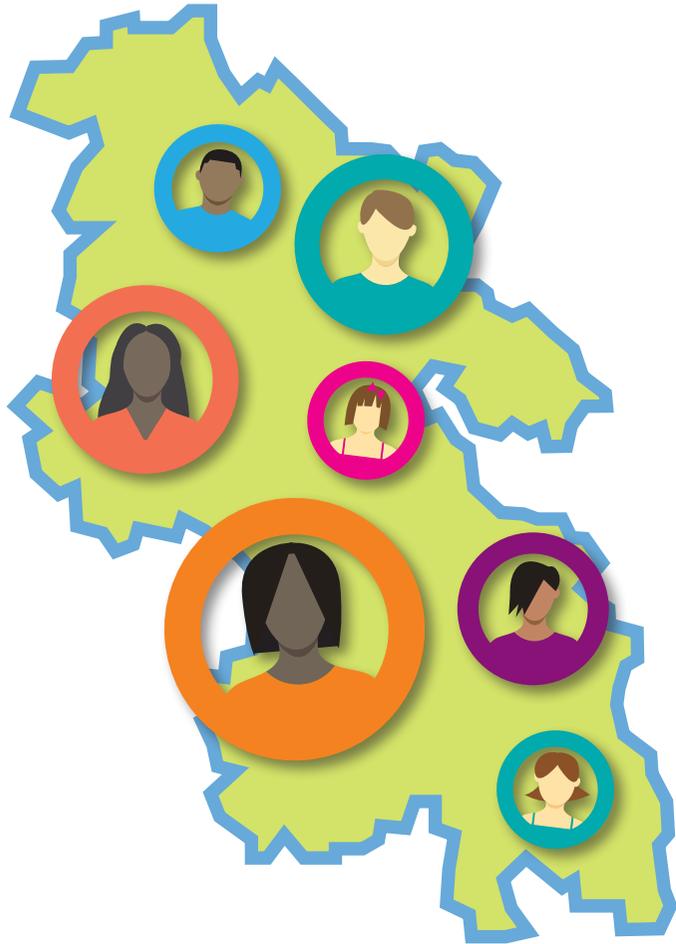


# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S STRATEGY 2016



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# 1 Children are at the heart of Buckinghamshire County Council's strategic priorities.



## Safeguarding our vulnerable children

We want Buckinghamshire to be a great place for all children and young people to live, be safe, to learn and achieve successful and fulfilled lives. We have strong collaborative partnerships across the County with Families, Businesses, Schools and Colleges, Private and Voluntary Sector, Police, Health, District and Parish Councils and many more.



## Creating opportunities and building self reliance

Our vision for children and young people in Buckinghamshire is:

**“Children and young people are safe, happy and healthy, feel valued and value others, are treated fairly, have lives filled with learning, thrive and are able to enjoy life and spend quality time with family and friends.”**



## Keeping Buckinghamshire thriving and attractive



Children and young people are the future of our county, which is why we have put them at the heart of our strategic priorities. We want Buckinghamshire to be a safe place for children, where they can have fun, grow and thrive. It is really important that all our children and young people are supported to achieve their full potentials.  
**Leader of the Council, Martin Tett**



This document describes our ambitions and priorities for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire. This is built on the foundation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which the UK Government is a signatory. As statutory agencies and partners, we should do all within our powers to protect and promote the rights of children as enshrined in the convention. This includes the child's right to protection, family life, a good education, proper health care and decent housing.

SAFE

HAPPY

HEALTHY

## 2 Planning for the future, what the data tells us about our children

Buckinghamshire is a county of contrast, with a predominantly rural north and a more urban south. We have 120,600 children and young people under the age of 18, representing 22.8% of the county's total population. The size and diversity of the county creates opportunities, but also some significant challenges.

We have 234 schools and academies in Buckinghamshire attended by 82,000 children and young people. Although Buckinghamshire is often perceived as an affluent county some of our children and young people still experience financial hardship and 6.0% of pupils at our schools are eligible for Free School Meals. Some of our pupils need extra support for other reasons and 11.2% have special educational needs.



### Current projections suggest:

- The number of children and young people (aged 0-19) in Buckinghamshire has been growing steadily over the last 15 years, from 123,000 (in 2001) to 132,000 (in 2016), an increase of 7%.
- This growth is set to continue over the next 15 years, which will be driven by more families and children moving into the county (the emerging Local Plans for Buckinghamshire suggest significant housing growth over this period) as well as by the number of children being born in the County.
- Over the last 5 years (2011 – 2016) we have seen increasing demand for some council services for children – in some cases, the increase in demand has been higher than the increase in the population of children and young people.

For example:

- Demand for school places has increased by 7% over the past five years and is projected to increase by a further 5% from 2015/16 to 2019/20 (with the largest increases expected in Aylesbury Vale and High Wycombe).
- Over the last five years the number of Looked After Children has increased by 18%, the number of children with a Child Protection Plan has increased by 20%, and the number of young people with Special Educational Needs has increased by 12%.
- The growth in the numbers of children and young people in the county combined with the growth in demand for services creates significant pressures that we need to plan for in the future.

### We also have to think about:

- Place shaping with design of new homes and communities.
- Growth spots e.g. Wycombe, Aylesbury and neighbouring counties.
- Pockets of high deprivation.
- Need to grow and attract more key workers.
- Need to ensure children learn skills to enable them to find work locally.
- National policy context.
- Public sector austerity.

## 3 Together keeping our children safe

**Safeguarding remains a priority for us all. To keep our children safe we will continue to strengthen and improve our operational service delivery, systems, procedures and commissioning of services.**

We continue to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure children are supported to live safely within their home and communities and where appropriate move seamlessly between services, achieve independence and transition into adulthood.

We continue to work with District Council's and other agencies to keep communities safe. Some of the priority areas we will continue to strengthen our work around are: domestic abuse, addressing radicalisation, reducing youth offending, substance misuse and support children with mental ill-health.

We have a 'relationship based' model of intervention which focuses on the whole of the family, looking at their strengths and how we can build on them, identifying areas of risks to children and what we need to do to mitigate against them, as well as areas where they need support. We believe in promoting self-reliance and building community resilience. The services to deliver our relationship based model will be evidenced based good practice and adapted to our population's current and future needs.

### Right service, right time, right place

- We will deliver effective interventions and family support in an integrated and coordinated way in order to achieve better outcomes for all children, and reduce the need for children and their families to access statutory services.

### Child centred

- We will ensure our services are child centred and optimise the engagement of children, families and partners in the co-design, delivery and evaluation of services to meet their needs.
- We will ensure children's voices are heard in all decision making.
- We will keep children and their families at the heart of all we do.

### Keeping children with their families

- Our aim is to keep children in their own home where it is safe to do so and only bring children into care when it is the best option for them.
- We will work to ensure that more children are placed in a family setting nearer their schools, family and friends.
- Every day counts for a child so we will strive to achieve a stable home for a child as quickly as possible.

### Developing our workforce

- We will work to ensure our workforce is skilled to ensure children receive a high quality consistent service.
- We will develop a workforce that is engaged, empowered, works together and has excellent leadership.

### Being innovative and digital

- We will encourage staff, partners and children to realise the potential of new technology to deliver our services differently.
- We will work with children and families to ensure they aware of the digital environment and remain safe within it.



The Children's Improvement Programme has already delivered significant improvements in our safeguarding services but we need to maintain a relentless focus on improving our services to children and their families.

**Cabinet Member for Children's Services,  
Lin Hazell**



# 4 Enabling all our children to learn and develop skills for life

**Resilient and successful children and families lead to resilient and successful communities which in turn drive county wide social and economic growth and prosperity.**

Our education system is highly regarded with the majority of our performance indicators above the national average. We remain focused on championing excellent education for all children.

We continue to build on our good relationships with all education providers to make sure that the necessary changes and improvements happen in a coordinated manner for all Buckinghamshire's children and young people to reach their full potential.

Our priority in the coming years will be to ensure we continue to focus on narrowing the achievement gap between our most disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

The education landscape is changing and we will maintain our focus on educational excellence for all. We are committed to working with all education providers across the county.



I am very proud of the history of achievement of Buckinghamshire schools however we must always be mindful that every young person deserves to achieve everything they possibly can in life and it's our responsibility to help them.

**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills,  
Zahir Mohammed**



## Best start in life

- We will support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning
- We will ensure that parents know what services are available locally.
- We will plan to ensure there are enough childcare places

## Narrowing the gaps in learning

- We will improve achievement for all children and narrow the gap between the most vulnerable and their peers
- We will support children to fully participate and engage in their learning
- We will work with schools to reduce the number of children being permanently excluded and support schools with behaviour management.

## Supporting our workforce

- We will work with our schools and school leaders to make Buckinghamshire an attractive place to work as a teacher

## Improving outcomes for those with special education needs or disability

- We will ensure children who have special educational needs and or disability have a single plan that coordinates all the help they need from different services
- We will increase confidence and capacity within mainstream schools in supporting children and young people with SEND

## School improvement

- We will ensure every child has access to a high quality school place
- We will encourage all young people to go on to further learning, training or through vocational routes
- We will work to enable more schools to be rated Ofsted good or better

## Being innovative and digital

- We will encourage staff, partners and children to realise the potential of new technology to deliver our services differently

# 5 Improving our children's health and well being

**Investing in improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people is one of the most important things we can do.**

What happens in pregnancy and the early years impacts on both physical and emotional health and wellbeing through childhood and into adult life and influences educational attainment and economic success as adults. The teenage years are vital as this is when the majority of behaviours that affect health such as smoking and alcohol consumption are initiated.

Protecting and promoting good mental wellbeing is important throughout life but there are key windows of opportunity throughout childhood which can help promote good mental wellbeing and resilience. Half of all mental disorders start by the age of 14 so early detection and a rapid, effective response is vital.

Although children in Buckinghamshire are generally healthy there are large variations seen in health and wellbeing across different groups of young people in Bucks. Children living in the most deprived fifth of the population have worse health and educational outcomes than the average and other groups such as looked after children, young carers are also at risk of poorer health.

## Ensure every child has best start in life

- We will aim to ensure all mothers have good mental and physical health during pregnancy and after the baby is born.
- We will provide advice and support for parenting.

## Enjoy healthy lifestyles

- We will promote good health for the child and family and encourage breastfeeding with newborns
- We will promote sexual health
- We will reduce harm from alcohol, smoking and drug use

## Promote good mental wellbeing and emotional resilience

- We will promote child and family mental wellbeing.
- We will protect children from the harmful effects of neglect, domestic violence and family substance misuse.
- We will provide opportunities for children to learn coping skills and emotional resilience.
- We will ensure rapid responsive mental health support for children and their families when they need it.

## Community life

- We will work to ensure young people are a part of a vibrant community life in Buckinghamshire, that our communities are child and young people friendly and involve them in designing services and making their communities a great place to grow up.
- We will support and provide play, leisure, culture and sporting opportunities that young people and their families have helped design.

## Workforce

- We will ensure our workforce is trained to support behaviour change and community driven solutions.



The early years, childhood are vital for setting young people on the road to happy, healthy and successful lives. Good mental and physical health helps achieve their goals in life. It benefits their education, ability to make friendships, achieve fulfilling jobs and affects their health throughout life and future generations.

Jane O'Grady, Director of Public Health



## 6 How are we going to do it: the 5 year plan

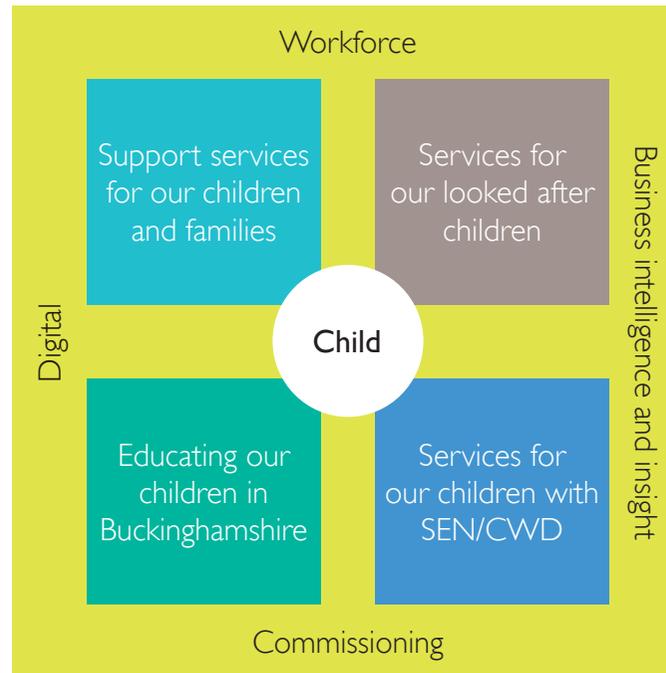
Like all Local Authorities, we have challenging financial circumstances so need to target our resources carefully and our most vulnerable children remain our priority. We will maximise our resources through being as efficient as possible, working collaboratively with others and putting our children at the heart of our decision making.

The aim of the 5 year plan is to help make things better for children and young people in Buckinghamshire. The plan will outline key priorities, key dependencies and the detail behind the four projects:

- Support Services for children and families – a new preventative co-ordinated approach for families.
- Services for our looked after children – enabling a stable permanent home for a child as quickly as possible.
- Services for our children with special educational needs and or disability – providing them with the support they need in a timely fashion to achieve their full potential
- Educating our children – a new approach to implement the 'team around the school' approach.

These projects detail how we will help develop children's services in Buckinghamshire in order to deliver our commitments as outlined in this strategy.

Our fiscal projection over the next 5 years and the as yet, unclear national funding arrangements for the local authority, requires us to identify how we are going to be financially sustainable whilst continuing to meet the needs of children.



### Supporting documents:

- Looked After Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- Education Strategy
- SEND Strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Workforce Strategy

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The challenges facing the public sector, both nationally and locally, mean that it is more important than ever to be focused on what we want to achieve, confident in the effectiveness of the services that we deliver and commission, and clear how we will improve outcomes for children and young people. Together we can keep children safe and enrich their lives.

Director of Children's Services, David Johnston

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