

# **Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board: Annual Report**

**31 March 2013 to 31 March 2014**

**The effectiveness of partner's work to safeguard and  
promote the welfare of children in Central  
Bedfordshire**



## **Information about this report**

The publication of an annual report summarising the work of the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and assessing the state of safeguarding across the partnership is a requirement of the statutory framework within which Safeguarding Boards work.

The annual report should provide rigorous and transparent assessment of performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify weak areas, causes, remedial action; lessons learned from reviews; and income and expenditure.

The Statutory functions of the LSCB are set out in Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 as:

- to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

**Date of publication: 2 September 2014**

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## 1. Foreword from independent chair

The last year has again brought a raft of changes for partners to grapple with, whilst retaining a focus on working together to keep children safe.

The year started with the publication of the long awaited Working Together 2013 at the end of March 2013, coming into force on 15 April 2013. The new document continues the reforms identified as part of Professor Eileen Munro's independent review of children protection which puts the child in focus at all stages. This brought with it a range of new requirements for our LSCB, including:

- expectations around developing a learning and improvement process to include Serious Case Reviews so that they form an integral part of our work to improve services to children
- the requirement to monitor the effectiveness of Early Help
- defining the safeguarding responsibilities of LSCB partners, including NHS Commissioning Board, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Police and Crime Commissioners – these include staff induction and child protection
- promoting the involvement of children and young people in the work of the LSCB and for the local authority to take reasonable steps to ensure that the LSCB includes two lay members representing the local community

Membership of the Board has been extended and at our September meeting we welcomed two new lay members, a governor representative, a further education representative and a representative from one of our Academy schools. Our previous representative from Barnfield College who represented all schools has since resigned and schools are being invited to provide representatives to ensure system of representation is complete.

During the year Bedford Borough decided to withdraw from the remaining joint working arrangements with the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Board and at the end of September the Boards formally separated their joint working arrangements. This included disaggregating the business unit providing support to the Board, reviewing the shared multi-agency training functions and disaggregating the joint working arrangements sitting beneath the Board structure. This provided unique challenges for all partners involved, including recruitment of new staff to the newly created business unit, attendance at additional meetings and the review and development of new protocols and strategies. The Training Review reported at the end of December and the only remaining shared function relates to multi-agency safeguarding training; this continues to be hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The period between October and the end of March saw the Board agree and publish a number of key strategies following the disaggregation, this included:

- a revised Thresholds document following a threshold review
- a Learning and Improvement Framework, including a new performance framework

- a Joint Training and Development Strategy with Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board, and
- a Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy

This period also saw the Board focus on its priorities of:

- **Evaluating the impact of Early Help – significant progress and improvement.** This involved reviewing audits of early help cases, communicating the learning and promoting refreshed **Thresholds** and the Early Help offer and process to all key stakeholders. The number of early help assessments has since increased and they now come from a wider range of partners, including GPs. The rate of referrals to assessment is on target and thresholds are understood. The authority reviewed its arrangements for the ‘front door’ and at the end of the year (March 2014) early help services were re-aligned alongside the referral and assessment team to ensure children in need of early interventions are referred swiftly. This is the preparation in Central Bedfordshire towards any future Bedfordshire Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Partners have also provided assurance that there is greater stability in key parts of the workforce (social workers, health visitors and school nurses) and that recruitment targets are on track to be met or that a stable agency workforce is covering key vacancies.
- **Evaluating the impact of work undertaken by partners in relation to Domestic Abuse– significant weaknesses and challenges identified.** This involved an in-depth review of the prevalence of domestic abuse and the range of services on offer, seeking assurance from Bedfordshire Police in relation to their response to a negative HMIC inspection report and seeking assurances from partners to provide adequate resources for the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory services. This is one of the key areas of challenge for the Board going forward and a number of actions have been agreed in order to improve strategic leadership, resourcing and support to children and families. To help support this work a specialist social worker and domestic violence worker has been commissioned to review this area of work and a report will be published in the Autumn 2014.
- **Ensuring an effective response to the Sexual Abuse of Children and young people through Exploitation (CSE) – good progress and Pan Bedfordshire arrangements in place. Further work required to evaluate the CSE Panel (formerly known as the SERAC panel).** A CSE Strategy was agreed by Board and awareness has been raised about the issues. A number of actions in relation to the identification and management of child sexual exploitation have also been completed. Ofsted have attended an operational meeting in respect of a group of

young people about whom there have been concerns regarding sexual exploitation. Ofsted expressed no concerns about the way in which these risks were being managed and reviewed. Bedfordshire Police now have a dedicated CSE team and the CSE Panel meetings continue monthly to share information and monitor intelligence in relation to children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation. A Pan Borough strategic group is now formed.

- **Implementation of Working Together 2013 – good progress made and new arrangements defined and in place.** The Board completed a self-assessment as part of its development and arrangements are compliant with the guidance. A Learning and Improvement Framework was agreed and protocols are in place for reviewing cases of concern referred by partners.

In the context of the challenges at Bedford Hospital and the closure of the paediatric services at the end of July 2013, the CCG reviewed all safeguarding arrangements in Bedford Hospital to ensure safeguarding advice and expertise is resourced, appropriate training is provided and a robust transparent quality assurance framework meets the CCG's safeguarding standards.

Looking forward, and taking account of the improvements and challenges identified during the year, the Board has agreed the following priorities for 2014-2015:

- **Ensuring children and families have faster, easier access to early help and safeguarding support through the delivery of a multi-agency support hub (MASH)** – this will involve taking multi-agency working and information sharing around safeguarding to the next level and building on current improvements;
- **Ensuring the effectiveness of safeguarding support for children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and/or substance misuse** – this will involve implementing further actions to improve support for children and families living with domestic abuse and reviewing support for children and families where mental health and substance misuse is an additional risk factor; and
- **Ensuring the effectiveness of the strategy to deal with child sexual exploitation** – this will involve evaluating our SERAC panel and ensuring the Board is sighted on the data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and the support to children at risk;
- **The development of the Board's core functions to ensure it can deliver these priorities** – this will involve reviewing relevant procedures and policies, ensuring we have in place protocols for joint working with other key strategic partnerships, raising awareness about key issues, learning from national and local case reviews and training and development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Board, particularly the newly appointed lay members who volunteer their time, for continuing to focus on keeping children safe, and for providing challenge and support in equal measure. Additionally I would like to thank all those at the front line who face the daily challenges of keeping children safe. The following pages of our annual report set out in some detail the considerable efforts of everyone.

I hope these highlights give you some idea of our shared effort during the year in rising to the challenges of further change and demand on our resources.

Phil Picton  
Independent Chair  
Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

## 2. Central Bedfordshire in context

Central Bedfordshire has a population of 260,000 people. This is forecast to increase to around 287,300 people by 2021 with a 13.9% increase forecast in children aged 0-15 between 2011 and 2021 and a 35% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over during the same period.

Overall levels of deprivation in Central Bedfordshire are relatively low. Deprivation is measured at small area level known as lower super output areas (LSOAs). Three LSOAs in Central Bedfordshire are in the most deprived 10-20% in England. These are Dunstable Manshead (Downside - 594), Parkside (602) and Houghton Hall/Tithe Farm (618). Analysis of the LSOAs shows that particular aspects of deprivation in Central Bedfordshire are in the most 10% deprived in England. These are:

- Education, skills and training – a particular issue in eight LSOAs in parts of Dunstable Manshead, Dunstable Northfields, Flitwick, Houghton Hall, Leighton Buzzard North, Parkside, Sandy and Tithe Farm wards.
- Crime and disorder – a particular issue in six LSOAs in parts of Dunstable Central, Dunstable Icknield, Dunstable Northfields, Eaton Bray and Parkside wards.

Unemployment is lower in Central Bedfordshire than in England. 2,655 people were claiming JSA in Central Bedfordshire in March 2014, a rate of 1.6% compared to the England rate of 2.8%. The five wards with highest unemployment rates in Central Bedfordshire are Dunstable Manshead, Tithe Farm, Parkside, Houghton Hall and Dunstable Northfields.

Average house prices in Central Bedfordshire (£175,000) are higher than the national average (£166,600), however 73% of people owned their own home and this is greater than the figure for England as a whole (64%).

Central Bedfordshire residents are less likely to have higher level qualifications compared to the England average, and a lower proportion of Central Bedfordshire pupils achieved 5+ A\*-C GCSE including English and Maths compared to the England average. Life expectancy for both men and women is longer in Central Bedfordshire than it is in England as a whole and overall health was slightly better than the England average and children are less likely to be obese.

Central Bedfordshire is less diverse than England as a whole and has a greater proportion of people who are White British. In 2011 89.7% of the population were White British (79.8% for England). The biggest ethnic minority groups in Central Bedfordshire were White Other (not White British, White Irish or Gypsy or Irish traveller) 2.8%, White Irish 1.2%, Indian 1.0% and other 5.3%.

View the online version of key Statistics in Central Bedfordshire [here](#).



### 3. Safeguarding children in Central Bedfordshire

Safeguarding of children in Central Bedfordshire continues to be good and regular rigorous performance evaluation has provided assurance to the LSCB throughout 2013-2014.

This has been provided through quarterly monitoring of key child protection indicators in the performance framework and through in depth reports highlighting particular issues, such as workforce sufficiency, audits in relation to early help and rates of conversion to child protection plans.

The following table shows safeguarding and early help activity with Central Bedfordshire children and families compared to 2012/1/3 including last known comparative data for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

Table 1

	<b>National 12/13</b>	<b>Statistical Neighbour 12/13</b>	<b>Central Beds 12/13</b>	<b>Central Beds 13/14 (provisional)</b>
<b>Number of referrals</b>	<b>2940</b>	<b>2160</b>	<b>2260</b>	<b>2598</b>
<b>Number of early help assessments opened</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>1353</b>
<b>Number of early help assessments opened as a result of step down from social care</b>		<b>N/A</b>		<b>171 (10 months)</b>
<b>Number of early help assessments closed</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>894</b>
<b>Number of children in need</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1423</b>	<b>1631</b>	<b>1508</b>
<b>% of referrals of children in need with an outcome of assessment</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>72.5%</b>
<b>Number of children subject to a child protection plan</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>196</b>

A gradual improvement in performance with identified challenges is described below. On this, our core business, the council's internal performance evaluation arrangements are central to overall performance and a core indication of multi-agency working.

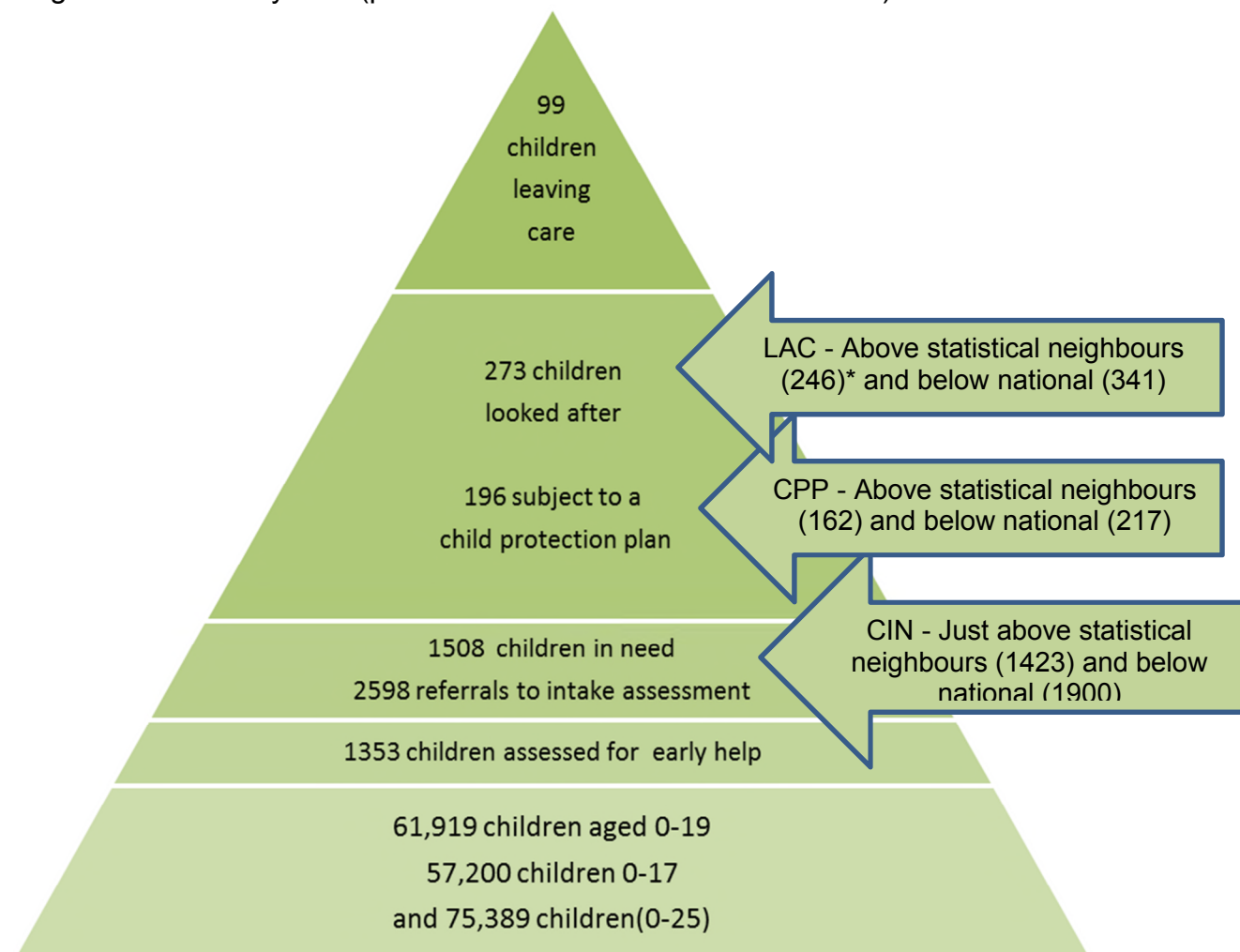
Within social care, a systematic programme of case audit throughout 2013-2014 resulted in practice challenge and review, resulting in a reduction of children with child protection plans and improvements in quality assurance arrangements.

Performance monitoring is a continuing, rigorous and transparent process, with quality control as part of day-to-day practice and supervision. Weekly team and senior management meetings provide appropriate attention to detail. The senior management team is attended by managers from the front

line when appropriate, providing immediate resonance to evaluation and identifying threats to high performance and swift remedial action to ensure long term sustainable improvement. For example, the identification of a high rate of section 47 investigations using statistical neighbour and national comparators resulted in investigation and remedial action which is summarised below. This was reported to the Local Safeguarding Children Board, endorsing social care actions.

## An analysis of the child’s journey in Central Bedfordshire

This section analyses performance using key indicators in relation to child protection. It examines data at key points in decision making from the point of referral through to child protection plans. It aims to help us understand the flow of cases through early help and referral and assessment within the context of multi-agency working. Below are the numbers of children at various stages in the care system (provisional data for end of March 2014).



\* statistical neighbour and national figures have been calculated based on population size to provide population comparisons. These are based on 12/13 outturn figures as 13/14 data is not yet available.

**Early help** was a priority for the LSCB in 2013-2014 and the numbers of early help assessments opened was 1353 in 2013/14, compared to 827 in 2012/13. This is a local measure and there are no national or statistical neighbour

comparators. The numbers of early help assessments show an increase from last year.

**Referral rates** are slightly increased in comparison to the year 2012/13. The rate (454 per 10,000) lies between the England average of 520 and statistical neighbor average of 382.9 per 10,000 population.

A threshold document was revised and widely disseminated by the LSCB and training is being re-modelled to support the new 'one front door' which sees the integration of early help and intake and assessment from 1 April 2014. It is anticipated that referral to an Early Help Assessment will increase compared to those proceeding to formal social care assessments. Every family now receives a service or advice and 'no further action' (NFA) is no longer a category on the case management system.

**Assessment timescales for social care** reflect the changes required following the Munro recommendations. Performance using the old measures has been good and remained stable and initial indicators from the new measurements demonstrate early signs of good performance

**The rate of cases converting to a Section 47 enquiry and to child protection conference** was identified as being higher than our regional comparators. There was a higher conversion rate at each stage of the child protection process from referral to initial child protection conference within Central Bedfordshire compared to others in the region. The rate of progression from referral to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) in 2012/13 was 1 in 11 nationally, 1 in 10 for our statistical neighbours and 1 in 9 for Central Bedfordshire. Whilst there is very little difference between the rates of referral to Central Bedfordshire Children's Social Care compared with our statistical neighbours there was a higher chance of a Section 47 enquiry progressing to a Child Protection Plan.

A review of decision making at key stages in the journey from referral to child protection plan was carried out. Audits were undertaken and overall an analysis of the children on plans indicated that a proportion could have been managed through alternative strategies using Child in Need processes.

Concerted work and careful scrutiny to raise awareness and enable sound decision making resulted in the following impact;

- Between 1st November 2013 and 31st December 2013 a total of 77 Section 47 enquiries were started averaging 38 per month. This was a reduction of 26% on the average number of Section 47 enquiries over the previous 10 months.
- The progression of cases from strategy meetings to section 47 enquires and initial child protection conference has been kept under close review by operational managers and managers within the Conference and Review Service.
- Initial analysis indicates that as a result families are more appropriately being supported through Child in Need planning than child protection.

- A further audit in January 2014 confirmed the trajectory and further scrutiny will continue in order to embed the learning.

**Length of time on a child protection plan.** From time to time, there will be a cohort of children who need a child protection plan longer than most. The England average for children exceeding 2 years subject to a child protection plan was 5.2%, statistical neighbours were 4.9% (both in 2012/2013). Central Bedfordshire performance was 7.5% in 2013/2014. This is slightly higher than our target rate of 6%.

**Children who became the subject of a child protection plan who had previously been the subject of a child protection plan.** There will always be a cohort of children in need of a protection plan more than once. The England average was 14.9% and, statistical neighbours 15.1% (2012/2013). The Central Bedfordshire rate is 15.8%. This exceeds the target for the year which was in a range between 9-15%. All cases where children have been subject to a second or subsequent child protection plan in less than 2 years are audited jointly by a conference chair and an operational manager in order to identify practice improvements and learning. Careful investigation and monitoring of each individual child indicates that this is appropriate for these children.

**Private fostering** - There are 3 carers caring for 7 children in private fostering arrangements and there is 0.5 FTE social worker allocated resource to raise awareness, carry out assessments and provide appropriate support to carers. Feedback from carers indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the assessment process and support services. Raising awareness is a continuing challenge. Work with schools, children's centres and a range of child care settings involves the distribution of a range of communications materials, including leaflets and flyers. Awareness raising in 2014-2015 will involve increasing collaboration with the Fostering Recruitment Officer to align energy and resources.

**Conclusions.** Early help assessments are increasing, enabling access by more children, earlier and so enhancing the possibility of long term sustainable improvements. Early help is located with the referral and assessment team in readiness for a multi-agency safeguarding hub. Social care has re-modelled internal structures to ensure that teams have manageable caseloads and that there are clear lines of management accountability. Performance Management Teams are run on a monthly basis and there is individual and collective alertness to emerging issues and swift responses to challenges.

Partners regularly assure the LSCB and/or the practice and performance group on routine and emerging performance issues. Overall performance is improving as new organisational arrangements stabilise across the partner agencies in Central Bedfordshire.

Social work alignment to GPs has greatly enhanced partnership working at local level, with improvements in information sharing and communications. A new information sharing tool has been developed for GPs in collaboration with

the Council and the CCG. Systems are in place to effectively ensure that vulnerable families are identified and members of the primary health care team informed.

The LSCB performance framework reflects the priorities set and will continually develop to reflect strategic direction and priorities. The LSCB performance framework gathers data on core child protection, workforce data and the priorities of the LSCB. It is monitored 7 times per year by the Practice and Performance group and 4 times per year by the Strategic Board. The Practice and Performance group will continue developing the performance framework for 2014-2015 to align with the LSCB business plan and produce clear, user friendly data with an analytical.

## **Workforce challenges**

Workforce instability and sufficiency are national challenges that appear locally too, and this is especially relevant for key professional roles working in social care, health and the police. Central Bedfordshire is located within commuting distance of London with its variety of competing offers for front line workers.

The LSCB performance framework started this year to monitor recruitment and retention for a number of professional roles in these key agencies in order to ensure effective risk management results in minimum negative impact on performance and outcomes for children. Children's social care and the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group have provided reports to the strategic board on areas of concern to assure the board of their risk reduction strategies and Bedfordshire police provide regular input to the performance framework. Reports to the LSCB have assured the Board of the mitigation in place and highlighted the following:

- South East Essex Partnership Trust strategy to recruit to health visitor and school nursing vacancies is showing early signs of success with ambitious targets for filling vacancies and careful regular scrutiny of key performance indicators such as new birth visits and is monitored by the LSCB and by the Health and Well Being Board.
- Partners maintain relentless focus on performance impact, individually and collectively, and regularly assure the LSCB of developments.
- Bedfordshire Police have successfully recruited 60 new officers increasing overall police capacity and have increased capacity for responding to child sexual exploitation and domestic violence.
- Social care's performance improvement programme provides regular assurances on impact on performance and allows for immediate remedial action.
- Many agency staff in social care remain with the local authority for considerable lengths of time which means that the workforce is more stable than might otherwise be expected and this reduces possible negative impacts for children and young people.

## **NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group**

The NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has developed a resilient safeguarding governance structure withstanding the impact of disaggregation of the Local Authorities and LSCB's in Bedfordshire. The Director of Nursing and Quality leads on the comprehensive range of safeguarding responsibilities in the CCG and, with the Designated Nurse represent the CCG on the LSCB. There is demonstrable evidence of this influence at the CCG governing body and the executive team; decisions on resourcing the LSCB budget contribution and the range of safeguarding responsibilities in the CCG are made at this level.

Designated Professionals for safeguarding children and Looked After Children, are experienced and supported, and have access to appropriate training, specialised supervision peer advice. The role of the Designated Professionals are explicitly defined and in line with national guidelines. A regular integrated safeguarding meeting provides a forum for advice, support and professional development as well as a sound network for information sharing. This ensures a swift response to emerging need at the highest levels with immediate "table top" in-house review to fact find on individual cases.

### **Focus for improvement**

A Central Bedfordshire Academy for Social Work and Early Intervention has been developed and brings together a comprehensive range of learning and development programmes for social workers, enhancing their career prospects, valuing the workforce and making Central Bedfordshire a better place to live and work. Social work salaries have been reviewed and an enhanced Market Rate Supplement has been agreed and implemented in key teams where recruitment of permanent staff has been an issue.

## 4. Progress on priorities in 2013-2014

### Priority 1: Evaluating the impact of work undertaken by partners in relation to domestic abuse

The LSCB carried out a detailed strategic overview of domestic violence in Central Bedfordshire to understand the issues in relation to children and families living with domestic violence. This report informed the LSCB of the incidence and prevalence of domestic abuse and the levels of service provision and resourcing issues and enabled the Board to identify the challenges ahead.

The strategic overview report has identified the persistent nature and prevalence of this problem and has identified challenges relating to service provision and pathways, capacity, resources, governance and leadership - all of which are fundamental to addressing this issue and effective delivery to our growing population.

#### Key facts

- Children are present in 37% of all incidents of domestic abuse attended by Bedfordshire Police
- In 2013 there were 419 children living in high risk domestic abuse situations being dealt with through MARAC
- 56.4% of social care assessments feature domestic violence
- Domestic abuse continues to be a factor in the majority (62%) of cases where children become subject to a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time
- MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) – There are, on average 24 cases referred to MARAC each month with around 36% of these being repeat referrals. This compares to an average of 18 cases per month in 2012 with around 27% being repeat referrals. Repeat referrals were lowest in 2011 at 15%. Referrals to MARAC have been identified as lower than they should be.
- In 2013/13 there were around 12 referrals per month with 31% repeat referrals to specialist case workers/advisors working with victims most at risk of homicide or serious harm. In 2011/12 there were around 18 referrals per month with 32% referrals.

Two **inspection reports** fed into the review conducted by the Board and these highlighted significant concerns in relation to domestic abuse.

**Bedfordshire Police** were the subject of a formal H.M.I.C inspection in November 2013 (HMIC report: Bedfordshire Police's Approach to Tackling Domestic Abuse). An action plan was devised and reported to the Board and immediate steps have been taken to address the key issues. In response to the HMIC findings around Bedfordshire Police's response to Domestic Abuse numerous pieces of work have been undertaken; the most notable being the redesign of Bedfordshire Police's domestic abuse structure and processes. It is a strength that all households where children reside are identified and

subject to further scrutiny and referral. Work continues with other agencies to improve the quality of this information sharing to support the most appropriate signposting to early help for those children affected by Domestic Abuse.

Bedfordshire Police have provided assurance to the LSCB on strategic and operational issues and have delivered on capacity building to improve, including a review of available services for both high and medium risk victims. Bedfordshire Police are working in collaboration with the local authority to deliver on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to improve swift decision making at the front line. Bedfordshire Police are committed to regular reporting to the LSCB on improvements.

**Bedfordshire Probation services** were the subject of an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). The report found that Probation involvement in LSCB's in the three Local Authority areas was strong and effective. The report also identified areas for development in relation to safeguarding children, including identification and appropriate referral to social care as well as some concerns about the targeting of resources only to highest risk victims. The Probation Service representative on the LSCB provided an account of these areas and of the Probation service response in full and assured the Board of its risk reduction strategies. The probation service will report to the Board on developments.

#### Focus for improvement

The LSCB has initiated work with leaders of the Community Safety Partnership, the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Health and Well Being Board and the Children's Trust Board to **provide clarity on Pan Bedfordshire leadership in relation to domestic violence** and agreed actions in relation to:

- Accelerating information protocols to improve the quality of information sharing.
- Prioritising domestic abuse pathways for multi-agency working
- Accelerating training for domestic abuse and ensuring co-ordination is improved.

Additionally the LSCB has challenged the community Safety Partnership in relation to the future funding for the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service (IDVA) and requested a position statement on this.

The LSCB training programme has been re-designed to increase emphasis on domestic violence, adult mental health problems and substance misuse, including the impact on children and young people.

The case audit programme has been re-modelled to enable case audit of children living with these features, engaging practitioners and their managers in the process so that the voice of front-line workers is heard and informs strategic decision making.



As a result of the strategic overview, the LSCB has agreed that domestic violence and the associated risk factors, adult mental health problems and substance misuse, will be a priority for 2014-2015.

As a result of these and other discussions throughout 2013-2014, the Board has also committed to the development of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, speeding up access to early intervention and prevention services with domestic violence as a strong feature in taking this work forward.

This will be monitored through the LSCB business plan and the LSCB performance framework during 2014-2015.

## **Priority 2 : Ensuring an effective response to the sexual abuse of children and young people through exploitation (CSE)**

Working in collaboration with Bedford Borough and Luton LSCBs, a Pan Borough strategy for Child Sexual exploitation is in place and this is complemented by a local Central Bedfordshire LSCB strategy agreed by the Board in February 2014. The co-ordination arrangements at a strategic level are managed through a strategic group that has now been established. This Pan Bedfordshire Strategic group supports co-ordinated activity across the county to deliver to the National CSE Action Plan. Further work is to be undertaken in the new year to ensure delivery in this area.

Work undertaken by the Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Boards and the joint Task and Finish Group has contributed to raising awareness, identifying work streams and completing tasks in relation to the identification and management of child sexual exploitation.

Operational arrangements are agreed and in place and local multi-agency arrangements involving the creation of a multi-agency panel have been successfully developed across Bedfordshire – this panel is the CSE Panel (formerly known as the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference - SERAC). The CSE panel meets monthly to share information, referrals and monitor intelligence. Bedfordshire Police have created a bespoke team to prevent and respond to child sexual exploitation. The development of a focussed CSE team has allowed for direct activity around the improvement of CSE intelligence and awareness across all partners and the analysis of that intelligence to support the response to young people who have been identified as being at risk of exploitation.

A CSE Panel is held monthly which supports practitioners in problem solving around complex cases and identifying support options for those identified as a concern. The CSE Panel has heard cases in relation to 101 young people during 2013-14, of these 36 referrals were in relation to children and Young People from across Central Bedfordshire. Additionally there was progression of 69 referrals and 11 intelligence reports.

Ofsted have attended an operational meeting in respect of a group of young people about whom there have been concerns regarding sexual exploitation. Ofsted expressed no concerns about the way in which these concerns were being managed and reviewed.

Multi-agency training is embedded in the LSCB training programme and there is strong commitment from partners to continue to prioritise this throughout 2014-2015.

Information on the arrangements is widely disseminated throughout the professional and volunteer community and has been posted on the LSCB website to ensure visitors are drawn to this information.

### Focus for improvement

An evaluation of the multi-agency CSE panel is being commissioned with specific reference to impact on outcomes for children and young people. The Pan Borough strategic group will oversee this review and recommendations will go to the three Bedfordshire LSCBs.

### Priority 3: Evaluating the impact of early help

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of early help assessments and intervention has been developed by:

- monitoring the number of early help assessments carried out
- monitoring the quality of training provided to professionals, and
- by developing an impact evaluation tool to assess the impact on lives of children and young people.

Three case audits were completed and reported to the LSCB in December 2013. The main lessons learnt involved the length of time that there were identified needs for children before a practitioner, in these cases within schools, acted. The Early Help Assessment appeared to have been a last resort after failing to be able to successfully make referrals elsewhere. This identified a training need for some schools that have not regularly been using the Early Help Assessment process.

This key learning relating to schools has been communicated through newsletters and through training and workshop sessions at termly headteacher and governor meetings.

Communications, training and advice to the professional community on Early Help has led to an increase in the numbers of assessments carried out and an associated increase in multi-agency meetings to deliver early intervention services. The majority of cases resulted in successful identification of appropriate services and delivery. Where service gaps were identified, resources were identified to commission bespoke services to meet the needs of the children concerned. For example, a number of children with parents in prison were identified as having additional needs. A specialist service was

then commissioned to provide counselling for the children with successful outcomes for them.

Over 660 professionals from all partner agencies received training which includes application of thresholds. This training reached GPs, schools, health and the voluntary sector. Evaluation of this learning has demonstrated that it is of high quality and highly valued by attendees. Further work to align the learning on thresholds, early help and safeguarding in line with the developing integrated referral and assessment work will support professional practice in navigating thresholds and understanding the importance of assessment of need.

Retrospective analysis of early help provision is carried out month by month looking back a year and this is beginning to show early signs of positive impact - this work began in November 2013. So far it is indicating that the majority of children (70-80%) did not require escalation to formal statutory social care provision and those referred because of a risk of school exclusion have had successful outcomes.

An evaluation tool has recently been designed to assess impact of early help provision at the end of an episode of intervention. This is sent to parents, the children concerned and the professionals involved. It is too early to measure impact. Work to ensure a high response rate is underway.

The Council's Early Help Service has been re-aligned so that it operates within the referral and assessment service, in readiness for a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

**Early Years settings** - There are agreements in places with over 108 private, voluntary and independent providers and 110 child minders who are able to receive Nursery Education Funding. They are regulated by Ofsted within the Early Years Framework and supported by the local authority's Childcare Development Officers, e.g. with model policies, telephone help and support at Child Protection meetings if needed. Their arrangements regarding safeguarding training, policy and safer recruitment are regularly reviewed and their continued registration is contingent upon effective safeguarding arrangements in provider units.

The Child Care and Early Years Sufficiency and Quality Officer is the designated lead for safeguarding within this sector. She ensures that safeguarding information is disseminated regularly via a 6 weekly newsletter. Urgent emerging news items such as national research and serious case reviews and information from the LSCB are disseminated immediately to ensure professionals are updated with contemporary national and local evidence.

#### **Actions to improve:**

Ongoing development of early help includes:

- Ongoing training to promote consistency in relation to thresholds, early help and safeguarding children and to ensure schools and early years

settings engagement.

- To refine and develop the evaluation tool used at the end of an episode of intervention to assess impact on outcomes for children and to learn from multi-agency audits.
- To monitor the impact of the inclusion of early help services with the referral and assessment team.
- To develop a Multi-Agency Safeguarding hub incrementally, learning from national and local experience and ensuring a focus on risk assessment and safety is maintained.

#### **Priority 4: Implementation of Working Together 2013 and findings of the Review of Joint Working with Bedford Borough LSCB**

The year started with the publication of the long awaited Working Together 2013 at the end of March 2013, coming into force on 15 April 2013. The new document continues the reforms identified as part of Professor Eileen Munro's independent review of children protection which puts the child in focus at all stages. Alongside existing statutory objectives in relation to co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of the safeguarding work of partners, this brought with it a range of new requirements for our LSCB, including:

- expectations around developing a learning and improvement process to include Serious Case Reviews so that they form an integral part of our work to improve services to children
- the requirement to monitor the effectiveness of Early Help
- defining the safeguarding responsibilities of LSCB partners, including NHS Commissioning Board, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Police and Crime Commissioners – these include staff induction and child protection
- promoting the involvement of children and young people in the work of the LSCB and for the local authority to take reasonable steps to ensure that the LSCB includes two lay members representing the local community

#### **Outcome of review of joint working with Bedford Borough Safeguarding Board**

During the year Bedford Borough decided to withdraw from the remaining joint working arrangements with the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Board and at the end of September the Boards formally separated their joint working arrangements. This included disaggregating the business unit providing support to the Board, reviewing the shared multi-agency training functions and disaggregating the joint working arrangements sitting beneath the Board structure.

This provided unique challenges for all partners involved, including recruitment of new staff to the newly created business unit for Central

Bedfordshire, attendance at additional meetings and the review and development of new protocols and strategies.

As part of this review the Training Review reported at the end of December and key recommendations have been implemented and multi-agency LSCB training is now the only remaining function shared by the two boards - this service continues to be hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council. A Training and Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire has now been agreed and this sits within the wider Learning and Improvement Framework agreed by the Board. This sets out how the LSCB will learn lessons from a range of sources to inform front line practice and multi-agency working.

### **Implementing Working Together 2013**

The LSCB reviewed the Working Together 2013 guidance and the new inspection arrangements. These were used as a framework for self evaluation at the LSCB development day in January 2014. This resulted in an assessment of current activity and an agreement on the LSCB priorities for 2014-2015 as well as areas to improve the functioning of the LSCB. A new business plan for 2014-2015 was agreed and is used at each meeting to measure progress.

The LSCB's role is "to **coordinate** what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area" (Working Together 2013).

In order to deliver on its statutory duties to co-ordinate the safeguarding work of partners, the Board reviewed the following co-ordinating functions:

### **Developing policies and procedures**

The LSCB collaborates with neighbouring LSCB's to maintain shared multi-agency safeguarding procedures and ensure that local protocols and procedures are clearly understood at practice level. These responsibilities include thresholds, multi-agency training, recruitment of staff working with children, investigation of allegations, safety of children privately fostered and co-operation with neighbouring children's services authorities and Boards.

The **Thresholds** for identifying which children needed additional support and intervention were reviewed and agreed in October 2013. These have been widely disseminated to the professional community and are easily accessible on the LSCB website. They are used in the LSCB multi-agency training and early help training programmes, helping practitioners to navigate and understand eligibility and need. In addition, a letter was sent from the Chair of the LSCB directly to the wider professional community drawing attention to the revised threshold document as well as lessons learned from case audits.

**Multi-agency training** - A rigorous training review was carried out across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire and resulted in a new shared Training and Development Strategy agreed by Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Boards in February 2014. The commissioning arrangements for training have been clarified and agreed.

One training commissioning unit provides a shared service to Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough LSCB's. Training is informed by evidence, using case audits and drawing from the needs identified through partners on both LSCBs. In Central Bedfordshire this has been informed by the learning log created in January 2014. A detailed end of year training evaluation, including quantitative and qualitative analysis, provided a basis for the learning and development programme for training in 2014-2015.

Over 950 days of multi agency training were delivered to 625 attendees across all CBSCB partner agencies, including schools in 2013-2014. Evaluation demonstrated that the training was high quality, interactive and highly valued by attendees. All courses are highly valued by practitioners with 100% indicating that the course met its objectives "completely" or "mostly". The impact of this training was also assessed and positive change in practitioners' responses to improved safeguarding knowledge and understanding was demonstrated. Practitioner feedback is established using end of day evaluations, follow up impact evaluations, (4-6 weeks after a course) and trainers' evaluation. Course evaluations have not been attached to the report however these can be supplied on request.

A total of 779 learners completed on-line e-learning packages over the year. These courses are all very well evaluated and some constitute a prior learning activity for face to face training. Smaller organisations in the voluntary sector and faith groups use the Introductory e-learning level package for Induction purposes and to stimulate further facilitated safeguarding discussions. The completion rate is 75% for the year and of 87% since the e-learning began in 2008.

The 2014-2015 programme will reflect the needs of both LSCB's, the views of practitioners and lessons from case audits and national experience. The training review carried out by both Boards concluded that the new training programme for 2014-2015 needs to be aligned with the priorities of the boards and evidence from audits. Fewer courses of shorter duration and increasing learning opportunities through modular learning will help reach the right staff on the right topic. The 2 day course revision will use a modular approach to learning, enhancing cost effectiveness, and ensuring that training is tailored appropriately to meet the needs of professionals. The programme will meet the needs of individual agencies seeking to develop and enhance practitioners' understanding of multi-agency processes and optimise outcomes for children. The programme will respond promptly to local need and commission specialist training providers in a timely way. A revised pricing structure will further improve completion rates for E-learning.

Members will now determine "reach" i.e. the numbers of staff in each agency who need identified learning opportunities. Members will set targets and

monitor this reach throughout the year. This will result in an improved understanding of global learning saturations levels.

Core Group working has been identified as an area for improvement via local case audits and Agency uptake for this training will increase. Parenting capacity is adversely affected by domestic abuse, adult mental health and parental substance misuse and the programme will continue to offer a variety of learning opportunities thus reflecting the LSCB priorities for 2014-2015.

Early years settings' access to training has already been revised and the emphasis is now being shifted from single sector training to multi-agency training. This means only multi-agency safeguarding training will be promoted to this sector. There is also a wide ranging educational programme for providers and practitioners which ensures competencies in enabling and effectively supporting children's growing understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Practitioners and child minders encourage children to gain an understanding of risk through activities that encourage them to explore their environment and to be able to share their concerns with a trusted adult.

Arrangements for validation and oversight of training offered within agencies (single agency training) will continue and assist in ensuring that local practitioners are clear about individual safeguarding roles and responsibilities

#### Targeted work with schools

Through the Children's Trust Strategic Workforce Development Group, Schools representatives identified a need for safeguarding training in schools and while this is not multi-agency training, a "Training for Trainer" course has been commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council's Workforce Development Team in conjunction with the LSCB and the Teaching School. The take up to date has been good and so far representatives from over 60 schools have attended the 5 training sessions offered (some schools have sent more than 1 person). Those schools that have not attended will be contacted and encouraged to take this offer up and a further two sessions are being planned before the end of the year.

**Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group** ensures professional development of senior staff and provides encouragement to consider future safeguarding roles, including shadowing and training with a long term view to succession planning. Additionally, the Designated Professionals give clinical advice and specialised supervision in complex cases, to health colleagues and partner agencies as required.

CCGs are not directly responsible for commissioning primary medical care, however BCCG has commissioned a Named GP to work with and support GPs on safeguarding children issues. The named GP for safeguarding children is well established and has dedicated sessions to provide advice and support to GP colleagues as required.



Level 3 multi-disciplinary training is provided in line with the Intercollegiate Document (2010), to GP's with input from various agencies, including the Local Authority. GP's with lead roles in safeguarding children attend the LSCB multi-agency level 3 training with other experienced lead professionals in partner agencies, providing them with the competencies required to effectively lead and support practitioners at a local level. Comprehensive data on GP's and their attendance at training is maintained and regularly reviewed. Each GP practice has a Lead GP for Safeguarding Children and a nominated deputy.

**Bedfordshire Police** - All staff are provided with safeguarding children training and all new recruits are provided with mandatory training at induction. Frontline officers are provided with regular training on safeguarding children with an emphasis on child sexual exploitation, child abuse and domestic abuse. Bedfordshire Police support the delivery of multi-agency training and anticipate an increase in police attendance in the coming year due to a successful recruitment drive and new Police Community Support Officers and a continued commitment to the development of partnership working in practice with an emphasis on Domestic Violence. The force training strategy provides a range of training materials and ensures that officers in key positions are appropriately targeted for safeguarding training.

**CAFCASS** - The core safeguarding training curriculum includes information on the requirements around reporting concerns about significant harm. This is delivered to all new practitioners and to students on placement. Business support staff complete an e-learning programme as part of their induction, which covers how they should report concerns.

All **schools** in Central Bedfordshire have a designated professional for safeguarding children, explicitly defined in job descriptions. Designated professionals attend the LSCB multi-agency level 3 training. Schools are also taking part in the LSCB "Training for Trainers" course so that they can disseminate learning to the whole school and also provide a range of internal training. The new Teaching School gains input from Heads and Partners via a reference group and safeguarding children is part of this agenda.

#### Focus for improvement

The new programme (2014-2015) will reflect the priorities of the LSCB identified through the needs and views of practitioners and partners and lessons from case audits and national experience. Partners have agreed to:

- determine "reach" i.e. the numbers of staff in each agency who need identified training and set targets and monitor this reach throughout the year. This will enable an understanding of whether multi-agency training is reaching the people it needs to.
- participate in training relating to core group working, domestic violence, adult mental health and substance misuse.



### **Safer recruitment of those who work with children**

A section 11 audit was completed with all partners taking an active role in auditing their services and safe recruitment has been identified as one of the subjects of this audit. Findings will be provided to the LSCB during 2014.

### **Investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children**

During 2013/14 the Allegations Manager responded to 73 concerns and 64 allegations against adults. This compares with 72 concerns and 49 allegations in 2012/13. The LADO provides an annual report to the LSCB and full details are available in this report. The outcomes of allegations during 2013/14 are as follows:

<b>The outcomes of allegations during 2013/14</b>	
Advice / Support / Training	35
Dismissal	6
Final Written Warning	2
No Further Action	9
Case not concluded	7
Resigned	4
Transferred to Other Local Authority	1

The Allegations Manager (**LADO- Local Authority Designated Officer**) continues to provide a single point of contact in Central Bedfordshire for responding to concerns and allegations against adults working with children in an employed or volunteer capacity. The service oversees the process of managing allegations and aims to contribute to good practice in this area and prevent those adults who pose a risk to children from working with them.

The advisory role of the Allegations Manager (LADO) in relation to lower-level concerns is a well-used aspect of the service, making up in excess of half of all contacts to the service. More serious concerns and allegations are responded to by means of a Joint Evaluation Meeting which brings together employers, Human Resources personnel, social workers and the police to plan a response to the reported allegation and the protection of children.

In addition training has been provided during the year to Heads and Chairs of Governors, foster carers, Early Years, independent care providers and the Voluntary sector.

### **Co-operation with neighbouring children's services authorities and their Board partners**

The LSCB collaborates with neighbouring LSCBs on strategic issues and examples of this include the work on Child Sexual Exploitation, the Child Death Overview Panel arrangements and shared policies and procedures. Pan Bedfordshire arrangements are reflected in the governance structures in section 7.

A challenge from partners was presented at the February 2014 LSCB meeting with partners requesting a common Bedfordshire wide form for CAF/Early Help Assessment. Although there have been discussions to move to one form this has not yet been resolved and will require further discussion in 2014.

### **Communicating and raising awareness about safeguarding children**

LSCB communications have prioritised the professional community, ensuring they are updated on developments and receive the training and support they need to operate effectively. For example, a practice note was sent from the chair of the LSCB to the professional community to inform them of lessons learned from recent audits and revisions to thresholds. The Training Commissioning Unit regularly sends communications to the professional community on emerging issues from national and local experience.

For Early years settings, local professional support networks provide for sound partnership working and relationships with health positively support information sharing and response to emerging issues and concerns.

Bedfordshire Police has run an education programme throughout all Schools focussed upon priority issues within particular areas across Bedfordshire. Within this review year the focus has been around the developments of social Media, Online safety advice and Safe relationships. These inputs have been delivered to children and young people of all school ages and have equally been supported by direct delivery to both professionals and parents to support their own children in this developing area.

Communications with schools have included Heads and the Director meet termly and in 2013-2014 safeguarding children, early help, thresholds and information sharing were regularly discussed, clarified and communicated at these meetings. Papers are also disseminated to all schools on these issues through *Central Essentials* the weekly schools' newsletter. For example, a letter from the Chair of the LSCB was disseminated to all schools summarising lessons learned from case audit and the LSCB plans to ensure these lessons impact on practice through training and communications.

A communication strategy and action plan is a priority for the Board in 2014 and this will include the launch of a new website and involving children and young people.

The LSCB's role is to **ensure the effectiveness** of what is done by agencies for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area.(Working Together 2013)

In order to deliver on its statutory duties to ensure effectiveness of what is done by agencies, the Board reviewed the following co-ordinating functions:

## **Learning from practice**

A Learning and Improvement Framework was agreed by the LSCB in February 2014. It describes the LSCB approach to learning from performance data, case audit, case review, training evaluation and national experience and research. Other key actions to ensure the building blocks of a learning strategic partnership are in place include:

- New protocols on case review have been created, using local and national experience and reflecting the LSCB priorities.
- A case audit toolkit has been designed and will be piloted in 2014.
- An LSCB learning log has been created. This is a repository of learning to track impact and ensure lessons learned are used to improve practice.

Learning from **multi-agency case audit** activity took place during a period of organisational change and while these changes slowed progress down, the work nevertheless continued, reaching a conclusion and lessons learned in February 2014. The audits were carried out using a combination of chronology building and facilitated group discussions, using an external consultant who drew together the learning in reports and analyses. 8 cases were reviewed and the following is a summary of lessons learned:

***Neglect*** - Practitioners identified the link between neglect and the pre-disposing factors of domestic violence, substance misuse and/or adult mental health problems. Understanding the cumulative nature of neglect and being able to recognise the problem while having a positive relationship with the family requires practitioners to have a particular skills set. Practitioners need the support of their managers and supervisors to help them work through these complexities. Training on neglect in 2014-2015 will emphasise these pre-disposing factors.

***Thresholds and information sharing*** - The LSCB learned that this remains a continuing challenge for practitioners. Upon recognition that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a straightforward intention to share information. However, putting the pieces of information together to inform the decision to refer can sometimes be challenging. The LSCB identified that understanding thresholds in practice can be challenging when working with families with complex needs. Practitioners and managers identified practice challenges in articulating the problems seen and establishing where to go to get help. The benefits of early intervention are indisputable, but practitioners sometimes find it difficult to comprehend the seriousness of a case and decide on appropriate action and referral. The LSCB has delivered the threshold document through a practice communication from the LSCB chair, posting it on the website and disseminating it through partners internal infrastructures. The document was also disseminated to schools, through newsletters and through the Heads and Directors meeting. The training programme 2014-2015 emphasises thresholds and their application. Further case audit in 2014-2015 will assess impact.

***False and non compliance-*** The LSCB learned from practitioners about their experience of the practice challenges when working with parents who can be

very convincing in their attitude towards interventions. Some will refuse outright, but others will indicate a willingness to co-operate but will avoid interventions which lead to change and positive impact on the child. This issue has been incorporated into the LSCB training programme and is included in the case audit programme.

**Core group working-** The importance of core groups in facilitating information sharing was identified as practitioners need support with practical arrangements to ensure timely and efficient information sharing and core group processes have been revised.

In the light of experience in 2013-2014, a new case audit methodology has been designed. Partners will use an analytical tool to assess cases using agreed practice standards. The audit tool will assess the impact of learning from the findings above as well as information on a range of basic child protection standards. A learning log has been created to capture learning from experience and this will be updated and used as evidence to inform the LSCB priorities and training for 2014-2015. The cycle of learning will be embedded and impact evaluation tools will be reviewed to ensure training is delivering improvement in practice.

**Learning from serious case reviews** - There have been no serious case reviews in Central Bedfordshire in 2013-2014, however learning from those published by other local authorities has been communicated to practitioners.

**Learning from child deaths** - Child death rates are reducing in Central Bedfordshire, although demonstrable links with campaigning activities cannot always be made. The numbers of Sudden Unexplained Deaths in Infancy across Bedfordshire is also decreasing. Numbers are low and therefore it is not possible to draw any conclusions on this.

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) in Bedfordshire is County wide and is well developed. The CDOP is a statutory function of the LSCB and BCCG hosts the Child Death Overview Panel manager's post ensuring sound links to both the Designated Office for Safeguarding Children & Young People and public health activities to ensure impact. A full account of the CDOP activities is in the CDOP annual report (Bedfordshire CDOP annual report 2013).

Learning from child deaths have been communicated through discussions with health care professionals and campaigns where robust messages are shared. Examples include safer sleeping practices, smoking cessation and weight management of pregnant women:

- A campaign to discourage co-sleeping has also been widely shared in the community following review of child deaths. Infant mortality and morbidity rates associated with deprivation have been identified, with raised awareness among professionals working in these areas.
- Findings from one death by drowning have led to the delivery of a leaflet advising parents on safety issues whilst swimming; this has

been disseminated to all schools and has been posted on the LSCB website.

Additionally, information sharing sessions on the role and function of the child death review process have been delivered over the past year to police, health and social care professionals across the local authority. The aim was to increase awareness of the process and to share learning with them about why babies/children in this area die and what interventions and messages can be given to parents to try and prevent future child deaths.

### **The child's voice and shaping practice**

The voice of children and young people is heard through the work of the police in supporting the Youth forum and work with the police cadets. There is a strong emphasis in case work practice to ensure the child is seen and listened to alone. This applies even to very young children and is recorded in the management log. This is emphasised in training and is assessed via quality assurance and audit.

There is a strong emphasis in social case work practice to ensure the child is seen and listened to alone. This applies even to very young children and is recorded in the management log. This is emphasised in training and is assessed via quality assurance and audit.

The BCCG quality assurance framework provides safeguarding indicators for the BCCG and for providers. Contracts with all providers ensure schedules emphasise duties in relation to safeguarding children and the importance of listening to the child both at case level and in strategic planning.

At a practice level, expectations around direct engagement with children who are subject to court proceedings, and ascertaining their views, needs, wishes and feelings are set out within the Cafcass Operating Framework (2012) and quality.

### **LSCB effectiveness: overall analysis**

The LSCB development day was used as an opportunity for self-evaluation using the Working Together 2013 guidance and the Ofsted Inspection ratings. Below a summary analysis of this self-evaluation.

While the board has experienced some changes during the year as a result of the disaggregation of some of the shared arrangements with Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board, these changes have had no impact on the management and operation of the Board. A continued focus on performance and the safety of children remained high on the agenda for all partner agencies, reflected in their commitment to meetings and their contributions to this report.

Multi-agency performance evaluation of safeguarding children is in development and local performance measures are consistent with

approaches being taken regionally and nationally. Partners are agreed on the need to develop evaluation techniques using analytical models, concentrating on the interpretation of the data more than the data itself. There is a consensus that learning from data and learning from practice experience are incorporated into the agreed Learning and Improvement Framework.

The LSCB has heard the messages from the front line through case audit. They suggest that priorities are further refined to include concern in practice for children living in households where adults and caregivers have problems with substance misuse, domestic violence and/or adult mental health issues. Commonly referred to as the “toxic trio” in practice, these elements, taken individually or combined, demonstrate increasing risks to children. Added to this, the evidence from the data on children with child protection plans demonstrates a high proportion of children with these factors in the household.

The Board has been concerned to improve arrangements for referral and assessment processes and supports the council’s new arrangements to include early help services into the referral and assessment team. The Board is working on a multi-agency safeguarding hub approach that is incremental and learns the lessons nationally. The partners have therefore agreed to work on a model which is appropriate for Central Bedfordshire using best practice from other areas, but not necessarily following them exactly. This incremental approach will ensure the application of sound risk assessment processes at each stage of development and allowing opportunities to ensure robust evidence informed decision making at identified intervals to ensure the safety of children is central to decision making. This preparation does ensure we are in a good position to enter any Bedfordshire wide MASH arrangements.

## **Conclusions**

This LSCB has delivered within the context of organisational change in the Local Authority and partner agencies. A consistent focus on Safeguarding Children as a priority has been sustained by individual members and for the LSCB as a whole. Partners’ commitment is seen through attendance at meetings as well as co-operating with work streams, such as case audit and training evaluation. The board self evaluation process has enabled partners to work together to gain collective insight into the areas of weakness and the challenges ahead. Informed by evidence from the front line, case audit and performance data, the LSCB has a clear set of priorities and monitors them at each meeting. There is effective challenge by partners seen in the examples provided in this report. The LSCB influences other partnerships to focus on safeguarding children. There is good progress on Child Sexual exploitation and early help. Subject to successful recruitment for schools, membership will be compliant with Working Together guidance and there is an agreed budget. The Learning and Improvement Framework is effectively used by the LSCB to gather evidence to inform priority setting and forward planning. The Threshold document has been widely disseminated with plans to assess impact through case audits.

However, impact on the lives of children is the primary focus of the LSCB and our core business. Performance is steadily improving with the numbers of

children with child protection plans reducing. Multi-agency and internal quality assurance systems ensure transparency, speedy management and sustainable improvement.

## 5. LSCB priorities for 2014-2015

The LSCB self evaluation, performance analysis, case audit and overall effectiveness conclusions serve to inform the priorities for 2014-2015 which are to;

- Ensure children and families have faster, easier access to early help and safeguarding support through the delivery of a multi-agency support hub (MASH);
- Ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding support for children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and/or substance misuse; and
- Ensure the effectiveness of the strategy to deal with child sexual exploitation.

In order to ensure the LSCB functions effectively, it has identified the following areas for development;

- Keep governance of the LSCB under review to ensure the two key statutory objectives are being delivered
- The Learning and Improvement Framework drives improvement in practice.
- Implement the training strategy and evaluate its impact.
- Review and revise policies and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose, up to date and effective
- Ensure that the workforce and the general public are aware of key safeguarding priorities and that practitioners have information to drive best practice and outcomes for children.

The LSCB business plan outlines the detailed actions and targets agreed to monitor progress.



## 6. Governance and accountability

**Delivering the LSCB** - The local authority has prioritised the management of transitional arrangements during disaggregation from a joint LSCB with Bedford Borough to a single LSCB for Central Bedfordshire. Interim management arrangements and leadership from the highest level in Children Services has ensured that priority setting and agenda management were not adversely affected by the changes. Recruitment to a full time permanent business manager's post resulted in a successful appointment and the post-holder commenced in post on April 2nd. The 3 year tenure for the independent chair expires in June 2014 and the re-tendering process is under way at the time of writing.

### **Membership**

The membership of CBSCB meets the statutory requirements set out in the Children Act (2004) and the Working Together 2013 guidance. Details of the governance arrangements and full membership and attendance details of the Strategic Board for 2013/14 are set out in appendix A.

Schools were represented on the LSCB by a representative from the Barnfield Academy Trusts and the school governors' representative. This has provided challenge and influence from the schools to the LSCB and information is disseminated from the LSCB to schools through termly meetings with headteachers and governors and through the schools' information bulletins: *Central Essentials and Governor Essentials*. The schools' governor representative also ensures that safeguarding children is high on the agenda at the local school governors' forum which is chaired by the Executive Member for Children's Service who is also a participant observer member of the LSCB. The virtual head teacher is a member of the LSCB practice and performance group and provides regular input and reports on the educational needs of Children Looked After. Schools' representation on the Board needs further development and headteacher representatives will be invited to participate.

CBSCB demonstrates clear priorities through its business plan and specific areas of achievement such as the impact of multi-agency training and improvements in the quality of practice resulting from multi-agency audits. The CBSCB Independent Chair also meets frequently with the Director of Children's Services and has full access to director level representatives from other partner organisations. The Chair also accounts to and meets regularly with the Chief Executive of the Council.

Representatives from the voluntary sector sit on the Board and are actively engaged in a wide range of strategic and operational groups through the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust. They are able to influence the development of services to support children and families.

The Lead Council Member is a participating observer of the CBSCB who routinely attends the Strategic Board and receives all its written reports. The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services ensures that all Local Authority services engage effectively with the CBSCB and is held to account for the effective working of

the CBSCB by the Chief Executive and challenged where appropriate by the Lead Member. The CBSCB has effective relationships with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children's Trust and the Independent Chair of CBSCB is a full member of the Children's Trust and attended all of its meetings in 2013-14. The development of a protocol to confirm the joint working with partner Boards is a priority for development.

**Financing and staffing 2013/14.** The work of the CBSCB is funded through contributions from partner agencies in line with a funding formula agreed by agencies in 2010 and adhered to since that time. The funding arrangements now reflect the disaggregation of the Boards from 1 October 2013 and the contributions to and expenditure from the CBSCB budget for 2013/14 were as follows:

Income 2013/14		Expenditure 2013/14	
Agency	Contribution (£)		Budget (£)
Bedford Borough (share of costs prior to disaggregation)	27,828.73	Staffing costs*	155,521.22
Central Bedfordshire	72,299.10	Cost of Independent chair	45,000.00
Police	25,146.37	Professional services/consultancy	40,142.82
NHS Bedfordshire CCG	69,437.10	General costs - website maintenance, office supplies, equipment.	2846.71
Probation	7,906.10	Training – venue costs, catering, trainers, e-learning licenses, agency administrator	39,856.83
Cafcass	1,100.00	CDOP**	6,761.60
Income - from training, grants, receipts in advance etc.	79,650.18	<b>Total:</b>	<b>290,129.18</b>
CDOP	6,761.60		
<b>Total:</b>	<b>290,129.18</b>		

\* Staffing costs include salaries for the 1.0 FTE Business Manager, 1.0 FTE administrator, 1.0 FTE Training Officer, 0.5 FTE Training Commissioning and Development Manager

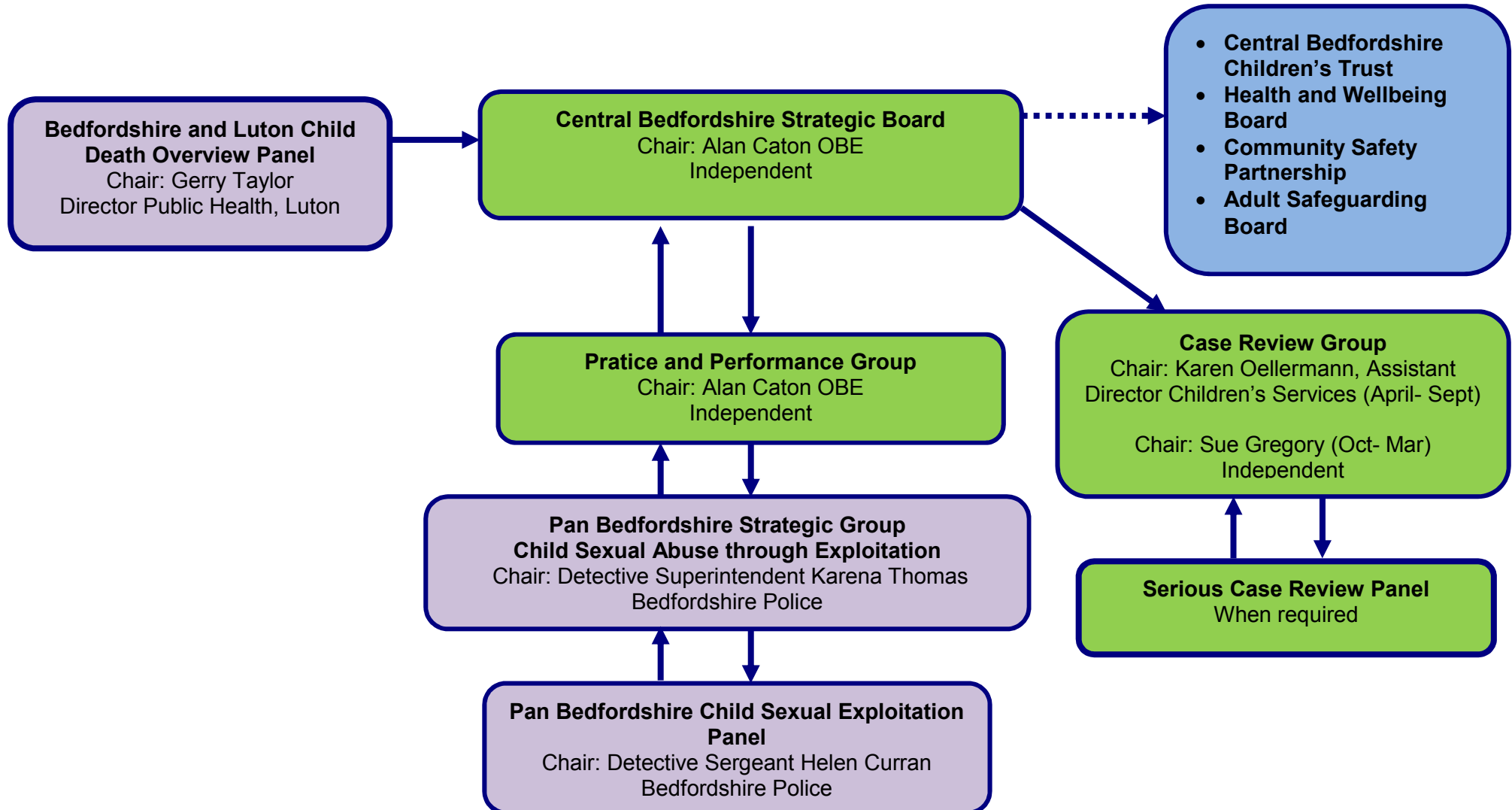
\*\* The total cost of CDOP is £33,808. The CDOP Manager is employed 3 days per week to manage the process. The cost of funding this post is met by the 3 Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Luton Clinical Commissioning Group (LCCG) and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG).

## Appendix A - LSCB attendance

Membership and attendance at the four meetings of the Strategic Board for the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board during April 2013 – March 2014 (Meetings held: 17th May 13, 17th Sept 13, 05th Dec 13 and 27th Feb 14).

Agency	Officer	Attendance by Agency
Bedfordshire Police	Nigel Trippett, Assistant Chief Constable or Karena Thomas, Detective Superintendent	4
Bedfordshire and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups	Anne Murray, Director of Quality & Nursing or Helena Hughes, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children & Young People	4
SEPT Community Health Service Bedfordshire	Dawn Andrews, Head of Service Safeguarding Children	3
Bedford Hospital	Nina Fraser, Director of Nursing or Lynda Fitzgerald, Clinical Business Unit Manager Women & Children's Services	3
Luton and Dunstable Hospital (joined 11/11/13)	Patricia Reid, Director of Nursing	1
NHS England	Heather Moulder, Director of Nursing & Quality	4
Lead Member for Children's Services	Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services	3
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services and Youth Offending Service	Edwina Grant, Central Bedfordshire Council	2
Central Bedfordshire Council	David Jones, Interim Assistant Director/ Stuart Mitchelmore, Assistant Director for Adult Services	3
Central Bedfordshire Council	Sue Ioannou, Head of Quality Assurance CRS	
Central Bedfordshire Council	Karen Oellermann, Assistant Director Commissioning and Partnerships	
Central Bedfordshire Council	Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Operations	4
Bedfordshire Probation	Emma Osborne & Linda Hennigan, Chief Executive	3
Cafcass Luton, Herts and Beds	Jane Stuart, Service Manager & Carol Pennington, Senior Service Manager	1
Voluntary Organisations for children, young people & families	Linda Bulled, VOCypf Officer	4
Home-Start Central Bedfordshire	Linda Johnson, Chief Executive Officer	2
Lay Members (Board Membership reviewed after meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2013) joined?	Joan Bailey (CBE)	2
	Linda Hockey	1
	Sue Howley (MBE)	3
Independent Chair for (CBSCB)	Phil Picton	4

## Appendix B - The LSCB governance structure 2014-2015



## Appendix C - Glossary

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
BBSCB	Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board
BCCG	NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Groups
BDAP	Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
BPT	Bedfordshire Probation Trust
BYOS	Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service
Cafcass	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBSCB	Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board
CDOP	Child Death Overview Process
CEOP	Child Exploitation Online Protection
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
CTB	Children's Trust Board
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
DA	Domestic Abuse
DARO	Domestic Abuse Repeat Offender
DfE	Department for Education
EHA	Early Help Assessment
GP	General Practitioner
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspection of Prisons
LA	Local Authority
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MST-PSB	Multi Systemic Therapy – Problem Sexual Behaviours
NHSCB	National Health Service Commissioning Board
PPU	Public Protection Unit (Police)
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SCIE	The Social Care Institute for Excellence
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEPT	South Essex Partnership Trust
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely
SUDI	Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy
TAC	Team Around the Child



## Contact us...

Për Informacion Per Informazione Za Informacije नगरवारी लयी  
المعلومات معلومات کے لئی তথ্যের জন্য Za Informacja برای اطلاع

by telephone: 0300 300 8000

by email: [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

