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| 21st July 2021 |
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**Buckinghamshire Challenge Board**

**Closing the Gap Newsletter – Summer 2021**

Dear Colleagues,

It has been a busy year and we on the board recognise the hard work and dedication in schools during the pandemic, especially to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds to keep up with their peers.

As many of you will have seen, the pandemic has had a significant impact on those who are disadvantaged. We know through national research that pupils with

As a board we have delivered 10 sessions to school leaders and governors, as you can see below, there has been a wide range of content and our feedback from the sessions has been overwhelmingly positive. We hope that you have been able to access some of the sessions and that you have found them valuable.

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| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Remote Education and Assessment of Need Workshop | Friday, 15 January 2021 13:00 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Parental Engagement Conference | Friday, 12 February 2021 13:30 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Parental Engagement Workshop | Monday, 15 March 2021 13:30 |
| Case Study Writing Workshop | Friday, 26 March 2021 13:00 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Evaluation of Need Workshop | Thursday, 22 April 2021 13:00 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Vulnerable Points Conference | Thursday, 20 May 2021 13:00 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Teaching Workshop | Monday, 21 June 2021 13:30 |
| Closing the Gap in Bucks, Accountability and Pupil Premium Workshop | Friday, 9 July 2021 08:30 |

All of our sessions have been recorded and can be found, along with other resources at our webpage on schoolsweb <https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/school-improvement-and-equalities/side-by-side/bucks-challenge-group/>

We are currently developing our workplan for the next academic year, which will again involve universal content available to all schools as well as some more focussed work for a group of schools who wish to engage in further direct support. We’ll be sharing this information as soon as it is available.

We are looking for more school leaders to join the board. We need primary and secondary school leaders who are able to commit approximately 2 hours a month to support our work and to help shape the strategy. Please let us know at sis@buckinghhamshire.gov.uk if you would like to be a part of our group.

**Family Support Service**

**How can we help and support your school and pupils?**

We can provide a range of information, advice, signposting and support to School staff and provide support to children, young people and families. We have a range of online information at Buckinghamshire Family Information Service [www.bucksfamilyinfo.org](http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org) or the duty team can be contacted directly by phone 01296 383293, which will be useful to schools and families.

We can also support through direct work and support delivered by Family Support Workers (FSW) through short term, themed group work (1:1 if needed) sessions for parents and children and young people (at Level 2 of the Bucks threshold of support) and more direct 1:1 support within the family home for families with more complex needs (Level 3). Referrals can be made through completing a Request for support form (L2) or MARF (L3) online, families are also able to self-refer.

All Buckinghamshire Schools have a **School Link Worker** (a Family Support worker within FSS) allocated to provide a direct link for schools into the service. The link worker can discuss with you any concerns you have for a child, young person or family and give information, advice and support you to identify the best support and how this can be delivered and sought, if an external agency (including FSS) could deliver. In addition, if you have a group of children who you feel may need support, the link worker can work with you to deliver support within school or virtually.

If you are unsure of your link worker, please contact the area team who will be able to confirm and ensure you are in contact with them.

Chiltern & South Bucks – Newtownfcp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Aylesbury – Southcourtfcp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Wycombe – Mapledeanfcp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

The **Early Help Monthly Partnership Forum** may also be a useful source of guidance and support, as it coordinates a response when current support work with a family or child is not affecting positive change.  A panel of professionals from a variety of support agencies are on hand to talk through the situation and will make suggestions and offer help.  For more information please contact ehpartnershipforum@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

If you want to look at further information about the Family Support Service online you can do so by using the link below.
<https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/parent.page?parentchannel=24>
*We are a consent based service so families will need to agree to working with us, if you feel you need support in how to seek this with families this can also be discussed with your School Link Worker.*

If you have a concern that a child is at risk of serious harm this should be referred directly to First Response.

**Partnership award to Cressex Community School**

Cressex Community School in High Wycombe, the lead school in the Cressex Cooperative Learning Trust, has been awarded £10,000, following a successful bid to the DFE’s ‘Cross Sector partnerships’ grant programme . The funding will support development of partnership work between Cressex Community School and Wycombe Abbey School, a local independent girls’ school.

Cressex Head Teacher David Hood welcomed the award. ‘Both Cressex School and Wycombe Abbey School really enjoy working together. Our partnership has strengthened over the years and has brought real benefits to both schools. We are very pleased that the DFE has recognised the importance of such partnerships and has chosen to invest funding in our joint working’.

The partnership money will be spent on developing and evaluating an enhanced literacy project between the two schools.

Contact: David Hood on dhood@cressex.org

Marc Rowland, who has been working with us this year, has released his new book on pupil premium recently to great reviews including from [schoolsweek](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/book-addressing-educational-disadvantage-the-essex-way/). If you are looking for something to read on a beach (travel permitting) that will support your thinking for next year then this might be the book for you!

Whatever you choose to read and wherever you go over the next six weeks I hope that you all have a great break and come back refreshed in September.

Warm regards,

*Gareth*

**Gareth Drawmer**

**Head of Service**

**Achievement & Learning**