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STRATEGY TO PREVENT & REDUCE SERIOUS VIOLENT CRIME & EXPLOITATION IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

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(1) Introduction

<u>Mission Statement</u> -To work collaboratively to provide a whole systems response to the issue of serious violence in our community including that which occurs within the context of the criminal and sexual exploitation of children, young people and adults.

Overview of Issues - Recorded crime in Wokingham Borough in 2022/23 is 20% higher than five years previously (2018/19), largely due to increases in Violent Crime (Violence without Injury has had a greater increase than Violence with Injury over the 5 years) and Public Order offences. Public Order offences peaked in 2021/22 and has had a 2% decrease in 2022/23. Acquisitive Crime is returning to pre-pandemic levels and is the most reported crime type in Wokingham Borough. Areas of concern are the increases in:

- Violence without Injury
- Violence With Injury
- Public Order Offences
- Sexual Offences Sexual Assault & Sexual Activity

Definitions

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

Exploitation happens when a child, young person or adult is encouraged – or forced – to take part in sexual or criminal activity, including drug dealing or sending of inappropriate images.

Success Measures

Reductions in the offences of crimes of concern above (utilising a 2022/23 baseline) together with reductions for the Group 1 Home Office indicators of

- all homicides
- all grievous bodily harm
- all knife crime.

Governance - The Serious Violence & Exploitation Strategy Board (SV & ESB) is responsible for producing the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), Strategy and Action Plan. SV & ESB meets quarterly always preceded by a briefing. SV & ESB is chaired by the Thames Valley Police LPA Deputy Commander, there are two deputy chairs. The Board reports to the Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership (WBCSP).

Performance of the SV & ESB is monitored quarterly with other delivery groups by the Performance Management Group and in turn this group reports to WBCSP.

Key Recommendations

The key recommendations informing our approach are:

- Consistent data sharing to ensure comparison and trend analysis can be completed to support more in-depth analysis.
- to identify the most appropriate trigger points for early intervention and the most appropriate agencies to intervene at those moments.
- to better understand, through case reviews, the journeys taken to serious violent offending and how these differ to those who are more likely to engage in less serious violence.
- to work with schools to identify learning points from cases where pupils have been excluded for possession of offensive weapons to identify again, any trigger points and opportunities for earlier multi-agency intervention.

<u>Action Plan</u> – We will use evidence and recommendations from the following key sources:

- Thames Valley Police (TVP) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Serious Violence Dashboard
- SV & ESB Local Problem Profile (SNA) September 2023
- SV & ESB Deep-Dives Analysis November, 2022
- Probation data
- Youth Justice Board data
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews & Safeguarding Adult Reviews.

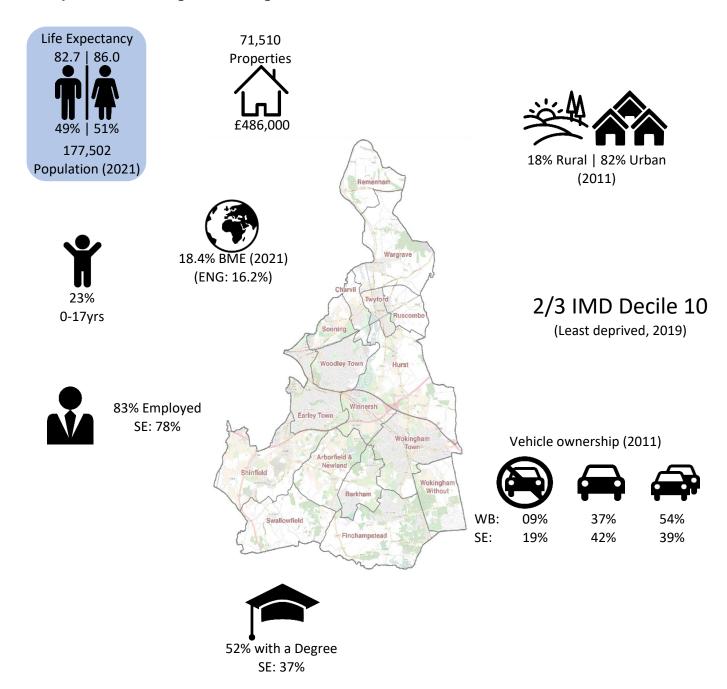
(2) Executive Summary of the Strategy

This Strategy has been produced in response to the requirements of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC ACT). The area covered by the Strategy is the Wokingham Borough Council area and the body responsible for producing, publishing and reviewing the Strategy is WBCSP.

Wokingham Borough is a largely urban and affluent area with low levels of unemployment and small pockets of deprivation. The 2021 population was 177,502 with 71,510 properties. Further analysis is required on the 2021 Census results particularly around the 15% increase in the Wokingham Borough population from 2011 (154,380 to 177,502) compared to 7.5% in the South East and 6.6% nationally. The 64+ age group has increased by 28.2% and the under 15 year's age group by 18%.

Recorded crime in Wokingham Borough in 2022/23 is 20% higher than five years previously (2018/19), largely due to increases in Violent Crime and Public Order offences. Public Order and Violence without Injury have increased year on year for the last 5 years. The biggest increases within violent crime have come from Actual Bodily Harm, Assault without Injury and Harassment. In 2022/23 Acquisitive Crime is the most recorded crime after Violent Crime being the most recorded crime for 2 years.

A picture of Wokingham Borough



To ensure compliance and to facilitate independent monitoring, the Strategy is set out in accordance with `Preventing and reducing serious violence Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities (England and Wales December 2022)'.

This is a whole system approach focussing on prevention and early intervention looking at all ages and including vulnerable adults. From evidence in the 2023 Strategic Needs Assessment (Local Problem Profile) we have identified risk factors for those vulnerable to engaging in violence and perpetrators of violence which give us a focus and targets for our activity.

- a) Children and young people missing and/or excluded from education, or on parttime education timetables
- b) Children and young people in care / leaving care who are not in education, employment or training
- c) Children and Young People with SEND
- d) Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Children and Young People newly arrived in the Borough
- e) Children and young people exposed to Domestic Abuse and/or family conflict.
- f) Children and young people involved in public order and criminal damage.
- g) Children and young people transitioning from PYJS to IOM
- h) Children and young people suspected of Serious Violence offences
- i) Children and young people in EDT who are victims of assault
- i) Children and young people in hotspot areas
- k) Children and young people at midnight, noon and 3pm (peaks in violent crime)
- I) Children of parents with a custodial sentence

(3) The Serious Violence Duty

Following increases in serious violence since 2014, the Government first announced that a new duty would be brought forward in the Queen's speech in December 2019. The duty is part of the provisions in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (PCSC ACT) enacted on April 28th, 2022.

The Duty covers the requirements set out in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the PCSC Act. It requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy.

The following authorities are subject to the duty:

- Police
- Local Authorities
- Youth Offending Teams
- Probation
- Fire & Rescue
- Health Authorities

The legislation grants these authorities the power to share data and information with each other for the purpose of preventing and reducing serious violence.

Educational institutions and prisons/youth custodial establishments will be under a separate duty to co-operate with core duty holders. There will be a requirement for the partnership to consult with all such institutions in their area.

The duty is to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a whole-system approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focused on prevention and early intervention. The duty requires these authorities to work together to generate evidence-based analysis of the problem and solutions and publish what actions they need to take collectively to reduce violent crime, including domestic abuse and sexual offences in local areas. There is flexibility for the responsible authorities to work together in the most effective local partnership for any given area.

This approach complements the current investment in Violence Reduction Units (VRU), in the 20 police force areas most affected by serious violence, by establishing a legal framework to support the successful delivery of this cross-sector approach, including through the extended set of partners on whom the duty will fall. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) has been amended to ensure that tackling serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships. The guidance (*Preventing and reducing serious violence Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities (England and Wales December 2022)*' outlines the changes made to section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requiring Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence.

Duty holders will work together to establish the local problem profile / strategic needs assessment. They will develop and publish a local strategy which will outline the collective action they intend to take, including (but not limited to):

(4) An Executive Summary of the Local Problem Profile (SNA)

- (5) How the partnership (SV & ESB) will work together
- (6) Actions including specific interventions / preventative action
- (7) Engagement plans with voluntary and community organisations and young people
- (8) Identified funding streams or resources.

Local authority Chief Executives are responsible for ensuring adequate representation to and participation with the local partnership.

(4) Executive Summary of the Local Problem Profile/Strategic Needs Assessment

Serious Violence in Wokingham Borough is increasing, based on both police-recorded crimes that match the VRU definition and the current Thames Valley definition of serious violence (taking into account Group 1 and 2 Serious Violence). Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) per 100,000 population, requires an update, but the data we have suggests they have been increasing in recent years. The increases in police-recorded group 1 serious violence are primarily made up of increases in recorded GBH (13%) and knife crime (5%). Within knife crime, Violence with and without injury were the two offence types that increased. Within group 2 serious violence Actual Bodily Harm, Rape, Sexual Assault and Drug Supply have all increased when looking at the 5 year change. This indicates that there have been increases in violent offences in Wokingham Borough over the last 5 years.

Furthermore, while serious violence is increasing in Wokingham Borough, there are also trends of increasing levels of lesser impact violence, including violence occasioning ABH, public order offences, and Sexual offences. The national focus on an early intervention and prevention approach to tackling serious violence calls for a greater understanding of the trigger points and journeys people take that lead to involvement in these types of offences.

Serious Youth Violence is decreasing in Wokingham Borough according to the YJB definition. Despite these decreases, recorded knife and offensive weapon offences involving youths in Wokingham Borough are stable with unchanging totals for the last two years (2021/22 and 2022/23). There has been an overall reduction in the total numbers in the cohort for intervention when compared with the last financial year. First time entrants to the Youth offending cohort have been increasing however the latest figures suggest that this is reducing again to normal levels, this is thought to be related to the clearing of the backlog of investigations as a result of the pandemic.

School exclusions are strongly linked with youth offending in research; however both permanent and fixed term exclusions are increasing in Wokingham Borough. Both Fixed-Term Exclusions and exclusions are more likely to be related to Persistent Disruptive Behaviour, Physical assault against adult/child or Drug and alcohol related and therefore related to less serious incidents.

Wokingham Borough CSP's previous strategic assessment highlighted that domestic abuse, child abuse, social care involvement and Special Educational Needs (SEN) were prevalent in youth offending and child criminal exploitation cases. The increasing complexity of cases should not be underestimated.

Data provided by the probation service on their MAPPA cases that reside within Wokingham Borough suggests that most cases relate to malicious wounding and other like offences and common and other types of assault. It is likely that a proportion of these MAPPA cases will relate to serious violence incidents, 13% of the MAPPA cases would be classified as serious violence under GBH or murder. It is not possible to identify how many further cases would be included as knife crime as this is not included in the data set.

Accommodation and Education, Training and Employment were two of the highest scoring pathway needs at assessment at IOM but also have the largest improvements at IOM exit, indicating a strong association with serious and persistent offending and their significance in achieving desistence from re-offending [Source: Starby May 2022 Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment]. The number of people applying for homelessness support has increased, there is evidence of people applying for support earlier and being offered the Prevention Duty. Wokingham Borough still falls far below the national average for successful outcomes. The most prevalent support needs recorded include mental and physical health

issues followed by domestic abuse, all of which have a higher-than-average proportion reporting when compared with the national data set. The number of people claiming unemployment in Wokingham Borough increased exponentially during the pandemic, and although numbers have reduced since lockdown restrictions ended, they still exceed prepandemic levels.

Recommendations

The Local Government Association's Safer and Stronger Communities Board "support a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, which has become an increasing priority for councils. Early intervention and prevention needs to be central to this work, as opposed to relying solely on a criminal justice strategy.

This requires the input of a range of partners, including in the health and education sectors." [Source: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021: serious violence duty factsheet].

In response to the national guidance and the data presented here, the first recommendation would be to have greater and more consistent data sharing to ensure that comparison can be made year on year without significant changes to the scanning streams. A better understanding of the data will support better and more in-depth analysis. As well as allowing for better suggestions for further data that may be required to be collected I the future.

The second recommendation is to identify the most appropriate trigger points for early intervention and the most appropriate agencies to intervene at those moments. For example, criminal justice involvement is likely to be too late to apply effective early interventions, and enforcement and offender management agencies (such as the police, YOS, probation, and IOM) are not well placed to deliver these initiatives. However, there may be opportunities to reduce access thresholds to address issues earlier than currently possible and employ alternative sanctions such as restorative and out of court disposals to those in the early stages of offending behaviour, particularly where specific vulnerabilities exist. Universal and voluntary sector services are much better placed to identify and address problems early if the right resources and commissioning structures are available.

Following on from the second recommendation to support the identification of early intervention points a better understanding, through case reviews is required. The journeys taken to serious violent offending and how these differ to those who are more likely to engage in less serious violence. Effort should be made to understand the relationship between public order and criminal damage and future serious violent offending as this could help identify trigger points and opportunities for early intervention. In a similar vein, the CSP could work with schools to identify learning points from pupils who have been excluded for possession of offensive weapons to identify again, any opportunities for earlier multi-agency intervention.

While two of these recommendations focus on early intervention, prevention is also a key factor in addressing serious violence. In particular, the possession of a knife is known to increase an individual's risk of both experiencing and perpetrating serious violence, but it also increases the risk of exclusion from school, which is another known predictor of reoffending. Anecdotally, knives are thought to be carried in response to a fear of victimisation and as a perceived deterrent towards others who would potentially cause harm.

There is likely to be scope for educational sessions to raise awareness of the risks of knives and dispel myths on their protective characteristics to dissuade young people from carrying them in the first place.

However, there is also a clear need to work with young people who feel afraid and understand the measures that are most likely to make them feel protected and the types of support that they might engage in when feeling vulnerable.

(5) How the partnership (SV & ESB) will work together.

In line with the World Health Organisations' definition of a public health approach our work will focus on the people living, working and visiting in the defined area of Wokingham Borough. We will work with and for our communities and not be constrained by organisational or professional boundaries.

Information in our Strategic Needs Assessment identifies the burden on the Wokingham Borough Council area population together with any inequalities. Our Strategy is based on evidence and our actions will utilise best practice in terms of effectiveness and will be a mix of long-term and short-term solutions.

<u>Lead Officer</u> – Head of Enforcement & Safety, Wokingham Borough Council. Currently Narinder Brar Narinder.brar@wokingham.gov.uk;

<u>Lead Co-Ordinator</u> – VRU Place Based Navigator, currently Peter Cutts, Community Safety Officer, Wokingham Borough Council. <u>Pete.cutts@wokingham.gov.uk</u>;

<u>Governance</u> - The Serious Violence & Exploitation Strategy Board (SV & ESB) is responsible for producing the Strategic Needs Assessment, Strategy and Action Plan. SV & ESB meets quarterly always preceded by a briefing. SV & ESB is chaired by the Thames Valley Police LPA Deputy Commander, there are two deputy chairs. The Board reports to the Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership.

The Terms of Reference shows a strong membership. Performance of the SV & ESB is monitored quarterly with other Delivery Groups by the Performance Management Group and in turn this group reports to the Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership.

SV & ESB works closely with the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit with representatives serving on the VRU Strategic and Operational Groups. We use evidence and best practice from the 5 VRU workstreams to inform our action plan.https://www.tvvru.co.uk

Framework, for gathering and analysing data – The Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy have been produced in the absence of access to the VRU dashboard and Thames Valley Together Platform (TVT). Starby Consultants were employed utilising CSF Funding and this document has been updated by Liz Brown, a jointly funded partnership analyst hosted by the Office of The Police & Crime Commissioner. It is hoped that access to TVT will materialise shortly. The TVP Strategic Needs Assessment (December 2022) was produced using Police data and partner information that is in the public domain and information from this will further inform our problem profile and action plan.

Who (such as the voluntary and community sector, young people and communities) the partnership will work with; why they have been chosen; and how they will collaborate,

SV & ESB will work with the community and voluntary sector through Involve Community Services and their Community Navigators. Wokingham Borough Council has worked with Involve to produce a VCS Strategy (2020-2025) and Involve manage the Wokingham Charity & Community Hub which is now a home for:

- Involve
- Cranstoun Wokingham
- Home Start Wokingham District
- Health Watch Wokingham Borough
- The Link Visiting Scheme
- Mind in Berkshire
- CLASP
- Promise Inclusion (Pinc)Wokingham Volunteer Centre
- Wokingham Foodbank
- Citizen's Advice Wokingham are already located at Waterford House on the second floor and are also part of the hub

A CVS SWOT analysis was carried out with Involve (Appendix xv).

Consultation arrangements with young people and communities - A resident's survey was produced to inform the Strategy. A further survey of young people was carried out as part of the work of Berkshire Youth and Safer Streets initiative funding secured by TVP OPCC. The Strategic Assessment and action plan is informed by the VRU funded Claremont Survey giving not only the views of young people but clear recommendations around communicating alternative ways to feel and be safer. SV & ESB will work with Wokingham Borough UNICEF Child Friendly Communities Initiative and Youth Council in a youth engagement strategy including developing a counter-narrative around violence and carrying knives. Our work with young people will be informed by the findings in the Youth Endowment Fund `Children, violence and vulnerability' Report. The Place Based Navigator met with the Voluntary Sector Children & Families Steering Group on February 2nd to share the Local Problem Profile and inform both the approach and action plan.

Geographical boundaries (especially if the arrangements operate across more than one local authority area) and how this links to Crime and Disorder Act requirements, - The geographical boundaries are those of Wokingham Borough Council. SV & ESB reports to the Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership, the statutory body responsible for the reduction of crime and disorder in Wokingham Borough.

How engagement with education and prisons will be managed effectively to ensure their involvement, Wokingham Borough Council is a Unitary Authority and we will identify a schools liaison officer to develop relations with all schools and hope to create a new and co-located post of Police Schools Liaison Officer utilizing the Community Safety Fund.

Engagement with Prisons will be managed by the Head of West Berkshire Probation Delivery Unit (also serves on SV & ESB) through quarterly meetings of the Local Leadership Forum with Head of Probation Service and Prison Governors attending (South Central Area).

<u>How appropriate links will be made with safeguarding arrangements</u> – SV & ESB is cochaired by the Assistant Director Children's' Services. SV & ESB has supported a review of Safeguarding arrangements through two Exploitation Task and Finish Groups looking at the Safeguarding Framework and Multi Agency Response (EMRAC).

<u>Involvement of the PCC</u> – The PCC oversees compliance with the delivery of the Serious Violence Duty, ensures funding is received by the Home Office and is allocated following collaboration with partnerships, including the CSPs, across the Thames Valley.

The TVP PCC, Matthew Barber, convened a meeting of community safety partners on February 22nd, 2023 attended by the Wokingham Borough Place Based Navigator. The event included discussions on use of the labour and non labour funding, definition, geography and ownership of SNA's and Strategies. The intention was to identify any efficiencies across the complex Thames Valley partnership area. A summary was circulated for partners to share more widely before re-convening on March 8th, 2023. A number of Thames Valley wide agreements have been made including a new definition, removal of the upper 25 years old age limit, structure for reporting and how funding will be used. The OPCC hosts the jointly funded analyst post responsible for the production of the Strategic Needs Assessment.

Set out what the arrangements are for commissioning additional services under the strategy and how links are made to existing funding partnership for prevention and reduction activities – this forms part of the Strategic Needs Assessment.

Recommendations are based on evidence including new approaches, review of services and additional services. There is an agreed approach to the Performance Management Group for bids to the CSF fund and this may include a bid for a co-located Police Schools Liaison Officer.

<u>What the arrangements are for independent scrutiny of the strategy – The first version of this strategy was assessed as `ready.</u> 'In addition to the Crest Advisory `duty readiness' assessment (questionnaire completed 24/02/23) it is envisaged that there will be a peer assessment carried out by partner Place Based Navigators (PBN's) within the TVP area utilising a benchmarking template to ensure compliance with key requirements. This proposal was made at the OPCC Partnership Agreement Event (22/03/23) and subsequent questionnaire. This approach aligns with current thinking as part of the national review of CSP's.

<u>A high-level (non-sensitive) summary of the strategic needs assessment</u> – an executive summary is provided in section (4) of this document.

Actions (including early intervention preventative action) to be undertaken by the whole partnership area, by sector/partners and wider actions (where appropriate — cross boundaries or nationally), how the identified actions enhance or complement existing actions/or arrangements within the local area — The format for the Action Plan is set out in section (8) of the document.

<u>An executive summary of the serious violence strategy</u> – an executive summary is provided at the top of this document (2).

Where applicable the annual assessment of the partnership's performance against the previous years' strategy – The Strategy to be published no later than 31/01/2024 and the first annual assessment by 31/01/2025.

Our approach is based on the experience and knowledge of key partners agreed at a workshop in February 2021 and informed by public consultation. Partners agreed to include exploitation and vulnerable adults in the strategy.

We will encourage authorities to place an emphasis on early intervention with young people in order to prevent them from becoming either a victim or perpetrator of serious violence in the first place.

A public health approach necessitates that partner agencies review their systems and processes and this has commenced with work-groups meeting to look at Safeguarding framework and multi-agency response EMRAC.

This strategy has important links to existing strategies and the actions plans of a number of agencies with related but separate statutory duties including e.g. Safeguarding, Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse.

The Strategy contributes to the Wokingham Borough Community Vision that Wokingham is a great place to live, learn and grow, and a great place to do business and key objective to create Safe and Strong Communities.

One Serious Violence & Exploitation Action Plan will be created and monitored by SV & ESB including actions based on recommendations in the Strategic Needs Assessment and developing Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy. The Action Plan will be monitored at quarterly meetings.

List of key strategies and initiatives

- Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2021-2024
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews & Safeguarding Adult Reviews.
- Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24
- Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy 2023-26
- Berkshire West Drugs & Alcohol Needs Assessment 2022
- Wokingham Prevent Action Plan 2022-23
- Wokingham ASB Strategy 2023-26
- Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2020-25
- Royal Berks Hospital A & E Navigators Initiative (Report 2022)
- VRU Strategic Assessment

(6) Engagement plans with voluntary and community organisations and young people

SV & ESB will work with the community and voluntary sector through Involve Community Services and their Community Navigators. Wokingham Borough Council has worked with Involve to produce a VCS Strategy (2020-2025) and Involve manage the Wokingham Charity & Community Hub which is now a home for:

- Involve
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- Promise Inclusion (Pinc)
- Wokingham Volunteer Centre
- Wokingham Foodbank
- Citizen's Advice Wokingham are already located at Waterford House on the second floor and are also part of the hub

A CVS SWOT analysis was carried out with Involve.

A resident's survey was produced to inform the Strategy. SV & ESB will work with Wokingham Borough UNICEF Child Friendly Communities Initiative and Youth Council in a youth engagement strategy including developing a counter-narrative around violence and carrying knives.

(7) Identified funding streams or resources – The PCC allocation to Wokingham Borough Community Safety Partnership is - £103,138 in 2022/23, £126,561 in 2023/24 and £150,875 in 2024/25. A total over 3 years of £380,574.

Approved and anticipated bids including requests for grants over 3 years, means an existing commitment of £317,000. There is an agreed approach to the Performance Management Group for bids to the CSF fund and this may include a bid for a co-located Police Schools Liaison Officer.

(8) Actions including specific interventions / preventative action

The action plan is a live document and is informed and developed following monitoring in terms of effectiveness and further analysis undertaken by partners on the SV & ESB. Actions flow from evidence and recommendations in the Strategic Assessment and further commissioned analysis.

All actions are either primary, secondary or tertiary with a clear focus on prevention and early intervention. In a public health approach early intervention should mean that the earliest opportunity is taken. There may be opportunities to reduce access thresholds to address issues earlier than currently operated.

From evidence we have identified risk factors for the vulnerable and perpetrators of violence which give us a focus and targets for our activity.

- a) Children and young people missing and/or excluded from education, or on parttime education timetables
- b) Children and young people in care / leaving care who are not in education, employment or training
- c) Children and Young People with SEND
- d) Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Children and Young People newly arrived in the Borough
- e) Children and young people exposed to Domestic Abuse and/or family conflict.
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- i) Children and young people in hotspot areas
- k) Children and young people at midnight, noon and 3pm (peaks in violent crime)
- I) Children of parents with a custodial sentence

The Action Plan will be further informed by recommendations from:

- VRU Dashboard
- Thames Valley Together Platform
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews & Safeguarding Adult Reviews.
- Berkshire West Drug & Alcohol Strategic Needs Assessment & CDP Plan An analysis of violence against public sector