

# Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Strategic Response

2020-2025



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Luton**



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# VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION STRATEGY FOR BEDFORDSHIRE 2020-2025

## STRATEGY ON A PAGE

**INTRODUCTION:** Violence and exploitation are key Public Health issues across Bedfordshire (Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough), influencing the health and wellbeing of our population and leading to significant health inequalities. Violence and exploitation can have an impact right across the life course, with potentially devastating consequences. Below is an overview of 2020-2025 strategic objectives for Bedfordshire.

**FOCUS & GOVERNANCE:** This strategy, refreshed in March 2023, focuses on how to reduce and prevent future violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire, using a whole-system multi-agency approach. The governance of the strategy sits with Bedfordshire’s Combating Drugs, Alcohol, Violence and Exploitation (DAVE) Strategic Board, which oversees the Bedfordshire VERU and the Bedfordshire Child Exploitation and Missing Strategic group.

**VISION:** Our overall goal is to prevent violence and exploitation, reduce the harm caused and thus improve health and wellbeing across Bedfordshire.

### Priority A: Attitudinal change

*Changing attitudes and behaviours towards all types of violence and exploitation*

- Strengthen community resilience and increase perceived safety
- Encourage communities to develop “place-based” solutions and allow young people to have a voice and co- design solutions
- Build upon and strengthen positive relationships between our communities, Bedfordshire Police and service providers
- Emphasise that violence is preventable, and shift beliefs around violence
- Share positive stories of interventions that have reduced violence and exploitation
- Develop a counter narrative, working with the community to identify ‘alternative’ initiatives, using its assets (including long-term opportunities for employment)
- Raise community awareness of the signs of exploitation

### Priority B: Primary Prevention

*Stopping violence and exploitation before it begins*

- Ensure that serious violence and exploitation are included as a strategic issue on all health and related boards across Bedfordshire, with a clear plan on how to reduce violence and exploitation
- Promote protective factors in children, working with parents/carers and support their relationships with their children
- Ensure that all children have a trusted adult to talk to and for support
- For all front-line professionals (including school staff, healthcare professionals and staff within the voluntary sector) to be aware of the drivers of violence and exploitation
- Ensure that all schoolchildren receive high quality, engaging training on how to keep safe online
- Continue, and build upon, the ongoing work being carried out across Bedfordshire which aims to address the “root causes” of violence and exploitation

### Priority C: Secondary Prevention

*Detecting those at risk of violence and exploitation and intervening early*

- For all frontline agencies across Bedfordshire to be ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) aware and trauma informed.
- Front line professionals have the knowledge, skills and confidence to detect those that are already involved in, or at higher risk of being involved in, violence and exploitation
- Siblings, families, and close contacts of individuals involved in violence and exploitation are identified early and given the appropriate support as part of contextual safeguarding
- Increase knowledge of violence during school hours, around before, and after school time, working with schools and colleges.
- Data and intelligence from multiple organisations (police, hospital attendances, and ambulance) is used to highlight “at risk” areas for serious violence and exploitation.

### Priority D: Tertiary Prevention

*Managing and reducing risks for those already involved in violence & exploitation*

- Ensure that individuals who are currently involved in violence and/or exploitation are offered different opportunities for support and mentoring
- Continue to support existing and established services, which support those who are involved in violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire
- Support the Bedfordshire Child Exploitation Partnership Response, using the Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit
- Develop a greater understanding of the scale of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the role of females in County Lines.
- Continue, and build upon, the ongoing work being carried out across Bedfordshire which supports those who have been involved in the criminal justice system to find employment

### Priority E: Criminal Justice, Enforcement and Rehabilitation

*Innovative criminal justice practices that reduce offending behaviour and recidivism.*

- Ensure that the Criminal Justice System is an ACE aware and trauma- informed environment. Understand the role of the whole criminal justice system in supporting our whole-system multiagency approach.
- Avoid criminalising children, young people, and vulnerable adults where possible, using a trauma informed approach.
- Work with all relevant partners to prevent and disrupt offending behaviours and support people to reduce re- offending, developing a robust multiagency plan to carry this work forward
- Continue to undertake targeted activity and interventions, including overt police activity, to tackle and reduce drugs, knife, and gun crime in affected areas.
- Improve reporting of specific crimes that are known to be consistently underreported

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Violence and Exploitation across Bedfordshire

Violence and exploitation are key Public Health issues across Bedfordshire (Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough), influencing the health and wellbeing of our population and leading to significant health inequalities. Violence and exploitation can have an impact right across the life course, with potentially devastating consequences (1). Whilst many people survive their experience of violence and/or exploitation, the impact that it has on their physical and mental health and wellbeing can be long lasting and severe (1).

We believe that violence and exploitation are preventable, and our aim is to stop them before they start and to improve the health and wellbeing of our population (1). To achieve this, we need to take a whole-system multi-agency approach. We need to continue to work together, across multiple agencies and organisational boundaries, to identify and address the root causes and drivers (2) and promote factors that protect individuals from becoming involved in violence and exploitation in the first place. We also need to be able to identify those people who are at risk of committing violent crimes or being a victim of violence and/or exploitation, at an early stage and intervene early.

“By adopting a Public Health approach, violence can be prevented. A range of different interventions throughout the life course can reduce individuals’ propensity for violence, lower the chances of those involved in violence being involved again and ensure that those affected by violence get the support they require” (Bellis et al 2012).

### 1.2. Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit

In August 2019, the Bedfordshire Office for Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) was awarded funding to set up a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). VRUs are multi-agency units, bringing together partners across the county to tackle and prevent serious violence. Due to the clear association between violence and exploitation, “exploitation” has been added into the VRU title. The Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) aims to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire by taking a whole-system multi-agency approach to violence and exploitation. It aims to gain a deeper understanding of the drivers of violence and exploitation and how these can be reduced at a place-based level.

Whilst serious violence has been described as a “public health” problem for over a decade, there has been renewed interest in the benefits of taking this approach, after the success of the Scottish

VRU at reducing knife crime related injuries. The Bedfordshire VERU has developed this strategy in collaboration with multiple partners across Bedfordshire, which includes relevant organisations such as Children’s services, Adult’s services, Public Health, Youth Offending, Community Safety Partnerships, Local Safeguarding Boards and Education. This is not a strategy for the VERU alone, rather a strategy for all the relevant partners across the system to work together to achieve.

### 1.3. Whole-system multi-agency approach

Taking a “whole-system multi-agency approach” to preventing and reducing violence and exploitation refers to how we view the issue and how we can work together to prevent violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire. Multiple organisations have defined what taking this approach means to them, but ultimately there are key features of such an approach (outlined in Figure 1).

Figure 1: The 5Cs: a place-based multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention.



Source: extracted from “A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention (3).”

At the core of this, is partnership working- we need to work across organisational boundaries to tackle this problem, working as a whole system at a place level (2). Partners need to have a shared understanding of the approach that is being taken, and a common vision. We need to know what is driving the problem (the “causes of the causes”) and address the wider determinants (such as housing, education, employment) which have an impact on violence and exploitation. We need to focus on how we can **prevent** people in our community from being involved, or at risk of, violence and exploitation before it starts or detect it early. We should be considering how we can reduce this risk across the population (universal approach), as well as targeting individuals who are more at risk

of becoming involved in violence and exploitation (targeted approach). Finally, the approach we take, the decisions we make, needs to be driven by high quality data. We need to consider how we can best maximise the data that we have in the system, and how we can work across agencies to have a greater impact through the sharing of information.

For long term, meaningful, sustainable change, we need a shift in the way we work, how our community perceives violence and exploitation and how well our interventions suit their needs. Therefore, our community needs to co-design our solutions with us, so we are tailoring the approach at “place level.” Co-production can build trust within our community, and we need to ensure that communities feel empowered to make a difference. Additionally, we need to acknowledge the fact that this change will be complex and that it may take time to become embedded.

#### **1.4. Aims of strategy**

This strategy focuses on how to *reduce* and *prevent* future violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire. The key aims of this strategy are:

- To review and use data and intelligence (e.g., high-level findings from the strategic needs assessment) to inform the short term and long-term priorities for Bedfordshire VERU.
- To highlight and identified actions required to address the “causes of the causes.”
- To have a strong focus on prevention (including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention).
- To ensure that there is a co-ordinated multi-agency approach (which includes all organisations, the voluntary sector and the communities themselves), to protecting, preventing and supporting children, young people and their families, who are involved in, or at risk of, serious violence and exploitation.

Serious violence and exploitation are inextricably linked to a wide range of factors. We know that many agencies across Bedfordshire are working together to promote protective factors, reduce risk factors, and prevent violence and exploitation across the county. Therefore, this strategy needs to be considered in a wider context, and it recognises and reflects the ongoing multi-agency work occurring across Bedfordshire. This strategy aims to align with other relevant strategies, including Community Safety Partnership; Domestic Abuse; Child Exploitation procedures; Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Drug and Alcohol strategic priority plans and the breadth of work covered by the Safeguarding Children and Adult Partnerships. Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed list.

This strategy will be supported by an annual action plan.

### **1.5. Governance of strategy**

The governance of this strategy sits with Bedfordshire's Combating Drugs, Alcohol, Violence and Exploitation (DAVE) Strategic Board, which oversees the Bedfordshire VERU and the Bedfordshire Child Exploitation and Missing Strategic group. In addition, the three Directors of Children's Services will report to their respective Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPs) on this strategy and its implementation. The SCPs will hold partners to account for their role in delivering this strategy and associated action plan.

Commitment to, and engagement from partners and stakeholders, will be supported and driven through wider partnership boards. This strategy will be reviewed and/or refreshed annually to ensure that it reflects the current issues and priorities for violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire.

### **1.6. Definitions and scope**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (4)."

The Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office in April 2018, includes the following types of crime within the strategy: "specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon (2)."

Figure 2 outlines the key areas of focus, risk and protective factors for serious violence and exploitation that have been included in this strategy. This broad approach has been taken due to the overlap and interplay of the drivers or "root causes" of serious violence and exploitation. Definitions can be found in the Glossary.

This strategy predominately focuses on *children and young people up to the age of 25 years old*. However, we acknowledge that the vulnerabilities and risk factors that are experienced in childhood and adolescence can increase the likelihood of an individual being a victim or offender in adulthood. Separate strategies and toolkits focused on reducing the exploitation of vulnerable adults should be read alongside this strategy for a complete strategic overview relating to preventing exploitation across Bedfordshire.

Figure 2: Key topics, common links and factors covered within this strategy



### 1.7. Development of strategic priorities and objectives

The original version of this strategy was underpinned by the VERU's Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) in March 2020. The SNA, which was most recently updated in March 2023, provides a high-level overview of the scale of the problem of violence and exploitation across Bedfordshire. In addition, it provides information that may be useful for providing a focus for further analytic assessment, prioritizing operational work, identifying intelligence gaps, highlighting opportunities for prevention and enforcement, and providing justification for actions. See the SNA for its key findings and recommendations, which should be applied alongside the strategic priorities highlighted in this strategy.

A wide range of partners had an input into the development of the strategic objectives set out in this strategy. However, there was not a formal consultation process with young people, or those people who are involved in violence and exploitation.



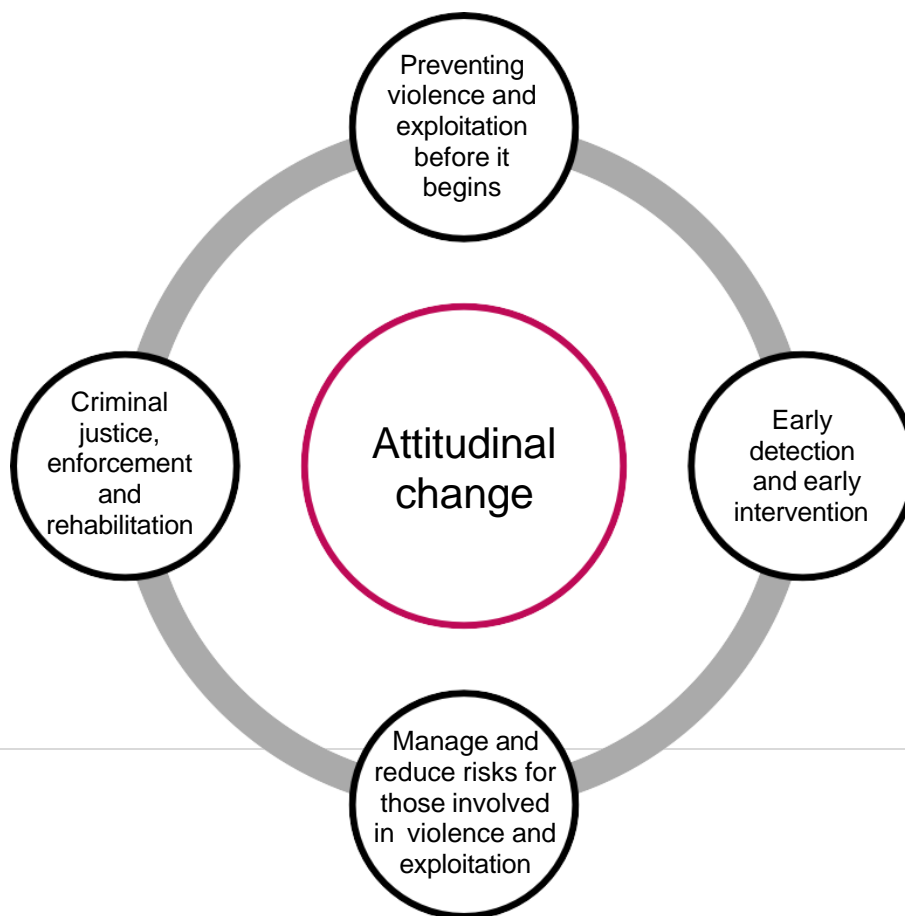
## 2. Strategic Objectives

### Our vision

Our overall goal is to *prevent* violence and exploitation, *reduce* the harm caused and thus *improve* health and wellbeing across Bedfordshire.

To achieve this ambitious goal, we have outlined high-level strategic objectives, themed into five overarching priorities (1) – see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Overarching strategic priorities



In addition, for all the five strands, we will work with our partners (including academic partners) to evaluate community projects/interventions funded by Bedfordshire VERU, to contribute and build upon the evidence base on the effectiveness of different interventions.

## Priority A: Attitudinal change

*Changing attitudes and behaviours towards all types of violence and exploitation at a societal, community and personal level.*

### Objectives

- Strengthen community resilience and increase perceived safety, continuing to work with communities and partners to support areas of Bedfordshire where violence is normalised, to change the narrative around violence.
- Encourage communities to develop “place-based” solutions and allow young people to have a voice and co- design solutions (2). Continue to engage with our community and voluntary groups, to give them the opportunity to guide and influence our objectives at a place level.
- Build upon and strengthen positive relationships between our communities, Bedfordshire Police and service providers, to increase trust and engagement and confidence in the partnership process to protect communities.
- Emphasise that violence is preventable, and shift beliefs around violence.
- Promote young people more positively using traditional and non-traditional media.
- Share positive stories of interventions that have reduced violence and exploitation, highlighting the positive impact of our work across Bedfordshire, through different forms of media (including social media).
- Develop a counter narrative, working with the community to identify ‘alternative’ initiatives, using its assets (including long-term opportunities for employment) (3).
- Ensure that we engage with, and work with, the victims of serious violence and exploitation, and their families for them to design and support our prevention work (1). Use evidence from other areas of what has “worked well.”
- Challenge the assumption that knife- carrying is “normal.” Work with communities and young people for them to understand that knife or other weapon carrying should not be tolerated within peer groups and within the wider community.
- Raise community awareness of the signs of exploitation (including child sexual exploitation, organised crime, county lines and modern-day slavery) and the scale of the problem within our local community.

### Expected outcomes

- An increase in disclosures and information provided by residents and communities (5).
- Improved levels of community confidence in the partnership process (6).
- Evidence of greater community/business involvement in local problem solving (6).
- Positive changes in the perception of safety across Bedfordshire. Reduced fear about violence and exploitation in our communities, particularly in children and young people.
- Evidence of a youth voice in everything that we do (6).
- An increase in the engagement with the serious violence and exploitation agenda by agencies, schools and communities (5). Schools and colleges have a greater understanding of their role in preventing serious violence and exploitation.

## Priority B: Stop violence and exploitation before it begins (Primary Prevention)

*We want to stop violence and exploitation before it even begins (1). We want to prevent “risk factors” of serious violence and exploitation and promote “protective factors.”*

### Objectives

- Ensure that serious violence and exploitation are included as a strategic issue on all health and related boards across Bedfordshire, with a clear plan on how to reduce violence and exploitation (1).
- Promote protective factors in children, working with parents/carers and support their relationships with their children. Ensure that parents/carers are informed about the value of parenting programmes, and the potential consequences of not participating in these programmes.
- Ensure that all children have a trusted adult to talk to and for support.
- For all front-line professionals (including school staff, healthcare professionals and staff within the voluntary sector) to be aware of the drivers of violence and exploitation, and how to identify and prevent these factors and promote protective factors.
- Increased education and training about the risks and potential consequences of knife carrying and being involved in violence and exploitation, including county lines and drug demand/supply. Take a universal and innovative approach for delivering these messages.
- Ensure that all schoolchildren receive high quality, engaging training on how to keep safe online.
- Ensure that all young people between 16-18 year olds are provided with a structured education or apprenticeship offer.
- Commission primary prevention interventions that work.

Continue, and build upon, the ongoing work being carried out across Bedfordshire which:

- Strongly advocates for early years support across Bedfordshire, as this is crucial for preventing the risk factors associated with serious violence and exploitation.
- Ensures that school aged children and young people have a good understanding about healthy and safe relationships, based on respect, empathy, and connectivity, through PHSE and Relationship and Sex Education.
- Promotes resilience, mental wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence, and emotional literacy (as protective factors), in children and young people from an early stage (2).
- Aims to address the “root causes” of violence and exploitation, improving the wider determinants of health (e.g., public health, community safety, children’s services, housing, education, employment).

### Expected outcomes

- A reduction in the prevalence or rate of risk factors for violence and exploitation.
- An increase in the prevalence or rate of protective factors for violence and exploitation.

## Priority C: Early detection and early intervention (Secondary Prevention)

*We want to recognise those people who are at risk of violence and exploitation and intervene at an early stage, with prompt and effective treatment (1)*

### Objectives

- For all frontline agencies across Bedfordshire to be ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) aware and trauma informed.
- Front line professionals can detect individuals or communities that are already involved in, or at higher risk of being involved in, violence and exploitation. Ensure that they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to intervene early and understand referral pathways (including National Referral Mechanisms, Bedfordshire VERU, Serious Youth Violence Panel, MASH, MAGpan, MARAC and VARAC services).
- Siblings, families, and close contacts of individuals involved in violence and exploitation are identified early and given the appropriate support as part of contextual safeguarding (7).
- Increased knowledge of violence during school hours, around before, and after school time, working with schools and colleges.
- Data and intelligence from multiple organisations (police, hospital attendances, and ambulance) is used to highlight “at risk” areas for serious violence and exploitation. Use this to inform our planning and interventions to improve community safety, reduce the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and reduce serious violence, alcohol- related injuries, sexual assault, and exploitation.
- Raise awareness of issues related to violence and exploitation across specific industries e.g., hoteliers, motorway service stations, football clubs, night-time economy, security, shopping centres, fast food outlets, taxi companies, barber/hairdressers and services that go into people’s homes (e.g., plumbers, electricians).
- Continue to support existing and established services, which support those at risk of being involved in violence and exploitation at an early stage, to ensure effective, sustainable, and consistent services across Bedfordshire
- Commission secondary prevention interventions that work.

Continue, and build upon, the ongoing work being carried out across Bedfordshire which:

- Supports children and young people who have speech and language delay, neuro-developmental issues, learning disabilities or mental health issues.
- Aims to reduce the number of children and young people who are excluded from school or other educational settings.
- Identifies individuals who have been in contact with the police due to anti-social behaviour (ASB) or may be at risk becoming involved in violence and/or exploitation, through improved data sharing between agencies. Ensure that these children and young people receive targeted education and support.
- Works with other Local Authorities who place vulnerable children and young people into Bedfordshire, to ensure that these individuals are known about and given early support.

### Expected outcomes

- Earlier access to support services (6).
- An increase in the number of children and young people who are engaged with interventions (5).
- Reduced NEETs across Bedfordshire.
- Reduced fixed and permanent school exclusions.
- Consistent recording and sharing of risks (6).
- Increase in safeguarding referrals and ASB referrals from all relevant partners (6).
- Greater professional awareness leading to increase in individuals identified and referred for support (5).
- A reduction in the number of missing young people.

## Priority D: Manage and reduce risks (Tertiary Prevention)

*Manage and reduce the risk for those who are already involved in violence and exploitation, to avoid crises and reduce its harmful consequences. We want to provide rehabilitation of people with established violent behaviour, to prevent re-offending and provide support and rehabilitation to victims and their families (1).*

### Objectives

- Ensure that individuals who are currently involved in violence and/or exploitation are offered different opportunities for support and mentoring (including from those with lived experience). Provide a counter-narrative to highlight future opportunities.
- Continue to support existing and established services, which support those who are involved in violence and exploitation to ensure effective, sustainable, and consistent services across Bedfordshire.
- Ensure that front line professionals are provided with education and training on “teachable moments” (2) or “making every contact count,” particularly within specific services e.g., within A+E and Youth Offending.
- Support the Bedfordshire Child Exploitation Partnership Response, using the Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit and developing a contextual safeguarding approach.
- Ensure that there is a clear and supportive process for vulnerable adults who are transitioning from children’s services to adult’s services, particularly for those people with low level support needs who may fall through the gaps in social, health and housing provision who may be vulnerable to exploitation in adulthood.
- Ensure that individuals who are involved (victims or offenders) in violence and exploitation can access support for their mental health and wellbeing.
- Develop a greater understanding of the scale of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the role of females in County Lines. Also, develop a greater understanding of the link between Child Sexual Exploitation, County Lines and Missing.
- Ensure effective information sharing and joint working to identify those involved and maintain an accurate profile of Serious Youth Violence to enable targeted, evidenced based activity and interventions (5).
- Support work carried out by specialists to provide emotional counselling and practical support for children, young people and their families involved in violence and exploitation. Ensure that these services link closely with other relevant services across the county e.g., Youth Offending Services and early help.
- Commission tertiary prevention interventions that work.

Continue, and build upon, the ongoing work being carried out across Bedfordshire which:

- Supports individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system to find employment.
- Supports individuals who are homeless and are at risk of violence and exploitation to find stable and safe accommodation. Work with housing teams to raise awareness of the challenges associated with violence and exploitation.

### Expected outcomes

- Earlier access to support services (6)
- A reduction in the rate of young people entering the Criminal Justice System
- A reduction in the rate of re-offending
- An increase in the number of individuals exiting offending behaviour (5)

## Priority E: Criminal Justice, Enforcement and Rehabilitation

*Innovative criminal justice practices that reduce offending behaviour and recidivism.*

### Objectives

- Ensure that the Criminal Justice System is an ACE aware and trauma- informed environment. Understand the role of the whole criminal justice system in supporting our whole-system multiagency approach.
- Ensure that there is a coordinated multi-agency approach for those young people who are already involved in violence and exploitation, through the Serious Youth Violence Panel and MAGpan.
- Avoid criminalising children, young people, and vulnerable adults where possible, using a trauma informed approach (2).
- Work with all relevant partners to prevent and disrupt offending behaviours and support people to reduce re- offending, developing a robust multiagency plan to carry this work forward. Continue and strengthen the ongoing work across Bedfordshire which aims to change the course of those with violent offending habits, including work focusing on rehabilitation, recovery from drug and alcohol dependency, resettlement, employment, and access to health services.
- Continue to undertake targeted activity and interventions, including overt police activity, to tackle and reduce drugs, knife, and gun crime in affected areas (5).
- Support interventions that promote restorative justice and continue to work with victims and their families and communities to deliver restorative justice programmes (2).
- Ensure that victims, and their families, are supported throughout their journey in the criminal justice system to promote recovery (2).
- Ensure that members of the public are confident to report serious violence and exploitation and that they feel that their concerns are valid, and they are listened to.
- Strengthen our message to the local community that carrying a knife and other weapons is not acceptable and will not be tolerated by the Bedfordshire police.
- Take action to identify and prosecute retailers who sell knives and other weapons to children and young people.
- Improve reporting of specific crimes that are known to be consistently underreported e.g., Child Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Domestic Abuse. Work with our partner organisations to share data (ambulance, A+E) to identify the scale of the under-reporting and respond to this.

### Expected outcomes

- An increase in the number of multi-agency information submission forms received by Police Central Intelligence Bureau and the local Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub.
- An increase in action taken against those causing harm to others (5).

## 2.1. Overall expected measures

The overall expected outcomes (as a result of the five priorities) are shown below. A separate evaluation plan will be developed to outline outcomes in more detail and monitor progress.

### Expected outcomes

- Improved data sharing, analysis and problem solving.
- Develop a greater wealth and depth of data surrounding violence and exploitation outcomes and risk/protective factors across Bedfordshire.
- A reduction in the prevalence of risk factors and an increase in the prevalence of protective factors for violence and exploitation.
- Increased awareness of the links between Child Sexual Exploitation and other forms of exploitation and violent incidents.
- Reduction in hospital admissions and attendances for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25 (Home Office success measure).
- Reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25, based on police recorded crime data (Home Office success measure).
- Reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25, including knives (Home Office success measure).

### 3. Version Control & Authors

Version	Date	Action	Author(s)/Owner(s)
V 0.1	31/01/2020	First draft of strategic response completed and circulated to partners for feedback	Megan Gingell & Lisa Robinson
V 0.2	20/01/2020	Updated strategy sent to VERU Oversight Board	Megan Gingell & Lisa Robinson
V 0.3	02/03/2020	Second draft of strategic response circulated to partners	Megan Gingell & Lisa Robinson
V 0.4	23/03/2020	Updated strategy sent to VERU Oversight Board	Megan Gingell & Lisa Robinson
V 1.0	27/03/2020	Signed off virtually by VERU Oversight Board	Megan Gingell & Lisa Robinson
V 2.0	22/03/2023	Strategy refreshed to reflect current realities and discussed with selected key internal stakeholders.	Ade Abitoye
V 2.1	31/03/2023	March 2023 refreshed strategy circulated	Ade Abitoye



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## 5. Glossary

Term	Definition
<p><b>Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)</b></p>	<p>“Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is not defined in law but is a term that has come to be associated with ‘county lines’. The government definition of county lines is set out below together with the Home Office definition of child criminal exploitation, which is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved.</p> <p>CCE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In exchange for something that the victim needs or wants.</li> <li>• For the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator.</li> <li>• Through violence or the threat of violence.</li> </ul> <p>The victim may have been criminally exploited, even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.</p> <p>The criminal exploitation of children is not confined to county lines but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality(8).”</p>
<p><b>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)</b></p>	<p>“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited, even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology(9)”</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	<p>A contextual safeguarding approach seeks to create a response to extra- familial forms of abuse that can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target the contexts in which that abuse occurs, from assessment through to intervention</li> <li>• Frame work to address extra-familial risk through the lens of child welfare, as opposed to crime reduction or community safety</li> <li>• Utilise partnerships between children’s services and agencies who have a reach into extra-familial contexts (such as transport providers, retailers, youth workers, residents associations, parks and recreation services, schools and so son), and;</li> <li>• Measure success with reference to the nature of the context in which harm has been occurring, rather than solely focusing on any behaviour changes displayed by young people who were at risk in those contexts (Developing a Criminal Exploitation Partnership in Bedfordshire PID)</li> </ul>
<b>County Lines</b>	<p>“County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of ‘deal line’.</p> <p>They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons(10).”</p>
<b>Knife crime</b>	<p>“There is no Home Office definition of 'knife crime'. The phrase was adopted by the media and is now popularly used to refer primarily to stabbings but also to the illegal carrying of knives by young people in a public place or on school premises. However, 'knife-enabled crime' includes a variety of other offences involving a bladed weapon, for example it is an offence to cause or threaten harm with a knife and if used in a robbery or assault, it aggravates the offence. It is also illegal to look after, hide or transport a dangerous weapon on behalf of someone else, market a knife in a way which is likely to encourage violent behaviour, and sell a knife to a person under 18(11).”</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Life-course approach</b>	“The life-course approach aims at increasing the effectiveness of interventions throughout a person’s life. It focuses on a healthy start to life and targets the needs of people at critical periods throughout their lifetime. It promotes timely investments with a high rate of return for Public Health and the economy by addressing the causes, not the consequences, of ill health(12).”
<b>Prevention: Primary</b>	Stop violence and exploitation before it begins
<b>Prevention: Secondary</b>	Early detection and early intervention, recognising those people who are at risk of violence and exploitation and intervene at an early stage, with prompt and effective treatment
<b>Prevention: Tertiary</b>	Manage and reduce the risk for those who are already involved in violence and exploitation, to avoid crises and reduce its harmful consequences.

## 6. Appendix 1: Associated strategies and useful resources

- **Bedford Borough CSP Strategy 2020- 2023:**  
[https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/Bedford\\_CSP-Plan\\_2017-20\(June17\).pdf](https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/Bedford_CSP-Plan_2017-20(June17).pdf)
- **Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Boards Procedures: Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures**  
<https://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/>
- **Bedfordshire CSE & Missing Strategy:** <https://www.centralbedfordshirelscb.org.uk/lscb-website/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation>
- **Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Local Transformation Plan**
- **Bedfordshire- The Police and Crime Plan**  
<https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/fluidcms/files/files/BPCC-Police-Crime-Plan.pdf>
- **Central Bedfordshire CSP Strategy** <https://safercentral.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CSP-Strategy-2019-21-FINAL.pdf>
- **Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/794554/6.5120\\_Child\\_exploitation\\_disruption\\_toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794554/6.5120_Child_exploitation_disruption_toolkit.pdf)
- **Central Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy:**  
[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/migrated\\_images/domestic-abuse\\_strategy\\_tcm3-19094.pdf](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/migrated_images/domestic-abuse_strategy_tcm3-19094.pdf);
- **Children and Young people Trafficked for the purpose of Criminal Exploitation:**  
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/exploitation-toolkit.pdf>
- **Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults – County Lines:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf)
- **Child Sexual Exploitation**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591903/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Core\\_Document\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf)
- **County Lines Exploitation Guidance:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/839253/moj-county-lines-practical-guidance-frontline-practitionerspdf.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839253/moj-county-lines-practical-guidance-frontline-practitionerspdf.pdf)
- **Department for Education: Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/641418/20170831\\_Exclusion\\_Stat\\_guidance\\_Web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/641418/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf)
- **Journey into Adulthood:** [21 | Page](https://www.nwgnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NWG-</a></li></ul></div><div data-bbox=)

[Report-Sexual- Exploitation-the-Journey-into-Adulthood-May-2018-1.pdf](#)

- **Luton-Adult Exploitation Strategy**  
[https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community\\_and\\_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Adult-exploitation-strategy.pdf](https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Adult-exploitation-strategy.pdf)
- **Luton CSP Strategy:**  
[https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community\\_and\\_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/luton-csp-plan-2017-2020.pdf](https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/luton-csp-plan-2017-2020.pdf)
- **Luton Domestic Abuse Strategy:**  
[https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community\\_and\\_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Community%20Safety/Domestic%20abuse%20strategy%20final8%203%2011.pdf](https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Community%20Safety/Domestic%20abuse%20strategy%20final8%203%2011.pdf)
- **Luton Serious Youth Violence Strategy:**  
[https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community\\_and\\_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/soLUTiONs%20strategies/Serious%20youth%20violence%20strategy%202016-20.pdf](https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/soLUTiONs%20strategies/Serious%20youth%20violence%20strategy%202016-20.pdf)
- **Serious Violence strategy:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)
- **Violence Against Women and Girls 2017-2020, Crown Prosecution Service:**  
[https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/legal\\_guidance/VAWG-Strategy-2017-2020-R01.pdf](https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/legal_guidance/VAWG-Strategy-2017-2020-R01.pdf)
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children:**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779401/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard-Children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf)