

Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2021-22 Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) Annual Report summarises the work of the Board throughout the year, highlighting how the safeguarding arrangements have been effective including evidence of impact. The report also identifies any areas for future development.

Impact of Covid-19

Safeguarding remained challenging and complex during this reporting period because of the ongoing national pandemic and its associated restrictions and lockdowns. COVID19 is still very significant, and the partnership has faced unprecedented challenges to support and safeguard vulnerable children and families. The partnership mobilised effectively during this uncertain time and worked tirelessly to identify and safeguard children who were at an increased risk of harm and exploitation from a range of sources.

Our Priorities

CBSCB set the following priorities for 2021-22, focusing its work in relation to safeguarding children and young people:

- Neglect
- Child Exploitation (Sexual & Criminal)
- Mental Health and wellbeing within families
- Digital Safeguarding

Neglect

CBSCB partners work closely with neighbouring Safeguarding Children Boards in Bedford Borough and Luton, taking a county wide approach to raising awareness of neglect and helping frontline practitioners to identify and tackle neglect. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Group is guided by the Pan Bedfordshire Neglect Strategy 2020-23. The Pan Bedfordshire Neglect group continues to monitor an action plan based on the Neglect Strategy. This provided an opportunity to hear directly from staff at local foodbanks; in return, we offered free eLearning to enhance volunteers understanding of neglect and safeguarding. Work is also underway to engage with schools to help offer guidance and advice when they are supporting children experiencing neglect.

Child Exploitation (Sexual & Criminal)

In May 2021, all exploitation procedures were moved into one section within the online library. As part of the move, procedures were reviewed and updated where appropriate. A range of local guides and toolkits can also be found on the VERU Frontline Website.

Mental Health and Wellbeing within families

CBSCB has shared guidance, advice, and resources from partners in relation to the mental health and wellbeing within families, in particular we have shared resources through our website, newsletters and email circulation/distribution lists. Mental Health and well-being is recognised as a concern locally (and nationally) due to rising numbers of children, young people and adults needing to access services.

The findings of the 2021 Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) Survey will inform ongoing plans for improvement across the system; particularly within the context of the impact of Covid-19. The Central Bedfordshire Children Leadership Board will have oversight of the impact of follow up actions and services provision to support the findings of the survey across the system, ensuring a commitment from all key partners.

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) Annual Report 2021-22



Digital Safeguarding

The Pan Bedfordshire Digital Safeguarding Group regularly reviews, updates and shares guidance available locally to professionals, parents, and young people in relation to digital safeguarding and online safety. Throughout the year, the group have made progress against their workplan, however, for 2022-23 it has been decided that digital safeguarding should become a golden thread across all subgroups to reflect that the online world is embedded into all aspects of children and young people's experiences. A task and finish group will focus on key activities such as Safer Internet Day. Central Bedfordshire will continue to raise awareness promote useful resources to the workforce via our newsletter.

Local Rapid Reviews & Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board completed one Rapid Review in relation to the death of a baby under the age of one with suspected non accidental injuries. The review highlighted information sharing, professional curiosity, and transient/ mobile families, it also explored intersectionality, and the impact of COVID.

Multi-agency Audits

CBSCB undertook the following Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Audits:

- Under 2's and risk of Non-Accidental Injuries (April 2021)
- Section 11: Standard 8: Information Sharing (September 2021)
- Neglect cases judged to have a good outcome (January 2022)

Training Highlights

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board co-fund a Pan Bedfordshire multi-agency safeguarding training offer. 2021-22 saw an increase in the number of instructor led courses delivered this year compared to last year and attendance increased by 70%. Satisfaction in the courses delivered also remained high at 98%. Over 5000 free eLearning courses were completed.

Impact

Key partners speak of strong, mature relationships at both strategic and operational levels. The local safeguarding partnership and pan-Bedfordshire Inspection of Central Bedfordshire local authority children's services 17 to 21 January 2022 8 arrangements support cross-authority cooperation, with resources pooled effectively.'

SOURCE: Inspection of Central Bedfordshire local authority children's services (Ofsted, January 2022)

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2)

The work of the Neglect Group has helped raise awareness, and use, of the GCP2 assessment by 177% in Central Bedfordshire. This evidence based tool, developed by the NPSCC, supports practitioners to measure the quality of care provided by parents/ carers, particularly when there are concerns of neglect.

Tackling, Reducing and Ending Exploitation (TREE) project

The TREE project is a new partnership effort launched in Central Bedfordshire to tackle the root causes of exploitation. The project is led by Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service (BYOS) and funded by Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU). Youth workers, children's services and specialist staff team up with police officers to conduct joint outreach work across the area with the aim of engaging with young people and the wider community and signposting to support services. Between January and March 2022, patrols took place in Shefford, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard.

Dark Web awareness

In response to shared learning from our neighbours in Luton, we came together to offer a free 'Dark Web' webinar in December. This bitesize session, open to Pan Bedfordshire practitioners, was

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) Annual Report 2021-22



delivered by Bedfordshire Police Cyber Crime Team and designed to raise practitioners' understanding of what the 'Dark Web' is, how it is used and the risks that it can present to young people. Feedback shows that participants gained knowledge of how to access the Dark Web and improved understanding of the risks.

Consent project

Young people from Central Bedfordshire College are supporting our work, by developing a media piece on consent. Young people have mapped how they would like to do this, and filming has started. The media piece will be an engagement and awareness tool shared across education settings and youth groups, with an aim to increase knowledge of consent and where young people can go if they have any concerns or questions.

Non-Accidental Injury (NAI) and under 2-year-olds

CBSCB co-produced a briefing highlighting key learning from national and local reviews, challenging professionals thinking and practice, aiding professional development. A further learning event is planned for 2022-23. Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Boards have co-funded 15 places on a Tubes of Life 'train the trainer' course taking place in May 2022. A range of awareness raising materials have been purchased for children's centres to help prompt discussions with parents/ carers about the ICON, a national programme to reduce the numbers of babies suffering head trauma as a result of being shaken. Implementation of the ICON programme commenced in 2021 with a report on its effectiveness expected in Autumn 2022.

Engagement with Education

A Pan Bedfordshire project group presented a strategy to bring an education subgroup into our safeguarding structures. The subgroup will be supported by local Designated Safeguarding Lead cluster meetings open to all education providers in Central Bedfordshire.

Conclusion

Our aim year on year is to make sure that children in Central Bedfordshire are protected from harm. This can only be achieved through ensuring the right systems are in place, that agencies work well together for each individual child and family, and we develop our learning culture. We need to be constantly reflecting whether children in the area are safe and, if not, what more can be done to reduce incidents of child maltreatment and intervene when children are at risk of suffering significant harm. We will continue to raise awareness within our local community that safeguarding children is everybody's business.