA - Independent Domestic Violence Advisors
BBC - Bedford Borough Council	IFD – Integrated Front Door
BBSCP - Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership	JSNA - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
BLMK ICB – Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	MASA – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
BDAP – Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership	MARAC - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
BYOS- Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service	MVAWG – Mal Violence Against Women & Girls
CAMHs - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	NRM – National Referral Mechanism
CCS – Cambridgeshire Community Services	NSPCC - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
CEM - Child Exploitation Meeting	QA - Quality Assurance
CIN - Child in Need	RSHE - Relationships, Sex and Health Education
CP - Child Protection	SAR - Safeguarding Adults Reviews
CP-IS - Child Protection Information Sharing	SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disability
CS - Children’s Services	SPOC – Single Point of Contact
CSC - Children Social Care	SYV - Serious Youth Violence
CSE - Child Sexual Exploitation	TAF – Team Around Family
CSP - Community Safety Partnership	VERU - Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit
CSPR – Child Safeguarding Practice Review	
DA - Domestic Abuse	
DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead	
EHCP - Education Health Care Plan	
ELFT - East London Foundation Trust	

### Appendix 3 - Bedford Borough Council Children's Services Engagement Group/projects:

**SHOUT:** is a monthly youth group for children and young people known to or open to Children's Services (Children Looked After, those on a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan, Kids who Share, Care Leavers, Adopted Children and Young People and those supported on a Special Guardianship Order). There are two SHOUT sessions a month: one for ages 8-12 and one for ages 13+. Each session is based around fun activities, eating together and a themed piece of engagement work, this is sometimes done as a large group and sometimes in smaller 'cohort' groups.

**Brilliant Activities in the School Holidays (BASH):** takes place in all school holidays and aims to provide children and young people known to or open to Children's Services fun and exciting opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills and share their thoughts and experiences on working with Children's Services. All activities include a consultation exercise and for Summer 2023, older Care Leavers volunteered and supported sessions. They received full training and a reference for doing this.

**Care Leavers Forum:** a group that it is hard to find a consistent and accessible forum for, but the Engagement and Development team are exploring a variety of different platforms. Currently this group meet once a month at a coffee shop in town. An informal session with key topics including preparation for independence and mental health of care leavers. The team also facilitated interviews with Care Leavers living in supported accommodation, this included home visits with Elected Members.

**The Youth Cabinet:** continues to grow with new members joining every session. With a newly elected Peer Committee the Youth Cabinet meet monthly and are currently working on two key campaigns: safety and standards of school toilets and a vaping awareness campaign. The committee have presented to the Head Teachers Forum and met with a construction company working on expansion of Bedford Borough Schools.

**Junior Voice:** a new group for 2023 and works in a similar way to Youth Cabinet. It is aimed at children aged 7-11 and meets four times a year. The children work on creating campaigns in top issues, the environment and bullying. The aim is to support children to transition confidently from this group into the Youth Cabinet.

**United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP):** The Member of Youth Parliament has been supporting the UKYP National Campaign for School Dinners being free for all. This has included campaign meetings with Local MP and sessions in schools, speaking at National Conferences and the House of Commons and presenting to Head Teachers.

**Pupil Voice Network:** aims to bring together School Councils/Pupil Voice Forums. After a face-to-face break due to Covid, there were three conferences for School Councils (two for Primary and one for Secondary). The conferences included consultation sessions in key issues in the morning and school councils training in the afternoon. There was a session for Pupil Voice led teachers to share good practise and share solutions to challenges.

**SEND:** The team support several initiatives to support children and young people with SEND:

Hub and Spoke: a termly consultation activity sent to settings via SENDCOs with themes set by young people and feeding back into the SEND QA Board.

Shout Out to SEND: an annual conference bringing SEND children and young people together (like Pupil Voice) to consult on key themes and share good practice.

Autism in Schools: supporting children and young people to share their experiences and drive forward the project; work includes monthly consultation activities, three conferences per year and the creation of resources for children, young people and staff.

## Appendix 4 – BBSCP Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

**Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (BBSCP)**  
**Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026**

This Strategic Plan sets out the BBSCP's shared vision and themes that will help keep children, young people and their families at risk safe and protected from abuse and neglect. Excellent practice is the norm. Partners work collaboratively to achieve the same end goals. Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively. There is early identification of 'new' safeguarding issues. Learning is promoted, embedded and evaluated. Information is shared effectively. Communities in Bedford Borough feel confident that children, young people and their families are protected from harm. BBSCP has agreed the following themes to direct its work for 2023 – 2026:

**Safeguarding children and young people .....**



Neglect – Cost of Living -  
Early help - Domestic abuse -  
Emotional wellbeing &  
mental health - SEND

**Contextual safeguarding -  
Child Exploitation and Missing  
- Safeguarding Education-  
Male Violence Against  
Women and Girls**

- Transition - children's to adults' services
- Policy & Procedures - Thresholds to services - Information sharing - Audit, Reviews, Learning, Development & Training and Independent scrutiny- Workforce capacity

<https://doi.org/10.1002/for>
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/for>

**Neglect** – via Pan Beds Neglect Group and annual conference  
**Cost of Living** – Golden thread  
**Early Help** – addressed through BCSCP/Pan Beds structure/work streams /assurance reports. This will be a theme for the BBSCB Strategic Board in April 2023.  
**Safeguarding online** – Golden thread and Pan Beds website  
**Children impacted by domestic abuse** - work with Pan Beds Strategic Leaders for DA, Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership and Local DA Board and assurance reports.  
**Emotional wellbeing& mental health** – via Bedfordshire children/young people MH & EWB Network and assurance reports  
**SEND** – a theme for the BBSCP Strategic Board October 2023.  
**Contextual Safeguarding, Child Exploitation and Missing** – via Pan Beds Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group and assurance reports.

**Safeguarding Education** - via Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group

**Male Violence Against Women and Girls** – via assurance reports.

**Transition** – via Pan Beds Transitional Safeguarding Task & Finish Group

**Policy and procedures** – via Pan Beds Policy and Procedures Group

**Thresholds to services** - new Thresholds of Need Guidance will be launched in February/March 2023. Evaluate in March 2024

**Information sharing** – Golden thread

**Audit, Reviews, Learning, Development & Training** - via BBSCP Case Review Group, Pan Beds Coordination Group, assurance reports and golden thread.

**Independent scrutiny** – Throughout this plan, structures, BBSCP Annual Report and a golden thread

**Workforce capacity** – Golden thread

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

**Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Coordinating Group**

**Pan Beds Neglect Group**  
and associated Task & Finish Groups

**Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group**

**Pan Beds Policy and Procedures Group  
and associated Task & Finish Groups**

### Pan Beds NAI & Under 2's Task and Finish Group

**Pan Beds Trauma Informed Practice Task and Finish Group**

**Pan Beds Body Worn Video  
Group will report in to the  
Pan Beds Neglect Group**

▼ **Pan Beds Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group will report into the BBSCP Strategic Board and Pan Beds Coordinating Group**

**Pan Beds Transitional Safeguarding Task & Finish Group will report into the BBSCP Strategic Board and Pan Beds Children Coordinating Group.**

Golden threads throughout this structure and plan

**Lived  
experience  
& voice of  
children &  
young people**

**Multi- agency and single agency training delivery and evaluation**

**Cost of Living**

Learning from  
practice reviews  
and multi-  
agency  
& single agency  
audits

**The voice & engagement of frontline practitioners**

**Information Sharing**

Performance & practice monitoring and analysis

Independent

Links to other Partnerships,  
their action plans &  
strategies which are  
developed, in place &  
monitored

Cultural Competency

Safeguarding Online

Force capacity

## Appendix 5 - BBSCP Structure 2022 - 2024

### Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's Structure 2022 - 2024

#### Pan Bedfordshire Strategic Leaders of Children's Services Group (4 x year)

**Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership;  
Strategic Board (X4)  
Case Review Group (X6)**

#### Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Coordinating Group (6 x year)

Themes: Domestic Abuse, EWB and Mental Health, Section 11, Child Exploitation and Missing, Transitional Safeguarding, training.

#### The following will report into the Pan Beds Coordinating Group as required;

Pan Beds Exploitation and Missing Strategic Group  
Pan Beds Safeguarding Education Group  
Pan Beds Policy and Procedures Group  
Pan Beds Neglect Group  
Pan Beds Voice of the Child Conference Task and Finish Group  
Pan Beds Safeguarding Children Boards in School Pilot  
Pan Beds Transitional Safeguarding Task & Finish Group

#### Golden threads throughout the Pan Bedfordshire Coordinating Group

Lived  
experience &  
voice of  
children and  
young people

Learning from reviews,  
multi-agency & single  
agency audits

Voice &  
engagement of  
frontline  
practitioners

Data  
monitoring  
and analysis

Links to other  
Partnerships  
action plans &  
strategies

Domestic  
Abuse

Child  
Exploitation

Cultural  
Competency

#### Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group (6 x year)

Themes; Physical neglect - Educational neglect - Emotional neglect - Medical neglect - Supervisory neglect - Environmental Neglect. There may also be some task and finish groups to address themes and work streams.

#### Golden threads throughout the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group

Lived experience  
& voice of  
children and  
young people

Learning from  
practice reviews,  
multi-agency &  
single agency  
audits

Voice &  
engagement  
of frontline  
practitioner

Data  
monitoring  
& analysis

Links to other  
Partnerships  
action plans &  
strategies

Embedding &  
improving  
use of GCP2

Domestic  
Abuse

Child  
Exploitation

Cultural  
Competency

Pan Beds Body Worn Video Group and the Annual ICON conversation will report in to the Pan Beds Neglect Group

Working towards an annual Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Conference

#### Pan Beds Safeguarding Education (6 x year)

Themes (TBC) S175, Safeguarding Boards in Schools, Safeguarding/Exclusions, Child on Child Abuse, Radicalisation.

#### Golden threads throughout the Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group

Lived  
experience &  
voice of  
children and  
young people

Learning from  
practice reviews,  
multi-agency &  
single agency  
audits

Voice &  
engagement  
of frontline  
practitioners

Links to other  
Partnerships  
action plans  
& strategies

Safeguarding  
aspect of  
attendance  
and  
exclusions

Domestic  
Abuse

Neglect

Child  
Exploitation

Cultural  
Competency

#### Pan Bedfordshire Policy and Procedures Group (2 x year)

Task and Finish Groups to undertake the work as appropriate

