

# Safer Buckinghamshire Strategy

2023 – 2026

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## Introduction

We are pleased to introduce the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership Strategy for 2023 – 2026 which sets out the strategic areas that we have prioritised to tackle over the next three years. 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.

The Safer Buckinghamshire Board, which is the multi-agency partnership responsible for tackling crime and disorder within Buckinghamshire, is committed to addressing the issues that cause the greatest level of harm to our communities. The priorities within this Strategy are informed by an in-depth analysis of data from a range of community safety agencies which are contained in the Partnership Strategic Assessment, along with the views of people living and working within Buckinghamshire.

Our 2023-2026 priorities are:

- Neighbourhood Crime
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Serious Violence
- Violence against Women and Girls
- Exploitation of Vulnerable People

We recognise we can only achieve our vision with our communities. With community involvement, we will be more able to protect individuals and property and make our neighbourhoods even safer. We want to reduce crime and disorder and protect vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire. Crime is constantly changing, and we face increased pressures on our resources. A partnership approach that involves local communities is the best way to tackle these challenges.

We would like to acknowledge all of the hard work and efforts of partner agencies and Council services who, on a daily basis, contribute significantly to keeping Buckinghamshire safe – and we look forward to replicating further successes throughout 2023 – 2026.

Chief Supt Michael Loebenberg  
Chair – Safer Buckinghamshire Board

Dr Jane O-Grady  
Vice Chair – Safer Buckinghamshire Board

## The Safer Buckinghamshire Board

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a duty on the police and local authorities to work together with named partner organisations to form a Community Safety Partnership and 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 Integrated Care Board
- National Probation Service – Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Board works with a wide range of partners from the statutory, community/voluntary and business sectors; and other organisations are invited to attend Board meetings and be involved in the work of the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership.

The Safer Buckinghamshire Board works closely with other strategic boards to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the Safer Buckinghamshire Strategy. Issues such as domestic violence and abuse, tackling serious violence and keeping children and young people safe, requires a safeguarding focus and long term health interventions, to ensure that the underlying causes are addressed. A number of the priorities and actions outlined in the Strategy are shared across the four strategic partnerships, with regular meetings of the chairs of the boards enabling delivery of our shared priorities.

The Board has Statutory Duties in in relation to:

- Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Annual Partnership Strategic Assessment
- Community Safety Strategy
- Community Engagement and Consultation
- Information Sharing Protocols and Information Sharing Agreements
- Reducing reoffending
- Preventing extremism
- Modern Slavery
- Anti-social behaviour
- Drugs and alcohol misuse

## Key Legislation

Key pieces of legislation govern the priorities in this Strategy. Due consideration has been given to the following:

### Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Police and Justice Act 2006, Policing and Crime Act 2009

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gave a statutory responsibility to local authorities, the police, and key partners to reduce crime and disorder in their communities. Responsible authorities, commonly referred to now as Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), are required to carry out audits every three years and to implement crime reduction strategies.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced amendments, including the addition of anti-social behaviour and substance misuse within the remit of the Community Safety Partnership strategies. Reducing reoffending was added by the Policing and Crime Act 2009.

### Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

The requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews came into effect in April 2011 as a result of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

### Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

This introduced directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to replace Police Authorities in England and Wales. It is a requirement for the PCC to have regard to the priorities of the responsible authorities making up the CSPs and for those authorities to have regard to the police and crime objectives set out in the Police and Crime Plan. The legislation also brought with it a mutual duty for the PCC and the responsible authorities to act in co-operation with each other in exercising their respective functions.

### The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

The Act introduced simpler and more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and provide better protection for victims and communities. This includes a new Community Trigger and Community Remedy to give people a greater say in how agencies respond to complaints. Updated statutory guidance from the Home Office released in December 2017 has brought greater clarity around the use of the tools and powers introduced by the Act.

### Safeguarding legislation

Between 2014 and 2016 a number of pieces of legislation were introduced, including the Care Act 2014, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Serious Crime Act 2015, Modern Slavery Act 2015 and Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. Legislation introduced duties including new reporting, referral and decision-making mechanisms, staff awareness requirements and impacts on contract management in the work of relevant organisations.

### Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

This places a legal duty on local authorities “when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. Prevent is one of four strands of the government’s counterterrorism strategy and aims to stop people

becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Section 36 of the CTSA places a duty on local authorities to ensure that a Channel Panel is in place for their area that provides support for people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

#### Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The changes introduced through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 will impact on victims, families and agencies by improving the response to domestic abuse. The Act included a statutory definition of domestic abuse; introduction of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner; a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order; a new duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims and their children in safe accommodation.

#### Serious Violence Duty (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022)

The Serious Violence Duty requires local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Prisons, youth custody agencies and educational authorities may also need to work with these core partners.

#### National Drugs Strategy – From Harm to Hope

A new cross-Government 10-year national drugs strategy was published in April 2022 with 3 core priorities:

- Break drug supply chains
- Deliver a world class treatment and recovery system
- Achieve a shift in demand for recreational drugs

Guidance for local delivery partners sets out a requirement for local areas to have a multi-agency Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP), accountable for delivering against the new National Combating Drugs Outcomes Framework.

## About Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire is a county in the south-east of England, bordering Greater London and Berkshire to the south, Oxfordshire to the west, Northamptonshire to the north, Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes to the north-east and Hertfordshire to the east. Buckinghamshire consists of 12 key towns: Amersham (New and Old Town); Aylesbury, Beaconsfield (old and new town), Buckingham, Chesham, Gerrards Cross, Great Missenden, High Wycombe, Marlow, Princes Risborough, Wendover, Winslow.

- The population size in the County has grown from around 505,300 people in 2011 to approximately 553,100 people in 2021. An increase of 9.5 per cent (2021 Census).
- In England, over the same period (2011 to 2021), the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800, an increase of 6.6 per cent. The growth is 2.9 per cent lower than the increase in Buckinghamshire (2021 Census).
- There were 6.2 per cent more 20-39-year-olds in Buckinghamshire in 2021 than previously estimated by the ONS. However, there were 3.3 per cent fewer 0-14-year-olds than previously estimated (2021 Census).

Buckinghamshire is an affluent county but contains some of the lowest levels of deprivation in England, with 3.3% of the population categorised as living in the 3 most deprived Indices of Multiple Deprivation deciles.

The relative affluence masks areas of poverty, with the greatest deprivation in Buckinghamshire found in the population of 'Urban City and Town' areas.

Buckinghamshire has better health overall in comparison to England and the South East. Life expectancy is higher for men and women; however, the health of residents varies within, and between, local areas. For example, people living in more deprived areas are more likely to live in poor health and die younger than people living in more affluent areas. They are also more likely to develop multiple long-term conditions earlier, such as diabetes and heart disease.

- In 2018 to 2020, the average life expectancy for men in Buckinghamshire was 81.5 years, and the average life expectancy for women was 85.1 years.

People in Buckinghamshire have also experienced declining mental health with rising diagnoses, referral rates and greater social isolation. COVID-19 has also impacted income, employment, and education – all factors that can affect someone's health and wellbeing.

Buckinghamshire has lower crime rates than England, the South East and Thames Valley. However, examining data at a smaller geographical level reveals areas within the county that experience crime rates far higher than the average rate for the county. Thames Valley Police is responsible for policing Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, along with Berkshire and Oxfordshire. It is the largest non-metropolitan force in England and Wales.

## What have we done in the last three years?

The priorities we committed to delivering in the previous Safer Buckinghamshire Strategy covering the period 2020-23 are set out below:

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

For the duration of our previous Safer Buckinghamshire Strategy 2020-23, we were able to make substantial headway on achieving our aims through the delivery of projects, partnership working, and placing the victims of crime at the heart of our response to crime and disorder. However, the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic must be acknowledged. During the last three years, the pandemic has forced the agencies involved in the Safer Buckinghamshire Board to adopt new ways of working. Across all of our priorities, we have addressed the impact of Covid-19 and taken steps to reduce its impact on crime and the causes of crime.

This has undoubtedly been a difficult period, but the strength of partnership working in Buckinghamshire has enabled the Community Safety Partnership to remain assured that community safety issues across Buckinghamshire are identified, addressed and reviewed.

During the last three years we have:

- Expanded the Council's Street Warden Team to cover not only High Wycombe town centre, but also Aylesbury. They have been working with partners to address town centre issues of begging and rough sleeping – supporting and referring individuals who are genuinely homeless, along with identifying those who are exploiting visitors to our town centres.
- The Community Safety newsletter, which includes a variety of community safety information and signposting to local services, now reaches almost 4000 subscribers each quarter.
- Buckinghamshire Council were awarded accreditation as a Friends Against Scams (FAS) Organisation.
- The Council's Community Safety Team are working alongside Trading Standards and Thames Valley Police to establish a local multi-agency Task and Finish Group to raise public awareness of fraud and scams.
- Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs) have been regularly undertaken alongside community members, Thames Valley Police and representatives from other partner

agencies in some of our local areas, to identify issues of concern. Partners have then developed a holistic approach in taking action to address the problems.

- Buckinghamshire Council Serious Violence Officers are linked into the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funded Hospital Navigator post, based within Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The Navigator, alongside vetted volunteers, work within the A&E Unit to identify individuals who may be a victim or perpetrator of serious violence. They are approached and offered support and if accepted, signposted on to further services.
- The Buckinghamshire Serious Violence Reduction plan has been developed and embedded across the Partnership, which includes the development of the VRU multi-agency data-sharing and analytical platform Thames Valley Together.
- There has been an increase in service and partnership representation within our Anti-Slavery and Exploitation Network (A-SEN), which aims to raise awareness of issues within this area and share knowledge and best practice. Speakers have included nationally recognised organisations such as: The Salvation Army, Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), Anti-Slavery Commissioners Office and Human Trafficking Foundation.
- The Buckinghamshire Hotel Watch Scheme has been expanded to over 80 premises across the county - all of which have been provided with information and guidance on how to spot the signs and report concerns, of exploitation.
- Following training, 3 community hubs were created to support and work with LGBTQ+, disability and ethnic minority communities. The hubs delivered projects during National Hate Crime Awareness Week
- Police and Crime Commissioner Community Safety funding has been allocated to support specialist intervention activities to students who are at highest risk of engaging in activities that put them at risk of exploitation and/or serious violence and criminality
- Partners are delivering the Blue Light project, which utilises behaviour change and assertive outreach strategies with complex drinkers, whose alcohol use and associated lifestyle contributes to a pattern of more frequent contact with a range of frontline public services. This is a highly diverse service user group whose social circumstances range from being housed to homeless, involved in the criminal justice system, commonly experiencing mental health problems, facing financial difficulties, and lacking in social capital or support networks.
- Criminal Justice Community Connectors have been recruited and work in the courts and police custody suite screening people, giving harm reduction advice and, where appropriate, Naloxone training and issuing a Naloxone kit. This work has resulted in a steady increase in referrals for individuals requiring structured drug/alcohol treatment.
- Needle Exchange Dispensing Unit has been installed within Aylesbury Custody Suite and TVP have been working in partnership on a harm reduction initiative to ensure appropriate access to needles for people who inject drugs. A Needle and Syringe dispensing machine has now been fitted within Aylesbury custody suite to dispense 1ml & 2ml packs. The dispensing units will be managed and restocked by One Recovery Bucks.
- The Buckinghamshire Council Community Safety team were successful in obtaining funding from the Ministry of Justice. With this, Women's Aid successfully appointed



a Complex Needs Floating Support Worker in December 2020. The worker provides intensive one to one work with clients of all risk levels who are survivors of domestic abuse but are unable to access emergency refuge accommodation. Clients are offered support, information and advocacy when dealing with other issues relating to their domestic abuse whilst in temporary accommodation.

- Talkback were commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council in March 2020 to produce a research and recommendations report into domestic abuse and learning disability and/or autism in Buckinghamshire. Following on from this, Talkback Advice Bureau (a drop-in service) was launched in Wycombe in November 2021. A second drop-in centre will open in Chesham in 2022. Funding is also in place to develop a service online.
- Development of a 24 hour mental health helpline to provide advice during covid pandemic
- There are 441 trained Domestic Abuse Champions across a range of organisations in Buckinghamshire.
- The PCC funded Youth Offending Service multi-agency project has enabled effective prevention work to be carried out across 16 schools in Buckinghamshire with young people at risk of offending.
- National data shows that Buckinghamshire had 132 First Time Entrants per 100,000 young people aged 10-18 in the October 2020 to September 2021 period. This is a decrease from October 2019 – September 2020 where there were 153 First Time Entrants per 100,000. Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service is performing better than the National and Thames Valley rates against this indicator.
- The Safer Buckinghamshire Board allocated funding from the PCC Community Safety grant to increase the outreach capacity for both Wycombe and Aylesbury Women's Aid in response to increased demand following Covid lockdown.
- A professional's toolkit of learning disability and domestic abuse advice materials and publicity has been created and is being regularly updated. Buckinghamshire Council has started work to create an Easy Read website for those with learning disabilities. One of the roles of this website will be to host the Toolkit.

## What you told us

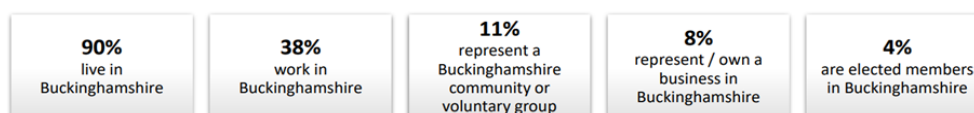
Each year the Safer Buckinghamshire Board undertakes an annual public consultation in order to understand the views and concerns of residents and communities.

In September 2022, 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.

However, due to the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a few days into the survey we halted the promotion and communications for a few weeks, out of respect.

Nevertheless, we received 1,264 responses, an increase of 20% on last year

- Demographic information was collected for the first time this year and indicates a reasonable distribution across age, sex, and ethnicity. A slightly higher proportion of women completed the survey (57%) and the age groups between 35 and 74yrs are over-represented (75% in total).



- Distribution of respondents were heavily weighted to the south of the county, with 50% from Chiltern and South Bucks area.
- When asked how much of an issue respondents felt a list of crime types were over the last 12 months, the following were selected as the most concerning – this is compared to those selected in 2021:

Top Concerns Related to Crime 2022	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns
Fraud /scams (including online fraud)	67% ←
Theft from a motor vehicle	52% ↑
Criminal damage	49% ↑
Cyber crime / cyber bullying	44% ←
Theft of a motor vehicle	43% ↑
Theft of equipment / tools from van	42% ↓
Burglary - sheds and garages	41% ←

Top Concerns Related to Crime 2021	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns
Fraud / scams (including online fraud)	69%
Theft of equipment / tools from van	49%
Theft from a motor vehicle	48%
Cyber crime / cyber-bullying	44%
Criminal damage	43%
Burglary - sheds and garages	41%

- As the tables illustrates, fraud and scams continue to be of most concern to respondents. The remaining crime categories that are of most concern have remained similar to those selected in 2021, however with the addition of theft of a motor vehicle as a fairly big/very big concern.

- The most common reasons for responding that a type of crime is a 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concern is 'you heard about it in the local news' (54%) and 'it has happened to someone you know' (52%).
- When asked how much of an issue respondents felt a list of types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) were over the last 12 months, the following were selected as the most concerning – this is compared to those selected in 2021:

Top Concerns Related to ASB 2022	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns	Top Concerns Related to ASB 2021	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns
Speeding	66% ←	Speeding	77%
Fly tipping	65% ←	Fly Tipping / Litter	76%
Parking	56% ←	Parking	64%
Criminal damage / vandalism	48% ↑	Dog Fouling	51%
Dog fouling	44% ↓	Criminal Damage / Vandalism	43%

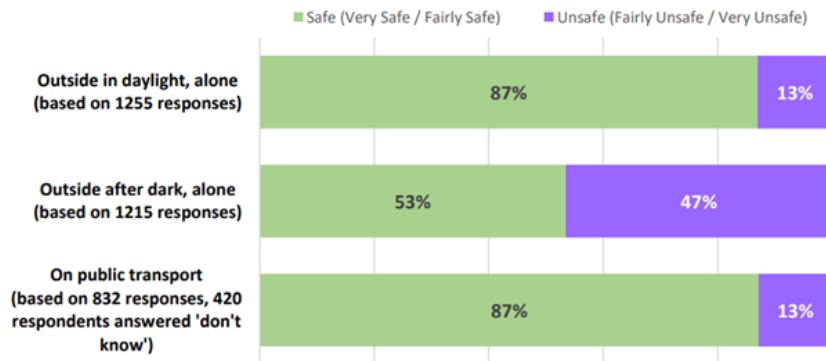
- Although the top three issues remain the same as last year, the proportion of respondents considering them to be either Very Big or Fairly Big issues has fallen in each case.
- Criminal damage / vandalism is the only ASB issue to see an increase, up 5%. This was also reflected in the Crime question.
- The most commonly selected reason for responding that a type of ASB is a 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concern is 'it has happened to you / you've seen it before'.
- Concerns relating to ASB continue to primarily be based on personal experience of the responder, rather than hearing about it from a third party. This was also the case in the 2021 survey
- When asked how much of a problem respondents felt a list of drugs and alcohol related issues were, the following were selected as fairly and very big concerns:

Top concerns relating to Alcohol and Drugs 2022	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns	Top Concerns Related to Alcohol and Drugs 2021	% of respondents with 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' concerns
Drug paraphernalia discarded (canisters)	43% ←	Drug paraphernalia discarded (canisters)	47%
Drug use	43% ←	Supply / selling of drugs	43%
Behaviour related to drug use	42% ←	Drug use	43%
Supply / selling of drugs	42% ←	Behaviour related to drug use	43%
Drug possession	39% ←	Drug possession	37%
Alcohol disorder / behaviour	38% ←	Alcohol disorder / behaviour	36%

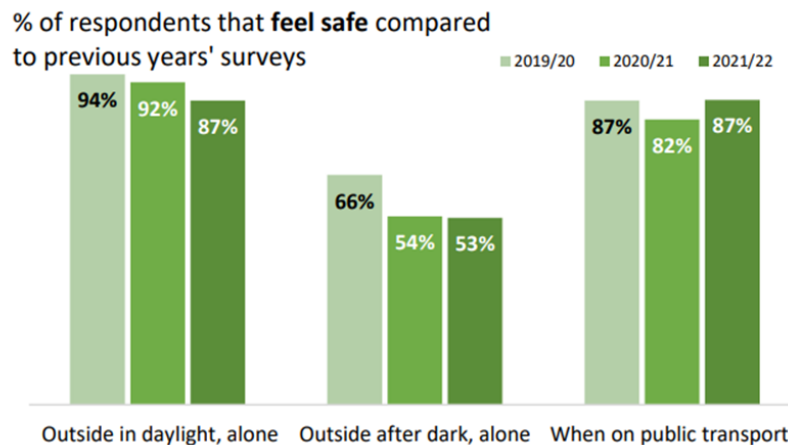
- The most common reasons for responding that a Drugs concern is 'Very Big' or 'Fairly Big' is 'it has happened to you / you have seen it before'. This was also the case in the 2021 survey.
- The proportion of respondents that were a victim of a crime in the 12 months leading up to the survey was 29%, higher than 2021 (20%). The proportion of crime

victims that did not report the crime in 2022 is 33%, slightly lower than 2021 (36%). Direct comparison with last year is difficult due to a different question configuration – however, ‘Little chance of catching the perpetrator’ is the most common reason in both years

- When asked how safe/unsafe respondents feel in their local areas, 47% felt unsafe/very unsafe after dark, whilst 13% felt unsafe/very unsafe when outside in daylight. 13% of respondents felt unsafe/very unsafe on public transport, however only 832 residents answered this question, and 420 responded ‘don’t know’.



- The following table illustrates the difference in responses over the last three years regarding people’s feeling of safety:



## Crime and Community Safety in Buckinghamshire

The Strategic Assessment is produced 3-yearly, assessing crime and crime related issues across the county to inform the priorities of the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership. The last report was completed in 2020, reviewing the 5-year period between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2019. The 2023 Strategic Assessment includes data from Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue and Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, it covers the time-frame April 2017 – March 2022.

The crime rate in Buckinghamshire in 2021/22 has marginally increased for the fourth year (excluding 2020/21 – see below regarding Covid Pandemic) to 59.6 crimes per 1000 population. Compared with the wider Thames Valley (72.4 crimes per 1000 population) and England (88.7 crimes per 1000 population), Buckinghamshire remains an area of relatively low levels of crime. Nevertheless, between 2017 and 2022 there were 152,235 crime occurrences across Buckinghamshire with 79,198 recorded victims, 21% of whom were victimised on more than one occasion.

The high-volume crime in Buckinghamshire is similar to that identified 3 years ago, with violent offences (37%) and theft offences (30%), accounting for most crimes. However, the increasing levels of violent crime identified in the Strategic Assessment 2020 have continued, as has the identified trend of theft crimes reducing (even without the impact of Covid). The result is that violent crime is now the highest volume crime type in Buckinghamshire, with theft offences now accounting for the second highest volume of crime. This pattern is repeated nationally and is not unique to Buckinghamshire. Public order is the third highest volume crime with 14% share, which has also increased over last 3 years. Other crime categories continue to account for broadly the same proportion of crime as 3 years ago.

### 2021/22 crime rates:

- Violence against the person offences 22.1 crimes per 1000 population – an increase of 9.6 over last 5 years
- Criminal damage and arson 5.7 crimes per 1000 population – a decrease of 1.4 over 5 years
- Public order offences 8.3 crimes per 1000 population – and increase of 6.7 over 5 years
- Theft offences 17.6 crimes per 1000 population – a decrease of 8.5 over 5 years
- Sexual offences 2.2 crimes per 1000 population – an increase of 0.6 over 5 years
- Drug offences 2.0 crimes per 1000 population – a increase of 0.5 over 5 years

### **Covid Pandemic**

In March 2020, a global pandemic placed the UK into a series of national lockdowns and restrictions and there has been significant impact on many aspects of life, both during and since the key periods of lockdown. Crime levels reflected some of the significant changes. The Office National Statistics (ONS) highlighted an instant drop in overall crime. This same pattern can also be seen in the crime levels of Buckinghamshire.

**Figure 12 - Crime level changes June 2019 - May 2020, England and Buckinghamshire**



The drop was not consistent across all crime types, the pattern in Buckinghamshire mirrored the national pattern. Those crime types that fell significantly, nationally were Sexual Offences, Robbery Offences, Criminal Damage & Arson Offences, and Theft Offences as outlined by ONS2. Such changes are likely a result of:

- People being instructed to stay home, with the closure of the night-time economy and non-essential retail
- Reduced movement of people, limiting the opportunity for perpetrator and victim to come into contact, and those people not at home being more visible.
- The act of staying home had a protective effect against some crimes such as residential burglary and vehicle crime.

The pandemic also had a significant and widespread economic and social impact. Living under Covid-19 restrictions compounded existing vulnerabilities and, in some cases, individuals not previously identified as vulnerable may have become so because of the pandemic.

Challenges were not felt equally across all communities; while some were grateful to spend more time with families, stop long commutes, achieve a better work / life balance and save money, other people experienced increased levels of loneliness and isolation and reduced personal resilience and loss of income, this was particularly noted in young people and older adults.

As the financial crisis now takes hold, those people who struggled economically, in health and / or socially are facing this next challenge with reduced resilience and resources.

### **War in Ukraine**

Many Ukrainians have sought refuge in the UK. The Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme has resulted in Ukrainian refugees moving into Buckinghamshire. Some of these people may have experienced trauma, be vulnerable to exploitation and potentially could become victims of domestic violence in this country . There is also the potential that they could experience hate crime.

### **Financial crisis**

For the first time in a generation or more, interest rates are increasing, which together with increasing energy, fuel and food prices is creating cost of living increases that many people cannot absorb.

## Our priorities for the next three years

Using all the information available we have developed a set of priorities for 2023-26. They focus on the known causes of crime and also the concerns of people in Buckinghamshire.

1. *Neighbourhood Crime*
2. *Anti-Social Behaviour*
3. *Serious Violence*
4. *Violence against Women and Girls*
5. *Exploitation of Vulnerable People*

### *Cross Cutting Priorities*

Underpinning these five priorities will be common themes that are applicable to any or all of the priorities to a greater or lesser degree. Those common themes are:

- **COVID-19 recovery**

It is important to look at how we return our services to 'business as usual' as we move out of the pandemic, recognising the impact COVID-19 has had on residents' and businesses, and using what we have learned to enhance and improve our approach.

- **Drugs and Alcohol**

Drug use drives crime, damages people's health, puts children and families at risk and reduces productivity – it impacts all of the country, with the most deprived areas facing the greatest burden. A new cross-Government 10 year national drugs strategy 'From harm to hope' was published in April 2022. This followed the publication of Dame Carol Black's independent drugs review in 2020 and 2021, commissioned by the Home Secretary. The strategy is led by the Home Office and includes additional investment for local authorities to supplement the public health grant tied to specific actions as agreed with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

The strategy has 3 core priorities:

- a) Break drug supply chains
- b) Deliver a world class treatment and recovery system
- c) Achieve a shift in demand for recreational drugs

Guidance on the strategy sets out a requirement for local areas to have a multi-agency Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP), accountable for delivering against the new National Combating Drugs Outcomes Framework. A Buckinghamshire Combating Drugs Partnership has been established on the Buckinghamshire Council footprint and is chaired by the Director of Public Health and Community Safety.

While the key focus is on drugs, it is recognised that alcohol is frequently used alongside drugs and that treatment services tend to be integrated across alcohol and drugs (as in Buckinghamshire). It has been agreed nationally CDPs should cover both alcohol and drugs as their use is interlinked.

As well as being driven by the Combatting Drugs Partnership, tackling the impact of drugs and alcohol will also feature within the delivery plans for each of the Safer Buckinghamshire Board priorities for 2023-26.

- **Offending**

The number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time is lower in Buckinghamshire than national rates and rates across the Thames Valley. The rate of young people reoffending in Buckinghamshire is also currently lower than that seen nationally, and across the Thames Valley. However, both national and local data clearly shows that young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are over-represented within the criminal justice system. Buckinghamshire's Youth Justice Plan sets out its ambition to continue to focus on prevention and diversion to ensure these rates remain low and that disproportionality is addressed across the county.

The causes of offending are 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. For adults in particular, the risk of reoffending is reduced if people can rebuild community and family connections and access safe, stable accommodation. Employment and education are also critical, along with providing continuity of care for offenders who experience substance misuse issues, especially when they leave prison. The criminal justice partnership plans focus on these important issues.

The Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership will maintain strong links with this agenda to ensure we support partners to deliver positive actions, through our delivery plans and through funding opportunities.

- **Levelling up**

Whilst the majority of our communities are thriving in the county, we know that in some areas of Buckinghamshire people are experiencing significant hardship. As partners, we want to come together with these communities and draw upon our collective resources to enhance opportunities and promote community wellbeing.

The Government has placed 'Levelling up' at the heart of its agenda to recover after the pandemic.

Within Buckinghamshire, 'Opportunity Bucks - Succeeding for All' provides a framework for bringing partners together to focus our collective resources in tracking those local priorities that will make a difference to the outcome of residents. It will focus on five themes:



- Education and Skills
- Jobs and Career Opportunities
- Quality of our Public realm
- Standard of Living
- Health and Wellbeing

Initially, the programme will be focused on 10 wards in three areas – parts of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham. Local action plans will be developed through engagement with the communities, led by the Community Boards.

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is one of the priorities within the Quality of our Public Realm theme, therefore the Safer Buckinghamshire Board will undertake co-ordinated, joined up work with the Opportunity Bucks Quality of the Public realm Working Group to deliver reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour in identified locations.

### Delivery Plans

Delivery Plans will be produced for each priority setting out clear measures so that we can track the impact of our actions.

The plans will seek to tackle each of the priorities by taking a public health approach and addressing the underlying factors in order to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people.

It is also important to work with our local communities to understand local priorities and develop an approach that is responsive and effective in increasing feelings of safety.

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 to prevent crime at the earliest opportunity.

The [Thames Valley Police and Criminal Justice Plan](#) sets out the strategic priorities for policing between 2021 and 2025:

- Strong local policing – preventing crime and protecting communities
- Fighting serious organised crime – protecting vulnerable people
- Fighting fraud and cybercrime – fighting modern crimes
- Improving the criminal justice system – reducing reoffending
- Tackling illegal encampments – enforcing with partners

The new Safer Buckinghamshire Board priorities will contribute to the delivery of the above Police and Criminal Justice Plan priorities.

## Priority 1 - Neighbourhood Crime

### **Our research, analysis and consultation feedback has told us that:**

‘Crime destroys lives. Victims are often left traumatised, injured or heartbroken. Crime can ruin neighbourhoods and does great economic damage to our country. It makes people feel unsafe on the street and in their homes. Criminal activity fuels and funds huge criminal enterprises. Involvement in crime can set someone on a path that brings enormous harm to themselves and others.’ (*Beating Crime Plan, 2021*)

When asked how much of an issue respondents felt a list of crime types were over the last 12 months, Fraud and Scams continue to be of most concern to respondents, with 67% of those completing our survey feeling it was a ‘fairly big’ or ‘very big’ concern. This was followed by theft from motor vehicle (52%), criminal damage (49%), cybercrime (44%) and theft of a motor vehicle (43%).

The National Crime Agency (NCA) states that fraud is the most experienced crime in the UK. Fraud can be defined as trickery used to gain a dishonest advantage, which is often financial, over another person. Fraud is an under-reported crime, the NCA estimates only 20% of crimes are reported to the police.

Tackling and reducing crime is the central aim of a Community Safety Partnership, and therefore it is essential as one of the priorities.

We will:

- Work with key partners to establish an operational group, who will take an evidence-informed approach to crime hotspots and trends. The group will direct partnership activity, resources and communications, taking into account the community safety concerns identified through the public consultation.
- Continue to raise awareness of fraud, scams and cybercrime and how people can report incidents, providing support for those that need it.
- Support the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership, recognising drugs and alcohol as drivers of crime and associated criminalities.
- Work with communities and partners to raise awareness of Hate Crime, building trust so people feel confident in reporting.
- Support innovative projects that address the prevention and reduction of offending behaviour.

## Priority 2 - Anti-Social Behaviour

### **Our research, analysis and consultation feedback has told us that:**

Anti-social behaviour can be described as behaviour/actions which cause or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress and, if left unchecked, can have a serious adverse effect on individuals, communities and the environment. Victims of anti-social behaviour can become frightened of leaving their home and even feel unsafe when in their homes, meaning they are less likely to engage in community activity, thus creating a more fragmented and less cohesive community.

Anti-social behaviour in Buckinghamshire continues to be a key community concern, identified annually in the Residents Community Safety Survey, which highlighted discarded drug paraphernalia (43%) and behaviour related to drug use (42%) as being a very big or fairly big problem.

Everyone has the right to feel safe in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

### **We will:**

- Work with partners to raise awareness of the ways in which people can report anti-social behaviour, ensuring that safe reporting mechanisms are accessible to all.
- Develop a multi-agency approach which maps occurrences of anti-social behaviour, locations and times. To identify repeat victimisation, known perpetrators, affected parties and direct partnership activity and resources.
- Consider a wide range of preventative and diversionary activities to help respond to anti-social behaviour.
- In partnership with registered social landlords, Community Boards, residents and other key partners, utilise all appropriate tools and powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Support victims of anti-social behaviour by providing practical guidance in partnership with support agencies; to address victim's needs, particularly those who are considered vulnerable.

## Priority 3 - Serious Violence

### **Our research, analysis and consultation feedback has told us that:**

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.

Nationally, serious violence and knife crime increased by 84% between June 2014 and June 2020. Concerns around serious violence and the need for specific and co-ordinated attention from partners as a priority matter gained traction with the publication of the national Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018. The Strategy highlighted increases in knife crime and serious violence and was followed in 2019 by the Serious Violence Duty and in 2022 by the Act, placing a legal duty on 'Duty holders' to work together to prevent serious violence – making it a priority within the 2023-26 Safer Buckinghamshire Strategy.

Tackling serious violence is not a law enforcement issue alone. It requires a coordinated approach involving a range of partners across difference sectors.

If serious violence is not appropriately addressed, it can deter individuals from actively engaging in and connecting with leisure, social and community activities.

We will:

- Raise awareness of serious violence through communication, education and training; so that professionals and those in our communities can recognise signs, how to report their concerns and make referrals to other agencies (as appropriate).
- Support early intervention for vulnerable young people and those becoming at risk.
- Deliver the key actions as set out in the partnership [Safer Buckinghamshire Serious Violence Reduction Plan](#)
- Develop awareness of, and embed, the Serious Violence Agenda and Duty requirements amongst the partnership.
- Enhance appropriate support for those who are released from prison, who are most at risk of re-offending.
- Undertake a proactive partnership response to cohorts and locations vulnerable to serious violence.

## Priority 4 - Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

### **Our research, analysis and consultation feedback has told us that:**

Crimes of violence against women and girls are many and varied. They include rape and other sexual offences, stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour-based' abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and 'honour' killings), 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting'. These crimes are deeply harmful, not only because of the profound effect they can have on victims, survivors and their loved ones, but also because of the impact they can have on wider society, impacting on the freedom and equality we value and enjoy.

One in 20 adults are estimated to experience domestic abuse every year, equating to almost 21,000 people a year in Buckinghamshire, or 57 people every day. It is a crime which disproportionately affects women, but also happens to men and is irrespective of sexuality, religion, gender, ethnicity, income or age. Individuals and families may live with domestic abuse for a significant time and suffer a multitude of incidents before asking for help. It can have a devastating impact upon physical and mental health and wide-reaching consequences for children who witness and experience it.

### We will:

- Deliver early intervention and prevention initiatives to reduce violence against women and girls.
- Raise awareness of these crimes through communication, education and training, so that professionals and those in our community know what to look out for, know how to report their concerns, and make referrals to other agencies (as appropriate)
- Deliver the key actions as set out in the partnership [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#).
- Work to prevent and reduce domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity through proactive use of communication and cross-agency training
- Provide effective services that meet the needs of victims and their families, including male victims and other vulnerable communities.
- Ensure a wide range of safe accommodation options are available for victims, survivors and their children
- Develop a multi-agency approach to dealing with perpetrators

## Priority 5 - Exploitation of Vulnerable People

### **Our research, analysis and consultation feedback has told us that:**

Exploitation involves being groomed, forced or coerced into doing something for someone else's gain. The exploitation of vulnerable adults and children is a national issue, often complex and intertwined with serious violence, organised crime, drugs and county lines. Modern Slavery, as defined by the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) includes all forms of exploitation. It encompasses slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. Victims are often hidden away, may be unable to leave their situation, or may not come forward because of fear or shame.

We know that in Buckinghamshire less affluent areas and urban areas experience disproportionately higher levels of crime. Many of these areas also experience other deprivations such as Health and Social Care Support needs which can heighten their vulnerability to crime. With the current cost-of-living crisis, it is likely that vulnerabilities will increase, and therefore vulnerability to crime including exploitation, will also increase.

In 2021, 12,727 referrals of potential victims of modern slavery were made in the United Kingdom through the National Referral Mechanism process. This represents a 20% increase in referrals compared to the preceding year. An accurate estimate of the true number of victims is difficult to achieve; recent research suggests only 20-30% of victims are known. If this is the case the number of victims is likely to be 5 times higher than that recorded. In Buckinghamshire criminal exploitation is the most significant form of exploitation and low reporting rates remain a concern for all areas.

Extremism causes harm to individuals and whole communities. By intervening at the earliest opportunity, we can work in partnership to address the personal and social factors which make people more receptive to radicalisation, diverting people away from being drawn into violent ideologies and criminal behaviour.

### **We will:**

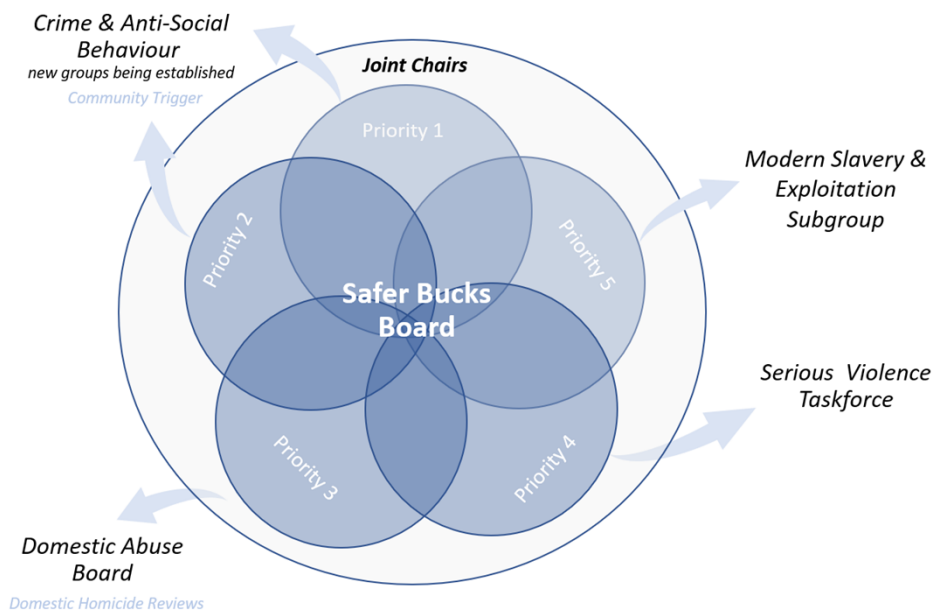
- Identify young people at risk of exploitation and deliver early intervention and prevention projects to prevent further harm.
- Improve reporting and referral processes to effectively identify and safeguard victims of modern slavery and exploitation
- Work with local communities to ensure they can recognise the signs and know how to report exploitation
- Provide training for professionals to improve understanding of exploitation and contextual safeguarding
- Empower those affected by child exploitation, supporting them to identify strategies to exit & withdraw safely
- Identify vulnerable groups and locations where exploitation is at risk of occurring and take action to reduce the risk in these groups and areas.
- Use intelligence to disrupt perpetrators and bring them to justice
- Provide support for individuals (and where appropriate their families) who are vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism leading to terrorism.

## How we will work in partnership

The Safer Buckinghamshire Board has the responsibility to deliver the priorities that are set out within this Strategy. The Board is also responsible for the strategies that flow from this Strategy, including the Serious Violence Plan and the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

This requires partner organisations to work together to share skills, knowledge, and resource in order to effectively deliver a service that achieves our ambitions and makes Buckinghamshire a safer place to live, work and visit.

## Partnership Landscape



## Strategic Partnerships

