

Partnership Foreword:

2025-26 has been a busy and productive year for the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Throughout a period of significant change across partner agencies, including restructuring within the Integrated Care Board, we have remained focused on what matters most: improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Together, we have continued to prioritise our key safeguarding themes, strengthen partnership working and support practitioners to respond effectively to risk and need. A particular area of focus has been ensuring our workforce has the skills, confidence and tools required to undertake effective safeguarding practice. This has included targeted development around Strategy Meeting and S47 Investigations, reinforcing our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), and creating opportunities for learning and reflection across the partnership.

We have also worked closely with colleagues across Bedfordshire to develop and launch the new Effective Needs guidance, providing a clearer and more consistent framework for understanding need, making referrals and ensuring children and families receive the right support at the right time.

Despite increasing demand and ongoing pressures across the system, partners have continued to demonstrate commitment, collaboration and a shared ambition to improve safeguarding practice. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this work and look forward to building on these strong foundations in the year ahead as we continue to keep children and families at the centre of everything we do.

Amana Gordon, Director of Children and Families, Central Bedfordshire Council.

Assistant Chief Constable John Murphy, Bedfordshire Police

Pol Toner, Director of Safeguarding and Complex Care – NHS Central East NHS

Reflections for the Independent Scrutineer:

It has been a privilege to continue my role as Independent Scrutineer for the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership during 2025/26. Over the past year I have observed a committed and constructive partnership, operating within an increasingly busy and challenging safeguarding landscape, but continuing to demonstrate a genuine willingness to work collaboratively, challenge appropriately and focus collectively on improving outcomes for children and young people.

Nationally, the safeguarding system continues to evolve significantly and at pace. The growing emphasis on earlier intervention, whole-family working and strengthening multi-agency child protection arrangements through the Families First Partnership reforms reflects a wider recognition that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and that agencies must work together more effectively around emerging need. These responsibilities are brought together and emphasised in the update of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026). Central Bedfordshire is well placed within this context. Throughout my scrutiny activity this year, I have seen strong evidence of partners embracing a more integrated approach, particularly through the continued development of Early Help, themed strategic discussions, multi-agency audits, and partnership learning activity.

The Partnership has rightly maintained focus on key national and local safeguarding priorities including neglect, child sexual abuse, exploitation, safeguarding children under five, and ensuring the voice of the child informs practice and strategic planning. These priorities strongly mirror national learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, which continue to identify neglect, domestic abuse, online harm, mental health pressures and vulnerabilities for infants and adolescents as recurring features in serious incidents across England. It is positive to see the Partnership responding proactively through awareness campaigns, practitioner training, thematic audits and strengthened multi-agency scrutiny activity.

Particularly encouraging has been the maturity of the themed strategic board discussions. The discussions regarding Child Sexual Abuse, exploitation, safeguarding under-fives, and mental health and wellbeing have demonstrated openness from partners, thoughtful self-reflection, and a stronger focus on identifying both impact and areas requiring further improvement. The willingness of agencies to recognise challenges around professional curiosity, data sharing, workforce pressures, consistency of practice and understanding lived experience is important and reflects a healthy safeguarding culture.

I have also been encouraged by the continued investment in working collaboratively with the neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships across pan Bedfordshire, and by learning and improvement activity across Bedfordshire, including the development of the new Pan Bedfordshire Threshold Guidance, the ongoing work around multi-agency chronologies and joint supervision, and the partnership's commitment to developing workforce knowledge in complex areas such as child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and child-to-parent abuse. These developments align well with national

safeguarding expectations contained within Working Together to Safeguard Children and evolving education safeguarding guidance, both of which continue to emphasise contextual safeguarding, extra-familial harm, information sharing and understanding the child's lived experience.

The feedback obtained through the Voice of the Child Conference was particularly powerful. Young people's concerns regarding online safety, bullying, exploitation, and community safety reflect national trends and reinforce the importance of ensuring safeguarding systems continue to adapt to the realities of children's lives, particularly within online environments and peer relationships.

Like many safeguarding partnerships nationally, Central Bedfordshire has experienced pressures arising from increasing demand, organisational change, and resource constraints. It is therefore important that the Partnership continues its focus on evaluating impact, reducing duplication, and maintaining strong partner engagement. The challenge moving forward is not simply to demonstrate activity, but to evidence how partnership work is improving the lived experience and outcomes of children and families.

Overall, my view is that the Partnership continues to provide effective multi-agency leadership for safeguarding arrangements across Central Bedfordshire. There remains a solid foundation of professional relationships, appropriate challenge and shared ambition. The next phase of development should build upon this by further strengthening evidence of impact, embedding learning consistently across agencies and continuing to prioritise the voices and experiences of children and families at the centre of all safeguarding activity.

Jon Brown

Independent Scrutineer, Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Introduction to Central Bedfordshire:

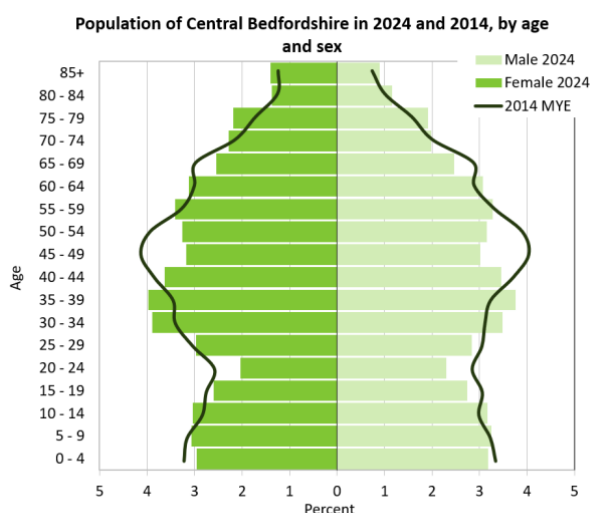
Central Bedfordshire has a growing population of 315,900. It is largely rural by area, with more than a third of the population living in rural areas and the rest in a number of market towns. The area is generally prosperous, with above average levels of employment, however there are pockets of deprivation and greater need.

Between 2014-2024, Central Bedfordshire's population rose by 18.3%, this is above the average rate for England (7.8%) and among the fastest-growing areas in the country. By age group, over the same period, there was a 20.6% increase in children aged 0-17, a 15.2% increase in adults aged 18-64 and a 26.2% increase in older people aged 65+.

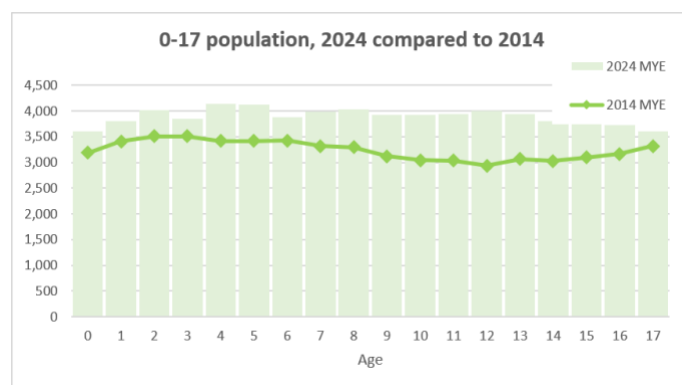
Central Bedfordshire's [Census 2021 factsheet](#) provides information on the ethnicity of residents; White British (83.5%), White- Other (5.3%), Indian (1.6%), Black African (1.3%) White Irish (1.2%), and White/ Black Caribbean (1.1%). Over 95% of pupils of compulsory school age speak English as a first language. However, more than 60 different first languages are recorded among the remaining children.

In 2025, the crime rate in Central Bedfordshire was about the same as the average crime rate across similar areas. (Source: [Police UK](#)). Life expectancy and overall health are both slightly better than the national average, and children are less likely to be obese. (Source: [Map | Local Insight](#), May 2026)

Children and Young People:



Source: Office for National Statistics, Mid Year Estimates of Population, 2014 and 2024



Children in low-income (relative) households by local authority:

LA	2023/24	2024/25	2024 MYE	2023/24 rate	2024/25 rate
Central Bedfordshire	8,247	9,081	62,754	13%	14%
Luton	20,974	22,100	55,475	38%	40%
Bedford	8,231	8,851	39,483	21%	22%
Southend-on-Sea	7,256	7,677	35,189	21%	22%
Milton Keynes	12,845	12,727	66,211	19%	19%
Huntingdonshire	5,022	5,070	34,743	14%	15%
Dacorum	4,240	4,644	32,590	13%	14%
Buckinghamshire	15,436	15,511	115,295	13%	13%
North Hertfordshire	3,275	3,452	25,820	13%	13%
South Cambridgeshire	3,396	3,621	34,286	10%	11%
St Albans	3,017	3,143	31,946	9%	10%

Sources: Department for Work and Pensions, Children in low-income families (relative) before housing costs, and Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates of Population 2024. Note that the rates are a local calculation based on these published figures.

Education Information:

Education Information January 2026 census	
No. pupils in Central Bedfordshire schools	49459
% of minority ethnic background	Published in June 2026
No. of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)	Published in June 2026
No. of pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM)	7453
No. of children with SEN Support	5715
No. of children with Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)	3230

Vulnerable Children:

The majority of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire enjoy safe and healthy lives within their family networks and communities, however, there are a proportion of vulnerable children who are at risk of poorer health and well-being outcomes. This section of the Annual Report sets out those categories of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire who have been identified by the local authority and other agencies as in need of help or protection to promote their welfare.

Children's Services Integrated Front Door:

The Integrated Front Door Team is the front door for anyone seeking information and/ or services for children, young people, and families, or to make a safeguarding referral. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is based here. During 2025/26 the team received 14,332 enquiries, and 1,574 referrals into Children's Social Care. (compared to 17,256 and 2,286 last year).

Early Help:

Central Bedfordshire's Early Help Locality Teams are integral to the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Central Bedfordshire multi-agency partnership early help offer. Early Help has been at the forefront of Children's Services Transformation and is a responsive locality focused service to support children and families who without support are likely to require statutory social care intervention with the aim of reducing demand on Children's Services. The two service areas work together to develop a positive partnership between professionals and families that empowers families of children and young people and builds resilience and wellbeing in individuals, families, and communities.

Central Bedfordshire's Early Help Offer identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as problems emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood they will emerge in the future, offering 'the right help at the right time'. The Early Help Offer includes universal and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

Early Help support can be grouped into 3 main areas:

- 1) Universal and targeted support through community-based services.
- 2) Multi-agency support which is co-ordinated by a range of professionals.
- 3) Targeted Early Help assessment and support for higher levels of identified need e.g. Early Help Plus.

During 2025/26 there were 878 Early Help Assessments (EHA's) completed by Children's Services (compared to 1,059 last year) with a further 308 EHA's being completed by partners in the community (compared to 315 last year)

At the end of 2025/26 (at the end of Q4) there were 452 children who were on a Child in Need Plan.

Children with a Child Protection Plan:

Children who have a child protection plan are considered to be in need of protection from either neglect, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or a combination of one or more of these. The child protection plan sets out the main areas of concern, what action will be taken to reduce these concerns and by whom. The plan will also set out how we will know when progress is being made.

At the end of 2025/26 there were 123 children with a Child Protection Plan in Central Bedfordshire (compared to 177 at the end of previous year)

Children in Care:

Children in care are those looked after by the local authority. Only after exploring every possibility of protecting a child at home will the local authority seek a parent's consent or a court's decision to move a child away from his or her family. Such decisions, whilst very difficult, are made in the best interests of the child.

At the end of 2025/26 there were 330 Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire (compared to 338 at the end of the previous year).

The Central Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements:

The Central Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements cover the Local Authority area of Central Bedfordshire. The three Safeguarding Partners are Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Bedfordshire Police.

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership works closely with neighbouring Partnerships in Bedford Borough and Luton. As such, our structure also includes a number of Pan Bedfordshire groups. The Independent Scrutiny for our partnership during 2025/26 was provided by an Independent Scrutineer, Jon Brown.

MASA Structure:



The Partnership Priorities for 2025/26:

The CBSCP MASA Executive met on the 7th July 2025 for a MASA Development session.

The Strategic Leads reviewed the activity of the partnership over the previous year, looking at what had gone well and some key achievements along with areas for future focus and development.

The MASA Executive agreed the following priorities for the year ahead:

Priorities for 2025/26:

- Neglect
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Exploitation
- Under 5's and Non-Accidental Injuries
- Voice of the Child

Other key areas for partnership focus:

- Embedding learning
- Partnership Development Opportunities
- Strengthening how we measure impact – ensure our work from Case Reviews have had an impact
- Developing stronger links with SEND

Moving forward throughout this year the Partnership has been keen to consider ways in which we can offer partnership development opportunities and also really develop the ways in which we measure the success and impact of the work we do.

Strategic Board meetings:

During the year the MASA Executive also agreed that going forward Strategic Board meetings would be themed (with maximum 2 themes per meeting). At each meeting all partners were asked to contribute to the themed discussions with feedback about how their agency was contributing towards each theme/priority and was there any evidence of the impact this work was having. They could also feedback if they felt there was anything else that was needed from the partnership or other agencies in relation to each theme.

CSA and Exploitation Themed Discussion:

In September 2025 the partnership had a themed discussion in relation to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Exploitation. Partners presented a consistent picture that child sexual abuse and exploitation remained a relatively low-volume but complex and evolving safeguarding issue, with strong evidence of improving multi-agency practice, workforce training, and victim-centred approaches, including better identification, joint working, and trauma-informed services. Health, police, probation, fire, and children's services all highlighted enhanced safeguarding processes, audits, and collaboration, alongside tangible improvements such as better information sharing, reduced backlogs, and increased training uptake. However, common challenges persist, including inconsistent

application of risk assessment tools and definitions, gaps in specialist support, under-identification or recording of CSA and Exploitation, variable professional curiosity, and weaknesses in data sharing and system integration. Emerging risks include online abuse, extra-familial exploitation, non-recent disclosures, and exploitation-linked violence, reinforcing the need for clearer multi-agency pathways, stronger intelligence sharing, improved support for non-offending families, and continued workforce development to ensure consistent, proactive safeguarding across the partnership.

Safeguarding Children Under 5 Themed Discussion:

In December 2025 the Partnerships themed discussion focused on safeguarding children under 5. The discussion highlighted that across the partnership, safeguarding children aged 0–5 is characterised by a strong and increasingly integrated multi agency approach, combining early identification and prevention (led by health services, Fire and Early Help), specialist assessment and intervention (CAMHS and social care), and protection, investigation, and risk management (Police and Probation), with clear evidence of effective collaboration, high levels of safeguarding training, and a growing commitment to trauma informed, child centred practice that prioritises the voice and lived experience of the child; audits and service data highlighted timely responses, good use of assessment tools, and impactful interventions such as health visiting reviews, home safety visits, and specialist investigative techniques, all contributing to improved identification of risk and support for vulnerable families, however consistent themes for development remain including strengthening professional curiosity and analytical depth, improving engagement with fathers and wider family networks, ensuring more consistent multi agency wraparound support and inclusion (particularly for Probation), addressing gaps in information sharing and understanding of MASH and Early Help pathways, reducing geographical inequalities in provision, and enhancing exit planning, outcome tracking, and system wide consistency so that improvements are sustained and fully embedded across all services.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Themed Discussion:

The themed discussion in March 2026 focused on Mental Health and Wellbeing. Across Bedfordshire, partners are delivering a comprehensive, whole-system approach to children and young people's mental health, spanning prevention, early help, targeted interventions, and crisis response. There is strong evidence of effective multi-agency collaboration between health (CAMHS/ELFT), Children's Services, Police, Fire & Rescue, Probation, and community services, with a clear strategic shift towards early intervention, community-based support, and "no wrong front door" access. Services include Mental Health Support Teams in schools, parenting programmes, digital access (e.g. text-based support), therapeutic and specialist interventions, and structured youth and rehabilitation programmes. Evidence shows positive outcomes, including improved wellbeing, reduced need for statutory intervention, increased resilience, and measurable progress through therapeutic support, alongside strong governance through audits, reviews, and outcome tracking.

However, the system is experiencing increasing demand, complexity, and capacity pressures, particularly at the crisis end of pathways and within health services. Key challenges include delays in access to mental health provision (e.g. Mental Health

Treatment Requirements (MHTRs) and Section 136 handovers), workforce capacity gaps, fragmented commissioning, and inconsistencies in information sharing and practice. While strengths include strong early help, partnership working, and a growing focus on lived experience, priority areas for development are improving timeliness, integration, data consistency, and capturing the voice of the child, alongside expanding early intervention and ensuring sufficient capacity across the system.

Other work of the partnership including multi-agency audits and quality assurance work:

Neglect Campaign:

During 2025-26 the Partnership had a focus on neglect via a neglect communications campaign, activities included the development of a campaign logo via a competition with young people, the development of a neglect section on the Safeguarding Bedfordshire website providing lots of resources and toolkits for practitioners, the development of a leaflet to signpost members of the community to local helpful resources and services the provision of several bitesize training courses, including topics such as what is neglect, adolescent neglect, hoarding and educational neglect.



CSA Audit:

In December 2025 the Partnership carried out a Pan Bedfordshire CSA Audit – looking at 9 CSA Cases across Bedfordshire. The audit looked at the following aspects:

- The referral
- The Assessment/understanding of risk
- Partnership working and interventions
- Safety planning
- Overall management of the case

Positives:

- There were some good examples of positive partnership working throughout the cases.
- Some good examples of safety plans in some of the cases.
- All the referrals to Children's Services were appropriate

- There were some good examples/evidence of the Voice of the Child in some of the cases and understanding the risk.

Areas for consideration:

- Understanding the risks on a partnership footprint and what this means in relation to partnership working, interventions and safety planning.
- There was an over reliance on mothers to implement safety plans, especially when the mother may have their own vulnerabilities, and especially when there has been a history of domestic abuse and coercive control or a history of abuse in their own childhood.
- Recording of information within Police records need to be more detailed.
- There needs to be more follow up in cases where children chose not to disclose – better recording of reasons why and following up later to offer further opportunities for disclosing.
- There is sometimes an over reliance on self-reporting by perpetrators about their behaviour and help they are receiving – which is not always true.
- There is a need to ensure all safety plans are shared with partners and accepted and there is a clear plan of how these will be monitored and reviewed going forward – 2 step planning processes, now and later.
- Consider responding to cases in similar ways as we do to cases of coercive control.
- Partners need to have on-going discussions around timescales for therapy work vs safety planning to help avoid drift and delay for victims.
- Issues around cultural not identified and addressed
- The vulnerabilities of the children not considered in some risk assessments.

These considerations and learning have been fed into the CSA Steering group for dissemination and action.

CSA Training:

As part of the Partnership's spotlight on Child Sexual Abuse, Safeguarding Bedfordshire has worked with external organisations to provide two new 'face to face' training events for 2025/26.

- [‘Developing an Understanding of Child Sexual Abuse’](#) (DUCSA - 2 day): This is accredited by the NSPCC and delivered by local practitioners who completed ‘train the trainer’.
- [‘Technology Assisted Child Sexual Abuse’](#) (TACSA - 1 day): Delivered by Marie Collins Foundation to specifically address the impact of technology used in CSA.

Further details regarding the attendance and evaluation of this training can be found within Appendix A – the Training Annual Report.

Annual VOC Conference 2025:

The annual Voice of the Child Conference 2025 took place on Tuesday 11th November 2025 at the Rufus Centre, and the focus was ‘Feeling safe in our community and feeling safe in our lives’. The Conference was opened and led by young people (through Big

Beds United). 3 schools from each local authority were invited, along with some students from Central Bedfordshire College. Unfortunately, 3 schools dropped out of attending on the day, therefore consideration needs to be given to how this may be handled in future years. The conference received positive feedback from the young people and schools that attended on the day.

Overall outcome themes included:

- Worries about online safety
- Feedback for educational settings
 - What makes children feel safe or unsafe in school
 - The actions that are taken when bullying or incidents happen – there doesn't appear to be consistency
 - People being unkind is becoming the norm and sometimes what is seen as banter is going too far
- Worries about gangs and exploitation

Young People's Webpage:

Our young people's pages of the Safeguarding Bedfordshire website were developed and co-produced with young people; you can access the pages here:

<https://safeguardingbedfordshire.org.uk/p/safeguarding-children/welcome-to-children-young-people>

Child to Parent Abuse Audit (CAPVA):

In conjunction with the other Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children and Adult Partnerships the CBSCP carried out a Pan Bedfordshire Child to Parent Abuse Audit.

In relation to good practice, there were some great examples of partnership working and positive interventions being put in place with children and families, in particular some intensive work from within Children's Services, which led to the family's situation improving to the extent that families could be stepped down from services.

In relation to areas for further development, some examples were:

- There were some examples where, the think family approach was missing and also the communication between adults and children's services could have been improved.
- Terminology/abbreviations used by children/adult services have different meanings and potential different consequences in terms of next steps and interventions for the child/young person/family.
- There was sometimes confusion about who the lead agency/practitioner was, and sometimes the thresholds between Children's Services, Adult Services and MARAC do not align, making cases/risk difficult to understand.
- In relation to SEND/neurodiversity issues evident in some cases but appear to have not been fully explored regarding the impact on the young person's violent behaviour.

The audit identified several questions for consideration and discussion by Pan Bedfordshire Quality Assurance and Improvement Sub-Group:

- How do the Partnership/Partners improve the knowledge and understanding of Parent Carer Assessments?
- What are the Partnerships/Partners response to Harmful Sexual Behaviours?
- What are the Partnerships/Partners response to children and adults with ADHD?
- Lack of self-criticism in the audits – how do the Partnerships and Partners address this?
- How do Partners improve their recording on systems & interpretation of information shared?
- Communication between departments – how can this be improved?
- What more does the Partnership/Partners need to do to promote/support the Think Family Approach?
- Cultural issues still not being addressed – how do the Partnerships/Partners address this?
- How do the Partnerships/Partners promote the Lead Practitioner and multi-agency chronologies?
- Any practice improvements will be based on systems learning and any individual practice gaps tasked for the relevant Partners to feedback to the Partnerships?

Actions that have taken place since the audit:

- Development of CAPVA Toolkit
- Harmful Sexual Behaviours Training being discussed with FCAMHS
- Possible ADHD webinar/training being discussed with FCAMHS – useful resources have also been added to the website
- MARAC Co-ordinator has been given read only access to Mosaic
- On-going Multi-Agency Chronologies Pilot
- Continued work with partners to standardise the language used for demographics
- Domestic Abuse ‘Power Hours’ including a session on CAPVA
- Domestic Abuse and CAPVA is included with our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Bedfordshire Training
- Domestic Abuse and CAPVA is also included within Single Agency Training
- AI Video and awareness briefing around different assessments has been produced for the Safeguarding Bedfordshire Website

Safeguarding Education:

The Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Education Group continued to meet on a quarterly basis throughout 2025-26 reviewing themes such as feedback from the local School Section 175 Audits (Safeguarding Self-Assessment Audits completed by schools), data/information around school attendance and exclusions and processes and practice in relation to Electively Home Education across Bedfordshire.

On a quarterly basis the group also links in with the local School DSL clusters to understand the issues and themes occurring locally in education settings, throughout the year themes have included Harmful Sexual Behaviours, sexism, mental health and wellbeing, online safety, parental and sibling imprisonment, bail conditions, staff code of conduct and CSA.

Similar links were also made with the Early Years Networks who have also received partnership updates throughout the year, including training and learning from case reviews. The issues raised by the Early Years networks attendees have mainly focused on the LADO processes; therefore, links have also been made with the LADO Service.

Section 11 Audit:

The Pan Bedfordshire Section 11 Audit for 2025-26 took place on the 5th May 2026. The Section 11 process involves multi-agency partners completing self-assessment safeguarding audits in relation to:

- Assurance and governance
- Evidence of impact on children and families
- Learning and improvement

Key discussion themes included:

- Strong collective commitment to safeguarding across agencies
- Shift required from:
 - Descriptive reporting → Evidence of impact/outcomes
- Importance of:
 - Voice of the child
 - Multi-agency working
 - Demonstrable improvements in practice
- Recognition of capacity and resource pressures affecting all agencies

Pan Bedfordshire Thresholds:

In January 2026 a new joint Pan Bedfordshire 'Effective Needs' document – previously known as thresholds guidance was agreed to help multi-agency partners working across the three local authority areas. The document aims to simplify the levels of need across Bedfordshire and improve the quality of referrals into the three front doors ensuring children receive the correct services in a timely manner. The guidance was officially launched on the 18th April 2026 and impact of the new guidance will be evaluated throughout 2026-27.

Multi-Agency Chronologies and Multi-Agency Joint Supervisions:

During 2024-25 the Partnership launched some projects to increase the use of multi-agency chronologies and multi-agency joint supervisions, work has continued throughout 2025-26 to imbed and increase the use of both these tools/processes, feedback from when they have been used has been very positive with practitioners finding them extremely useful.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews:

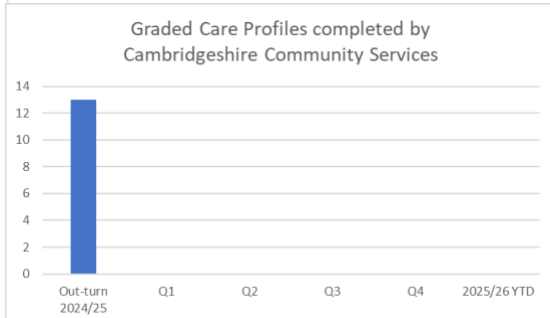
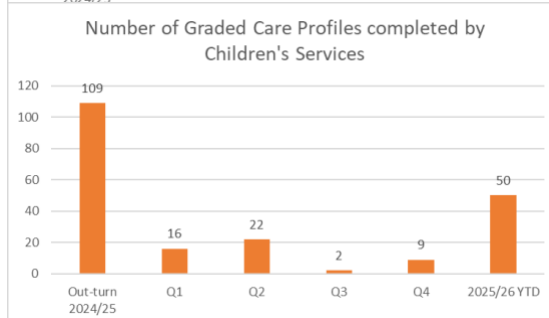
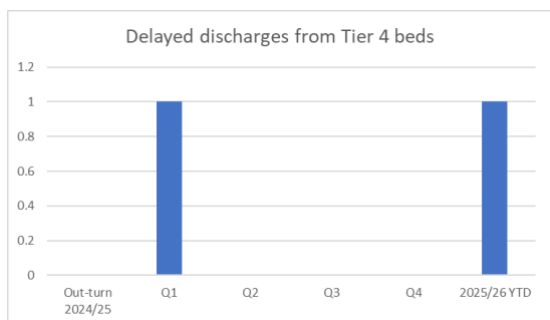
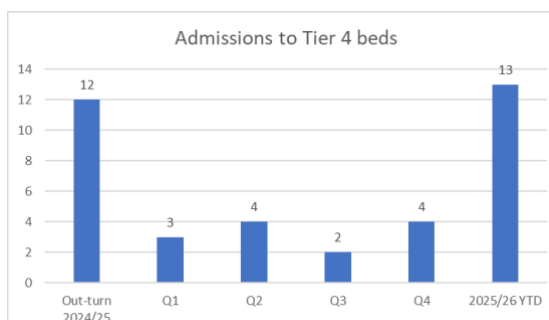
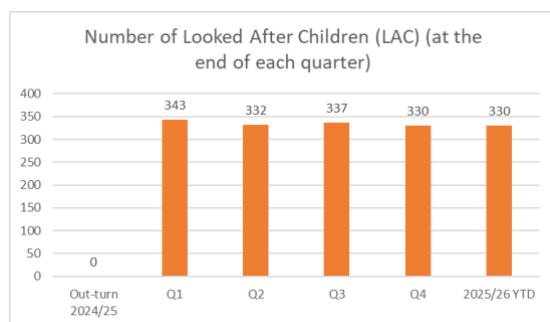
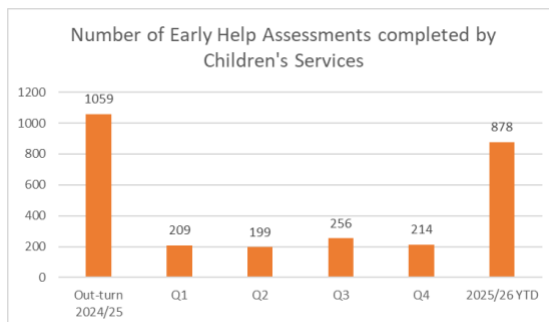
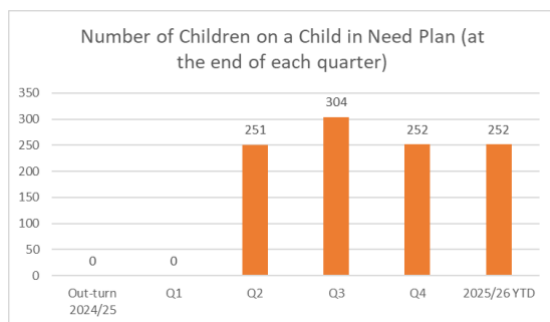
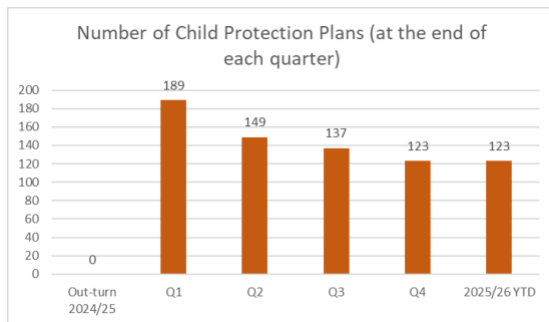
No new Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were undertaken by the partnership during 2025-26.

Training:

The Partnership Annual Training Report is contained in **Appendix A**.

Performance:

Throughout the year the CBSCP Performance group have monitored and scrutinised the partnership dashboard on a quarterly basis, below are some highlights of some of our key performance indicators:



Funding Contributions and Spend:

Current funding arrangements (Per year), including the costs of both the Business and Training Units.

Annual Funding Contributions:

Partner	Total Contribution	Business Unit/Training Split	Overall Percentage of Contribution
Central Bedfordshire Council	£137,730.19	£121,671.07 – Business Unit	64%
		£16,059.12 – Training Unit (CBC provide also provide extra funding to purchase training places for all staff – not included in this figure)	
BLMK ICB	£54,829.84	£44,905.64 – Business Unit	26%
		£9,924.20 – Training Unit	
Bedfordshire Police	£19,991.61	£16,373.13 – Business Unit	9%
		£3,618.48 – Training Unit	
Probation	£2,200	£1,801.80 – Business Unit	1%
		£398.20 – Training Unit	
Total Budgets	£214,751.64	Business Unit - £184,751.64 Training Unit - £30,000.00*	

Business Unit Spend 2025/26

Annual contributions: **£184,751.64**

Carried forward from previous years: **£84,230.93**

2025/26 Forecast Spend: **£184,372.59**

Breakdown of Spend 2025/26:

Expenditure	Amount
Staffing	£141,384.65
Independent Chair/Scrutineer	£24,120.00
Car Mileage	£953.00
Training	£250.00
Staff related costs	£100.00
Website development	£3,690.00
Subscription	£750
MASA Review	£2,514.90
Advertising and Publicity	£1,000
Venue Hire/Conference Costs	£1,895
CSPR's costs	£275
Additional CDOP Costs	£7,440.04
Total Spend	£184,372.59

£30,000 is also spent by the CBSCP on multi-agency training.

A further £7,000 is provided by CBC towards the contribution costs of CDOP.

Summary and Areas for Development

Overall, the Partnership has continued to work effectively throughout 2025/26, demonstrating strong and cohesive multi-agency working. Partners have maintained a shared commitment to safeguarding children and young people, working collaboratively to progress key priorities whilst creating a culture in which constructive challenge, professional curiosity and shared accountability are actively encouraged. This ability to work together, whilst also providing appropriate challenge when required, remains a significant strength of the Partnership.

Throughout the year, however, partners have recognised the challenges arising from significant organisational change across several agencies, increasing service demand, workforce pressures and resource constraints. Whilst partner commitment has remained strong, these factors have at times impacted attendance, capacity and engagement across some areas of the governance structure. As a result, partners acknowledged the importance of ensuring that safeguarding arrangements remain efficient, proportionate and focused on delivering impact rather than generating activity.

In response, the Partnership undertook a comprehensive review of its Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) during 2025/26. The review identified a number of strengths within existing arrangements, including strong partnership relationships, effective scrutiny, and a shared ambition to improve outcomes for children and families. However, it also highlighted opportunities to simplify governance structures, strengthen accountability, improve oversight of partnership priorities and reduce duplication across the safeguarding system.

Following the review, a revised governance structure has been agreed which will be implemented during 2026/27. Partners have committed to progressing these changes at pace, recognising the significant benefits the new arrangements will bring.

The revised arrangements will:

- Provide clearer lines of accountability and ownership for safeguarding priorities.
- Strengthen strategic oversight and decision-making.
- Improve the ability of leaders to identify emerging safeguarding risks and respond promptly.
- Reduce duplication across partnership groups and streamline reporting processes.
- Make better use of partner time and resources, reducing system burden and meeting fatigue.
- Create stronger links between scrutiny, learning, workforce development and improvement activity.
- Improve the use of performance information, audit findings and learning reviews to inform decision-making.
- Strengthen the Partnership's ability to demonstrate the impact of safeguarding activity on frontline practice and outcomes for children.
- Support greater consistency of approach across Bedfordshire whilst retaining a clear focus on local needs.
- Better position the Partnership to respond to national reforms and future inspection and assurance requirements.

The Partnership recognises that demonstrating impact remains a key area for development. Whilst there is significant evidence of learning, activity and collaborative working across the system, partners acknowledge the need to further strengthen how improvement is measured and how the difference made to children and families is evidenced. The implementation of the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements will be an important step in supporting this ambition by creating a governance

framework that is focused not only on what the Partnership does, but on the difference it makes.

Ongoing Priorities for 2026/27

- The Partnership will continue to focus on the following priorities:
- Neglect
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Exploitation
- Under 5s and Non-Accidental Injuries
- Voice of the Child
- Transitions

Alongside these priorities, the Partnership will focus on implementing the revised Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, strengthening the evaluation of impact, embedding learning consistently across agencies, reducing duplication across the safeguarding system, and ensuring that the voices and experiences of children, young people and families remain at the heart of all partnership activity.

As the Partnership moves into 2026/27, the ambition is to build upon the strong foundations already established, creating a more streamlined, impactful and sustainable safeguarding system that enables partners to work together effectively and demonstrate tangible improvements in the lived experiences and outcomes of children and young people across Central Bedfordshire.