

Equalities Monitoring Community Safety

Annual Report – 2023/24



Published

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1. Introduction

The Community Safety Service sits within the Early Help and Communities Department in the People Directorate. Its objectives are:

- To ensure full compliance of BFC with statutory requirements as laid out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2011, the Prevent Duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.
- To lead strategically and operationally on community safety for BFC and the statutory Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- To co-ordinate delivery of the CSP's priorities in partnership with stakeholders and the community

2. Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Domestic Abuse

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of whether they have a protected characteristic or not. Many people face discrimination in society and for victims of domestic abuse from marginalised groups, they may face additional barriers, discrimination or hostility when trying to obtain the support and advice they need. *'Individuals can be victims of multiple and different abusive behaviours because of the way their different personal or situational characteristics overlap (intersectionality), including effects on their access to services and support if services are not designed to meet their needs'*¹.

The Bracknell Forest DA Safe Accommodation Strategy and wider DA Strategy both have action plans which set out our local approach to addressing our domestic abuse priorities to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse have equality of support. In the preparation of each strategy, an Initial Equalities Screening Record was completed to consider the impact on the protected characteristics groups. Examples of specific work to include those with protected characteristics include reviewing online information on the council's website to ensure it is fully inclusive of all groups and promotes available services, and liaising with neighbouring local authorities to consider options to jointly commission support services for particular groups with protected characteristics (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief, Pregnancy and Maternity, Marriage, and Civil Partnership).

Serious Violence

The Serious Violence Strategy includes research into the links between risk factors and serious violence perpetration and victimisation. Where a group with a protected characteristic is more vulnerable than those without a protected characteristic to commit, or be a victim of serious violence, the action plan sets out our approach to ensure that all people have equality of support. An example is ensuring that children

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007814/draft-da-statutory-guidance-2021-final.pdf

who experience trauma receive an appropriate therapeutic intervention when the trauma occurs so that there is less risk that they become involved in serious violence later in life. (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief, Pregnancy and Maternity, Marriage, and Civil Partnership). An Initial Equalities Screening Record was completed when the strategy was written in 2023 to consider the impact on this work on those with protected characteristics.

Prevent/Channel

Prevent is part of the government's counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST, which includes the Protect, Prepare, Pursue, and Prevent strands. The lead agency for Prevent is the local authority. Within Bracknell Forest Council, Prevent is delivered by the Community Safety Service. Prevent works in the pre-criminal justice environment to support those at risk of radicalisation.

Bracknell Forest's Prevent Strategy 2024-2027 has an action plan which sets out our local ambitions to address our Prevent priorities to ensure that those who are susceptible to radicalisation have equality of support. In the preparation of the strategy, an Initial Equalities Screening Record was completed to consider the impact on the protected characteristics groups. Examples of specific work to include those with protected characteristics include reviewing online information on the council's website to ensure it is fully inclusive of all groups, promoting available resources, information and training, and liaising with neighbouring local authorities to consider options to jointly commission support services for particular groups with protected characteristics (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief, which have been identified in the CTLP (Counter Terrorism Local Profile).

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

ASB is defined as acting in a manner that has "caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household" as the perpetrator. This broad statement covers a wide range of behaviours and types of disorder.

The Community Safety Service are responsible for responding to ASB that occurs in privately owned properties. In line with government-recommended approaches, we have adopted a harm-centred approach which looks at the behaviour type, the impact that the behaviour is having and identified risk factors. Accordingly, a risk assessment is completed with victims to consider the impact on protected characteristics (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion and Belief).

Plain Talking

This is a free one to one support service for people who recognise that their behaviour in their relationship is becoming, or has become, problematic and who need support to make positive, healthy, long-term change. It offers an initial 6 x one to one sessions to talk about what is going on for the person and a chance to step back, learn and recognise the behaviours and thinking that have become part of how the individual lives and relates to those close to them.

To ensure the intervention works to eliminates discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct under the Equality Act, the intervention incorporates the following principles:

We ensure that practitioners involved in the intervention receive comprehensive training on equality, diversity, and inclusion. This training raises awareness of different forms of discrimination and ensures that people are treated fairly, regardless of protected characteristics.

By regularly reviewing and adapting the intervention based on feedback, research and staying informed about developments in domestic violence prevention and anti-discrimination efforts, we will ensure this intervention develops alongside best practice.

Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

General

The Community Safety Service responds to crime and disorder issues experienced by residents on a singular basis as opposed to a group basis. Where group work takes place, this is led by the commissioned service e.g., Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA).

Where work on a singular basis is required, we aim to respond to the needs of the individual to engage them in an agreed intervention, rather than expect the individual to fit and respond to our structures. Examples of this approach have been:

- Multi-agency home visits for people who find it difficult to engage with services.
- Extended engagement processes for those who have an adversarial position with services due to historic involvement.
- Making sure that we are allowing additional supportive elements (with consent) into the process e.g., a family member or existing support worker.

2.1 SAVE (Serious Adult Violence and Exploitation)

This multi-partner problem-solving approach for adults who are victims and/or perpetrators of serious violence and exploitation has been re-launched and complements the existing approach that is being delivered for those under 18

(Protected Characteristic applicable: Age). In time, we will use the SAVE referral data to ensure that those with protected characteristics beyond age are adequately catered for by SAVE.

2.2 Makesafe Male Exploitation Prevention Worker

The BFC Makesafe Team works with victims (and those at risk of) exploitation. The frontline team is all-female with excellent experience of working with victims of child sexual exploitation (mainly girls), however there is a long-standing gap in provision for a male worker to work with boys who constitute many referrals relating to youth violence and criminal exploitation. In 2022 and 2023, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) provided funding for a male worker to undertake this valuable work (Protected Characteristic applicable: Gender).

2.3 Fraud Victim Support

Older adults have always been thought of as being the most vulnerable to scams and frauds. However, research has shown that this is not currently the case. 'People between the ages of 16-34 are more susceptible to being scammed and account for over half of the scams experienced in the UK'.² In 2023, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provided funding for a Scams Officer to work across all ages to raise awareness of most common scams and how to spot and report them (Protected Characteristic applicable: Age).

2.4 Domestic Abuse

The OPCC has funded [Hourglass](#), a charity focused on the abuse and neglect of older people, to work within the Thames Valley area (including Bracknell Forest) to provide a community response including face to face support, an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) focusing on elder domestic abuse and localised expertise (Protected Characteristic applicable: Age).

The [BRAVE \(Building Resilience And Valuing Emotions\) project](#), funded by the OPCC, provides therapeutic support for people of all genders across Berkshire (including Bracknell Forest) who have experienced domestic abuse and who also experience emotional difficulties following the abuse. In 2023, the service expanded and started running groups specifically for male victims called BRAVE Too) (Protected Characteristic applicable: Gender and Disability).

The Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse calendar of awareness-raising opportunities is in place. The ManKind Initiative held 'Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse Day' on 7th November 2023 which was promoted locally through Bracknell Forest Council social media and the local Domestic Abuse network (Protected Characteristic applicable: Gender).

² [Younger people more susceptible to being scammed | Local Government Association](#)

The Bracknell Forest Introduction to Domestic Abuse training includes a section on 'marginalised groups' and 'intersectionality' to encourage delegates to identify and understand the additional issues faced by marginalised groups suffering domestic abuse (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief, Pregnancy and Maternity, Marriage, and Civil Partnership).

Bracknell Forest Council commission refuge, IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) and Outreach, and Safe Accommodation Outreach services through Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA). The values of BWA include *'we believe in providing support to anyone who needs it, regardless of their sex, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability'*. The service was recommissioned in 2032-24 with the specification requiring the Service Provider to:

- collect protected characteristics information on victims and their children in order to access accessibility and impact of the service, including any barriers or disadvantage.
- be able to evidence a clear commitment to equality.
- have means to provide appropriately qualified translation and interpretation services.
- have a clear policy around delivering services to those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).
- monitor equality related needs of Service Users and proactively address any risks of disadvantage, unequal access or insight or poor community cohesion.
- build knowledge through the critical assessment of Service User needs and outcomes by protected characteristics.
- build positive and practical links with local providers of specialist (protected characteristic) services (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief, Pregnancy and Maternity, Marriage, and Civil Partnership).

2.5 Prevent/Channel/Hate Crime

The Prevent Duty and hate crime agendas are integrated, with established groups reporting to the Community Safety Partnership and Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership. These work streams are standing agenda items at the Partnership Problem-Solving Groups and Community Safety fortnightly team meetings. This ensures that unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation are identified and managed at the earliest opportunity. Proactive weekly interrogation and review of data allows the identification of emerging trends as well as repeat victims and perpetrators.

The latest Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) identified that LGTBQIA and older adults were two groups who were underrepresented in terms of referrals and connections within the community. These two groups have been added as focus and development areas in the Prevent Action Plan for the coming year. Initial discussions with the BFC Community Engagement and Equalities Team are being undertaken to explore routes to reach and engage these groups.

The Home Office continues to fund and provide access to specialist independent Intervention Providers (IP's). These IP's will respond to the individual needs of those successfully referred to the Channel process. This provision will consider both the ideological position and protected characteristics of the individual, enabling interventions and engagement to proceed in a strength-based model (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion and Belief).

Our Prevent Strategy is designed to be implemented in a way that is consistent with the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The strategy recognises all forms of extremism including right-wing extremism. Some key aspects of how we address equality of opportunity within our action plan are:

- We emphasise the importance of engaging with a wide range of communities to build trust and understanding. This engagement is intended to be inclusive, recognising the diversity of communities in Bracknell Forest and ensuring that the strategy's implementation is culturally sensitive.
- We focus on individuals who have been identified as being vulnerable/susceptible to radicalisation and providing them with appropriate support. This involves working with partners, including Police, Education, healthcare professionals and social workers to identify and address vulnerabilities early on.
- Prevent training is provided to various professionals, including teachers, healthcare workers, and community leaders. This training aims to raise awareness about the signs of radicalisation and the importance of safeguarding, promoting understanding and sensitivity to diverse communities.

2.6 Anti-Social Behaviour

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ASB Case Review provides an important safety net for victims of persistent anti-social behaviour and those who may be most vulnerable.

The ASB Case Review gives victims and communities the right to ask for a case review of problematic reports of ASB reported in the past 6 months. This process is designed to put victims first and makes sure all agencies work together to try and resolve reports of ASB, making sure that no one affected by ASB feels unheard. The Community Safety Service hosts the ASB Case Review process on behalf of the police and registered housing providers. (Protected Characteristics applicable: Disability, Minority Ethnic Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion and Belief).

2.7 Plain Talking

Promoting equality of opportunity within Plain Talking involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment that addresses the diverse needs of people, regardless of their protected characteristics. These strategies are used to advance equality of opportunity within the service:

- The completion of cultural competence and sensitivity training ensures that practitioners recognise and respect the diversity of participants and consider differences in cultural backgrounds, languages, and experiences. Using an individual's preferred pronoun is a simple but powerful example of this.
- Tailoring interventions to the specific needs of the service user, considering factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability is important. The intervention recognises that individuals with different protected characteristics may have unique challenges and experiences related to domestic abuse. Also, adopting a trauma-informed care approach recognises the potential impact of trauma on individuals with different protected characteristics.
- Every effort is made to ensure the intervention is accessible for all individuals, regardless of their protected characteristics by making reasonable adjustments. Consideration is given to factors such as physical accessibility, language accessibility, the provision of support services to accommodate diverse needs, out of hours sessions to allow for work or family commitments, location accessibility and sessions in a public space or service user's home (once a risk assessment has been considered). For instance, face to face sessions are held in an environment with little or no background noise for individuals with hearing difficulties or neurodiversity to assist them to engage with the process.

- 1) Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic.

3.1 Prevent/Channel

While referrals to these work streams are managed beyond BFC, we are responsible for making sure the process meets statutory requirement and standards. The Home Office requirement for a Prevent Annual Assurance Statement and Channel Self-Assessment, allows us to reflect and review our progress and processes in line with best practice from across the Thames Valley. The Community Safety Service is an active participant, collaborator, and member of the CCEP (Community Cohesion Engagement Partnership) and Faith and Belief Forum, and we routinely support community events. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) roundtable events are regularly held as part of the ongoing learning process.

While its primary focus is on national security, the strategy is intended to be implemented in a way that respects human rights, promotes community engagement, and fosters good relations between different communities, including those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Members of the Prevent Steering Group regularly engage with a wide range of communities, recognising that different communities may have unique needs and concerns. We recognise the importance of promoting inclusivity and addressing discrimination, by creating an environment that values diversity and inclusion. The Prevent Steering Group aims to counter the narratives that may contribute to feelings

of exclusion and vulnerability by building partnerships with community leaders, organisations, and individuals. This community engagement work is essential for effectively addressing the root causes of radicalisation.

The Channel Panel focuses on early intervention and support for individuals who may be vulnerable/susceptible to radicalisation. This involves working closely with professionals to identify signs of vulnerability and providing appropriate support which contributes to building trust within communities.

It is important to understand that Prevent has been subject to criticism and debate. Some critics argue that it may inadvertently stigmatise certain communities or influence free speech. Balancing the prevention of radicalisation with the protection of civil liberties and the fostering of good community relations is an issue we are mindful of and will be an ongoing challenge.

The effectiveness of Prevent and Channel work is in the respectful delivery of the safeguarding message to foster good community relations. Continuous evaluation, transparency, and community feedback are crucial elements, both locally and from central government, in refining and improving the strategy to achieve its intended goals, while minimising unintended negative consequences.

3. Breakdown of customers/service users by protected characteristics

DA Strategies

As per Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment was carried out in 2021 which followed a template produced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Data was collected from Police, MARAC/IDVA, Health, Housing and Homeless and Social Care with the following breakdowns: Age, Sex, Marital Status, Sexual Identity, Disability, National Identity/Ethnic Group, Household Structure, Occupation, Household Income, Education. Not all the agencies collected all this data.

Another section of the Needs Assessment focuses on DA victims, their characteristics (age, gender identity, sexual identity, housing, family, national identity/ethnic group, immigration status, language, culture/faith, violence against women and girls, employment, income, disability/health, additional support needs) and their needs, looking at the demands on local safe accommodation.

A further section of the Needs Assessment focuses on direct consultation with victims/survivors or with service providers that can represent victims/survivors, and what their experience was in accessing support within safe accommodation. No specific names or personal details are to be included in this.

A revised Needs Assessment (and strategy) are due to be completed in 2024 and again will follow the national template from DLUHC. The Needs Assessment will consider the provisions made under the 2021-24 Safe Accommodation Strategy and the impact this has had. Client feedback is obtained from clients who have had Sanctuary (property reinforcement) installed and who have accessed BWA services.

Prevent/Channel

The impact of the UK's Prevent strategy on practices, policies, and decisions regarding people with different protected characteristics, including both staff and service users, is the subject of debate and scrutiny and one which we are very mindful of. Here are some key aspects of its impact and our responses:

- Training staff to recognise signs of radicalisation, is a basic requirement for our organisation. This is to be done in an informative and contextual framework. Our training materials are centrally sourced and certified to meet equality standards.
- Regular Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) ensure that our Prevent Strategy does not disproportionately affect individuals based on protected characteristics. The newly refreshed Bracknell Forest Prevent Strategy 2024-27 included an EIA which found that no negative impact would occur with people with protected characteristics.
- Referral data is monitored by the Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing South-East. The Community Safety Service, however, responds to their published data by allowing it to shape our priorities for the coming year.

Serious Violence Strategy

A Serious Violence Strategy for 2024-2027 has been prepared in line with the Serious Violence Duty contained in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act 2022. An EIA has been undertaken and there is not expected to be a negative impact on people with protected characteristics through this work. The EIA considered how the work would impact positively based on research on links between serious violence victimisation and perpetration and protected characteristics.

4. Key issues for 2024/25:

- Continue to explore and review the accessibility of resources and the need for language options on the Bracknell Forest public webpages to allow more choice for the user to engage with our online information and resources. This will involve consultation with communications and marketing, digital services, and partners to explore best practices.
- The development of a bespoke case management system with an embedded Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) function, allowing data to be pulled off once inputted. This project has been agreed in principle but has yet to be built. Until then, further work to embed EDI will continue with our existing systems.
- Develop contacts and undertake Prevent awareness-raising with LGBTQIA and older adult groups.

5. Actions and mitigations planned:

- EDI will be a standing agenda item for monthly team meetings, using discussion, reflection, and collaboration to shape our service further embedding the PSED.
- Further focusing on one part of our service quarterly, in a round table format to identify opportunities for EDI to be discussed and agreed.
- A data feedback period is to be agreed, where data can be scrutinised, reviewed and actions set.
- Ensuring all our online information and resources follow the principles of accessibility.

6. Performance against the equality objectives

1) Inclusive in all we do

‘Work to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing being of all citizens and address the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health’.

There is an established causal link between crime and mental health and wellbeing, and the Service works with partners to reduce and prevent all crime and disorder for residents.

‘Work to narrow the gaps in life chances and outcomes for vulnerable people and support them through prevention, early intervention, and self-care’.

Vulnerable people in the community may be at higher risk of being a victim of crime or of becoming an offender and prevention is at the heart of our work e.g., domestic abuse, serious violence, ASB, and radicalisation.

2) Accessible for all

Bracknell Forest Council’s public webpages are some of the most accessible in the country and the resources that we develop are designed with accessibility at the forefront of the process e.g., exploitation and domestic abuse resources in Ukrainian and Russian

3) Accountable and fair

Community Safety’s focus on those most at risk is evident without DA work e.g., MARAC is for victims who are at highest risk, Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) is for perpetrators who present the most risk, SAVE is for victims and offenders of serious violence and exploitation and the Partnership Problem-Solving Groups (PPSGs) resolve the most complex and challenging cases of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme which is supported by the service is to manage and support offenders who are most prolific.

4) Diverse and inclusive workforce

'Introduce aspects of anonymous recruitment that enable us to recruit for skills and mindsets and remove potential bias'.

'Interviewed and appointed those with a disability and explored reasonable adjustments that they needed to thrive at work'.

Bracknell Forest Council's recruitment selection process is anonymous. The Service recently recruited an applicant with a disability and reasonable adjustments were explored and agreed.

Progress against the 2022/23 Equalities Action Plan is shown as follows:

- protected characteristics data is now collected at point of referral on a new modified BF referral tracking spread sheet and reviewed at each Channel panel by the chair at each meeting
- protected characteristics data is now captured on the ASB case review forms and a spreadsheet has been created to capture feedback
- a protected characteristics section has now been added to an updated referral form for professionals to populate. In the instance of a self-referral, this is discussed at the initial meeting and outcomes are recorded on a modified BF referral tracking spread sheet.

7. Views of our customers/service users

a) Customer engagement and consultation

No public consultations were undertaken in 23/24. However, CSP and DA consultations are scheduled to take place in 24/25, both of which will capture equalities information.

b) Customer satisfaction and learning

Domestic Abuse

As part of BWA contract monitoring, feedback forms are requested to be completed by those clients with planned closures. Clients are asked questions including whether they feel: safer, their wellbeing has improved, their emotional wellbeing has improved, their physical wellbeing has improved, their quality of life has improved, they have more stable accommodation, they have improved financial stability, more optimistic about the future, more confident in themselves, they have a strong support network, they have been supported to improved safety of children or not applicable to all. Additional comments are also collected as part of this, and a quarterly case study shared.

Any consultations that take place going forward will include questions of whether the person responding has a protected characteristic so that we can understand groups that are under-represented that we can reach out to.

Compliments:

Thank you so much Sophie and great work! I know how much work you must have put into organising all this - thank you for all your support for the DA sector, people like you make things happen :-)

Kate Agha. Oxford Against Cutting

It was a great event and very powerful. Thank you. Let's do it again next year, we need to keep this in everyone's mind. I think the white ribbon campaign is a great movement. We need more work early on to challenge attitudes.

Cllr Megan Wright

Exactly my view about raising the profile of the huge scale of the work being done in CS, especially in the DA area. The report shows the breadth of work that goes from the most high risk to preventative work and is so positive! Pass my thanks on to Sophie. Her level of knowledge, skill and commitment is so obvious when she presents. Very impressive!

Grainne Siggins

c) Complaints activity and learning

There were two complaints in this period.

Identified learning:

- Local support that applicants can be referred/signposted to
- Training using a 'trauma informed approach' when dealing with enquiries
- Better communication with customers
- Advise customers to check online for updates
- Ensure a face-to-face meeting is held

8. Conclusion

The following gaps that will need to be addressed in 2024/25 are as follows:

1	Review all our public-facing service interfaces, advice, and signposting resources through an accessibility lens.
2	Explore if there is a need for our public facing service interfaces, advice, and signposting resources to be made available in different languages.
3	Assess impact of the DA Strategy and DA Safe Accommodation Strategy on people with protected characteristics through consultation work.
4	Development of a bespoke case management system with an embedded EDI section.
5	Assess the impact of the CSP plan on people with protected characteristics through consultation work.
6	Continue to work with partners to improve the data set for serious violence so that prevention work can be targeted at the right people and in the right areas. Apart from gender and age, protected characteristics aren't routinely captured by TVP.
7	Develop contacts and undertake Prevent awareness raising with LGBTQIA and older adult groups.
8	Across Early Help and Communities work will be done to improve how we respond to clients/residents who are neurodiverse. This will include joint sessions on how to implement learning from training and working with partners.