VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION STRATEGY FOR BEDFORDSHIRE 2020-2025

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

INTRODUCTION

Violence and exploitation are key Public Health issues across Bedfordshire, 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.

To reduce and prevent violence and exploitation we need to take a multi-agency approach. This includes collaboration across multiple partners, co-production with those involved in or affected by violence and exploitation, developing a counter narrative, cooperation in data sharing, and developing a community consensus approach.

BEDFORDSHIRE

Bedfordshire is divided into three unitary authorities: Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. The three local authorities have very distinctive populations with vastly different profiles and needs. This strategy makes it clear, that despite these differences we are committed to working together to prevent and manage violence and exploitation whilst at the same time responding to the individual needs of each community. Through working together, we have developed our understanding of violence and exploitation and the aims and objectives of this strategy and the associated action plan is based on national guidance underpinned by local understanding.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of this strategy sits with the Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Oversight Board and the Bedfordshire Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Strategic group. In addition, the three Directors of Children's Services will report to their respective Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) on this strategy and its implementation. The LSCBs will hold partners to account for their role in delivering this strategy and associated action plan.

LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

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.

Attitudinal change

- 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. Continue to engage with our community and voluntary groups, to give them the opportunity to guide and influence our objectives at a place level.
- 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).
- 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. Use evidence from other areas of what has "worked well."

Primary Prevention

Stopping violence and exploitation before it begins

- 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.
- Continue work which:
  - Strongly advocates for early years support across Bedfordshire
  - Ensures that schoolchildren have a good understanding about health and safe relationships, based on respect, empathy, diversity and connectivity
  - Promotes resilience, mental wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence and emotional literacy (as protective factors), in children and young people from an early stage

Secondary prevention

Early intervention and detection

- For all frontline agencies across Bedfordshire to be ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) aware and trauma informed.
- Front line professionals are able to 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.
- 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).
- Use data and intelligence from multiple organisations (police, hospital attendances, ambulance) 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.

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.

Tertiary prevention

Managing and reducing the risk in those already involved in violence

- 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 Criminal Exploitation Partnership, using the Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit and developing a contextual safeguarding
- 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

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

Criminal Justice, Enforcement and Rehabilitation

- 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-systems 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..
- 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.
- Support interventions that promote restorative justice, and continue to work with victims and their families and communities to deliver restorative justice programme.
- Ensure that victims, and their families, are supported throughout their journey in the criminal justice system to promote recovery.
- 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. Work with our partner organisations to share data (ambulance, A+E) to identify the scale of the under-reporting and respond to this.