



Bracknell Forest

All-age Exploitation Strategy 2026 - 2031

*It takes a community to
stop exploitation.*

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Foreword

Bracknell Forest's all age exploitation strategy is introduced by Katalina:

'This is the first time I've done something like this.

I have been in foster care, residential units and secure units while I was a looked after child from the age of 13.

I think doing an all-age strategy is a good idea, so people don't feel abandoned at 18. I remember feeling overwhelmed with everything that happened to me and I was really high-risk even after I turned 18.

When working with people, I think it's important to be straight up and honest. Don't say things you don't mean and don't make promises you can't keep.

It's also important not to be judgemental.

I hope this strategy will help professionals have an understanding of my point of view as a young person that has been through exploitation and the care system'.

Exploitation in all its forms causes profound harm to individuals, families and communities. It undermines safety, dignity and opportunity, and it disproportionately affects those who are already vulnerable. Bracknell Forest has a clear responsibility to prevent exploitation wherever possible, to protect those at risk, and to ensure that people who have experienced exploitation are supported to recover and thrive. This All-Age Exploitation Strategy 2026–2031 sets out how the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Board will meet that responsibility over the next five years.

This strategy has been shaped through engagement with our partners across safeguarding, health, policing, education, housing and the voluntary and community sector. Crucially, it has also been informed by the voices of children and adults with lived experience of exploitation, alongside feedback from the wider community. Their insights have been central in helping us understand what works, what needs to improve, and where our collective efforts can make the greatest difference.

The strategy is built around four key priorities. Prevention is at the heart of our approach: strengthening early identification, building resilience, and tackling the wider social and environmental factors that create conditions for exploitation. Transition to Adulthood recognises the increased risks faced by young people as they move into adulthood, and commits us to providing continuity, stability and tailored support during this critical period. The Perpetrator priority focuses on disrupting, deterring and pursuing those who exploit others, while working with partners to reduce harm and prevent re-offending. Support ensures that children and adults who have experienced exploitation can access trauma-informed, compassionate and effective services that promote recovery and long-term wellbeing.

This strategy represents our shared commitment to work together, across all ages and all communities, to prevent exploitation and to ensure that everyone in our area can live safer, healthier and more hopeful lives.

Councillor Georgia Pickering
Cabinet member for Housing, Community Safety and Communication
Bracknell Forest Council Armed Forces Champion

Local exploitation examples

Binh is a boy who was trafficked to the UK from Vietnam. Binh became a looked after child and was placed in Bracknell Forest.

Binh travelled to London soon after moving here where he met someone from his community who offered him a job. Binh was then trafficked to a location in the Midlands where he was forced to work in a cannabis factory. Binh was beaten and made to feel fearful for his life while at the factory. Binh was found a month after he went missing when the cannabis factory was raided by the police.

Lenny was living in a house of multiple occupation in Bracknell Forest. Whilst he was there, he became a victim of modern slavery and was made to work 12hrs a day, seven days a week for food and sometimes a small amount of cash. He was dependant on his exploiter as he had nowhere else to go and did not have any family locally. After an incident where an ambulance was called out to help him after a fall, they suspected he was being exploited. He was referred into the government's National Referral Mechanism. The Salvation Army were able to move him away from the area and from his exploiter. He did not hear from him again and was no longer at risk from him. He informed his worker that he had been terrified of his exploiter and was grateful for the chance to escape and begin a new life.

Rochelle was 14 years old when she was groomed online by an adult man over a few weeks. She arranged to meet him near her home in Bracknell Forest and was picked in a van. She was driven to a location where she was sexually assaulted. Rochelle was upset when the man was arrested, and conditions put in place for him not to contact her as she had been manipulated into believing he was her boyfriend.

Penny is an adult who uses substances to help with a painful condition. Some of her associates started to exploit her by stealing her money and food and forcing her to buy drugs for them. Penny was arrested for shoplifting after being told to steal by one of her exploiters. After her arrest, a support package was put in place by social services. This worker helped her get support with her addiction and is helping keep her exploiters out of her home. She has expressed her thanks to the SAVE group and says that if it wasn't for all their support, she does not know where she would have ended up.

Introduction

This strategy sets out the commitment of Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) to stand together against exploitation in Bracknell Forest. At the heart of this strategy is an ambition to prevent exploitation happening to residents of all ages, support those who are experiencing it, learn from those who have survived it and stop those who are perpetrating it.

It was intentional to create an all-age exploitation strategy that works across the life span, life stages, thresholds and service criteria. We were particularly keen to ensure that this strategy supports older children transitioning into young adulthood, focussing on how we can strengthen vulnerabilities beyond childhood.

This strategy focuses on developing co-ordinated, cross-sector responses to tackle the complex and multi-faceted nature of exploitation.

It is for children, adults, families, residents and professionals across the statutory and voluntary sector so that we can improve outcomes for all.

This strategy should be read in conjunction with related strategies¹.

¹ Safeguarding Board Strategic Plan

Pan Berkshire Policy and Procedures

Community Safety Plan 2025-28

Serious Violence Strategy 2024-27

Youth Service Strategy 2024-27

Executive summary

The Bracknell Forest All-Age Exploitation Strategy 2026–2031 sets out a unified commitment across the Bracknell Forest CSP and the BFSB to prevent, identify, and respond effectively to exploitation affecting children and adults. Built on strong multi-agency foundations, the strategy recognises exploitation as a complex, evolving issue that spans criminal, sexual, financial, and labour forms, and is closely linked to wider vulnerabilities such as disrupted education, substance use, housing instability, care experience, and mental health needs.

The strategy draws on consultation with children, adults with lived experience, professionals, and Bracknell Forest residents, revealing consistent themes: the need for earlier education and awareness, improved trust in services, more personalised support, better transitions into adulthood, and stronger action against perpetrators.

To address these challenges, the strategy identifies four priority areas: Prevention, Transition into Adulthood, Perpetrators, and Support and Recovery. These priorities aim to strengthen early intervention, improve continuity of safeguarding at key life stages, enhance intelligence-led disruption of perpetrators, and ensure victims receive trauma-informed, holistic, and accessible support. A detailed work plan outlines SMART actions for partners, supported by stronger data, workforce development, community engagement, and cross-system collaboration.

Together, these priorities establish a coordinated, all-age, place-based approach designed to build resilience, reduce harm, and ensure that safeguarding in Bracknell Forest is proactive, compassionate, and driven by lived experience. The strategy reinforces the central message that #ittakesacomunity to prevent exploitation and protect the borough's most vulnerable.

Governance and accountability

The Bracknell Forest CSP and BFSB will have overall responsibility for this strategy and work plan. The Serious Violence and Exploitation (SVE) Strategic Sub-Group of the CSP will develop and monitor progress with the priorities identified in the strategy. The main mechanism for the delivery of the strategy will be an work plan comprising SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) objectives detailing both prevention and response themes. It will be progressed by stakeholders in line with existing services, programmes, arrangements, and resources.

The SVE Strategic Sub-Group's key aim is to work to prevent serious violence and exploitation of people of all ages in Bracknell Forest. It is a collaborative group of partners across BFC and partner organisations who ensure that there is co-ordinated service provision for those at risk of serious violence and exploitation, making the best use of available resources across all stakeholders.

Membership of the group comprises:

BFC Youth Justice
BFC Adult Safeguarding
BFC Makesafe (child exploitation)
BFC Drug and Alcohol Team
BFC Early Help
BFC Community Safety
BFC Housing
BFC Children's Social Care
BFC Education
Public Protection Partnership (PPP)
Bracknell and Wokingham College
BFSB
Thames Valley Police
Involve (voluntary and community sector)
Integrated Care Board (ICB)
National Probation Service

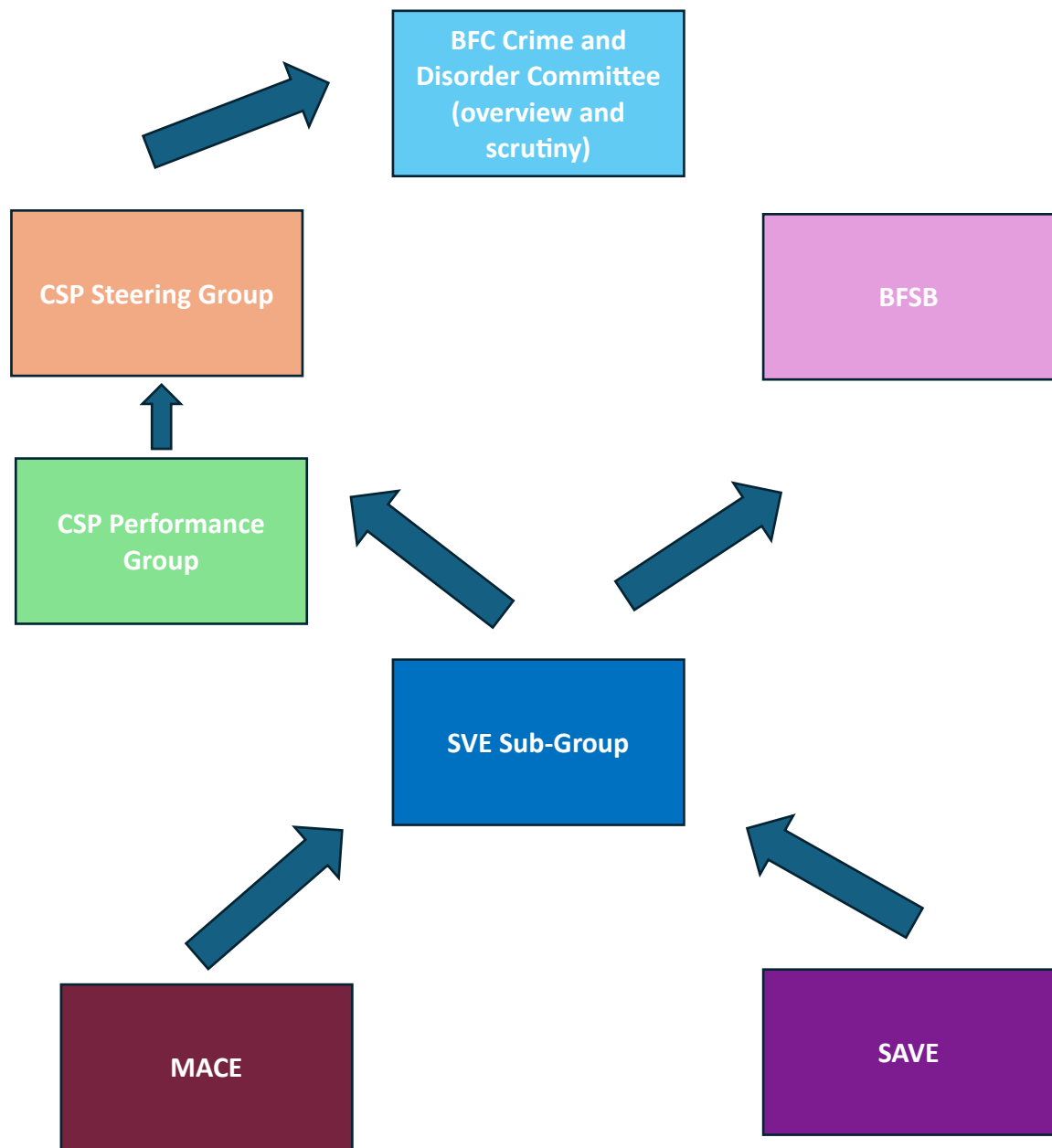
The role of the SVE Strategic Sub-Group is also to oversee the operational groups set up to prevent and respond to threat or prevalence of exploitation. These operational groups comprise:

MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation): an operational group to safeguard children at risk of going missing, being exploited and being a victim of serious violence

SAVE (Serious Adult Violence and Exploitation): an operational group to manage habitual knife carriers and also to safeguard adults at risk of serious violence and exploitation

The SVE Strategic Sub-Group reports into the CSP Performance Group which oversees progress, supports with removal of barriers of success and also ensure best practice is incorporated into work.

The CSP is overseen by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission which sits as the public Crime and Disorder Committee each year to scrutinise progress against CSP priorities, including exploitation. The CSP also robustly supports regular consultation with those with lived experience of exploitation to help shape and steer its vision and approach.



Exploitation definition

National definition

There is no single statutory definition of 'exploitation' that applies uniformly across all law. However, the Modern Slavery Act of 2015's definition is the principal statutory definition relied on in legal contexts involving exploitation. Courts and agencies may also interpret the term through guidance or case law where other offences or contexts apply.

In simple terms, law says a person is exploited when someone uses or controls them for gain in a way that removes their real choice or freedom.

A person is considered legally exploited if any one of the following applies:

Slavery, servitude or forced labour

- They are made to work or provide services
- They cannot leave freely
- They are controlled through threats, force, debt, fear, or abuse of power

Sexual exploitation

- They are made, pressured, or manipulated into sexual activity
- This includes situations that would count as sexual offences under English law

Criminal exploitation

- They are forced, pressured, or manipulated into committing crimes
- For example: drug dealing, theft, fraud, or other offences that benefit someone else

Exploitation through force, threats, or deception

They are tricked, threatened, or pressured into working, providing services or generating money or benefits for someone else

Exploitation of vulnerability

- They are targeted because they are a child, disabled, ill, dependent, or otherwise vulnerable
- The law assumes a person without that vulnerability would have refused

Organ removal

- They are pressured or forced into organ removal (even if it does not ultimately happen)

Local definition and principles

The Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board has adopted the below definition of exploitation:

Exploitation involves the misuse or manipulation of individuals for personal gain, often at the expense of their well-being, rights, or dignity. Vulnerable individuals, including children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, are particularly susceptible to exploitation, which can have devastating consequences on their physical, emotional, and financial welfare.

Exploitation can take different forms, including financial, sexual, labour, or psychological exploitation. Perpetrators may use coercion, deception, or abuse of power to exploit vulnerable individuals for monetary gain, personal gratification, or control.

Exploitation can have profound and lasting effects on the lives of individuals. It can lead to financial impact, loss of autonomy, trauma, social isolation, and psychological distress. Children and adults alike may suffer from diminished self-esteem, trust issues, and a sense of powerlessness because of exploitation.

This strategy is also based on the following principles which are consistent with how exploitation is understood and applied across England in 2025 by police, safeguarding partnerships, prosecutors, local authorities and victim-support frameworks. They also align with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, statutory guidance under that Act, Working Together to Safeguard Children and College of Policing guidance:

- Exploitation is an abuse of power, where the perpetrator takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a person and exploits them.
- Our definition of exploitation places emphasis on those that perpetrate – we need to shift our focus on stopping those responsible for exploitation.
- It is imperative that we use language that cares when discussing people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation. Language should also reflect the presence of coercion and the severity of the impact of exploitation on lives.
- Exploitation is deliberate maltreatment and manipulation irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, background, ability and sexuality.
- Exploitation can also include organ harvesting and forced labour. We want to remain open-minded to the changing picture of the types of exploitation and the ways people might be exploited i.e. youth culture, vulnerability of people leaving prison.
- We recognise that vulnerability can take different forms and that we need to be aware that some aspects of life might make people more vulnerable to imbalances of power and potential exploitation e.g. homelessness, poverty, disability, immigration status, adverse childhood experiences, limited family networks, substance misuse, special education needs and disabilities.
- There are no 'typical' descriptive characteristics of a perpetrator. Those who exploit others will be represented across all gender identities, social classes, ages and ethnicities.

- Exploitation can involve different types of abuse. People can be subjected to one or more of these at the same time and the type of exploitation can change in a short space of time.
- People may also be both a victim and perpetrator of exploitation, requiring professionals to manage their individual needs and the risks they present to others. There may also be interchangeability between being a victim and a perpetrator, with a person possibly being both.

Further strategy context

This strategy recognises that exploitation can exist or feature in:

- Domestic abuse
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Rogue trader and bogus caller activity, fraud and cybercrime
- Abuse by those in positions of trust
- Hate crime

The above forms of abuse either have a strategy, board or workstream of their own or do not meet the legal or safeguarding threshold for exploitation. Therefore, to avoid duplication, the work of this strategy will focus on:

- Modern slavery
- Human trafficking
- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation

Legislation

There are various acts of parliament and statutory regulations in place across England and Wales which are designed to work together to tackle forms of exploitation, protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Key legislation is summarised below:

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

This new statutory guidance emphasises how organisations and professionals must work together to protect children from harm and promote their welfare. It provides a clear framework for coordinated multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities and decision-making. Key provisions include:

- It recognises child exploitation as a form of abuse requiring the same safeguarding response as other harms.
- It emphasises early identification and information sharing between agencies to prevent escalation.
- It promotes contextual safeguarding approaches that address risks beyond the family, such as peer groups, online spaces, and community environments.

Crime and Policing Bill 2025

This Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, introduces new measures to combat exploitation. Key provisions include:

- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) – establishes a stand-alone offence for adults using children for criminal activity, with penalties up to 10 years imprisonment or a fine. Civil preventative orders are also available.
- ‘Cuckooing’ – criminalises taking control of a vulnerable person’s home for illegal activity.
- Coerced internal concealment – targets forcing individuals to conceal illegal items inside their bodies.

Once enacted, these offences will provide statutory powers to prosecute adults exploiting children or vulnerable adults through criminal activity.

Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 remains the primary legislation underpinning child safeguarding. Key provisions include:

- Duty to protect children – authorities must investigate and intervene where children are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Safeguarding children from harm – local authorities must provide services to children at risk of significant harm, including from exploitation.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

This Act is one of the most significant pieces of legislation addressing exploitation, particularly in forced labour, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Key provisions include:

- Offences of slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour – including domestic work, agriculture, and the sex industry.
- Human trafficking – criminalises trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour, or other forms of exploitation.
- Provision of support to victims – assistance with housing, financial aid, and other support.
- Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders – restricts movement and activities of individuals suspected of involvement in modern slavery.
- Local authority duties – under Section 52, authorities must identify and refer victims to the Home Office via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), considering consent and mental capacity.

Local authorities also have a duty to cooperate with multi-agency safeguarding arrangements under the Care Act 2014 when victims are adults.

Care Act 2014

This Act recognises modern slavery as a form of abuse and includes safeguarding duties. Key provisions include:

- Recognition of modern slavery – includes trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced labour.
- Adult safeguarding duties – local authorities must act when an adult with care and support needs is suspected of being exploited.
- Referral processes – includes use of NRM (with consent) and MS1 notifications (without consent).
- Exploitation screening tools – used to assess adults at risk, followed by Adult Safeguarding Concern Forms (SA1) where appropriate.
- Mental capacity considerations – best interest principles and advocacy support must be considered.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

This Act addresses sexual offences, including the exploitation of children and vulnerable adults. Key provisions include:

- Sexual exploitation – criminalises sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and exploitation for prostitution or pornography.
- Trafficking for sexual exploitation – illegal to transport individuals for sexual exploitation.
- Grooming offences – criminalises grooming online or offline, particularly of minors.

Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 remains the primary legislation underpinning child safeguarding. Key provisions include:

- Duty to protect children – authorities must investigate and intervene where children are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Safeguarding children from harm – local authorities must provide services to children at risk of significant harm, including from exploitation.

Other relevant legislation and strategies

Employment Rights Act 1996: provides workplace protections relevant to exploitation.

Equality Act 2010: covers discrimination in England, Wales, and other UK jurisdictions.

Crime and Courts Act 2013: includes provisions to combat sexual exploitation, particularly online.

National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and National Living Wage: contains key protections against labour exploitation.

Policing and Crime Act 2009: introduces offences targeting human trafficking, forced labour, and sexual exploitation.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006: prevents abuse and exploitation of vulnerable individuals.

UK Anti-Slavery Strategy: a cross-government strategy on prevention, victim support, and prosecution.

Serious and Organised Crime Strategy: addresses human trafficking and exploitation.

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Strategic Plan 2024–2026: national guidance and priorities for multi-agency anti-slavery work.

Online Safety Act 2023: relevant for online sexual exploitation and grooming.

Serious Crime Act 2007: used in practice to address organised exploitation networks.

Proceeds of Crime Act 2002: relevant for asset recovery in exploitation cases.

Guidance for local authorities

In 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA), in collaboration with the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, published the first guidance to help councils tackle modern slavery. Since then, both the nature of modern slavery and councils' responses have evolved significantly. Referrals of suspected victims have increased, reflecting growing awareness and understanding of exploitation in local communities, including child criminal exploitation, labour exploitation, and sexual exploitation. Councils have also developed dedicated modern slavery lead roles and increasingly participate in local anti-slavery partnerships, improving victim support and safeguarding outcomes.

In response to these developments, the LGA published updated guidance in 2022. This guidance provides councils with practical advice on addressing all forms of modern slavery and includes targeted sections for different council services, such as children's services, adult social care, housing, community and regulatory services, and council supply chains.

A central feature of the guidance is the maturity matrix, which allows councils to assess their current performance and plan future activity. Progress is assessed across four levels: basic first steps, early progress, substantial progress, and mature. The matrix is structured in two parts:

1. **Organisational management** – evaluates how councils manage modern slavery work through leadership, resources, and capacity.
2. **Council activity themes** – assesses progress in:
 - Identifying, referring, and supporting victims
 - Disruption of criminal activity
 - Prevention of exploitation
 - Mitigation of modern slavery risks in supply chains

Councils can use the matrix to identify gaps, plan next steps, and monitor progress over time.

Bracknell Forest Council has completed the matrix and its maturity in each section for 2025 is shown below:

Theme	Key elements	Council self-assessment
Leadership	Strategy and planning	2. Early progress
	Governance	2. Early progress
	Councillor engagement	3. Substantial progress
	Funding and staffing	2. Early progress
Resources and capacity	Cross-council coordination	3. Substantial progress
	Training and awareness	2. Early progress
	Data and intelligence	1. Basic
	Partnership working	2. Early progress
Identifying and supporting adult victims	Monitoring and evaluation	1. Basic
	Service design	3. Substantial progress
	Multi-agency working	4. Mature
	Referral pathways	3. Substantial progress
Identifying and supporting child victims	Service design	3. Substantial progress
	Multi-agency working	4. Mature
	Referral pathways	2. Early progress

Disruption and prevention	Awareness and overall approach to disruption and prevention	3. Substantial progress
	Operational disruption activity and partnership working	3. Substantial progress
	Prevention activity	3. Substantial progress
Procurement and commissioning	Training and awareness raising	2. Early progress
	Policies and procedures	3. Substantial progress
	Supply chain mapping and activity	2. Early progress

KEY

Progress levels
1. Basic
2. Early progress
3. Substantial progress
4. Mature

Steps required to reach the next progress level will be progressed by BFC alongside the partnership-owned workplan.

National context

Modern slavery and exploitation remain serious concerns in England and Wales in 2024. The UK government, law enforcement agencies, and non-governmental organisations continuously monitor these issues including data and intelligence. Key sources include the NRM, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and reports from major non-government organisations as well as the Salvation Army and Unseen.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data: 2024

- Total referrals: 19,125 potential victims were referred to the NRM in 2024, a 13% increase from 2023
- Over half of all decisions were positive

Main types of exploitation

- Labour Exploitation: Most common form, especially in agriculture, construction, and hospitality.
- Sexual Exploitation: Affects both children and adults, including online grooming and trafficking.
- Criminal Exploitation: Includes County Drug Lines drug trafficking, coercing children and vulnerable adults and other forms of criminal coercion.
- Domestic Servitude: Often affects women in live-in roles such as carers or cleaners, with little freedom.

Impact on vulnerable groups

- Children accounted for around 30% of NRM referrals. They are particularly vulnerable to criminal and sexual exploitation.
- Adults made up 70% of referrals, mostly aged 18 - 45.
- Gender: Female victims are disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.

Law enforcement and prosecutions

The government has invested in improving victim engagement and increasing prosecutions:

- £1.4 million invested in police capacity.
- New technologies like the Child Abuse Image Database.
- Strengthened offender management through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (which is primarily focused on broader criminal justice reforms and supports modern slavery responses more indirectly).
- Enhanced National Crime Agency (NCA) capabilities.

Government action and policy

The Beating Crime Plan and the Crime and Policing Bill 2025 proposed introducing measures targeting:

- Child criminal exploitation.
- Cuckooing (where criminals take over a vulnerable person's home).
- Cross-agency collaboration and victim support.

2025 estimates and strategic direction

While official 2025 figures are not yet available, the Home Office and local authorities anticipate a continued rise in referrals due to increased awareness and reporting

Local context

General

As of 30 September 2025, Bracknell Forest had the 12th lowest rate of crimes and ASB out of 61 unitary authorities at 5.27 incidents per 1,000 population. This position improved from last year where our position was 13th lowest at a rate of 6.2 per 1,000 population.

When compared with 14 other most similar CSPs per 1,000 population, Bracknell Forest is 5th lowest in all police-recorded crime for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. It was also lower than the average crime rate across similar areas (Bracknell Forest was 58.5 vs average of 66.74). Data from 9-months prior (year ending 30 September 2024), showed Bracknell Forest was 6th lowest, with a crime rate normal for the group, so there has been an improvement by 1 position since September 2024.

Exploitation

Local children's data demonstrates that exploitation, while affecting a relatively small cohort known to services is closely linked to wider vulnerabilities including disrupted education, substance use, missing episodes, care experience and unmet additional needs. It is also recognised that exploitation is under-identified, particularly where harm is less visible, normalised within peer or family networks, or occurs online.

Local patterns broadly reflect national trends. Criminal exploitation and serious violence are more visible among boys, often linked to behavioural indicators and contact with policing, while sexual exploitation is more commonly identified among girls, frequently once harm is already occurring. This highlights the need for earlier, gender-informed identification and responses, especially for children whose exploitation may be hidden. Emerging questions around disproportionality reinforce the importance of culturally competent and trauma-informed practice.

Education disruption and special educational needs are consistent risk factors. Exclusion, persistent absence and placement instability increase vulnerability and create opportunities for exploitation, while transitions between services and into adulthood represent periods of heightened risk. Schools, colleges and alternative provision are therefore critical to prevention and early intervention.

Alongside established organised exploitation models, local data indicates a growing trend of localised criminal exploitation, particularly linked to cannabis supply within peer and community networks. This challenges traditional safeguarding narratives and requires a stronger focus on contextual, place-based approaches that address environments as well as individuals.

Where perpetrators are known, they are mostly male and increasingly local to victims, reinforcing the need for coordinated disruption activity across safeguarding, policing, community safety, housing and the wider partnership.

This strategy emphasises shared responsibility across agencies, underpinned by strong multi-agency intelligence, education-centred safeguarding, gender- and trauma-informed practice, and a sustained focus on the places, contexts and transition points where children are most vulnerable to exploitation.

In the adult population, most known cases of exploitation reported to police between 2022 and 2025 are for criminal exploitation and forced labour, with smaller numbers for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and human trafficking. While most adult victims known to services in Bracknell Forest are highly vulnerable due to mental health needs, substance misuse or disabilities, a small number comprise those who pose a threat to those they associate with while also being exploited themselves. As set out elsewhere in this strategy, Bracknell Forest has a multi-agency children's exploitation safeguarding group as well as one for adults.

For the year 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, suspected victims of exploitation referred to TVP comprised mostly males of British nationality with an age range of 15-44 years old.

Contextual safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding, which is an approach to understanding and responding to experiences of significant harm beyond families, was developed specifically for children. However, its principles are relevant to vulnerable adults too, especially those who are also at risk in environments outside the family. Examples of these environments include peer groups, education institutions, workplaces, public spaces and online contexts. It emphasises the need for safeguarding systems to assess, intervene in, and reshape the environments where these harms occur.

Bracknell Forest's approach to child exploitation is rooted in contextual safeguarding. BFC Makesafe (exploitation prevention) specialist team works directly with children who are missing or at risk of exploitation, while also addressing risks within schools, community spaces, transport hubs, parks, and online environments.

Exploitation concerns are coordinated through the Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) panel, providing a consistent, multi-agency response supported by shared risk assessment tools. Children's voices are central to this work, informing interventions across youth work, return after being missing conversations, and targeted programmes to ensure safeguarding is empowering and effective. Similarly, the SAVE (Serious Adult Violence and Exploitation) panel provides a multi-agency problem-solving response to adult victims and perpetrators.

BFC also works proactively with partners and the wider community to prevent exploitation. This includes multi-agency contextual safeguarding activity in parks and open spaces, hotspot monitoring, environmental interventions, and joint operational responses. Engagement with local businesses and targeted awareness campaigns improve recognition and reporting of exploitation in commercial settings, supported by workforce training and prevention initiatives.

Contextual safeguarding is embedded across wider safeguarding and prevention frameworks, including Prevent and Channel, which treat radicalisation as a safeguarding issue and apply a pre-criminal, consent-based, multi-agency approach. Oversight is provided through the CSP and BFSB, ensuring an all-age, place-based safeguarding response that reduces risk, disrupts exploitation, and builds resilience across communities.

Exploitation risk arising from temporary displacement

Bracknell Forest is committed to delivering a whole-system, all-age response to exploitation that recognises the increasingly cross-jurisdictional nature of harm. Exploitation does not respect administrative, force or regional boundaries, and our safeguarding arrangements must be equally agile, intelligence-led and collaborative. We will ensure that individuals are protected irrespective of where they originate, where they are placed, or where exploitation occurs.

Our vision is to create a borderless safeguarding system that anticipates and responds to mobility-related exploitation risks. We recognise that vulnerability can intensify when children, young people and adults are displaced, placed out of area, living in temporary or supported accommodation, experiencing homelessness, or travelling across borough and county lines.

Example of cross-border exploitation risks may include:

- Organised criminal exploitation, including county lines activity, where children and vulnerable adults are transported across force boundaries to distribute drugs, store weapons or commit crime.
- Sexual exploitation linked to movement between locations, including victims being transported for abuse in hotels, short-term lets, private addresses or online-facilitated meetups across different local authority areas.
- Labour exploitation, where individuals are recruited in one area and exploited in another, including car washes, construction, nail bars, hospitality, domestic servitude or other informal labour markets.
- Trafficking and modern slavery, involving movement within the UK (internal trafficking) as well as international routes, often accompanied by debt bondage, coercion or threats to family members.
- Exploitation associated with out-of-area placements, where children in care or adults with care and support needs placed beyond their home community may be targeted by local networks due to isolation or unfamiliarity with services.
- Online-facilitated exploitation, where grooming and coercion transcend geography but lead to physical movement across borough or county boundaries.
- Financial exploitation and criminal coercion, including cuckooing, fraud, forced criminality or exploitation of benefits systems spanning multiple jurisdictions.

These forms of harm can be interconnected and may involve the deliberate movement of victims to areas perceived to have lower detection risk, weaker community ties, or limited contextual safeguarding oversight.

BFC exploitation stakeholders must ensure that safeguarding frameworks proactively account for individuals who originate outside the borough or are placed here from other local authorities as well as those who are resident but travel across force, county or regional borders. Out-of-area placements, including residential care, supported accommodation or specialist provision commissioned beyond the borough due to capacity limitations, introduce additional layers of risk unless there are robust cross-authority coordination, shared risk assessment and clarity around safeguarding responsibilities. Evidence from national practice highlights that without effective information sharing and joint contextual risk assessments between placing and receiving local authorities, vulnerable individuals placed away from home may become exposed to new exploitative networks or experience continuity gaps in their safeguarding plans, potentially undermining protective interventions.

This 'borderless safeguarding' challenge requires clear protocols that enable real-time sharing of intelligence, care plans and risk indicators between Bracknell Forest and partner authorities so that all practitioners – from social care, health services and education to police, housing and community safety teams – can identify, respond to and mitigate exploitation risks wherever they emerge.

In addition, specific measures should be embedded to support vulnerable individuals entering the borough from outside areas– including London boroughs and other metropolitan contexts – through induction to local services, trauma-informed support pathways, and enhanced community engagement. This includes effective use of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of trafficking and exploitation, and proactive engagement with neighbouring authorities to anticipate and respond to placement trends. By foregrounding cross-border exploitation in strategic planning, Bracknell Forest can better safeguard individuals at greatest risk, ensure continuity of tailored support irrespective of place of origin, and strengthen collaborative responses that disrupt exploitative practices and protect residents and transient populations alike.

The workplan attached to this strategy will incorporate specific actions to ensure that we develop or strengthen current arrangements.

Consultation findings

Consultation on this strategy and proposed workplan was comprehensive and took place in several ways:

1. Online workshops with the stakeholders of the CSP and BFSB
2. An in-person workshop with BFC Heads of Service
3. In-person consultation with children within a school, some with lived experience of exploitation
4. Telephone consultation with adults with lived experience of exploitation
5. A wider community online consultation

The findings of 1 and 2 above have already been included in this strategy. A summary of findings under 3, 4 and 5 are included below:

1. In-person consultation with children within a school, some with lived experience of exploitation

A focused session took place with students at Garth Hill College (please see Appendix 2 for a workshop outline). The session was planned and led in a way that was inclusive and sensitive to trauma, treating children as partners rather than just asking for their opinions. Activities included real-life scenarios, mapping out of problems and solutions, and group discussions to explore the challenges around exploitation, staying safe, and asking for help. This hands-on approach helped children share honest views, suggest real changes, and shape both this strategy and wider improvements to the system. Feedback received per priority is as follows:

Prevention:

Children said schools need to teach about exploitation earlier and in a way that feels real and relatable. They want lessons that go beyond stereotypes, build understanding, and include real-life stories. They also asked for better online access to information and more child-friendly ways to get involved, like through school bulletins, social media, and websites.

Support and Recovery:

They highlighted the need for services that are private, non-judgemental, and based on trust. Support should recognise the emotional side of exploitation, including feelings of shame, fear of consequences, and blaming oneself.

Transition into Adulthood:

Children were worried about being treated like “just a number” and said support should be more personal and flexible. It should respect their identity, independence, and the unique risks they face as they grow up.

Perpetrators:

They said services need to understand the power imbalances involved and make sure victims aren't blamed or treated like criminals, especially when they've been pressured or manipulated into harmful behaviour.

Across all these areas, children showed a strong desire to stay involved in shaping local services — not just to protect others, but to give back to their community and hold adults and systems accountable.

2. Telephone consultation with adults with lived experience of exploitation

Four adults with lived experience of exploitation provided valuable feedback on their experiences and how it could have been better. Seven questions were asked:

1. When this happened did you know who to ask for help.
2. Would you have gone to the police?
3. Did you feel believed, safe and listened to?
4. Did the support make things better or worse.
5. What support do you still need that you're not getting.
6. Were you involved in the decisions about how to keep you safe?
7. What else could support services have done to help you?

A summary of responses is below (please see Appendix 2 for detailed responses).

The feedback highlights experiences of victims affected by exploitation, including financial abuse, coercion, and unsafe living situations. The accounts reveal a lack of clarity about where to seek help, with some victims distrusting or feeling let down by the police and other services. While certain support, such as housing providers, social care, and welfare services, offered some relief, many participants still felt unheard, unsafe, or seen as the problem rather than the victim. Experiences of reporting exploitation varied: some received helpful interventions, while others found inaction worsened their situation. Ongoing needs included safer accommodation, financial and emotional support, practical household help, and more consistent action from authorities. The responses underscore the importance of timely, empathetic, and proactive safeguarding to protect vulnerable people and restore their sense of safety and dignity.

3. A wider community online consultation

An online resident consultation took place over a 6-week period in August and September 2025. Four questions were asked:

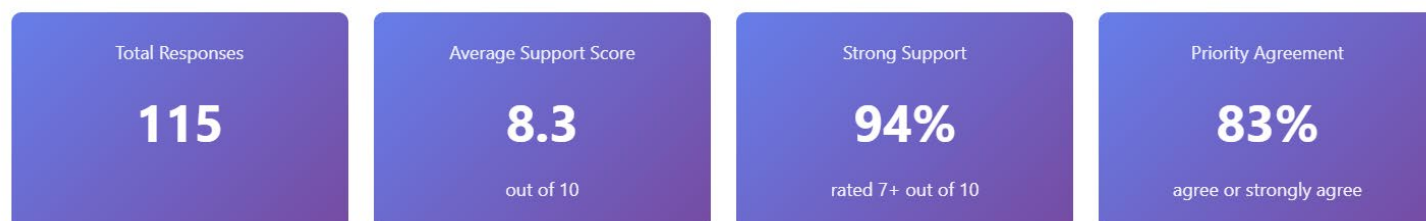
- Do you support the plan to introduce an exploitation strategy across all ages?
- The All-Age Exploitation Strategy recommends four priorities:
 - Prevention
 - Transition into Adulthood
 - Perpetrators
 - Support and Recovery.

Do you agree with these priorities?

- Would you include different priorities and why?
- Do you agree with the 'strapline' for the strategy of #ittakesacomunity?

The consultation received 115 responses, demonstrating good public engagement. The data reveals strong support for the strategy, with 94% of respondents rating their support at 7 or above on a 10-point scale. There is broad agreement with the proposed priorities, with 95 respondents (83%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing. The strapline "#ittakesacomunity"

received positive reception from 65% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed, though 25% remained neutral. This is summarised in the image below:



In summary, the strategy enjoys exceptionally high community support, with 54 respondents (50%) giving a maximum score of 9 out of 10. Only 3 respondents gave a zero rating, representing minimal opposition. The consultation generated 53 detailed text responses providing valuable qualitative feedback for strategy refinement.

Responses to the third question were analysed and categorised into key themes which are summarised below:

Education and awareness (7 mentions): Multiple respondents emphasised the need for educational programs and public awareness campaigns. Suggestions included school-based education for vulnerable teenagers (from age 14), workplace training, and public education about recognising exploitation.

Age-specific support (8 mentions): Respondents highlighted the importance of tailoring support to different age groups, particularly noting that 'all ages' should explicitly include older people who may be vulnerable to financial exploitation and scams.

Support and resources (7 mentions): Several responses called for enhanced support services, including support for families affected by exploitation, assistance for perpetrators to break cycles of harm, and ensuring adequate resources are allocated to tackle issues effectively.

Perpetrators and enforcement (5 mentions): Respondents suggested strengthening the perpetrator-focused elements, including clarifying what actions will be taken (stopping, catching, punishing, or re-educating), and increasing visible police presence as a deterrent.

Prevention (4 mentions): Prevention was identified as a critical priority, with respondents suggesting it should receive greater emphasis and focus on identifying and tackling root causes.

Other Important Themes

Financial exploitation: Specific concerns about internet scams, unscrupulous tradesmen targeting elderly residents, and financial exploitation.

Flexibility and individualisation: Recognition that support needs to be tailored to individual circumstances rather than following a "blanket formula."

Implementation concerns: Requests for more information about the problem scope, costs, and evidence base for the strategy.

4. An in-person workshop with BFC People Directorate Heads of Service

A workshop was held in October to consult with People Directorate Heads of Service. The following 3 questions were posed to the group (a summary of responses is included below each one):

Question 1: What are the key local risks, vulnerabilities, and patterns of exploitation you're seeing across age groups — and where are the current gaps in our response?

Answer:

- Housing-related exploitation is a significant risk, particularly involving houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) and criminal landlords, with a need for stronger partnership working and targeted enforcement.
- Children and young people aged 12–17 remain highly vulnerable. While individual interventions are strong, there is a gap in proactive, group-based prevention work.
- Criminal exploitation (including county lines and grooming networks) remains a concern, with a perceived need for more proactive identification of hidden and emerging risks.
- Adults who do not meet traditional service thresholds, including people with mental health needs and those who are under-served, are at increased risk and not consistently reached.
- Care leavers and those transitioning into adulthood require improved multi-agency planning and risk management.
- There is a gap in public and professional awareness of what exploitation looks like in everyday contexts, indicating a need for accessible awareness campaigns.

Question 2: How can we make this strategy genuinely 'all-age'— avoiding duplication while ensuring age-appropriate, trauma-informed support across the life course?

Answer:

- There is strong support for an all-age safeguarding model, with better alignment between children's and adults' services, including consideration of extended MACE-type arrangements (i.e. SAVE) up to age 25, particularly for care leavers and young people with SEND.
- Data integration across agencies is a key priority to enable early identification and continuity of support.
- Participants emphasised the importance of engaging under-served groups and embedding trauma-informed approaches across the life course.
- Lived experience should play a greater role in shaping services, learning, and prevention activity.
- All services in the community should see themselves as identifiers of exploitation, reinforcing the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Better communication of successes and learning, using accessible case studies, would help build shared understanding across the system.

Question 3: What would support your teams to implement this strategy effectively — and what barriers (structural, cultural, financial) might get in the way?

Answer:

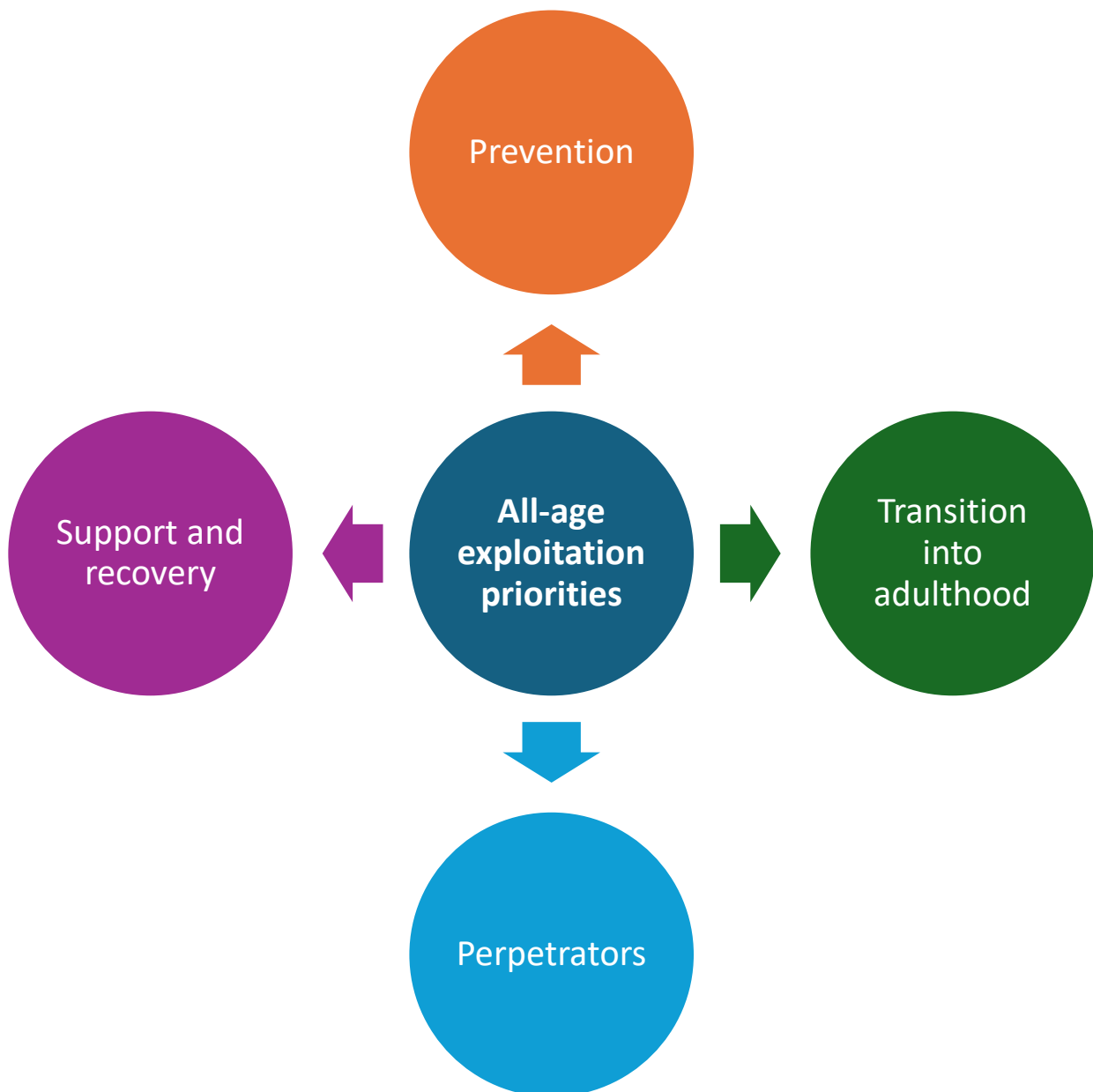
- Practitioners would benefit from a single, accessible point of contact and a shared knowledge repository, designed for those without specialist expertise.
- Improved information-sharing and joined-up datasets are critical, including greater access for schools to safeguarding information where appropriate.
- Participants highlighted financial pressures and capacity constraints, particularly in schools and frontline services, as a major barrier.
- Concerns were raised about reduced data sharing, especially between police and children's services compared to previous practice.
- Seeing good practice examples and case studies would support confidence and consistency in implementation.
- There was strong support for co-production approaches when gathering data, developing services, and evaluating impact.

All the above findings have been carefully considered and included in the following strategy priorities and work plan.

Recommended strategic priorities

Based on all feedback from colleagues, partners and residents of Bracknell Forest, four strategic priorities areas have been identified which comprise our ambition for this 5-year strategy.

The four priorities are depicted below:



Priority 1: Prevention

Prevention is a crucial multi-faceted approach in tackling exploitation because it recognises the root causes of exploitation before individuals are harmed. Exploitation often involves complex factors such as vulnerability, power imbalances, and social or economic inequalities. By focusing on prevention, the aim is to reduce the likelihood of these crimes occurring in the first place, rather than simply responding to the harm after it has taken place.



Prevention

Key areas that Bracknell Forest will be exploring and developing are summarised as follows:

Raising Awareness

- Undertake public campaigns which target a range of audiences to ensure that they recognise exploitation that may be taking place around them and that they understand how it can appear in different situations
- Promote and share annual campaigns of national modern slavery charities and non-government organisations through our networks and communication routes
- Ensure that people know how to report suspected exploitation and feel confident and supported when doing so. This includes confidential reporting channels.
- Identify and target particularly vulnerable groups of people in the community e.g. children, migrants, those in care, those with disabilities, those who misuse substances, those with mental health needs, children who are electively home educated, and others who are disproportionately represented within local trends, with the aim of reaching these people as early as possible.
- Develop age-appropriate exploitation education in schools, using real-life, relatable scenarios and addressing online, criminal, financial and sexual exploitation.
- Enhance place-based contextual safeguarding, particularly in parks, open spaces, transport hubs, HMO's and other identified hotspots.
- Use lived experience input to shape prevention messages, campaigns and education materials.

Workforce Training and Education

- Identify all exploitation stakeholders in Bracknell Forest and create a network of communication so that we are always learning and sharing information.
- Work with local businesses, especially those in high-risk sectors, to offer training on how to spot modern slavery and exploitation. This can include how to identify coerced labour, trafficked individuals, or forced sex work within their supply chains or businesses.
- Ensure that professionals who are most likely to encounter suspected victims, particularly community-facing services, are able to recognise exploitation, know what to say and what action to take, through accessible training and education.

Ethical Business Standards

- Share with employers the requirements under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to issue modern slavery statements and to ensure that their supply chains are free from exploitation.
- Encourage local businesses to adopt ethical practices, particularly in sectors vulnerable to labour exploitation (e.g., construction, hospitality, agriculture) by providing them with guidance on identifying forced labour and human trafficking in their supply chains or operations so that their practices do not contribute to modern slavery or human trafficking.

Community Engagement

- Work with community leaders, particularly in vulnerable communities, to raise awareness about the risks of exploitation in their communities. Engaging with faith groups, charities, and ethnic community leaders can be crucial in identifying and preventing cases of exploitation in at-risk populations.
- Ensure that service development directly addresses localised trends identified in the community e.g. cannabis use/risk of exploitation/disengagement in school.

Data and Intelligence

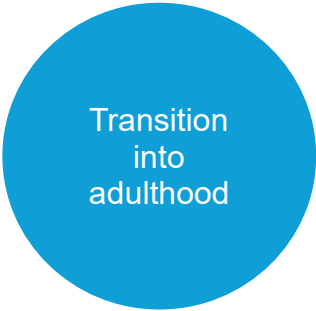
- Identify accurate data sources so that a local profile of exploitation can be built and responded to
- Share intelligence-sharing reporting routes with partners so that intelligence of suspected exploitation is submitted as easily and quickly as possible.

Procol and Policy Development and Standards

- Introduce or strengthen commissioning and contract monitoring standards requiring residential and supported accommodation providers to demonstrate contextual safeguarding, staff training and disruption pathways.
- Develop and implement a multi-agency protocol between BFC, placing authorities, TVP, health partners and providers to ensure robust information-sharing, risk assessment and safeguarding planning.
- Engage with national and regional policymakers and networks to highlight local issues related to exploitation as well as good practice and successes.

Priority 2: Transition into adulthood

We want to offer more than a 'cliff edge' for young people turning 18, creating an overlap rather than a gap by ensuring that they continue to receive strong and meaningful support to protect against exploitation into adulthood.



Transition
into
adulthood

Young adults in this age group are particularly vulnerable as they are transitioning from childhood to adulthood, often facing significant changes in their personal, social, and economic circumstances. They may have fewer safety nets compared to children, which can increase their risk of being exploited.

Key areas that Bracknell Forest will be exploring and developing are summarised as follows:

Tailored Support for Care Leavers and Vulnerable Young Adults

- Develop a strong, all-age safeguarding model, improving alignment between children's and adults' services.
- Ensure support during transition is personalised, flexible and strengths-based respecting identity, independence and changing risks.
- Ensure young people leaving care or the youth justice system, particularly those who have been exposed to abuse or neglect, are provided with ongoing aftercare services that include housing, education, employment support, and mental health services.
- Create individual care plans for each young person leaving care, which should include tailored pathways for housing, employment, education, and emotional support so that they have a support network as they transition to adulthood to mitigate against risk of exploitation
- Establish mentoring programs where care leavers and other vulnerable young adults are paired with trusted adults or peer mentors who can provide guidance and emotional support during this critical period.

Strengthened Access to Education, Employment and Training

- Ensure young people have access to education, training, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities as lack of economic opportunities is one of the key factors that makes young adults vulnerable to exploitation.
- Encourage businesses to offer apprenticeships and job placements for young people.
- Explore local youth employment hubs that provide guidance on job searches, CV writing, interview preparation, and other employability skills as well as awareness of exploitation risks in certain sectors.
- Ensure that young people, particularly those who may have had a disrupted education, are given access to alternative education routes, such as vocational training or access to higher education, through financial support, bursaries, and academic guidance.

Multi-agency Risk Assessment Processes

- Create multi-agency safeguarding collaborations that include social services, police, housing, healthcare providers, youth workers, and non-government organisations who can share information and co-ordinate actions to identify young people who may be at risk of exploitation.
- Establish separate pathways, approaches and services for children up to age 16, those between the ages of 16 and 25 and those 25+.

- Establish comprehensive risk assessment protocols to identify young adults at higher risk of exploitation, such as those with a history of abuse, mental health issues, substance misuse, or involvement in the criminal justice system.
- Understand the legislation relating to capacity and consent which are key considerations in exploitation and ensure that we have policies and protocols which support us to know the difference.
- Ensure case coordination between different services (youth services, housing, social care, education, and police) to deliver holistic support for young people who are at risk of exploitation or who may have already been exploited.

Housing Stability and Safe Accommodation

- Provide access to safe, supported accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness as housing instability is a significant factor that makes them more vulnerable to exploitation.
- Embed exploitation risk screening within housing assessments, particularly care leavers and adults placed out of area.
- Offer targeted accommodation options for young people who have experienced trauma, abuse, or exploitation, with wraparound support services such as mental health counselling, drug and alcohol support, and life skills training.
- Implement early intervention services for those at risk of homelessness, including mediation services for family disputes, emergency housing, and temporary accommodation solutions that prevent young people from becoming homeless and potentially falling prey to exploiters.

Awareness and Prevention of Exploitation

- Launch local awareness campaigns using social media, community groups, schools and youth services which is targeted at young adults to raise awareness of risks of exploitation, such as county lines, sexual exploitation, forced labour, and online exploitation.
- Establish peer-led education programs that allow young people to educate each other about the dangers of exploitation and how to stay safe.
- With young people increasingly vulnerable to online grooming and exploitation, local authorities should invest in digital literacy programs which cover safe internet use, recognising online grooming, scams and frauds and how to seek help.

Targeted Mental Health and Well-Being Services

- Offer accessible mental health services for young adults who may have experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect as they will be more vulnerable to exploitation.
- Use a trauma-informed approach in working with young people, particularly victims of exploitation, to ensure that services and interventions do not further traumatise them.
- Support with access to counselling services, support groups and safe spaces specifically designed for young adults who are dealing with issues such as addiction, past trauma, or mental health disorders.

Targeted Substance Misuse Support

- Children and young adults who are struggling with substance misuse may be more likely to fall prey to exploitation in various forms including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and financial exploitation. Access to substance misuse treatment is crucial together with support on building emotional and social resilience, improving self-esteem and coping mechanisms and empowerment to help make safer life choices.

Strong Community Engagement

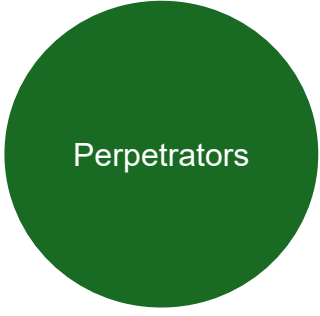
- Empower young people to take a leading role in shaping the services and policies that affect them through the use of youth councils or youth fora where young adults can discuss the issues they face and propose solutions to local authorities and partner organisations.
- Encourage the development of community watch programs where neighbours and local residents are educated to recognise and report suspicious activities that may involve exploitation, such as trafficking or drug dealing.
- Embed the concept that 'safeguarding is everyone's business' by placing responsibility on businesses, retailers, communities, peers and the public to recognise and report suspected exploitation in locations and sectors where children and young adults are likely to be.

Data Collection, Sharing of Information and Evaluation

- Regularly collect data on exploitation risks for young people between 17 and 21, including trends in trafficking, sexual exploitation, and criminal exploitation, and using this data to inform the development of services and prevention strategies.
- Establish mechanisms for feedback from young people who have accessed services, allowing local authorities and partner organisations to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make improvements where necessary.
- Identify what works well for those aged 16 - 25 years old by collating best practice in this area and, where appropriate, embed it in our approach.
- Ensure that information is routinely and proactively shared between services and organisations as children become adults.

Priority 3: Perpetrators

Responding to perpetrators of exploitation, whether children or adults, is a critical aspect of protecting vulnerable individuals and preventing future harm in Bracknell Forest. The management of these perpetrators involves a multi-agency approach, integrating criminal justice, rehabilitation, monitoring, and prevention strategies. It is essential to ensure that those responsible for exploitation are held accountable, and that appropriate interventions are in place to stop re-offending.



Perpetrators

Key areas that Bracknell Forest will be exploring and developing are summarised as follows:

Multi-Agency Collaboration and Intelligence-Sharing

- Establish clear protocols that enable timely and secure sharing of information between all partner agencies so that there is a co-ordinated approach to identifying and tackling perpetrators and their networks.
- Collaborate on joint intelligence-led operations to prevent, enforce and disrupt exploitative networks and individuals to target high-risk areas or industries including cross-border locations.
- Create, where appropriate, working groups with focused action plans that focus specifically on a type of exploitation that is perceived to be prevalent in Bracknell Forest e.g. where a county drug line or a sexual exploitation issue is identified.
- Work closely with law enforcement to identify those controlling, coercing, or manipulating people into criminal activities (this includes, where possible, tackling not just the 'street-level' criminals but also the organisers and facilitators higher up in the chain).
- Clarify and communicate the local approach to perpetrators, including enforcement, disruption and opportunities for behaviour change where appropriate.
- Develop data-led mapping of transport routes, hotels, short-term lets and known exploitation venues to identify patterns linked to cross-border activity.
- Increase visible deterrence and intelligence-led activity in identified hotspots.
- Use criminal and civil powers to disrupt and enforce e.g. Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO), Modern Slavery Prevention Order (MSPO), Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) and Civil Injunctions.
- Use learning from cases to inform system-wide improvement and prevention.

Support and Protection from Perpetrators

- Ensure that any response to perpetrators of exploitation is victim-centred and does not criminalise victims, particularly where individuals have been coerced or manipulated into criminal activity. This includes providing immediate support and protection to victims while working to disrupt or dismantle perpetrators' operations.
- Ensure that survivors of exploitation, particularly those subjected to sexual exploitation or trafficking, receive tailored support services, including counselling, housing assistance, access to education, employment and training and legal support so that they are less vulnerable to repeated exploitation.
- Collaborate with housing authorities and charities to ensure that victims are not further exposed to perpetrators by keeping them safe in alternative accommodation where possible.

Use Technology to Tackle Perpetrators

- Support police in utilising digital forensic capabilities to investigate perpetrators who use social media, websites, and encrypted platforms to groom or exploit victims.
- Work with tech companies, local schools, and youth organisations to monitor and prevent the online grooming of young people. This can include public awareness campaigns about the risks of online exploitation and how to stay safe.
- Use technological resources to intercept communications or track digital activities that are used by exploiters, especially those operating in organised networks. This could involve collaborating with cybercrime units to tackle the digital dimension of exploitation.

Priority 4: Support and recovery

Ensuring that victims of exploitation receive the comprehensive support they need to recover from their experiences is critical to their healing, empowerment, and reintegration into society. The recovery process for victims of exploitation requires a holistic, victim-centred approach. This approach should address not only the immediate safety and well-being of victims but also their long-term recovery and re-integration into society.



Support and
recovery

Key areas that Bracknell Forest will be exploring and developing are summarised as follows:

Multi-Agency Support

- Improve clarity of pathways so children, adults and professionals know where and how to access help quickly.
- Strengthen multi-agency safeguarding responses, including consistent use of risk assessment tools, improved information-sharing systems to support coordinated, timely responses and shared decision-making forums.
- Create a trauma-informed 'first 72-hour' safeguarding response for high-risk children or adults placed into the borough, ensuring early relationship-based intervention.
- Establish multi-agency case management collaborations that include social services, healthcare providers, mental health professionals, housing authorities, police, and third-sector organisations to create and progress tailored recovery plans for each victim (with the victim's consent if an adult). These should be regularly reviewed based on victim and agency feedback.
- Establish links with non-government organisations and charities e.g. Unseen, Salvation Army, Children's Society, Barnardos and understand their offer of support.

Immediate and Safe Accommodation

- Ensure that victims have access to immediate, safe, and confidential accommodation when identified, particularly for those at risk of further harm. The accommodation must be separate from other at-risk populations to prevent further exploitation.
- For longer-term housing, ensure that victims have access to supported accommodation that provides a safe, nurturing environment while they work through their recovery. This housing should be combined with wraparound services such as mental health support, addiction recovery services, and life skills programs.
- Consider the specific cultural or social needs of the victims, particularly if they come from marginalised communities or from overseas and strive to provide culturally appropriate housing and services.

Legal Support and Advocacy

- Ensure victims have access to legal support to help them navigate the complex legal issues they face, including securing their immigration status, obtaining compensation, and pressing charges against perpetrators.
- Offer advocacy services (specialist and independent if possible) to help victims report crimes, understand their legal rights, and participate in legal proceedings if they wish to pursue justice including referral routes into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- Support victims to feel empowered and treat them with dignity in an inclusive way. equally to others

Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Care

- Provide immediate and ongoing access to mental health support, counselling, and therapy. Many victims of exploitation suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other psychological effects that can hinder their recovery and reintegration into society.
- Ensure support services are trauma-informed, non-judgemental, private and trust-based, recognising shame, fear and self-blame experienced by victims.
- For victims under 18, provide specialised child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to address the unique psychological needs of young people who have been exploited.
- Develop peer support networks where victims who have gone through the recovery process can provide support to newer victims. This can help victims feel less isolated and more empowered as they move through their recovery.

Support with Physical Health and Well-Being

- Provide immediate access to health services, including medical screenings for physical harm, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, substance abuse, and other health needs as victims may have been exposed to violence, sexual assault, malnutrition, or poor health conditions, and need urgent care.
- Ensure that victims have access to ongoing health care, including chronic disease management, rehabilitation from substance misuse, and support for sexual and reproductive health.
- Victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking often need access to specialised sexual health services, including support for sexual trauma and reproductive health care.

Social and Community Integration

- Support victims with empowerment and re-integration e.g. financial assistance, training, job readiness programs, volunteering opportunities, and social support networks.
- Partner with local community organisations, churches, and cultural groups to integrate victims into local communities, offering them a sense of belonging and support networks outside of the recovery services.
- Support with training in essential life skills such as budgeting, cooking, basic home maintenance, and communication as victims may have been deprived of these opportunities and need these skills to build independent lives.
- Ensure that young victims of exploitation, or those who have had their education disrupted, are provided with educational support to enable them to catch up on missed schooling or further their learning. This could involve working with local schools, colleges, or adult education providers.

Vocational Training and Employment Opportunities

- Support victims to access vocational training and skills development programs to help them build a sustainable future. This can include apprenticeships, qualifications, or industry-specific training.
- Work with local businesses and employers to create job placement schemes for victims of exploitation, ensuring that these positions offer fair wages, job security, and safe working conditions.
- For those who may face challenges in traditional employment, support with access to guidance Aftercare and Long-Term Monitoring: on self-employment, entrepreneurship, and how to start small businesses.

Safe Discharge and Long-Term Support

- Identify any mentoring programs that may be available where survivors of exploitation, particularly those who have successfully navigated recovery, may mentor newer victims to help guide them through their journey.
- Provide periodic follow-up services to check on the well-being of victims, ensuring they are adjusting to their new lives and are not at risk of being re-exploited.

Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continuously monitor the effectiveness of the support services provided to victims. Collect data on the number of victims accessing services, their recovery progress, and their long-term outcomes to evaluate whether current support models are working and free of barriers in accessing them.
- Create safe, anonymous feedback mechanisms for victims to report on their experience of recovery services, which will help improve the quality of support and ensure it meets their needs.
- Embed co-production by involving people with lived experience (including cross-border exploitation) in service design, commissioning, evaluation and improvement.

Impact measures

The following set of impact measures are recommended for quarterly monitoring by the Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategic Sub-Group of the CSP and BFSB. These measures are grounded in safeguarding expectations, statutory obligations, and emerging practice in local multi-agency exploitation responses:

No.	Measure
1	Regular review of strategy impact with performance dashboards on action progress (RAG)
2	Number of exploitation-related referrals to Children's and Adult Social Care
3	Time from first contact/referral to risk assessment
4	Number of referrals and closures/resolutions/step-downs on the MACE multi-agency safeguarding group for children at risk of/experiencing exploitation
5	Number of referrals and closures/resolutions/step-downs to the SAVE multi-agency safeguarding group for adults at risk of/experiencing exploitation
6	Frequency of partner attendance at MACE and SAVE
7	Reduction in repeat exploitation incidents (child and adult)
8	Reduction in missing episodes linked to exploitation
9	Proportion of care leavers with exploitation risk plans at 17-18
10	Reach of campaigns and awareness-raising
11	Professional training completions
12	Number of exploitation-related disruption actions issued e.g. closure orders, warning notices, arrest warrants
13	% of placements into the borough with documented, up-to-date risk and support plans shared across authorities
14	Number of cross-agency safeguarding reviews triggered by out-of-area placements
15	Evidence of co-production of services and strategy reviews with those with lived experience

Appendix 1: Child exploitation consultation workshop outline

Focus group workshop: developing a strategy to tackle exploitation

Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours

Participants: 1 child group and 1 adult group

Facilitators: Nick Young and Lisa Bursill

Agenda and activities

1. Welcome and introductions (10 mins)

Activity: Icebreaker – “One Word”

- Ask each person to share one word they associate with “safety” or “support.”
 - Briefly introduce the purpose of the workshop: *“We’re not just asking for your opinions—we’re building something together. Your voices will shape how people are supported and protected.”*
-

2. Setting the scene: Understanding exploitation (20 mins)

Activity: “What Does It Look Like?” (Group Discussion & Scenarios)

- Present 2-3 age-appropriate, anonymised scenarios of different types of exploitation (e.g., criminal, sexual, online, financial).
 - Use open-ended questions to encourage discussion: *“What would you do in this situation?” “Who could help?” “How do you think people feel in these situations?”*
 - Summarise key points raised by the group on a flipchart/board.
-

3. Identifying what works and what doesn’t (20 mins)

Activity: “The Wall of Barriers & Solutions”

- Split the group into small teams. Give them two colours of sticky notes:
 - **One colour for barriers** (Why don’t people ask for help? What stops professionals from supporting them well?)
 - **One colour for solutions** (What could make it easier to get support? What do people need from professionals?)
 - Stick notes on a board or wall. As a group, group similar ideas together and discuss themes.
-

4. Co-producing the strategy: What should be in place? (30 mins)

Activity: “Our Strategy: 3 Key Actions”

- Explain: *“Now we’ll design what good support looks like—what do people need to feel safe and supported?”*
 - Break into three groups, each focusing on one question:
 1. **Awareness and education** – How should people be taught about exploitation in school/made aware of it as adults? What works and what doesn’t?
 2. **Support and reporting** – What would make it easier for people to seek help? What should professionals do differently?
 3. **Youth voice and influence** – How can people help shape services? How can they hold professionals accountable?
 - Each group writes 3 key recommendations on flipchart paper.
-

5. Commitments and next steps (15 mins)

Activity: “Our Pledge”

- Participants write one action they want professionals to take and one action they will take themselves.
 - Facilitators summarise the key recommendations and commit to feeding back on how they will be used.
-

Closing the Session (5 mins)

- Thank participants for their time and contributions.
- Explain the next steps: how their input will shape the strategy and when they can expect feedback.

Appendix 2: Adult exploitation consultation feedback detail

Q1: When this happened did you know who to ask for help?

Case A - I was a bit unsure, the only person I did talk to or was having some contact with was my housing provider for noise and I was in a bit of trouble and antisocial behaviour or that's what people were saying but it was the people who were visiting my flat getting me into trouble and I didn't really know what to do and was drinking with them to cope with feeling scared and powerless. I wasn't really thinking, I just felt stuck because I wanted to be kind, have company but these were also my friends. I didn't like what was going on but they were giving me alcohol and not being very respectful.

Case B - No, I felt completely lost.

Money and good were stolen, I was threatened and bullied to give money. I didn't call police, I didn't trust the police, they didn't take action when it happened, so it got worse.

Case C - Yes, I went to social welfare.

Case D - No, I didn't really know who I could turn to or where I could report it. Nobody had ever explained to me what I should do or who I should speak to.

Q2: Would you have gone to the police?

Case A - No because I thought they wouldn't take me seriously due to me struggling with my alcohol addiction.

Case B - The police failed to act on several occasions which made it worse for me, even when I got hit over the head with a bottle, they still did nothing.

Case C - Yes, I went to the police when I was being abused by my ex.

Case D - If things had become too much to cope with, then yes, I think I would have gone to the police.

Q3: Did you feel believed, safe and listened to?

Case A - Not really because I was seen as the problem I was struggling with alcohol, and I guess that made it very difficult not to be seen as the problem that needed to be solved or made to go away. And when other people are pointing the finger at me to take the attention from them it looked as if I was the problem.

It wasn't until my housing provider started to talk to you that further questions were asked and I met you and that's when you guys started to see the bigger picture.

Case B - They did believe me, but I felt not listened too. Even when reported to Adult safeguard, no action was taken, it made it worse.

Case C - Yes, I went to the police when I was being abused by my ex.

Case D - I honestly can't remember clearly how I felt at the time, but I don't think I always felt fully listened to.

Q4: Did the support make things better or worse?

Case A - Better, although there are things that did and are going on. My girlfriend at the time lives downstairs and she was friends with the people who got told they couldn't come to my flat anymore, so falling out with them meant they started to complain about me being noisy, drunk and having knives – nothing has ever been found when the police have come out but because I have been drunk I think I'm just seen as a loser.

I often drink because I'm really angry about being treated like rubbish and when I feel bullied and once, I've had too much alcohol I can shout and stuff and tell the world off making myself an easy target.

Case B - Reporting then the police took no action. This made it worse and made me feel more isolated

Case C - Yes, it made me feel better

Case D - I didn't receive much assistance overall, but being able to talk about what was happening did make me feel a bit better. It helped to share it with someone, and the situation isn't going on anymore now.

Q5: What support do you still need that you're not getting?

Case A - Mostly repairs to my flat that I'm still waiting for Abri to do.

Other people in my block of flats cause more issues than I do, they have police and Abri attention. I try to keep away from them but if I need to my housing provider and you...I know you've helped me with my keys and all that.

Case B - How to keep safe, reporting and what people who will take action

Case C - I need some more financial support with physical materials like a dining table and chairs. After fleeing the abuse, I was able to stay in the flat for a while but then have been in multiple different temporary accommodations. I also don't have enough money for my children to do extra curriculum activities that they feel like they miss out on (swimming for my young daughter and the gym for my teenage son).

Case D - I'm not completely sure at the moment. I'm hoping to move into assisted living – the accommodation opposite the BP garage. I'm going to see it for the first time on Thursday, with my youngest sister.

Q6: Were you involved in the decisions about how to keep you safe?

Case A - Yes, but there were consequences if I didn't listen, there were behaviour contracts, ABC's, police bail conditions. I'm just glad the people who were staying with me and taking advantage of my kindness can no longer because of an injunction put in Abri. Having them do it helped.

Case B - I was but no action taken, victims should be first

Case C - Yes.

Case D - I was barely included in the decision-making process. Most of the time, my sister spoke on my behalf rather than me being directly involved in the discussions.

Q7: What else could support services have done to help you?

Case A - I'd like to get my flat looking nice but need repairs. I have been to New Hope but haven't really needed it yet.

Not sure, I don't work at the moment. I have worked but felt bullied.

Case B - Take some form of action so that the assailant feels the events are being investigated. This may change the behaviour at least and frequent communication from the police. Last time it received a complaint for the police to give an update,

Case C - They did a lot of things to protect me, like calling to check on me and the children. I had appointments with social care every two weeks back when I had just fled my abusive partner. Maybe it would have been better if they could have moved me out of the home, I experienced the abuse in quicker. It was private rented, and I had to wait to get an eviction notice, as I couldn't afford to live there with my income and benefits alone. I am now still in temporary accommodation.

Case D - My sister did listen to me and made sure to tell me that she had reported the exploitation. The people involved were using me, though they weren't directly threatening. I still see them about once a week, but they're not bothering me as much anymore. They know that I'm moving soon, though I haven't told them exactly where.