

RESTRICTED



## Crime

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### Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

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## **VISION**

To provide an effective response to all reports of domestic abuse within the county of Bedfordshire ensuring they are all recorded and appropriately investigated. For all agencies and services to work collaboratively to prevent domestic abuse and to reduce its impact by providing high quality support and services for all women, men and children affected by domestic abuse ensuring that those who perpetrate abuse are held accountable.

## **AIM OF THE STRATEGY**

It is the responsibility of the police and agencies to work together to safeguard both children and adults from the harm caused by domestic abuse and it is the purpose of this strategy to outline the steps that shall be taken to fulfil that responsibility in line with the Police and Crime Plan - 'Helping Police to Help the Public – Building Better Policing for Bedfordshire' and the Chief Constable's three-year plan.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **1. *PROTECT - Improve the confidence of victims***

Domestic abuse affects individuals and families across all ethnic backgrounds, religions, age, class and social backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender. It is vital that every opportunity is fully utilised to support the needs of every victim through single and multi-agency interventions where appropriate, and to ensure confidence is built to deliver improved outcomes and levels of reporting.

### **2. *PREVENT – Strategic commitment to joint working, safeguarding and raising awareness that domestic abuse is a crime***

To work with partners (statutory and voluntary) to ensure sufficient and appropriate measures are in place to protect and safeguard vulnerable victims and those affected by domestic abuse in Bedfordshire. We will work together to prevent, intervene and reduce the impact and extent of domestic abuse decreasing repeat victimisation and increasing the safety and wellbeing of those it affects.

Bedfordshire Police will work with partners to support national media campaigns whilst embedding in daily corporate communications business the message "Domestic abuse is a crime"

Bedfordshire Police and partners will work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to both educate and break the cycle of offending.

### **3. *PURSUE - Hold offenders to account***

All incidents of domestic abuse will be recorded and appropriately investigated. Bedfordshire Police will work with victims, the CPS and other agencies to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and where suitable alternative support and intervention is identified. Working across the partnership we will promote a clear and consistent message that domestic abuse is not acceptable and ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for their behaviour, and positive action is taken to bring them to justice. Bedfordshire Police will ensure a robust policy is in place outlining how staff within the organisation suspected of being perpetrators of domestic abuse will be dealt with reaffirming the message "Domestic abuse is a crime".

#### **4. PREPARE – *Commitment to Delivery***

Bedfordshire Police will ensure the appropriate strategy; plans and training are in place to equip the workforce to protect persons reporting domestic abuse.

##### DELIVERY OF STRATEGY

###### Protect

1. Refer all children and vulnerable people affected by domestic abuse to partners for partnership review.
2. Safeguard all victims of domestic abuse whilst exploring methods, with partners, to enhance the support and services available.
3. Ensure that the MARAC process across all three local authorities is effective and continues to support those at the highest risk, including those subject to repeat victimisation.
4. Provide specialist services and knowledge to those requiring support through forced marriage, honour based violence or FGM issues.
5. Ensure information for victims and those assisting them is accessible and available. This will include information around the use of civil and criminal remedies, and third party local and national support options.
6. Explore the use of technology, including TeCsos mobile phones, as a method of enhancing the protection of victims of domestic abuse.
7. Ensure a mechanism is in place where staff within the organisation are comfortable to report matters where they have been the victim of any crime but especially DA/SSO related matters. The staff should be confident they will be treated appropriately and the perpetrator will be dealt with positively (see Pursue category).
8. Ensure mechanisms are available to identify repeat and vulnerable victims, ensuring appropriate safety planning, ownership and problem solving measures are adopted.

###### Prepare

1. Ensure all front-line staff understands the impact of domestic abuse, including Coercive Control and Stalking and Harassment. Furthermore ensure key staff understand the importance of DVDs, DVPOs, risk assessment and safety planning.
2. Provide up to date information through internal communication methods informing staff of legislative change and the tools available to equip them to deal with domestic abuse.
3. Ensure the appropriate governance is in place to manage this strategy with clearly identified Strategic, Tactical and Operational leads.

4. Monitor national best practice around domestic abuse, including learning from DHR/SCR reviews.
5. Work to sustain a MASH within the county that will facilitate more effective information sharing and safeguarding around domestic abuse incidents.
6. Work with partners to identify appropriate programmes to support victims, children and perpetrators within domestic violence relationships, especially those that fall below the MARAC threshold.
7. Utilise the services of internal partners including the Continuous Improvement Department to carry out reviews of bespoke areas with the objective to improve performance.
8. Develop the external Bedfordshire Police webpage to ensure access to police information, legislation and links to the local authority forum and partnership information.

### Prevent

1. Identify high risk perpetrators and ensure, through IOM and partner engagement, work is carried out to address their offending.
2. Ensure DVPO's become part of daily police business and their use is embraced.
3. Ensure lessons are learned and practices are embedded following a domestic violence homicide review (DVHR), IPCC investigation or peer review.
4. Ensure that a partnership approach is taken to vulnerable victims identified through the VARAC with a bespoke trigger plan implemented to support on-going risk mitigation.

### Pursue

1. Ensure that Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) are utilised to deliver specialist knowledge and oversight for those entering the criminal justice system.
2. Ensure that victims of domestic abuse are supported through the Criminal Justice System and feel confident to see cases through to resolution at the court, reducing the number of cases where the victim fails to appear or refuses to attend court.
3. Where possible pursue victimless prosecutions as a mechanism to protect victims and address perpetrators' behaviour.
4. Ensure the use of photographic and body camera evidence within domestic abuse investigations becomes standard practice and the quality is such that positive resolutions are maximised.
5. Ensure file quality is excellent across the organisation maximising the potential for a positive resolution. Utilise feedback sheets to educate the wider organisation.
6. Where police officers are identified as perpetrators, ensure that force policy is adhered with and there is a consistent and robust approach.

## **Governance**

Within Bedfordshire Police governance is provided by the Force Operations Board. The Assistant Chief Constable, as chair of the Force Operations Board will act as senior Responsible Officer [SRO]. The SRO will also ensure that the Force's strategy remains aligned with the Police and Crime Plan the PCC's objectives and with the direction of national policing through the maintenance of effective links with the College of Policing and the Association of Chief Police Officers [NPCC] Workforce Development Business Areas. The maintenance and oversight of the strategy will take place at the Domestic Abuse Gold Group chaired by ACC Sebire.

At a partnership level, Bedfordshire Police is a key partner within the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. Partnership engagement at strategic level is constructive, ensuring that joint working between Bedfordshire Police and our partners focuses on the needs of the victim and other vulnerable groups and individuals in the community.

Elements of this strategy will be delivered through the BCJB Victims and Witnesses subgroup. Supporting this is a working tactical group chaired by a Chief Inspector that will turn the strategic vision into an operational reality.