

Serious Violence Strategy

2022 - 2025



Together

• Safer MK
• Community Safety Partnership

Introduction

The new Serious Violence Duty requires all community safety partnerships to agree a strategy to reduce serious violence. The definition of serious violence set out by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit is:

“Serious Violence against the person including murder, manslaughter, and assault with intent to cause serious harm. Crimes that meet the knife crime threshold include anywhere a knife is used or threatened to be used but does not include possession of a bladed article”.

The Serious Violence Duty places obligations on community safety partnerships to work together to prevent serious violence by or against people under the age of 25.

To prepare for the Serious Violence Duty, the MK Together Tasking Board has been implementing a serious violence action plan via a task and finish group. The members of the group included statutory partners (local authority, local policing area, Integrated Care Board) and representatives

from the education and voluntary and community sectors. The group oversaw the implementation of projects funded by the partnership, carried out scoping of need within Milton Keynes, conducted a community survey and produced a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). Information gathered from these activities has been used to produce this strategy.

The community safety partnership in Milton Keynes, known as SaferMK, is committed to tackling the root causes of serious violence and creating a safe environment for children to grow and thrive.

We know that serious violence is not just a policing issue and therefore for the purpose of this strategy, our aims and objectives have been split into four areas:

- 1.** Governance
- 2.** Early Identification and intervention
- 3.** Prevention and diversion
- 4.** Enforcement

What the public survey told us



The survey was carried out online and with focus groups between January and March 2022. In total 1427 people responded to let us know their views on serious violence. Most respondents (68%) felt that serious violence had increased in the last year and felt that knife crime and gangs were issues that affected their community. Drugs, gangs, and lack of punishment/enforcement were given as the most likely causes of violent crime.

6.3% of respondents told us that they had either carried or would consider carrying a knife, the reason given was for safety. Males were more likely to carry a knife than females. 66% females and 44% males told us there are areas of Milton

Keynes that do not feel safe to go due to fear of violence. The main reasons given were physical environment, crime rate in the area, or concern about the people who live or frequent the area.

The solutions that the public would like to see put in place are:

- More visible policing and enforcement for crime and drugs
- Improved physical environments to deter criminals
- Education and support
- Activities to improve community cohesion

What the SNA told us

The SNA viewed data from across the partnership and the VRU Thames Valley needs assessment. As well as reviewing crime data, we looked at other indices of vulnerability including deprivation, families receiving early or statutory intervention from children's services, and school exclusion data. We know that Adverse Childhood Experiences increase a child's likelihood of being criminally exploited and therefore understanding need at a young age and being able to identify those children at an earlier stage is a key part of our strategy.

Offences

Serious violence has fallen over the last two years having peaked in 2019, however the figure is trending upwards and remains significantly higher than in 2016.

The growth in serious violence offences by under 18s is disproportionate compared to the age of

the population within Milton Keynes. This has increased from 1.11% offences committed by a child in 2016 to 19.37% in 2021. Young males, in particular those from with Black African heritage, are disproportionately affected by knife crime as both victims and perpetrators.

Black males accounted for 14.8% of arrests for serious violence in 2021 yet make up only 7.9% of the population (2011 Census).

Only 17% of offenders resided outside of Milton Keynes.

Recorded missing episodes in under 18s has also increased since 2018, with 57% of the children arrested for a violent offence having previously had at least one missing episode.

In 2021, 24% of serious violence offences had drug markers attached to them.

Vulnerabilities

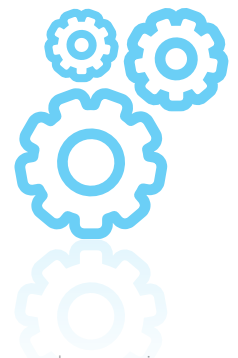
The number of children on child protection plans per 10,000 of the child population has increased from 13.4 to 26.4 from 2017 to 2021. This is significantly lower than the rate for England of 41.4, which in contrast has remained stable since 2017, but approximately three quarters of Child Protection registrations were linked to the matter of neglect.

Between the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 MKCC (Milton Keynes City Council) Children's Social Care saw safeguarding referrals increase by

14.9% from 2799 to 3217. Neglect remains the main reason children are referred to children's services. The full impact of the pandemic is, however, to be fully understood in this increase in demand.

Data collected by our Youth Offending Service demonstrates that 65% of all first-time entrants to the criminal justice system have required support with speech and language. Nationally it is thought that 10% of children have speech and language difficulties and therefore these children are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Strategic Commitments



Governance

This strategy will be owned by the Milton Keynes Community Safety Partnership known as SaferMK. The SaferMK partnership includes representation from the Local Policing Area (LPA), Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), National Probation Service (NPS), Youth Offending Service (YOS), Public Health, Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Bucks Fire and Rescue. The Community Safety Team will report annually to SaferMK on progress and outcomes of the Strategy. All work driven by the Strategy will be delivered via the MK Together Tasking Board through Task and Finish Groups led by our Violence Reduction Co-ordinator. As well as Partners represented at SaferMK, the Tasking Board also includes representation from primary and secondary education. This ensures a multi-agency partnership approach to tackling serious violence, providing opportunities for professional challenge and problem solving.

Any emerging risk and vulnerabilities related to serious violence identified through work driven by this strategy will be escalated to the MK Together Risk Board for multi-agency mitigation. Through the implementation of this strategy, we will continue to monitor our governance arrangements on an annual basis to ensure they continue to meet our local needs.

Information Sharing

Good information sharing both at strategic and operational levels is key to enabling effective

partnership working to tackle issues such as serious violence. Our MK Together Partnership structure, which includes community safety and safeguarding partnerships, enables us to effectively streamline our activities, target resources and avoid duplication.

What we have done

- We have agreed the strategic information sharing governance via SaferMK and the MK Together Tasking Board. Both have senior level multi-agency membership including local authority, police, health, probation and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). All members are signed up to an information sharing agreement to allow for open and transparent communication.
- We have introduced a robust partnership approach to working with children and young people at risk of violence overseen by our Strategic Exploitation Panel (SEP). A pathway for children at risk of exploitation and serious violence is in place and co-managed between Milton Keynes City Council and Thames Valley Police. This pathway ensures relevant and proportionate information is shared across agencies to appropriately assess and manage risk of individual children and groups of concern.
- A Problem-Solving Analyst in post at MKTVP continues to share information with partners on children and areas of concern using the serious violence dashboard.

What we will do

- Once live we will be able to use the Thames Valley Together data platform to produce up to date hotspot maps showing us our “hot people and hot places”. This will allow us to target resources and interventions to the areas of most need including “place-based policing” and preventative education in the areas of most need.
- We will improve our co-ordination of multi-agency activity and information sharing via our Focussed Deterrent (FD) Programme. Three posts will be added to our contextual safeguarding approach to co-ordinate the FD care plans of 40 of our most vulnerable young people.

Early Identification and Intervention

Evidence from local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) tells us that early indicators of risk are linked to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) including, but not limited to, witnessing domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, or through a parent in custody and poverty.

Evidence also tells us that the earlier you intervene the more positive the outcome for the child and family. Rather than wait until children start demonstrating risky behaviour, we plan to identify them at an early age and target resources at the areas we know children are most likely to experience adversity or trauma.

Trust in the police and children’s services is vital in empowering communities to report concerns at the earliest stage, especially in communities that have reason to fear statutory services due to previous experiences. Discussions at our Independent Advisory Group (IAG) have provided valuable insight into how some communities have experienced police brutality before arriving in the UK and still have that fear associated with police. In order to support people to reach out for help we need to break down those barriers.

What we have done

- Our Children and Family Practices (CFPs) work with families in need that do not meet the statutory threshold, to help build resilience within the family.
- Our Strengthening Families service works with families who are suffering hardship, to support parents to access employment and benefits and provide structure in their children’s lives.
- Information sharing is supported by the co-location of health services and police in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), to ensure good communication to inform intervention or response.
- Operation Encompass enables police to inform schools when a student has witnessed an incident of domestic abuse to ensure appropriate support is put in place.

- Funded education programmes in school and at Hazard Alley provide age-appropriate preventative education to children and provide an opportunity to talk about any concerns they have in relation to violence.

What we will do

- We will promote multi-agency trauma informed care in all agencies that work with children and families in Milton Keynes.
- We will continue to work with Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit in the roll out of a new shared data system Thames Valley Together, that will enable us to map live hotspots for crime as well as vulnerable families to inform professionals working in those areas and more effectively respond to risk of harm for children and young people.
- We will work with our Strengthening Families Service to target areas where families are most likely to experience trauma or harm.
- We will deliver a counter narrative campaign to change the perception that carrying a weapon makes you safer.
- We will ensure the legacy of the Monument Against Violence and Aggression, visiting MK in December 2022, will be one of hope and aspiration.

Prevention and Diversion

Milton Keynes has a rich variety of activities available to children ranging from youth clubs to sporting activities and restorative justice interventions.

However, our mapping of these activities told us that some are cost prohibitive to families who are struggling financially and there is a gap in provision for girls.

Evidence suggests that children who participate in age-appropriate activities are less likely to be vulnerable to exploitation and where children at risk can be diverted via enrichment interventions this is likely to improve their outcomes.

We also know that intense targeted support for children who are at risk of being victims and/or perpetrators of serious violence works best to divert them away from crime.

What we have done

- We have funded several prevention and diversionary activities including education for Years 6 and 7 students and activities for children identified as at risk of criminal exploitation, ranging from sport to music and art.
- We have started to review our missing data to identify links between children who go missing and may be at risk of serious violence.
- We have invested in specific roles including mental health provision in our exploitation hub and supporting children transitioning into adulthood.

- We have embedded strategic oversight of our operational multi-agency case management of children who go missing or are exploited, with the introduction of the Strategic Exploitation Panel that reports to the MK Together Risk Board.
- Our Early Support Project (ESP) and Youth Deterrent programmes managed by the Youth Offending Team offers children and young people at risk, or involved in offending, an offer of early support to tackle challenges, needs and risks at the earliest opportunity.
- We are working with local education providers and schools, and are offering timely Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessments to primary and secondary school children who are at the greatest risk of school exclusions, so that needs can be identified at the earliest possible opportunity.
- We have increased our Speech and Language Therapy support so that we are able to reach more children and young people to prevent them coming into contact with the formal Youth Justice System.
- The Hospital Navigator scheme is funded by the VRU and delivered by the YMCA. It supports young people aged 11 to 35 who attend Milton Keynes Hospital due to violence or are assessed as being at risk of violence.
- The problem solving team at TVP work with partner agencies in relation to managing cohorts of habitual knife carriers, or those who go missing or are involved in serious violence to prevent and divert away from Criminal Justice System.

What we will do

- We will implement a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary Contextual Safeguarding Service within children's services to work with children with extra-familial harm.
- We will collate and analyse outcomes data from the funded projects to gather evidence of success.
- We will recruit to a specialist post to work with young women and girls at risk of gang exploitation.
- We will explore the introduction of school navigators to signpost children at risk to the most appropriate activities and agencies.
- We will embed the updated Child Death Pathway to ensure that when a child is murdered in a weapon enabled crime other children at potential risk are identified and supported.
- We will improve the prevention and diversionary activities for all children to ensure we provide inclusive diversionary support to all children and young people at risk of harm in MK.
- We will explore further enrichment activities that can be offered to children on part-time school timetables to reduce the risk of extra-familial harm when they are not in education.

- We will further explore any trends for our children who go missing, working with local authorities who place looked after children in Milton Keynes to provide improved safeguarding support and prevent further episodes.

Community support

Communities are at the heart of this strategy, and we know that in order to create safer spaces for residents and families to live and enjoy we need to empower resilient communities. Trust in local services such as the police is key to building resilience as is working with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to support engagement, provide activities and support families who are struggling to access available support.

What we have done

- We have supported a detached youthwork project delivered by volunteers to engage children who may be on the edge of risky behaviour.
- Introduced a community peer mentoring scheme to empower communities to build resilience.
- Embedded robust links to diverse communities via the Independent Advisory Group to support engagement with families from Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic communities who have lost loved ones through serious violence.
- We have mapped all universal and targeted VCS provision within Milton Keynes to support professionals to signpost children to age-appropriate diversionary activities.

What we will do:

- Carry out further work with communities, especially those who are disproportionately impacted by serious violence, to gain better insight into their needs and the workable solutions.
- Strengthen community engagement to build trust in the police and local services so families and friends can reach out when they are concerned about a child.
- Introduce a schedule of Environmental Vulnerability Audits (EVAs) in areas that have a high rate of anti-social behaviour to reduce the opportunities for perpetrators of serious violence.

Enforcement and County Drug Lines

Thames Valley Police has a clear focus on its response to serious violence. Whilst early intervention and diversion is a vital part of our work to reduce serious violence, enforcement must be used when people are actively seeking to harm others.

TVP utilise intelligence led policing to target the highest risk individuals and maximise the range of tactical options to remove the threat from our communities.

What we have done

- Increased analytical capacity within the problem-solving team to provide a targeted operational response to serious violence and knife crime.
- Maximised a wide range of powers from Section 60 and Civil orders/injunctions to ensure offenders are identified and managed.
- Introduced Operation Deter to deliver robust combination of prosecution, intervention, and prevention to tackle knife crime.
- Participated in national or force wide intensification weeks including Operation Sceptre.

What we will do

- Support the implementation of Custody Navigators to capitalise on the teachable moment and reduce reoffending.
- Support our staff and our partners to utilise a trauma informed approach to dealing with violent offenders in recognition that they are likely to have been or also be a victim.
- Provide police staff to co-locate with the Contextual Safeguarding Service.

Conclusion

We recognise that serious violence has far reaching consequences across communities, and it cannot be tackled by one single organisation. Our aim through this strategy is to empower both the community and partners to tackle serious violence at its root cause so that no family suffers the loss of a child through serious violence in Milton Keynes. Whilst the focus of this strategy is on Serious Violence, SaferMK continues to tackle other types of crime and disorder that affect our community such as drug use, domestic abuse, and anti-social behaviour through our Community Safety Strategy.