

Community Safety Plan

2024 to 2027



**Bedford Borough
Community Safety
Partnership**

***“working together to
make communities safer”***

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Foreword

The Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership Strategic Plan sets out a clear vision of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol misuse, and increase perceptions about safety and well-being in our communities.

Our vision will be achieved through a strong collaboration of agencies working alongside our communities to tackle some of the most complex and persistent problems arising, in order to ensure that the communities of Bedford Borough remain a safe place for all, where a high quality of life can be enjoyed.

This plan aims to address the significant challenges in terms of emerging threats and risks faced by the CSP. These include the ongoing attention to the criminal exploitation of vulnerable people, serious youth violence and violence against women and girls. These threats to safety are now firmly within the sights of partners, alongside other important issues such as modern day slavery, preventing radicalisation and domestic abuse. The plan also recognises the requirements of the new Serious Violence Duty.

During the same period, the CSP and partner agencies have continued to face reductions in budget and resources, adding to the challenge of delivering more service with less.

The strategic priorities for the Bedford Borough CSP have been identified through the 2023 Strategic Assessment and the analysis of current data and intelligence alongside contributions from our community surveys. This process allows us to focus on three priority areas which cause the most concern to both local residents and agencies.

The plan sets out how we will address core community safety issues.

Success in addressing the three priorities requires the trust and confidence of the public in our agencies, for this reason there is a strong theme of engagement running throughout the partnership aims. Visible partnership working, community engagement and empowerment will continue to be the key to tackling crime, disorder and the local priorities identified as strategic issues for the CSP.



Chair of Bedford Borough CSP
Laura Church



Deputy Chair of Bedford Borough CSP
Jaki Whittred

Introduction

Our Vision

Tackling crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse and increasing perceptions about safety and well-being in our communities.”

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the priority areas of action for the CSP and its partner agencies by:

- Introducing Strategic Community Safety Priorities for the CSP based on the results of the 2023 CSP Strategic Assessments.
- Describing what the CSP’s strategic aims and priorities are over the period 2024-2027.

Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was formed in response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as a statutory requirement. Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership is a joint partnership of five responsible authorities – **Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire Police, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Offender Management Services and Bedfordshire Integrated Care Board** – who work together to tackle the crimes and anti-social behaviour that affect our communities.

Every CSP in England is required to produce a Strategic Plan. This Plan covers the period **April 2024 to March 2027** and establishes the key strategic aims and priority issues of the CSP for the period. As well as establishing a strategic plan, the CSP also has a statutory obligation to undertake an annual Crime and Disorder ‘Strategic Assessment’ (SA). This will continue to be carried out annually to inform the progress of the Plan, the work of partners and effective delivery of community safety work.



About Bedford Borough

Bedford is a mixed 'urban and rural' Borough. The rural area covers 476 sq km and includes the county town of Bedford and the adjacent urban area of Kempston, and 45 rural parishes comprise the remainder of the Borough. The population is concentrated in the urban area, with almost two-thirds (63%) living in Bedford and Kempston.

According to ONS data, the Borough has a population of 185,761 (2021 Census) which has grown by approximately 17.8% since 2011. Much of that growth has occurred in the rural parishes bordering the urban area where there have been several major residential developments, including the large new community of Wixams.



- There are an estimated 74,650 households in the Borough (ONS 2021 Census).
- The older population is projected to increase at a much higher rate. Between 2018 and 2043 the 65+ population is projected to rise by 61% and the 85+ population by 93%.
- Long term, the population of the Borough is projected to reach 196,146 in 2043; this would represent a 14.2% increase between 2018 and 2043.

The Borough has a diverse population. The 2021 Census reported that 34.9% of the population was from ethnic minority groups (non-'White British') compared to 26.5% nationally. The number of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased by 21,554, between 2011 and 2021.

Ethnic minority groups are highest in the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston, with particularly large communities in Queens Park (78%) and Cauldwell (67%). The proportions of residents from ethnic minority groups are higher among younger age groups.



Strategic Assessment Process

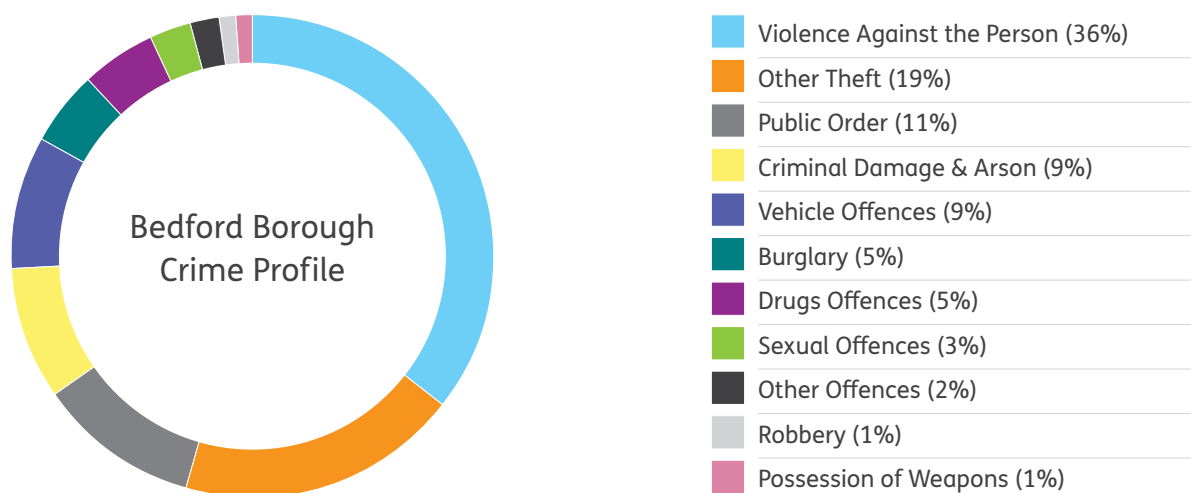
An annual Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment (SA) is produced on behalf of the Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to inform strategic planning and commissioning processes. It is part of an intelligence led process that is used to tackle crime and disorder and improve community safety. The SA considers what needs to be achieved to help improve community safety, including how communities can feel assured and confident that their concerns and fears are being addressed.

The assessment is developed using a standard risk scanning tool which allows partners to contribute recorded data, professional judgement and organisational demands into the assessment process. This process identifies those issues that present the greatest concern to the CSP and require further analysis within the assessment.

Each issue has been evaluated at both the national and local level; the process of analysis makes use of data from across the partnership and community to develop patterns of emerging issues and significant changes. Analysis focuses on a victim, offender and location (VOL) approach to ensure a clear picture of the problem is developed. Key recommendations in the assessment are used to develop priority areas of focus for the partnership.

Findings in the most recent assessment, completed in 2023, have been used develop this plan to ensure that the priorities are relevant to partners and communities and make best use of valuable resources. In the 12 months April 2022 to March 2023, Bedfordshire Police recorded 13,932 offences in Bedford Borough. This is a reduction of 7.4% (1119 offences) on the previous year. This represents a crime rate of 75 offences per 1,000 of the population in the most recent year.

A full copy of the Bedford Borough CSP Strategic Assessment 2023 is available at www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/community-safety



Community Consultation

The CSP Consultations are designed specifically to:

- ✓ Understand progress in terms of tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- ✓ Understand what contributes to making people feel safe and unsafe.
- ✓ Gain an understanding of people's concerns about underlying issues that impact on Crime and ASB.
- ✓ Gain an understanding of people's awareness of new and emerging issues.
- ✓ Understand the issues that cause the greatest level of public concern.

By collecting and using geographic, equality and diversity monitoring data, the CSP is also able to understand the opinions of different sections of the community. Face to face engagement with the public allows the CSP to gauge levels of awareness and understanding of local issues and concerns. This exercise is also helpful in raising awareness of the CSP and in signposting the support services that are available.

The survey explored two key areas; these were:

a. "How confident are you that agencies in Bedford work together to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour?"

The proportion of those that felt 'Very Confident' or 'Fairly Confident' was 34%, a reduction from the 2019 figure of 41%.

b. "What makes your local area a safe and unsafe place?"

There was a consistent message that '*positive relationships with neighbours*' and '*being part of an established community*' has the greatest impact on people's feeling of safety. The '*physical environment*' was also highlighted as important, as is a '*visible presence of authority*'.

A much wider range of issues contribute to people feeling unsafe. Some talked about very specific concerns around '*levels of speeding*' or '*acquisitive crime*;' others talk in more general terms about '*drug and alcohol issues*,' the '*impact of gangs and those acting in a suspicious or anti-social manner*' and a '*lack of visible authority*'. These findings were broadly consistent with previous consultation exercises.

The complete responses to these and the other questions included in the survey, as well as the open comments provided, will be used to develop the Action Plans that address those areas of high concern. A complete copy of the CSP Consultation 2022 report is available at www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/community-safety



Strategic Priorities 2024-2027

By reviewing the Areas of Interest and Common Threads identified in the Strategic Assessment process alongside the feedback from our Community Survey, the Bedford Borough CSP has identified and developed the three following Strategic Priority Areas for the Plan.

Each area has been explored to identify the Key Issues, Outcomes and Priority Actions in order to reflect the evidence and themes gathered from within the annual Strategic Assessment process and the CSP Community Consultation exercises.

To provide a clear understanding of achieving progress in these strategic priority areas, delivery regarding each priority will be managed by a corresponding Action Plan, reviewed and updated on an annual basis, each with specific performance objectives and milestones.

It is important to note that the specific Action Plans will seek to reduce the risks around the priorities identified by the Strategic Assessment and Community Consultation. The ‘business as usual’ elements of reducing crime and disorder will still take place, with these elements managed within the appropriate groups involving the appropriate partners.

The Strategic Priorities identified are:

- **Priority One**
Tackling Serious Violence
- **Priority Two**
Protecting Vulnerable People
- **Priority Three**
Developing Safer Neighbourhoods



The Partnership recognises that all three priority areas are intrinsically linked and that some strategic aims will need to be delivered simultaneously in all areas.

The following areas of work should be coordinated by the CSP to avoid duplication and to ensure consistent outcomes in all three areas.

- Building confidence and trust in Partnership services to encourage reporting.
- Understanding the opportunities of new technologies and accepting the additional risks of Cyber enabled crime and exploitation.

Priority One - Tackling Serious Violence

This priority focuses on the devastating impacts of serious violence on the victims, families, and the wider community. This priority area aims to deliver the new Serious Violence Duty for the partnership as outlined in chapter 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.



The priority will focus on public space youth violence but also recognises the links to domestic abuse and sexual offences.

Key Areas

- Knife Crime
- Serious Youth Violence
- Violence Against Women & Girls

Links to

- Robbery
- Domestic Abuse
- Sexual Offences

Key issues – Identified in the 2023 Strategic Assessment.

- Reduction in perceptions of safety recorded in the CSP survey.
- Increase in Severity Scores for Knife Crime & Serious Youth Violence.
- Significant number of Victims and Offenders in Knife crime offences under 25 years.
- Nearly 1/2 of Knife Crime offences record an outcome that referenced the victim being unwilling to support the investigation.
- Increase in the number of Knife-enabled Robberies.
- More than 40% of victims of Domestic Abuse are recorded as a repeat victim.
- Nearly 1/3 of VAWG offences reported by victims aged under 18 years were for a Sexual Offence.

Outcome – ‘What we wish to achieve’.

- Reducing levels of severity score for knife crime and serious youth violence.
- Changing perceptions of professionals amongst communities and young people to increase trust and joint working.
- Improve perceptions of safety amongst local communities.
- Reduction in knife enabled robberies.
- Create opportunities to increase information sharing between communities and professionals.
- Gain an understanding of the relationship between VAWG and the role of females in County Lines.

Priority Actions – ‘What we will do to deliver outcomes’.

- Ensure that front line professionals have the skills to detect those at risk of violence.
- Continue to work collaboratively to identify and address the root causes of violence.
- Focus on joint working with communities and the voluntary sector to develop initiatives and strengthen relationships with statutory partners.

Priority Two - Protecting Vulnerable People

This priority focuses on the identification and protection of the most vulnerable members of our communities, with an aim of reducing the risks of exploitation. This area applies to young persons and adults, recognising the link between both groups.



The hidden nature of these offences, both physical and online, along with the overlapping issues mean that officially recorded data at a national and local level is limited.

Key Areas

- Criminal & Sexual Exploitation
- County Lines
- Cuckooing

Links to

- Modern Slavery
- Radicalisation

Key issues – Identified in the 2023 Strategic Assessment.

- Increasing numbers of crimes and non-crime incidents with a CSE marker.
- Increasing numbers of adult safeguarding referrals raising concerns about sexual abuse and cuckooing.
- Increasing numbers of multi-agency information forms being submitted across the Partnership.
- Nearly 1/2 of respondents to the CSP survey had ‘no opinion’ or ‘didn’t know’ about Criminal Exploitation in their area.

Outcome – ‘What we wish to achieve’.

- Early identification of those at risk of exploitation.
- Reduction in repeat victims and locations of cuckooing.
- Increase community awareness of exploitation and improved levels of reporting.
- Confident and effective information sharing amongst professionals.
- Increase awareness of the Prevent process amongst professionals and communities.
- Develop a greater understanding of the nature of technology-enabled exploitation.

Priority Actions – ‘What we will do to deliver outcomes’.

- Deliver a continual programme of training to allow professionals to identify and share concerns in all areas of vulnerability and exploitation.
- Share positive stories of partnership working that target those who exploit vulnerable people.
- Focus on contextual safeguarding in locations where vulnerable people live, congregate or visit.
- Work collaboratively to identify and dismantle drug supply chains.

Priority Three - Developing Safer Neighbourhoods

Listening and responding to local communities is vital. This priority focuses on the issues that impact directly on the daily life of those that live, work and visit the Borough.



The areas of focus reflect both recorded data and the contributions to the Partnership's consultation, conducted in the summer of 2022.

Key Areas

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Identifying and Disrupting Serious Organised Crime

Links to

- Hate Crime
- Neighbourhood Crime

Key issues – Identified in the 2023 Strategic Assessment.

- Lower levels of confidence and awareness in partnership working recorded in the CSP survey.
- Reducing numbers of ASB incidents reported to the Police.
- Increasing numbers of partnership disruptions to Serious Organised Crime.
- Reducing numbers of Hate Crimes being recorded but increasing levels of severity scores.
- Increasing numbers of Hate Crime victims described the offender as a neighbour.
- High levels of community concern in relation to drug and alcohol issues recorded in the CSP survey.
- Overlapping community concerns for Bedford Town Centre identified in CSP survey.

Outcome – ‘What we wish to achieve’.

- Increase in community awareness and confidence in multi-agency working.
- Confident and cohesive communities who are willing to work with partners to identify and address local issues.
- Effective multi-agency working to tackle complex/persistent ASB.
- Increased awareness of Serious Organised Crime within local communities and amongst professionals.
- Reducing levels of severity scores for Hate Crime.

Priority Actions – ‘What we will do to deliver outcomes’.

- Increased communications around joint working within the partnership.
- Improve visibility and face to face working in repeat locations.
- Making use of new technologies to facilitate reporting and improve problem solving.
- Training for professionals in use of ASB tools and problem solving methods.
- Developing place based initiatives with local communities in high demand locations.
- Training non-police partners in identifying and tackling serious organised crime.
- Strengthen partnership working where ASB and hate crime overlap.





Links to Wider Partnership Working

There is a strong relationship between the Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership and a number of Countywide thematic groups. Many of the issues identified in this plan link to the strategic aims of this wider network, creating the opportunity for enhanced joint working.



More information

If you would like further information about the work of the Community Safety Partnership, or you have a specific query regarding Community Safety matters, you can get in touch in the following ways:

-  Visit the webpages online for the Community Safety Partnership:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/community-safety/our-role-bedford-community-safety-partnership>
-  Contact the Community Safety Team by email:
communitysafety@bedford.gov.uk
-  Contact the Community Safety Team by post:
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK42 9AP
-  Follow the Community Safety Team on X:
[@safer_bedford](https://twitter.com/safer_bedford)