



The Police and Crime Plan for Bedfordshire (2021 – 2024)

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF POLICING



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Foreword

It is an honour to serve as Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner. Being the voice of residents when it comes to the setting of policing priorities, delivering a safer Bedfordshire for all our residents, and working constructively with the Chief Constable are just some of my statutory responsibilities.

My number one priority is the safety of each of our residents—irrespective of whether they live in our busy urban settings, growing market towns or rural communities. Therefore, this Police and Crime Plan sets out a vision that delivers for all of Bedfordshire, with a strong emphasis on crime prevention, victim care and visible community policing.

While it is imperative that we clampdown on organised crime gangs, serious violence, antisocial behaviour, and cyber-crime etc through police enforcement; I believe we can be at the forefront of a prevention-based approach to crime reduction and community safety.

This focus is true to the letter and spirit of Sir. Robert Peel's founding principles that underpin British policing since its inception in 1829. It also aligns with the growing emphasis the government is placing on prevention and diversion through the creation of Violence Reduction Units – which take a public health approach to serious youth violence, for example.

Ultimately, the success of our hard-working police officers, safeguarding partnerships and other agencies in keeping our communities safer, depend largely on all of us pulling together as a community to fight crime. I have full confidence that we will continue to do this as we come out of the covid pandemic and by working together – we can make Bedfordshire safer for our children, families, and communities.

Sincerely yours

Festus Akinbusoye – Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Key Summary

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

- Ensure the implementation of Bedfordshire Police's Community Policing Plan
- Partnership working with Local Authorities, use of smart spaces for improved access to services
- Support Neighbourhood Schemes and engage fully with Community Safety Partnerships
- Invest in technology and Control Room aimed at increasing public confidence in policing
- Invest in volunteer roles that can be aligned with and for the community

2: Recruitment and retention of police officers.

- Wellbeing and welfare of officers
- Organisation culture challenge and tasking
- Inclusion and equality commitment

3: Tackling the causes of crime and breaking the cycle of re-offending.

- Mentoring
- Paid internships
- A supportive Pathway for parents and guardians
- Debating competitions
- Youth Spaces
- Next Steps Programme
- Perpetrator focus for crime types such as Cyber, Fraud, Child Sexual Exploitation Domestic Abuse and Roads
- Probation Framework

4: Placing residents and victims at centre of policing priorities.

- Signpost; service for those who have experienced crime
- Commitment to the Victim Code of Practice and timeliness of return of items
- Delivery of the Victims Need Analysis
- Community Engagement
- Investigation focus / Protecting the Vulnerable
- Business Watch
- Ministry of Justice Fund

5: Multi-agency and transparent approach to community safety and crime reduction.

- Information sharing
- Engage the community in true problem solving
- Action on drug dealing, fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour
- Criminal Justice Centre

6: Transparency and open communication.

- Publication of Strategic Board Meetings
- Publishing information on websites
- Engagement with communities, local and national media

7: National contributions

- Engaging with national review
- The Strategic Policing Requirement
- Local connection to national issues of emergency

Priority I

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

Deliverables:

1.1 Community Engagement; Problem Solving and Days of Action

Visible and active community policing is important, so are partner approaches and operations on specific crime types which hold real benefits for local areas.

Community policing is therefore not just about the police, working alone or in isolation from the community they police. It is a combination of residents, businesses, schools, and other stakeholders working in partnership with the police. We will invest in our Neighbourhood and Watch Schemes, as partners in community safety. They will also be held accountable for the investment so as to demonstrate value for money for residents and tangible outcomes.

A successful engagement campaign can do a lot to educate, inform and support the public about alternative approaches that will work for the issues they are experiencing. We will work together to deliver real change at community engagement and action days across the County. The neighbourhood schemes will be key to this delivery. We will, through our governance boards, monitor if community officers are supported to be focused on the community policing they are there to deliver.

We will also work with Bedfordshire Police to ensure they are updating key contacts when post holders change in community-based roles and actively making good use of these contacts for intelligence purposes through agreed community policing protocols.



1.2 Community Trigger

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is one of the most common incidents reported to the police and features strongly in the government's Beating Crime Plan. I am also very mindful of residents' wishes to tackle this issue locally given its identified impact on quality of life of victims, businesses, and local communities.

We will ensure that communities understand that they can be part of a process which will get their local council, the police and other organisations working together to identify what can be done to better tackle the anti-social behaviour that is affecting them if they aren't initially satisfied with a response about this crime type.

1.3 Access to policing services

Technology and smart locations will be identified for collaborative spaces for the public to have greater access to police services.

Making sure that where possible, there is feedback or acknowledgment on intelligence provided. We will also ensure greater access to updates on reported cases so that this service is not reliant on shift pattern of the investigating officer.

The advances in mobile and internet technology provide real opportunities for policing that can be leveraged to securely enhance the public's access to some core police services, which currently are not at the levels they could be.

The use of internet or mobile enabled points for not only reporting crime, but also following up on reported crime, intelligence reporting, uploading images and video, probation service delivery and signposting to victim support or other services – are key areas that will be explored.

Investing in these will not only improve residents' experience with police service delivery but also relieve some of the demand pressures on our control room, police staff and police officers. This will free up capacity, potentially cut costs and improve staff welfare.

We will invest to improve performance and wellbeing of staff in our Force Control Room.

1.4 Volunteers

I will recruit local people as agents of change to work with us for their community. Such volunteer roles as Special Constables will be aligned to communities for those communities. I will work with the Force to recruit designated Community Special Constables. These will be residents who volunteer to help police their local area as warranted police officers. Their local knowledge and passion for their area will be assets for community safety.



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Priority II

Recruitment and retention of police officers.

Deliverables:

2.1 Culture and Wellbeing

Police and Crime Commissioners have statutory responsibilities for delivering an efficient and effective police service. Our efficiency and effectiveness improves when the right level of resources are available and maximised.



Bedfordshire Police's attrition rate requires focus to maximise the resource level that we have. The force has begun a significant re-branding of its values, in an effort to shape and deliver a culture suited to modern policing. There still remains some significant risks with staff burn-out especially in the

areas of Investigation, the Force Contact Centre (FCC) and CyberTeam. Bedfordshire Police also still suffers from a view that it often 'talks the talk, but doesn't fully walk the talk'. Despite previous investments in upgrading the working environments there is still opportunity to continue with this but with a greater focus on staff members, their wellbeing, level of complaints and understanding underlying issues - such as leadership and supervision support.

A fully engaged and supported workforce is the key enabler to deliver this Police and Crime Plan, which is why retention and staff welfare are key priorities.

Core to this work is the accessibility of our working spaces as well as the inclusivity of our workforce at all levels of the organisational structure.

Additionally, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be held accountable for improving the levels and quality of exit interviews, refining the process where needed and acting on analysed data in order to drive up retention. Furthermore, a comprehensive estates review will be carried out to assess how fit for purpose the working space of our growing Force is, and how well they meet the needs of our growing population. This will be a ten year forward plan with a view to upgrading the physical working environment of our staff.

This estates review will also take into consideration our responsibilities toward a greener and cleaner environment in the areas we operate.

I will support the work of the Force in improving the welfare of officers by investing in additional mental health and counselling support for staff members, ensuring the currently existing service is working and ensuring that staff welfare is a primary priority at all levels. The latter will be achieved through channels of scrutiny that are available and also direct engagement with officers, staff and representing bodies such as Police Federation, Unions and in-force support groups.

2.2 Equality Commitment

I am determined to tackle racism, discrimination and bias wherever we find it. We will work to ensure that we police with the consent of our community, for our community.

I will work with representing bodies that support diverse groups within the Force to ensure we pick up on the earliest signs of discrimination and exclusionary practices which impact on disproportional outcomes in areas such as recruitment, promotions, career progression, disciplinaries and dismissals. The aim will be to address any identified disproportionality of outcomes for all of our staff.

We will also use our platform to focus our messaging to the perpetrators of these crimes and not move into a victim blaming space of purely offering preventative advice to girls and women.

I will drive the ambition of the recruitment of new recruits to be more reflective of Bedfordshire residents, this will be in line with the available population who could apply for the role of Police Constable in line with Central direction of qualifications for new recruits.

Priority III

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

Deliverables:

3.1 Community Safety Partnerships

Community Safety Partnerships represent the voice of the public with Local Authorities. I will work with all the strategies in place designing collaboratively our approaches to areas such as youth support and early intervention. This area links to section five where we discuss multi-agency working.

3.2 Internships and youth engagement

Community safety is more than just policing and police numbers. It is also about tackling the causes of crime such as lack of opportunity, access to mentorship and suitable peer support.

To ensure our communities' future leaders get a supported voice in policing now, we will run paid internship programmes across the year to engage our young people, work with them and support them in delivering their ideas. They will be supported in the design, delivery and evaluation of projects that directly impact on young people across the county. The scheme is also designed to bring young people across Bedfordshire together to work on a shared project.

The ability to confidently communicate, work as team and critically assess social issues from both sides of a divide are good life skills to possess. This is why we will run an annual schools' debating competition across the county for young people to practice essential life skills and ensure we focus on educating young people about their rights.

We will run debates across the county for young people to practice essential life skills and ensure we focus on educating young people about their rights. Crime reduction, education and life opportunities go hand in hand.

3.3 Cyber Crime

A cross-cutting issue that is still rising today is that of cybercrime. Ranging from fraud to indecent behaviour, child sexual exploitation to revenge porn; cyber-crime has grown massively through the pandemic. Providing the resources needed for this area is vital, as technology usage increases for offenders, so must our response to tackling cyber-related crimes.



We will invest to increase Bedfordshire Police's capacity to deal with cyber-related crimes more swiftly. This will be particularly helpful in the investigation of crimes where mobile phones and laptops require forensic investigation in-situ.

3.4 Domestic Abuse

At the start of the pandemic it was sadly predicted that domestic abuse would rise in one years' time as individuals became ready to reach out for support. This prediction has become a reality and from May 2021 it did rise. I will ensure that appropriate services are in place for victims within the power of the OPCC.

We will implement an offender management initiative to include a cohort of domestic abuse perpetrators, thus making a shift away from advising victim to deterring offenders.

3.5 Road Safety

We will take a public health approach to crime on our roads. I will utilise the Cameras Tickets and Collisions fund available to me to treat the causes of road related crimes not just the outcomes. This will include a commitment to the Speed Watches to support their work and to support local councils in improving the response to speeding and e-scooters.

3.6 Direction

We will continue to manage 'Direction for Bedfordshire' the organisation that is supporting offenders as they turn away from criminality. This includes support for those leaving prison and returning to Bedfordshire as a resident.

3.7 Next Steps programme

We will support individuals with alcohol and drug dependencies who are ready to gain support to move away from criminality. This is a partner approach with health, policing and the Local Authorities supported by Direction.

3.8 Probation framework

The national changes to the probation framework mean, that to be considered for any supportive programmes that become available the OPCC needs to qualify onto the framework. We will do this to ensure we access opportunities for service users.

3.9 Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit and Youth Spaces

I want young people to have a direct say in how we utilise resources to support them in making safe spaces across Bedfordshire. This work will link with the delivery of the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit that I will continue to perform the governance and oversight role for.

3.10 Pathways to support young people and their carers

While it is vital that we continue the work we do in directly engaging with young people in schools, community hubs and in public spaces, I want to ensure we are also reaching the parents and carers of our young people. Most parents and carers do the very best they can for their children. However, there may be some who are struggling to cope with changes in a child's behaviour, unable to spot the signs of child criminal exploitation and might be unaware of what to do if they notice something of serious concern. They may be afraid to contact the police or reluctant to inform the school or social services.

We will provide a support worker to be the bridge for carers of our young people to reassure, advice and signpost as needed. Ensuring that young people and the people that care for them feel supported to make safe decisions is key for focusing on preventative measures, so young people never need to experience a life of criminality.

3.11 Violence Against Women and Girls

We know these are difficult and distressing times for the survivors of male violence. We understand this has gone on for too long. We will look hard internally at culture, systems and processes that may have made your journey as someone impacted by this crime difficult or more painful than it needed it to be.

In addition to addressing organisational barriers that make support more difficult for survivors, we will also bid into all available Home Office funding that can be utilised to make our streets and communities safer spaces for women and girls.

Priority IV

Placing residents and victims at centre of policing priorities.

Deliverables:

4.1 Victims' Code of Practice Commitment

It is crucial that each individual is supported appropriately throughout the criminal justice system and beyond. It is important that the revised Victims' Code is accessible to all victims of crime and to ensure that they are aware of their entitlements. We will therefore:

- Communicate local processes in Bedfordshire, how victims can access support, key information and services.
- Communicate the OPCC's support of each right.
- Monitor Bedfordshire Police compliance with the rights.

4.2 Community Safety Fund

I will ensure the community safety fund is balanced across offender management, prevention of criminality in an evidenced based way.

4.3 Business Support

In order to support our local businesses, I will start a Business Partnership programme across the County, listening and responding to the needs of our local industries.



Businesses are key contributors to the overall welfare and prosperity of our communities. They create jobs, contribute through taxes and often are the lifeblood of local areas. The increase in the rate of assaults on retail staff, for example is unacceptable as is the targeting of businesses by organised or persistent criminals. I believe we can find ways to improve the level of police service available to our local businesses, whether in rural areas or urban centres.

4.4 Investigation focus / Protecting the Vulnerable

I will ensure that victims of crime are offered the right level of investigation and ensure vulnerable individuals are taken through the process in a way that works for them as an individual. I will modernise the charity; The Bedfordshire Police Partnership Trust so that vulnerable people are supported with both physical and mental needs.

4.5 Victim Needs Analysis

The recommendations of the Victim Needs Analysis 2021 have been allocated to appropriate boards to progress action plans and partner contributions. I will ensure delivery of these actions so those needs are met.

4.6 Ministry of Justice Fund

I will ensure that the money for victims is distributed in accordance with the needs of Bedfordshire. Commissioning will also have a focus on drug and alcohol dependent service users, not linked to conditional cautions, instead linked to victims and their needs.

4.7 National fraud

Every PCC must be a champion for victims and fulfill their statutory obligation of commissioning services to support victims with coping and recovering from crime both mentally and physically, for crime types such as fraud I will ensure we have the right support in place for our people through Signpost, the service for those affected by crime.

We will also contribute to the national review of the service for investigating fraud.

4.8 Child Sexual Exploitation

Our young people deserve to feel safe, when something has gone horrifically wrong, I will ensure I have the right resources to support them and will work with partner agencies to ensure the same.

4.9 Ten Year Estate Plan

I will work with Bedfordshire Police to sign off a 10-year plan for our estate that considers

- Criminal activity
- Victim impact
- Accessibility for all residents
- Collaborative responsibilities
- Alignment with Local Authorities' development plans.

Priority V

Multi-agency approach to community safety and crime reduction.

Deliverables:

5.1 Partnerships

Building and maintaining a strong network of key partners is essential, whilst the other “Blue Light Providers”, Local Authorities and Judicial bodies and agencies are a given.

Strong and appropriate links with local and national businesses are of great benefit for various elements of the delivery of any plan, from drawing upon Corporate and Social Responsibility strategies for employees to volunteer locally within Bedfordshire Police, to supporting and promoting the Partnership Trust with sponsored equipment, locations for events etc.

With the greater desire to embrace more technological solutions, links should be forged with IT providers, so that the organisation could potentially benefit from supporting the development of emerging Police Technology in a very cost-effective way (Allowing the Force to assist in the development and testing of new systems and innovation, therefore reducing the cost of receiving such systems due to mutually beneficial contract terms and arrangements).

Utilising pockets of money such as Safer Streets to reduce crime in locations across Bedfordshire.

5.2 Criminal Justice Centre

The new Criminal Justice Centre will be delivered in 2022 and will be a flagship of partner working in the justice sector.

5.3 Partnership delivery of community engagement and action

Working with our partners collaboratively to deliver the focus on listening and working with the community.



We will build a strategy to bring commissioners of services together to

make joined up decisions to see the money go further for the people of Bedfordshire.

5.4 Anti-bullying

We will lead on a county-wide campaign and effort to tackle bullying as a known contributor to Adverse Childhood Experiences, fear and vulnerabilities which can increase the push factors towards serious violence or criminal activities.

This campaign will work with schools to add support in terms of a mentor available to young people.

5.5 A focus on Restorative Justice

Getting the benefits of restorative Justice into schools and other areas where the technique can be used appropriately. Ensure awareness of the restorative approaches are well advertised.

5.6 Working with our local educators

I will directly engage with young people through school visits, attending targeted events and other alternative education providers.

Priority VI

Transparency and open communication.

Deliverables:

6.1 Communication and Engagement Strategy

It is essential that residents are made aware of the resources, support and opportunities available towards making their areas safer. This is an area that I take seriously as it is fundamental to improving public confidence, trust and legitimacy of policing.

Consequently, we will communicate with the people of Bedfordshire to promote positive interactions aimed at achieving these objectives.

I stand with those who want to see policing that has the confidence of all of our communities and I believe we can achieve this through positive, consistent and inclusive community engagement.

We will make use of direct engagement with residents, working in partnership with local authorities as well as communicate through other platforms such as social media, monthly newsletters and printed material. In addition, we will foster an open relationship with local and national media outlets as part of this strategy.

We will ensure we listen and work with the Independent Advisory Group members who support Bedfordshire Police and my office as critical friends.

6.2 Transparency

The public have told me that improving accountability will go a long way to improve trust with Bedfordshire Police. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) use



a framework called PEEL to assess how well a Force is functioning.

My Office will utilise the same approach to both monitor the work of the service and then communicate that work to the people of Bedfordshire. Ensuring full cover of the successes and the areas where there is work to do.

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We will publish information through utilising information management agreements with Bedfordshire Police, therefore making police data more accessible to the community without having to go through a Freedom of Information (Fol) request.

This doesn't only save time and money, but also improves transparency, accountability and legitimacy.

We will dip-sample and monitor not only the complaints to Bedfordshire Police that we as an Office have to do but we will add the expressions of dissatisfaction from the public to this same sample approach, ensuring we have full view of what is not going well so it can be addressed.

Here we will be expecting the National Code of Ethics to have been implemented at every opportunity.

As PCC I will ensure that my Office and Bedfordshire Police work with our internal auditors fully and in line with the Audit annual schedules. The Topics will be agreed between the Chief Executive for the OPCC and ACO for the Force and any findings/recommendations will be worked through against process and ensure the findings are presented to my JAC board.

As PCC I will ensure that the OPCC and HMICFRS have a working relationship that delivers any recommendations directed to the PCC or OPCC.

A specific example of this is the Roads Policing Inspection. My office will attend a joint working group with the Force, where all aspects of this inspection are reviewed and discussed. The OPCC will ensure that all recommendations which have been made to Bedfordshire Police are completed and continually monitored.

The HMICFRS Report on the super-complaint on policing and immigration status said that

'Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners - In consultation/collaboration with local or national specialist organisations, should:

: Take steps to promote migrant victims' and witnesses' confidence in reporting crimes to the police through safe reporting pathways, without fear of prioritised immigration control.

: Conduct assessment of local access to specialist victim support organisations or networks and take any necessary steps to build up such networks'.

6.3 Risk

As PCC my Chief Executive will work with internal and external auditors to ensure that our Strategic Risk Register reflects the most recent issues and that clear mitigation is designed logged and implemented.

Priority VII

National contributions

Deliverables:

7.1 Engaging with National reviews

I will fully engage in the Strategic Performance Review run by Government to ensure Bedfordshire's needs are heard, understood and responded to. I will work with my colleagues across collaborations to both share with that review how far we have come with collaborative approaches but also with plans of how we can further enhance both the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborated policing areas.

I will continue to monitor and plan the financial situation of Bedfordshire police through the Strategic Board with my Chief Finance Officer, always ensuring decisions are made based on evidence-based policing.

7.2 The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR)

The latest version of the Strategic Policing Requirement identifies six key threats that police and crime commissioners must consider when establishing local policing plans:

Terrorism; serious and organised crime; a national cyber security incident; threats to public order and public safety; civil emergencies; and child sexual abuse.

Through the collaborative work already engaged and with my added commitment I will ensure we meet the needs of those threats in both an efficient and effective way.

As PCC I will ensure that the Policing vision for 2030 (when released) is reviewed and incorporated into the Strategic plans of Bedfordshire.



7.3 Local connection to national issues of emergency

Beyond the agreement for the Strategic Policing Requirement I will ensure Bedfordshire Police are in a position to respond effectively to matters of crisis such as pandemics or natural disasters by requiring the reviews they perform on their preparedness to come to the Strategic Board for overview.



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