



THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD July 2007

1. What is the BCSB?

1.1 Key agencies must work together effectively to properly safeguard and promote good outcomes for children and young people. To strengthen arrangements for safeguarding the Local Authority, pursuant to its duties under the Children Act 2004 have established a Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB), covering all areas of Buckinghamshire.

1.2 The BSCB is the key statutory mechanism for coordinating inter-agency work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Buckinghamshire. It replaces the non-statutory Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC).

1.3 The Board brings together representatives of the main organisations who work with children and families. It has two overarching functions, to coordinate what each person or body represented on the Board does to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Buckinghamshire and to ensure agencies carry out this work effectively.

1.4 BSCB is committed to working in partnership with the community to improve wellbeing (as defined by Every Child Matters). However, the Board's core business is to keep children safe. This includes, protecting them from harm, preventing impairment of their health and development, ensuring they have safe and effective care, and undertaking the role in ways that ensure children have optimum life chances and successfully enter adulthood. The Board will concentrate on its core business, encapsulated by the Staying Safe and Being Healthy Every Child Matters outcomes, before considering its wider agenda.

1.5 Children Acts 1989 and 2004 underpin Board activities. The Acts provide a comprehensive framework for children's care and protection whilst reflecting the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and European Convention on Human Rights. Convention rights incorporate "protection from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child". This includes the right to "prevention and the identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow up of instances of maltreatment". (Article 19 UNCRC).

1.6 Protecting children requires close working relationships between Social Care, Education, police, medical and nursing services, schools, voluntary agencies, and others. 2-A of this section summarises the main roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies, professionals, the voluntary sector and the wider community in relation to Child Protection.

1.7 Joint agency or management policies for Child Protection need to support co-operation at the individual case level. The BSCB is the recognised joint forum for developing, monitoring and reviewing Child Protection policies.

1.8 The BSCB encourages all private and voluntary organisations offering services or who have significant contact with, children in Buckinghamshire to have their own internal Child Protection procedures in place (where it is not part of their registration requirement).

2 What does the BSCB do?

Scope

2.1 BSCB safeguards and promotes children's welfare in three broad areas of activity. Universal children's activities that aim to identify and prevent maltreatment or impairment of health or development and ensure children have consistent, safe and effective care.

For example:

- mechanisms to identify abuse and neglect
- work to increase understanding of safeguarding children's issues in the professional and wider community,
- work to ensure that organisations working or in contact with children, operate safe recruitment and human resource practices;
- monitoring the effectiveness of organisations implementation of their duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004; and
- ensuring children know who they can contact when they have concerns about their own safety.

b) Proactive work that targets particular groups of children for example:

- work to safeguard and promote the welfare of groups of children who are potentially more vulnerable than the general population, for example children living away from home, children who have run away from home, children in custody, or disabled children.

c) Responsive work to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of harm, including:

- children abused and neglected within families in the context of domestic violence, and substance misuse;
- children abused and neglected by professionals, within institutional settings, or where they are cared for away from home;
- children abused by other young people;
- young perpetrators of abuse; and
- children abused through sexual exploitation and prostitution.

2.2 The BSCB does a number of things that have a direct impact on those staff working in the field of Child Protection. These include:

- making sure all Child Protection in the County is carried out within the framework of agreed inter-agency policies;
 - promoting partnership as a key principle, both in Child Protection work with parents and in the development of quality links between all agencies involved in the process;
- and
- supporting multi-agency training in Child Protection, which is pivotal to providing an efficient and sensitive service.

Specific Responsibilities

2.3. The BSCB has a number of specific responsibilities. They are:

- to develop and agree local policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including policies and procedures in relation to:

- i. the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention;
- ii. training people who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
- iii. recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
- iv. investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
- v. the safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
- vi. co-operation with neighbouring children's services authorities and their Board partners;

- communicate and raise awareness about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to individual services, professional groups and the wider community, in particular, to explain their shared responsibility for protecting and promoting children's welfare, and how each can contribute to these objectives;

- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Buckinghamshire County Council and its Board partners individual and collective work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and advise on ways to improve;

- participate in planning services for children and putting in place objectives and performance indicators for Child Protection, within the framework and objectives set out in children's services plans;

- undertake reviews of serious cases where a child has died or in certain circumstances been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is confirmed or suspected, advise the Authority and Board partners on lessons to be learned and ensure they are understood and acted upon;

- improve local ways of working in the light of knowledge gained through national and local experience and research, and to make sure that any lessons learned are shared, understood, and acted upon;

- encourage and help develop effective working relationships between different services and professional groups, based on trust and mutual understanding;

- ensure that there is a level of agreement and understanding across agencies about operational definitions and thresholds for intervention; and

- help to improve the quality of Child Protection work and of inter-agency working through specifying needs for inter-agency training and development, and ensuring that training is delivered.

In carrying out these responsibilities the BSCB considers the welfare of the child to be of paramount concern and encourages consultation with children in addition to their carers. Furthermore, BSCB recognises that the primary responsibility to protect children and promote their welfare resides with parents.

2.4. To deliver a quality service to children parents, carers and professional staff within member agencies the BSCB will:

a) Work to identify and prevent child abuse and neglect and ensure children grow up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care by:

- developing policies and procedures for safeguarding, promoting the welfare of children in

Buckinghamshire and providing a forum to review, amend and improve these policies as necessary;

- monitoring the effectiveness of organisations implementation of their duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004;
- establishing means to communicate with communities in Buckinghamshire to ensure all communities understand issues of safeguarding and provide the opportunity for BSCB to address those issues;
- using the structures in place to ascertain the views of children, parents and carers and ensuring Child Protection work is carried out in partnership with children, parents and carer;
- ensuring information is available to children so they know who they can contact when they have concerns about their own safety and welfare;
- developing standards for the recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children and monitoring their implementation and compliance;
- developing and implement a training strategy to meet the training needs of staff across all agencies so that they work effectively together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who may be at risk of significant harm;
- participating in the local planning and commissioning of children's services to ensure they take safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children into account. The Board will also encourage the development of preventive services for parents, to allow them the means to improve their parenting knowledge and skills;
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the Local Authority and Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, through peer reviews, joint auditing and individual service monitoring and advise them on ways to improve;
- improving cross border collaboration; and
- carrying out its task with due regard to the Equal Opportunities policies of its constituent agencies.

(b) Undertake proactive work that targets particular groups of children by:

- developing and implementing strategies to safeguard and promote the welfare of groups of children who are potentially more vulnerable than the general population, for example children living away from home, children who have run away from home, or children with disabilities.

(c) Carry out responsive work to protect children who are suffering or at risk of harm by:

- ensuring systems are in place to identify and support the safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
- making sure there are systems in all agencies for investigating alleged breaches of safeguarding practices in respect of persons working with children and monitor compliance with the procedures;
- establishing a Child Death Review Group to review all child deaths in Buckinghamshire; and

- undertaking serious case reviews as required by Working Together to Safeguard Children.

3. Anti-discriminatory Guidance

3.1 All agencies working with children and families should ensure they have policies and practices in places that cover all sections of the community and take account of race, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, gender sexuality and class.

3.2 Ethnicity and Culture

a) Children from all cultures are abused and neglected. They have a right to grow up safe from harm, equal access to services and the same consistency of response. Professional judgments about a child's needs, and his or her parenting, must take account of differences in family patterns, lifestyles and child rearing patterns across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups.

b) Professionals should be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against black and minority ethnic people. They should understand the effects of racial harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism, as well as cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

c) Professionals should guard against myths and stereotypes of black and minority ethnic families, both positive and negative. They should be aware of and work with the strengths and support systems available within families, ethnic groups and communities, which can be built on to help safeguard children and promote their welfare. At the same time they must be clear that child abuse can not be condoned for religious or cultural reasons.

d) The assessment process (see Section 3.4) should maintain a focus on the needs of the individual child. It should always include consideration of the way religious beliefs and cultural traditions influence the family's values, attitudes and behaviour and how family and community life are structured and organised.

e) Cultural factors neither explain nor condone acts of omission or commission, which place a child at risk of significant harm. Anxiety about being accused of racist practice should not prevent the necessary action being taken to safeguard a child. A thorough assessment, based on evidence of a child's needs, and a family's strengths and weaknesses and understood in the context of the wider social environment, will help to avoid the distorting effect of these influences on professional judgments.

3.3 Other Aspects of Difference

a) All agencies working with children and families are responsible for ensuring they provide services in a way that does not further discriminate against children and families and positively promotes their well being.

b) Professionals need to take account of disability, gender, sexuality, class mental health issues and domestic violence in safeguarding work. They must also bear in mind that a family's experience of disadvantage is never a reason for not acting to prevent child abuse or neglect.

c) Professional should base decisions about child's safety on a careful assessment of the child's needs and family strengths and weaknesses which is supported by evidence.

4. Accountability

4.1. The BSCB is accountable to the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's services. Whilst the BSCB operates within the Children's Trust Governance arrangements, it has a clear and distinct identity and is not an operational subgroup of the Children's Trust.

4.2. The BSCB's work as set out in its annual Business plan, and agreed and endorsed by Board partners within the framework of the Children's Young Peoples plan, is monitored and inspected through Joint Area Reviews and the Annual Performance Assessment process. The BSCB is not responsible for the operational work of member organisations. Each Board partner retains their existing lines of accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as prescribed by their service. The BSCB does not have a power to direct other organisations; it does have the responsibility to challenge organisations.

4.3. Agencies must have procedures in place for considering reports from its representative(s) to identify any action necessary by the agency or the BSCB.

5. Membership

5.1. The BSCB comprises representatives nominated by each of the principal member agencies, plus co-opted members who represent a particular discipline or body. Principal agency representatives must be people with a strategic role in their organisation for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. They must be able to speak for their organisation with authority, commit their organisation on policy and practice matters, and hold their organisation to account. Each member has a duty to contribute to the effective work of the BSCB by assessing performance and recommending or deciding on action to rectify problems. Appendix 2-B to this section outlines the principal agencies, nominated representative post holders and their roles and responsibilities.

5.2. Attendance of a principal agency representative at Board meetings is considered mandatory. Where a member is unable to attend, the agency may nominate a suitable deputy. To provide a quorum, at least half of the total number of principal agency representatives and either the Chairperson or vice Chairperson must be present.

5.3. The BSCB will normally conduct business by reaching a consensus. Should the Chairperson decide a vote is appropriate on a matter that has budgetary implications then the senior representative present from the principal agency may vote. The Chairperson will have the casting vote. Co-opted members present may vote on matters that do not have budgetary implications.

6. Co-opted & Corresponding Members

6.1. A discipline or body whose personnel have a relevant contribution to make to the work of the BSCB may be represented on the BSCB by co-opted membership. Whilst the attendance of co-opted members will not generally be mandatory, members may attend meetings if they so wish. Conversely, the Board may consider the attendance of one or more co-opted member agency representatives desirable for specific agenda items. In which case, the co-opted representative will be asked to attend the meeting. Otherwise, co-opted members will ordinarily be classified as 'corresponding' only.

6.2. Only one person per discipline or body will be nominated to attend Board meetings. From time to time, the BSCB may co-opt additional people for achieving its long-term aims and objectives or in the interest of the Board's business in general. A list of co-opted member agencies and their representative post holders can be found on the website (www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/bscb/membership)

7. BSCB Chairing: Policy & Arrangements

7.1. A person of sufficient standing and expertise to command the respect and support of member agencies will Chair the BSCB. The Chairperson's role is to ensure the Board operates effectively and has an independent voice. She or he must have a firm grasp of operational issues within Buckinghamshire. It is BSCB's policy for the Director of Children's Services in consultation with Board members to appoint a Chairperson who is independent of member agencies, where practicable and prudent.

7.2. Where the Chairperson is independent of the member agencies, the vice-Chairperson will be an officer from Social Care.

8. BSCB Working Groups

8.1. To provide support to the BSCB, working groups have been established to carry out specific tasks or provide specialist advice. The groups work to agreed terms of reference within the framework of the annual business plan and have clear lines of reporting and communicating with the Board, which monitors their work. Working groups may be short term or have standing basis.

9. LSCB Annual Business Plan

9.1. The BSCB produces an annual business plan, setting out a work programme for the forthcoming year. The plan includes the Aim and Key Principles of the BSCB, together with measurable objectives, actions and targets. Relevant management information on Child Protection activity in the course of the previous year and progress against objectives is included. The plan both contributes to and derives from the framework of the Children's and Young People Plan. Senior managers in each of the principal constituent agencies endorse it.

9.2. An edited version of the plan is also published for the wider community, copies of which can be accessed through local libraries.

10. Administration

10.1 Buckinghamshire County Council, whose support services include legal, financial, and administrative advice & support, will service the BSCB. The Board will normally meet by-monthly. Minutes will be circulated to principal and co-opted members for information and consideration at the next Board meeting.

The Board is also supported by a Business Manager who assists in the preparation of the Business plan and assists partners in the efficient implementation of decisions of the Board.

11. Financial Provisions

11.1 The BSCB will set an annual budget at the beginning of each financial year. Contributions are made by each of the principal agencies represented on the Board. Pro-rata ratios between

agencies are agreed on an inter-agency basis and reviewed annually. Members' agencies are required to allocate funds for these purposes. There are three principal areas of expenditure: Policy and practice in relation to Child Protection in the County; Inter-agency training based on an agreed formula; *and*,

Any other purpose approved by the BSCB i.e. administration, or inter-agency publications/publicity. Recharging for multi-agency training is sent out one year in arrears. Voluntary agencies are not expected to contribute to the annual budget.

12. Budget Management

12.1. BSCB Budget requirements are as follows:

- a) The budget will be held in a dedicated account;
- b) At the first meeting of each financial year Buckinghamshire County Council will nominate a treasurer to ensure the proper financial administration of the Committee's financial affairs;
- c) The treasurer will be entitled to attend and speak at Board meetings but not to vote (unless attending in a separate capacity as a member of a principal agency);
- d) An annual presentation of accounts will be made at the first meeting in each financial year;
- e) A budget summary will be presented at each Board meeting;
- f) The Treasurer should be consulted prior to bids being submitted for funding, which should be properly costed and presented;
- g) The main BSCB budget will be the responsibility of the Chairperson of the BSCB and will be managed on a day to day basis by the BSCB Business Manager.

13. Management Information

13.1 Buckinghamshire Children Services will make available at each BSCB meeting information on the yearly BSCB Business Plan.

13.2 Members of the Board may submit reports to meetings on any major internal or external factors affecting the level of service provision in Child Protection work (including any initiatives on the prevention of child abuse)