

# Wolverhampton

## Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy



2019 – 2022

Safer Wolverhampton Partnership

## Foreword

To be added on strategy completion

## Executive Summary

To be added on strategy completion

## Introduction

To be added on strategy completion

### Partnership Vision

**Working together to strengthen the visibility, early identification and partnership response to prevent serious violence, exploitation and its associated harms.**

## National Picture

The nature of offending behaviour is changing; there is more evident exploitation of adults/young people with county lines, some of which is linked to drugs, but not all linked to gangs. Whilst youth violence overall has fallen, there has been an increase in youth violence involving weapons; this is in line with the regional and national picture.

The launch of the government's Serious Violence Strategy in April 2018 provides a helpful context for Wolverhampton's approach. Striking a balance between enforcement action, early intervention to tackle root causes of violence and a strengthened partnership response, the key themes of the strategy are;

- Tackling county lines and misuse of drugs
- Early intervention and prevention
- Supporting communities and partnerships
- Effective law enforcement and criminal justice response

To inform a local approach, guidance from the Modern Slavery Act 2015 has also been considered. The current National Referral Mechanism (NRM) which supports victims of trafficking and modern slavery is under review by the Home Office and as

such our approach to dealing with this particular strand of exploitation will adapt to mirror any changes to the process.

The government provide a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) definition guide for practitioners which helps to inform practice and provide best practice examples for all professionals to work against.

## **Regional Picture**

Whilst regionally there are a number of various strategic boards with an interest in tackling violence and exploitation, a joined-up commitment to how this will look for West Midlands has not yet been agreed. The evident growth in awareness around issues such as county lines, modern slavery and the associated grooming and exploitation by organised crime groups whose operations span geographic boundaries has raised the profile of these issues and highlighted the need for a coordinated response, so there is a clear willingness of key partners to work collaboratively and share learning.

Regionally various boards including the West Midlands Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Board and the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) drive work and awareness around violence and exploitation. Wolverhampton are represented on these boards and take an active part in raising awareness and increasing resilience across the workforce.

## **Local Picture**

Wolverhampton's commitment for a more encompassing approach to addressing serious violence and exploitation in the city builds on positive work already taken to embed our response to CSE and gangs/youth violence through our statutory services; the role of our third sector partners in providing specialist interventions is acknowledged and valued in the city. Recognising the evident exploitation of adults/young people with county lines, cutting across other service areas (such as children and young people in care, Missing, CSE), some of which are linked to drugs, but not all which are linked to gangs, the city recognised the need for a more flexible, joined up strategic model which moves away from the traditional 'themed' approach to these issues. Our partnership response is therefore centred around tackling violence and exploitation in whatever guise, with revised operational governance for tackling these more complex vulnerabilities.

The city is open to learning from other parts of the UK, such as Scotland, which adopted a public health approach to knife crime using a multi-agency violence reduction unit to assist the delivery of long-term interventions at a population level. Hackney Council have also taken a public health approach to knife crime, having developed a contextual safeguarding approach; here risk is addressed outside of the

family context, and involves partners from across the geographic boundary, including schools, transport providers and take away proprietors for example. Wolverhampton is considering this approach to inform future practice.

Building on the work of the city's joint working protocol, which sets out arrangements for coordinated planning and delivery across the city's strategic boards, (in place since 2014), joint governance of this strategy lies between Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board and Wolverhampton Safeguarding Adults Boards. This will strengthen the city's overall approach to preventing, identifying, and responding to issues of serious violence and exploitation.

## What do we know about serious violence and exploitation in Wolverhampton?

### Exploitation

#### Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation

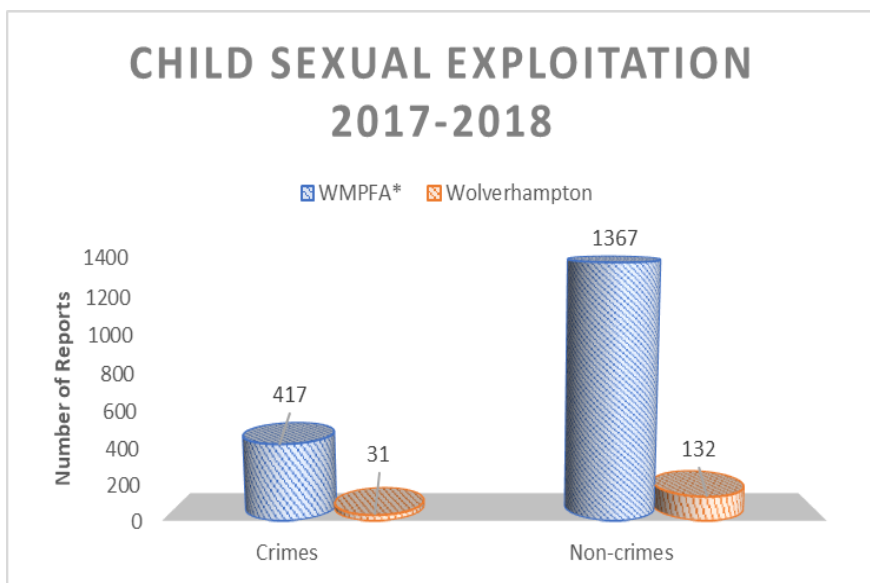
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

DfE (2017) 'Child Sexual Exploitation' Department of Education Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591903/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Core\\_Document\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf)

Often a victim is groomed into believing that the abuser cares for them. Children are just as likely to be coerced, forced or intimidated using emotional or physical abuse to participate in sexual acts. Often victims are not aware that they are being abused. Children who become a victim of CSE are frequently characterised by having limited choices as a result of their social, economic and /or emotional vulnerability. They are likely to have experienced several Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

The number of young people reported as being at risk of or involved in CSE has increased. The increase in reporting can in part, be attributed to improvements in training and professional development of practitioners to better identify risk and intervene at an earlier point.

**Data**



In comparison to CSE crimes and non-crimes reported in the West Midlands; Wolverhampton reports 7.43% of Crimes and 9.66% of non-crime<sup>1</sup>.

\*West Midlands Police Force Area

CSE Victim Profile	CSE Perpetrator Profile
Predominantly white UK females between 15-17 years old	Majority of offenders in Wolverhampton in 2017 were white British
Often multiple victims and perpetrators are known to each other	The most common age of a perpetrator is 16-20. In 2017 the most common age was 18 years old
Drugs, alcohol and travel expenses are often cited as gifted to victims	The most common offence reported to the police is rape
Most young people at risk of CSE have been missing previously or go missing often and may also have low attendance at school	It can be difficult to progress action against perpetrators if there is a lack of evidence or an unwillingness of victims to give evidence



## Early areas of focus

Broaden cross sector training for professionals, targeting key service areas	Extend CSE Champions across all sectors	Strengthen cross-boundary coordination and consistency of practice
Understand and identify young men who are vulnerable to or already victim to CSE	Identify suitable placements for young people and strengthen cross boarder information sharing and communication	Engage with faith sector and minority communities to build knowledge and understanding around the risks of young people being exploited
Increase the number of successful prosecutions and to support / empower victims to peruse prosecution	Broaden support for exploited young people as they transition from child (under 18) to adult	

### Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or a young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be consensual.

Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact it can also occur through the use of technology.

Home Office (2018) Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults; Countylines Guidance available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf)

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or commit theft, for example.

Children who are victim to both CCE and CSE may display behaviours such as;

- ✚ Withdrawn from family and friends
- ✚ Secretive and/or aggressive and difficult behaviours
- ✚ Associating with new friends who have not previously been known to parents
- ✚ Missing from home for periods and truanting from school
- ✚ Expensive new clothes/items or large sums of money
- ✚ Lack of respect to family, peers and teachers

Many children will not recognise that they are being exploited or coerced and that they are at risk. They will believe that they are in control of the situation and can leave at any time, when in fact the opposite is true. Many children who have been exploited by criminals may become involved in county lines.

County lines are telephone lines which Organised Crime Groups (OCG) use to sell and arrange delivery of drugs up and down the country. Typical county lines activity involves OSG and/or criminal networks exploiting younger individuals from large urban areas to travel to smaller locations such as a county or coastal town – to either deliver or sell drugs and/or money.

The young people involved are often vulnerable and are coerced into delivering the drugs via; grooming, threats/violence, debt bondage or gifts. In all cases, anyone who is under 18 is being exploited and is a victim of a crime.

It is recognised that the issue of county lines threads through all the key themes included in this strategy and young people may also be involved in a gangs, youth violence, CSE and/or be a victim of modern slavery.

## Definition of Modern Slavery

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;"

United Nation Human Rights (2018) Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx>

Modern Slavery is an umbrella term which encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking.

They may be male, female or children, usually vulnerable and easy to coerce with promises of a better life. Vulnerabilities may display as; lack of stable employment, opportunity, individual or family debt to repay, poverty including homelessness, mental health issues and substance dependency. Modern Slavery has no boundaries and trafficked victims are both British and Foreign nationals.

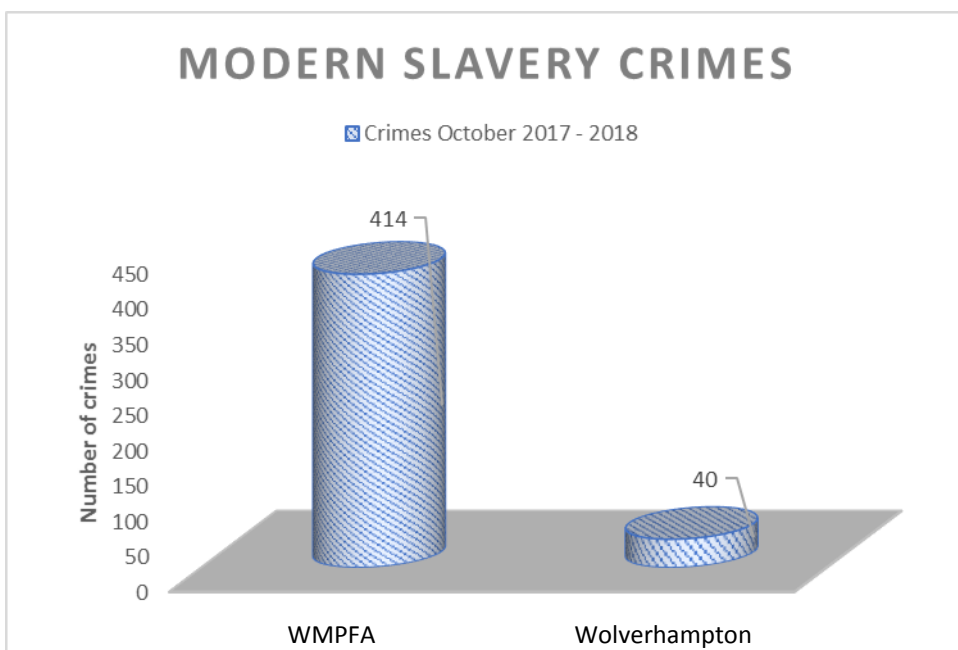
The Modern Slavery Act 2015 has consolidated previous offences relating to trafficking and slavery and introduced civil powers to restrict convicted or suspected offender's movements. The Act has also increased prison sentencing and strengthened law enforcement powers.

Wolverhampton and Walsall Anti-Slavery Partnership (WASP) provides specialist provision and coordination for tackling modern slavery which includes city roll out of the modern slavery training packages, targeted communication and intelligence gathering. A train the trainer programme has seen over thirty people trained to deliver multi agency Modern Slavery training.

A Modern Slavery Pathway has been developed within Wolverhampton, which will allow practitioners to make timely referrals and signpost victims ensuring that they receive the individual support required.



**Data**

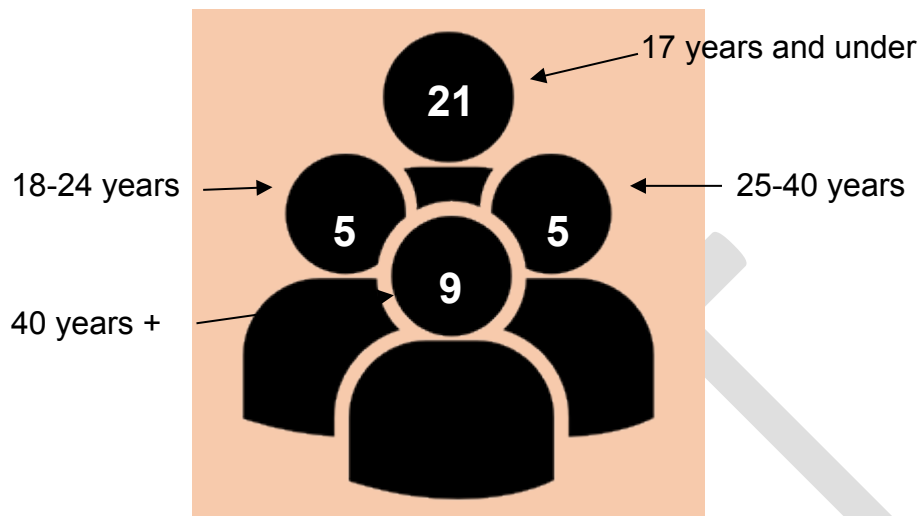


There were 40 crimes recorded in Wolverhampton which accounts for 9.67% of all modern slavery crimes across the West Midlands police force area in 2017-2018.

**Early areas of focus**

Roll out multi agency training across Wolverhampton	Better identification of those at risk of becoming entrapped in modern slavery	Strengthened data capture
Develop arrangements to identify, disrupt and dismantle OCGs linked to modern slavery	Strengthened links to the business sector to address labour exploitation	Improve frontline safeguarding response
Whole City commitment to eliminating slavery	Compliance with the modern slavery charter	

## Victims Age Profile



## Definition of Gangs

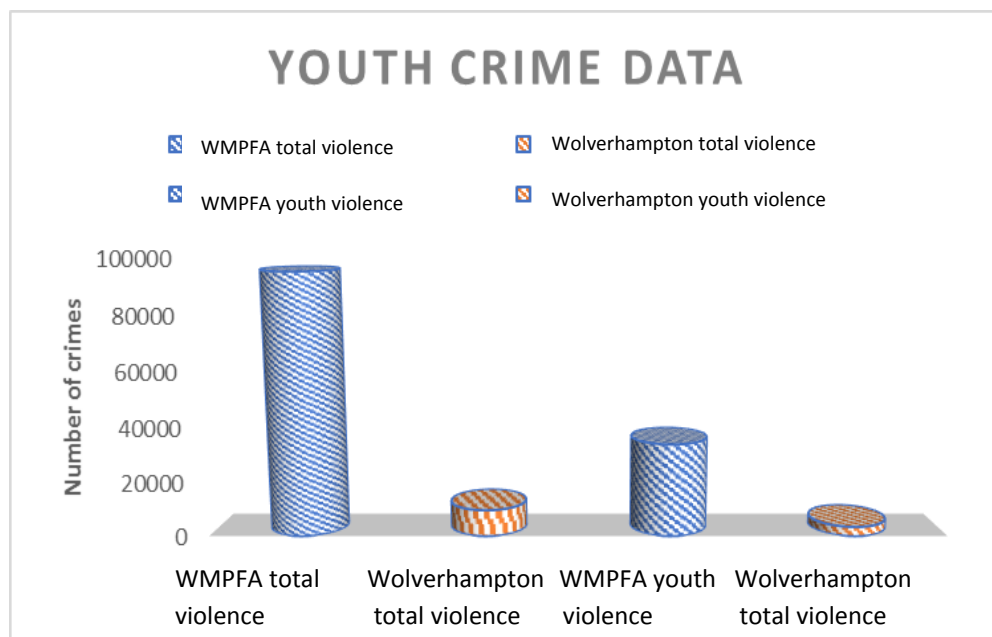
A relatively durable, predominantly street based group of young people who:

- See themselves (and are often seen by others) as a discernible group
- Engage in criminal activity and violence
- Lay claim over territory (this is not geographical territory but can include an illegal economy territory)
- Have some form of identifying structural feature
- Are in conflict with other similar gangs

The Centre for Social Justice (2009) 'Breakthrough Britain: Dying to belong' Available at; <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/dying-belong-depth-review-street-gangs-britain>

## Youth Violence Data

“Youth” is defined as a person between the ages of 0-24 years. In the Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence strategy 2016-2019 there are three age groups defined; under 10 years are considered children, below the age of criminality, 10-17 years are children and young people above the age of criminality and 18-24 years are young adults. This profile shall consider the same defined age groups.



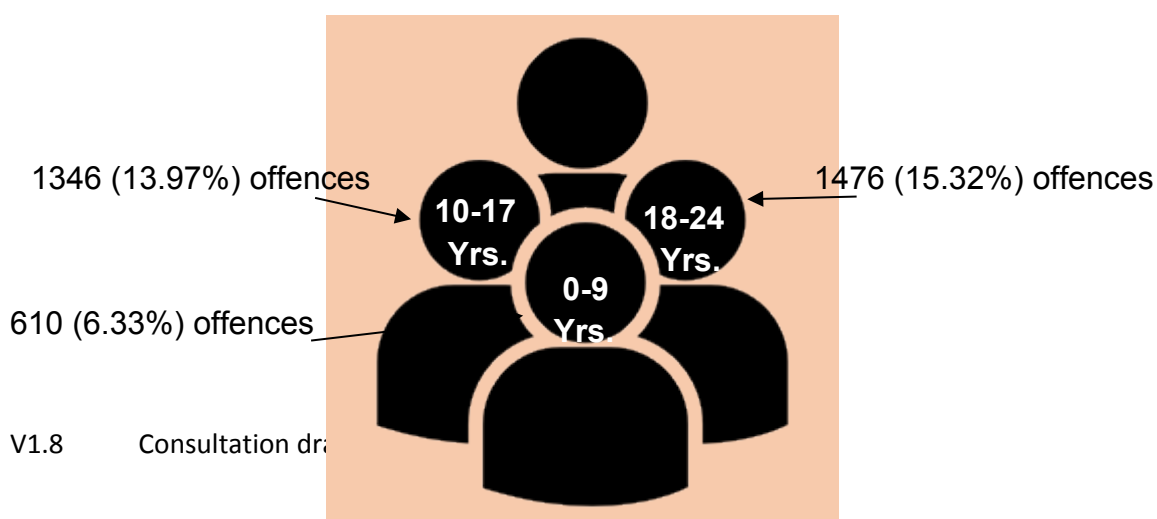
Wolverhampton’s youth violence accounts for 35.61% of the City’s total violence, this is in line with the wider West Midlands area, which stands at 35.60%.

Wolverhampton saw a 4% increase in youth violence during 2017-2018 when compared with the previous year. Knives in particular have been the most frequently used and carried weapon. Whilst this increase is lower than that experienced across the wider West Midlands, which saw an increase of 14.2% during the same period, the majority of knife offences were committed by young people areas between 10-17 years old which is of concern.

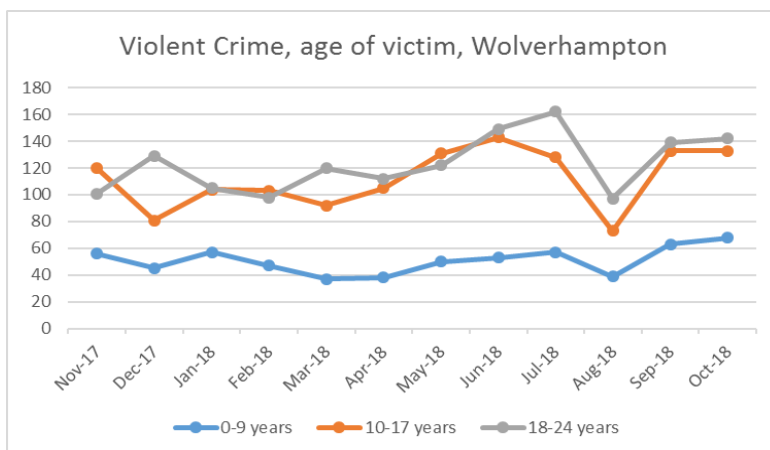
It is recognised that those young people involved in gangs and/or youth violence can be vulnerable to exploitation, many of these young people will be vulnerable and may be coerced into county lines. Young victims and perpetrators of youth violence are often interchangeable.

To address the issues professionals work in partnership to deliver a range of preventative measures supported by police activity.

### Perpetrator Age



### Victim Age



### Early Areas of Focus

Identify those at risk of becoming victims and offenders	Embed a consistent referral mechanism with clear pathways	Understand the continually changing landscape
Building resilience in school settings	Provide targeted outreach support	Offer intensive family support to those identified as involved in gangs/youth violence
Provide long term sustainable activities to deter young people from youth violence and gang affiliation	Develop a structured training programme and resources for professionals	

## Recognising increased risk

There are several factors which increased risk of exploitation.

Evidence clearly highlights that ACEs significantly increase the likelihood of young people becoming involved in violence or vulnerable to exploitation.

Criminals and gangs often target vulnerable people as they are easier to coerce and groom. Young people who frequently go missing may have a higher propensity to become involved in county lines for example, and it is recognised that frequently missing people require the correct support to protect them and reduce their vulnerability.

Children who are living in care and those excluded from school or on modified timetables are at increased risk of both victimisation and perpetration of violence and exploitation. Chaotic lifestyles, low self-esteem and the need for acceptance are contributing factors for young people to be drawn into exploitive relationships. These feelings and needs are used by exploiters to prey on vulnerable individuals.

## Identified Risk Factors

It is recognised that there are many factors which can make young people more vulnerable to being involved in violence and/or exploitation.

Identified Risk Factors	Identified Pull Factors
Having prior experience of neglect, physical or sexual abuse	Peer acceptance / belonging
Lack of stable home environment/ insecure accommodation status	Financial rewards, gifts and /or alcohol
Domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health issues	Glamorisation
Social isolation	Love / relationships
Economic vulnerability	Security / Protection
Having physical or learning disability	Popularity
Persistently going missing from home/ care	Accommodation (without rules)
Disengaged or excluded from education, training and employment	
Being in public care (particularly those in residential)	



## Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategic Outcomes





## The Four P Model

The strategy outcomes will be delivered using the 4 P model. The model allows for a holistic approach to tackle the causes and consequences of both serious violence and exploitation by proactively preventing and protecting those who may have a propensity to or be vulnerable to violent crime and exploitation to pursuing those who are causing the most harm.

<b>Prevent</b>	<b>Protect</b>
<p>The prevention strand will identify individuals at risk of being exploited and/or involved in violence and those who are vulnerable as a result of their lifestyle or experiences.</p> <p>This approach will ensure that with these individuals and their families receive the help and support required to prevent further harm by identifying appropriate short medium and long-term solutions to reduce the risk to the individual.</p> <p>Success can be gained by partners working together to tackle some of the underlying causes. Individuals are often known to a range of services, therefore there are significant opportunities for intervention and prevention.</p>	<p>The aim of this theme is to protect the community against criminality, reduce the fear of crime and protect those who are most vulnerable. Communities working together to address concerns, issues and providing support will have a significant role in tackling exploitation and violence.</p> <p>Local residents need to believe that concerns can be raised confidentially and that issues will be addressed appropriately.</p>
<b>Prepare</b>	<b>Pursue</b>
<p>The prepare strand will strengthen resilience of victims and communities to mitigate the harm caused serious violence and exploitation.</p>	<p>Pursue will work to identify risk and progress enforcement action against those involved in the most serious violence and exploitation; it will manage those that are involved in medium-high risk offending and deter those involved in lower level criminality or anti-social behaviour (ASB) with use of civil powers to aid desistance.</p>

## **Monitoring – How we will drive the strategy forward and embed into business as usual**

A performance framework and an annually refreshed delivery plan will underpin the strategy and ensure that implementation against the strategic outcomes.

## **Equalities**

*The equalities analysis will be informed by data insight and consultation responses.*

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## **Appendix A**

### **How do we work together?**

*Operational Governance to be reviewed and diagrammatic outline to be inserted.*

## **Appendix B**

### **Screening tools weblinks to be inserted**

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<sup>i</sup> A crime is where an incident has been reported and there is enough evidence to prove that a crime has been committed. A non-crime is where an incident has been reported and recorded by the Police but there is insufficient evidence to suggest a crime has been committed.