



Annual Report 2023-24

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PRIORITY 1

Investment in community-based and community-led policing for urban and rural areas.

Key activities and achievements:



This is my third budget as PCC and my office, and I have worked closely with the Chief Constable and his senior leadership team to understand the operational needs of Bedfordshire Police.

My office consulted the public on the levels of potential precept increase and the survey concluded that of those 1274 responses (133% Increase), 721 (57%) people voiced their support, 191 (15%) voiced that they were neutral, and 362 (28%) people didn't support the proposal.

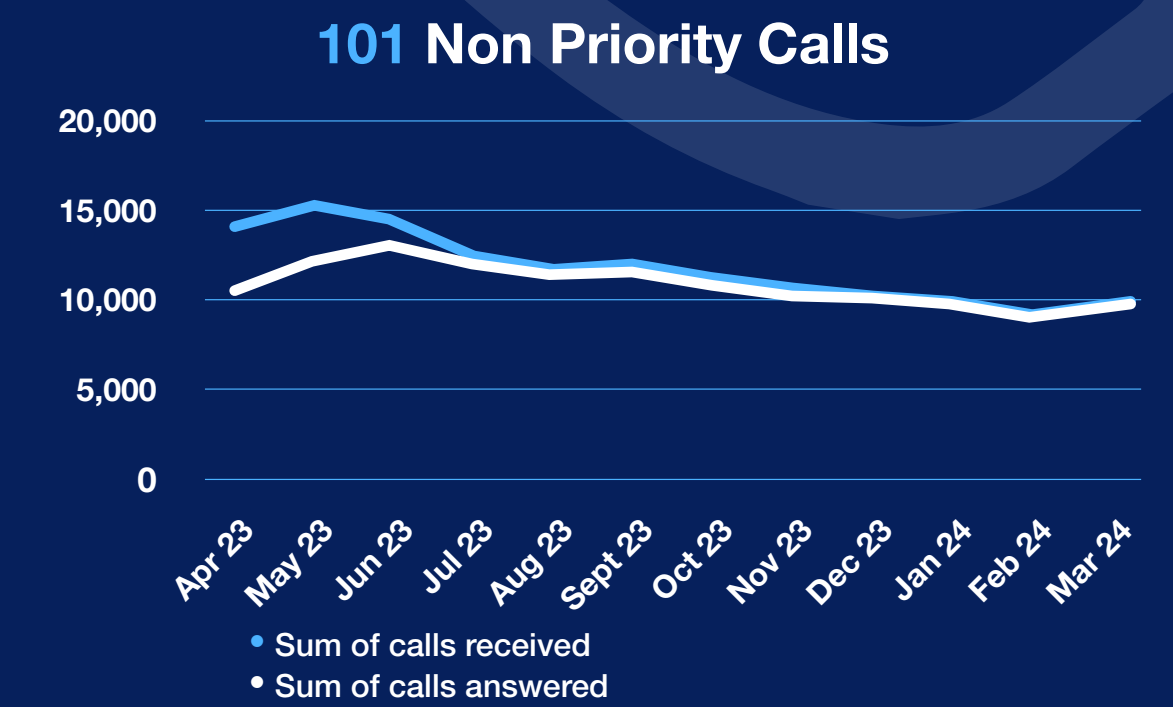
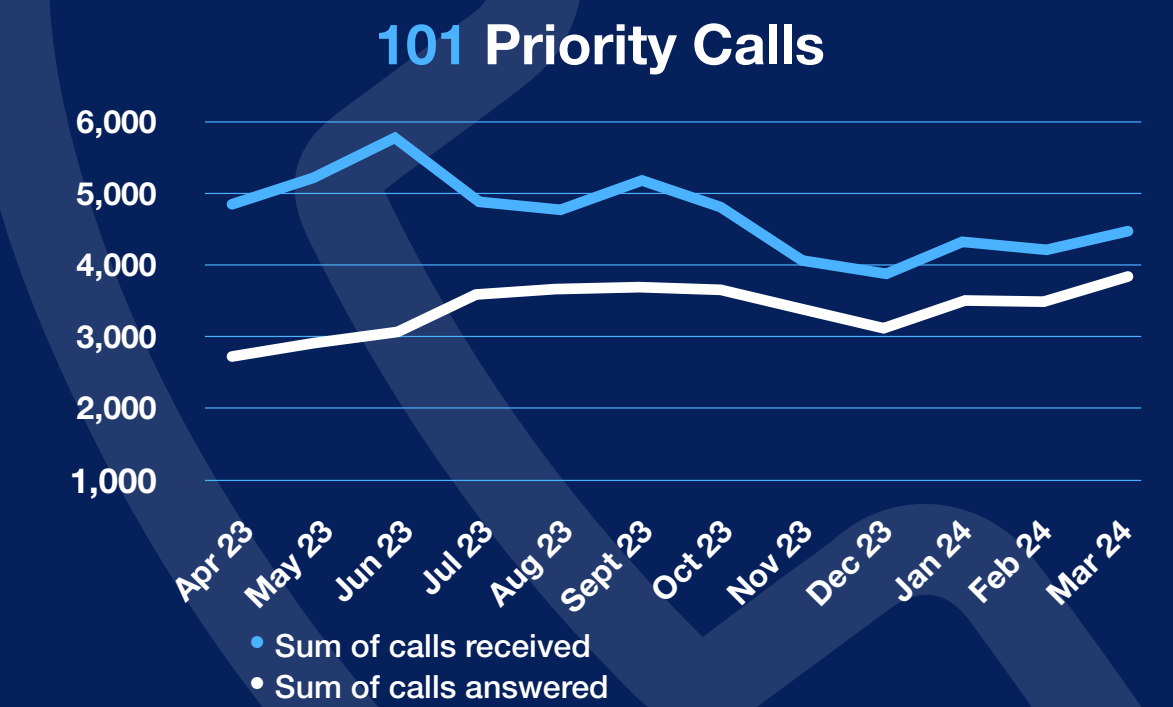
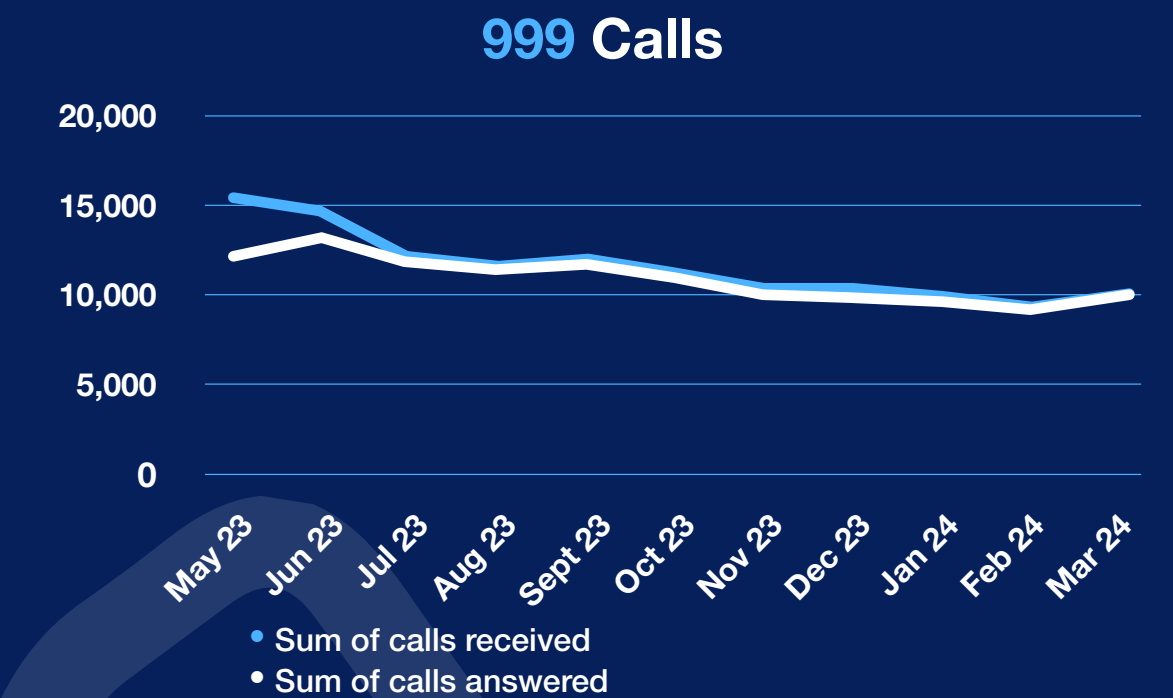
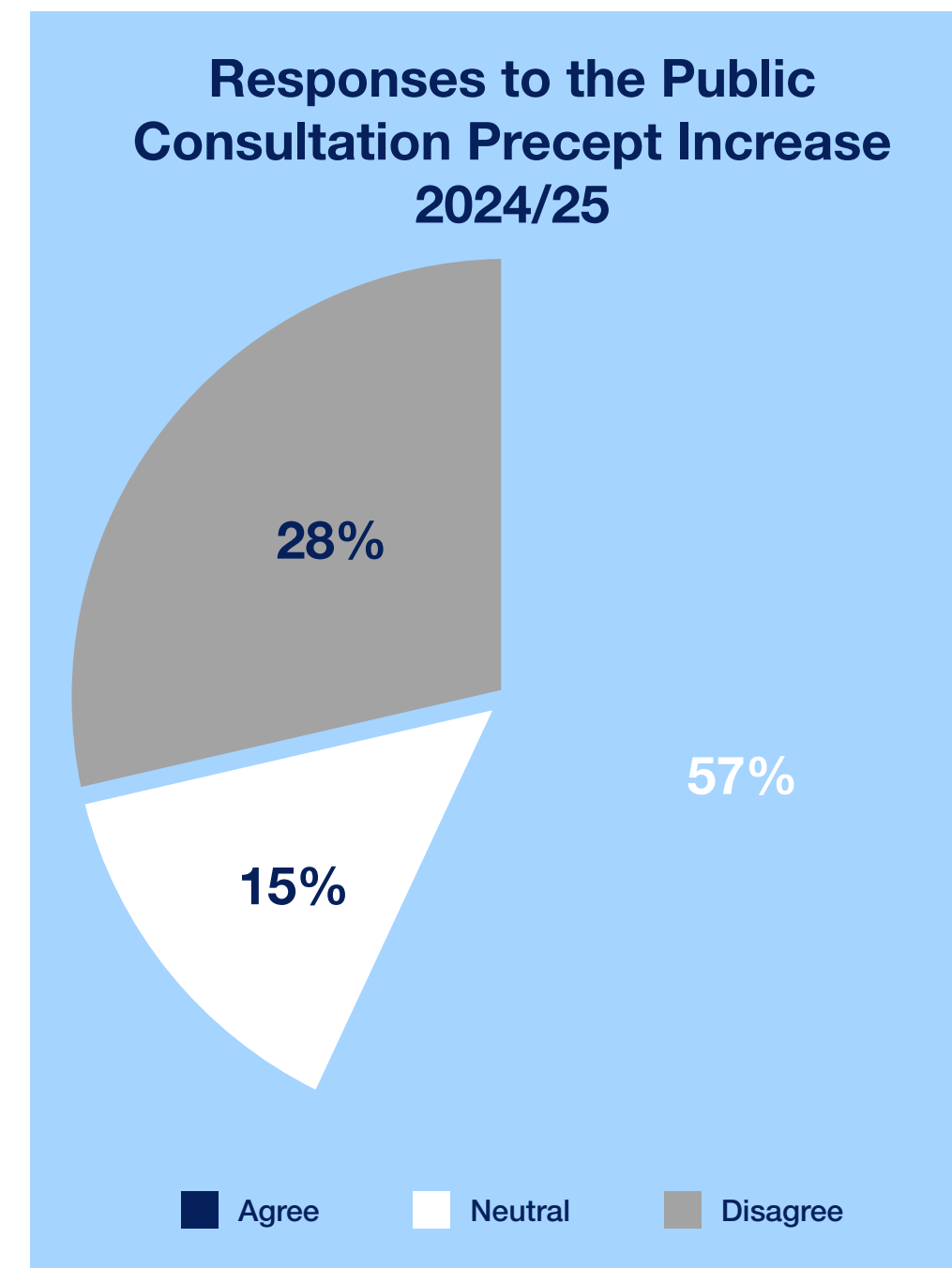
Of those that expressed a preference 1083, 67% voiced their support for the increase in precept.

Panel members from Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, and the independent members voted in regard to the precept that helps to fund Bedfordshire Police with 4 members in favour, 7 against and 1 abstention for the £13 increase (25p a week) proposed to ensure the following commitments to enhance services were met:

- **Retail crime** - We want to work with retailers and partners to improve the investigation of retail crime by using artificial intelligence linked to CCTV technology. We want to put CCTV in real time in the hands of police officers and support the identification of suspects through facial recognition. This will take Bedfordshire Police to the next level of using technology to support the detection and prevention of crime.
- **Force control room** - The Control Room continues to experience high levels of demand, with a total of 23,000 emergency and non-emergency calls received in November 2023. This level of demand is significantly higher than previous years. To control this demand and ensure a timely response the Force will increase the level of resourcing and use a mixed workforce of police staff and police officers.

This will be supplemented with enhancements through technology including chat and voice bots, to help with non-emergency demand. This will free up officers and staff to deal with police incidents. We also want to introduce a citizens' portal that will keep victims updated on the response to the crime that they have suffered via individual accounts with the Force. This will keep all information about an incident in one place and give victims direct access to information through their personal account. My office organised another joint event, chaired by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, alongside the National Farmers Union (NFU) to discuss rural crime. The event again was attended by the Bedfordshire Police dedicated Rural Crime team and officers from the Community Policing team.

- **Crime prevention** - Bedfordshire continues to be impacted by knife crime and serious youth violence. We want to bring in a dedicated Superintendent role to develop a countywide crime prevention strategy with a specific focus on preventing serious youth violence and reducing knife related crime. This new Superintendent will work closely with our key stakeholders and statutory agencies, including our Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit, in order that we strengthen our partnership approach to serious youth violence and its prevention.



- **Improved outcomes for victims through immediate justice** - We want to make more and better use of alternative ways of dealing with offenders by increasing our use of processes like out of court disposals. This will help us to speed up resolution for some victims of crime and help to shape offender behaviour to prevent further victims of crime.
- **Speeding** – We want to train and equip our Special Constables with monitoring and enforcement techniques to reduce speeding in key areas across our county at periods of high road use. We want to deploy more Specials into our communities during 2024/25 to focus on responding to reports of speeding by all vehicle users. During 2024/25 there will be a sustained campaign throughout the year to recruit more Specials in the Force as part of our commitment to Community Policing, all with a focus on reducing speeding and the road traffic incidents that speeding causes.



I have continued the momentum of the Annual Rural Crime Events working closely with our partners the National Farmers Union (NFU) and have due to demand and understanding the often more local nuances introduced a second event, splitting North and South of the County. These events were well attended and allowed the farming and rural communities an additional opportunity to directly raise any concerns and observations to both myself, my deputy, officials from my office and Bedfordshire Police Rural Crime Team.

The two events held in the north and south of the county saw different groups pledge to continue to work together to tackle rural crimes that impact rural communities. It was an invaluable opportunity to meet with our farming communities and hear from them directly at our annual event. In December 2023 we launched a ‘rural task force’ vision, so we were able to come together as a group and check in on any issues or concerns. I’m confident that we’re working in collaboration to ensure crimes are being reported, investigated and updates fed back to our rural communities. It is vitally important that the police ensure our rural communities feel as safe and protected as those who live in our larger towns.

The ‘Cesar Scheme’ was announced at these events.

The Cesar marking scheme is one of the initiatives under the Home Office funded Safer Streets 5 project that supports neighbourhood crime. A new half price discount will be available to Bedfordshire farmers on DataTags which have been known to assist policing teams to recover stolen agricultural equipment. Rural community policing officers have been undergoing training on how to fit and track CESAR equipment, allowing them to engage with and work with local farmers to begin to issue out discounted DataTag systems.



Public Accessibility Terminals. The OPCC continues to deploy Public Accessibility Terminals and following an initial trial in Central Bedfordshire libraries, a relationship has now been established with a national supermarket chain to allow for terminals to be installed initially at four of their largest locations around the County, with the addition of some further terminals remaining in the university of Bedfordshire’s Luton Campus and Cranfield Universities reception building.



To further support the benefits of the Public Accessibility Terminals an ‘APP’ version that is due to be launched in 2024. This will allow access to police and other statutory partners services from across the County to be available in one easy reference point.



I continue via Bedfordshire Police to fund activity to support Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. The method of funding via Bedfordshire police was introduced in 2023-24 to strengthen further the relationship and interaction between the watch schemes and their local community policing teams.

The increase in your precept means that we can focus on the following areas in 2024/25



Retail Crime

We want to work with retailers and partners to improve the investigation of retail crime by using artificial intelligence linked to CCTV technology. We want to put CCTV in real time in the hands of police officers and support the identification of suspects through facial recognition.



Force Control Room

The Control Room continues to experience high levels of demand, with a total of 23,000 emergency and non emergency calls received in November 2023. The Force will increase the level of resourcing and use a mixed workforce of police staff and police officers. Chat and voice bots will help with non emergency demand.



Crime Prevention

Bedfordshire continues to be impacted by knife crime and serious youth violence. We want to bring in a dedicated Superintendent role to develop a countywide crime prevention strategy with a specific focus on preventing serious youth violence and reducing knife related crime.



Improved outcomes for victims through immediate justice

We want to make more and better use of alternative ways of dealing with offenders by increasing our use of processes like out of court disposals. This will help us to speed up resolution for some victims of crime and help to shape offender behaviour to prevent further victims of crime.



Speeding

We want to train and equip our Special Constables with monitoring and enforcement techniques to reduce speeding in key areas across our county at periods of high road use. During 2024/25 there will be a sustained campaign throughout the year to recruit more Specials in the Force as part of our commitment to Community Policing.





As part of my continued commitment to both road safety and the growth of our amazing volunteers that support this function, I have through the latest round of Safer Streets, instructed my office to purchase additional speed monitoring equipment to both enhance existing capability and to update aging equipment.



Community Triggers - Community triggers process has been reviewed by the new force lead C/Insp Jim Goldsmith who has worked with the three local authorities, and all three local authorities are now using the same documentation and process with the OPCC being responsible for any appeals process. Local authorities are responsible for publishing the community trigger numbers on their websites.



I supported the launch of Operation Belville at the Harpur Centre in Bedford. Bedfordshire Police community policing teams are utilising information from the public and other sources to identify the top 10 suspects in different areas across the county as well as identifying crime hotspots. The gathering of evidence to issue frequent offenders with Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) designed to stop reoffending and this is establishing and building further on strong links within the retail sector. This is a perfect example of what partnership working and targeted enforcement can achieve. I will continue to support and advocate for local people and businesses who want to work with Bedfordshire Police in keeping our county safer.



Neighbourhood Policing week

I supported the efforts around Neighbourhood Policing Week, with Bedfordshire Police's community officers during the national crackdown. Bedfordshire Police joined constabularies around the country for the neighbourhood policing week of action. The force's northern, southern, and central community teams are out and about across different communities all year around – with special operations led by community officers to coincide with the nationwide operation.

Since becoming PCC, community policing has become a crucial area of interest to me and where investment is important. I maintain a keen interest due to the significant role community officers play in building links across our communities and tackling crime in our local areas.

Teams are working more closely than ever with the local area they're assigned to. Communities want to see officers on the streets. More officers are now doing drop-in sessions and foot patrols and sharing their routes with the public as part of their 'Street a Week' initiative. And it doesn't stop there, just recently community officers were part of securing several arrests as part of Operation Belleville, targeting the most prolific shoplifters in Bedfordshire.

In Luton, officers targeted key locations in the town centre as part of Operation Metal, tackling serious criminal activity such as drug dealing, knife crime, anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and violence against women and girls. 69 arrests were made, and over £300,000 worth of cash and drugs seized, along with 19 weapons.

In Leighton Buzzard, community officers engaged with residents about the most common concerns around crime in their town. Following an arrest of a man in possession of a weapon near the canal, the team prioritised weapons sweeps and proactive work to stop drug use and dealing in the town centre.

In Bedford, the neighbourhood policing team targeted the most prolific shoplifters in crime hotspots as part of Operation Belleville, which aimed to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour on the local community, with six arrests made.

In rural areas and villages around Central Bedfordshire and north Bedfordshire, the team focused on speaking with women and mothers who may require advice and support on issues such as domestic violence, drink spiking and violence on nights out.

From January 2024 to March 2024, 96 persons have been arrested in relation to both OP BELLEVILLE and OP HIGHGATE (targeting ASB in the Town Centre).

PRIORITY 2

Recruitment and retention of police officers

Key activities and achievements

- ✓ I am proud that since assuming office in 2021, Bedfordshire Police now has its highest-ever number of police officers. We have not only met our recruitment targets but also exceeded them. We are retaining more of our new recruits, as well as our experienced officers too. Bedfordshire Police was amongst the worst forces for officer retention when I took office in 2021. By focusing on improved organisational culture, investing in the working environment of the workforce, and holding the Chief Constable more accountable for these, retention continues to improve.
- ✓ Within my holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable, the recruitment and retention of officers and staff continues to be a focus.
- ✓ I have continued to ensure that provision is in place for officers and staff to receive appropriate independent counselling support, in addition to other services readily available through Bedfordshire Police. Staff welfare continues to be a key priority to enable effective delivery of my Police and Crime Plan. I have therefore maintained the commitment of allocating £20,000 of funding provision to ensure that this essential support is in place.
- ✓ I continue to hold various informal engagement events across the county with officers, staff and volunteers to express my gratitude for their ongoing service and actions taken to make Bedfordshire a safer place for all residents.
- ✓ I continue to regularly discuss 'Culture and Wellbeing' with the Chief Constable and senior team allowing the Chief Constable to respond directly to me and provide details and updates of action and activity undertaken in this important area of business.
- ✓ The force internal "Be You" cultural programme and journey began in 2021 following extensive research, conducted within the Bedfordshire Police workforce, on what made them proud to be part of the organisation and what should be changed to further improve the organisation. Collectively the organisation decided on the core identities of Compassionate, Courageous, Inclusive, Professional and Proud. These identities underpin everything the force does and what they want to achieve, and I support the ongoing work of this initiative as it has a positive effect on both initial recruitments, attracting transferees from other Forces and the retention of officers and staff.

Code of Ethics

It has two parts, both of which are non-statutory:

- *Ethical policing principles.*
- *Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing.*

The ethical policing principles help the organisation make and reflect on their professional decisions. As policing professionals, they commit to the following:

making, communicating and being accountable for decisions, and standing against anything that could bring the profession into disrepute.

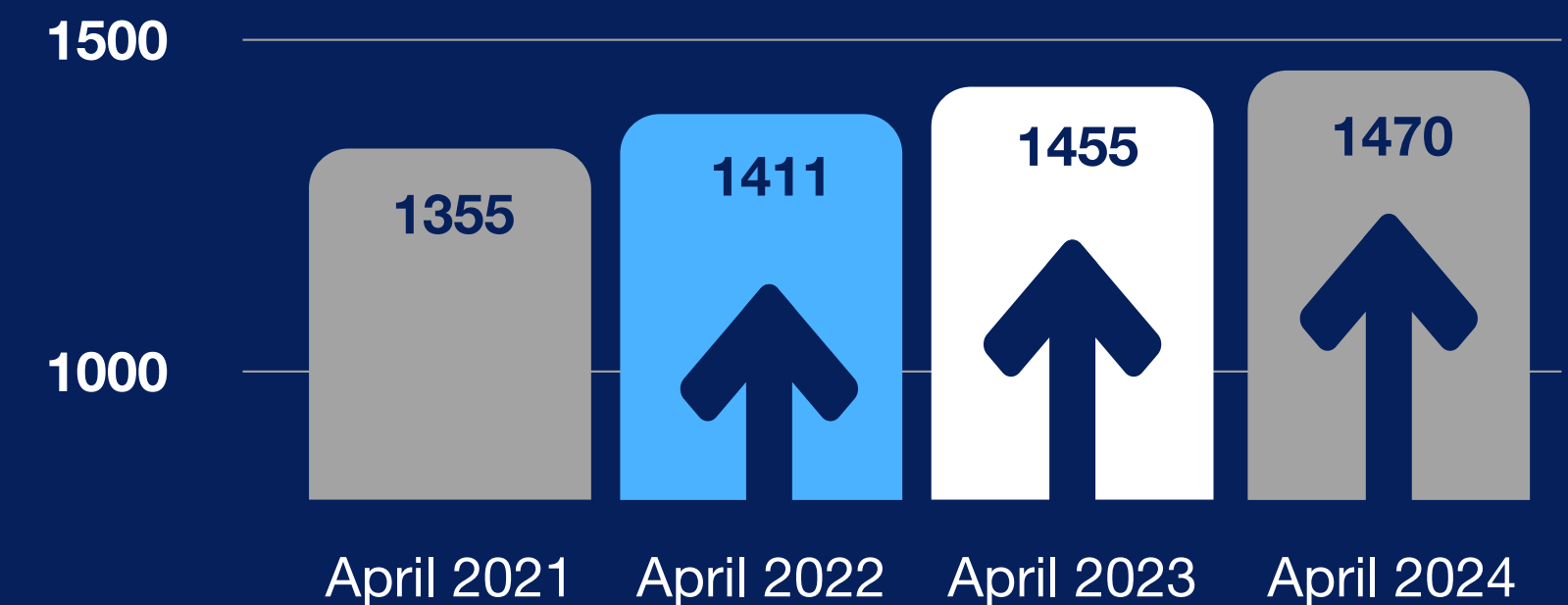
encouraging, listening to, and understanding the views of others, and seeking to recognise and respond to the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that they and other people may face.

working in the public interest, fostering public trust and confidence, and taking pride in providing an excellent service to the public.

Effective policing is built on public trust and confidence. This depends on a policing profession that is ethical and professional in the way that it respects, listens, responds, improves, and serves the public.

Bedfordshire Police had a home office target of a headcount of 1,436 police officers by the end of 2023/24, with a home office stretch target of 1,455. The force is set to have a record 1,470 officers, surpassing its target of 1,455 by the end of March 2024.

Number of Police Officers



PRIORITY 3

Tackling the causes of crime and breaking the cycle of re-offending

Key activities and achievements

- ✓ Restorative Justice (RJ) - We have developed wider opportunities to enhance the Restorative Justice awareness and capabilities across Bedfordshire Police to support victims of crime in achieving necessary outcomes and closure.

The OPCC has formed a collaborative working arrangement with His Majesty's Prison Service and several schools across the county and are progressing some innovative initiatives to further expand the use and understanding of Restorative Practices.

Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships, and repair harm by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively.

- ✓ I have commissioned the ongoing work of Roads Victim Trust for a further 12 months allocating an amount of £60,000.

- ✓ I fund a Roads Safety Manager to reinforce their commitment to safety on the road in Bedfordshire. This links directly to the Police and Crime Plan under Priority 3, Tackling the causes of crime and breaking the cycle of re-offending. Road safety is an integral part of community safety and of significant importance to the people who live in, work, and visit Bedfordshire.

- ✓ I set another record investment for victim support services, over £2.5 million is to be allocated to services 2024 – 2025, helping victims of crime. In line with the Police and Crime plan, which lays out the priorities for the year by crime type, victims of all ages and backgrounds across the county are to have more help available to them. I meet victims of crime every day when out and about around Bedfordshire. As a Police and Crime Commissioner, I have insight into the range of crimes our police officers face, day in day out, but I also get the opportunity to hear from the victims themselves. This is why we have ensured that the range of services commissioned this year reflects the diversity of the communities in Bedfordshire, as well as the diversity of crime, enabling the process to be fair, transparent, and equal. We want local people to feel confident to report crime and get the support that they need afterwards.

Over £210,000 is being allocated to new services this year, in addition to £195,000 being allotted into developing initiatives and services focused on children, young people, sexual exploitation, stalking, multi-crime and hate crime.

This new investment, alongside continued funding for existing services takes the total funding allocation for PCC commissioned victim and community safety services to £2,579,432 for the 2024/25 financial year.

The commissioning process is administered by the OPCC, which advertises the services to be provided, receives, and reviews the applications, awards commissioning grants to successful organisations and monitors the delivery of the services. This is in line with the finance regulations and standing orders.



Restorative Justice
BEDFORDSHIRE



Road
Victims
Trust



The OPCC has continued to support the project that was allocated funds of £35,000 in 2021/22 to progress a project collaboratively with colleagues from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) to purchase a Virtual reality vehicle simulator to educate drivers around the risks associated with common offences such as using a mobile phone whilst in charge of a vehicle. This resource is now deployed around the County on an ongoing basis to help reduce road traffic collisions and improve general road safety attitude.

The new 'Vision Van' was launched in March 2024 and is now on the road and will be used as part of Bedfordshire's Road Safety Partnership's mission to reduce road casualties by 50 per cent by 2035. Funded jointly by my office and BFRS, the Vision Van is a road safety vehicle that utilises virtual reality films to engage and educate young drivers in schools and at local events. Using dedicated hydraulic chairs inside the van it allows users to immerse themselves into a virtual reality scenario, to better understand the factors and risks that can lead to a driver being distracted or to lose concentration on the road.

Schools, colleges, and other higher education institutions will be able to book a visit from the team that operates the Vision Van, and it will be heading out into the community to allow young people to engage with the impactful virtual experience.

In Bedfordshire in 2022 alone, emergency services attended over 300 road traffic collisions where someone was killed or seriously injured. This is why as part of the Police and Crime Plan, we have dedicated resources aimed at educating drivers, particularly young drivers, on the biggest risk factors associated with driving. Namely, using a mobile phone, speeding, drink, and drug driving and not wearing a seatbelt. I have met many family members of road traffic victims through the Road Victims Trust, and each meeting is a reminder to me of the need to work as a partnership in Bedfordshire to reduce road casualties.

According to figures from road safety charity Brake, drivers aged 16-19 are a third more likely to die in a car crash than those aged 40-49, while nearly one in four 18-24-year-olds crash their vehicles within two years of passing their driving test. Young drivers are also found to be at greater risk on the roads due to inexperience and over-confidence.



Safer Streets 5

3 elements - Neighbourhood Crime, Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

I have secured the funding from the fifth round of the Safer Streets project, £820,000 will be allocated into projects in Bedfordshire to tackle neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The Home Office awarded Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) nationally, through the Safer Streets Fund. The project is also hoping to build on the successes of previous rounds, whilst also incorporating learnings and feedback. The scheme will run for an 18-month period between October 2023 and March 2025.

Projects set to be funded include a targeted schools education programme that improves understanding of ASB and the impact it has, investment in local schemes like Neighbourhood Watch and interventions for young people about VAWG.

The APCC has been instrumental in the delivery of this opportunity, gathering the views of PCCs and sharing them with the Home Office to inform how best to spend this funding. Prevention lies at the heart of our Police and Crime Plan. We are working with different groups and organisations here in Bedfordshire to reduce victims and increase feelings of safety in our communities. This new injection of funding will enable PCCs to build on these achievements and apply their local knowledge to deliver projects where they are most needed.





Through the Safer Streets Project, Theatre sessions have been funded to be completed in schools to teach Students ways to stand up against violence. Reports from Ofsted state that 1 in 3 teenage girls have experienced some sort of sexual violence from their partner, which has led the OPCC to take steps towards prevention of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in schools. Schools across Bedfordshire have welcomed Performance in Education into their assemblies to speak to Year 7 and Year 8's about sexual violence, and what individuals can do to be a safe and effective active bystander.

'Performance in Education' specialise in delivering theatre projects in schools across the UK to educate through memorable learning experiences, which have proven to have lasting effects on young people. The latest of their performed sessions, entitled 'Step In, Speak Up', teaches the power that peer intervention can have on preventing harassment and abusive behaviour towards women and girls.



Special Grants - The £6.3 million funding awarded by the Home Office will directly support operations specifically set-up to tackle this multi-faceted and interlinked criminal activity in Bedfordshire. This funding is split between both operations, which between them have made close to 1,000 arrests, seized millions of pounds worth of drugs, and taken dozens of firearms off the streets. This has been a major boost for our ongoing work to tackle organised crime and disrupt county lines activity in our county. Whilst this special grant is not a permanent funding arrangement, it is however an acknowledgement of the unique situation we face in Bedfordshire by the government.

The OPCC as a joint initiative between the VERU and other statutory partners names within the Serious Violence Duty have introduced an A&E navigators' scheme into Bedfordshire hospitals. Specialist youth workers are now embedded into hospital A&Es in Bedford and Luton to offer support to patients involved in or at risk of violence and exploitation. The Bedfordshire A&E navigators programme works with young people aged 10 to 25.

The service is focused on patients who present to A&E with injuries linked to violence and exploitation, including self-harm and assault. They will be offered specialist support to move away from criminal exploitation, gangs and county lines related activity and to positively engage with other local services. Charity St Giles Trust, which runs similar schemes across the country, has been commissioned to run a pilot service which is due to launch next year.

<https://www.beds.police.uk/news/bedfordshire/news/2023/11-november/ae-navigators-scheme-to-launch-in-bedfordshire-hospitals/>



Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) Review

Bedfordshire Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) are entering the final year of their multi-year grant agreement with the Home Office, which covered 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25. This final year (24/25) sees a reduction of just over £400,000 from the original funding high point. As a result, a review of the VERUs operating model was undertaken on my request, with the aim of ensuring that this unit continued to provide its core function of leadership and strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence, in the most effective and efficient way.

As in previous years, in recognition of the fundamental importance of multi-agency working to the successful delivery aligned to a public health approach, the review of the operating model and subsequent 24/25 Delivery Plan for the VERU funding was developed in partnership with the core members of the partnership.

In order to maximise the amount of funds allocated to targeted, evidence-based intervention to tackle violence and exploitation across the County, the existing management and administration costs were reviewed and significantly reduced. A total of 13% of the overall fund will now be allocated to management and admin costs, compared to roughly 64% in previous years. This has been achieved by firstly not replacing staff who left the organisation for alternative roles and opportunities. Secondly, the overall staffing model was reviewed and has rationalised to provide the appropriate roles that are required to manage the approximate £1m budget of activity. This has allowed for a streamlined, but effective staffing model.

The new operating model for 24/25 will see the largest uplift of funds allocated to intervention, since the unit's inception. A total of £743,000 will be allocated to providing a variety of interventions to tackle serious violence across the county. This includes money which will be further used to support our local authority Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) to strengthen and support the work they do in this area.

By flexing the suite of interventions to respond to the evidence base represented in the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Toolkit will ensure that the VERU are delivering activities which are known to deliver greatest impact for vulnerable young people.



PRIORITY 4

Placing residents and victims at the centre of policing priorities

Key activities and achievements

- ✓ BVCS has seen some significant changes over the last 12 months and a lot of work has gone into understanding what the true demand is and to understand what the referral rates should look like. We have worked closely with the force to increase referrals and there has been a real push on social media promoting the service, and we are seeing around 550-600 referral a month. We continue to look at opportunities to grow the number of victims referred into us and we have increased our partnership working to bring about greater awareness of our service in the county. Much work has gone into improving the Case Tracker reporting so that we can make performance more visible, and in the last 8 months there has been more change to the system than there has been in the last 4 years. Work is also going on to produce a PowerBI report that will automatically produce performance data for publication. Following a review to ensure that victims of crime were being offered the most comprehensive service possible.

BVCS returned to become a Bedfordshire Police managed resource from the 01 March 2024. My office continues to fund victim care via a grant arrangement.

Chrysalis Centre - Inspiring change, transforming lives, delivering safer communities.

In March 2023, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire in collaboration with Hertfordshire OPCC were successfully awarded £2 million from the Home Office to deliver a range of behavioural change interventions between 2023-2025.

The Chrysalis Centre brings together a range of professionals from healthcare, criminal justice, and behavioural change experts to introduce clinical, behavioural and support interventions to achieve positive and potentially life affirming futures.

The Chrysalis Centre triages and supports clients to access support from six interventions across four providers.

Inspiring Change – our vision

Chrysalis Centre is a ground-breaking programme of interventions to break the cycle of domestic abuse making victims, families, and communities safer. This is achieved by challenging underlying abusive behaviours and providing education and support to enable healthy, safe, and positive relationships. Central to the role of Chrysalis Centre is the effective screening of referrals to understand causation factors, including Adverse Childhood Experiences, substance, or alcohol dependencies.

Transforming Lives – how we help

The Chrysalis Centre offers a new way of enabling behaviour change through a holistic and person-centric approach. Interventions are available to anyone who causes harm and is a resident of Beds and Herts irrespective of sex, age, or risk level.

The Centre uses a four-step process. The first is a simple referral form available online.

Next, there are two separate assessments – an initial risk screening, where safeguarding checks are made within two working days, and then a needs assessment of the perpetrator, where an interview will be conducted, and a support plan developed.

Perpetrators are then placed on one of a range of intervention programmes.

Since the Centre opened in December it has received over 421 referrals and more than half are already engaging with perpetrator programmes.





I set another record investment for victim support services this year, more than £2.6 million is being put into victim support and other services utilising funds received from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) the Home Office, and Community Safety Fund (CSF). The funding will support a whole range of prevention and early intervention services to support victims of crime and prevent things like domestic abuse and exploitation. Commissioning has been based on rigorous research by staff in my office, using police data and public surveys to identify the most important areas for investment, as well as ensuring progress on my police and crime plan.

In 2023-2024, I funded a number of services through the Community Safety Fund (CSF) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Funding which is received into the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. With a budget of £955,000 available via the Community Safety fund and a budget of £1,908,655 in total awarded via the Ministry of Justice. Through these funding streams, I have funded nine projects/services from the CSF and twenty projects/ services from the MoJ funding streams.

Further to the core projects and services, I have awarded additional funding for specialist requirements such as a hardship fund, supporting victims who do not have recourse to public funds, a translation service, supporting victims in accessing a wider range of counselling support and a community link work, assigned to the ISVA team, working to engage in the diverse communities of Bedfordshire.

Community Safety Fund Core Services

Of organisations funded via the CSF budget three providers, Ringcraft Boxing Gym, The Princes Trust, and Bedford Blues Foundation Trust focused on early intervention and prevention through sports-based interventions. Sports-based interventions are often used to engage young people in an activity, diverting them away from criminality and anti-social behaviour, however further benefits such as access to a safe space, support for deprivation and opportunities and support in accessing and engaging with employment opportunities have also been seen across the organisations funded. By giving young people positive role models, tools to fulfil their potential and empower them and encouragement from peers, the young people are able to improve their behaviours, habits, and activities to prevent them from entering criminality.

In 2023-2024, Luton and Bedford Youth Offending services alongside YouTurn Futures and Red Snapper were funded to deliver interventions for children, young people and adults who have come into contact with the criminal justice system or have received an Out of Court Disposal via Bedfordshire Police. Bedford and Luton Youth offending services support young people aged 10-17 years old who have come into contact with the Police, supporting them to address their behaviours, become accountable for their actions and diverting them away from the criminal justice system. I also commissioned an Out of Court Disposals service and Referral and Support service originally via YouTurn Futures, and then via Red Snapper following a procurement led tender process. The Out of Court disposals service engages with adults referred by Bedfordshire Police to receive one of thirty-two interventions to acknowledge and address their behaviour, preventing further interaction with police and likely other statutory partners.

Recognising the importance of intervention and prevention, I continued to fund the Family Drug and Alcohol Court, through the work of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC), parents benefit from the support they need to improve their wellbeing, health, and parenting abilities, with an improved chance of reunification with their child/ children at the end of care proceedings. Through this work, not only do the parents benefit from support to become better contributors to the community, but the risk of intergenerational abuse, criminality and reduced wellbeing is addressed.

Recognising that hate crime is often an under-reported crime, with an estimation of 170,000 unreported incidents per year according to the University of Huddersfield in 2016, I commissioned Mary Seacole to introduce a community mediation service, supporting those who experience hate crimes across the County. With aims to increase awareness, improve accessibility of support and to improve victim confidence when reporting and asking for help, Mary Seacole has provided advocacy, online and face to face support delivered in a trauma-informed way.

Lastly, I continued to support projects and services such as the Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and the Bedfordshire Community Watch Schemes including Speed Watch, Street Watch, Horse Watch and Dog Watch which support and enable the public to take actions and develop and maintain a safer community.

Community Safety Fund Additional Services

To uplift the service provision via the CSF budget, I commissioned nine organisations for small, local projects many with a focus on supporting young people or people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Operating across Bedfordshire, three organisations, namely Azalea, USP CIC and Developwise CIC have introduced community engagement activities and events focusing on sexual exploitation and crime and violence, respectively. Recovery Code X were commissioned to deliver peer mental health support, acknowledging a gap for victims who have experienced trauma but may have SEND needs or neurodiversity requirements, supporting victims to recognise, discuss and subsequently address and recover from their traumas. I commissioned Freddie and Friends CIC to develop a community-based group to support families and children with SEND needs who are vulnerable to criminality. Lastly, via the opportunity I funded a further 4 sports-based local activities send community support, Sporting Aid CIC, Dan Gaze Support Services, a British Ju Jitsu coach and Luton AllStars were commissioned to work with young people, encouraging them to divert away from criminal activity, using sport as an avenue to introduce discipline, teamwork, trust and offering a safe place/ guidance and mentoring.

Cameras, Tickets and Collisions Fund

Via the Cameras, Tickets and Collisions fund, I have commissioned two projects focusing on improving road safety and education in Bedfordshire. Following a funding exercise, I awarded Ravensden Parish Council to purchase 2 Variable Speed Cameras, further reducing speeding through the village, following the implementation of these traffic calming measures. Secondly, I funded Bedford Borough Council to deliver Independent Travel training to young people within the local community who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Through this project I am supporting young people in gaining their independence, in accessing public transport, whilst reducing their need for support from statutory partners.

Ministry of Justice Funding

The MoJ funding is awarded to the OPGC to support victims in coping and recovering from the crimes that they have experienced, to support this activity in Bedfordshire I funded ten organisations to deliver victim support services, from initial victim care via practical and emotional support to complex needs counselling.

I have continued to fund Bedfordshire Victim Care Service (BVCS) to provide practical and emotional support to around six hundred victims of crime each month. BVCS not only support the victim initially but support the victim to access wider services for advocacy, counselling etc. appropriate to the victim's needs.

I ensured that the funding by the MoJ was utilised to continue to deliver the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA), Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) and Children and Young Person Domestic Violence Advisor (KIDVA) services across Bedfordshire, ensuring victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse receive specific support, with specialisms such as LGBTQ+ awareness, male specific support, and where relevant support a victim during the court process. Annual the funding supports over five hundred victims across the seven projects, delivered by three organisations, Embrace the KIDVA service, Victim Support, the IDVA service and Early Childhood Partnership, the ISVA service,

During this year, I funded The Counselling Foundation, Living Your Life and Embrace to deliver counselling services to children and young people, adults, and those with specific needs across the County. Across the three organisations, there are nine counselling provisions available to victims including domestic abuse, sexual violence, and targeted counselling as well as multi-crime counselling support for those who have experienced a crime tother than domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Recognising the need to support those with additional needs due to mental health, demography or the specific experiences victims have, I funded Azalea to introduce a sexual exploitation support van which will offer a safe place, advice, and support to victims in situ, assisting with Police warrants and engagement, secondly, I funded a mental health worker for the FDAC as a majority of their clients had mental health needs that required support. Lastly, I funded Luton All Women's Centre and Bedford Women's Centre to offer practical and emotional support for victims who do not have English as a first language. Recognising the diversity of Bedfordshire, I commissioned domestic abuse caseworkers to support in languages such as Polish, Urdu and Bengali.

Further to the core projects and services, I have awarded additional funding for specialist requirements such as a hardship fund, supporting victims who do not have recourse to public funds, a translation service, supporting victims in accessing a wider range of counselling support and a community link work, assigned to the ISVA team, working to engage in the diverse communities of Bedfordshire.

Additional MoJ Funding

During 2023-2024, the OPCC was awarded funding to run specialist projects in a number of areas identified by the ministry of justice. The MoJ awarded the OPCC RASAF funding to introduce a specialist sexual violence service into Bedfordshire. Collaborating closely with providers, local OPCCs and the MoJ, a service is being developed in this space, enabling victims of sexual violence in Bedfordshire to access specialist practical and emotional support.

Further to the RASAF funding, the OPCC also received a small amount of funding to support male victims of sexual violence, I commissioned the ISVA service to develop their staff in male specific practises, enabling male victims to experience a better, more specialised service.

Home Office Funding

Further to core funding, I was successful in accessing £2 million of funding in a joint funding application with Hertfordshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Home Office to deliver a suite of domestic abuse perpetrator interventions with the support of a triage hub, named the Chrysalis Centre in 2023-2025. The Chrysalis Centre has been mobilised to support perpetrators of domestic abuse, inclusive of children, male and female perpetrators to engage with a perpetrator programme, as well as signposting to other services to support the client's journey to addressing their behaviour.

In addition to the Home Office funding, the project has seen significant partnership support with match-funding secured for £1.2 million. I have provided match-funding alongside, Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioners, Hertfordshire County Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, Luton Council, the Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board, the West Essex and Hertfordshire Integrated Care Board, and the National Probation Service. Please see the website for more information: Chrysalis Centre.

In addition to the interventions delivered through the Chrysalis Centre, the project also aspires to develop as a centre of excellence, implementing an Expert Clinical Advisory Group to ensure that activity is conducted in line with best practise, considering safeguarding, relevant clinical knowledge and experience from partners collaborating with victims and perpetrators.

Lastly, I have commissioned a research and evaluation piece to inform the approach to supporting clients, to inform decision making and to ensure victim safety and effectiveness of service.

Wider OPCC activity

In addition to the service provision, I have also used the funding available to uplift service provision where there is demand, facilitate the introduction and piloting of new roles into organisations and I have supported capacity within the OPCC to ensure that service delivery progresses, introducing new collaborative arrangements with partners.



In February 2023 at my request my office held the second annual Business Conference. This event consisted of a multitude of guest speakers who had been chosen specifically to help inform and support the business community across the County.



Azalea has launched a new mobile drop-in van which I have funded, to provide 1-1 support sessions to sex workers who may have been trafficked or may be victims of exploitation. In Bedfordshire we are seeing a change in the nature of the sex industry. Bedfordshire Police's modern slavery and human trafficking teams are receiving more and more reports of concerns for the welfare of women and girls who are being exploited and are reliant on the support of the force and our victim-centred services to help them. As part of my Police and Crime plan, Bedfordshire Police are focusing on tackling the causes of crime and breaking the cycle of reoffending. Initiatives such as this excellent proposal by Azalea is guaranteed to play a vital role in assisting the partnership in providing the necessary support to victims that as such will interrupt the cycle of offending in this area.

PRIORITY 5

Multi-agency approach to community safety and crime reduction

Key activities and achievements



10 Year Drugs Strategy

I have instructed my office to fund a post for two years dedicated to coordinating the counties response to requirements of the 10 Year Drug Strategy. This is a partnership hosted by Luton Borough Council. Initial activities have included:

1) Partnership response - preparedness for emerging threat of Nitazenes & synthetic opioids

The coordinator is currently leading on the construction of a partnership response to the emerging threat of synthetic opioids/nitazenes nationally. This review will form Bedfordshire Police's response to this national request of all forces. This review involved identifying risks and recommendations across several Police and Health led processes including Local Drugs Information System; Police Investigations; Naloxone, Prevention & Near Miss data. This review has been inputted to and by key partnership agencies, and the recommendations produced will be incorporated into the drugs strategy delivery plan to ensure effective governance once the findings have been briefed into the Serious Harm Partnership Board (SHPB).

2) Bedfordshire Hospitals Drug and Alcohol Referral Pathways Task & Finish group and workshops

The proportion of referrals received into Bedfordshire Drug and Alcohol treatment services from the Luton and Dunstable Hospital and Bedford Hospital are lower than desired to help us achieve the aims of the national Drugs Strategy of increasing overall numbers in treatment. To address this system challenge, the coordinator has convened a task and finish group of key stakeholders including Local Authority commissioners, drug and alcohol treatment providers, Hospital leads, Education and Diversion Navigator programme leads. There has been two in person workshops to date. The aims of the workshops are to:

- Coordinate efforts between respective Local Authorities/Providers and Hospitals to promote a pan-Bedfordshire approach and avoid duplication of work.
- Identify opportunities for co-commissioning, and joint training offers to improve understanding & effectiveness of pathways.
- For local drug and alcohol providers to share the current training/support/staffing model/offer to best support Hospitals including integration of newly joint funded posts
- To gain commitment from Hospital leaders to increase active referrals into specialist drugs and alcohol treatment services in Bedfordshire, to provide early support and harm reduction.

3) Evolution of Drugs Strategy Governance - positive changes

The coordinator has undertaken a review of the current Drugs Strategy Governance as a key deliverable of the Bedfordshire Serious Harm Partnership Board. A number of my recommendations were approved and are now being implemented/in progress:

- Assigned named 'Strategy Pillar Champions' from relevant lead organisations who will be accountable for delivery and reporting of the drugs strategy for each pillar. This model has been adopted by other Combatting Drugs Partnerships (CDP's) to enhance accountability, which will benefit the partnership given the wide scope of the SHPB. A new internal SCG with named pillar champions has been established quarterly to support this, to provide progress updates and scrutiny.

4) Drugs strategy delivery plan refresh in progress

The coordinator at my request is progressing the annual refresh of the pan Bedfordshire Drugs Strategy Delivery plan. This involves working closely with named pillar champions to:

- Review progress against the current delivery plan, highlighting successes, outstanding actions, and challenges.
- Identify top priorities and key deliverables for the next financial year across each pillar.
- Assign actions and owners for pan Beds delivery.



My office held the third Annual Parish Conference in October 2023 at Marston Vale Forest Centre. The DPCC gave an introduction with presentations from Chief Superintendent Whittred, Supt Hoque, Det Ch Insp Stean with additional attendance by Insp Goldsmith. The conference was supported by Watch Schemes and Safer Streets.



More than 100 people attended the second multi-faith conference bringing together a number of prominent community members that showcase the vast diversity of Bedfordshire's residents. This event is just one of the proactive ways I have continued to improve community engagement and relations between local authorities and residents, while providing an open and transparent communication platform in line with my police and crime plan. While the office and policing remain at the forefront when it comes to tackling crime and reducing reoffending, we are cognisant that community leaders can play a crucial role in amplifying our efforts. Hosting events like these is how we gain the support of our community and build trust and confidence in the work we're doing to make Bedfordshire a safe and welcoming county for all.



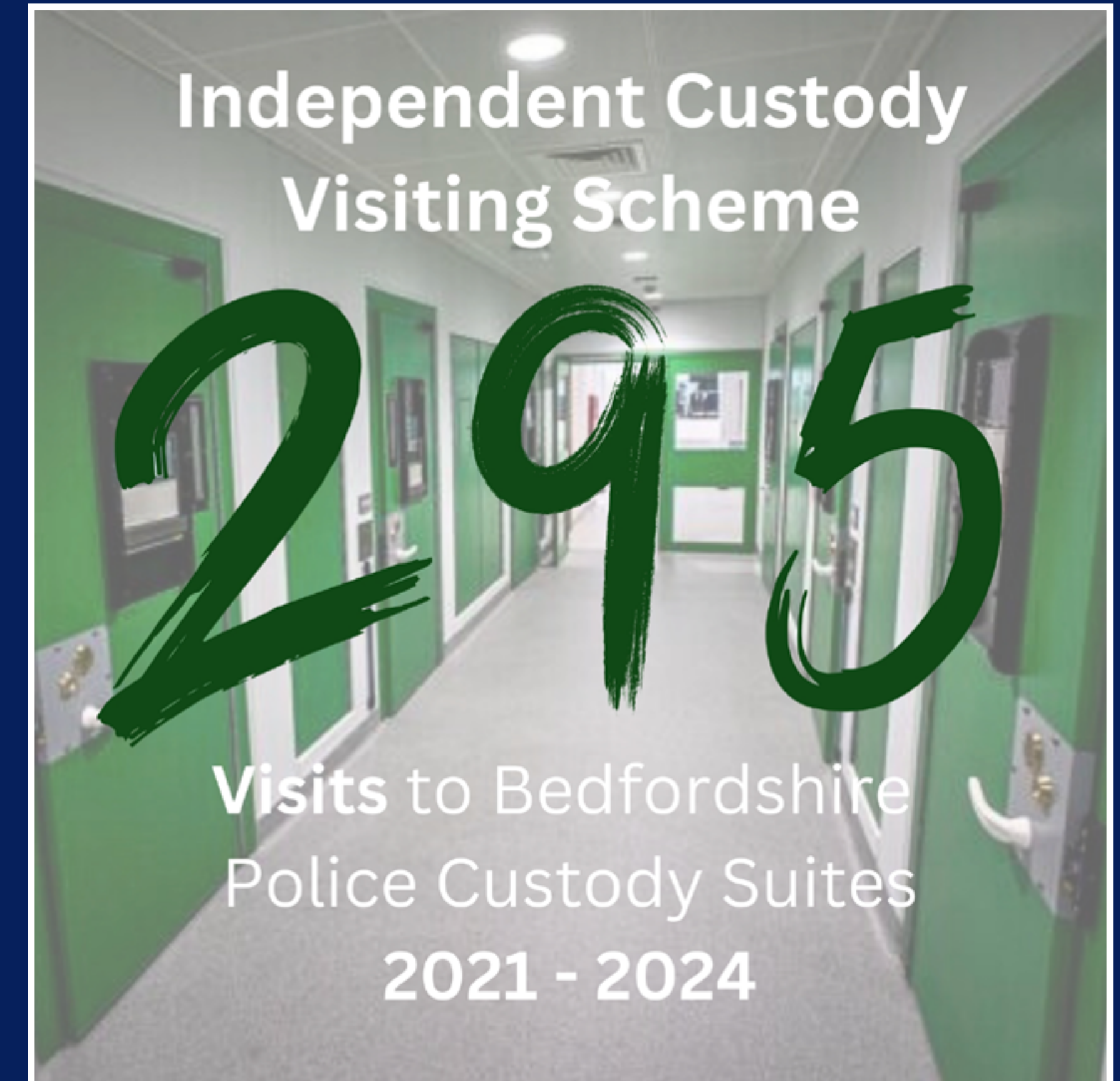
My office hosted the first-ever OPCC awards ceremony for OPCC volunteers. The event saw 23 volunteers from the Stop and Search and Use of Force scrutiny panel, Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), and a Restorative Justice volunteer have their efforts celebrated at a ceremony at Bedfordshire Police Headquarters. The Lord Lieutenant, Susan Lousada, was also present to support the event, and presented 9 special awards, highlighting specific examples of where volunteers had demonstrated excellence in support of the OPCC and its scrutiny of Bedfordshire Police in key areas that impact on community trust and confidence.



I supported the new Right Care Right Person rollout in Bedfordshire, a major new national initiative to ensure that health and social care incidents get the best response from the most appropriate agency in a timely manner. Right Care Right Person (RCRP) will ensure vulnerable people receive the specialist health support they need, that often police officers are not best placed to provide. While some health incidents require police attendance, there are a significant number in which there is no safety risk or crime committed, with other agencies such as mental health services or social care better placed to offer this support.

In Bedfordshire over 12 months from July 2022 to June 2023, police officers attended 14,738 reports of concern for welfare and 5,666 reports relating to mental health. This was a landmark day in Bedfordshire for a cause I have championed at the highest levels since becoming the county's police and crime commissioner. While I already fund a mental health nurse in our force control room and additionally, a mental health street triage team, it simply cannot be right that police officers are often the first port of call for vulnerable people experiencing a mental health crisis. The public rightly want our officers out there fighting crime, while properly trained medical professionals are much better placed to provide people in situations such as mental health crisis with the care they need.

I want to thank our county's other public service partners for their support on this vitally important new approach. This national programme of Right Care Right Person has my full support, and I will be doing everything I can to ensure its success. There are circumstances where our partners in health or social care are the most appropriate professionals to offer help and support to vulnerable people. Our police officers currently spend a significant amount of time dealing with health incidents, which inevitably has an impact on our resources and our ability to respond to crime issues that really matter to people.



PRIORITY 6

Transparency and open communication

Key activities and achievements

- ✓ The OPCC maintain an active presence on various social media channels to ensure that the public are aware of activity the OPCC is engaged in.
- ✓ The OPCC has also published meeting minutes and agendas on my office website to ensure the public can review these if they wish.
- ✓ My Police and Crime Plan is published on my website as this is a statutory duty, however the delivery plan is also published so the detail is present in regard to the progress of delivery of the plan, which is discussed at the Police and Crime Panel on a regular basis to scrutinise progress.
- ✓ The OPCC publishes information regarding the commissioning process opportunities to apply for funding and decisions made, to ensure the public are aware of organisations that have been funded and the areas of focus for these funded organisations.
- ✓ Bedfordshire Police publish information for members of the public to review on Bedfordshire Police | Police.uk (www.police.uk)
- ✓ The OPCC publishes information surrounding events, surveys, and press releases so that activity and actions are as transparent as we can be.
- ✓ The 'You said, we did' campaign was launched in August 2023. The campaign highlights my work to date under each of the seven priorities in the Police and Crime Plan. The infographics show each achievement so far under each priority.
- ✓ The OPCC launched a new Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (ICDSP) to the Beds Police Custody Suite for the first time. The panel, made up of local people from across the policing area, represent local communities in conversations with police officers and staff actively involved in detention and custody environments. The aim of the Panel is to independently assess and report on detention and custody processes such as challenging disproportionality in police custody, notably on grounds of race and/or protected characteristics.



PRIORITY 7

National contributions

Key activities and achievements

- ✓ Non-Executive Director of the College of Policing for a period of three years commencing on 20 March 2023
- ✓ Early in my term I was appointed the National Lead for the 'Prevention' portfolio by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). I continue to contribute to this important piece of work.
- ✓ In April 2023, I was joined by Bedfordshire Police's stop and search lead, Superintendent Ian Taylor, to meet with civil officers from the Cour des Comptes (Court of Auditors) and Deputy Home Affairs attaché at the French Embassy in London. The representatives were tasked by French authorities to review and study how police powers such as stop and search are scrutinised in Bedfordshire. The discussions covered use of force, the county's stop and search scrutiny panel and work being completed by myself to address race disparity and improve legitimacy.
- ✓ Bedfordshire Police is leading the way across the region for tackling county drugs lines, modern slavery, and gun crime. The grading and report from the police watchdog praised the force's leadership, work with partners and activity to prevent organised crime as key aspects of its comprehensive plan to tackle these issues.

The report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) also gives a good grading to the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), which coordinates the response to serious and organised crime across the region.

This is tremendous recognition for the tireless work our officers, staff and partner organisations are doing to tackle the most serious criminality we face in Bedfordshire. I was clear when I became police and crime commissioner that I wanted our enforcement activity against organised crime gangs to be teamed with an outstanding prevention-based approach to crime reduction and community safety. This report is an excellent endorsement of this approach here in Bedfordshire. The report praises clear leadership, high awareness of issues among community officers and good analysis of organised crime threats as key pillars of the work underway in Bedfordshire. Bedfordshire Police has a dedicated serious and organised crime team which works to improve the force's response to issues, maintaining an ongoing action plan as well as delivering support and training to officers and partners who manage individual organised crime groups. Bedfordshire has pioneered the clear hold build concept through the Dallow Cares project, with police working in tandem with existing community partnerships to tackle the issues that matter most to local communities in the area.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) partnered with national charity Stamp Out Spiking to deliver training to professionals in a bid to help raise awareness of spiking and keep partygoers safe. As part of the Safer Streets project, the OPCC have joined forces with Stamp out Spiking to deliver training to officers and local authorities, educating them on the signs to spot when it comes to spiking and how they can help prevent such offences. Stamp out Spiking work to tackle incidents of spiking across the UK by highlighting the dangers and offer tangible solutions to keep the public safe in social settings such as pubs, clubs, and festivals.





In a country-first Bedfordshire OPCC have advanced from being code compliant to platinum for their Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme. My office achieved the award at the inaugural Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) Quality Assurance awards. We were presented with platinum status at a ceremony in Birmingham on Wednesday 29 November 2023.



Platinum status means Bedfordshire's ICV scheme provides an outstanding standard of custody visiting and volunteer management. To achieve this, there were more than 25 criteria covering key areas such as holding the force to account and requiring evidence to support each assessment. ICVA assessed each submission in order to obtain platinum award. ICVA is the national organisation that supports, leads, and represents locally run custody visiting schemes.

I'm proud that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has been awarded platinum in the ICVA Quality Assurance awards. This award is a fantastic achievement shows that our independent custody visiting scheme is among the best in the country. The team and volunteers have worked exceptionally hard to progress us from code compliant to platinum. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our independent custody visitors. They conduct visits at all hours of the day and night, without financial reward and play a critical role in ensuring that people who are held in police custody are treated fairly.



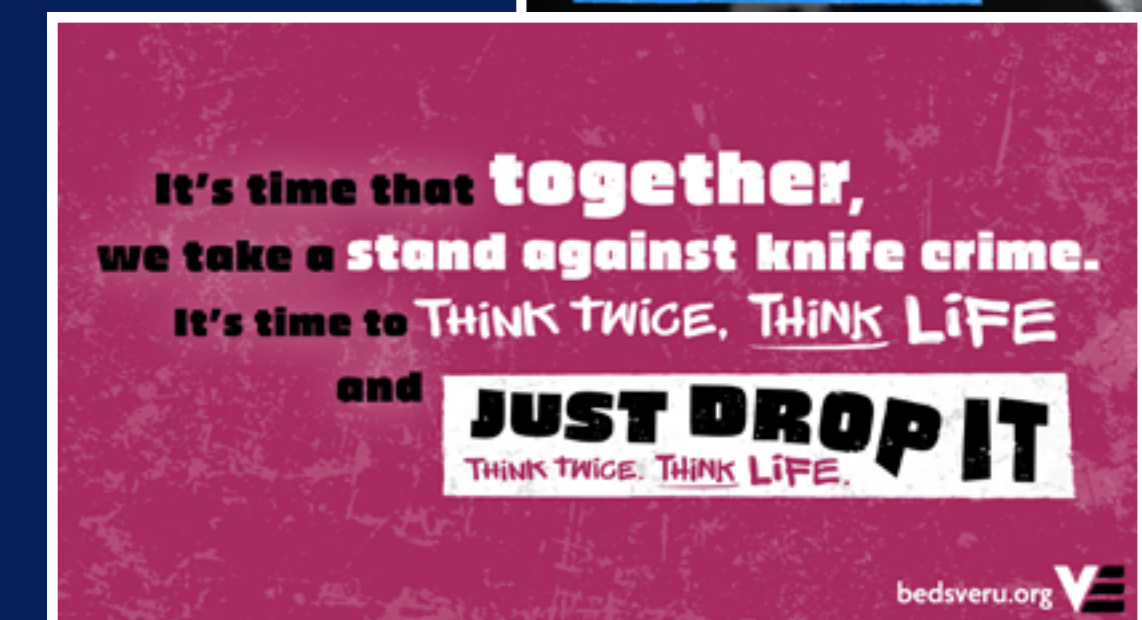
I backed new legislation that will see the sale of dangerous zombie-style knives banned, as a flagship anti-knife crime campaign for the county reached more than 5,000 students. More than 5,000 students across 15 schools in Bedfordshire have received assemblies around the devastating impact of knife crime as part of the county's anti-knife crime campaign 'Just Drop It', which was endorsed by me, the campaign was launched in November 2023 by sharing lived experience and the impact it has on lives.



I have supported efforts to tackle violence against women and girls during #ItsNotOk week. It's Not Ok week raises awareness around issues such as rape and sexual abuse. During this week, I met with Bedfordshire Police's specialist victim engagement officers (VEOs), who provide dedicated support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. I made funding available to recruit seven additional VEOs this year, doubling the size of the team. I have invested more than £1 million in 23/24 in support services to support victims and carry out prevention activity around domestic abuse and sexual violence.



I have backed the national Victims' Code campaign, the Victims Code is a practical guide that victims have the right to receive from police, courts and criminal justice agencies. The campaign signposts victims of crime to new dedicated resources outlining support available to them. As PCC, I have statutory responsibilities for ensuring support for victims of crime are in place and adequate. My office has funded a number of charities who support victims of crime. Services such as these are vital. They provide life-changing emotional and practical support for victims to help them cope and recover from the effects of the crimes. I am also the chair of the Criminal Justice Board. This meeting aims to improve communication and collaboration to provide fair, efficient, and effective criminal justice services in Bedfordshire. I will ensure the new victims code remains high on our agenda. This, together with the support services alongside the new Victims' Code enables us to provide the best possible service to victims of crime and witnesses.

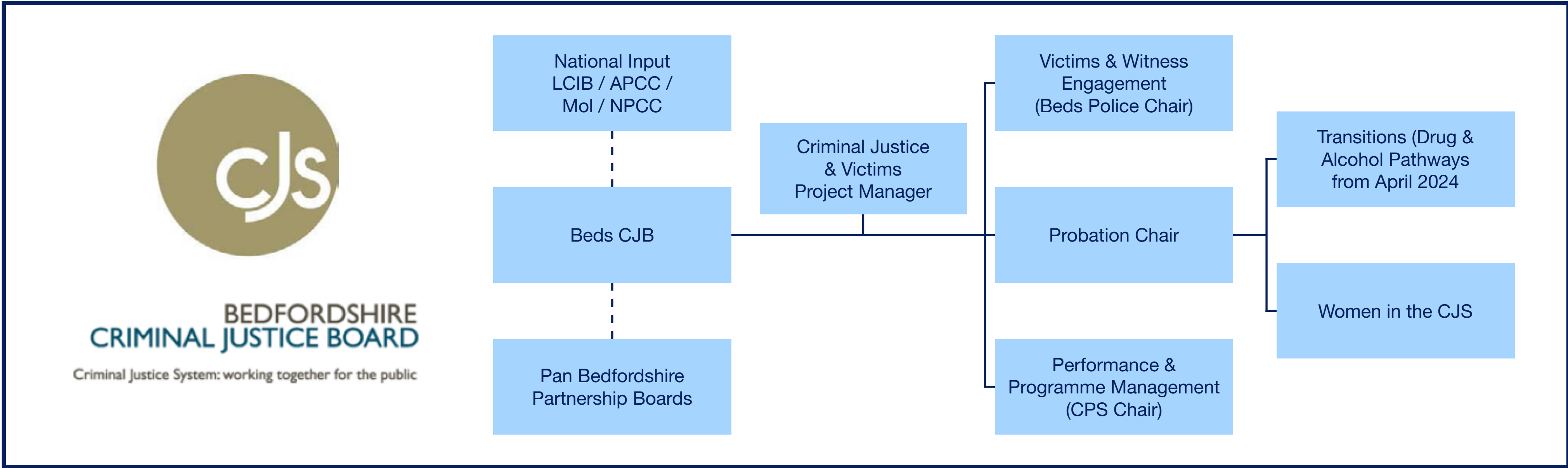


Criminal Justice



The Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board (BCJB), brings together criminal justice partners to identify priorities, address cross cutting issues, reduce reoffending, improve the experiences of victims and witnesses, and deliver agreed objectives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the local Criminal Justice System.

In 2022/23 the BCJB streamlined performance reporting and introduced themed items on its agenda. The purpose of this change was to ensure that in future, the Board would have time for evidenced based reports which would enable us to identify emerging areas for development in terms of partnership working, action and inform future decision making, priorities and strategy, which has already proven to be a positive development.



Women in the CJS

In 22/23 Quarter 4 (December 22), the Police presented the Board’s theme on ‘Women in the Criminal Justice System’. The Police reported that nationally, in 40% of all women arrested no further action is taken, this is often for offences of violence against a person, and they are often arrested at the scene of a domestic incident.

National research supports that the majority of the women are usually victims of more serious crimes themselves and sometimes they have been victims for most of their life i.e., sexual abuse as a child. We also know a number suffer mental illness and drug and alcohol related mental illnesses.

The Board agreed that the Police and OPCC should lead on a project looking at identifying women who have offended as a result of domestic abuse to provide the support they need and divert them away from the system. Initial meetings with the Bedfordshire safeguarding leads have taken place to look at how to progress this action. A small task and finish group has been created which will report updates to the Reducing Reoffending Board.

The aim of this project is to divert adult females out of the criminal justice system, reduce reoffending and deliver proportionate outcomes which place the victim at the heart of the process and to deliver restorative justice solutions where appropriate. The scheme will encourage and empower offenders to take responsibility and provide the support to improve their lives and consequently to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System & HMICFRS Joint Thematic

Presented by Beds Police and the OPCC 23/24 Q1 (June 23) – The Board will be carrying forward Mental Health as a theme in 2024/25 and look at raising awareness of mental health concerns in the criminal Justice system for early identification of offenders with mental health concern.

The aim of this work will be to support the CPS with trial preparation, for efficiency, which would help to avoid trial delays saving time and money, manage victim and witness expectations, ensure proportionality in sentencing and enable those who are most vulnerable in the system to be identified as early as possible and provided with the support needed.

Children and Young People in the CJS

Presented to the Board by Youth Offending Services Bedfordshire and Luton in September 2023. The Board is currently exploring the recommendations from this theme, with a focus on disproportionality and multi-agency support for young people which would help to divert them away from crime. The CJ Manager is currently looking at progressing the following with CJS partners:

- Agency audits on disproportionality in the CJS using the Avon and Somerset audit as the starting point.
- Explore the potential for a multi-agency transitions hub in Bedfordshire for the purpose of reducing reoffending for 17-21 year olds transitioning from Youth Offending services into the community or Probation.
- Contact has been made with education for the CJ Manager to attend the teacher forums for initial thoughts on a joint CJS awareness programme in schools with the aim of myth busting, potentially raising career interests and reducing offending.

The Board held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 19th December 2023. The AGM was the first of its kind in the country, this gave residents the opportunity to gain an understanding of the work carried out by the Criminal Justice Board, which works to support victims and witnesses of crime and reduce reoffending.

There was a call for public questions whereby communities; residents and partner organisations across Bedfordshire were encouraged to put their questions to Board members including Bedfordshire Police, the Courts, Crown Prosecution, Youth Offending and Probation services.

The recorded meeting was uploaded onto the OPCC website.

A link to the meeting recording can be found on the OPCC website at; (<https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/criminal-justice-board/>)

Governance

ARRANGEMENTS	PURPOSE	ACTIVITY MAY 23 - APRIL 24
Performance and Governance Board	The main 'holding the force to account' meeting with the OPCC and Force Exec team	12 meetings (Held monthly)
Joint Audit Committee (Meet Quarterly)	Provides advice to the PCC and Chief Constable on the effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control arrangements	4 Meetings a year with 1 development day
One to One meeting with the Chief Constable	For the PCC to hold the Chief Constable to account To ensure regular communication to discuss strategic matters and current issues	Completed weekly
Independent Custody Visiting Scheme	OPCC run schemes where volunteers visit unannounced to check that those being held in are being treated fairly	Total number of visits = 108
Decision Log	In line with the Decision-making framework, decisions made by the PCC and the OPCC of significant public interest are published the OPCC Website	58 decisions have been made and published
Dealing with complaints against the Chief Constable.	The PCC is responsible for reviewing and investigating Chief Constable complaints - statutory guidance	0 complaints recorded

NOTABLE OPERATIONS / WORK

There were notable operations/work carried out by Bedfordshire Police, Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) and Joint Protective Services (JPS) in 2023-24 of particular significance (not limited to):

- **Reported in February 2024** - Three men were arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the supply of a controlled drug, after officers executed a warrant last week at a property in Bedford linked to a county lines drug gang. On arrival, officers found three men at the address along with £2,000 worth of crack cocaine and heroin, more than £1,000 in cash, drugs paraphernalia and numerous mobile phones. These latest results follow a number of operations this month that have seen more than £3,000 worth of Class A drugs and weapons seized.
- **Reported in January 2024** - Community officers' crackdown on crime across the county during week of action. Knife crime, shoplifting and drug dealing were among the crimes combatted by Bedfordshire Police's community officers during a national crackdown this week. The force joined constabularies around the country for the neighbourhood policing week of action. The force's northern, southern and central community teams are out and about across different communities all year around – with special operations led by community officers this week to coincide with the nationwide operation. In Luton, officers targeted key locations in Luton town centre as part of Operation Metal, tackling serious criminal activity such as drug dealing, knife crime, anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and violence against women and girls. So far 69 arrests have been made and over £300,000 worth of cash and drugs seized, along with 19 weapons.
- **Reported in January 2024** - Specialist organised crime crackdown hits jail terms of 400 years.
- **Reported in December 2023** - Drugs worth more than £50,000 and £15,000 in cash has been seized by police in a series of warrants at homes and businesses across the county.
- **Reported in December 2023** - Over £300,000 cash and drugs seized in Luton town centre as force prepares to launch Project Servator.
- **Reported in December 2023** - Officers disrupting criminal activity in Luton town centre have now seized more than £300,000 in cash and drugs as Bedfordshire Police prepares to unveil a major new crackdown on crime in the town. Officers working on Operation Metal have also taken 19 weapons off the streets and made 63 arrests as part of the dedicated operation to tackle crime in the town centre since it launched. Project Servator is a policing tactic that aims to disrupt a range of criminal activity, including terrorism, while providing a reassuring presence for the public. Since it launched Operation Metal, led by the CET and the Luton community policing team, has seized £259,000 worth of drugs and £58,675 in cash.
- **Reported in November 2023** - Over 2,000 knives and offensive weapons have been surrendered as Bedfordshire's Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU) launched the county's first dedicated anti-knife crime campaign calling for young people to 'Just Drop It'.

In a collaborative effort with police, local authorities, education settings and community groups, officers carried out more than 30 weapons sweeps in parks, alleyways, and town centres in their attempts to seize concealed and discarded weapons.

- **Reported in November 2023** - A specialist Bedfordshire Police operation targeting suspected criminal cash being funneled out of the country has seized over £200,000 since July. This is since the National Crime Agency identified the likes of airports and other ports across the UK as potential hotbeds for this kind of money laundering activity in its most recent review of serious and organised crime. The ongoing operation has earmarked suspected organised crime gangs looking to move their money to other countries.

Bedfordshire Police is continuing to search suspected organised crime group members in a bid to disrupt their activities, including those looking to leave the country. In one of the most recent seizures this month nearly £30,000 in cash was found at London Luton Airport. Official force figures show that between April and September Bedfordshire Police has carried out nearly 400 disruptions against organised criminal activity and remains focussed on targeting those who exploit vulnerability and cause harm in local communities.

- **Reported in October 2023** - Fourteen arrests during week of action to tackle county drugs lines. Forces across the country took part in county lines intensification week, which saw 250 county lines dismantled and 1,613 arrests made across the country. Across the Eastern region, 132 people were safeguarded, including 35 children, thanks to the efforts of different police forces. Exploitation, coercion and violence are cornerstones of the county lines trade, and cannabis is used by gangs to trap young people into debt, forcing them to transport their drugs and sell to other children to continue the cycle.
- **Reported in September 2023** - Bedfordshire Police secures national Menopause Friendly Accreditation - Bedfordshire Police has officially been accredited as a Menopause Friendly employer, having demonstrated continually high standards and proven practices that embrace the menopause in the workplace. The industry-recognised Menopause Friendly Accreditation (MFA) was jointly awarded to Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire (BCH) police forces. The accreditation has only been awarded to five police forces nationally and highlights their ongoing commitment to promoting awareness, understanding and support of the menopause.
- **Reported in September 2023** - Drugs worth almost £3,000 have been seized and 15 arrests made this month by a new operation to make Luton town centre a safe place to live, work and visit. The enforcement action under Operation Metal saw Bedfordshire Police make four arrests and seize what officers think was the handset behind the 'Maz' drugs line. The same operation led by the force's Community Enforcement Team seized around £30,000 in cash as part of the same investigation. It means that throughout August Operation Metal led to 15 arrests and the seizure of four knives, £32,000 in cash and around £2,950 worth of drugs, as dedicated officers proactively tackle criminal activity in the town centre.
- **Reported in August 2024** - Bedfordshire Police and National Police Air Service team up to clamp down on nuisance vehicles. Bedfordshire Police joined forces with National Police Air Service (NPAS) this week to drive down the illegal and antisocial use of motorbikes, scooters, and other vehicles in central Bedfordshire. The joint operation saw community policing officers covering the ground, patrolling areas where repeated issues had been reported in Dunstable, Houghton Regis, and Leighton Buzzard, while an NPAS helicopter provided surveillance and support from above. Trained motorcyclists from Bedfordshire Police's Operation Meteor team – the force's dedicated response to nuisance motorbikes – were also on the road, ready to respond quickly to any incidents and reports of antisocial riding. The harm that illegal and nuisance vehicles can cause to communities can be significant. In addition to endangering the public and other road users through reckless driving, these vehicles can cause disturbances and property damage, and may even be used for criminal endeavours such as transporting drugs. During the two-day operation, two scooters were seized under S165 Road Traffic Act 1988. A man was also arrested for possession with intent to supply Class A drugs, while another was arrested for drug driving.
- **Reported in August 2023** - More than £30,000 cash has been seized and a man arrested by officers on a new operation targeting crime in Luton town centre. Officers from Bedfordshire Police's Community Enforcement Team found the cash in the back of a car stopped by police.
- **Reported in July 2023** - Cannabis worth £2 million seized in month of police action across county. Bedfordshire Police made 25 arrests and seized cannabis plants worth more than £2 million in a month-long national operation combatting the criminal networks behind organised cannabis cultivation. Throughout June 2023, police forces across England and Wales supported Operation Mille and executed over 1,000 warrants against organised crime at a scale and pace never seen before.

In Bedfordshire, officers carried out 16 search warrants, resulting in 25 people arrested and 4,397 cannabis plants seized. In addition, £125,000 in cash, half a kilogramme of cocaine, two combat-style knives and one imitation firearm was also seized, as well as two luxury cars.

The operation aimed to disrupt organised crime group (OCG) activity by targeting mass cannabis production, a key source of their illicit income. The link between serious organised crime and those involved in cannabis cultivation is clear, with the drugs trade fuelling gang violence as groups compete for territory and drive out their opposition.

- **Reported in June 2023** - More than £6 million government backing to combat drugs, violence, exploitation, and organised crime in Bedfordshire. The £6.3 million funding awarded by the Home Office will directly support operations specifically set-up to tackle this multi-faceted and interlinked criminal activity in Bedfordshire. The force's Boson and Costello teams have dedicated officers and staff leading the fight against gangs and organised crime, in recognition of the need to effectively tackle the significant threat posed by these issues in the county.

Bedfordshire Police have also released a new video outlining some of the successes both Boson and Costello have achieved since they were established in 2018 and 2020 respectively. The new government funding will be split between both operations, which between them have made close to 1,000 arrests, seized millions of pounds worth of drugs, and taken dozens of firearms off the streets.

<https://www.beds.police.uk/police-forces/bedfordshire-police/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-costello/>

- **Reported in June 2023** - Multiple arrests in Bedfordshire over mass cannabis production. More than £450,000 worth of cannabis has been seized in connection with mass cannabis production following a series of warrants across Bedfordshire. During the warrants, police seized a total of 477 cannabis plants with the highest estimated street value total of £455,510, according to expert police drug witnesses.
- **Reported in May 2023** - More than a thousand weapons surrendered following knife crime week of action. Over 1,000 knives and other weapons were recovered across Bedfordshire following a week-long amnesty as part of a national campaign to cut knife crime. Operation Sceptre saw Bedfordshire Police join forces with key partners and communities to carry out operational activity across the county. The county's 11 weapons bins were emptied, with 1,038 offensive weapons recovered. These weapons will be destroyed after being reviewed by officers to see if they have been used in any criminal acts.
- **Reported in May 2023** - Hundreds of potential victims of modern slavery identified in Bedfordshire. More than 750 potential victims of modern slavery were identified in Bedfordshire last year, according to official Home Office figures. Between January 2022 and December 2022 last year 755 referrals in total were made by different agencies in the county to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a framework for identifying victims of modern slavery or human trafficking. This was the fourth highest number of any police force area in the country, with more potential victims identified in Bedfordshire than in Greater Manchester and the whole of Scotland. Of those identified, 147 were children aged 17 and under.
- **Reported in May 2023** - Watchdog grades Bedfordshire Police 'good' for tackling organised crime. Bedfordshire Police has been rated as good for the way it tackles serious and organised crime, with the force leading the way across the region for tackling county drugs lines, modern slavery and gun crime. The grading and report praise the force's leadership, work with partners and activity to prevent organised crime as key aspects of its comprehensive plan to tackle these issues. The report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) also gives a good grading to the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), which coordinates the response to serious and organised crime across the region.
- **Reported in April 2023** - Detectives have called on communities to report possible cannabis factories in Bedfordshire to avoid violent clashes between rival gangs in their neighbourhoods. New figures released by us reveal the force uncovered 128 cannabis factories across the county over the past year – one every three days. Around a quarter of these were only discovered by police following reports of burglaries at these locations, with rival drugs gangs often targeting them to steal the product and disrupt rival criminal operations.
- **Reported in April 2023** - The force welcomed the return of Op Cadbury, the force's proactive response to policing domestic abuse offenders. The operation sees officers check on high risk offenders, carry out priority arrests and check conditions of civil orders like domestic violence protection orders. The force's dedicated domestic abuse team, Emerald, run the operation, with two people arrested for separate incidents for breach of conditions on its first day. As well as the perpetrator focus, measures have been put in place to improve services for victims. The force also launched WEPROTECT, an instant victim referral app for legal advice in a bid to improve support and safeguarding of victims.

The project is a partnership between the force and the Domestic Abuse Alliance, which offers specialist legal support. Some 52 victims have been referred to the app already since it launched. Rapid Video Response (RVR) pilot went live in Bedfordshire in March 2023, which enables non-emergency victims of domestic abuse to speak to a specialist officer via video link rather than a call handler.
- **Reported in April 2023** - Drugs worth around £300,000 seized - Cannabis worth around £250,000, half a kilo of suspected cocaine and £10,000 in cash has been seized after a series of warrants targeting organised crime in Luton. Officers from Bedfordshire Police's specialist Community Enforcement Team (CET) led the operation which culminated in four people being arrested at an address in Luton. Officers seized Class A drugs worth around £50,000 and almost £10,000 of cash at the property. It followed two previous warrants in Luton where CET officers uncovered cannabis worth around £250,000. CET work with local teams across the county on proactive operations to tackle issues identified by officers out in the community.