

Feedback from Thresholds Survey

January 2017

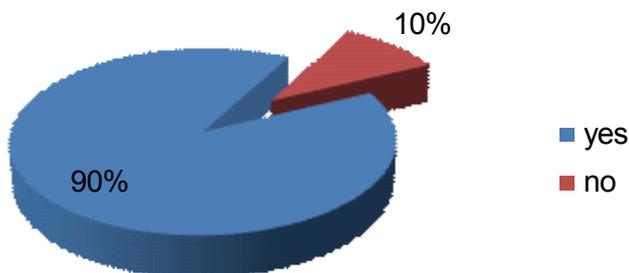
The [BSCB Thresholds document](#) outlines 4 levels of need to identify when a child may need additional support to reach their full potential. When Ofsted undertook their inspection in summer 2014, they commented on poor knowledge of thresholds across the partnership. In March and April 2015, the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board ran a [multi-agency consultation](#) on our Thresholds document. Across the 241 respondents, 40% had not heard of the Thresholds document.

Since then, the Board has undertaken substantial work with partners on communication and awareness raising. Feedback from partners and results from auditing are now demonstrating increased knowledge and improved application of thresholds.

Between September and December 2016 we ran a second survey to help us understand how well the Thresholds document is known and used across different organisations. 460 professionals responded; 193 via a short version of the survey we ran at our 3 safeguarding conferences in September 2016 and 267 via an online survey. Overall responses show a large **increase in knowledge and usage of the Thresholds document** compared to the survey we ran in April 2015.

Key Findings

1) Were you aware of the Thresholds document before this survey?

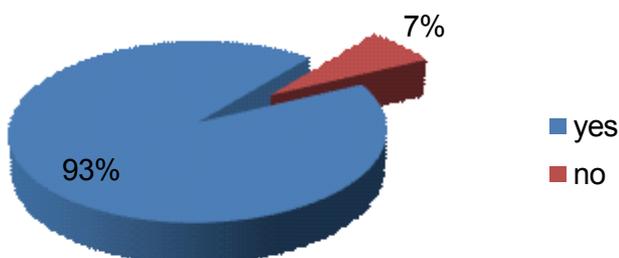


90% of respondents said they were aware of the Thresholds document, compared to 60% in April 2015.

There has been substantial work across the partnership to improve knowledge of thresholds since 2015. This includes:

- Single and multi-agency training and awareness raising
- The dissemination of over 4,000 laminated, colour copies of the Thresholds document
- The design and dissemination of over 3,000 copies of each of our two wallet cards outlining what to do if you have a concern about a child in Buckinghamshire
- The design of a new referral flow diagram
- 1:1 work with agencies to improve the quality and appropriateness of referrals

2) Do you personally know how to access the Thresholds document?

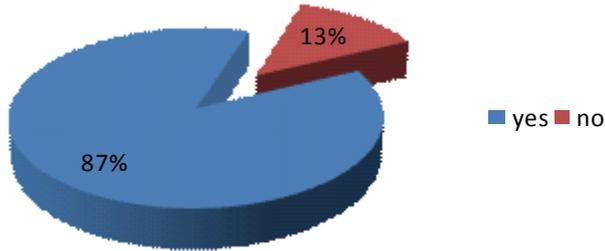


93% of respondents said they knew where to access the Thresholds document (for example where to find it online or where it was displayed in their own organisation).

The thresholds document has made the referral process simpler and aids the decision making process when referring to social care, identifying the criteria needed for individual referrals.

(NB: The online questionnaire was routed, so if you answered **NO** for Q1, you would not have seen question 2. Routing was not possible for the survey completed at the conferences, which is why the answer for Q2 is a higher percentage than that for Q1.)

3) Is the Thresholds document prominently displayed in your office?

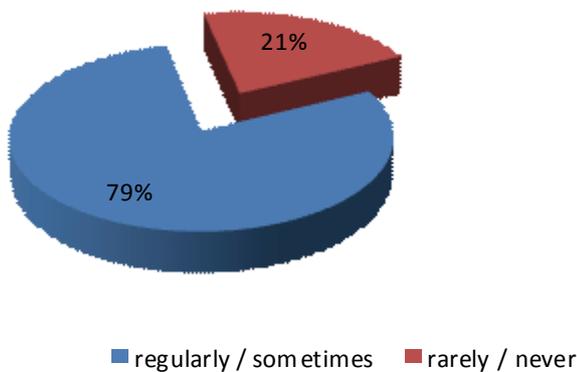


87% of respondents said the Thresholds document is prominently displayed in their office in a place where staff can see it.

We have had good feedback from the partnership that making free, laminated copies of the Thresholds document available, alongside the referral flow diagram and wallet cards, has encouraged colleagues to display the documents in a prominent position.

We regularly see multiple copies displayed when we visit offices around the county and continue to disseminate further copies to partners and through our own training.

4) Do you use the Thresholds document in your day to day work?



79% of respondents said they used the Thresholds document either regularly or sometimes in their day to day work. This compares to 61% in 2015.

We know that the survey was answered by a range of staff with different roles and responsibilities including a number of staff who do not have a direct operational role with children and young people. We would not expect all of these staff to be using the Thresholds document on a regular basis.

Only 6% of respondents said they never used the Thresholds document compared to 15% in 2015.

Our laminated Thresholds documents, wallet cards and referral flow diagram have been distributed widely to help improve knowledge.

I have looked at the thresholds document to help a family. I read each stage / step for advice. I then recommended this advice to the family. I have the thresholds document on display in my setting and I do look things up to help me recognise any problems that a child or parent might have. It is very helpful as there are specific categories for what type of help you need to focus on.

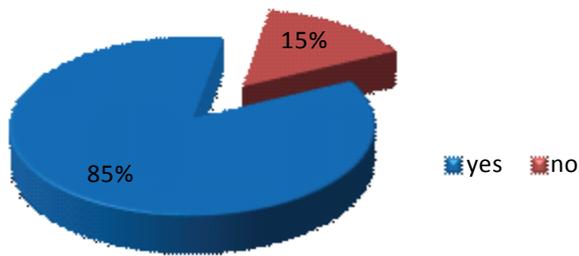


Basic wallet card which reminds staff that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff are directed to contact their safeguarding lead if they have a concern and there is space to write who this is on the back.

Detailed wallet card for safeguarding leads or those who have regular contact with vulnerable children and young people. This provides information on the course of action to take at different levels of need.



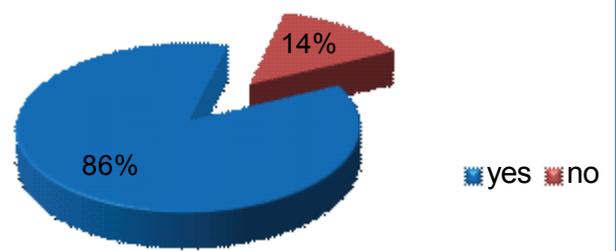
5) Do you find the Thresholds document helpful to inform decisions regarding children?



We use the document to decide how to support parents - whether to go to First Response, whether to access parenting groups via BFIS etc.

We have a copy in the staffroom and in my office. If I have a query about a pupil, I always look at the Document to guide me before phoning for advice.

6) Are you clear about where your service fits within the Thresholds document?



It is a practical guide to support my understanding of the levels of need a child may require. I read it frequently to familiarise my knowledge of the information.

It has helped me to recognise the correct pathway for concerns; directing a professionals meeting to ensure that individual professionals were focused on the thresholds which helped ensure a child's needs were actually considered more carefully and appropriately.

Questions & Queries

Whilst the vast majority of comments made by respondents were positive and demonstrated effective use of the Thresholds document, a very small number of respondents raised challenges. These comments fell into 3 categories.

1 An agency may assess a child to be at level 4, but Children's Social Care say it does not meet their criteria.

Any agency who has a concern about a child is asked to use the Thresholds document to help them assess the child's level of need and take an appropriate course of action. Where an agency feels the child's level of need meets the level 4 threshold for a statutory response led by Children's Social Care, they should outline their reasons for this on the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF). However, the decision about whether the threshold has been reached is made by Children's Social Care. If the threshold is not met, then there are other options available to ensure the child gets the most appropriate level of support. For example, where need is assessed to be at level 3, the Early Help Panel can provide a coordinated Early Help response.

It is not helpful when the thresholds document is clearly referenced and then ignored by Social Care.

The only issue is when children who appear to be on level 4 are 'not meeting the criteria' for Social Care.

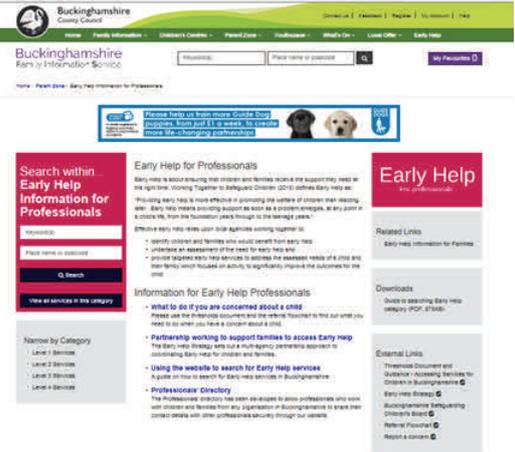
Our MARF are always informed by the Thresholds document. I have experienced problems with referring a child who meets level 3 criteria and not being accepted by Social Care at that level. If a professional has assessed a child using the thresholds document, this should be accepted.

The protection of children will always be an area in which there may be differences of opinion about the best course of action. Where there is disagreement between Children's Social Care and the referring agency about the level of need, there should be discussion to try and resolve this. The [BSCB Escalation Procedure](#) provides further information, including setting out a formal process for resolving differences of opinion where this cannot be achieved through the normal course of business.

2 The Thresholds document should include contact details for the agencies that are mentioned

The document is clear but it would be useful to have all the contacts on the same document.

Contact details are provided for First Response and the Police due to their role in responding to situations needing urgent and immediate attention. However, the Thresholds document is a reference document, not a directory of services. There is not room to list contact details for all agencies, or provide more detail about what they can offer. Whilst some examples of services are provided at each level, this list is not exhaustive.



Professionals can use the [Buckinghamshire Family Information Service \(BFIS\)](http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org) to search for different services, including by level of need. The professionals directory of services is accessed by clicking on the Early Help tab from the home page. The details for BFIS are provided on the Thresholds document.

3 The Thresholds document doesn't cover everything, and sometimes we can't find the situation we are dealing with

The Thresholds document needs to apply across a range of ages and needs, whilst also remaining a reference document that can be effectively used by professionals across a range of agencies. We have tried to be as specific as possible in the language used, and cover a wide range of scenarios.

However, there may be some instances where professionals need to work on a 'best match' basis. The [Thresholds guidance](#) indicates that alongside referring to the Thresholds document, practitioners should use their professional judgement, experience and training and not restrict their considerations to the example indicators contained within the chart. The indicators are not exhaustive and children's needs do not always clearly fit into the specific levels or the examples that are given.

I understand that it is a large document but it does not cover everything and we sometime read and re-read it looking for the situation we are dealing with and don't find it.

If professionals need support or advice in making a judgement they should discuss this with their line manager or designated safeguarding lead.

Further Information & Contacts

- **Thresholds document and guidance:** www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/professionals/thresholds-document/
- **The Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS)** website provides a full directory of services and contact details including further details of our Early Help Offer: www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/home.page
- To order **FREE** laminated copies of our Thresholds document or copies of our referral flow diagram or wallet cards, please contact Carol Gorley (cgorley@buckscc.gov.uk)

The document has helped us to identify the next steps based on each individual set of circumstances.

Helped me decide whether early help or statutory intervention is needed. Reminded me about universal services and additional support that exist for all children

When considering whether to refer a child to Social Care for further investigation and support and when attending core groups it helps me to ensure that the needs of the child are held in mind.