

## **Buckinghamshire County Council CAA Managing Performance Self-Assessment 2009**

**Introduction** - Building on the 4 out of 4 score achieved in our 2006 Corporate Assessment, we worked hard during 2008 to regain our overall four-star CPA rating (previously awarded in 2005). This commitment was reflected in the final set of CPA scores for 2008, where we were judged by the Audit Commission to be a top performing, four-star Council. In addition, our Direction of Travel for the future was assessed as 'Improving well', the second highest rating possible.

Individual service scores remain consistently high. We achieved 3 out of 4 scores for all the 'Level 1 CPA services' covering Children and Young People, Adult Social Care and Use of Resources (UoR improved from a score of 2 in 2007). For the 'Level 2 CPA services', we retained the highest score of 4 for Environment, however for the Culture block, we scored 3, down from 4 in 2007. This was mainly due to a slight reduction in active library borrowers from 21.8% of the population in 06/07 to 20.2% in 07/08. Action has already been taken during 2008/09, resulting in a 1.6% increase in active borrowers from 99,242 to 100,841. Our target for 2009/10 is to increase this by a further 0.65%.

Achieving four-stars in 2008 has been an enormous achievement for the Council, particularly in the face of a difficult financial climate, the global economic downturn and the continuing increase in demand for our services. In our latest Annual Audit Letter (March 2009), the Commission recognised that:

*"The Council delivers a range of high quality services, while maintaining below average council tax and net revenue expenditure. The Council is well led both politically and at a senior managerial level and is developing good plans for the future, especially in the face of the credit crunch and budgetary pressures".*

Overall, we have successfully delivered on behalf of the residents of Buckinghamshire and our 'Direction of Travel' rating acknowledges we are well placed to deliver further improvements in the future. That said, we are not complacent and we have clear plans for coping with the difficult financial future that lies ahead, including a comprehensive Action Plan that responds to the Commission's latest Audit Letter and a developing CAA Improvement Plan which will focus on four key partnership areas for the future – Promoting Economic Prosperity, Tackling Disadvantage, Community Safety and Securing Value for Money. In addition to our Buckinghamshire Pathfinder initiative, we are also managing an ambitious internal Transformation Programme, the outcomes of which will deliver the most significant changes to the Council since local government reorganisation in 1997.

### **1. What is the authority seeking to achieve?**

The Council's main aims, objectives and targets are currently set out in our 2005 – 2009 Corporate Plan. However, now that the new Council administration has been elected, Members will be agreeing a brand new Corporate Plan for 2009 – 2013. A special 'Vision for Buckinghamshire' event took place on 18<sup>th</sup> June where Members had their first chance to consider the future priorities of the Council. Members considered six key priority areas as a basis for discussion:

- Promoting Prosperity through the economic downturn
- Managing, improving and protecting our exceptional environment
- Creating opportunities for all
- Reducing bureaucracy, cost and delivering excellent services
- Supporting the most vulnerable
- Promoting safe and integrated communities

Over the summer period work will progress on developing the new Corporate Plan which is scheduled to be agreed by County Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

Through the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP), the collective focus has been on delivering the first year of our new Local Area Agreement signed with CLG on 2 July 2008. Progress is monitored through a shared performance management system 'Performance Plus', which allows all partner organisations to input data and take action as appropriate. Moving on, we are now working to deliver a refreshed LAA which was signed off by Government in April 2009. The Agreement now contains 27 National Indicators, plus 7 local indicators.

Historically, the Countywide and four District based community strategies have been developed largely independently of each other. However, this year, the Councils will have a 'family' of community strategies at both county and district level. These will be clearly linked, setting out our priorities for the longer-term future of the County. Working to a common date of 2026 will bring the Community Strategies in line with the local planning frameworks. The 'family' of Community Strategies is set for agreement by July 2009. We will also be taking into account the implications of two major national reports which will impact on the development of partnership working in Buckinghamshire. These are:

- HM Treasury's 'Operational Efficiency report, led by Michael Bichard
- Audit Commission's 'Working better together? Managing local strategic partnerships'

This year, the BSP has made available an additional £400k (£200k countywide and £50k for each of the district LSPs) specifically for initiatives to combat the credit crunch.

Through our 'Pathfinder' agreement with CLG, the five Buckinghamshire Councils have established an ambitious agenda of developing new ways to join up services across the tiers of local government, designed to save money, increase capacity and deliver service improvements to our customers. A key highlight from the programme is the decision to create a Joint Venture Company between the participating authorities (four of the five Councils and the Bucks Fire and Rescue Service) and a private sector partner to provide support services Buckinghamshire authorities. "In scope" service areas are;

- Professional Human Resources (HR)
- Payroll and transactional HR processing
- Professional Finance
- Transactional financial processing
- Strategic Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and development
- Operational ICT and helpdesk
- Operational Facilities Management, Property Services, Repairs and Maintenance and helpdesk

A strategic business case has been created which will be used as the benchmark against which future proposals will be judged. The procurement phase has now begun with the publication of an advert in the Official Journal of the European Union inviting private sector companies to bid for the Shared Support Services contract. This notice was published on 12 June 2009 with a view to a signing a contract with the selected private partner in spring 2010. The OJEU notice also includes Customer Services, Procurement and Revenues and Benefits as services that may be added to the Joint Venture Company in the future.

The Pathfinder programme has already delivered joined up working and efficiencies in procurement and transportation through co-operation across all partner councils. The waste project has also identified £1.5m in savings through further development of the already well advanced joint working. Further details about all aspects of the Pathfinder agreement can be found on the dedicated website - <http://www.buckspathfinder.gov.uk/>

Internally, we are embarking on our most ambitious Transformation programme to date. Over the next 18 months, Transformation, (alongside Pathfinder) will be the two main ways we are planning to meet our assessed medium term plan pressures of £27m over the next three years. Our Transformation Programme is made up of seven strands; Customer Focus, Redesigning the Organisation, Workstyles and Places, Streamlining Business Processes, Standardising Business Support, Managing Third Party Spend and Self Directed Support and Adult Social Care Transformation. We have already drawn in external support from Deloitte to provide expertise in cost reduction techniques and seconded Heads of Service to provide sufficient capacity. It is planned that this programme will enable the Council to bank a significant proportion of the required savings within two years. For example, our new 'Transport for Buckinghamshire' provision has developed from a major transformation of the Transportation Service where we are now working with two commercial partners Ringway Jacobs and Amey Plc in a new and fully integrated way.

We carry out regular local satisfaction surveys with residents and customers. In the most recent face to face survey conducted in 2007, overall satisfaction with the way we run things improved to a record

70%. Using different methodology, results from the latest national Place Survey show resident satisfaction with the County Council at 49% compared to 55% from last BVPI survey in 2006. Clearly, there has been a reduction in resident satisfaction (where surveys are comparable) however, initial comparisons with other County Councils show this is a national pattern, probably reflecting the current economic downturn.

## **2. How is improvement being achieved?**

We strive to make the very best use of all the resources we have available to support improvement. In terms of financial resources, our robust medium-term planning makes sure our priorities are addressed. We have also delivered over £6.2m of efficiencies in 2008/09, and the budget for 2009/10 includes savings of £8.9m. These internal savings allowed the authority to reduce Council tax for 2009/10 from a proposed 3.9% to 3.7%. In total, over the last four years, we have identified and driven out £23 million of efficiency savings.

We have also been able to redirect resources into those priority areas that our residents are telling us are important. Examples of some of the major additional allocations are;

- An extra £4m for road and pavement maintenance in 2009/10 to cope with the excessive damage to our roads by this winter's snow and ice.
- A further £2m in both 2009/10 and 2010/11 within Adult Social Care to cope with demographic pressures and to sustain service improvement.
- The existing £500,000 devolved Local Area Forum budget have been increased by a further £340,000 resulting in each Forum having around £44,000 to spend on the things that matter to local people, such as local environmental priorities, positive activities for young people and early years provision
- £100k extra to the Citizen's Advice Bureau to support their increasing workload during the downturn,

We are however currently finding it difficult to sustain our Capital Programme. The economic downturn has had a significant impact on our ability to realise capital receipts and developer contributions. Coupled with being on the Government funding floor and the fact that the Council no longer receives funding to pay for the borrowing costs of capital schemes, this has had a significant impact on the scale of the Council's Capital Programme. The affordability and priority of capital schemes has to be weighed against the further cuts we would have to make in our revenue budget in order to cover the repayments on the loans taken out to boost the Capital Programme.

Over the last three years, we have carried out Performance Reviews of all aspects of council activity. Members were involved in each review area to challenge existing policy and practice and to help deliver efficiencies, improvements and savings. Recommendations resulting from the series of reviews amounted to approximately £8m of savings and some of these have already been taken and recorded in the Medium Term Plan. Other outcomes will be progressed through our Transformation programme.

The Council is also taking opportunities to do things in different ways to both improve services and save resources. A recent example is our 'New Ways of Recruiting' project where we have let a 10 year contract with Hay Recruitment, to implement a new, automated recruitment system. In addition, a strategic approach to the procurement of highway works and consultancy contracts has been delivered through our 'Built Environment' initiative. As a result, on 1st April 2009, 'Transport for Buckinghamshire', a partnership with Ringway Jacobs was formed to deliver the transportation services on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council. As a result of the cost savings generated, the road patching programme has increased from 57000m<sup>2</sup> in 2008/09 to a target of 84,000m<sup>2</sup> in 2009/10 for the same cost. In addition, we have also devolved responsibilities for minor highway works, such as sign cleaning, hedge cutting and foliage removal to parish councils. They appoint a contractor or individual and the County Council pay directly for this service. This proves to be more efficient in time and money and supports local employment opportunities.

Improving the health and well-being of the population in Buckinghamshire is a key priority for the County Council. We have welcomed the opportunity to work together with Buckinghamshire Primary Care Trust to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA was adopted by Cabinet on 30 March 2009 and will help inform joint commissioning priorities over the next ten years.

It will also underpin a wide range of local strategies and plans in areas as diverse as sustainable communities, housing, healthy communities and support for carers. Crucially, it draws heavily on detailed, local analysis to understand inequalities between the least and most deprived communities and groups, wards and areas within Buckinghamshire.

The Council is strengthening its approach to partnership working with health organisations and the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to developing Healthier Communities. Member commitment to this area of work has been underpinned by the identification of a Lead Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities who also chairs the Healthy Communities Partnership, a thematic partnership of the Bucks Strategic Partnership.

Over the past year the Healthy Communities Partnership has overseen:

- The Partnership Healthy Communities Strategy This provides a framework for achieving our vision of Buckinghamshire as one of the healthiest places to live in the United Kingdom by improving health for all residents and narrowing the gap in inequalities in health.
- Work under the strategy's umbrella
  - Project to promote better co-ordination across benefits advice and service in county. Maximising benefit uptake and debt management is particularly important in the current economic climate and can help to prevent homelessness by supporting people to pay rents and stay in their own homes.
  - Screening programme for those at risk of heart disease and stroke, beginning with the practices serving the most disadvantaged 20% of the population.
  - Promoting physical activity through walking will help to address the rising tide of obesity which can lead to increased Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and strokes. £50k has been secured for *Walk Wycombe* project to improve walking signs in Wycombe, engage GPs to promote walking to and around surgeries and identify key walking routes and prioritise maintenance activities.
- Mapping of health and wellbeing work is an Appendix to the Healthy Communities Strategy. This includes projects that impact on health inequalities such as work targeted at vulnerable groups and work to address wider factors such as tackling poverty.
- Monitoring a number of targets that specifically support the healthy communities agenda in particular those in the Local Area Agreement. Buckinghamshire is performing well on National Indicators for mortality from all causes of circulatory disease and cancers but will continue to address gaps between the most disadvantaged.
- Facilitated the submission of funding bids for healthy communities projects
- Raised the profile of the healthy communities agenda

Our approach to 'Getting Closer to Communities' has been developed and refined since its conception in 2005. In July 2008, the Council agreed a revised GC2C Strategy designed to achieve services tailored to local needs, real and increased influence by residents over local decisions and budgets, more accessible and integrated local services and strengthened local community leadership across all three tiers of local government. Our aim is for each community to receive a 'core set of services', however, with the opportunity to access additional or enhanced services according to local priorities.

Local community plans are also being developed for each of the 19 community areas. These will include sophisticated data profiles together with 'on the ground' analyses of local requirements gathered at 'service excellence' events with community representatives and will help to match the services we provide to specific local need. We also now have dedicated highway technicians and lead officers for adult social care working in each community area. The 19 local areas have also been used to determine the location of children's centres and extended services for schools. We are also a national pilot for Participatory Budgeting and have introduced pilot participatory budgeting schemes in transportation and some areas of youth.

The engagement of communities and partners is key to the delivery of our GC2C vision and implementation of the Bucks Empowerment offer will help us deliver our GC2C strategy. In addition, one of the Pathfinder work streams is focused on developing a shared framework for community engagement using the GC2C building blocks. An important initial piece of work for this project was the New Deal for Buckinghamshire which sets out the framework for our working relationship with parish and town councils. We are also currently exploring the possibilities of offering our procurement benefits to Parish Councils

As well as delivering the required improvements to our final accounts process, risk assessment has also been improved. We have reviewed our Risk Management Strategy, which has led to improvements to the management of partnership and project risks, improved clarification of officer and member roles, and adding a 'new opportunities' risk matrix to underline the positive side of managing risks. To support strategic decisions for all major projects, a requirement to produce a risk assessment in key reports has also been added. The Corporate Risk Register and all service registers have been transferred to our 'Performance Plus' software system and key project areas are in the process of being added. Data from the new system is now being used to provide an improved quarterly 'dashboard' report to Members.

### **3. What has the Council Achieved?**

As in previous years, the Council uses the PriceWaterhouse Coopers (PWC) benchmarking tool for comparing BVPI's. Based on 2007/08 'actuals', the comparison identifies us as the 2<sup>nd</sup> best county performer in England, up from 3<sup>rd</sup> the previous year. Overall, 62% of indicators improved last year and although that was less than the previous year (76%), it was still a significant improvement relative to other Counties and was enough to improve our relative standing. Every year we monitor our performance in delivering the targets which underpin our seven Corporate Aims. The following table shows our final performance for 2008/09, together with 2007/08 for comparison.

<b>Corporate Aim</b>	<b>Achievement of targets set per Aim in 2007/08</b>	<b>Achievement of targets set per Aim in 2008/09</b>
1. Involve, represent and serve all who live or work in Buckinghamshire	67%	72%
2. Provide efficient and effective services	54%	50%
3. Give children and young people the best possible life chances	64%	48%
4. Improve the quality of life for adults	67%	60%
5. Provide support to help families cope with their responsibilities	67%	60%
6. Build with you safer, stronger and healthier communities	68%	74%
7. Maintain a vibrant economy whilst protecting the environment	76%	76%

Last year, saw the conclusion of Buckinghamshire's LPSA 2 agreement which included twelve major targets, reflecting where improvement was most needed countywide. Considerable successes have been achieved in the areas of reducing the instances of arson, burglary (a 25% reduction), fly-tipping and falls amongst older people. In addition there have been very strong improvements in the educational attainment amongst under-achieving pupil groups in Maths and English, an improvement in adult skills (particularly literacy and numeracy) and advancements in tackling domestic violence. As a result, we will receive around £8.5m in reward grant, out of a maximum of £12m. The only area not to trigger a reward grant payment was in reducing the misuse of alcohol and illicit drugs, however this area still saw an 11% improvement from the original 63% baseline.

Overall, progress during the first year of the new Local Area Agreement has been good, with only one indicator – NI 156 (Number of households living in temporary accommodation) reported as off target.

#### **Our Service achievements in greater detail**

**Transportation** – Multi-million pound infrastructure continues to be delivered to support housing and economic growth in the County and to mitigate the impact of traffic on local communities. This includes the Aylesbury Transport Hub; award winning Bourg Walk Bridge; Aylesbury Vale Parkway; the refurbishment of Aylesbury Bus Station and successful introduction of Real Time Passenger Information; the state of the art Travel Information Centre that won the 2008 INFORM Innovation Award; and traffic management measures to support the new Eden Shopping Centre in High Wycombe. Through LPSA 2, bus ridership across the County has improved against a national trend of

decline. In urban areas we achieved 6.06 million passengers (against a target of 4.87m) and for inter-urban journeys, 6.57 million passengers (against a target of 5.30m).

The Countywide Speed Limit Review is now 67% complete, benefiting communities with lower speed limits and improving road safety. We are also on well on track to meet 2010 national casualty reduction targets thanks to a particularly strong reduction in casualties in 2008/09. Joint work is taking place with Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership to implement speed camera enforcement on the M40 to help further reduce injury crashes.

Progress against our Local Transport Plan 2 targets continues to be strong with our mid term status report being well received by Government Office who describes our performance achievement as “an impressive result”. In a very tight bidding climate, we successfully secured Community Infrastructure Funding for just over £4m to implement an Urban Traffic Management Control System to manage the highway network particularly in the major growth area of Aylesbury, that will greatly assist in the effective management of congestion on key routes with potential wider benefits to the rest of the County (with additional investment) in the future.

The £4m increased provision of maintenance funding was focused on a “We’re Working On It” campaign to engage local people in identifying where pot hole repairs should be targeted across the County. The customer satisfaction surveys show a very high level of positive satisfaction following the campaign and treatment. Our winter maintenance service maintained effective salt levels and were in a good position to successfully deal with the snow and freezing weather in February. There was some rationing but the primary routes continued to be salted

Our high quality transport provision was recognised at the 2008 National Transport Awards where we were voted ‘Transport Local Authority of the Year’. We also won an award for Cycling Improvements and were runners up for improvements to Bus Services.

**Planning & Environment** - A key achievement in Environmental Services was the achievement of a ‘4’ score in the 2007 CPA, which continued in 2008. Since 2003, significant improvements have been made in reducing the occurrence of fly tipping, with over 135 convictions, saving tax payers £250,000 in clean up costs and generating over £180,000 in fines and awarded costs.

A new Household Waste and Recycling Centre will be opened at Aston Clinton in July 2009 and work is in progress on the High Heavens Household Waste and Recycling Centre in High Wycombe which is due to be opened in October 2009. Although currently in the top quartile for recycling already (43.55%), these developments will help us achieve our target of 50% by 2011.

In-line with NI 197 requirements for the Council to monitor biodiversity management at local sites, the Service has been able to establish baseline data for all 392 county sites. This information can now be used to monitor positive conservation management in Buckinghamshire.

Two companies have now been shortlisted for the contract to build an ‘Energy from Waste’ facility, which will minimise waste going to landfill. As part of the proposals, both propose to generate sufficient electricity to power 20,000 homes while meeting the strict emission standards required.

In order to help local businesses with cash flow during the current ‘credit crunch’ we are now committed to pay all our invoices within 10 days rather than the current 30 day practice. In addition, we together with the Bucks Economic and Learning Partnership, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Learning and Skills Council and Business Link are establishing a ‘one stop shop’ for advice and support for existing and new businesses in the county. A £100,000 BCC ‘Challenge Fund’ has just been launched to support businesses through the economic downturn, which offers grants of up to £5,000 to buy professional advice, purchase capital equipment or refurbish premises to enable them sustain their development and grow. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April, our economic team and resources have been integrated with the Bucks Economic and Learning Partnership. This integrated capacity is being enhanced through the recruitment of two key posts. The first will focus on Skills and Employment, building links between educational organisations and business need in the county and second, will concentrate on Inward Investment and

Business retention across Buckinghamshire. The County has also started its analysis for the production of an Economic Assessment for Buckinghamshire.

In-line with NI 185 requirements on the council to reduce carbon emissions, the Service has been able to establish baseline data for all council property gas and oil consumption and base line data on electricity consumption will be completed by the end of June 2009. Smart metering is being rolled out across the property portfolio to help monitor consumption and to prepare for our Carbon reduction commitment. This information will be used to monitor carbon reduction initiatives targeted at 4% on the 2008/09 baseline by March 2011. To help finance energy efficiency projects, a £2.1m Salix loan fund has been established.

As part of the Council's commitment to improve right of way accessibility 97.8% of the rights of way network is easy to use based on BVPI 178 criteria with 95.46% signposted in accordance with 1968 Countryside Act and 4.3% of structures removed or altered to assist mobility in 2008.09.

Through the adoption of the Simply Walk project P&E are working to increase the use of the existing access networks and impact positively on levels of health, particularly related to reducing levels of obesity and coronary heart disease with positive effects on mental health and social well-being. Simply Walk now covers 14 out of the 19 GC2C areas, and a total of 49 walks are now set up which include 'Buggy Walks' for young mothers, Mental Health Service walks and Sunday striders. In 2008.09 there was a total of 1780 walkers who walked a least once during the year, and more than half of those walk 3 or more times during the quarter.

**Adult Social Care** - During 2008/09 service users, carers and local people, have told us that they have experienced real improvements in the quality of their lives as a result of the wider choices and decisions they have been able to make. These improvements are evidence of the successful delivery of the vision within Adult Social Care "**because Every Adult Matters**" (bEAM), which was developed in consultation with local people in response to the Government's national agenda for modernising public services.

The philosophy underpinning bEAM is that every adult in Buckinghamshire is entitled to advice and support from the Council and that some adults will as their needs graduate, be entitled to a range of services to meet these needs, in their own homes and communities for as long as is possible.

The impact on people's lives is evidenced in the 96 individual outcome stories we have shared with CQC supported with over 100 direct quotes from people expressing their positive views on the impact of the service they have received (*these are available on request*).

Through a varied and ambitious range of partnership developments, service users, carers and local people have been able to access, participate in, enjoy and benefit from a variety of community based activities and health and social care services, which have resulted in regained or new found independence, improved economic wellbeing and work, leisure and learning opportunities being made possible:

<b>Preventative support activities</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>
Contact the elderly	715
Falls Prevention	396
Gardening	467
Affordable Warmth	1012
Alzheimer's Café	148
Home from Hospital	359
Get fit avoid falls	171
Simply Walks	3467
Mind	54
Telecare	349
<b>In-Touch</b>	<b>Over 5000</b>

Telecare has made a real difference in helping service users live independently. Telecare is the continuous, automatic and remote monitoring of real time emergencies and lifestyle changes over time in order to manage the risk associated with independent living. Service users say they feel more secure in being at home knowing that help is available through their Telecare devices and that they have greater confidence in carrying out their daily tasks. Telecare also provides extra confidence to the Service users families, who are secure in the knowledge that their loved one can contact someone if they require help at any time. Feedback from users is very positive, for example one user said: *"If I didn't have this equipment, I would still remain within my own home, but it gives me reassurance that if I feel and couldn't get back up again, I could summon help easily"*.

The results of an independent evaluation of the service by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University was extremely positive about the service and the impact it had on peoples lives. The evaluation found that "people clearly perceived the main value of the service in terms of the reassurance and regular contact which the service provides."

Comments included:

- 'They ring regularly and are always concerned and caring'
- 'They ring regularly and we can ring them if necessary'
- 'Knowing they are there if needed'
- 'Very approachable'
- 'Provides information. Good to know what is going on'
- 'Gives confidence'
- 'Knowing they are contactable'
- 'I am reassured that I have someone to turn to in hard times. I welcome their calls.'
- 'It's good to have a chat'
- 'It's nice to talk to someone. I get lonely at times. My 3 daughters do not live near me.'

The great majority said they would recommend the service to others, and a number had already done so. Overall, interviewees found the staff helpful, patient and considerate and appreciated the newsletter.

Adult Social Care works with partner organisations to ensure that all vulnerable adults living in Buckinghamshire are treated with personal dignity and respect and that they are free from discrimination or harassment. We have significantly increased our investment in safeguarding functions supported by stringent contract management, to ensure they are effective both for people living in institutional care and those living in the community. In 2008/9 expenditure was £298,650 an increase of 52% from 2007/8, enabling us to provide additional capacity in investigation, strategic and operational development. Strengthening our multi agency safeguarding board and increasing the profile of safeguarding has been reflected in the increase in safeguarding "alerts" by 170% in 2008/9.

Carers play a crucial role in supporting the people they care for and enabling them to continue to live in the community. The County Council supports carers by financing the countywide support to carers provided through the carers centre which supports them to maintain and manage the balance between caring, working and having time for themselves. In 2008/09 we identified over 800 new Carers who are supported via the Carers Centre. For new and existing carers, support, advice, skills development and networking were provided through 98 courses attended by a total of 1110 carers, including recognising that some carers would only feel able to accept support available if it was offered in environments they felt comfortable in i.e. men only groups.

Both a lack of timely information and guidance for self funders and low income levels generally can be a barrier for people remaining independent and have a significant impact on the quality of their lives. The Council has been very successful in working with self funders to enable them to make informed and timely decisions about how they choose to live their lives and the support required to achieve this. We have also been successful in helping people to maximise their incomes, in 2008/09, 1,360 people have gained an average increase in their income of £47 per week with help from our Welfare Benefits Team.

Effective partnership working is central to achieving outcomes for residents, service users and carers in Buckinghamshire. Through both our engagement in the Local Strategic Partnership and successful

delivery of LAA targets and our key role in Getting closer to Communities (GC2C) where we have participated in over 88 “surgeries” which attracted over 700 people, Adult Social Care has worked effectively with partners in listening and responding to the needs of local people, and contributed to this development of best practice in engaging with diverse communities.

In partnership working with health we are now able to focus on the range of needs of residents as a result of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Key commissioning developments are coming to fruition with real benefits for service users. For example, 117 people with a range of learning disability and mental health needs have been involved in choosing to live their lives differently away from institutional care settings. Over the next 6 years we have planned that over 1,000 people will be able to choose to live in extra care housing thus maintaining their independence and offering alternatives to residential and nursing care.

Core to our successful delivery of improvements to the people of Buckinghamshire is the combination of strategic leadership, and strong fiscal probity which are reinforced by effective performance management which functions at all levels across the organisation and serves to clarify and reinforce a common set of goals and an understanding of the role that each of us within Adult Social Care has in contributing to this success. Central to the further development and improvements made by Adult Social Care is our continued focus and delivery of the Personalisation and Self Directed Support Program to ensure an even greater level of responsiveness to the individual needs and aspirations of local residents, service users & carers. In June 2009 as part of our Transformation Programme we are bringing together Adult Social Care with Culture, Adult Learning and Libraries to form the new ‘Adult and Family Wellbeing’ portfolio which will be working with families at key life stages to influence their future quality of life, and maximise people’s opportunities to live in and contribute to thriving and integrated local communities.

**Community Services** - In response to our 2007 AAL, we carried out a comprehensive self assessment against Level 3 of the Equality Standard across the whole authority and was externally validated by a Dialogue consultant as meeting the requirements of this measure. We have also developed priorities for partnership work for the county wide Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum and established a Preventing Violent Extremism Action Plan. In addition, we have carried out a series of focus groups and mystery shopping with disabled people to get up to date information on how accessible our services are and have used this information to update services actions around disability equality. Internally we have developed guidance for staff on removing barriers to communication, accessible venues, understanding faith needs, and ran a workshop with staff and disabled residents. We have also developed a challenge process for completed equality impact assessments to support continued improvements in the quality of the assessments and developed a council wide equalities monitoring policy.

The new award-winning library in High Wycombe which opened last year goes from strength to strength. The library includes fully equipped teaching spaces for Adult Learning, rooms for community hire, self service technology, Wi-Fi and Headspace, an area designed and managed by young people. Visits to and loans from the new library are continuing to increase.

Use of the Council’s first new generation large mobile library, or “supermobile” has continued to grow, and following a review of mobile library services, a second supermobile has now been commissioned. A new smaller vehicle serving rural areas in the north of the county uses solar panels to generate much of its own electricity, and won the principal award for vehicles at the 2009 national conference.

In 2007 the service was awarded over £1.4 million by the Big Lottery under its Community Libraries funding stream, one of a handful of successful bids by authorities in the South East. As a result, rebuilding or extensive renovation is currently in progress at three libraries in the south of the county, at Micklefield, Burnham and Bourne End. Each library will include a classroom for Adult Learning and spaces for community meetings and activities. Self-service technology will enable customers to issue and return their own loans. The new buildings will become community hubs, used extensively outside normal opening hours. Local Management Groups have been set up in each community, to advise officers and support the successful delivery of the project outcomes.

The County Council is working to maximise every opportunity presented by the 2012 London Olympic Games. For example, the numbers of schools in Buckinghamshire registering with the London 2012 ‘Get Set’ programme almost doubled to 68 during the last quarter, which represents one of the largest

percentage increases in the region. In addition, over 1000 Buckinghamshire businesses have now registered with the Compete 4 London 2012 Contract Procurement System. Buckinghamshire's first significant contract success, is represented by Buckingham Construction Company winning the contract to build the Handball Centre which will stand alongside the main stadium in the Olympic Park. It is estimated that the value of this contract is £35 million.

In April 2009 Culture and Learning achieved a successful reaccreditation of its Charter Mark, the government award for excellence in public service. The Adult Learning service was inspected by OFSTED in October 2008 and was awarded an overall Grade 2 as a "good provider". The service has delivered an increased number of NVQ qualifications this year, both direct delivery and franchised, mainly for the care sector and 604 are on programme in May 2009. Specific programmes have been put in place to support those who wish to prepare for a return to work and for those returning to learning. Basic literacy and numeracy as well as English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) make up the most significant part of our accredited programme. The main leisure learning programme continues to deliver to over 9,000 people across the county.

Trading Standards have implemented "Buy with Confidence", a scheme whereby local businesses that have been vetted and approved by Trading Standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way are publicised, helping consumers to choose reputable businesses and not fall prey to rogue tradesmen.

The achievement of our 3 year LPSA 2 burglary reduction target last year, secured a £1 million reward grant for the partners involved. We have also delivered in partnership with Bucks Fire and Rescue and Thames Valley Police, a new website – 'I: on Bucks' - <http://www.ionbucks.info/ionbucks/html/home>. For the first time, the site gives local residents the opportunity to view crime and community safety data in their local areas. The site also provides interactive maps showing the crime hotspots at district level and crime information down to neighbourhood level. The site uses the same neighbourhood policing areas as Thames Valley Police for consistency across the partnership. This also makes it easier for residents to get to know their neighbourhoods.

The County Council leads on the co-ordination and development of local responses to domestic violence in Buckinghamshire. Considerable progress has been made in developing the infrastructure to reduce repeat victimisation of those experiencing domestic violence with the establishment of two multi-agency referral and assessment conferences (MARACs) operating in the north and south of the county. The County Council has also taken a lead role in promoting local responses to the alcohol agenda, leading on the implementation of the Bucks Alcohol Strategy. We have driven the expansion of alcohol counselling and support services through the provision of brief interventions and addressing the alcohol and crime issues in the area of community safety, including a referral process for alcohol related offenders, which has resulted in more people seeking treatment.

**Children and Young People** – Overall, children are relatively healthy. Teenage pregnancy rates are low and falling and a new post covering sex and relationship education is helping to train more staff and foster carers in sexual health awareness. The Bucks Stop Smoking service has reached a total of 1000 young people providing advice and support to the Year 7 to 12 age group. The Healthy Schools Programme has enabled 96 schools to achieve Healthy Schools status and 97% of schools are now participating. The County Sports Partnership has been targeting under 16's in selected disadvantaged areas resulting in a 50% increase in participation from 2007 to 2008. Following a scrutiny review into eating disorders, a multi-agency group has developed a new schools and GP pack to enhance understanding and direct people to agencies who can help.

The safety of children across Buckinghamshire has improved. Bullying in schools is being tackled more effectively and the Regional Anti-Bullying Alliance Officer reports that Buckinghamshire is now ahead of other local authority areas in implementing actions. A new 'Child car seats and in-car safety' information pack has been developed in partnership with the PCT and will reach 6,000 parents over the next 12 months. Child seatbelt wearing is showing an increase of compliance from 63% in 2005 to 91% in March 2008.

To minimize the potential for child abuse and neglect, there has been a significant amount of work in the area of preventative support and the Prevention and Early Years Intervention Strategy 2007-2010 underpins development. A review by the Probation Service has led to major changes to the procedures for the management of sex offenders. The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board

and its sub-committees are making significant progress in updating and developing inter-agency procedures in line with Government Guidance. All young people subject to a Child Protection Plan are allocated to a qualified social worker. There will have been £3million investment in Safeguarding during 2007-09 and a new Children In Care Service has been set up with these resources.

Performance on placement stability is consistently good. Progress has been made in developing placements for children with relatives and friends and performance on placing them within their wider family is good. Adoptions of LAC improved significantly in 2007/8 and ended the year at more than 12%, its highest level this decade and well above statistical neighbours and the average.

Buckinghamshire pupils continue to achieve well above average national attainment standards. 70% of pupils are achieving five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs and 94% are achieving GCSEs at grade A\* to G. 66.7% of looked after children in Buckinghamshire now achieve one or more GCSEs, which represents top quartile performance when compared with other Counties and is a rise of 8.7% from 2007. The Asian or Asian British Pakistani group (8% of the cohort) is performing below the average and is largely concentrated in areas of disadvantage. An action plan for raising achievement of specific BME groups has been developed and targeted work in schools is on going. A community consultative group has been set up and works in collaboration with the County Council on raising achievement of BME groups in Buckinghamshire. An improvement grant has supported the purchase of resources and further training on structured programmes for Communication, Language and Literacy and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Results show a 0.6% improvement in Linking Letters and Sounds from 2006 to 2007, evidence that the concentrated support is beginning to close the gap. Overall results for students at A/AS level and equivalent are the second highest of all shire authorities. Last year, the proportion of 16-19 year olds who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) decreased from 3.2% to 2.7%, however, in 2008/09, this increased to 3.7%. Rates of persistent absenteeism are low in Buckinghamshire and the 2011 government target for secondary schools has already been achieved. Persistent absence of Children in Care (CiC) declined by 5% last year. A comprehensive action plan has been prepared which responds to the latest Annual Performance Assessment

In May 2009, the Cabinet approved the new [Children and Young People's Plan 2009/11](#). The Plan focuses on five key areas – Closing the attainment gap, the family, early intervention and secondary prevention, transitions and Children and Young People and decision making. Delivering the Plan over the next two years will be the responsibility of the Children and Young People's Trust.

We also had an unannounced inspection by Ofsted of Contact, Referral and Assessment Services on 23 and 24 June. The draft letter indicated there were no serious concerns and both areas of strength and those for development were identified. The final letter will be published on the Ofsted website on 22 July.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, the findings of an independent review into the abuse of children at Stony Dean School, Amersham, commissioned in November 2005, were made public at the press conference held at County Hall. The report found failings in systems in place at the time, and makes a series of recommendations for a number of agencies - the County Council, the Safeguarding Board, School Governing Bodies in Bucks, Ofsted and Government Departments. The report also acknowledges that, due to the time taken to complete the investigation, the recommendations have now largely been addressed as they were taken up and acted upon incrementally. The Executive Summary is available to read on the [BSCB website](#).

**Overall** – The Council is aware of what improvements need to be made in the coming year. As well as responding to the one formal recommendation for action in the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, the Council has also responded to all other performance issues raised. This was agreed by the Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009 and can be viewed using the link below (see Item 7).

[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000124/M00003359/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000124/M00003359/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

**For further details on any aspect of this self assessment or for copies of supporting documentation, please contact Aidan Shutter in the Policy Team – 01296 382126 or e-mail [ashutter@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:ashutter@buckscc.gov.uk)**