

## What Did We Do & Why?

In 2019, the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, through its Performance, Quality and Improvement Sub Group, commissioned an audit to seek assurance that multi-agency child protection plans are achieving good outcomes for children through the reduction of risk, so that there is clear evidence that the threshold for significant harm is no longer met.

The audit explored the following areas:

- How services are experienced by children and families.
- Whether plans were robust and effective.
- The quality of referral and assessments.
- Appropriate application of thresholds.

## Methodology

The Chair of the Performance, Quality and Improvement Sub Group produced an overview of contextual data for children who are currently on a Child Protection Plan. This included age profiles, length of time on a plan, category of plan, repeat plan, sibling groups, unborn children, gender, and whether the child is disabled.

The audit focussed on children aged 5 years and under who have been on a Child Protection Plan for more than one, but less than 2 years. The primary reason for the current plan was domestic abuse and the audit specifically looked at the role of fathers in the assessment, planning and review of their child's plan.

All agencies participating in the audit were asked to complete a standard template (provided by the Partnership Support Team) to capture their involvement with the children and their family. This information was shared at the audit and used to inform discussions and views about whether the Child Protection Plan is achieving good outcomes for children.

The multi-agency discussion about the Child Protection Plan considered the following questions:

- What are the child's needs, risks and circumstances that led to the current child protection plan?
- Has the child previously been on a child protection plan? If yes, when, the category and how long for?
- Was the family invited to attend a Family Group Conference prior to going to Initial Child Protection Conference?
- Who was invited to the Initial Conference? Who attended? Who provided reports?
- Who is regularly attending core group meetings? Are these meetings progressing the child's plan?
- How has the child's voice influenced their child protection plan?
- For children aged 10 years or older, did they attend their child protection conference? If not, were their views represented through an advocate?
- Is there input from adult services about the adult's ability to safely parent their children?
- Does the plan adequately address all of the known and potential risks?
- Does the plan take full account of historical information known about the child and their family?
- Are all absent parents (particularly men) considered in the assessment and plan?
- If this is a repeat plan, what is different this time that will achieve sustainable change?
- Are decisions evidence based and not solely reliant on self-reporting of the adults?

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Agencies involved in the audit:

- Children's Social Care
- Oxford Health Foundation Trust
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
- Education
- Early Years
- Police
- One Recovery Bucks
- Community Safety
- Youth Offending Service
- CCG
- Probation
  
- Voice of the child isn't consistently being heard over the parents' voices.
- Plans are too adult focussed.
- Parents need to be empowered to be able to understand and show insight of their child's needs
- Professionals at conference need to voice what they are able to do, rather than relying on external services .
- Family Group Conferences, Core Groups and child protection conferences need to take place in the correct order, and consideration to include early help services.
- Work needs to take place with the child to build confidence and having someone for them to talk to.
- Professional training and meetings need to take place to build knowledge of who has what role.
- Helping Hands and other support or interventions shouldn't be forced on children as a solution.
- Child Protection Plans can sometimes be seen as going through the motions and not effective.
- Measures of success in plans need setting and monitoring.
  
- Coercive control will affect the child and they will not be able to voice their own views. Is it actually the voice of the child or the voice of the abuser that is being heard?
- There is not enough awareness of coercive control.
- Exploration of each child's individual needs is needed to ensure the plan achieves positive change
- There is not enough intervention before the Initial Child Protection Conference.
- Better quality of information and the knowledge needed in the plan.
- GDPR and the clarity of recording is an issue, this results in an incomplete picture
- Review conferences need to have the full raft of professionals involved with the family in attendance
- If domestic abuse is mentioned in a referral, how to start work with the family needs to be understood
  
- Agencies are there to support families not enforce things.
- Agencies need a victim focussed approach and a holistic assessment needs to take place (history, all agencies involved, professionals that are working with the family).
- Find the most appropriate adult for the child to have a discussion with, regarding their views and feelings.
- Name domestic abuse. Don't use terms such as 'couple violence' or 'domestic incident'.
- Clarity from Social Care needs to be provided regarding background of decision making to help other professionals in assisting families.
- There needs to be more information and the context recorded around domestic abuse incidents.
- Child Protection Conference scheduling is an issue for Thames Valley Police, Social Care need to identify the most critical conferences for TVP to attend.
- Social Care need to ensure an invite is sent to Women's Aid for all Child Protection Conferences as standard.

## **Additional Information**

To view previous Audits carried out by BSCP, please click here:

[Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

To view BCC Children's Services Improvement Programme, please click here:

[Buckinghamshire Children's Services Improvement Programme](#)