



Ending Adult Exploitation Strategy

Prevention Depriving
 Freedom Offenders Empowering
 Grooming **Support** Settings
 Depriving **Victims** Exploitation
 Empowering Knowledge **Prevention**
 Offenders **Victims** **Adult** Grooming
 Freedom **Victims**
 Settings Exploitation
 Awareness **Ending**
Victims **Exploitation** Outcomes
 Grooming **Exit** Controlling **Justice** Depriving
 Prevention Removing **Ending** Knowledge Settings
 Outcomes **Support** **Empowering** **Prevention**



Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Introduction

This strategy sets out the commitment of Luton Community Safety Partnership, Luton Safeguarding Adult Board and Luton Health & Wellbeing Board to stand together united to identify, tackle and most importantly prevent criminal exploitative behaviours across the town. We share a common vision to eliminate the exploitation of adults. This strategy sets out an overview of our approach, our strategic intentions and what we will do to work towards our ambition to eliminate exploitation.

The exploitation of children is of equal and utmost importance to the agencies involved in this strategy. A separate strategy exists in relation to children and should be read alongside this strategy for a complete strategic overview relating to preventing exploitation in Luton.

Overview of adult exploitation

Exploitation is a hidden and complex crime which abuses the basic human rights and dignity of victims who are subject to it. There are many different ways in which people can be used:

- **Sexual exploitation** - Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from sexual exploitation of another, including commercial sexual exploitation into prostitution.
- **Labour exploitation** – Servitude and forced/compulsory labour are forms of ‘modern slavery’.
- **Human trafficking** – Action or practice of illegally transporting people from one country or area to another, typically for the purposes of forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Material exploitation** – A form of crime in which exploiters take over the home of a vulnerable person, in order to use it as a base for a number of areas of criminality. This may also be referred to as ‘cuckooing’.
- **Organised forced criminality** – Victims may be forced into criminal activities by gangs such as drug cultivation, organised begging or benefit fraud e.g. extra tax credits, housing benefit.
- **Forced or sham marriages** – A forced marriage is where one or both people do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. A sham marriage is where the marriage or civil partnership is contracted for immigration advantage by a couple who are not in a genuine relationship.



Victims may be subject to one or more of these at the same time – for example being sexually exploited into prostitution alongside organised criminal exploitation. Trading people as commodities and exploiting them for profit or personal gain has long lasting psychological and physical impact on victims.

Strategic action area

Victims endure horrifying experiences and protecting them from harm and supporting them to escape is central to our approach to exploitation. Victims are often hidden – raising awareness and identification are key to our plans.

Exploitation can take many forms and the scope of this strategy is set broadly to enable local agencies to react to different and emerging types of behaviour. There are common features or tactics which **offenders** use in exploitative situations, which include:

- **Controlling** – through violence, threats of violence, humiliation, intimidation or controlling the victim’s everyday activity.
- **Depriving** – a victim of their ability to resist the controlling behaviour, their ability to escape.
- **Removing** – a victim’s independence, freedom of choice and access to their support network.
- **Gaining** – the exploiter gains personally, financially or materially as a result of the exploitative conduct.
- **Grooming/befriending** - establishing an emotional connection with a victim, and sometimes the family, to lower their inhibitions with the ultimate outcome of exploitation.

Strategic action area

Bringing **offenders** to justice through enforcement and punishment is critical to the disruption of criminal exploitation. Sharing information and intelligence about offenders will form an integral part of our approach.

Exploitation can occur in any location but key potential **settings** have been identified:

- **Home** – victims may be targeted within their own home – with it being taken over by criminals who use it for criminal purposes such as drugs or brothels or who may use it to benefit financially or materially by taking control of the victims money and household. Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO’s) present a risk as there’s a high turn over of occupants and some properties may be of a low standard, which can increase vulnerability.
- **Sexual establishment venues** – may be a sham or disguise for sexual exploitation or slavery with people being forced to work in them against their informed consent.
- **Street** – offenders identify potential victims to target through their ongoing presence in public spaces such as town centres, licensed premises or parades of shops. Commercial sexual exploitation can take place through off and on-street transactions.

- **Businesses** – national examples demonstrate that slavery takes place in a variety of business locations – from factories & fields to beauty salons and builder’s yards.
- **Online** – victims may be targeted online by offenders who are seeking vulnerable people to exploit.
- **Homelessness** – not having access to suitable and stable safe accommodation provides an overarching setting in which people become vulnerable to exploiters.

Strategic action area

Disrupting and designing out locations and **settings** where the exploitation of adults can occur is vital to tackling the issue.

Vision

Our vision is very simple – we want to eliminate the exploitation of adults.

What matters to us is that across all agencies, partnerships, community groups, residents and organisations is:

That we **Recognise** exploitation

that we are **Ready** to

Respond

And that ultimately exploitation is **Removed** from our town.





Challenges in Luton

As a hidden crime, numbers of identified victims in Luton remains concerningly low. This is similar to the national trend. What we do know is that there are factors we need to take into account to understand why, how and where exploitation may be taking place in Luton.

Luton has an increasingly transitory population.

With an international airport, Luton is a major port of entry within the United Kingdom with good transport links both rail and road to the rest of the area and country.

Residents of Luton are on lower wages in comparison to statistical neighbours.

There are people in the town who cannot speak English and/or whom have no recourse to public funds

There are vulnerable people living in isolation who are unable to protect themselves from exploitation and who may not even recognise that they are being subject to it – believing the exploiter to be a friend or a mate.

We do know there are significant numbers of victims of commercial sexual exploitation whose circumstances are compounded by the mis-held belief that they are choosing to sell sex and the subsequent stigma that surrounds this group.

People who have little or no support network and may not be known to any universal services may be targeted by offenders who will exploit them as a result of their lack of interaction with other people.

These points illustrate the need for us to look at a range of factors and vulnerabilities which could be leading to exploitative situations. To think broadly about our policy frameworks and how key decisions we make for the Town have an opportunity to make a positive difference towards ending exploitation. We need to look deeply into situations, people and settings and create a culture whereby we look the right way, ask the right questions and take every opportunity, no matter how small, towards the elimination of exploitation.

Making progress against our strategic action areas

Our plans to work towards prevention and elimination are based on 3 key areas of strategic and operational action.

Strategic action area	What are we trying to achieve
Victims - protect and support	Raise awareness to identify victims, understand their needs, support them to safety and recovery and prevent further victimisation
Offenders – enforce and bring to justice	Identify offenders, disrupt their activity and prevent further offending
Settings – disrupt and design out	Address conditions that foster exploitative situations and prevent further harm

Accountability

A Reducing Violence and Exploitation Board will be established in the first instance to lead on the coordination of the strategy and action areas.

Updates on progress will be provided 6-monthly to the Community Safety Partnership Executive, Luton Safeguarding Adults Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Annually, a report will be made available to the Crime and Disorder Committee to provide scrutiny, transparency and accountability in relation to the strategy.



What to look out for

An adult at risk of harm is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm may be increased by their personal characteristics or life circumstances. Signs that someone could be being exploited **may** include:

- Not being allowed to go where they wish, when they wish or do the things they used to
- Suspicion of physical assault/unexplained injuries
- Unexplained change in circumstance such as sudden lack/increase of money or in possession of expensive items
- Asking for things for their 'friend' or 'boyfriend'
- Relationships with controlling individuals or groups
- Being withdrawn or acting in a defensive or aggressive manner
- Isolation from peers or social networks
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being
- Associating with other people currently being exploited
- Significant increase in drug/alcohol consumption or escalation to stronger substances
- A 'friend' or 'boyfriend' insists on making and attending any appointments they may have
- Too eager to do everything they are asked
- Showing compulsive behaviour
- Not being able to concentrate or focus
- Unable or unwilling to answer questions or reluctant to engage with services that are offering support
- Behaving in a sexually inappropriate way
- Changes in appearance
- A friend, family member or somebody tells you something that causes you concern
- You notice the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts something may be wrong

They tell you about abuse, exploitation or neglect happening to them. It's important to note that victims of exploitation may not use these terms.

What to do if you are concerned that an adult is being exploited:

Call the Police on **999** if there is imminent risk of harm.

Activate safeguarding processes by reporting your concern to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on **01582 547653**, out of office hours: **0300 3008123**.

Submit information on possible offenders or locations to the Police on **101**.

Talk to a professional you trust about your concerns to share on your behalf.

If in doubt – shout. Telling somebody about your concern could help a victim to escape exploitation.

