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# **Safer Buckinghamshire Plan**

## **2020-2023**

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# 1. Introduction

**Welcome to the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan for 2020 - 2023.**

Our aim is for Buckinghamshire to continue to be one of the safest places to grow up, raise a family, live, work and do business.

This plan sets out the five priorities agreed by the Safer Buckinghamshire Board and explains how we will deliver them.

We want to reduce crime and disorder and protect vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire. Crime is constantly changing and we face increased pressure on our resources. So it is important that we work together to tackle these challenges.

**Our five priorities are:**

- **Helping communities to become more resilient.** We will target support to those communities experiencing greater levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **Protecting vulnerable adults and children.** We will work with them to reduce their chances of experiencing or committing serious crime or being exploited.
- **Addressing the impact of drugs, alcohol and poor mental health.** We will work to reduce levels of crime and harm linked to these factors.
- **Tackling domestic violence and abuse.** We will focus on early intervention and improving services for victims.
- **Dealing with offending.** We will act as early as possible to prevent first time offending. We will bring offenders to justice and work hard to stop re-offending.

Across all of our priorities, we will look at the impact of Covid-19 and take steps to reduce its impact on crime and the causes of crime. We will review these priorities every year and will consult with residents. We will continue to focus on the crimes with the highest risk of harm. We will learn from local and national experience and will follow examples of best practice.



**Chair of Safer Buckinghamshire Board**

Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire Council

## 2. The Safer Buckinghamshire Board

We must work together to tackle crime and disorder successfully. This includes local residents and businesses, community and voluntary groups and public services.

The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 gave the police and local authorities powers to join with other organisations to form a local Community Safety Partnership. The role of the partnership is to develop an action plan to reduce crime within the local area. In Buckinghamshire this partnership is called the Safer Buckinghamshire Board.

### **The members of the Safer Buckinghamshire Board are:**

- Buckinghamshire Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service
- Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- National Probation Service – Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire
- Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Board brings together experts from the police, fire service, probation, health and social care. This gives a rounded approach. Reducing crime is not just about dealing with the crime itself but looking at the wider picture. For example, health services may be the first service to pick up the impact of crime on a person. In a similar way, keeping children and young people safe, either as victims of crime or those committing crime, will involve social care services.



The Safer Buckinghamshire Board also works closely with many other organisations including community and voluntary groups and local businesses. Although these groups do not sit on the Board, they may be invited to meetings and get involved in the work of the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership.

**The Board also has legal duties. These are:**

- Undertaking a Community Safety Strategic Assessment
- Developing a Community Safety Plan
- Seeking the views of local residents
- Reducing re-offending
- Preventing extremism
- Tackling modern slavery
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Addressing drug and alcohol misuse
- Carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Tackling persistent anti-social behaviour

### 3. What you told us

In January 2020, we asked people in Buckinghamshire what they thought the biggest community safety issues were.

The survey included multiple choice questions and the opportunity for people to give comments.

**2379**

people completed the Buckinghamshire Residents Community Safety Survey.

**76**

elected representatives completed the survey.

**Almost 1700**

respondents provided postcodes enabling geographical analysis.

#### Types of Crime

Burglary, fraud, scams and motor vehicle crime were the issues of most concern to people.

**Over 50%**

of the most serious concerns resulted from hearing news reports or the experience of others.

Residents in more deprived communities also expressed strong concerns over other types of crime.

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

Criminal damage, begging and vagrancy and loitering were the issues of most concern.

**Over 50%**

of those who expressed a view, criminal damage, begging, rough sleeping and loitering were the issues of most concern

A larger proportion of strong concerns came from those living in more deprived communities.

## Drugs and alcohol

Drugs are of greater concern than alcohol.

More than half of those who expressed strong concerns had personal experience.

Those from more deprived communities had the strongest concerns about drug problems.

## Feeling safe

**59%**

of those who took part said they feel very safe when out in daylight compared to 38% living in more deprived areas.

**35%**

of those who took part said they feel fairly unsafe or very unsafe when out alone at night. This increased to 64% in more deprived areas.

**17%**

have been a victim of crime in the past 12 months.

**32%**

of this group did not report the crime. The reasons included believing the police would not respond and feeling that the person who committed the crime would not be caught.

The most common concerns raised in the survey were: Drugs, fly-tipping, lack of police, burglary, youths, speeding, parking and street lighting.

## 4. Crime and community safety in Buckinghamshire

We carried out a study to look at the crime and community safety issues specific to Buckinghamshire. This work was called a Strategic Crime Assessment. The results have been used to decide on the priorities and key actions in the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan. The results showed five clear areas of concern:

### 1

- Anti-social hotspots across the county.
- Disproportionate levels of crime across more deprived areas.
- Community concerns from the Residents Survey around antisocial behaviour, drug use and crimes such as fraud, scams, vehicle crime and burglary.

### 2

- Vulnerability to violence and exploitation.
- Emerging criminal activity in Aylesbury – Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and High Wycombe - (CSE and modern slavery).
- Increasing levels of young victims and suspects, increasing levels of female victims and suspects.
- Increased repeat offending and increased numbers of suspects who are also victims.
- BAME over representation in suspects.

### 3

- A quarter of drug and alcohol treatment service users have an offending history.
- A third of mental health treatment service users have a risk of offending.
- Community concerns from the Residents Survey around drug use, paraphernalia and anti-social behaviour relating to drugs and alcohol use. Drugs and related issues was the most quoted comment in the survey.

## 4

- Domestic abuse is one of the highest non-crime demand on resources.
- Domestic violence and abuse crimes have increased by 23%.
- Increase in a new problem area among older people (30 – 39 years).
- Increases in females as both victims and suspects.

## 5

- Negative childhood experiences increase the risk of offending.
- Almost 1 in 2 identified suspects were suspected of more than 1 offence in a 5 year period.
- Homelessness may increase the risk of someone offending.
- Community concerns around young people intimidating, loitering and being involved in anti-social behaviour.

Crime in Buckinghamshire has increased every year for the last five years. This is line with the regional and national picture. There were 33,529 crimes recorded by the police between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, although the Police will have received many more calls about people's concerns. This is a 9% increase on the 30,531 recorded crimes in 2017/18 and a 42% increase when compared to 5 years ago (23,643 recorded crimes in 2014/15).

- The largest increases have been in violent crime and public order offences.
- Sexual offences have continued to increase every year.
- Drugs offences are falling overall but drug issues are a key concern for our residents.
- The main types of crime are theft, burglary and criminal damage. However they have been increasing at a slower rate compared to other types of crime.

## 5. Our priorities for the next three years

Using all the information available we have developed a set of priorities. They focus on the known causes of crime and also the concerns of people in Buckinghamshire:

- **Helping communities to become more resilient.** We will target support to those communities experiencing greater levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **Protecting vulnerable adults and children.** We will work with them to reduce their chances of experiencing or committing serious crime or being exploited.
- **Addressing the impact of drugs, alcohol and poor mental health.** We will work to reduce levels of crime and harm linked to these factors.
- **Tackling domestic violence and abuse.** We will focus on early intervention and improving services for victims.
- **Dealing with offending.** We will act as early as possible to prevent first time offending. We will bring offenders to justice and work hard to stop re-offending.

We have written a plan to carry out the key actions linked to these priorities. We will set up clear measures so that we can track the delivery and impact of our plan.

We will use our funds, including the Community Safety grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner, to support these priorities. Our focus will be on early interventions.

In the coming year, we are expecting to take responsibility for some new legal duties relating to domestic abuse and dealing with serious violence.

We will review these priorities and our delivery plan every year. We will consider what effect our actions are having and whether we need to make any changes.



## Underlying themes

The five priorities have a number of underlying themes. These will be addressed in our delivery plan:

- Traumatic experiences can have a long lasting effect on a person. They can increase the chances of them becoming a victim of crime or carrying out a crime. Experiencing domestic violence and abuse and negative childhood experiences are clearly linked to personal wellbeing in the future and also have implications for the wider community.
- People with disabilities and people suffering from poor mental health are more vulnerable to becoming victims of crime. You are also more likely to experience poor mental health if you are a victim of crime.
- Supporting vulnerable people and challenging hate, prejudice and extremism.
- Supporting communities to come together to make their environments safer. The introduction of 16 Community Boards across Buckinghamshire provides a new opportunity to work with communities to address their community safety concerns.
- Assessing the impact on Covid-19 on crime and take steps to reduce its impact on crime and related harm.

# Priority 1: Helping communities to become more resilient

## Why is it a priority?

Crime and anti-social behaviour is a large concern for residents but varies across the county. The level of anti-social behaviour has not changed greatly over the past three years but more is taking place in larger towns and known hotspots. Nearly a third of reported crime occurred within the most deprived areas in the county. This compares to just 10% in the least deprived areas. Some less deprived areas are hotspots for particular crimes, such as scams. We want to support individuals and communities to take steps to reduce the likelihood of crime and anti-social behaviour. At the same time we will target our resources in hotspot areas.

## What we plan to do

### *Building Resilience*

We will:

- Work with communities to reduce the opportunities for crimes such as theft and burglary, anti-social behaviour and exploitation.
- Build confidence in the safety of local neighbourhoods.
- Talk with Community Boards, residents and councillors to identify local issues and work out local solutions for dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Work with partners to increase the resilience of children and young people. Ensuring they feel safe in their neighbourhood and the places they visit.

### *Targeting local areas*

We will:

- Address local issues, providing advice, community support and enforcement activity in emerging hotspots.
- Work with planners and developers, town centre managers, town and parish councils and other partners to improve the design and management of public spaces.
- Use anti-social behaviour legislation to address issues such as cuckooing, graffiti and problems in town centres. Cuckooing is where criminals exploit a vulnerable person by taking over their home often for criminal purposes.
- Work with partners in the voluntary and community sector to tackle the issues associated with rough sleeping and begging.
- Ensure guilty people are prosecuted for their crimes. This will also send out a clear message that such behaviours will not be tolerated.

## Priority 2: Protecting vulnerable adults and children

### Why is it a priority?

The largest increase in crime in Buckinghamshire in the last five years has been in violent crime (+133%) and public disorder (+133%).

Serious violence has a negative impact on individuals, communities and the county as a whole. It stops people feeling safe and affects their wellbeing. We also know that traumatic and negative experiences, especially in childhood, can have a lasting effect and make someone more vulnerable to harm in later life.

Extremism causes harm to individuals and whole communities. The rise of hate, intolerance and violence has a great impact on community tensions and unity. It affects the quality of life and wellbeing of those targeted.

Thames Valley Police has the second highest number of reported incidents of modern slavery in the country. Modern slavery is often called a hidden crime so an increase in reporting may be due to increased public awareness of the issue.

Reports of child abuse and exploitation have not changed greatly. They continue to be a significant concern.

Vulnerable adults and children are often the target of exploitation. This can include physical, sexual or financial criminal acts. 'County lines' gang activity can lead to anti-social behaviour and violence. It can also raise safeguarding concerns. 'County lines' is the practice of drug dealers from one area setting up in another areas and targeting vulnerable people.

There are clear links between exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking. These crimes form part of a wider exploitation agenda.

## What we plan to do

### *Prevention and Early Help*

We will:

- Improve information and intelligence sharing to identify potential victims at a much earlier stage.
- Take swift action where a person is at immediate risk of exploitation.
- Provide constructive activities to distract those at high risk.
- Provide awareness training for frontline workers to give them confidence to take responsibility for reporting their concerns.
- Work with communities to improve general awareness of the signs of child and adult exploitation and what action to take. Improve the confidence of victims to report issues.

### *Combating Exploitation*

We will:

- Encourage local community groups to work together to combat exploitation of vulnerable people such as the elderly and those with special needs.
- Improve cross-boundary relationships and sharing of information to tackle modern slavery and exploitation.
- Work together to reduce the number of children and young people who go missing and the risk of harm caused to them. Provide improved support and guidance to missing children and their families and carers.
- Provide protection in places where vulnerable people are often targeted. This includes pupil referral units and residential children's care homes. We will also use our knowledge to target emerging hotspots.
- Provide support for individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism leading to terrorism. Support projects and events which build unity and offer a positive alternative to extremism.
- Create greater awareness and understanding of the techniques to exploit people online.



### ***Serious Violence***

We will:

- Implement the Buckinghamshire Violence Reduction Plan to reduce serious violence. We will intervene as early as possible to prevent people being drawn into violent crime, either as victims or offenders.
- Support the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit's pilot projects in Buckinghamshire. We will expand the learning from the pilots into other key locations in Buckinghamshire.
- Promote alternatives to young people at risk of being drawn into serious organised crime that may include violence.

### ***Hate crime***

We will:

- Explore all opportunities for schools to promote anti-discrimination practice through the curriculum. We will also support schools in their duties to promote community cohesion and equalities.
- Produce public information which makes it clear what hate crime is and how to respond to it as a victim, witness or a concerned person.

## Priority 3: Addressing the impact of drugs, alcohol and poor mental health

### Why is it a priority?

Drug and alcohol misuse is often a factor in many offences. It is particularly linked with crimes relating to night time socialising, sexual violence, domestic violence and abuse, child abuse and anti-social behaviour. Street drinking and drugs are also issues that concern residents.

People suffering from poor mental health are more likely to be targets of crime and anti-social behaviour. You are also more likely to experience poor mental health if you are a victim of crime.

### What we plan to do

We will:

- Support vulnerable people who are either victims or those causing anti-social behaviour. This may involve directing them to support services such as counselling, mental health support, and substance misuse treatment. It may also include safeguarding or protecting individuals where it is appropriate.
- Continue to build better links to more specialist services to deal with underlying issues such as mental health and substance misuse.
- Work to address harm associated with the people begging and sleeping rough.
- Protect vulnerable adults who are at risk of being exploited through drug related crime such as being drawn into county lines or being “cuckooed” into hosting drug dealing.
- Tackle hotspot areas that are affected by the open drug markets.
- Closely monitor performance around drug and alcohol treatment to ensure that targeted actions are working and there is continued improvement in key outcomes.



## Priority 4: Tackling domestic violence and abuse

### Why is it a priority?

Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) makes up a large proportion of violent crime. It causes long lasting harm in families. There are high numbers of children living in abusive homes. Despite many incidents remaining unreported, the number of incidents which come to the attention of services is high.

There are cycles of repeat offending and repeat victimisation. Only a small number of offenders are convicted. We know that the long-term impact of experiencing domestic or sexual violence and abuse in a family environment can have a devastating effect on a person's ability to cope throughout their life. This is the case for both adults and children. DVA also has increasing financial implications for public finances. We know that DVA is under-reported. It is often not readily identifiable or recognised by many professionals and the community. We will be seeking to build more effective interventions to reduce the occurrence of DVA.

In 2019, a detailed study on domestic violence and abuse in Buckinghamshire reviewed both national and local evidence of need and effective responses. The findings of this study form the basis for our priority actions.

### What we plan to do

We will:

- Focus on early intervention and prevention. We will introduce more evidence-based best practice techniques for identifying those at risk. We will respond more effectively by intervening early to reduce harm and prevent homelessness.
- Engage with Early Help services to ensure appropriate early help is delivered to address adverse childhood experiences.
- Introduce more effective and accessible offender services to change behaviours.
- Better align specialist DVA services with mainstream services. This includes reviewing procedures and protocols and linking all relevant agencies to provide an improved, more holistic service.
- Work to better understand the barriers and increase access to DVA services for male victims, victims with physical and learning or sensory disabilities and people with poor mental health and improve these services.
- Work with the Council's Housing Service to place the victim at the centre of our response. This includes reviewing housing allocations policies to ensure DVA cases receive appropriate support.



- Work with Housing Associations to intervene early and prevent homelessness. We will also develop accommodation options for victims unable to access shelters.
- When commissioning new DVA services from 2022 onwards we will:
  - Seek opportunities to incorporate or provide separately support services for ‘hidden’ victims. This can include older people, men, travellers, LGBT, people without recourse to public funds, services for those needing information in other languages.
  - To strengthen, formalise and connect the support received from mental health services and substance misuse services.
- Set up a multi-agency partnership training programme to support all professionals in responding to victims, offenders and others affected, for example, children.
- Produce clear public information explaining what DVA is, how to spot the signs and how to respond to it as a victim, witness or a concerned person.
- Work with the Community Boards and other organisations, extend our Domestic Violence Champions scheme to raise awareness and encourage more consistent understanding of the issues and changes in legislation across our communities.
- Introduce specialist learning events to share lessons learned from both local and national recommendations of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

## **PRIORITY 5: Dealing with offending**

### **Why is it a priority?**

The causes of offending are very broad and complex so it is important that a range of organisations work together to help prevent offending and re-offending. Once someone has begun offending, there is a greater chance that they will re-offend. In Buckinghamshire nearly a quarter of those who commit a crime will go on to re-offend.

In 2018/19 in Buckinghamshire, 8,994 individuals were suspected of carrying out the reported crimes. Of these, one third were suspected of committing more than one crime. This is equivalent to an average of 3.8 crimes each. This is a 5% increase in the last five years. One out of every two identified suspects re-offended within five years and a third of recorded suspects were also reported as victims. This is higher for violence suspects, repeat suspects and women.

### **What we plan to do**

We will:

- Work with professionals to improve their understanding of the social factors influencing vulnerability, exploitation and offending to encourage earlier intervention.
- Work to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system. Find new ways of preventing young people from entering the system so better outcomes can be achieved for them and the wider community.
- Ensure that people at risk of offending and of becoming involved in more serious crime are prioritised and managed to ensure any exploitation or vulnerability is addressed first before any criminal proceedings are pursued.
- Support offenders with accommodation, training, employment and other services.
- Support the development and implementation of approaches that meet the specific needs of female offenders.
- Continue to use restorative practices to empower victims, support community resolutions and reduce levels of reoffending through confronting offenders with the impact of their behaviour.
- Increase the number of offenders accessing services for treatment for substance misuse and mental health, with a focus on those referred from custody and those suitable for community sentence treatment requirements.

# Safer Buckinghamshire Plan 2020-2023

**The Safer Buckinghamshire Board is the Community Safety Partnership for Buckinghamshire:**

- Buckinghamshire Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- National Probation Service
- Thames Valley Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner