

Learning Log

Multi-Agency Audit of Re-Referrals via Front-Door Services

July 2018

What did we do & why?

In Buckinghamshire, the rate of referrals (per 10,000 of the population) is significantly higher than average on a national, regional and 'statistical neighbours' level.

In 2017, Buckinghamshire also had the highest percentage of repeat referrals (within 12 months of the previous referral) compared to other authorities in the South East Region.

In response to both of these statistics, the Local Authority undertook a multi-agency audit of the quality and appropriateness of repeat referrals in May 2018. The report also provided the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) with an overview of front door referral activity over 2017/18, looking at the number of referrals and repeat referrals, as well as the reasons behind those

- ★ The main source of repeat referrals to front-door services are:
The Police (36%) and Schools (19%)
- ★ The Top Three Reasons for repeat referrals:
 - **Domestic Abuse**
 - **Neglect**
 - **Behavioural Problems**
- ★ Children who are first referred at either age 2, or between 5-9 years old are **most likely** to be re-referred.
 The two most prevalent ages for re-referrals are 8 years old and 14 years old.

Audit Findings

- ⇒ The source of repeat referrals (Police and Schools) and the reasons for repeat referrals correlates with Buckinghamshire County Councils recent analysis of data
- ⇒ **The vast majority of the repeat referrals met the threshold, with agencies recognising risk and sharing appropriate and relevant information**
- ⇒ There was not always an indication of whether the parents and carers were aware of the referral (40% either unclear or not stated) - There needs to be a consistent message and understanding of what 'consent' means in the context of making a referral to Social Care
- ⇒ The audit identified a good example of a referral which gave a clear picture of the child's living experience, including historical content, as well as a clear record as to what the referrer was seeking to achieve.
- ⇒ There was, on occasion, a sense that the referral form was being completed in order to pass the risk from the referring agency onto Social Care.
- ⇒ Domestic Abuse notifications from Thames Valley Police do not indicate the number of previous incidents - the initial referral form tends to give a better level of information regarding the family circumstances and historical call outs.
- ⇒ **Referral forms from other agencies are not particularly 'child-focused'. Whilst they tend to include a good level of information about the family and the specific incident which lead to the referral, data on the child themselves can be inconsistent.**
- ⇒ The audit included an example of a child with disabilities, currently open to review, who required a referral in order to be assessed for additional support.

Recommendations

- ★ 1. Share the identified good example of a referral via multi-agency and single-agency training.



- ★ 2. Review all referral form (MARF, Thames Valley Policy, SCAS) to ensure they are all sufficiently child-focused

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Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF)

A multi-agency referral should be made when the agency considers:

- A child has multiple needs requiring a multi-agency coordinated response with a lead professional (level 3 on the threshold document)
- A child has a high level of unmet and complex needs or is a child in need of protection (level 4 on the threshold document)

Consult

Use the thresholds document (www.bucks-iscb.org.uk/professionals/thresholds-document/), discuss with your safeguarding lead and use your professional judgement to identify the level of need. If you think the need has reached level 3 or 4 and you need advice or guidance, you can consult by calling **First Response** on 0845 460 0001.

Email MARF to: secure-cypfirstresponse@buckscc.gcsx.gov.uk (note: only fully secure, if emailing from another secure email account).

For those that do not have access to a secure email account, there are two options for sending the MARF securely:

- Password protect the form and send the password in a separate email.
- Email initially without personal details. A Contact and Referral Officer will then send you an encrypted email which you can use to send the MARF securely.

First Response is open Mon-Thurs 9am to 5.30pm & Fri 9am to 5pm. If your referral is URGENT and is outside of these times or on a Bank holiday please contact the **Emergency Social Work Team** on 0800 999 7677.

All telephone referrals must be followed up with completion of a MARF by the referrer within 48 hours.

- ★ 3. Remind commissioners and providers of adult services about the **thresholds** for children



and when it is appropriate to refer

- ★ 4. Test individual agency understanding of consent in the context of making a referral

.....And how this operates in practice

- ★ 5. Consider introducing a check point in the front door service to confirm the referrer has received feedback.



- ★ 6. Cease the practice of requiring a referral for children already open to review in the **Children with Disabilities team**

For more information regarding the children with disabilities team, please visit:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send/>