

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Marsworth PC and Newsletter 11th September 2023

Give teens a chance – Foster with Bucks

With two-thirds of children in care in England over the age of 10, Buckinghamshire Council is asking people to consider whether fostering a teenager may be for them. Anyone interested is invited to find out more about fostering with Buckinghamshire Council on social media and at a special teen-focused information event in September.

During August and September, the council's Fostering team is inviting people to consider whether they could foster teens and help build their future. They'll be myth-busting, exploring the science behind teenage brains, and speaking to some current foster carers to share more about their experiences of fostering teens.

Find out more about fostering teens with Buckinghamshire Council at: buckinghamshire.gov.uk/foster-teens, @FosterBucks on Facebook, or try out the [FosteringReady](#) tool which helps people to find out more and create a personalised plan.

Eliminating hepatitis C: Buckinghamshire's Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service achieves milestone

Buckinghamshire Council is excited to announce that our local Drug and Alcohol treatment service, One Recovery Bucks, has recently achieved a major milestone in eliminating hepatitis C virus from its service users.

Hepatitis C is a virus that can affect the liver. The virus is spread through blood-to-blood contact and people who inject drugs are at the highest risk of becoming infected. No vaccine is available, and if left untreated it can result in serious and sometimes life-threatening liver damage. However, the good news is that detecting and treating hepatitis C can prevent liver damage and make sure the infection is not passed on to other people.

One Recovery Bucks has been awarded 'micro-elimination' status – meaning that everyone who has previously injected drugs who has accessed the service across the whole of Buckinghamshire has been tested for hepatitis C, and more than 9 in 10 people who have tested positive have either started treatment or cleared the virus naturally.

One Recovery Bucks is the first county-wide service to achieve this nationally, representing a major achievement for Buckinghamshire. In doing so, we are supporting the ambition to eliminate hepatitis C nationally by 2025 – ahead of the rest of the world.

Strong leadership and co-ordination between One Recovery Bucks, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Buckinghamshire Council and the NHS Addictions Provider Alliance has been paramount to this success. The improved patient pathway has reduced the number of tests needed, brought services into Buckinghamshire to avoid longer travel times to Oxford, and has halved the number of appointments patients were required to attend before starting treatment.

This year the use of an NHS mobile outreach screening van has also been secured for Buckinghamshire to increase the testing of at-risk individuals who may not yet be known to One Recovery Bucks by delivering services directly in their communities.

Go back to school sustainably this September

With families preparing for the start of the new school year, Buckinghamshire Council is taking the opportunity to encourage more people to make their journey to and from school more sustainable.

Steven Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport explained: “Many people already use alternatives to the car to take their children to and from school, but we want to make sure that everyone is aware of the huge benefits using a more sustainable form of transport can have. Choosing to walk, cycle or scoot to school is good not only for your own health but also better for the environment.”

The council’s Sustainable Transport Team works with schools across the county to help them create their own School Travel Plans to promote and encourage active, safe and sustainable travel for school journeys. Schools are encouraged to sign up to the national Modeshift STARS accreditation programme which recognises and rewards schools and other organisations that have shown excellence in supporting sustainable and active travel. Currently 65 schools in Buckinghamshire have a Modeshift STARS accreditation, ranging from the starter level Green award up to a Platinum award for outstanding achievement.

Even for those who have no alternative to the car for school journeys, there are still things you can do to make a difference. Steven explained: “We know that alternatives to the car are not always possible but simply by turning your engine off when waiting for your children to come out of school at the end of the day, you are helping reduce potentially harmful pollutants. Alternatively, you could try parking a bit further away from school and walking the last part of the journey. This can help with fitness and also avoid traffic congestion outside the school gates.”

Encouraging more people to switch to greener forms of travel is a key element of Buckinghamshire Council’s Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy which aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Rough calculations show that for an average sized car, travelling a distance of one mile to school each day and one mile home again, over the course of the school year, the level of CO2 emissions created in one year would be around 100kg. Choosing to adopt an active form of travel such as walking, cycling or scooting instead, would save this amount, which equates to the same weight as a newborn baby elephant.

Parents can make a commitment to follow the Parent's Parking Promise. Those who sign up to the pledge get a sticker to put in their car window. The promise encourages people to think more carefully about where they park for school drop offs, avoiding zig zag lines directly outside school and being mindful of not blocking pavements for other families, including those with buggies and wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

For more information on sustainable school travel, visit the council website where you can also find out more about the Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy.

Do you still need to respond to the annual canvass?

During July and August, Buckinghamshire Council's Electoral Services team sent either a letter or an email to all households in Buckinghamshire as part of the annual canvass. This communication asked residents to check that their electoral registration details are correct to make sure they retain their right to vote and have their say in future elections.

Households that have been asked to confirm or update their details but haven't yet done this are urged to do so as soon as possible and online where possible. The letter or email will say if you need to respond or not according to your circumstance. Residents not on the electoral register won't be able to vote in elections and this may also impact their ability to obtain credit.

People who have moved recently are especially encouraged to take part in the canvass and check who is registered to vote at their new address; also if someone in the household has now turned 16 or 17 years old.

Households that haven't responded, and are required to do so, will be visited by one of Buckinghamshire Council's door-to-door canvassers who will begin doing their rounds on **Friday 22 September**.

Canvassers will be carrying clear identification with them and will check the details held on the electoral register are correct or record any changes, if necessary. **Please follow the instructions on your canvass form or email to avoid a canvasser visiting your household.**

For more information, please contact the council's Electoral Registration team by telephoning 01296 798 141 or by emailing elections@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Giving Access All Areas to people who are autistic and/or have a learning disability

Aimed exclusively at people in Buckinghamshire who are autistic and/or have a learning disability, the event is designed to ensure people are aware of the range of services and support available and to encourage healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.

Currently in Buckinghamshire there are over 2,400 people with learning difficulties and over 5,000 autistic people, many of whom are not accessing activities or services available to them. The Access All Areas event aims to showcase the

fantastic range of services which can help support people who are autistic or have additional needs, to live a fulfilled, independent and healthy life.

Run in partnership with Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board, this year Access All Areas will be held in two locations. The first event takes place at The Gateway in Aylesbury on 16th October between 10am and 4pm and the second event takes place in High Wycombe at the Highcrest Academy on 26th October, from 10am to 4pm. The free events are aimed at autistic children, young people, and adults and/or those with a learning disability. Carers, family members, friends and care workers are also encouraged to attend.

Both events will feature information stands and interactive learning activities from charities and services who work to support and promote equality for autistic people and/or those who have a learning disability. This includes NHS teams who will be promoting health checks and other checks that can be done at home. These checks are a proactive way of picking up on health concerns and preventing more concerns, helping people with learning disabilities stay as healthy as possible. Health professionals will be on hand to talk through what to expect from an annual health check and answer questions. Other highlights at the event include sporting activities open to everyone and advice on how to get your voice heard to make changes within public services.

There will be designated breakaway areas for anyone needing some time-out and specific quiet hours between 10am to 11am and 3pm to 4pm

Councillor Derek Town