

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 January 2016

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### **Annual Report of the Resilience Group for Schools and other Settings (September 2014 – July 2015)**

*Hereinafter referred to as the Schools' Resilience Group (or Group)*

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#### **Purpose of this report**

1. The Schools' Resilience Group Annual Report is the vehicle by which the Children's Services Management Team (CSMT) monitors the work of the Schools Resilience Group, and which in turn enables it to be fully accountable.
2. To provide members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the work of the Schools' Resilience Group and the opportunity to review its progress against the objectives for 2014/15 set out in the previous Annual Report.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

1. Review and comment on the Annual Report
2. Endorse the objectives identified by the Schools' Resilience Group for its work across 2015 / 16 detailed in 'Conclusion and Next Steps'.

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Comments and Recommendations**

3. The previous Annual Report of the Schools' Resilience Group was presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2014. The Committee endorsed the Group's proposed objectives for 2014/15 which were set out within the report. These are identified in italics in the Executive Summary.

## **INTRODUCTION**

4. The Resilience Group for Schools and other Settings (originally called the 'Critical Incidents in Schools Group') was adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) in April 2009 at which time it was led by the Emergency Planning Team and supported by the Head of School Support and the Area Education Officer. The Group was originally established under Bedfordshire County Council, three years before the re-structuring of Local Authorities in 2009, which saw the creation of CBC.
5. Following consultation with the Director of Children's Services in April 2011, it was decided that the Group should henceforth be chaired by a School Governor. Once the new Chairperson was in place, to ensure it was fit-for-purpose going forward, the Group conducted a wide-ranging review, covering: membership, terms of reference and current work programme.
6. In August 2011, the Group was given its current name to reflect its broader overview of CBC educational establishments. New Terms of Reference were drawn up and subsequently approved by the Children's Services Management Team (CSMT) from which the Group derives its governance.
7. This is the third Annual Report of the Schools' Resilience Group which covers the period from September 2014 to August 2015.
8. The Schools' Resilience Group provides a forum for the relevant, key CBC officers, supported by Headteachers and School Governors, to consider and, as appropriate, recommend and develop CBC support and guidance for educational establishments in relation to Emergency and Business Continuity Planning.
9. In operational terms, the Group acts as a consultative forum for CBC's Compliance and Risk Adviser who is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations of the Group are implemented in line with other CBC policies and procedures. The Group meets once a term; and reports annually to the CSMT and to CBC's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This Annual Report comprises two sections, as follows:

**The Executive Summary** - provides an assessment of progress against objectives for the same period (which were listed in the previous annual report). It also provides brief details of the Group's work in other areas; plus some data about school closures and other significant incidents during 2014/15

**Main Body** - gives further detail of the above, including detail of the evidence underpinning these assessments

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*(Objectives contained within the 2013 -14 Annual Report are denoted in italics)*

### **The School Open Status (SOS) system**

**Objective:** *To successfully oversee the final phase of SOS development and provide training to commissioned providers of schools' transport with regard to their use of the SOS system*

#### **Assessment:**

10. Not achieved. The proposed development of the SOS system to incorporate alerts for closed transport routes is currently under wider review in order to identify the most cost effective, efficient and secure means of communicating route closures to parents of the children affected.

### **Emergency and Business Continuity Planning in Pre-Schools**

**Objective:** *To continue to collect pre-school data in relation to Emergency and Business Continuity Planning, in order to be able to establish a clearer and fuller picture of preparedness within Central Bedfordshire's pre-school sector to manage effectively unforeseen contingencies.*

#### **Assessment:**

11. Achieved – an ongoing process. The emerging picture from the data collected thus far, is of a sector having in place few such plans, other than those required in law;
12. To encourage the development of plans to address this cross-sector weakness, CBC circulated to all pre-schools in its region in March 2015 relevant guidance plus associated planning template. The Group considers it important for CBC to continue to collect relevant data for this sector. In the light of this it will consider what further action may be advisable

### **Resilient Schools Award**

**Objective:** *To develop, pilot and launch a 'Resilient Schools' award scheme – drawing on findings from the biennial survey of Emergency and Business Continuity planning in all schools in the Central Bedfordshire area. It is proposed that the evidence required for assessment of awards is collected as*

*part of the existing data collection process which as a result may be subject to a review with regard to timing.*

**Assessment:**

13. Significant progress: an on-line tool which enables schools to self-assess (confirming the extent of their existing Emergency and Business Continuity planning) and CBC to verify, has been developed. A trial by six schools in April 2015 led to some further improvement in this tool.

14. The Group intends to promote this Award scheme to schools during the 2015 Autumn term; with the intention of it being fully launched in January 2016.

**'Managing Emergencies in Schools' guidance**

**Objective:** *To further develop the 'Managing Emergencies in School' guidance to:*

- *Incorporate the most recent guidance around utility outages.*
- *Provide schools with clear and succinct advice regarding roles and responsibilities of key staff in the immediate aftermath of an incident.*
- *Link with, and cross-reference to, the 'Resilient Schools' Award Scheme*

**Assessment:**

15. Achieved: reflecting the feed-back and advice which the Group previously received from the Scrutiny Committee, this guidance has been up-dated and made available to all schools and academies.

**Additional Work**

16. During 2014/15 the Group has continued to engage with outside agencies in order to be able to inform schools and academies of best practice in areas related to Emergency and Business Continuity planning. To this end representatives from the Police and Fire and Rescue have made presentations relevant to schools to the Group.

**School closures/other significant incidents**

17. In the period covered by this report, there have been no school closures resulting from severe weather. However there have been two utility related school closures, one closure as a result of a police investigation in a house close to a lower school and two simultaneous

school lockdowns as a result of a direct warning from Bedfordshire Police concerning an armed man in the vicinity of the schools

## **MAIN BODY**

### **School Open status System (SOS)**

18. Concern has been expressed that the proposal to incorporate route closure alerts from school transport providers into the (non-secure) SOS system, could, in some circumstances, have unintended and adverse safeguarding consequences. In part because of this, CBC's Schools' Transport Team is currently therefore considering incorporating alerts for route closures into their new management system **Routewise**. Adoption of this system - which would render unnecessary any proposed, related improvements to the SOS system - would have two advantages:

- It will enable parents of children using school transport to be given a secure login to register for alerts
- Administrative support to maintain the databases of transport providers, would be required only for one, not two, CBC systems.

### **Emergency and Business Continuity Planning Support for Pre Schools**

19. In January 2014, a survey of all private, voluntary and independent providers of pre-school education was undertaken in order to establish a clear picture of the extent of Resilience arrangements in pre-school settings within the Central Bedfordshire area. The response to this survey was poor; only 23 responses out of a potential 140. This was reported to the Scrutiny Committee in December 2014.

20. In view of the poor response, data continued to be collected until March 2015 at which point the data collection process was reviewed in consultation with the CBC Early Years Team. In light of this discussion, it was agreed to cease collection of this data as an on-going process, and to revert to the original (pre-2014) plan to do so on a biennial basis. The next such collection of pre-school data is therefore planned for the Spring of 2016. This will provide a timely indication of the impact in this sector of recently published guidance (**see Appendix 1 & 2**).

21. In terms of total data collected, by March 2015 44 responses had been received. Of these:

- 42 pre-schools reported having some emergency arrangements
- 34 had lockdown procedures
- 20 had written an Emergency Plan; and
- 11 would be able to continue delivering a service if accommodation was unavailable.

22. Although the survey return was low, the data obtained strongly suggests that pre-schools tend not to have Emergency Plans in place (45% of the most pro-active settings [i.e. those who responded to the survey] reported that they did not have plans in place).
23. In March 2015, following a pilot project with one pre-school, CBC circulated 'Emergency Planning Guidance for Pre-Schools', together with an associated template, to all pre-school settings in the Central Bedfordshire area. (**Appendix 1 & 2**) The guidance includes advice on evacuation, lockdown and business continuity. These documents have also been made available on the CBC website.

### **Resilient Schools Award**

24. Given the importance attached to all schools having robust Emergency and Business Continuity plans in place, the Schools' Resilience Group believes that schools which are pro-active in this area should be publicly recognised for their resilience arrangements, not least because of the considerable contribution such arrangements make towards the safety and safeguarding of children. Whilst Ofsted do not provide a separate grade for safeguarding, a written judgement is included in the leadership and management section of an Ofsted report. The Resilient Schools Award will provide external verification and acknowledgement that a robust and resilient response to potential risks, is in place.
25. Between January and April 2015, the process, assessment criteria and documentation for the Resilient Schools Awards took shape; and, following feed-back from a trial with six schools (1 x Upper; 2 x Middle and 3 x Lower), were endorsed by the Schools Resilience Group. Three of these schools would have qualified for the award; while two realised that they needed to further develop their Emergency Plans because the process had exposed gaps in their resilience arrangements. CBC's Compliance and Risk Adviser has arranged to meet separately with these two schools to offer appropriate guidance.
26. CBC, in making this award to qualifying schools, are well aware that in so doing they are publicly confirming that such schools have in place arrangements which at least meet a basic level of resilience. It is therefore considered essential for a CBC officer to have sight of every application (and its supporting documentation).
27. It is proposed that the award scheme is promoted to schools via 'Central Essentials' and 'Governor Essentials' during the Autumn Term. The scheme will go live in January 2016 when it will be launched as part of a presentation ceremony with one of the pilot schools.

## **Schools' Emergency and Business Continuity Planning Guidance**

28. In February 2012, the 'Managing Emergencies in Schools' guidance and the Emergency Plan template were made available to schools and academies in the CBC region via the on-line Schools Portal. In a survey of schools conducted in February 2014, 51 of the 61 schools which responded (85%) reported having viewed this guidance.

29. Between June and August 2015, this guidance was reviewed and updated; in September it was made available to all schools (**appendix 3**). Significant changes and/or additions to the previous version were:

- a section-by-section reference to the CBC Resilient Schools Award and how individual schools could best satisfy the assessment criteria required
- a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities in the recommended 'School Emergency Leadership Team' (SELT)
- inclusion of role cards within the Emergency Plan Template for identified SELT members and for 'other staff'.
- inclusion of CBC Lockdown procedures
- cross reference to CBC's 'Coping with Severe Weather' guidance for Schools
- re-ordering of sections within both the guidance document and the Emergency template, to ensure both documents are aligned with each other
- inclusion of recent examples of best practice locally and nationally

## **Visiting Speakers**

30. In the period covered by this report, the Schools' Resilience Group have continued to engage with outside agencies in order to inform best practice guidance to schools and academies in the Central Bedfordshire area.

31. An officer of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) attended a Resilience Group meeting in March 2015. The group were updated on the role of BFRS in auditing schools, planning for coping with fires and in the provision of relevant advice and guidance. In the light of this briefing:

- CBC contacted all schools and academies within Central Bedfordshire and signposted to the [www.bedsfire.com](http://www.bedsfire.com) website as a source of further guidance and advice and in particular, the Fire Risk Assessment template.
- the Group have a better understanding of the inspection process operated by BFRS in relation to Schools and Pre-Schools in Central Bedfordshire

- the Group have a better understanding of the process of schools' Fire Risk Assessments; the recently up-dated guidance to schools 'Managing School Emergencies' reflects this;
32. An officer of Bedfordshire Police attended a Resilience Group meeting in June 2015 to help the Group better understand the resilience challenges faced by schools in the aftermath of extremism-related events. The Group were keen to explore the extent to which issues around the new Counter Terrorism and Security Act (which places a duty on schools and local authorities to prevent pupils becoming radicalised and being drawn into terrorism) affect schools. In light of this presentation and subsequent discussion, the Group concluded that radicalisation is a Safeguarding issue and beyond its remit, although it would continue to monitor national and local developments.
33. Subsequent liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and with key officers within CBC have confirmed that training opportunities are in place to support schools in the management of the threat of radicalisation.

### **Notable Incidents in Central Bedfordshire Schools**

34. During January 2015, a lower school was forced to close for the afternoon when builders nearby damaged a mains electric cable. The school reported loss of telephones, heating and fire alarm. The school re-opened as usual the following morning.
35. During June 2015 another lower school was forced to close for the morning due to a lack of mains water as a result of a general outage in the area. The school was able to re-open in the afternoon.
36. On 19 June, the presence of an armed man on the streets of Houghton Regis was reported to police. The police issued a general alert and contacted two nearby lower schools directly. As a result the schools concerned followed lockdown procedures. At the time, this incident was not reported to Central Bedfordshire Council either by the Police or by the schools concerned.
37. As a follow up to the lockdown incident, CBC has issued a general notice to schools and academies in the Central Bedfordshire area to remind them of the importance of ensuring it is immediately made aware of any incidents likely to lead to closure, even if only temporary. A meeting has also been held with a representative of Bedfordshire Police to raise their awareness of CBC Lockdown Procedures.

### **Council Priorities**

During the period covered by this report, the following council priorities were current and relevant to the work undertaken by the Group:

- Central Bedfordshire Council's Strategic Plan 2012-16 Priority 3 – Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable
- The Children and Young People's Plan 2015-2017 Priority 1 – Improved education attainment. Outcome 4 – Well led and managed schools

Future work strands will contribute to the following objectives as identified in the Council's Five Year Plan (2015 – 2020):

- Improve Education and Skills
- Protecting the Vulnerable; improving wellbeing

### **Corporate Implications**

38. There is a risk of damage to the reputation of CBC caused by inadequate Emergency and Business Continuity Planning by one of its establishments and a perceived failure of the Council to have effectively supported schools in their ability to respond to a school emergency.

39. There is a risk of being unable to deliver the work plan of the Resilience Group. This is owing to reduced capacity as a result of the medium term financial plan.

### **Legal Implications**

40. Local authorities have certain responsibilities and powers in relation to major civil emergencies, accidents and hazards under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Central Bedfordshire Council has a duty to assess, plan and advise in relation to emergency situations which would affect the performance of its functions and therefore to promote Emergency and Business Continuity in Schools and Other Settings.

41. The Local Authority also has a duty under the common law to take care of pupils in the same way that a prudent parent would. In addition, the Local Authority is the employer in the context of community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nursery schools. Therefore the duties of an employer apply to school safety.

42. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the employer in a school must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. Regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 set out in detail what actions employers are required to take. For example, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to:

- assess the risks to staff and others affected by school activities in order to identify the health and safety measures that are necessary and, in certain circumstances, keep a record of the significant findings of that assessment;
  - introduce measures to manage those risks (risk management);
  - tell their employees about the risks and measures to be taken to manage the risks; and
  - ensure that adequate training is given to employees on health and safety matters.
43. In particular, Regulation 8 requires employers to provide employees with information on procedures to be followed in the event of danger or threat of danger.
44. The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 set out requirements for first aid provision.
45. The Equality Act 2010 requires employers to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to their premises to ensure that disabled people are not at a disadvantage. This includes ensuring that disabled people can leave the premises safely in the event of a fire or other emergency.
46. The current legal requirements governing fire safety procedures in schools are set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This legislation places a duty on all employers and other ‘responsible persons’ (which include the proprietor of schools in the case of independent schools and Academies), to undertake fire risk assessments.
47. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 set out standards for workplaces such as acceptable temperatures and facilities such as the availability of drinking water.
48. The Department for Education has published Guidance ( March 2014) for schools entitled: Emergencies and severe weather: schools and early years settings.

The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 apply to schools maintained by local authorities in England (including pupil referral units). They set out the standards required of all schools to which the Regulations apply. These include Regulation 6 in relation to health, safety and welfare standards:

“School premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein must be maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.”

49. Independent Schools including Academies are subject to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 which set out duties of the proprietor of the school in relation to welfare, health and safety of pupils (regulations 6-16).

### **Financial Implications**

50. None arising

### **Equalities Implications**

51. None Identified

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

52. To review and as necessary update, the 'Lockdown Procedures: Guidance to Schools' document.
53. To review and as necessary update, the 'Coping with Severe Weather: Guidance to Schools' document.
54. To undertake, in Spring 2016, a second survey of pre-schools, in order to gauge the effectiveness of the Emergency Planning Guidance first circulated to this sector in March 2015.
55. In close co-ordination with CBC's Schools' Transport Team, to identify and put into operation, the most cost-effective and efficient means of communicating school transport route closure up-dates to parents.
56. Given that responsibility for Emergency and Business Continuity Planning is now often included in the role of school and academy Business Managers, to recruit such an individual onto the Schools' Resilience Group to better inform CBC's policy considerations and communications around this subject
57. To promote and launch the Resilient Schools Award to all schools and academies across Central Bedfordshire and to achieve a minimum target of 50% of schools and academies achieving a Bronze Award in the first year of the schemes operation. Evidence submitted by schools in support of their application will be recorded and incorporated into annual monitoring statistics.

### **Appendices**

The following Appendices are provided through an electronic link:

Appendix 1 [Emergency Planning for Pre-School Settings](#)

Appendix 2 [Emergency Plan Template for Pre-School Settings](#)

Appendix 3 [Managing Emergencies in School](#)

### **Background Papers**

The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

None