

98% of Bucks families get one of their primary school preferences

Figures published today, Monday 17 April, show that overall, 98% of children in both Reception and Junior schools were offered one of their preference schools this year.

90% of children starting Reception received their top choice allocation, with 96% of families getting their first choice of Junior school. All children who expressed preferences in the Reception and Junior allocation rounds have been offered a school place in Buckinghamshire.

Communities devastated by groundwater flooding to receive support

Groundwater flooding can be devastating but the lack of information and management techniques available often leaves communities with little support. Without effective mapping and modelling, groundwater flooding can seem to come out of nowhere, with communities and management authorities not understanding how to prepare and respond. Project Groundwater Chiltern Hills and Berkshire Downs is here to change that. Over the next four years, it will develop modelling techniques and a flood warning service for groundwater flooding, working in collaboration with the community to help protect their homes and businesses.

Led by Buckinghamshire Council, Project Groundwater will work with communities in nine areas of the Chiltern Hills and Berkshire Downs at high risk of groundwater flooding, gathering local knowledge about floods and developing solutions on the ground, to ensure residents are better prepared for groundwater flooding. Findings from the project could benefit hundreds of communities and thousands of properties at risk of groundwater flooding across the region. The project's findings will also support a national understanding of how to manage groundwater flooding.

Are you entitled to childcare support for your two-year-old?

Buckinghamshire Council is reminding parents of two-year-old children to check whether they are entitled up to 15 hours a week funded childcare.

Any parent or carer who currently claims some benefits may qualify for this support, which is worth over £3,000. Full details of who is eligible can be found on the [Buckinghamshire Council website](#).

The funded childcare can be used with participating childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools and nursery schools across Buckinghamshire.

Have your say on the vision and objectives for development and transport in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council wants to hear your views on its draft vision and objectives to guide future development and transport in Buckinghamshire.

The council is creating two long-term plans for what Buckinghamshire should be like in 2040 and how this can be achieved:

- The Local Plan for Buckinghamshire – to shape and manage future development across Buckinghamshire.
- Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP 5) – to set out the priorities for all types of transport across Buckinghamshire.

The draft vision and objectives have been developed from what people who work and live in Buckinghamshire have already told the council during a survey that ran from November 2021 to February 2022.

Bucks Tree Mission flourishes with more than 145,000 trees planted since October

Buckinghamshire Council is celebrating the significant progress made in its Bucks Tree Mission, with over 145,000 trees planted since October 2022.

The overall mission, which began in 2021, is to plant over 543,000 new trees on council-owned land in Buckinghamshire within a decade – one for every resident. This is part of the council's comprehensive Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy.

The most recent tree planting season ran from October 2022 to March 2023. Key projects in the county have included a mix of large-scale tree planting on council land and a wide variety of local community planting initiatives.

- **Grange Farm** – 14,700 trees and shrubs planted at this site to create a new woodland in Hazlemere. Volunteers, including 60 school children, attended a planting day run by Chiltern Rangers.
- **Bury Farm** – 14,300 trees and shrubs planted at this site in Amersham, creating a new woodland.
- **Platinum Way** – 4,038 trees planted along this walking, wheeling and cycling route with volunteer planting co-ordinated by Chiltern Rangers.

Alongside the larger projects on council-owned land, community involvement has resulted in locally delivered, smaller tree planting projects across Bucks. One such example is the St Peter's Greenway, where a total of 2,700 trees were planted, spanning from Berryfields to Buckingham Park. Additionally, two 'tiny forests' were established; one at Princes Risborough School and the other at Bourton Park in Buckingham, both consisting of 600 trees each.

Furthermore, a lease has been signed with Forestry England to create a new woodland in Bucks near Wing, where 132,000 trees will be planted over the next 12 months. During a relatively wet April, Forestry England have already planted over 109,000 trees at the new Wing Woods.

New early bird trial gives free bus pass holders even more freedom

Older and disabled residents in Buckinghamshire who qualify for a free bus pass, can now benefit from even more freedom following the introduction of a new early bird trial which allows them to use the bus before 9am for a reduced fare.

Holders of an older person's bus pass or a disabled bus pass in Buckinghamshire are allowed free travel on buses. Previously this was only after 9am on Monday to Friday. In a pilot arrangement with local bus companies, Buckinghamshire Council has arranged for new, extended benefits to free bus pass holders to travel on a bus before 9am on weekdays by paying a fixed £1 fare. These additional benefits will be in place until 31 August 2023.

Respect our beloved School Crossing Patrollers

Buckinghamshire Council is calling on all drivers in Bucks to be respectful of the work carried out by the county's dedicated group of lollipop men and women.

Come rain or shine, the small army of 60 school crossing patrollers are out morning and afternoon during the school term with their trusty STOP signs to help children safely reach school, as well as assisting adults across the road. However, a small minority of drivers can be abusive and put lives at risk with dangerous manoeuvres just because they don't want to stop to let people cross safely.

Examples include drivers using abusive language, not stopping when the patroller was already standing in the road and swerving round the patroller to get past. The patrollers' job is also made more difficult by drivers blocking pavements and stopping or parking in inconsiderate locations to drop off their children, particularly at 'School Keep Clear' markings and at bus stops.

So, the council is relaunching its 'Respect Me' campaign to remind drivers to be more considerate and respectful of the job school crossing patrollers do.

Buckinghamshire Council outlines further cost-of-living support for residents

Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has today agreed a comprehensive package of continuing support for residents struggling with cost-of-living pressures.

The council has been allocated a further £4.8 million of Household Support Fund money from the Department for Work and Pensions to provide support until March 2024. It's now set out how the funding will be used to provide the best help possible to residents who need it most.

The council recognises the cost-of-living pressures have not gone away and high inflation and recent annual bill rises are continuing to impact households across the county. The council is pleased the funding is for a full twelve months of support and today the Cabinet has agreed to continue with a range of initiatives to help local households, including its flagship Helping Hand service.

The Council will spend the new tranche of money in the same way it has done previously, by providing food vouchers to eligible residents, direct support through the Helping Hand service and using the funds to support local organisations like foodbanks, which are providing vital community-based support.

Creating a safer Buckinghamshire for all

The Safer Bucks Strategy 2023-26 is the product of many months of work to identify the community safety issues that matter most to Buckinghamshire residents, working with partner agencies and analysing available data.

The five identified priorities are:

- Neighbourhood crime - raising awareness of fraud, scams and cybercrime; and undertaking multiagency problem solving to tackle crime hotspots
- Anti-social behaviour - Tackling repeat victimisation and encouraging reporting and working with partners to address concerns
- Serious Violence - Raising awareness of serious violence and supporting early intervention and prevention for young people at risk
- Violence Against Women and Girls - Raising awareness through education and training of professionals and increasing confidence in reporting

- Exploitation of Vulnerable People - Identifying vulnerable locations where exploitation is at risk of occurring and ensuring communities can recognise the signs and how to report exploitation

To help set the priorities, in September last year a public consultation was run to gain an understanding of how safe residents feel in Buckinghamshire. Some of the key findings included:

- Fraud and scams continue to be of most concern to respondents, followed by theft from a vehicle
- Anti-social behaviour continues to be a significant concern for residents
- There has been an increase in criminal damage and vandalism

The Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership Board is the multi-agency partnership responsible for tackling crime and disorder within Buckinghamshire. The central vision of the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership is for Buckinghamshire to continue to be one of the safest places to grow up, raise a family, live, work and do business.

Councillor Derek Town