

# Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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| <b>Schedule</b>               | Tuesday 21 January 2020, 10:00 AM — 2:00 PM GMT   |
| <b>Venue</b>                  | Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 9TQ   |
| <b>Description</b>            | <p>To Chair and Members of the Committee:-</p> <p>Cllr D Shelvey (Chair)<br/>Cllr M Liddiard (Vice Chair)</p> <p>Councillors: Foster, Versallion, Wallace, Ryan, Tamara, Berry, Smith, Bowater<br/>Co-opted Members: K Minor, L King, D Morton, D Main<br/>Substitute: Councillors Firth, Chatterley, Collins, Farrell, Gomm</p>  |
| <b>Notes for Participants</b> | <p>A member of the public who wishes to speak at this meeting can register to speak online via this link:<br/><a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/speak">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/speak</a></p> <p>This meeting may be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast online and can be viewed at <a href="https://centralbedfordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home">https://centralbedfordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home</a>. The Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council. Any footage will be on the Council's website, a copy of it will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By attending the meeting, you are deemed to have consented to being filmed by the Council. Full details on the use of recordings is provided via the link above.</p> <p>For further information on this meeting contact:<br/><a href="mailto:committeemeetings@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">committeemeetings@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Hard copies of the papers for this meeting are not routinely made available to those in attendance. Should you require a copy of please download this from the Council website beforehand.</p> |

## Agenda

**A great place to live and work.**

## 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members.

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## 2. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 November 2019 and to note actions taken since that meeting.

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## 3. Members' Interests

To receive from Members any declarations of interest and of any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

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## 4. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

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## 5. Petitions

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part 4G of the Constitution.

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## 6. Questions, Statements or Deputations

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part 4G of the Constitution.

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## 7. Call-In

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Part 4D of the Constitution.

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## 8. Requested Items

To consider any items referred to the Committee at the request of a Member in accordance with Part 4D of the Constitution.

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## 9. Executive Members' Updates

To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Members for Families, Education and Children and Health

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## 10. Neuro-Developmental Disorders (NDD) Pathway



The Committee will be provided an overview of work being undertaken to develop the Neuro-Developmental Disorder Pathway alongside Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council and the Council's health partners. The report details the purpose of this work, progress to date and next steps.

|  |    |
|--|----|
|  200121 CS OSC item 10 Neuro Developmental Disorders Pathways Cover report v2.docx        | 8  |
|  200121 CS OSC item 10 Appendix A Neuro Developmental Disorders pathway presentation.pptx | 13 |

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## 11. Progress report on Short Breaks





The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations project. This includes recent activity and engagement with families with children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and with the voluntary organisations who deliver services to these families.

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|  200121 CS OSC item 11 Short Breaks Report v2.docx               | 22 |
|  200121 CS OCS item 11 Appendix A Short Breaks presentation.pptx | 25 |

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## 12. Looked After Children (LAC) Placements Strategy (including Independent Fostering Agency - IFAs)

The purpose of the report is to share an update on the recent consultation around options for Looked After Children (LAC) placements, to share the Equalities Impact Assessment which was requested as an action from a report delivered at an earlier meeting and to outline the first phase of the commissioning intentions for LAC placements which is for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements.

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|  200121 CS OSC item 12 LAC Placements Cover report v2.docx          | 40 |
|  200121 CS OSC item 12 Appendix A LAC Placements Presentation .pptx | 43 |
|  200121 CS OSC item 12 Appendix B LAC Placements.docx               | 51 |
|  200121 CS OSC item 12 Appendix C LAC Placements.doc                | 61 |



## 13. Consultation On The Council's Admission Arrangements For The Academic Year 2020/21

To seek the views of the Committee with regards to proposed changes to the admission arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

|  |     |
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|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Admission Arrangements Report v2.docx              | 73  |
|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Appendix A Admissions Arrangements Exec Report.pdf | 76  |
|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Appendix 1 Admission Arrangements.pdf              | 88  |
|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Appendix 2 Admission Arrangements.pdf              | 99  |
|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Appendix 3 Admission Arrangements.pdf              | 108 |
|  200121 CS OSC item 13 Appendix 4 Admission Arrangements.pdf              | 117 |

## 14. Work Programme 2019/20 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee will receive details of the currently drafted work programme and the Executive forward plan

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|  200121 CS OSC item 14 work programme report .docx    | 119 |
|  200121 CS OSC Item 14 Appendix A Work Programme.docx | 122 |

## 15. Children's Services: Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report 2018/19

The report fulfils the council's statutory duty to monitor the effectiveness of the complaint procedure and produce an annual report for children's social care. The report provides statistics on the number of compliments and complaints received; complaint causes; complaint outcomes; performance; and learning/improvements resulting from complaints for 2018/19. This report is for information only.

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|  200121 CS OSC item 15 Annual Report Childrens Services v2.docx | 123 |
|  200121 CS OSC item 15 Appendix A Annual Report.pdf             | 126 |

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At a meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Priory House  
Council Chamber on 19 November 2019 from 10am

**Present:** Cllr D Shelvey (Chair)  
Cllr M Liddiard (Vice-Chair)

**Members:** Cllrs M Foster Cllrs A Ryan  
M Versallion J Tamara  
E Wallace R Berry  
D Bowater M Smith

**Parental Co-optees:** K Minor  
L King

**Church of England Co-optee:** D Morton

**Members in Attendance:** Cllrs S Clark Cllrs T Stock  
S Goodchild

**Officers in Attendance:** P Fraser Assistant Director - Children's Services  
Jody Nason Head of Children's Services  
Commissioning and Performance  
Rachel Williams Practice Manager  
Ruth Coals Head of Professional Standards  
and Principal Social Worker  
Jackie Edwards Head of Virtual School and  
Vulnerable Pupils  
R Preen Scrutiny Policy Adviser

## 1. Minutes

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 September 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 07 October 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendments:-

- **That Cllr R Berry had given his apologies for the meeting held on 07 October 2019.**

## **2. Members' Interests**

Cllr D Shelvey (Chair) declared a pecuniary interest in item 14 as a Director of Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) but that a dispensation had been granted via the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Cllr M Liddiard (Vice Chair) declared an interest in item 14 as a Governor of Robert Bloomfield Academy.

## **3. Chairman's Announcement and Communications**

The Chair informed the Committee that two parent governor representatives had resigned their posts at their respective schools and therefore could no longer remain as co-opted Members on the Committee. On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked them for their service. In addition, Members were advised that the agenda would be re-ordered in order to bring forward items 14 and 13 to the beginning of the meeting, with the remaining agenda items following. Item 16 was to note and for information only but if Members had any queries relating to the content of the report, they would be addressed at the Executive Member update.

## **4. Petitions**

None.

## **5. Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

## **6. Call-In**

None.

## **7. Requested Items**

None.

## **8. Executive Members' Update**



The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children advised the Committee that a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection was underway, with the outcome expected over the coming weeks. The Council had been working closely with the Greenwood Academies Trust and the Department for Education in relation to the closure of Houghton Regis Academy and was pleased to announce that an agreement had been reached that the school would remain open until 2022, therefore enabling a smooth transition of pupils to the new school site once it was open. The Council had also allocated additional funds to the school to support teaching and learning for those pupils in years 10 and 11 who would be due to sit exams during 2020 and 2021. Members were advised that the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) had now formally launched and were also appraised of local and national awards which the youth service and social work teams had been a part of and received nominations for.

In response to a Member query the Executive Member advised that business contacts would be provided to Ward Members as had been previously agreed.

Members recommended that a joint press release between the Council and the Academy Trust be circulated in relation to the support offered and progress made at Houghton Regis Academy.

The Ward Member for Parkside thanked the students at Houghton Regis Academy for proactively holding to account those responsible for the future of the school and for their positivity in the face of uncertainty. In response to a Member query the Assistant Director for Education confirmed that those other schools in financial deficit were currently under license with a credible plan of recovery, supported by the Council and their Academy School Trusts as appropriate.

The Executive Member for Health advised the Committee that flu vaccines had been delayed within Central Bedfordshire and would instead be administered in January 2020. Members expressed concern that this was late in the flu season, querying the effectiveness of the vaccine at that time in light of which it was recommended that the issue be taken up with the clinical commissioning group (CCG) at the earliest opportunity and that parents and schools be alerted. New commissioning arrangements were in place with regards to weight management of children, with more emphasis on those activities which should be included within the curriculum. Members were advised that the two and a half year progress check for children had been changed to three and three-quarter years and that data was positive, demonstrating the effectiveness of the new approach.

In relation to item 16 Members queried the assertion that figures were based on full cost recovery in light of which it was confirmed that overheads and staff costs were recovered but that figures were not based on genuine commercial cost recovery.

Members agreed that particular elements required more detail in future reports and that all services needed to be competitive in order to ensure buy in from schools.

## 9. School Improvement Team - Impact

The Assistant Director, Education introduced a report and presentation which set out the work of the school improvement team to date. The team had been introduced during the second half of 2018 and so, assessing the immediate impact on academic outcomes was a challenge, particularly as there had not been a full quota of staff to date, however feedback from schools in relation to the support offered had been positive, with Ofsted also recognising the value provided by the service.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The impact of improvements compared to Central Bedfordshire's statistical neighbours, with officers anticipating that by focusing on narrowing the disadvantaged pupil gap outcomes would improve by several percentage points.
- The importance of tangible targets and regular monitoring in relation to improvements.
- That schools were encouraged to share the outcomes of their annual appraisals and self-evaluations with their governing bodies.
- That Members were encouraged by the work of Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) and that an invitation be extended to them to attend the Council and deliver information to Members.
- The need to analyse data in relation to recent reading projects.
- The need for regular engagement with the Regional Schools Commissioner given that Academy schools fell within their remit and not that of the local authority.

### **RECOMMENDED:-**

- 1. That identified improvements relating to specific schools be shared with the relevant Chair of Governors as well as Head Teachers.**
- 2. That measurable and timely targets be provided at a future meeting.**
- 3. That data in relation to the evaluation of schools be included within a future report.**

## 10. Schools for the Future

The Assistant Director for Education provided Members with information on the consultation timeline and decision-making pathway, confirming that the Committee itself was a consultee at this stage in the process and that comments would be taken into account before any conclusions were drawn. Due to future housing growth it was anticipated that there could be as many as 25000 additional school places required and that the Council was working with all parties including academy trusts and the

Diocese in order that a collaborative approach to schools for the future be effectively managed.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The importance of a phased approach to any changes, aligning with the wider project in order to manage the smooth transition of changes to structure.
- The rationale behind the timing of each cluster and when the next one would be brought before the Committee, to which it was confirmed that phase one of the Leighton Linlade cluster was likely to be next.
- That the quality of engagement with schools and the Diocese had been exemplary.
- Concerns that the wording on the consultation document was unclear, to which it was confirmed that the cluster plans were the plans of all schools within that cluster, not of the Council and that parents had the opportunity through the consultation process to voice their views and any concerns they had.
- The need to include additional information in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision.
- The importance of taking into account the professional opinion of Head Teachers, that sufficient support for any transition or change in structure was required and that the process of recruitment and retention of quality teaching staff needed to be robust.

**RECOMMENDED that any future cluster consultations include information with regards to feeder and catchment schools and that this additional information be expanded upon within the FAQ's for the current Shefford and Stotfold cluster consultation.**

**(Cllr M Smith abstained from the recommendations)**

## **11. Alternative Education Provision**

The Head of Children's Services Commissioning and Performance provided Members with the background to the service and what the most recent project was designed to achieve. This included meeting the needs of vulnerable learners, keeping children and young people in mainstream schools, reducing exclusions and with a flexible approach which met the needs of children and their families. Referral hubs would be in place by September 2020 with the aim that children would remain in a mainstream school setting, whilst accessing appropriate provision from elsewhere.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the outcomes for children attending the Academy of Central Bedfordshire were available and could be reported at a future meeting.
- That despite a rise in fixed term exclusions no children under the age of 11 had been permanently excluded within the last academic year and that schools were

- able to easily access the service and appropriate support before a child reached exclusion stage.
- That the service was commissioned but take up amongst schools was extremely high with only seven schools across the region choosing to source support from elsewhere.
- That training for parents was provided via the sensory impairment teams, which included managing challenging behaviour.
- Despite there being no statutory duty to capture the needs of home educated children, the process for supporting and monitoring their progress was robust and the team maintained good contact with parents and children.

**RECOMMENDED:-**

- 1. That the Committee support the development of a pathway in collaboration with schools.**
- 2. That the timetable for the accessibility of referral hubs remain as September 2020.**
- 3. That progress data be delivered in a future report.**

## **12. Children and Young People Plan - Early Help Focus**

The Practice Manager delivered a report and presentation which set out the background to the early help available to children and their families, highlighting that performance for supporting families had exceeded targets, the percentage of referrals had reduced following intervention and that the number of children entering statutory services had reduced compared to the local authority's statistical neighbours.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That costs had reduced in light of the decrease in referrals.
- The need to work in a preventative way and understand the circumstances under which families were referred back to the service.
- That peak periods in referrals were often centered around school holidays, particularly the summer months.
- Whether the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) had the capacity to meet the demands and needs of children and young people.
- The need to consider how the support of the voluntary and community sector could best be put to use.

**RECOMMENDED that a Member briefing be arranged in relation to early help to include CAMHS, the liaison between the Council and voluntary sector, children's centres provision and the primary challenges facing the service.**

## **13. Working with Children at Risk of or Suffering Neglect**

The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker delivered a report which set out the measures in place to address children suffering neglect in Central Bedfordshire. Neglect was recognised as having a significant and lifelong impact on children, which continued as they transitioned into adulthood and could be attributed to their parents' complex needs, with cycles and generational continuation of neglect often a recurring theme. Neglect comprised approximately 60% of children who are Subject of Child Protection Plans.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That schools and health colleagues had full access to professional training and that take up was high, caseloads were effectively managed which supported staff retention, with low agency use.
- That ongoing assessments ensured that the correct cohort were signposted to the appropriate service.
- That the Council compared itself to its statistical neighbours who were closely matched and within expected measures.

**NOTED the report with Members recognising the importance of the service and that information continue to be shared with all relevant professionals.**

#### **14. Work Programme 2019/20 and Executive Forward Plan**

**AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following amendments:-**

- That validated exam results be approached with a clear purpose and outcome, ensuring that the Committee add value, perhaps removing the agenda item and replacing it with an alternative – Date and content TBC
- Schools for the Future - That clarification be provided in relation to the next cluster.
- That a Member briefing be arranged in relation to early years – Date TBC

Chair .....

Dated .....



## Central Bedfordshire Council

**Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny      21st January 2020**

### **Neuro-Developmental Disorders (NDD) Pathway**

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**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education & Children, ([sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director(s):** Sue Harrison, Director Of Children's Services, [sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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

This report provides an overview of work being done to develop the Neuro-Developmental Disorder Pathway alongside Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council and our health partners. The report details the purpose of this work, progress to date and next steps.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Review and comment on the proposed model for the NDD pathway.**
- 2. Consider and comment on the current key areas of development including the multi-agency triage panel and NDD Local Offer.**

## Definitions

1. Neuro-developmental Disorders of multivariate origin where the cause is unknown or complex, with typical onset in childhood, that may affect areas of cognitive function such as memory, inhibition control, coordination and motor skills, as well as emotion

## Purpose of project

2. The purpose of this project is to ensure that agencies work together to develop a joined up, transparent pathway that can be accessed when there are concerns that a Child or Young Person (CYP) may have a neurodevelopmental disorder.

## Current issues

3. Mapping of the current pathway and parent/ carer feedback suggests that our current offer is disjointed and unclear (see presentation slide 5 – current offer).
4. The current pathway mapping shows that services are not working together effectively which can cause significant delay for children to access services.
5. The current model means that children need to have a diagnosis to access some support services, this does not support a needs-led approach.
6. There is no visible NDD pathway in place which makes it difficult for families to understand how to access services at the right time increasing the risk of escalation of needs. There is no visible universal offer for children and families.

## Benefits of the proposed model

7. There will be a needs-led visible pathway across Pan Bedfordshire for all children where there is a suspected NDD.
8. There will be a NDD universal local offer where families and professionals can access support for children across all levels of need. This will support the progression from diagnosis-led to a needs-led model.
9. A multi-agency triage panel will meet regularly to ensure holistic and joined up decisions are made around children's needs and which services are best placed to support/ asses.
10. The model we are using is supported by Council for Disabled Children and has been implemented and worked effectively in other areas.



11. The model is being co-produced with all key agencies who will be involved in implementation including health providers, education, social care and crucially parent/ carers.

## Council Priorities

12. **Enhancing Central Bedfordshire** - A clear NDD pathway will support children and families to access support when they need it, supporting positive outcomes for our children and more joined up working across agencies.
13. **Great resident services** - The work is being co-produced which means parent/ carers are helping to shape the pathways to ensure they are accessible and user friendly.
14. **Improving education and skills** - Children will have their needs met by appropriate services allowing them to access and engage meaningfully in education.
15. **Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing** - Children with NDD will be able to access services in a timely manner preventing escalation of needs and enhancing their wellbeing.
16. **Creating stronger communities** - Partnership and multi-agency working will support our communities to develop build community resilience
17. **A more efficient and responsive Council** - Working together across health via the Clinical Commissioning Group and community services provider will enable the Local Authority to work in a more efficient way.

## Corporate Implications

18. The project group does not consider that there are corporate implications at present.

## Legal Implications

The project will work to strengthen pathways for families to access support and strengthen identification of children and young people who have a Neuro-developmental Disorder in a timely manner. The Children & Families Act 2014, section 22 provides that '*A local authority in England must exercise its functions with a view to securing that it identifies—*

*(a)all the children and young people in its area who have or may have special educational needs, and*

*(b)all the children and young people in its area who have a disability.'*

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

19. At this stage there is no financial implication to the Local Authority However the NDD working group are calculating costings to resource the multi-agency triage panel however this is currently at cost the the Clinical Commissioning Group and the provider.

## **Equalities Implications**

20. The project will work to clarify and enable access to services which support children and young people with or who are suspected to have NDD across the Local Authority.
21. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

22. The report sets out the progress to date and next steps to develop the NDD Pathway. A NDD steering group, now informed by workshop held by the Council for Disabled Children will oversee and ensure the pathway is developed and progress is made. The development of the NDD Local Offer and crucial development of the NDD multi-agency triage panel has a timescale for April 2020.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: NDD Pathways Presentation**

## **Background Papers**

None

**Report author(s): Emily Warner**

**Joint Commissioning Manager**

**Emily.warner@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk**



Appendix A

# **Neuro Developmental Disorders (NDD) Pathway**

## **Children's Services**

# Contents

- What is NDD?
- The project
- What have we done?
- Current Services
- Proposed Vision
- What next?
- Communication

The purpose of this report is to provide Overview and Scrutiny with an update on this multi agency project

# What is NDD?

## Definition

Neuro-developmental Disorders of multivariate origin where the cause is unknown or complex, with typical onset in childhood, that may affect areas of cognitive function such as memory, inhibition control, coordination and motor skills, as well as emotion regulation. These disorders include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Tourettes Syndrome (TS), and Autism spectrum Disorder (ASD) amongst others.

# The project

The ASD pathway project was formed alongside colleagues in health to develop a Pan Bedfordshire approach which would ensure consistency for our families and was broadened in 2019 to include all Neuro Developmental Disorders.

The purpose of this project is to ensure that agencies work together to develop a joined up, transparent offer of services and support that can be accessed when there are concerns that a Child or Young Person (CYP) may have NDD. It is acknowledged that the current pathway is disjointed and unclear resulting in some CYP being unable to access appropriate services at the right time increasing the risk of escalation of needs



# What have we done?

## Joint working

- Developed a map of services for these children
- Hosted a workshop with the Council for Disabled Children to identify what good looks like

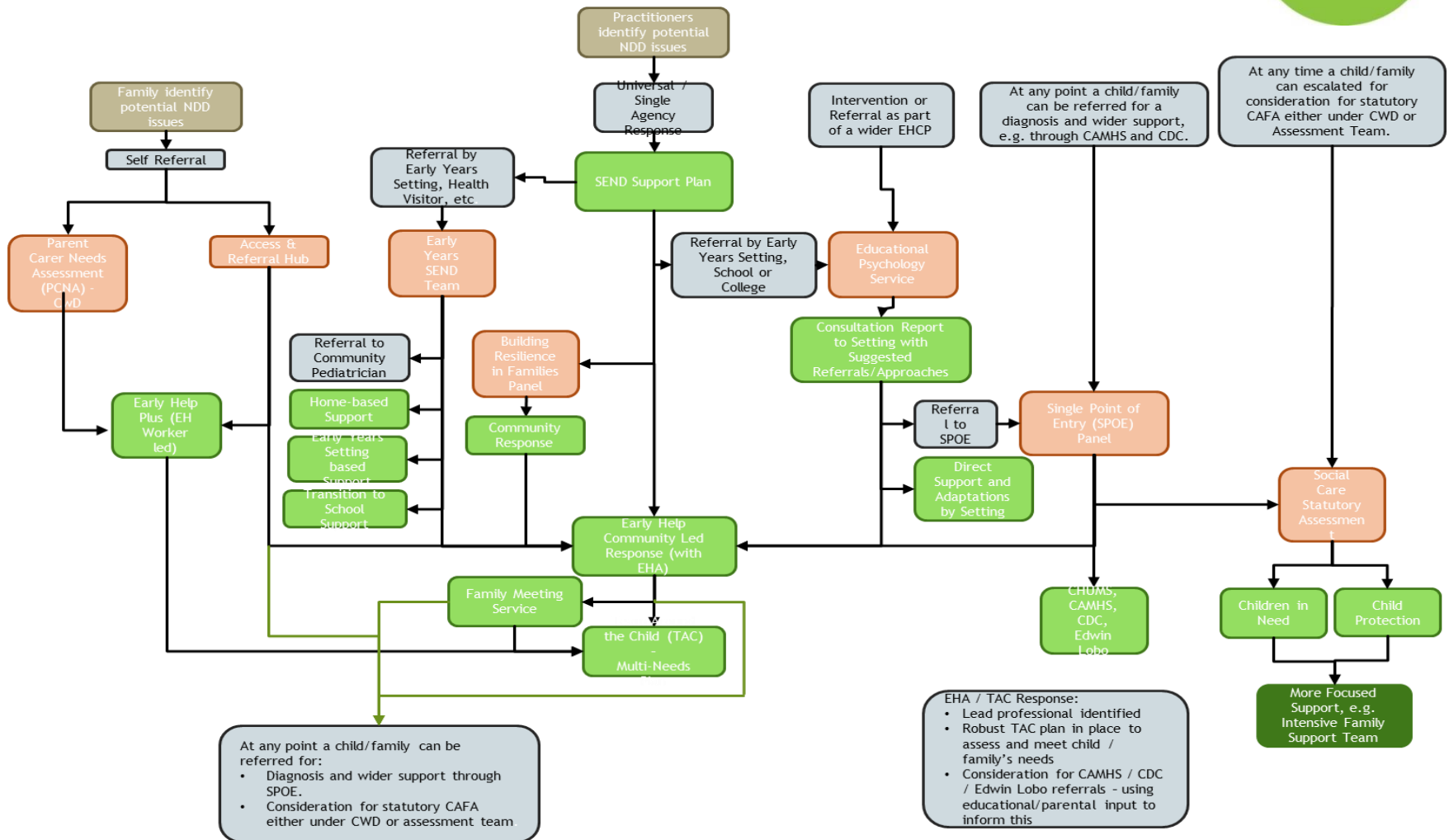
## Support

- Commissioned support sessions for parents to support pre – diagnoses for topics including managing behaviour, helping with sleep, emotional wellbeing of parent/ carers.

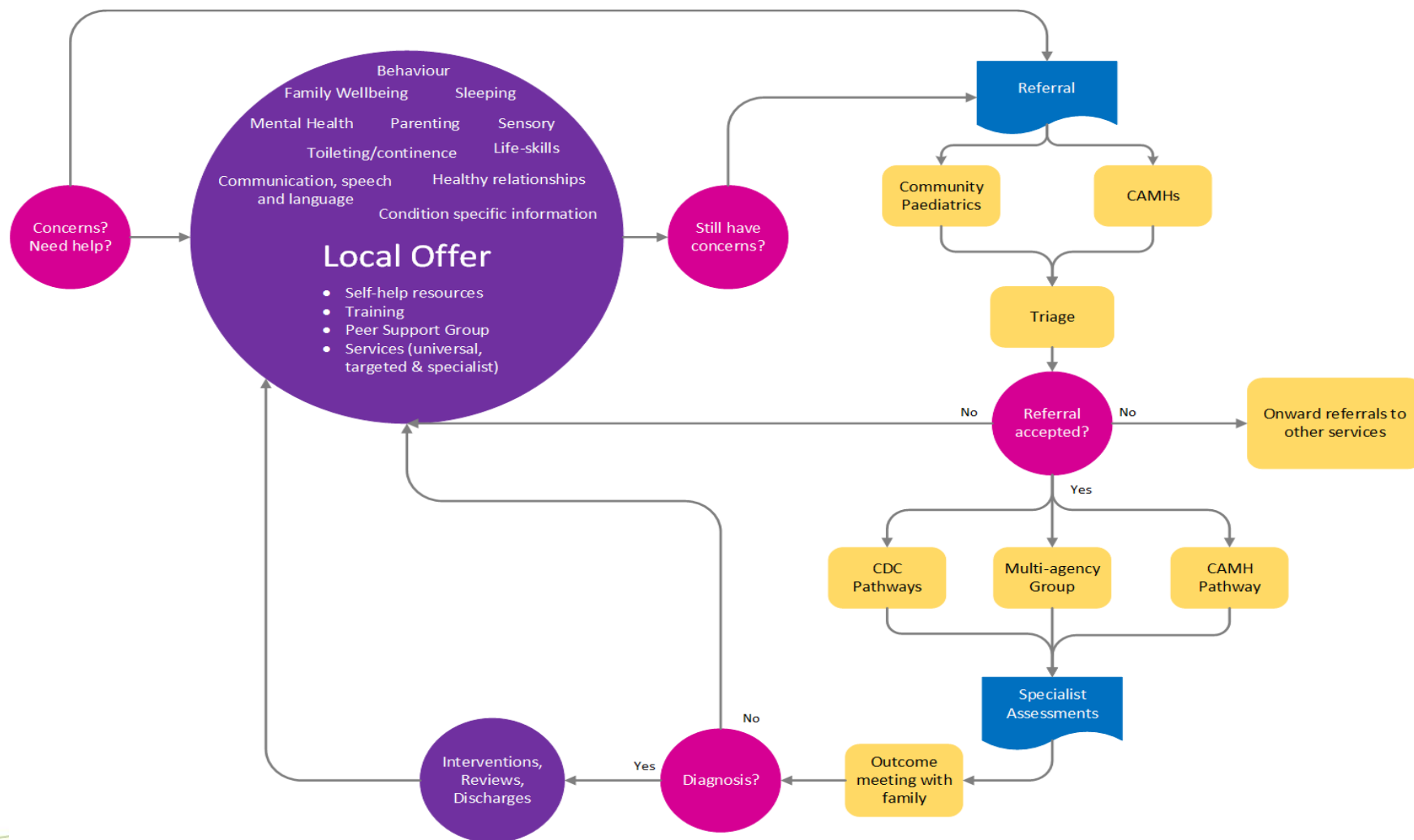
## Improved processes

- Established a multi-disciplinary team with a single point of entry across health providers.

# Current services



# Proposed vision



# What next?

- Development of a 'multi-agency' triage panel with membership to include Consultant Psychiatrist or Psychologist, Paediatrician, Educational Psychologist, Early Help or SC, SALT & OT and meetings will be held fortnightly.
- Development of a communication strategy to ensure the service offer is clear to parents and visible on the Local Offer.

Services will be clearly communicated on the Local Offer





## Central Bedfordshire Council

### Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

21<sup>st</sup> January 2020

### Progress report on Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations *formerly known as Personalisation (including Short Breaks)*

**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children ([Sue.Clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director(s):** Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services ([Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

### Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations project. This includes recent activity and engagement with families with children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and with the voluntary organisations who deliver services to these families.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and comment on the progress of the Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations project.
2. Support the project priorities for the next six months.

### Issues

1. Please see Appendix A for presentation that details '**Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations**'.
2. The presentation will be co-delivered by Sue Harrison (Director of Children's Services), Jody Nason (Head of Commissioning, Children Services), and Kirsty Green (SNAP Parent Carer Forum).

### Council Priorities

3. Protecting the Vulnerable; improving wellbeing: This proposal will support vulnerable children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities and their families to receive respite support and short breaks – helping them to maintain and improve their wellbeing.

## **Corporate Implications**

4. The Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations project is governed by the Children's Services Transformation Portfolio.
5. From April 2021, the delivery of short breaks funding to voluntary organisations will be governed by the multi-agency Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Delivery Board, chaired by Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services.
6. It has clear links to the Partnership Vision for Education, the Home to School Transport Policy, the commissioning of other services across children and adult services, locality teams and the local health sustainability programmes.

## **Legal Implications**

7. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

8. Six voluntary organisations are currently in receipt of grant funding from Childcare Sufficiency and Children with Disabilities.
9. In January 2019, to stabilise services and support for families, it was committed that grant funding arrangements would stay the same between 2018/19 and 2019/20. In September 2019, it was confirmed that these grant funding arrangements would continue for the 2020/21 financial year.
10. The six voluntary organisations received a letter from Sue Harrison (Director of Children's Services) in January 2019 and September 2019 confirming the committed funding.
11. The Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations project is currently developing a sustainable financial model to enable voluntary organisation to continue to effectively support Short Breaks for families in Central Bedfordshire. In line with this work, current grant funding arrangements to the six organisations may change from April 2021.

## **Equalities Implications**

12. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
13. A detailed Equalities Impact Assessment was completed as part of the original short break consultation. This document is still relevant for the work being undertaken in the



project but will be reviewed going forwards and updated accordingly, particularly in the context of a planned public consultation in March 2020.

## Next Steps

14. We are seeking approval to go to public consultation from Executive on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
15. If approval for consultation is granted, Children's Services plans to consult between March 2020 and May 2020. This consultation will target key stakeholders including children and young people with SEND and their families, voluntary organisations both currently receiving CWD grant funding and those who do not, as well as being open to the general public.
16. Continue to work to develop a specialist universal offer for children and young people with SEND, building the pilot of summer leisure activities and subsequent half-term provision to create a wider programme through 2020.
17. Feedback from this consultation will be used to inform the development of funding and delivering options for short breaks provision currently provided by voluntary organisations. This will take place in June 2020 following the closure of the consultation and the presentation to OSC and Executive in summer 2020, with a view to a new arrangement being in place for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.
18. Continue to work with the wider Personalisation project including the development of the Personalisation Advice and Guidance for children, young people and families with additional needs and/or disabilities.
19. Financial modelling to ensure a fit for purpose funding model to deliver services and support that meet the needs of children, young people and families with additional needs and/or disabilities.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Short Breaks (PowerPoint).

**Report author(s): Paul Chandler**

**Strategic Commissioning Officer**

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Appendix A

# **Personalisation (including Short Breaks) Children's Services**

**Central  
Bedfordshire**

**Sue Harrison (Director of Children's Services)  
Jody Nason (Head of Commissioning, Children's Services)  
Kirsty Green (SNAP Parent Carer Forum).**

# Personalisation (including Short Breaks)

- Context
- Project activity since July 2019
- Key progress and outcomes
- Looking forwards

**Purpose of this report:** To provide an update on the recent activity and engagement with SNAP PCF, families with children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the voluntary organisations who deliver services to these families.

# Short Breaks

Short Breaks has an invaluable impact of supporting families and reducing family breakdown.

**Short Breaks can come in two forms:**



**Respite**



**Play & Leisure,  
activities and  
support**

This presentation and discussion is about Short Breaks through Play & Leisure Activities and Support.

# Context

- The **voluntary sector is critical** to the way in which children and families with disabilities and/or additional needs are supported.
- Historically, the council has provided grants directly to voluntary organisations to deliver short breaks for these families.
- In line with the central government **personalisation agenda**, we have been discussing these changes with the voluntary organisations since 2015.
- **Changes were agreed in 2017 at Executive** with the proposal of reducing grant funding by half (68k). However, the commitment of this funding was put back in place.
- **Changes in funding impacted some children and families** receiving services and support they needed over the summer of 2018.
- Updates were provided to OSC in January 2019 and July 2019.

# Definition of Personalisation - Council of Disabled Children

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Personalisation means children, young people and their families being fully involved in decision making and planning for their own future.

By definition this means flexible, adaptable, creative approaches that enable people to have choice and control over their lives.

This fits well with the Children's Services strength based families approach, where we 'do' with the family and not 'to' them.

# Working principles of personalisation in Central Bedfordshire

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**Definition:** Children, young people and families are fully involved in planning for their future, ensuring they get the support that is right for them, and that they have choice and control over how they live their lives and the services they access.

## Working principles

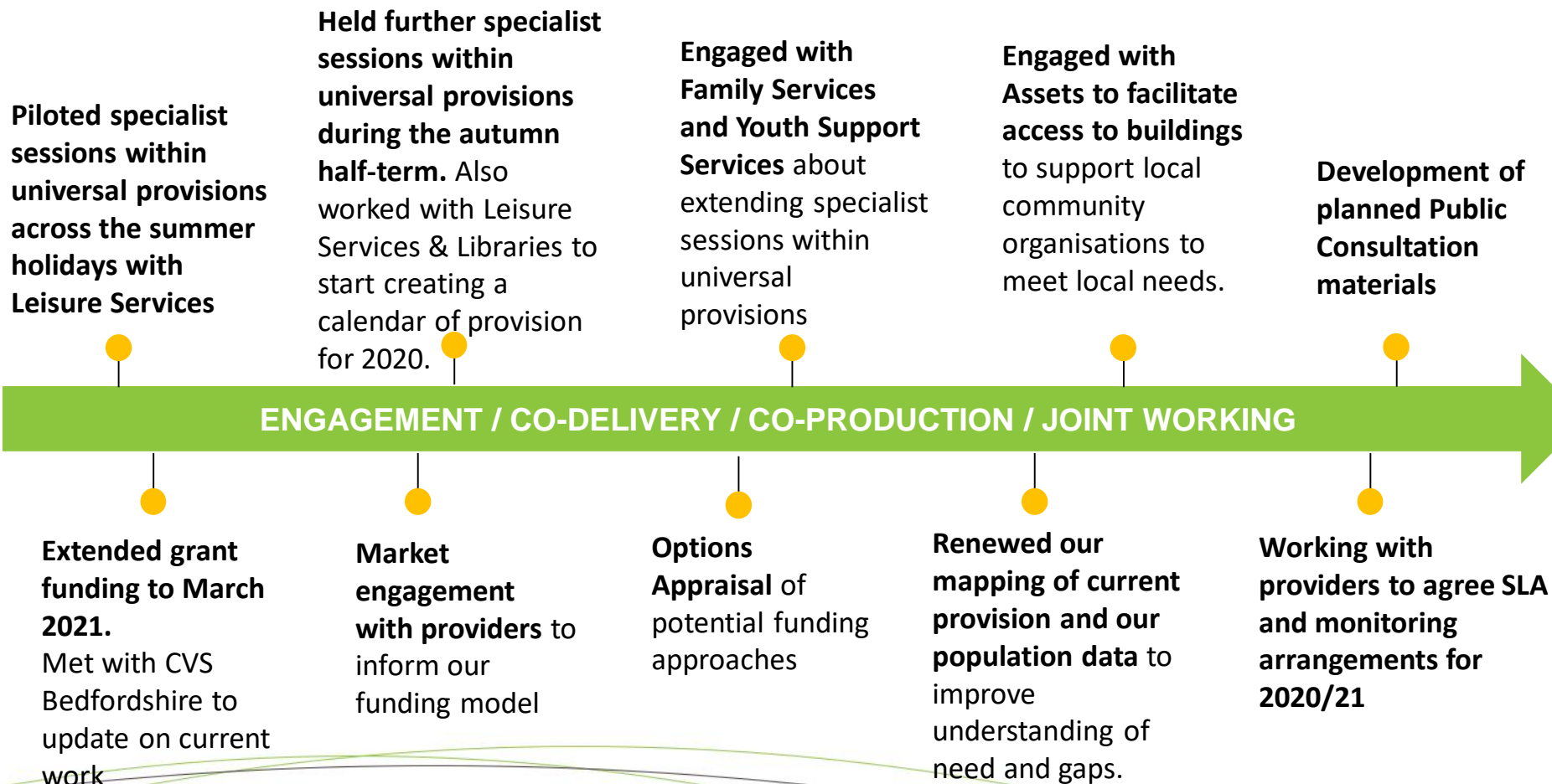
- The views and wishes of children, young people and families are at the heart of the decision-making process. They must be in control of making decisions about what will work for them.
- Proposed solutions or actions are discussed and worked through together.
- Children, young people and families can confidently use local services and support that meets their needs.
- Our support services will put children, young people and families at the centre of the process.
- Personalisation will help identify the different types of support services available and how children, young people and families can access these.
- Personalisation is about individuals or individual families, not about groups of people whose needs are assumed to be similar.

The working principles were co-designed with families and Voluntary Organisations.



# Activities carried out from July to December 2019

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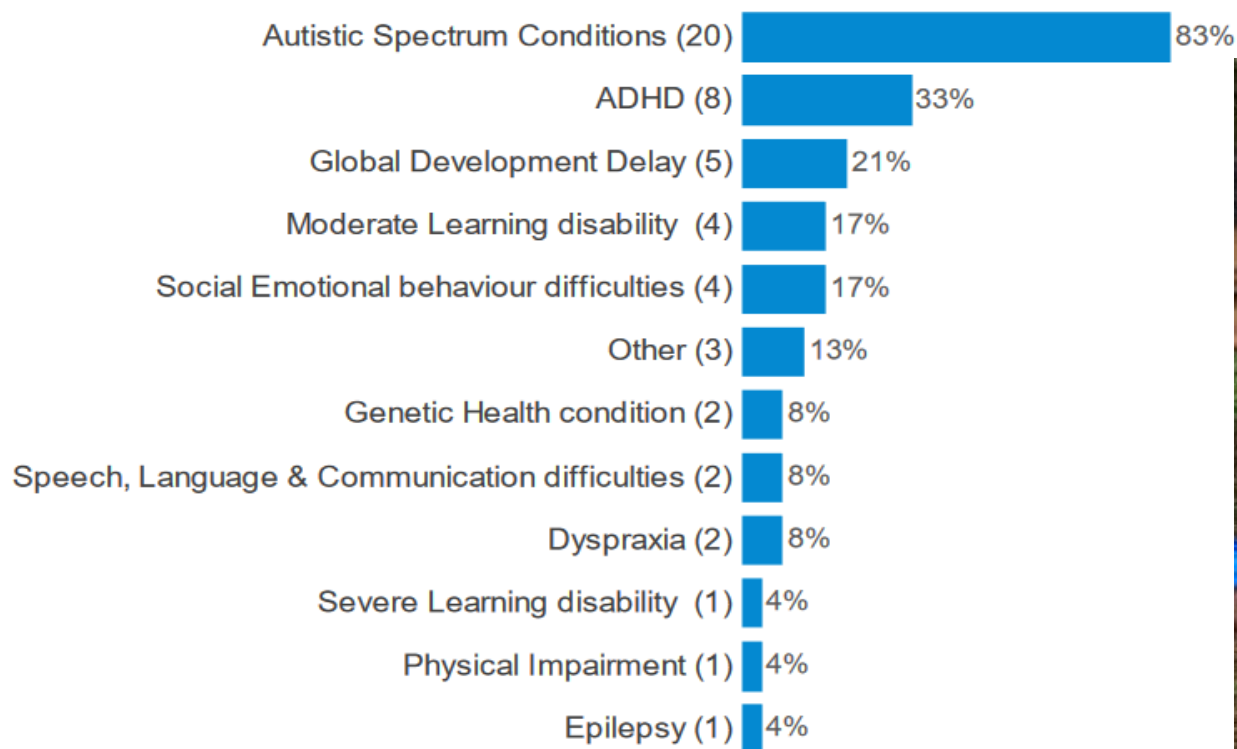


# Specialist Sessions within Universal Provisions

- Feedback from parent engagement activities was used to find out how inclusive local services and support are for children and young people with SEND and to inform the mapping of provision in Central Bedfordshire.
- Joint meeting held with SNAP PCF to share feedback with Leisure Services and to discuss how services can provide more support for families with children and young people with SEND.
- With strong support from within Leisure Services, they set up and delivered accessible specialist sessions within universal provisions for families who have children with SEND, and their siblings. This was initially piloted in Summer 2019, and also run during Autumn half-term. A total of about 188 children accessed these sessions
- Sessions were spread across Central Bedfordshire and included the Greensand Trust Bug Lab, Branch Out Forest School, relaxed film screening as well as activities within our leisure centres, e.g. climbing and trampolining.

# Needs of children that attended

- The needs of the children that attending the six summer sessions.
- Families selected all the needs their child had, e.g. Autism and Moderate Learning Difficulties.
- There were 24 respondents in total



# Progress update: SEND sessions successfully delivered during Summer and Autumn Half-Term

## Feedback was collated from:

- **Parents** - after each session completed a survey.
- **Providers** - debrief meeting to gather learnings and next steps.
- **Project team** - attended each session to understand needs of children, and impact of activity on families.

## Parents said:

*"Staff were lovely. They made us feel warm and welcome, and helped when needed."*

*"Brilliant activity, thoroughly enjoyed. The staff members were brilliant and managed to keep the kids always engaged"*

*"Today has been wonderful. The staff made it work so if my two children wanted to do two different things they could, due to the excellent interaction and communication skills of staff"*

*"It was a truly amazing experience for my children and for me. So often as a SEND family everyday experiences that most take for granted become stressful disasters that leave me feeling deflated and hopeless".*

All providers are keen to provide more sessions all year round to meet the needs of families.

# Other key progress and next steps:

## More opportunities

Seven SEND sessions were organised and run over the October half term and over the Christmas Holidays to meet the needs of families.

## Better planning

An annual calendar of activities is being proactively developed with providers to promote awareness and efficient delivery of SEND targeted sessions.

## Improved sessions and services

There will be continuous evaluation of the sessions to enhance improvements of the support given to families. Providers are also being supported to access relevant SEND training. This is part of our SEND offer in Children Centres.

## Better collaboration and greater shared understanding

Liaising with other in-house services to expand and provide more sessions for these families e.g. Children Centres, Libraries etc



**Active Lifestyles** Page 6 of 10

**October half term activities for families with children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**  
Siblings welcome. Note small group sizes, First come, first serve.

**Monday 21st October**  
1pm – 3pm  
**Branch Out Forest School**  
Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre,  
Park Road North, Houghton Regis,  
LU5 5FU  
Cost: £10 per child - Must be accompanied by an adult/carer (free of charge). We also apply a 10% sibling discount after a full paying first child is booked.  
Advanced booking required, contact [branchoutforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:branchoutforestschool@gmail.com)  
Or call Rosie on 07706 753260.  
For information about Houghton Hall Park visit [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

**Tuesday 22nd October**  
12 noon – 1.30pm  
**Flitwick Climbing Wall**  
Flitwick Leisure Centre  
Steppingley Road, Flitwick, Beds,  
MK45 1TH  
£8 per child  
Advanced booking required  
Contact [climbing.flitwick@sl.co.uk](mailto:climbing.flitwick@sl.co.uk) or call 01525 493131  
Parents/carers need to stay to help supervise their child/children.

**Wednesday 23rd October**  
10.00am – 11.00am  
11.15am – 12.15pm  
**Sandy Trampolining session**  
£2.50 per child  
Advanced booking required  
Contact Engayne Avenue, Sandy,  
Beds SG19 1BL  
01767 681872  
Parents/carers need to stay to help supervise their child/children.

**Thursday 24th October**  
12.30pm – 1.30pm  
**Flitwick Climbing Wall**  
Flitwick Leisure Centre  
Steppingley Road, Flitwick, Beds,  
MK45 1TH  
£8 per child  
Advanced booking required  
Contact [climbing.flitwick@sl.co.uk](mailto:climbing.flitwick@sl.co.uk) or call 01525 493131  
Parents/carers need to stay to help supervise their child/children.

**Wednesday 23rd October**  
10 am - 12 noon  
**Greensand Trust Supervised shelter building challenge.**  
Rushmere Country Park, Linslade Rd, Heath and Reach LU7 0EB  
£5 per child.  
Maximum 12 participants. Minimum age 6 years old. Children must be accompanied by an adult.  
Advance booking required, visit [www.greensandtrust.org/whats-on](http://www.greensandtrust.org/whats-on)  
Or call 01234 743666

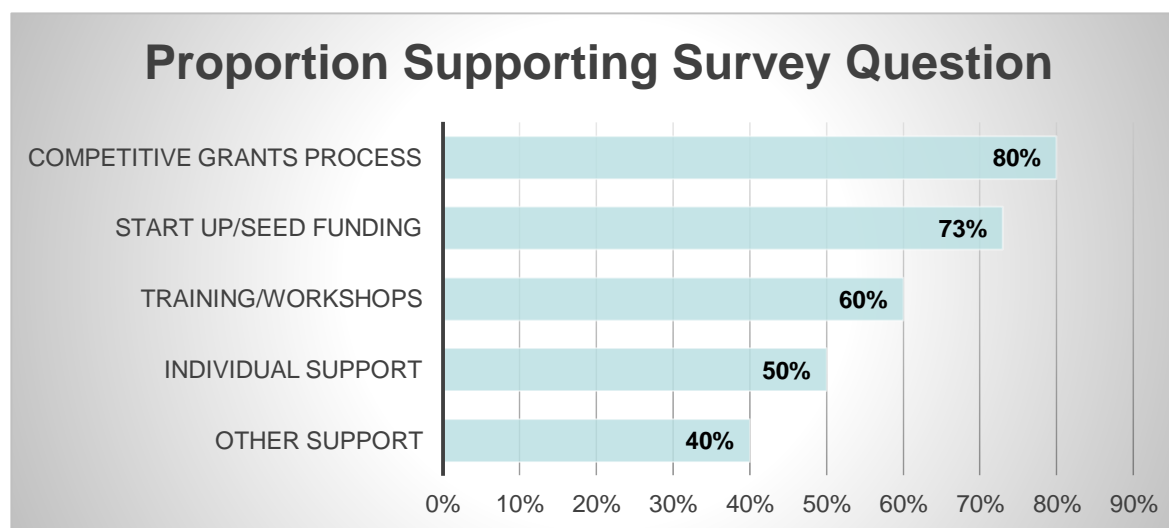
**Thursday 24th October**  
11am  
**Relaxed Screening of Playmobil: The Movie (U)**  
The Grove Theatre, Court Drive, Dunstable, LU5 4GP  
Cost: contact for charges  
To book visit [www.grovetheatre.co.uk/events/playmobil-the-movie-u-relaxed-screening/](http://www.grovetheatre.co.uk/events/playmobil-the-movie-u-relaxed-screening/) or call 01582 602060

**Active Lifestyles**

SLC The Greensand Trust Houghton Hall Park

# Provider Engagement Feedback

- **Areas Supported:** All areas of Central Bedfordshire were supported through the providers engaged, however the least supported was West Mid Beds (55%), with Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard the most supported with 82% of respondents.



Feedback from October/November 2019 engagement with local providers through a week of face-face drop ins an additional 3 weeks as an online survey

# Provider Engagement Feedback

*"We're a growing organisation, looking to expand into new areas, but are struggling to find the right support."*

*"Happy to develop a better relationship with CBC after past experience. Happy to reform the partnership relationship with CBC."*

*Happy/seek to "Evolve on what families ask for. Biggest things that parents are ask is MORE - they want more provision. However we can't provide through current funding arrangements"*

*On Seed/Start Up funding: "As more SEND placements are required within CBC, I feel this would help establish new provisions and services to help resolve this issue and provide a wider range of services to young people with SEND."*

Feedback from October/November 2019 engagement with local providers



# Key progress and outcomes

- **The provision of more CBC run activities over the holidays** for children, young people and families with SEND across Central Bedfordshire, including establishing a calendar of activities across 2020.
- **Greater shared understanding of Personalisation** across the system. This work is ongoing, as Personalisation is a way of working.
- **Stabilised grant funding** which has enabled CBC to work in partnership with the voluntary organisations and ensured families continue to receive the support needed.
- **Improved working relationship with the voluntary organisations** in receipt of CBC grant funding through regular information sharing and involvement.
- **Greater understanding and measurement of family needs within Central Bedfordshire** through various engagement exercises and joint working with SNAP Parent Carer Forum, and mapping of provision and children and young people's needs.
- **Cohesion across CBC teams** through regular project meetings and shared ownership, responsibilities, and shared goals of support children and young people with SEND.



# Looking forwards

Key tasks and priorities between January and June 2020:

1. Continue to **develop a financial model** to ensure a fit for purpose funding model to enable local services and support that meet the needs of children, young people and families with additional needs and/or disabilities, in Central Bedfordshire. This model will come to OSC as part of our public consultation.
2. Conducting a full **public consultation** between March 2020 and May 2020 to inform our funding methodology.
3. Continue work to develop an **offer of specialist sessions within universal provisions** for children and young people with SEND, building the pilot of summer leisure activities and subsequent half-term provision to create a wider programme through 2020.
4. Continue to work with the Children Centres to deliver specialist sessions.



## Central Bedfordshire Council

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny

21<sup>st</sup> January 2020

### Looked After Children (LAC) Placements Strategy (including Independent Fostering Agency - IFAs)

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**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education & Children, ([sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director(s):** Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, ([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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#### Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to share an update on the recent consultation around options for Looked After Children (LAC) placements.
2. To share the Equalities Impact Assessment which was requested as an action from the previous report presented at Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive.
3. To outline the first phase of our commissioning intentions for LAC placements which is for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Consider the information in this report and review Appendix A.**

#### Issues

1. Please see appendix A – presentation that details '**Looked After Children (LAC) Placements**'.

#### Council Priorities

2. *Great resident services* – ensuring that we commission or directly deliver value-for-money, outcomes-focused services that work in partnership with the Council to make a positive impact for our most vulnerable residents.

3. *Protecting the vulnerable, improving wellbeing* – fulfilling our pledge to Looked after Children and Young People to provide them with a safe, stable home. Research indicates that this placement stability is the cornerstone to improving the wellbeing of children in care and helping them to achieve good lifetime outcomes.

## Corporate Implications

4. No further corporate implications identified at this time.

## Legal Implications

5. There are no direct or immediate legal implications arising from this report.

## Financial and Risk Implications

6. The 2018/19 overspend for fostering placements was £873,000 meaning only an all in-house model would be achievable within the 2019/20 foster care budget of £5,169,250. However, this is not a viable option given the current lack of available in-house carers.
7. The Independent Fostering Agency budget for year 2019/20 is £2,786,000.
8. There are a number of initiatives which are assumed to mitigate this overspend including additional funding of £416,000 for Independent Fostering Agency placements within the draft budget for 2020/21. A consultancy support to the Local Authority to continue to increase the number of in house foster carers which will reduce the need to use Independent Foster Caring Agencies. Additionally, work is also underway to develop a new approach to tender for Independent Foster Carer agencies alongside Bedford Borough and Luton.

## Equalities Implications

9. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. Although Looked After status is not a protected characteristic, these children and young people often experience multiple vulnerabilities before coming into care, while in care and after leaving care; including material deprivation, abuse and neglect, poor educational attainment, poor physical and mental health outcomes, young parenthood, involvement with the criminal justice system and CSE. In addition, 8% of the current cohort have diagnosed disabilities, around a third have identified SEND needs, and 14.5% are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seekers. This means that these children and young people have a wide range of equality and

access needs.

## Next Steps

11. If the recommended IFA placements proposal is endorsed, Children's Services plan to go out to tender April 2020 (subject to approval from Executive) with the aim of having the new commissioning arrangement in place by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.
12. Next steps include:
  - Agreeing a contract composition
  - Developing a price structure
  - Developing a service specification
  - Seeking approval from Exec to go out to tender.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Presentation: Looked After Children (LAC) Placements**  
**Appendix B: Consultation report**  
**Appendix C: Equalities Impact Assessment**

## Background Papers

**Report author(s): Sarah Preston**

**Strategic Commissioning Officer, Children's Services**

[Sarah.preston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.preston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



Appendix A

# **Looked After Children (LAC) placements**

## **Children's Services**

# Looked After Children (LAC) Placements: Background

In March 2019 a paper was taken to Overview and Scrutiny (OSC) to share an options appraisal that was developed to identify how best to commission Looked After Children placements going forward, as a result of the sufficiency gaps and needs identified in the 2018-2023 Looked After Children Placements Strategy. The OSC paper was agreed and a public consultation on the preferred options was published in June 2019. Findings are attached in appendix B and outlined in this presentation along with the results of the Equalities Impact Assessment attached in appendix C.

The placements work is being implemented in a phased approach:

**Phase one: Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements – first phase due to imminent contract end**

Implementation date – 2020.

**Phase two: 16+ Providers**

Implementation date – 2021.

**Phase three: Children's residential homes**

Longer-term, residential provision will be reviewed in conjunction with the ongoing SEND placement strategy.



## **The overall aims of the Looked After Children Placements project are:**

- To meet the needs of children and young people who become looked after by Central Bedfordshire by directly providing or commissioning sufficient local accommodation.
- To achieve Value for Money by delivering or commissioning accommodation that balances cost-effectiveness with quality and minimises the need for placement changes and high-intensity provision.
- To achieve the sufficiency duty outlined in section 22G of the Childrens Act 1989

# The findings and the plan

| Trends identified through analysis   | How we will address these (Commissioning Priorities)   |
|--|--|
| <p>CBC needs a range of safe, stable and local provision ranging from adoptive placements to leaving care accommodation.</p>   | <p>Continue to maintain and grow our pool of inhouse foster carers and develop a commissioning approach for independent foster agencies.</p>                         |
| <p>Services that are able to meet the specific needs of children and young people, including cultural, religious and linguistic needs.</p>                             | <p>Continue to ensure that residential provision is sufficient and calibrated to meet needs locally</p>  |
| <p>To plan for a greater number of young people needing appropriate accommodation to make transitions to adulthood, both for planned transitions and UASC arrivals</p> | <p>Continue to maximise the use of the current arrangements to commission stable, value for money semi-independent placements for young people aged 16 and above</p> |

# Consultation findings:

## **Concentrate on in-house foster carers and value our foster carers**

This has already been identified as a priority in our Looked After Children Placements Strategy and we will be employing a consultant to support with the implementation of the existing recruitment strategy.

## **Spending money wisely is important but predominantly the placement needs to be right for the child and this is not always the cheapest option**

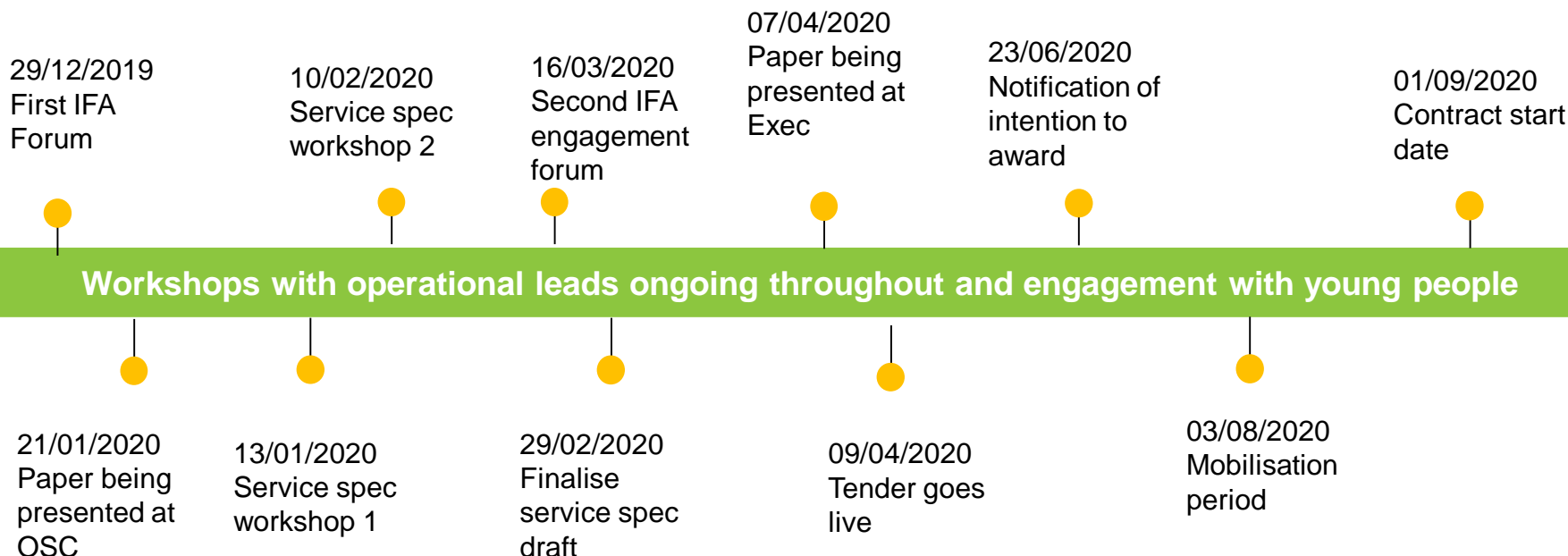
We are in complete agreement and are looking for value for money as apposed to cheaper placements. It is imperative that we identify placements that are suitable for the child and do so by using the Valuing Care tool.

## **Invest in our own resources and provide in-house residential placements**

This is something we already try to achieve but recognise that local in-house provision of this sort is not always suitable for the child so out of county placements with an external provider is also considered.

# Phase one: Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements – Timeline

***The first phase of the Looked After Children Placements project is to recommission the IFA placements commenced September 2019. It has been agreed that Central Bedfordshire Council will work in partnership with Luton Council and Bedford Borough Council to share a Framework for IFA's to sign up to***



# Phase one: Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements – Progress update

## workshops

- Workshops with practitioners and placement officers have commenced in each authority to better understand our needs and how to best utilise our existing outcomes tool (valuing care)

## Forum

- An IFA providers forum has been arranged for 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019 to begin open and transparent conversation with providers to better understand the market

## Analysis

- Further analysis is underway alongside feedback from providers to ensure that contracts called off of the shared framework meet the council's commissioning priorities.

# Phase one: Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements – Next steps:

- Agreeing a contract composition
- Developing a price structure
- Developing a service specification with practitioners
- Continuing to engage with the market

## Appendix B

**Central  
Bedfordshire**

# Looked After Children Placements Strategy

Consultation results

By

**Joanna Lang & Rebecca Carr**

Consultation Officers

Community Intelligence

## Purpose of consultation

The proposal for the Looked After Children placements strategy was published on the council's website on 24 June 2019. This included a summary of the proposed strategy. Local residents and stakeholders were encouraged to comment on the proposed strategy by completing a short online survey.

To make sure local residents were aware of the proposal, we publicised the consultation using a press release and the council's social media accounts. We also sent e-bulletins to those who had previously registered an interest in council consultations.

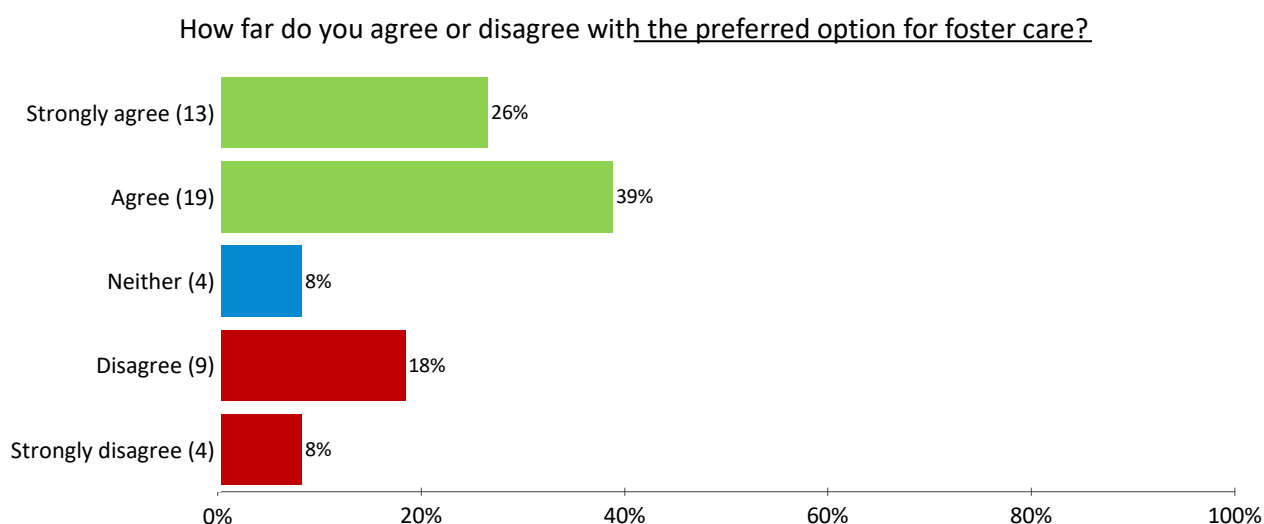
To make sense of the feedback received, we employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the headline quantitative measures, followed by coding of the free text comments to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with the options. The codes we generated identified frequently mentioned comments and concerns. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

## Feedback on proposal

49 responses were received during the consultation. Of this, 11 (22%) were looked after children, 2 (4%) were foster carers, 1 (2%) was a placement provider and 1 (2%) was a community or voluntary organisation. The rest of the respondents fell into the resident or 'other' category.

### Foster care

The preferred option for foster care is Option E: To have a mix of in-house and external (IFA) fostering placements, but clearly define what we would use each type for, and commission some 'blocks' of provision to meet specific needs.



66% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the preferred option for foster care.

24 comments were received to explain their response. The key themes identified were:



| Theme   | No. of comments |
|---|-----------------|
| In-house is preferable  | 11              |
| Invest in support for your foster carers to limit the need for external provision | 4               |
| Important to find the right setting for the child                                 | 4               |
| Agreement with the proposal   | 3               |
| Other   | 6               |

(n.b some of the comments covered multiple themes so the table above does not total 24)

Some of the comments received were:

*"In an ideal world with proper central government funding in-house options would be preferred."*

*"I consider that in-house fostering is always best. If you cannot obtain enough in-house places, but can find external places instead, you need to look at why external bodies are successfully finding foster placements but you cannot. Are their standards lower, or do they offer more attractive payments, etc. (that you would be paying for anyway)? In order to provide more flexibility, it may be helpful to look at placing children in neighbouring councils' in-house facilities, as a reciprocal arrangement. If external bodies, for example, pay foster carers more, you could afford to pay your in-house foster carers more, and still save money compared with using external providers. The money saved could be used to boost the funding for looking after children."*

*"A Level Playing Field is essential thinking about what is right placement right time for the right child Not in-house first Blocks only work if purposefully targeted - soft blocks - specific and small. Not large blocks."*

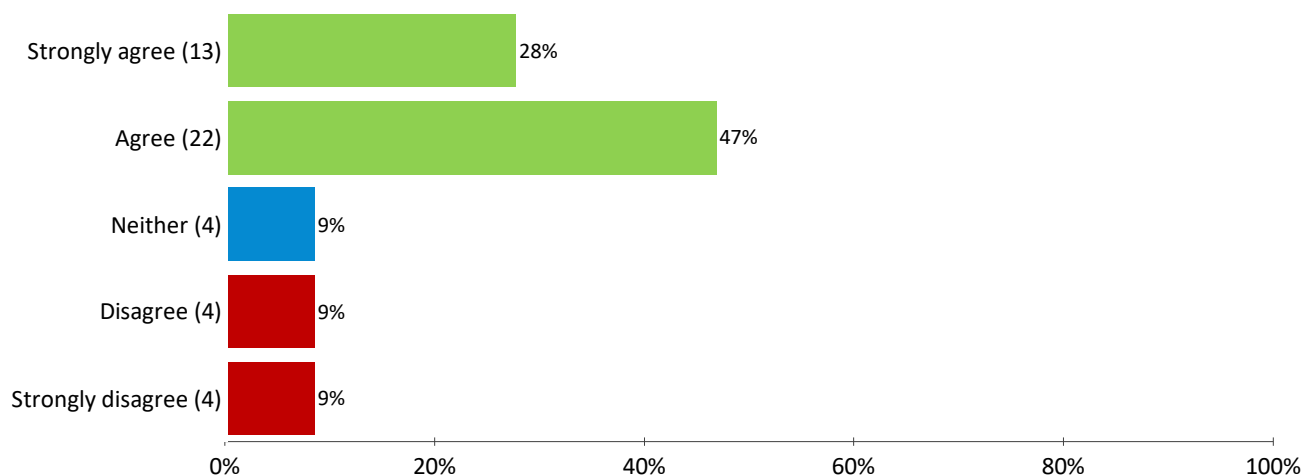
*"I agree with option E as it is unrealistic to be able to meet all needs with in house placements. E seems quite similar to A but from what i read, it is more specific about what type of provision will suit which child/young person and their particular needs."*

The comments identify there is a need for investing in the existing foster carers but also highlights the need for finding the right setting for the child's needs.

## 16+ semi-independent living

The preferred option for semi-independent living is Option E: To have a mix of in-house and external (IFA) placements, but clearly define what we would use each type for, and commission some 'blocks' of provision to meet specific needs.

How far do you agree or disagree with the preferred option for 16+ semi-independent placements?



75% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the preferred option for 16+ semi-independent living.

22 comments were received to explain their response. The key themes identified are:

| Theme  | No. of comments |
|--|-----------------|
| Need for in-house provision  | 7               |
| Foster care should be extended to 18/21                                  | 6               |
| Concern about regulation/quality of semi-independent living arrangements | 3               |
| A mix of provision is good   | 2               |
| Other  | 7               |

Some of the comments received were:

*"I have some concern around semi-independent post 16 placements in terms of how these are regulated if they extend in to adulthood, or those who do not come under ofsted regulation. They have the potential to be a positive option but need a robust structure to ensure this is the case."*

*"Again, I believe that in-house is always best. However, I question whether semi-independent is always best for those aged 16+. These days, 16+ teenagers seem much more immature than 16+ teenagers a generation ago. Those who are in care have often been through difficult circumstances, and may need more care than this."*

*"a mix brings quality and competition."*

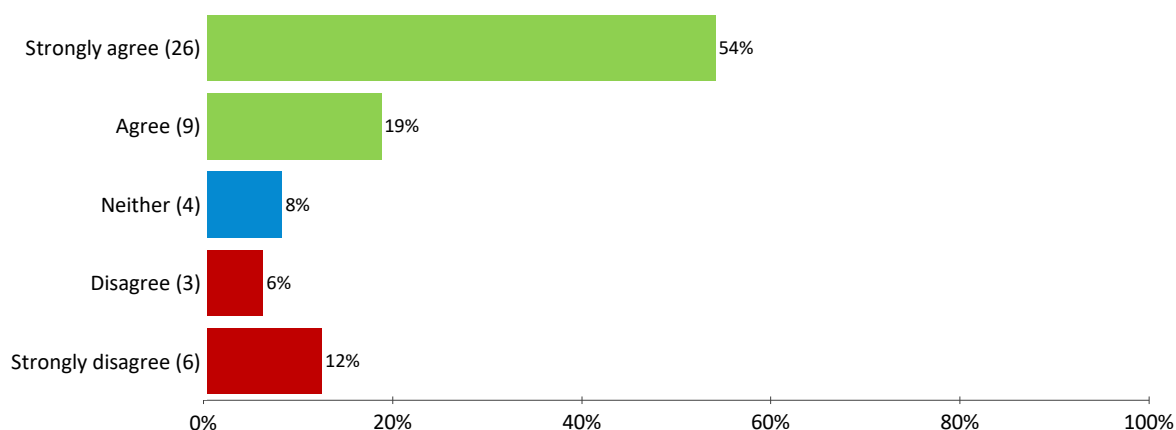
*“A “mix of offers is very vague and allows you to potentially have any split you like”*

The comments identified concerns about semi-independent being available for those aged 16, noting that they still need guidance from adults. Some stated that being 18 or even 21, would be better, with foster care continuing for longer. With this, there is the need for additional support for foster carers. Again, there was a preference for in-house provision, as there is some concern about the regulation and quality of semi-independent providers with some stating examples of less than ideal experiences.

## Residential

The preferred option for residential is Option B: Provide all services in-house (with a potential framework of national providers for out of area placements).

How far do you agree or disagree with the preferred option for residential placements?



73% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the preferred option for residential placements.

20 comments were received to explain their response. The key themes identified were:

| Theme                                      | No. of comments |
|--|-----------------|
| General agreement with proposal            | 12              |
| Needs to be the right choice for the child | 7               |
| Other                                      | 2               |

Some of the comments received were:

*“This would not conform to the most appropriate placement principle of the Children Act The right placement at the right time for the right child is paramount Placement selection needs to be by specialism, safety and choice. It has to be psychological not geographical”*

*“I understand that this is not always practical, but often our out of area placements are those whose needs we struggle to meet. I believe investment in our own resources to make our services capable of meeting the needs of our most complex and*

*challenging young people, providing the highest standard of service close to home and very much under CBC's scrutiny"*

*"I think there is always a need for out of area placements on occasion so agree with this approach. I do think we should increase out in house offer and have specialist provision and train staff in specific approaches/methodologies. As staff are attached to CBC they would also be open to lots of training and development opportunities"*

The comments suggested that the majority of respondents were in favour of providing this service in-house however respondents also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the specialist support services some children require continue to be provided in the future.

### **Alternative options**

8 comments were received on what people thought of the alternative options or whether they had any alternative suggestions themselves. Due to the low number of responses and broad range of topics, it is not possible to group them into themes so they are provided below in full:

*"Could there be an increase in family and friends placements for children. Is enough done to investigate the potential for these alternative placements and appropriate financial and SW support provided."*

*"There are others to be considered"*

*"Not sure what is being asked here?"*

*"Build Residential placements that mimic external organisations that provide top care. Think of safety and a positive warm not over subscribed environment. They should not feel like care homes but instead fun, modern, clean, therapeutic environments that are better than what's currently available. .on site therapy teams.. think outside of the box and give us something to be proud of. Somewhere a parent would feel happy for the child to stay."*

*"As far as possible the carers should be in-house to enable better supervision. The supervising social workers need to be robust enough to challenge practice if necessary. Care should not be "good enough" but so much better than that. I believe fostering should be an occupation, with a proper salary etc. this gives an opportunity to have legally binding contracts, more accountability etc. There are some excellent foster carers out there and they need to be utilised to help other carers learn and improve. there needs to be better training for carers in areas of health and well being of children and young people Statistics show we still fail LAC."*

*"More flexibility on foster and adoption, increase ages, sexes, single parents to widen foster and adoption offerings."*

*"Bear in mind that in places such as Spain, the annual council tax is around £200 a year. In the UK it is high because of the number of services which are labour-intensive and therefore costly, intervention, therapy, care homes etc . One way to keep the costs down would be to offer a reduction in council tax to families who are willing to care for or foster a young person, or to be a mentor to them. People would much rather help someone out in their local community."*

*"Have the options be canvassed with the broader community through consultation?"*

## Other comments

Respondents were asked whether they had any further comments about the proposals and 18 comments were received, reiterating many of the points from before:

| Theme  | No. of comments |
|--|-----------------|
| Needs to look for the best option for the child  | 6               |
| The best options shouldn't be about cost cutting | 4               |
| Encourage/support foster carers                  | 3               |
| Other  | 7               |

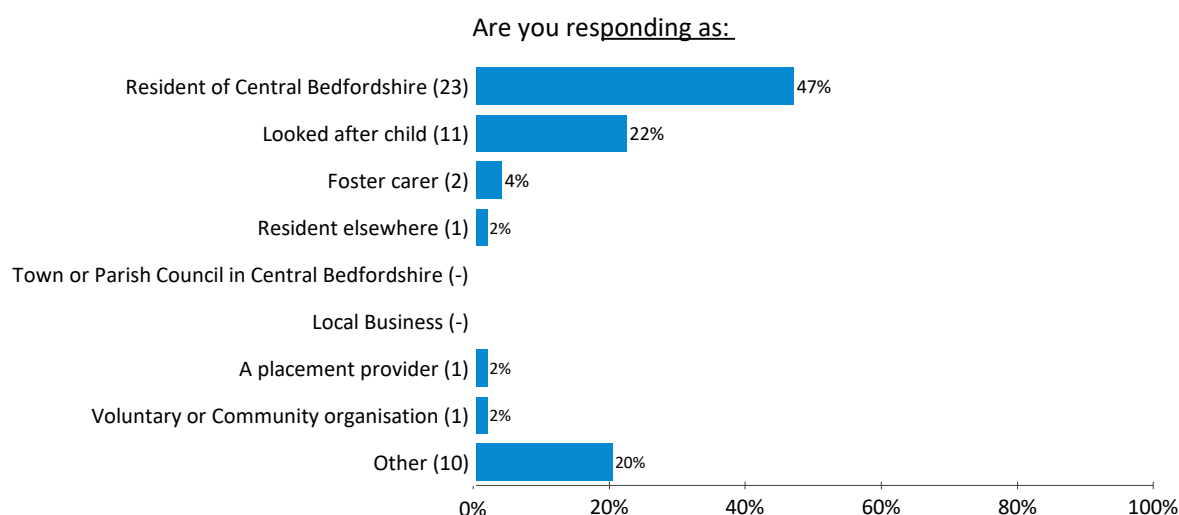
Some of the comments received were:

*"We all know money has to be spent more wisely but no one seems to be looking at why there is such a need for external placements. If you focused more intently on improving the situation for in house carers you would see a significant shift. Foster Carers don't like the unfairness of two tier system and until you address the underlying problems in house nothing much will change."*

*"Any changes made need to be in the best interests of the children. I appreciate that finances play a bit part in the provision offered and there isn't an infinite pot of money but what there is, needs to be used wisely. There needs to be long-term planning for the sustainability of any new provisions."*

*"Childrens well being and safety should be the primary concern when procuring services. If necessary have the courage to increase rates to ensure this."*

## About the respondents



**If other, please specify:**

National expert

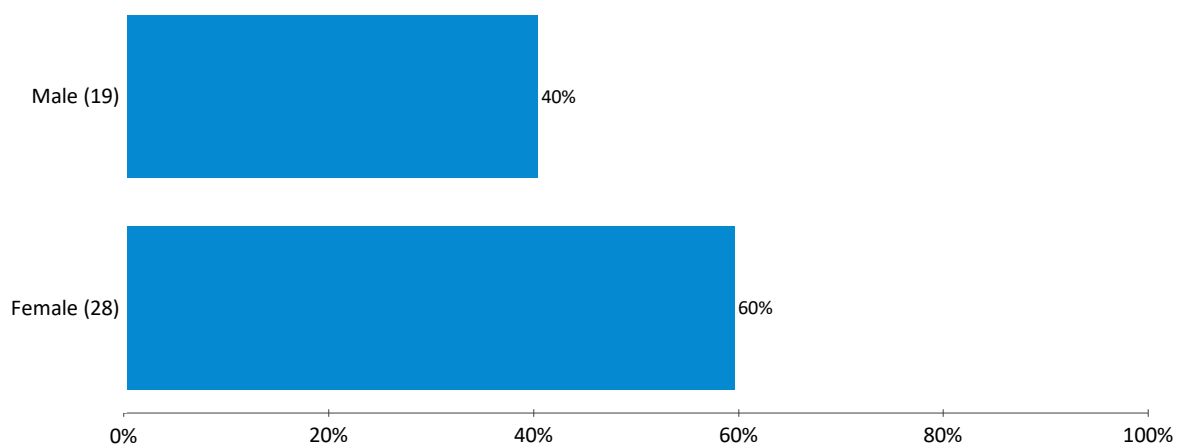
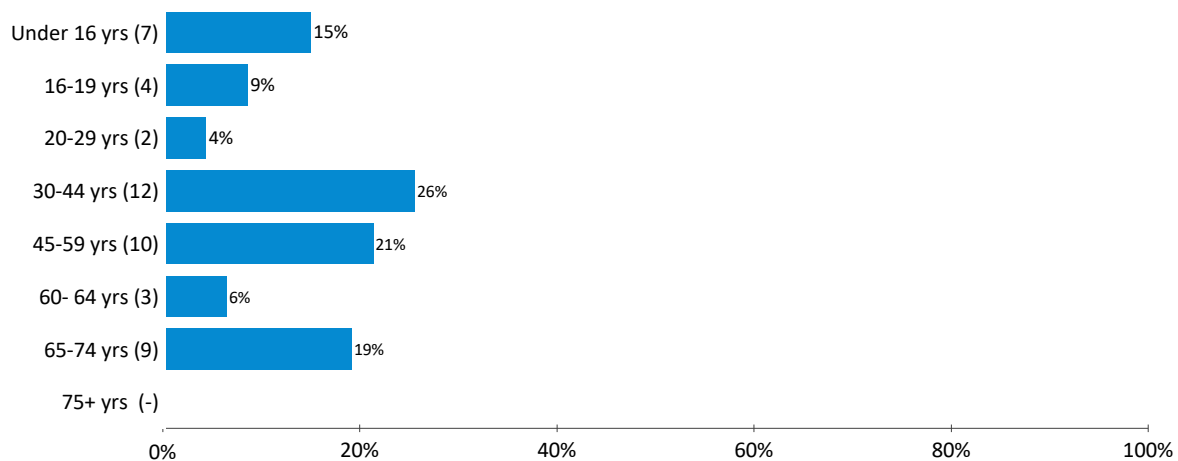
CBC employee (manager of maythorn children's home)

staff member in CBC Childrens Services

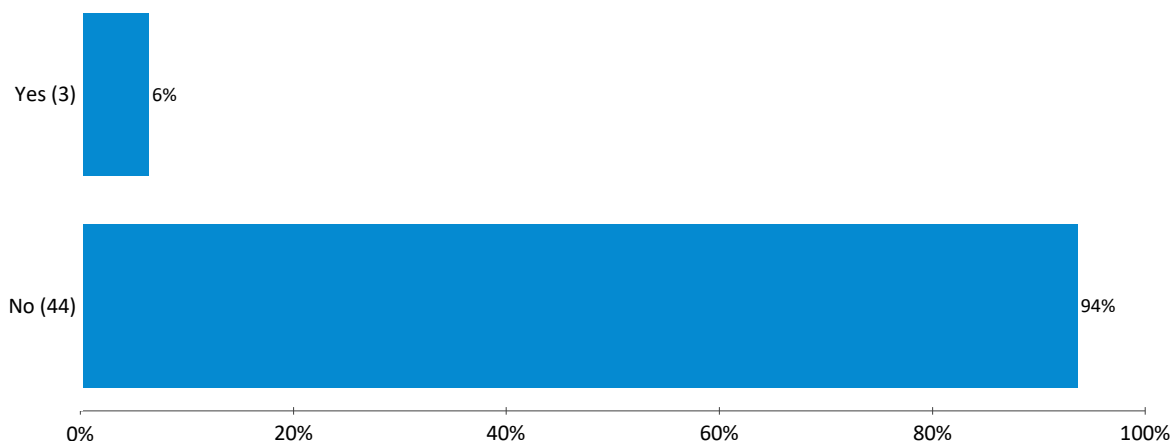
Social Worker

member of staff

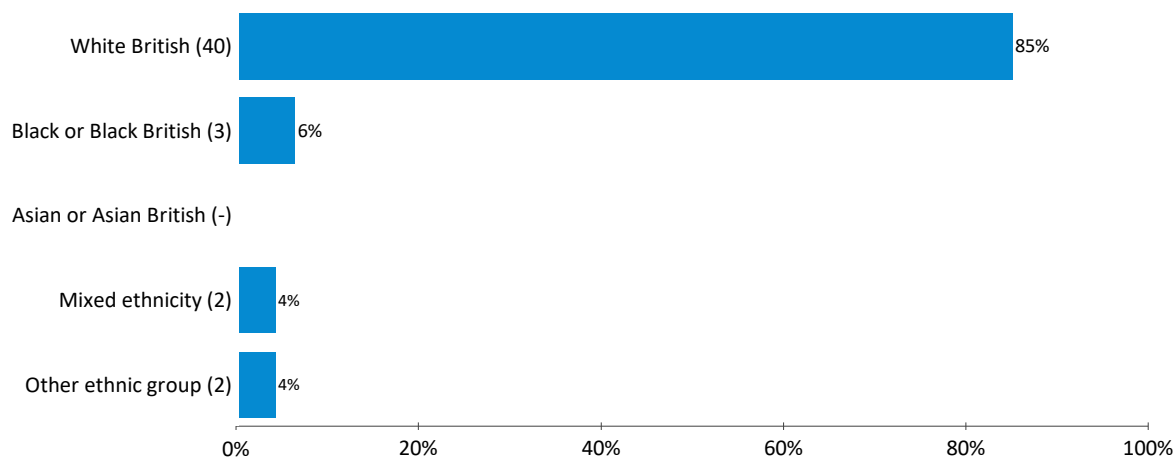
Grandparent of looked after children

**Are you:****What is your age?**

### Do you consider yourself disabled?



### To which of these groups do you consider you belong?



|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| <b>If other, please specify:</b> |
| Black african                    |
| black african                    |

## Conclusion

Overall, respondents are generally supportive of the proposals. There are some key themes that appear throughout the questionnaire about in-house options for looked after children, detailing the ability to track and regulate the offer. There was also acknowledgement from respondents that they understand the need to spend money wisely or reduce the money spent however there must be consideration for the best choice for the child, and not necessarily the cheapest option.

There were also a number of comments throughout the questionnaire about the value of foster carers and the need to invest in and support them to provide the best chances for foster children. They are seen as playing a valuable role in the lives of vulnerable young people.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations)

**Email:** [consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



## The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Duty requires public bodies to have **due regard** to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

### Protected Characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (elimination of discrimination only)
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

**Due Regard** means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Duty as part of the process of decision-making. For example:

- How they act as employers
- How they develop, evaluate and review policy
- How they design, deliver and evaluate services
- How they commission and procure from others

**Advancing equality of opportunity** involves considering the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people because of their protected characteristics
- Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low

**Fostering good relations** involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

**Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better** than others, as far as this is allowed in discrimination law. This could mean making use of an exception or positive action provisions in order to provide a service in a way that is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic.

### Officers should:

**Keep an adequate record showing** that the equality duties and relevant questions have been actively considered.

**Be rigorous in both inquiring and** reporting to members the outcome of the assessment and the legal duties.

**Final approval of a proposal, can only happen after the completion of an equality impact assessment. It is unlawful to adopt a proposal contingent on an equality impact assessment**

## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

|                                 |  |                            |            |
|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Title of the Assessment:</b> | Looked After Children (LAC) Placement Strategy   | <b>Date of Assessment:</b> | 12.11.2019 |
| <b>Responsible Officer</b>      | <b>Name:</b> Sarah Preston   | <b>Extension Number:</b>   | 76627      |
|                                 | <b>Title:</b> Strategic Commissioning Officer  |                            |            |
|                                 | <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Sarah.preston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">Sarah.preston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a> |                            |            |

### Stage 1 - Setting out the nature of the proposal and potential outcomes.

| Stage 1 – Aims and Objectives |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>1.1</b>                    | <p><b>What are the objectives of the proposal under consideration?</b></p> <p>The aim is to set out the case for enhanced service development and commissioning of accommodation provision for Looked After Children, and to propose phased priorities for this work based on current and forecast needs, risks and issues.</p> <p>The main objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow and maintain a pool of in-house foster carers, especially those who can foster children with more complex needs. There is potential to explore intensive/therapeutic fostering models (e.g. Dyadic Development Practice and Mockingbird) within the proposals for Fostering Transformation;</li> <li>• Develop an effective commissioning methodology for IFA placements, while maximising use of in-house to meet our aspiration to place 70% of fostered children in-house;</li> <li>• Ensure that residential provision is sufficient and calibrated to meet needs locally; including for mainstream, complex needs and CWD;</li> <li>• Maximise use of 16+ DPS or similar framework to commission stable, value for money semi-independent placements;</li> <li>• Implement contractual arrangements for spot-purchasing one-off placements (e.g. parent &amp; child units) that ensure quality, value for money and compliance; and</li> <li>• Work with children, young people, parents (where appropriate), carers, practitioners and providers to co-design and develop accommodation provision that meets children's needs, can contribute to improved outcomes, and enables them to achieve their aspirations as they move towards adulthood.</li> </ul> |
| <b>1.2</b>                    | <p><b>Why is this being done?</b></p> <p>We need a clearer strategy to identify the best way to commission placements for our Looked After Children in order to improve sufficiency and reduce the competition for resources and costs.</p> <p>This EIA will inform us of any impact on equalities that may be identified from the public consultation findings around our proposed Looked After Children placement options which was published in July 2019. These options were:</p> <p><b>Phase 1 Foster Care – Option E:</b> Operate a mixed economy of in-house and external framework/spot-purchase and block-contracted provision, with the scope for each clearly demarcated in commissioning plans.</p> <p><b>Phase 2 16+ Semi Independent – Option E:</b> Operate a mixed economy of inhouse and external provision, with block contracts, and with the scope for each clearly demarcated in commissioning plans.</p> <p><b>Phase 3 Residential Care – Option B:</b> Provide all services in-house (with potential framework of national providers for out of area placements).</p>  |

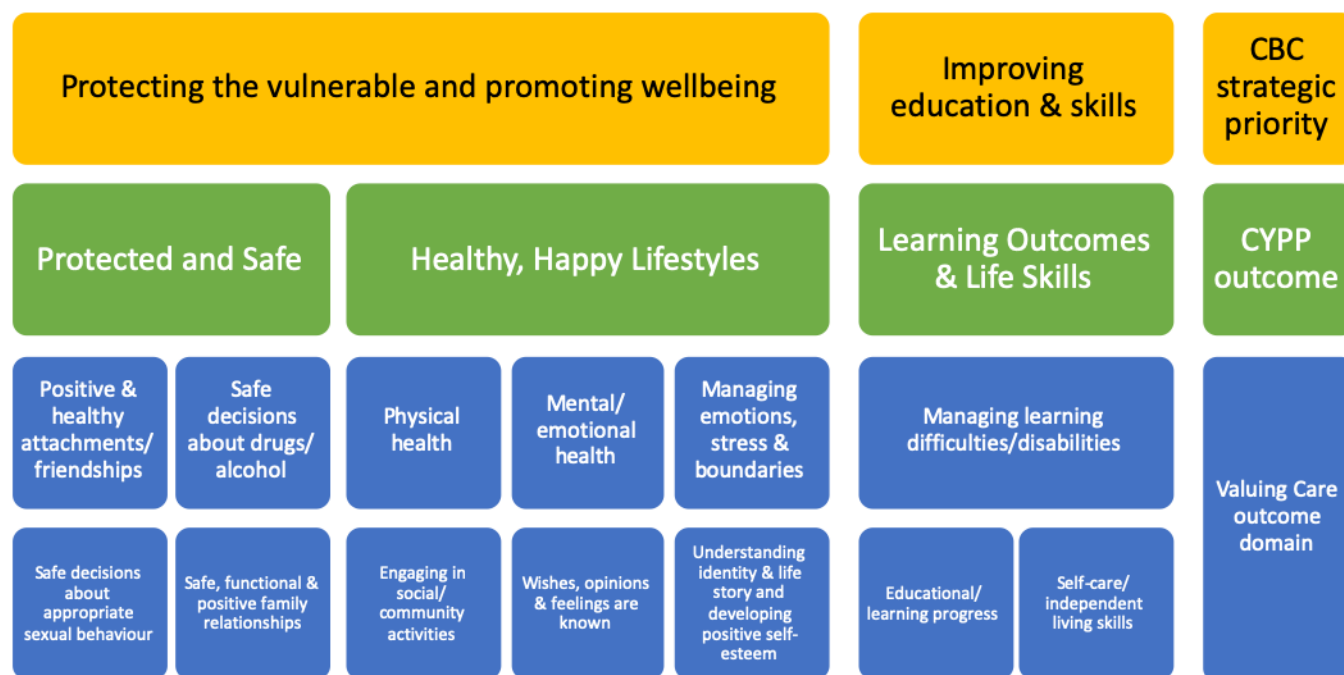
## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

### 1.3 What will be the impact on staff or customers?

No implications have been identified for staff. Improved support will be provided to children in our care which in this case is the customer.

### 1.4 How does this proposal contribute or relate to other Council initiatives?

Below outlines the Council's initiatives, the desired outcomes for children and young people as their Corporate Parents and in blue the 13 elements of the Valuing Care tool that will monitor their needs in order to meet the initiatives and provide greater outcomes for them.



### 1.5 In which ways does the proposal support Central Bedfordshire's legal duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Looked After Children are not a protected group under the Equality Act, however the effective support of looked after children requires consideration of a range of issues related to their protected characteristics. Consideration of mental health and wellbeing can be particularly important and has been highlighted by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Children who have been in care :

- are between four and five times more likely to attempt suicide in adulthood,
- have a fivefold increased risk of all childhood mental, emotional and behavioural problems
- have a six to sevenfold increased risk of conduct disorders.
- 60% of Looked After Young People have some level of mental health problem

The proposal will ultimately improve opportunities for children and young people in our care. The implementation of the Valuing Care tool will ensure identification of specific support needs for

## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

each c/yp. This will allow us to make better placements and ensure that the placement can meet the specific needs of the c/yp to create better outcomes for them.

**1.6 Is it possible that this proposal could damage relations amongst groups of people with different protected characteristics or contribute to inequality by treating some members of the community less favourably such as people of different ages, men or women, people from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, carers, people with different religions or beliefs, new and expectant mothers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities?**

As part of the commissioning process, providers will be assessed on their knowledge and ability to meet equality requirements as part of a scoring process.

**Stage 2 - Consideration of national and local research, data and consultation findings in order to understand the potential impacts of the proposal.**

### Stage 2 - Consideration of Relevant Data and Consultation

**In completing this section it will be helpful to consider:**

- **Publicity** – Do people know that the service exists?
- **Access** – Who is using the service? / Who should be using the service? Why aren't they?
- **Appropriateness** – Does the service meet people's needs and improve outcomes?
- **Service support needs** – Is further training and development required for employees?
- **Partnership working** – Are partners aware of and implementing equality requirements?
- **Contracts & monitoring** – Is equality built into the contract and are outcomes monitored?

**2.1. Examples of relevant evidence sources are listed below. Please tick which evidence sources are being used in this assessment and provide a summary for each protected characteristic in sections 2.2 and 2.3.**

#### Internal desktop research

|                                     |   |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Place survey / Customer satisfaction data | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Demographic Profiles – Census & ONS.         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Local Needs Analysis                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Service Monitoring / Performance Information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other local research                      |                                     |  |

#### Third party guidance and examples

|                                     |                              |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | National / Regional Research | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Analysis of service outcomes for different groups |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Best Practice / Guidance     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Benchmarking with other organisations             |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Inspection Reports           |                                     |   |

#### Public consultation related activities

|                                     |  |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Consultation with Service Users  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Consultation with Community / Voluntary Sector |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Consultation with Staff  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Customer Feedback / Complaints                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Data about the physical environment e.g. housing market, employment, education and training provision, transport, spatial planning and public spaces |                                     |  |

#### Consulting Members, stakeholders and specialists

|                                     |                 |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Elected Members | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Expert views of stakeholders representing diverse |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|

## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

|  |                                      |        |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------|
| X  | Specialist staff / service expertise | groups |
| <p><i>Please bear in mind that whilst sections of the community will have common interests and concerns, views and issues vary within groups. E.g. women have differing needs and concerns depending on age, ethnic origin, disability etc</i></p> <p><b>Lack of local knowledge or data is not a justification for assuming there is not a negative impact on some groups of people. Further research may be required.</b></p>  |                                      |        |
| <h3>2.2. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings: - Service Delivery<br/>Considering the impact on Customers/Residents</h3>   |                                      |        |
| <p><b>- Age:</b> e.g. Under 16 yrs / 16-19 yrs / 20-29 yrs / 30-44 yrs / 45-59 yrs / 60-64 yrs / 65-74 yrs / 75+</p> <p>We currently have 315 looked after children in our care, 73 16-17 year olds and 241 under 16's. This tells us that 77% of our young people are under 16 and require a foster care placement making it our biggest demand which is why Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements is the first phase of the process in which recommissioning is due to commence in April 2020 ready for implementation September 2020.</p> <p><b>Consultation findings:</b></p> <p>No specific issues were raised in the findings.</p> <p>Of the 11 looked after children who completed the consultation, 7 were under 16 years old and 4 were 16-19 years old meaning it is likely that they have experience in different support provisions and we should have a view from someone who has been in foster care, residential and a 16+ provider.</p> <p>A high number of responses stated that foster care placements should be available up until the age of 18 years old and even 21 years old due to the continued need of guidance from adults and likely their vulnerability.</p> <p>A lot of the feedback was around increasing our in-house foster carer provision and working to retain those foster carers. Although our in-house provision does not feed into this work, I will ensure all feedback around in-house provision is fed into the work being done internally.</p> |                                      |        |
| <p><b>- Disability:</b> e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement</p> <p>This will form part of the service specifications where providers would be expected to recognise the nine protected characteristics.</p> <p><b>Consultation findings:</b></p> <p>No specific issues were raised in the findings.</p>   |                                      |        |
| <p><b>- Carers:</b> A person of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill-health or a substance misuse problem</p>  |                                      |        |

## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

**- Gender Reassignment:** *People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex*

This will form part of the service specifications where providers would be expected to recognise the nine protected characteristics.

### Consultation findings:

No specific issues were raised in the findings.

**- Pregnancy and Maternity:** *e.g. pregnant women / women who have given birth & women who are breastfeeding (26 week time limit then protected by sex discrimination provisions)*

Not applicable to staffing but mother and baby placements will be included as part of the placements needs for our looked after children that are pregnant.

### Consultation findings:

No specific issues were raised in the findings.

**- Race:** *e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other*

This will form part of the service specifications where providers would be expected to recognise the nine protected characteristics.

### Consultation findings:

No specific issues were raised in the findings.

The consultation results show that the majority of responses were from White British individuals with only a small number of Black or Black British and other ethnic groups having responded. Unfortunately we had no responses from Asian/Asian British or mixed ethnicities.

**- Religion or Belief:** *e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other*

This will form part of the service specification where providers would be expected to recognise the nine protected characteristics.

### Consultation findings:

No specific issues were raised in the findings.



## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

### - **Sex:** *e.g. Women / Girls / Men / Boys*

We currently have 315 looked after children in our care, 126 of which are female and 189 male which tells us that there isn't much of a divide with the gender of children becoming looked after with 40% female and 60% male.

18/19 stability data also shows that there is not a lot of difference between the gender of c/yp that had been moved more than once with 57.5% of moves for males and 42.5% for females. Averaging at 2.2 moves for females and 2.3 males.

So currently, there is an equal need for placements for both males and females.

#### **Consultation findings:**

No specific issues were raised in the findings.

The majority of consultation results were received by female respondents at 60% with only 40% of responses received were male.

### - **Sexual Orientation:** *e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals*

This will form part of the service specifications where providers would be expected to recognise the nine protected characteristics.

#### **Consultation findings:**

No specific issues were raised in the findings.

### - **Other:** *e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership*

Looked after children should be entitled to equal opportunities which must be reflected in where they are placed. The purpose of this proposal is to ensure children and young people are supported and looked after according to their needs. We will be looking at the various different placements that are needed specifically for groups such as high needs, siblings etc.

The implementation of the Valuing Care tool will enable us to identify specific needs and ensure the right placement is sourced in the beginning to reduce the number of placements a child/young person has to encounter to ensure that they receive the level of support they need. The expected impact on the children and young people as a result of this is greater outcomes.

## **2.3. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings – Employment Considering the impact on Employees**

### - **Age:** *e.g. 16-19 / 20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60+*

**Not applicable.**

## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>- Disability:</b> e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>             |
| <p><b>- Carers:</b> e.g. parent / guardian / foster carer / person caring for an adult who is a spouse, partner, civil partner, relative or person who lives at the same address</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>                                   |
| <p><b>- Gender Reassignment:</b> People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p> |
| <p><b>- Pregnancy and Maternity:</b> e.g. Pregnancy / Compulsory maternity leave / Ordinary maternity leave / Additional maternity leave</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>- Race:</b> e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>- Religion or Belief:</b> e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>- Sex:</b> Women / Men</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>- Sexual Orientation:</b> e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>  |
| <p><b>- Other:</b> e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership</p> <p><b>Not applicable.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>2.4. To what extent are vulnerable groups more affected by this proposal compared to the population or workforce as a whole?</b></p>   |



## Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

The placements work is specifically to meet the needs of looked after children which is a vulnerable group.

### 2.5. To what extent do current procedures and working practices address the above issues and help to promote equality of opportunity?

Providers go through a rigorous procurement process to secure a place on our DPS/Framework and are expected to explicitly evidence that they can meet the needs of the children and young people that we are looking to place.

### 2.6. Are there any gaps in data or consultation findings

LGBTQ+ was not an element included in the consultation nor is there local data. However, this will be included in the service specifications to ensure that placements have a full understanding and a duty to:

- Protect all young people from homophobia, transphobia and harassment. To challenge those who bully and harass.
- To provide transport and access to services, groups and resources. Allow young people to be themselves and explore their identity at their pace.
- Support and advocate for young people through this process.

### 2.7. What action will be taken to obtain this information?

This data is not relevant to the purpose of this proposal but will be included in the service specifications going forward.

## Stage 3 - Providing an overview of impacts and potential discrimination.

### Stage 3 – Assessing Positive & Negative Impacts

| Analysis of Impacts                  | Impact? |        | Discrimination? |    | Summary of impacts and reasons |
|--------------------------------------|---------|--------|-----------------|----|--------------------------------|
|                                      | (+ve)   | (- ve) | YES             | NO |                                |
| <b>3.1 Age</b>                       | x       |        |                 | x  |                                |
| <b>3.2 Disability</b>                | x       |        |                 | x  |                                |
| <b>3.3 Carers</b>                    |         |        |                 | x  |                                |
| <b>3.4 Gender Reassignment</b>       |         |        |                 |    | n/a                            |
| <b>3.5 Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b> | x       |        |                 | x  |                                |
| <b>3.6 Race</b>                      | x       |        |                 | x  |                                |
| <b>3.7 Religion /</b>                | x       |        |                 | x  |                                |

### Central Bedfordshire Equality Impact Assessment

| <b>Belief</b>  |   |  |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>3.8 Sex</b>   | x |  |  | x |  |
| <b>3.9 Sexual Orientation</b>  | x |  |  | x |  |
| <b>3.10 Other e.g.</b><br><i>Human Rights,<br/>Poverty / Social Class<br/>/ Deprivation, Looked<br/>After Children,<br/>Offenders, Cohesion<br/>Marriage and Civil<br/>Partnership</i> | x |  |  | x | Looked after children are a vulnerable group and it is important that placements are matched to their needs. |

### Stage 4 - Identifying mitigating actions that can be taken to address adverse impacts.

| Stage 4 – Conclusions, Recommendations and Action Planning  |              |      |          |
|---|--------------|------|----------|
| <b>4.1 What are the main conclusions and recommendations from the assessment?</b><br>The assessment has not identified any recommendations to be made.  |              |      |          |
| <b>4.2 What changes will be made to address or mitigate many adverse impacts that have been identified?</b><br>No adverse impacts have been identified. |              |      |          |
| <b>4.3 Are there any budgetary implications?</b><br>No but we will continue to try and make savings whilst maintaining quality of the placement.        |              |      |          |
| <b>4.4 Actions to be taken to mitigate against any adverse impacts:</b>   |              |      |          |
| Action  | Lead Officer | Date | Priority |
|   |              |      |          |
|   |              |      |          |
|   |              |      |          |
|   |              |      |          |

### Stage 5 - Checking that all the relevant issues and mitigating actions have been identified

| Stage 5 – Quality Assurance & Scrutiny:<br>Checking that all the relevant issues have been identified       |  |
|---|--|
| <b>5.1 What methods have been used to gain feedback on the main issues raised in the assessment?</b>        |  |
| <b>Step 1:</b>  |  |
| Has the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) reviewed this assessment and provided feedback? Yes |  |
| <b>Summary of CPA's comments:</b>   |  |
| <b>Step 2:</b>  |  |
| <b>5.2 Feedback from Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum</b>  |  |
| The EIA Manager advised that this would not be necessary.   |  |

## Stage 6 - Ensuring that the actual impact of proposals are monitored over time.

| Stage 6 – Monitoring Future Impact  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>6.1 How will implementation of the actions be monitored?</b>                           | Placements will be monitored by Social Workers, Contract managers and the QA manager who will all ensure that providers are adhering to the service specification and delivering satisfactory support to the children and young people in our care.  |
| <b>6.2 What sort of data will be collected and how often will it be analysed?</b>         | The Valuing Care tool will allow for data to be collected on the 13 elements of support what the tool identifies – the needs of the children and young people will be monitored by Social Workers and the idea is by monitoring these needs closely, the relevant support will be provided and the needs for the c/yp will reduce over time. |
| <b>6.3 How often will the proposal be reviewed?</b>                                       | There are various stages to the delivery of the project which are reviewed against how well the components are delivered.  |
| <b>6.4 Who will be responsible for this?</b>  | Social Workers, Contract managers, Commissioning, QA manager.  |
| <b>6.5 How have the actions from this assessment been incorporated into the proposal?</b> | No additional actions identified.  |

## Stage 7 - Finalising the assessment.

| Stage 7 – Accountability / Signing Off  |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>7.1 Has the lead Assistant Director/Head of Service been notified of the outcome of the assessment</b>                   |             |
| Name: _____   | Date: _____ |
| <b>7.2 Has the Corporate Policy Adviser Equality &amp; Diversity provided confirmation that the Assessment is complete?</b> |             |
| Date: _____   |             |

## Central Bedfordshire Council

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

21 January 2020

### Consultation On The Council's Admission Arrangements For The Academic Year 2020/21

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**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children, ([sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director:** Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, ([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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#### Purpose of this report

1. To outline the proposed changes to the admission arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and seek the views of the Committee.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and Provide a response to the consultation
2. Provide any other comments on the proposed changes to the admission arrangements as set out in appendix A and appendices 1-4.

#### Council Priorities

2. The Council's co-ordinated admissions scheme and admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary schools support the Council's priority to improve educational attainment.

The Council must consult on and determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area in accordance with Section 88C of the 1998 Act and Chapter 3 of the School Admissions Regulations.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Legal Implications**

3. As the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area, the Council is required by Section 88C(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") to determine, on an annual basis, the admission arrangements which are to apply to such schools for the next-but-one school year. Accordingly, for September 2021 admissions, the Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.
4. Before determining admission arrangements, the Council is required by Section 88C(2) of the 1998 Act to carry out such consultation about the proposed arrangements as may be prescribed in regulations (in this case, the School Admissions Regulations, Chapter 3 of which prescribes, amongst other matters, the persons who must be consulted, the manner of consultation and the time for consultation and determination of admission arrangements).
5. As Section 88C of the 1998 Act and Chapter 3 of the School Admissions Regulations impose statutory duties on the Council, a failure to consult on and determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area would amount to a breach by the Council of these duties, the possible implications of which include legal challenges by interested parties and intervention by the Secretary of State for Education, who has the power under Section 497 of the Education Act 1996 to give such directions as appear to him to be expedient to a local authority which has failed to discharge a statutory duty imposed on it under the Education Acts.
6. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Council consults on and determines the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area in accordance with Section 88C of the 1998 Act and Chapter 3 of the School Admissions Regulations.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

7. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities Implications**

8. The School Admissions Code sets out the duty on Local Authorities and Admission Authorities to produce admission arrangements which are fair, clear and objective, which can be easily understood by parents. Admission arrangements must comply with regulations and legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
9. Public authorities have a statutory duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. As part of the consultation on the Admissions Arrangements

the Council will check that the proposed changes do not have a disproportionate or negative impact on vulnerable groups.

### **Appendices:**

10. Appendix A – Executive report of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019: Consultation on the Admission Arrangements for the Academic Year 2021/22
11. Appendix 1 – Lower, Primary and Middle 2021/22 co-ordinated admissions scheme.
12. Appendix 2 – Secondary and Upper 2021/22 co-ordinated admissions scheme.
13. Appendix 3 – Proposed Community and Voluntary Controlled schools Admissions Policy and PANs 2021/22.
14. Appendix 4 – Confirmation of Religious Affiliation form.

### **Background Papers**

None

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Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

3 December 2019

## CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2021

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**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children, ([sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director:** Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, ([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**This report relates to a decision that is Key**

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### Purpose of this report

1. To approve the commencement of the Council's consultation on admission arrangements to ensure the statutory requirement for admissions consultation is met. The Council is the admissions authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.
2. Outline the proposed changes to the admission arrangements for all Central Bedfordshire Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. **Approve the commencement of consultation for the proposed changes to the Council's admission arrangements for the academic year 2021/22.**

**The proposed changes to the Council's admission arrangements:**

- Include children of staff priority to the oversubscription criteria for Roecroft Lower
- Amend priority for children of staff at Fairfield Park Lower School

- **Amend the oversubscription criterion for Marston Moreteyne VC (Formerly known as Church End Lower) School to bring this in line with the standard admission policy for community and VC schools in Central Bedfordshire**
  - **To defer the decision to include priority for children attending Pulford CofE Lower and The Mary Bassett Lower schools to Leighton Middle School oversubscription criterion until the plan for future educational landscape in the cluster has been agreed and consulted on.**
  - **Amend priority children of staff at Leighton Middle School by changing position from sixth to third place.**
  - **Amend the Community and Voluntary Controlled schools Admission arrangements for Academic Year 2021/22 to include the priority children of staff in its oversubscription criteria.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to determine the Council's admission policy for 2021, by 28 February 2020, as required by legislation.**

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

3. The Council's proposed Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2021-22 will be considered by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2020 as a consultee to the process if the Executive approve the recommendations of this report.

## **Issues**

4. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that admissions are coordinated for all admission authorities in the local authority's area for all children being admitted into the normal year of entry, and only 1 offer of a school place is made.
5. The Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the academic year 2021/22 fulfils this requirement, setting out the timeframes for processing admission applications.
6. In addition, as the Council is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, it must also undertake consultation on its own admission arrangements where changes are proposed. The admission policy for these schools sets out the criteria in which applications will be considered if the school is oversubscribed. This report explains the rationale for the proposed changes for seventeen Community and Voluntary Controlled schools' admission criteria.

## **Central Bedfordshire Council's Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Academic Year 2021-22**

7. Legislation contained within the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements (England) Regulations 2012 ("the School Admissions Regulations") requires Local Authorities to have a co-ordinated admissions scheme for their area where parents can apply on a common application form for a place in the normal year of entry at a mainstream maintained school or academy.
8. The Council is required to co-ordinate the admissions for children in their area so that only 1 offer of a school place is made per prospective pupil. The co-ordinated admissions scheme must be formulated and published on the Council's website by 1 January in the relevant determination year and must be consulted on with the admission authorities in the area (and any other local authorities it determines) if it is substantially different from the previous year.
9. Central Bedfordshire's Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme sets out the arrangements and timetable by which applications will be processed. The scheme details the processes and procedures that the Council and other admissions authorities need to work to in order to process the applications by the offer date for the normal year of entry at a school or academy.
10. The Council acting as the local authority must have a co-ordinated admissions scheme in place for all mainstream maintained schools and academies in the area.
11. Admissions for the normal year of entry for Secondary schools (which in Central Bedfordshire includes Upper and Secondary schools) are subject to a national closing date of 31 October for receipt of applications and a national offer date of 1 March (or the next working day).
12. Admissions for the normal year of entry for Primary schools (which in Central Bedfordshire include Lower, Primary and Middle schools) are subject to a national closing date of 15 January and a national offer date of 16 April (or the next working day).
13. The proposed coordinated scheme for 2021/22 is attached for Lower, Primary and Middle at Appendix 1 and the proposed co-ordinated scheme is attached for Secondary and Upper at Appendix 2.
14. The proposed coordinated scheme is not substantially different from the previous years' and has been updated with the relevant dates for the academic year 2021/22. This scheme therefore is not subject to formal consultation as per the requirements of the School Admissions Regulations but will be circulated for information to all relevant parties.

## **Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools**

15. Admission arrangements are the procedures and processes that determine how children will be admitted to a school and include the oversubscription criteria which will be applied if more applications are received than there are places available.
16. The School Admissions Regulations require Admission Authorities (i.e. the Council in relation to Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area, the governing bodies of Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools and the relevant Academy Trust in relation to academies) to consult where changes are proposed on their admission arrangements, including any supplementary information form that will apply for admission applications for the following academic year. The confirmation of Religious Affiliation form is a supplementary form to the Council's common application form for point of entry admissions and is attached at Appendix 4 for information. The Religious Affiliation form is for all Central Bedfordshire schools who prioritise applicants on faith grounds for both Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools.
17. For admission arrangements determined in 2020 for entry in September 2021, consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October 2019 and the 31 January 2020. The Admission Arrangements must then be determined by 28 February 2020. The Council will conduct its consultation between the 17 December 2019 and 30 January 2020 to gather the views of all consultees over a six-week period to ensure that it meets the statutory consultation duration.
18. Admissions Authorities are required to consult with the following parties:
  - i. Parents of children between the ages of 2 and 18 who are resident in the relevant area;
  - ii. Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admissions authority have an interest in the proposed admission arrangements;
  - iii. All other admission authorities within the relevant area;
  - iv. The Governing Bodies of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools;
  - v. Adjoining neighbouring local authorities;
  - vi. In the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing religious denomination schools.
19. From 2021/22 changes are proposed to the admissions criteria of all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Central Bedfordshire.
20. As part of the Schools for the Future programme, the Council is currently working with each cluster to co construct a cluster plan for each area which will outline the shape of education provision for the next 15-20 years in line with housing and population growth. Until each plan is finalised and agreed, the Council is not seeking to make any significant changes to admission arrangements for Community or Voluntary Controlled schools.

## Including priority for children of staff for Roecroft Lower School

21. The Governing Body of Roecroft Lower School has requested that children of staff be given priority within their oversubscription criteria.
22. Many schools have had difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, and therefore wish to include the priority as an incentive to attract high quality staff.
23. The School Admissions Code, the statutory code which underpins the admission process, permits admission authorities to give priority to children of staff within a school's oversubscription criteria in either or both of the following circumstances; where the member of staff has been employed at the school for at least two years when the application is made and/or where they have been recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
24. The proposed oversubscription criteria for Roecroft Lower School is:
  - 1) All 'looked after' children and children who were previously 'looked after'
  - 2) Children who appear to the Local Authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted
  - 3) Children of staff\*
  - 4) Children living in the catchment with siblings at the school
  - 5) Children living in the catchment area
  - 6) Other children with siblings at the school
  - 7) Any other children

\*A clear definition would be required to set out how a parent/carer would be eligible for this criterion. The proposed definition would be;

Permanent full or part-time staff who have either been employed at the school for two or more years at the time of application or recruited to fill a vacant post where there was a demonstrable skill shortage. The relationship to the child is defined as by blood or adoption or with legal parental responsibility and living with the child in the same house Monday – Friday.

25. A third of Central Bedfordshire schools and academies who are responsible for their admission arrangements include children of staff priority within their oversubscription criteria. Therefore, supporting these schools' requests would enable the schools to operate as many of the other schools already are. The number of children of staff applications for schools with this criterion has been very low, on average there is one application per year that meets this criterion and therefore the impact on other applicants is minimal.
26. Last year following the required consultation, the Council included the priority for children of staff to the oversubscription criteria for seven community schools, following a request from the school. In that consultation the majority of respondents were supportive of the proposal and the general consensus was that it was a pragmatic way of supporting schools attract and retain quality staff.

27. The possible disadvantages to the proposed criterion is that as admission authorities cannot give priority to children based on their parents' occupations, except for children of staff it could be viewed as unfair to other parents as their occupation cannot be considered. However, it is permissible by the School Admissions Code and therefore an acceptable criterion. As a result of the children of staff criterion it may result in children from outside the local area gaining a place at the school ahead of local children if staff living in a distance to the school opt to apply for a place for their child at the school at which they work. However, the number of applicants expected to meet this criterion is so low and not all school staff want their child attending the school at which they work.
28. It is therefore proposed to include the children of staff priority criterion within the oversubscription criteria for the schools listed to support the Governing Body of Roecroft Lower in attracting high quality staff to join their school and bring the school in line with a number of academies schools within Central Bedfordshire that already include this criterion within their admission policies.

### **Amending priority for children of staff for Fairfield Park Lower School**

29. Following the appropriate consultation in autumn 2018, the Council included priority for children of staff to be added to the oversubscription criteria for Fairfield Park Lower School with effect from September 2020. This was following a request from the Governing Body to support the school in attracting and retaining high quality staff.
30. The Governing Body has requested that the priority for staff be moved higher up the oversubscription criteria, currently 6<sup>th</sup> and now requested to be 3<sup>rd</sup>. The request is in response to the recruitment issues facing many schools, and therefore enable the school to attract and recruit high quality staff.
31. Many own admission authority schools and academies that include this priority within their oversubscription criteria have made it a high criterion, so therefore the request made by Fairfield Park Lower is in line with many other local schools and would ensure parity.
32. The proposed oversubscription criteria for Fairfield Park Lower is:
- 1) All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
  - 2) Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted
  - 3) Children of staff\*
  - 4) Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
  - 5) Children living in the catchment area
  - 6) Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school
  - 7) Any other children

### **Oversubscription criteria for Marston Moreteyne VC School**

33. In September 2019 Church End Lower School converted from a foundation school to a Voluntary Controlled school, at which time the school was renamed Marston

Moreteyne VC School. As the school converted to a Voluntary Controlled school the admission authority changed from the Governing Body to the Local Authority.

34. The School Admissions Code states “Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period”
35. The admission arrangements for the school were last consulted on in autumn 2012, for the 2014/15 admission arrangements and therefore a consultation on the school’s admission arrangements needs to take place this year to ensure compliance with the School Admissions Code.
36. Last year the Council consulted on including priority for ‘children who have been in state care outside of England and have since been adopted’ to the oversubscription criteria for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Central Bedfordshire following a request from the Minister for Education. The proposal is therefore to include the criterion within the oversubscription criteria for Marston Moreteyne VC School so that it adheres to the Minister’s request and is in line with the admission policy for other schools.
37. Applicants applying under this criterion will be required to provide documentation to evidence that their child meets this criterion. The School Admissions Team would seek advice from the Virtual School to determine if applicants meet the criterion based on the evidence provided by parent. The Department for Education has stated that the number of pupils who will meet this criterion is small so it is not anticipated that many applications will be considered under this priority.
38. It is also proposed that the criterion ‘very exceptional’ medical grounds is removed from the school’s oversubscription criteria to bring it in line with the admission policy for community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Central Bedfordshire. The Council removed the medical criterion in 2014/15 following consultation. The definition for this criterion is where the school is the only school locally that can meet the child’s needs. Parents or Carers are required to submit a medical report from the child’s doctor or medical consultant setting out the valid medical reasons why it is essential for the child to attend the school in question.
39. Very few applications meet the medical criterion as many schools can meet a child’s medical needs by having the appropriate resources or training staff to meet a child’s needs. The evidence provided does not always set out a strong enough case of why the school is the only school that can meet the child’s needs.
40. Medical conditions cannot be validated by members of the School Admissions Team who are not trained medical professionals and it would be a constraint on the timetable for processing admissions if these were referred to an appropriate person in the NHS. Time and resources for the NHS would also be an issue. It is therefore proposed to remove this criterion.
41. The proposed oversubscription criteria for Marston Moreteyne VC School (the first being mandatory and the second in response to the Minister’s request) are:

- 1) All 'looked after' children and children who were previously 'looked after'
- 2) Children who appear to the Local Authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted
- 3) Pupils living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 4) Other pupils living in the catchment area
- 5) Other siblings
- 6) Any other children

**To defer the decision to include priority for children attending Pulford CofE Lower and The Mary Bassett Lower schools to Leighton Middle School oversubscription criterion until the plan for future educational landscape in the cluster has been agreed and consulted on. Also, to amend priority children of staff at Leighton Middle School by changing position from sixth to third place.**

|    | 2020/21 determined criteria                                | Proposed criteria by Governing Body                        |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | Looked after children and previously looked after children | Looked after children and previously looked after children |
| 2. | Children that have been in state care outside England      | Children that have been in state care outside England      |
| 3. | Catchment sibling  | Children of staff  |
| 4. | Catchment  | Siblings   |
| 5. | Sibling (non-catchment)                                    | Children attending Pulford and The Mary Bassett*           |
| 6. | Children of staff  | Catchment  |
| 7. | Any other children   | Any other children   |

**(Table 1)**

42. The Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, has requested that their oversubscription criteria be amended as follows:

43. The main rationale behind the request for adding the feeder schools of Pulford and The Mary Bassett is to forge close links (which would include collaborative planning) with a smaller number of feeder schools to facilitate a smoother transition from lower to middle school and place greater emphasis on the academic and pastoral needs of pupils.



44. Feeder schools have been identified as a criterion in other schools in Leighton Buzzard.

45. Analysis (Table 2) of pupils attending the two proposed feeder schools (Pulford CofE Lower and The Mary Bassett Lower) shows that children attending these schools live across Leighton Buzzard, with a significant number living within the catchment area for Brooklands School. Therefore, by giving these pupils priority, it may negatively impact the school and could result in pupils living in the catchment area of Leighton Middle which do not attend these two lower schools not obtaining a place. Those most likely to be affected would be those living on the furthest edge of Leighton Middle's catchment area, which includes Stanbridge village and the traveller site nearby.

|                | Middle school catchment |            |                    |          |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|
| School on roll | Leighton Middle         | Brooklands | Gilbert Inglefield | Linslade |
| Mary Bassett   | 181                     | 121        | 62                 | 18       |
| Pulford        | 105                     | 107        | 33                 | 19       |

(Table 2)

46. It is therefore proposed that the decision to consider these two schools as feeder schools to Leighton middle, be deferred until such time the plan for the future educational landscape in the cluster has been agreed and consulted on.

**Amend the Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools Admissions Policy for academic year 2021/22 to include the priority children of staff in its oversubscription criteria.**

47. As previously stated, many schools across central Bedfordshire have difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. The School Admissions Code states that '*Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances*':

- a. Where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/ or
- b. The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

48. By adding this to the Community and VC Schools oversubscription criteria, it will provide equality of opportunity for all teachers across Central Bedfordshire.

49. It is proposed that the children of staff criterion be the number three priority, which would be in line with other schools with this criterion.

50. The proposed oversubscription criteria for the majority of Community and VC schools in Central Bedfordshire for 2021/22 is as follows:

- 1) All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
- 2) Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted
- 3) Children of Staff\*
- 4) Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 5) Children living in the catchment area
- 6) Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 7) Any other children

### **Reason for decision**

51. As outlined above, the Council is required to consult on changes to its admission arrangements where these are proposed and is required to consult within the statutory timescales set out in the School Admissions Regulations. A decision is therefore required from the Executive to approve the commencement of the Council's consultation on the proposed changes to the admission arrangements for all Central Bedfordshire Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

### **Council Priorities**

52. The Council's co-ordinated admissions scheme and admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools supports the Council's priority to improve educational attainment.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Legal Implications**

53. As the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area, the Council is required by Section 88C(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") to determine, on an annual basis (before the beginning of each school year), the admission arrangements which are to apply to such schools for the next school year. Accordingly, for September 2021 admissions, the Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

54. Before determining admission arrangements, the Council is required by Section 88C(2) of the 1998 Act to carry out such consultation about the proposed arrangements as may be prescribed in regulations (in this case, the School Admissions Regulations, Part 3 and the School Admissions Code of which prescribes, amongst other matters, the persons who must be consulted, the manner of consultation and the time for consultation and determination of admission arrangements).

55. As Section 88C of the 1998 Act and Part 3 of the School Admissions Regulations and the School Admissions Code all impose statutory duties on the Council, a failure to consult on and determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area would amount to a breach by the Council of these duties. The possible implications of which include legal challenges by interested parties and intervention by the Secretary of State for Education, who has

the power under Section 497 of the Education Act 1996 to give such directions as appear to him to be expedient to a local authority which has failed to discharge a statutory duty imposed on it under the Education Acts.

56. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Council consults on and determines the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area in accordance with Section 88C of the 1998 Act, Part 3 of the School Admissions Regulations and School Admissions Code.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

57. There are no financial implications for this report.

## **Equalities Implications**

58. The School Admissions Code sets out the duty on Local Authorities and Admission Authorities to produce admission arrangements which are fair, clear and objective, which can be easily understood by parents. Admission arrangements must comply with regulations and legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
59. Public authorities have a statutory duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. As part of the consultation on the Admissions Arrangements the Council will check that the proposed changes do not have a disproportionate or negative impact on vulnerable groups.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

60. It is a necessary requirement for the Council to consult on its admission arrangements where changes are proposed and to formulate a co-ordinated scheme for admission by 1 January in the determination year.
61. The proposed co-ordinated admissions scheme has been drawn up with regard to the national closing and offer dates for the academic year of 2020/21, taking into account the necessary timescales to process and allocate places working with the schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire to meet the deadlines
62. The next steps are for the Council to undertake the consultation within the statutory timeframes engaging with all the relevant parties to ascertain views on the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools of which the Council is the admissions authority for.
63. The consultation will run from 5 December and conclude on 30 January 2020, for a total of eight weeks, six of which are during term time, to ensure that it meets the statutory consultation duration. The legislation states that the Council must determine its admission arrangements for admissions in 2021/22 by 28 February

2020, which would not allow sufficient time for the responses to be analysed and reported back to Executive during February 2020. Therefore, responses to the consultation will be reported in February 2020 to the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to determine the Council's admission arrangements for the academic year 2021/22 alongside the Director of Children's Services before 28 February 2020 as required by the regulations.

## **Appendices**

The following appendices are attached through an electronic link:

- 64. Appendix 1 – Lower, Primary and Middle 2021/22 co-ordinated admissions scheme.
- 65. Appendix 2 – Secondary and Upper 2021/22 co-ordinated admissions scheme.
- 66. Appendix 3 – Proposed Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools Admissions Policy and PANs 2021/22.
- 67. Appendix 4 – Confirmation of Religious Affiliation form.

## **Background Papers**

N/A

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## Appendix 1

### **PROPOSED**

### **CO-ORDINATED SCHEME FOR ADMISSIONS TO: LOWER, PRIMARY AND MIDDLE ACADEMIES AND SCHOOLS**

### **ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002 and supported by The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2014 requires Local Authorities to formulate a scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements for all academies and maintained schools in their area.
- 1.2 A school is here defined as any academy or maintained community, foundation, trust, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school in the Central Bedfordshire Council area.
- 1.3 Central Bedfordshire Council, acting as the Local Authority is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. The admission authority for academies is the academy trust. For foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools, the admission authority is the governing body.
- 1.4 This scheme will apply to all lower, primary and middle academies and schools for admissions in the Central Bedfordshire Council area from September 2021.
- 1.5. Any reference to Central Bedfordshire is a reference to the administrative area of the unitary authority.
- 1.6 Central Bedfordshire Council uses the equal preference system to process admission applications, as outlined below:
  - 1.6.1 Stage 1

All first, second and third preference applications are considered equally against the admissions criteria. At this stage the Council does not distinguish between first, second and third preference applications. For example, if the school has 120 places and there are 150 first, second and third preference applications all are considered equally against the admissions criteria.

### 1.6.2 Stage 2

If a pupil qualifies for a place at more than one school the parent's highest ranked preference (i.e. first or second preference on the parent's application form) will be offered, and any lower ranking offers will be disregarded. For example, a parent's first and third preferences might both qualify for a place, in which case the parent would be offered their first preference, leaving the place at the third preference school available for another pupil.

## 2. The Scheme

- 2.1. This scheme is for admissions in the normal year of entry for:
  - a) Lower Academies and Schools
  - b) Primary Academies and Schools
  - c) Middle Academies and Schools
- 2.2. There will be a standard form known as the Common Application Form (CAF) available for parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire to apply online or by completing a hard copy application form.
- 2.3. The CAF will be used for the purposes of admitting children into the first year of a:
  - Lower or Primary academy/school (Year R), or
  - Middle academy/school (Year 5).
- 2.4. The CAF will enable parents/carers to:
  - express a preference for up to 3 academies/schools
  - rank their preferences
  - give reasons for their preferences
- 2.5. Information will be provided on the admissions process in the form of the admissions booklet and will contain information on:
  - a) the academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire
  - b) dates of open evenings (where applicable)
  - c) published admission numbers and admissions criteria
  - d) how to complete an application
  - e) how places are allocated
  - f) timetable for the application and allocation process
  - g) school transport
  - h) who to contact for advice
- 2.6. **Admissions for the normal year of entry into a Lower or Primary Academy/School (Year R):**
  - 2.6.1 Parents of all children born between **01/09/16 and 31/08/17** and living in Central Bedfordshire will be able to apply for an academy or school place online or by completing a hard copy of the Common Application Form (CAF). The CAF will be available from any local lower or primary

academy/school, from the School Admissions Team or it can be downloaded from the Council website.

- 2.6.2 Parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire who wish to apply for a primary or lower academy/school in another Local Authority must apply online or complete the hard copy of the CAF.
- 2.6.3 Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire but who wish to apply for a place at a Central Bedfordshire school or academy must make their application to their home Local Authority.
- 2.6.4 **Deferred Entry:** Parents of children offered a place for admission in the reception year are offered a full-time place to commence in the September following their child's fourth birthday. However, parents may defer the admission of their child until later in the academic year or until their child becomes of statutory school age or request that their child takes up their place part time until they reach statutory school age. A place cannot be deferred beyond statutory school age nor beyond the academic year for which the place was offered. Therefore, the following will apply, according to the child's date of birth for deferring entry to the Reception year:

| <b>Child born:</b>                                    | <b>Term which place can be deferred until:</b> |
|---|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> December | Spring term (January)                          |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March      | Summer term (April)                            |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> April – 31 <sup>st</sup> August       | Summer term (April)                            |

**2.7. Delayed admission for summer born children (those born between 1 April and 31 August).**

- 2.7.1 Parents/carers can also request that their Summer born child is admitted to Reception in that year rather than to Year 1. However, parents/carers do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular age group, a decision will be made by the admission authority for the school in consultation with the Headteacher.
- 2.7.2 Parents/carers of Summer born children should make their application for a school place on the Common Application Form (CAF) by 15 January if their child will be 4 years old by 31<sup>st</sup> August of that year. They should make clear on the form that they wish to defer entrance to school for a year. They should apply for both entrance to their child's normal age group (Year R) and for entrance out of the year group.
- 2.7.3 In line with the School Admissions Code December 2014 ("the Code"), the Council, as the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, will consider a request on the basis of the individual circumstances of the case and the best interests of the child. To this end, the Council will liaise with the Headteacher and must take account of their professional opinion on the case. The Council will also take account of the parents'/carers' view. A written request, sent together with the CAF should be made by the parents/carers for the attention of the Admissions Manager

and should include the parents'/carer's reasons for the request, information regarding the child's academic, social and emotional development including any supporting evidence the parent deems relevant; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional and if applicable, details if the child was born prematurely including whether they would have been in a lower age group had they been born on their due date. Once determined, the decision will be communicated to the parent(s)/carer(s) in writing and will include the reasons for the decision.

- 2.7.4 For schools which control their own admissions (Foundation, Trust or Voluntary Aided), parents/carers need to make their request in writing, separately from the CAF, directly to the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school. The request should include such details as are outlined above. The Governing Body, along with the Headteacher, will then consider the request, making their decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child in accordance with the Code. For Academies, parents/carers need to make their request in writing directly to the Academy Trust via the Principal. Academies must also follow the Code in making a decision.
- 2.7.5 Where the parents'/carers' request for a school place outside the normal age group is successful, the parents/carers can withdraw their application for a place within the normal age group. They will have to make a fresh application during the admissions round the following year. Where the request for a place outside the normal age group is unsuccessful, they may decide to continue with their application for a place within the normal age group or may withdraw it and make an in year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.
- 2.7.6 Where a parent has more than one preferred school in their application, the relevant admission authorities will each consider the request and make their decision individually. There is no guarantee that all will come to the same decision.
- 2.7.7 Again at a future application or transfer point the decision to admit a child out of their normal age group rests with the admission authority and there is no guarantee they will come to the same decision as an earlier authority may have.
- 2.7.8 As set out above, if a request is granted, the parent will need to make an application as part of next year's normal admission round and this will be processed within the normal allocation process. A place is never guaranteed at a particular school and in the case of oversubscription, places are offered in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria. In short it would be delaying the application rather than an offer of a place.



## **2.8 Admission into the normal year of entry into a Middle/Extended secondary Academy/ School (Year 5)**

- 2.8.1 Parents of all children living in Central Bedfordshire and attending a lower academy/school in the Local Authority area will receive the details about the transfer process and how to apply.
- 2.8.2 Parents of children attending a lower academy/school, in Central Bedfordshire who do not live in the Local Authority area must make their application to their home Local Authority.
- 2.8.3 Parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire but not attending a lower academy/school, in the Local Authority area and who wish to apply for a middle academy/school place may make their application online or obtain a hard copy of the CAF and the Admissions booklet from the School Admissions Team. The CAF and booklet are also available to download from the Local Authority website.

## **2.9. Admission of children outside their normal age group**

- 2.9.1 Parents who want their child to transfer to the next phase of school out outside of their normal age group must make the request in sufficient time for it to be considered before the application deadline.
- 2.9.2 Where the preference is for a Community or Voluntary Controlled school the request should be made in writing for the attention of the Admissions Manager. The Council will liaise with the Headteacher accordingly and will support their professional opinion on the case. The request should include the parent's reasons for the request, information regarding the child's academic, social and emotional development, including any supporting evidence the parent deems relevant and whether the child has previously been educated outside their normal age group. Once determined the decision will be communicated to the parent(s)/carer(s) in writing and will include the reasons for the decision.
- 2.9.3 For own admission schools (Foundation, Trust or Voluntary Aided) parents/carers need to make their request in writing to the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school who will then consider the request, making their decision on what they determine as in the best interests of the child. For Academies parents/carers need to make their request in writing to the academy trust via the Principal.
- 2.9.4 Requests which have been granted must be followed up by a formal application using the appropriate paper CAF within the admission timetable. The application will be considered within the normal allocation process under the relevant admission criterion.

### 3. **Timetable for admissions into Lower, Primary and Middle academies and schools**

#### **Lower/Primary:**

- 3.1. In **September 2020** the Local Authority admissions booklet and the CAF will be available to parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire must apply to their home Local Authority.
- 3.2. Completed online applications and CAFs are to be submitted to the School Admissions Team by **15 January 2021**. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire must have applied to their home Local Authority by this date.

#### **Middle transfer:**

- 3.3. In **September 2021** information is sent to parents of all children in Year 4 attending a lower academy/school in the Local Authority area. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire will be advised to contact their home Local Authority in order to make their application.
- 3.4. Completed online applications are to be submitted and hard copies of the CAF are to be returned to the School Admissions Team by **15 January 2021**. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire must have applied to their home Local Authority by this date.

#### **Lower, Primary and Middle admissions**

- 3.5. By **8 February 2021** all preferences will be logged on the database and the School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust school or voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that academy or school. Applications for places in other Local Authority academies/schools are sent to those authorities.
- 3.6. By **5 March 2021** the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust or voluntary aided school will consider all applications, apply their oversubscription criteria and provide the School Admissions Team with a list of those applicants ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. All preferences will be ranked equally against the admissions criteria.
- 3.7. The School Admissions Team will process the ranked lists against the ranked lists of other academies and schools nominated and:
  - where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated academies or schools, that academy or school will be allocated to the child.
  - where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated academies or schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference

- 3.8. Between **10 March 2021 and 20 March 2021** information will be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers (i.e. a Central Bedfordshire child applying for a place in another Local Authority area or a child from another Local Authority applying for a place at a Central Bedfordshire academy or school) to determine the allocation of a place at the highest ranked preference.
- 3.9. Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated academies or schools, the child will be allocated a place at the nearest appropriate academy or school with a vacancy, but only if the child is resident in Central Bedfordshire. If the child does not reside in Central Bedfordshire, parents will be invited to request a place at any of the academies or schools that still have vacancies, after the allocation process. Priority will always be given to those parents who have expressed a preference for a particular academy or school over those who have not.
- 3.10. On **14 April 2021** all middle academies and schools will have access to details of the pupils to be offered places via the web based School Admissions Module.
- 3.11. On **16 April 2021** the School Admissions Team will notify parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire of the outcome of their application, including those who have applied for a place in another Local Authority academy or school. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire will be notified by their home Local Authority.
- 3.12. By **30 April 2021** parents are to notify School Admissions Team of their rejection of the place offered if this is no longer required. If parents do not respond by this date it will be assumed that they have accepted the place.
- 3.13. By **30 April 2021** parents who have applied on time and want to change their preference from their original offer need to have submitted a change of preference by this date.

#### **4. Late Applications**

- 4.1. The national closing date for applications in the normal admissions round is **15 January 2021**. Applications received after this date will be considered late and will be processed after the initial allocation of places.
- 4.2. Late applications received from 16 January until 30 April 2021 will be processed as part of the initial late allocation round and will be logged onto the database by **4 May 2021**.
- 4.3. The School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that academy or school by **4 May 2021**.

- 4.4. Applications for places in other Local Authority academies or schools will be sent to those authorities by **1 May 2021**.
- 4.5. By **10 May 2021** the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school will consider all their initial late applications for their academy or school, apply their oversubscription criteria and provide the School Admissions Team with a list of those applicants ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. All preferences will be ranked equally against the admissions criteria.
- 4.6. The School Admissions Team will process the ranked lists against the ranked lists of other academies or schools nominated and:
  - where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated academies or schools, that academy or school will be allocated to the child.
  - where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated academies or schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference.
- 4.7. Information will be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers (i.e. a Central Bedfordshire child applying for a place in another Local Authority area or a child from another Local Authority applying for a place at a Central Bedfordshire academy or school) to determine the allocation of a place at the highest ranked preference.
- 4.8. Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated academies or schools, the child will be allocated a place at the nearest appropriate academy or school with a vacancy, but only if the child is resident in Central Bedfordshire. If the child does not reside in Central Bedfordshire, parents will be invited to request a place at any of the academies or schools that still have vacancies, after the allocation process. Priority will always be given to those parents who have expressed a preference for a particular academy or school over those who have not.
- 4.9. On **21 May 2021** the School Admissions Team will post letters to parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire notifying them of the outcome of their Middle School applications, if part of the initial late allocation round, including those who have applied for a place in another Local Authority academy or school where the result of this decision has been received by the timescales outlined above.
- 4.10. On **7 June 2021** the School Admissions Team will post letters to parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire notifying them of the outcome of their Lower and Primary School applications, if part of the initial late allocation round, including those who have applied for a place in another Local Authority academy or school where the result of this decision has been received by the timescales outlined above.

- 4.11. Late applications received on or after the 1 May will be processed from **24 May 2021 for Middle school applications** and **8 June 2021 for Lower and Primary school applications**.

## **5. Waiting Lists**

- 5.1. Pupils not offered a place at their highest preference academy or school or at any of their preferred academies or schools are kept on a waiting list maintained by the admission authority to be re-allocated if places become available. The Council, as the Admission Authority, will maintain waiting lists until **the end of the academic year for 2021/22** for Community and Voluntary controlled schools. Allocation will be on the basis of the published oversubscription criteria. Priority will not be given to children based on the date their application was received or when their name was added to the list. Looked after children, previously looked after children, and those allocated a place at the school in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol, will take precedence over those on a waiting list.

## **6. In-year Admissions (applications received on or after 1 September)**

- 6.1. An in-year admission is an application made for a child to be admitted outside of the co-ordinated admissions scheme for the normal year of entry or for another year group within an academy/school.
- 6.2. The local authority will co-ordinate in-year applications for community and voluntary controlled schools as the admission authority for those schools.
- 6.3. The local authority will co-ordinate in-year applications made for academies and own admission authority schools (Foundation, Trust and Voluntary-Aided schools) who opt-in to the local authority's scheme for in-year admissions.
- 6.4. The Local Authority will make an application form available to enable parents to apply for an in-year place at any academy or school within the Local Authority area, which will enable parents to express a preference for up to 3 academies or schools and to rank their preferences. The form will be available on the Local Authority website as an e-form or can be downloaded or a hard copy can be obtained from the School Admissions Team.
- 6.5. The application will be dealt with by the local authority for those schools which are community or voluntary controlled schools or those academies and own admission authority who have opted in to the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme.
- 6.6. Any application received by the School Admissions Team for an academy or own admission authority school who has opted out of the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme will be forwarded to that academy or school to process.

- 6.7. All Academies and own admission authority schools who deal with their own in-year admissions (i.e. opted out of the in-year co-ordination scheme) will be required to determine the child's application and notify the parent and local authority of the outcome.
- 6.8. Pupils not offered a place at a community or voluntary controlled school or at an academy or own admission authority school which has opted in to the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme will be kept on a waiting list which will be maintained for the academic year of admission. Academies and own admission authority schools who have opted out will have their own waiting list arrangements. In all cases where a place cannot be offered parents will have the right of appeal.
- 6.9. If all of the preferred academies and schools are full and the pupil lives in Central Bedfordshire, a place will generally be offered at the nearest academy or school with places available, unless the child is already attending a local school or academy.
- 6.10. Any place offered is usually expected to be taken up by the child within 4-6 weeks or by the start of the next school term.
- 6.11. Details of the community and voluntary controlled schools and those academies and own admission authority schools who have opted-in to the in-year co-ordination scheme and those who have opted out can be obtained from the School Admissions Team at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions).

**Timetable for Co-ordinated Admissions to:  
Lower, Primary and Middle Schools and Academies for academic year 2021/22**

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>September 2020</b>               | Information about the Starting School and Middle Transfer process issued.   |
| <b>15 January 2021</b>              | National closing date for receipt of applications.  |
| <b>8 February 2021</b>              | By this date details of applications to be sent to academies, foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools. Applications for places in other Local Authority academies and schools sent to those authorities.  |
| <b>5 March 2021</b>                 | By this date, academies and foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools provide the School Admissions Team with ranked lists of applicants.   |
| <b>10 March –<br/>19 March 2021</b> | Between these dates information to be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers.   |
| <b>14 April 2021</b>                | Information on pupils to be offered places will be available to schools and academies via the School Admissions Module.   |
| <b>16 April 2021</b>                | Notification to be sent to parents living in Central Bedfordshire on the offer made to their child.   |
| <b>30 April 2021</b>                | Date by which parents reject the offer of a place if not required.  |
| <b>4 May 2021</b>                   | Late applications received between 16 January and 30 April 2021 will be logged onto the database by this date.  |
| <b>4 May 2021</b>                   | The School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that school or academy and applications for places in other Local Authority academies/schools will be sent to those authorities. |
| <b>21 May 2021</b>                  | Notification to be posted to parents living in Central Bedfordshire who have submitted a late Middle School application that qualifies for consideration in the initial late allocation round.  |
| <b>24 May 2021</b>                  | Late Middle School applications received on or after 1 May will be processed from this date.  |
| <b>7 June 2021</b>                  | Notification to be posted to parents living in Central Bedfordshire who have submitted a late Lower and Primary School application that qualifies for consideration in the initial late allocation round.   |
| <b>8 June 2021</b>                  | Late Lower and Primary School applications received on or after 1 May will be processed from this date.   |





## **PROPOSED**

### **CO-ORDINATED SCHEME FOR ADMISSIONS TO: SECONDARY AND UPPER ACADEMIES AND SCHOOLS**

#### **ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022**

## **Section 1**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002 and supported by The School Admission (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008, requires Local Authorities to formulate a scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements for all academies and maintained schools in their area. Academies are required to participate in the co-ordinated scheme.
- 1.2 A school is here defined as any academy or maintained community, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided or voluntary controlled school in the Central Bedfordshire Council area.
- 1.3 Central Bedfordshire Council, acting as the Local Authority is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. The admission authority for academies is the academy trust. For foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools, the admission authority is the governing body.
- 1.4 This scheme will apply to all secondary and upper academies and schools in the Central Bedfordshire Council area from September 2021.
- 1.5 Any reference to Central Bedfordshire is a reference to the administrative area of the unitary authority.
- 1.6 Central Bedfordshire Council uses the equal preference system to process admission applications, as outlined below:
  - 1.6.1 Stage 1

All first, second and third preference applications are considered equally against the admissions criteria. At this stage the Council does not distinguish between first, second and third preference applications. For example, if the school has 120 places and there are 150 first, second and third preference applications all are considered equally against the admissions criteria.

## 1.6.2 Stage 2

If a pupil qualifies for a place at more than one school or academy the parent's highest ranked preference (i.e. first or second preference on the parent's application form) will be offered, and any lower ranking offers will be disregarded. For example a parent's first and third preferences might both qualify for a place, in which case the parent would be offered their first preference, leaving the place at the third preference academy or school available for another pupil.

## Section 2

### The Scheme

- 2.1. This scheme is for admissions in the normal year of entry for:
  - a) Secondary Academies and Schools
  - b) Upper Academies and Schools
- 2.2. There will be a standard form known as the Common Application Form (CAF) available for parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire to apply online or by completing a hard copy application form.
- 2.3. The CAF will be used for the purposes of admitting children into the first year of a:
  - Secondary academy/school (Year 7), or
  - Upper academy/school (Year 9), or
- 2.4. The CAF will enable parents/carers to:
  - express a preference for up to 3 academies/schools
  - rank their preferences
  - give reasons for their preferences
- 2.5. Information will be provided on the admissions process in the form of the admissions booklet and will contain information on:
  - a) the academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire
  - b) dates of open evenings (where applicable)
  - c) published admission numbers and admissions criteria
  - d) how to complete an application
  - e) how places are allocated
  - f) timetable for the application and allocation process
  - g) school transport
  - h) who to contact for advice

## **2.6. Admission into the normal year of entry into a Secondary academy/school (Year 7)**

- 2.6.1 Parents of all children living in Central Bedfordshire and attending a primary academy/school, in the Local Authority area will receive the details about the transfer process and how to apply.
- 2.6.2 Parents of children attending a primary academy/school, in Central Bedfordshire who do not live in the Local Authority area must make their application to their home Local Authority.
- 2.6.3 Parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire but not attending a primary academy/school, in the Local Authority area and who wish to apply for a secondary academy or school place may make their application online or obtain a hard copy of the CAF and School Admissions booklet from the School Admissions Team. The CAF and booklet are also available to download from the Local Authority website.

## **2.7. Admission into the normal year of entry into an Upper academy/school (Year 9)**

- 2.7.1 Parents of all children living in Central Bedfordshire and attending a middle academy/school, in the Local Authority area will receive the details about the transfer process and how to apply.
- 2.7.2 Parents of children attending a middle academy/school, in Central Bedfordshire who do not live in the Local Authority area must make their application to their home Local Authority.
- 2.7.3 Parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire but not attending a middle academy/school, in the Local Authority area and who wish to apply for an upper academy or school place may make their application online or obtain a hard copy of the CAF and School Admissions booklet from the School Admissions Team. The CAF and booklet are also available to download from the Local Authority website.

## **2.8. Admission of children outside their normal age group**

- 2.9.1 Parents who want their child to transfer to the next phase of school out outside of their normal age group must make the request in sufficient time for it to be considered before the application deadline.
- 2.9.2 Where the preference is for a Community or Voluntary Controlled school the request should be made in writing for the attention of the Admissions Manager. The Council will liaise with the Headteacher accordingly and will support their professional opinion on the case. The request should include the parent's reasons for the request, information regarding the child's academic, social and emotional development, including any supporting evidence the parent deems relevant and whether the child has previously been educated outside their normal age group. Once determined the

decision will be communicated to the parent(s)/carer(s) in writing and will include the reasons for the decision.

- 2.9.3 For own admission schools (Foundation, Trust or Voluntary Aided) parents/carers need to make their request in writing to the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school who will then consider the request, making their decision on what they determine as in the best interests of the child. For Academies parents/carers need to make their request in writing to the academy trust via the Principal.
- 2.9.4 Requests which have been granted must be followed up by a formal application using the appropriate paper CAF within the admission timetable. The application will be considered within the normal allocation process under the relevant admission criterion.

### **3. Timetable for admissions into Secondary and Upper academies and schools**

#### **Secondary:**

- 3.1. In **September 2020**, information is sent to parents of all children in Year 6 attending a primary academy/school in the Local Authority area. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire will be advised to contact their home Local Authority in order to make their application.
- 3.2. Completed online applications and hard copies of the CAF are to be submitted to the School Admissions Team by **31 October 2020**. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire must have applied to their home Local Authority by this date.

#### **Upper:**

- 3.3. In **September 2020** information is sent to parents of all children in Year 8 attending a middle academy/school in the Local Authority area. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire will be advised to contact their home Local Authority in order to make their application.
- 3.4. Completed online applications are to be submitted and hard copies of the CAF are to be returned to the School Admissions Team by **31 October 2020**. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire must have applied to their home Local Authority by this date.

### **Secondary and Upper transfer admissions**

- 3.5.1 By **27 November 2020** all preferences will be logged on the database and the School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust school or voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that academy or school. Applications for places in other Local Authority academies/schools are sent to those

authorities.

- 3.5.2 By **6 January 2021** the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust or voluntary aided school will consider all applications, apply their oversubscription criteria and provide the School Admissions Team with a list of those applicants ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. All preferences will be ranked equally against the admissions criteria.
- 3.6 The School Admissions Team will match the ranked lists against the ranked lists of other academies or schools nominated.
- where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated academies or schools, that academy or school will be allocated to the child.
  - where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated academies or schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference.
- 3.7 Between **20 January 2021 and 29 January 2021** information will be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers (i.e. a Central Bedfordshire child applying for a place in another Local Authority area or a child from another Local Authority applying for a place at a Central Bedfordshire academy or school) to determine the allocation of a place at the highest ranked preference.
- 3.8 Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated academies or schools, the child will be allocated a place at the nearest appropriate academy or school with a vacancy, but only if the child is resident in Central Bedfordshire. If the child does not reside in Central Bedfordshire, parents will be invited to request a place at any of the academies or schools that still have vacancies. Priority will always be given to those parents who have expressed a preference for a particular academy or school over those who have not.
- 3.9 On **26 February 2021** all Secondary and Upper academies and schools will have access to details of the pupils to be offered places via the web based School Admissions Module.
- 3.10 On **1 March 2021** the School Admissions Team will notify parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire of the outcome of their application, including those who have applied for a secondary or upper academy/school place. Parents of children who do not live in Central Bedfordshire will be notified by their home Local Authority.
- 3.11 By **15 March 2021** parents are to notify the School Admissions Team of their rejection of the place offered if this is no longer required. If parents do not respond by this date it will be assumed that they have accepted the place.

- 3.12 By **15 March 2021** parents who have applied on time and want to change their preference from their original offer need to have submitted a change of preference by this date.

#### 4. Late Applications

- 4.1 The national closing date for applications in the normal admissions round is **31 October 2020**. Applications received after this date will be considered late and will be processed after the initial allocation of places.
- 4.2. Late applications received from 31 October until 15 March will be processed as part of the initial late allocation round and will be logged onto the database by **19 March 2021**.
- 4.3. The School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that academy or school by **19 March 2021**.
- 4.4. Applications for places in other Local Authority academies/schools will also be sent to those authorities by **22 March 2021**.
- 4.5. By **26 March 2021** the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school will consider all their initial late applications for their academy or school, apply their oversubscription criteria and provide the School Admissions Team with a list of those applicants ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. All preferences will be ranked equally against the admissions criteria.
- 4.6. The School Admissions Team will process the ranked lists against the ranked lists of other schools or academies nominated and:
- where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated academies or schools, that academy or school will be allocated to the child.
  - where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated academies or schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference
- 4.7. Information will be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers (i.e. a Central Bedfordshire child applying for a place in another Local Authority area or a child from another Local Authority applying for a place at a Central Bedfordshire academy or school) to determine the allocation of a place at the highest ranked preference.
- 4.8. Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated academies or schools, the child will be allocated a place at the nearest appropriate academy or school with a vacancy, but only if the child is resident in Central Bedfordshire. If the child does not reside in Central Bedfordshire, parents will be invited to request a place at any of the

academies or schools that still have vacancies, after the allocation process. Priority will always be given to those parents who have expressed a preference for a particular academy or school over those who have not.

- 4.9. On **20 April 2021** the School Admissions Team will post letters to parents of children living in Central Bedfordshire notifying them of the outcome of their applications, if part of the initial late allocation round, including those who have applied for a place in another Local Authority academy or school where the result of this decision has been received by the timescales outlined above.
- 4.10. Late applications received on or after the 17 March will be processed from **21 April 2021**.

## **5. Waiting Lists**

- 5.1. Pupils not offered a place at their highest preference academy or school or at any of their preferred academies or schools are kept on a waiting list maintained by the admission authority to be re-allocated if places become available. The Council, as the Admission Authority, will maintain waiting lists until **the end of the academic year for 2021/22** for Community and Voluntary controlled schools. Allocation will be on the basis of the published oversubscription criteria. Priority will not be given to children based on the date their application was received or their name was added to the list. Looked after children, previously looked after children, and those allocated a place at the school in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol, must take precedence over those on a waiting list.

## **6. In-year Admissions (applications received on or after 1 September)**

- 6.1. An in-year admission is an application made for a child to be admitted outside of the co-ordinated admissions scheme for the normal year of entry or for another year group within an academy/school.
- 6.2. The local authority will co-ordinate in-year applications for community and voluntary controlled schools as the admission authority for those schools.
- 6.3. The local authority will co-ordinate in-year applications made for academies and own admission authority schools (foundation, trust and voluntary aided) who opt-in to the local authority's scheme for in-year admissions.
- 6.4. The Local Authority will make an application form available to enable parents to apply for an in-year place at any academy or school within the Local Authority area, which will enable parents to express a preference for up to 3 academies or schools and to rank their preferences. The form will be available on the Local Authority website as an e-form or can be downloaded or a hard copy can be obtained from the School Admissions Team.

- 6.5. The application will be dealt with by the local authority for those schools which are community or voluntary controlled schools or those academies and own admission authority schools who have opted in to the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme.
- 6.6. Any application received by the School Admissions Team for an academy or own admission authority school who has opted out of the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme will be forwarded to them to process.
- 6.7. All academies and own admission authority schools who deal with their own in-year admissions (i.e. opted out of the in-year co-ordination scheme) will be required to determine the child's application and notify the parent and local authority of the outcome.
- 6.8. Pupils not offered a place at a community or voluntary controlled school or at an academy or own admission authority school who has opted in to the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme will be kept on a waiting list which will be maintained for the academic year of admission. Academies and own admission authority schools who have opted out will have their own waiting list arrangements. In all cases where a place cannot be offered parents will have the right of appeal.
- 6.9. If all of the preferred academies and schools are full and the pupil lives in Central Bedfordshire, a place will generally be offered at the nearest academy or school with places available, unless the child is already attending a local school or academy.
- 6.10. Any place offered is usually expected to be taken up by the child within 4-6 weeks or by the start of the next school term.
- 6.11. Details of the community and voluntary controlled schools and those academies and own admission authority schools who have opted-in to the in-year co-ordination scheme and those who have opted out can be obtained from the School Admissions Team at:  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions).



**Timetable for Co-ordinated Admissions to:  
Secondary and Upper Academies and Schools for academic year 2020/21**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>September 2020</b>               | Information about the admission process issued.  |
| <b>31 October 2020</b>              | National closing date for receipt of applications.   |
| <b>27 November 2019</b>             | By this date details of applications to be sent to academies, foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools. Applications for places in other Local Authority schools and academies sent to those authorities.   |
| <b>6 January 2021</b>               | By this date academies, foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools provide the School Admissions Team with ranked lists of applicants.  |
| <b>20 January – 29 January 2021</b> | Between these dates information to be exchanged with other Local Authorities on potential offers.  |
| <b>26 February 2021</b>             | Information on pupils to be offered places will be available to academies and schools via the School Admissions Module.  |
| <b>1 March 2021</b>                 | Notification to be sent to parents living in Central Bedfordshire on the offer made to their child.  |
| <b>15 March 2021</b>                | Date by which parents reject the offer of a place if not required.   |
| <b>19 March 2021</b>                | Late applications received between 1 November 2019 and 16 March 2020 will be logged onto the database by this date.  |
| <b>22 March 2021</b>                | The School Admissions Team will notify the admission authority for each academy, foundation, trust and voluntary aided school of every nomination that has been made for that school or academy. Applications for places in other Local Authority schools / academies will be sent to those authorities. |
| <b>26 March 2021</b>                | By this date academies, foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools provide the School Admissions Team with ranked lists of applicants in the initial late allocation round.   |
| <b>21 April 2021</b>                | Notification to be sent to parents living in Central Bedfordshire who have submitted a late application that qualifies for consideration in the initial late allocation round.   |
| <b>21 April 2021</b>                | Late applications received on or after 16 March will be processed from this date.  |



## **PROPOSED Community and Voluntary Controlled schools Admission Arrangements for Academic Year 2021/22**

If there are fewer applications than places available at a school all applicants will be admitted. If there are more applications than places available, the criteria outlined in this document will be used to prioritise applications. The admissions criteria will be applied separately and sequentially until all places are filled. Priority is not given within each criterion to children who meet other criteria.

### **Tiebreaker**

Straight line distance will be used as a tiebreaker in each criterion where required to determine the allocation of places. The distance the pupil lives from the school, which is measured in a straight line, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority. The Local Authority will measure the distance from the address point of the pupil's home to a point on the school site agreed with the governing body of the school, which is known as the designated measuring point. In the event of (a) two or more children living at the same address point (e.g. children resident in a block of flats) or (b) two addresses measuring the same distance from the school, the ultimate tie-breaker will be random selection, using the Synergy Admissions database to allocate the place.

### **Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan**

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, children with an Education, Health and Care Plan are required to be admitted to the academy/school named in the Plan and will be allocated a place ahead of those without an Education, Health and Care Plan in the allocation process. Thereafter the admissions criteria for each academy/school will apply to those children without an Education, Health and Care Plan. After allocations have been made, if an application is made late or is received as part of the in-year process, pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan are required to be admitted to the school which is named on the Plan, even if the school is full.

### **Fair Access Protocol**

All Local Authorities must have a Fair Access Protocol which operates outside of the arrangements of co-ordinated admissions (i.e. those children being admitted to the point of entry at an academy/school) to ensure unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable are offered a suitable school place. Pupils identified for admission through the Fair Access Protocol will be admitted even if the school is full.

### **Unsuccessful applications**

#### **Waiting List**

All unsuccessful applicants will be added to the waiting list which will run until the end of the academic year (July 2022). Waiting lists are ranked solely by the published oversubscription criteria for the school. The list will be ranked each time a child is added to the waiting list.

#### **Appeals**

If a place cannot be offered at a Central Bedfordshire Community or VC school the applicant(s) have the right of appeal. All appeals are heard by an independent panel. Information regarding the appeal process will be sent to all unsuccessful applicants when notified of the outcome of their application.

**Definitions of Admissions Criteria:****'Looked after' children**

A 'looked after' child is a child in the care of a local authority as defined by Section 22 of the Children Act 1989. In relation to school admissions legislation a 'looked after child' is a child in public care at the time of application to a school.

**Previously 'looked after' children**

A previously 'looked after' child is a child who was 'looked after', but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or a special guardianship order.

**Children who appear to the Local Authority to have been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted**

A child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society.

**Catchment area**

A catchment area is a geographical area from which children are given priority for admission to the particular school. Please see [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions) for more information on school catchment areas.

**Sibling**

A sibling refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, step brother or sister, adopted brother or sister or fostered brother or sister where foster care has been arranged by a Local Authority or the child of the parent / carer's partner, and in every case, the child should be living at the same address. The sibling must be in the school at the time of application and be likely to remain in the school at the proposed date of admission. In the scenario where one twin or a child from multiple birth has an EHCP, the other twin or children from multiple birth will be considered as a sibling once the school named on the EHCP has been finalised.

**Any other children**

Pupils who do not meet any of the higher criteria will be prioritised by the distance with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority. Using their computerised measuring system, the Local Authority will measure the straight-line distance from the address point of the pupil's home to the designated measuring point for the school, as agreed with the school's governing body.

**Children of staff**

Permanent full or part-time staff who have either been employed at the school for two or more years at the time of application or recruited to fill a vacant post where there was a demonstrable skill shortage. The relationship to the child is defined as by blood or adoption or with legal parental responsibility and living with the child in the same house Monday – Friday.

**Nearest school**

The nearest school will be identified by measuring the distance the pupil lives from the school which is measured in a straight line, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, from the address point of the pupil's home to a point on the school site agreed with the governing body of the school, which is known as the designated measuring point.

Please see [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions) for more information on the nearest lower/primary school (Leighton Buzzard area only).

Pulford CofE VA Lower School will not be considered as a pupil's nearest school for the purposes of this policy as admission to Pulford is predominantly based on faith grounds rather than a pupil's address.

**The oversubscription criteria for the majority of Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools in Central Bedfordshire is as follows:**

- 1) All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
- 2) Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted
- 3) Children of staff\*
- 4) Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 5) Children living in the catchment area
- 6) Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 7) Any other children

| <b>School</b>                                     | <b>Published Admission Number</b> | <b>Designated measuring point</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Aspley Guise Lower School                         | 27                                | Main gate                         |
| Caddington Village School                         | 60                                | School medical room               |
| Campton Lower School                              | 26                                | Main gate                         |
| Chalton Lower School                              | 15                                | School gate                       |
| Flitwick Lower School                             | 60                                | Main office                       |
| Hawthorn Park Community Primary School            | 60                                | Front door of school              |
| Haynes Lower School                               | 24                                | School front door                 |
| Houghton Conquest Lower School                    | 20                                | Headteacher's office              |
| Houghton Regis Primary School                     | 45                                | Centre of school field            |
| Husborne Crawley Lower School                     | 12                                | Main entrance                     |
| Kingsmoor Lower School                            | 45                                | School gate                       |
| Linslade Lower School                             | 30                                | Pupils entrance gate              |
| Maulden Lower School                              | 30                                | Main pedestrian gate              |
| Marston Moreteyne VC School                       | 120                               | Main entrance at Church Walk site |
| Ramsey Manor Lower School                         | 60                                | Front door                        |
| Ridgmont Lower School                             | 15                                | Headteacher's office              |
| Russell Lower School                              | 90                                | School gate                       |
| Shillington Lower School                          | 30                                | Headteacher's office              |
| Silsoe CofE VC Lower School                       | 60                                | Front door                        |
| Slip End Village School                           | 24                                | Main gate                         |
| Southill Lower School                             | 15                                | Main entrance                     |
| Stanbridge Lower School                           | 24                                | Front gate                        |
| Stondon Lower School                              | 30                                | Main gate                         |
| St. Swithun's Church of England VC Primary School | 30                                | Main door                         |
| Studham CofE Village School                       | 15                                | Main door                         |
| Swallowfield Lower School                         | 60                                | Front door                        |
| Templefield Lower School                          | 60                                | Main door                         |
| Thornhill Primary School                          | 30                                | School main gate                  |
| Tithe Farm Primary School                         | 60                                | Main gate                         |
| Watling Lower School                              | 30                                | Main school gate entrance         |
| Woburn Lower School                               | 12                                | Main entrance                     |
| Potton Middle School                              | 90                                | School office                     |

**Variations to the standard admissions policy:****Biggleswade cluster schools:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Dunton CofE VC Lower School</b>                      | <b>Published admission number: 15</b>  |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Headteacher's office |  |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted   |
| 3.  | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |
| 4.  | Children living in the catchment area  |
| 5.  | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |
| 6.  | Children, one or more of whose parents/carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made*. |
| 7.  | Any other children   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School</b>               | <b>Published Admission Number: 210</b>   |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Headteacher's office |  |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted   |
| 3.  | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |
| 4.  | Children living in the catchment area  |
| 5.  | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |
| 6.  | Children, one or more of whose parents/carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made*. |
| 7.  | Children attending Dunton VC Lower, Northill VA Lower, Sutton VA Lower and Wrestlingworth VC Lower   |
| 8.  | Any other children   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>St. Andrew's CofE VC Lower School</b>   | <b>Published Admission Number: 180 (West site 90, East site 90)</b>  |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b><br>West site: Front entrance door<br>East site: Front entrance door |  |
| 1.   | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |
| 2.   | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted   |
| 3.   | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |
| 4.   | Children living in the catchment area  |
| 5.   | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |
| 6.   | Children, one or more of whose parents/carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made*. |
| 7.   | Any other children   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School</b>    |  | <b>Published Admission Number:</b><br>13 |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Front door |  |  |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |  |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted   |  |
| 3.  | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |  |
| 4.  | Children living in the catchment area  |  |
| 5.  | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |  |
| 6.  | Children, one or more of whose parents/carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made*. |  |
| 7.  | Any other children   |  |

\*A Christian Church is defined as one which is a member, or is eligible for membership, of Churches Together in England or the Evangelical Alliance. Applications in this category will need to ask their priest or minister to complete the relevant section of the local authority common application form.

#### **Cranfield cluster schools:**

|  |  |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Thomas Johnson Lower School</b>             |  | <b>Published Admission Number:</b> 18 |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> School gate |  |                                       |
| 1.   | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |                                       |
| 2.   | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |                                       |
| 3.   | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |                                       |
| 4.   | Children living in the catchment area  |                                       |
| 5.   | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |                                       |
| 6.   | Children of staff  |                                       |
| 7.   | Any other children   |                                       |

#### **Dunstable and Houghton Regis cluster schools:**

|   |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Dunstable Icknield Lower School</b>          |  | <b>Published Admission Number:</b> 60 |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> School tower |  |                                       |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |                                       |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |                                       |
| 3.  | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |                                       |
| 4.  | Children living in the catchment area  |                                       |
| 5.  | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |                                       |
| 6.  | Children of staff  |                                       |
| 7.  | Any other children   |                                       |

**Leighton Buzzard cluster community schools:**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Leighton Middle School</b>                                | <b>Published Admission Number: 150</b>   |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Centre of memorial garden |  |
| 1.   | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |
| 2.   | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |
| 3.   | Children of staff  |
| 4.   | Catchment Sibling  |
| 5.   | Catchment  |
| 6.   | Sibling (non catchment)  |
| 7.   | Any other children   |

| <b>School</b>   | <b>Published Admission Number</b>  | <b>Designated measuring point</b> |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Greenleas School, Derwent Road  | 60   | Front door                        |
| Greenleas School, Kestrel Way   | 60   | Front door                        |
| Heathwood Lower School  | 30   | Front door                        |
| Southcott Lower School  | 60   | Main door                         |
| <b>If the schools listed above are oversubscribed priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below, in order:</b> |  |                                   |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |                                   |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |                                   |
| 3.  | Children with siblings at the school   |                                   |
| 4.  | Children of staff  |                                   |
| 5.  | Children for whom the school is their nearest lower/primary school*  |                                   |
| 6.  | Any other children   |                                   |

| <b>School</b>   | <b>Published Admission Number</b>  | <b>Designated measuring point</b>          |
|---|--|--|
| Beaudesert Lower School   | 56   | Main pedestrian entrance                   |
| Clipstone Brook Lower School  | 75   | School notice board at top of school drive |
| Doverly Down Lower School   | 30   | Front door                                 |
| Hockliffe Lower School  | 15   | Front door                                 |
| Leedon Lower School   | 90   | Middle of school quadrant                  |
| Linslade Lower School   | 30   | Pupils main gate                           |
| Stanbridge Lower School   | 24   | Front gate                                 |
| The Mary Bassett Lower School   | 60   | Front door                                 |
| <b>If the following schools listed above are oversubscribed priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below, in order:</b> |  |  |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |  |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |  |
| 3.  | Children with siblings at the school   |  |
| 4.  | Children for whom the school is their nearest lower/primary school*  |  |
| 5.  | Any other children   |  |



**Shefford, Arlesey and Stotfold cluster schools:**

|  |  |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Shefford Lower School</b>                                   |  | <b>Published Admission Number: 90</b> |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> War memorial in town centre |  |                                       |
| 1.   | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |                                       |
| 2.   | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |                                       |
| 3.   | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |                                       |
| 4.   | Children living in the catchment area  |                                       |
| 5.   | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |                                       |
| 6.   | Children of staff  |                                       |
| 7.   | Any other children   |                                       |

|   |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Roecroft Lower School</b>                          |  | <b>Published Admission Number: 90</b> |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Main entrance door |  |                                       |
| 1.  | All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'   |                                       |
| 2.  | Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted |                                       |
| 3.  | Children of staff  |                                       |
| 4.  | Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school  |                                       |
| 5.  | Children living in the catchment area  |                                       |
| 6.  | Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school   |                                       |
| 7.  | Any other children   |                                       |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Fairfield Park Lower School</b>   | <b>Published Admission Number: 90</b>   |
| <b>Designated measuring point:</b> Equidistant point between Dickens Boulevard and Ruskin Drive sites  |   |
| Applications for Fairfield Park Lower will be ranked according to the standard admissions criteria as mentioned above. Where a place can be offered, the following process will determine at which school site, either Dickens Boulevard or the Ruskin Drive site, the child will attend. Successful applicants will be notified at the time of offer which school site their child will attend. |   |
| 1.   | <p><b>All ‘looked after’ children or children who were previously ‘looked after’</b></p> <p><i>Looked after children in catchment will be prioritised by which priority area they are in, with those out of catchment being prioritised by straight line distance from their home address to the nearest school site to them.</i></p>   |
| 2.   | <p><b>Children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted</b></p> <p><i>Allocated children will be prioritised by which priority area they are in, with those out of catchment being prioritised by straight line distance from their home address to the nearest school site to them.</i></p>   |
| 3.   | <p><b>Children of staff</b></p> <p><i>Where possible pupils will be allocated a place at the site at which their parent is based.</i></p>   |
| 4.   | <p><b>Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school</b></p> <p><i>Before applications in this criterion are allocated children will be prioritised for either the Dickens Boulevard or the Ruskin Drive site according to which site their sibling attends and will be ranked by their straight-line distance from the designated measuring point.</i></p> <p><i>If children are unable to obtain a place at the site at which their sibling attends they will be then ranked by their straight-line distance to the other Fairfield Park site. Places will be allocated in accordance with this distance after allocations have been made to those with siblings at that site taking precedence before those with siblings at the other school site.</i></p> |
| 5.   | <p><b>Children living in the catchment area</b></p> <p><i>Before applications in this criterion are allocated children will be prioritised for either the Dickens Boulevard or the Ruskin Drive site according to which priority area they reside in first and be ranked by their straight-line distance from the designated measuring point.</i></p> <p><i>If children are unable to obtain a place at the site within their priority area they will be then ranked by their straight-line distance to the other Fairfield Park site which is not in their priority area. Places will be allocated in accordance with this distance after allocations have been made to those in their priority area taking precedence before those from the other priority area.</i></p>        |
| 6.   | <p><b>Children living outside the catchment area with siblings at the school</b></p> <p><i>Siblings will be prioritised for either the Dickens Boulevard or the Ruskin Drive site depending on which site their sibling attends and will be ranked by their straight-line distance from the designated measuring point. There will be no guarantee that a sibling can attend the same school site.</i></p>  |
| 7.   | <p><b>Any other children</b></p> <p><i>Where possible pupils will be allocated a place at the site nearest to them, measured from their home address in a straight line, although if this is not possible a place will be allocated at the other site.</i></p>  |

**Priority areas for Fairfield Park Lower School catchment area**

| <b>Address</b>  | <b>Priority for Fairfield Park Lower site</b> |
|---|---|
| Alfred Row  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Anderson Walk - properties 2,4,6                      | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Anderson Walk - properties 1,3,5,7                    | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Beatrice Place  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Bronte Avenue - properties 1-21, 23,25,27             | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Bronte Avenue - properties 22,24,26,28-155            | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Brunel Walk   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Burton Close  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Cavell Walk - properties 1,3,5,7,9                    | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Cavell Walk - properties 2,4,6,8,10                   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Charlotte Avenue                                      | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Connely Lane  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Copperfield Close                                     | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Dickens Boulevard - properties 1-23                   | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Dickens Boulevard - properties 24-74 inc Beeton Court | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Disraeli Place  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Doyle Place   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Earnshaw Drive  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Edison Way  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Emily Place   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Fairfield Mews  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Faraday Gardens                                       | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Fleming Drive - properties 1-15, 17, 19,21            | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Fleming Drive - properties 16,18,20,22-47             | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Franklin Place  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Gaskell Place   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Gladstone Drive                                       | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Hardy Way   | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Heathcliff Avenue                                     | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Helena Crescent                                       | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Hitchin Road - properties 153-167, inc East Lodge     | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Hitchin Road - Icknield House                         | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Kingsley Avenue                                       | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Kipling Crescent                                      | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Leopold Corner  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Livingstone Way                                       | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Louise Rise   | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Middlemarch   | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Nickleby Way  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Nightingale Way - properties 1-6,8,10,12,14           | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Nightingale Way - properties 7,9,11,15,17,19          | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Palmerston Way  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Paxton Drive  | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Russell Walk  | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Salisbury Close                                       | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Shaftesbury Drive                                     | Ruskin Drive                                  |
| Stephenson Walk                                       | Dickens Boulevard                             |
| Lower Wilbury Farm                                    | Dickens Boulevard                             |



**Confirmation of religious affiliation – Church of England Schools**

Please complete this form if you are applying for the any of the following schools  
**on religious/faith grounds:**

Manshead CE Academy, Edward Peake CofE Middle, Henlow CofE Academy, Holywell School, Ashton St. Peter's VA Primary, Clifton All Saints Academy, Dunton VC Lower, John Donne Primary, Meppershall CofE Academy, Northill VA Lower, Pulford VA Lower, St. Andrew's VC Lower (both East and West), St. Leonard's VA Lower, St. Mary's CofE Academy, St. Mary's VA Lower (Clophill), Sutton VA Lower, Thomas Whitehead CE Academy, Wrestlingworth VC Lower

**To be completed by the parent/carer:**

Child's surname \_\_\_\_\_ Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School preferences (1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

**To be completed by Priest, Minister or Faith Leader:**

I can confirm that (name(s) of parent/carer) \_\_\_\_\_

Is/are a member/practising member of the following congregation/place of worship and  
meets the criteria for admission to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school/s)

Name of priest/minister/faith leader \_\_\_\_\_

Name of congregation/place of worship \_\_\_\_\_

Christian denomination or religious faith \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of priest/minister/faith leader \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this completed form to the School Admissions Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable LU6 1LF or email it to: [admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)**

## Confirmation of religious affiliation – Catholic Schools

Please complete this form if you are applying for the any of the following schools  
**on religious/faith grounds:**

St. Mary's Catholic Primary (Caddington), St. Vincent's Catholic Primary

If your application for a place at the above Catholic primary schools is on religious grounds because your child has been baptised or enrolled in a catechumenate programme you must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate or your priest must confirm enrolment in the programme.

### To be completed by the parent/carer:

Child's surname \_\_\_\_\_ Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School preferences (1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

I have attached a copy of my child's baptismal certification: Yes ☐ No ☐

### To be completed by Priest, Minister or Faith Leader:

I can confirm that (name(s) of parent/carer) \_\_\_\_\_

The family of this child is a practising Catholic family ☐

The child is not baptised but is enrolled in a catechumenate programme ☐

I support this application ☐

Name of priest/minister/faith leader\_\_\_\_\_

Name of congregation/place of worship\_\_\_\_\_

Christian denomination or religious faith \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of priest/minister/faith leader\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Return this completed form to the School Admissions Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable LU6 1LF or email it to: [admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)**

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2020

### Work Programme and Executive Forward Plan

**Responsible Director(s):** Charles Warboys, Director of Resources,  
([Charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Public**

### Purpose of this report

The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and approve the work programme attached, subject to any further amendments it may wish to make;
2. Consider the Executive Forward Plan; and
3. Consider whether it wishes to suggest any further items for the work programme and/or establish any enquiries to assist it in reviewing specific items.

### Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

1. The committee work programme aims to provide a balance of those items on which the Executive would be grateful for a steer and those items that the overview and scrutiny Committee (OSC) has proactively requested to receive.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel has suggested that the following be prioritised in the work programme: -
  - activity led by the OSCs and residents;
  - policy development activity, through the exploration of proposals and principles at the earliest opportunity of commencement of strategy development;
3. In considering which items should be added to the work programme Members are encouraged to minimise duplication, focus on those items that have been requested by residents and the committee and to focus on those items where Members can add value.
4. The committee is also recommended to ensure it creates time for Members to consider matters outside of formal meetings as well as providing the opportunity to brief Members informally on some topics. This might mean considering whether all of the formal meetings included in the schedule are necessary.

## Overview and Scrutiny Task Forces

5. In addition to consideration of the work programme, Members may also wish to consider how each item will be reviewed, i.e. by the Committee itself (over one or a number of Committee meetings) or by establishing a Member Task Force to review an item in greater depth and report back its findings.

## Executive Forward Plan

6. Listed below are those items relating specifically to this Committee's terms of reference contained in the latest version of the Executive Forward Plan. The full Executive Forward Plan can be viewed on the Council's website at the link at the end of this report.

| Item   | Indicative Executive Meeting date |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Schools for the Future                                       | 4 February 2020                   |
| Personalisation (including Short Breaks) Future Arrangements | 4 February 2020                   |
| Looked After Children Placement Strategy: Commissioning Plan | 7 April 2020                      |
| Schools for the Future                                       | 7 April 2020                      |
| Schools for the Future - Shefford and Stotfold               | 7 April 2020                      |

## Council Priorities

7. The work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will contribute indirectly to all 5 Council priorities.

## Corporate Implications

8. There are no direct corporate implications arising from this report, the implications of proposals will be details in full in each report submitted to the Committee.

## Legal Implications

9. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, the implications of proposals will be details in full in each report submitted to the Committee.

## Financial and Risk Implications

10. There are no direct financial implications or risks arising from this report, the implications of proposals will be details in full in each report submitted to the Committee.



## Equalities Implications

11. In determining what to add to their work programmes the overview and scrutiny committees should consider items that are important to all residents.
12. There are no direct equality implications or risks arising from this report, the implications of proposals will be details in full in each report submitted to the Committee.

## Conclusion and next Steps

13. The Committee is requested to consider the work programme and the indicated outcomes at **appendix A** and to amend or add to it as necessary.
14. Additionally, Members are requested to consider whether there are any matters where they may wish to establish a task force to assist the committee in its work. This will allow officers to plan accordingly but will not preclude further items being added during the course of the year if Members so wish and capacity exists.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: OSC work programme

## Background Papers

Executive Forward Plan (can be viewed at any time on the Council's website) at the following link:-

[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/31/meetings/641/calendar\\_of\\_meetings\\_and\\_forward\\_plan/2](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/31/meetings/641/calendar_of_meetings_and_forward_plan/2)

**Report author(s):** Rebecca Preen

Scrutiny Policy Adviser

[rebecca.preen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.preen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



**Children's Services OSC Work Programme 2019/20**

| Meeting date           | Report Title  | Outcomes we are seeking to achieve  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Tuesday, 10 March 2020 | To Assess the Budget Implications of Mainstream and Special Schools Transport | To receive a report as requested by the Corporate Resources OSC   |
| Tuesday, 10 March 2020 | Schools for the Future Update – Shefford and Stotfold Cluster Plan            | Following the conclusion of a public consultation, the details of which were delivered to the Committee at an earlier meeting             |
| Tuesday, 10 March 2020 | Schools for the Future Update - the next cluster                              | To receive a report in relation to phase one of the Leighton Linlade cluster plan   |
| Tuesday, 10 March 2020 | Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) Update                          | This report replaces the previous Safeguarding Children's Board and will inform the Committee of the new approach and associated outcomes |



## Central Bedfordshire Council

### Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

21<sup>st</sup> January 2020

### Children's Services: Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report 2018/19

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**Report of:** Cllr Sue Clark – Executive Member for Families,  
Education & Children  
([Sue.Clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Clark@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**Responsible Director(s):** Sue Harrison – Director of Children's Services  
([Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

### Public

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### Purpose of this report

This report fulfils the council's statutory duty to monitor the effectiveness of the complaint procedure and produce an annual report for children's social care. The report provides statistics on the number of compliments and complaints received; complaint causes; complaint outcomes; performance; and learning/improvements resulting from complaints for 2018/19.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Consider and comment on the content of the report at Appendix A**

### Issues

1. The Customer Relations Team manages the council's customer feedback procedures. These procedures detail how customer compliments, comments and complaints are handled. Regulations govern how complaints relating to children's social care services are managed. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the council's handling of the complaint, they can refer to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO is an independent body that can consider complaints about the council.
2. In 2018/19, there were 2713 children receiving support from children's social care services. 47 complaints were received, with 33 of those being suitable for investigation under the statutory children's complaint procedure. This was both a decrease in the number of complaints received and accepted into the process, compared to the previous year.
3. Complaints were important customer feedback and a means of identifying how practices may be changed for the better. Services were receptive to customer views and complaints with 80% of complaints being upheld, either fully or in part.
4. The top reason for well-founded complaints across children's social care in 2018/19 related to looked after children, with the highest proportion being in relation to quality issues and service delay.
5. There may be occasions where financial redress is offered through the complaint procedure. Financial remedies can be provided to reimburse a person who had suffered a quantifiable loss, or it might be more of a symbolic payment which serves as an acknowledgement of the distress or difficulties they have been put through. The amount will depend on the circumstances of the case and can be paid through settlement following investigation by the LGSCO but can also be recommended during the council's consideration of the complaint.
6. The total cost of financial remedies paid in relation to complaints about children's social care in 2018/19 was £3150.00. This was a combination of financial redress through the council's complaint process and following investigation by the LGSCO.

## **Council Priorities**

7. The report supports Central Bedfordshire's Five-Year Plan 2015/2020 and the specific priorities of great resident services; protecting the vulnerable and improving wellbeing; and a more efficient and responsible council.

## **Legal Implications**

8. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

9. Complaints are assessed at the point of receipt to ensure risks are managed e.g. child protection issues; risk to reputation; exclusions.

10. Effective management of complaint issues focuses resource on resolution to reduce the risk of financial remedies being paid.
11. Effective complaint management ensures service failings are identified and remedied, thereby reducing the risk of public report from the LGSCO. There were no public reports in relation to complaints about the council's children's social care provision in 2018/19.

## **Equalities Implications**

12. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
13. The report contains statistical analysis of monitoring information where it has been recorded. This demonstrates that the complaint process is accessible and no specific issues relating to discrimination have been identified.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

14. The production of an annual report is a statutory requirement and should be made available to anyone on request. The report will be posted on the council's website.
15. Members are asked to note the content of the report at Appendix A

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Children's Social Care Services:  
Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report  
2018/19

## **Background Papers**

None

**Report author(s): Paula Terry**

**Customer Relations Manager**

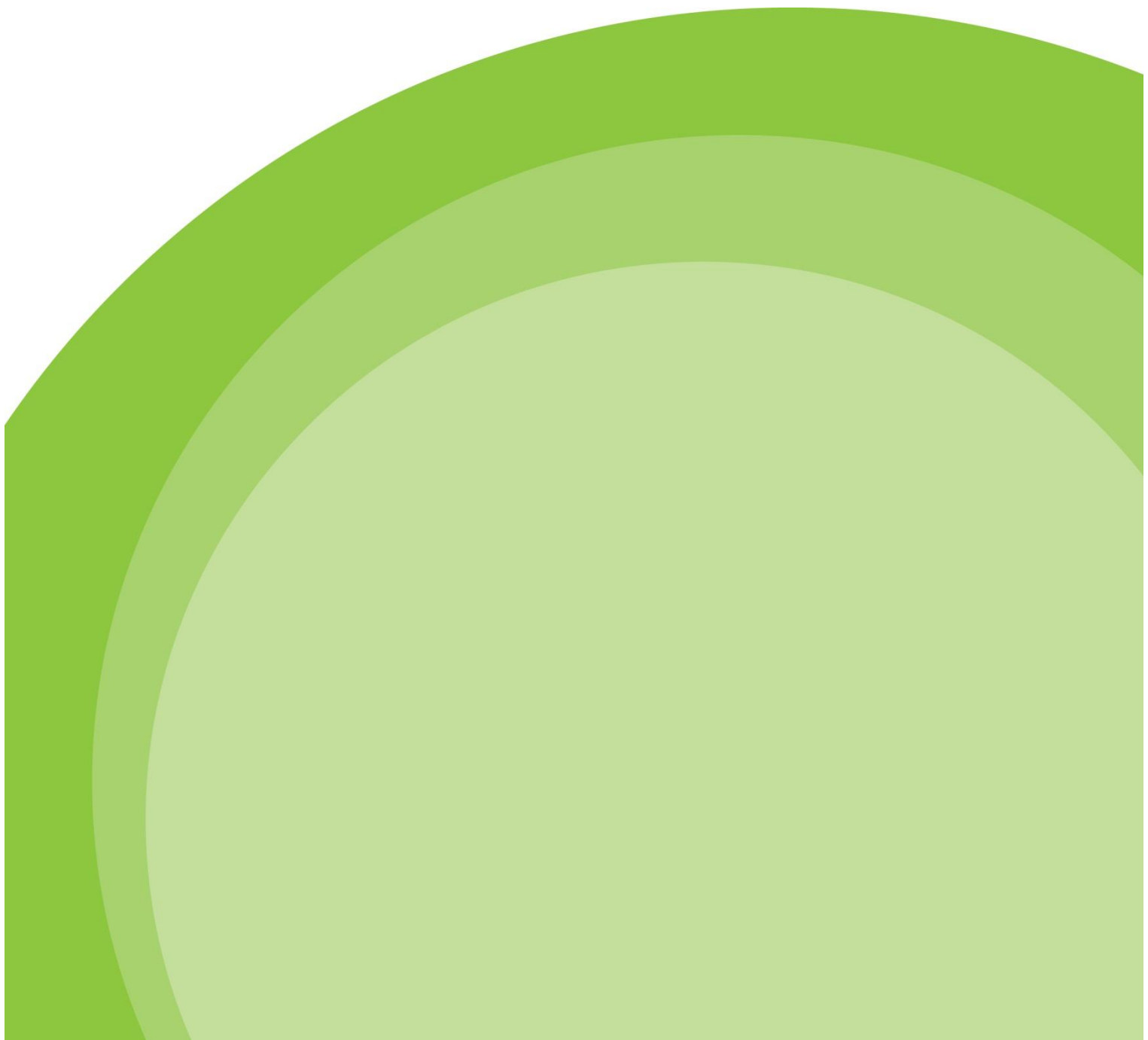
**[Paula.Terry@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Paula.Terry@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)**





# Children's Social Care Services

Customer Feedback – Compliments/Complaints  
Annual Report (1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31 March 2019)  
Not Protected



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If you have any comments on this report, please contact Paula Terry, Customer Relations Manager on [Paula.Terry@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Paula.Terry@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Introduction

This report fulfils the council's statutory duty to monitor the effectiveness of the complaint procedure and produce an annual report for children's services social care complaints.

This report provides statistics for 2018/19 on the number of compliments and complaints received; a summary of complaint causes; the number of complaints that were well founded (upheld fully or in part); performance; the actions taken to improve services because of complaints; complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO); and the effectiveness of the complaint procedure.

The report will be presented to the relevant local authority committee and will be made available on the Council's website.

## The Complaints Procedure

The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended by the NHS & Community Care Act 1990) requires the local authority to establish a procedure for considering complaints in relation to the discharge of, or failure to discharge, any social services functions in respect of a qualifying individual. The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 provides the legal framework for the procedures in relation to social care functions.

The regulations require the local authority to attempt to resolve complaints as soon as reasonably practicable and within specific timescales. The procedure has three stages, which are set out below, however where appropriate and with the agreement of the complainant the local authority may arrange for conciliation, mediation or other alternative dispute resolution to help resolve matters.

- Stage 1 (local resolution by manager) – 10 working days or up to 20 working days for complex cases;
- Stage 2 (investigation by someone outside of the service area complained about) - 25 working days with maximum extension to 65 working days;
- Stage 3 (independent review) – 30 working days to convene and hold a review panel; then 5 working days for the panel to issue its findings; and a further 15 working days for the local authority to respond to those findings.

All complaints are triaged to ensure they are suitable for the process. This ensures matters are managed through the correct procedures, should an alternative process be in place. Any matters which are not suitable for the complaints process are filtered out and passed to the appropriate channel.

If customers remain dissatisfied with the council's handling of the complaint, they can refer to the LGSCO. The LGSCO is an independent body that can consider complaints about the council.

## Executive Summary

### Children's Social Care

16 compliments were received in 2018/19 for children's social care services, with instances of customers telling us that services were getting it right and having a positive impact on their lives.

There were 47 new complaints received, 33 of which were managed through the complaint procedure (11 from children and young people). The remaining complaints related to matters which were not suitable for the children's statutory complaints procedure i.e. matters where an alternative process takes precedence (legal; child protection; internal management); concerns raised by someone who does not have eligibility to use the process; concerns that were withdrawn; concerns that were resolved on the spot. These cases were filtered out and where appropriate they were passed to alternative channels already in place to manage those issues.

35 stage 1 complaints were concluded. Complaints were important feedback for services and a means of considering how to improve. Managers listened to customers' views with 80% of stage 1 complaints being upheld, either fully or in part. Matters relating to looked after children accounted for most well-founded complaints, with the highest proportion being in relation to quality issues and service delay.

Performance in complaint handling has improved this year, in that 74% (compared to 69%) of complaints received a stage 1 response within 20 working days or less. However, there is room for improvement in those cases that exceeded 20 working days as the top reason for the extended timescales was recorded as being due to delays within the service.

Two complainants sought to escalate their stage 1 complaints to stage 2. Both stage 2 complaints remained under investigation at the end of 2018/19. There were no stage 3 reviews.

Individual cases had specific remedies put in place, where they were well-founded, and most of the wider service improvements resulted in the complainant's experience being shared with staff to improve practice.

The LGSCO considered three complaints about the council's children's social care services in 2018/19 and found fault in relation to the council's actions. In all three cases the LGSCO recommended suitable remedies, which the council complied with.

### Effectiveness

The activity for this reporting period shows the complaint procedure has been effective at resolving customer complaints at a local level. Learning from the customer experience through complaints has led to improvements to practices however, there is some room for improvement in managing complaints to timescale, reducing upheld complaints and establishing the root-cause of complaints to identify further learning for services.

# 1. Representations Made to Central Bedfordshire Council

## 1.1 Compliments Received

Compliments from service users and/or their representatives about service delivery are recorded under the Customer Feedback Procedure. Whilst children's services may seek and receive positive feedback from families and professionals via other mechanisms, the Customer Feedback Procedure captures compliments where the service user and/or representative has voluntarily gone out of their way to provide praise and appreciation for the service provided to them.

In 2018/19, compliments were recorded across children's social care services relating to good customer care and the quality of support to children and their families. A breakdown of compliments received is detailed below:

### Compliments Summary

The social worker was always easy to talk to, which helped immensely in a very difficult situation. The social worker always seemed to employ common sense solutions and I was very happy that she dealt with this case. So, I'd like to say thank you for all the help and support she has given me.

We've had a few different social workers but this one is approachable I can talk to her quite easily. She is pleasant and nice. The presence of social care has made a big difference for my son, his school grades have improved.

The social worker has been an absolute asset in multi-agency working and communication. I have found her to be professional, supportive and efficient – especially with a young man who is high risk and hard to engage. The young person clearly has respect for her. He continues to engage with her, and he agrees for me to share information with her. It is clear, having spoken to his mother that she has also received appropriate support and values the social worker's role within their family. In addition, the social worker has been able to ensure my safety by updating me on new concerns to inform our working practice and worked hard to make arrangements for me to be able to meet and engage with this young person at the earliest opportunity. As a voluntary service, this really helps us in gaining meaningful engagement from young people and some basis of trust and respect. Having worked in and with various children's social care services for over 10 years, the social worker has been an outstanding example of good practice and it has been a pleasure to work with her.

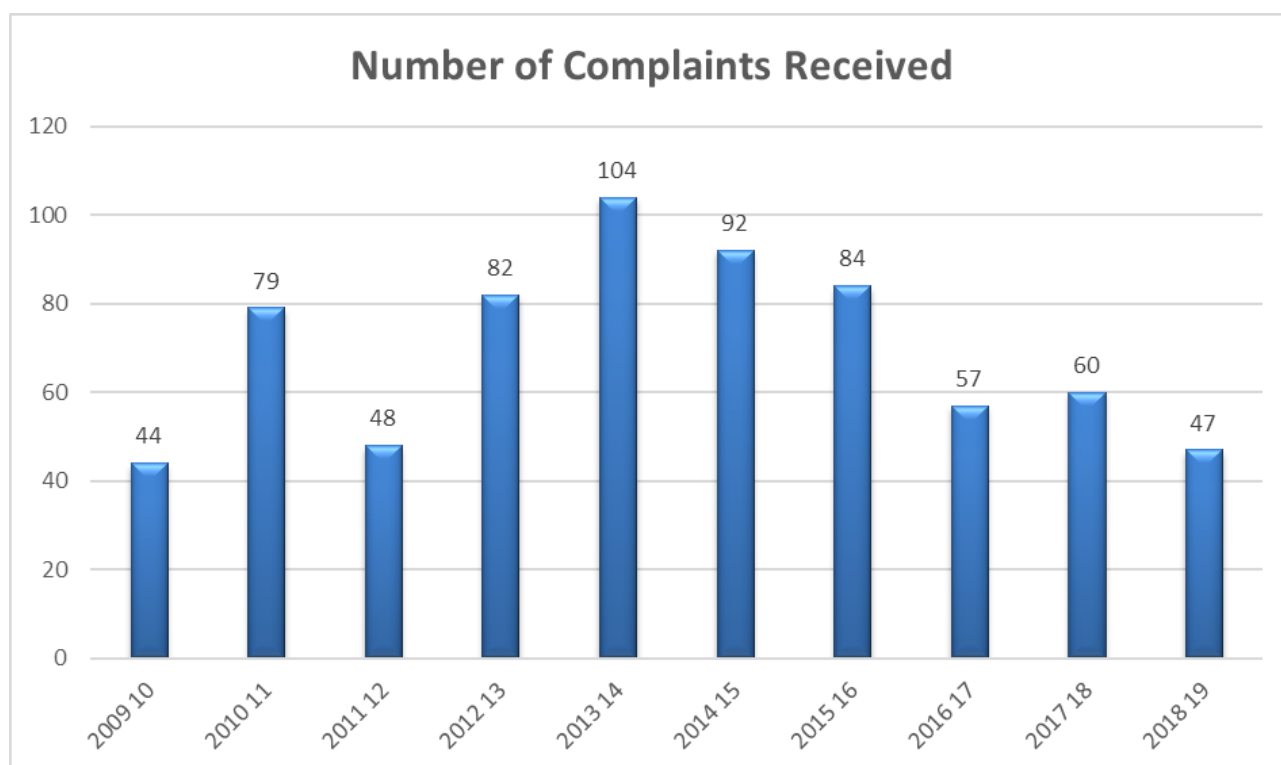
I thought it important to raise how impressed I have been with the level of communication and care the social worker has shown to her client, and to the professionals working with her. It has been unusual in my experience in this role to have had so much consistent communication and positive feedback from a social worker. I think that this has been beneficial to our client's progress and has supported her in making positive changes to her and her daughter's lives.

## 1.2 Complaints Received

A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.

In 2018/19, 47 new complaints were received across children's social care services.

The below chart demonstrates the number of complaints received across children's social care services since 2009.



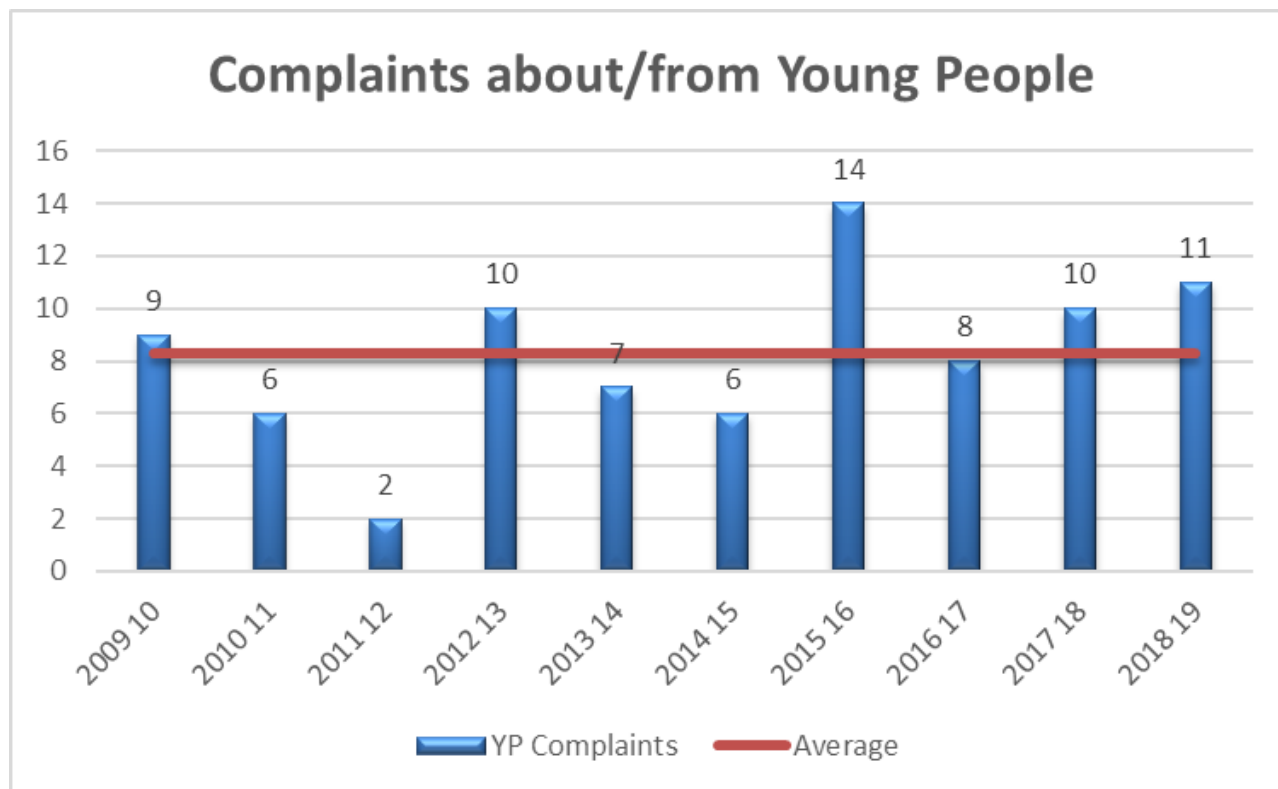
During 2018/19 complaints about children's social care decreased by 22% on the previous year. However, complaint volumes alone do not tell us enough about the social care landscape; the quality of services; or peoples experience of them. A decrease in the number of complaints may indicate better quality care and experiences. Equally it may mean that people do not feel able to speak up and raise concerns. Our aim must therefore be to ensure the council continues to demonstrate a willingness to listen and learn from feedback.

Of the 47 new complaints received about children's social care in 2018/19, 33 were managed through the children's statutory complaints procedure at stage 1. The remaining complaints related to matters which were not suitable for the children's statutory complaints procedure i.e. matters where an alternative process takes precedence (legal; child protection; internal management); concerns raised by someone who does not have eligibility to use the process; concerns that were withdrawn; concerns that were resolved on the spot. These cases were filtered out and where appropriate they were passed to alternative channels already in place to manage those issues.

Of the 33 new complaints suitable for the children's statutory complaints procedure at stage 1, 11 were specifically about the service to a child/young person:

- Nine were raised on behalf of the child/young person with their wishes and views considered (five from foster carers; 3 from parents; 1 from an advocate);
- Two were received directly from a child/young person.

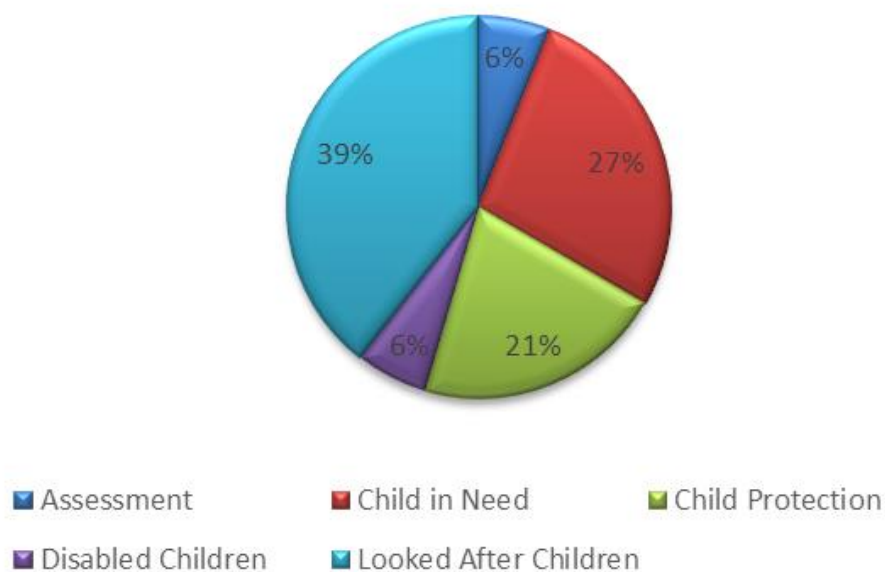
The below chart demonstrates the number of complaints received about/from young people across children's social care services since 2009.



During 2018/19, the number of complaints about/from young people accounted for 33% of the complaints received in relation to children's social care. This was a slight increase on the previous year and above average in comparison to numbers received since 2009/10.

The below chart details the types of complaints received in 2018/19, about children's social care, by subject and nature category. The subject categories were introduced in 2018/19 to assist with making reporting more meaningful. This will help with future analysis, year on year.

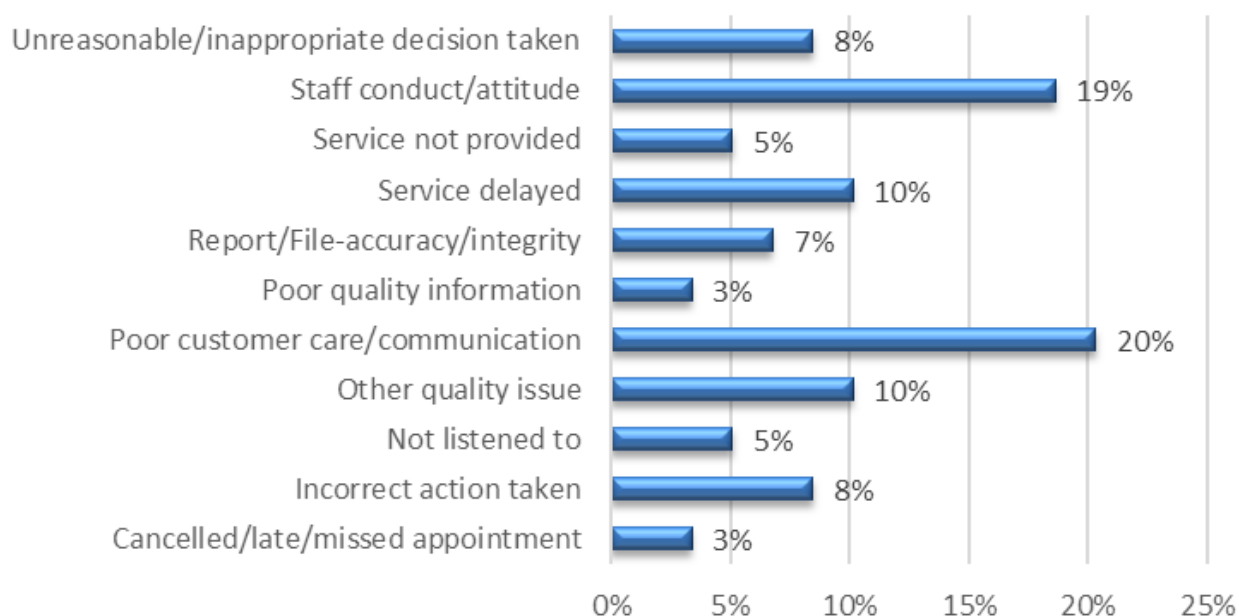
## Complaints Received by Subject Category



Complaints relating to looked after children were the highest at 39%. This was followed by complaints relating to children in need at 27% and complaints about child protection at 21%.

Complaints about poor customer care/communication were the highest at 20%. This was closely followed by complaints about staff conduct/attitude.

## Complaints Received by Nature Category





## 2. Equality and Diversity Monitoring

All complaints received about children's social care are captured by the Customer Relations Team. In addition to the complaint details we also record equality and diversity information. This data relates to the person affected by the actions described in the complaint. The purpose of capturing this information is to monitor access to the complaint procedure; to ensure services are appropriate for all service user groups; and to check whether any issues relating to discrimination have been raised.

Whilst information is not always provided by a complainant, the system used for capturing complaints has the facility to record gender, ethnicity, age group and whether the person affected describes themselves as having a disability or not.

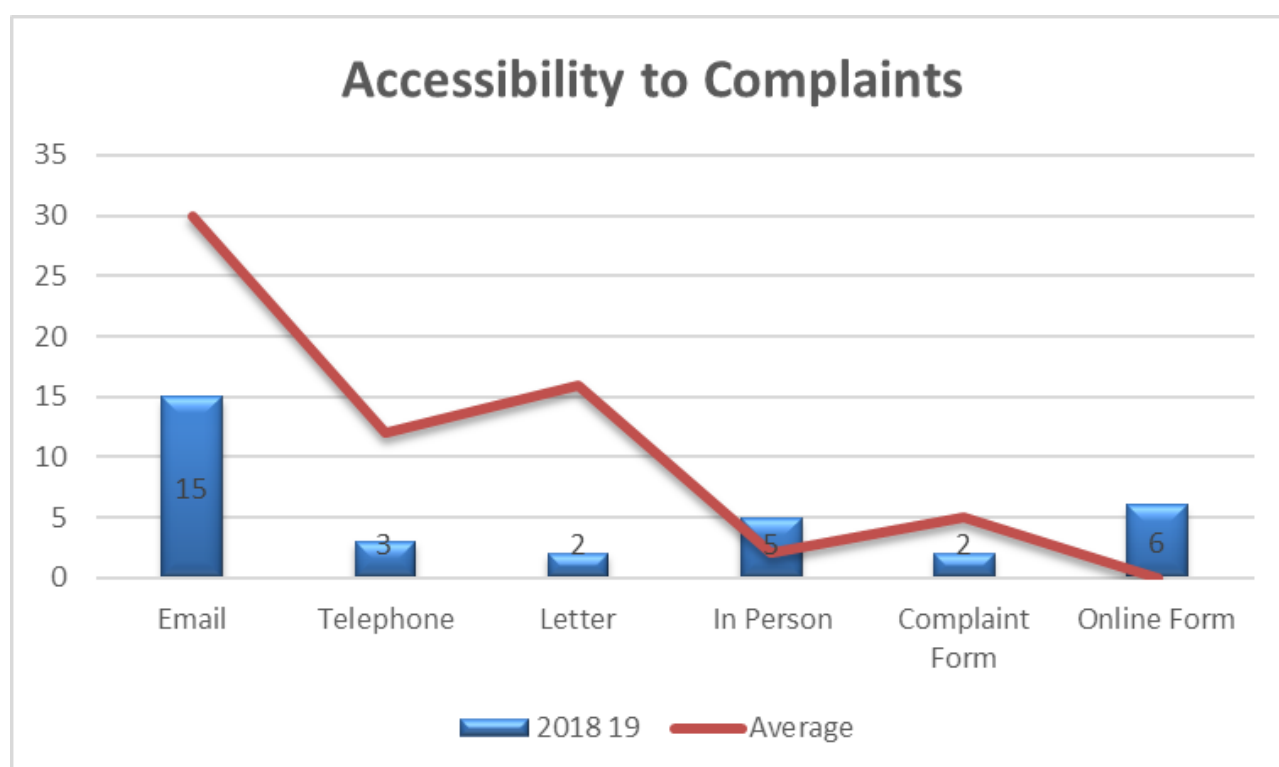
The below analysis is based upon the 33 complaints accepted into the children's statutory complaints process at stage 1.

### 2.1 Accessibility to Complaints

By having a range of contact options, the council aims to meet the needs of its service users in accessing the complaint procedure. Complaints can also be made by a representative of the service user or an advocate.

Complaints can be made in person; via telephone (including a direct line to Customer Relations); in writing; via email; letter; or via complaint form. During 2018/19 the Customer Relations Team replaced manual complaint forms with an online form to enable complaints to be made via the council's website.

The below chart shows which method of communication the 33 complainants used to contact the council in 2018/19.



Email was the preferred choice for complainants to contact the council in 2018/19, with just under half being received via this method. The averages detailed in the above chart show that email has consistently been the preferred option over previous years. The introduction of the online complaint form has been successful with 18% of new complaints being received via this method.

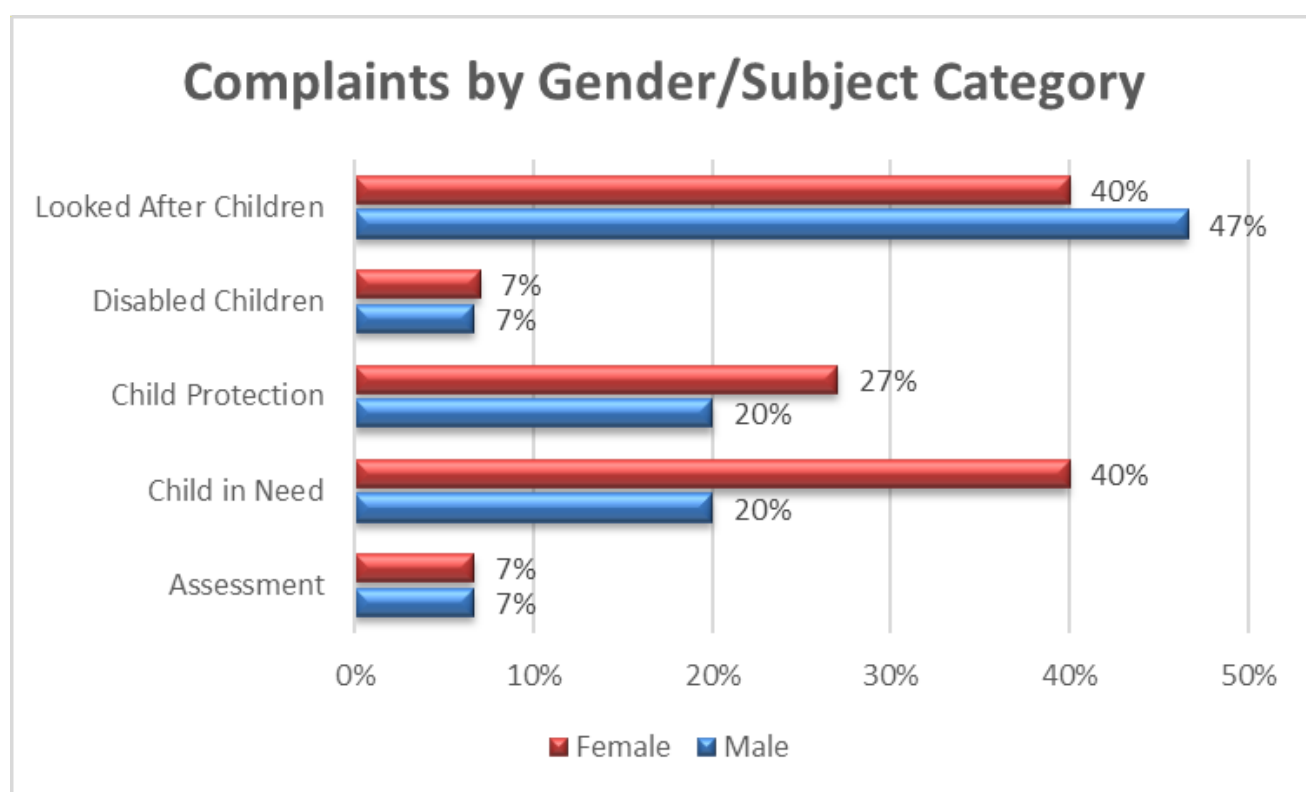
## 2.2 Social Care Complaints – Gender

In 2018/19 there were 2713 child records loaded by children's social care services. Of those records 53% were male, 45% were female and 2% were unborn/unknown.

Of the 33 new complaints suitable for the complaint procedure in 2018/19, 45% were from males and 55% were from females.

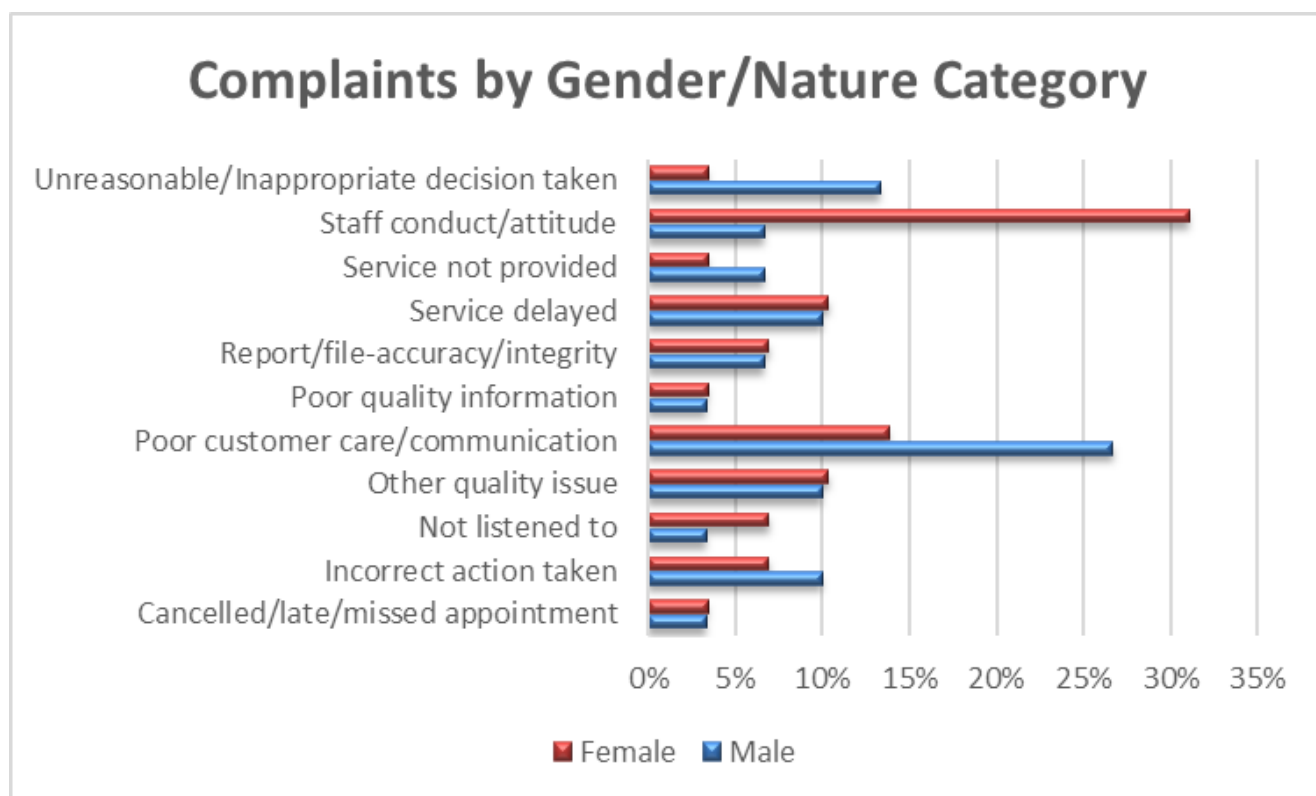
- 11 of the 33 new complaints were received specifically about/from young people. Of those 11 young people, 64% were male and 36% were female.
- 22 of the 33 new complaints were raised by adults about their own experience (usually parents or carers), 36% were male and 64% were female.

The below chart shows that the top subject category for complaints from males in 2018/19 was in relation to looked after children. This was the same for females but they equally raised concerns in relation to children in need.



In the previous year the top nature category for complaints from males and females was in relation to incorrect action being taken. In earlier years the top nature categories were poor customer care/communication and staff conduct/attitude.

The below chart demonstrates that in 2018/19, poor customer care/communication was the top nature category for complaints from males, for females it was staff conduct/attitude.



## 2.3 Social Care Complaints – Ethnicity

The last census on population by ethnic origin (2011) showed that 89.7% of the population in Central Bedfordshire were 'White British' and 10.3% were classified as 'Other'.

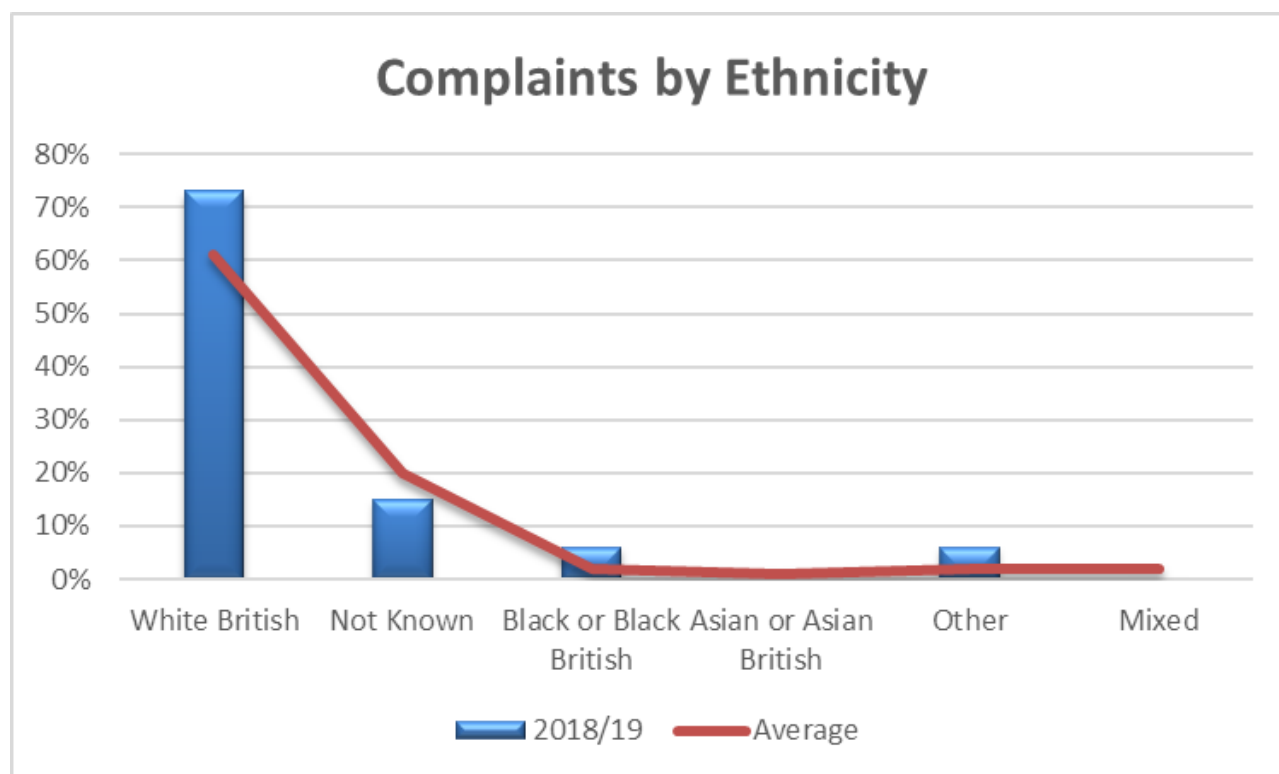
Of the 2713 child records loaded by children's social care services in 2018/19, 80% were classified as 'White'; 8% were classified as 'Mixed'; 5% were classified as 'Black'; 2% were classified as Asian; 3% were classified as 'Other'; and the remainder were unrecorded.

The below table provides a breakdown of how ethnicity groups were represented in complaints made about/by young people; complaints made by adults and the total number of complaints made (young people and adults combined) during 2018/19.

| Ethnicity Group        | Complaints from/about young people (11) | Complaints from adults (22) | Total number of complaints (33) |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| White British          | 82%                                     | 68%                         | 73%                             |
| Black or Black British | 0%                                      | 9%                          | 6%                              |
| Other                  | 18%                                     | 0%                          | 6%                              |
| Unrecorded             | 0%                                      | 23%                         | 15%                             |

Most of the complaints received in 2018/19 were raised by young people and adults who were classified as 'White British'. This is to be expected as the population of Central Bedfordshire and the number of cases loaded by children's services are predominantly represented by those classified as 'White'.

The chart below provides a breakdown of how ethnicity groups were represented in the 33 new complaints received during 2018/19.



The above chart demonstrates that in 2018/19 complaints from 'White British'; 'Black or Black British' and 'Other' ethnic backgrounds were above average compared to complaints received over previous years.

The issues affecting service users with a minority ethnic background were wide ranging. There were no significant themes although one complainant alleged that they were subject to racial bias. The investigation into this complaint detailed that there are several methods in place to ensure social workers practice in a non-discriminatory manner. This begins with their social work training, which is at degree level. All social workers are registered and adhere to the HCPC Code of Practice and the council provides a robust training programme, which includes equality and diversity. The investigation found that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation.

## 2.4 Social Care Complaints – Age

The below table provides a breakdown of how age groups were represented in respect of complaints made about/by young people; complaints made by adults and the total number of complaints made (young people and adults combined) during 2018/19.

| Age Group | Complaints about/from young people (11) | Complaints from adults (22) | Total number of complaints (33) |
|-----------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Under 18  | 91%                                     | 0%                          | 30%                             |
| 18 - 21   | 9%                                      | 5%                          | 6%                              |

|           |    |     |     |
|-----------|----|-----|-----|
| 22 - 64   | 0% | 77% | 52% |
| Not Known | 0% | 18% | 12% |

Most of the complaints received were from adults within the age group of 22-64.

Most complaints about/from young people were in relation to those in the under 18 age group. When a young person makes a complaint independently, the council will support them by actively providing information and advice. The young person is also entitled to and advocate, which is currently provided by the council's Business and Support Service. Of the 11 complaints about/from young people, 1 chose to be supported by an advocate. The remaining young people were supported by a parent or foster carer.

## 2.5 Social Care Complaints – Disability

Of the 2713 child records loaded by children's social care services in 2018/19, 10% of service users were described as having one or more disability.

A significant proportion of complaints (91%) were recorded as 'unknown' in relation to disability of the person affected. Where data was captured 6% were described as having multiple disabilities and 2% were described as having a long-standing illness or health condition.

There were two complaints received in relation to the Children with Disabilities Service. Both were in relation to the cancellation of respite, which was unique to this service area.

## 2.6 Social Care Complaints – Postcode

To support the equality and diversity information captured from complaints received in 2018/19, the Community Intelligence Team undertook an analysis based upon postcode data. The aim was to understand who was using the complaint process; whether there were any barriers that may prevent specific groups from complaining; and if there was any relation between complaints and deprivation.

This research demonstrated that complaints came from all parts of Central Bedfordshire, from both urban and rural areas. Overall, 'deprived' households were more likely to make a complaint.

This analysis was helpful in highlighting that whilst numbers of complaints are not particularly high there doesn't appear to be any obvious issues in terms of accessibility to the complaint process.

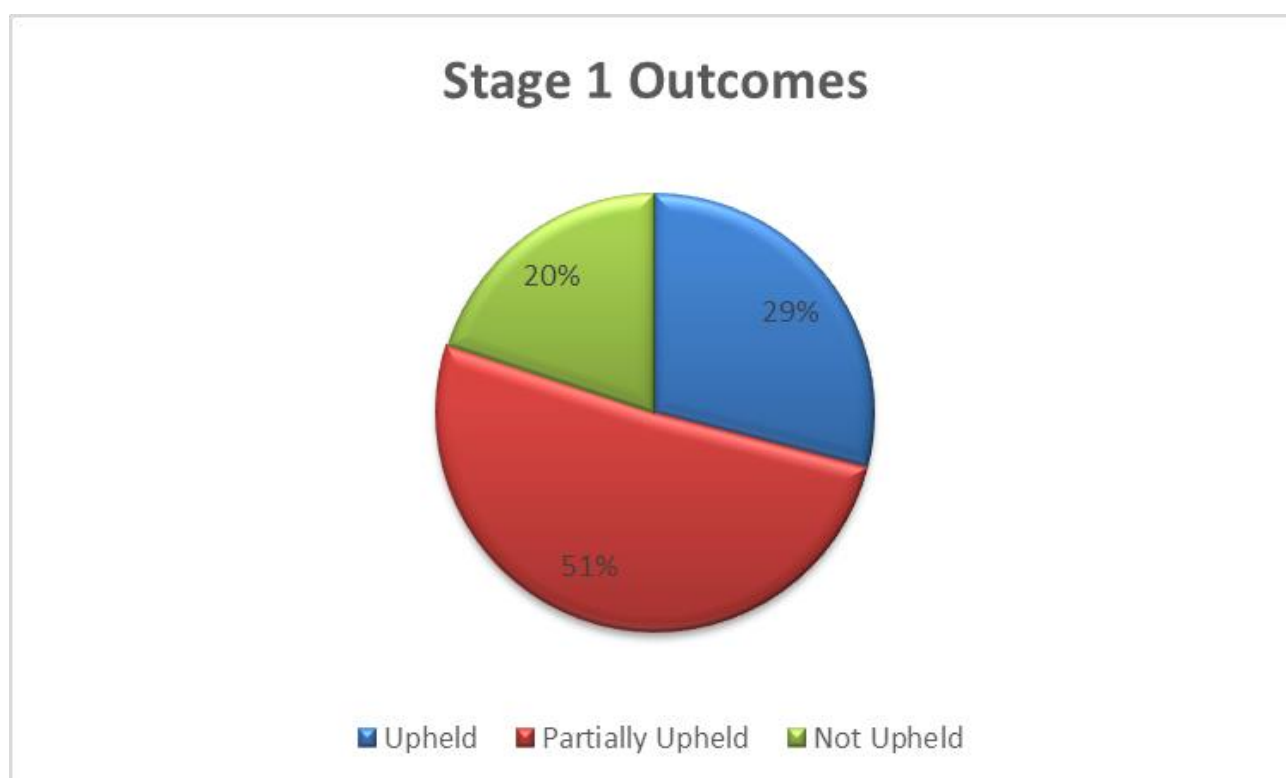
### 3. Outcomes from Concluded Complaints

#### 3.1 Stage 1 Outcomes

Stage 1 requires the council to resolve a complaint as close to the point of contact with the complainant as possible (i.e. through front line management of the service).

35 complaints received an outcome at stage 1, in 2018/19.

29% of complaints were upheld at stage 1; 51% were partially upheld; and 20% were not upheld. In total 80% of complaints were upheld either in full or in part at stage 1.

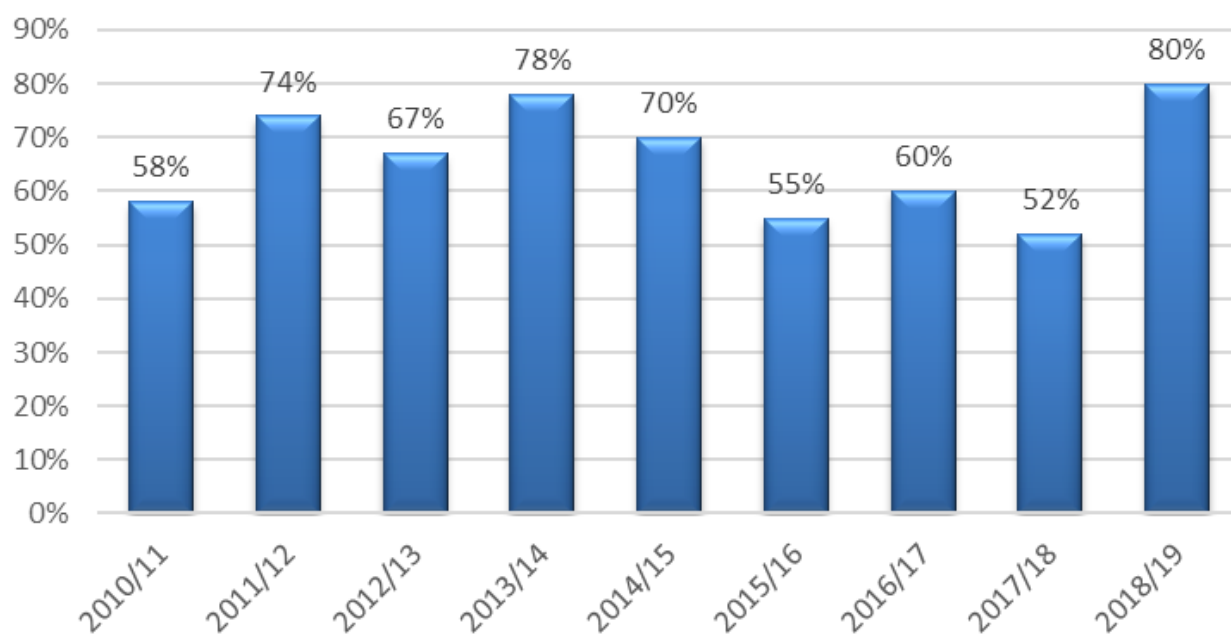


#### 3.2 Upheld Rates

A key aim in managing complaints is to achieve a reduction in the number that are upheld. The below chart shows the percentage of upheld complaints either in full or in part since 2010/11 (data for 2009/10 is not available).

Upheld complaints were at their highest in 2018/19 at 80%. This is a 28% increase on the previous year.

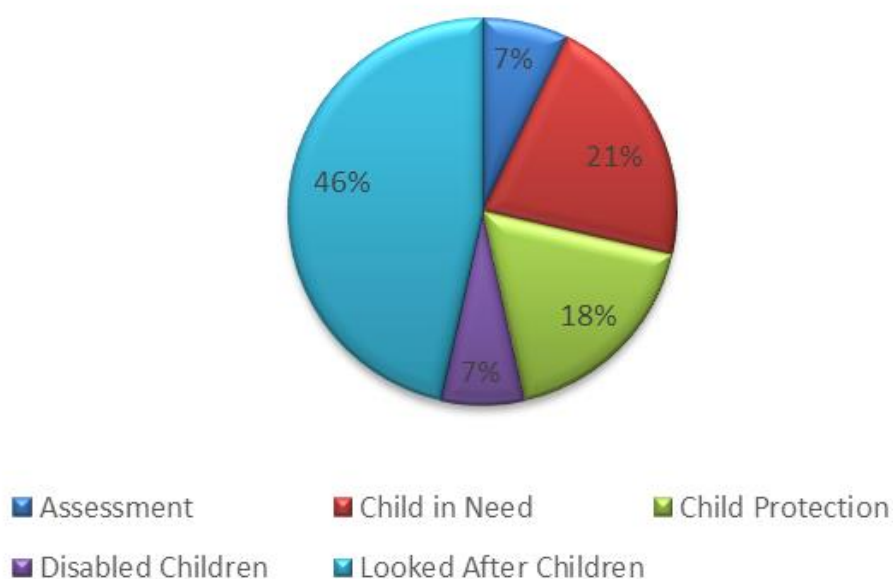
### Complaints upheld in full or in part



### 3.3 Upheld Rates by Category

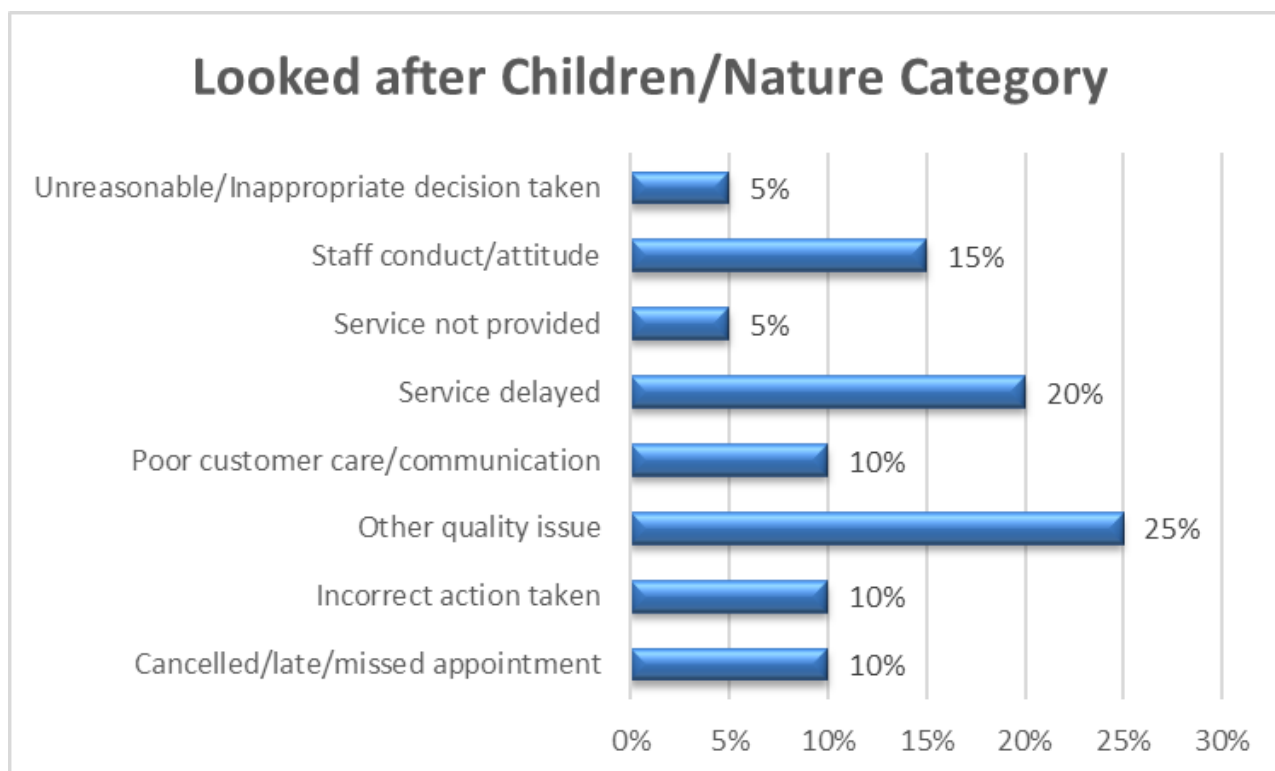
Individual complaints can cover several subject categories. For example, a complainant may raise concerns about the service provision to a child in need but also include issues relating to an assessment. In 2018/19, the most common subject category, that contributed to upheld complaints in full or in part, related to looked after children. This subject category accounted for 46% of issues.

### Upheld Rates by Subject Category



## Looked after Children

Looked after children accounted for 46% of upheld complaints, in full or in part. Those complaints fell into the nature categories shown in the below chart. Most related to quality issues (25%), closely followed by service delay (20%).



The table below provides a snapshot of the complaints about looked after children that were upheld in full or in part:

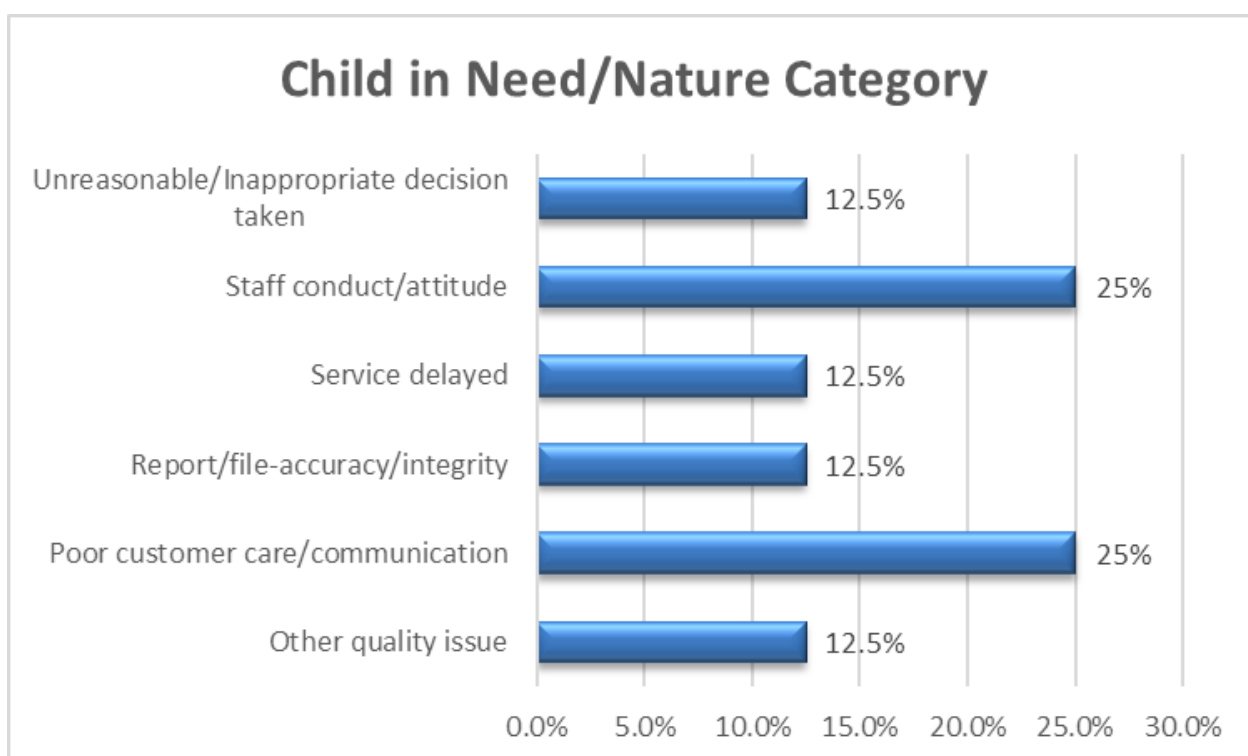
| Nature Category        | Summary of complaints   |
|------------------------|---|
| Other quality issue    | Lack of work around independent living and completion of pathway plan; 4 different social workers in 6 months; paperwork relating to criminal compensation was not completing in a timely manner; lack of confidence in IRO's ability to hold social work team to account; respite placement did not meet national minimum standards as there was no IT access for educational needs; |
| Service delayed        | Young person waited too long for authorisation from the Head of Service for an operation to take place; delay in arranging funding for additional maths tuition; actions agreed at looked after child review have not been completed in timescale; pathway plan overdue.  |
| Staff conduct/attitude | Lack of contribution from social worker   |



|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | during a Staying Put Meeting; social worker arranged an assessment without mother's consent and did not present well at a looked after review; social worker has been ineffective.                                |
| Poor customer care/communication          | No reply to questions about social worker's role and understanding of anorexia and mental health issues; not advised that children's social worker had changed and not advised of contact dates.                  |
| Incorrect action taken                    | Failing to recognise a complaint being raised and no outcome shared; copy of looked after review minutes not provided to foster carer.  |
| Cancelled/late/missed appointment         | Social worker arrived 10 minutes late for a progress meeting and only stayed for 10 minutes; social worker did not attend an important education meeting and did not inform the parents or apologise for absence. |
| Unreasonable/Inappropriate decision taken | Social worker has forced a meeting to meet a new worker without thought to the child in order to meet timescales.   |
| Service not provided                      | No interpreter provided at looked after review.   |

### Child in Need

Complaints relating to children in need accounted for 21% of upheld complaints, in full or in part. Those complaints fell into the nature categories shown in the below chart. Most related to staff conduct/attitude (25%) and poor customer care/communication (25%).

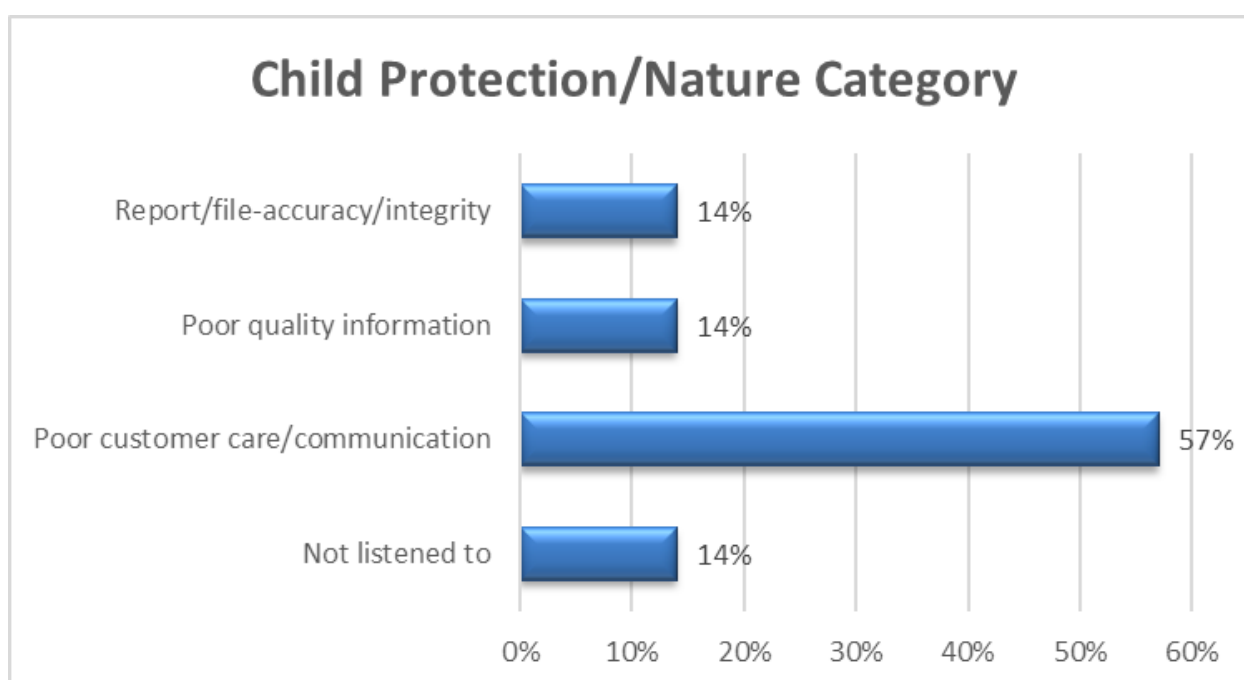


The table below provides a snapshot of the complaints about children in need that were upheld in full or in part:

| Nature Category                           | Summary of complaints  |
|---|--|
| Staff conduct/attitude                    | Parent told to stop calling after changes to contact arrangements were not relayed to child as agreed; social worker did not verify information included in a report with parent and provided meeting minutes on day of the next meeting               |
| Poor customer care/communication          | Time spent trying to talk to a social worker by phone which included hanging on for over 30 minutes and/or leaving a telephone numbers with no call returned; meeting arranged for when parent cannot attend and failure to notify of meeting details; |
| Unreasonable/Inappropriate decision taken | 24-hour notice given to mother and child to leave their foster placement.  |
| Service delayed                           | Delay in supporting the securing of social housing   |
| Report/file/accuracy/integrity            | Lack of research and evidence in Child and Family Assessment to explain future risks to children.  |
| Other quality issue                       | No advocate was provided during a child protection conference for a parent with autism   |

### Child Protection

Complaints about child protection accounted for 18% of upheld complaints, in full or in part. Those complaints fell into the nature categories shown in the below chart. Most related to poor customer care/communication (57%).

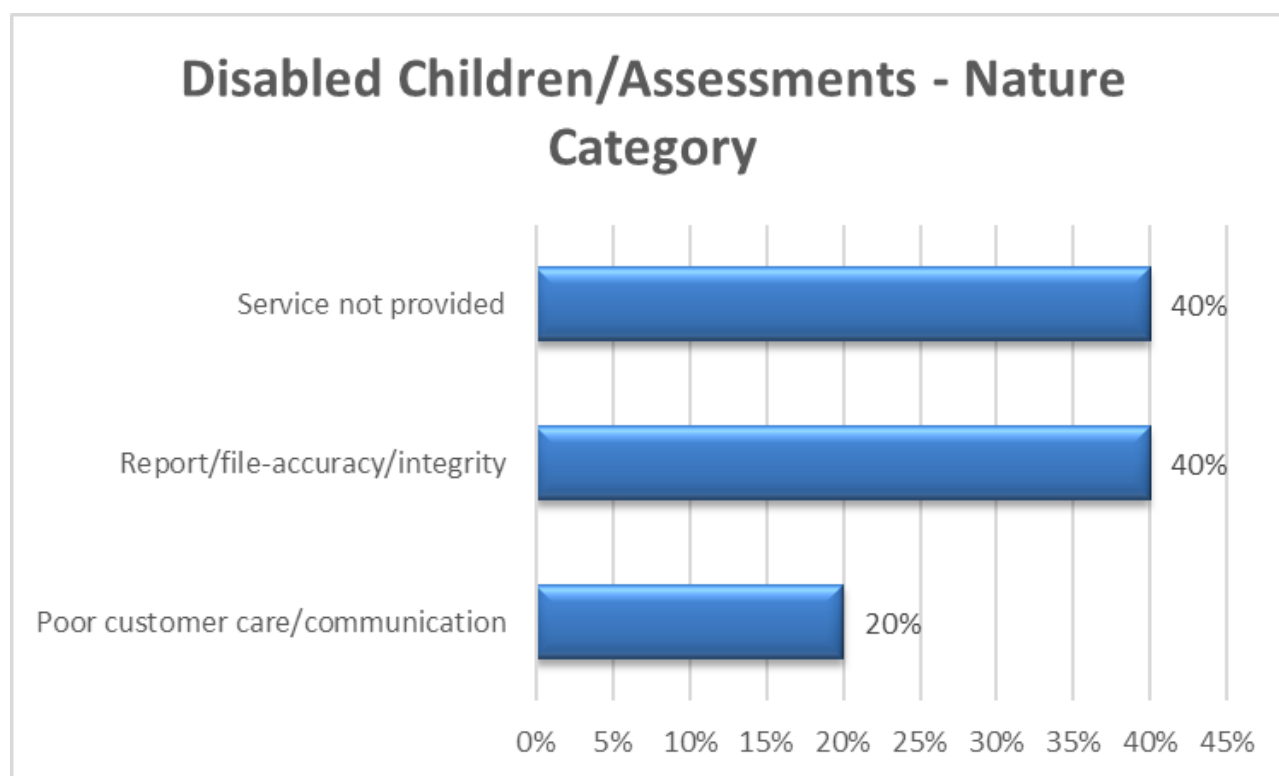


The table below provides a snapshot of the complaints about child protection that were upheld in full or in part:

| Nature Category                  | Summary of complaints  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Poor customer care/communication | Referral details and reasons/boundaries for supervised contact were not explained; lack of response to concerns/questions and failure to return calls; inconsistent communication from social worker and pressure to sign working agreement; social worker not keeping to arrangements to contact parents or acceptable meeting times. |
| Report/file – accuracy/integrity | Inaccuracies in the social worker's report for a child protection conference.  |
| Poor quality information         | Reasons for child protection conference were not made clear  |
| Not listened to                  | Views about medical treatment were not reflected back as understood and considered   |

#### Disabled Children & Assessments

Disabled children and assessments combined accounted for the remaining 14% of upheld complaints, in full or in part. Those complaints fell into the nature categories shown in the below chart. Most related to service not being provided (40%) and report/file-accuracy/integrity (40%).



The table below provides a snapshot of the complaints about disabled children or assessments that were upheld in full or in part:

| Nature Category                  | Summary of complaints  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Service not provided             | Respite care being cancelled (x2)  |
| Report/file-accuracy/integrity   | Inaccuracies/information not referred to in Child and Family Assessment; old assessment, rather than new sent out to parents, inaccuracies/poor spelling and grammar |
| Poor customer care/communication | Parents weren't advised that a referral to the Family Intervention Service and a Child and Family Assessment could be refused  |

## 4. Performance in Complaint Handling

### 4.1 Stage 1 Compliance

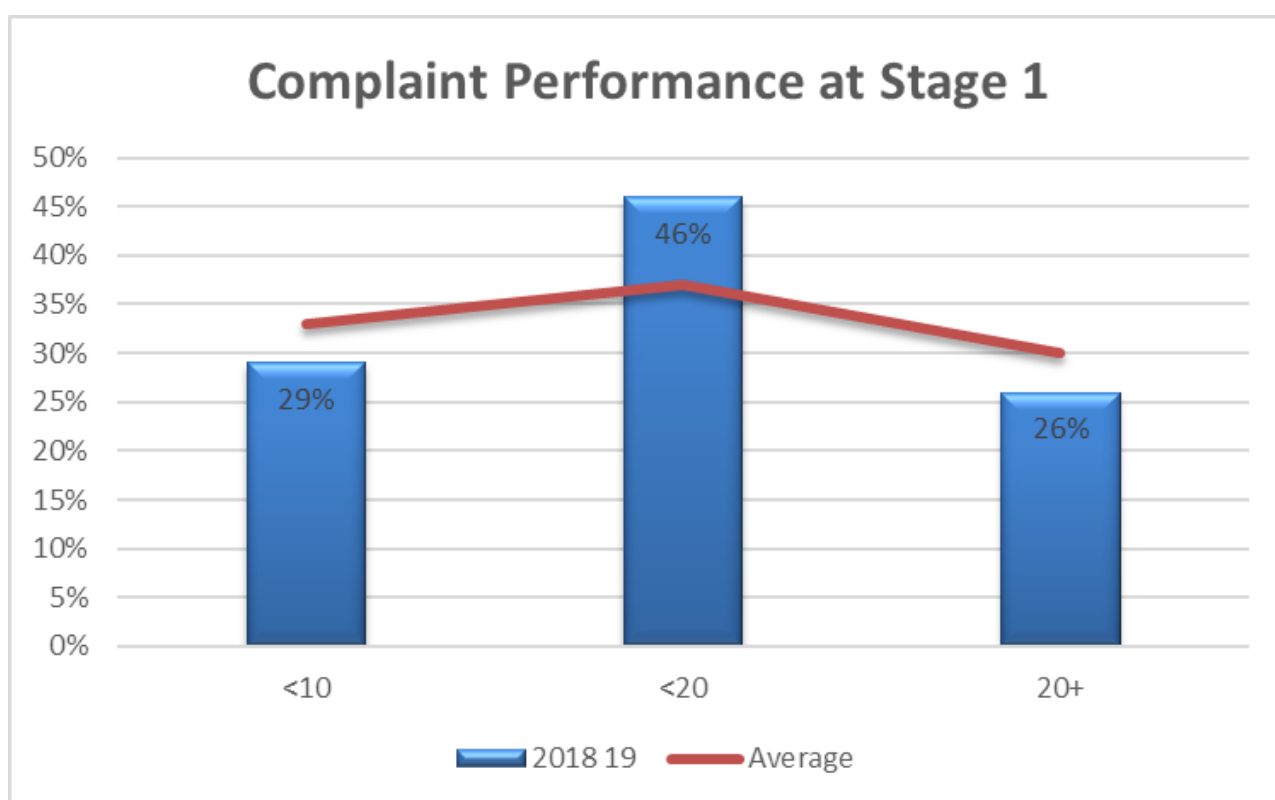
35 complaints were concluded at stage 1, in 2018/19.

The complaints procedure allows for 10 working days for completion of a stage 1 complaint with a further 10 working days for more complex complaints or if an advocate is required.

Of those 35 complaints concluded at stage 1:

- 10 were completed within 10 working days
- 16 were completed within 20 working days
- 9 exceeded 20 working days.

The below chart indicates the performance in handling complaints at stage 1 during 2018/19, in comparison to the average performance in handling complaints at stage 1 in previous years.



In 2018/19, 74% of the complaints concluded at stage 1 were done so within 10 or 20 working days. This is an improvement on the previous year (2017/18 = 69%). In addition, the number of complaints that took longer than the statutory 20 working days was below the average number of complaints that have exceeded 20 working days over previous years.

The below table indicates the reasons why complaints took more than 20 working days to conclude, in comparison to the previous two years. Service delay was the top reason in

2018/19. In 2017/18 it was extensions being agreed with the complainant. In 2016/17 it was service delay and the availability of key personal.

| Performance Delay Reasons                | 2018/19  | 2017/18  | 2016/17  |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| Service Delay                            | <b>5</b> | 3        | <b>4</b> |
| Extension agreed                         | 2        | <b>4</b> | 2        |
| Complainant's Delay                      | 1        | 0        | 2        |
| Clarification required/Complaint unclear | 1        | 0        | 0        |
| Availability of Key Personnel            | 0        | 0        | <b>4</b> |
| Detailed/Historical/Complex              | 0        | 2        | 1        |
| Eligibility Query                        | 0        | 1        | 0        |

## 4.2 Complaint Escalations (Stages 2 & 3)

Where a complaint is not resolved locally at stage 1, the complainant has the right to request consideration of the complaint at stage 2. Consideration of complaints at stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an externally commissioned investigating officer and an independent person. Where stage 2 has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, the complainant can request further consideration of the complaint by a review panel at stage 3. On conclusion of the council's complaint process the complainant should be advised of their right to refer the matter to the LGSCO.

Whilst there are three stages to the complaints procedure the Customer Relations Team provides support and guidance to children's social care services to ensure responses at stage 1 are as robust as possible. Any requests for escalation under the complaints process will be assessed by the Customer Relations Team.

Nothing should preclude either the complainant or the council from suggesting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). There are significant cost savings by remedying cases without the need for externally commissioned investigators and the council should therefore explore this option. However, entering ADR should not restrict the complainant's right to escalate their complaint.

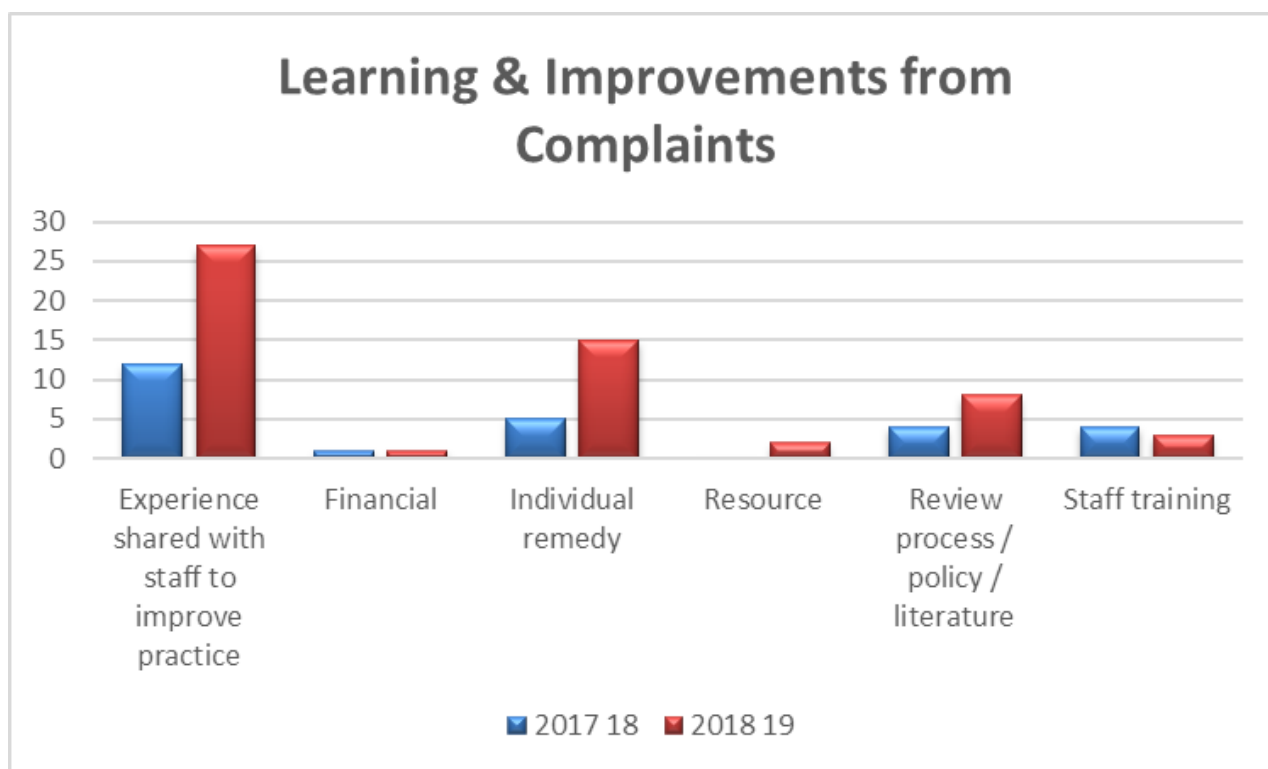
Of the 33 new complaints accepted into the process in 2018/19, two complainants sought to escalate their stage 1 complaints to stage 2. Both stage 2 complaints remained under investigation, with outcomes expected in 2019/20.

There were no stage 3 reviews during 2018/19.

## 5. Learning and Improvements from Complaints

Where complaints are upheld, either fully or in part, complainants will receive an apology. However, service areas are also expected to put in place a remedy which may be for the individual complainant or undertake wider learning across the service to ensure mistakes are not repeated.

The below chart shows the types of learning identified from complaints in 2018/19, compared to those identified in the previous year.



The above chart shows that most improvements identified in 2018/19 resulted in the complainant's experience being shared with staff to improve practice. This was followed by individual remedies for complainants. This was also the case in 2017/18.

### Key improvements to children's services included:

- Work has been undertaken to increase the use of research in child and family assessments to inform decisions and recommendations;
- Information packs for families have been introduced which social workers will take with them on visits;
- Briefing sessions have been run in respect of written agreements with families to support best practice;
- Where a pathway plan for a looked after child has not been put into place by the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the relevant Team Manager will attend the final looked after review to ensure that drift in future planning does not occur;

- A mandatory addition has been added to ensure that when a pathway plan for a looked after child has been completed it is used to update the looked after review and has been shared with the young person;
- Minimal use of short-term social workers for looked after children but when this is inevitable a clear discussion will take place with the young person affected via the looked after review process. This will ensure clarity and prevent delay in planning progress;
- Housing colleagues were invited to team meetings to discuss the process around housing applications for young people, to ensure social workers were able to support families better;
- A review has been undertaken to streamline the administrative process for sending out looked after review minutes to avoid delay.



## 6. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

### 6.1 Complaints Received and Decision Notices

The LGSCO annual statistics show that they received 16,899 complaints and enquiries about local authorities in 2018/19. In comparison, the LGSCO considered three complaints about the council's children's social care services. The table below sets out the complaints received and any LGSCO decisions reached:

| Complaint   | Ombudsman Decision   |
|---|--|
| The complainant complains the council did not properly follow legislation or guidance when it acted on a child protection referral concerning one of his children. He says this resulted in he and his wife moving out of the family home for 15 nights, leaving his two children in the custody of his mother.             | <p>The Ombudsman has found there was fault in the way the council reached the agreement which led to this happening, and it was also at fault for excluding the complainant's wife from the initial discussion about the matter. However, the injustice caused to the complainants by these faults was not significant and has already been remedied by the council. Moreover, it has agreed to implement service improvements to ensure these faults do not reoccur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a short informative leaflet it can give to those with parental responsibility when accommodation of children under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 is being discussed. This leaflet will explain any agreement is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any time. In addition, it will highlight that parental responsibility is not transferred to the council and those subject to the agreement can seek legal advice about its implications. Conversely, it will explain the consequences of not entering into the agreement and the actions the council may take in these circumstances.</li> <li>• Brief front-line staff on the use of the 'Consent to Placement and Medical Treatment' form they should be using in these situations</li> </ul> |
| The complainant complains that the council failed to provide agreed support required for her son, following his spinal surgery. She says that the council led her to believe that the care package was in place, however only one day before her son was discharged from hospital did the social worker inform her that the | The council has already acknowledged it failed to meet the complainant's son's post-surgery needs. However, its response to the complaint did not recognise fully the distress and injustice caused. To remedy this the Ombudsman recommends a financial payment, apology and service improvements. Financial remedy total of £2,327.  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| council had been unable to source a care agency. The complainant and her son were left without support for six months.   |  |
| The complainant complains the council's investigation of her complaint did not properly consider the impact its failures had on her when she was a looked after child. | The Ombudsman has found the council was at fault for the way it dealt with the complaint and did not investigate it in line with the statutory procedure, which it should have done. The complaint warrants further investigation under the children's social care statutory complaints procedure immediately. |

## 7. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

### 7.1 Effectiveness of Complaints Handling

Service users, their representatives and people affected by the actions of children's social care services can access the council's complaints procedure and the LGSCO.

The Customer Relations Team monitors the operation and effectiveness of the complaint procedure as well as how information about complaints is being used to improve services and delivery.

Managing complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure has generally been an effective means of dealing with complaints during 2018/19, with only two escalations to stage 2 and no stage 3 reviews.

Complaints were seen by managers as important feedback and a means of identifying how services may be changed for the better. The customer experience in complaints also led to some improvements to practice.

Performance around complaint handling has improved this year in that 74% (compared to 69% in 2017/18) of complaints received a stage 1 response within 20 working days or less.

However, 80% of concluded complaints were upheld either fully or in part and in cases that exceeded 20 working days, the top reason for the extended timescale was captured as being due to delays within the service. There is therefore room for improvement in these areas although, it is important to note that in 2018/19 there were only two escalation requests for stage 2 investigations; no stage 3 reviews; and only three complaints investigated by the LGSCO.

Last year we reported that work in understanding the root cause for complaints at a local level, to fully identify learning opportunities, would be helpful for services. Customer Relations continues to support improvements in this area.

### 7.2 Financial Implications

There are several ways in which the council can incur costs as part of the statutory complaints process for children's social care services.

Stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an investigating officer and an independent person. The investigating officer may be employed by the council or be externally commissioned. The investigating officer however cannot be in direct line management of the service complained about. Due to the nature of the complaints that tend to escalate to stage 2, usual practice is to externally commission an investigating officer specifically for that piece of work. The independent person however must not be an employee of the council and is therefore always externally commissioned.

Stage 3 requires the council to arrange a panel hearing which must consist of three independent people, which means they cannot be employees of the council. This requires the panel members to be externally commissioned.

In addition, there may be occasions where financial redress is offered through the complaint procedure. This might be to reimburse a person who has suffered a quantifiable financial loss, or it might be more of a symbolic payment which serves as an acknowledgement of the distress or difficulties they have been put through. The amount will depend on the circumstances of the case and can be paid through local settlement following investigation by the LGSCO but can also be recommended during the council's complaint process.

Any financial costs incurred are the responsibility of children's social care services. To assist in minimising the risk of costs the Customer Relations Team is consistent in assessing whether complainants are eligible to use the statutory complaint procedure; is proactive in offering alternative dispute resolution where appropriate; is actively involved in quality assuring stage 1 responses to reduce escalation; and works collaboratively with services to ensure appropriate and reasonable remedies are recommended.

The below table details the total costs incurred during 2018/19:

| Reasons for Cost                                   | 2018/19 Spend   |
|--|---|
| Stage 2  | £0.00<br><i>(Costs of two investigations commenced will be incurred in 2019/20)</i> |
| Stage 3  | £0.00   |
| Financial Redress<br>(Council's complaint process) | £823.50   |
| Financial Redress<br>(LGSCO Recommendation)        | £2327.00  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>£3150.50</b>   |

## 8. Customer Relations Team – Supporting Children’s Social Care

The Customer Relations Team supports children’s social care services by:

- ✓ Providing guidance, advice and support to staff on the management of complaints;
- ✓ Supporting staff involved in all stages of the complaint procedure;
- ✓ Quality assurance of complaint responses;
- ✓ Managing challenges to complaint handling and responses;
- ✓ Liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman;
- ✓ Overseeing the arrangements for communicating and publicising the complaints procedure;
- ✓ Evaluating and reporting on the numbers, types, outcomes and trends of complaints to inform practice, development and service planning;
- ✓ Providing a means to capture the learning from complaints to contribute to practice development, commissioning and service planning

During 2019/20 the Customer Relations Team will focus on a number of initiatives:

- Continue to ensure the complaints procedure is accessible (particularly to young people) and introduce an easy read/autism complaint form for customers;
- Continue to promote the Customer Relations root-cause analysis tool to help managers with identifying systemic improvements;
- Continue to promote the Customer Relations toolkit for handling persistent customers consistently and fairly;
- Continue to ensure complaints are handled responsively promoting alternative dispute resolution where appropriate;
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to achieve a reduction in levels of complaints upheld;
- Maintain the low levels of complaint investigations by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and where they find fault;
- Continue to provide data for the Council’s performance scorecard to improve visibility of complaints and their outcomes;
- Introduce a rolling programme of staff briefing sessions on good complaint handling.



**A great place to live and work**

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