

NOTICE OF MEETING

**Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Wednesday 12 January 2011, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell,
RG12 1AQ**

**To: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY PANEL**

Councillor Mrs Birch (Chairman), Councillor Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs Beadsley, Dudley, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne, Phillips and Mrs Ryder

Church Representatives (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Mr G S Anderson and One Vacancy

Parent Governor Representatives (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Dr P Josephs-Franks and One Vacancy

Teachers' Representatives (Non-Voting)

Miss V Richardson and One Vacancy

cc: Substitute Members of the Committee

Councillors Beadsley, Edger, Mrs Fleming, Harrison, Leake, Mrs Shillcock and Virgo

Children's Social Care Representative (Non-Voting)

Ms C Mitchell

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 If you hear the alarm, leave the building immediately.
- 2 Follow the green signs.
- 3 Use the stairs not the lifts.
- 4 Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

If you require further information, please contact: Katharine Simpson
Telephone: (01344) 352308
Email: katharine.simpson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Published: 24 December 2010



**Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Wednesday 12 January 2011, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Easthampstead House, Town Square,
Bracknell, RG12 1AQ**

AGENDA

Page No

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 27 October 2010.

1 - 8

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interest and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Any other items, which pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.

5. CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL

The minutes of the meeting of the above Advisory Panel held on 29 September 2010 are attached. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2010 will follow.

9 - 12

BUDGET CONSULTATION

6. 2011/12 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS

To consider key themes and priorities for the Children, Young People and Learning Department as outlined in the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2011/12

13 - 82

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

To consider the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the PMR for the second quarter of 2010/11 (July to September) relating to Children, Young People and Learning, giving particular attention to 14-16 years education offering and take up and to school exclusions. A paper in respect of 14-16 years education is attached.

83 - 88

NB: Please bring the previously circulated Performance monitoring Report to the meeting. Copies are available on request and attached to this agenda if viewed online.

8. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

To consider the 2009/10 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

89 - 112

OVERVIEW & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

9. SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AND PUBLIC HEALTH WHITE PAPER: HEALTHY LIVES, HEALTHY PEOPLE

To receive briefings in respect of the Schools White Paper which seeks to introduce a reform programme that places teachers at the centre of school improvement and releases schools from central government direction, and of the linked Public Health White Paper which sets out the Government's long term vision for the future of public health in England.

113 - 130

10. REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The report of the Working Group of the Panel reviewing safeguarding children is attached for consideration.

131 - 262

11. REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF SCHOOL MEALS

The Chairman will give an oral update regarding the Group reviewing school meals.

HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

12. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

To consider forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

263 - 268

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel will take place on Wednesday 15 June 2011.

This page is intentionally left blank

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
27 OCTOBER 2010
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Beadsley, Dudley, Edger, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne and Phillips

Ms C Mitchell, Children's Social Care Representative
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative
Dr P Josephs-Franks, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers Associations Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs Ryder

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children and Young People

Also Present:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Andrea King, Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager
Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Martin Surrell, Senior Advisor
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

15. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Edger for Councillor Mrs Ryder

16. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 30 June 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Minute 9: New South Bracknell Youth Facilities

It was confirmed that the Council would take delivery of a new Silver Bus shortly and it was expected that it would be operational in the New Year. The old Silver Bus had been used to provide temporary facilities while refurbishment of the Wayz Youth Centre was taking place.

17. **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

18. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

19. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) held on 6 July 2010.

The Panel noted that this had been a public meeting, but expressed concern about the possible identification of the young people who took part in the CPAP training session. The Panel were informed that SILSIP representatives were always involved in the development and running of CPAP training sessions and surnames were never used. This had been considered sufficient protection in the past but the matter would be reviewed for future training sessions.

20. **Co-option onto the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

The Panel considered a report inviting them to consider co-opting on to the Panel Catriona Mitchell, Director of Kerith in the Community, as the children's social care representative.

The remit of the Panel included children's social care in addition to education and it was considered appropriate for the externally drawn membership of the Panel to reflect the scope of the Panel's work.

RESOLVED that Catriona Mitchell be co-opted onto the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel as a non-voting children's social care representative member for a term of four years.

The Chairman welcomed Catriona Mitchell to the Panel.

21. **Performance Monitoring Report**

The Chief Advisor: Learning and Achievement gave a presentation in respect of departmental performance with reference to the Performance Monitoring Report for the 1st quarter (April to June) of 2010/11 with a particular focus on school performance, Ofsted inspection outcomes and provisional test results.

Eleven schools had been assessed by Ofsted during the 2009/10 academic year. These assessments had been carried out using the new inspection framework first introduced in 2009 which raised the bar in terms of what needed to be achieved by schools. The inspections had found the strongest features of specific judgements to include: care guidance and support, personal development and well-being, leadership and management and safeguarding. In terms of safeguarding all schools inspected were deemed to be satisfactory or better. Areas for development identified in some schools included: the use of assessments to ensure that all pupils were challenged, ensuring tasks matched pupil ability and ensuring that all pupils knew how to improve

and were challenged to do so. These weaknesses were not unique to Bracknell Forest and work was taking place with schools to tackle them.

Satisfactory progress had been made in the Early Years Foundation Stage Assessments. Some good successes had been made but the Department were not complacent and there was still room for improvement. Of particular note were the results of the combined Personal and Social Education Development and Communications language and Literacy Development which had risen from 50.8% to 52.5%. The gap between the weakest 20% of children and the average point score had narrowed by 0.6%. None of the Borough's Schools Had joined the boycott of Key Stage testing.

Key Stage 1 reading results had either been maintained year on year or had improved. Year on year Key Stage 1 results had increased at level 2 but were down by 2% at level 3. Compared to national results all Key Stage 1 writing results were either at or below the national average. Key Stage 1 mathematics results were in line with national average figures.

At Key Stage 2, 84% of pupils achieved the expected two levels of progress in English from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, a figure in line with national figures. In Mathematics 79% of pupils achieved the expected two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, this was lower than the national average of 83%.

Key Stage 3 results in English, Mathematics and Science were all above the national average. Key Stage 3 ICT results had increased by 5.7% compared to 2008/9 results.

Provisional Key Stage 4 results showed that the proportion of young people achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* - C including English and Mathematics had increased by over 5%. The proportion of young people achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C (not including English and Mathematics) had risen by over 13%. Analysis of these results had shown that this improvement had happened in all the Borough's Secondary schools.

Improvement priorities instigated for teaching and learning at Key Stages 1 and 2 focused on improving writing skills, improving teachers' use of assessments to better target teaching, improving pace and expectations in lessons at some schools, making better use of interventions for example one to one and small group tuition so that pupils can catch up quickly.

Improvement priorities instigated for teaching and learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 focused on work to narrow the gaps in performance of vulnerable groups, evaluation of the impact of intervention strategies at an early stage, securing appropriate progression and course choices at Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form or college and ensuring that all subject and middle leaders contribute fully to school improvement.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Workshops are being run with teachers to improve the teaching of writing and schools were encouraged to promote the writing of in-depth pieces of work and activities that involved writing for a wide range of audiences
- The possibility of training more secondary teachers to teach reading was suggested
- There were a number of schemes in place to encourage reading including Book Start and Every Child a Reader and it was queried whether libraries levied charges on overdue children's library books

- Pre-reading programmes had taken place with approximately sixty families in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Pre-schools and these had met with some success. The importance of encouraging children to read could not be overstressed
- All schools had processes in place to track pupil progress but there was no one standardised method used across the Borough
- The Education Team worked with schools to ensure that pupil tracking was good quality
- Further information detailing the publicity of the Play Rangers and Play Leader services would be circulated
- The school placed in Special Measures following a recent Ofsted inspection had been deemed to be making satisfactory progress following a subsequent monitoring visit. The Ofsted monitoring officer would be conducting further visits in November and during the Spring Term. The School would remain in Special Measures until after a successful re-inspection however, the judgement of the Monitoring Officer would be key to the school's exit from Special Measures
- The significant cut in Connexions' grant funding would make meeting its targets challenging. More details of the work taking place to refocus service delivery and target services more effectively would be circulated
- The Schools Job Evaluation process was taking longer than anticipated and more details would be circulated
- The number of pupils excluded from school in the past was half that of the previous year, 7 compared to 14 in 2009/10
- The figures in the table pertaining to staff sickness rates would be recalculated
- The Marvellous Me project involved Year 6 pupils writing letters to their new Year 7 Teacher telling them about themselves
- Details of the schools involved in the Year 6 to Year 7 Transition programme would be circulated

22. **Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2009/10**

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Business Manager presented the annual report of the LSCB for 2009/10.

The report provided an assessment of local safeguarding arrangements, set out actions taken in response to case reviews, assessed the LSCB's discharge of its functions including the assessment of the effectiveness of policies and procedures, detailed local safeguarding achievements and challenges and provided feedback to and challenge to the Children and Young People's Trust. In addition the report would be used to challenge the Children and Young People's Trust and their commissioning framework to ensure that both were fit for purpose.

During the period covered by the report, several areas of the LSCB's work had been noted as being examples of regional or national good practice and had lead to the LSCB being invited to present some of its activities at regional meetings and a national conference.

Challenges that had been identified by the LSCB included:

- The number of children experiencing bullying
- The need to enable early identification and support of children at risk of sexual exploitation
- The need to redesign safeguarding training in light of national developments and increased local demand

- Active promotion of the use of the Common Assessment Framework and the Integrated Care Pathway by all sectors of the children's workforce
- The need to reduce social and health inequalities for disadvantaged children
- Ensuring reductions in resources did not negatively impact on the identification of safeguarding needs and monitoring and supporting families

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The death of any child or young person up to the age of 18 years old was reported to the LSCB regardless of the reason for the death. The Child Death Overview panel would then investigate each case individually.
- Of the nine deaths reported to the LSCB eight had been defined as not preventable. The outcome of the investigation into the ninth death was not yet available
- The LSCB would be discussing their concerns about the high number of children and young people reporting that they had experienced bullying with the Anti-Bullying Group in the New Year
- Deadlines for work aimed at reducing bullying had been extended due to the extension of anti-bullying work beyond schools and the unexpectedly high number of venues that needed to be dealt with
- A significant amount of work had been undertaken with schools, and secondary schools in particular, to improve their record keeping
- Arrangements for children who have gone missing have been reviewed and changes implemented including the introduction of interviews of all children who had gone missing on their return home
- The Munro Review was expected to impact on the work of the LSCB but details would not be available until the New Year
- Funding restrictions meant that it would not be possible to fully subsidise Level 2 training for voluntary, community and faith groups. There had been a significant increase in the demand for safeguarding training, to some 9,000 requests in the last year
- Every agency coming into contact with children in Bracknell Forest is asked to complete and return a self assessment of their work. These are then analysed by the LSCB support team. Of the completed self assessments examined over 90% were considered to be either good or excellent. Follow up visits were made to those groups where the self assessment return gave rise to concerns
- Individual support was offered to voluntary groups who found completing the self assessment difficult
- Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action were providing support to organisations implementing the LSCB's Safeguarding Toolkit

The Panel thanked the LSCB Business Manager for the hard work of the LSCB and a comprehensive report.

23. **Inspection of Children's Services**

The Panel received a report detailing the outcome of the unannounced inspection of Bracknell Forest's contact, referral and assessment services that took place in August 2010.

The inspection took place over two days and included interviews with staff in the duty team and reviews of cases, supervision files and case records. At the end of the inspection feedback was given on areas of priority action.

Although the inspection provided only a snapshot of work it did demonstrate that a significant amount of good practice was taking place and showed that staff morale was high and many areas of strength and satisfactory practice had been identified. Nonetheless, the department was not complacent.

The inspectors had identified some areas for development however these were considered to be relatively minor and included:

- Lack of clarity over whether or not children and young people were seen alone when assessments were carried out
- A small number of initial assessments carried out by Family Support Workers were not fully identifying all needs
- Inconsistent, or not fully established, use of the common assessment framework
- A lack of clarity between the recording of contact and referrals
- A potential blurring of boundaries between the social worker and managerial role in those instances where assistant team managers held cases. This final development area had been strongly challenged by the department as all assistant team managers were supported in turn by their managers.

An action plan had been put in place to address these concerns and a meeting with the Executive Member for Children and Young People, to assess the progress made towards completing the actions would take place in the first week of November

The most significant piece of work contained within the action plan was to improve people's use of the Common Assessment Framework. A Co-ordinator with responsibility for developing this piece of work was already in post.

The Panel congratulated all officers involved in the contact, referral and assessment services on the high quality of their work and the outstanding inspection results.

24. 'Grow Our Own' Project Update

The Panel received a report providing an update on the progress of the Grown Our Own service since operational activity began in Bracknell Forest in February 2010.

It was noted that the Year 1 Annual Targets had been revised upwards and the Panel were provided with updated figures for the number of people provided with assistance for the period February to present:

- 256 had received information, advice or guidance (Annual Target of 350)
- 86 had attended skills based training (Annual Target 80)
- 35 had progressed into employment (Annual Target 35)

The Panel noted the report.

25. Delivering the 14-19 Education Entitlement

The Panel received a report providing an update on the progress made in respect of the implementation of the 14-19 education entitlement.

The Panel were informed that although it was no longer a requirement to make provision for diplomas the Education Authority wanted to ensure that there was a sufficiently broad range of opportunities to allow all 14-19 year olds to progress educationally.

Although uncertainty over the future of diplomas had resulted in a lower than initially expected take up rate, a situation that was mirrored nationally, significant progress had been made in the broadening of education provision. Revenue funding for Diploma courses was still in place but there was no indication yet of whether this funding would continue. To encourage the take up of Diplomas the Government had given local authorities an additional £1,000 for each student studying a Diploma course but it was unclear if this would continue.

Three diploma courses were currently available: Hair and Beauty, IT and Business Administration and Finance. A further five Diplomas: Creative and Media, Engineering, Construction and Built Environment, Society Health and Development and Sport and Active Leisure were under development. The planning for these courses had been completed. The facilities were in place and it was expected that the courses would run even if they were not run as Diplomas.

26. **Working Groups Update**

The Panel received a report providing an update on its Working Groups.

Safeguarding Children

The scope of the review had been considered and key documentation received. The Working Group had met with the Director of Children, Young People and Learning, key staff and a range of partners. A meeting with representatives from the NHS would take place on 28 October.

Officers were thanked for the time they had given to support the review.

School Meals

The Member Reference Group looking at the take up and organisation of school meals in Bracknell Forest had visited five schools to date. The Group had gathered a significant amount of information and it was expected that a report would be brought to the next meeting.

27. **Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report**

The Panel considered a report outlining the activities of all the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Commission and summarising significant national developments in overview and scrutiny.

The Panel noted:

- i. Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period February to August 2010 set out in Section 3 and Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.
- ii. The developments in Overview and Scrutiny set out in section 4 of the report.

28. **Work Programme 2011/12**

The Panel considered a report containing the indicative work programme for the Children, Young People and Learning Panel for 2011/12.

The Panel agreed its 2011/12 work programme without change for commending to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and expressed a wish to establish working groups to look at:

- School record keeping
- Common Assessment Framework
- The provision of school places, school admissions and the School Admission Appeals process

The Panel noted that the Commission would determine which work would be done in light of the resources available.

29. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the forthcoming items relating to Children, Young People and Learning on the Executive Forward Plan.

CHAIRMAN

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
29 SEPTEMBER 2010
5.00 - 7.05 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Mrs McCracken (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch and Beadsley

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Shillcock and Edger

14. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councillor Beadsley for Councillor Mrs Shillcock

15. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2010 and the training session held on 6 July 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising –

- (i) Visit to Rainforest Walk – Councillors Mrs Ryder, Mrs McCracken and Mrs Angell attended the informative visit where Area Manager, Fiona Nelson, gave them an idea of the services that were offered.
- (ii) Revised Terms of Reference – the revised terms of reference had been submitted to the Departmental Management Team and would be submitted to the Executive on 19 October. The Advisory Panel would be updated at the next meeting.
- (iii) Care Leaver Accommodation Scheme – Sheila McKeand updated the Panel on discussions she had with Clare Dorning, Head of Housing Needs, about accommodation for care leavers. No specific plan for accommodation for care leavers had been identified. Overall, care leavers needs were being appropriately met. A floating support service had been commissioned from One Support.

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Report on SiLSiP Meeting held on 18 August 2010

The Panel noted the minutes of the SILSIP meeting held on 18 August 2010. The Chairman reported that it had been a well attended meeting and she hoped it would be possible to build upon the basic structure of SILSIP.

The Panel watched a photograph slide show of the young people's holiday to the Mill Residential Centre. It was hoped to continue such holidays as they gave foster carers a break and gave the young people the opportunity to have fun whilst participating.

The Panel noted that SILSIP young people applied to the Youth Opportunities Fund for funds to put towards the Awards Ceremony and received £1800. The young people had put forward suggestions for a fun activity to take place after the formal award ceremony.

18. LAC Examination Results and Education Awards Ceremony

The Panel noted the report of Tony Mansfield, the Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children, on the end of Key Stage 4 results for the academic year 2009-2010 for those nine students who were in the care of Bracknell Forest Council and who had been looked after continuously during the academic year. Also reported were Key Stage 2 results and Post 16 students, including care leavers who were engaged in education and training. Tony Mansfield highlighted –

- The young people had performed well this year.
- There had been a real change in the importance social workers gave to education and there was now more emphasis on the social worker working with the school. .
- Results had been broadly in line with targets and predictions.
- BTEC grades appeared to be higher than corresponding GCSE grades.
- In the case of one out of area placement, Bracknell Forest had taken the area's education authority to the adjudicator to get the school placement considered most suitable for the student.

Arising in discussion –

- There was a dedicated Connexions worker for post 16 young people.
- Not as many had dropped out of further education as in previous years. There were sometimes difficulties for care leavers struggling with further education at a time when they had to be more independent than when at school and this stage often coincided with leaving a foster placement to move to more independent living. Students were discouraged from leaving care too early in an attempt to avoid this situation. The Panel noted that this was being monitored and students who dropped out often came back to education a few years later.

Tony advised the Panel that the young people had asked to go to Laser Quest as part of the Awards Ceremony and staff were currently negotiating the cost of this activity.

The Chairman thanked Tony for a very interesting report and asked the Panel to let Penny Reuter know if there was any additional information they would like included in next year's report.

19. Performance Report

Sarah Roberts presented the short performance report giving an overview of performance of Children's Social Care for looked after children for the year to 30 June 2010.

Arising in discussion –

- The overall numbers of looked after children, excluding short break care, had increased over the year from 76 to 86.
- Five young people had moved twice so far this year but over the longer term the trend line analysis showed a slight decrease in the number of placement moves occurring between July 2008 (8) and June 2010 (4).

In order to improve the outcomes of looked after children there was a strategy and action plan to –

- attempt to understand the child's needs and make the correct placement;
- identify and predict issues arising before placements became unstable;
- support foster carers to live through unstable patches.

The Panel noted that many placements had a natural lifespan and the size of different age groups would always affect placement moves and there was more movement in teenage year groups.

When asked why other areas appeared to succeed and met the targets on placement moves when Bracknell Forest had not, Penny Reuter pointed out that Bracknell's data was very accurate. Sarah Roberts would investigate further and contact West Berkshire and Windsor & Maidenhead, whose movement numbers were low, and Buckinghamshire to see if any reasons could be found for Bracknell's higher statistics.

A map was tabled of out of area placements as at the end of June 2010. A previous requirement was to place within 20 miles but that had changed and the Council should now look to place within the authority's boundary. The Panel noted that there was more likely to be more foster carers and residential homes in more rural or impoverished areas where there was less employment and cheaper properties.

The Panel asked for the out of area placement map to be provided annually.

20. **Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy Action Plan**

The Panel noted the commissioning strategy for looked after children action plan 2009/2012, the actions of which had been updated as at September 2010.

Arising in response to questions about foster carer recruitment –

- Sheila McKeand referred to the marketing approach taken to encourage people to come forward for assessment. 16 households attended the last information open evening and it was anticipated that quite a few will apply to be assessed. Some applications had already been received and it will therefore be necessary to run a second preparation group.
- The economic climate may have increased interest.
- It was not known if there had been interest to foster teenagers.

The Panel noted that –

- The recruitment of a youth worker for vulnerable children had been successful but the in year cuts to the Area Based Grant meant the post was deleted. Integrated Youth Support would identify areas where the youth service could provide a service for some looked after young people.
- There had been poor attendance at the open evening for supported lodgings.
- An action plan had been drawn up for developing the Children in Care Council (SILSIP).

The Chairman thanked the officers for a very informative report. If members had any further questions they should contact Penny Reuter.

21. **Employment of Care Leavers**

Sheila McKeand advised the Panel that there had been good developments in the employment of care leavers –

- A successful bid had been made for Government grant money for a project on employment for care leavers and other vulnerable groups, specifically people with learning difficulties, mental ill-health and ex-offenders. The money had been used towards compiling a recruitment pack and appointing a project manager to drive the project forward.
- Presentations would be made to managers in the new year.
- A Children's Social Care seminar would be held on 18 October to advise workers of the opportunities available for care leavers. A Connexions Specialist Advisor would attend.

22. **Information Items**

22.1 **Children and Young People's Trust Minutes**

The Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People's Trust held on 27 May 2010.

22.2 **Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children Annual Report 2009-2010**

The Panel noted the NHS Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children Annual Report 2009-2010. Members were advised that this report would be discussed at the meeting on 9 March 2011 and members were asked to retain this report and bring it to the meeting to avoid printing it again.

23. **Dates of Future Meetings**

15 December 2010 – IRO Service Annual Report
Annual Performance Report
SiLSIP attending

9 March 2011 – Leaving Care Process

A suggestion was made that it may be possible next year to arrange a visit to a children's home, as the training session for the Panel.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 12 JANUARY 2011

DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2011/12 (Borough Treasurer)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Executive agreed the Council's draft budget proposals for 2011/12 at its meeting on 14 December 2010 as the basis for consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and other interested parties. The consultation period runs until 25 January 2011, after which the Executive will consider the representations made at its meeting on 15 February 2011, before recommending the budget to Council.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Panels comment on the Council's draft budget proposals for 2011/12.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Attached to this report are extracts from the 2011/12 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports that are of relevance to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. These extracts are for information and background to assist consideration of the Council's draft budget proposals and comprise:

- Revenue Budget Report
- Commitment Budget
- Draft Revenue Budget Pressures
- Draft Revenue Budget Savings Proposals
- Proposed Fees and Charges
- Equalities Screening Record Form (where applicable)
- Capital Programme Report and Summary
- Proposed Capital Schemes

The full 2011/12 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports are available on the Council's public website as part of the wider budget consultation (www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council/yc-budget-consultation-2011-to-2012.htm)

- 3.2 The day before the Council's budget proposals were agreed as a basis for consultation, the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced. This was unprecedented in terms of its timing and complexity as well as in the overall scale of grant reduction. Whilst some information on individual grants is still awaited

the Council now has a much clearer picture of the position it will be facing. In overall terms it may be necessary to reduce spending next year by up to £2.25m, in addition to the £3.7m identified in the initial budget proposals. Of this £2.25m, around £1m was fully anticipated as it relates to grant funded work that has always been due to end on 31 March. This leaves just over £1m of further savings to find. Work on this is underway and the outcome will be fed into the budget consultation process as soon as possible.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Chris Herbert: 01344 355694

Chris.herbert@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alan Nash: 01344 352180

Alan.nash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Doc. Ref:

G:\Accounting Services\Budget 2011-12\Consultation\Scrutiny\Budget Proposals Covering Report (OS) (Dec 10).doc

TO: THE EXECUTIVE
DATE: 14 DECEMBER 2010

GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2011/12
(Chief Executive/Borough Treasurer)

1. PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 Over recent months Leading Members and officers have been developing options for the 2011/12 Budget in light of national expectations of significant reductions in public expenditure.
- 1.2 Under the Council's constitution, the Executive is required to consult on its detailed budget proposals with the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Commission and other interested parties during the next six weeks. This report summarises the current position on the Council's budget preparations for 2011/12. This year, however, perhaps reflecting the difficulty of constructing a national financial settlement, the Provisional Local Government Settlement has been delayed. Uniquely, at the time the Executive agenda was published the settlement had not been announced and, indeed, no firm date for it had been given. Therefore, in the absence of the provisional settlement, the report is based on a number of assumptions regarding government funding. This approach can be justified as the proposals contained within the report represent a 'core' budget package that would be needed under almost all potential funding scenarios. Members will be updated orally at the Executive meeting if the settlement is announced on Monday 13 or Tuesday 14 December. Should the provisional settlement require significant modifications to these proposals, they will be agreed as soon as possible by the Leader and Executive Member for Finance, Resources and Assets for consultation along with the items included in this report.
- 1.3 All comments received on these budget proposals will then be submitted to the Executive on 15 February along with details of the final finance settlement. This will allow the Executive to determine its final budget package and recommend the appropriate Council Tax level to Council, who will formally approve the 2011/12 budget and Council Tax on 2 March 2011.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Approve the revised Commitment Budget for 2011/12 to 2014/15 at Annexe A;**
- 2.2 **Agree the draft budget proposals for 2011/12 as the basis for consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and other interested parties.**
- 2.3 **Agree the Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents at Annexe E and request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.**
- 2.4 **Approve the virements relating to the 2010/11 budget as set out in section 10.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The recommendations are designed to allow the Executive to consult on its draft budget proposals for 2011/12 as required by the Local Government Act 2003.**

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The range of options being considered is included in the report and its Annexes.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5 COMMITMENT BUDGET 2011/12 – 2014/15

- 5.1 Initial preparations for the 2011/12 budget have focussed on the Council's Commitment Budget for 2011/12 – 2014/15. This brings together the Council's existing expenditure plans, taking account of approved commitments and the ongoing effects of service developments and efficiencies that were agreed when the 2010/11 budget was set. The planning period has now been extended from three to four years so that it is aligned with the new Coalition Government's spending plans. It should be noted however that the figures included for years two (2012/13) to four (2014/15) are indicative only.
- 5.2 There have been no significant changes to the Commitment Budget since it was last considered by the Executive in July. In particular the position on Area Based Grant in future years, following the in-year reductions implemented in June, is still not clear and will not be known until the provisional settlement is received at the earliest.
- 5.3 Against this background Table 1 summarises the position and shows that base expenditure (excluding schools) is planned to rise by £0.782m to £75.369m next year, before consideration is given to allowances for inflation and the budget proposals identified by individual Departments in 2011/12. The most significant elements of the rise are increasing costs of waste disposal, changes in employers NI and bandings and the revenue impact of the capital programme. The commitment budget is shown in more detail in Annexe A.

Table 1: Summary Commitment Budget 2011/12-2014/15

	Planned Expenditure			
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Base Budget	74,587	75,369	75,326	75,427
<i>Movements in Year:</i>				
Chief Executive / Corporate Services	79	-70	0	0
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	-102	10	-20	0
Adult Social Care and Health	11	0	0	0
Environment, Culture & Communities	290	17	121	13
Non Departmental / Common	504	0	0	0
<i>Total Movements</i>	782	-43	101	13
Adjusted Base	75,369	75,326	75,427	75,440

6 PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2011/12

National Perspective

- 6.1 In previous years the Government has announced the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in late November, enabling Councils to consult on their budget proposals based on an informed estimate of its core funding from central government. However as at 10 December, the Provisional Settlement for 2011/12 has still not been announced. It is believed that this is largely due to the difficulties in arriving at an acceptable distribution of grant following the significant cuts to local government funding announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010.
- 6.2 The Spending Review set out real-term reductions of 28% in local authority budgets over the period 2011/12 – 2014/15, with significantly front-loaded reductions in grant. Given the lack of detail contained within the Spending Review announcement and the complexity of the funding formula, the Council has had to make its best judgement of the likely loss of grant over the 4-year period. For budget planning purposes a cash reduction in formula grant of 8% has been assumed in 2011/12, followed by a 6% cut in 2012/13, a 2% reduction in 2013/14 and a further 4% reduction in 2014/15. The remaining 8% represents the allowance for inflation over the 4 years. These forecasts take into account the Coalition Government's plans to tackle pressures on social services by providing an additional £1bn to local authorities (and a further £1bn to the health service) over the spending review period.
- 6.3 Based on the reductions announced for Local Government as a whole within the Spending Review there is likely to be reductions in specific grants and in particular in the Area Based Grant. However until the full details of the Provisional Settlement are released it is not possible to identify the impact of these on Bracknell Forest. As such the Budget Proposals do not reflect any specific reductions to these grants, although these will need to be addressed ahead of the meeting of the Executive on 15 February. At the simplest level, if the 12% reduction introduced in-year during 2010/11 is sustained; no further action will be needed. However, any increase above

this level will need to be considered against the Council's full spending plans and not just against grant funded spending.

- 6.4 The *Valuing People Now* consultation undertaken by the previous Government led to a change in policy which from April 2009 required NHS learning disability budgets and associated commissioning responsibility for social care for adults to be transferred to local authorities. Last year the funding was received by East Berkshire Primary Care Trust and then transferred to the Council during the year. For 2011/12, for the first time, funding will be allocated directly to Councils by the Department of Health as part of the general grant settlement. Matching income of £7.599m has been removed from Adult Social Care and Health to reflect this change.

Council Tax

- 6.5 Council Tax at current levels will generate total income of £47.915m in 2011/12. In addition a further £0.558m will be generated from the increase in tax base arising from the occupation of new properties and other changes in exemptions and discounts during 2011/12.
- 6.6 The Government has prioritised keeping Council Tax increases to the minimum possible next year. To support this aim, the Department for Communities and Local Government has announced that it will give Councils who agree to freeze or reduce Council Tax in 2011/12 a grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in Council Tax. In the three subsequent years, the government will provide supplementary funding via specific section 31 grant to compensate Councils for the reduced council tax income.
- 6.7 The Executive intends to accept the Coalition Government's offer to work in partnership with local authorities to protect council tax payers with a council tax freeze, thereby passing on the benefit to the council tax payers. The working assumption upon which the proposals in this report are based at this stage, therefore, is that there will be no increase in Council Tax and that the Council will receive additional grant from central Government of £1.212m to offset this. Of course, this assumption may need to be revisited in the light of the final settlement, but the Executive's aspiration is clear.

7 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2011/12

Service Pressures and Developments

- 7.1 In the face of significant reductions in public expenditure in general and in grants to Local Government in particular the scope to invest in new service provision is self evidently severely restricted. Nevertheless, it is important to retain a clear focus by ensuring that the Council continues to improve services and invest in the Borough, focussing on protecting front line services and continuing to invest to deliver the six Medium Term Objectives that were set for the period to 2011. In preparing the 2011/12 draft budget proposals each department has evaluated the potential pressures on its services and these are set out in Annexe B. The following Table summarises the pressures by department.

Table 2: Service Pressures/Development

	£'000
Chief Executive / Corporate Services	45
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	160
Adult Social Care and Health	809
Environment, Culture & Communities	347
Council Wide	<u>756</u>
Total Pressures/Developments	2,117

7.2 Many of the pressures are simply unavoidable and respond only to changing demographic trends, particularly as they relate to Adult Social Care and the resultant increase in client numbers, the economic climate or additional requirements on the Council stemming from legislation. They do, however, also support the Council's six overarching priorities and medium term objectives in the following way;

- Promote health & achievement (£0.87m)
- Create a Borough where people are, and feel safe (£0.13m)

7.3 Within the proposals, however, are two important developments to invest in better futures for the Borough's most vulnerable people that could also lead to a significant longer term reduction in costs. These are the plans to enhance the support given to the victims of domestic violence and their families, recognising that there is a background factor in around 70% of children who are subject to Child Protection Plans. Quite apart from the impact on the lives, preventative action, if successful, could help stem the increase in the number of such children, who subsequently become the subject of expensive care, support and protection packages. The second major development is the proposal to invest £0.100m in developing additional support for carers within the Borough. This reflects the Government's aspirations for the 'Big Society' and recognises the role that carers play within our communities.

7.4 In addition to these revenue proposals the Council continues to invest in its priorities through targeted capital expenditure, details of which are contained in the capital programme report elsewhere in tonight's agenda.

Service Economies /Balancing the Budget

7.5 Since May 2010 the Executive and CMT have held regular meetings to determine options for savings in order to balance the budget and a list of potential draft budget savings has been developed. This list totals £3.662m and is attached at Annexe C and summarised in Table 3. As in previous years, these economies focus as far as possible on central and departmental support rather than on front-line services. However it is becoming increasingly difficult to find further savings in these areas, which would not compromise the Council's ability to function effectively.

Table 3: Summary Service Economies

	£'000
Chief Executive / Corporate Services	374
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	325
Adult Social Care and Health	1,382
Environment, Culture and Communities	1,331
Council Wide	<u>250</u>
Total Savings	3,662

Net Impact of Economies and Pressures

- 7.6 The Table below shows the net impact of the economies less pressures by department (therefore excluding Council Wide pressures and economies) and as a percentage of the commitment budget.

Table 4: Net Impact of Economies and Pressures

	£'000	%
Chief Executive / Corporate Services	329	2.1
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	165	1.1
Adult Social Care and Health	573	2.5
Environment, Culture and Communities	984	3.5
Total Net Savings by Department	2,051	2.5

Key Decisions

- 7.7 The Council's constitution requires key decisions to be declared on the forward plan. It defines a key decision as being one over £0.400m and/or a major policy decision affecting more than one electoral ward. Consideration and approval of the budget is a major policy decision and is therefore a key decision. However, the budget, by its nature, includes proposals which in themselves fall within the technical definition of a key decision. Examples of these are the savings proposals on:

- Additional Support for Carers
- Domestic Violence
- Educational Psychology Service
- Education Welfare Service
- Heritage Service
- Arts Development

- 7.8 As the budget report is a policy document and is subject to six weeks consultation, the identification of these issues within the budget report fulfils the requirements under the Council's constitution.

Council Wide Issues

- 7.9 Apart from the specific departmental budget proposals there are some Council wide issues affecting all departments' budgets which need to be considered. The precise impact of these corporate budgets is likely to change before the final budget proposals are recommended. However the current view on these issues is outlined in the following paragraphs:

a) **Capital Programme**

The scale of the Council's Capital Programme for 2011/12 will impact upon the revenue budget and will itself be subject to consultation over the coming weeks. All new spending on services will need to be funded from new capital receipts or borrowing from internal resources. The proposed Capital Programme of £10.458m for 2011/12 features in a separate report on tonight's agenda. After allowing for projected capital receipts of £2m in 2011/12, but

excluding the self-funding Invest to Save schemes, the additional revenue costs will be £38,000 in 2011/12 and £425,000 in 2012/13.

b) Interest and Investments

Short term interest rates are expected to remain on hold for a considerable time. The recovery in the economy has commenced and recent growth data has come in on the high side of expectations. Nevertheless, this higher rate is unlikely to be sustained, with growth expected to revert back to more insipid levels. The danger of a double-dip recession is fading but the crisis in the euro-zone, the prospects of tight economic policies in the UK and tenuous consumer confidence means the threat has still not evaporated. The Bank of England admits that inflation will remain above target until 2012 and remains a key risk to the future course of interest rates. Nevertheless, the perceived need to counter the fiscal squeeze via accommodative monetary policy suggests that barring a deterioration of the current situation, the Monetary Policy Committee will be prepared to hold rates at very low levels until the latter stages of 2011. The Council continues to regard security of the principal sum it invests as the key objective of its treasury management activities.

The 2011/12 budget is therefore based on an average rate of return of 0.9% and reflects the lower cash balances as a result of the 2010/11 and 2011/12 Capital Programmes. The 2010/11 budget was based on a return of 2.0% and as such expected interest income is projected to fall from £0.769m to £0.200m in 2011/12. After taking into account movements in the commitment budget and the impact of the proposed capital programme this produces a budget pressure of £0.456m. However, should interest rates not recover as quickly as anticipated, every 0.1% reduction in the average rate of return would add a £20,000 pressure to the General Fund.

The Council reviews the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement under the requirement of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to “have regard to” the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. Annex E outlines the Council’s prudential indicators for 2011/12 – 2013/14 and sets out the expected treasury operations for this period. It is recommended that the Executive agree the Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents and in line with the Code of Practice request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.

c) Provision for Inflation and Pay Awards

The Commitment Budget excludes the cost of inflation on both expenditure and income. With consumer price inflation (CPI) currently running at around 3.1% and retail price inflation (RPI) 4.6%, inflation will clearly impact on budgets.

In past years, the Council has restricted the provision for inflation on prices as a general economy measure, to help address the underlying budget gap, although pay awards have been fully funded. In the context of the Council’s overall financial position, it is again prudent to consider where the provision for inflation on prices can be limited as an economy measure, although some

exceptions will be necessary to reflect actual increases that will not be containable without real service reductions and to meet contractual commitments.

At this stage the inflation provision is not finalised, although for planning purposes a sum of £0.646m has been added to the budget. This compares to a provision of minus £0.068m last year and approximately £2m in the previous two years. This will be achieved by:

- Freezing pay budget lines, although an allowance has been made for a £250 increase for employees earning less than £21,000 in line with the national settlement;
- Having zero inflation in certain areas e.g. furniture, equipment and consultants;
- Using the Consumer Price Index for a number of budget lines rather than the Retail Price Index;
- Increasing fees and charges by 3.5% unless this is inconsistent with the Council's income policy.

The Council will need to consider where it is appropriate and necessary to provide for inflation over the coming weeks so that the actual inflation provision can be added to the final budget report in February 2011.

d) Fees and Charges

The Council established a policy for the review of fees and charges when setting the 2001/02 budget. This requires each Department to consider the level of charges against the following criteria:

- Fees and Charges should aim, as a minimum, to cover the costs of delivering the service;
- Where a service operates in free market conditions, fees and charges should at least be set at the market rate;
- Fees and charges should not be levied where this is an ineffective use of resources, i.e. the cost of collection exceeds any income generated.

It is estimated that most prices, where the Council charges users a fee for services, will need to increase by around 3.5% to recover the costs of those services. This is in addition to the 2.5% VAT increase effective from 1 January 2011. However, where current economic conditions and the market rate indicate a different percentage, for example for leisure income, this has been applied. Certain other fees also attract a different percentage as they are determined by statute. The proposed fees and charges are included in Annexe D. Car park charges were increased for the period January 2011 to March 2012 by the Executive on the 17 November. A zero percent increase is therefore shown in Annexe D.

e) Corporate Contingency

The financial risks facing the Council are at a similar overall level to those experienced last year. The Council manages these uncertainties in the budget through the use of a general contingency added to the Council's budget. A sum of £1.393m is currently included for contingency in the base budget for 2011/12. This is derived from the original 2010/11 contingency of £1m plus ongoing transfers into the contingency relating to the in-year grant savings

package and energy price reductions. The addition in relation to in-year grant savings will be retained to help meet the expected reduction in Area Based Grant and specific grants next year. The energy price reductions will be taken into account in the calculation of the inflation provision for 2011/12. Therefore this leaves £1m in the contingency.

During the next year the Council will continue to face significant risks on its budget particularly in relation to demand led budgets. Capital funding from Government to fund additional capacity in schools could also be at risk. Therefore the Borough Treasurer recommends that the general contingency should be set at £1m which is equal to the original contingency for 2010/11.

The Executive will need to make a judgement on the appropriate level of contingency at its February meeting, taking advice from the Borough Treasurer who will need to certify the robustness of the overall budget proposals in the context of the Council's remaining general and earmarked reserves. All the reserves will be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficient to manage the financial risks facing the Council in the coming years.

Spending on Schools

- 7.10 The Schools Budget – both delegated school funding and centrally managed items such as Special Educational Needs placements made outside of the Borough - is funded by a specific Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) with any year end balance, either surplus or deficit, required to be ring-fenced within the Schools Budget. Therefore, use of this funding is outside the control of the Council.
- 7.11 However, Local Authorities have a legal duty to set the overall level of Schools Budget and individual budgets for each of their schools by 31 March. This must be no lower than the level of anticipated DSG, but can be higher, if the Council decides to add a top up.
- 7.12 The level of DSG is calculated by multiplying the per pupil funding rates that the Department for Education (DfE) determines for each local authority by the actual January pupil numbers. At this stage, both of these key pieces of information have yet to be confirmed, and with the DfE also considering changes to school funding for 2011/12, such as the new Pupil Premium, it is difficult to estimate future funding. However, using the 2010/11 per pupil funding rate of £4,367 and the number of pupils on roll at October would generate a total DSG of £66.383m.
- 7.13 To meet the statutory publication deadline, the Schools Budget for 2011/12 will have to be set on the basis of the estimated level of DSG plus any accumulated balance. The draft budget proposals therefore assume the Schools Budget is set at the level of DSG and that any accumulated deficit or surplus is managed to a nil balance by the end of the funding period.
- 7.14 Decisions around the final balance of the budget between spending by schools and that on pupil services managed by the Council is the responsibility of the Executive Member for Education, although the Schools Forum must be consulted, and in certain circumstances, agree to spending increases on the services managed by the Council.

Summary

- 7.15 Adding the draft proposals to the Commitment Budget and taking account of the corporate issues identified above would result in total expenditure of £82.563m as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of proposals:

	£'000
Commitment Budget	75,369
Transfer of learning disability funding to general government grants	7,599
2011/12 Budget Pressures	2,117
2011/12 Budget Economies	(3,662)
Capital Programme	38
Reduced Interest Rate	456
Inflation Provision	646
Change in Contingency	0
Draft Budget Requirement 2011/12	82,563

- 7.16 Without the provisional finance settlement assumptions have had to be made on the level of grant income. It has been assumed that the Council can anticipate income of up to £81.310m. This arises from Government grants (£24.026m), transfer of learning disability funding (£7.599m), Council Tax Freeze Grant (£1.212m) and Council Tax (£48.473m). However, with the potential overall cost of the budget package being consulted on in the region of £82.563m, this leaves a potential gap of around £1.253m. As such, as outlined in paragraph 1.2, the potential economies outlined in Annexe C should be seen as a "core package" that may well need to be built upon through the consultation period.
- 7.17 Members can choose to adopt any or all of the following approaches in order to bridge the remaining gap:
- an appropriate contribution from the Council's revenue balances, bearing in mind the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
 - identifying further expenditure reductions.

8 BALANCES

- 8.1 The Council has an estimated £7.3m available in General Reserves at 31 March 2011. Details are contained in Table 6.

Table 6: General Reserves as at 31 March 2011

	£m
General Fund	8.8
Enid Wood House lease surrender	(1.2)
VAT repayments and Ufton Court	0.3
Planned use in 2010/11	(0.6)
Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2011	7.3

- 8.2 The lease for Enid Wood House has now been surrendered to the Landlord at a cost of £1.211m. This has allowed the Council to avoid costs of approximately £6.9m over the next 27 years. On the 15 September 2009, the Executive agreed that the surrender cost should be met from the Structural Changes Reserve. However this reserve is required to meet the one-off costs associated with the proposed savings included in the 2011/12 budget, and future years. It would therefore be more appropriate to meet the cost of the surrender from the General Reserve. This approach will be reviewed over the coming months with a view to bringing a firm recommendation to the Executive when the accounts for 2010/11 are closed.
- 8.3 Changes in VAT legislation resulted in various services being reclassified from standard rated to exempt for VAT purposes. At the time these changes were introduced the Council raised and submitted claims for overpaid tax but was only able to claim for the previous 3 years. This 3 year cap was successfully challenged in court cases collectively known as Conde Nast/Fleming. As a result a number of claims were submitted to try and claim back overpaid VAT plus interest for earlier years (going back to 1973 when VAT was introduced). The outstanding claim for adult courses has recently been settled and the Council has received the sum of £0.149m (including interest but after fees). This leaves one Council specific claim outstanding for junior sports tuition. The timing and outcome of this claim is still uncertain. The Council is also entitled to a share of Wokingham Borough Council's sporting claim as the Downshire and Hurst golf clubs were originally jointly managed. Reading Borough Council has also made a library hire charges claim for all the Berkshire unitaries as prior to 1997 this had been a Berkshire County Council function. The Council's share of these claims is estimated to be in the region of £0.283m (excluding interest and fees). Only the £0.149m has been included in the projected balance because of the uncertainty as to the timing and amount of any future receipts.
- 8.4 A revenue reserve relating to Ufton Court and held by West Berkshire on behalf of the six unitaries is now no longer required. This has been distributed, resulting in additional revenue funds for the Council of £0.117m.
- 8.5 The Council has investments of £2m with Heritable and £3m with Glitnir which are both Icelandic banks that have been put into receivership/administration. At this point in time, recovery rates have not been fully disclosed by the respective institutions, although indicators suggest up to an 85% recovery for Heritable and something approaching full recovery for Glitnir. With regard to the Heritable deposits, payments totalling £931,000 (representing 45p in the £) have been received to date, and a further interim dividend is expected in January 2011. The administration of Glitnir Bank is being progressed in Iceland under Icelandic law and as such is proving to be more protracted and complex. The Council is working closely with the LGA and the administrators in order to maximise the return of these deposits. The case is currently being argued in the courts and an initial decision is expected to be made early in 2011.
- 8.6 The Council took advantage of the Capital Finance Regulations to defer the impact of the potential loss on General Reserves. In 2010/11 the loss which is currently projected to be approximately £0.4m will need to be charged to the General Reserve. This projection is based on the best case scenario although in the worst case the loss could be as high as £2.575m. With this in mind an earmarked reserve of £2.575m was created at the end of last financial year to meet any potential losses. An application has recently been made to capitalise the loss at whatever level it is eventually settled and the outcome of this application should be known before the Council considers the final budget proposals and sets the level of Council Tax on 2 March 2011.

- 8.7 No allowance has been made for Performance Reward Grant, resulting from the successful delivery of the Local Public Service Agreement with the previous Government, in the balance calculation as the government is reviewing its position on this.
- 8.8 The Council has, in the past, planned on maintaining a minimum prudential balance of £4m. This assessment is based on the financial risks which face the Council and the Borough Treasurer considers these in the February report to the Executive.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council's constitution requires a six week consultation period on the draft budget proposals. In this context, it is inevitable that, of the broad range of options proposed for consultation, not all will necessarily be included in the final package. It is also likely that some further issues with a financial impact will arise between now and February.
- 9.2 When the final settlement is known, the Executive can consider the prudent use of revenue balances to support expenditure in line with the overall medium term financial strategy, along with further possible reductions to augment the "core package" of economies in Annexe C. In doing this, it will be important to manage the budget process effectively so that the inevitable important service pressures can be responded to whilst, as far as possible, front-line services are maintained with minimal disruption and without creating long term problems for the Council.
- 9.3 It is suggested, therefore, that the Overview & Scrutiny Commission reviews the overall budget package and determines whether any specific issues should be considered further by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, at their meetings in January.
- 9.4 All comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and others on the revenue budget proposals will then be submitted to the Executive on 15 February 2011. This will allow the Executive to determine the final budget package and recommend the appropriate Council Tax level to the Council on 2 March 2011.

10 BUDGET MONITORING 2010/11- VIREMENT REQUEST

- 10.1 A virement is the transfer of resources between two budgets but it does not increase the overall budget approved by the Council. Financial Regulations require formal approval by the Executive of any virement between £0.050m and £0.100m and of virements between departments of any amount. Full Council approval is required for virements over £0.100m. During 2010/11 a number of significant virements have been identified which require the approval of the Executive. These have been previously reported to the Corporate Management Team who recommend them to the Executive for approval. They have been included in the quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports. Details of virements between departments are set out in Annexe F and summarised in Table 7. Details of internal departmental virements exceeding £0.050m are set out in Annexe G.

Table 7: 2010/11 Virements

	Reorganisation £'000	Town Centre £'000	Structural Changes Reserve £'000	Bus Contracts £'000	Contingency Fund £'000	Council Wide Items £'000
Corporate Services/Chief Executive's	277	365	168	0	109	-95
Children, Young People and Learning	10	0	204	0	155	72
Adult Social Care & Health	-158	0	51	0	-330	-10
Environment, Culture & Communities	-29	0	132	323	96	-22
Council Wide	-100	0	0	0	0	266
Non Departmental Budgets	0	0	0	0	0	1
Contingency	0	-71	0	0	-30	-196
Earmarked Reserves	0	-294	-555	-323	0	-16
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

11 **ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 11.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set the level of the Council Tax by 11 March each year. It is impossible to achieve this without having agreed an affordable revenue budget for the year in question.

Borough Treasurer

- 11.2 The financial implications of this report are included in the supporting information.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 11.3 The Council's final budget proposals will potentially impact on all areas of the community. A detailed consultation process is planned in order to provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to comment on the draft proposals. This will ensure that in making final recommendations, the Executive can be made aware of the views of a broad section of residents and service users. A number of the budget proposals require specific equality impact assessments to be carried out and draft versions of these are attached in Annexe H. Consultation with equalities groups that are likely to be affected by the proposal is part of the assessment process.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 11.4 A sum of £1m is currently proposed to meet the costs of unpredictable or unforeseen items that would represent in year budget risks. This is equal to the level of contingency set for 2010/11. The Executive will need to make a judgement on the level of contingency at its meeting in February.

- 11.5 The Borough Treasurer, as the Council's Chief Finance Officer (section 151 officer), must formally certify that the budget is sound. This will involve identifying and assessing the key risk areas in the budget to ensure the robustness of estimates and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage those risks, including maintaining an appropriate level of reserves and contingency. This formalises work that is normally undertaken each year during the budget preparation stages and in monthly monitoring after the budget is agreed. The Borough Treasurer will report his findings in February, when the final budget package is recommended for approval.

12 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 12.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will be consulted on the budget proposals and may also choose to direct specific issues to individual overview and scrutiny panels. Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. Comments and views will be sought on both the overall budget package and on the detailed budget proposals. In addition, this report and all the supporting information are publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. To facilitate this, the full budget package will be placed on the Council's web site at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk. There will also be a dedicated mailbox to collect comments.
- 12.2 The timetable for the approval of the 2011/12 Budget is as follows

Executive agree proposals as basis for consultation	14 December 2010
Consultation period	15 December 2010 - 25 January 2011
Executive considers representations made and recommends budget.	15 February 2011
Council considers Executive budget proposals	02 March 2011

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Timothy Wheadon – 01344 355601

Timothy.wheadon@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alison Sanders – 01344 355621

Alison.sanders@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Chris Herbert – 01344 355605

chris.herbert@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alan Nash – 01344 352180

Alan.nash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Arthur Parker – 01344 352158

Arthur.parker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Doc.Ref.

G:\Accounting Services\Budget 2011-12\Executive December 2010\14 Dec 10 Revenue Budget Report.doc

Commitment Budget 2011/12 to 2014/15

	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Chief Executive / Corporate Services					
Approved Budget	15,846	15,923	16,002	15,932	15,932
Transport function - Best Value Review		-50			
Place Survey		-15			
Area Based Grant		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Borough Elections		70	-70		
Capital Invest to Save 07/08 - server refresh		13			
Other revisions to recharges		61			
Net Inter Departmental Virements	77				
Chief Executive / Corporate Services Adjusted Budget	15,923	16,002	15,932	15,932	15,932
Children, Young People and Learning					
Approved Budget	14,991	14,466	14,364	14,374	14,354
Suitability surveys			20	-20	
Schools Music Festival		10	-10		
Area Based Grant		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Senior Management Restructure		-112			
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-525				
Children, Young People and Learning Adjusted Budget	14,466	14,364	14,374	14,354	14,354
Adult Social Care and Health					
Approved Budget	23,688	23,300	23,311	23,311	23,311
Area Based Grant		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Senior Management Restructure		11			
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-388				
Adult Social Care and Health Adjusted Budget	23,300	23,311	23,311	23,311	23,311
Environment, Culture and Communities					
Approved Budget	27,866	27,633	27,923	27,940	28,061
Landfill Tax / Waste Disposal PFI		71	-207	6	16
Landfill tax increase		109	106	104	99
Local Development Framework		-50	105	3	-110
Planners Farm Income		30			
Capital Invest to Save 06/07 - Easthampstead Park		-1	-1	-1	-1
Area Based Grant		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Sandhurst Freedom March			5		
South Hill Park Grounds		80			
Forestcare		-25			
Coroners Service - transfer from TVPA		10	9	9	9
E+ Card		66			
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-233				
Environment, Culture and Communities Adjusted Budget	27,633	27,923	27,940	28,061	28,074
Total Service Departments	81,322	81,600	81,557	81,658	81,671
Non Departmental / Council Wide					
Approved Budget	-7,804	-6,735	-6,231	-6,231	-6,231
2010/11 capital programme (full year effect) - Interest		71			
Minimum Revenue Provision		179			
2010/11 use of balances (full year effect) - Interest		4			
Area Based Grant		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Changes in employers NI and bandings		250			
Net Inter Departmental Virements	1,069				
Non Departmental / Council Wide	-6,735	-6,231	-6,231	-6,231	-6,231
TOTAL BUDGET	74,587	75,369	75,326	75,427	75,440
Change in commitment budget		782	-43	101	13

For management purposes budgets are controlled on a cash basis. The following figures which are used for public reports represent the cost of services including recharges and capital charges:

	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Corporate Services	6,854	6,933	6,863	6,863	6,863
Children, Young People and Learning	19,231	19,129	19,139	19,119	19,119
Adult Social Care and Health	25,679	25,690	25,690	25,690	25,690
Environment, Culture & Communities	36,135	36,425	36,442	36,563	36,576
Non Departmental/Council Wide	-13,312	-12,808	-12,808	-12,808	-12,808
	74,587	75,369	75,326	75,427	75,440

Description of Commitment Budget Items for 2011/12 to 2014/15

Department and Item	Description
Chief Executive / Corporate Services	
Transport function - Best Value Review & Berkshire Wide Procurement	Retendering of home to school transport contracts.
Place Survey	Following the abolition of Comprehensive Area Assessments, there is no longer a requirement to complete the Place Survey.
Area Based Grant	TBC
Borough Elections	The next scheduled Borough elections will be in May 2011.
Capital Invest to Save 07/08 - server refresh	This capital project reduced the overall size of the server estate by using consolidation/virtualisation software. This produced revenue savings.
Other revisions to recharges	An accounting adjustment to ensure income from recharges matches the expenditure budgets.
Children, Young People and Learning	
Suitability surveys	Suitability and access surveys are undertaken every three years to update the Asset Management Plan so that up to date information is available to inform investment decisions on the capital programme.
Schools Music Festival	Biennial event which enables pupils from the Council's Primary schools to participate in a large scale production which links music, dance and art.
Area Based Grant	TBC.
Senior Management Restructure	The new Council Departmental structure approved by the Council on 23 September 2009 has created changes to the senior management structure in Children, Young People and Learning.
Adult Social Care and Health	
Area Based Grant	TBC.
Senior Management Restructure	The new Council Departmental structure approved by the Council on 23 September 2009 has created changes to the senior management structure in Adult Social Care and Health.

Department and Item	Description
Environment, Culture and Communities	
Landfill Tax / Waste Disposal PFI	Projection of 25 year contract costs for Recycling and Waste Disposal. The contract is shared with Wokingham and Reading Borough Councils.
Landfill tax increase	Projected costs of increased rates of Landfill Tax over and above those initially announced by the Government which have increased through successive budget announcements.
Local Development Framework	The estimated costs of a continuous rolling programme to deliver Development and Supplementary Planning.
Planners Farm Income	Re-imburement of capital investment by Bracknell Forest Borough Council in the expansion of the composting facility several years ago at Planners Farm in return for a lower gate fee over the term will drop out in 2011/12.
Capital Invest to Save 06/07 - Easthampstead Park	An invest to save scheme to provide en-suite bedrooms. This is the incremental net increase in revenue to be received on top of the original sum declared to repay the original capital investment.
Area Based Grant	TBC.
Sandhurst Freedom March	Contribution to Sandhurst Town Council's freedom march scheduled to take place in 2012.
South Hill Park Grounds	A condition of the grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the South Hill Park Grounds Restoration Project is that there is an ongoing commitment by the authority to maintain the improvements.
Forestcare	The business plan for Forestcare seeks to break even over a period of time. This commitment is to move to that break even point.
Coroners Service - transfer from TVPA	The Thames Valley Police Authority (TVPA) is transferring responsibility for the Coroners Service to the local authorities in Berkshire. In 2010/11 the TVPA will provide 100% funding. This will be phased out over the next four years 2011/12 to 2014/15.
E+ card	Expenditure previously charged to Capital
Non Departmental / Council Wide	
2010/11 capital programme (full year effect) -Interest	The full year effect of the loss of interest based on the 2010/11 capital programme.
Minimum Revenue Provision	The increase in the principal repayment on internal loans used to finance capital expenditure.

Department and Item	Description
Non Departmental / Council Wide	
2010/11 use of balances (full year effect)	The full year effect of the interest loss on the use of balances in 2010/11.
Area Based Grant	TBC
Changes in employers NI and bandings	Employer rates of National Insurance Contributions will increase by 0.5 per cent from April 2011.

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

Description	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
<p>School Improvement Service</p> <p>The School Improvement Service is currently part funded through specific grants to deliver the National Strategies. This funding will be withdrawn from April, with total known loss of grant (as at Sept 10) at £0.237m. In order to maintain a level of provision for specialist and targeted advice and support for all schools, and to continue to provide a level of support for school improvement a new traded service will be established. These funds would be use to meet costs associated with the new model which would include a subscription scheme for schools. A full business case is being developed to support the new traded service model.</p>	60			
<p>Domestic Violence</p> <p>A significant change in approach to tackling domestic violence is proposed, involving more direct intervention, to mirror the intensive approach currently proving successful through the Operation Ladybird scheme. This investment is intended to head off increased costs from domestic violence in the longer term.</p>	100			
<p>CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING TOTAL</p>	160			

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

Description Impact	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
<p>Support to Departmental Management Team</p> <p>There will be a reduction in staffing and support to the Management Team through deleting the vacant 0.7 FTE administrative support post.</p>	-20			
<p>Educational Psychology Service</p> <p>The service supports young people experiencing or causing psychological distress, usually affecting their healthy emotional, social or educational development. There will be a reduction of 0.4 FTE staff with a reduction in the level of service available to support schools and young people.</p>	-25			
<p>Education Welfare Service</p> <p>The service works with schools, parents/carers and their children who are experiencing difficulties in school. It ensures that regular attendance at school remains of paramount importance in order that children may benefit from their education. Staffing levels will be reduced by the equivalent of 0.7 FTE, resulting in a withdrawal from some multi-agency work and a revised school referral threshold.</p>	-20			
<p>Re-commissioning of advocacy and independent visiting</p> <p>Re-commission provision from the voluntary sector as the current contract is ending using a spot purchase model from a range of providers, with the expectation of a consequent reduction in cost.</p>	-15			
<p>Larchwood short break care unit</p> <p>Larchwood is a short-term care unit, offering breaks for children and young people with learning disabilities. There will be a reduction of 0.6 FTE in indirect staffing support.</p>	-10			
<p>Provision of information to parents of children with disabilities</p> <p>This service is currently provided through a contract with the Family Resource Centre. A review has identified that bringing the service in house, to be managed within Children's Social Care – Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Service would reduce costs.</p>	-10			

Description Impact	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
<p>Children Looked After – costs of care and support</p> <p>On current known placements, if only planned changes occur from September 2010 to March 2012, a saving will be achieved. Savings will arise primarily from the relatively high age profile with a number of high cost pupils moving into cheaper after care arrangements or transferring to ASCH. This is a volatile budget and is subject to significant changes at short notice. The net saving is after allowing for an increase in the number of Child Protection Plans, which has consequently caused an increase in the number of looked after children. The additional cost of managing this is estimated at £95,000 and provides for 0.5 FTE increases in each of the following: the independent chair of child protection conferences; servicing of these meetings; and the allocation of an experienced social worker and the independent reviewing officer.</p>	-136			
<p>Integrated Youth Support Service</p> <p>Review the staffing arrangements across the support services for 13-19 year age range and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs / Learning Disabilities as part of developing a more integrated structure around the future youth offer.</p>	-30			
<p>ICT maintenance fees</p> <p>A review has been undertaken of the requirement to retain all the modules currently used in the Department's Capita One ICT data base. This has concluded that modules supporting ContactPoint, Training Manager on-line and Education Plan Monitoring are either no longer required or their key outputs can be obtained through alternative means.</p>	-13			
<p>Student Finance</p> <p>Responsibility for processing Higher Education and Further Education student loans and grant applications passes to Student Loans Company in 2011. The dedicated 1.0 FTE post in place to support this responsibility will be deleted.</p>	-27			
<p>Human Resources Modern Apprentice post</p> <p>There will be a reduction in support to the Human Resource function through deleting the vacant 1.0 FTE modern apprentice post.</p>	-5			

Description Impact	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
<p>Human Resources</p> <p>The Departmental training budget will be reduced by £4,000, with a consequential impact on staff development and the cost of administering the official staff absence arrangements in schools will be charged to the Schools Budget at £10,000.</p>	-14			
<p>CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING TOTAL</p>	-325			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Adult and Community Learning

Purpose of the Charge: To fully fund the costs of the service not financed by external grant

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	5	15

Are concessions available? Yes 50% reduction for all on means tested benefits
--

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan and to build a vibrant Bracknell town centre that residents and businesses are proud of

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Adult and Community Learning Plan

Course Fees			
Next Step Courses	Per hour	4.00	4.75
Initial Taster Sessions	Per hour	1.00	1.50
			18.8
			50.0
Personal & Community Development Learning			
Course Fees		As above	
Other Courses are fully funded from external grant			
Course fees are agreed on an academic year basis once external funding is confirmed and approved by the Executive Member as part of the Adult Learning Plan			
The above fees assume the same level of grants if this changes significantly they will need to be revised. A review of Adult Learning fees is also underway which might result in a restructure of fees nationally			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Adult and Community Learning

Purpose of the Charge: To fully fund the costs of the service not financed by external grant

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	90	96

Are concessions available? Yes to the voluntary sector, charities and associated learning agenda organisations as well as internal BFC usage

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan and to build a vibrant Bracknell town centre that residents and businesses are proud of

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Bracknell Open Learning Centre Room Hire and Refreshments

Room Hire per Hour			
Grant funded courses	10.00	10.50	5.0
Bracknell Forest Council	12.30	13.00	5.7
External users - Voluntary Sector, Charities & Associated Learning Agenda Organisations	12.00	13.00	8.3
Other external users	15.40	16.00	3.9
IT Suite (specific requirement to use IT)	As above	20.00	
IT Suite (specific request for large hall)	As above	20.00	
Insurance	10% room hire	10% room hire	
Refreshments			
Tea & Coffee	per half day	5.10	
	per day	10.25	
	Per person per Mug (e.g. *2 for half day, *3 for full day)	0.75	
Lunches	Cost + 10%	Cost + 10%	
Photocopying per copy	0.02	0.02	0.0
The above fees assume the same level of grants if this changes significantly they will need to be revised.			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	108	109

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Room Hire Non Bracknell Forest Council

Whole Day			
Newbury	286.00	295.00	3.1
Bedford	180.50	186.50	3.3
Donnington	180.50	186.50	3.3
Sandys	180.50	186.50	3.3
Wimpole	180.50	186.50	3.3
Other	180.50	186.50	3.3
Cromwell Computer Room	261.00	269.00	3.1
Half Day			
Newbury	143.50	148.00	3.1
Bedford	93.00	96.00	3.2
Donnington	93.00	96.00	3.2
Sandys	93.00	96.00	3.2
Wimpole	93.00	96.00	3.2
Other	93.00	96.00	3.2
Cromwell Computer Room	155.00	160.00	3.2

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers

Link to the Council's Medium Tem Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan
--

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Room Hire Non Bracknell Forest Council (cont)

Twilight			
Newbury	106.00	109.00	2.8
Bedford	69.00	72.00	4.3
Donnington	69.00	72.00	4.3
Sandys	69.00	72.00	4.3
Wimpole	69.00	72.00	4.3
Other	69.00	72.00	4.3
Cromwell Computer Room	126.00	130.00	3.2
Evening	119.00	123.00	3.4
Newbury	93.00	96.00	3.2
Bedford	93.00	96.00	3.2
Donnington	93.00	96.00	3.2
Sandys	93.00	96.00	3.2
Wimpole	93.00	96.00	3.2
Other	93.00	96.00	3.2
Cromwell Computer Room	155.00	160.00	3.2

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget £'000	Proposed 2011/12 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Room Hire Bracknell Forest Council

Whole Day			
Newbury	237.00	245.00	3.4
Bedford	150.00	155.00	3.3
Donnington	150.00	155.00	3.3
Sandys	150.00	155.00	3.3
Wimpole	150.00	155.00	3.3
Other	150.00	155.00	3.3
Cromwell Computer Room	221.00	228.00	3.2
Half Day			
Newbury	119.00	123.00	3.4
Bedford	74.00	78.00	5.4
Donnington	74.00	78.00	5.4
Sandys	74.00	78.00	5.4
Wimpole	74.00	78.00	5.4
Other	74.00	78.00	5.4
Cromwell Computer Room	132.00	136.00	3.0

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget £'000	Proposed 2011/12 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Room Hire Bracknell Forest Council (cont)

Twilight			
Newbury	89.00	92.00	3.4
Bedford	64.00	66.00	3.1
Donnington	64.00	66.00	3.1
Sandys	64.00	66.00	3.1
Wimpole	64.00	66.00	3.1
Other	64.00	66.00	3.1
Cromwell Computer Room	116.00	120.00	3.4
Evening	100.00	103.00	3.0
Newbury	74.00	78.00	5.4
Bedford	74.00	78.00	5.4
Donnington	74.00	78.00	5.4
Sandys	74.00	78.00	5.4
Wimpole	74.00	78.00	5.4
Other	74.00	78.00	5.4
Cromwell Computer Room	132.00	136.00	3.0

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	70	71

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Refreshment Charges Non Bracknell Forest Council

Tea and Coffee			
Per Day	4.20	4.35	3.6
Per Half day	2.80	2.90	3.6
Per Mug	1.40	1.45	3.6
(change from per cup to per mug wef 1-4-10)			
Sandwiches			
Per Round with Tea, Coffee, OJ & Fruit	7.15	7.45	4.2
Lunch in Main Restaurant			
Per Person	13.65	14.15	3.7
Finger Buffet			
Per Person with Tea, Coffee, OJ & Fruit	10.50	10.90	3.8

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Refreshment Charges Bracknell Forest Council

Tea and Coffee			
Per Day	3.75	3.90	4.0
Per Half day	2.50	2.60	4.0
Per Mug (change from per cup to per mug wef 1-4-10)	1.25	1.30	4.0
Sandwiches			
Per Round with Tea, Coffee, OJ & Fruit	6.95	7.20	3.6
Lunch in Main Restaurant			
Per Person	13.50	13.95	3.3
Finger Buffet			
Per Person with Tea, Coffee, OJ & Fruit	9.95	10.45	5.0

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	13	8

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Charges for Goods Sold

Photocopying				
Per Copy - Black & White	A3 Single Sided	0.06	0.06	0.0
	A4 Single Sided	0.04	0.04	0.0
	A3 Double Sided	0.10	0.10	0.0
	A4 Double Sided	0.06	0.06	0.0
Per Copy - Colour	A3 BFC	0.80	0.85	6.2
	A3 External	0.80	0.85	6.2
	A4 BFC	0.50	0.55	10.0
	A4 External	0.50	0.55	10.0
Laminating	per metre 25" wide	2.05	2.15	4.9
	Pockets A3	0.72	0.75	4.2
	Pockets A4	0.41	0.45	9.8

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Education Centre

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Education Centre Charges for Goods Sold (Cont)

Stationery/Cards etc				
Cards	Each	1.20	1.20	0.0
	Each when purchasing 10 or more	1.00	1.00	0.0
Thank you notes & invites		4.00	4.00	0.0
Wrapping Paper		1.00	1.00	0.0
Tissue Paper	Coloured	1.00	1.00	0.0
	Metallic & Patterned	1.50	1.50	0.0
Pks Christmas Cards	Small	2.50	2.50	0.0
	Medium	3.50	3.50	0.0
	Large	4.00	4.00	0.0
Bottle Toppers		2.50	2.50	0.0
Bookmarks		0.50	0.50	0.0
Flip Files A4 10 Pockets		1.62	1.67	3.1
Zip Wallets	A3	0.46	0.47	2.2
	A4 Generous	0.39	0.40	2.6
	A4 Ordinary	0.38	0.39	2.6
	A5	0.34	0.35	2.9

Above prices are controlled by Stationery suppliers and so may vary
New stock items will be purchased if demand justifies with prices to be agreed at the time

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Learning and Achievement

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	74	50

Are concessions available? Yes, fees to Local Authority schools are lower than those charged to external customers

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Professional Development Courses

Course Fees and Timings			
Internal and Other LEA Schools			
Full Day (09.15 - 15.45)	118.00	125.00	5.9
Half Day (09.15 - 12.15) or (13.00 - 16.00)	62.00	65.00	4.8
Twilight (16.15 - 17.30)	29.00	30.00	3.4
Independent Schools & Academies			
Full Day (09.15 - 15.45)	236.00	250.00	5.9
Half Day (09.15 - 12.15) or (13.00 - 16.00)	123.00	130.00	5.7
Twilight (16.15 - 17.30)	57.00	60.00	5.3
* Course fees will be increased to take account of any specific additional costs incurred			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Learning and Achievement

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget £'000	Proposed 2011/12 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes, internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Consultancy Rates

Chargeable Activities			
Services offered include Curriculum Reviews, Data Analysis, Training, Specialist Advice and Performance Management			
All fees are a minimum rate, include normal preparation time but exclude travel and materials and must be agreed with line manager and Chief Officer			
BFC Schools			
Daily rate	410.00	500.00	22.0
Half Day	215.00	275.00	27.9
Hourly rate	87.00	90.00	3.4
Non BFC Schools			
Daily rate	538.00	550.00	2.2
Half Day	272.00	280.00	2.9
Hourly rate	108.00	110.00	1.9

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Larchwood

Purpose of the Charge: To cover the costs of the service when used by other Local Authorities
--

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	35	36

Are concessions available? Yes, free service for Bracknell children
--

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Residential short break care

Overnight Per Night		372.50	385.50	3.5
Daycare - Existing Clients				
Standard	per hour	15.00	15.50	3.3
Additional 1:1 staffing	per hour	12.50	12.90	3.2
Additional 2:1 staffing	per hour	25.00	25.90	3.6
Daycare - New Clients				
Standard	per hour	15.00	19.95	33.0
Additional 1:1 staffing	per hour	12.50	16.05	28.4
Additional 2:1 staffing	per hour	25.00	32.10	28.4

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Children Looked After

Purpose of the Charge: To cover the costs of fostercare charges when BFC fostercarers are used by other Local Authorities

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	23	24

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Tem Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Fostercare charges

Charge per week	283.76 to 590.71	276.58 594.81	0.7 (estimate)
Fees are increased in line with guidance from the Fostering Network which has yet to be confirmed. The increase is therefore indicative.			
Additional amount: Emergency placement	TBD	TBD	
Additional amount: Long term placement	TBD	TBD	
Additional amounts agreed through negotiation with Berkshire Local Authorities.			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Other Children's and Family Services

Purpose of the Charge: To charge for other Local Authority children placed with BF adopters
--

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	53	55

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Tem Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan
--

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Adoption Fees

One child	50% at Scale point 31	13,415.50	13,415.50	0.0
2 children	x 1.5	20,123.25	20,123.25	0.0
3 or more children	x 2	26,831.00	26,831.00	0.0
Fees are set nationally and are dependant on the pay rise awarded to staff.				(estimate)

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Youth Service

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	12	12

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Tem Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan
--

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Young Peoples Attendance Fee

Attendance Fee	per session	0.00 to 1.00	0.00 to 1.00	0.0
Membership Fee	per annum	0.00 to 2.00	0.00 to 2.00	0.0
Activities Fee	per session	0.00 to 2.50	0.00 to 2.60	4.0

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Youth Service

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	128	132

Are concessions available? Internal fees are lower than those charged to external customers see below

Link to the Council's Medium Tem Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Hire Fees

Youth & Community Groups - not for profit basis				
Hall	per hour	7.35 to 11.60	7.35 to 12.00	3.4
Meeting Room	per hour	7.35 to 10.75	7.35 to 11.10	3.3
Private & Commercial				
Hall	per hour	10.75 to 25.75	10.75 to 26.70	3.7
Meeting room	per hour	10.75 to 21.50	10.75 to 22.30	3.7
Other income is generated by long term leases				

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Youth Service

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	9	9

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Sale of Goods

Tuck Shops Various refreshments	0.01 to 1.50	0.01 to 1.60	6.7
Duke of Edinburgh Awards Books	13.00 to 18.50	13.00 to 19.10	3.2
Duke of Edinburgh now using web-based information so no books to sell. Cost of materials set nationally			

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Family Tree Nursery

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	358	183

Are concessions available? Yes. Where 2 or more fee paying (Not Early Education Funding only) children from the same family attend the nursery, a 10% discount will be applied to the cheapest placement(s). This discount will not apply to extra hours outside of the agreed contractual hours, late collection fees or administration fees. Staff concessions are not available

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Placement Fees

3 Months - 3 Years old				
Full Time				
Weekly	229.03	240.48	5.0	
Monthly	995.18	1,044.94	5.0	
Part time				
1 day	- Weekly charge	51.42	53.99	5.0
	- Monthly charge	223.42	234.59	5.0
2 days	- Weekly charge	102.15	107.25	5.0
	- Monthly charge	443.85	466.04	5.0
3 days	- Weekly charge	152.19	159.80	5.0
	- Monthly charge	661.30	694.36	5.0
4 days	- Weekly charge	201.54	211.62	5.0
	- Monthly charge	875.76	919.55	5.0
Hourly Rate		5.76	6.04	5.0
Deposit per child		50.00	50.00	0.0
Late Collection Fees - per 15 minutes		10.00	10.00	0.0

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Family Tree Nursery

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

Are concessions available? Yes. Where 2 or more fee paying (Not Early Education Funding) children from the same family attend the nursery, a 10% discount will be applied to the cheapest placement(s). This discount will not apply to extra hours outside of the agreed contractual hours, late collection fees or administration fees. Staff concessions are not available
--

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Placement Fees

Over 3 years				
Full Time				
Weekly	215.70	226.48	5.0	
Monthly	937.25	984.11	5.0	
Part time				
1 day	- Weekly charge	48.42	50.84	5.0
	- Monthly charge	210.41	220.93	5.0
2 days	- Weekly charge	96.20	101.01	5.0
	- Monthly charge	418.01	438.91	5.0
3 days	- Weekly charge	143.33	150.50	5.0
	- Monthly charge	622.80	653.94	5.0
4 days	- Weekly charge	189.81	199.30	5.0
	- Monthly charge	824.78	866.02	5.0
Hourly Rate		5.46	5.74	5.0
Deposit per child		50.00	50.00	0.0
Late Collection Fees - per 15 minutes		10.00	10.00	0.0

Nursery fees are calculated over 52.143 weeks and paid over 12 months with a discount of 1 week in December

The calculation of these fees is based on receiving Early Education Funding at the level currently calculated.
--

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : School related expenditure

Purpose of the Charge: To fund the costs of the service where provided to other local authority pupils

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	51	53

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

SEN recoupment overhead fees

Percentage addition to funded cost of placement to cover cost of BFC overheads	Various	Various	
--	---------	---------	--

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : School related expenditure

Purpose of the Charge: To cover costs of the service that are not fully funded by Government Grant

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		
This is parental income to our music provider	301	270

Are concessions available? Yes for all on means tested benefits

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Music Tuition

Tuition Fees				
Large Group Lessons- Beginners	per pupil per term	40.00	41.00	2.5
Standard Group Lessons- Beginners	per pupil per term	65.00	67.00	3.1
Standard Group Lessons- Continuation	per pupil per term	83.00	86.00	3.6
Achievement-Bronze	per pupil per term		119.00	New
Achievement-Silver	per pupil per term	230.00	238.00	3.5
Achievement-Gold	per pupil per term	460.00	476.00	3.5
Bands	per pupil per term	56.00	57.00	1.8
Fees are set on an academic year basis from each September.				
Beginner Group Lessons are a new activity being supplied this year so fees for 10-11 were set with a similar subsidy to the other group lessons				
Bronze Achievement award will be offered next year for the first time				
The above fees assume the same level of grants if this changes significantly they will need to be revised				

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Children's Centres

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2010/11 Budget	Proposed 2011/12 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	5	5

All concessions are included in the fee structure detailed below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Sessional Fees

Sessional Fees			
BFC families (or those with guest cards)	2.00	2.00	0.0
BFC families receiving additional support/benefits	1.00	1.00	0.0
Families from outside BFC	4.00	4.00	0.0

These charges would apply only to those sessions where substantial additional costs are incurred e.g. baby massage/yoga, messy play sessions etc.

Any other sessions would either be completely free or donations sought to cover refreshment costs.
--

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Children's Centres

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service not financed by grant

	2009/10 Budget	Proposed 2010/11 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

All concessions are included in the fee structure detailed below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Room Hire Fees

Rowans Children's Centre			
Private group/ Statutory Agencies			
Hall	10.00	12.00	20.0
Squirrel Room	8.00	10.00	25.0
Owl Room	6.00	8.00	33.3
Badger Room	4.00	6.00	50.0
Kitchen (if used for cooking)	8.00	10.00	25.0
Modular Building	10.00	12.00	20.0
Voluntary/non profit making Group			
Hall	8.00	9.00	12.5
Squirrel Room	6.00	7.00	16.7
Owl Room	4.00	5.00	25.0
Badger Room	2.00	3.00	50.0
Kitchen (if used for cooking)	6.00	7.00	16.7
Modular Building	8.00	9.00	12.5

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

2011/12 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service : Children's Centres

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service not financed by grant

	2009/10 Budget	Proposed 2010/11 Budget
	£'000	£'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:		

All concessions are included in the fee structure detailed below

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: To improve the outcomes for Children and Families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Room Hire Fees

Oaks Children's Centre:			
Private group/ Statutory Agencies			
Green Room	7.00	9.00	28.6
Blue Room	6.00	8.00	33.3
Family Room and Kitchen	10.00	12.00	20.0
Pre-school room	12.00	14.00	16.7
Voluntary/non profit making Group			
Green Room	5.00	6.00	20.0
Blue Room	4.00	5.00	25.0
Family Room and Kitchen	8.00	9.00	12.5
Pre-school room	10.00	11.00	10.0
Alders Children's Centre			
Private group/ Statutory Agencies			
Family Room	8.00	10.00	25.0
Meeting Room 1	5.00	7.00	40.0
Meeting Room 2	4.00	6.00	50.0
Voluntary/non profit making Group			
Family Room	6.00	7.00	16.7
Meeting Room 1	3.00	5.00	66.7
Meeting Room 2	2.00	3.00	50.0

Groups who are directly supporting the delivery of 62 services will not be charged. Refreshments will be charged at £0.50 per head per session to a maximum of £10.00.

Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: November 2010	Directorate: C,YP&L	Section: Learning and Achievement
1. Activity to be assessed	Proposed staffing reduction in Educational Psychology Service by 0.4 FTE staff	
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Bob Welch Chief Adviser	
5. Who are the members of the EIA team?	Anthony Riches Principal Education Psychologist	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	The service supports the LA to identify and assess special educational needs of children and young people and those CYP (and their teachers and carers) who experience psychological distress, usually affecting their healthy emotional, social or educational development.	
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Children and Young People	
8. a Racial equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on White British and Irish, Gypsy/Roma/Travellers, White Other, Black and Minority Ethnic groups; e.g Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed Race.
8. b What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc.	This is a universal service, focussed on all children who meet the criteria for support.	
9. a Gender equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on men, women and transgender, where relevant.
9. b What evidence do you have to support this?	This is a universal service, focussed on all children who meet the criteria for support.	
10. a Disability equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	Y	Please explain considering all forms of disability e.g. visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically disabled, learning disability, mental health and unseen disabilities e.g. heart disease and diabetes
10. b What evidence do you have to support this?	Children with a mild learning disability or emotional or mental health issues, or their families and teachers, will have less opportunity to engage with an Educational Psychologist.	
11. a Age equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on children, young people, middle aged and older people.
11. b What evidence do you have to support this?	This is a universal service, focussed on all children who meet the criteria for support.	

<p>12. a Religion and belief equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p>	N	Please explain considering the impact on those with a religious belief e.g Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists; as well as those with non religious beliefs e.g Atheist
<p>12. b What evidence do you have to support this?</p>	This is a universal service, focussed on all children who meet the criteria for support.	
<p>13. a Sexual orientation equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p>	N	Please explain considering the impact on heterosexual men and women, gay men, lesbians and bisexual men and women.
<p>13. b What evidence do you have to support this?</p>	This is a universal service, focussed on all children who meet the criteria for support.	
<p>14. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carer's/ex-offenders) and on promoting good community relations.</p>	None	
<p>15. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</p>	No	
<p>16. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</p>	The service is focussed on those in groups listed under item 10. A small number of pupils below the threshold for support and statutory intervention could be affected.	
<p>17. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</p>	N	Please explain for each equality group
<p>18. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</p>	The Council's budget consultation in December 2010 will enable consultation with equality groups on the budget proposals the consultation responses and results will be added to the impact assessment.	
<p>19. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</p>	N	This is a service reduction but all statutory duties will be completed. The impact will be in a reduction of time devoted to development work and other projects and the team's capacity to work with young people who may not have special educational needs.
<p>20. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</p>		
<p>Action</p>	Timescale	Person Responsible
Review service provision	April 2011	Anthony Riches
		Key service levels maintained and report deadlines met.
<p>21. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</p>	C, YP&L business plan	
<p>22. Have any current actions to address issues for any of the groups or examples of good practice been identified as part of the screening?</p>	No	

<p>23. Chief Officers signature.</p>	<p><i>Bob Welch</i></p> <p>Signature: Date: 1.12.10</p>
<p>24. Which PMR will this screening be reported in?</p>	<p>Quarter 3</p>

When complete please send to abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for publication on the Council's website.

Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: November 2010	Directorate: C,YP&L	Section: Learning and Achievement
1. Activity to be assessed	Proposed staffing reduction in Education Welfare Service by 0.7 FTE staff	
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Bob Welch Chief Adviser	
5. Who are the members of the EIA team?	Gloria King Children and Families Manager	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	The service supports the LA to secure good levels of attendance in schools	
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Children and Young People	
8. a Racial equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on White British and Irish, Gypsy/Roma/Travellers, White Other, Black and Minority Ethnic groups; e.g Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed Race.
8. b What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc.	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	
9. a Gender equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on men, women and transgender, where relevant.
9. b What evidence do you have to support this?	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	
10. a Disability equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering all forms of disability e.g. visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically disabled, learning disability, mental health and unseen disabilities e.g. heart disease and diabetes
10. b What evidence do you have to support this?	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	
11. a Age equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	N	Please explain considering the impact on children, young people, middle aged and older people.
11. b What evidence do you have to support this?	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	

<p>12. a Religion and belief equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p>	N	Please explain considering the impact on those with a religious belief e.g Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists; as well as those with non religious beliefs e.g Atheist
<p>12. b What evidence do you have to support this?</p>	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	
<p>13. a Sexual orientation equality - Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</p>	N	Please explain considering the impact on heterosexual men and women, gay men, lesbians and bisexual men and women.
<p>13. b What evidence do you have to support this?</p>	This is a universal service, focussed on all children their families who meet the criteria for support.	
<p>14. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carer's/ex-offenders) and on promoting good community relations.</p>	None	
<p>15. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</p>	N/A	
<p>16. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</p>	No	
<p>17. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</p>	N	Please explain for each equality group
<p>18. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</p>	The Council's budget consultation in December 2010 will enable consultation with equality groups on the budget proposals the consultation responses and results will be added to the impact assessment.	
<p>19. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</p>	N	This is a service reduction but all statutory duties will be completed. The impact will be in a reduction of time devoted to development work and other projects and the team's capacity to work with children, young people and their families.
<p>20. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</p>		
<p>Action</p>	Timescale	Person Responsible
Review service provision	April 2011	Gloria King
		Key service levels maintained and report deadlines met.
<p>21. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</p>	C, YP&L business plan	
<p>22. Have any current actions to address issues for any of the groups or examples of good practice been identified as part of the screening?</p>	No	

<p>23. Chief Officers signature.</p>	<p><i>Bob Welch</i></p> <p>Signature: Date: 1.12.10</p>
<p>24. Which PMR will this screening be reported in?</p>	<p>Quarter 3</p>

When complete please send to abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for publication on the Council's website.

**TO: THE EXECUTIVE
14 DECEMBER 2010**

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2011/2012 - 2013/2014
(Borough Treasurer)**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 Under the Council's Constitution, the Executive are required to issue their budget proposals for consultation for a minimum period of six weeks prior to making their recommendations to full Council on 2 March 2011. The capital programme forms an important part of the overall budget proposals and is a key means by which the Council can deliver its medium term objectives.
- 1.2 This report draws together each service's proposals so that the Executive can agree a draft capital programme for 2011/12-2013/14 as the basis for consultation. In compiling the draft programme the main focus is inevitably on determining the requirements for 2011/12, although future year's schemes do also form an important part of the programme.
- 1.3 The financial implications of the recommendations in this report are reflected in the subsequent reports on the Council's draft revenue budget. Any revisions to the proposals put forward by each service would also need to be reflected in that report which will also be published as the basis for consultation following the Executive's meeting.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Approves, for consultation, an initial Council funded capital programme of £10.458m for 2011/12 summarised in Annex A, including the schemes listed in Annexes B – F.**
- 2.2 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for Invest to Save schemes.**
- 2.3 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £2.5m of expenditure to be funded from S106 as outlined in para 5.10**
- 2.4 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £2.764m of expenditure to be externally funded as outlined in para 5.10**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The reasons for the recommendations are set out in the report.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The alternative options are considered in the report.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Capital Resources

- 5.1 Each year the Council agrees a programme of capital schemes. In the past these schemes have been funded from three main sources:
- the Council's accumulated capital receipts
 - Government Grants
 - other external contributions
- 5.2 The Local Government Act 2003 brought in radical changes to the financing of capital expenditure and from that date, the Government no longer issued borrowing approvals. Instead, under a new "prudential framework", Councils can set their own borrowing limits based on the affordability of the debt.
- 5.3 The Council's estimated total usable capital receipts at 31st March 2011 are zero. The Council is constantly looking for opportunities to rationalise its property holding to reduce costs. However, the impact of the "Credit-Crunch" and the substantial deterioration in the property market means it is unlikely that many opportunities will be available for disposal at optimal prices in the near term.
- 5.4 As a result of the LSVT Transfer of the Council's housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes in 2008 the Council will benefit from a share of future Right-to-Buy sales and from the VAT Shelter. At the time of the transfer it was estimated that this would deliver annual receipts of approximately £3m over the proceeding 10 years. This is now expected to be lower in the short-term as a result of the recession and the on-going uncertainty in the capital markets. As such it is now assumed that receipts in 2011/12 will amount to £2m rising to £3m in 2012/13 as the economy picks up.
- 5.5 As the Council's accumulated capital receipts have been fully utilised the Council returned to a position of internal borrowing in 2010 and as such a revenue contribution is required each year. Once the Council's current level of investments is exhausted, which is expected to be within the next 2 years, the Council will need to borrow externally.
- 5.6 The proposed capital programme for 2011/12 has been developed, therefore, on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of Government grants, other external contributions and some internal borrowing in addition to the £2m of capital receipts. The financing costs associated with the General Fund Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans which also appear on tonight's agenda.

New Schemes

- 5.7 Within the general financial framework outlined above, Service Departments have considered new schemes for inclusion within the Council's Capital Programme for 2011/12 - 2013/14. Given that both capital and revenue resources are under pressure, each Department has evaluated and prioritised proposed schemes into the broad categories, set out in the Council's Corporate Capital Strategy and in line with the Council's Asset Management Plan. Having done this, only the very highest priority schemes and programmes are being recommended for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

Unavoidable (Including committed schemes)

This category covers schemes which must proceed to ensure that the Council is not left open to legal sanction and includes items relating to health and safety issues, new statutory legislation etc. Committed schemes also include those that have been started as part of the 2010/11 Capital Programme. Also included within this category are those schemes that were previously funded from the General Fund Revenue Account, but which by their nature could be legitimately capitalised. Schemes in this category form the first call on the available capital resources.

Within these categories provision has been made to address the disabled access requirements to both school buildings (£0.1m) and all other Council buildings (£0.1m). The works have been identified through independent access audits and have been prioritised to meet the needs of pupils and the users of these buildings. Significant progress has been made in past years and a programme of works has been planned across a range of service areas.

Maintenance (Improvements and capitalised repairs)

The Council is responsible for a significant number of properties and assets. As part of the established asset management planning process, property condition surveys are carried out and updated annually to assess the overall maintenance needs. Historically the Council has funded all Priority 1 maintenance works identified in these surveys. These represent the works that are necessary, within the next 12 months, to maintain buildings in beneficial use through the prevention of closure, dealing with health and safety items and potential breaches of legislation. The latest assessment, based on condition surveys, identified a backlog of urgent outstanding repairs of £8.47m. However £4.47m of this requirement relates to schools and as such must be a first call on their capital resources. The Council has provided for an allocation (£0.2m) within its Capital Programme as a contingency for urgent works that cannot be met from within the schools devolved budgets.

As such, based on the most recent survey data, £4.0m of the Priority 1 urgent repairs relate to Council buildings other than schools. Given the resource restraints of the Council, the Capital Programme is restricted to £1.145m (exclusive of Schools contingency). An additional £0.2m has been added to the revenue budget in 2011/12 to address some of the shortfall that cannot be legitimately met through the capital programme – this relates to work that is not of a capital nature or below the Council's deminimus level, but has been highlighted in the condition surveys as requiring urgent attention. This level of investment will result in £2.655m of urgent repairs being deferred to future years and increasing the overall level of backlog maintenance.

The implications of failing to maintain Council buildings and to address the backlog will be a significant issue for the Council over the coming years and efforts will be focussed on ensuring that the highest priority items are tackled first, that efficiencies are maximised in the procurement of works and that maintenance which will result in energy efficiencies are undertaken through the invest-to-save programme, as set out in the Council's Asset management Plan 2010

Rolling programmes

These programmes cover more than one year and give a degree of certainty for forward planning schemes to improve service delivery. They make an important contribution towards the Council's Medium Term Objectives and established Asset Management Plans.

Other Desirable Schemes

In addition to the schemes identified in the above categories, each service has requested funding for other high priority schemes that meet the needs and objectives of their service and the Council's Medium Term Objectives. The net cost of schemes which attract partial external funding are included in the schemes put forward. The number of Council funded schemes within this category is severely constrained this year, but does include some money to allow a full £4m refurbishment programme at Kennel Lane School to proceed. This reflects the priority given to the scheme when the Executive considered the education capital programme in October.

Invest To Save Schemes

These are schemes where the additional revenue income or savings arising from their implementation exceeds the internal borrowing costs. The Council's approach to Invest to Save schemes is included in its Capital Strategy and in accordance with the Capital Strategy it is proposed that a further £1m be included in the 2011/12 capital programme for potential Invest to Save schemes.

- 5.8 A detailed list of suggested schemes within the draft capital programme, together with a brief description of each project, for each service is included in Annexes B – F. A summary of the cost of schemes proposed by Departments is set out in the table below and in Annex A. This shows that the total net funding requested is £10.458m in 2011/12.

Capital Programme 2011/12-2013/14				
Annex	Service Area	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000
B	Corporate Services	320	825	270
C	Council Wide	2,364	2,875	2,605
D	Children, Young People & Learning	3,754	5,150	4,320
E	Adult Social Care & Health	0	60	0
F	Environment Culture & Communities	9,284	9,753	6,923
	Total Capital Programme	15,722	18,663	14,118
	Externally Funded	5,264	6,200	5,600
	Total request for Council funding	10,458	12,463	8,518

- 5.9 As part of the offer to tenants in the lead up to the housing stock transfer ballot the Council gave a commitment to spend 75% of the available receipt on new affordable housing and the 2011/12 – 2013/14 programme includes an allocation of £12.9m, with £4m earmarked for 2011/12. The remainder of the receipt will be used in subsequent years.

Externally Funded Schemes

- 5.10 A number of external funding sources are also available to fund schemes within the capital programme, amounting to £5.264m of investment in 2011/12. External support has been identified from two main sources:

Government Grants

A number of capital schemes attract specific grants. It is proposed that all such schemes should be included in the capital programme at the level of external funding that is available. There is significant uncertainty regarding the level of funding that the Council will receive, particularly in relation to funding from the Department for Education.

Section 106

Each year the Council enters into a number of agreements under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 by which developers make a contribution towards the cost of providing facilities and infrastructure that may be required as a result of their development. Usually the monies are given for work in a particular area and/or for specific projects. The total money available at present, which is not financially committed to specific projects, is £4.15m, although conditions restricting its use will apply to almost all of this.

Officers have identified a number of schemes that could be funded from Section 106 funds in 2011/12, where funding becomes available. These are summarised below

Department	Schemes	Budget
Corporate Services	Community Centres	£250,000
CYPL	Schools	£250,000
ECC	Local Transport Plan	£750,000
ECC	Leisure, Culture & Visual Environment	£250,000
	Total	£1,500,000

Under the constitutional arrangements, the Council must approve the release of such funding. However, this does not preclude the Executive bringing forward further schemes to be approved by the Council to be funded from Section 106 funds during the year.

Annexes B - F also include details of all schemes that will be funded from the various external sources in the next year.

Funding Options

- 5.11 There are a number of important issues concerning the long term funding of capital expenditure. Following the transfer of the housing stock in 2008, the Council's capital receipts are limited to miscellaneous asset sales and the contribution from the VAT Shelter Scheme and Right-to-Buy claw back agreed as part of the transfer. As noted earlier in this report, these receipts are likely to be depressed by the general economic conditions and as such receipts in 2011/12 are estimated to be in the region of £2m.
- 5.12 The proposed capital programme for 2011/12 has been developed, therefore, on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of £2m of capital receipts, Government grants, other external contributions and some internal borrowing. The

financing costs associated with the Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans.

- 5.13 Should any additional capital receipts be generated in 2011/12 the interest earned on these will be used to mitigate the revenue cost of the capital programme.
- 5.14 For 2011/12 it is unlikely that the Council will need to resort to external borrowing as it will be able to utilise revenue resources held internally. However the Capital Finance Regulations, require the General Fund to set aside an amount which would be broadly equivalent to the amount the Council would need to pay if it borrowed externally. If any amendments are made to the capital programme the revenue consequences will need to be adjusted accordingly. Executive Members will therefore need to consider the impact of the capital programme as part of the final revenue budget decisions.
- 5.15 The reduction in available capital receipts has placed greater emphasis on the capital programme and its impact on the revenue budget. Following the introduction of the Prudential Borrowing regime local authorities are able to determine the level of their own capital expenditure with regard only to affordability on the revenue account. In practice this represents the amount of borrowing they can afford to finance, and will necessitate taking a medium-term view of revenue income streams and capital investment needs.
- 5.16 To achieve its aim of ensuring that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, the Local Government Act requires all local authorities to set and keep under review a series of prudential indicators included in the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Capital Programme recommended in this report can be sustained and is within the prudential guidelines. Full Council will need to agree the prudential indicators for 2011/12 to 2013/14 in March 2011, alongside its consideration of the specific budget proposals for 2011/12 and the Council's medium-term financial prospects.
- 5.17 Members will need to carefully balance the level of the Capital Programme in future years against other revenue budget pressures and a thorough review, including the prioritisation of those schemes planned for 2012/13 onwards, will need to be undertaken during next summer.

Meeting the Council's Medium Term Objectives

- 5.18 The integrated budget package prioritises resources according to the six overarching priorities of the Council and continues to invest mainly through targeted capital expenditure, in services designed over the next three years to:

Priority 2 - Protect and enhance our environment

- £1.2m on highways infrastructure maintenance
- £4.0m on new affordable housing
- £1.4m on other measures to protect and enhance the environment

Priority 3 – Promoting health and achievement

- £1.1m on promoting achievement and learning

Priority 4 - Create a borough where people are, and feel safe

- £0.2m on access improvement programmes

Priority 5 - Provide value for money

- £0.2m on continued investment in Information Technology

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The authorisation for incurring capital expenditure by local authorities is contained in the legislation covering the service areas. Controls on capital expenditure are contained in the Local Government Act 2003 and regulations made thereunder.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Council's final budget proposals will potentially impact on all areas of the community. A detailed consultation process is planned in order to provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to comment on the draft proposals. This will ensure that in making final recommendations, the Executive can be made aware of the views of a broad section of residents and service users. Where necessary, impact assessments on specific schemes within the capital programme will be undertaken before work commences.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The most significant risk facing the Council is the impact of the capital programme on the revenue budget. The scale of the Council's Capital Programme for 2011/12 will impact upon the revenue budget and will itself be subject to consultation over the coming weeks. All new spending on services will need to be funded from new capital receipts or borrowing from internal resources. The additional revenue costs of the proposed Capital Programme of £10.458m for 2011/12 after allowing for projected capital receipts of £2m but excluding the self-funding Invest to Save schemes will be £38,000 in 2010/11 and up to £425,000 (based on estimated short-term interest rates) in 2012/13. This effect is compounded by future year's capital programmes. As revenue resources are limited it is clear that a capital programme of this magnitude is not sustainable in the medium term without significant revenue economies. The generation of capital receipts in future years may mitigate the impact on the revenue budget, but as the timing and scale of these receipts is uncertain their impact is unlikely to be significant.
- 6.5 There are also a range of risks that are common to all capital projects which include:
- Tender prices exceeding the budget
 - Planning issues and potential delays
 - Uncertainty of external funding (especially when bids are still to be submitted or the results of current bids are unknown)
 - Building delays due to unavailability of materials or inclement weather

- Availability of staff with appropriate skills to implement schemes and IT projects in particular.

6.6 These can be managed through the use of appropriate professional officers and following best practice in project management techniques.

6.7 The report also identifies the risk associated with the shortfall in maintenance expenditure compared to that identified by the latest condition surveys. With only those highest priorities receiving funding in 2011/12, there will be further build up in the maintenance backlog and a risk that the deterioration in Council assets will hamper the ability to deliver good services.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will be consulted on the budget proposals and may also choose to direct specific issues to individual overview and scrutiny panels. Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Senior Citizens' Forum, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. Comments and views will be sought on both the overall budget package and on the detailed budget proposals. In addition, this report and all the supporting information are publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. To facilitate this, the full budget package will be placed on the Council's web site at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk. There will also be a dedicated mailbox to collect comments.

7.2 The timetable for the approval of the 2011/12 Budget is as follows

Executive agree proposals as basis for consultation	14 December 2010
Consultation period	15 December 2010 - 25 January 2011
Executive considers representations made and recommends budget.	15 February 2011
Council considers Executive budget proposals	02 March 2011

Background Papers

Contact for further information

Chris Herbert – 01344 355694

chris.herbert@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alan Nash -01344 352180

alan.nash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Calvin Orr – 01344 352125

calvin.orr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Doc. Ref

G:\Technical And Audit\Capital\Capital 2011-12\December Exec 2010\Capital Programme (Exec Dec 10) - Draft.Doc

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2011/12

	Corporate £000	Council Wide £000	CYPL £000	ASCH £000	ECC £000	TOTAL £000
Committed	0	435	60	0	5,035	5,530
Unavoidable	55	784	784	0	1,382	3,005
Maintenance	0	1,145	200	0	312	1,657
Rolling Programme / Other Desirable	15	0	151	0	100	266
Total Request for Council Funding	70	2,364	1,195	0	6,829	10,458
Total External Funding	250	0	2,559	0	2,455	5,264
Total Capital Funding	320	2,364	3,754	0	9,284	15,722

This page is intentionally left blank

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING

	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000
Committed			
Capita One.net (EMS) upgrade	60	0	0
	60	0	0
Unavoidable			
Plumbing Improvements - Great Hollands Primary	280	0	0
Edgbarrow changing rooms	30	0	0
Fire Risk Assessments	334	330	100
College Town Infant Fire Alarm System	20	0	0
Edgbarrow Fire Safety	20	20	20
Disabled Access (schools) DDA legislation	100	100	100
	784	450	220
Maintenance			
Improvements & Capitalised Repairs - Schools	200	200	200
	200	200	200
Rolling Programme / Other Desirable			
Kennel Lane Redevelopment	151	0	0
	151	0	0
TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING	1,195	650	420
External Funding			
Additional School Places - Primary	1,700	3,700	3,400
Additional School Places - Secondary	430	550	250
Kennel Lane Redevelopment	179	0	0
Section 106 Contributions	250	250	250
Building Schools for the Future - Other Schools	tbc	tbc	tbc
Schools Devolved Formula Capital (excl VA schools)	tbc	tbc	tbc
Modernisation Funding (Grant)	tbc	tbc	tbc
Targeted Capital Fund	tbc	tbc	tbc
Primary Capital Programme	tbc	tbc	tbc
Aiming High	tbc	tbc	tbc
PVI funding - School Foundation Years	tbc	tbc	tbc
TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING	2,559	4,500	3,900
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	3,754	5,150	4,320

Capital Programme 2011/12 – Children, Young People and Learning

Committed	£'000
Capita One (EMS) Upgrade	60
Capita are continuing to migrate the ONE (EMS) software from its existing outdated Powerbuilder environment to the industry standard Dot Net (.net) technology. This project was initiated in 2007 and will run until March 2012 according to current information. There are significant costs associated with this migration which have increased greatly since initial quotes provided by Capita. As the system was designed to be sizeable and scalable, the infrastructure requirements are greater with each module migration. The point has been reached where the current infrastructure needs to be increased to accommodate further migrations and to safeguard the speed and performance of the database moving forward.	

Unavoidable	£'000
Plumbing Improvements – Great Hollands Primary	280
The project involves the replacement of pipes and boilers to remove the risk of legionella at Great Hollands Primary School. Asbestos will also be removed as part of the works.	
Edgbarrow changing rooms	30
This is a high priority as the current use of the changing rooms, toilets and shower facilities by members of the public and school pupils during the school day is unacceptable from a child protection point of view. Construction work will allow the alteration of the changing rooms at Edgbarrow Sports Centre to provide separate facilities for members of the general public and the school pupils. The work will improve the service to both the school pupils and the public. The alternative is to stop members of the public using the sports facilities whilst the school pupils are having their PE lessons. This could impact on income levels at the sports centre as public use would be more restricted.	
Fire Risk Assessments	334
A budget to carry out essential works identified in Fire Risk Assessments. Fire safety legislation requires schools to have fire risk assessments, and the Council to manage the identified risks. All of the works identified meet the eligibility criteria for capital expenditure.	
College Town Infant Fire Alarm System	20
Works recently highlighted in the BFC corporate FRA programme have highlighted the need for extensive works at this school. This project will allow the school to upgrade the fire detection system to the current Fire	

regulations standard to BS583 and improvements will include MCP, bells and detectors. The school are contributing an additional £40,000 towards the cost of the works from their devolved budgets for a total value of £60,000.	
Edgbarrow Fire Safety	20
Works recently highlighted in the BFC corporate FRA programme have highlighted the need for extensive works at this school. This project will allow the school to address Health & Safety Issues. Improvements to the school will make all school buildings compliant with current Fire safety regulations by replacing fire doors and emergency lighting across the school. The school are contributing an additional £10,000 towards the cost of the works from their devolved budgets for a total value of £30,000.	
Disabled Access (Schools) DDA Legislation	100
Disabled access works to school buildings to meet the needs of disabled staff, pupils and visitors. The works have been prioritised to meet the needs of any disabled pupils in line with the Council strategy to improve access for disabled pupils and potential pupils who are disabled to the curriculum and facilities of schools. Bracknell Forest, therefore meets a statutory duty to plan systematically to improve access and avoid unreasonable discrimination. This will also help to prevent greater cost of out-Borough placements, possibly in the independent sector. One placement of a physically disabled child in the independent sector could cost approximately £50k per annum. All of the works identified meet the eligibility criteria for capital expenditure. The schedule of works includes a sum of money for specific access works for an individual disabled pupil who is expected to apply for a primary school place in 2011/12.	

Maintenance	£'000
Improvements & capitalised repairs – Schools	200
An assessment has been made of the condition of the Council's property assets to arrive at an estimate of the outstanding maintenance works required. Only Priorities 1D and 1C have been included in the Capital Programme proposals with an allocation of £200,000 for Schools on the assumption that they should be responsible for meeting their maintenance requirements from within their delegated budgets	

Rolling programme and Other Desirable	£'000
Kennel Lane Redevelopment	151
<p>A budget to reinstate part of the £330k lost to the redevelopment project from the withdrawal of 8.25% of the DFE Targeted Capital Fund grant. The work is refurbishment and improvement of the existing school buildings. The reduction in funding for the Kennel Lane project has increased the backlog of urgent suitability and access work which will continue to be a burden on the School and the Council in future years.</p> <p>The redevelopment project addresses the capacity issues in the school, but the balance of the budget is earmarked for these high priority fitness for purpose issues identified in the Asset Management Plan, and by the school. Lack of funding for planned maintenance is a problem across the whole Council, which is being mitigated by using capital project funding where this is appropriate. Cutting the redevelopment budget will just divert this need onto other budgets which are already under pressure. The suitability and access issues at Kennel Lane are also a high priority due to this being a Special School where all of the pupils have special needs which can only be met by investment in the physical environment.</p>	

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 12 JANUARY 2011

THE 14 – 16 CURRICULUM OFFER IN BRACKNELL FOREST Director of Children, Young People & Learning

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following the progress report in respect of the implementation of the 14-19 education entitlement presented in October 2010, this report provides further details of the 14 - 16 curriculum offer in Bracknell Forest schools. The report also outlines some of the possible implications of the Schools White Paper, published on 24 November 2010 and the addendum to the Statement of Intent with regard to the publication of test and examinations results, announced in December 2010.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children Young People & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the Report.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Recent Developments

- 3.1 Following the announcement by the new coalition government that the requirement for young people to have access to a revised entitlement, including all Diploma lines of learning, by 2013 was to be removed, the Local Authority has discussed the future curriculum offer with local providers, including all six secondary schools and Bracknell and Wokingham College. This considered the provision of Diplomas, the Increased Flexibility Programme, Young Apprenticeships, Foundation Learning and alternative vocational qualifications, including BTECs and OCR Nationals.
- 3.2 The Schools White Paper confirmed that there is to be a review of vocational qualifications, led by Professor Alison Wolf and scheduled to report in the spring of 2011. In addition, there will be a review of the secondary National Curriculum. This document also confirmed that the age of compulsory participation in education or training is to be raised to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015.
- 3.3 The Schools White Paper introduced the concept of an English Baccalaureate. The Statement of Intent with regard to the publication of test and examinations results noted that:

'The Government believes that schools should offer pupils a broad range of academic subjects to age 16, and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) promotes that aspiration.'

'The EBacc is not a new qualification in itself. It will recognise students' achievements across a core of selected academic subjects in getting good passes in rigorous GCSE or iGCSEs. The English Baccalaureate will cover achievement in English, mathematics, sciences, a language and a humanities subject. We intend to mark individual students' future achievements through a certificate.'

'A humanities subject' is further defined as being history or geography.

- 3.4 Bracknell Forest schools remain committed to providing the most appropriate curriculum to meet the diverse needs of our young people. As a result, they will continue to plan the development of vocational learning opportunities and will work in partnership with Bracknell and Wokingham College to deliver these. Given the uncertainty over the future of the new Diploma qualifications, it is likely that there will be only a limited expansion of provision in 2011. Alternative vocational qualifications, notably BTECs, will, however, be available.

The Current Curriculum Offer

- 3.5 Students in our schools were offered the option of taking a Diploma in one of four areas in 2010. Three of these recruited and have now started. These are:

Hair & Beauty at Wick Hill (Bracknell & Wokingham College), Level 2 KS4,
Six Bracknell Forest students (plus students from Wokingham)

Business, Administration & Finance at Brakenhale school, Level 2 KS4,
Eight Bracknell Forest students

IT at Sandhurst school, Level 2 KS4,
Three Bracknell Forest students

These will continue in 2011 and The Diploma in Creative & Media and The Diploma in Hospitality are expected to be introduced at Garth Hill College.

- 3.6 BTEC First Certificate courses were delivered in seven subject areas in 2010. The great majority (499) of the 563 subject entries were in Applied Science. Students also studied Art & Design, Engineering Studies, Health & Social Care, Music Studies, Performing Arts and Sports Studies. Results in all subject areas were good and schools will look to extend participation and expand provision as required.
- 3.7 The collaborative timetable developed to facilitate the delivery of Diplomas has also enabled an increased number of students to access the Young Apprenticeship programme at Bracknell and Wokingham College. This requires students to spend two days each week either at College or in a workplace environment. Young Apprenticeships are available in Hairdressing, Health & Social Care and the Motor Industry. At present 20 young people are engaged in these programmes.
- 3.8 Bracknell & Wokingham College's Eastern Road site has now closed and all 14-16 vocational options provided by the College are now delivered at the Wick Hill site. Bracknell Forest and Wokingham LAs have supported the refurbishment of the facilities which, when this work has been completed, will offer a broader range of improved facilities than was available at Eastern Road. In addition to Diplomas and Young Apprenticeships, other vocational courses in Childcare, Hair & Beauty, Motor Vehicle, Construction, Engineering and Health & Social Care are available at Wick Hill. Approximately 100 students in each Key Stage 4 cohort, drawn from all schools, participate in this provision.
- 3.9 The great majority of young people in Bracknell Forest schools study a range of GCSE or equivalent subjects. All students study English, mathematics and science (17% studied the three separate sciences of Biology, Chemistry and Physics in 2010, with the remainder following core and additional science programmes).

In a cohort of 1128, 930 students studied English Literature in addition to Language. Almost half (547) studied one of the Design & Technology options. Of the other optional subjects, the most popular were:

History – 497 students (44%)
Modern Language – 431 (38%)
Geography – 331 (29%)
Business Studies & Economics – 294 (26%)
Art & Design/Fine Art – 292 (26%)
Religious Studies – 284 (25%)
Sport/PE Studies – 233 (21%)
Information Technology – 224 (20%)

169 students studied Drama & Theatre Studies. Other subjects with between 50 and 100 entries were Catering Studies (98), Child Development (71) and Music (64).

Fewer than 50 students were entered for Media (40), Photography (33), Office Technology (23), Statistics (27), and Dance (21).

- 3.10 All schools now teach functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT. These will be examined as part of GCSE courses in these subjects or as 'stand alone' qualifications. The schools are also exploring ways in which they can work together to combine functional skills, vocational qualifications and certification of personal development learning in more coherent Foundation Learning programmes for those young people who are not able to achieve appropriate outcomes in Level 2 programmes.

GCSE Performance 2010

- 3.11 In the core subjects, 68.5% of students achieved Grade A*-C in English and 63.6% in mathematics. 57% achieved Grade A*-C in both of these subjects. 94% of students taking the three separate science subjects achieved A*-C, whilst 56% achieved A*-C in single/core science and 68% in additional science.
- 3.12 In the most popular Design & Technology options, 78.4% achieved Grade A*-C in Food Technology, 73.3% in Graphic Products and 62.7% in Resistant Materials. In French, 78.3% of the 253 entries achieved A*-C and in German 81.3% out of 139 students achieved this level.
- 3.13 The most successful option subjects were Fine Art (93% Grade A*-C), Music (87%), Art & Design (77%), Religious Studies (75%), Sport/PE Studies (72%) Geography (69%), History (68%) and Drama (67%).
- 3.14 A very high proportion of entries (99%) resulted in students achieving Grade A*-G. Those subjects in which 10 or more students failed to achieve a pass grade were English Literature (12), Business Studies, (10), History (10) and Information Technology (10).

New Measures of Performance

- 3.15 The addendum to the Statement of Intent with regard to the publication of test and examinations results included several new indicators of performance to be included in the School Performance Tables from January 2011. Based on 2010 results, these tables will, for the first time, show the proportion of pupils at school, local authority

and national levels achieving Grades A*-C in both English and mathematics. The intention is to include science in this 'Basics indicator' from next year.

Fischer Family Trust data suggest that:

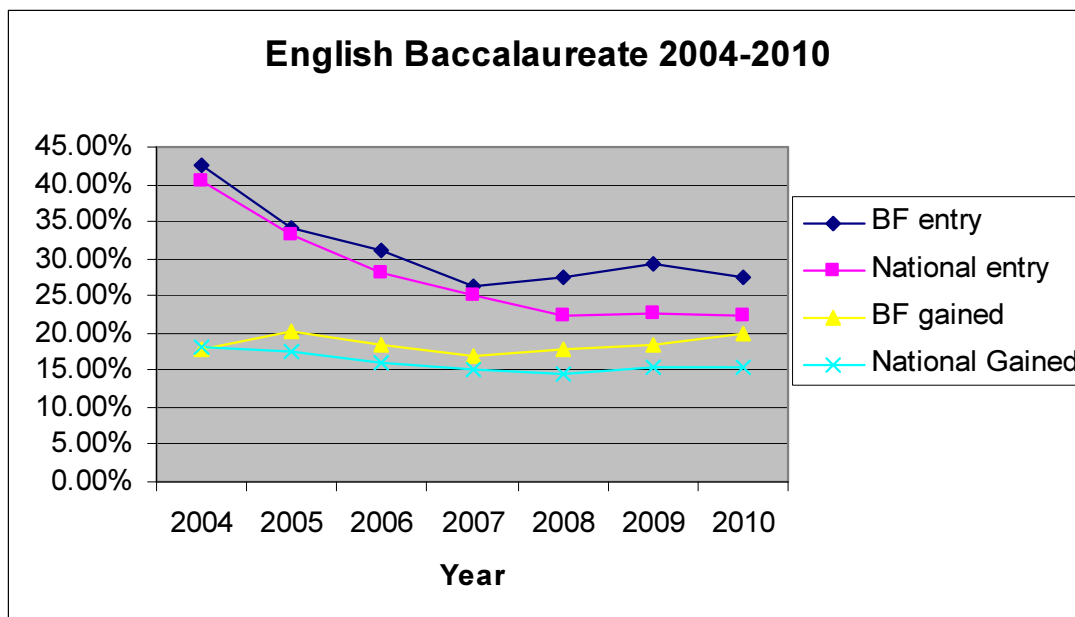
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Achieving A*-C in both English and maths - LA	48.7%	50.25%	53%	52.6%	57%
Achieving A*-C in both English and maths - National	45.8%	47.7%	49.7%	52.1%	56.1%
Achieving A*-C in English maths and science - LA	41.3%	42%	43.6%	44.6%	48.1%
Achieving A*-C in English maths and science - National	37.4%	38.1%	38.2%	39.7%	41.9%

On the basis of this indicator, Bracknell Forest is just above the national average for the proportion achieving the higher grades in both English and mathematics and significantly above the national average when science is added to the indicator.

- 3.16 The School Performance Tables will also show performance at school, local authority, and national level in the combination of subjects which comprise the proposed English Baccalaureate (as defined in para. 2.3 above) alongside the current indicator of the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE Grades A*-C. The definition of the EBacc will be reviewed for the Tables which will reflect the 2011 results.

Fischer Family Trust data suggest that:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Proportion of cohort entered for the EBacc - LA	31.1%	26.2%	27.5%	29.3%	27.3%
Proportion of cohort entered for the EBacc - National	28%	25%	22.4%	22.7%	22.3%
Proportion of cohort achieving the EBacc - LA	18.3%	17%	18%	18.3%	20.1%
Proportion of cohort achieving the EBacc – Nat.	16.5%	15%	14.6%	15.3%	15.4%



On the basis of this indicator, Bracknell Forest has a higher proportion of young people taking the combination of EBacc subjects than the national average. The proportion of young people achieving Grades A*-C in all of these subjects, and hence achieving the EBacc, is also above the national average.

- 3.17 Although Bracknell Forest is therefore likely to be above the national average when the additional indicators are introduced, the English Baccalaureate has significant implications for the curriculum offer available in individual schools. As the graph above shows, the proportion of students taking the full combination of EBacc subjects has fallen significantly since 2004, although the proportion achieving it has remained relatively stable.

The key factors in the declining numbers taking the full EBacc are the fall in numbers taking a Modern Foreign Language, which was formerly compulsory, and the proportion of students who take either history or geography.

- 3.18 The number of young people studying a Modern Foreign Language remains high at some of our schools but is much lower at others. In part, this reflects the moves in recent years to broaden the curriculum offer to better meet the needs and aspirations of our young people. The relatively narrow definition of 'Humanities' means that a considerable number of students who achieve well will not achieve the EBacc since they chose to study alternative options. In order to achieve the EBacc, it is therefore inevitable that students will have less freedom to choose from the range of optional subjects available. This will also have significant implications for school staffing, since the current balance of specialisms may no longer be appropriate to deliver the EBacc to more students.

Contact for further information

Martin Surrell (Senior Adviser)
 Martin.Surrell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
 01344 354033

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 12 JANUARY 2011

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT 2009 / 10 Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the 2009/10 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service which performs a key role in assuring the quality of the local authority's care planning for children who are looked after. The Annual Report was received by the Executive Member for Children and Young People on 16 November 2010 and the associated report is attached.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the 2009/10 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.**

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning – 01344 352283
e-mail: janette.karklins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122
e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT 2009 / 10
Chief Officer Performance and Resources

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service to the Executive Member for Children and Young People.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the report set out in Annex 1 is received by the Executive Member, Children and Young People.**
- 2.2 **That the Executive Member for Children and Young People notes item 3.3 below with regards to the current status of new IRO guidance.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The IRO Service performs a key role in assuring the quality of the local authority's care planning for children who are looked after. The annual report supports the continuing development and review of the local strategy for children's services.
- 3.2 Guidance issued by the DCSF [now the DFE] expects that an annual report should be provided to the Lead Member with Executive responsibility for Children's Services and for Corporate Parenting, with the aim of identifying good practice, and highlighting areas for further development / improvement.
- 3.3 Towards the end of 2009 the DCSF consulted on a suite of statutory guidance for consultation setting out how local authorities should carry out their full responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children. The new IRO Handbook was one of those documents. There is work underway currently to determine the impact of the final guidance, published in spring 2010, for implementation in April 2011. The new Coalition Government has recently established a review of social work chaired by Professor Eileen Munro, which will report in April 2011. This may signal changes in the IRO service and regulations around children in care.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None considered as production of such a report is recommended in DCSF Guidance.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Current DCSF Guidance suggests that IRO Services should produce an annual report for consideration by the Executive Member for Children's Services.

- 5.2 The Guidance does not specify either structure or content but states that the purpose of the report is to inform the development of local strategies for meeting the needs of children who are looked after by the Local Authority.
- 5.3 The attached report is the fifth annual report. It sets out the work of the IRO Service over the period 1 September 2009 – 31 August 2010. The report highlights good practice and identifies areas of potential concern and the measures that have been taken to address these.
- 5.4 Legislation is supported by detailed guidance, which has been taken into account in making arrangements in Bracknell Forest.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforces and strengthens the role of the IRO enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case to ensure that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Guidance is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. As such the Guidance does not have statutory force but the authority should comply with it unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2.1 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that there are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The IRO Service has been the subject of a full Equalities Impact Assessment and as this report proposes no change of policy a further EIA is not required at this stage.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 No issues arise from this report.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups to be Consulted

None

Method of Consultation

Not applicable

Representations Received

Not applicable

Background Papers

Revised policy and procedure for the statutory review of
children looked after: Bracknell Forest Borough Council

21 March 2006

Contact for further information

Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance
Sandra.davies@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Jan Poole Independent Reviewing Officer
Jan.poole@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



Independent Reviewing Officer Service

Annual Report

2009/10

Jan Poole, Independent Reviewing Officer
Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance
October 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO] over the period of September 2009 to August 2010. It is the fifth annual report to be presented in this way.

Section two of the report lays out the legal framework for the role of the IRO, and identifies the numbers of children who are looked after, this number can fluctuate from month to month and the figure given in the section of the report relates to those children looked after in August 2010. Information in this section identifies the purpose of the statutory review, and the required frequency at which reviews must take place.

Section three provides an overview of the work of the IRO and includes:

- The number and timeliness of reviews – this is monitored in relation to performance against statutory timescales, and performance in this area is good.
- Child participation in reviews – this is seen as a key function of the IRO role as the involvement of children in the review process is essential, performance in this area is good with 93% of children participating in their reviews as at 31 March 2010. Reasons for non participation are recorded, and work is ongoing to encourage participation. It is noted that a new consultation booklet for disabled children has proved successful in gaining children's views.
- Young people chairing their own reviews – is actively encouraged by the IRO, and there has been some success with this, it is noted that when young people do chair their conferences they appear more confident.
- Reporting to managers in Children's Social Care is inherent in the role to ensure effective communication, and provide opportunities to feed back on key performance, practice and development issues. A number of key areas are discussed during this reporting such as Permanence Plans, Pathway Planning, Consultation Papers, Parental Involvement in reviews and the involvement of key agencies in the review process.
- Short Break Care reviews relate to children with learning difficulties / disabilities who receive care away from home overnight. New guidance on Short breaks led to an internal review of those children who met the criteria as looked after, and a number of children at this time were felt not to meet the criteria, and were therefore no longer looked after.

Section four provides a focus on practice; as a key function of the IRO is to raise issues where it is felt that practice can be improved upon. The IRO notes in the report the strong commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people across the Council, there are however some occasions where the IRO will raise an issue formally through use of the Resolution Protocol. Issues raised in this way cover care planning issues, accommodation issues, and some specific practice issues. There is also a focus on good practice, which highlights comments made by children and young people about their Social Workers and their Foster Carers.

Section five looks at some of the key challenges in carrying out the role of IRO, these include:

- Independence and collaboration, noting the IRO needs to maintain a collaborative relationship with Social Work staff and management, whilst retaining the responsibility of challenging poor practice in the review of cases where this is necessary.
- Workload and timing of reviews, noting that over the period of this report the workload has increased by 11.8%. Within the IRO role many elements must be planned effectively to ensure a smooth review which includes preparation, consultation with the child, and other key people prior to a review, travel where a child / young person is placed outside the Borough, and undertaking additional reviews where circumstances warrant this, such as a placement move or change to a care plan.
- Providing induction and training to Social Workers ensuring that new workers are familiar with and understand the looked after child review process.

Section six highlights areas for future development which the IRO feels will benefit the further development and success of the looked after review process.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the fifth annual report on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in Bracknell Forest. The IRO has a key role in assuring the quality of the case planning for those children and young people who are looked after by the local authority. Throughout the period of this report the IRO has contributed to the development of good practice in this area through highlighting examples of good practice and identifying areas of concern and weakness. The purpose of this report is to provide a context for this work and to summarise the issues that have arisen for the Executive Member with responsibility for children, young people and corporate parenting.

The report covers the period from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010.

2 Context

Legislation

- 2.1 The arrangements for the statutory reviews of looked after children were amended and updated by Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which introduced the new statutory role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. The requirement for such a post came into force in September 2004.
- 2.2 The legislation required local authorities to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer with the remit of:
- chairing the authority's looked after children reviews;
 - monitoring the authority's review of the care plan; and
 - where necessary, referring cases to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to take legal action as a last resort if the failure to implement the care plan might be considered to breach the child's human rights.
- 2.3 In addition, there is an expectation that this service will 'quality assure' the local authority's care planning for looked after children.
- 2.4 Legislation is supported by detailed guidance¹, and has been taken into account in making arrangements in Bracknell Forest.
- 2.5 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, reinforces and strengthens the role of the IRO enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case to ensure that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

¹ Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory guidance
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare/careplanning/careplanning/>

Which children?

- 2.6 All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement, prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation.

In Bracknell Forest the number of such children in August 2010 was:

	August 2010	August 2009
Section 31 of the Children Act 1989	33	35
Section 20 of the Children Act 1989	57 [including 7 short break care]	59 [including 19 – Short Break Care]
Placement Order: Adoption and Children Act 2002	2	0
On remand	0	1
Total	92	95

The IRO service in Bracknell Forest

- 2.7 Responsibility for the service rests with the Director of Children's Services. In order to provide independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources within Children's Social Care, the IRO function sits with the Chief Officer Performance and Resources and is managed by the Head of Performance and Governance.

Statutory Reviews

- 2.8 The purpose of the statutory review is to consider the plan for the welfare of the child; to monitor the progress of the plan; and make decisions to amend the plan as necessary in the light of changed knowledge and circumstances.
- 2.9 In chairing reviews, the IRO is required to ensure that:
- the child's views are understood and taken into account; and
 - the persons responsible for implementing any decision taken in consequence of the review are identified.
- 2.10 Any failure to review individual cases should be brought to the attention of a senior person within the local authority.
- 2.11 The Executive Member for Children and Young People approved a revised policy and procedure for the reviews of looked after children which complied

with the most recent legislative requirements in 2006², this was updated in May 2007. This policy will be further updated to take account of the new guidance which becomes effective from April 1st, 2011.

Frequency of reviews

2.12 Under the provisions of the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations (1991)*³ local authorities are required to review the case of any child who is Looked After or provided with accommodation as follows:

- first review must take place within 28 days of the date upon which the child begins to be looked after or provided with accommodation;
- second review must be carried out no later than 3 months after the first review; and
- subsequent reviews shall be carried out not more than 6 months after the date of the previous review.

2.13 The date of the next review should be brought forward:

- if there is a change of placement or other substantial changes to the care plan (see below for clarification of this);
- if the IRO has specific concerns about a child and directs that the review be brought forward; and
- any request from the child or parent(s) for a review to be brought forward should be given serious consideration.

3 Overview of Work

Number and timeliness of reviews

3.1 A total of 230 Looked After Children (LAC) reviews (excluding Short Break Care reviews) took place in the relevant period. Although this figure remains similar to the previous year [238], this is evidence of the impact of children coming in and out of the care system and the time frames required for reviews, which remains consistent.

3.2 Every effort is made to carry out reviews within the statutory timescales⁴. In the period up to 31 August 2010, 228 (99%) reviews have been conducted on time. This is excellent performance.

3.3 At 31 March 2010 the NI 66 figure was 95.3% which is an improvement on the figure at 31 March 2009 of 91.3%.

3.4 Local authority performance is closely monitored and in all cases when a review is 'out-of-time', the reasons are noted. The reasons for four reviews being overdue during the relevant period were:

- Key personnel not available;

² Policy and Procedure for the Statutory Review of Looked After Children
Bracknell Forest Borough Council, 2006

³ Paragraph 3

⁴ NI 66 Timeliness of Reviews of LAC is included in the 198 indicators in the National Indicator set and will be reported on in quarterly performance monitoring reports.

- Error by IRO in calculation of subsequent date.
- 3.5 The statistics reflect the effectiveness of the system in place for notifying the IRO when a child is newly accommodated and the conscientiousness of social workers in alerting the IRO in good time to anticipated difficulties with forthcoming review dates.

Child Participation in reviews

- 3.6 The involvement of children in their own reviews is regarded as an essential part of the process. This has been highlighted as a priority in previous reports and has continued to be an important theme this year.

*'A key task for the IRO will be to ensure that the review processes, and particularly review meetings, remain child and family centred'*⁵

- 3.7 The IRO has an important role in ensuring that the child:
- can make a meaningful contribution to their review;
 - speaks for themselves if they are able and willing to do so; and where this is not possible that their views are conveyed by someone else on their behalf or by an appropriate medium; and
 - has been given the opportunity to make a written contribution to the meeting, particularly if they have chosen not to attend or are unable to attend for some other reason.
- 3.8 The recorded achievement in this area of activity is also a measure of local authority performance (although no longer a national performance indicator)⁶. At 31 March 2010, this figure was 93.3%.
- 3.9 The reasons why children did not contribute to their reviews in this reporting period are given below:
- In spite of changing the review location to Bracknell, as per the wishes of a young person who was living outside of the borough, the young person did not attend. The IRO's subsequent attempts to make contact via the telephone were unsuccessful;
 - The meeting for a child with severe learning disabilities was cancelled due to severe weather conditions and the review was carried out by telephone with relevant personnel individually. The IRO was not able to meet the child within the required timescales;
 - Two young people refused to attend their meetings or complete a consultation paper. Attempts by the IRO to speak to them on the telephone were unsuccessful.
- 3.10 Work has continued to enable children to participate in their reviews in ways acceptable to them.
- 3.11 Participation by children with disabilities has continued to be promoted. The most appropriate venue and support to encourage their participation is

⁵ Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002

⁶ PAF C63, Participation in Reviews

carefully considered. The introduction of a new consultation booklet for disabled children has proved very successful in obtaining the children's views.

Young people chairing their own reviews

- 3.12 Ten reviews were chaired by the young person themselves, which is 7 fewer than 2009. They enjoyed the experience and their willingness to be available to help other young people who are considering chairing their reviews for the first time is an area which is available for development. Their increased confidence is noticeable each time they take on this role. Thirteen young people co-chaired their reviews, which is 7 more than in 2009. It is anticipated that this number will fluctuate from year to year and will depend on the age, ability and confidence of the children to undertake this role.
- 3.13 Developments such as spending more time with the young person preparing for the review, encouraging other young people to chair and younger children to co-chair, are carried out as time permits, although all young people are offered the opportunity to speak to the IRO directly before their review.

The Child Participation Development Officer (CPDO)

- 3.14 The Department employs an officer with responsibility for encouraging the participation of children and young people in a range of activities. The IRO has worked with this officer to develop this area of work with regard to statutory reviews. The CPDO seeks to:
- encourage professionals to do all in their power to enable young people to have their say in decisions which affect them;
 - inform and enable young people to know their rights and to have their say in meetings which concern them; and
 - ensure there are appropriate processes in place to enable a young person to participate in their reviews
 - promote advocacy to young people. A new advocacy leaflet is currently being produced.
- 3.15 If a child has not attended their review this will be followed up by the allocated social worker. The CPDO will be informed if there are any specific barriers to participation so these can be addressed.
- 3.16 The consultation documents are currently being reviewed and the CPDO is seeking the views of staff, carers, and young people. The CPDO will also explore options of making the consultation document available to young people electronically.

Reports to managers in Children's Social Care

- 3.17 The IRO meets with the Head of Service for Looked After Children every other month in order to ensure appropriate liaison between the service and Children's Social Care teams. In order to support the development of good practice, the IRO has reported quarterly to the Children's Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) and six monthly to the meeting of Team and Unit Managers (TUMs). In addition to reporting on the number of reviews held

on time and child participation in reviews, she has also reported on the following issues:

Overarching Permanence Plans

- 3.18 A plan for permanence must be produced for all looked after children at their four monthly statutory reviews with milestones that can be monitored and agreed at that review. 24 (100%) were completed on time

Pathway Plans

- 3.19 A Looked After Child Pathway Plan should be started when the young person is 15½ and completed by their sixteenth birthday. Of the young people who fall into this category, 85% had a plan in place at the required time.
- 3.20 In instances where young people become looked after post 16, a Pathway Plan is completed as soon as possible. Some young people may be reluctant to engage with their Social Worker to develop a plan, and work must be taken at the young person's own pace.
- 3.21 There is good joint working between the Over 11s and the After Care Teams with a member of the latter team attending reviews once a looked after child reaches the age of 15 ½ in most cases.
- 3.22 This enables them to get to know the child and vice versa and to assist with the child's smooth transition to the After Care service at the appropriate time. It has generally been agreed that Pathway planning will be strengthened by the IRO reviewing the Pathway Plan rather than Care Plan for 'eligible' young people and planning is taking place for this to be introduced.

Consultation Papers

- 3.23 *'The IRO has an important role in ensuring that all parties to the review are able to make an effective contribution.'*⁷
- 3.24 Consultation Papers are sent to parents, carers and the young person prior to a review. The child's consultation paper provides the IRO with a comprehensive picture of the child's feelings about the various aspects of their care and services he/she is receiving and assists the IRO in ensuring the child's voice is heard.

⁷ Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption And Children Act 2002 page 27 *DfES publication*, available at www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption

Parental Involvement in Reviews

- 3.25 In 230 reviews [59%⁸], over the reporting period, parental contributions were taken into account:
- 3.26 45% of reviews were attended by a parent and a further 14% participated by the medium of a consultation paper, prior discussion with the Social Worker or a telephone conversation with the IRO.
- 3.27 In further 15% reviews parental attendance is N/A for reasons such as parents being deceased, adoptive placements, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker [UASC] etc. – this would increase this figure to 74%. In some cases, however, it is not appropriate for the birth parents to attend reviews.

Youth Offending Service (YOS) involvement in Reviews

- 3.28 In order to improve ways in which the Youth Offending Service can contribute more effectively to reviews, the IRO has monitored their attendance or report contribution in relevant LAC cases. The IRO is satisfied that communication is good between the YOS and Social Workers in respect of looked after children.

Other Issues

- 3.29 Further monitoring includes the completion of Permanency Planning Meetings; timescales for Social Workers' reports reaching the IRO in advance of children's reviews; the completion of mid-term reviews (i.e. a paper review of the decisions and actions agreed at the previous review, carried out by the Social Worker half way through the six monthly cycle, a copy of which is forwarded to the IRO).

Short Break Care Reviews

- 3.30 Following the introduction of the Short Break Statutory Guidance⁹ on how to promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks, an internal review of the children/young people who were in receipt of short breaks under Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989 took place in May 2010. The view was reached that 5 of these children/young people met the criteria for accommodation under section 20 from June 1st 2010. Those who do not come into this category will continue to be provided with accommodation under Section 17(6) of the Children Act 1989 and be reviewed as Children in Need by the Disabled Children's Team Manager and Assistant Team Manager. Parents were included in the consultation process.

⁸This compares with 58% in the period up until the end of August 2009

⁹ Short Breaks Statutory Guidance 2010

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare/careplanning/careplanning/>

- 3.31 Over the period, a total of 34 reviews took place for children who receive short break care at the Larchwood Short Stay Unit, The Chiltern Centre, Bridge House, and Slough and with Bracknell Forest Foster Carers.
- 3.32 Short Break care is defined as care that lasts for more than 24 hours, fewer than 75 days per annum, does not include a single episode of 17 days or more and is provided in one setting.
- 3.33 Whilst Local Authority Performance is not measured in this area¹⁰, short break care reviews are given equal importance to those for children who are classed as fully looked after but less Quality Assurance monitoring is undertaken.

Development of policies and procedures

- 3.34 The IRO contributes to new policies or review of existing policies as relevant.

Support for the Berkshire IRO Network

- 3.35 The Berkshire IRO Network has met quarterly and the meetings continue to be hosted in Bracknell Forest. It is well attended and considered to meet its aims. The network aims to raise standards for LAC across Berkshire; to promote consistency of practice and service provision across agencies; and to provide a source of mutual support. This includes:
- professional development;
 - raising practice standards;
 - research and development;
 - group supervision; and
 - the opportunity to feed issues into the SE Regional Network.
- 3.36 The IRO also attends the South East IRO Network Meetings which provides a wider perspective of the IRO role and up to date information on Government policy, guidance and initiatives. Although the support function for these meetings has ended with the abolition of GOSE, it is intended that IRO's will explore opportunities to continue to meet and share information and good practice.

4 Focus on Practice

- 4.1 A key function of the IRO is to raise issues where practice can be improved. In the vast majority of cases this is not necessary and comments are made elsewhere in this report on the quality of care planning and case management by staff within the Children's Social Care (CSC) branch. Regular feedback on good practice is given to members of staff and their managers.

¹⁰ Locally this performance is included in the quarterly Performance Monitoring Report for CSCMT.

- 4.2 It is evident that there is a strong commitment to improve outcomes for children across the Department and within the Council. The issues that follow have been raised by the IRO in line with the Resolution Protocol (see page 16) during the period of this year's report, with the intention of highlighting where improvements can still be made. It should be noted that some issues were already known to CSC and the IRO wrote to support the need for them to be addressed:

Care Planning Issues

Contact with family

- 4.3 Contact for children from two families who are in long term foster care was considered too frequent by the IRO with increasing evidence of it causing instability for the children and of the placements being disrupted by the parents. CSC personnel were already aware of the situations.

Outcome: An independent assessment was commissioned in one case resulting in the recommendation for a reduction in contact frequency, which was subsequently implemented. In the second case, legal advice was sought and, as the Public Law Outline process had not been successful and it was evident that parents were not working with CSC, care proceedings have been initiated.

These cases highlight the tensions which can arise in long term foster placements when parents find it difficult to support care plans assessed to achieve permanency and stability for children and meet individual needs

Young people placed in the care of external agencies

- 4.4 The IRO commented on the lack of progress of care plans in three cases for children placed in the care of external agencies. In two cases the children were approaching their 18th birthdays and it was apparent that, whilst both young people were demonstrating some resistance to developing independence skills, no structured programme was in place to encourage them. In the third case, there had been a long delay in identifying a more appropriate home for a young person who had been assessed as requiring a larger property due to their height and size.

Outcome: Discussions were already in place between CSC and the agencies on these issues and in two cases, programmes to promote independence skills were put in place. In the third case, subsequent events caused the agency to serve notice on the placement and the young person to be moved.

Care Planning for young people approaching 18

- 4.5 The IRO commented on two cases of vulnerable young people subject to full care orders where a decision had not been made within 6 months and four months respectively of their 18th birthdays regarding where they would live post 18. In the first case, CSC were in negotiation with the Independent Fostering Agency to obtain a decision from the foster carer as to whether the young person could remain with her on a supported lodgings basis. In the second case, the IRO wrote in support of the young person's wish to remain

in the same placement post 18. She commented that it did not now allow for the young person to prepare to leave what had been her home for a significant period of time and people she considers to be her family.

Outcome: In the first case, a decision was taken by CSC to fund a support package from a provider who helps young people adjust from adolescence to adulthood and live independently for the first time in the community, which the young person was in agreement with.

In the second case, negotiations between CSC and the young person's provider were not successful in securing the placement post 18 on a supported lodgings basis, which the IRO would have supported.

Negotiations were still ongoing as the young person reached 18 and, therefore, ceased to be looked after and the IRO's involvement ended. The IRO had sought advice from the CAFCASS duty helpline regarding this case.

CSC consideration to change care plan at short notice

- 4.6 The IRO had supported the wish of a young person to remain in his residential placement out of borough and attend college locally post 16. He had been informed in June 2010 that his request, which had been supported by his Social Worker, had been agreed. His care plan was subsequently considered within the external budget spending review and the Social Worker was asked at the end of July to consider whether the plan could be changed to explore a college place and accommodation in Berkshire. The IRO challenged this, noting that the young person's views had not changed, that he was expecting the agreed plan to go ahead and that it was a matter of only a few weeks to the beginning of the new academic year. She also contacted the CAFCASS duty helpline.

Outcome: The IRO was informed that, following receipt of a comprehensive report by the Social Worker on the lack of availability of suitable accommodation and college provision in the local area, that the decision for him to remain in his current out of area placement was confirmed.

- 4.7 The IRO has commented on good practice and good progress in care planning in several cases where she has observed positive development in the children / young people's self esteem and confidence.
- 4.8 The IRO has commented on two particularly successful placements and relayed positive comments from residential providers on commitment by CSC practitioners and positive care planning.

Accommodation

- 4.9 The IRO wrote expressing her view that she did not consider that a 16 year old's temporary placement in a guest house in Reading was appropriate as it did not meet his cultural needs. His parents had also commented on the inappropriateness of the placement. It had been acknowledged by CSC that

this was not an appropriate placement. At the first LAC review it had been envisaged that the young person would be moving to Supported Lodgings in Bracknell within two weeks.

Outcome: No supported placements were available either within Bracknell Forest or via Independent Fostering Agencies. The young person's name was registered on Look Ahead's waiting list and he remained in the guest house for three months until offered a room in one of the semi independent units.

This case highlighted that there remains some issues regarding the number of available Supported Lodgings placements in Bracknell Forest.

Practice Issues

- 4.10 The IRO queried whether a young person could have been remanded on welfare grounds rather than on criminal grounds.

Outcome: The IRO was informed that the view had been taken that the young person stay in one place for assessments to be completed. Furthermore, the risk taking behaviour did not centre around absconding. The IRO did not pursue further as she was invited to and took part in a comprehensive review of this highly complex case several months later.

- 4.11 The IRO supported concerns expressed at two LAC Reviews regarding the children's emotional welfare and the fact that CAMHS and the NSPCC were not able to offer a service in one case and that efforts to identify a resource in the other were proving difficult, due to the child living out of the Bracknell Forest area.

Outcome: In the first case, the Social Worker was identified as able to undertake work with the child.

In the second case, the child was offered a service from CAMHS several months later following a serious incident in school which resulted in an exclusion and the school's request to identify an alternative educational provision for the child.

- 4.12 The IRO queried when leaflets/ information were to be translated into relevant languages for Bracknell Forest's Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

Outcome: An Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers policy is currently being developed

- 4.13 The IRO is pleased that there has been an increase over the past year in children being placed with families in Bracknell Forest. She remains concerned, however, that there are still insufficient foster placements locally resulting in children being placed some distance from their home area. Additionally, as matching is a vital component for placement stability, there is

a need for a choice of placements in order to ensure the best possible match between child and foster family. Whilst the IRO is aware that there is a national shortage of foster placements and that the family placement team actively attempt to recruit new foster carers, reality for some children is not only a move out of their family home to live with a new family, but also to a home some distance away, which involves them travelling considerable distances to school and back to Bracknell Forest for contact with relatives.

- 4.14 The IRO informs the Department of any concerns in relation to foster carers' standards.

The work involved in raising issues

- 4.15 In order to raise issues, the IRO speaks to or writes to the Social Worker's supervisor, team manager or a Service Manager as appropriate with concerns and comments following a review. Their response may be verbal or in writing. A Resolution Protocol is in place (*Appendix 3 of Policy and Procedure for the Statutory Review of Children Looked After, May 2007*) and formal Practice Memos written by the IRO following a review are subject to this procedure. Timescales for responses and action regarding the escalation of an unresolved issue are set out in the protocol. The IRO has contacted the CAF/CASS duty helpline regarding two cases in this reporting period.

Identifying good practice

- 4.16 In accordance with the quality assurance function for the authority's service for looked after children, it is important that the IRO recognises and reports on good practice by individuals or teams and encourages the authority to continually improve its service for looked after children. The IRO carries out this function both formally and informally. The quarterly reports provide positive as well as critical feedback to managers and senior managers. Informal positive feedback to social workers takes place regularly as appropriate and in written form when the review meeting minutes are sent to the Social Worker.

Positive comments made by children and young people in their consultation booklets about their Social Workers:

- 'Very kind and funny';
- 'She's patient, very nice and listens to me very well. She's a superstar';
- 'She is friendly, understanding and helpful';
- 'She is very nice and she listens to me';
- 'Funny and very caring and will help me as much as she can'.

Positive comments made by children and young people in their consultation booklets about their Foster Carers:

- 'They care for me and look after me and I'm happy that I live with them and I want to stay with them forever';
- 'Funny and help me with problems and treat me like family';
- 'I think this is a good place for me. I am happy';
- 'They treat me as their own. I love them to bits. They love me';
- 'Friendly, understanding, funny, fair'.

- 4.17 It is considered that social workers' commitment to LAC reviews has remained high over the reporting period and that they respond equally well to positive and critical comments from the IRO. They also demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for looked after children within the constraints of available resources and when working under pressure, which has been particularly noticeable during the second half of the reporting period.
- 4.18 Two-way dialogue with social workers is encouraged by the IRO with attendance at their team meetings. These forums provide an opportunity to praise good practice and encourage ideas for improvement.

5 Key challenges for the IRO Service

Independence and collaboration

- 5.1 *'The independence of the Reviewing Officer is essential to enable them to effectively challenge poor practice in the review of cases'*¹¹
- 5.2 In accordance with the guidance, the IRO is required to have a collaborative relationship with social work staff and management who hold the responsibility for ongoing care planning for the children in the care of the local authority. This relationship is not that of supervisor or someone who could undertake tasks in relation to the care plan or service delivery. This is well understood by staff.

Workload and timings of reviews

- 5.3 The numbers of LAC in Bracknell Forest (excluding short break care) has increased over the reporting period by 11.8% from 76 to 85 children. In addition to the statutory review process outlined above, there are additional pressures and practical challenges caused by the need to bring some reviews forward e.g. in cases of placement breakdown, and when there is a change to the care plan¹². For some children, therefore, reviews take place several times in a year.
- 5.4 Preparation, travelling time, chairing the meeting and writing the minutes constitute a considerable number of hours per review. A small number of reviews need to be carried out in two or three parts e.g. where circumstances make it difficult for child and parent(s) or parents to be together in a room. On a practical level, reviews in term time for school age children need to take place after the end of the school day, causing pressures, at times, on the IRO's diary.
- 5.5 Reviews are, therefore, constant with the added pressure of some children being placed many miles away from Bracknell e.g. Wales, Lancashire, Kent. Completing all reviews on time presents a challenge, which requires efficient time management on the part of the IRO and a commitment by social workers

¹¹ Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption And Children Act 2002 page 23 *DfES publication*, available at www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption

¹² NI 62 figures for children and young people who have three or more placement moves as at 31st March 2010 was 19.3%. (For 2008/09, this figure was 13.4%; 2007/08, this figure was 12%; 2006/07, this figure was 19% and for 2005/06, 13.9%)

to the statutory time requirements. In recognition of the increase in the numbers of looked after children, some additional resource has been identified to support the IRO in the challenging role of ensuring reviews are undertaken within timescales. This is currently a short term measure, and a submission has been made regarding the need to consider growth of resource in this area.

Induction and Training

- 5.6 The IRO seeks to play a part in the induction of all new Social Workers within CSC, and appraise them of the procedures and expectations of the review process. A significant event in this year has been the retirement of two experienced Team Managers, and the appointment of two new Team Managers. The IRO continues to work with colleagues in children's Social Care on ensuring the review requirements are implemented effectively across the teams.

6 Areas for future development

The following areas have been identified for development.

Child participation in LAC reviews

- 6.1 Whilst there has been continuing improvement in this area, continuing efforts are required to maintain the high profile of the importance of enabling children to participate as fully as they are able in their reviews, in accordance with their rights. Social Workers will continue to be encouraged to start the planning process for a review well in advance of the due date to allow time for the necessary planning to aid participation.
- 6.2 The IRO will continue to offer to meet with the child before their review to listen to their views and, if necessary, hold a review meeting in two or three parts.

Engaging the harder to reach young people

- 6.3 Whilst the number of harder to reach young people and those who express no interest in attending their reviews is very small, continuing thought needs to be given on how to engage them in order that their views can be represented at the meetings.

Children chairing their own reviews

- 6.4 Young people will continue to be invited to chair their own reviews. Younger aged children will be encouraged to co-chair their reviews with the IRO, if appropriate, with a view to them increasing in confidence to chair their own reviews when older.

Consultation documents

- 6.5 Monitoring of completion of these documents will indicate how these documents can be further improved for children, parents and carers.

Improving standards

- 6.6 Regular attendance at team meetings throughout the year by the IRO will assist dialogue on the review process and ways to improve standards.
- 6.7 Attendance at events such as the Foster Carers' Conference and Foster Carers' preparation groups by the IRO would assist in developing a greater understanding of the review process.
- 6.8 Both nationally and locally, the question is raised about how IROs can be truly independent, given they are employed by the local authority. It is important that the IRO continues to have the authority and support from the Local Authority to undertake the role and responsibility as required within legislation and guidance. The new Government has recently established a review of social work chaired by Professor Eileen Munro that will report in April 2011. This may signal changes in the IRO service and the regulations around children in care.
- 6.9 New guidance was issued by the previous government in spring 2010, due for implementation by April 2011. Assuming there are no changes to the current policy there is likely to be an impact on the IRO service and its capacity to meet the requirements.
- 6.10 As in other authorities, there is a need for a more effective system whereby the IRO manager receives a copy of the final care plan and the judgment made at the conclusion of the care proceedings. Additionally the Guardian should, as identified within CAF/CASS practice guidance, communicate with the IRO at the end of proceedings to hand over the care plan and any issues for monitoring. Protocols are being developed between CAF/CASS and the National IRO Management/DFE group in relation to their working relationships and a protocol is being established. Whilst a Berkshire IRO / CAF/CASS protocol was drawn up, it is yet to become embedded.
- 6.11 In seeking to achieve an effective IRO service there will be further development of Quality Assurance mechanisms to enable clear evidence of the function and performance of the care planning service and outcomes for children in care.

7 Conclusion

Over the period of this review, the IRO service has met the requirements of the relevant guidance and regulations. There continue to be improvements in the quality of contributions to reviews from all parties, despite the evident pressures on time for some participants. The involvement of young people in their reviews is pleasing, but there will always be progress to be made in this area. Priorities are clear and will be addressed when possible, together with opportunities for further development.

The next review will cover the period from 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011.

Jan Poole, Independent Reviewing Officer
Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 12 JANUARY 2011

SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER - THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PUBLIC HEALTH WHITE PAPER - HEALTHY LIVES, HEALTHY PEOPLE Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report introduces the briefing papers in respect of the above Schools and Public Health White Papers which are attached for the Panel's information. The Schools White Paper seeks to introduce a reform programme that places teachers at the centre of school improvement and releases schools from central government direction, and the linked Public Health White Paper sets out the Government's long term vision for the future of public health in England.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the attached briefings in respect of the Schools and Public Health White Papers.**

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning – 01344 352283
e-mail: janette.karklins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122
e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching

Overview

The Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, was published on 24 November alongside *The Case for Change*, described as 'an evidence-based publication which outlines the case for change to our schools system'.

In the joint foreword, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister state that '... what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past.' Citing the most recent (2006) OECD PISA survey as evidence of the UK's decline, they also draw conclusions about the characteristics of the most successful school systems, which the White Paper sets out to emulate: 'This White Paper signals a radical reform of our schools. We have no choice but to be this radical if our ambition is to be world-class. The most successful countries already combine a high status teaching profession; high levels of autonomy for schools; a comprehensive and effective accountability system and a strong sense of aspiration for all children, whatever their background. Tweaking things at the margins is not an option. Reforms on this scale are absolutely essential if our children are to get the education they deserve.'

The White Paper covers teaching and leadership; behaviour; curriculum, assessment and qualifications; the new school system; accountability; school improvement; and school funding. In setting out a major programme of reform for schools, it necessarily also includes some major changes in the role of local authorities (and other bodies). A Schools Bill will follow and most of the proposed changes are intended to be introduced between 2011 and 2014.

Briefing in full

1. Introduction – the future of schools

This sets out the many acknowledged strengths of schools in England today, but says that 'we can do much better'. Teachers report feeling constrained and burdened by a narrow syllabus, lack of authority and the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. Headteachers feel constrained to comply with the wishes of government, with too many agencies pursuing different goals and difficulty pursuing their own approach. Schools too frequently adopt an approach aimed at meeting targets, rather than the needs of their pupils – for example, 'teaching to tests' in primary schools and too great an emphasis on GCSE-equivalent vocational qualifications in secondary schools. The White Paper sets out the lessons to be learned from the world's best performing and fastest improving education systems, with the aim of making our system one of the fastest improving – by paying attention to the recruitment, training and practices of teachers and leaders, the standards being set by the curriculum and qualifications, and the autonomy and accountability of schools.

2. Teaching and Leadership

The most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a school system is the quality of its teachers. Not enough of the most academically able people are entering teaching. There continues to be a struggle to attract enough graduates in shortage subjects like physics, chemistry and mathematics. The government will:

- only fund applicants for the PGCE qualification who have a 2:2 degree, and continue to expand Teach First; provide financial incentives for trainees in the shortage

subjects, and enable 'talented career changers' to become teachers, including a 'Troops to Teachers' programme. Detailed proposals on the funding of initial teacher training will be published in the New Year

- abolish the Teaching and Development Agency and transfer key functions to the DfE; enable more 'on the job' initial teacher training (ITT) which focuses on key teaching skills and managing behaviour; establish a network of teaching schools which brings together the existing training schools which provide ITT and other outstanding schools. The best HE ITT providers will be invited to become university training schools
- from 2011, introduce a competitive national scholarship scheme to support teacher professional development
- encourage schools to make more use of existing pay flexibilities and ask the School Teachers' Review Body to recommend greater freedoms and flexibilities
- shorten and simplify current regulations on teacher competence and review current standards for Qualified Teacher Status
- abolish the GTCE and put new arrangements in place for dealing with professional misconduct and incompetence. There will be a public list of those barred from teaching and there will be no other sanctions (nothing is said about continuing with the current system of teacher registration)
- reform the National Professional Qualification for Headship and increase significantly the number of National and Local Leaders of Education, working with the National College to ensure that they are deployed effectively, often across local authority boundaries
- free head teachers and teachers from bureaucracy and red tape including the removal of declaratory requirements, and specifically the duty on schools to co-operate with local partners to improve the well-being of children, and abolish the requirement on local authorities to produce children and young people's plans. There will be reduced prescription on school governing bodies, and also removal of the self evaluation form. There will be no centralised target setting process. The current financial management standards in schools will be replaced by a simpler version, and much guidance will be withdrawn or simplified, as it is felt to be virtually impossible for even the most conscientious headteacher or chair of governors to absorb it all.

3. Behaviour

Tackling poor pupil behaviour is fundamental to attracting good people into teaching. Amongst undergraduates considering teaching, the most common reason given for pursuing another profession is the fear of not being safe in schools, and many teachers report a lack of appropriate support; and pupils have the right to focus on their studies, free from disruption and bullying. Proposals are intended to strengthen the discipline and the role of teachers and head teachers, whilst making better provision for pupils who are excluded. They include:

- abolishing the current requirement to give 24 hours' notice for detentions
- new guidance on the reasonable use of force by teachers
- strengthening teachers' powers to search pupils
- better protecting teachers from false allegations, including the introduction of reporting restrictions to prevent a teacher's identity being revealed until they are charged with an offence – and consideration of whether such measures should be extended to the wider children's workforce
- extension of head teachers' powers to punish pupils who misbehave on their way to or from school
- rationalisation and simplification of guidance on bullying, with a particular emphasis on prejudice-based bullying
- a stronger emphasis on behaviour in Ofsted inspections

- reform of independent exclusion appeal panels, retaining a review of decision-making but ending compulsory re-instatement of permanently excluded pupils
- requiring local authorities to provide full-time education for all children in alternative provision from September 2011
- extending to PRUs the same self-governing powers as community schools, including over staffing and finance, opening up the market in alternative provision, and extending diversity by allowing PRUs to become Academies and encouraging Free Schools that offer alternative provision and voluntary sector providers
- piloting a new approach to permanent exclusions, balancing head teachers' authority to exclude pupils with responsibility for the quality of the education they receive and what they achieve; schools would be responsible for finding and funding alternative provision (with funding shifting from local authorities to schools), and the academic performance of excluded pupils would count in the school performance tables. Such a change would take time, and involve working closely with schools and local authorities.

4. Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications

The national curriculum should set out only the essential knowledge and understanding that all children should acquire, and leave teachers to decide how to teach this most effectively. Teachers will take greater control over what is taught in schools and how they teach, and developing new approaches to learning. Qualifications must match up to the best internationally in providing a good basis for the future of education and employment.

- The national curriculum will be reviewed and reformed so that it becomes a benchmark outlining the knowledge and concepts pupils should be expected to master to take their place as educated members of society; the review of the early years foundation stage will report in spring 2011.
- Systematic synthetic phonics is 'the most effective way of teaching young children to read, particularly those at risk of having problems with reading'. Ofsted will enhance its inspectors' expertise in assessing the teaching of reading.
- An English baccalaureate will be introduced which requires a GCSE at grades A*-C in English, mathematics, sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanity such as history or geography. Performance tables will specify the number of students achieving the English baccalaureate in each secondary school.
- Schools will be asked to concentrate on mathematics and science but at the same time be allowed space to provide a truly rounded education. There will be an internal review of how schools can improve the quality of all personal, social, health and economics education.
- Reliance is placed on English school performance in comparison to other developed countries through the OECD tests and surveys. Ofqual will measure English qualifications against the best in the world.
- Key Stage Two tests will be reformed but will still be used to measure progress of primary schools as well as individual pupils. GCSEs and A-levels will likewise be reformed. Ofqual is asked to consider the issue of re-sitting large numbers of units at A-level. GCSE courses will be reviewed to remove modularisation. Ofqual will advise on how marking schemes can take greater account of the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar for examinations in all subjects.
- The Alison Wolf review on vocational education will report in spring 2011, apprenticeships will continue to be supported for 16-19 year-olds.

5. New Schools System

After rehearsing the arguments in favour of increased school autonomy, from overseas and the experience of City Technology Colleges (CTCs) and Academies in this country, a number of proposals are described:

- Restoration of Academy freedoms through removal of requirements that have accrued over time, whilst maintaining a level playing field on admissions, particularly in relation to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- Rapid expansion of the Academy programme (already extended to primary and special schools through the Academies Act), with all schools identified by Ofsted as good with outstanding features also now automatically eligible, and all other primary and secondary schools able to apply provided they work in partnership with a high performing school or other sponsor to support improvement (the first group of these schools expected to open by April 2011); special schools will be able to apply from January 2011, and the forthcoming Green Paper on SEN and disability will consider how to best to use these new freedoms.
- The lowest performing schools (in all categories), attaining poorly and in an Ofsted category or not improving, will be partnered with a strong sponsor or outstanding school and converted to become Academies; the Secretary of State's closure powers in the Academies Act will be extended to schools covered by a notice to improve.
- Strong and experienced sponsors will be encouraged to play a leadership role in driving improvement of the whole school system, including through leading more chains and federations.
- There will be more encouragement and support, including through the New Schools Network, for those wishing to open Free Schools, with priority for proposals in disadvantaged areas. Free Schools will also drive innovation through University Technology Colleges (UTCs) and Studio Schools. UTCs will be sponsored by at least one local business and a local higher education institution to offer high-quality technical qualifications combining practical education with academic GCSEs; Studio Schools will be 14-19 institutions with an entrepreneurial and vocational focus, with several business sponsors connected to one sector of industry, in which students will spend time working in these businesses whilst gaining qualifications (the first Studio Schools opened in September 2010 in Luton and Kirklees).

Role of local authorities

It is in this chapter that the future role of local authorities is described, in the context of a more autonomous school system. It will centre around acting as champions of children and parents, ensuring that the school system works for every family and 'using their democratic mandate to challenge every school to do the best for their population'. LAs' strategic role includes 'bringing together all services for children in a local area so that every child is ready and able to benefit from high quality teaching in excellent schools', and they will be given progressively greater freedom as targets, regulations and ring-fencing of funds are removed. LAs' key roles will include:

- promoting a good supply of strong schools, encouraging the development of Academies and Free Schools which reflect the local community
- ensuring fair access to all schools for every child
- supporting vulnerable pupils, including looked after children, those with Special Educational Needs and those outside mainstream provision
- supporting maintained schools performing below the floor standards to improve quickly or convert to Academy status with a strong sponsor

- develop their own school improvement strategies, marketing their services to all schools, including beyond their geographical area.

LAs will be expected to encourage good schools to expand and encourage Academies or Free Schools to meet demand, focusing on supplying enough good places rather than removing surplus places. Where a new school is needed the preference will be an Academy or Free School; the competition process for new schools will be simplified, and if LAs are unable to identify a suitable sponsor the Secretary of State will work with them to find one.

LAs will continue to lead the coordination of admission arrangements for all schools. The requirements to establish an admissions forum and to submit an annual report to the Schools Adjudicator will be ended, with responsibility for making the process as fair and simple as possible for parents and pupils resting with LAs. The Adjudicator will review specific complaints about admission arrangements for all schools, including Academies and Free Schools. The Admissions Code will be simplified, with consultation in the new year, so that the new Code can be in place by July 2011; it will retain the principles and priorities of the current Code, including provisions for looked after children and pupils with a statement of SEN, and consultation will include the possibility of allowing Academies and Free Schools to give priority to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. LAs will also retain responsibility for school transport arrangements which promote fair access.

Alongside the key roles of the Lead Member for Children and the Director of Children's Services, the White Paper draws attention to the role of other councillors engaged in the scrutiny function in focusing on issues of local concern. LAs will be expected to take action over concerns about the performance of any local school, through different channels in the case of Academies and Free Schools, and will, over time, play a role in commissioning new provision and the transition of failing schools to new management; the DfE will consult LAs and Academy sponsors on the role of LAs as strategic commissioners when all schools in an area have become Academies.

LAs will continue to ensure that disabled children and those with Special Educational Needs can access high quality provision that meets their needs, and will continue to be responsible for funding provision for pupils with statements of SEN; they will be given more freedom to develop new and innovative approaches to providing services for vulnerable children. LAs' role in relation to broader children's services will continue, including acting as corporate parent for looked after children, with a key role in improving their educational outcomes (but the duty to publish a Children and Young People's Plan will be scrapped, as will the duty on schools to cooperate with partnership arrangements). They will also continue to secure the provision of education for young people in custody. And their broad responsibilities for safeguarding will continue – and will develop in light of the Munro review.

Whilst the majority of schools remain as LA maintained schools their funding will be routed through LAs, but it is envisaged that authorities' role will increasingly move towards strategic commissioning and oversight as Academy status becomes the norm. The requirement to appoint a school improvement partner for every maintained school will be removed, along with LA-level targets, and authorities will have increasing freedom to define their own role in school improvement. The Government will welcome a more diverse approach to the provision of school improvement services, and anticipates that school-to-school support will play an increasing part in LA strategies, making more use of National Leaders of Education and encouraging federations.

6. Accountability

Schools should be accountable for achieving a minimum level of performance, but current duties, requirements and guidance will be reduced so that, over time, all schools will have the freedoms that Academies currently have. In place of central requirements – such as every school having an improvement partner, and having to complete a self evaluation form – a comprehensive range of information about each school will be made available to enable parents and the public to hold schools to account. All the information which underpins government statistical publications (for example data on attainment in specific subjects, trends over time, class size, attendance, pupil characteristics and financial information) will be published in a standardised, easily accessible online format. Schools will be required to publish a range of information online (for example on admissions, the curriculum, behaviour policy, and how the Pupil Premium is used). Parents will have a route to complain about problems, but recent legislation giving the Local Government Ombudsman a role will be repealed. DfE will work with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to find ways of publishing data on 16-19 education and training that enables parents and students to compare school sixth forms with other post-16 providers.

The performance tables will be reformed (Prof. Alison Wolf has been asked to bring forward recommendations on how best to recognise vocational qualifications in the tables), and the 'contextual value added' (CVA) measure will be dropped in favour of an emphasis on the progress made by pupils. There will be a focus on how well disadvantaged pupils do, with specific reporting measures in the tables showing the performance of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium, and a review of performance measures for those special schools whose intake performs in the main below the levels of National Curriculum tests or GCSEs; the forthcoming Green Paper on SEN and disability will consider how to record in the performance tables the progress of the lowest-attaining 20 per cent, many of whom have additional learning needs.

Ofsted will consult on a new inspection framework, to come into force from Autumn 2011, with a focus on just four things: pupil achievement; the quality of teaching; leadership and management; and the behaviour and safety of pupils. Schools will not be required to complete a self evaluation form, but the DfE and Ofsted will ensure that they set the same expectations of schools, reflecting the starting point of pupils at the school and expected levels of progress during schooling. There will be a highly proportionate approach to inspection, with no routine inspection of schools judged outstanding from Autumn 2011 unless there is evidence of decline or widening attainment gaps; schools judged inadequate will receive termly monitoring visits to assess improvement, and there will be differentiation within the 'satisfactory' category between schools which are improving and those which are stuck. Schools will be able to request an Ofsted inspection if they feel the last judgement is out of date, and Ofsted will be able to charge for this service.

There will be a new minimum, or 'floor' standard, which schools will be expected to meet: for secondary schools it will be 35 per cent of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grade GCSEs including English and mathematics and pupils making progress between key stage two and key stage four at the national average rate; for primary schools it will be 60 per cent of pupils achieving level four in both English and mathematics and the national average proportion of pupils making the expected progress between key stages one and two. In future, the floor at secondary level will include science, and the floor standard will be raised over time as the system improves. It is acknowledged that schools below the floor standard will be in different situations, and there will be a differentiated approach to supporting their improvement.

The DfE will work with the National Governors Association and others to clarify governing body accountabilities and responsibilities to focus more strongly on strategic direction.

Schools will be encouraged to appoint trained clerks, the National College will offer high-quality training for chairs of governors, and efforts will be made to encourage more business people and professionals to volunteer as governors. Schools will be able to establish smaller governing bodies, with appointments primarily focused on skills – while retaining at least two parent governors; schools with a majority of governors appointed by a foundation will continue to do so.

7. School improvement

The primary responsibility for improvement rests with schools, and the government aims to create a system which is more effectively self-improving, rather than using a centralised approach. Schools will be expected to set their own improvement priorities, choose their own external support and determine how to evaluate themselves. Publication of appropriate information and data will enable schools to identify other schools from which they might learn. The number of National and Local Leaders of Education (successful head teachers with a proven record of supporting improvement in other schools) will increase from 1,154 to around 3,000 over the next four years, and a network of Teaching Schools, with outstanding and innovative practice in teaching and learning, will be established to lead system-wide improvement in an area, with their role growing over time. The Green Paper on SEN and disability will consider how to support the identification and sharing of excellence in teaching for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

From next year, the DfE will publish ‘families of schools’ documents grouping similar schools in a region and providing detailed performance information, enabling schools to identify others which are contextually similar, but may be in a different authority, from which they might learn. The new Education Endowment Fund, to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in underperforming schools, will be £110 million and ‘will run throughout the course of the next spending period and beyond’; it will encourage innovative approaches from schools, local authorities and others, and funded ideas will be evaluated and shared widely. There will also be a new collaboration incentive worth £35 million a year, which will reward schools that support weaker schools to demonstrably improve their performance whilst also improving their own.

As National Strategies and other field forces come to an end, the DfE will support a new market of school improvement services with a wider range of providers and services – including the possibility of local authority services being traded. Where a primary or secondary school is below the new floor standards, or if Ofsted judges a special school to require a notice to improve or special measures, the DfE will ensure that there is focused intervention and support, working with schools and local authorities to ensure there is a comprehensive plan for turning problems round (including an experienced professional to act as lead adviser to implement the plan). Where this does not lead to adequate improvement, further intervention will be required, including conversion of schools into Academies, partnered with a strong sponsor or outstanding school. If Academies or Free School fail to meet floor standards, the response will be similar, including the possible replacement of the sponsor. If school sixth forms fall below the minimum levels of performance agreed for all post-16 provision they will be subject to intervention, and possible withdrawal of funding.

8. School funding

The Government proposes to take action to end the current variation in funding between similar schools in different areas, to ensure that more of the money allocated on the basis of need reaches schools, and to equalise post-16 funding across providers.

The new 'Pupil Premium' (see 'related briefings'), providing additional money for each deprived pupil, will be distributed in addition to the underlying school budget from 2011-12, and will rise to £2.5 billion per year by 2014-15. Whilst head teachers will be free to decide how to use this additional funding (*i.e.* it will not be ring-fenced), performance tables will include information about the achievement of eligible pupils.

There will be consultation in Spring 2011 (following discussion with a range of partners, including LAs) on the introduction of a new national funding formula for schools which is intended to be clearer, more transparent and fairer than the present system; it will be introduced with transitional measures to minimise disruption and undue turbulence. It is intended to replace the Young People's Learning Agency with a new Education Funding Agency (EFA) as an executive agency of the DfE with responsibility for the direct funding of Academies and Free Schools and all 16-19 provision; the EFA will also distribute resources to local authorities for them to pass on to LA maintained schools. The DfE is reviewing the calculation of the additional funding received by Academies and Free Schools for the services which maintained schools receive from LAs to ensure that it is fair, and the reform of school funding will take account of the needs of vulnerable pupils, such as those with complex Special Educational Needs, who are the responsibility of LAs. Subject to the outcome of the proposed trials, it is anticipated that in the longer term funding for alternative provision will go directly to schools, which will assume responsibility for pupils they exclude.

The commitment to all young people staying in education and training to age 18 by 2015 is to be underpinned by a simple post-16 funding system which will bring the funding levels for school sixth forms into line with colleges; this will begin in 2011-12 and will be complete by 2015, with transitional protection for schools facing significant changes.

In order to maximise the funding going straight into schools' budgets, the Government is to 'reduce all the Department for Education's other activities, programmes and initiatives by more than half over the next four years' (there is no further detail of what this means). Guidance on LAs' claw-back of school budget surpluses will be reviewed, with consultation on making changes from 2012-13 and removal from 2011-12 of the requirement for LAs to have a claw-back mechanism (though it is acknowledged that there will continue to be situations where claw-back is appropriate). The current Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) will be replaced with a simpler standard during 2011-12, and schools are encouraged to obtain the services (shared or full time) of a high quality business manager to assist with financial management, and save head teachers' time. It was anticipated in the Spending Review that schools should be able to save at least £1 billion on procurement and back office spending by 2014-15.

Finally, the announced 60 per cent reduction in education capital spending will lead to expenditure being prioritised to address the poor condition of some schools, and to ensure that there are enough places for the predicted increase in pupil numbers, particularly at primary level.

Comment

The White Paper sets out a quite radical set of proposals, with the aim of lifting aspiration, raising standards, increasing social mobility and, specifically, improving the nation's position in the international 'league table' of school improvement. The most recent (2006) PISA survey of student achievement in OECD countries is cited as evidence of our recent decline – and it will be interesting to see what the new PISA survey shows, to be published on 7 December. In addition, the DfE has published *The case for change* alongside the White Paper, which draws together a wide range of evidence, much of it from more successful jurisdictions overseas, to demonstrate that the proposals are the right ones. But previous

White Papers have had a similar aim, and have often been supported by evidence, and importing ideas and approaches from abroad will not be sufficient without recognising that the social and historical context is often different.

Much in the White Paper is to be welcomed: for example, the emphasis on teaching, improving the status of teachers, and restoring their scope for exercising their professional judgement; the reduction in the Government's management of the system from the centre; the recognition that collaboration is a powerful force for change, and the focus on improving the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people.

But there are tensions: there will clearly be central prescription on some aspects of what and how to teach, and changes in examinations which have attracted criticism from teacher unions and head teacher associations; there is a view of how 'good schools' do things which partly underlies increasing their autonomy, but there are also academically successful schools which are insular, exclusive and lack a broader sense of social responsibility; and the ambition for the disadvantaged appears to lack sufficient understanding of the challenges faced by many children and young people, and by many schools whose intakes are significantly unbalanced.

And some aspects of the White Paper are problematic: increasing school autonomy does not necessitate breaking up the system into its component parts – and many schools clearly feel this strongly, so there is a clear sense of 'fracture'. The diminishing role of local authorities threatens to reduce coherence, as well as local accountability. Some of the detail remains quite sketchy, and some issues await further consultation (though mostly fairly brief). The forthcoming Education Bill will doubtless generate a lively debate, but the White Paper suggests the Secretary of State has already decided what he's going to do; the interesting question will be to what extent schools follow the path he is indicating.

This page is intentionally left blank

Public Health White Paper: Healthy Lives, Healthy People

Overview

Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health (Public Health White Paper), was published on 30 November. It sets out in more detail the proposed reform of public health in England that was announced in the health white paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*.

The reforms will have significant implications for local government and they present major opportunities, as well as some risks. They are taking place at the same time as unprecedented spending pressures on local authorities and as part of huge structural change in the NHS.

The white paper does clarify some issues from the health white paper, but there are still several critical areas that are not yet clear – mainly because there are further consultation documents due to be published, particularly those on the outcomes framework and on funding and commissioning. These will be important documents and councils should respond to them, as well as to the white paper itself.

This briefing summarises the key points for local government in the white paper and sets out our initial thoughts on it.

Briefing in full

This white paper has been keenly anticipated by local government – following the publication of *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, the health white paper. The Public Health White Paper provides more details on some of the key proposals that will fundamentally affect local government, particularly the transfer of public health responsibilities to local authorities. There are several important consultations outstanding, such as on funding and commissioning of public health and on the outcomes framework, so this white paper leaves some major issues unresolved at this stage.

The Secretary of State's foreword to the paper stresses the government's localist vision:

"We need a new approach that empowers individuals to make healthy choices and gives communities the tools to address their own, particular needs. The plans set out in this White Paper put local communities at the heart of public health. We will end central control and give local government the freedom, responsibility and funding to innovate and develop their own ways of improving public health in their area. There will be real financial incentives to reward their progress on improving health and reducing health inequalities, and greater transparency so people can see the results they achieve".

The white paper logically follows from the government's wider policy direction. Instead of 'top down' targets, there will be a national outcomes framework, setting out the broad public health and health inequalities outcomes. The approach to improving health encompasses concepts around choice and individual responsibility: *"all capable adults are responsible for these very personal choices (over lifestyles)"*, but it also recognises that *"at the same time, we do not have total control over our lives or the circumstances in which we live. A wide range of factors constrain and influence what we do, both positively and negatively"*. There are shared responsibilities for health and wellbeing between the individual, communities, the state, and the private and voluntary sectors.

The paper succinctly states the government's approach to improving health and wellbeing – "relevant to both national and potential local actions" – based on the following, strengthening self-esteem, confidence and personal responsibility; positively promoting 'healthier' behaviours and lifestyles; and adapting the environment to make healthy choices easier.

Health and wellbeing today

Healthy Lives: Healthy People recognises the critical importance of public health – “most of the major advances in life expectancy over the last two centuries came from public health rather than healthcare”.

Preventing poor health is a major theme of the paper:

“We know that a wide range of factors affect people’s health throughout their life and drive inequalities such as early years care, housing and social isolation. Despite this, our health efforts focus much more on treatment than on the causes of poor health. The contrast between what we know about the causes of premature death and illness in our society and the domination of our attention and spending on secondary care represents a profound challenge to our policy and our society as a whole. At a population level, it is not better treatment, but prevention – both primary and secondary, including tackling the wider social factors that influence health – which is likely to deliver greater overall increases in healthy life expectancy”.

The paper sets out the challenges the country face in improving health and wellbeing, particularly in bridging the health inequality gap. There still are major public health challenges; rates of tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections are rising; pandemic flu is still a threat; rising levels of obesity; the high levels of illicit drug use; regular heavy drinking by a minority of people.

The health inequality facts are well rehearsed: people in England are healthier and living longer than ever before, but people living in the poorest areas will, on average, die seven years earlier than people living in richer areas and spend up to 17 more years living with poor health.

The paper refers extensively to the 2010 independent review of health inequalities in England by Professor Sir Michael Marmot ‘*Fair Society: Healthy Lives*’. It follows the Marmot review approach in considering the ‘life course’ and in the emphasis on early years and young people:

“Starting well, through early intervention and prevention, is a key priority for the government, developing strong universal public health and early education with an increased focus on disadvantaged families. This approach, proportionate universalism, was advocated in the Marmot Review into health inequalities”.

The new public health system

With the abolition of primary care trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), the government is to create a new public health system in England. The new system is made up of two elements: the creation of Public Health England and of local government taking on new responsibilities for improving people’s health and tackling health inequalities at the local level.

The paper highlights that the NHS will continue to have a crucial role in public health:

“Preventing ill health, screening for disease, supporting people with long-term conditions, improving access to care for the whole population and tackling health emergencies are all key functions that the NHS provides. GPs, community nurses, allied health professionals, dentists and pharmacists in the community, and hospital-based consultants and nurses all play a vital part”.

Public Health England

Public Health England (PHE) will be created within the Department of Health, accountable to the Secretary of State for Health. PHE will hold a ring-fenced public health budget which is estimated to be around £4 billion. PHE will bring together public health functions that are

carried out in different parts of the system currently. It will incorporate the functions of the Health Protection Agency, the National Treatment Agency, the regional directors of public health and the Public Health Observatories. It will work with local government, the NHS, other government agencies and other partners in preparing for and responding to emergency threats and in building partnerships for health.

Public Health England's role will include:

- providing public health advice, evidence and expertise to the Secretary of State and the wider system, including working with partners to gather and disseminate examples of what works
- delivering effective health protection services
- commissioning or providing national-level health improvement services, including appropriate information and behaviour change campaigns
- jointly appointing Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and supporting them through professional accountability arrangements
- allocating ring-fenced funding to local government and rewarding them for progress made against elements of the proposed public health outcomes framework.

The new role of local government

“For the first time in a generation, local government will be given the responsibility, backed by ring-fenced budgets and new freedoms, to make a major impact on improving people’s health and tackling health inequalities in every community”.

The Health and Social Care Bill will provide that upper-tier and unitary local authorities will have a duty to take steps to improve the health of their population.

The key elements of the new system are:

Joint appointments of Directors of Public Health (DsPH)

DsPH will be employed by local government in upper tier and unitary authorities and jointly appointed by the relevant local authority and PHE. DsPH will lead local public health efforts: this role can be shared with other councils if agreed locally. They will be professionally accountable to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and part of the Public Health England professional network.

DsPH tasks will include:

- promoting health and wellbeing within local government
- providing and using evidence relating to health and wellbeing
- advising and supporting GP consortia on the population aspects of NHS services
- developing an approach to improving health and wellbeing locally, including promoting equality and tackling health inequalities
- collaborating with local partners on improving health and wellbeing, including GP consortia, other local DsPH, local businesses and others.

Local public health grant and the health premium

PHE will allocate a ring-fenced grant, weighted for inequalities, to upper tier and unitary local authorities. The budget will fund improving population health and wellbeing and some statutory services such as immunisations. There will be scope, as now, to pool budgets locally in order to support public health work.

The public health grant will be made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. As a ring-fenced grant, it will carry some conditions about how the budget is to be used. The

paper says that the government will “seek to enable flexibility for local areas to determine how best they can use this funding to improve the health and wellbeing of their community”.

There will be ‘shadow’ allocations to local authorities for each local area for this budget in 2012-13, providing an opportunity for planning before allocations are introduced in 2013-14.

There will be a health premium for health improvement, applied as part of the overall public health budget. PHE will award the premium to local authorities. Building on a baseline allocation that is weighted towards areas with the worst health outcomes and most need, local authorities will receive an incentive payment, or premium, for these services that depends on the progress made in improving the health of the local population, based on elements of the proposed outcomes framework.

The paper says that the “premium will be simple and driven by a formula developed with key partners. Disadvantaged areas will see a greater premium if they make progress, recognising that they face the greatest challenges” However, an area that makes no progress might receive no growth in funding for these services.

The consultation on funding and commissioning of public health will discuss issues around the health premium. The paper stresses that the government will only set out a detailed model when they have established the baseline and potential scale of the premium clearly, and have agreement about the outcomes to be used.

Health and Wellbeing Boards

How health and wellbeing boards will function is subject to the current consultation on them – the government will shortly publish their response to the consultation. The boards will bring together the key NHS, public health and social care leaders in each local authority area to work in partnership.

The public health white paper does give, however, a somewhat clearer picture of how the government envisage the boards working than was in the health white paper.

The paper confirms that the DH will put forward detailed proposals for the establishment of health and wellbeing boards in every upper-tier local authority.

“They will have the flexibility to bring in the local expertise of district councils. There will be a proposed minimum membership of elected representatives, GP consortia, DsPH, Directors of Adult Social Services, Directors of Children’s Services, local HealthWatch and, where appropriate, the participation of the NHSCB. Subject to legislation, these members will be required to be part of the board, and local areas will be able to expand membership to include local voluntary groups, clinicians and providers, where appropriate”.

GP consortia and local authorities, including DsPH, will each have an equal and explicit obligation to prepare the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), and to do so through the arrangements made by the health and wellbeing board.

The outcomes framework

The public health outcomes framework “will sit alongside” the proposed NHS outcomes framework and social care outcomes framework.

The proposed framework is likely to cover five broad ‘domains’ of public health:

Domain 1 – Health protection and resilience: protecting people from major health emergencies and serious harm to health;

Domain 2 – Tackling the wider determinants of ill health: addressing factors that affect health and wellbeing;

Domain 3 – Health improvement: positively promoting the adoption of ‘healthy’ lifestyles;

Domain 4 – Prevention of ill health: reducing the number of people living with preventable ill health; and

Domain 5 – Healthy life expectancy and preventable mortality: preventing people from dying prematurely.

Legislation

The Health and Social Care Bill will give upper tier and unitary councils a duty to lead public health efforts in their area and enact proposals in the WP. The bill will now not be published until after Christmas, but the DH says that they will publish its response to the Health White Paper 'Equity and Excellence' consultations in December.

Timetable – subject to parliamentary approval of legislation

Date

Consultation on:

- specific questions set out in the white paper
- the public health outcomes framework
- the funding and commissioning of public health

Dec 2010 –
March 2011

Set up shadow-form Public Health England

Start to set up working arrangements with local authorities, including matching of PCT DsPH to local authority areas

During 2011

PHE will take on full responsibilities

Publish shadow public health ring-fenced allocations to local authorities

April 2012

Local health improvement functions transferred to local authorities, with ring-fenced grant

April 2013

Comment

Significant parts of this white paper will be strongly supported by local government. The recognition of the role of local government in improving health and tackling the underlying social and economic causes of ill health is translated into major reform which puts local authorities at the heart of the new public health system. Indeed, the reforms could be seen as taking local government back to the role it had historically, even if the context is now very different.

The LGiU welcomes the commitment to bridging the health inequality gap and to building on the Marmot Review's work. Previous reports into health inequalities, notably the 1980 Black report, have been abandoned when a new government has come to power – this is clearly not going to happen to Marmot.

'*All's well that ends well?*' was published by the LGiU in November 2010. Commissioned by the Department of Health, it considered the role of councils in health improvement and analysed the proposed reforms that were set out in the health white paper from the perspective of local government. Many of the points we raised are reflected in the public health white paper. We particularly support the white paper's emphasis on prevention and early intervention; the plans for statutory health and wellbeing boards; the need for much more robust evidence about 'what works'; and the vision of integrating public health much more closely to areas such as social care, transport, leisure, planning and housing.

There are, naturally, areas where we think the government could have been more radical – such as in relation to developing new national models that incentivise public sector bodies to invest in programmes that prevent ill health and deliver financial benefits elsewhere over

time, providing financial rewards for councils investing in early intervention models, such as family intervention that produces, for example, savings down the line to the NHS.

Although local government will support the thrust of the white paper, there will, of course, be concerns about how it will be implemented.

Local government had called for the local public health grant not to be ring-fenced. We argued that the contribution of local authorities to improving the health of their residents and to tackling the health inequalities gap is made largely through their mainstream activities and ring-fencing the budget would constrict what councils can do. However, it is clear that it will be ring-fenced and local government must now forcefully argue for maximum funding discretion, in accordance with the principles of localism, to facilitate efficiencies, joint working and commissioning and pooled budgets.

It is not yet clear what the scope or scale of the budget is going to be, nor what it will have to cover in relation to new staffing responsibilities. The transfer of the DsPH and, presumably, parts of the public health workforce must be adequately funded.

The LGiU welcomes the health premium in principle, but it will clearly be very difficult to develop a system of reward that is both fair and understandable. There is also the wider danger that the outcomes framework will be too centralised and prevent innovation and local flexibility.

The position of the DsPH is of some concern. There seems to be confused accountabilities here, and the case has not been robustly made by the government for the joint accountability proposed.

There are bound to be tensions over the relative roles and powers of local government and PHE (and indeed between local government, the department of health and the NHS). Local government will want to see as much devolution as possible to the local level and for councils to take on a wider, lead commissioning role for services such as mental health. There needs to be continuing debate about the most appropriate split between councils and PHE for commissioning public health services. There also needs to be more thought given by the government to how district councils, that have an essential role in improving wellbeing, can be properly incorporated into the new regime.

All's well that ends well highlighted the major challenges facing local authorities in the transition to the new system and beyond. These challenges remain. Local government and health are facing major structural changes at the same time as unprecedented spending cuts; there are huge policy challenges, particularly tackling health inequalities; and new relationships need to be developed and partnerships redesigned. The white paper says little about the cultural change that will be needed, especially to ensure that councils can work effectively with the new GP consortia. It is recognised that GPs will need to work closely with local authorities and the DH says that it will work to strengthen the public health role of GPs. One of the few specific questions asked in the consultation is whether there are additional ways in which the DH can ensure that GPs and GP practices will continue to play a key role in areas for which PHE will take responsibility?

Although local government clearly faces big challenges, the reforms do offer very significant potential benefits for local government and communities. They should strengthen democratic accountability of local health and public health services. Local authorities collectively could take the lead in supporting health improvement locally and managing performance. This could be a unique opportunity to shift the policy and public emphasis from the focus on the medical model of health to health and wellbeing. The new framework for public health should more effectively bring together the work that councils do to influence health and wellbeing through their core services and leadership role with the more traditional public health and health improvement focus.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
12 JANUARY 2011

'BEING SAFE' OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT
Lead Working Group Member

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the attached draft report resulting from the review of safeguarding children and young people undertaken by a working group of this Panel.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel agrees the attached report of the review of children and young people undertaken by its working group and commends it to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.**

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283

e-mail: richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122

e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

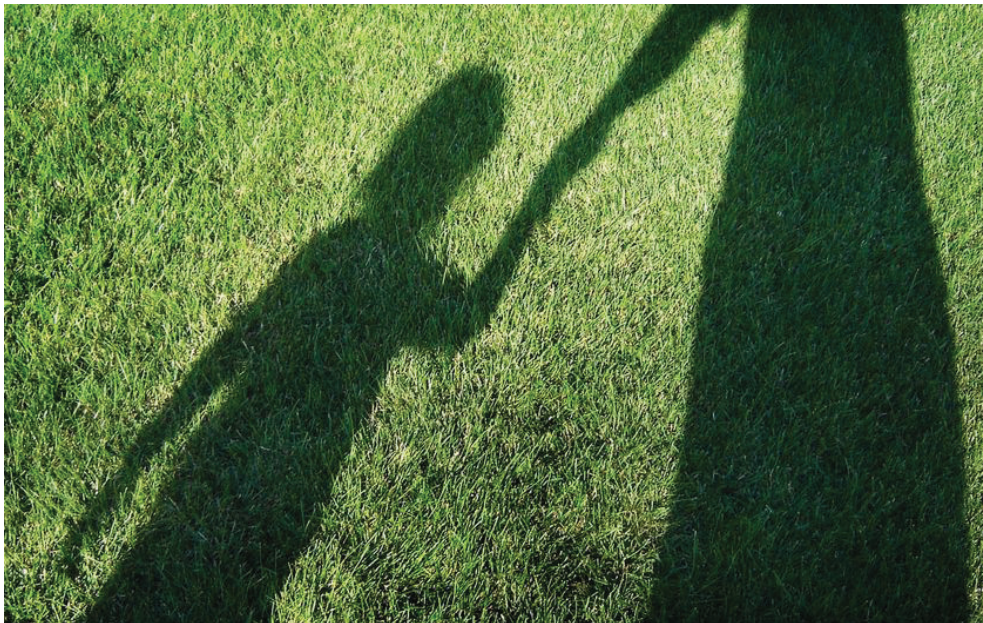
This page is intentionally left blank

DRAFT 16.12.2010



Being Safe

**A Review of Safeguarding Children and Young People
by a Working Group of the
Children, Young People and Learning Overview &
Scrutiny Panel**



January 2011

Table of Contents

	Page Number
1. Executive Summary	4
2. Background	6
3. Investigation, Information Gathering and Analysis	15
4. Conclusions	58
5. Recommendations	66
6. Glossary	69
Appendix 1 – The scope of the review	70
Appendix 2 – The Council's staffing and budgets for safeguarding children and young people	75
Appendix 3 – Performance Indicators for Children's Social Care	76
Appendix 4 - Summaries of Government guidance and other key documents	80
Appendix 5 – Response from the Director of Children, Young People and Learning to the 'top ten' questions from the IDEA/CFPS guide on the scrutiny of safeguarding	118
Appendix 6 - Comments from Primary Schools and External Organisations Regarding Safeguarding Children in Bracknell Forest	126

Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the following people for their co-operation and time. All those who have participated in the review have been thanked for their contribution and provided with a copy of this report.

Bracknell Forest Council

Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard	Executive Member for Children and Young People
Dr Janette Karklins	Director of Children, Young People and Learning
Penny Reuter	Chief Officer, Children's Social Care
Mairead Panetta	Head of Service, Safeguarding
Sarah Roberts	Policy & Commissioning Officer
Fiona Gibbins	Over 11's Team Manager, Children's Social Care
Sonia Johnson	Duty and Fast Team Manager, Children's Social Care
Gloria King	Children and Families Manager
Richard Beaumont	Head of Overview and Scrutiny
John Ainsworth	Administrative Assistant, Overview & Scrutiny

NHS Berkshire East

Sheila Davies	Locality Lead Health Visiting and School Nursing
Rachael Matthews	Health Visitor
Sue Viccars	Health Visitor
Dr Pat Riordan	Director of Public Health
Carolyn Finlay	Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategic Lead for Children's Services
Sarah Parsons	Head of Universal Services and Safeguarding
Elaine Welch	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding
Dr Katie Caird	Named General Practitioner for Bracknell Forest

Schools

Gordon Cunningham	Headteacher, Easthampstead Park Community School
Sue Skilton	Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Easthampstead Park Community School
Andrea de Bunsen	Headteacher, Kennel Lane Special School
Paul Van Walwyk	Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Kennel Lane Special School

Thames Valley Police

Simon Bowden	Chief Inspector, Local Police Area Commander for Bracknell Forest
Sarah Austin	Detective Sergeant, Child Abuse Investigation Unit

Local Safeguarding Children Board

Elaine Coleridge Smith	Independent Chair of Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board
------------------------	---



1. Executive Summary

I must start this Executive summary by thanking a number of individuals:

First and foremost to the children and young adults we met, for their time and for sharing with us their experiences;

To Penny Reuter and her Team who have been so supportive throughout this review. They have given us their time, encouragement and honest insight into their multifaceted and often sensitive work;

To Richard Beaumont who, as my Lead Officer, brought this Review together. He guided us through a complex and intricate piece of research with great ideas and good will. On behalf of the Working Group and myself many thanks;

To my councillor colleagues who formed the working group. Safeguarding Children is a difficult subject to embark upon and they did it with enthusiasm and good spirit.

We were also most fortunate to have Valerie Richardson (Teacher Representative) and Paula Ridgway (Chair of the Children and Young People Voluntary Community Sector Forum) as part of the Working Group

Thank you Valerie for the Teacher insight, it was most valuable to the Review.

To have the experience of Children's Services and the Voluntary Sector that Paula brought to our Review gave us a whole new dimension on the subject. I cannot thank Paula enough for joining us and adding to her already considerable workload and for sharing her knowledge and wisdom with us.

To John Ainsworth for all those superb graphs.

Last, but by no means least, our partners from the NHS, Thames Valley Police, the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Headteachers and their designated Teachers for child protection at Kennel Lane and Easthampstead Park School.

The purpose of this review and its resultant report has been to ensure that our arrangements as a Council with regard to Safeguarding Children were and are of the highest standard.

I must stress that this review was not convened through any concerns that our arrangements were in anyway lacking but we must never become complacent and in light of recent national headline cases it was felt both appropriate and timely to revisit our practices and processes.

It is self evident that we each have a duty of care whether as a biological parent or as a corporate parent to safeguard our children. There can in the end be no higher responsibility than the care and well being of a Child or Young Person and their needs should be paramount

Unfortunately this is not always the case and this is when Children's Services become involved.

As can be seen from the report we spent a considerable amount of time with the managers and social workers of Policy and Commissioning, our Under 11's and Over 11's teams, and the Duty and Fast Team. Their professionalism and dedication in the face of such delicate, difficult and often demanding situations was reassuring, complacency is not in their vocabulary.

Equally we also felt it was very important to talk with our partner agencies to gauge their involvement with our Children's Services. We were very impressed by the cohesive manner in which the agencies were able to work together and the regard in which our Children's Services is held.

It may come as no surprise that during our interviews there developed an overwhelming sense that a social workers job is without doubt a vocation. They often have to become involved in the most sensitive areas of people's lives at a time when they are at their most vulnerable. This is especially true of working with Children and Young People who are at risk.

As with so many other areas of the Council the dedication and professionalism of the staff of Children's Services is both gratifying and exemplary.

I speak for my member colleagues when I say that this review has been enlightening, profound and at times highly charged emotionally.

If this review has taught us anything it is that there is no room for complacency, nor should there be, particularly when it comes to the Safeguarding of our Children.

Cllr. Mrs Jennie McCracken
Lead Member

The Working Group members were:

Councillor Mrs Jennie McCracken (Lead Member)
Councillor Mrs Gill Birch
Councillor Mrs Jan Angell
Councillor Trevor Kensall
Miss Valerie Richardson, Teacher Representative
Mrs Paula Ridgway, Chair of the Children and Young People Voluntary
Community Sector Forum

2. Background

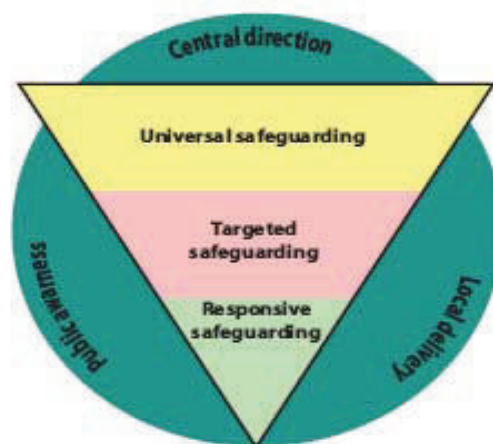
Introduction

- 2.1 The whole country has been struck by the tragic cases of Victoria Climbié, Baby Peter, Khyra Ishaq and other children and young people who were terribly abused and lost their lives, and this has inevitably raised the question, 'could it happen here?'
- 2.2 Recognising the vital need to safeguard children and young people, the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel of Bracknell Forest Council ('the Council') proposed that it should carry out a thorough review of the arrangements to safeguard children and young people in Bracknell Forest, with a particular emphasis on child protection (child protection is the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm). In reaching this decision, Councillors did not have any reason to think that the arrangements are lacking, but decided a review was justified because safeguarding children is one of the most important functions of a local authority, and this previously had not been subject to a focussed overview and scrutiny review. Councillors also considered that the high level of public concern nationally meant that the children of Bracknell Forest and their parents/carers would welcome an impartial and public review of the adequacy of the arrangements to safeguard children and young people.
- 2.3 The Panel's proposals were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, in consultation with the Council's Executive and Corporate Management Team. Our review commenced in May 2010, and this report records the outcome of the review.
- 2.4 This background section of the report sets out the context for, and the base information for the review. Section 3 summarises what we found during the review, and that is used to support the conclusions we have reached in Section 4. Our conclusions have generated a number of recommendations to the Council and its partner organisations, which we set out in Section 5. At the end of the report we have included a glossary of the abbreviations used in the report, and there are a number of appendices containing detailed supporting material we gathered during the review.
- 2.5 Throughout this report, in the interests of brevity we have used the term 'children' as encompassing young people too.

What is Meant by Safeguarding?

- 2.6 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purpose of statutory guidance under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 respectively as:
- protecting children from maltreatment;
 - preventing impairment of children's health or development;
 - ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
 - undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

This is represented diagrammatically, opposite. Safeguarding encompasses a huge range of activity applying to all children (and young people). At its most basic level, safeguarding includes measures to protect all children such as pedestrian crossings on roads, licensing controls to prevent the sale of alcohol and knives to young people, and the Police addressing school assemblies on personal safety. Targeted assistance applies to fewer children: in relation to child protection it is the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. The Council relies upon the 'universal services' such as General Practitioners (GPs) and schools to draw attention to cases exceeding the Council's threshold concerning cases of possible significant harm. When so alerted, the Council considers them and carries out an initial assessment, then moves on to the appropriate action and services to individuals at risk of significant harm. All responsive cases have a Child Protection plan, with a range of different actions depending on the circumstances of each case. In a small number of such cases the action could include applying to the Court for a Care Order.



The Legal Responsibilities of the Council

2.7 There are extensive legal duties applying to safeguarding children, as summarised below

a) **The Children Act 1989**

The Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities (LA) to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need in their area. The Act's specific requirements encompass: promoting the upbringing of children in need (see paragraph 2.19), by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. The Act allows local authorities to request the help of other organisations including: other councils; local education authorities; local housing authorities; the National Health Service; and those organisations have a legal duty to assist local authorities in carrying out enquiries into whether or not a child is at risk of significant harm. Section 47 of the Act places a duty on local authorities and others to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in cases where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Section 53 of the **Children Act 2004** amended the Children Act 1989, to require in each case that before determining what services to provide or what action to take, the LA shall, so far as practicable ascertain and consider the child's wishes and feelings on the action to be taken.

The Act provides for the court to make an **Emergency Protection Order** if it is satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is likely to suffer significant harm if they are not removed from their home, or if the Section 47 enquiries are being frustrated by access to the child being

unreasonably refused. An emergency protection order gives authority to remove a child, and places the child under the protection of the applicant for a maximum of fifteen days. The Court may include an **exclusion requirement** in an emergency protection order or an **interim care order**. This allows a perpetrator to be removed from the home instead of having to remove the child.

Police protection powers come from Section 46 of the Children Act 1989. Where a police officer has reasonable cause to believe that a child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, he or she may remove the child to suitable accommodation and keep him or her there; or take reasonable steps to ensure that the child's removal is prevented. No child may be kept in police protection for more than 72 hours.

b) Local Government Act 2000

Local authorities have a corporate responsibility to address the needs of children and young people living in their area. The Local Government Act 2000 sets out a broad cross-government expectation that there should be a concerted aim to improve the wellbeing of people and communities. To achieve this, there should be effective joint working by education, children's social care, housing and leisure, in partnership with health, police and other statutory services, also the voluntary and independent sectors.

c) Education Act 2002

Section 175 of the Act puts a duty on local education authorities, maintained (i.e. state) schools and further education institutions, including sixth-form colleges, to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children – children who are pupils, and students under 18 years of age in the case of schools and colleges. The same duty is put on local education authorities, including academies, by Regulations made under s157 of that Act.

d) The Children Act 2004

Section 10 of the Act requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the LA's area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area – which includes protection from harm or neglect. The Act requires a range of organisations to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions and services are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Section 13 of the Act requires each children's services authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It also requires a range of organisations to take part in LSCBs, and its sets out various requirements for LSCB's. We give further information on the Bracknell Forest LSCB in paragraphs 3.15 – 3.17.

Government Policy and Statutory Guidance

- 2.8 The newly formed government in May 2010 has introduced a programme of change, and we return to this in paragraphs 2.16 and 3.22 below. The cornerstone of government policy on safeguarding children in recent years

- 2.9 Alongside the legislation (summarised above), which was introduced following Lord Laming's report, the Government issued statutory and non-statutory guidance on various aspects of safeguarding children. We have reviewed and summarised in Appendices 4.3 and 4.4 what we regard to be the two main documents relevant to our review: the statutory guidance on Safeguarding Children; and the non-statutory guidance on 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'.
- 2.10 In line with legislation and government guidance, the framework for safeguarding children is a threefold one. The roles and responsibilities of the Lead Member (LM), the Director of Children's Services (DCS), the members of the local Children's Trust Strategic Partnership and the members of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) all have differing, but complementary roles. The DCS and LM have the lead responsibility for ensuring all children are safeguarded, their welfare promoted and their wellbeing enhanced. The LSCB has the lead responsibility for ensuring that the welfare of all children is safeguarded, and more specifically for ensuring children are actively protected from harm. The Children's Trust Board has the primary responsibility for promoting children's welfare and for generally ensuring vulnerable children, and children in need are receiving support to improve their outcomes and live safe, fulfilled lives. These responsibilities are complex but necessarily overlap and there is the potential for confusion.
- 2.11 The LSCB through its chair is accountable to the DCS. The LSCB however holds the Children's Trust Board accountable for its work on safeguarding children. The DCS is held to account by the Chief Executive of the Local Authority and the Lead Member by the Leader of the Council. The Children's Trust Board is held to account by all the partners together for achieving improvements in overall outcomes for children and young people. In turn Overview and Scrutiny committees hold officers and executive members to account.
- 2.12 Whilst the parts of the system are not always directly accountable to each other, they are responsible for holding each other to account within the system. Strong leadership from the DCS, the Lead Member and the LSCB Chair, working closely together, is required to ensure these responsibilities are discharged effectively.
- 2.13 The consequence of the legislation and guidance is that every agency working with children, young people or families is required to fulfil eight key standards:
1. **Senior management commitment** to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare;
 2. **A clear statement of the agency's responsibilities** towards children available for all staff;
 3. **A clear line of accountability** within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;

4. **Service development that takes account of the need to safeguard** and promote welfare and **is informed**, where appropriate, **by the views of children and families**;

5. **Staff training** on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or (depending on the agency's primary functions) in contact with children and families;

6. **Safe recruitment** procedures in place;

7. **Effective inter-agency working** to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;

8. **Effective information sharing**.

2.14 Major developments in government policy and legislation are likely to arise from the Munro Review of Child Protection, which commenced in 2010¹. The context of this review is one of financial constraint across public services, increasing demand for children's social care, and radical plans for the way government approaches public services. In her interim report, Professor Eileen Munro has said that:

- 'Child protection work involves working with uncertainty: we cannot know for sure what is going on in families; we cannot be sure that improvements in family circumstances will last. Many of the problems in current practice seem to arise from the defensive ways in which professionals are expected to manage that uncertainty. For some, following rules and being compliant can appear less risky than carrying the personal responsibility for exercising judgment.
- Social workers are only one of the many groups who work with children and all have a responsibility to protect them, to watch out for signs of difficulty and take responsibility for considering how those difficulties might be tackled. The problem is that the evidence of abuse and neglect is not clearly labelled as such. The causes of injuries are often hard to ascertain; children's distress and problematic behaviour can arise from myriad causes. Fear of missing a case is leading to too many referrals and too many families getting caught up in lengthy assessments that cause them distress but do not lead to the provision of any help. This is creating a skewed system that is paying so much attention to identifying cases of abuse and neglect that it is draining time and resource away from families.
- The Children's Commissioner has provided a wealth of evidence to this review that reveals the distress children feel at receiving an impersonal service where insufficient time is given to helping them understand what is happening to them. They want a social worker who forms an enduring relationship with them and listens to them.'

1

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/informationforprofessionals/a0065082/pofessor-munros-review-of-child-protection-analysis-of-the-problems>

- 2.15 Professor Munro has said that she finds that processes and procedures, and the unintentional consequences of previous reforms, are getting in the way of social workers spending time with vulnerable children and families. Professor Munro is due to submit her final report in April 2011.
- 2.16 The coalition government has already made a number of changes, and signalled other changes, which have major implications for local authority services, including children's social care. Along with substantial reductions in funding for local authorities, the Government has acted to dismantle many of the controls and restrictions on local authorities. The Government has indicated that they envisage local authorities becoming more accountable and having more discretion to choose what is most important in terms of local services. The Government has also indicated that they will be replacing a number of separate grants with an 'Early Intervention grant'. The overall impact on central government funding for local authorities is not yet clear.

Best Practice

- 2.17 The London Assistant Directors of Children's services have submitted that good social workers possess a range of knowledge, skills and abilities which they utilise to undertake purposeful intervention in the following way: Assessment, analysis, risk assessment, working alongside families problem solving, decision making and planning, building relationships, partnership with other agencies, relationships with looked after children. Underlying all the work that social workers do is a value base which incorporates an approach where empathy and warmth are central, where respectful scepticism is a priority and which is based on an holistic view of the child and family. Social workers act as advocates and at the core is the preservation of human rights for children, and their families, when these are not in conflict.
- 2.18 Bracknell Forest's Local Safeguarding Children Board has issued a 'Safeguarding Toolkit' designed to support all Partners working with children, young people or families in Bracknell Forest to identify their shared responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people. The toolkit also provides tools, and exemplars to support everyone to meet these responsibilities. We summarise the Toolkit at Appendix 4.7.

What Is A Child In Need?

- 2.19 Children who are defined as being 'in need', under the Children Act 1989, are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services (s17(10) of the Children Act 1989) plus those who are disabled. The critical factors to be taken into account in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 1989 are what will happen to a child's health or development without services, and the likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development.

What Is Significant Harm?

- 2.20 Some children are in need because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. The local authority is under a duty to make

enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (s47 of the Children Act 1989). To make enquiries involves assessing what is happening to a child. Where s47 enquiries are being made, the assessment (the 'core assessment') should concentrate on the harm that has occurred or is likely to occur to the child as a result of child maltreatment in order to inform future plans and the nature of services required. Decisions about significant harm are complex and should be informed by a careful assessment of the child's circumstances, and discussion between the statutory agencies and with the child and family.

What Is Abuse And Neglect?

- 2.21 Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.
- 2.22 Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.
- 2.23 Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- 2.24 Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent failing to:
- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
 - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
 - ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

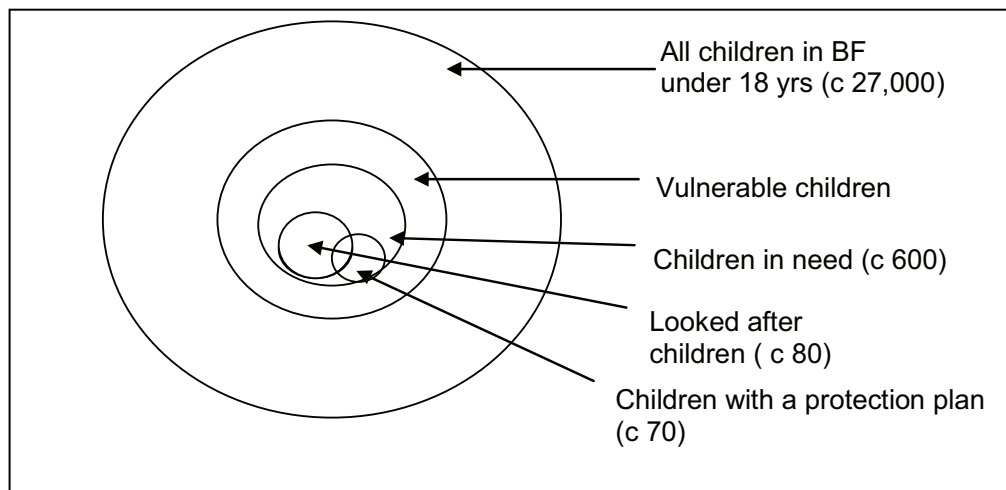
How many Children and Young People Are Involved in the Safeguarding process?

- 2.25 Nationally, there has been a steady escalation of numbers referred to social workers over the decades but there has been a perceptible steep rise in

referrals (11 percent in the 2009/10 year) since the publicity around the tragic death of Baby Peter Connelly. The interim report of the Munro review states that 547,000 children were referred to children's social care in 2008/09. There has been an 11 percent rise to 607,000 in 2009/10. Children receiving social care support are described as 'children in need' and numbered 382,300 in 2009/10 (up 25 percent from 304,400 in 2008/09) according to provisional figures from the latest Children in Need census. These figures are significant, given that there are 12.3 million 0–19 year olds in total in the United Kingdom.

2.26 Professor Munro has commented that managing this high rate of referrals has become so problematic that it is seriously affecting all other aspects of social work. The majority of referrals to social workers are not deemed to warrant a full child protection investigation. The statistics for 2008/09 and 2009/10 show that around 22–23 percent receive a core assessment and 6 percent became or continued to be the subject of a child protection plan.

2.27 The numbers of children involved in Bracknell Forest at May 2010 are shown in the diagram below.



In Bracknell Forest on 31 March 2010, there were 70 children and 41 families subject to a child protection plan, a rate of 26 per 10,000 children. During the year ended 31 March 2010:

- There were 1269 referrals to Children's Social Care;
- 100 children had an initial child protection conference;
- 18% of referrals during the year resulted in S47 (child protection) investigations;
- The Council started care proceedings involving 11 children; and
- There were no serious case reviews.

2.28 We were advised that the numbers of child protection plans had continued to grow, reaching their highest level to date of 80 cases at 30 June 2010. At our meeting on 2 September 2010 we considered the results of a report entitled "Analysis of Increase in Child Protection Plans in Bracknell Forest July 2010". The Working Group discussed the following points.

- a) It was pointed out that fewer children are coming off plans, which may reflect an increase in professional quality of the service or that the plans are not working.

- b) The category of abuse for children subject to a protection plan is now more in line with the national picture, with neglect being the largest category.
- c) We noted that there is no single cause of the increase in the numbers of children subject to a protection plan. As well as reflecting the general increase in children's social care activity, this was probably influenced by the heightened awareness of professionals.
- d) It was interesting to see that cases of children aged 0-4 have doubled between March 2009 and March 2010, partly as a result of former looked after children having children.
- e) It was agreed that the report was a good and thorough piece of work. It was mentioned that a similar piece of work would be difficult to do without the support of GOSE which is to be abolished in the future.
- f) It was suggested that the following recommendations be included in the final report:
 - 1. That funding is provided for the monitoring of the recommendations made in the Analysis.
 - 2. That funding is provided to carry out future analysis in the absence of GOSE.
- g) Overall the Working Group considered that the analysis was very interesting, and thought it was particularly important such a thorough piece of work had been done to establish the reason why demand for services has increased recently.

The Processes For Safeguarding Children

2.29 Four key processes underpin work with children in need and their families, each of which needs to be carried out effectively in order to achieve improvements in the lives of children in need. They are assessment, planning, intervention and reviewing. At any stage, a referral may be necessary from one agency to another, or a referral may be received from a member of the public. These steps are spelt out further in the Government's non-statutory guidance on 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused', which we have summarised at Appendix 4.4.

2.30 Best practice emphasises the need for **early intervention and prevention**. The role of universal services (such as schools and GPs) is crucial in the recognition and referral of children in need and children in need of protection. The Children's Social Care teams in local authorities get involved in individual cases of a Child in need or in need of protection through:

- The child protection investigation, which may then require
- The child protection conference, which can lead to
- The child protection plan, which in a few cases requires
- Care proceedings.

The action is informed by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form, which is used for non-emergency cases where someone believes there is a cause for concern. We describe the CAF form in more detail in Appendix 4.11. We set out in more detail in Section 3 of this report how the Council has organised itself to carry out the safeguarding functions.

3. Investigation, Information Gathering and Analysis

What did the Working Group do in this Review?

- 3.1 In line with the normal practice of Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups, we determined the scope of our review in some detail at the outset, taking advice from officers and in consultation with the Council's Executive Member for Children and Young People, and Director of Children, Young People and Learning. The scoping document setting out our plans for this review is at Appendix 1. Whilst we did not review any individual cases of children's social care, all members of the working group signed undertakings not to divulge any confidential information on any individuals which we might encounter during the course of the review.
- 3.2 This Section 3 of the report sets out the evidence we have obtained during our review. This comprised: gathering background information (see also section 2 of this report); reviewing Government Guidance and other key documents relating to safeguarding children and young people (which we have summarised in Appendix 4); obtaining written responses from national and local organisations (see Appendix 6); and gathering a substantial amount of evidence through a structured series of meetings with children and adults who had been involved in the Council's safeguarding services, also many other people involved in safeguarding, as set out below.
- 3.3 Discussions were held with:

21 May 2010	Dr Janette Karklins , Director of Children, Young People and Learning. Penny Reuter ² , Chief Officer Children's Social Care. Mairead Panetta , Head of Service: Safeguarding. Sarah Roberts , Policy & Commissioning Officer.
18 June 2010	Sarah Roberts , Policy & Commissioning Officer Fiona Gibbins , Over 11's Team Manager, Children's Social Care. Sonia Johnson , Duty and Fast Team Manager, Children's Social Care. On a further day in November, Councillor Mrs McCracken observed the Council's Duty Team carrying out their daily operations.
2 July 2010	Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard , Executive Member for Children and Young People
2 August 2010	Sheila Davies , Rachael Matthews and Sue Viccars (NHS Berkshire East)
2 September 2010	Elaine Coleridge Smith , Chair of Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board.
23 September 2010	Gordon Cunningham , Headteacher Easthampstead Park Community School. Sue Skilton , Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Easthampstead Park Community School.
7 October 2010	Andrea de Bunsen , Headteacher: Kennel Lane Special School. Paul Van Walwyk , Designated Teacher for Child

² Penny Reuter, as the Chief Officer responsible for Children's Social Care and the departmental link officer for our review, attended most of our meetings.

Protection: Kennel Lane Special School.
Chief Inspector Simon Bowden, Local Police Area
 Commander for Bracknell Forest, Thames Valley Police.
Detective Sergeant Sarah Austin, Child Abuse
 Investigation Unit, Thames Valley Police
Gloria King, Children and Families Manager.
 28 October 2010 **NHS Berkshire East Primary Care Trust:**
Dr Pat Riordan, Director of Public Health.
Carolyn Finlay, Assistant Director Commissioning,
 Strategic Lead for Children's Services.
Sarah Parsons, Head of Universal Services and
 Safeguarding.
Elaine Welch, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding.
Dr Katie Caird, Named General Practitioner for
 Bracknell Forest.
 12 November 2010 **Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard**, Executive Member for Children
 and Young People
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young
 People and Learning.

The Working Group also took part in the following events during the course of its investigation:

2 July 2010	A meeting with parents involved with safeguarding services
28 July 2010	A meeting with children involved with safeguarding services
19 Oct 2010	Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Conference Stakeholder Event

3.4 In designing its approach to this review, the Working Group applied the best practice guidance from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS) on scrutiny of safeguarding children. This guide recognises that safeguarding children and promoting their welfare is one of the key statutory responsibilities vested in top tier local authorities. The guide states that relentless vigilance, with a strong outcomes focus, are the keys to ensuring that local councils and their partners fulfil their responsibilities properly. The guide goes on to state that vigilance requires robust performance and quality assurance mechanisms, clear accountability arrangements and a system of checks and balances that provide effective challenge; and that local Overview and Scrutiny Committees are one of those critical checks and balances.



3.5 The approach to scrutiny recommended in the IDEA/CFPS guide includes ten 'top' questions to address the core issues that can be looked at in scrutinising safeguarding arrangements. We formally asked the Council's Director of Children, Young People and Learning to answer these questions, and the written responses we received are reproduced at Appendix 5. We reviewed

the Director's responses at our meeting on 2 July. We were reassured by the responses, which we see as a fundamental statement by the Council on how it meets all its important responsibilities to safeguard children.

How does the Council Plan its Safeguarding Activities?

- 3.6 The Council plans for safeguarding children have their basis in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. The Council's long term strategic plans are contained in the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which is agreed with a wide range of partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors as a shared long-term vision for the Borough of Bracknell Forest. The current SCS, for 2008- 2014 has within its top priorities 'A thriving population', and within that, 'Nurturing the next Generation'. Alongside that plan, the Council has a statutory Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The Secretary of State has recently announced that he plans to revoke the regulations which require the production of CYPP's in April 2011.
- 3.7 The Council translates its long term strategic plans into six high level priorities, one of which is, 'Create a borough where people are safe and feel safe'. Within that Priority is Medium Term Objective 6: To improve the outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan. That in turn comprises a number of key objectives, including, '6.9 Taking all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.'
- 3.8 Each of the Council's departments produce an annual Service Plan showing in more detail how the Council's key objectives will be actioned during the year, and sets targets for each of the national and local performance indicators. Performance against these is monitored and published every three months, and we return to the published performance information in paragraph 3.25 below.

How does the Council organise itself to carry out its safeguarding functions?

- 3.9 In the Council, Safeguarding Children is led politically by the Executive Member for Children and Young People, and operational leadership rests with the Director of Children, Young People and Learning, both of whom have specific statutory responsibilities (we have commented on how these are being met, at paragraphs 3.5 and 3.50). The more significant executive decisions are taken by the Executive as a whole. Similarly, major operational issues involve the Council's Chief Executive and the Corporate (top) Management Team as appropriate. Full time operational leadership of safeguarding rests with the Chief Officer: Children's Social Care, whose direct reports include the Head of Service - Safeguarding. The other service areas in Children's Social Care include: the Assessment service for new referrals; Continuing Social Work support for particular children and their families; the Family Placement Service, to support fostering and adoption; the Youth Offending Service, to prevent and manage youth offending; Larchwood Short Break Unit, for children with disabilities; Child Protection Conferences; Family Group Conferences; and Education Support for Looked After Children. In addition to operating safeguarding for children and young people in Bracknell Forest, the Council also operates an Out-Of-Hours Emergency Duty Team for Children's and Adult's Social Care covering the whole of Berkshire, the cost of which is shared by all six unitary authorities in Berkshire.

- 3.10 The Duty and Assessment Team:
- Undertake Initial Assessments and Child Protection (Section 47) enquiries
 - Provide crisis intervention in the form of family support.
 - Plan short term support strategies to enable families to care for their children.
 - Identify the need for a core assessment and undertake these.
- 3.11 The Fieldwork Teams:
- Undertake core assessments
 - Plan and review the needs of looked after children in medium to long term foster care or residential placements
 - Monitor and review children who are subject of a Protection Plan
 - Work with children who are subject to civil proceedings in the courts regarding their welfare
 - Place children for adoption subject to an assessment of their need
 - Provide longer term support to children, young people and families through allocation of continuing social work support and the provision of other community based services
 - Work closely with other statutory agencies and voluntary sector organisations in order to promote and protect children's welfare.

There are three Fieldwork teams

- Under 11 years, which also includes the Family Centre who have a role in carrying out more detailed assessments and supporting families
- Over 11 years, which also includes the After Care Team who provide after-care support to young people who have left care
- Disabled Children's Team (for children who have a chronic and enduring disability).

- 3.12 The Council operates various systems and procedures in line with legal requirements, government policy and best practice. This includes the on-line Berkshire LSCB Child Protection Procedures, and the Common Assessment Framework Form which we summarise at Appendices 4.5 and 4.11. The Council also applies a very usable 'Needs/Risk' matrix setting out generic characteristics of children for each of the 'Every Child Matters' Outcomes, under four levels. The table below gives examples of the matrix, in relation to the 'Stay Safe' outcome.

Priority	Stay Safe - examples
Level 4: Children and families in crisis needing urgent intervention <i>- High level and complex needs requiring immediate or ongoing social care response</i>	Child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm(e.g. child suffers serious non-accidental injury, severe neglect or is sexually abused).
Level 3: Children and families needing intensive assistance <i>- where provision of service is needed to prevent impairment of welfare, health and development of the child</i>	Fear and anxiety from high levels of domestic violence. Severe parental mental illness or substance misuse.

Level 2: Children with additional needs (vulnerable children) - Will be assessed under the Common Assessment Framework	Child who experiences bullying, or presenting disruptive behaviour at home.
Level 1: All children and families -Child has no identified additional needs and will receive universal services	Child lives in safe environment. No significant parenting or behavioural problems.

What resources do the Council and its partners deploy to safeguard children and young people?

- 3.13 The Council and its partners have dedicated substantial staff and financial resources devoted to safeguarding children, but in addition there is a huge range of activity which contributes to safeguarding in its widest sense. Examples of such activities include school crossing patrols helping children get to school safely, trading standards officers checking that shops do not sell knives to young people, and every school having a designated teacher for child protection who receives specialised training and spends a significant amount of their time dealing with child protection issues.
- 3.14 Within the Council, the staffing and revenue budgets for Children’s Social Care pertaining to safeguarding children and young people are shown in Appendix 2. This shows that currently some 107 (Full time equivalent) staff are employed, and some £7.7 million revenue expenditure is incurred on, directly or indirectly safeguarding children and young people.

The Role of the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board

- 3.15 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) were established in April 2006 to replace the child protection arrangements previously undertaken by the Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC). The LSCB’s have more authority and a wider, statutory remit. The chairs of the LSCB are either an independent person (this is the case in Bracknell Forest) or a senior officer with a safeguarding background from one of the partner organisations. The functions for the LSCB are defined in The Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations (2006) and the government’s guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.
- 3.16 The LSCB is expected to take an objective independent perspective in relation to the work of the partner agencies both individually and collectively. It is important for the effectiveness of the LSCB that this independence is maintained despite members having roles and responsibilities within their own organisations and partnership bodies which may come under scrutiny. What is always necessary is a combination of independence and co-operative collaborative work between partners.
- 3.17 In Bracknell Forest, the LSCB has an independent Chair, who is paid a fee. The LSCB Manager (a part-time Council officer): co-ordinates the various LSCB groups (on safety, raising awareness, etc) and the development of policies; produces the LSCB annual report and their business plan. We have summarised in Appendix 4.6 the most recent Annual Report of the Bracknell

Forest LSCB. We note that the LSCB has its own budget, with cash contributions from its partner organisations. The Working Group met the Chair of the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board as part of our review (see paragraphs 3.66 – 3.72 below).

The Role of the Children's Trust

- 3.18 Children's Trusts are local partnership arrangements to improve children's well-being. They are not defined in legislation but are underpinned by a 'duty to co-operate' in section 10 of the Children Act 2004. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 amended section 10 by bringing schools, colleges and Jobcentre Plus under the duty to co-operate and requiring all local areas to have a children's trust board, which has to prepare and publish a jointly owned Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Children's Trusts (CT) were created to address the fragmentation of responsibilities for children's services by strengthening accountabilities and developing a local strategy in every area for improving children's lives by delivering better services, including their health and wellbeing.
- 3.19 A Children's Trust Board oversees the CT cooperation agreements. CT Boards provide the interagency governance to bring partners together in preparing and monitoring the implementation of the CYPP. Delivering the strategy remains the responsibility of the partners, both individually and together.
- 3.20 Bracknell Forest established its Children's Trust on 1 April 2008, The Children and Young People's Trust Board is one of ten theme partnerships within the Bracknell Forest Partnership. The Children and Young People's Trust Board is the statutory body which provides interagency governance of the cooperation arrangements as a whole. It represents the voice of children, young people and families at partnership level and aims to ensure that outcomes for children and young people and families remain at the centre of partnership working and delivery. It has membership at a senior level and includes young people amongst its members. The board is chaired by the Executive Member for Children and Young People. The Working Group met the Chair of the Bracknell Forest Local Children's Trust as part of our review (see paragraphs 3.46 – 3.51 below).
- 3.21 The Bracknell Forest Children and Young People's Trust Executive is responsible for undertaking and achieving the priorities identified by the board as agreed through the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). It steers the flow of business through the Board. This includes taking responsibility for commissioning of services and for performance monitoring the activities of the Board as key mechanisms supporting the Trust. The Executive is chaired by the Director of Children, Young People and Learning. Working Groups report directly to the Executive and represent significant building blocks of the Every Child Matters agenda and operate to strengthen partnership working.
- 3.22 In July 2010, the Secretary of State said that 'Strong local partnerships are crucial to meeting the needs of all children, but a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. That is why this Government intends to remove much of the bureaucracy surrounding children's trusts and allow schools to choose how best they may engage.' The Secretary of State has indicated that he proposes to remove the requirement on local authorities to set up Children's

Performance

- 3.23 The Council's Children's Services have been consistently rated as 'good' in the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) by Ofsted, and were rated as 'good' in the Joint Area Review (JAR) published in 2008. The most recent Children's Services assessment conducted by OFSTED reports that services are 'performing well'. There have been two unannounced inspections of Larchwood, the second of which focused specifically on safeguarding. On both occasions provision was judged as "outstanding".
- 3.24 We summarise in Appendix 4.8 the recent OFSTED reports on safeguarding, including their unannounced inspection of the Council's referral and assessment arrangements in our Children's Services. The reports are positive, pointing to a number of strengths. There are five areas for development identified, as summarised in Appendix 4.8.
- 3.25 The Council's performance against the national indicators relating to safeguarding, also its performance against its service plan objectives, is at Appendix 3. This shows that performance was in line with targets and objectives on almost all areas of activity.
- 3.26 At the Working Group's first meeting on Friday 21st May 2010 the WG met with **Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning, Penny Reuter, Chief Officer Children's Social Care, Mairead Panetta, Head of Service: Safeguarding and Sarah Roberts, Policy & Commissioning Officer.**
- 3.27 In addition to electing a lead member and discussing our approach to this review, the Group received an informative presentation and briefing from the officers on Safeguarding Children, with particular reference to child protection (which we have drawn on in section 2 of this report). The main points arising in the discussion were:
- a. Safeguarding encompasses a huge range of activity. At its most basic level, safeguarding includes issues for all children such as pedestrian crossings on roads, through levels towards targeted assistance and services to individuals at risk of significant harm.
 - b. The three main agencies involved in child protection are the Council, the Police and the Health Service.
 - c. 'Looked after children' are those who have been removed from their family setting, sometimes at the request of their parents, though not all would be placed with foster carers.
 - d. Individual children can and do move in and out of child protection arrangements.
 - e. Most cases of significant harm to children arise within their own family/home setting.
 - f. Neglect is regarded to be the hardest form of significant harm to identify.
 - g. The Council relies upon the 'universal services' such as General Practitioners and schools to draw attention to cases exceeding the Council's threshold concerning cases of possible significant harm.

When so alerted, the Council considers them and carries out an initial assessment, then moves on to the appropriate action. This can lead, for example, to a Child Protection conference and possibly a Child Protection plan, with a range of different actions depending on the circumstances of each case. In a small number of cases the action could include applying to the Court for a Care Order.

- 3.28 The Head of Service: Safeguarding led members through a fictitious case study prepared by officers, reflecting typical aspects of a more serious case dealt with by the service. The case study concerned a single parent living in poverty, with issues concerning alleged sexual abuse, theft and domestic violence. The co-ordinated action included a Section 47 enquiry, a child protection conference, an Emergency Protection Order, and a foster placement. In our discussion, the main points arising were:
- a) Because of loneliness and the inability to socialise outside the home, some parents formed relationships over the internet.
 - b) Final decisions on cases often took a long time due to a range of assessments required.
 - c) In the circumstances of the case study, the child would be in foster care whilst a final decision was being worked towards.
 - d) There is a very thorough assessment process for prospective foster carers, with attendant training and help. The training and support was very extensive, and it continued throughout the foster period.
 - e) Foster carers were appraised of the case history of the children entrusted to their care.

The Chief Officer remarked that there had been a significant increase in child protection cases in the last year, with some 70 children currently the subject of a protection plan. Nationally, there had also been a significant increase. There was likely to be a range of reasons for this, including heightened awareness and possibly societal changes. The Directors of Children's Services in South East England councils had commissioned research on the reasons for the increase, and we comment further on this in paragraph 2.25 above.

- 3.29 On Friday 18th June the Group finalised its approach to the review and met the **Over 11's Team Manager for Children's Social Care Fiona Gibbins, the Under 11's Team, and the Duty & Fast Team Manager for Children's Social Care Sonia Johnson** at their workplace in the Council's Time Square offices.



From left to right; Cllr Mrs McCracken, Cllr Mrs Angell, Sarah Roberts, Fiona Gibbins, Richard Beaumont, Sonia Johnson, Cllr Mrs Birch

- 3.30 Sonia Johnson, Duty and Fast Team Manager for Children's Social Care, explained that the team of 16 includes 3 family workers and 2 part time staff. As well as managing the duty team she is responsible for Family and Adolescence, homeless and accommodation, and record keeping/access to records. The Duty team receive all contacts (around 400-600 each month) where there has been no recent social worker contact, and make decisions to progress contacts to referrals and assessments using a needs matrix. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form, is used as a method for referrals for all family support work (children's work force) and a Multi Agency Referral Form (Adult work force). Child protection referrals are also taken over the telephone.
- 3.31 The Group was informed that contacts came from various sources and take various forms. Among the common causes of contacts were: domestic violence; single mothers with alcohol problems, and emotional harm. At the outset, the team endeavoured to obtain as much relevant information as possible on all cases. Each case was looked at and a decision made as to whether to progress it to a referral (where more information was gathered), and if necessary a statutory (Section 47) assessment. The team holds case for a maximum of 4 weeks. The team provide an immediate, short term service and can respond within the same day if necessary. When children are considered to be in danger, they arrange accommodation and find extended family and other solutions to make children safe.
- 3.32 Members met the Duty Team, and had the duty rota including a social worker and family worker explained to them. Members were informed by staff that there is an Out Of Hours Emergency Duty Team, covering adult and children's social care, on a Berkshire-wide basis, and this is based at the depot, alongside the Forestcare team.

The Members met the Over 11's, Under 11's and Duty Teams in their workplace



From left to right; Sonia Johnson, Cllr Mrs Birch, Cllr Mrs McCracken, Cllr Mrs Angell

3.33 Councillor Mrs McCracken spent a day with the Duty and Assessment Team to observe their daily routine. Cllr Mrs McCracken found this to be highly informative and enlightening, and attended the regular Monday morning meeting, during which officers discussed and reviewed with Sonia Johnson their Team Manager the way forward on the caseload, both existing and new referrals. There then followed a Duty Team unannounced visit to existing clients, which had to be rescheduled. Points arising in discussion with the team included:

- a) The emotional aspects of the job, where the team were emphatic that their experiences did not have a desensitising effect on them personally.
- b) The professional approach to their work, their training and the absolute commitment to ensuring a Child or Young Person is safe wherever possible was clearly paramount in the Duty Team's approach to their job. The team saw that applying to everyone who works in the Children's and Young People's Service.
- c) The team said their job is difficult at the best of times and harrowing at the worst, so it is particularly important and obvious that the Team are supportive of one another. Cllr Mrs McCracken found this to be a very tight knit team who also enjoyed the full support of senior management. This gave assurance that as far as we as a Council are concerned we are doing everything that we can to ensure the safety of our Children and Young People.

3.34 During the visit to the Duty and Assessment Team, it was explained that the families referred to or seeking help from Children's Social Care have differing levels of need. Many will be helped by advice or practical services or short-term intervention. A smaller proportion will have problems of such complexity and seriousness that they require more detailed assessment, involving other agencies in the process, leading to appropriate plans and intervention. The

systematic approach that is used on each and every referral was explained as comprising:

- a) For cases that are open to the long-term teams (i.e. Under 11s, Over 11s and the Disabled Children's Team), any new contacts or referrals regarding these cases should be passed directly to the relevant team.
- b) For children and young people who were previously open to one of these long term teams within the previous 3 months, any new contacts or referrals on these children should be passed directly to the relevant team.
- c) Not all initial contacts lead to a referral, for example a request for information or advice. A contact will normally be: a notification from other agencies; a request for general information, advice or assistance (e.g. Childminding list; benefits query, notification of intention to undertake a Statement of Educational Needs); offering a service (e.g. prospective foster carer); or recording significant information on an already open case where assessments are ongoing.
- d) The Team signposts as appropriate to services which Children's Social Care do not provide.
- e) All contacts (and referrals) not previously known or on closed cases are dealt with by the Duty and Assessment Team.
- f) The Team check referrals on receipt, record information on their system, and where the contact or referral refers to an open case, this will be passed immediately on to the allocated worker or their supervisor.
- g) Other agencies can contact Children's Social Care for advice about a child or young person in a consultative capacity, and these contacts are recorded in the Consultation Book by the Duty Worker, together with details of any advice given.
- h) Where it appears that the child or children being discussed might be a 'child in need', the professional will be asked to discuss with the family making a formal referral.
- i) The Duty Senior will decide upon any further action. This will be either: no further action; progress to information and advice received; progress to referral, and this decision is communicated to the referrer in writing and details are entered onto the system. Where action is required, this is passed to the Duty Worker to complete the action identified by the Duty Senior. When the action has been completed, the contact is passed on to the Duty Senior to decide whether to take no further action or to progress to referral. This decision is to be made within one working day. Any completed work on contacts are to be allocated at the end of the day to a named worker.

3.35 Fiona Gibbins, Over 11's Team Manager, explained the role and activities of her team, comprising 8 full time social workers at Time Square and one full time social worker and 3 part time in the After Care Team based at Portman Close. The over 11's are split into the Fieldwork Team (which deals with the statutory work, i.e. looked after children), child protection and family support and the After Care Team. The team uses mobile working, and is equipped with laptop PCs. This team receives all cases from the Duty Team.

3.36 We were informed that 'Child In Need' is a long term programme which works with children from 11-18 years. An approach is designed to suit the circumstances of each case. Cases are reviewed every 3 months. A Social Worker works closely with the child and the family, also with other public agencies such as schools and the Youth Offending Service. A multiagency

approach was normal, and co-operation is good. We were advised that in child protection cases, there is an initial conference, leading to a core group deciding on a plan, which is reviewed every 4-5 weeks. Plans can last for up to 18 months before court action is considered, if no change is achieved. The team endeavour to keep continuity of staffing on each case, as far as possible. As a long term team, Looked After children remain with the team until they reach 18, therefore cases close or move on at a very slow rate, though over time the activity level can vary markedly. Cases are referred to aftercare depending on the circumstances. Aftercare supports people up to the age of 21 (or 24 as long as they are in full time education).

- 3.37 We were told that the Over-11 and Under 11's teams have no option but to take on cases from the Duty Team, which allowed the Duty Team to receive more contacts. The workload had gone up significantly since the Baby Peter case, with referrals of new cases constantly rising, making it harder to manage the workload. The number of child protection referrals remains constant at about 20 cases a month which take priority. Managers supervise staff to make sure the workload is manageable using a points system to allocate workload to staff, with 38-42 points for a senior worker which equates to about 15-20 people each, including around 4 on child protection. It was mentioned that accessibility to children during school holidays is better and referrals from schools decrease, which improves the workload as a high proportion of work received is from schools.
- 3.38 On the issue of caseload, we were told that management are well aware of the pressures involved and hold a caseload weighting meeting where work is distributed among the social workers taking into account certain factors including needs and travel distances. It was mentioned that a lot of time is spent on travel (placements were often well away from Bracknell Forest) and some social workers feel aggrieved that the lower mileage reimbursement rate applies. Social workers work overtime when the workload is too high and claim time off in lieu, as most people work around 50 hours per week. Staffing had increased with a recent addition of a social worker and a family worker. Agency staff were not regarded to be an option and the only solution to an increased workload is to reprioritise and work overtime. The record keeping system was computerised 5 years ago but records are printed out only for use in court cases. The records are only available within the department and are not shared with other agencies unless necessary.
- 3.39 The Group was informed that the service experienced entrenched behaviour in some family groups, where problems are passed down through generations and social workers are finding themselves providing services to the children of people who received services a generation ago. Bracknell seems to be a less transient town nationally, which leads some people being unable to break out of cycles of problems. It was mentioned that some young people requiring services have no aspirations and low self esteem.
- 3.40 We were advised that the Under 11's Team was under much pressure, with more child protection and court cases, and with some children being identified as 'at risk' before they were born. Members were informed that the manager was currently covering the role of another manager, and the team was currently short of 2 full time staff and 1 part time staff member. Staff said there seemed to be a delay in advertising vacancies, and a policy of advertising with a wide ranging title and salary range, so as not to discourage potential applicants. One of the team members expressed her view that she

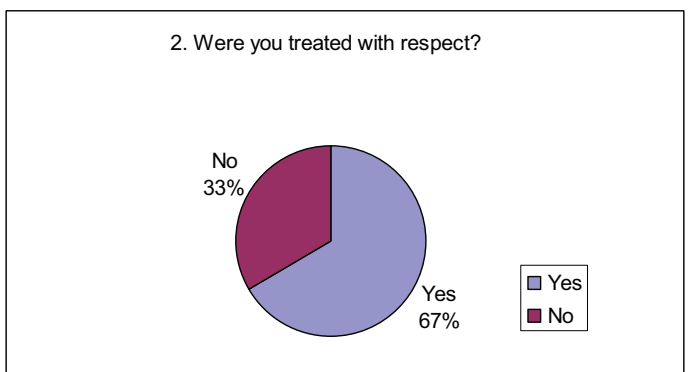
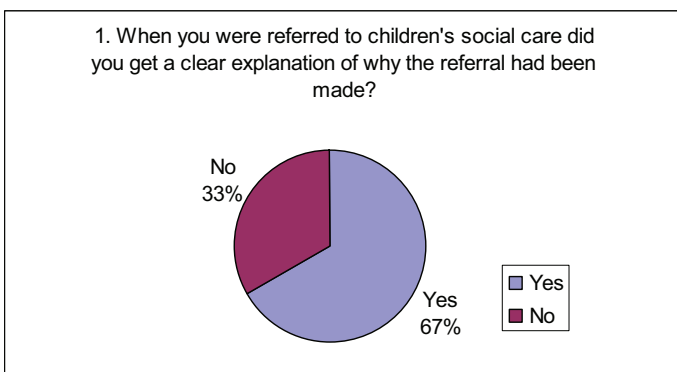
was really worried that they would miss something important because of the under-staffing, and this also put a squeeze on the time spent on training. One member of staff also mentioned that the team were finding themselves writing the same information over and over again when filling out various forms; this also detracted from the time they were able to spend with children directly. We have subsequently been informed by the Chief Officer that the under 11s team was fully staffed by October 2010, and we return to this point in our conclusions at paragraphs 4.11 – 4.12 below.

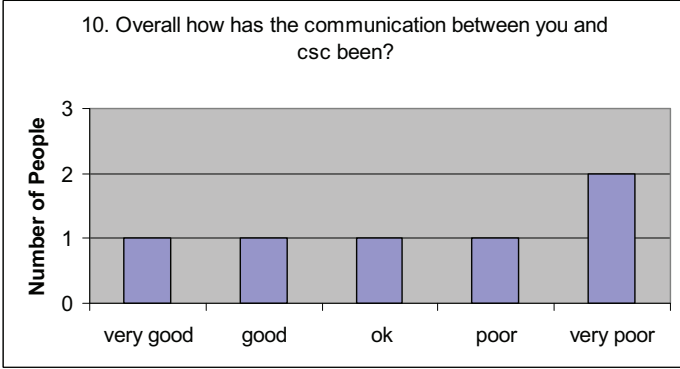
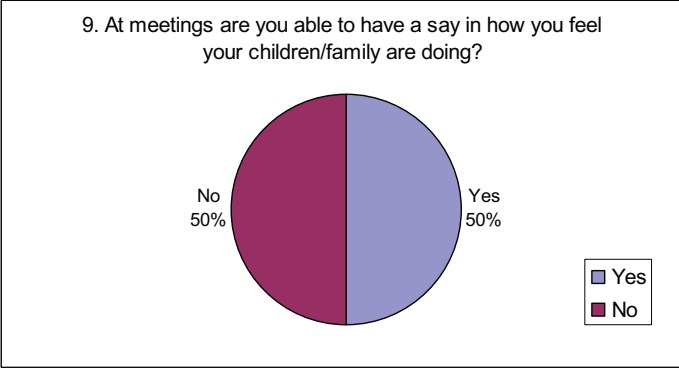
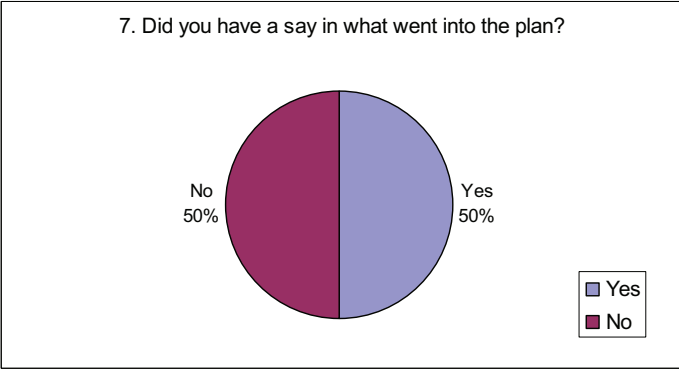
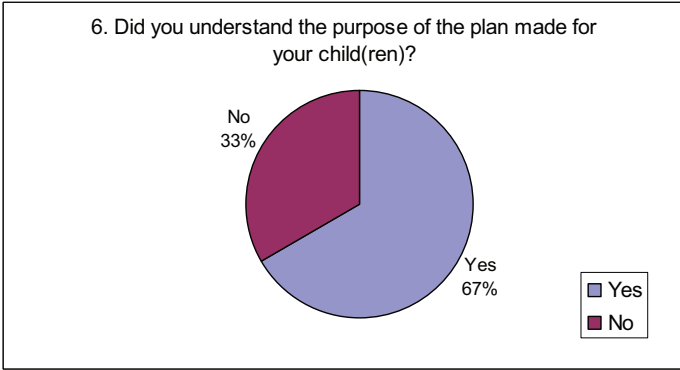
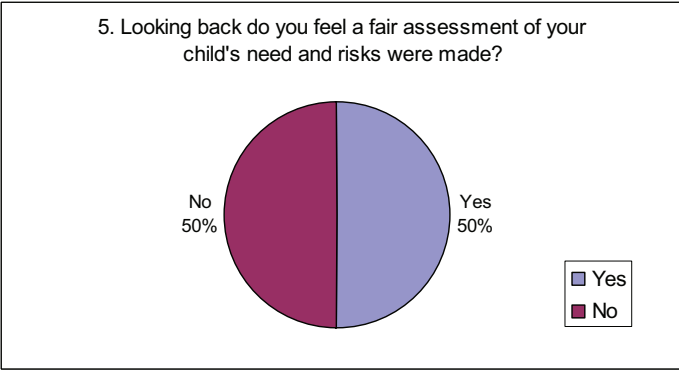
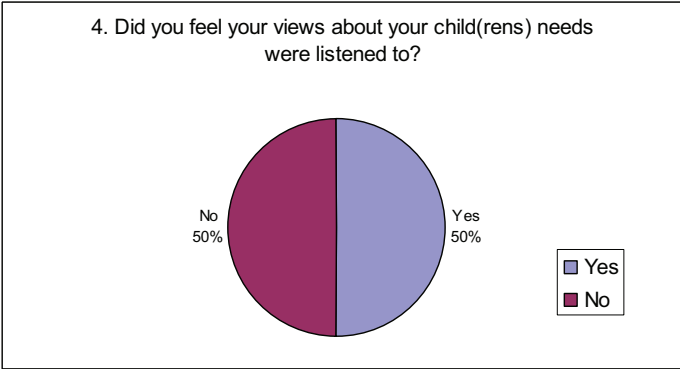
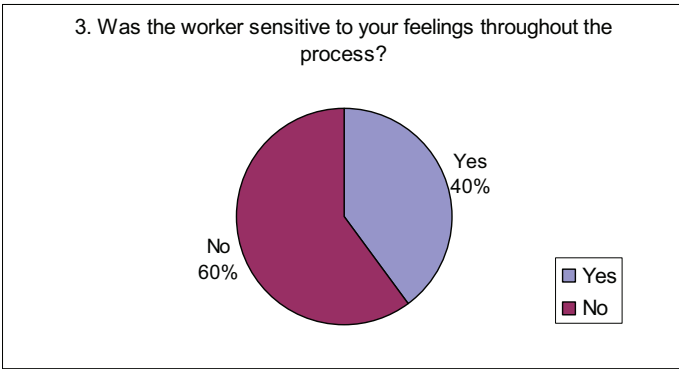
3.41 The Group was impressed by the professionalism and dedication of staff we met. We return at paragraph 4.25 below to our appreciation of the difficulty of their jobs, and our admiration for what is being achieved by the Children’s Social Care teams.

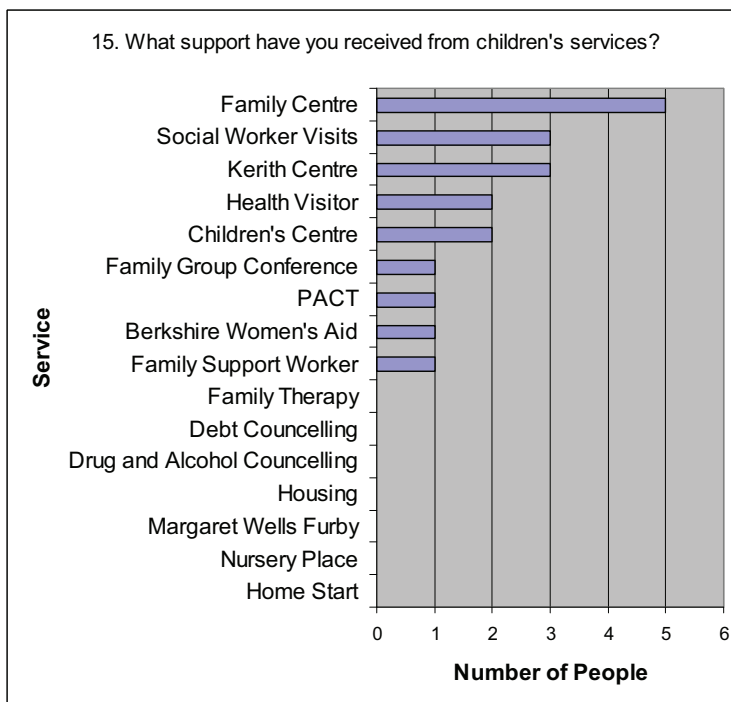
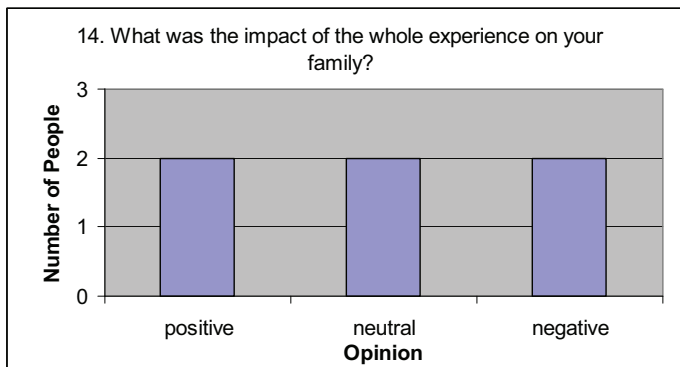
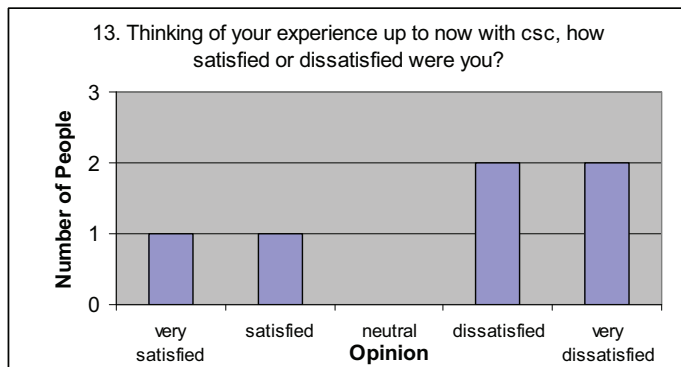
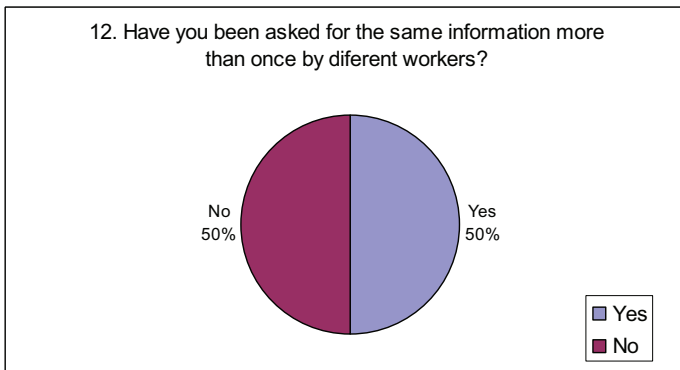
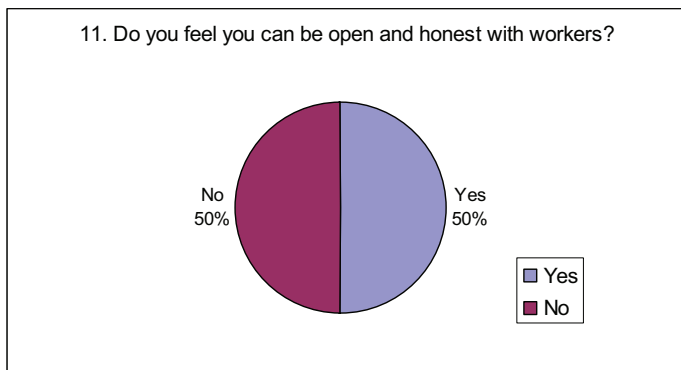
3.42 On 2 July 2010, two members of the Working Group met with some **parents who attended the Bracknell Family Centre** to discuss with them their experiences of Children’s Social Care. The Council’s Policy and Commissioning Officer was also present. We commenced with asking a set of questions, and confidentiality of individual responses was assured by using ‘Quizdom’ electronic voting equipment. We then had a discussion with the parents.



3.43 In addition to the five participants at the working group session a sixth parent was contacted to gain their views on the service. They were asked the same Quizdom questions and the results have been included with the other parents answers, displayed graphically below.







3.44 In the discussion which followed, the main points made by the parents we met were:

- a) In the majority of cases parents had been given an explanation of why they had been referred to Children's Social Care. They thought that in many cases social workers were initially too negative, often implying that the reason they had become involved was that the parent was not good enough to look after their child. Some parents felt that social workers became too involved too quickly without first offering support and advice and services.

- b) Participants agreed that parents were made to feel generally inadequate and they had not been treated with respect. Some parents felt as if they were being judged by the social worker and in cases of young parents that there were assumptions made about the situation, based on them being a young parent.
- c) It was felt that social workers were sometimes not particularly sensitive to the feelings of the parents during the process and did not take into account their views of the whole family's need, instead focussing solely on the welfare of the child. In some cases, decisions about the child and the family situation were made by Children's Services without parents feeling consulted about their views.
- d) It was noted that some parents had experiences of Social Services when they were young and their preconceptions had a bearing on how they viewed social services intervening in their family circumstances.
- e) The parents felt that they would have liked to have been more involved in the decision making process around their child and arrangements made for their family. Some parents felt manoeuvred into situations which they were not completely happy with and then often left to cope by themselves for long periods with no explanation from social services. Parents felt pressured into making decisions before they had been given adequate time to consider them and were given the impression that there would be consequences if they did not agree to the decisions social workers had recommended.
- f) Earlier education and in some cases intervention from Social Services would have been helpful for parents as in some cases they were not fully prepared for what to expect after they had given birth. A greater level of engagement during pregnancy would have meant time to prepare and plan living arrangements and other aspects of care before birth.
- g) Accommodation had made a real difference to the lives of parents. Many had been on the housing waiting list for a number of years before becoming eligible for a property. A secure place to live meant that parents were better able to make plans for their child's' future and not have to worry about where they would be staying, or who they would be staying with, in the future.
- h) Attending sessions at the Family Centre allowed parents to see that they were not alone and that other parents were experiencing similar challenges. Meeting with other parents and social workers at the centre meant that parents were able to see their situation and options from another perspective. Attending the sessions meant that support could be gained from others in a similar situation.
- i) The Family Centre group ran for 14 weeks and allowed parents to have a break for an hour a day from their children as well as working with them in sessions to learn key skills. All parents on the course got on well together and, although they did not socialise together outside the centre, they did occasionally encounter one another whilst 'out and about'.

- j) The parents thought that facilities such as the Family Centres and parent groups provided by Children's Social Care should be better advertised so parents were more aware of what was available to them. A list of all services provided would mean it was easier to see what was available and it was likely that if one service was not suitable then another on the list would provide the facility and/or support that might be needed.
- k) Parents felt that more notice of meetings, sessions and groups which they were required to attend was needed to allow proper planning for childcare. In some instances, it was felt that they had been ordered to attend a session by the social worker rather than given the choice. Parents often felt anxious about the consequences of not being able to attend a session if circumstances such as illness prevented it. It was felt that social workers were often suspicious and did not believe that the parent or child was genuinely unwell.
- l) Parents felt that unannounced visits did not fairly reflect the normal household routine as often social workers came at odd times. This caused disruption to the child's routine and made it look as though the parents were not in control of the situation. Parents felt unannounced visits took place to try and catch them doing something that they should not be doing. The process was intimidating and often social workers contradicted themselves.
- m) The parents felt that social workers need to make plans based on what was best for the entire family and not just focus on the child. Support for the relationship between the parents of the child was needed as well as support for the parent's relationship with the child.
- n) Many of the parents felt that the social workers' time should be spent on looking after children who were in danger as they felt that their child was not at risk as they would never hurt them.
- o) Some of the older parents felt less negative towards children social care and said that their perspective had changed as they had grown up. Many younger parents felt as though Children's Social Services were 'the enemy'.

The Group found it interesting that many of these comments and concerns were reflected on the national level in the Children's Commissioner for England's report on: Family perspectives on safeguarding and on relationships with children's services, which we summarise at Appendix 4.10.

3.45 We asked the Council's Head of Service for Safeguarding for her views on the comments we received from parents, as set out above. She said that it was helpful to have this feedback, as they do not routinely obtain views from current service users; feedback was routinely collected at close of a case and at this time it is often positive. Furthermore, some of the information highlighted by the Quizdom exercise as areas of difficulty, for example the sensitivity of the worker (Q3), and preparation for meetings (Q8), would be useful and would be relayed to social work teams. The officer's specific comments were:

- a) The officer had formed the impression that it was not the current Family Support Group staff that parents were unhappy with but previous social

workers, especially at the referral stage, and even the social workers who had worked with their family during their own childhood.

- b) Families are invariably referred to Children's Social Care (CSC) at a time of crisis when the family's difficulties have become obvious to a professional working with the adults or the children, e.g. a domestic abuse incident, or a child showing signs of neglect in school. Often families feel stigmatised by Children's Social Care involvement and anxious about the extent of officers' powers, and are worried that their children will be removed from their care. Some would much prefer not to be working with officers and some parents would like to be left alone. Some of the families had had or were currently experiencing a high level of intensive compulsory intervention and this could often influence their perceptions of social workers and the service they have received, causing them to be negative in their responses; for example the unannounced visits, which some parents are not happy about, are an important part of a child protection plan, ensuring that the child is kept safe at all times.
- c) Officers also commented that it was not surprising that parents see social workers as focusing on the welfare of the child, as this is the primary purpose of children's social care. The parents, no matter how vulnerable they may be, cannot be the sole focus of the child's social worker's concerns or interventions; however, officers regularly refer parents to adult services who can offer support to parents and meet their needs.

- 3.46 On Friday 2nd July the WG met **Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children and Young People, also Penny Reuter, Chief Officer for Children's Social Care** (who, as the departmental link officer for this review, attended most of our meetings).
- 3.47 Cllr Barnard said it was a time of great change in Local Government and social care, and the full extent of the Coalition Government's policies were not expected to become clear until later in 2010. He explained that the Council had chosen to have two Executive Members for Children and Young People's issues, who work together effectively. He had the statutory duties pertaining to Children's Social Care, and covered special needs, Children's Social Care, and with reference to the Every Child Matters agenda: inclusion, safety, health, enjoying and achieving, and economic well-being (on which there had been a lesser focus). Safeguarding was not treated in isolation. Cllr Kendall, as the Executive Member for Education, covered all main schools issues.
- 3.48 On the adequacy of the arrangements to safeguard children in Bracknell Forest, Cllr Barnard told the Group that the Council's core belief is that, wherever possible and provided the risks are not too great, the Council tries to keep families together. This is because the statistics show that children's life chances are usually best served in that way. He said he has a quarterly safeguarding meeting with the Chief Executive, Director of Children, Young People and Learning, and the Chief Officer: Children's Social Care. This meeting concentrates on key issues. He also chairs the Children's Trust, which has various themes of work, and the Early Years, Child Care and Play Partnership (which is practitioner-led). He receives the minutes of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), and statements of action taken by them. He regularly meets staff in the Children's Social Care teams, and receives presentations from case workers. Cllr Barnard receives the

Independent Reviewing Officer's report, which he regards to be a very important part of the overall framework. He also sees the annual report of statutory complaints concerning Children's Social Care, as well as on-going data on performance and activity levels. He added that he monitored policies and other work to ensure that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are up to date, also that OFSTED reports are properly actioned. The main points arising in our discussion on this area were:

- a) On the staffing resources in the Under-11's team, the Chief Officer commented that there was some temporary extra help for that team, and other resources were coming on stream too. Cllr Barnard added that managers helped to ensure the continuity of case work.
- b) Some 70% of child protection cases involved under-13's, which had significant workload implications. The majority of Looked-After Children (LAC) are over the age of 11. Cllr Barnard commented that the Council's Larchwood short break care unit does outstandingly good work in this area.
- c) Cllr Barnard acknowledged that the Council could never be sure safeguarding incidents would not occur, but the staffing position was good, with staff feeling respected and valued, there is stability of management, and there is a strong ethos of supporting families. He believed that the Council is doing a good job, within the resources available. This was evidenced by positive benchmarking and good inspection reports.
- d) The Council had fewer safeguarding cases than a predictive model suggested Bracknell Forest should have. There was always a risk of unknown cases, however, the Council and its partners have a high level of contact and engagement with children across the borough, giving confidence that there are unlikely to be unknown cases of children in need. Nevertheless, whatever the Council does, there are always cases of dysfunctional families. The Council's approach is sensitive to the varying social and cultural issues applying. Early intervention and good quality actions gave the best and most cost-effective outcomes for children and young people.
- e) It was noted that the process leading up to adoption decisions by courts can take a great deal of time, and this is linked to the courts requiring a high level of 'proof' to support a decision.
- f) Cllr Barnard was confident that staff balanced risks well with doing the best they could for families. There had been positive views from staff on this in a MORI survey, and it was clear that social workers are effective advocates for children. Information sharing was assisted by the open plan office environment, helped by good supervision, and information is properly shared with prospective adopters.

3.49 In response to our questions on how the Children's Trust (the Trust) and Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) were performing in relation to safeguarding children, Cllr Barnard said it was not yet clear whether the new government wanted Children's Trusts to continue. He believed that the Bracknell Forest Children's Trust (the Trust) is working well, and it sets and supports the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which addresses some key issues. The anticipated pressure on resources would make this partnership even more valuable. The main points arising in discussion on this area were:

- a) Cllr Barnard considered that the Children's Trust (The Trust) is probably too large a group for effective decision-making. He thought it might be better to have this large group act as a 'sounding board' with a smaller group making operational and spending decisions. We noted there were some similarities with the structure of the Bracknell Forest Partnership and the BFP Board. The anticipated reduction in funding may act as a driver on this issue.
- b) The way forward might be for the wider group to meet three or four times each year, and a smaller executive group – accountable to the wider group - to meet more frequently. Any changes to the performance management framework should be determined by the wider group. The Group stressed the need for strong accountability.
- c) There is some tension between the Safer Communities Partnership and the Trust, regarding the approach taken with some youth offenders.
- d) Cllr Barnard regarded the LSCB as doing its job well. In his view, it was a large group and might benefit from being smaller and more focussed, in the same way as the Trust (see above). It is practitioner-led, so there would be no purpose in the Executive Member attending its meetings.
- e) The LSCB has statutory partners including the Strategic Health Authority, Thames Valley Police, CAF/CASS and the Youth Offending Team, also non-statutory partners including adult mental health services.
- f) Cllr Barnard said that when the CYPP is next re-written it will probably be shorter and more focussed.
- g) The role of the voluntary sector in safeguarding children was key, and it must be properly supported.

3.50 Cllr Dr Barnard told the Group that he complied with all the statutory duties applying to the Lead Member for Children's Social Services, which were consistent with the broad purpose of the Executive Member's role. They required him to exercise strategic and political leadership, and to be aware of what the service was doing, without breaching client confidentiality. Operational management rested with the Director and her officers, whom he rated highly, and who are empowered to deliver. Other points arising in our discussion on this topic were:

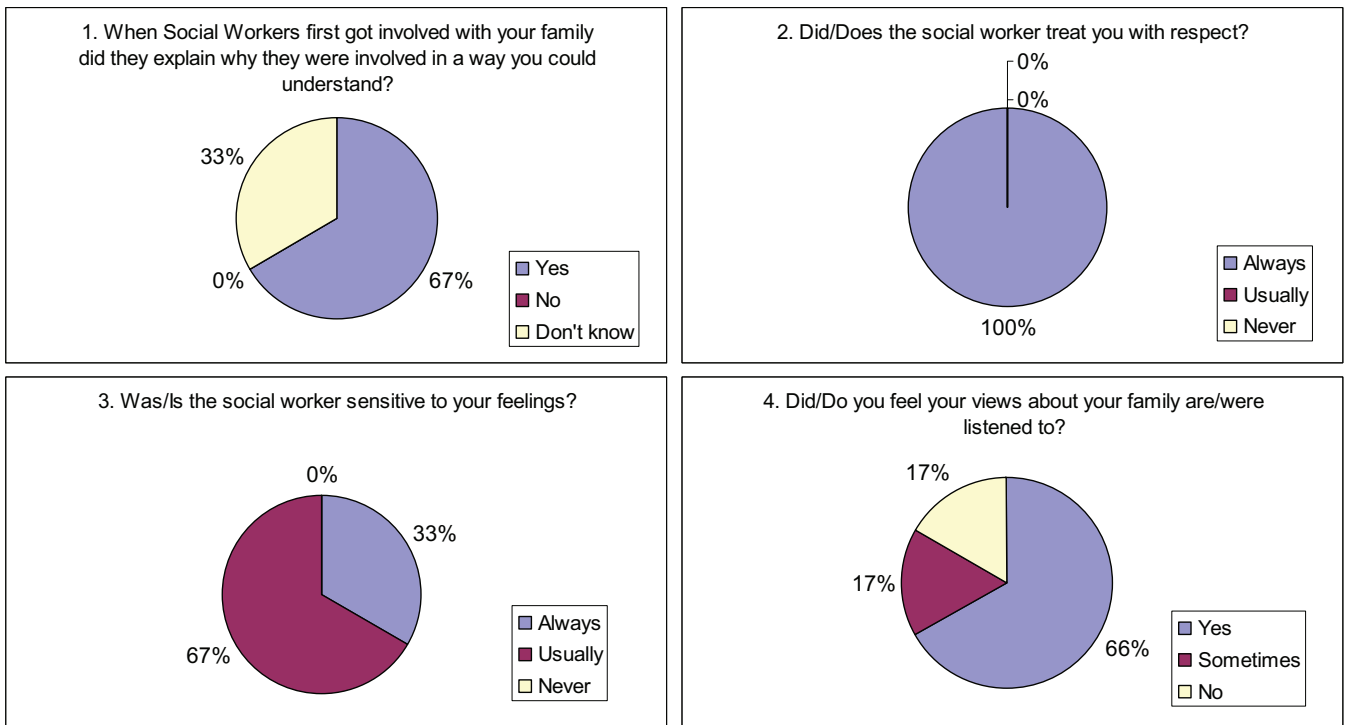
- a) The Executive Member's statutory duty to hold the Director of Children's Services (DCS) to account was principally achieved through the quarterly monitoring meetings with her, the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer.
- b) The Lead Member could not make decisions on individual cases, but makes a strategic input.
- c) The Lead Member, together with the DCS, is accountable to the Secretary of State, as well as to the Council.
- d) Cllr Barnard said there is good trust and understanding between Members and officers at the Council. The last Joint Area Review had complimented the Council's political and managerial leadership.
- e) Self-assessments were carried out routinely, as required.
- f) There were strong links in case management through the transition to adulthood.

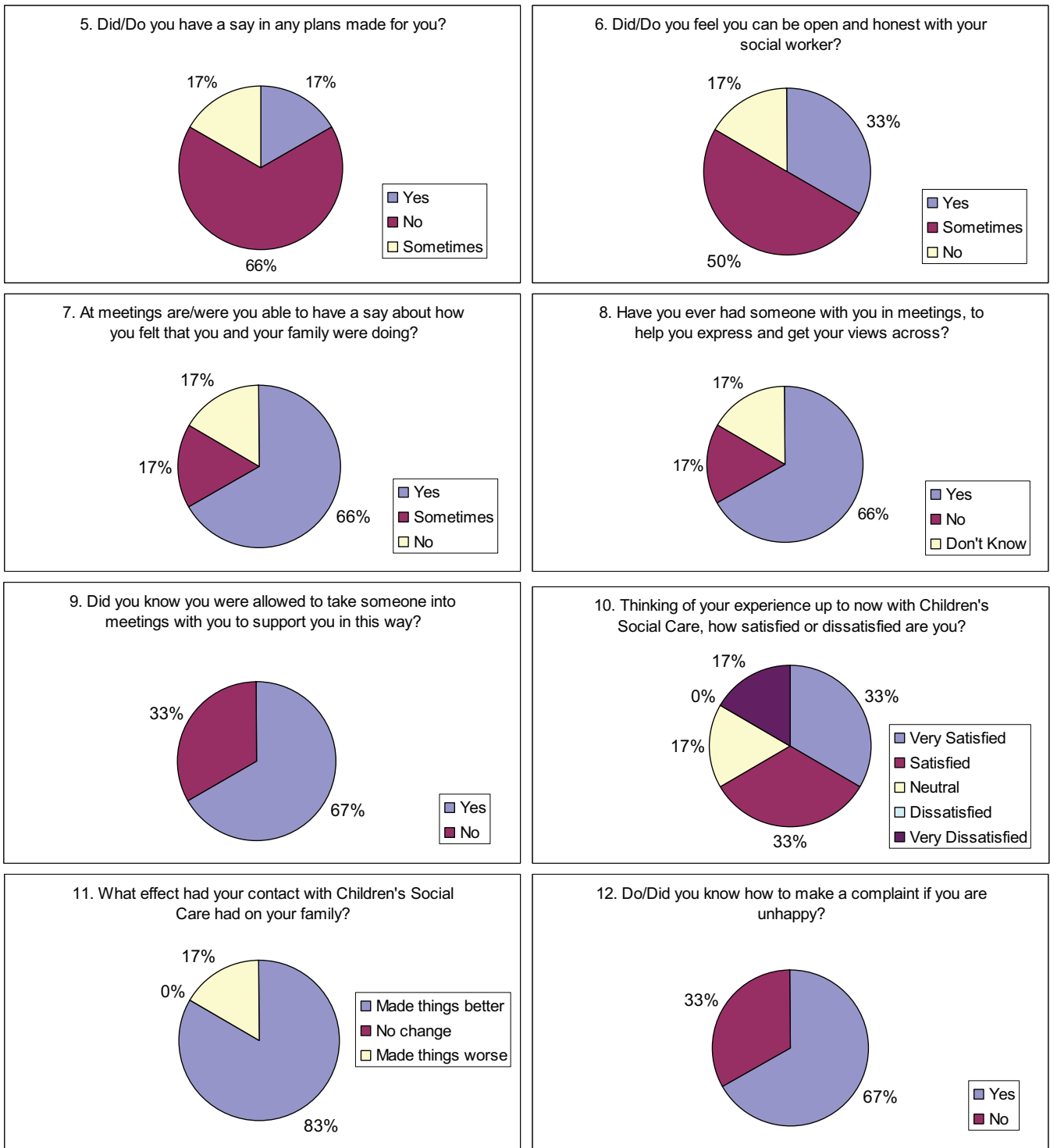
g) There is scope to further improve engagement with young people. For example, he is keen to have a 'shadow' Children's Trust, led by children and young people.

3.51 We asked Cllr Barnard what he regarded to be the future challenges and opportunities in relation to safeguarding children. He told us that it would be useful to define a job specification for the Lead Member for Children's Services. He also said that the recession was having an impact on children, and particularly child poverty, though those extra pressures did not in themselves generate new safeguarding referrals. He regarded the Council to have a good network of contacts with the families in need, and worked closely with the voluntary sector.

3.52 Towards the end of our review, on 28 October the Working Group met again with the Executive Member, Cllr Dr Barnard and Director, Dr Janette Karklins to discuss the provisional main observations and conclusions flowing from the O&S review.

3.53 On 28 July, two members of the Working Group met six **young people who had received safeguarding services**, at Portman Close. In the same way as our meeting with parents (see above), we wanted to hear at first hand their experiences of Children's Social Care. A Council officer was also present. We commenced with asking a set of questions, and confidentiality of individual responses was assured by using 'Quizdom' electronic voting equipment. We then had a discussion with the young people. The results of the Quizdom survey are displayed graphically below.





3.54 In the discussion which followed, the majority of the young people we met said that social workers had explained why they had become involved with their family at an early stage. Social workers talked through the process that would take place and provided leaflets which they discussed with the young people outlining what would happen and why. The leaflets were aimed at adults, however, the young people felt that leaflets specifically aimed at young people were not necessary as the information was explained by a social worker.

- 3.55 All the young people felt that their social workers had treated them with respect and were usually sensitive to their feelings. The young people recognised that there were certain issues that needed to be discussed and that sometimes these were of a sensitive nature that made them feel uncomfortable. The young people felt that in most cases the social worker broke information to them slowly rather than launching into the main focus of the information being given. This gave the young people a chance to take in the information and allowed them time to understand what was taking place.
- 3.56 Some of the young people thought that the Family Group Conferences³ provided a good opportunity to discuss any issues, as everyone was given the chance to express their opinion. The professionals left for part of the meeting which meant that the young people had a chance to give their thoughts without having to do so in front of social workers. The young people felt that there were often too many professionals at meetings which could make them feel anxious and uncomfortable about sharing personal details. Most of the young people felt that they sometimes had a say in any plans which were made for them depending on what the plan was in relation to. Some plans, such as education, had to be undertaken and could not be changed as the young person's choice was not practical or achievable. It was felt that there could be greater explanation of why a particular plan was for the best and why the young person's ideas were not achievable.
- 3.57 The majority of young people we met felt that they could be open and honest with their social worker most of the time. It was felt that if they met with their social worker on a more regular basis it would be easier to build up a relationship which would make it easier to share information and concerns. Currently the young people only met with their social worker once a month at the most, it was felt that a fortnightly meeting would allow a stronger relationship and a greater level of trust. Meetings once a month meant a lot of time was spent on issues that had built up over the period since the last meeting and often reviewing things as not all the details could be remembered. The monthly meetings tended to last for a long time as such a large number of items needed to be covered.
- 3.58 Other points raised by the young people we met were:
- a) Most had the same social worker and were happy with who had been assigned to them. Not all the young people were aware that they could request to change social worker if they did not get along with the one that they had.
 - b) They did not like to be put on the spot by professionals when in meetings, particularly if it was a large group of people. They felt that there were often people attending the meetings that they did not know and it was not fully explained who they were or why they were attending the meeting.

³ A Family Group Conference is a meeting in which family members themselves, including children and young people, design their own plan to overcome identified problems and to respond to the concerns of professionals. It is convened by an independent co-ordinator, not directly responsible for assessing or providing services to the family, who ensures relevant family and friends are invited and adequately prepared. Children are actively encouraged to attend and may be supported by an advocate.

- c) They found that having a number of unknown people attending meetings caused confusion and meant that they had to repeat the same information again and again so everyone was aware of the whole situation. It was felt that people should be fully briefed before the meeting began to prevent the young people from having to repeat the story or having to listen to a worker tell the story for them. Sharing information with new workers that the young people did not know made them feel uncomfortable and nervous about attending meetings. The young people felt that they should be asked before the meeting if they were happy for their personal information to be shared.
- d) They felt that it would be good to have a choice of who attended meetings and that they should be told who was attending before the beginning of the meeting. They felt that they should be able to bring a friend or family member to a meeting for support without having to clear it through the social worker. Having support at a meeting meant that the young people felt more able to have their say. Often people attending to support them helped them answer questions in a way they wanted to.
- e) At times they felt bored at meetings as they could be lengthy and in some cases the adults would talk about the children as though they were not there and not ask their opinion. It was felt that all plans and decisions made should be discussed with the young people and that their opinion should not be dismissed without consideration. If the suggestion was not practical, then the social worker should explain why the idea would not work. Plans should be made with young people rather than for young people.
- f) They felt that social workers tried to change things which did not need to be changed. Often they felt there was nothing wrong with a situation and the social workers were trying to change something for the sake of change. More regular contact and increased explanation of meetings would help young people understand why things were being done.
- g) The majority were aware of how to make a complaint and were given information on how to do this. Some facilities had slips which could be filled out to raise awareness of problem areas. It was felt that making a complaint was seen as too formal a process and would possibly result in serious consequences. It was suggested that a suggestion box which had slips titled 'I have a worry about...' would help young people to feel more comfortable about raising an issue. It was suggested that a text message service could be used to submit worries; however this would cost the young people and they did not often have phone credit. A pre-paid returnable card would allow young people to submit their worries or concerns to the council without having to incur a cost.
- h) The best aspects of social care were the family outings and that when you raised a problem with the social worker issues were dealt with quickly, which made them feel safe.

- i) The young people agreed that it was good that the council were consulting young people on what they thought of the service.

3.59 We asked the Council's Head of Service for Looked After Children for her views on the comments we received from the young people we met, as set out above. She commented that the comments as a whole reflected the findings of national surveys of many groups of young people. Participating in meetings that focus on them can be very difficult for any child or young person and becomes increasingly challenging if, for example, they witness conflict of views between a parent and professional. Considerable efforts are made to minimise the number of adults attending Looked After Children reviews or Personal Education Planning meetings but it is more difficult to limit professionals involved with Child Protection conferences or core group meetings. Other comments made by the officer were:

- a) One striking theme of our consultation was the value that young people place on relationships with a trusted adult. They value a social worker who gives them sufficient time to develop a good working relationship, be consistent and persistent, and listen to a child's wishes. Experience and research confirms that the quality of the social worker's relationship has a significant impact on the outcome of any intervention.
- b) Young people tend to prefer informal (but quiet) settings to discuss sensitive issues. They also appreciate a 'holistic' approach to understanding their lives – hence fun activities go some way to balancing the distress at the exposure to negative aspects of their family life.
- c) The Pledge for Looked After Children provides detailed information about the quality of the service can be expected, including how to complain, the right to ask for a change of social worker and to have an advocate.
- d) Given the other comments made, it makes sense that young people and children value information provided by a trusted adults more than what they could read on 'information leaflets'. To know they have a right to complain, or ask for another social worker, is one thing, it is quite another for a young person to say it. The development of an 'advocate' system, where young people can be supported to say what they really feel, may help address this.
- e) Establishing the views of young people is challenging and complex. The development of the role of the Participation Officer may be a key to developing relationships with the children and young people that we work with to enable future consultations to become part of the culture of participation that the Council aimed to embed.

3.60 On 2 August 2010 the Group met **Sheila Davies, Rachael Matthews and Sue Viccars from NHS Berkshire East** to discuss the roles of Health Visitors and School Nurses.



From left to right: Cllr Mrs Jennie McCracken, Val Richardson, Cllr Mrs Gill Birch, and Penny Reuter. NHS Berkshire East - Sue Viccars, Rachael Matthews and Sheila Davies

- 3.61 The Health Visitors explained their role and services they provide. They have been commissioned to provide an agreed core service, as defined in the 'Healthy Child Programme' issued by the Department of Health. This is not a legally enforceable service - parents are entitled to refuse the service and a few do. There are 3 teams covering Bracknell Forest, each covering a designated geographical area, with some Health Visitors based in children's centres, including The Oaks and The Rowans. These locations allow them better access to parents and their children. The age range for the service is 0 – 5 years, after which the school nurse takes responsibility. There is a named health visitor for each GP practitioner so they work closely with GP's, but due to the large number of recent changes, they are more disconnected from GP's. The Group noted that the role of the health visitors is becoming more targeted and less universal and that the number of referrals from the Health Sector had reduced, for no clear reason.
- 3.62 Health visitors are informed of new births and make a visit in all cases to ensure the health of the baby and the mother. Previously, ante-natal visits may have been carried out, where there were grounds for concern. Another 'universal' visit is made when the baby is 8 weeks old and a development review is carried out for all babies during weeks 9 to 12. Another visit is made at age 2; advice and support is continually available until the child is 5 years old. All babies have access to a 'well baby clinic' and other services. The health visitors liaise with other services and respond to any concerns raised by GP's and others, particularly Children's Social Services. Occasionally, families who may need help make contact themselves. Throughout, safeguarding children is the Health Visitors' top priority.
- 3.63 There are 3 School Nurses working on a part time basis across the borough, supported by three Healthcare Assistants and two Staff Nurses. The teams do not cover private schools, which are responsible for employing their own school nurse. This may be an area of concern. The school nurses' core programme starts with children at age 5 and includes: health screening, height, weight, vision and audiology. Parents are asked if any immunisations have been missed by the child. In Year 6 the national screening programme takes place, which calculates the BMI for children and recommends possible changes to lifestyle. Although it has good intentions, this programme has received some bad publicity recently due to misunderstandings concerning obesity.
- 3.64 The new HPV vaccination scheme for girls (for cervical cancer) has had a really good uptake, and is a very good example of prevention. The scheme

also includes private schools. The school nurses have a good relationship with schools and are involved with PSHE lessons, which is a great platform to communicate with the children. Some private schools have school nurses, often combined with other duties.

3.65 The main points arising in the ensuing discussion were:

- a) A Health Visitor is a member of the 'core group' for any cases of children in need of protection.
- b) The service is very open. Families are told in advance about visits and every opportunity is taken to communicate with the family.
- c) Domestic violence cases are prioritised. The service receives contacts from the general public as well as GP's but their biggest lead is from Social Services, usually on a faxed 'Notice of Domestic Violence' form. The response is immediate. A small discreet investigation is carried out to understand the situation and decisions are made as to the best actions to carry out. Social Services are informed of the situation and a friendly visit is made 2 or 3 days later. The health visitors are not trained to make an analysis of domestic violence so the service is limited in that extent. Social services use a Community Paediatrician or GP to carry out a health assessment in serious cases. The health visitors said that public awareness of domestic violence is increasing, and it is now more openly talked about.
- d) Health Visitors had less time to spend with people than previously, due to financial constraints.
- e) Post natal depression is another issue health visitors provide advice and support for. At 8 weeks, a PND questionnaire is provided for the mother, but it is not a legal requirement and the mother can refuse to take it. Community Nursery nurses run Post Natal Support groups and a new service is currently being introduced for mothers with PND.
- f) Children's Centres had made a big difference to promoting children's health, and their free courses were particularly valued by many mothers.
- g) Records are still kept only in the traditional 'red books' which stay with the mothers. New documentation requirements were due to begin soon, which concerns the health visitors as it will increase their workload. A new computerised database system was to be introduced as well.
- h) Health Visitors were due to transfer to the Berkshire Healthcare Trust in April 2011, as part of the transfer of Community Health Services from NHS Berkshire East.
- i) When asked which group required the most help, it was mentioned that the more affluent professionals do require help with parenting. As professionals it was not unusual for them to have children later in life and some found it difficult adjusting their lifestyle. They tend to also have high expectations for their children to achieve, and many have moved home for career reasons, putting them further away from their own family support.
- j) The workload is fairly consistent because the birth rate in the borough is stable. The three teams support each other in event of a surge in contacts and the office is not left unattended. Management provided additional support as necessary.
- k) In the event a Health Visitor is denied access to children and they have concerns, they send the family a standard letter and report this to Children's Social Services for them to follow up (if necessary with a Children's Paediatrician in support).
- l) The health visitors have a good partnership with the school nurses and generally have good working relationships with other services too. They

- have a dedicated Link Health Visitor who visits the women's refuge run by Berkshire Women's Aid.
- m) There are a growing number of people in ethnic minorities in the Bracknell Forest area, making it more difficult to assess the situation as cultural norms vary. The health visitors have access to translators to avoid misunderstandings, but it does increase the workload slightly. The Sandhurst team make use of a Nepali translator assigned by the Royal Military Academy.
 - n) In the past, health visitors and school nurses received training together which helped build relationships. It was understood that more joint working is needed. There had been less joint training in recent years.
 - o) Overall, the health visitors said that they find their work can be very rewarding, even though it was difficult and complex.
- 3.66 On Thursday 2nd September the Group met with **Elaine Coleridge Smith, Chair of Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board and Mairead Panetta, Head of Service: Safeguarding**. Mrs Coleridge Smith described to us her background in safeguarding at a Primary Care Trust and explained the structure and role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It was noted that the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel routinely received and considered the annual report of the LSCB. It was also noted that Members had received the Safeguarding Toolkit – summarised by the Group at Appendix 4.7 - which can be used by different organisations to assess their own arrangements against statutory guidance.
- 3.67 Mrs Coleridge Smith informed the Group that LSCB's across the UK are organised to deliver the statutory and other guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', particularly Chapter 3. It is a statutory mechanism to ensure organisations in the local area cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the local area. LSCBs are strategic, with the detailed 'doing' work carried out by the partner organisations which are members of the LSCB. The Local Authority is responsible for making sure the LSCB is working but it does not influence the decision making of the Chair. Mrs Coleridge Smith is allocated 25 days each year to work with Bracknell Forest LSCB, designed so as not to have the Chair getting too closely involved in detail. It also allows her to check Bracknell Forest decision making with other LSCBs. She is supported by a part time Business Manager (Andrea King) and some administrative support.
- 3.68 The Bracknell Forest LSCB meets 5 times a year, and it engages in all activities concerning safeguarding children in statutory, voluntary, community and independent settings. It is a partnership which has the responsibility to coordinate and strengthen safeguarding and oversee the effectiveness of each statutory member organisation with regards to safeguarding. The LSCB can and does make requests for information and action. The LSCB also lead on the co-ordinated treatment for children who have been abused or mistreated, holding serious case reviews as required. The partners in the LSCB include senior representatives of: the Council (both Children's and Adults Services), Thames Valley Police, Probation Service, Health Services, Schools, Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, Broadmoor Hospital and others. The LSCB is not accountable to the Children's Trust Board.
- 3.69 The LSCB try to think ahead and proactively consider national issues in order to be prepared in the local area e.g. e-safety is a national issue which the

LSCB have identified and are addressing. The work plan is 4 years long, it is based on objectives and it is reviewed every year. The LSCB is given a small budget by partners, which is used to run the website and pay for administrative support for the board. Partner organisations meet their own costs of participating in the LSCB. We were informed that the role of representing an organisation in the LSCB requires a high level of seniority. It is a complex role where the representative must prioritise safeguarding children over their own organisation's interests, and be able to implement requests made by the LSCB. They also need to be in a position where they can make a financial contribution on behalf of their organisation.

3.70 The Group was informed that the LSCB Board makes use of sub-groups which carry out detailed work delegated by the Board. The sub-groups are: Quality Standards and Case Review Sub-Group, Raising Awareness Task Group, E-Safety Sub-group, Anti-Bullying Working Group, Serious Case Review Sub-Group, Partnership Performance Group, and Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group.

- The Quality Standards and Case Review Sub-Group carries out the audit and scrutinises actions. It also makes sure the section 11 audit takes place.
- The Raising Awareness Sub-Group engages with the public and professionals. It has done particularly good work recently with a new leaflet on domestic abuse aimed at 13 -19 year olds, and the cue cards. The leaflet highlights different forms of abuse, physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse. The work of this group was highly commended at the Bracknell Forest Partnership Awards.
- The Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group questions organisations and requests actions to be taken to ensure all arrangements are in place to prevent sexual exploitation. We were told that sexual crimes had increased in Bracknell affecting young white women. No clear reason for the increase had been identified to date. The LSCB also co-ordinate the annual conference with the police, which had included the issue of sexual exploitation of 14-17 year olds. The partnership approach had been particularly valuable, with pooling of useful intelligence and joint working.
- The Serious Case Review Sub-Group meets quarterly. In the case of child death, serious abuse, severe harm or failure of partners, this group initiates the serious case review and tries to understand the issues and learn lessons to prevent the same thing from happening again.

3.71 The other main points of the subsequent discussion were:

- a) The LSCB recently introduced a Whistle Blowing Policy where people can go directly to the LSCB if they have unresolved concerns.
- b) With reference to the recent case in Birmingham Children's social care, Members were told that the LSCB could intervene if problems are identified. The LSCB depends on people notifying it of problems. If necessary, the LSCB meets with the director of the partner concerned to solve the problem, the issue becomes an agenda item if not solved and the Chair can call an extraordinary meeting concerning the issue.

- c) The LSCB is not inspected as such but it is referred to in OFSTED reports and it takes part in scrutiny.
- d) The LSCB is currently working on how to measure its effectiveness better as the current measures are basic, and do not for example touch on prevention. Current measures are based on: how often a partner is challenged; method of scrutiny; and analysis of Data - but there is a very small number of incidents so data can take years to build up.
- e) Whilst Bracknell Forest had a good record, disasters can happen due to children 'falling through the net' between partner organisations, and partnership working is the key to having a finer net.
- f) Mrs Coleridge Smith considered the arrangements for safeguarding children to be more than adequate in Bracknell Forest, where the partner organisations showed they are very willing to work together. The health services have had positive inspection results, and the recent Ofsted inspection of the Children's Social Care Duty Team was very positive. The Duty team is a small but crucial part of safeguarding. The main concern is with whether cases are unknown.
- g) The LSCB considers that the Council and Children's Trust are performing well in relation to safeguarding children, with children being seen promptly. The concerns are that – both nationally and locally - the number of children requiring services is going up with a decrease in the number of cases being closed. This may be due to greater recognition of need for services or actual increase in need.
- h) A particular challenge concerned sexual exploitation as it is on the increase for no clear reason. Another challenge is dealing with the impact of the new changes introduced by the government. The financial pressures on partners may mean that gaps between partners will grow and children may fall through the net.
- i) Opportunities included: working more closely with Slough; the LSCB are looking at the structure of the board and strategic information sharing improvement; and appointing lay members onto the LCSB.
- j) If a serious case review is required, we were told that resourcing and funds would be immediately available. It is the responsibility of the Chair to call a serious case review and it is the statutory responsibility of the partners to carry out their duties.

3.72 Mrs Coleridge Smith considered that the Bracknell Forest LSCB is very impressive compared to others. All partners are proactive and all extraordinary meetings have been arranged and attended. But everyone needed to constantly guard against becoming complacent. If a partner does not respond to their duties, the Chair has a one to one meeting with the representative, which progresses to a meeting with the director and then if necessary the inspectorate of the organisation. No partner has yet needed to be disciplined so the procedure has not been put to the test yet.

3.73 On 23 September the Working Group met with **Gordon Cunningham, Headteacher, and Sue Skilton, Designated Teacher for Child Protection of Easthampstead Park Community School.**

3.74 The Working Group was informed about how the school ensures children are safeguarded and the role as the designated teacher for child protection. The Child Protection (CP) card is given to employees at the beginning of the school year, and all children at the school are told who the Child Protection Officer is. The school holds a fortnightly liaison meeting chaired by the

Assistant Headteacher to discuss any issues that prevent students learning, to include CP issues. The members include all Heads of Houses, the relevant social workers, the school nurse, and police. All these partners work well together. There are 29 children at the school supported by Children's Services, 4 of whom are also looked after children.

- 3.75 The CP teacher receives concerns from children or other school employees, which she investigates by talking to the child or children involved. She aims to inform both staff and students of the outcome of her conversations with Social Services cases later the same day. She fills in the CAF form and contacts Children's Services if she has concerns. Sometimes, children don't feel safe going home after making a report, so Sue stays with the child until they are secure. It takes about 2 hours to deal with a situation when a concern is raised, and these are often on a Friday afternoon. At least two new referrals occur each week, but not all require further services. Parents are contacted after the referral has been made. Very few parents behave inappropriately or angrily, and in some such cases the Headteacher has told parents that any contact with the school must be through him. Most parents do not want to let social services 'into their lives', and have preconceived ideas about children's services.
- 3.76 The Designated CP teacher told us that she has a very good relationship with all partners including Children's Services. She commented on the fast speed of the response from Children's Services and emphasised the excellent relationship she has with the Duty Team. She is allocated extra non-contact time for Looked after Children. The top priority for the school is child protection, and this over-rides teaching commitments. She goes to all training provided by BFC regarding safeguarding children. She also attends the Child Protection Conference in order to keep up to date with the latest rules and regulations, in order to disseminate to other staff and update the school's procedures. The Headteacher commented on the importance of Sue's job. He said that there are few people who can deal with this role as it makes distinct emotional demands and involves working with families, various agencies as well as the regulations and procedures. It requires a broad range of skills and commitment, to do the job well. He described it as a vocation rather than a job. Both the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher provide support including absence cover, as it is essential that nothing is left unactioned at the end of each day.
- 3.77 We were told that whilst people are now more trusting of social workers and open about their problems, child protection issues have been increasing steadily for years. The Headteacher stressed that the majority of children and young people are well behaved and have a good social conscience. This is rarely reflected in media comment, which tends instead to paint a gloomy picture, which children tend to believe. The contributory factors for the general increase in safeguarding issues include, in their opinion:
- a) More family breakdowns, also the effect of step sisters and step brothers having to cope with living in the same household.
 - b) Children being much more aware of their rights.
 - c) Children bombarded with too much information.
 - d) Children staying up too late and not getting enough sleep.
 - e) Children are more pressured by society into growing up too quickly.
 - f) Reality TV: encouraging the notion that the worse you behave the more famous you get.

- g) Facebook: cyber-bullying (special assemblies have been run on this, including its dangers and the legal requirements).
- h) Recession: More families re-housed with longer journeys to school, and the impact of reduced incomes causing resentment, for example over fewer holidays.

3.78 The staff said that safeguarding children had improved massively over the years, and the support from the Council's Children's Services was 'fantastic'. In recent years, the staffing position in Children's Services had been more stable and relationships had been allowed to develop. Easthampstead Park School has a Family Support Advisor, an arrangement which works well. The main issues with regard to Safeguarding Children at the school included:

- a) Some children take to bullying in an attempt to avoid being bullied themselves.
- b) 'Grooming' cases had grown, making children more vulnerable.
- c) The CAF Form is not working. It may have to be completed without the parents' cooperation, and effective solutions need parental support.
- d) The incorrect preconceptions of children's social care on the part of many parents are a serious hindrance to the provision of support needed by their children.
- e) It is clear that there are some family trends with 'naughty' children.
- f) The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator's post had been made redundant. This was a big loss as she was an excellent asset to the school. It was noted that this was a budget reduction caused by the Coalition Government ceasing elements of the Council's Area Based Grant mid-year.
- g) The Early Intervention Project has been shut down. The teachers were very sad at this loss as it was a very important project and was essential, particularly for Primary Schools. It was noted that this too was a budget reduction caused by the Coalition Government ceasing elements of the Council's Area Based Grant mid-year. The Council usually consulted before making changes of this sort but the reduction in Government funding had been too sudden to do so.
- h) The staff considered that sensible funding for liaison with families and partner organisations is essential, and the link between the school and social services is essential.

3.79 The Group was advised that the Council's Children and Families Manager is also the lead in child protection and anti-bullying. She acts as quality assurance at the school. She is in regular contact with the school and is very supportive. She was regarded by both the staff we met to be an excellent asset to the school. We subsequently met the Children and Families Manager (see paragraphs 3.89 – 3.90 below).

3.80 On 7 October the WG had a meeting with **Andrea de Bunsen, Headteacher, and Paul Van Walwyk, Designated Teacher for Child Protection at Kennel Lane Special School.**



From left to right: Cllr Trevor Kensall, Cllr Mrs Jennie McCracken, Cllr Mrs Jan Angell, Chief Inspector Simon Bowden, Detective Sergeant Sarah Austin, Gloria King, Val Richardson, Andrea de Bunsen, Mrs Paula Ridgway, Paul Van Walwyk, Cllr Mrs Gill Birch and Richard Beaumont

3.81 The Headteacher and Teacher told us that generally good practices are in place with regard to safeguarding children. They described how Kennel Lane Special School ensures children are safeguarded at their school, and the difficulties they face as a special school. The school takes in a wide variety of children with widely differing impairments and special needs. Some are profoundly disabled. Much research has been carried out but much more is needed in order to understand how everyone can best help the children. Generally, they find it difficult to access support when problems arise outside their area of expertise (and given their extensive experience, this is not too frequent). Kennel Lane cannot exercise the Integrated Care Pathways like mainstream schools. This has led to some confusion with partner agencies, sometimes leading to cases being closed without good reason. A common and important issue for the school is that a child's ability to comprehend a situation can be well below what their language and communication ability suggest, making them far more vulnerable than other children. In expressing the school's frustration with the current arrangements, they were also representing the frustration felt by the children, who are less able to express their own views.

3.82 The other main issues which arose in our discussion with the school included:

- a) Their safeguarding audit had highlighted that some improvements were needed in the arrangements with the Council; and they still had some concerns relating to referral procedures for their pupils and how the CAF is used. The school had had meetings with the Council's Chief Officer on these issues.
- b) The school has at least one issue relating to safeguarding a week as well as regular referrals to social care, some of which relate to open cases, these are quite frequent and termly liaison meetings are held with other agencies on safeguarding.
- c) A doctor visits every two weeks and the school has access to the school nursing community team.

- d) The school has an excellent relationship with the Disabled Children's Team in Children's Services, which has suitable procedures, also with Thames Valley Police (TVP) who were very supportive and helpful.
- e) The Children's Services Duty Team does not always seem to understand the significance of Kennel Lane referrals, though the social workers they deal with are very professional and helpful. The criteria for intervention used by the Duty Team to make decisions on service provision does not take into account learning difficulties and other hidden impairments.
- f) There is confusion with partners, who don't evaluate the risks in the same way the school does. Children's Services don't see learning difficulty as increasing the risk the child is at. People with special educational needs (learning difficulties) are at four times the risk of abuse. The school's experience of the referral to partner agencies has not been uniform and not fully taken account of the impact of their understanding relating to their special educational need, nor a recognition of their journey through the system of child protection.
- g) The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) does not work well for Kennel Lane.
- h) Their specific concerns on the CAF form are that: it is for general usage and is unsuitable for pupils who have already been identified as having special needs; It is used as a referral tool rather than an assessment tool, and BFC should be clear what its principal purpose is; also whether it is suitable for use in emergency situations; it is not sufficiently child-focussed; it does not make use of the multi-professional assessment in place for all children at the special school; some children are transported to school from afar making it difficult to get their parents to sign the form; there is an added difficulty when families do not wish to engage. This is partly due to some social workers not having experience or additional skills in relation to the particular issues with children in a special school. Further issues were that: it can take hours to complete the CAF, yet it can result in no action being taken; the school would like to see the CAF trigger a 'Team around the Child' multi-agency meeting to establish accountability for actions; they consider that the Council tends to close CAF's too readily, whereas in their experience other councils use the CAF more to formulate which actions need to be taken by which organisations.

3.83 We invited the Headteacher and Teacher to say what changes they would like to see made, and they told us:

- a) Partner agencies need to understand both the role of the school and the needs of a young person who attends. This could include having new staff from agencies who will come into contact with the school spending a day at the school as part of their induction training.
- b) The school has developed specialised Family Support Worker in partnership with the Disabled Children's Team (DCT), to which some of the Council's social service function could be devolved, with funding.
- c) The CAF form is inappropriate for the school because the school already provides a specialised service and none of the needs at the point when the Duty Team is contacted are at the level a CAF is designed to address. Each child at the school already has a "Statement of Special Education Needs" which required a Multi Professional Assessment.
- d) The school should either have a named Social Worker assigned to disabled children in the Duty Team, or the school should send new referrals straight to the Disabled Children Team.

- e) It would support the closure of cases that a CAF be completed and a "Team Around the Child" meeting be convened prior to case closure in order to support ongoing work from all professionals involved.

3.84 The Chief Officer: Children's Social Care: subsequently told us that the Council valued Kennel Lane School's expertise and flexibility, and they are working with a very particular group of children with additional needs. The officer agreed with the suggestion that partner agencies could benefit from better understanding the role of the school, and including a visit to the school as part of induction for new staff in Children's Social Care (CSC) and other services is something that could certainly be developed. On the specific points, the Chief Officer commented that:

- a) In recognition of the particular needs of the school's pupils and the need to have closer working relationships, a single joint post of ½ time Family Worker in the Disabled Children's Team (DCT) and ½ time Family Support Adviser (FSA) in the school (all funded by the Council, drawing partly on the Extended Schools funding) was set up in 2009. Other schools meet half the cost of the Family Support Adviser. The role had contributed to an increased shared understanding of roles, as well as providing a family support service. The Extended Schools funding currently applies until August 2011; the Council's understanding is that Kennel Lane school will fund that half of the post from that point onwards.
- b) The comments on the CAF were helpful. The CAF is an assessment process that is undertaken with the child and family. It is a more holistic assessment than the multi-professional assessment that is undertaken for a statement of SEN because it covers all needs, not only special educational needs. The CAF develops a multi-agency early intervention plan. The Council considers that the CAF is the best means of evidencing needs and strengths and this evidence supports effective referrals. The CAF co-ordinator had supported the school in completing CAF's and CAF action plans and will continue to do so, and can also provide support in developing the Team around the Child multi-agency approach.
- c) The Integrated Care Pathways (ICP) are organised around age range. Children with learning difficulties are not excluded from the process, but the services they need will sometimes be more specialised in nature and so the ICP process is probably less likely to be used. Services such as CAMHs could be accessed through the ICP by Kennel Lane pupils, as well as referred direct. The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme has developed a tiered approach to parenting programmes for parents of children with LDD and challenging behaviour in close liaison with the school.
- d) Not all the school's pupils would meet the criteria for a service from the DCT, consequently new referrals for social care needed to be referred to the Duty team rather than the DCT. The Duty Team have the expertise and regular experience of undertaking child protection investigations. The Assessment Framework Triangle is used to make an assessment and a judgement is then made as to whether CSC need to provide a service, following the established guidance. A meeting between the Duty team manager, Kennel Lane School and the Children and Families Manager has been arranged to try to resolve the reported difficulties in the referral and assessment process.

- 3.85 On 7 October the Group also met **Chief Inspector Simon Bowden, Local Police Area Commander for Bracknell Forest, and Detective Sergeant Sarah Austin, Child Abuse Investigation Unit, Thames Valley Police (TVP).**
- 3.86 The Chief Inspector outlined the role of the Police in regards to safeguarding children, which includes wide and far reaching responsibilities, particularly in relation to investigating criminal offences of physical and sexual abuse. There is a police officer on both the Children's Trust Board and the LSCB. School officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) regularly visit schools. The Detective Sergeant told us that TVP's Child Abuse Investigation Unit had recently expanded due to an increase in child abuse, greater awareness and greater reporting. The team, comprising 10 Police Constables and 4 Detective Sergeants worked closely with Social Services. For some years, TVP had joint training sessions and carried out joint investigations in parallel with Social Services investigations. The Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs), with its dedicated Detective Chief Inspector, manages predatory criminals released from prison; registered sex offenders, violent and other types of sexual offenders, and offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public. Procedures are in place to make sure they do not present a risk in the area. We were informed that there are not many registered sex offenders in the borough as most of them are in prison and they are monitored regularly. Other issues concerning the Police's role included:
- a) In criminal offences, any of the people involved may need protection; the victim, the witness or the offender.
 - b) Community messaging was used, for example text messaging following the serious sexual assaults earlier in 2010. We warmly commended this.
 - c) Licensing: children who may be exposed to Alcohol, Gaming and Gambling are at risk.
 - d) Emergency powers – the Police have the power to take children into custody where they are found to be in immediate danger.
 - e) Domestic abuse, which leaves children in a vulnerable position.
 - f) Missing children are at particular risk; they are also a target for predators. TVP uses a risk assessment, and the minimum assessment for missing children is 'medium risk'.
 - g) Children who visit relatives in Broadmoor Hospital may be at risk.
 - h) TVP are tackling violent extremism through the Prevent strategy, and through setting up a Supporting Vulnerable Individuals (SVI) Panel, which can involve young people.
 - i) TVP are involved with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) to safeguard young people at risk of sexual exploitation, grooming, and to prevent young people from getting involved in prostitution.
 - j) The Chief Inspector is a member of the Management Board of the Youth Offending Service.
 - k) Detection figures had increased, alongside the increase in referrals of child abuse cases. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are very diligent with child abuse cases, but they do not proceed to prosecute all cases.
- 3.87 The other main points which arose in our discussion with Thames Valley Police were:

- a) Legislation requires local authorities to provide safe and secure accommodation for children (between 10 and 17) who are in custody overnight. The Council does not have any such accommodation, so on the rare occasions that this is required, the child is kept in a detention room or a cell; for minor offences, TVP would often decide to bail the young person.
- b) We were told that partnership work in this area is strong and well developed. The other agencies involved are the LSCB, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and TVP. The relationships are good and open enough for the partners to challenge each other's decisions. An example of working together has recently been in the CDRP giving a higher priority to domestic abuse and sexual exploitation.
- c) There is a lack of qualified medical examiners in Bracknell Forest. GP's on call provide general Force Medical Examiner (FME) services, but special training is needed for children's FME's, especially in cases of child rape. This had been raised with the LSCB, and we return to this issue at paragraph 3.98 (h) below).
- d) TVP said that funding must be found to maintain the Early Intervention Project.
- e) Youth and alcohol was becoming more of a problem in Bracknell, and TVP were looking at new ways of dealing with this.
- f) Child Protection plans have doubled recently; there are now over 80 children at risk.
- g) There were financial difficulties ahead for the Police and other public sector organisations, which might require a shared risk assessment across the partnership.
- h) TVP considered that, overall, the Borough performed well in terms of safeguarding children and young people. Individual cases are well managed and the partnership is effective.

3.88 The Group received the following comments from the Chief Officer: Children's Social Care on TVP's concern regarding provision of accommodation for young people who have been arrested, who would otherwise be kept in custody overnight. There is usually one case a year where this applies. While there are no Children's Homes in the borough who can take children in this kind of emergency, the local authority does usually have Emergency Foster Carers available or can approach Children's Homes and Independent Foster Care agencies further away from the area. The work needed is to reach agreement between the police and the local authority on what constitutes suitable and safe accommodation in each particular case and this will be unique to each case. There are specific criteria for obtaining secure accommodation (which is children's home accommodation provided for the purpose of restricting liberty); the secure accommodation criteria have to be met, ie the child has committed a serious offence and the public are at risk of serious harm if the child is not held in secure accommodation, and the child has to be over 12.

3.89 On 7 October the WG also met **Gloria King, the Council's Children and Families Manager**, who summarised her role as the lead professional on safeguarding in the Council's Education area and the link to Children's Social Care, and advisor to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning, also the LSCB , on safeguarding issues regarding education. The services included: providing child protection training and advice for school staff and governors; being involved in the recruitment of Headteachers; elective home

education; acting as quality assurance at schools, making sure policies and procedures are in place, up to date and followed, keeping schools updated with a broad array of relevant information and advice; involvement in a special projects for vulnerable children, which has an important safeguarding theme; attending Governors Discipline Committee meetings for excluded pupils; involvement in investigations of allegations of teachers abusing children within schools; and supporting schools in the event of a serious incident e.g. death of a pupil.

3.90 The other main points arising in our discussion were:

- a) A separate team ensured all Early Years settings have a designated member of staff for child protection.
- b) The service area works with schools to make sure they are aware of domestic violence cases, as notified by TVP to the service and to Children's Social Care.
- c) The service area reminds employers of child employment law; no child can work under the age of 13 or between 7 pm and 7 am, and the child must have a licence issued by the Council.
- d) The manager told us that, overall, she did not have any concerns about Children's Social Care. Whilst there is scope for further improvement, the 'rights and respect' agenda in schools is working well, and supporting safeguarding. Schools generally have a good culture and ethos for valuing children and safeguarding them. The work has become increasingly pressurised, but the team of Education Welfare Officers (EWO) were at full strength.

3.91 On 19 October, some members of the Working Group attended the **LSCB Annual Stakeholder Event** : to hear about current best practice; to meet representatives of the wider organisations in Bracknell Forest connected with safeguarding children and young people; and to mention to those present the O&S review, offering those present an opportunity to give their views to the Working Group. The event was run by the LSCB Business Manager, Andrea King, with support from officers in Children's Social Care, the Human Resources Team in Children, Young People and Learning, and Connexions. Around 150-180 people were present from a wide variety of organisations.

3.92 The event was lively and purposeful, with good participation from those present, and it covered:

- a) An LSCB Presentation, covering learning from multi-agency reviews and the statutory S11 process.
- b) Integrated Care Pathway (ICP) and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Overview Presentation. This included an announcement that the ICP was being extended to Early Years, in addition to the current Primary and Secondary ICP's
- c) A 'Guess the year' exercise – a practical exercise asking people to listen to quotes from information sharing and vote as individuals on what particular year they came from.
- d) Information Sharing scenarios – a practical exercise in which 4 statements were read, attendees are asked to individually vote on whether they would: 1) Share information with consent; 2) Share information without consent; 3) Keep information confidential.
- e) What action would you take? A practical exercise with everyone asked to read and discuss each scenario on tables, individuals voting on

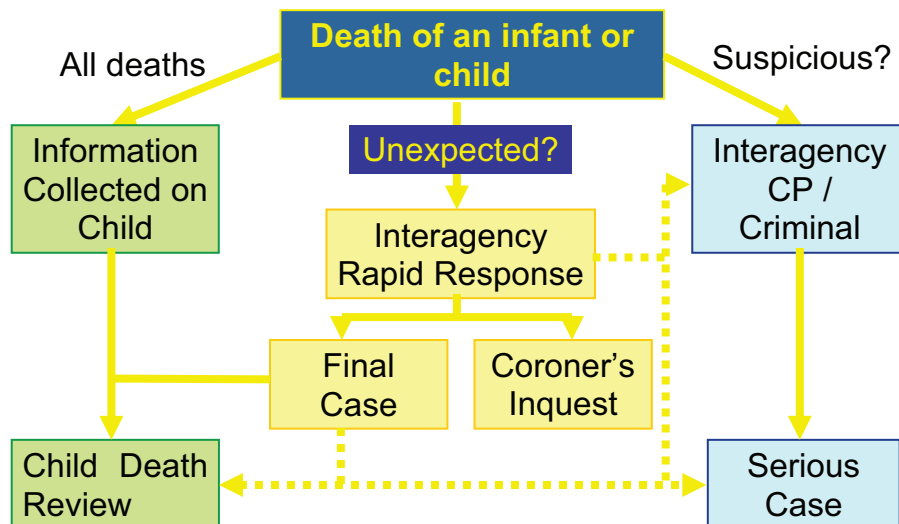
whether they would: 1) take no further action; 2) monitor the issue and record it internally (within their organisation); 3) discuss with a manager or seek advice; 4) Initiate a CAF and/or refer to an ICP; 5) Refer to Children's Social Care.

- 3.93 At the end of the event, Cllr Mrs McCracken addressed the audience to briefly explain the purpose of the Working Group reviewing the arrangements for Safeguarding Children, to stress the value of the successful partnership working that the group had seen, and to invite everyone to contribute their views to the working group.
- 3.94 On 28 October the Group met representatives of NHS Berkshire East Primary Care Trust, including **Dr Pat Riordan, Director of Public Health, Carolyn Finlay, Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategic Lead for Children's Services, Sarah Parsons, Head of Universal Services and Safeguarding, Elaine Welch, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Dr Katie Caird, Named General Practitioner for Bracknell Forest.**
- 3.95 The Group was provided with a report to the NHS Berkshire East (the PCT) Board containing an update and review of service developments in relation to Safeguarding Children, and which provided assurance that the organisations commissioned by the NHS Berkshire East (NHS BE) are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding children. We also received a presentation, which stressed that the PCT's key focus is always on the needs of the child. In relation to Health responsibilities, we were informed that:
- a) There is a six monthly report to the PCT Board concerning the safeguarding of children.
 - b) There is an "Adult & Children Safeguarding Group" and a "Commission & Compliance Governance Group". A "Health Economy Committee" has designated professionals with regard to safeguarding of children.
 - c) The Designated Doctor, Designated Nurse and other Named Professionals are on the LSCB.
 - d) The PCT's Community Health Service is meeting the Care Quality Commission's Outcome 7, and was progressing towards meeting standard 5 of the National Service Children's Framework.
 - e) The PCT acts on recommendations from local Serious Case Reviews and National Inquiries, and all NHS Berkshire East providers have a regular Safeguarding Audit.
 - f) Good record keeping, information sharing and multi-agency liaison practices are in place.
 - g) The Director of Public Health is responsible for PCT Board Assurance. The Medical Director provides strategic overview for Serious Untoward Incidents & Quality standards, also supervises Named Doctors. The Assistant Director for Commissioning reports on any issues regarding safeguarding from all contractors.
 - h) The Designated Doctor has a strategic/supervisory for Child Protection, Serious Case Reviews and is the lead on the Child Death Overview Panel, the LSCB, and on Rapid Response, Legal & Forensic Investigations.
 - i) The PCT's Designated Nurse is responsible for Commissioning, LSCB & sub-groups including training, quality, policy and procedures; and produces Serious Case Review overview reports.

- j) The Named Nurses for Child Protection provide daily advice and support as required by health staff, supervise health visitors and school nurses, attend initial child protection conferences, and deliver local training. They are also involved in the LSCB and Sub-Groups, the Domestic Abuse work Forum, the Serious Case Review Panel, and Partnership Working.
- k) There are quarterly internal provider assurance meetings which deal with safeguarding concerns, share learning points, and consider results of audits and training issues.

3.96 In relation to the NHS input on Prevention through to Child Protection, the PCT told us they commission services for: Looked after children; Welfare checks for asylum-seeking or detained children; children in mental health and secure settings, when placed outside their areas. The Looked after Children's Team's statutory duties included the Integrated Care Pathway; initial Health Assessments and reviews. The Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse advise the PCT, Local Authority, Health Professionals and Foster Carers. They make sure policies and procedures are being carried out, monitor the quality of health assessments, and produce an annual report for the PCT. We were advised that the Preventative and Early Intervention Services includes: Parenting programs with Children's Centers; the Family Nurse Partnership; care plans for Looked After Children and Leavers of Care; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) (tier 3 PCT) and tier 4 (Specialist Commissioning Group); and the Specialist Learning Disability Service. They are also involved in drug and alcohol services and young carers support programmes. The PCT told us that safeguarding training for Health Service staff was based on 'Working Together' government guidance and tiered to suit differing needs.

3.97 The Group was shown the following diagram to illustrate the Child Death Review Process. We were told that the number of avoidable child deaths in Bracknell Forest is so small that it is not possible to make any kind of correlations and any generalizations made would be very speculative. The Child Death Overview Panel covers the whole of Berkshire and its main features are: it is an Inter-agency team (Police, PCT, Children's Services, Bereavement Services, LSCB Business Managers); it is notified of all deaths of people under 18 years; it organises data collection, evaluation and classification of all deaths; in-depth review of selected cases. The Panel presents an annual report to LSCBs. The outcomes are improvements in: understanding patterns of childhood death; procedures in responding to childhood deaths; ascertainment of deaths due to child abuse and neglect; interagency working to prevent childhood deaths. Potentially Avoidable Deaths included those from abuse, neglect, accidents, suicides (which are very rare in under-18's).



3.98 The main points arising in the ensuing discussion were:

- a) There have been no suicides of children or young people in Bracknell Forest in recent times; however, there is a relatively high rate among young men nationally which is related to schizophrenia.
- b) We were told it is unclear how the PCT's policies and procedures will transfer to the planned GP Consortia, or which services will be transferred. This is largely dependent on the passage of the Government's Health Bill, based on the NHS White Paper. Public Health will be transferred to local authorities in April 2012 and this may include safeguarding. A Health and Wellbeing Board has been established and will hold to account commissioning of services, but at the moment levels of details are not available. Currently, no GP Consortia has taken on the PCT's responsibilities in regard to safeguarding, which remained a high priority for the PCT.
- c) Members were impressed with the organisation and support provision of NHS BE, but queried how some children still slipped through the net. We were told the PCT work hard to encourage information sharing within the data protection legal framework. Often in a crisis situation, it turns out that not enough information was shared rather than too much. Furthermore, some families are always moving and information doesn't always move with them. Often a crisis occurs in an unpredictable set of circumstances. The 'contact point' initiative had effectively stopped but the CAF enabled sharing of information. 'Disappearing' families were a risk; and the PCT sometimes identified these if and when they register at another GP or present themselves at A&E. They also have health links with shelters. Dentists also identify neglect cases.
- d) Domestic abuse, mental health and substance abuse are regarded as the main causes of harm for children.

- e) Post-mortems do not always take place in the child death review process, for example children can die of extreme prematurity or cancer. The aim of the Child death review is to pool information to ensure the safety of other children. If the PCT believes there are suspicious circumstances, it will act in advance of a post-mortem.
- f) The PCT believe their functions fit in well with the Council's. Commissioning and service providing are fairly sophisticated and rigorous systems are working well in Bracknell Forest. The PCT consider that partnership working and the LSCB in Bracknell Forest work very well. Health workers based in Family Centres are excellent for partnership working, and their turnover is low.
- g) Basing health workers in children's centres has somewhat diminished the knowledge of the GPs, but the PCT has worked at this. The development has meant that communication with GP's has lost some of its informality, but they try to keep their relationships.
- h) On the TVP's concerns regarding a lack of appropriately qualified Force Medical Examiners (FME) for child cases, Dr Louise Watson, Consultant Paediatrician has subsequently advised the Group that, whilst they aware that there have been individual cases where difficulties have arisen, there are in fact clear guidelines for examination, agreed across the Thames Valley with the Police, which if properly applied should mean that no child needs to travel long distances. Very few children require urgent out of hours examinations, and those that do often have acute symptoms which mean they need to go to hospital, where they should be seen jointly by the on-call paediatrician and the on-call FME; for which there is now a full FME rota. We were also advised that there is a Sexual Assault Referral Centre planned which is now imminent. This will also accommodate children.

3.99 The PCT identified the future challenges as including:

- a) The transition of the public health function to local authorities. It is important not to underestimate the challenge and the need to maintain effective safeguarding. The Group noted that additional risk factors were the major transfer of community health services in April 2011, and the substantial reduction in NHS management costs.
- b) The Named GP said that some parents often take their children to a different hospital each time an incident occurs in order to hide the number of incidents.
- c) It is difficult to get information from abroad as there are different structures in foreign countries.
- d) Private fostering remains a risk area.

Written Comments received

3.100 The Working Group sought comments from Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Victim Support on the current arrangements to safeguard children in Bracknell Forest. The responses we received are at Appendix 6. The responses were generally positive, with some concerns about the CAF process and the future

financial pressures on everyone involved in safeguarding (similar to those reported by others above). The Working Group also invited comments from primary school Headteachers. Their responses are summarised at Appendix 6, and the issues they raised correspond to some extent with the other views we received concerning, for example: capacity; the CAF process; communications and information.

- 3.101 On the basis of the information we gathered, as set out above and in the background section 1 of this report, we have reached a number of conclusions on safeguarding children and young people, which we set out in the following section 4.

4. Conclusions

From its review, the Working Group has drawn the following conclusions.

General

- 4.1 This has been a very extensive review of a matter of the highest importance to the community. We set out with no predetermined notions of whether the services to safeguard children and young people were lacking in any way. We have met some of the children and their parents who have used the Council's safeguarding services, we have met a large number of people from the Council and its various partner organisations engaged in safeguarding; we have taken views of others; and we have researched a lot of the key reports and other information available nationally on safeguarding. All this has helped us to form a well evidenced and comprehensive view of how well the Borough looks after the interests of children and young people who are vulnerable and at risk of abuse.
- 4.2 We adopted a structured approach to this review, following the guidance for scrutiny of safeguarding recommended by the Improvement and Development Agency and the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This included obtaining written answers from the Director of Children's Services to the 'top ten' questions (see Appendix 5). We have endeavoured to put the interests of the Borough's children and young people at the forefront throughout our review, and this has been greatly helped by our Working Group including teachers, parents, grandparents, a representative of the voluntary sector active in this field, and members of the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.
- 4.3 We have been struck by the professionalism and commitment of the people we met, the huge importance, size and complexity of the service, and the range of activity. In its widest sense, almost all council services have a contribution to make to safeguarding, from the obvious – such as schools, children's social services, and children's centres - to the somewhat less obvious, such as the action on domestic violence, road safety, and preventing sales of knives and alcohol to underage young people.
- 4.4 The Council's overall approach aims to keep as paramount the interests of children and young people, and we are satisfied that that is being achieved in all important respects. The Working Group strongly endorses the view of the 2010 'Munro Review of Child protection' that 'A dominant theme in the criticisms of current practice is the skew in priorities that has developed between the demands of the management and inspection processes and professionals' ability to exercise their professional judgment and act in the best interests of the child. This has led to an over-standardised system that cannot respond adequately to the varied range of children's needs.' The Council must not fall into the trap of making the top priority pleasing the inspectors – in our view, the needs of children and young people must always be the top priority.

- 4.5 The review has led to us to reach positive conclusions on the most important aspects of safeguarding children and young people, and we believe that this is a reassuring message for everyone. We have grouped our conclusions under the broad headings below, and these form the basis for our recommendations in Section 5 of this report.
- 1. Are the Council and its partners throughout the community sufficiently alert to identify new cases of potential safeguarding concerns, and does it follow these up promptly and properly?**
- 4.6 The safeguarding services as a whole are evidently running well, as demonstrated by positive reports from OFSTED and the LSCB, satisfactory performance against national indicators and service plan objectives, and the various information we have gathered from our review. Even with workload pressures on the social workers, the Council and its partners still have the ability to work well. They have coped well with a major increase in the number of child protection cases, but we consider it has not yet been put to a big test, in terms of a serious case.
- 4.7 We are reassured and impressed by the commitment of the professionals involved in safeguarding, particularly in terms of their alertness to concerns and dealing with them speedily and thoroughly. The Assessment process seems robust, but we do have concerns over the usage and application of the Common Assessment Framework form, and we return to this in paragraphs 4.15-4.16 below. Partners seem to be alert and responsive to specific issues applying to Bracknell Forest, and have for example given targeted attention to the issue of sexual grooming.
- 4.8 There is good management, and there are cover arrangements. From our questioning, it is clear to us that the statutory roles of the Executive Member and Director are well understood and applied in practice. In addition, there is a quarterly meeting between the Council's Chief Executive, the Executive Member for Children and Young People, the Director of Children Young People & Learning, and the Chief Officer Children's Social Care; the purpose of this meeting is to monitor safeguarding activity and arrangements.
- 2. Do the Council and its partners have good plans, procedures and resources to achieve effective safeguarding?**
- 4.9 The evidence we have gathered leads us to conclude that there are good plans and processes, regularly updated and improved; for example, we commend the work being done to interview all children who go missing in order to see if any support systems have broken down, family or otherwise and how this may be addressed. The application of these plans and processes is greatly assisted by well-established and successful structures - including the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust - the turnover of social worker staffing being lower than in many other councils, and the good training in place for Council and partner organisations' staff, schools, and the voluntary sector.
- 4.10 Comprehensive procedures are in place and are evidently in use, with a range of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure safe practice:
- The LSCB undertake and report on multi-agency case analysis on a regular basis

- Child protection conferences are audited by representatives of at least three of the organisations required to attend child protection conferences, including Children's Social Care, to ensure multi-agency decision making. There is also family participation and provision of written reports.
 - The Children's Social Care Management Team has a programme of regular auditing of cases.
- 4.11 The work is very much demand led, and the staff we met seemed quite hard-pressed, particularly in the Under-11's Team. We were told by this team that the main ways of coping with surges in work were staff working considerably more hours than their contracts provided for, and reducing the amount of time spent on the less worrying cases. The Chief Officer has clarified that as the service is demand-led, at certain times staff are required to work late or to work additional hours. The expectation is that staff then take time off in lieu to compensate for this, although this is not always easy to accommodate. When there are above average pressures in particular teams, then action is taken by the management team, as it was on this occasion by: allocation of some of the cases in other teams where there is more capacity, use of short term contracts to employ known and familiar social workers to increase capacity, and rigorous management oversight of cases through regular meetings to ensure that all cases are allocated, and prioritised according to the level of risk. The Under-11s Team was fully staffed by October 2010. In general, the Children's Social Care Service has benefited from low staff turnover and positive team working.
- 4.12 We are reassured by the active management of resources, but we nonetheless consider these arrangements are unfair on the staff and they are not sufficiently robust. The tragedies which have occurred in children's social care elsewhere show that the greatest danger of mishaps will occur when the system is under stress. We would like to see more contingency arrangements in place, for example for temporary re-deployment of staff between the teams in children's services, but also between them and adult services. We recognise that in practice, taking on new workers places an additional burden on the team as processes need to be explained, and the new workers will take time to develop their knowledge of the families. We also see scope for some sort of reciprocal arrangement for mutual assistance with children's teams in adjoining local authorities. The joint arrangements for the out-of-hours duty team show that BFC can work effectively with other councils. We acknowledge that this arrangement isn't a pooling of resources otherwise deployed within one borough; it is a joint arrangement which is funded by the 6 Berkshire Unitary Authorities, and hosted by the Council who employ the staff as a distinct team.
- 4.13 The Group is concerned that there should be no lessening of the work on early, integrated and targeted intervention and support. Specifically, the Council should reconsider the reduction in resources for Teenage Pregnancy advice and the Early Intervention Team. We acknowledge that both these changes were effectively forced on the Council by the government's sudden reduction in the Area Based Grant, which funded them. The Working Group received strong representations from the staff of a major school that both these changes were very harmful, and we agree with the Headteacher concerned that this kind of preventative work – in this case, minimising teenage pregnancies when the UK has some of the worst rates in Western Europe, and tackling signs of criminal behaviour in young people – is very

valuable. It not only has a dramatic effect on the life chances of the children and young people involved in the programme, but is highly likely to be economically cost effective when set against the cost to society of unwanted teenage pregnancies and increased criminal activity.

- 4.14 The Bracknell Forest LSCB has issued a very useful and practical 'Safeguarding Toolkit', which we warmly endorse as an excellent resource available, to be used by all agencies to audit their policies and procedures. We observed that Section D of the toolkit is reserved for good practice examples, but this is currently empty. Given that the Toolkit is designed for the use of a wide variety of people and organisations, we suggest that it would be helpful if the LSCB could include 'real life' examples of good practice to illustrate the practical application of the guidance. The safeguarding toolkit is evidently only in the early stages of roll-out in the voluntary sector, and there is a need for completion of the self-assessment audit and its return with a plan of action. It is hoped that with the Children and Young People's Voluntary Community Sector Development Worker – who will be employed by the BFVA in support of the sector - being in place this will be facilitated in the voluntary sector, especially among the smaller groups.
- 4.15 We are concerned with the unresolved issues raised by Kennel Lane Special School concerning the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Form, and the related processes as being unsuitable for their needs. We note that there is a differing view on this by Council officers, but we are cognisant of the school's comment that other councils appear to operate the CAF system better. We also note Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action's comment that the CAF process is very patchy and not given the priority it once had, particularly from social services and the NHS. CAF forms have been filled out but then no response is forthcoming. BFVA told us that there was an ongoing issue of needing more capacity for safeguarding issues and processes in the voluntary sector. The Council's partners have a responsibility too in relation to the CAF process. We had similar concerns about the CAF expressed by others, including in the latest report from Ofsted (see Appendix 4.8) and it is clear to us that the CAF form is not applied consistently in the community. We note this has also been referred to by the LSCB in their recent annual report, and we are encouraged that the Chairman of the Children's Trust has acknowledged the need for action.
- 4.16 We note that there have been some positive aspects to the development of the CAF process. The Council has worked hard to introduce and embed the CAF, including having a dedicated CAF Coordinator. The number of CAF's has increased significantly in the last two years; an increasing amount of time has been spent by officers advising people on CAF's; and training events have been held on the usage of CAF's.
- 4.17 Thames Valley Police told us that legislation requires local authorities to provide safe and secure accommodation for children (between 10 and 17) who are in custody overnight. The Council does not have any such accommodation, so on the rare occasions that this is required, the child is kept in a detention room or a cell. We are reassured to have been told by the Council that incidents requiring safe and secure overnight accommodation are very rare and a satisfactory solution is always found to them, but we would like to see this important issue formally resolved.

- 4.18 Thames Valley Police also told us that there is a lack of qualified Force Medical Examiners (FME) that can assess children in Bracknell Forest. The Chief Inspector has taken this issue to the LSCB. The Working Group has also raised this point with the PCT's Director of Public Health and other senior staff involved in safeguarding. The PCT's Consultant Paediatrician has subsequently advised us that whilst there have been individual cases where difficulties have arisen, there are in fact clear guidelines for examination agreed across the Thames Valley with police and health, which if properly applied should mean that no child needs to travel long distances. There is now a full FME rota.
- 4.19 We are impressed by Berkshire East Primary Care Trust's (PCT) commitment and expertise on safeguarding, but we are greatly concerned that the huge changes looming in the NHS should not result in a reduction in that service. The NHS White paper proposes that the public health function in PCTs – which includes the commissioning role on safeguarding - is to transfer to local authorities before 2013, and in the case of the Berkshire East PCT, this will involve a set of transfers to three unitary authorities including BFC. At the same time, there is to be a cut of some 50% in the PCT's management costs. A further major issue is the transfer of the community health service – which includes the 'provider' service on safeguarding – from the PCT to the Berkshire Healthcare Trust in 2011. During these massive changes, it will be vital not to divert attention from effective safeguarding. We see this as a huge risk to be managed jointly by the PCT, the Healthcare Trust, the GP Consortium for BF, and the Council.
- 4.20 Plans and procedures are only as good as their application in practice. We are reassured by the indications of good supervision, management, and review. Above all, safeguarding is highly dependant on the prevailing culture, and on this too we were reassured by what we saw.

3. Does the extended partnership work well together?

- 4.21 Effective safeguarding of children and young people depends on a lot of people in many different roles and organisations working together in partnership. All have an important contribution to make, and the chain can only be as strong as its weakest link. The Working Group has met a wide variety of people in the Council and its partner organisations during this review. We have been impressed by their commendable sense of partnership, and the universal commitment of everyone to do their very best to safeguard children and young people in the Borough. Whilst no system, however well resourced, can guarantee there will never be instances of children and young people being harmed, we are greatly heartened by what we have seen during this review.
- 4.22 Within Bracknell Forest we are fortunate in having an extensive voluntary sector to deliver services and activities to the children and young people sector. We see it as a positive strength to have the LSCB Annual Conferences draw together all the partners concerned with safeguarding throughout the borough.
- 4.23 We were advised that the Children's Trust also the LSCB have too many members for it to be effective and agile. Both could usefully consider whether it might be better to have the wider group meeting less frequently with a smaller subset of that group operating in an executive capacity and meeting

more frequently, with full accountability to the wider group. This has a close similarity to the successful arrangements in the Bracknell Forest Partnership.

- 4.24 We were encouraged to hear from both schools we met that they have good relationships with Children’s Social Care, and Thames Valley Police. However, we think there needs to be a fuller understanding and appropriate adaptation of procedures in the Council to take account of the particular circumstances and safeguarding issues involved with Kennel Lane Special School. We particularly draw attention to the School’s views that:
- Partner agencies need to be better educated on what the school does. This could include having new social care staff spend a day at the school as part of their induction training.
 - The school has developed specialised social work independently and consider that some of the Council’s social service function could be accordingly devolved to the school and funding be provided.
 - Either a named Social Worker should be assigned to disabled children issues in the Duty Team (to build understanding, and to give a ‘familiar face’ with the children), or arrangements are made so the school can send new referrals straight to the Disabled Children Team.

The primary school Headteachers raised issues around capacity, the CAF process, communications and information.

- 4.25 Social Workers generally have had a bad press in recent years, nationwide. This is often unfair, for example the recently released Serious Case review reports on Baby Peter showed that there were failures by all the organisations – including the NHS and the Police - involved in ensuring he was protected. The Working Group met some of our Council’s Social Workers and we were very impressed by them; they are doing a challenging and highly responsible job, often in difficult circumstances. They do not deserve to be vilified and we, on behalf of all Councillors, cannot thank them enough for what they do to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society today.

4. Has the Council learnt and applied the lessons from OFSTED, Haringey and Birmingham?

- 4.26 We consider that the full extent of these lessons has yet to be fully appreciated and applied across the country. To the extent that new national requirements were put in place by the government in the light of these tragic cases, and the Council has complied with all national requirements, the lessons have been applied. Similarly, we consider that the council has acted appropriately on reports from OFSTED.
- 4.27 Our concern here is not on what has happened in Bracknell Forest, it is instead how well conditioned everyone is for what might happen. The lack of a crisis in Bracknell Forest certainly does not mean we should assume a tragedy will not happen. On this, it seemed to us in our review that the Council and its partners are ready to ‘think the unthinkable’, and they should continue to do so.

5. What do the service users think of the service from Children’s Social Care?

- 4.28 The Working Group gained a good understanding from our face to face meetings with service users, though as both groups we met were small in number we cannot know whether their views are representative of everyone. The children we met were very appreciative of and had great faith in their social workers. The young adults with children were not positive; they generally felt that they did not require social services. The adults felt the social workers were intrusive but the children felt that they could relate more easily.
- 4.29 The adults met by the working group reported much lower levels of satisfaction with the service than is the norm for other Council services. The Group has considered this carefully. On the one hand, any reports of low customer satisfaction need to be followed up, but on the other hand, the social care service is by its nature going to be unpopular with some or even many service users and it will be controversial. We should neither hide from nor be fearful of that as an organisation. While taking into account the views of parents, what we must bear in mind is that the needs of the child must be paramount, and the feelings of parents secondary to that. The WG's overall view is that – just like the council's regulatory services - some dissatisfaction with the service by the parents of children receiving care services is unfortunate but inevitable, and it should not distract the children's social care service delivering the services which they believe are necessary for the children's well-being.
- 4.30 A common view among people we met was that parents tended to see the Council's social services team as a threat, likely to result in their children being taken away from them. The Council should take every opportunity it can to stress that the social services team is there to provide support in the first instance, and whilst putting the interests of the child first, the emphasis is on helping them to stay with their families wherever possible. In reality, few children are taken away from their families, and this can only be done with the approval of the Courts. In communicating this message, the Council could usefully take account of the very helpful report by the Children's Commissioner on family perspectives and relationships with children's services, which we summarise at Appendix 4.10.

6. Has this review built Members' knowledge and understanding?

- 4.31 This has been a challenging, positive and very interesting Overview and Scrutiny review, and it has greatly added to the knowledge and understanding of the members of the Working Group. Given also that some of us are teachers or otherwise involved in safeguarding – for example as members of the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel – this leads us to think that more information on the vital issue of safeguarding could usefully be made available to all councillors. For example, the key messages from the LSCB annual reports and the outcome of the quarterly formal meetings of the Executive Member, Chief Executive, and Director of Children's Services should be openly communicated. We believe the value of this wider communication was demonstrated by the very positive response from Councillors when everyone was issued with the new 'cue cards'.
- 4.32 The tragic cases at Haringey, Birmingham and elsewhere have resulted in increased Member understanding and interest in those councils and to some extent, nationally. No council should wait for a tragedy before it gains

sufficient understanding and commitment to safeguarding. Safeguarding is complex. Members cannot be expected to have full knowledge or understanding of this or indeed any of the Council's wide range of specific activities. However, the huge importance of safeguarding demands that all Members are equipped with an up to date understanding of the main safeguarding principles and practice. We are encouraged to see that an all-member briefing was arranged on safeguarding for January 2011, and we encourage the Council's leadership to use this and other means to build and maintain Members' understanding of safeguarding. We would also see merit in:

- (i) The Group's report being sent to all Councillors and the Town and Parish Councils for their consideration too.
- (ii) As part of their induction, all Councillors should be given the LSCB cue card. They should be required to sign a statement of their safeguarding responsibilities, both for adults and children, also a summary of the Council's safeguarding policies.

7. Overall, has the Council done all it reasonably can do to safeguard children and young people from harm and abuse?

- 4.33 In overall terms, in all major respects we are very satisfied that the Council and its partners have done all they reasonably can to safeguard children and young people. This is notwithstanding the observations and recommendations made elsewhere in this report, which point out the need for constant improvement. It behoves everyone not to be complacent or relax their efforts for one moment.
- 4.34 Almost everything the Council does has some impact on safeguarding children and we must build on this, making it more explicit.
- 4.35 We are impressed by the weight of effort put into identifying and addressing individual cases of children and young people suspected or known to be at risk of harm, but we query whether an appropriate balance of effort is going into universal prevention measures; for example, we see excellent parenting support at Children's Centres, but not much of a 'universal' offering beyond that. In this regard, we welcome the emphasis being given by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to tackle cases of domestic violence, not least because these cases often have a bearing on child abuse too.
- 4.36 Everyone can take great assurance from the fact that cases of children being seriously abused and harmed are extremely rare in Bracknell Forest; however, we cannot be certain that all cases of possible abuse are known about, and there is always scope for improvement. We must not succumb to the risk of complacency, and our vigilance must be constant.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended to the Executive Member for Children and Young People that:

- 5.1 The Council should continue to ensure that it provides the necessary profile, resources and support for safeguarding children and young people, which we see as among the most important responsibilities of a local authority.
- 5.2 Reflecting Lord Laming's encouragement for local authorities to put children at the heart of everything we do, all Council service areas could usefully look to see how their contribution towards safeguarding children could be more explicitly recognised. Similarly, to improve universal awareness and understanding of the vital business of safeguarding, we recommend that the Council raises the profile of safeguarding where possible, for example in adopting a job specification for the Lead Member for Children's Service, reflecting their statutory duties (paragraph 3.51), also articles in 'Town and Country' (paragraph 4.30).
- 5.3 Better arrangements should be made for dealing with unforeseeable increases in Social Services workload, since experience of tragedies elsewhere shows this to be a great risk to effective safeguarding. This could include larger contingency arrangements – both financial and staffing – and developing more reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities nearby (paragraph 4.12).
- 5.4 Whilst we recognise the positive progress made with the important Common Assessment Form in various ways, we recommend the CAF processes should be reviewed in the light of differing views as to its purpose, and the criticisms expressed to us. In particular, there is a lack of universal understanding about what the CAF process is actually for. The review should determine whether the processes could be improved to give a more appropriate and effective method for assessment and referral of cases (paragraph 4.15), particularly in relation to Special Schools, and feedback to those utilising the forms.
- 5.5 The Council and its partners should consider how to improve joint working and communication with schools, both on individual cases and on increasing schools' knowledge of thresholds and the appropriate use of the CAF.
- 5.6 The Executive Member should review whether an appropriate balance of effort is going into universal prevention measures (paragraph 4.35).
- 5.7 The highly necessary work on early, integrated and targeted intervention and support must be properly resourced. This particularly applies to teenage pregnancy advice, alcohol abuse, and early intervention. This could usefully be co-ordinated with the planned transfer of the Public Health function from Primary Care Trusts to local authorities, which will include sexual health issues (paragraphs 4.13 and 4.19). If the resources could be found, we would particularly like to see the reinstatement of an officer post to give full-time, focused attention to teenage pregnancy issues.

- 5.8 This Overview and Scrutiny report should be presented by the Lead Member of the Working Group to the Local Safeguarding Children Board, for their information and interest.
- 5.9 To strengthen the success of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust:
- a) The Council's website should give clearer links to the role and activities of the LSCB and the Children's Trust.
 - b) The LSCB should be asked to include 'real life' examples of good practice in their safeguarding Toolkit.
 - c) The Council should continue to actively promote the Toolkit and support the Voluntary sector in their take-up of it.
 - d) We support the view of the Executive member for Children and Young People that there is scope to further improve engagement with young people, for example, in terms of a 'shadow' Children's Trust, led by children and young people.
 - e) The LSCB Safeguarding Cue Cards are an excellent idea, and should remain freely available to all, and promoted at every opportunity.
 - f) The structure of the Children's Trust also the LSCB should be reviewed, in particular to determine whether it might be better to have the wider groups meeting less frequently with a smaller subset of each group operating in an executive capacity and meeting more frequently, with full accountability to the wider group.
- 5.10 The Council should consider giving more effective publicity to facilities such as the Family and Children's Centres and parent groups provided by the Council and its partners, to increase uptake, in view of the comments we received from parents that they are valued and more people needed to be aware of what facilities and support are available (paragraph 3.44 (j)).
- 5.11 A formal understanding be made between the Council and Thames Valley Police demonstrating how the Council meets its legal responsibility to provide safe and secure accommodation for children who are in custody overnight (paragraph 4.17).
- 5.12 During the massive changes planned by the Government for the NHS, the Executive Member should work closely with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing to ensure that there is an orderly transfer of the Public Health and related functions from the PCT to the Council and the GP Consortium, such that the NHS's current role in safeguarding remains effective (paragraph 4.19).
- 5.13 The Council should obtain feedback occasionally from parents and children, along the lines of the two surveys we carried out (see paragraphs 3.42-3.44 and 3.53-3.58), in addition to routinely obtaining views from individual service users at the close of cases.
- 5.14 The Council should actively promote putting the interests of the child first. We recommend that the Council should take every opportunity it can to stress that the social services team is there to provide support in the first instance. The emphasis is on helping children to stay with their families wherever possible, and very few children are taken into care. This is to counter the reported views of many parents seeing social workers as a threat, likely to result in their children being taken away from them (paragraphs 4.28-4.30).

- 5.15 We think it was important for the Council to have analysed the significant increase in the number of child protection plans. We recommend that funding is provided for the monitoring of the recommendations made in the analysis and for future analyses as necessary (paragraph 2.28).
- 5.16 The young people we met thought the complaints system could be more user-friendly and made some suggestions, which we ask the Executive to consider. These included: having a suggestion box which has slips entitled 'I have a worry about...' More publicity needs to be given to the Council's text message service and the pre-paid returnable card which allow young people to submit their worries or concerns to the Council without having to incur a cost (paragraph 3.58(g)).
- 5.17 The Executive Member should consider how the commitment of, and regular flow of information to councillors on the vital issue of safeguarding might be usefully enhanced, specifically through the proposals we set out in paragraph 4.32.
- 5.18 The Executive Member is asked to convey to the Council's social workers the Working Group's appreciation that they have a challenging and highly responsible job to do, often in difficult circumstances. We think we speak on behalf of all councillors by saying we cannot thank them enough for what they do to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society today.

It is recommended to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel that:

- 5.19 The Panel should continue to receive and review the annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and in future this should include a discussion on the report with the Chair of the LSCB, in the Panel's public meeting.

6. Glossary

A&E	Accident and Emergency
ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee
BF	Bracknell Forest
BFVA	Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CEO	Chief Executive
CfPS	Centre for Public Scrutiny
CP	Child Protection
CYPL	Children Young People and Learning
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
CT	Children's Trust
DCS	Director of Children's Services
DCT	Disabled Children's Team
DOH	Department of Health
ENT	Medical and surgical treatment of head and neck, including ears, nose and throat
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FAST	Funding and Adolescent Support Team
FME	Force Medical Examiner
GOSE	Government Office for the South East
GP	General Practitioner
H&WP	Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
ICP	Integrated Care Pathway
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDEA	Improvement and Development Agency
LAC	Looked After Children
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LM	Lead Member
NHS BE	The NHS Primary Care Trust for Berkshire East
NHS	National Health Service
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RBH	Royal Berkshire Hospital
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
'The Council'	Bracknell Forest Council
TVP	Thames Valley Police
WG	Working Group
YOS	Youth Offending Service

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WORK PROGRAMME 2010 – 2011

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Purpose of this Working Group / anticipated value of its work:

The overall **purpose** is to review whether the arrangements by the Council and its partners provide reasonable assurance and confidence that children at risk of significant harm in Bracknell Forest are properly safeguarded, with particular reference to child protection. The exact focus of the review will be refined following the meetings with service users.

The anticipated **value** of this work is:

- 1) To build Member's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children arrangements
- 2) To demonstrate publicly the great importance attached by the Council and its partners to safeguarding children
- 3) To identify any obstacles to effective safeguarding, and to make recommendations for action as appropriate
- 4) To demonstrate to officers in Children's social care positions that they are valued and that their work is crucially important
- 5) To engage with service users and partner organisations
- 6) To reach an overall conclusion on whether the Council and its partners have done everything they reasonably can do to prevent tragedies like the Victoria Climbié and Baby Peter cases occurring in Bracknell Forest.

Key Objectives:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | To build Member's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children arrangements (with a specific emphasis on child protection) |
| 2. | To gain direct knowledge of the experience of service users, assisting the development of the Children and Young People's Plan |
| 3. | To consider the adequacy of those arrangements, particularly on any obstacles to effective safeguarding/child protection |
| 4. | To promote the value and importance of children's social care |
| 5. | To report publicly the findings of the review, including recommendations for action as appropriate |

Scope of the work:

Child safeguarding (with particular reference to child protection) arrangements by Bracknell Forest Council and its partners, including the statutory duties of the Executive Member for Children and Young People, and the Director of Children, Young People and Learning

Not included in the scope:

Detailed practice and procedures on child protection

Terms of Reference prepared by: R M Beaumont

Terms of Reference agreed by: The Working Group

Working Group structure:

Councillors Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Mrs McCracken, Kensall, and Harrison⁴; and Miss V Richardson. Possibly a co-optee (TBC)⁵

Working Group Lead Member: Councillor Mrs McCracken

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children and Young People

BACKGROUND:

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Members have chosen to carry out a review of safeguarding children in Bracknell Forest, not because they have any reason to think that the arrangements are lacking, but because:

- (i) Safeguarding children is one of the most important functions of a local authority, and this has not previously been subject to a focussed overview and scrutiny review;
- (ii) The children of Bracknell Forest and their parents/carers would benefit from an impartial and public review of the adequacy of the arrangements to safeguard children.
- (iii) In the major aftermath of the 'Baby Peter' case at Haringey, the Government has legislated to strengthen the Children's Trust arrangement, also other safeguarding arrangements, and have clearly indicated they want a much stronger emphasis on scrutiny.
- (iv) Critically, the Lord Laming report sets out an extensive series of recommendations. Scrutiny needs to ensure that the report's recommendations are implemented, to reinforce the Council's operational arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Scrutiny would build an additional and useful safeguard for the borough's children.
- (v) The aftermath of the Victoria Climbié and Baby Peter tragedies has included some perceived 'demonisation' of social care staff, nationally. This has exacerbated the existing, country-wide difficulty of recruiting and retaining social care staff. O&S Members are keen to reassure social care staff in Bracknell Forest that their work is very important, and that they are valued.

The Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel has met the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Children's Trust as part of its review of the Bracknell Forest partnership during 2009. The Panel also routinely reviews the annual statutory report of complaints received by service users of Children's Social Services, and the annual reports of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This review builds on that strong foundation of Overview and Scrutiny in this area.

Safeguarding encompasses a very wide range of actions and activities, many parts of which are worthy of an O&S review in their own right. In the interests of completing the review in a realistic timescale, this review will have a principle focus on Child

⁴ Cllr Harrison was subsequently replaced by Cllr Mrs Angell

⁵ Mrs Paula Ridgway was subsequently co-opted onto the group

Protection, being one of the most important areas. In carrying out this review, Members do not want to replicate the role of OFSTED or any other inspectorate or agency, instead we want to add value by making an original and constructive input to the continuous improvement of this most vital aspect of safeguarding. To that end, and in keeping with Lord Laming's stressing the importance of placing the child at the centre of all that we do, the Working group intend refining the scope of this review only after meeting – with their agreement - some children who have been subject to the child protection process, together with their parents/carers. We will ask them about their experience of the service, and use that to decide on which issues to concentrate our attention on in this review.

Before meeting the service users, the working group will receive a factual briefing from officers on safeguarding arrangements, building members' understanding from that and from background reading, and firm up on our plans for those aspects of the review which can be planned in advance.

Viewing information and meeting named people on individual cases raises important issues of confidentiality, sensitivity of handling, and of being able to cope with possibly harrowing information. Advice will be sought from the Council's legal team on any confidentiality requirements, and all these issues will need airing with Members at the first meeting.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL TO ADDRESS:

1.	The 'top ten' questions from the IDEA/CFPS guide on scrutiny of safeguarding (attached)
2.	Other questions for individual witnesses to be developed, to meet objectives for the review as set out above. The over-riding themed question for the Working Group's review will be, 'do the arrangements for safeguarding/ Child protection in Bracknell Forest reasonably prevent the risk of a tragedy like Baby Peter or Victoria Climbié?'
3.	Do officers and partners have the resources, training and facilities they need for their roles?
4.	Are service users content with the services provided to them?

INFORMATION GATHERING:

Witnesses to be invited

Name	Organisation/Position	Reason for Inviting
A group of children who have been subject to the child protection process by the local authority, together with their parents/carers	Bracknell Forest service users	To hear at first hand the experience of safeguarding arrangements by children who have used the service
Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard	Bracknell Forest Council/ Executive Member for Children and Young People	To review the Executive Member's application of his statutory duties, and to exchange views on the arrangements for safeguarding children
Dr J Karklins	BFC/ Director of Children,	To review the Director's

	Young People and Learning	application of her statutory duties, and to exchange views on the arrangements for safeguarding children
Penny Reuter	BFC/ Chief Officer: Children's Social Care	Responsible Chief Officer and Link officer for review
TBC – A representative	The organisation which has taken over the functions of the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit ⁶	To ascertain the national government's perspective on Safeguarding Children in Bracknell Forest
TBC – representatives (to be refined after meetings with service users) to include Front Line Health Visitors	Thames Valley Police, NHS Berkshire East and Bracknell Forest Schools	To exchange views with key partners on the arrangements for safeguarding children
Elaine Coleridge Smith	Chair, Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children's Board	To establish the role and activities of the LSCB and exchange views on the Children's Trust and arrangements for safeguarding children
Mairead Panetta and Sarah Roberts	Head of Service: Safeguarding Policy & Commissioning Officer	For detailed information on safeguarding, and to arrange the questionnaires and meetings with service users
TBC	NSPCC, Victim Support and Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	To obtain the views of voluntary organisations on child protection in Bracknell Forest

Site Visits

Location	Purpose of visit
TBC - Children's Social Care Duty Team	To gain a first hand appreciation of safeguarding/child protection from service practitioners

Key Documents / Background Data / Research

1.	Safeguarding Children Scrutiny Guide, IDEA and Centre for Public Scrutiny
2.	BFC Children and Young People's Plan
3.	Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report
4.	Latest OFSTED report on safeguarding at Bracknell Forest
5.	Statutory guidance on safeguarding children
6.	TBC - Other documents and research

⁶ The National Safeguarding Delivery Unit and Government Office for the South East were abolished by the Government before a meeting could be arranged

TIMESCALE

Starting: May 2010

Ending: January 2011

OUTPUTS TO BE PRODUCED

1. A report summarising the outcome of the review, with practical recommendations designed to assist further improvement of safeguarding children in Bracknell Forest
2. Visible Member recognition of the value and importance of the arrangements for safeguarding children

REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Body	Date
Children's Services and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel	At each public meeting
Draft report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission	At conclusion of review
Report to Council's Executive (and Partners as necessary)	At conclusion of review (estimated – January 2011)

MONITORING / FEEDBACK ARRANGEMENTS

Body	Details	Date
Children's Services and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel	Progress reports to each Panel meeting, culminating with draft report	30 June 2010 27 October 2010 12 January 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Commission	In six – monthly reports on O&S activity	28 October 2010 and subsequently

Children's Social Care Staffing April 2009 – June 2010





Children's Social Care	Staffing Levels	Establishment Posts	Staffing Full Time	Staffing Part Time	Total Posts Full Time Equivalent	Vacant Posts	Vacancy Rate
April - June 2009	Quarter 1	125	81	48	108.96	4	3.1
July - Sept 2009	Quarter 2	130	79	46	111.34	5	3.84
Oct - Dec 2009	Quarter 3	130	82	48	111.34	4	3.07
Jan - Mar 2010	Quarter 4	129	81	48	110.53	3	2.32
Apr - Jun 2010	Quarter 1	126	79	47	106.92		


Children's Social Care Budget for the year 2009- 2010 and Quarter 1 April - 30 June 2010

2009 - 2010	Approved Budget	Spend to Date
	£000's	£000's
CO - Children & Families: Social Care		
Children's Services & Commissioning	1,515	1,498
Children Looked After	4,235	4,663
Family Support Services	893	854
Other Children's and Family Services	1,141	1,144
Management and Support Services	71	45
	7,855	8,204
Quarter 1 2010 - 2011	Approved Budget	Spend to Date
	£000's	£000's
CO - Children & Families: Social Care		
Children's Services & Commissioning	1,623	238
Children Looked After	4,106	697
Family Support Services	774	9
Other Children's and Family Services	1,142	133
Management and Support Services	47	6
	7,692	1,083


Source – PMR for Children, Young People and Learning Quarter 4 2009 -2010, and PMR for Children, Young People and Learning Quarter 1 2010 -2011.

Performance Indicators For The Year Ended 31 March 2010





Measure	Current Actual	Current Target	Previous Actual		Comments & Improvement Action	MTO
NI062- Stability of placements of looked after children - number of placements (Annually)	19.3%	12.0%	13.4%		This indicator provides a snapshot of data for looked after children, as at 31/03 in any given year, and the number who have moved placement three or more times.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI063- Stability of placements of looked after children - length of placement (Annually)	56.3%	50.0%	52.4%		This indicator provides a snapshot of data for looked after children under 16, as at 31/03 in any given year, who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI064- Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more (Annually)	0.0%		1.6%		This indicator provides a cumulative result as at 31/03 in any given year and is based on the number of children deregistered during the course of the whole year. There are currently five children who have now been subject to a Child Protection Plan for 2 years+	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI065- Percentage of children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (Annually)	14.1%	10.0%	10.9%		This indicator provides a cumulative result as at 31/03 in any given year and is based on the number of children registered throughout the course of the whole year.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI066- Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Annually)	96.5%	96.0%	92.8%		It should be noted 100% is not our target as reviews will be postponed if key people are not available	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's

						Plan
NI067- Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Annually)	100.0%					MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI068- Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment (Annually)	66.2%	57.0%	59.4%		Provisional actual outturn data for 2009/10 and may change	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI069- Children who have experienced bullying (Annually)	33.5%		52.6%		Sourced from the TellUs 4 Survey. Results from Tell Us 3 and TellUs 4 are not directly comparable due to changes in the question in TellUs 4. In light of this, the advice from GOSE is that the DCSF (DfE) have deemed this LAA target to have been met.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI070- Reduce emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people (Unclear - Annually)	97.2					MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan

Performance Indicators – For Three Months Ended 31 July 2010

Measure	Current Actual	Current Target	Previous Actual		Comments & Improvement Action	MTO
NI067- Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Quarterly)	100.0%		100.0%		All Child Protection reviews have been held on time. This indicator provides a snapshot of data for children subject to Child Protection Plans, as at 31/03 in any given year, and the timeliness of all their reviews held during the year.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI068- Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment (Quarterly)	75.5%	60.0%	76.0%		The cumulative total for this indicator for quarters 1 and 2 is 75.7%	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan
NI071- Children missing from home or care (Quarterly)	13		10		The outturn provided is based on a pre-liminary self-assessment in 5 discrete areas submitted end of Jul 2010. Next data submission due end of Oct 2010.	MTO 06 - To improve outcomes for children and families through the Children and Young People's Plan

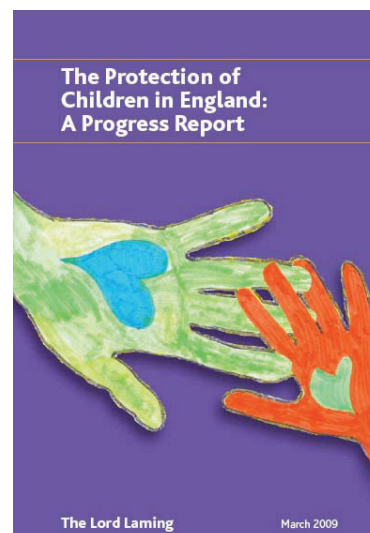
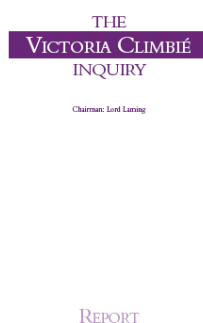
Extract from Children, Young People and Learning Department's Performance Monitoring Report, April – June 2010

Detailed Action	Due date	Status	Comments
6.9.2 Implement new guidance in 'Working Together' focusing on the Children's Social Care response to referrals from other professional agencies	31/03/2011		This is currently being implemented by the Children's Social Care duty team and will be audited by the team manager and the independent child protection chair at the end of July 2010
6.9.3 Implement the Domestic Abuse Pilot Project, intended to improve information sharing and a co-ordinated multi-agency response to early signs of domestic abuse	31/03/2011		The multi-agency group are meeting quarterly to review and monitor the progress of this project.
6.9.4 Safer recruitment/workforce training to be provide to managers across the children's workforce	31/03/2011		Training has started and will continue throughout the year
6.9.5 Lead on the implementation of the Vetting and Barring Scheme	30/11/2010		Ongoing due to changes in the Vetting and Barring Scheme.

A Summary of Lord Laming's Recommendations and the Government's Action Plan

Lord Laming's Report 2003⁷

Lord Laming's inquiry, report and recommendations were prompted by wide public concern at the death of Victoria Climbié, aged 8 on 25 February 2000 at the hands of her Aunt and her Boyfriend. She had been placed by her parents in their care to further her education in England. Despite prolonged abuse and the fact that her situation was known to four social service departments, police child protection teams, a NSPCC Centre and the NHS, Victoria failed to receive the protection she needed.



In April 2001 the Government instigated an Inquiry into Victoria Climbié's death under the chairmanship of Lord Laming, former Chief Inspector of Social Services. The Report on the findings of the inquiry, in January 2003, was searching and wide ranging. Lord Laming concluded that services on over a dozen occasions failed to intervene and employ the basic good practice that could have saved her life. Although the Children Act 1989 was found to be basically sound the Report called for a comprehensive overhaul of policy and organisation to ensure that good practice was applied consistently throughout the agencies and services to protect vulnerable children. 108 broad recommendations were identified which were each allocated a time scale of three, six or twenty-four months for implementation.

Seventeen recommendations were concerned with revising roles and responsibilities in the care of children and families at national, regional and local levels, including the creation of the new post of Children's Commissioner whose responsibilities would include reporting annually to Parliament on the quality and effectiveness of services in particular on the safety of children

Lord Laming also made recommendations aimed at ensuring that services to children and families were coordinated and inter agency links were managed effectively, which included replacing the Area Child Protection Committees. Stronger links were to be developed with community based organisations contributing to local services for children and families.

Lord Laming also recommended that: the Government should review the law regarding the registration of private foster carers; the government inspectorate

⁷The Full Text of The Victoria Climbié Inquiry and The Protection of Children in England: Progress Report can be found respectively:

<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/CM-5730PDF.pdf>
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/HC-330.pdf>

should inspect the quality of services and the effectiveness of inter-agency arrangements in providing services to children and families; and frontline staff in each of the agencies must record basic information about the child in each new contact.

Confidentiality was addressed in the request for the Government to issue guidance on the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and common law rules. The Government was required to issue guidance as to how these impact on information sharing between different professional groups where there are concerns about the welfare of children and families. The Government was advised to actively explore the benefit of setting up a database on all children under 16 with the aim of strengthening the safeguarding of children.

Social care services received 46 recommendations. These were very specific and comprehensive in their aim to radically improve the flow of communication, sharing information and the whole process of giving care so that children and their families were not failed.

Training

Directors of social services were to ensure that intake teams and all staff working with children have the appropriate training and receive any necessary induction training in local procedures. No social worker should undertake section 47 inquiries unless they have been trained to do so.

Communication and the transfer of information

This was a major focal point and covered many situations from ensuring a child who does not have English as a first language has the use of an interpreter to employing one electronic database system for recording information to facilitate sharing of information across the council and its workers. Other recommendations concerned the transfer of cases, accessing information regarding vulnerable children, and explaining the role of a child protection adviser to all those working in children's services.

Working Systems

Recommendations here were very specific. They covered line management so that responsibilities and arrangements were clear in situations such as in staff absence, incoming information, and the "allocation" of casework, maintaining contact with the child, supervision of cases was to be tightened. Clear steps were put forward for each case from the very first involvement of services with the child and family to the closing of a case, including:

- taking information and actioning newly reported concerns
- specialist services and provision of a 24 hour referral telephone service
- case files and maintaining a clear chronology
- protocol and timescales for discussions with children and carers
- procedures for child found not to be attending school and for those in temporary accommodation
- Systems for tracking children in their care and the outcomes of their care
- protocol regarding home visits and recording visit in case files
- procedures for strategy meetings
- the welfare of hospitalised children due to return home
- cooperation between social services and hospital employed social workers
- provision to review all levels of work and systems and procedures for closing a case
- children's services should be included the operational plans of local authorities

Healthcare was subject to 27 recommendations which were very specific again in respect of information gathering and sharing, training, day to day practice with children where deliberate harm was suspected and documentation and follow up procedures. These included support by designated child protection doctors and consultant paediatricians in their ongoing training; ensuring that all GP'S receive training in recognising deliberate harm.

Specific recommendations applied to care of the child where there is suspicion of deliberate harm, concerning admission arrangements, examinations, documentation, discharge, follow up and monitoring procedures.

There were eighteen recommendations for the Police. Some of these were to raise the profile of child protection issues in the context of other serious crimes. They covered: a national training programme for child protection; proper prioritisation of child protection policing; child protection investigations; the integration and training of child protection teams. Other recommendations concerned systems, practice and protocol, including liaison with social services, a review of systems for taking children into police protection; and ensuring an effective child protection IT system.

All these comprehensive recommendations required a rethink of roles and responsibilities. Communication was seen to be a vital: there was a strong thread of improving the flow and accessibility of information but also checking the reliability of that information, filling in the gaps and omissions and - perhaps most importantly - questioning that information and the professionals who provided it. Training and monitoring were also key. The most outstanding message was rigorously converting policy into effective systems and the best everyday practice to protect children.

This report was welcomed and supported by the government, which stressed eight main causes of concern from the report which required an immediate responses and the following actions, around a new 'Every Child Matters' agenda:-

- Monitoring by the inspectorate to improve standards of the North London local services which had failed Victoria.
- An increased profile and priority to be given to child protection by the police, social services and healthcare including reflecting its importance in budgeting.
- Training for members in these services with emphasis on good communication and cooperation with other services. A review of training by professional training bodies to better focus on inter-agency training.
- A new set of common standards to be produced to address the lack of good standard practice evidenced in the report.
- A clarification of guidance based on the Children Act so it could be accessible to all staff
- A checklist of recommendations to raise standards for the three services and to be in place within three months
- Inspectorates to extend their monitoring its to verify that good practice is being implemented with further powers of intervention
- The development of Children's Trusts where health, social services and other local services could work together.

The recommendations for the police force were also underlined with reference to information sharing, training programmes, investigative work and legal requirements. Developing Preventative Strategies and tracking systems were to be promoted.

Baby Peter Connolly

In November 2008 the public shock at the fate of Baby Peter, which again showed failures in systems and standards of care, caused the government to ask for an urgent review of the progress in safeguarding arrangements nationally to be led by Lord Laming. His report *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report* was published on 12 March 2009.

In his report Lord Laming acknowledged that Every Child Matters reforms were well supported and moving care work in the right direction and that there were strong legislative, structural and policy foundations in place. He made very positive comments about progress but was explicit that an urgent drive to achieve a step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm was still needed. He set forward 58 recommendations to push forward progress and remove boundaries to success in child protection.

In its interim response the government announced increased budgets for social care and accepted most of the recommendations. This was followed by a detailed action plan. These followed broadly the same issues and principles as the 2003 Report but with some change of emphasis to cover updates and new initiatives. The government grouped points under several headings:

National Leadership and Accountability

A new post of Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children was created to advise the Government on policy and priorities, and to report the progress on delivery of Lord Laming's recommendations. A Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People was to be established in May 2009, to ensure that all government departments that impact on the safety of children should adopt a comprehensive approach to child centred care. The government also outlined the establishment of a new National Safeguarding Delivery Unit; this was disbanded by the new coalition government. The Government also undertook to introduce new statutory targets for safeguarding and protection. We report on the Council's performance against these national indicators in paragraph 3.25.

Local leadership and accountability

At this level there was less detail on basic procedures than in the 2003 Report but many references to revising the *Working Together* guidance in terms of:

- regular reviews of referral points, where there was a safety concern
- automatic referral where there was domestic violence or drug or alcohol abuse
- all police, probation, adult mental health and adult drug and alcohol services to have well understood referral processes which prioritise the protection and well being of children
- all directors of children's services if they had no experience in safeguarding and protection to have a senior manager to fill that gap
- regular training on safeguarding and effective leadership for political leaders and managers in front line services
- guidance for every Children's Trust on general and protection needs
- clarification for intake/duty teams on points dealing with referrals
- the detail to be maintained in children's records
- early access to specialist services for 'Children in Need'
- the delivery of high quality supervision of casework, challenge and professional development, with reviews and casework decisions to include all agencies involved with the child

- formal procedures for management of differences of opinion among professionals and to cover absence of relevant parties

There were special references to reflect the importance and responsibilities of the Children's Trust:-

- the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Board were not to be chaired by the same person, and the chair was to receive training in their role
- the responsibility of the Children's Trust to promote good communications
- Each Children's Trust was to ensure named representatives from the police service, community paediatric specialists and health visitors are active partners within social work departments
- monitoring by Children's Trusts of the application by partners of Information Sharing Guidance from the Government

The Local Safeguarding Boards were to publish an annual report on effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.

There was also a move to tighten line management and accountability in Social services, with codes of conduct for senior management.

Supporting the front line – Health

The Government stated that recruitment and professional development for health visitors would be prioritised, and they would clarify their contribution in working with vulnerable families and safeguarding. The Family Nurse programme was to be extended in a drive to support young families and prevent maltreatment of young children through pregnancy to 2 years.

GP training and development in protection issues was to be enhanced, and there were proposals to increase GP involvement in Children's Trusts. The NHS would take stock of current training programmes dealing with safeguarding and child protection issues and put forward actions for a national training programme. This was to cover the full range of the children's health workforce. Further measures included assisting staff in Accident and Emergency Departments to deal effectively with children who may need protection.

Police Service

The Home Office was working to develop a new Strategic Framework for delivering Protective Services, with Child Protection one of the first priorities. Updated Specialist Training was to be made available, to include the child protection teams, child protection supervisors and Senior Investigating Officers. Every Police Force would ensure it has the right levels of resources in place locally to protect children and young people from abuse.

Social Services

Social services were the focus of some very specific recommendations concerning:

- recruitment and retention of social workers
- professional development and career progression for social workers
- establishing manageable caseloads for workers on protection cases
- new models for social work
- effective supervision of the social work workforce

- consideration of reforms to the social work education, including specialisation and development of a practice based Masters programme
- language tests and conversion qualifications for recruits from abroad and access for them to a support package

The handling of Serious Case Reviews, the government's decisions included:

- reviews should be a real tool for improving multi-agency working and also in learning lessons to improve individual agencies
- revision of the framework so that the Panel chair has sufficient documents and staff to conduct a thorough and effective learning exercise
- focus on implementations of findings and timely changes to protect children
- panel chairs and overview authors to be independent of Local Safeguarding Children Boards with serious scrutiny and challenge integral to the review process
- high quality detailed publicly available reporting on reviews
- The Serious Case Review Evaluation framework was to be revised
- Other responsibilities of Ofsted in the field of sharing information.
- Training programmes for Chair panels and authors and the task of ensuring there were enough of these in their regions

Inspections

In line with the general focus on review and assessment more rigour and close working was called for in the inspectorates responsible for the main services, including Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). These bodies were to review training and frameworks for inspections.

An Ofsted led 3 year rolling programme of safeguarding inspections was to start from June 2009, including the arrangements for looked after children. The new school inspection framework was to be applied from September 2009, with schools graded on safeguarding arrangements from 1-4. The lowest grade of 4 would affect overall grading and trigger urgent improvement.

Legal Proceedings and Court Fees

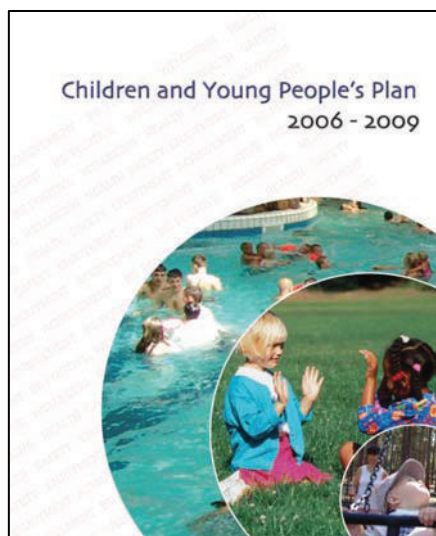
The Ministry of Justice was charged to work with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to reduce delays in care proceedings. Concern about whether court fees deterred local authorities from commencing care proceedings was to be reviewed.

Children and Young People's Plan

In 2003 the Government launched its 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) agenda with 5 key outcomes for children:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The Council's long term plan for safeguarding Children and Young People forms part of the statutory Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)⁸, which is produced by the Children's Trust. The CYPP is the defining statement of strategic planning and priorities for children, young people and families in the Borough. The current plan, for 2006-2011, has the following references to safeguarding children and young people.



The 'Stay Safe' outcome is expanded on in the Plan's Vision for Children and Young People, for them to 'Live in a safe, secure and tolerant community where they are protected from harm, abuse, harassment and neglect.' The Plan adopts a number of principles, it gives a profile of the borough and its population, and it explains how the plan was developed with widespread consultation.

The plan sets out what the Council and its partners will do to improve outcomes for children and Young People, grouped under the five ECM headings. In relation to 'Stay Safe', the plan describes the position in 2006, and sets four priorities around: safety from crime and anti-social behaviour; bullying; looked after children and young people having security and stability; and safeguarding in an ICT environment.

The plan describes the resources available and how performance will be monitored. It outlines the services provided, and how they are organised, including the roles of the LSCB and working group. This is expanded on in an annex which sets out in more detail the actions to support the achievement of the Plan. In relation to safeguarding, this includes: setting up the LSCB; strengthening performance management; better data sharing; implementing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF); and workforce improvements. The planned actions in the Children and Young People's Plan are then taken into the more detailed departmental service plans, which are published and progress against them is reported regularly.

In 2010, the Council published a review of the CYPP. This recognised that the 2006-2009 plan had been extended as a result of new legislation being introduced, which would change the way the plan is developed and managed from April 2011 onwards. The review provides a brief overview of the new legislative requirements and highlights that in this final year there will be an impact on the delivery of the CYPP due to the new Coalition Government coming into power, with some changes in policy, and reductions in funding. The review confirmed that the vision was unchanged. It summarised progress, it

⁸ The Children and Young People's Plan can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk>

updated the earlier CYPP, including adding actions relating to access to services, and supporting parents and carers. The review noted that the Bracknell Forest LSCB had been recognised as a national and regional example of best practice in a number of aspects, also that the rating given by OFSTED to the Council's Children's Services in 2009 was '3, Performs Well' (out of a maximum of 4). This has been maintained in 2010.

The 2010 review listed a number of areas for development, including:

- Children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation/sexual crime.
- Further research on bullying, where levels reported remain higher than the Council's statistical neighbours.
- The increase in the numbers of Looked After Children putting strain on the capacity of the Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Placement of looked after children.
- Analysing the increase in children subject to a Protection Plan.
- Safer workforce training.
- Links with family work to be developed.

The 2010 review described the arrangements for the production of a new CYPP against a background of significant budget pressure across the public sector.

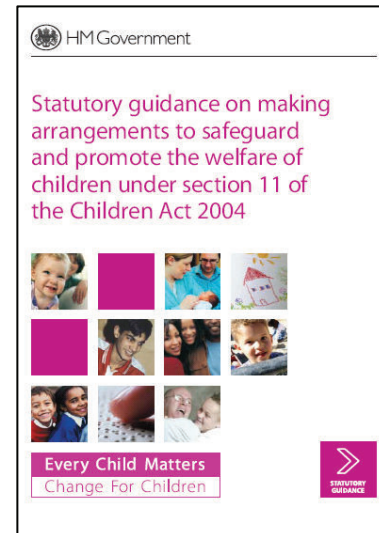
The Working Group observes that the influx of children from abroad raises issues around communication and accessing necessary records.

A summary of the Government's Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding Children⁹

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The application of this duty will vary according to the nature of each agency and its functions.

The key people and bodies that are covered by the duty are:

- Local Authorities
- Police
- Probation Services
- NHS bodies
- Connexions Service
- Youth Offending Teams
- Governors of Prisons and Young Offender Institutions



These key people and bodies must make arrangements to ensure two things. Firstly, that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and secondly, that the services they contract out to others are provided having regard to that need.

The duty does not give agencies any new functions, nor does it over-ride their existing functions. It, however, requires them to carry out their existing functions in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Safeguarding the Welfare of Children is defined as

Protecting children from maltreatment;

Preventing impairment of children's health or development;

Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;

Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

⁹ The full text of the document can be found on the following website:
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DFES-0036-2007.pdf>

A Clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children.

It should be clear who has overall responsibility for the agency's contribution to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and what the lines of accountability are from each staff member up through the organisation to the person with ultimate accountability for children's welfare.

It should also be clear with whom each staff member should discuss, and to whom they should report, any concerns about a child's welfare.

Information Sharing

Effective information sharing by professionals is central to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This sharing of information makes an important contribution to the shift to addressing children's needs at an early stage rather than when serious problems have developed. This applies both to the 30% or so of children who require targeted or specialist services to ensure they achieve their optimal developmental outcomes, and to the much smaller numbers of children in need, including those who have suffered harm or are likely to suffer harm.

The safeguarding arrangements should ensure that:

- A. All staff in contact with children understand what to do and the most effective ways of sharing information if they believe that a child and family may require particular services in order to achieve their optimal outcomes.
- B. All staff in contact with children understand what to do and when to share information if they believe that a child may be a child in need, including those children suffering or at risk of suffering harm.
- C. Appropriate agency-specific guidance is produced to complement guidance issued by central Government and such guidance and appropriate training is made available to existing and new staff as part of their induction and ongoing training.
- D. Guidance and training specifically covers the sharing of information between professions, organisations and agencies, as well as within them, and arrangements for training take into account the value of multi-agency training as well as single-agency training.
- E. Managers in children's services are fully conversant with the legal framework and good practice guidance issued for practitioners working with children.

The Role of Local Authorities in Safeguarding Children

Cultural and Leisure Services

The LA (Local Authority) provides a wide range of facilities and services for children such as libraries, play schemes, sport, parks and leisure centres, museums and art centres. Their staff, volunteers and contractors have different levels and types of contact with children who are users of these services.

Appropriate training for staff should be provided, including training on the issues of safe working practices and on creating safe environments for children.

Staff should be alert to any indications that a child may need to be safeguarded from harm and know who to contact if they have concerns. They should also be aware of the important contribution they make to children obtaining their full potential.

Early Years and Childcare

These include family centres, children's centres, nurseries, childminders, playgroups and holiday and out of school schemes.

All early years' staff should be aware of possible signs of children at risk of harm.

Early year's staff have a wider responsibility to identify and pass on any general or specific concerns that they may have about the safety, welfare or development of children.

Education and schools

All people working in education contribute to the welfare of children. All schools and further education institutions have a statutory duty to safeguard children. Consequently, staff in these establishments play an important part in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect by early indication of children who may be at risk of harm and by educating children, about managing risks and improving their resilience through the curriculum.

Housing Authorities

Housing and homelessness staff have access to family homes/temporary accommodation, in some cases in a time of crisis in the course of their work they are, therefore, likely to identify initial concerns regarding children's' welfare that will need to be referred on to another agency. These concerns might relate to what they have observed or witnessed happening to a child, the physical conditions within the home/accommodation, the family's reactions to a crisis or inconsistencies in the information given to them

Youth Services

Youth and Community workers work closely with children and young people. They play an important role in offering young people opportunities to extend and enjoy themselves in a safe environment. They **are** in an ideal position to be confided in as a trusted adult, and should be alert to signs of abuse or neglect and know how to act upon their concerns about a child's welfare.

Child Employment

Young people's development through legitimate employment should be encouraged, however, it must be ensured that work is done in a safe environment and within sensible constraints. Local authorities are responsible for administering child employment legislation and local bylaws.

Guidance issued to local authorities on the role of Directors of Children's Services states that Directors must have effective oversight of local authority functions relating to child employment as part of their remit.

Connexions

The leaders, managers and staff of connexions services have an individual responsibility for ensuring that young people are always in a safe, healthy and

supportive environment when using services. In addition, appropriate risk assessments should be undertaken to ensure that children and young people are not exposed to undue risk from unsafe or unstable situations, whether they are with the Connexions service or its subcontractor or referred to other organisations providing services, learning or employment opportunities. Vetting arrangements for existing staff and recruits must comply with current Government guidance.

The Connexions personal advisor is responsible for carrying out a systematic and comprehensive screening of each individual's needs. This lays the vital foundation for subsequent work to safeguard and promote the welfare of that individual.

Making Arrangements to Safeguard and Promote welfare in the NHS - roles and responsibilities of different NHS organisations

With the exception of Strategic Health Authorities, all the NHS organisations covered by section 11 deal directly with children. Strategic Health Authorities manage the NHS locally and are responsible for:

Improving health services in their local areas;

Making sure local health services are of a high quality and are performing well;

Increasing the capacity of local health services – so they can provide more services;

Making sure national priorities are integrated into local health service plans.

The role of Strategic Health Authorities in relation to section 11 is therefore to work with local health bodies to help them meet the core standard on child protection and work towards delivery of standard 5 of the National Service Framework

The Role of the Police in relation to Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

The police service has a number of key contributions to make in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Whilst their principal role is the investigation of child abuse allegations, they also have a key role in preventing crime against or involving children and minimising the potential for children to become victims.

The police service contribution should also include:

- Identifying vulnerable children in domestic violence cases;
- Using police powers to take children into protective custody when appropriate;
- Protecting the needs of children as witnesses or victims;
- Working with partner agencies in the criminal justice system dealing with youth offenders to divert children away from crime;
- Working with partner agencies to educate children and young persons on issues such as substance misuse and the prevention of crime.

In dealing with these issues, the aim of the police service is to protect the lives of children and ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount.

The Probation Service

The probation service understands its contribution to safeguarding children to be in the:

- Management of adult offenders in ways that will reduce the risk of harm they may present to children through skilful assessment, the delivery of well targeted and quality interventions and risk management planning;
- Delivery of services to adult offenders, who may be parents or carers, that addresses the factors that influenced their reasons to offend, for example, poor thinking skills, poor moral reasoning, drug/alcohol dependency;
- Recognition of factors which pose a risk to children's safety and welfare, and the implementation of agency procedures to protect children from harm through appropriate information sharing and collaborative multi-agency risk management planning.
- Seconding staff to work in youth offending teams;
- Providing a service to child victims of serious sexual or violent offences;
- Providing a service to the woman victims of male perpetrators of domestic abuse participating in accredited domestic violence programmes. In practice, this will mean having regard to the needs of any dependent children of the family.

Youth Offending Teams

YOT's are central to the youth justice system – they have a statutory duty to deliver youth justice services including advising courts, administering community sentences and interventions, and working with juvenile custodial establishments. YOT's are responsible for the statutory supervision of children and young people.

The statutory aim of the youth justice system, and of YOTs, is to prevent offending by children and young people.

Children and young people with whom the YOT works are carefully assessed. The primary assessment method for the majority of children and young people in contact with YOTs is the Youth Justice Board's Asset assessment tool. This assessment process examines a range of factors:

- Living arrangements;
- Family and personal relationships;
- Education, training and employment;
- Neighbourhood and community factors;
- Lifestyle factors;
- Substance misuse;
- Health (physical, emotional, and mental);
- Vulnerability, including risk of harm to others or to themselves.

Everybody in the YOT should be clear about their responsibilities for safeguarding children. The need to have effective communication arrangements that ensure that all staff are aware of the priority given to safeguarding children and also their lines of accountability.

YOTs should act in accordance with local arrangements for the sharing of information between key agencies, including raising concerns about safeguarding and welfare to appropriate agencies and will contribute to common processes as appropriate.

Prisons

Governors/Directors understand their contribution to safeguarding children, in practice, to be in the development and implementation of policies and arrangements designed to:

- Protect the children committed to their custody from significant harm, including self-harm or suicide, harm from other children (bullying and other potential forms of abuse which may occur in prison), and harm from staff and other adults, e.g. visitors;
- Safeguard the children who are not in the Service's custody but with whom the Service has routine contact – when in contact with those children, i.e. children visiting the establishment, and prisoner's children who are resident in Mother and Baby units;
- Minimise the risks of harm to children in the community by prisoners who have been identified as presenting such a risk, which could occur during any form of contact with a child, including correspondence, telephone and visits.

And finally;

Education

It is clear to everyone in the Education Service that they share an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to:

- Providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn in educational settings.
- Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and at school.

Summary of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'¹⁰

This non-statutory practice guidance from the Government was developed to assist practitioners to work together to safeguard and promote children's welfare. It is for anyone whose work brings them into contact with children and families, but particularly those who work in early years, social care, health, education, schools and criminal justice services.

The guidance recognises that people are likely to be involved in three main ways:

1. You may have concerns about a child, and refer those concerns to children's social care or the police. School staff have local procedures to be followed for reporting concerns about a particular child.
2. You may be approached by children's social care and asked to provide information or to be involved in an assessment.
3. You may be asked to provide help to the child or their family as part of an agreed plan, and contribute to reviews.

The guidance includes flow charts to illustrate the processes for safeguarding children:

1. Referral - Concerns are raised about a child and the child is referred to a statutory agency that can take action to safeguard the child.
2. An initial assessment of the child's situation and what happens after that.
3. Taking urgent action to safeguard children, if necessary.
4. The strategy discussion and the child protection conference.
5. What happens after the child protection conference, the child protection plan, and the review process.

The guidance stresses that everyone working with children and families should:

1. Be familiar with and follow their organisation's procedures and protocols for safeguarding the welfare of children, and know who to contact in their organisation to express concerns about a child's welfare.
2. Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation.
3. If you are responsible for making referrals, know who to contact in the police, health, education, school and children's social care to express concerns about a child's welfare.
4. When referring a child to children's social care you should include any information you have on the child's developmental needs and their parents'/carers' capacity to respond to these needs.
5. When contributing to an assessment or providing services you should consider what contribution you are able to make. Specialist assessments, in



¹⁰ The full text document as well as the summary can be found on the following website:
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00182/>

particular, are likely to provide information relevant to a specific dimension, such as health, education or family functioning.

6. See the child and ascertain their wishes and feelings as part of considering what action to take in relation to concerns about the child's welfare.
7. Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference. This is especially important for disabled children and for children whose preferred language is not English.
8. Where concerns arise as a result of information given by a child it is important to reassure the child but not to promise confidentiality.
9. Record full information about the child at first point of contact, including person(s) with parental responsibility and primary carer(s), if different. Record in writing all concerns about the child, decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions.
10. The child's records should include an up-to-date chronology, and details of the lead worker in the relevant agency – for example, a social worker, GP, health visitor or teacher.

The guidance stipulates that if people have concerns about a child's welfare, everyone should:

1. Discuss their concerns with their manager, or designated member of staff. If they still have concerns, to discuss these with senior colleagues in another agency.
2. If, after these discussions, concerns remain, consider whether the child and their parents would benefit from further services.
3. If you consider the child may be a child in need or at risk of significant harm, you should refer the child and family to children's social care. In cases of significant harm, the police and the NSPCC have powers to intervene.
4. In general, seek to discuss your concerns with the child, as appropriate to their age and understanding, and with their parents and seek their agreement to making a referral to children's social care unless you consider such a discussion would place the child at an increased risk of significant harm.
5. When you make your referral, agree with the recipient of the referral what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.
6. If you make your referral by telephone, confirm it in writing within 48 hours. Children's social care should acknowledge your written referral within one working day.

The guidance specifies that social workers and their managers, in responding to a referral, should:

1. Following a referral, decide on the next course of action within one working day and record this decision.
2. Further action may include undertaking an initial assessment, referral to other agencies, provision of advice or information.
3. If the decision is to take no further action at this stage, tell the referrer of this decision and the reasons.
4. If the child's case is open, and there are concerns that the child may be suffering harm, then a decision should be made about whether a strategy discussion should be initiated, and to undertake a core assessment, to understand the child's current needs and circumstances.
5. If this information causes you concern about a child's safety then discuss it with your manager. Decide whether it is appropriate to hold a strategy discussion without undertaking an initial assessment.

6. You and your manager should consider whether a crime may have been committed. If so, discuss the child with the police at the earliest opportunity, as it is their responsibility to carry out any criminal investigation.
7. When you have received a referral from a member of the public, remember that personal information about referrers should only be disclosed to third parties with the consent of the referrer. If the police are involved, discuss with them when to inform the parents about referrals from third parties, as this will have a bearing on the conduct of police investigations.

The guidance specifies that Police officers should:

1. Where they become involved with a child about whom they have child welfare concerns, refer to children's social care and agree a plan of action.
2. Where they are contacted by children's social care about a child, consider whether to begin a criminal investigation.
3. Undertake the evidence gathering process whilst working in partnership and sharing relevant information with children's social care and other agencies.
4. Take immediate action where necessary to safeguard a child, consulting with children's social care and agreeing a plan of action as soon as practicable to decide what should happen later in the child protection process.
5. Investigate any allegations of crime or suspected crime.
6. Use the information gained to assist other agencies in understanding the child's circumstances.
7. Investigate the criminal history of any known or suspected offender and where appropriate refer to the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).

The guidance specifies that Social workers and their managers should:

1. Lead on the assessment and planning processes, ensuring planned interventions are carried out, and the child's developmental progress is reviewed.
2. Provide support or specific services to the child or member of the family as part of an agreed plan.

The guidance specifies that everyone else should:

1. Provide relevant information to children's social care or the police about the child or family members.
2. Contribute to initial or core assessments and undertake specialist assessments, if requested, of the child or family members.
3. Provide support or specific services to the child or member of the family as part of an agreed plan, and contribute to the reviewing of the child's developmental progress.

The document also highlights six key points on information sharing with the following basic principals.

1. Be open and honest with children and families receiving services about the sharing of information, and seek their agreement.
2. The child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration.
3. Respect the wishes of the child concerning information sharing wherever possible.
4. Seek advice when in doubt.

5. Ensure information you share is accurate, up-to-date, necessary and shared securely.

The guidance also lists the extensive legal provisions relating to safeguarding children and young people. These are summarised in the Working Group's report.

Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures¹¹

This on-line manual has been adopted for the use of all local authorities in Berkshire, also their partner organisations involved in Child Protection. It is very informative, regularly updated and is formatted in a pragmatic and useful fashion for practical usage. It is based on the law, government guidance and best practice. It contains a wealth of information drawn from a very wide variety of sources.



Agreed Policy

Production of these multi-agency procedures reflects a significant consensus about best practice across Berkshire's Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and amongst the partner agencies that contribute to the: Prevention, detection and investigation of abuse or neglect; Risk management of offenders; and Support and treatment of those affected by abuse or neglect

Encapsulating those agencies' principles and values

The manual is designed to cover all work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes organisational intentions, commitments, and it stresses that the purpose of all interventions should be to achieve the best possible outcomes for each child recognising each is unique.

Key Outcomes of the procedures are aimed to be supportive of the Every Child Matters agenda: Stay safe; Be healthy; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; and Achieve economic wellbeing

The structure of the main part of the manual is:

- Introduction
- Policies, Principles and Values
- Agency Roles & Responsibilities
- Information Sharing & Confidentiality
- Recognition & Response
- Recognising Vulnerability of Children in Particular Circumstances
- Referral and Assessment
- Section 47 Enquiries
- Child Protection Conference
- Planning & Implementation
- Additional Procedures (e.g. abuse by children)
- Strategic Management (e.g. serious case reviews)
- Seven Appendices, e.g. on the Statutory framework
- Documents for consultation

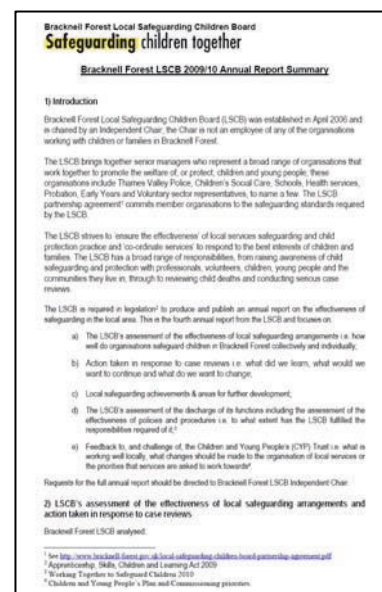
The procedures manual is essential reading regarding Safeguarding Children. To read please follow the link below.

¹¹ The online resource is available at the following website:
<http://proceduresonline.com/berks/>

Summary of Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board's Summary 2009/10 Annual Report¹²

All LSCB's are required to produce an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in their local area. This report from the Bracknell Forest LSCB for 2009/10 focuses on:

- a) How well do organisations safeguard children in Bracknell Forest collectively and individually;
- b) Actions taken in response to case reviews i.e. what did we learn, what would we want to continue and what do we want to change;
- c) Safeguarding achievements and areas for further development;
- d) Assessment of the discharge of the LSCB's functions;
- e) Feedback to, and challenge of, the Children and Young People's Trust i.e. what is working well locally, what changes should be made to the organisation of local services or the priorities that services are asked to work towards.



LSCBs assessment of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements

The LSCB assessed the following:

- Child deaths and local multi-agency case review;
- Reports on specific areas of safeguarding activity e.g.
 - a. Domestic abuse,
 - b. Sexual offences,
 - c. Bullying,
 - d. Licensing,
 - e. Workforce strategy;
- Safeguarding practice in a sample of individual cases;
- Safeguarding incidents;
- Performance management information.

Following these assessments the LSCB made recommendations to the Children and Young People (CYP) Trust regarding:

- Resources and support available to organisations
- Information sharing training
- Targeted youth support with specified reference to providing more individualised and focussed support
- The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Integrated Care Pathways (ICPs) to reduce repetition or duplication
- Safeguarding priorities

¹² The summary report can be found on the following webpage: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/lscb-annual-report-summary.pdf>

Local Safeguarding achievements and challenges

Several areas of work were highlighted as regional or national examples of good practice. The LSCB annual conference was well attended and successful. The LSCB sub-groups achievements included:

- Raising awareness of local issues i.e. sexual offences, bullying and e-safety;
- Establishing that none of the child deaths in the borough were preventable
- Developing new training to respond to requests for information or support from professionals/volunteers
- Ensuring the policies and procedures are updated or amended as new research is completed.

The LSCB highlighted the following challenges for the CYP Trust:

- The number of the children in the borough experiencing bullying
- The need to identify and support children/young people who may at risk of sexual offences.
- The need to redesign safeguarding training in light of new national research and offer a new range of training programmes.

On this issue the LSCB recommended to the CYP Trust regarding:

- Child Poverty
- The impact of reduction in resources on safeguarding

LSCB's assessment of the discharge of its functions

Bracknell Forest LSCB works with neighbouring LSCBs in Berkshire to ensure that the Berkshire Child Protection Procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. The LSCB introduced a safer workforce training programme that has been attended by about 300 managers. The LSCB have also introduced a new whistle-blowing policy to enable any member of the children's workforce to approach the LSCB Independent Chair directly to raise concerns if:

- a member of the workforce has raised a concern that has an impact of safeguarding in their organisation that has not been resolved to their satisfaction;
- a member of the workforce believes that their Employer's ability to safeguard children is compromised.

Feedback to, and challenge of, the Children and Young People's Trust

In summary Bracknell Forest LSCB's feedback to the CYP Trust was as follows:

Area of Consideration	Action Required
Section 11 development areas	To ensure that sufficient support/ resources are made available and promoted to support organisations with development needs in information sharing and safer workforce processes
Commissioning priorities - Multi-Agency review of a child death	That the CYP Trust reviews Targeted Youth Support with specific reference to providing more individualised and focussed support to vulnerable young people; That the CYP Trust actively promotes the use of CAF and ICP, and the Lead Professional role, by all sectors of the children's workforce, That the CYP Trust seeks to ensure that parenting course are actively promoted and advertised to the workforce
Child Death Overview Panel	That the Child Poverty Strategy considers the need to reduce social and health inequalities for disadvantaged children, in the context of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis.
Sexual Offences	That the CYP Trust notes that Bracknell Forest has a slightly higher than expected rate of sexual offences against young people and takes this into account in decisions re: commissioning and decommissioning of services. The recommendations from the

	sexual offences analysis work will be shared with the CYP Trust to inform a local preventative approach.
Performance Management	That the CYP Trust note the safeguarding priorities identified in LSCB exception reports and take this into account in strategic planning and commissioning.
Challenges	That the CYP Trust gives specific attention to the LSCB's concerns about whether reductions in resource (i.e. public service budgetary pressures) may reduce the workforce's capacity to identify safeguarding needs, contribute to assessments and monitor/support families. In particular the LSCB recommends that the workforce's potential capacity to safeguard children is risk assessed when services are planned or commissioned and embedded in service specification requirements.

Summary of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Safeguarding Toolkit

The Safeguarding Toolkit produced by the Bracknell Forest LSCB in 2009¹³ is designed to support all Partners working with children, young people or families in Bracknell Forest to:

1. Clearly and simply identify their shared responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people;
2. Provide tools, and exemplars to support everyone to meet these responsibilities.



The safeguarding toolkit was launched by the LSCB at its annual stakeholder event in 2009, and all the indications are that it has been well-received, and viewed as practical and helpful. It is designed to be used by different types of organisations within Bracknell Forest. The Toolkit ensures that a partner is in compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, (and the accompanying guidance document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children') using simple clear language in context of Bracknell Forest. The LSCB imagine that partners may wish to use the Toolkit to inform, audit or prepare for inspections.

Every agency working with children, young people or families is required to fulfil eight key standards.

1. **Senior management commitment** to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare;
2. A **clear statement of the agency's responsibilities** towards children available to all staff.
3. A **clear line of accountability** within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
4. **Service development that takes account of the need to safeguard** and promote welfare and is **informed**, where appropriate, **by the views of children and families**.
5. **Staff training** on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or (depending on the agency's primary functions) in contact with children and families.
6. **Safe recruitment** procedures in place.
7. **Effective inter-agency working** to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
8. **Effective information sharing**.

The toolkit is divided into 2 main sections – Section A is broken down into the 8 key standards. Section B contains 10 safeguarding exemplars from Bracknell Forest LSCB. Section C gives the contact details of key Contact people in the Council who

¹³ The full version of the safeguarding Toolkit can be downloaded at <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/living/liv-children-and-families/liv-local-safeguarding-children-board/liv-lscb-safeguarding-toolkit.htm>

can provide further support. Section D is reserved for good practice examples, but this is currently empty.

Each key standard section is set out in a table, which is designed to be an audit tool, it includes:

- A statement of the Requirements to ensure each standard is met – these are set out as a list of questions the partner needs to demonstrate progress against. The questions are designed to be answered with a clear ‘yes’, ‘partially’ or ‘no’ answer.
- Evidence - A section is provided to list evidence.
- Action Plan – This prompts an action plan to be made in order to meet requirements which were answered with ‘partially’ or ‘no’.
- Links to Guidance – These are useful resources relevant to the standard being addressed. The resources are divided into two categories;
 - Toolkit Resource – These resources are found in the annexes of the toolkit and the LSCB website. They include exemplars, policy and procedures specific to the local area. These are useful as they can be used as templates for partners to develop their own documents.
 - Government Resource - A list of government guidance/resources are provided for further information and reference.
- Audit trail – This is used to keep a record of completion of an organisation’s self-audit of each standard; it is signed and dated so the next audit can be planned and completed within the deadline.

The completed audits of the standards can be used in discussions with inspectors and submitted to the LSCB when the partner is asked to complete the section 11 Audit.

The toolkit provides a link to the LSCB website where further resources can be found including electronic versions of all the documents in the toolkit. It provides contact details (Phone number, e-mail address) for the lead contact person of each sector in Bracknell Forest to support partners in using the toolkit.

Safeguarding Toolkit Resources

Annex 1: Exemplar Child Safeguarding Policy

This is an example of a Child Safeguarding Policy which can be used as a basis for organisations in the Public, Private, Independent, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors. It covers various principles and procedures including: responding to disclosure, acting on concerns, acting on allegations, staff conduct, unaccompanied children in public settings, training, recruitment and e-safety. It also includes a template risk assessment form which can be used for processes, procedures and events. These topics can be cut down according to the activities of the specific organisation.

Annex 2: Exemplar Safeguarding Contractual Legal Clause

This provides a set of standard contractual clauses concerning safeguarding children. It includes a useful list of minimum requirements any contractors must fulfil in order to work with the organisation.

Annex 3: Safer Workforce Practice Checklist

This provides a checklist of good working practices which can be expanded upon to ensure the workplace itself is not compromised and the employees are willing and capable of undertaking the activities of the organisation. The checklist is under the following categories: designing a job description, selecting an employee, supervision and training, and managing concerns about an employee's suitability to work with children.

Annex 4: Information Sharing Protocol

This is the formal information sharing protocol between the Council and its public sector partners in safeguarding children and young people. It includes information sharing procedures within the following headings: depersonalised data, personal data, data protection, designated officer, disclosures, subject access, guidance notes, complaints, indemnity, and mechanisms for sharing information and contractual agreements, and references to the law.

Annex 5: Information Sharing Pocket Guide

This gives a web link as well as a postal address and phone numbers to obtain the pocket guide. The guide itself is an excellent resource which explains the key principles of information sharing clearly. It gives a very useful flow diagram which helps to decide which circumstances to share information in.

Annex 6: Information Sharing Cue Card

This is a summary of the information sharing protocol; it covers the main requirements for information sharing. Its format allows it to be printed on one double sided page so it can be kept on a table for quick reference.

Annex 7: Safeguarding Cue Card

This contains brief and highly practical guidance for people who are concerned that a child/young person may be at risk of harm or neglect. It includes the most essential information such as basic advice and contact details of the Children's Social Care Duty Team, including the Out of Hours team.

Annex 8: Multi-Agency Needs/Risks Matrix

This table provides a useful tool to allocate a priority level to children so that appropriate action can be taken. It includes a set of indicators grouped under the 'Every Child Matters' themes of: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; and Economic Well Being.

Annex 9: Guidance to children's services professionals on making a referral to Children's Social Care

This guidance is to be used in conjunction with Multi-Agency Needs/Risks Matrix and the Common assessment Framework (CAF) Guidance. It defines the action needed in 3 different referral situations; referral where child is at immediate risk at level 3 or 4, referral where concern for the child has increased from 2 to 3, referral where concern for the child has increased to from 3 or 4. It also provides some key principles when dealing with referrals.

Annex 10: Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency Protocol on Safeguarding Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

This local protocol has been produced in response to 'Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution', Supplementary Guidance to 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children'. This protocol is to be used along with any other protocol which relates to this area. The aims of this protocol are to:

1. Establish the basic principles of working with young people involved in prostitution.
2. To assist agencies in recognising circumstances where they should contact Children's Social Care and/or Police about their concerns.
3. To outline the responsibilities of key agencies in protecting young people and acting against those who are abusing and exploiting young people in order to empower them to exit from prostitution or to prevent their involvement in prostitution.

OFSTED Report on Bracknell Forest Borough Council Children Services¹⁴

Ofsted is the Government's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They regulate and inspect, aiming to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. The Education and Inspections Act, which established the new Ofsted, specifically requires that in everything we do they should promote service improvement and ensure services focus on the interests of their users.

In their last Annual rating of December 2009, Ofsted judged the Council's Children's Services¹⁵ to be level 3 'Performs well - An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements'. Ofsted also noted that in the joint area review in 2008, they had judged safeguarding and provision for looked after children as being good.

Ofsted's most recent report on safeguarding at Bracknell Forest resulted from an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements conducted on 3 and 4 August 2010.

The summary that has been provided as part of the OFSTED report covering the referral and assessment arrangements within our Children's Services articulates the areas that were under inspection.

It also provides a clear indication of the outcomes of the inspection in terms of our strengths (Ofsted pointed to five areas of strength) and satisfactory practices (Ofsted pointed to 14 areas of satisfactory practices).

More particularly it highlights areas for development. In all there are five such areas and these will need to be addressed and they will be subject to specific attention in any future inspection.

- Evidence that children have been seen alone by social services, and the consistency of recording their views.
- Identification of needs in some initial assessments undertaken by family support workers.
- The use of the common assessment framework (CAF) is not consistent or fully established.
- A lack of clarity between the recording of contacts and referrals.

¹⁴ The full report can be found at the following website:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/\(id\)/5799/\(as\)/UAV/uav_2010_867.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/5799/(as)/UAV/uav_2010_867.pdf)

¹⁵ The Ofsted letter can be downloaded at

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/\(id\)/5804/\(as\)/CAR/car_2009_867.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/5804/(as)/CAR/car_2009_867.pdf)



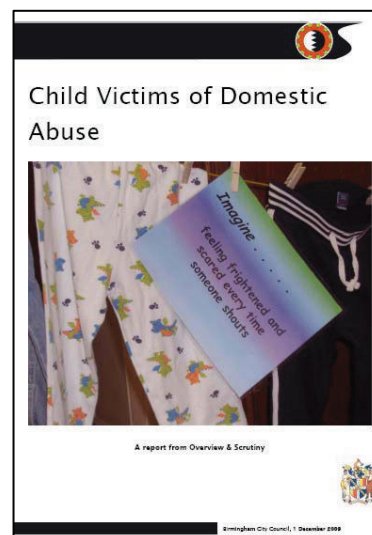
- The role of assistant team managers to hold cases, in terms of the boundaries between the social worker and the managerial role.

Child Victims of Domestic Abuse¹⁶ Birmingham City Council December 2009

This report highlighted the shocking scale and widespread impact of the problem of domestic abuse in Birmingham with a clear focus on the impact on children and young people.

The consequences of such abuse can follow them through their lives; physically, socially, emotionally, economically, educationally, and sexually.

The report highlighted that large proportions of children on the at risk register are living in households where domestic abuse occurs. These children are likely to require significant support to stay safe and alive.



Not all victims of domestic abuse have access to timely and appropriate support. Particular concern was raised for:

- Victims with no recourse to public funds;
- Child victims living in temporary accommodation;
- Child victims who may benefit from council services;
- Child victims who continue to live with abuse but have been identified as being at low risk;
- Teenagers experiencing domestic abuse who might be a parent themselves but fall between service remits.

The report also highlighted that children may have wide ranging and conflicting emotions in relation to their domestic abuse experiences, and could need help and support to make sense of them. The Young People and Families Directorate did not have a Lead Officer to promote work around domestic abuse, or ensure appropriate information sharing internally or with partners.

There was only one city-wide domestic violence co-ordinator and she did not have sole focus on the child victims of domestic abuse.

Funding for a one year post to support the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator had been established, but this needed to go through the moderation process which can take up to three months.

Despite having its own representative on Birmingham Domestic Violence Forum, Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board had encountered difficulties in receiving an update on the implementation of the Pan Birmingham Domestic Violence Strategy.

¹⁶ The full text of the document can be found at the following website:
<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy/Pages/GetDoc.aspx?DocumentID%3D6DEASRG4QK0%253d%26MimeType%3Dapplication%2Fpdf%26DocName%3DChild+Victims+of+Domestic+Abuse+Scrutiny+Report.pdf>

The lack of staff to cover leave and the insufficiency in staff resources within the Safer Birmingham Partnership to co-ordinate domestic abuse work had had a detrimental impact on the relationship between the organisations.

It is also important to note that despite clear links between domestic abuse and child protection that neither the chair of Birmingham Domestic Violence nor the Safer Birmingham Partnership was represented on Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board.

All of the areas listed below could be impacted because of domestic abuse:

- Pregnancy / Birth
- Health
- Neglect
- Psychological Development
- Disruption / Bullying
- Enjoyment of Life and Long Term Consequences

We could also add to the above an atmosphere of fear, tension, intimidation and confusion.

It follows that children living with domestic abuse could directly observe physical or sexual violence; emotional violence and abuse. They could also be directly threatened, injured or abused themselves.

These children often live with secrecy and shame and feel that it is in some way their fault that this is happening. All too often this leads to them trying to intervene and becoming a victim themselves.

It is essential that children who are victims of domestic abuse have help and support in relation to their experiences.

A 2008 Treasury Report stated that The Outcome of Poverty Today can also be the cause of Poverty Tomorrow thus perpetuating a vicious cycle which can only escalate if the help needed is not there and the cost of funding that help can only become greater.

Domestic abuse is mentioned in over half of the published Birmingham Serious Case Reviews that have taken place following a child's serious injury or death when abuse or neglect is known or suspected.

This demonstrates the potential risks of domestic abuse to children and their families and the importance of intervention to prevent problems escalating.

There were sixteen recommendations' to come out of the 2009 Child Victims of Domestic Abuse report.

Six months later the progress towards achieving these recommendations was reported to the Birmingham Vulnerable Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2010.

There was an OFSTED Report in July 2010. It was found that the services were still inadequate and had failed to protect vulnerable children.

This announcement came just weeks before a Serious Case Review into Khyra Ishaq's death from starvation. Khyra weighed just 2st 9lb when she was found.

Ofsted Inspectors contacted Children and Young People's Receiving Services, Front Line Managers, Health Professionals, and Senior Officers including the Director of Children's Services as part of their report.

They also reviewed forty two course files for children and young people.

The conclusion that was drawn from the inspection was that the quality assurance systems failed to identify the major weaknesses in casework in many areas.

Other areas the inspectors highlighted as serious deficiencies were in management and practice, as well as the sharing and availability of information across the partnerships.

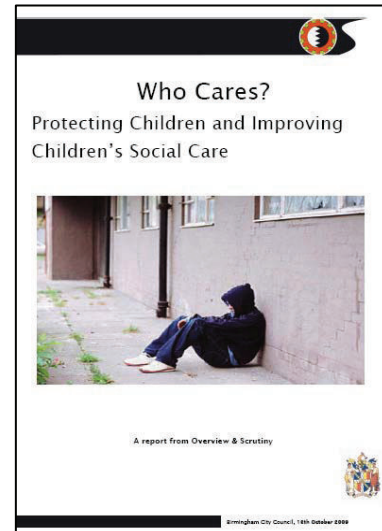
The OFSTED report said: although some improvements had recently been made in some key areas including most of those areas required by the Government Improvement Notice that was issued in 2009, some key and important deficiencies remained.

To finish this summary it is clear that we cannot go far enough ever to safeguard children. However much we might feel that we have got it right there must always be room for improvement.

We must strive as a Council to always be better.

Birmingham City Council - “Who Cares? Protecting Children and Improving Children’s Social Care”¹⁷

On 17th December 2008, the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of services for children and young people, judged Birmingham city council to be ‘inadequate’ in the area of ‘Staying Safe’. A number of issues were highlighted and recommendations were then put in place. The Leader of the Council then established a Task Force to drive through improvements in children’s social care services. The issues did not emerge overnight, as there had been a history of underperformance in delivering children’s social care – particularly safeguarding services in Birmingham. During the last 10 years, the service had been in special measures. The main issues that were the main reason for concern were – Human Resources, Finance, and accommodation.



HUMAN RESOURCES – It emerged that Social Workers were extremely over-worked and that some of their tasks could be undertaken by skilled graduates who are not yet qualified. This would free up the Social Workers to devote more time to the children and their families.

The Inquiry had recommended a Graduate Support Scheme. This involved the recruitment of Children’s Practitioners who do not have a social work qualification but are graduates with a good first degree who have the ability and skills to do many of the tasks previously done by social workers.

The inquiry found a lack of reliable staffing information, no trend data and no site specific sickness information and a lack of support to managers in tackling individual poor performance. There was a lack of expertise in dealing with disciplinary issues and a need to address sickness levels by applying established Council policy.

There was also a need to improve the provision of training and development in all areas of management.

There was no indication that pay was a significant reason for not being able to recruit staff.

Human Resources are now in conjunction with Aston Business School to undertake a survey of new starters, post holders and recent leavers to establish a base of employee opinion on factors affecting attraction, retention and leaving.

ACCOMMODATION – The working environment was highlighted as insufficient as workers in children’s social care were dispersed across different buildings in different locations, this hampered working together effectively. Also, basic maintenance requirements were not responded to e.g. insufficient and unclean facilities, overcrowding and a lack of essential storage capacity for files, etc.

It was felt that teams needed to have a good working environment for them to work as teams and together with the issue of caseloads would have a more serious impact on the ability to recruit and retain staff than pay.

¹⁷ The full text of the report can be found on the following website:
<http://videos.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/birminghamcouncilreport.pdf>

IT – IT equipment and access that required urgent upgrading was a key factor having a negative impact on performance improvement. Up to 75% of the computers currently used required urgent upgrade.

FINANCE – Managers were unclear about which budgets they were responsible for. There was a need for clear accountability of budgets and training, but there was no evidence how many people attended the training. Investment was urgently needed in IT, accommodation and training.

CONCLUSIONS - There was clear competency and capacity issues at the front line, middle and senior management. These issues were addressed and the appointment of 3 Assistant Director posts and a new Service Director would strengthen the leadership team.

This was no quick fix .Determined Management effort was needed to address the long –standing issues.

The Children's Commissioner for England's report on: Family perspectives on safeguarding and on relationships with children's services¹⁸ June 2010

This research study was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner as they were interested in exploring ideas around resistance from families receiving child protection services and the type of practice which would be most effective.

The size of the study needs to be kept in mind as there were only four focus groups were held with 19 family members and individual interviews with a total of 16 different people, including five young people. Interviews were held with five professionals and a focus group involved four family conference group organizers.

The review writers addressed the link between perceived barriers to gaining help and the development of resistance. It is suggested that some apparent resistance may be understood as resulting from inadequacies in services and in the way they are provided, often arising from the mismatches in the perception of needs and problems. A number of practice messages emerge for the 'helpful practitioner'; including confirmation of the need for a greater focus on the child's experience.

This study addresses the experience and views of those engaged with social work services, with the intention of providing insight into how they perceived the notion of resistance and it proved to be a contentious topic for the families, especially in those whose previous experience had led to mistrust.

While there are many negative reflections, it is also clear that family members appreciated the help of social workers who were open, involved them in unraveling the problems and demonstrated understanding.

The key messages which came out time and again were:

- The perceived failures of understanding by professionals and disagreement about their needs lay behind the family members' perception of resistance. Yet similar feelings were common to both the families and the workers, as both groups felt they would be pre-judged and both could feel defensive from the outset.
- The fear of the consequences of being involved in the child protection system, the sense of suspicion and mistrust and the formality of the processes were clearly expressed by the families.
- The barriers to using services, which the families and young people identified, were the fundamental issues of respect and the experience of a double standard in



¹⁸ The full text of the document can be found on the following website:
http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_405

behaviour, in how they were to behave as opposed to how the social workers behaved, which reinforced powerlessness and stigma. Good support also would be undermined by frequent changes of social worker, with consequent changes of plan. Not all the barriers concerned quality of individual practice: frustration with not getting a service sufficiently early led to anger and difficulty for families, as did the premature removal of support. They all agreed that it was this process which has made them critical and at times angry, rather than individual workers.

- Both families and young people and social workers valued relationship based practice, for the personal attributes of social workers were more important than the agency. The view of the social workers was that they found providing social work services in the current climate was complex and, because of the many child death enquiries, they had to work hard to gain the trust of family members. They also felt pressure to work in partnership with people who they saw to be in very real need, whilst being suspicious about what they might be hiding.
- All the young people and the family members interviewed said that they did not understand the system they had been drawn into. This was despite many of them having two generations with such experience. This lack of knowledge created fear and a sense that anything could happen. This lack of understanding of their rights led to a perceived lack of fairness on the part of the families.

What style of social work practice with children and families is most likely to result in positive engagement:

- Demonstrating respect by social workers in actions, not just words
- Understanding the barriers
- Working in partnership
- Social workers who care
- Good communication and being open and honest on both sides

How can the services and structures within children's social care be organised to maximise the likelihood of engagement:

- Family focused services
- A more informal approach
- Separating support work from the child protection process
- Listening to all family members
- Family Group Conferences
- Giving practical support
- Services which are not crisis led
- Providing advocacy, particularly for those who are recognized as being more vulnerable
- *Local and accessible services

Conclusions and messages from this research:

The impact of having a social worker in your life is intensely personal. Individuals felt the stigma and shock of it, and worried that it reflected upon them as people. This fed into already existing feelings of low self-esteem. These concerns were compounded by images of social workers as all powerful, and able to make decisions, which they are, in reality, not able to make. People talked about fear, which was again compounded by most not knowing the system they were in and not knowing what their rights were, or who to ask. For families where there was domestic abuse, parental learning disability, child and parental disability, refugee status, poor mental health and drug and alcohol problems, there was even greater uncertainty.

This consultation highlights how important it is that social workers and managers

understand the impact of these experiences and are knowledgeable about effective responses.

Social work training and supervision needs to take account of the impact of poverty on children and family in the child protection process so that this understanding can inform the work with families.

The views expressed here point to the importance of young people and other family members being provided with information about the child protection system and their legal rights within it.

The current “think family” agenda fits well with family members’ views of what is helpful: that agencies see the family as a whole and that there is a good connection between children and adult services.

Common Assessment Framework Form

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form assists and informs a standardised process by practitioners across children's services for assessment of children's needs and strengths; taking account of the roles of parents, carers and environmental factors on their development. This assists practitioners to agree with children and families about appropriate modes of support. It promotes earlier identification of additional needs, particularly in universal services and is designed to improve integrated working by promoting coordinated service provision. The following headings are used in the layout of the form.

The image shows the 'Every Child Matters Change For Children' CAF form. It is titled 'Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF)'. The form includes a header with the logo and title, a date assessment started field, and a note for users. The main body is divided into several sections: 'Identifying details' (name, sex, address, ethnicity), 'Special requirements', and 'Parents/carer comments'. The ethnicity section includes checkboxes for various groups like White British, Black or Black British, Indian, etc. There are also fields for 'Child's first language' and 'Parent's first language'.

CAF assessment summary: strengths and needs

1. Development of unborn baby, infant, child or young person
 - a. Health
 - i. General health
 - ii. Physical development
 - iii. Speech, language and communication
 - iv. Emotional and social development
 - v. Behavioral development
 - vi. Identity, self-esteem, self-image and social presentation
 - vii. Family and social relationships
 - viii. Self care skills and independence
 - b. Learning
 - i. Understanding, reasoning and problem solving
 - ii. Participation in learning, education and employment
 - iii. Progress and achievement in learning
 - iv. Aspirations
2. Parents and cares
 - a. Basic care, ensuring safety and protection
 - b. Environmental warmth and stability
 - c. Guidance, boundaries and stimulation
3. Family and environmental
 - a. Family history, functioning and well-being
 - b. Wider family
 - c. Housing, employment and financial considerations
 - d. Social and community elements and resources including education

Conclusions, solutions and actions

1. What are your conclusions?
2. What needs to change?
3. Action plan
 - a. Who will do this?
 - b. By when?
4. Agreed review date
5. How will you know things have improved?
6. Child or young persons comment on the assessment and the actions identified
7. Parent or carer's comment on the assessment and the actions identified

Response from the Director of Children, Young People and Learning to the ‘top ten’ questions from the IDEA/CFPS guide on the scrutiny of safeguarding

<p>Partnership</p>	<p>1. Is the LSCB effective in holding individual agencies to account and ensuring effective multi-agency working through the safeguarding children procedures and operational performance oversight?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LSCB has the required statutory partners as Board members and the way in which partners are required to operate within the LSCB is laid out in legislation [Section 14 of the Children Act 2004, and the LSCB Regulations 2006]. • The requirements of being a member of the LSCB are clear to all Board members and this is discharged in a number of ways, firstly through the Business Plan [which is reviewed annually], through reporting on a regular basis by individual agencies on safeguarding progress and issues, and through set activities and processes, such as Child Death Overview Panel, Serious Case Review Group, Quality Standards and Case Review Group, and Policies and Procedures Group. • The LSCB is responsible for two primary strategic functions; ensuring the effectiveness of local safeguarding activity and coordinating safeguarding activity. • The LSCB is not accountable for operational practice of individual partners; this remains the responsibility of partner agencies under the Children Act 2004 and the Children, Schools and Families Act 2010. • The LSCB has areas of key activity designed to assess the effectiveness of local safeguarding practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LSCB conducts detailed reviews of specific cases that have been identified as providing the potential for learning i.e. serious case
---------------------------	---

	<p>reviews, reviews of child deaths, multi- agency reviews.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring partner agencies to formally self-assess their safeguarding policy and practice against national or local requirements, and submit to the LSCB for review and comment, i.e. Section 11 audit, post Laming report assessments, safer workforce assessments. The Section 11 audit is a toolkit provided to partner agencies which allows them to self-assess against the requirements for safeguarding in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. • The LSCB requests updates on progress made by individual partners relating to safeguarding action plans e.g. monitoring implementation of serious case review or multi-agency review action plans, requesting updates on self-assessment action plans. • The Quality Standards and Case Review sub-group analyses multi-agency practice by reviewing work with individual children and young people and the LSCB summarises the strategic learning and recommendations based on this analysis.
<p>2. Does your LSCB have the resources, both financial and human, to undertake its role effectively and deliver the LSCB business plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of safeguarding is very broad and it is necessary for the LSCB to ensure it is able to prioritise its activity, and plan and manage its resources effectively. • The LSCB pays for an Independent Chair and a full time Business Manager who both ensure that the business plan is implemented. • Section 15 of the Children Act 2004 sets out that statutory Board Members may make payments towards expenditure and provide goods, services, accommodation or other resources for purposes connected with an LSCB. • The LSCB receives payments from partners agreed at the beginning of each

	<p>year and a business plan enables the Board to clearly lay out the priority areas for each financial year, and again there will be statutory priority activity which the Board is required to undertake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners additionally contribute resource in kind i.e. time, resources and expertise to the activity of the LSCB, including chairing and leading groups, sitting on a group, participation in key activity such as audits.
<p>3. Is the relationship between the LSCB and the Children's Trust clear and working effectively to improve outcomes for children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an area of development within this year. New Guidance on Working Together to Safeguard Children, and Children's Trust Guidance strengthens and makes clear the requirements of the two Boards. The Coalition Government has indicated that they may make changes to the current requirement to have a Children's Trust. The CYP Trust has a responsibility to ensure that the five outcomes for all children and young people are achieved to their best potential, and that agencies cooperate under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, whilst the LSCB maintains a specific focus on staying safe and its role in ensuring the effectiveness of arrangements made by individuals and wider partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This year will see the first annual report from the LSCB to the CYP Trust, with the content of this informing the development of the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan in 2011. It is the intention to create a robust dialogue across the two Boards, and to enable effective challenge to be made when there is concern that an outcome is not being achieved to its full potential. The relationship between the two Boards is highlighted in the Governance document of the CYP Trust Board, and this will be reflected in the Governance of the LSCB.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Independent Chair of the LSCB is also a member of the Children and Young People's Trust and the Director of Children, Young People and Learning Services is also on both Boards.
<p>Quality and performance</p> <p>4. How does your LSCB perform its quality assurance role? Is there evidence it leads to service improvement at system and frontline practitioner level?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LSCB facilitates self-evaluation across a range of safeguarding issues, a recent Section 11 Audit programme asked agencies to self-assess safeguarding practice within their organisations against the minimum standards identified in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, for review and comment by the LSCB. Although these requirements relate specifically to statutory partners the LSCB has extended the assessment to partners in the PVI sector, including Early Years settings and Leisure providers who provide valuable services to children and young people in the local area. The LSCB has developed a data set along with partners across Berkshire which enables the Board to maintain an overview of the progress made against outcomes using key national indicators, where there appears to be an issue the LSCB can identify further investigation to determine whether further preventative action should be taken. The LSCB receives reports from partner agencies on an annual basis in relation to key business functions; this includes for example a report on the activity of the Child Death Overview Panel, various reports from Health Partners in relation to key safeguarding achievements and priorities, the Annual Licensing Report etc. The newly established Serious Case Review Sub-Group seeks to provide strategic recommendations from child deaths and cases where local learning has been identified. The group also seeks to use national learning from serious case

	<p>reviews and establish where local changes to policy and practice would be in the interest of children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recent Multi-Agency Review into the death of a young person in Bracknell Forest has recommended a series of changes to local policy and practice. The LSCB set six months in which to implement the recommended changes, progress is monitored regularly. • It is a challenge to evidence the direct impact, there is no systemic measurement available and this has been identified as an area for development in the 2010 /11 Business Plan.
<p>5. Is the LSCB gathering and using the experience of children, young people and families to inform improvements to safeguarding arrangements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LSCB has a Raising Awareness sub-group and through this group targets groups or individuals for engagement. Examples of the activity include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people designing a safeguarding resource for other young people across the Borough, which provides contact details for sensitive safeguarding services that young people were sometimes reluctant to make enquiries about with adults. This process has been highlighted as a national example of best practice by the former NSDU and shared in LSCB resources nationally. • Young people designed, wrote and performed a series of monologues on “risky behaviours” they were given a slot on the programme of the annual LSCB Conference to present their perceptions of risky behaviours to a multi-professional audience and inform the LSCB identification of and response to local concerns. GOSE have requested a presentation of this work at a regional LSCB forum. • Primary aged children have recently submitted a series of entries to the LSCB capturing pictorially their concerns about safeguarding. Three winning entries have been selected and will feature as part of a new

	<p>resource for primary age children in the borough with the aim of promoting safe messages to children of this age.</p>
<p>6. Is there a robust needs assessment process in place and are the trends in demand and outcomes well understood?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a robust needs assessment that has been undertaken by the CYP Trust Board, looking at all five outcomes for children and young people living in the Borough. This was updated in 2009, to include where available data broken down to ward level to assist the CYP Trust Board and the LSCB in planning and monitoring services. Examples include identifying areas where there is a higher number of children with a child protection plan, or a higher number of children who become looked after by the local authority. • The implementation of the requirement for the CYP Trust to receive an annual report from the LSCB will strengthen the link between the two Boards and will ensure the LSCB has a range of opportunities to contribute to the needs assessment and ongoing development and prioritisation of services. • The LSCB provides quarterly analysis of partnership performance against safeguarding indicators, a highlight report seeks to focus discussion on areas of local performance in which we fall behind statistical neighbours on national comparators, or in which we exceed our comparator authorities' performance. For example recent higher than expected number of under 18 victims of serious sexual offences had led to the LSCB commissioning local analysis of cases of serious sexual offences against under 18 victims in 2009 /10. • GOSE have contributed to the analysis of the increase in children with a Child Protection plan, Children's Social Care have arranged a follow up meeting to discuss the findings and draw up an action plan. Further work on the increase including data analysis and a survey of professionals is underway.
Practice	

<p>7. Are universal services supporting vulnerable children well and are there adequate and effective early intervention or prevention services in place for children and families? What safeguards are there to protect children and families from inappropriate child protection interventions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LSCB requests periodic reports on a wide range of needs and processes, i.e. Common Assessment Framework, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2010 places new responsibilities on the LSCB to have oversight of thresholds in the local area. • The Common Assessment Framework is well developed in Bracknell and widely used, a range of agencies provide intensive support to families including Children's Centres and Outreach workers, BST, HomeStart, PACT, Kerrith etc. • All child protection investigations are signed off by a senior manager in CSC or the Independent Chair and any Child Protection interventions considered inappropriate can be addressed. • This is an area that the LSCB are looking at developing further to provide more information about thresholds and early intervention and prevention.
<p>8. Are services reaching the most vulnerable groups e.g. children with disabilities, children in families affected by substance misuse, domestic violence or parental mental illness and children from refugee and asylum seeking communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the LSCB routine activity requires consideration of the impact of provision on vulnerable groups e.g. quality standards work on the analysis of cases regularly considers the needs of vulnerable children, the recent multi-agency review identified particular needs associated with specific vulnerability. Annual reports are requested on particularly vulnerable groups for whom the LSCB has statutory responsibility for maintaining strategic oversight e.g. privately fostered children. • Many of the children with Child Protection Plans are from families where there is domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness. There are not significant numbers of refugee or asylum seeking communities in Bracknell. Children with disabilities are well supported by the Disabled Children's Team.
<p>9. Do all Child Protection Plans contain specific, achievable, child focussed outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. Are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Conferences use the Signs of Safety model this is outcome based with specific, achievable and child focused outcome. This format has been independently reviewed on two occasions by GOSE.

<p>these measurable and are those protection plans independently reviewed?</p>	
<p>10. What is the quality and frequency of supervision and training given to frontline staff? Does supervision routinely address safeguarding practice and performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision arrangements vary across the workforce. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 presents the new expectations for supervision arrangements and the LSCB is reviewing the requirements with a view to supporting partners to respond/adapt to the requirements. • Within Children's Social Care 3 weekly supervision sessions are provided to all social workers, and regular high quality training is also provided.

Comments from Primary School Headteachers and External Organisations Regarding Safeguarding Children and Young People in Bracknell Forest

Written submission from Primary Headteachers

This is a summary of the themes from written responses from 14 Primary School Headteachers covering 16 schools, gathered at a meeting of the Primary Heads Association for Bracknell on 9th December 2010 in response to two written questions. The responses were written individually, but following some group discussion about safeguarding, which will have influenced the nature of the responses. The headteachers welcomed the opportunity to give their views.

The two written questions were:

1. The overall adequacy of the arrangements to safeguard children in Bracknell Forest;
2. Your views on future challenges and opportunities in relation to safeguarding children in Bracknell Forest.

Similar answers were given in response to both questions so the common themes have not been separated under the two headings.

- Family Support Advisers in schools have been a success: *"We value the role of our FSA and are very aware of the ever increasing responsibilities and expectations they fulfil"*, but there was also concern about the future: *"FSAs are now a vital part of the school but budgets are tight."*
- While some headteachers were clear about the thresholds for a service from Children's Social Care, there was some concern about whether the threshold was too high; *"Social Services threshold for intervention means children at risk of neglect could be missed"*. Some headteachers wanted more information about thresholds, and felt that they did not always get a consistent response from the Duty Team.
- The highest number of comments were about the need for a joint approach to information sharing and to improve communication. Schools particularly wanted to know when Social Care were working with families *"are there families Children's Social Care are working with I don't know about?"* and to be included in the decisions about when the case was to be closed.
- Where headteachers felt they had not had a positive response from Children's Social Care, they thought that more was needed to develop good trusting working relationships. *"Build stronger links between Duty Team and Schools."*
- Queries about the CAF were raised such as whether it was appropriate always, and *"we need more work on what happens once a CAF exists and an old problem comes back"*.
- The need for more provision was identified by some: *"appears that social services are overstretched"* and a plea for *"the development of services to meet the counselling needs / play therapy for vulnerable pupil."*, *"Increased capacity for training"* was another request.
- One headteacher noted that schools were trying to address issues within their school such as procedures, which could benefit from being worked on collaboratively, and there were some comments that working in clusters might help with resource problems.

Extract from an e-mail response from Martin Gilman, Chief Executive, Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, 15.10.2010

- 1) The CAF process is still very patchy, it was very good in its early days but in the last twelve months or so it seems not to be very high on people's agenda. As you may know we run the Young Carer's project here at BFVA and Angela Evans still frequently gets referrals from other agencies without a CAF form and has to start that process from here. Most of the schools are OK, but Social Services and health are particularly bad at initiating the process.
- 2) As you know the VCS is not one organisation and whilst we can advise and try to support the rest of the sector we have very limited resource in getting the Safeguarding Tool kit and doing face to face work with the groups and this work tends to get tagged on to other work. This obviously affects the speed of distribution of the tool kits. We have been trying to get a dedicated Young People's VCS worker in post for about 18 months. We are about to advertise for a 9 month post courtesy of some CDWC funding, and this will help with that process, but it is a short term answer to an ongoing problem of capacity in the sector to support the safe guarding issues and processes.

Extract from an e-mail response from Linda Darrall, Divisional Manager, Victim Support, Thames Valley

In response to your letter regarding the above. If I first detail what we in Victim Support operate regarding safe guarding children: All of our staff and volunteers have an enhanced CRB check before they have access to any clients or any client data, and all volunteers and staff complete mandatory safe guarding training. We have a designated officer nationally, regionally and locally to support any member of VS who suspects that a child may be at risk, and have a policy to follow if such a thing is identified. (A copy of our policy can be made available if required.)

Our Victim Care unit and managers in Bracknell are aware of who to contact if the need arose, and for this reason can deem the arrangements adequate, (fortunately in my 5 years with VS we have not had to use this.)

I think the future for safeguarding children continues to be challenging; with the need to share accurate information, support staff and volunteers who come into contact with a vulnerable child or adult and of course support and protect the child themselves.

Mr R Beaumont
Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Bracknell Forest Council
Easthamstead House
Town Square
Bracknell
RG12 1AQ

NSPCC
1st Floor
Ash House
Woodlands Business Park
Brecklands
Linford Wood West
Milton Keynes
MK14 6ET

Tel: 01908 328050
Fax: 01908 328065
E-Mail: danrussell@nspcc.org.uk

20th September 2010

Dear Mr Beaumont

Thank you for your letter dated 20th August 2010 and addressed to Andrew Flanagan, Chief Executive of the NSPCC. As the Regional Head of Services for the region covering Bracknell Forest I am responding on Mr Flanagan's behalf.

The NSPCC currently has a project that is based in Slough and offers therapeutic intervention for children across the Berkshire authorities. Some of those children are in the Bracknell Forest area however regrettably the numbers are of insufficient size to provide accurate on which to be able to reliably generalise. I am not aware of any specific issue or difficulty that the project has encountered in its safeguarding work with Bracknell Forest agencies.

With regards to your second question I believe that the current financial and economic climate in which we work is likely to present significant resource challenges throughout the social care field. Those responsible for public services will need to ensure that safeguarding of children remains of paramount importance. The climate is likely to increase opportunities for collaboration and shared resources. This is both within LSCB areas and across them.

As you may be aware, I wrote recently to both LSCB Chairs and Directors of Children's Service in all the local authorities in the region. The purpose of my letter was to introduce myself and explain something of the NSPCC Strategy to 2016 which is very much focussed on sharing learning. I subsequently had a useful meeting with Dr Karklins and Penny Reuter. The NSPCC is re-locating its 100 projects into larger Service Centres over the next 3 years. The exact location of what will be your nearest service centre is not yet known but I will continue to keep colleagues informed.



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Chairman: Sir Christopher Kelly Chief Executive: Andrew Flanagan
Founded in 1884, incorporated by Royal Charter. ChildLine is a service provided by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Registered charity numbers 216401 and SC037717. NS/1151. www.nspcc.org.uk



I am sorry that have been unable to help further with your review. You may wish to know that the NSPCC Consultancy Service is available and may be able to add independence to your review should this be considered desirable. If you like further details about this service please feel free to contact me at the above address and I will be happy to put you touch with the right people.

Yours sincerely



Dan Russell
Regional Head of Services
North London and East of England Region
Ash House
Woodlands Business Park
Linford Wood
Milton Keynes
MK14 6ET

)

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 12 JANUARY 2011

EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN ITEMS RELATING TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

Assistant Chief Executive

1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents current Executive Forward Plan items relating to Children, Young People and Learning for the Panel's consideration.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the current Executive Forward Plan items relating to Children, Young People and Learning appended to this report.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Consideration of items on the Executive Forward Plan alerts the Panel to forthcoming Executive decisions and facilitates pre-decision scrutiny.
- 3.2 To achieve accountability and transparency of the decision making process, effective Overview and Scrutiny is essential. Overview and Scrutiny bodies are a key element of Executive arrangements and their roles include both developing and reviewing policy; and holding the Executive to account.
- 3.3 The power to hold the Executive to account is granted under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 which states that Executive arrangements of a local authority must ensure that its Overview and Scrutiny bodies have power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This includes the 'call in' power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the body / person that made it. This power does not relate solely to scrutiny of decisions and should therefore also be utilised to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

Background Papers

Local Government Act 2000

Contact for further information

Richard Beaumont – 01344 352283

e-mail: richard.beaumont@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122

e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

REFERENCE	I026303
------------------	---------

TITLE: Award of Contract for the Wick Hill Skills Centre

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the award of contract for the creation of Wick Hill Skills Centre, Phase 2 and 3.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Central government grant.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Education

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Bracknell and Wokingham College and Wokingham Borough Council.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Meetings with interested parties.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Jan 2011

REFERENCE	I026183
------------------	---------

TITLE: Family Tree Nursery Consultation

PURPOSE OF DECISION: The report considers the results of the consultation and makes proposals for the closure of the Family Tree Nursery in 2011.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: This is a follow up from the report of 14 September 2010 which set out the financial position in some detail.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Nursery staff

Parents

Public

Schools Forum

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: As set out in the report: meetings with interested parties and written representation.

DATE OF DECISION: 18 Jan 2011

REFERENCE	I026270
------------------	---------

TITLE: Secondary Education Strategy

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To inform the Executive of the Secondary Education Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None at this time.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Headteachers

School governing bodies

DMT

CMT

School Pupils

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Letter, Meetings with interested parties, Presentation.

DATE OF DECISION: 29 Mar 2011

REFERENCE	I024404
------------------	---------

TITLE: The Secondary Education Strategy

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the Secondary Education Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Central Government Grant.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Corporate Management Team, Officers of Children Young People & Learning, Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of Secondary Schools.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Meetings with interested parties.

DATE OF DECISION: 29 Mar 2011

REFERENCE	1025967
------------------	---------

TITLE: Annual Admission Arrangements 2012/13

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree the Annual Admission Arrangements 2012/13.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Education

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: All Bracknell Forest Schools, Diocesan Authorities, neighbouring LAs.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Report and meetings with interested parties.

DATE OF DECISION: 29 Mar 2011

This page is intentionally left blank