

**Bracknell Forest**

**Serious Violence Strategy**

**2024 – 2027**

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# Foreword

Serious violence has a devastating impact on the lives of victims and families, it instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. While Bracknell Forest has low levels of serious violence, we need to explore and investigate the risk factors which increase the likelihood of someone becoming an offender or victim and to work in partnership to reduce this risk. As such, prevention needs to be central to our approach.

This first Serious Violence Strategy for Bracknell Forest is a commitment to work effectively across organisational and professional boundaries to deliver a truly multi-agency approach. It is vital that relevant services work together, share information and target interventions effectively.

Through existing partnership structures, we will collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within our local communities, all informed by evidence and the voices of people in the community with lived experience.

Serious violence affects us all in one way or another. This could be due to being a victim, an offender, knowing a victim or witnessing the increasing reports of violent incidents through the media.

As a Community Safety Partnership, we will not be complacent on this issue. We have always prioritised serious violence. However, we are now going one step further with an ambitious strategy to keep Bracknell Forest's serious violence levels low.

It is our intention that this strategy will serve to complement and enhance the current activity and the results achieved, whilst supporting professional developments by securing the resources and focus they require to make a positive and effective impact for the residents and communities all the people and communities they serve.

**Councillor Iskandar (Kandy) Jefferies**

**Executive Member: Culture, Delivery and Public Protection**

# Context

In April 2018, the government published its [Serious Violence Strategy](#) in response to increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide across England. Action in the strategy is focused on [4 main themes](#):

- tackling county lines and misuse of drugs
- early intervention and prevention
- supporting communities and local partnerships
- law enforcement and the criminal justice response

The strategy has a call to action to partners from across different sectors to come together in a multi-agency public health approach to tackling and preventing serious violence at a local level.

To help local areas implement a whole system multi-agency approach, the government introduced a range of initiatives including a new [legal duty](#) to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

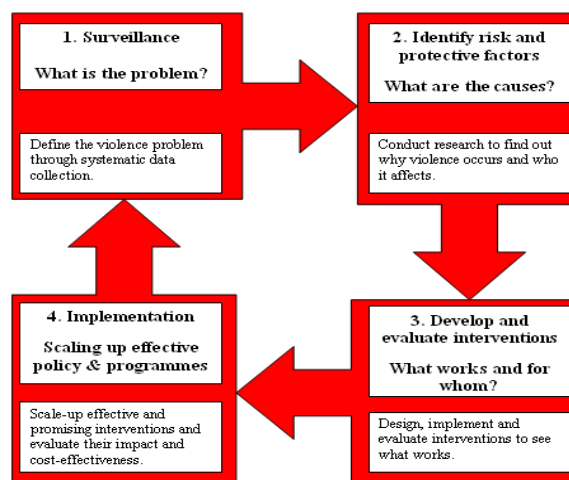
The government's view is that serious violence is a public health issue. This is because living without fear of violence is a fundamental right for health and wellbeing. It is also a public health issue because violence is a major cause of ill health and poor wellbeing and is strongly related to inequalities. The poorest fifth of people have hospital admission rates for violence 5 times higher than those of the most affluent fifth. It affects individuals and communities and is a drain on health services, the criminal justice system, and the wider economy.

Interventions to prevent violence, especially those in early childhood, prevent people developing a propensity for violence. They are usually holistic in nature, meaning that they also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes. Therefore, addressing the issue of violence and its root causes can improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and have wider positive implications for the economy and society.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\) 4-step public health approach to reducing violence](#) aims to improve health and safety for people by addressing the risk factors that increase the likelihood that someone will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence.

The 4 steps are:

1. Surveillance: define the problem through collecting information and data about violence.
2. Identify risk and protective factors: use research to look at the causes of violence, what's linked to it, risk factors for violence and where interventions could be effective.
3. Develop and evaluate interventions: to find out what works in preventing violence by designing, implementing and evaluating interventions.
4. Implement effective interventions: also monitor the effects of these interventions on risk factors and evaluate their impact and cost-effectiveness.



## Governance and Accountability

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) will have overall responsibility for compliance with the Serious Violence Duty which includes this Strategy. The Duty requires it to be reviewed at least annually.

The Serious Violence and Exploitation (SVE) Strategic Sub-Group of the CSP will develop and monitor progress with the recommendations in the Strategy. The main mechanism for the delivery of the Strategy will be an action plan comprising SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) objectives detailing both prevention and response themes. It will be progressed by CSP stakeholders in line with existing services, programmes, arrangements, and resources.

The CSP is overseen by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission which sits as the public Crime and Disorder Committee each year to scrutinise progress against CSP priorities, including serious violence. The CSP also aims to reach out to those with lived experience of serious violence to help shape and steer its approach in the form of consultation, co-design and/or co-production.

The aim of the SVE Strategic Group is to set strategic vision and priorities and to oversee operational groups which are working to prevent and reduce Serious Violence and Exploitation of people of all ages in Bracknell Forest.

The membership of the group comprises representatives from:

BFC Youth Justice
BFC Adult Safeguarding
BFC Exploitation Prevention
BFC Drug and Alcohol Team
BFC Early Help
BFC Community Safety
BFC Housing
BFC Children's Social Care
BFC Education
Thames Valley Police
Involve (voluntary and community sector)
Integrated Care Board (ICB)
National Probation Service
Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

Gathering and analysing data will be conducted by the Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Analysis and Insight Team, one role of which is part-funded by Bracknell Forest Council.

The OPCC oversees compliance with the delivery of the Serious Violence Duty, ensures funding is received by the Home Office and is allocated following collaboration with partnerships, including the CSPs, across the Thames Valley.

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Risk Factors

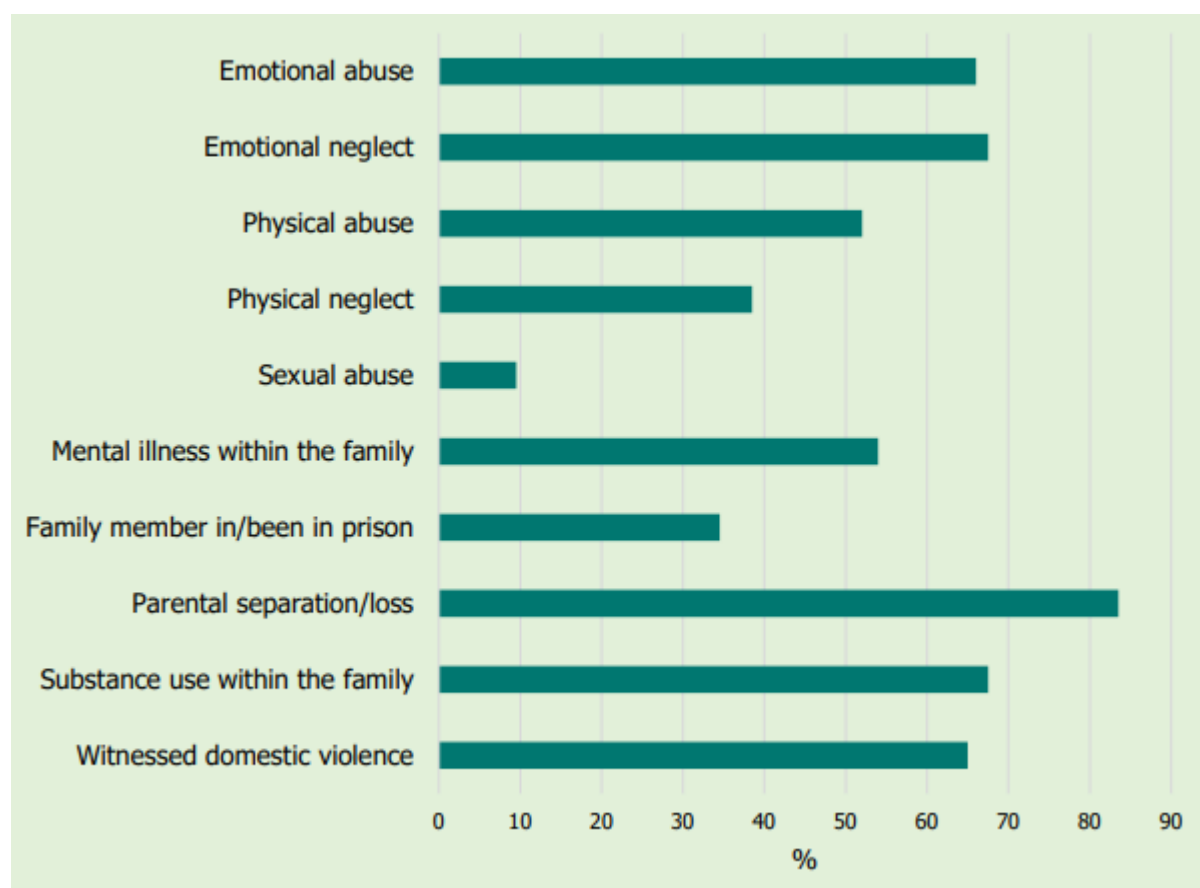
The World Health Organisation's (WHO's) public health approach to violence seeks to identify the common risk factors driving violence and the protective factors preventing violence. It encourages identification of these factors and implementing interventions across all levels: individual, relationship, community and societal, at the same time.

## Young People

Much research has taken place on risk factors as a determinant for criminal behaviour and there have also been developments over time as additional research has taken place. Research undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in 2021, based on 200 people in Manchester, considered adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), serious youth violence, trauma-informed practice, and youth participation<sup>1</sup>.

The study found that the ACEs that featured the most in the justice-involved children in the study were:

- Parental separation/loss
- Substance use within the family
- Emotional neglect and abuse
- Witnessing domestic abuse



While not one of the ACEs on the assessment tool used, a number of the workers interviewed felt that poverty and deprivation played a key role in some of the children's offending behaviour. The relationship between ACEs and socio-economic deprivation has also been noted in other recent research. Growing up in poverty can lead to children feeling rejected by society, and this rejection can elicit feelings of shame and humiliation, which in turn elicit feelings of anger. Anger can then manifest itself as violence. This is looked at further under Summary of Place.

<sup>1</sup> [Academic Insights 2021/13: Serious youth violence and its relationship with adverse childhood experiences \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/academic-insights/2021/13-serious-youth-violence-and-its-relationship-with-adverse-childhood-experiences/)

A summary of key findings from the same research related specifically to the relationship between serious youth violence and ACEs and is as follows:

- Not everyone who experiences ACEs has a negative outcome. However, ACEs have been found to be strongly associated with a range of 'problematic behaviours' including aggression, violence, and criminal behaviour.
- In line with other research, all of the youth justice workers that were interviewed felt that ACEs have a detrimental impact on the thought processes and emotional wellbeing of the children they work with
- An individual child struggling to handle their emotions might respond to various social interactions or situations that they find themselves in in an angry or aggressive way because they can't recognise what it is that they're feeling.
- This increased tendency to respond to situations through anger and/or aggression appeared to be exacerbated by the domestic violence that many of the children had witnessed and/or experienced as victims.
- Neurodevelopmental research has shown that ACEs can result in children being on constant alert for danger and quick to react to threats via the fight, flight, freeze survival responses, even when there are no threats present.
- A number of workers felt that the need to feel safe was directly linked to children carrying knives or other weapons.
- The workers also talked of ACEs resulting in children seeking out opportunities, or behaving in particular ways, that gained them praise and/or acceptance from their peers. Not only because this might have been largely absent in their home lives, but also as a direct response to the negative feelings and emotions that ACEs can engender.
- Research on belongingness has shown that those who are socially deprived are more easily 'pressured to commit violent acts ... to be accepted by and to demonstrate commitment to the group'.

## **Older People**

When considering risk and protective factors across all ages, most of the research pertains to youths or adolescents up to the age of 25 years with little research focused on older age groups. The 'Victims of Serious Violence in England and Wales, 2011-2017', however, sets out some influential factors for older age groups. It is recognised that some of the risk and protective factors for young people could also be relevant into adulthood:

### **Age**

Those over the age of 25 years are more likely to present at A&E, double that of those aged 11–17 years. This could, however, be due to a higher level of injury caused by serious violence in the older age range. Older people are also more likely to report incidents of serious violence to the Police and view acts such as pushing and shoving very differently to those of the younger age.

### **Ethnicity**

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) found that those of mixed ethnicity had an elevated risk of being a victim of crime overall, but the findings were not conclusive in this regard.

### **Socio-Economic and Crime-Related Deprivation**

Risk of being involved in serious violence is linked to the level of deprivation experienced by the older age groups. If there are high levels of crime in the area where they live, there is an increased risk in becoming

involved in serious violence. The more economic pressure experienced by the adult, the higher the risk of serious violence occurring, especially in relation to domestic abuse.

## **Place**

This is also a factor in this context, in that the more public the space, the more potential witnesses so the less likelihood of serious violence being committed, but in the home, there are very few if no witnesses. The home is also a place where there are more potential weapons to hand increasing the risk again of more serious violence occurring.

Referring back to the research under Young People above, key recommendations were as follows:

1. Quantifying ACEs as a measure of risk should be replaced with high-quality trauma-informed policy and practice to identify the ACEs experienced and the impact on individual children. This knowledge and understanding should then be used to co-develop with children, personalised approaches to address their involvement in serious youth violence.
2. Deliver training around implementing trauma-informed practice in a therapeutic way across the youth justice system including the courts, police and other partners. This training should be provided by qualified professionals and will help embed an awareness of ACEs and trauma-informed practice throughout the justice system and ensure consistency for children at all stages of the involvement in justice.
3. Clinical support around trauma should be readily available to those children who may need it. It should be delivered by qualified professionals based within youth justice services.
4. Children should receive trauma-informed intervention/s at the point of the adverse experience/s. Schools, children's services, and health services should be adequately funded and equipped to embed trauma-informed practice into their services and organisations. If offered at an earlier stage in a child's life, this could potentially reduce the number of children presenting to youth justice services for serious youth violence.



# Summary of Place<sup>2</sup>

The below summary of Bracknell Forest includes a focus on some risk factors where there is evidence of a link between them and serious violence offending or victimisation.

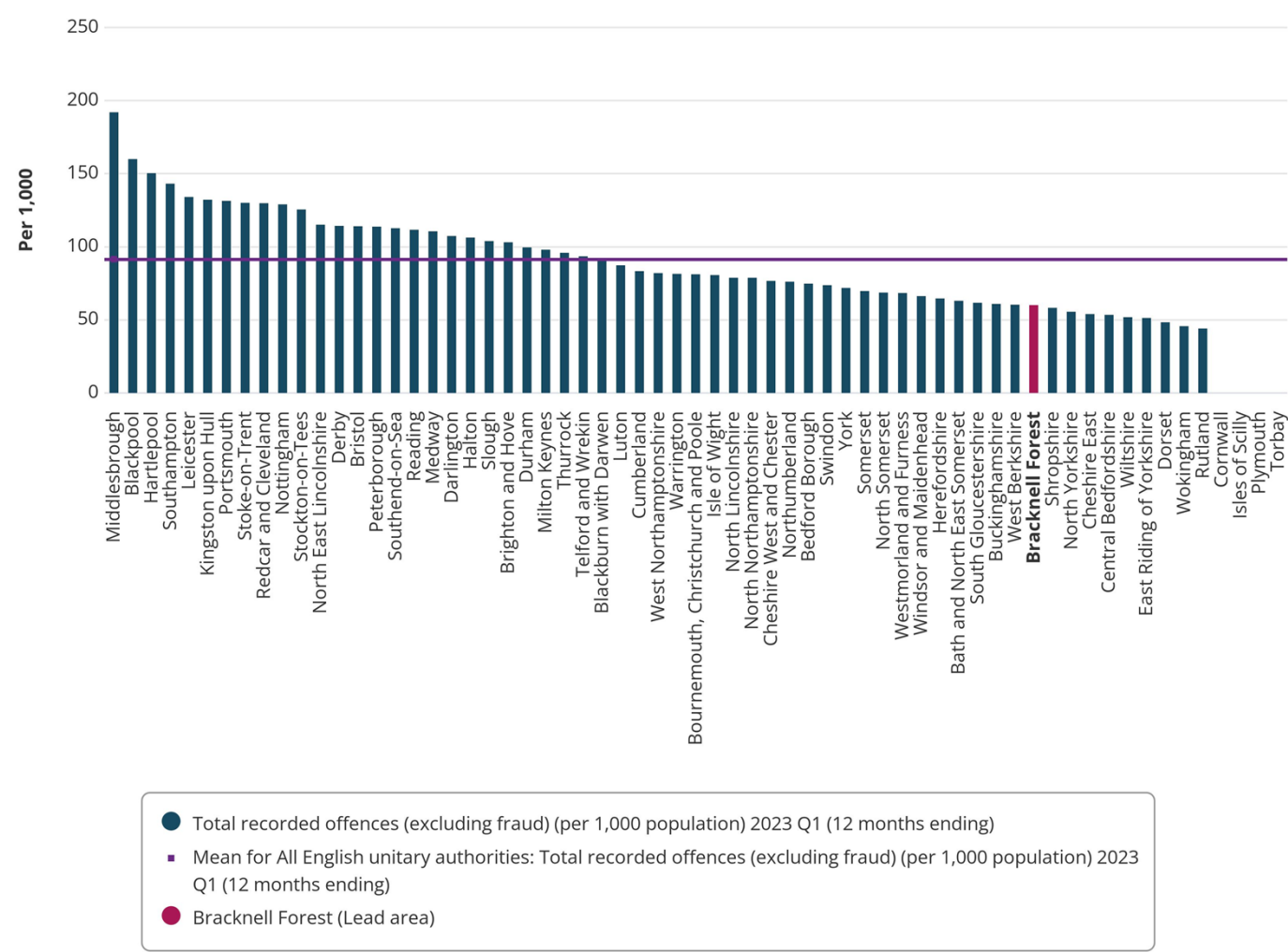
## General

Bracknell Forest Local Authority area is determined as the geographic boundary within which this strategy applies.

Bracknell Forest has an overall population of approximately 124,608 which has increased by 10% in the last 10 years.

## Crime

On 1 October 2023, total police-recorded offences per 1,000 population placed Bracknell Forest 10<sup>th</sup> lowest out of the 57 unitary authorities in England, significantly lower than the average. This is shown below:

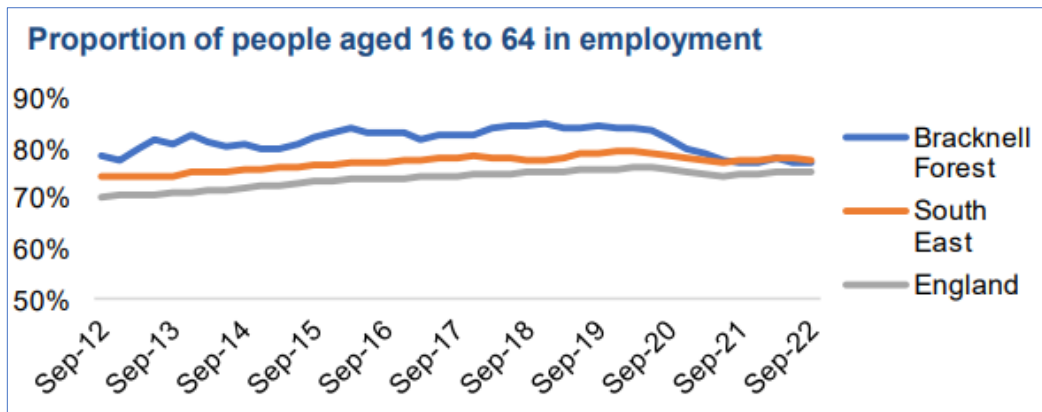


<sup>2</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

## Employment

Socio-economic factors (the differences between groups of people because of financial reasons<sup>3</sup>) have been evidenced as being a risk factor for serious violence. Research in 2021 of London boroughs showed that all 10 of the boroughs with the highest rates of victims of serious violence had higher rates of child poverty than the London average<sup>4</sup>.

From October 2021 to September 2022, 77% of Bracknell Forest's working age population were in employment. The proportion of people aged 16-64 in employment were higher than England figures and similar to those in the South-East:



Over the same time period, 20% of the population were also economically inactive i.e., not in employment or seeking work. The main reasons for this in Bracknell Forest were being a student or retired:

**Proportion of economically inactive people by main reason (Oct-21 to Sep-22)**

	Bracknell Forest	South East	England
Total	20%	20%	21%
Student	34%	27%	27%
Looking after family/ home	18%	20%	20%
Long-term sick	14%	20%	24%
Other	34%	33%	29%

5

## Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers

Research shows that children with care and support needs are vulnerable to perpetration and victimisation of serious violence, often linked to their earlier experiences of trauma, abuse and neglect.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, more than half (51%) of adults who were abused as children experienced domestic abuse in later life.<sup>7</sup>

146 children in Bracknell Forest were in care on 31 March 2021. This was a rate of 51 per 10,000 population and is increasing.<sup>8</sup>

As of August 2023, there were:

- 156 children in the care of the Council (CLA). Of the 156, 38% were aged 16-17 and 37% were aged 10-15.
- 134 children were assessed to be at risk of significant harm.

<sup>3</sup> [SOCIOECONOMIC | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Mayor reveals driving factors behind violence affecting young people | London City Hall](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> [People who were abused as children are more likely to be abused as an adult - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

- 83 were care leavers

Children going missing from home or school is a behaviour that has significance as it could indicate that they are being exploited to supply drugs in other areas or carry out sexual acts.

The number of CLA going missing reduced to 24 in 2022/23. However, the number of missing incidents increased by 34% in this time. There were no missing episodes with a known link to serious violence or child exploitation (sexual or criminal). CLA most often went missing from semi-independent placements with the second highest missing location from residential placements.<sup>9</sup>

## **Mental Health**

While there is no evidenced link between mental health and likelihood to perpetrate serious violence, research does show the impact of serious violence on mental health.

In Bracknell Forest, mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year. They range from common problems, such as depression and anxiety, to rarer and more severe disorders such as psychosis. 13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates.

The suicide rate is higher in males in Bracknell Forest whereas self-harm is higher in young females. Overall, the most recent rates of hospital admissions for self-harm in Bracknell in 2020/21 was:

- 292 aged 10-14 years
- 968 aged 15-19 years
- 234 aged 20-24 years

Of all suicides in Bracknell Forest in 2019/21, 82% were male.<sup>10</sup>

While the rates of suicides and emergency admissions for intentional self-harm are lower than those of the South-East and England, the rate of hospital admissions because of self-harm for females aged 15-19 is higher than for the South-East and England.

It is noted that an East Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategic Group has been established to address rates of suicides and the Bracknell Forest Self-harm Workforce Project has also been running with a task and finish group taking forward recommendations.

There are no known links between the causation of the above-described self-harm or suicide levels in Bracknell Forest to serious violence. However, it is important to note that the extent of domestic abuse-related suicide is only now beginning to emerge because of the work of domestic abuse campaigners<sup>11</sup>. A Home Office and police study of the first year of the pandemic, April 2020-March 2021, detailed 38 domestic abuse-related suicides, a likely underestimate as only those with a reported history of abuse to police were included. The following year, the study was repeated and found that domestic abuse-related suicides had increased by 23 compared to the previous year.

Bracknell Forest is conducting its first Domestic Suicide Review (DSR) this year. New national guidance is also awaited with the aim of holding a launch event across the Thames Valley. The Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive which is a statutory sub-group of the CSP will lead on this work.

## **Disabilities**

There is a correlation between disability and being a victim of serious crime:

- In the year ending March 2019, disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse (17.3%) than non-disabled women (7.0%).
- In the three years ending March 2018, 3.7% of disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced any sexual assault (including attempts), compared with 1.9% of non-disabled adults.

<sup>9</sup> BFC, 2023

<sup>10</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Suicide by domestic violence: call to count the hidden toll of women's lives | Domestic violence | The Guardian](#)

- In the three years ending March 2018, disabled women were almost twice as likely to have experienced any sexual assault in the last year (5.7%) than non-disabled women (3.0%).<sup>12</sup>

In Bracknell Forest, the percentage of the population with a long-term health condition or disability in 2021 was 16,703 which was lower than the South-East and England. 0.3% of Bracknell Forest's population in 2019/20 had a learning disability. This equates to approximately 374 people across all ages.<sup>13</sup>

## Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Links between drug and alcohol use and serious violence are well-evidenced. In 2014, a large-scale research project was undertaken across 9 different countries which found that 48 percent of homicide offenders had alcohol in their systems at the time of their offence while 37 percent were intoxicated. Though not every country provides crime statistics linked to substance use, those countries that do highlight how often drug and alcohol use is linked to violent crimes.<sup>14</sup>

Bracknell Forest has low numbers in treatment for both drugs and alcohol when compared to the South-East and England:<sup>15</sup>

### Adults – 2021/22

	Bracknell Forest	South-East	England
<b>Opiate</b>	108	14,897	140,558
<b>Non-Opiate</b>	83	3,254	29,582
<b>Alcohol only</b>	143	10,447	84,697
<b>Non-Opiate and alcohol</b>	79	4,264	34,378
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>32,862</b>	<b>289,215</b>

### Young People – 2021/22

	Bracknell Forest	National
<b>Numbers in treatment</b>	12	12,583

## Drug Dealing

The overall demand for drugs continues to increase within the UK<sup>16</sup> and with increasing demand comes increasing dealing or selling. Growth in drug supply has also driven an increase in county drug lines (CDLs) which are often violent and exploitative, with children and other vulnerable people being coerced into becoming 'runners' to transport drugs and money around the country.<sup>17</sup>

Crest, a research organisation, whose insights are used by government, have undertaken research into the role of drug markets as a driver of serious violence. The data shows a correlation between the growing availability of harmful drugs and the rise in serious violence, including a notable increase in the number of drug-related homicides. At the same time, the profile of those involved has changed: those convicted of class A drugs supply are getting younger<sup>18</sup>.

Bracknell Forest has local and out of area drug lines operating within it and multi-partner disruption and eradication is an ongoing priority.

In 2022, the government released a 10-year drugs plan called 'From Harm to Hope' which has 3 strategic priorities:

1. Break drug supply chains
2. Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system
3. Achieve a generational shift in demand for drugs

<sup>12</sup> [Disability and crime, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/disability-and-crime)

<sup>13</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>14</sup> [How Are Substance Abuse and Violence Related? | Psychology Today United Kingdom](#)

<sup>15</sup> [NDTMS - Home](#)

<sup>16</sup> [National Strategic Assessment \(NSA\) Campaign 2023 - Drugs - National Crime Agency](#)

<sup>17</sup> [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Understanding what is driving serious violence: drugs \(crestadvisory.com\)](#)

To bring together partners to tackle these issues locally, all areas must put in place a Combatting Drugs Partnership. Bracknell Forest is included in the East Berkshire Combatting Drugs Board and a local delivery partnership is in the process of being developed as a sub-group of the CSP.

Therefore, the work of this Strategy will take place in conjunction with the work of the Board which is measured against:

- reducing drug use
- reducing drug related crime
- reducing drug related deaths and harm
- reducing drug supply
- increasing engagement in treatment
- improving recovery outcomes

## Youth Justice

The Youth Justice Board publish a Serious Violence Tool which presents data to assist local areas to understand the nature of proven serious youth violence and to benchmark incidents against similar 'statistical neighbours'.

Headlines from the Bracknell Forest Youth Justice Board Serious Violence Toolkit are as follows:

- In the year ending March 2023, there were 4 serious violence offences committed by 4 different children from Bracknell Forest
- In the year ending March 2023, the rate of serious violence per 10,000 children aged 10-17 was 3.1 for Bracknell Forest
- In the year ending March 2023, serious violence offences by children comprised 7% of all youth offences for Bracknell Forest
- The volume of serious youth violence in Bracknell Forest remains consistently low:

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Serious youth violence offences	3	3	0	4
Number of individual children involved	3	3	0	4

## Exploitation

The national picture on exploitation by drug lines continues to develop. There are recorded cases of:

- children as young as 12 years old being exploited or moved by gangs to courier drugs out of their local area; 15-16 years is the most common age range.
- both males and females being exploited.
- the use of social media to make initial contact with children and young people.

Exploiters are known to target vulnerable children and adults who may have the following vulnerabilities:

- prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- lack of a safe/stable home environment
- social isolation or social difficulties
- economic vulnerability
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having a physical or learning disability
- having mental health or substance misuse issues
- being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)

- being excluded from mainstream education, in particular attending a Pupil Referral Unit<sup>19</sup>

In Bracknell Forest, evidence from missing children data in 2022/23 showed that the post-covid trend of a decreasing correlation between missing episodes and exploitation in Bracknell Forest continues. Missing episodes recorded as being linked to 'suspected sexual exploitation' decreased by 84% (13 down to 2).

CDL activity in Bracknell Forest involving children has reduced significantly over the past five years and, more broadly, criminal gangs are aware that the use of vulnerable children involved with services and periods of missing can bring attention to their activities. Together, this indicates that missing episodes may no longer be as strong an indicator of grooming/exploitation (i.e., exploitation may be happening without missing episodes).

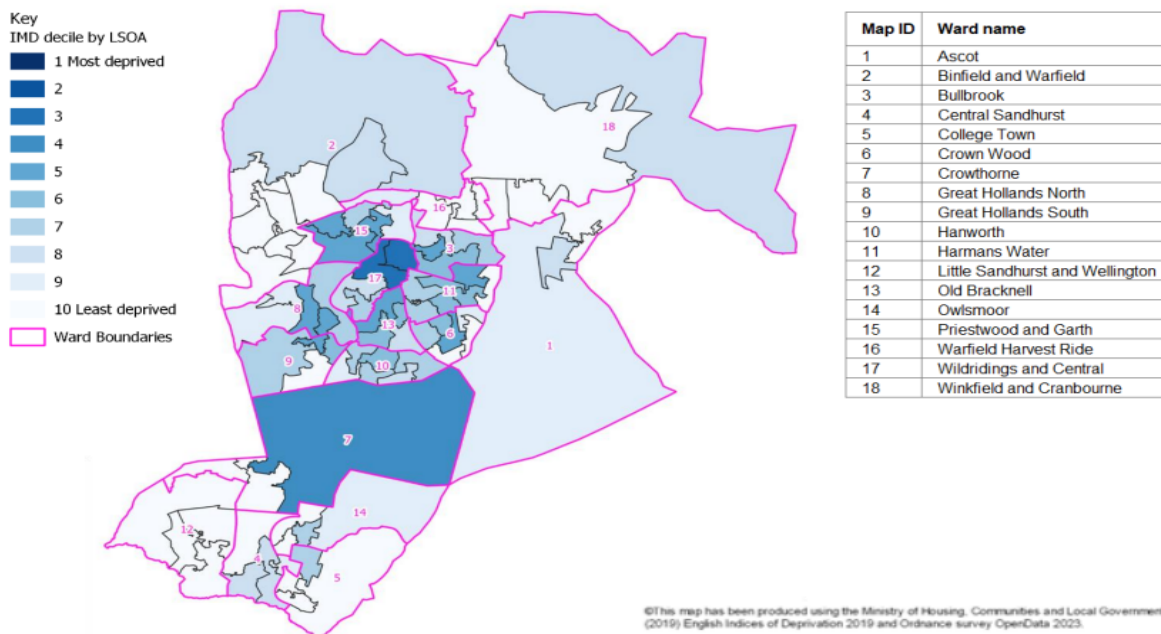
BFC has an Exploitation Prevention Team which works to prevent exploitation in children and safeguard them from risk.

## Deprivation

Deprivation includes a wide range of factors including income, employment, health, education, housing, services, and crime. A recent 2019 study into the causes of violent crime in London found that the proportion of children under 20 living in poverty was the main factor correlated with levels of youth violent crime in London Boroughs.<sup>20</sup>

Bracknell Forest is in the least deprived 10% of local authorities in England and more than a third of the neighbourhoods are also in the 10% least deprived nationally. Although none of the neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived areas in England, there are areas of higher deprivation within Wildridings and Central, Crowthorne and Great Hollands North. There is a 2.3-year difference in life expectancy between girls born in the least deprived and most deprived areas of Bracknell Forest and 6.1 difference in boys. The gap in healthy life expectancy is greater at 7.8 years for girls and 10 years in boy.<sup>21</sup>

**Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in Bracknell Forest 2019 by 2021 LSOAs**



10.7% (2,700) of Bracknell Forest's children aged under 16 lived in relative low-income families in 2020/21. This is lower than the South-East and England.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines)

<sup>20</sup> [Poverty is the Main 'Cause' of Youth Violent Crime in London.....](https://www.met.police.uk/press-releases/2019/09/20190916-poverty-is-the-main-cause-of-youth-violent-crime-in-london/)

<sup>21</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

## Homelessness

Due to the inherently chaotic nature of many homeless people's lives, they are more likely than most to be victims (and perpetrators) of crime<sup>23</sup>.

In 2021/22, 599 households in Bracknell Forest were identified as eligible for support (prevention or relief duty) under the Homeless Reduction Act. This is a rate of 11.8 per 1,000 households which is higher than the South-East but the same as England.<sup>24</sup>

The Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment that was undertaken highlighted 38 suspects that did not have a location associated to them, with 23 of those showing as being out of the Thames Valley. The remaining 15 were checked with only 1 having no address information. The Local Police Area confirmed that there are no current links with serious violence perpetration and homelessness in Bracknell Forest.

## School Exclusions

There is convincing evidence linking deprivation and vulnerability to knife crime, alongside links between school exclusion and knife crime and serious violence.<sup>25</sup> Barnardo's, a children's charity, states that excluded schoolchildren are at serious risk of becoming involved in knife crime and are also at risk of being groomed and exploited by criminal gangs.

Permanent exclusion rates from schools in Bracknell Forest in 2021/22 were 12<sup>th</sup> lowest out of the 13 local authorities in the Thames Valley and 5<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 15 for suspensions. Suspensions and exclusions are overseen by BFC's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Inclusion Team and the Education Welfare Service.

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<sup>23</sup> [Homelessness and Violence \(svru.co.uk\)](https://svru.co.uk)

<sup>24</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Youth violence – RCPCH – State of Child Health](#)



# Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA)

## Definitions

This strategy is informed by the SNA which reviewed Police data from January 2018 to end of December 2022 and was completed by the Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Analysis and Insight Team. In a joint effort between Thames Valley's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and the OPCC in consultation with Community Safety Partnerships across the Thames Valley, a working definition of serious violence was agreed as follows:

**“Serious Violence includes specific types of recorded crime, such as homicide, grievous bodily harm, incidents that involve a knife, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing.”**

To further develop this definition and define what should be included in the monitoring and analysis of serious violence, 2 groups were formed:

### Group 1

Crime in this category forms the core measurement of serious violence in Thames Valley. These are recorded offences that the CSP aims to have a direct impact on and see reductions. These will be monitored for performance and submission to the Home Office under the Serious Violence Duty.

- All homicide
- All grievous bodily harm (GBH)
- All knife crime (as collected for Home Office Annual Data Requirement 160)
- Inclusive of all ages, location types (public/private) and domestic flags

### Group 2

There was widespread agreement that Sexual Offences should not be discounted in what we deem to be important, regardless of whether it was the original intention of the Home Office Strategy into serious violence or not. Therefore, Group 2 crimes are recorded offences which contribute to the threat, inherence and understanding of Group 1 offences. Group 2 offences would be analysed to understand the relationship between crime type, the people involved (offenders and victims) and the context of the incident (where and when it took place). Analysis may result in future inclusion into Group 1 (if there is an internal or externally triggered review of the serious violence definition). These would not be included in Home Office reporting but would be monitored for partnership sharing. These crimes can increase because of improved awareness, reporting, recording, trust, and other external factors. It is, therefore, not always appropriate to assume that Reduction = Good

- All Actual Bodily Harm (excluding 'other' Violence with Injury) (ABH)
- All Drug Supply/Trafficking (excluding 'possession' alone)
- All Sexual Assault (excluding sexual activity and 'other' Sexual Offences)
- All Rape

## Findings

### Group 1 Analysis<sup>26</sup>:

In 2022, Bracknell Forest was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> highest in this group of offences out of the 13 local authorities in the Thames Valley,<sup>27</sup> two places higher in rank than 2021. Group 1 serious violence in Bracknell Forest has a downward trend, based on Police data from 2018-2022. However, it is noted that knife crime for 2022 is on an upward trend when compared with 2021. Group 1 serious violence had 33 repeat offenders.

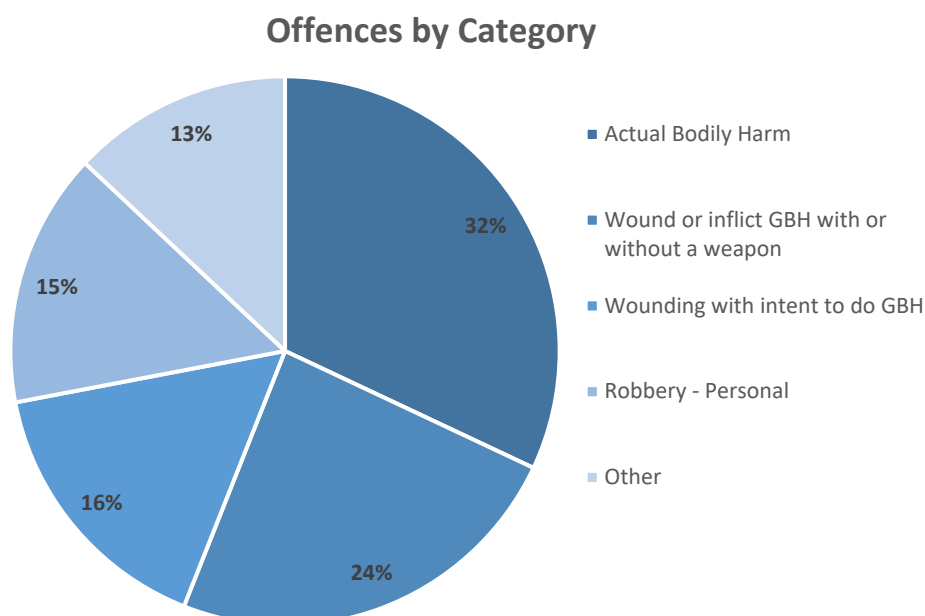
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<sup>26</sup> Excludes occurrences reported more than 365 days after the date of the incident.

<sup>27</sup> Rank is based on number of occurrences per 1,000 of population.



In Group 1, 57.4% of crimes were classified as knife crime, with 42.3% GBH, and 0.3% homicide. It is noted that 24% of all crimes were flagged as having a domestic abuse flag, all of which were either knife crime or GBH. On review of the person data related to domestic abuse, 1 young person under the age of 18 has been included as a victim in 1 occurrence. There are 4 victims that are repeat victims and none of the recorded repeat victims are under the age of 18. The highest level of crime recorded was classified under ABH 32%, and the second highest crime recorded being wound or inflict GBH with or without a weapon 24%. Wounding with intent to do GBH constituted 16% and robbery personal accounted for 15% of offences. Other crime classifications make up the final 13% of the Group 1 data.



### GBH Summary:

- 2022 had the lowest total number of GBH reports in a year for the last 5 years in Bracknell Forest.
- 28% of occurrences were recorded to have taken place on a Saturday, 37% in the early hours of the morning (midnight-02:59) and 26% between 19:00 and midnight. Most GBH is recorded to have occurred between 19:00 and 01:59 with 58% of reported GBH in Group 1 serious violence.
- 88% of suspects for GBH are recorded as male.
- 29% of recorded suspects for GBH are males aged 18-24.
- 13% of recorded suspects for GB are under 18.
- 18-21 is the peak age band for both male and female suspects and victims of GBH.
- 28% of GBH victims were recorded as female.
- 77% of recorded suspects for GBH offences are reported to be from Bracknell Forest.
- 40% have their offender/victim relationship unknown, 20% are an acquaintance, and 19% strangers.

### Knife Crime Summary:

- 23:00 pm and 16:00 are the most common times of recorded offences with Fridays and Mondays being the most common days of the week.
- 81% of recorded suspects for recorded knife crime are male.
- 22% of recorded suspects for knife crimes are males under the age of 18, with the high point being in the age band 15-17.
- 18–27-year-olds account for 27% of recorded suspects.
- The 18-21 age group is the high point for female suspects.

- Younger suspects (under 18) are more likely to commit ABH and robbery offences whereas suspects aged 18 and over 74% are suspects of ABH occurrences.
- 80% of recorded suspects are reported to be from Bracknell Forest.
- 21% of victims are under 18.
- There are a greater proportion of female victims (30%) than there are female offenders (18%) in knife crime.
- 'Acquaintance' and 'Stranger' are the most common recorded relationship groups.

### **Group 2 Summary:**

- Over the last 5 years, Bracknell has been ranked mid-table for rate of Group 2 serious violence occurrences per 1,000 of population, with a rank of 6th out of the 13 local authority areas for 2022.
- Group 2 occurrences are on an upward trend over the time period.
- Excluding Broadmoor data, multiple hotspots were identified in central Bracknell.
- ABH accounts for 77% with sexual assault 10%, rape 7% and drug supply 6%. ABH and sexual assault have increased whereas rape and drug supply have both decreased.
- Saturday was the most reported day of the week with most reported times being 15:00 and 16:00 and 23:00.
- Most reported age of victim and suspect was 11-17.
- 79% of suspects were male and 58% of victims were female.
- Acquaintance and Stranger are the next most common relationship groups after 'Blank'.

### **Other Data:**

- The rates of hospital admissions for violence in Bracknell Forest are lower than those reported in the South-East and England. There were 100 admissions from 2018/19 to 2020/21.
- Street Safe is a service on the Police.uk website that allows people to report safety concerns in public spaces anonymously. From 8th August 2022 – 9th August 2023, 14 separate reports were made, the highest of which was 'Other Forms of Harassment', 'Signs of Drug and Alcohol Use' and 'Absence of CCTV'. The reports were made by 7 males and 7 females.

# Peoples' Voices

As much as data can provide evidence, and a level of understanding to prevalence of violent behaviour, the voices of those at risk is crucial to a fuller understanding. It is noted that, while feedback from young people has been captured on becoming involved in serious violence and feedback from adults on being victims of serious violence, there is no implication that young people are offenders and that adults are victims.

## Young People

### Violence in the Thames Valley: Young people's perspectives on what causes and prevents it (January 2023)

A qualitative study was conducted on violence in the Thames Valley area<sup>28</sup> which involved 50 young people aged 11-18 years and 25 youth practitioners. There were three key lines of enquiry:

1. What might cause a young person to get involved in violent behaviour?
2. What might prevent a young person getting involved in violent behaviour?
3. What role do places play in keeping young people away from violent behaviour?

A summary of insights is set out below:

#### 1. 'What might cause a young person to get involved in violent behaviour?'

Four main insights were identified:

**A sense of belonging, the need to be understood and to be someone.** The research suggests that if young people feel excluded, unwelcome, misunderstood, and isolated from various environments or contexts such as home, school, public spaces, and have very few constructive activities, there is a risk of getting involved in negative behaviours including searching out criminal groups/gangs where they gain a sense of belonging.

**Fear.** This was observed to be a key factor, especially amongst those who were known to carry knives or act violently. The fear of violence shapes the way young people behave, even when the level of fear felt wasn't always directly proportionate to the level of violence, they had personally experienced.

*"I never feel safe, there's always something. Even when walking the dog, I've always got to look behind me. It's a natural instinct to look behind you 24/7" (Young person - Bracknell)*

**To obtain money.** This was also shown to be a motivating factor to either earn money for them and their families, if they were living in deprivation, or wanting to show status. The attraction to earn large sums of money fast, as opposed to low-paid, low-skilled employment is a key factor, a risk of which, may be involvement in violent behaviour, even when that is not the young person's intention. Some young people in this situation will sometimes show strong yet unharnessed entrepreneurial talents.

*"If your parents can't afford to put food on your table that's a struggle no one wants to feel that. I don't want to see my mum crying cos she can't feed me. So that's going to make me go and do something, it's not cos I'm a bad person. Your intentions are good but bad things come with it. These people are coming from low-income houses, they're trying to make their life a bit easier. Their mentality is to go to the street and make some fast money not knowing the consequences come with violence – knives and all that." (Young person – Milton Keynes)*

**Selling and taking drugs.** From the young people's perspective, selling and taking drugs go hand in hand with violence, quoting it as it is something that 'comes with the territory'.

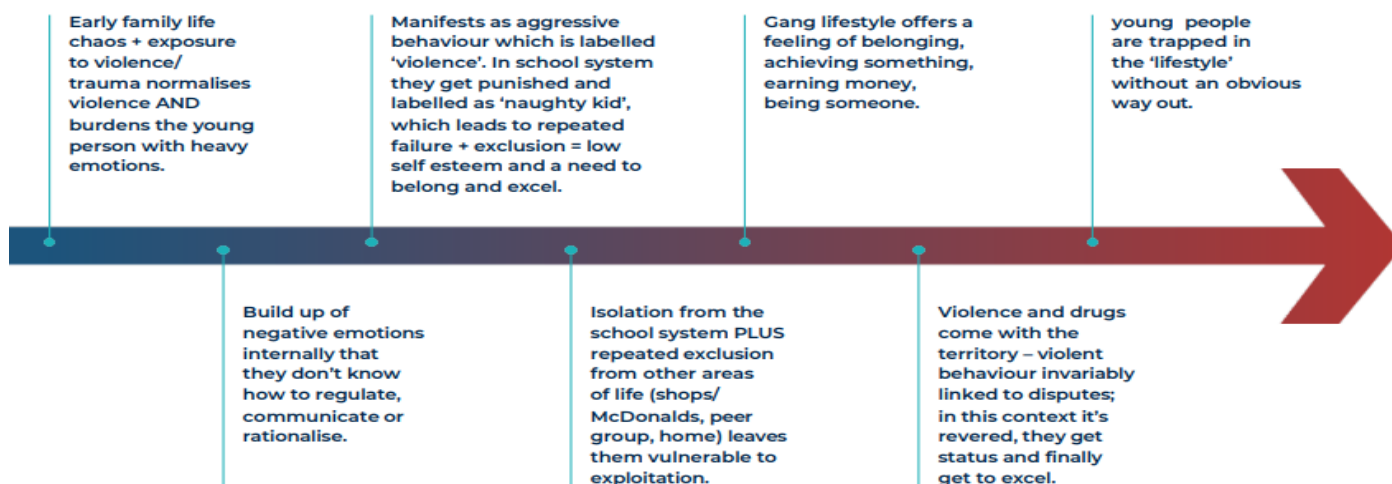
*"Even if were not smoking those drugs they're still brought up by those people, kids get taught to carry knives, drugs, they're brought up like that" (Young Person - Bracknell)*

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<sup>15</sup> [New research with young people on their experiences and perceptions of violence - Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit \(tvvru.co.uk\)](https://www.tvvru.co.uk)

From the practitioner points of view, drugs were not seen as being central to serious violence, rather a consequence of the bigger picture linked to a young person's background, instability, boredom, and the need to earn money.

Overall, young people and practitioners have similar views on the reasoning and causes of violent behaviour with practitioners taking a broader socio-ecological view. There appears to be a sequencing of events that can lead to the potential for violent behaviour as depicted in the diagram below.<sup>29</sup>



## 2. 'What might prevent a young person getting involved in violent behaviour?'

Four main insights were identified:

**A physical space that they feel they belong to.** A common theme is having a space where a young person feels safe and accepted, a place where they can be themselves, a place where they feel they won't come to any harm or be removed from. For many young people who have less stable home lives, the importance of access to a safe space becomes ever more important, as does having someone they trust, who makes them feel heard, understood, supported, and listened to.

**Someone they can trust who understands both them and their circumstances.** This relates to being able to access an understanding adult, who young people can talk safely to about their lifestyle and ask questions of without judgment.

**A chance to learn and achieve something.** Many of the young people expressed desires to have access to opportunities to learn and develop skills in a fun, non-school, non-judgmental environment. They reasoned that they needed an alternative to the allure of the 'easy' money they can earn 'on road'. Many young people who were not excelling at school also stated the need to engage in something that they were good at and which they could channel their energies into. This would boost their sense of self-value and self-esteem.

**Prevention starts with staying calm.** With regards to staying calm, young people showed a level of understanding that violent behaviour was often linked to poor communication skills and limited ability to self-regulate. Young people spoken to appeared to strongly want to find an alternative way of dealing with emotions and a better way of communicating.

*"For someone like me – The times I've been violent have never been to do with beef shit or road shit, it's more that I've had a meltdown or breakdown, something where you're really scrambled, you don't know what's going on or what you're doing" (Young Person - Didcot)*

*"There are other ways of communicating, you might hate that one person but that doesn't mean you have to do something bad to them. It's communication – there are other ways out of an argument." (Young Person - Bracknell)*

<sup>29</sup> [New research with young people on their experiences and perceptions of violence - Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit \(tvvru.co.uk\)](http://tvvru.co.uk)

### 3. 'What role do places play in keeping young people away from violent behaviour?'

Young people responded that they liked a friendly and safe environment, with something to do, a place to go and hang out with friends. A place where they didn't feel judged and have opportunities to learn and try new things. A place where they felt heard and understood.

#### **BFC Youth Review Consultation – July 2023**

Further evidence and views have been collected through a Youth Review Survey which included questions on serious violence.

There were 64 respondents to the survey consisting of 38 young people's practitioners, 10 parent/carers, 9 young people<sup>30</sup>, 5 elected members and 2 members of the public.

A summary of findings is as follows:

#### 1. **Have you been a victim of serious violence as described?**

None declared themselves victims of serious violence.

#### 2. **If so, did you know how to report it?**

Of the 12 responses, 1 knew how to report it.

#### 3. **Who did you report it to?**

Of the 6 responses, 1 reported to police 1 to a teacher, 1 to social care and 3 to 'other'.

#### 4. **Did you know that you can report serious violence without having to give your name or by speaking to anyone?**

Of the 33 that reported, 20 knew that confidential reporting was possible.

#### 5. **Have you seen serious violence as described where you live/go to school/work/in parks?**

Of the 38 responses, 8 said that they had, 27 said no and 3 weren't sure.

#### 6. **Have you heard of places where there is sometimes serious violence where you feel it's risky to go to? If so, can you tell us where?**

18 people responded highlighting mainly parks and underpasses.

(Parks at night/Town Centre/Some parks in the community/Birch Hill and South Hill Park/Underpasses around Bracknell Forest/Underpass down London Road on the way to the College/Lots of underpass issues in Bracknell Forest/Underpasses in Great Hollands/Morgan Rec (Crowthorne)/Great Hollands shops/Harmanswater/Harmanswater and Great Hollands/Subways/Peel Centre in the evening/Inner cities/Underpasses in Bracknell Forest at night/It can happen anywhere/Slough)

#### 7. **Why do people get involved in serious violence?**

28 responses were received. Themes comprised Money, Fear, Parenting, Boredom, Belonging, Mental Health, Neurodiversity.

Actual answers included:

Toxic social media/Lack of positive role-models/Lack of positive parenting with firm and secure boundaries/Lack of access to education/Low self-worth/Financial incentives/Mental health difficulties/Boredom/Gang-related revenge/Drugs and County Lines/Domestic Violence/relationships of control and dominance/Because some people are just terrible/Pent-up frustration at lack of opportunities/Ego/status/Peer approval/Criminal exploitation/Gangs/Fear/Cultural expectation/Own experience of it (repeating behaviour)/Not knowing how to escape it/Music that encourages it/Poverty/Trauma/Breakdown of school place/Lack of trained staff in school to deal with trauma/behaviour/neurodiversity/Feeling of control and power/Sense of belonging/Safer to be part of a gang

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<sup>30</sup> Aged between 12-19 years, 5 of which were 16-19yrs of age.

## 8. What can be done to stop people getting involved in serious violence?

31 responses were received. Themes included: Awareness, Activities, Safe Space, Trusted Adults.

Actual answers included:

Education in schools about serious violence/Opportunities within the community/Engaged parents/Funding for youth work, education and mental health support/Better presence of police/community workers/youth workers in the community/Youth outreach/Early intervention and prevention/Education incorporating practical skills (as opposed to academic)/More trained staff in schools/Building positive relationships/Positive role models/Offering safe places with support 7 days per week/Supported employment)

Considering both surveys, there is a clear correlation and consistency between the results.

## Older People

There is limited evidence of voices from adults on serious violence. As Group 1 includes serious violence with a domestic abuse flag, we have included a link to the victim/survivor voice feedback which was collected in 2021 and which contributed to the Safe Accommodation Strategy.

## What victims want and need

To feel safe and to have fast, effective, action	Victims need the council to find and secure safe accommodation as quickly as possible, usually local and furnished, with help to address an inability to pay a first months' rental or deposit or lack of references, and a dedicated point of contact to support them.
A single point of contact	Victims need to feel that approaching the council is as safe as approaching the police or a refuge, for help and support in finding a safe home and to have a single point of contact who can 'hand-hold' them through the process and signpost appropriately; victims shouldn't have to tell their story again and again
Acknowledgement and building trust	All victims want to feel heard and acknowledged, especially if they do not 'fit' the perceived type, e.g., male victims, LGBT+ victims, elderly victims, those with learning difficulties or physical disabilities or mental health issues.
Front-line staff to be trained in domestic abuse	Victims approaching the council or other organisations would like staff to be aware of and understand all of the different forms of domestic abuse, as well as domestic violence.
Suitable/appropriate accommodation	When considering placing in accommodation, need to consider location, cost of private rent and bills, or cost of refuge, furnishings, safety features and risks of remaining in the home. Victims would like more options to stay locally, including furnished accommodation.
A holistic approach to support	Victims want a 'holistic approach' to support that considers a wide variety of needs, including an early offer of counselling/therapy, specialist support tailored to specific groups, financial help if no furniture, clothes, money, and more access to programmes –

	Choices, BRAVE, DART
Better signposting	Victims want improved online information that covers all cohort types and effective signposting to local VCS organisations, commissioned services and inhouse services.

The above have been built into the Safe Accommodation Strategy priorities which are monitored by the Domestic Abuse Executive of the CSP. To avoid duplication, they are not discussed further in this strategy.

# Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

The Thames Valley VRU was established in 2019, funded by the Home Office to deliver upon the government's Serious Violence Strategy. It is one of 20 VRUs set up across England and Wales whose core function is to provide leadership and strategic co-ordination of the local response to serious violence.

It is a partnership body which brings together representation from policing, local authority community safety, children's services and social care, prisons and probation, education, youth offending and the voluntary and community sector.

The vision of the Thames Valley VRU is to reduce serious violence in our communities, especially where it affects young people in public places.

Together with its partners, the VRU has agreed the following underpinning principles:

- We will embed public health approaches to tackling serious violence and its root causes
- We will be data-led and use evidence-based practices and interventions, with a commitment to sharing our learning
- We will embed trauma-informed practices and approaches

A summary of key projects which are available to Bracknell Forest are as follows:

## Thames Valley Together (TVT)

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is currently developing TVT which is a cloud-based environment where specified authorities in the Thames Valley region can share relevant information to facilitate a public health approach. This approach identifies the causes of serious violence and develops targeted products designed to tackle them. A key characteristic of a public health approach is its population-level coverage. This means that a project or intervention aims to encompass and address the entire population, rather than targeting only specific groups. In the TVT context, population-level coverage is defined as including everyone who comes to the attention of a TVT partner e.g., police, local authority, health service, fire service, due to the indication of a serious violence risk factor(s). This approach recognises that focusing solely on people already associated with serious violence would be insufficient for effective intervention and prevention. By adopting a population-level strategy, the goal is to increase the chances of early identification and support, acknowledging that addressing underlying risk factors before people become victims or offenders is crucial in reducing serious violence.

TVT is also seen as the means by which partnerships can meet their obligations for whole-system data sharing approaches which identify and address the risk and protective factors which drive violence, as required by the Serious Violence Duty.

It is noted that Bracknell Forest Council's participation in TVT is in development.

## Operation Paramount<sup>31</sup>

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and Thames Valley Police have begun a new process to identify children of a parent who is sent to prison, allowing a prompt offer of support for the whole family by the charity [Children Heard and Seen](#).

By analysing data from the prison service, Operation Paramount has created a new means of recognising those families who may need additional support, helping to tackle risk factors of young people being drawn into future crime or experiencing other problems.

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<sup>31</sup> [Operation Paramount: Innovative scheme offers rapid support for children with a parent in prison - Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit \(tvvrु.co.uk\)](#)



First piloted in October 2021, Operation Paramount is live in Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and West Berkshire and the VRU are exploring roll out across the whole Thames Valley region by the end of 2023/24.

## **Hospital Navigator Scheme<sup>32</sup>**

The Thames Valley are seeing a trend with an increase of patients presenting at Emergency Departments (ED) or walk-in centres due to incidents of serious violence. The main factors for this are violence within the under 25's demographic or domestic abuse-related violence.

When in hospital, there is a reachable moment when the patient can be reflective and open to intervention. A volunteer in a dedicated Navigator role would ask for consent to refer the patient onto a third sector organisation who can provide the specialist support. This moment could help divert the patient back out into the community on a different pathway.

Hospital Navigators are available to victims of serious violence who present at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading and Wexham Park Hospital in Slough.

## **Custody Coaches**

This intervention comprises mentoring of 18–24-year-olds in custody for non-domestic violence offences with the possibility to expand to 25+ years old in the future. This programme would be available across the Thames Valley if the trial is successful.

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<sup>32</sup> [Hospital Navigators Scheme - Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit \(tvvru.co.uk\)](https://www.tvvru.co.uk)

## Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions have been drawn from the above chapters and set out below together with next steps. As tackling serious violence involves 2 themes of responding to current serious violence and as well as preventing serious violence in the future, conclusions and recommendations are separated below:

<b>Theme 1: Response</b>		
<b>Conclusion 1</b>	<p><b>Group 1 (Homicide, GBH and Knife Crime)</b></p> <p>There is a downward trend over the 5 years in Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest was 7th highest out of the 13 local authorities in the Thames Valley in 2022. This was 2 places higher than 2021 and 1 place higher than 2020. This was based on occurrences per 1,000 population.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest has the lowest count when compared with its near neighbours in the Thames Valley in 2022 but is ranked 4th highest out of 7 per 1,000 population (West Berkshire/Windsor &amp; Maidenhead/Milton Keynes/Wokingham/Reading/Buckinghamshire).</p> <p>57% were knife crime.</p> <p>24% had a domestic abuse flag and were all knife crime or GBH.</p> <p>The most frequent location is Broadmoor Hospital and then Central Bracknell in the vicinity of the train station, bus station and the Market Inn.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Please refer to GBH and knife crime next steps below.</p>
<b>Conclusion 2</b>	<p><b>GBH</b></p> <p>2022 had the lowest total number of GBH reports for the last 5 years.</p> <p>28% were on a Saturday.</p> <p>58% occurred between 19:00 and 01:59.</p> <p>88% of suspects were male.</p> <p>28% of victims were female.</p> <p>29% of recorded suspects were males aged 18-24.</p> <p>13% of recorded suspects for GBH are under 18.</p> <p>18-21 is the peak age band for both male and female suspects and victims.</p> <p>77% of suspects were from Bracknell Forest.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>With specific reference to occurrences on Saturday nights between 19:00 and 02:00 with male suspects who are under 18 and aged 18-21 who are Unknown:</p> <p>Undertake further analysis to better understand these offences so that appropriate interventions can be identified</p> <p>Understand repeat locations more fully and respond accordingly</p> <p>Identify repeat perpetrators and repeat victims and ensure that they are referred into the appropriate operational groups</p>

	40% of suspects were unknown, 20% were an acquaintance, and 19% strangers.	
<b>Conclusion 3</b>	<p><b>Knife Crime</b></p> <p>This is on a downward trend over the 5 years.</p> <p>When looking at the last 2 complete calendar years (2021 and 2022), there is an upward trend</p> <p>23:00 and 16:00 are the most common times.</p> <p>Fridays and Mondays are the most common days.</p> <p>81% of suspects were male.</p> <p>22% of suspects were males under the age of 18, with the high point being in the age band 15-17 (23 suspects)</p> <p>18–27-year-olds accounted for 27% of suspects.</p> <p>The 18-21 age group in female suspects reports highest.</p> <p>Younger suspects (under 18) are more likely to commit ABH and robbery offences whereas suspects aged 18 and over, 74% are suspects of ABH occurrences.</p> <p>80% of suspects were from Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>Victims are under 18, 21% of the time.</p> <p>There are a greater proportion of female victims (30%) than there are female offenders (18%).</p> <p>‘Acquaintance’ and ‘Stranger’ were the most common relationship groups (after ‘blank’)</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>With specific reference to occurrences on Mondays and Fridays at 16:00 and 23:00 with male suspects who are under 18 and aged 18-27 who are Acquaintances or Strangers:</p> <p>Undertake further analysis to better understand these offences so that appropriate interventions can be identified</p> <p>Understand repeat locations more fully and respond accordingly</p> <p>Identify repeat perpetrators and repeat victims and ensure that they are referred into the appropriate operational groups as appropriate</p>
<b>Conclusion 4</b>	<p><b>Group 2 (ABH, Drug Supply and Trafficking, Sexual Assault and Rape)</b></p> <p>There is an upward trend over the 5 years in Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest is ranked at 6<sup>th</sup> highest out of 13 local authority areas for 2022. This was 2 places higher than 2021 and the same for 2020. This was based on occurrences per 1,000 population.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest has the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest count when compared with its near neighbours in the Thames Valley in 2022 but is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> highest out of 7 per 1,000 population (West Berkshire/Windsor &amp; Maidenhead/Milton Keynes/Wokingham/Reading/Buckinghamshire).</p> <p>77% were ABH.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>With specific reference to ABH occurrences on Saturdays at 15:00-16:00 and 23:00 with male suspects who are under 18 who are Acquaintances or Strangers:</p> <p>Undertake further analysis to better understand these offences so that appropriate interventions can be identified</p> <p>Understand repeat locations more fully and respond accordingly</p> <p>Identify repeat perpetrators and repeat victims and ensure that they are referred into the</p>

	<p>ABH and sexual assault have increased whereas rape and drug supply have both decreased.</p> <p>The most frequent location is Broadmoor Hospital and then Central Bracknell, Old Bracknell Ward, and Great Hollands.</p> <p>Saturday was the most reported day of the week with most reported times being 15:00 – 16:00 and 23:00.</p> <p>Most reported age of victim and suspect was 11-17.</p> <p>79% of suspects were male and 58% of victims were female.</p> <p>Acquaintance and Stranger are the next most common relationship groups after 'Blank'.</p>	appropriate operational groups as appropriate
<b>Conclusion 5</b>	<p><b>Hospital Admissions</b></p> <p>The Thames Valley is seeing a trend with an increase of patients presenting at Emergency Departments (ED) or walk-in centres due to incidents of serious violence. This is mainly due to violence within the under 25's demographic or domestic abuse related violence.</p> <p>The rates of hospital admissions for violence in Bracknell were lower than those reported in the South-East and England. There were 100 admissions from 2018/19 to 2020/21.</p> <p>A Hospital Navigator Scheme is in place at Royal Berkshire Hospital and Wexham Park Hospital where some victims of Bracknell Forest may present.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Work with the OPCC to obtain hospital serious violence data for Bracknell Forest to better understand who is presenting as well as the context so that a response is evidence-based.</p> <p>Link in with the hospital navigator scheme at Royal Berkshire Hospital to understand who is presenting as well as the context so that a response is evidence-based.</p>
<b>Conclusion 6</b>	<p><b>Street Safety<sup>33</sup></b></p> <p>There were 14 reports to police.uk in the year from 8 August 2022 to 9 August 2023 by an equal number of males and females (7 each). The main reason was 'Other Forms of Harassment', 'Signs of Drug and Alcohol Use' and 'Absence of CCTV'.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Raise awareness of this pathway to reporting with residents.</p> <p>Obtain this data routinely.</p> <p>Identify locations.</p> <p>Conduct visual audits of repeat locations and identify remedies.</p> <p>Share public awareness on how to stay safe in a public place.</p> <p>Refer complaints of drug/alcohol littering to BFC.</p>

<sup>33</sup> Street Safe is a service on the Police.uk website that allows people to report safety concerns in public spaces anonymously.

Theme 2: Prevention		
<b>Conclusion 1</b>	<p><b>ACE Research</b></p> <p>Trauma-informed practice training delivered by qualified professionals to agencies beyond youth justice</p> <p>Child support should be provided at the point of trauma. (This needs to be considered alongside the results of the SNA which showed that 24% of Group 1 serious violence had a domestic abuse flag).</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Investigate funding options.</p> <p>Undertake a scoping exercise of professionals to receive potential training.</p> <p>Research an appropriate provider.</p> <p>Undertake an exercise to explore provision of support to children who witness domestic abuse.</p>
<b>Conclusion 2</b>	<p><b>Mental Health</b></p> <p>13% of Bracknell Forest's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder, compared to national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Ensure that Domestic Suicide Reviews (DSRs) are routinely identified and considered where there is a suspected or known link to serious violence which is domestic-related. This work will be led by the Domestic Abuse Executive sub-group of the CSP.</p>
<b>Conclusion 3</b>	<p><b>Disabilities</b></p> <p>The percentage of the population with a long-term health condition or disability in 2021 was 16,703 which was lower than the South-East and England. 0.3% of Bracknell Forest's population in 2019/20 had a learning disability. This equates to approximately 374 people across all ages.<sup>34</sup></p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Raise awareness of reporting routes and support available for people with long-term health issues and disabilities as well as their support networks.</p>
<b>Conclusion 4</b>	<p><b>Deprivation</b></p> <p>Bracknell Forest is in the least deprived 10% of local authorities in England and more than a third of the neighbourhoods are also in the 10% least deprived nationally. Although none of the neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived areas in England, there are areas of higher deprivation within Wildridings and Central, Crowthorne and Great Hollands North.</p> <p>10.7% (2,700) of Bracknell Forest's children aged under 16 lived in relative low-income families in 2020/21. This is lower than the South-East and England.<sup>35</sup></p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Develop a counter-narrative for young people so that they are less likely to turn to dangerous and harmful behaviours to earn money. Community and school support, particularly in the locations identified, as well as activities and opportunities should be explored as part of this.</p>

<sup>34</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Bracknell-Forest-People-and-Place-Summary-February-2023 \(3\).pdf](#)

Conclusion 5	Peoples' Voices	Next Steps
	<p>Younger people commit serious violence because of money, belonging, fear, parenting, mental health and neurodiversity.</p> <p>Having a safe physical space, having trusted people to talk to, developing their communication skills to resolve conflict, awareness of serious violence and having opportunities to learn and achieve were the main ways to prevent them committing serious violence.</p> <p>The above feedback ties in with known Risk and Protective Factors.</p> <p>Locations that were of concern were parks and underpasses.</p>	<p>Recognise and identify risk and protective factors in young people and promote preventative approaches that mitigate against violence.</p> <p>Work with the community to identify alternative pathways to employment, including training and apprenticeships.</p> <p>Ensure that all agencies working with children and young people are aware of all available opportunities by creating an online resource of community assets that can be shared.</p> <p>Continue the multi-agency operational group which specifically addresses ASB in Parks and Open Spaces due to ASB being a risk factor to serious violence offending.</p> <p>Use the findings of the evaluation of the Safer Street project that ran in Bracknell Forest which comprised youth outreach, diversionary activities and creation of safe spaces for young people to gather safely to explore what young people are saying they would find most useful and enjoyable.</p>

## Recommendations

The conclusions and next steps above demonstrate that there are clear areas which need focus and development. These have been separated into 2 distinct themes: 'Response' and 'Prevention'. While both themes are linked, the Response theme focuses on current serious violence whereas the Prevention theme considers what we can put in place now to prevent future serious violence. The recommendations depicted below also fit with the WHO 4 step public health approach to reducing violence, referred to under Context.

### Theme 1: Response

	Category	Action	Lead/Group
1.1	Locations	Identify and problem-solve repeat locations of serious violence from Police data as well as the Streetsafe Reporting Tool	Partnership Problem-Solving Groups  Anti-Social Behaviour in Parks and Open Spaces Group
1.2	People	Support and manage people who are identified as being most at risk of being victims or perpetrators of serious violence	Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) Group  Serious Adult Violence and Exploitation Group

### Theme 2: Prevention

	Category	Action	Lead/Group
2.1	Information and Intelligence	Undertake additional analysis to better understand the offences that occurred on most common days, at most common times with most prevalent age groups and genders as highlighted under Conclusions 2, 3 and 4.	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (TV OPCC) Analyst
		Improve data collection in police-reported Bracknell Forest offences so that there are fewer blank fields, and that victims and suspects are better understood.	Thames Valley Police
		Obtain hospital serious violence data for Bracknell Forest residents who present with injuries	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
		Obtain hospital serious violence data for Bracknell Forest residents who are supported by hospital navigators at Royal Berkshire Hospital	Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System (ICS).
		Explore participation in the Thames Valley VRU's Thames Valley Together programme	Bracknell Forest Council

2.2	<b>Awareness, Learning and Support</b>	<p><b><u>Professionals</u></b></p> <p>Explore trauma-informed practice training for professionals.</p> <p>Develop an online resource of community and organisational support that is available to victims and perpetrators of serious violence as well as professionals.</p> <p><b><u>Victims and Perpetrators</u></b></p> <p>Undertake an exercise to explore provision of support to children as victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Use the findings of the Safer Streets 4 evaluation to understand feedback from young people on youth support, facilities and activities that they would find most useful and enjoyable.</p> <p>Conduct regular publicity campaigns that are accessible to all residents to share support, reporting pathways, how to report unsafe locations through the Streetsafe Reporting Tool and where to get additional help.</p> <p>Explore interventions in schools, particularly those with pupils who live in highest areas of deprivation to support them to choose alternative pathways to employment, including training and apprenticeships as well as other routes that are not likely to cause them to turn to dangerous and harmful behaviours to earn money.</p> <p>Explore and share interventions and support with young people that address the reasons that were provided in the consultation on why people commit serious violence (money, fear, parenting, mental health, neurodiversity)</p> <p>Explore provision of safe spaces where young people can meet where there are trusted adults and where they can take part in activities that help with self-esteem and skill development.</p> <p>Explore community-level factors such as social networks, social capital and empowerment that can offer a protective alternative to serious violence and provide a sense of belonging.</p>	<p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Executive Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p> <p>Serious Violence and Exploitation Group</p>
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**Note: The above recommendations are underpinned by the below:**

- 1      Serious Violence perpetration, victimisation and support links in with a number of related programmes of work in Bracknell Forest which will to complement each other. These are:  
  
        Bracknell Forest Youth Justice  
        Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse  
        East Berkshire Combatting Drugs Board  
        East Berkshire Suicide Prevention
- 2      The voices of residents, particularly those with lived experience, will continue to be involved in steering the work of this Strategy.
- 3      Bracknell Forest should consider adopting and embedding positively evaluated programmes and interventions developed by the TV VRU where possible.

# Action Plan

## Theme 1: Response

	Category	Action	Progress Indicator	Lead	Deadline
1.1	Locations	Identify and problem-solve repeat locations of serious violence from Police data as well as the Streetsafe Reporting Tool by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Undertaking additional analysis to identify serious violence hotspots</li><li>- Refer into the Partnership Problem-Solving Group or Anti-Social Behaviour in Parks and Open Spaces Group</li></ul>	Completed analysis showing hotspot detail  Number of locations referred into the problem-solving groups and resolved	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Analyst  Partnership Problem-Solving Groups  Anti-Social Behaviour in Parks and Open Spaces Group	31 July 2024
1.2	People	Support and manage people who are identified as repeat offenders and/or victims of serious violence by: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Undertaking additional analysis to identify repeat victims and repeat perpetrators at risk of serious violence</li><li>- Refer into the MACE Group if under 18 and SAVE Group if over 18</li></ul>	Completed analysis showing repeats offenders and/or victim detail  Number of people referred into the multi-agency safeguarding/management groups	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Analyst  Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) Group  Serious Adult Violence and Exploitation (SAVE) Group	31 July 2024

## Theme 2: Prevention

	Category	Action	Progress Indicator	Lead	Deadline
2.1	Information and Intelligence	Undertake additional analysis to better understand the offences that occurred on most common days, at most common times with most prevalent age groups and genders as highlighted under Conclusions 2, 3 and 4.	A clear summary of the data that indicates who, where and when most of the serious violence incidents occurred over the data period.  This data would then, where appropriate, feed into	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) Analyst	1 July 2024
		Improve data collection in police-reported Bracknell Forest offences so that there are fewer blank fields, and that victims and suspects are better understood.	A reduction in blank fields recorded in police data, especially in the 'ethnicity' and 'relationship' fields.	Thames Valley Police	1 April 2024
		Obtain hospital serious violence data for Bracknell Forest residents who present with injuries	Comprehensive detailed data of hospital admissions of Bracknell Forest residents for	Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)	1 July 2024

			serious violence to enable trends to be identified and responses designed.		
		Obtain hospital serious violence data for Bracknell Forest residents who are supported by hospital navigators at Royal Berkshire Hospital	Comprehensive detailed data of hospital admissions of Bracknell Forest residents for serious violence to enable trends to be identified and responses designed.	Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System (ICS)	1 March 2024
		Explore participation in the Thames Valley VRU's Thames Valley Together programme by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring that the information sharing is compliant with data sharing legislation</li> <li>- Agreeing to the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)'s Information-Sharing Agreement</li> </ul>	Bracknell Forest is a participating organisation in Thames Valley Together.	Bracknell Forest Council	1 April 2024
2.2	Awareness, Learning and Support	<b><u>Professionals</u></b>  Explore trauma-informed practice training for professionals so that trauma symptoms and behavioural problems among trauma survivors are decreased, and empathy and a sense of safety is increased.	Number of professionals trained in trauma-informed practice.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group  Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)	1 April 2024
		Develop an online resource of community and organisational support that is available to victims and perpetrators of serious violence as well as professionals.	A comprehensive directory of support and interventions available for victims, perpetrators and professionals that can be shared for self or agency referral.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	1 June 2024
		<b><u>Victims and Perpetrators</u></b>  Undertake an exercise to explore provision of support to children as victims of domestic abuse. This needs to consider all-age appropriate support which considers children with protected characteristics.	An accessible pathway for therapeutic support is available for all children who witness domestic abuse including those who have a protected characteristic.	Domestic Abuse Executive Group	1 April 2024
		Use the findings of the Safer Streets 4 evaluation to understand feedback from young people on youth support, facilities and activities that they would find most useful and enjoyable.	Regular feedback and views from young people in our community to help steer our approach to serious violence prevention and response.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	Ongoing

		Conduct regular publicity campaigns that are accessible to all residents to share support, reporting pathways, how to report unsafe locations through the Streetsafe Reporting Tool and where to get additional help.	Increased public awareness on how the community can contribute to safeguarding those who are vulnerable to serious violence victimisation and exploitation and report any concerns that they become aware of.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group DA Executive Group	Ongoing
		Explore interventions in schools, particularly those with pupils who live in highest areas of deprivation to support them to choose alternative pathways to employment, including training and apprenticeships as well as other routes that are not likely to cause them to turn to dangerous and harmful behaviours to earn money.	Identified interventions and schools to receive an appropriate intervention.  A delivered program with positive evaluations.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	1 October 2024
		Explore and share interventions and support with young people that address the reasons that were provided in the consultation on why people commit serious violence (money, fear, parenting, mental health, neurodiversity)	A collection of opportunities that young people can access which support them to explore alternative pathways away from serious violence.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	1 October 2024
		Explore provision of safe spaces where young people can meet where there are trusted adults and where they can take part in activities that help with self-esteem and skill development.	A collection of safe spaces that are available for young people to access with supportive adults and where positive activities are on offer.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	1 October 2024
		Explore community-level factors such as social networks, social capital and empowerment that can offer a protective alternative to serious violence and provide a sense of belonging.	A collection of networks, community guardianship and peer support that is available for young people who may be at risk of becoming involved in serious violence.	Serious Violence and Exploitation Group	1 October 2024

## Definitions and Glossary

**Actual Bodily Harm (ABH):** Bodily harm has its ordinary meaning and includes any hurt calculated to interfere with the health or comfort of the victim: such hurt need not be permanent but must be more than transient and trifling.

**Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH):** The words "grievous bodily harm" bear their ordinary meaning of "really serious" harm.<sup>36</sup>

**Knife Crime:** Knife crime data includes occurrences where a knife was used or there was a knife present and it was being threatened to be used for example (Thames Valley OPCC).

ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences

BFC – Bracknell Forest Council

CDL – County Drug Line

CREST – Children at Risk of Exploitation Safeguarding Task Group

CSP – Community Safety Partnership

DA – Domestic Abuse

ICB - Integrated Care Board

ICS – Integrated Care System

JSNA – Joint Strategic Assessment

MACE – Missing and Child Exploitation

OPCC – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

SMART - Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely

TV – Thames Valley

TVP – Thames Valley Police

TV OPCC – Thames Valley Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner

SVE – Serious Violence and Exploitation

VRU – Violence Reduction Unit

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<sup>36</sup> [Offences against the Person, incorporating the Charging Standard | The Crown Prosecution Service \(cps.gov.uk\)](#)