



# Bedfordshire Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group

Terms of Reference

June 2021



# Terms of Reference for Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group

## Purpose

The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group will ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to concerns about Child Exploitation (CE) and Missing; to maintain an overview of emerging issues in Bedfordshire. The group reports to the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB), Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) and Luton Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

The overall purpose of the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group is to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic and operational multi-agency response to Exploitation and Missing across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

The purpose of the Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group will be to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic and operational multi-agency response to the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation (VER) Strategy and Action Plan. The Exploitation & Missing Strategic Group will deliver on the VER Strategy and action plan on behalf of the VERU Board and will regularly review the Strategy.

## Governance

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** is accountable to the VERU Board and Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Boards. The group will support and fulfil the Boards statutory responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and protect children, young people and young adults (up to the age of 25) who are at risk of or are being Exploited and going missing.

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will agree key strategic objectives annually for Exploitation and Missing. The group will review the progress against the strategic objectives and report to the respective Boards by the Chair of this group.

**The Monthly Child Exploitation & Missing Reduction Group (CEM)** will be accountable to the **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** and present updates on the outcomes of their interventions and in particular any exceptions to effective inter-agency working and the co-operation of partners.

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will provide assurances to the Boards in relation to its business; specifically, the VERU (Violence and Exploitation Unit Reduction Board).

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will ensure that the voice of the child/young person/young adult is heard and acted upon and link in with the Pan Beds Voice of the child group.

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will engage with the Community Safety Partnerships organisations involved with children and young people to raise awareness of information pertinent to those at risk.

**The Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will raise awareness of the impact of exploitation and missing on the welfare of children and young people and will oversee the Bedfordshire Against Violence and Exploitation Communication Plan (BAVEX).

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will identify, apply and disseminate good practice and promote consistent implementation.

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will deliver on the Exploitation and Missing strategy and action plan on behalf of the VER Board and will regularly review the strategy.

- Ensuring that current practice and interventions are informed by evidence based and linked and mapped to national policy and developments
- Ensuring the focus is on prevention as well as response
- Ensure multi-agency practice is regularly reviewed and evaluated
- Ensuring that current and future multi-agency policies and procedures are appropriately designed to be responsive in meeting the demand that Exploitation poses within the local community and when necessary develop new policies and procedure, for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Ensure that there is clear data and evidence supporting effective responses to the risk to children and young people of Exploitation and Missing
- Ensure staff are adequately trained in how to identify and respond
- Ensure that the public receive key messages
- Ensure links to other partnership groups – for example; Safeguarding Children Board's groups and OCG & County lines Board.

All members will be responsible for linking to their senior management teams in their agencies and will take on pieces of work as appropriate to their role on behalf of the group.

## Scope

References used by the **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** for children and young people are those defined by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and they will work with children and young people, up to the age of 18 and for children looked after up to the age of 21 years.

*The Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation 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.*

## Strategic Priorities;

- Attitudinal Change
- Primary Prevention
- Secondary Prevention
- Tertiary Prevention
- Criminal Justice, Enforcement & Rehabilitation

## Links to other Partnerships

Exploitation cannot be tackled in isolation from other partnerships and initiatives to support, educate and protect children and young people. The work of this group will sit alongside, support or report to other local partnership such as:

- OCG & County Lines Board
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Public Health
- Drug & Alcohol Boards
- Domestic Abuse Boards
- Health and Wellbeing Boards

## Structure

Following discussion at the CSE & Missing Strategic Group in 2021, it was agreed that Harmesh Bhogal Chief Officer for Children's Services, Bedford Borough Council would take over the chairing of this group. Representative from one (or all 3) of the 3 Safeguarding Boards Business Managers will attend the group to ensure the links with appropriate groups in their respective areas are maintained and represented.

## Membership

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will include membership from:

- Bedfordshire Police
- VERU
- Bedford Borough Children Social Care and Education representation
- Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership
- Central Bedfordshire Children Social Care and Education representation
- Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnership
- Luton Children Social Care and Education representation
- Luton Community Safety Partnership
- Luton & Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service
- Luton Youth Offending Service
- Link to Change
- Public Health
- Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board, Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Luton Safeguarding Children Board.
- Adult Safeguarding representatives

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair's role in each meeting will be to ensure that:

- All members are offered equity with regard to opportunities to contribute to the meeting
- The function of the meeting is maintained and it is conducted within the agreed timescale
- The efficient administration of the meeting is maintained.
- The information shared is accurately recorded and disseminated through the meeting.
- If the Chair is unable to attend, a Vice Chair will be nominated to chair the meeting

The members' roles will be to ensure that:

- They attend meetings regularly or send a deputy from their own area of expertise
- Contribute to the information sharing which enables the meetings to fulfil their purpose
- Implement appropriate levels of disclosure of information shared at the meetings to enable further integrated working with other frontline partners
- Contribute to the actions agreed during the meetings and provide timely reports on progress and outcomes
- Represent and act as a communication link with their organisations and SCB

Each member will have the appropriate skills base required to effectively execute the group's work plan. Members will take the responsibility for attending meetings, fully contributing by bringing expertise to the task and informing their respective agencies of issues and developments.

The Chair will meet with the VERU Bedfordshire Exploitation Lead prior to the meeting; to agree the agenda items and ensure reports are submitted. The Bedfordshire Exploitation Lead will prepare the agenda and documents for the Pre-meet and when agreed send to business support in preparation to send to the group members.

## **Confidentiality and the Sharing of Information**

The success of interagency co-operation in the protection of children and young people is rooted in the exchange and sharing of relevant information. Rules of confidentiality are not intended to prevent the sharing of information, the purpose of which is to protect children and young people. Please see the Pan Bedfordshire Information sharing Protocol at [https://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_information\\_shar.html?zoom\\_highlight=information+sharing](https://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/p_information_shar.html?zoom_highlight=information+sharing)

The overriding duty to share all relevant information and the protection of the child/young person must take precedence. It is vital to the decision-making process that professional's follow the information sharing protocol process to contribute all relevant information held on their records.

Those in receipt of information obtained through any part of the child protection process must treat it with strict confidence. They should not disclose such information for any purpose other than the protection of child or young person without the expressed consent of the professionals or any family member who provided it.

In many cases it is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a full picture is created where a child or young person can be seen to be vulnerable, in need or at risk of harm. Appropriate sharing with other practitioners and agencies is essential if children and young people who may need support and services are to be identified at an early stage before problems become serious. Sharing can also enable information from different cases to be put together and assist the process of assessing levels of concern and any potential risks.

## **Frequency of meetings**

The **Pan Bedfordshire Exploitation/Missing Strategic Group** will meet on a quarterly basis or if required by the nature of or to meet the needs of a particular work stream, more frequently as decided by the Chair.

## Governance Chart

