

6. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

6.19 Safeguarding – Contacts, Referrals, Children in Need Plans, Child Protection Plans and Children Looked After

Children who require safeguarding and who are 'looked after' by the local authority are some of the most vulnerable in our society. This section will describe why their health and wellbeing requires a local response, it identifies the current and future prevalence and the services this group will require.

6.19.1 The impact of safeguarding on health and wellbeing

Children's Social Care receive contacts that are assessed to ascertain whether a child should be referred or not (a referral). A referral is defined as a request for services to be provided by Children's Social Care and is in respect of a child who is currently not assessed to be in need. A referral may result in an initial assessment of the child's needs, the provision of information or advice, referral to another agency or no further action. New information relating to children who are already assessed to be a child in need is not counted as a referral.

A child in need is one who has been assessed by children's social care to be in need of services and will therefore be on a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan and/or being looked after.

Children often enter care with poor starts to life, in infancy this can be related to parental neglect, or parental poor health which prevents the expected growth, both physically, neurologically and emotionally of the child. Early childhood deprivation is known to cause lack of brain development, which may lead to learning disabilities or attachment disorders.

In later childhood, children who enter care may have lived in low warmth, high criticism environments, which may lead to isolation or challenging behaviours. These issues can lead to young people becoming disaffected by society such as education, which is considered a protective factor, and young people engage in dangerous behaviours such as substance misuse, anti-social behaviour, and violence and are more susceptible to manipulation such as sexual exploitation.

Children who go on to be adopted or placed with special guardians often have additional needs which are not always explicit at the point of permanency. There is a need for these children and their parents or carers to receive ongoing interventions and support.

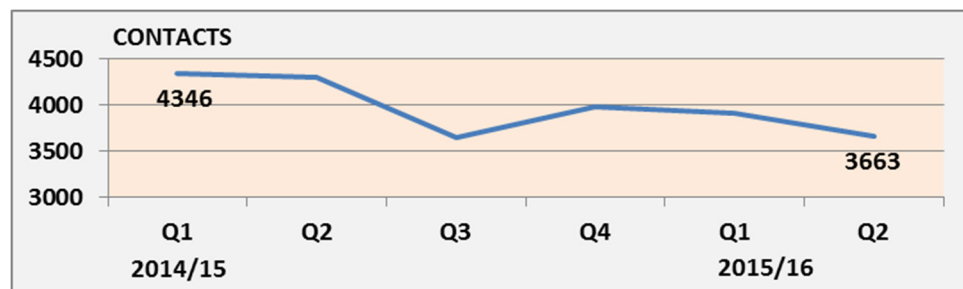
There is also acknowledgement that a poor transition from care into adulthood can often repeat the infant experience of a care leaver for their own children. The average age for a young person leaving care to become a parent is 18, whilst for adults who were not in care this is 24.

6.19.2 Information on Safeguarding

6.19.2.1 Contacts

Despite some fluctuations, there has been a slight downward trend in the number of **contacts** received each quarter by Children's Services during 2014/15 and into 2015/16. From 4,346 in the first quarter of 2014/15, to 3663 in the second quarter of 2015/16.

Figure 1 Contacts received each quarter by Children's Services during 2014/15 and into 2015/16

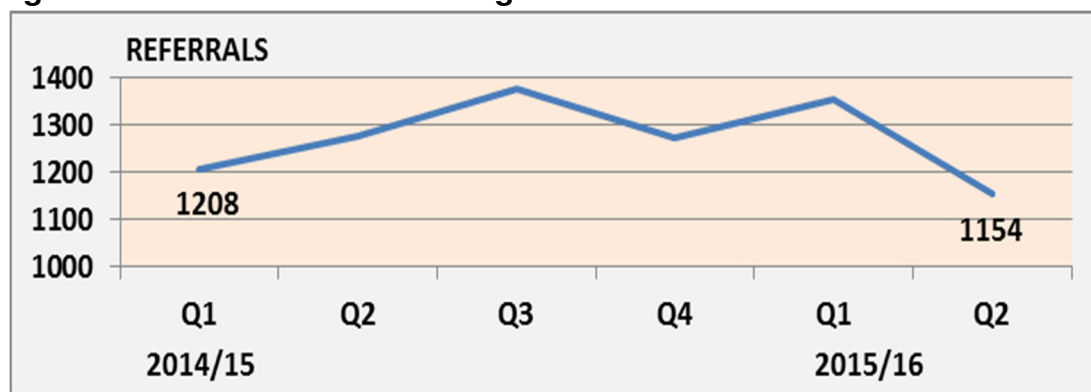


Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.2.2 Referrals

Until very recently there has been a slight increasing trend of referrals being received each quarter, thereby increasing the demand on front line assessment teams. The number of referrals increased from 1208 in Q1 2014/15 to 1354 in Q1 2015/16. However, Q2 2015/16 bucked the trend with a fall to 1154. Bucks had a higher rate of referrals compared to the average for similar councils during 2014/15 - 431 per 10,000 children compared to 373, although a lower rate than the English average of 548.

Figure 2 Referrals received during 2014/15 and into 2015/16



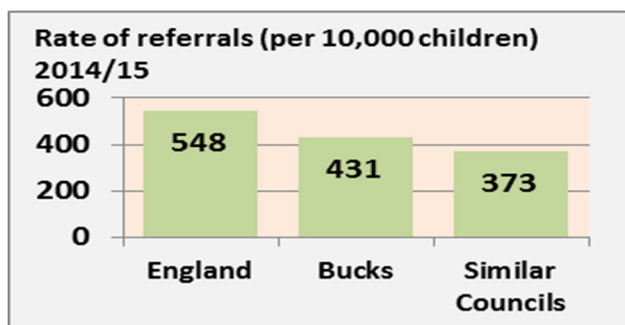


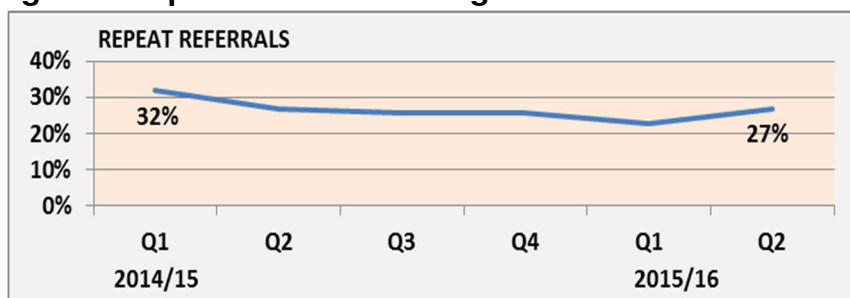
Figure 3 (above) Rate of Referrals during 2014/15

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.2.3 Repeat Referrals – lower % are better

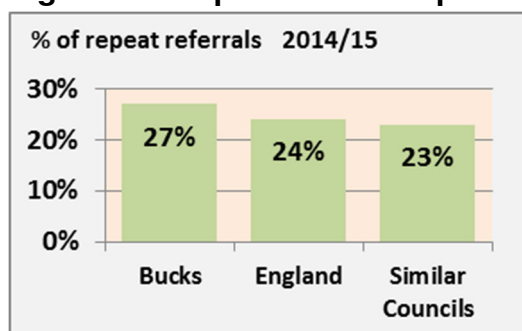
Repeat referrals decreased from 32% in Q1 2014/15 down to 23% in Q1 2015/16. However, Q2 15/16 saw an increase to 27%. Bucks' performance in this area is still below the English average of 24% during 2014/15 and the average for similar councils of 23%.

Figure 4 Repeat Referrals during 2014/15 and into 2015/16



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Figure 5 Comparisons of Repeat Referrals 2014/15

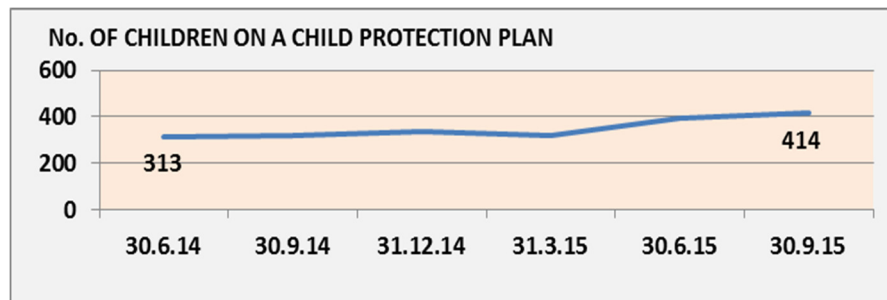


Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.2.4 Child Protection Plans

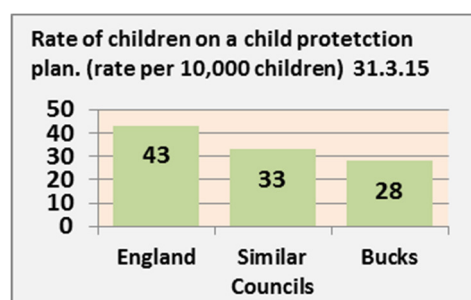
Number of plans - The number of children on a child protection plan is increasing, particularly in the first half of 2015/16. Numbers have increased from 313 children on a plan at 31.6.14 to 414 by 30.9.15. Despite the increase, Bucks had a lower rate of children on a child protection plan as at 31st March 2015 compared to the national average of 42.9 per 10,000 children and the average for similar councils of 33.1; however the latest Q2 figures puts Bucks now on a par with similar councils.

Figure 6 Number of children on a child protection plan June 2014-September 2015



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

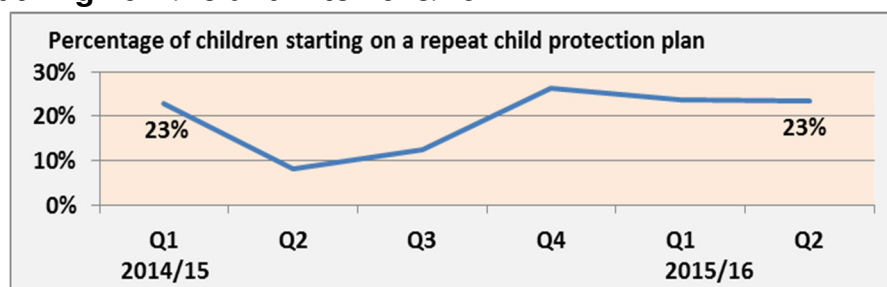
Figure 7 Comparisons of rate of children on a child protection plan



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Repeat plans - There has been an increase so far this year in the % of repeat protection plans compared to the full year 2014/15 result. The percentage of children starting on a repeat plan so far this year is 25.3% compared to 16.8% for 2014/15. During 2014/15 Bucks had a similar percentage of children starting on a repeat plan compared to other similar councils and the English average.

Figure 8 Percentage of children starting on a repeat child protection plan during 2014/15 and into 2015/16



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

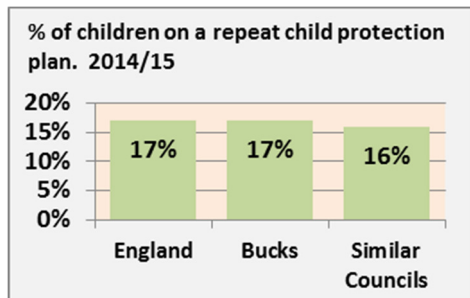


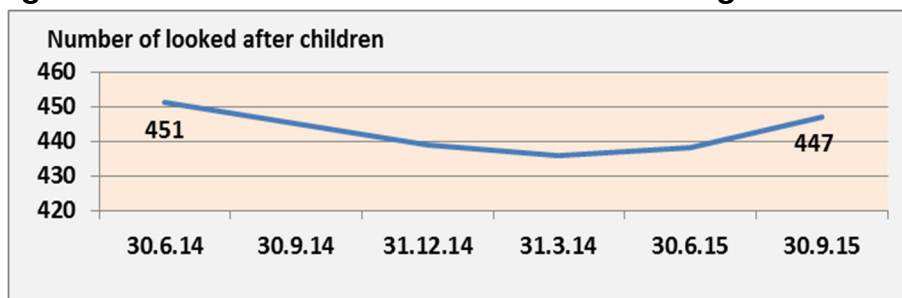
Figure 9 (above) Percentage of children on a repeat child protection plan during 2014/15

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.2.5 Looked After Children

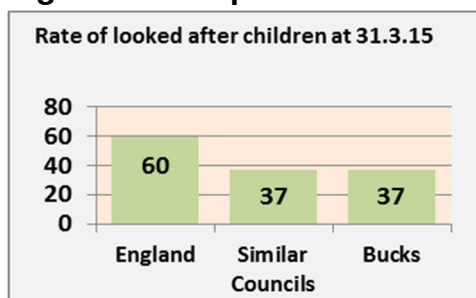
After falling during 2014, the number of looked after children has started to increase again during 2015. As at 30.9.15, there were 447 children being looked after, compared to 436 at 31.3.15. Bucks has a similar rate of looked after children compared to similar councils but must less than the England average.

Figure 10 Number of looked after children during 14/15 and into 2015/16



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Figure 11 Comparisons of rate of looked after children

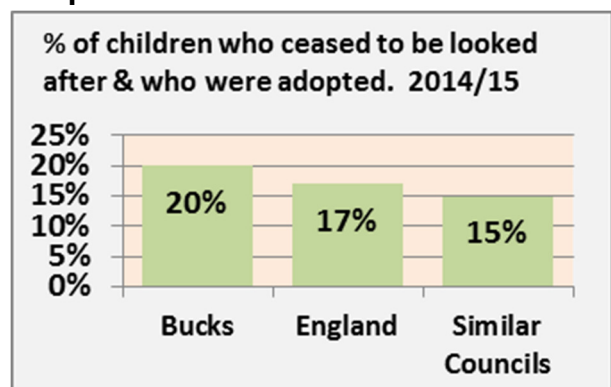


Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.2.6 Adoptions

A total of 30 children were adopted during 2014/15 this equals 20% of those ceasing to be looked after. This is better than the similar council average of 14.8% and the English average of 17%.

Figure 12 Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after and who were adopted



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.3 Demand

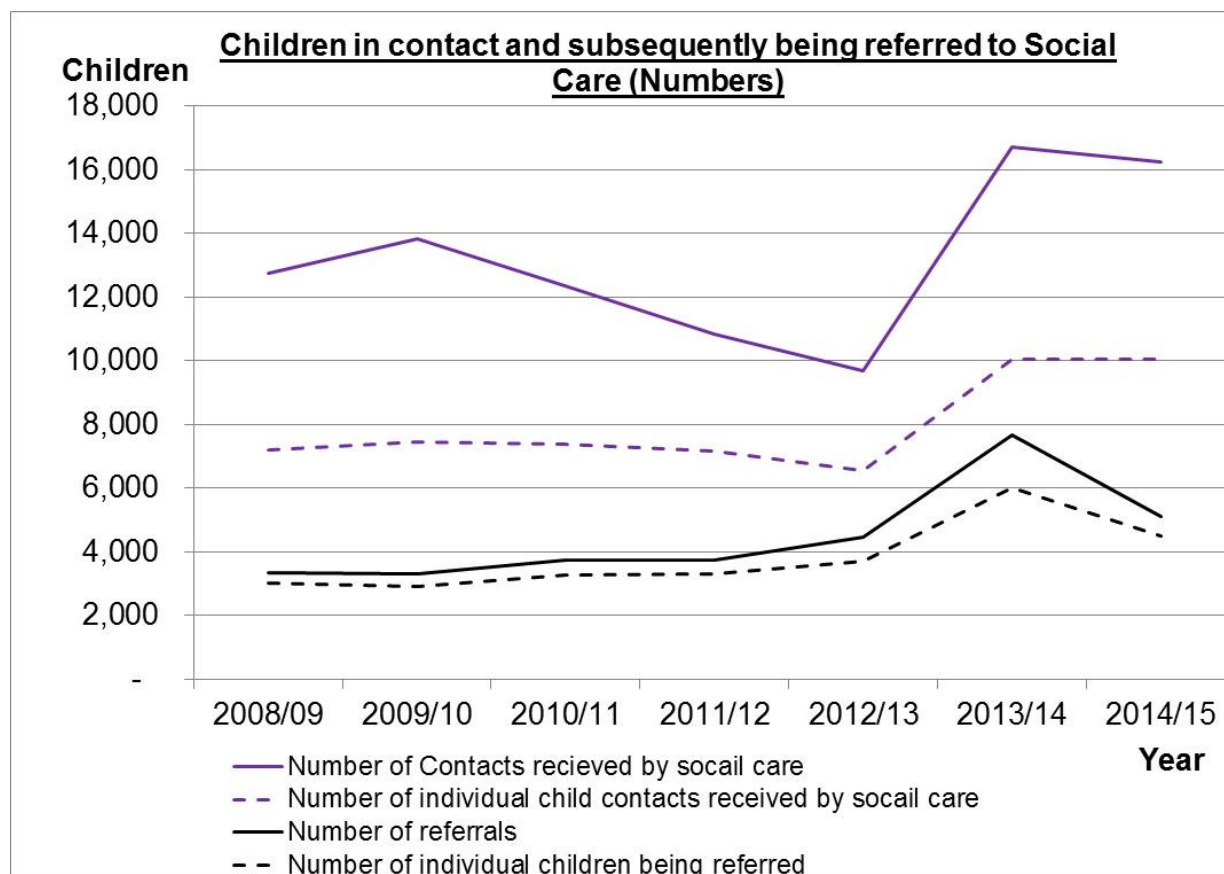
6.19.3.1 Contacts and referrals

The graph below shows the number of contacts and referrals to social care alongside the number of individual children in contact with the service, and those being subsequently referred, on an annual basis. Note that individual children appear once annually but can appear again in subsequent years where contacts and referrals continue.

The current number of contacts is at a much higher level in 2014/15 than in 2008/09, with the number of contacts for individual children remaining relatively stable from 2008/09 to 2012/13, rising at this point.

Referrals have risen slowly since 2008/09 to 2012/13, but have also risen to a much higher level in recent years mirroring the rise in contacts at this point.

Figure 13 Number of children in contact and subsequently referred to Social Care



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

6.19.3.2 Reasons for Contact

The most common reasons for contacting social care about a child are regarding; drug or alcohol issues, parenting issues, issues centring on where people live, anti-social behaviour, depression, domestic violence or assault, mental health issues in the family, domestic argument related issues, criminal damage, and other issues where partner organisations are involved e.g. police, school, GP/Health related issues. Source text analysis of common issues raised in contact forms.

In 2014/15 just under a quarter (23%) of contacts for individual children were assessed as needing to have a referral to further assess their need for social care services. Organisations and people making contact with social care about a child's welfare are an important step in a child (and family) receiving appropriate support, which can be social care interventions when the issues is severe enough (meet specific thresholds), early help services or more general support available to all.

6.19.3.3 Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children

The graph below shows the number of individual children subject to Child Protection Plans each year and the number of individual Looked After Children each year. Note

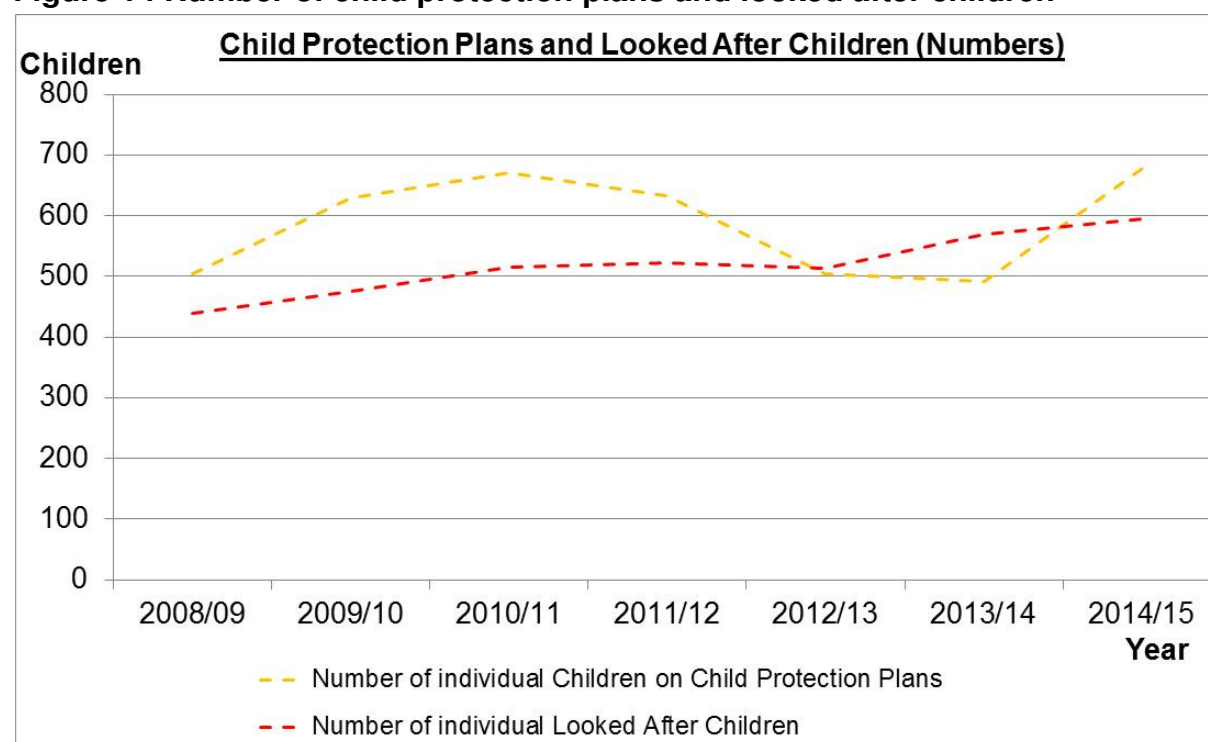
that individual children appear once annually but will appear again in subsequent years where they continue to be subject to care or re-entre care.

The number of individual children on Child Protection Plans (annually) initially rose from 2008 to 2010/11 where there was a short fall in numbers, before rising again in 2014/15.

There has been a general increase in the number of individual Looked After Children throughout this period from 2008/09 to 2014/15.

6.19.4 Inequalities and Descriptive Profiling

Figure 14 Number of child protection plans and looked after children



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

In the following section, acronyms are used throughout. Please find below a short description of their meaning:

1. CIN – (a child in need, this includes children subject to a child protection plan and children looked after)
2. CPP (Child Protection Plan, a child who has been subject to a child protection plan)
3. CLA/LAC (Children looked after, looked after child)

Please note that all definitions are in line with the Department for Education definitions.

6.19.4.1 Age Profile

The table below shows the age profile of children that have received a service for the whole of 2014/15.

Table 1 Age profile of children in receipt of a service during 2014/15

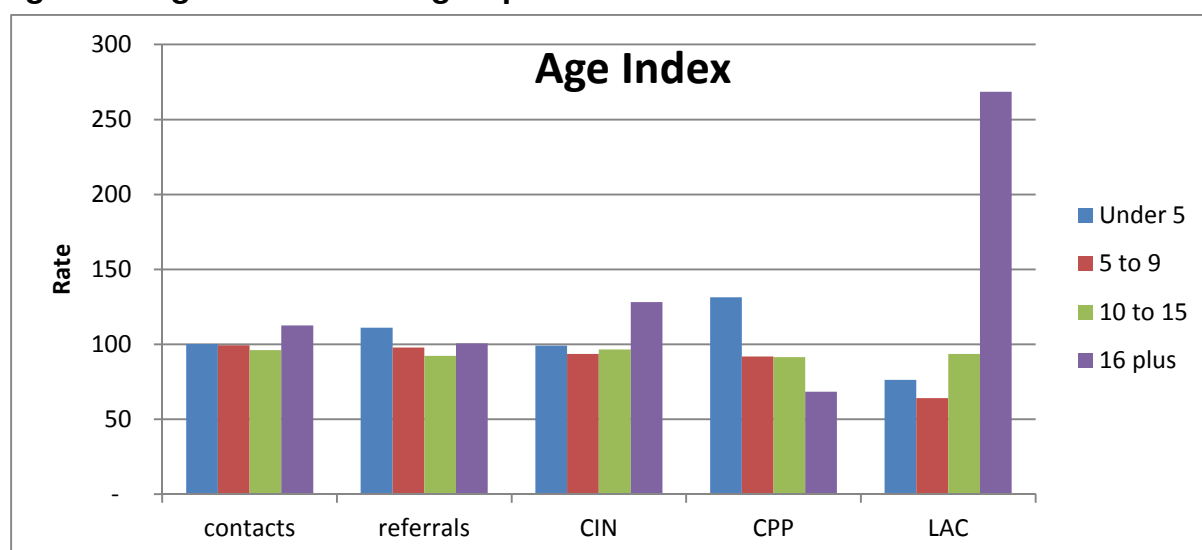
	Contacts		Referrals		CIN		CPP		LAC		County Profile
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Under 5	2779	28%	1375	31%	1798	27%	246	36%	125	21%	28%
5 to 9	2851	28%	1254	28%	1754	27%	178	26%	109	18%	29%
10 to 15	3157	31%	1353	30%	2076	32%	203	30%	182	31%	33%
16 plus	1269	13%	506	11%	944	14%	52	8%	179	30%	11%
Total	10056	100%	4488	100%	6572	100%	679	100%	595	100%	100%

Note that all ages have been recorded.

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

The graph below shows the age index of each group if compared to the county profile. This is based on all children receiving a service throughout 2014/15 where their ages have been calculated as at 31st March 2015, so some of these children appear older than when they received the service. It shows that the proportion of children under 5 that are on Child Protection Plans is 31% higher than the proportion of children in that age group in the county.

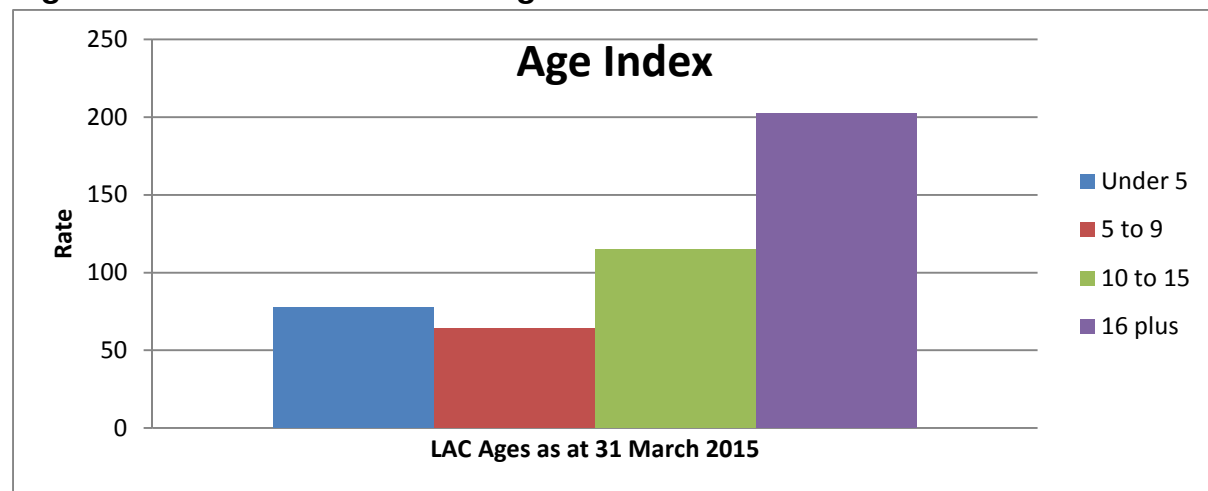
Figure 15 Age index of each group



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

* 100 is same as county proportion, 200 is twice the county proportion, 50 is half the county proportion

Figure 16 Looked after children age index



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Those aged 16 plus are also much more likely to be looked after. If we look at children that are looked after at a point in time (rather than the whole year) using the actual age at that point this shows that the proportion of LAC aged 16 plus is twice as high as the county profile for this age group.

6.19.4.2 Gender Profile

The table below shows the gender profile of children that have received a service for the whole of 2014/15. The gender profile of children that have been in contact or received a service is close very close to the county profile (based on those aged 0-17).

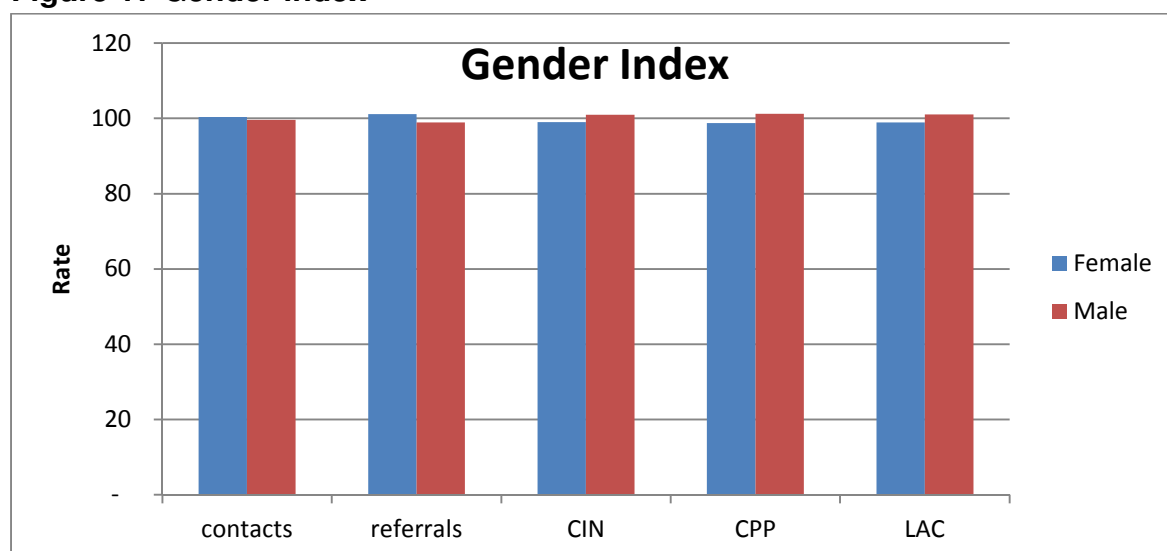
Table 2 Gender profile of children receiving a service during 2014/15

	Contacts		Referrals		CIN		CPP		LAC		County Profile
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Female	4816	49%	2176	49%	3130	48%	327	48%	287	48%	49%
Male	5020	51%	2234	51%	3354	52%	352	52%	308	52%	51%
Total	10056	100%	4410	100%	6484	100%	679	100%	595	100%	100%

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Note that for contacts 220 (2%) were not recorded, 78 (2%) for referrals and 88 (1%) for CIN. These have not been included in the analysis.

Figure 17 Gender index



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

* 100 is same as county proportion, 200 is twice the county proportion, 50 is half the county proportion

6.19.4.3 Disability

The table below shows the disability profile of children that have received a service for the whole of 2014/15. The reason the child became known is not necessarily because of their disability because there are a variety of reason, which are most often complex that they become known.

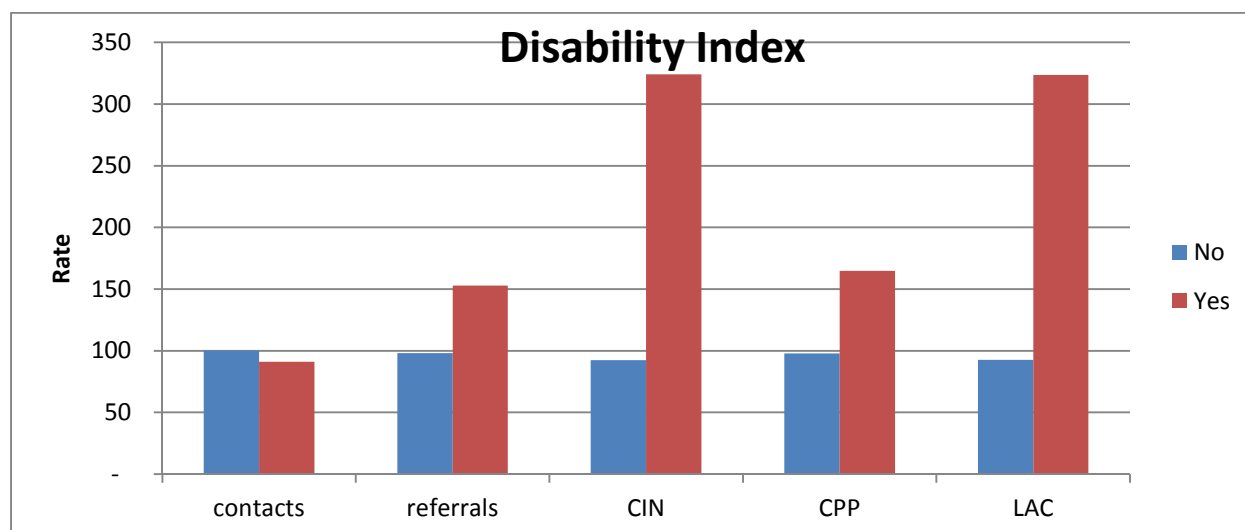
Table 3 Disability profile of children in receipt of a service during 2014/15

	Contacts		Referrals		CIN		CPP		LAC		County Profile
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
No	9761	97%	4267	95%	5886	90%	643	95%	533	90%	97%
Yes	295	3%	221	5%	686	10%	36	5%	62	10%	3%
Total	10056	100%	4488	100%	6572	100%	679	100%	595	100%	100%

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

The graph below shows the groups compared with the county profile. Both CIN and LAC proportion of children with disability is over three times higher than the rest of the county (based on children aged 0-19).

Figure 18 Comparison with the County profile



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

* 100 is same as county proportion, 200 is twice the county proportion, 50 is half the county proportion

6.19.4.4 Ethnicity

The below table shows the ethnicity profiles for each group of children who received a service for the whole of 2014/15.

Table 4 Ethnicity profiles for children in receipt of a service during 2014/15

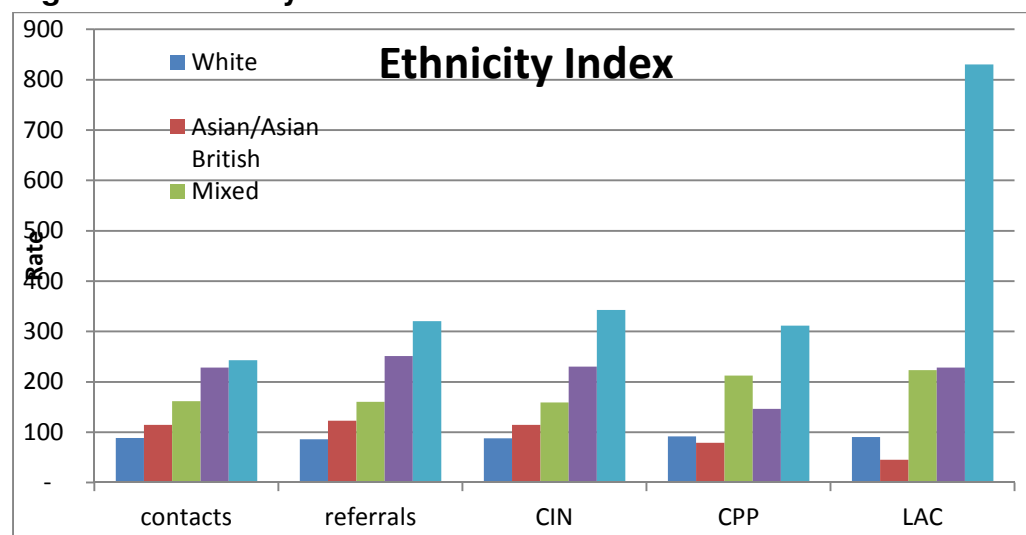
	Contacts		Referrals		CIN		CPP		LAC		County Profile
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
White	5059	70%	2894	68%	4367	69%	483	72%	422	71%	79%
Asian/ Asian British	990	14%	625	15%	864	14%	63	9%	32	5%	12%
Mixed	734	10%	428	10%	629	10%	89	13%	83	14%	6%
Black/ Black British	355	5%	229	5%	311	5%	21	3%	29	5%	2%
Other ethnic group	93	1%	72	2%	114	2%	11	2%	26	4%	1%
Total	7231	100%	4248	100%	6285	100%	667	100%	592	100%	100%

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Note that 2,825 (28%) recorded did not have an ethnicity record, 240 (5%) for referrals, 287 (4%) for CIN, 12 (2%) for CPP and 3 (1%) for LAC.

For all groups the proportions differ somewhat to the county profile (based on 0-17 year olds). The Mixed, Black/Black British and Other Ethnic Groups are all over-represented (when compared to the county profile of these groups) in all levels of intervention below.

Figure 19 Ethnicity index



Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

* 100 is same as county proportion, 200 is twice the county proportion, 50 is half the county proportion

6.19.4.5 Adoption

There are currently 28 children placed for adoption, this are awaiting a final adoption order being made, and 27 children who are in need of adoptive placements.

Table 5 Adoption figures

ADOPTION MEASURES	National Avg	Apr 2015	May 2015	Jun 2015	Jul 2015	Aug 2015	Sep 2015
Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family – A1	628	735	711	642	681	721	711
Average time (in days) between Placement Order and deciding on a match to an adoptive family– A2	217	460	488	453	409	391	367
% of children who wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family – A3	N/A	35%	37%	31%	33%	37%	40%

Data source: Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care Information System (LCS)

Currently Bucks is working in collaboration with Coram VAA to improve our performance around adoption. Current activity includes:

- Full review of the child's journey to permanence
- Review of the adoption panel
- Individual support and coaching from Coram on a number of active cases
- Some quick wins have been identified around process and data collection

Coram will submit a report at the end of November with details of their findings, including case studies and recommendations, and an action plan will be developed.

Barry Kirwan
Head of Children in Need
June 2016