



Wolverhampton Serious Violence Needs Assessment

Executive Summary 2024

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Introduction

Serious violence has a devastating impact on victims and their families, when unaddressed it can instil fear within communities and become extremely costly to society.

Since 2014 incidents of serious violence have increased across England and Wales. Following public consultation in July 2019, the Government announced that it would bring forward new legislation introducing a Serious Violence Duty¹ for specific public bodies; local authorities, integrated care boards or local health boards, probation service, fire and rescue services, local police force and appropriate criminal justice agencies.

The duty aims to ensure that these specific services and wider partners work together to share data, intelligence and knowledge allowing them to deliver targeted and appropriate interventions to prevent serious violence.

In response to the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty Wolverhampton has produced a Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). The assessment draws on data and evidence from a wide range of sources, including criminal justice and health, and importantly includes qualitative information from a number of key stakeholders. The SNA aims to:

- Identify the current and future needs of Wolverhampton's population in respect of violence prevention
- Provide a greater understanding of established and emerging serious violence trends, priority locations and other high-risk concerns
- Identify current and long-term issues relating to serious violence
- Identify population groups most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence



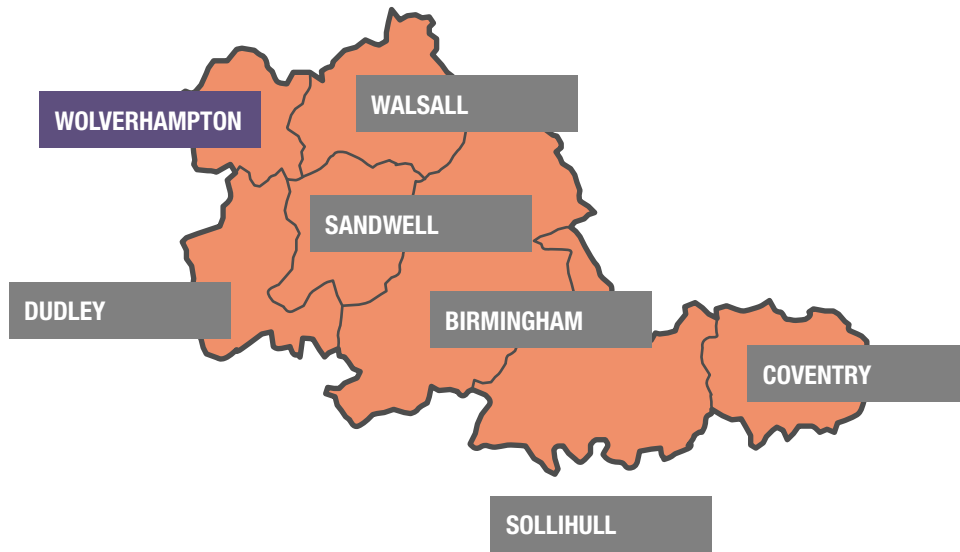
- Inform decisions about how interventions and services are designed, commissioned and delivered to prevent violence within the city
- Identify data and intelligence gaps and challenges across the Partnership which require addressing.

The assessment focuses on the extent of violence, including volumes and rates over time and also the risk factors associated with violence at both a population-centred and place-based level. Allowing for the development of a set of recommendations which will inform future decision making in relation to violence prevention and reduction across the Partnership.

¹ Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

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National & regional context



Available data suggests that the Covid-19 pandemic and the temporary restrictions imposed had a significant impact in reducing crime trends nationally, this was replicated locally resulting in less crime being recorded.

Since the restrictions have been lifted police recorded crime has exceeded pre-Covid levels. The increase, in part has been attributed to changes in the way that police now record crime. Police statistics suggest that violent crime in general (in contrast to many other crime types), is rising, a pattern which has been seen for several years.² This is in part down to proactive activity and an increase in reporting where victims have been empowered to report crimes which may previously have gone underreported, an example of which is the reporting of domestic abuse.

² Violence Reduction Partnership, 2023

Key findings include:



DECREASE

1.29% 2022-23
1.89% 2021-22

Adults experiencing violent crime

Nationally during 2022-2023 around 1.29% of adults had experienced a violent crime (compared to 1.89% in the previous year).³

VIOLENT
CRIME IN
ADULTS
DOWNSTABLE
FIGURES**More Repeat Victims?****Violent Crime**

Whilst the number of violent crimes remained stable in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year, there was a significant decrease in the number of victims (suggesting more repeat victims).³

DECREASE
IN VICTIMS

DECREASE

3% drop**Violence with Injury**

Between April 2021 to March 2022 West Midlands had the highest rate of Violence with Injury and knife crime compared to other police forces in England and Wales, although this was a 3% decrease when compared to the previous year.⁴

STILL
HIGHEST
RATE

MALES

15-24 years old**Most likely group hospitalised as a result of a sharp object**

In the West Midlands Males aged 15-24 are the most likely group to be admitted to hospital as an inpatient for assault with a sharp object. They are also most likely to be a victim of stabbing.⁵

SHARP
OBJECT

³ Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2023 ⁴ Violence Reduction Partnership, 2023. ⁵ Violence Reduction Partnership, 2023

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Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton has a diverse and cohesive population, communities represent a variety of different ethnicities, religions and cultures. The city has a relatively young population, with over a quarter of residents under 20 years old. Wolverhampton is a relatively deprived area with significant challenges in relation to poverty, unemployment and housing, the scale of these challenges and the response differs significantly between the diverse wards across the city.

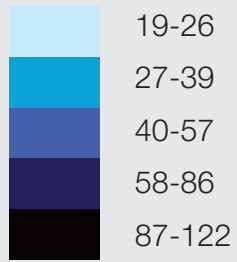


Violence in Wolverhampton – An Overview

- Violence with injury offences recorded in Wolverhampton had seen an increase until 2022 - 2023⁶ when a slight reduction was recorded by West Midlands Police
- There has been a decrease in recorded violent crime since Autumn 2022. This reduction is particularly significant when considering incidents where the victim is under 25, a reduction of 27% was seen between September 2022 – June 2023 when compared to the same period in the previous year.⁷
- Wolverhampton has the highest rate of hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) in the Black Country, higher than England and West Midlands figures. Recording is likely impacted by a strong local commitment to ensure that incidents are identified and recorded by New Cross Hospital Accident and Emergency department.⁸
- The highest number of incidents of violent crime with injury occurred in Wolverhampton city centre, Heath Town and Blakenhall wards.⁹



Incidents of Violent Crime with Injury (Victim Under 25)





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Views of key stakeholders

To inform the needs assessment a number of engagement events were held across the city with community members, statutory partners, young people and community and voluntary sector partners.

Over 200 people engaged with the events sharing their views and contributing to the local violence prevention approach.



Key themes from the engagement events include:

“Wolverhampton has a strong third sector and community voice. Communities are committed to supporting efforts to reduce violent crime.”

“The immediate multi-agency response to a violent incident in Wolverhampton is thorough and appreciated by families, professionals and communities. It is however important to ensure that support provided to communities is clear and coordinated and well communicated.”

“Whilst there is a robust response to those who are identified as being at risk of violence or exploitation, stakeholders felt that the focus of the partnership should be on identifying people at risk at an earlier point.”

“Communities felt that gender was a driving factor in youth violence, stating that there is a need to increase the presence of positive male role models for young people in the city.”

“There is a need for further engagement with families and communities to proactively build trusting relationships and engage them in the response to violence reduction, deliver key messages and communicate the help and support available.”

Most young people in Wolverhampton **do not carry weapons**. Those that do carry a weapon state that they do so for self defence, or because they feel unsafe.



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Victims and offenders



The age profile of victims of knife crime is younger than the age profile of victims of all violent crime.¹⁰

During 2022- 2023 Wolverhampton saw a decrease in violence where the victim was under 25 when compared to the previous year. An increase was seen in violence where the victim was over 25 during the same period.¹¹

Males in Wolverhampton are significantly more likely to suffer a violence related injury than females and are more likely to be perpetrators of violence.¹²

Of those under 18 in Wolverhampton who received outcomes (including custodial, out of court or outcome 22) for serious violence during 2022-2023 ages ranged between 11-17 years, with peak ages being 14 and 15 years.¹³

Where children and young people are engaged with the Youth Offending Team in Wolverhampton. Those who are black and/ or have social, emotional or mental health needs are disproportionately represented.¹⁴

Heath Town ward in Wolverhampton has the highest number of under 25s admitted to hospital for assault compared with all wards across the West Midlands Combined Authority Area. This contrasts with police data, which records Heath Town as 15th in violence with injury data.¹⁵

In Wolverhampton, younger adults are **more likely** to be victims of violent crime - this is in line with regional and national trends.

¹⁰ Violence Reduction Partnership, 2023

¹¹ West Midlands Police, 2023

¹² West Midlands Police, 2023

¹³ Wolverhampton Youth Offending Team, 2023

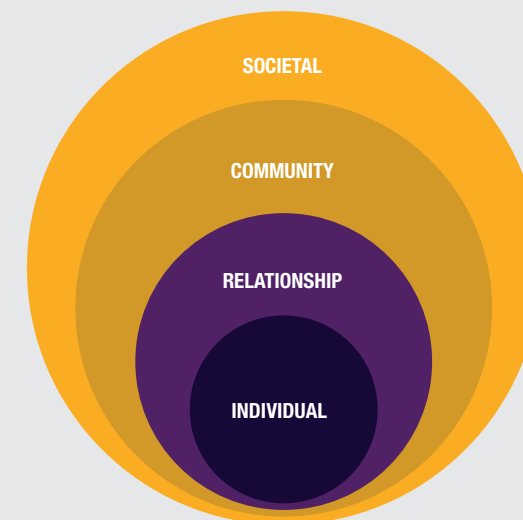
¹⁴ Wolverhampton Youth Offending Team, 2023

¹⁵ Violence Reduction Partnership, 2023

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Prevalence of risk factors

The causes of violence can be complex and influenced by a number of risk factors impacting individual, relationship, community and societal domains. The SNA therefore considers a range of potential local drivers which contribute towards violence.



Key findings include:



INCREASE

Missing People

Reported missing episodes of young people in Wolverhampton have increased over the last 3 years, this is particularly notable in the 14-15 age group.¹⁶



INCREASE

Improved Grades

In 2021-2022 the percentage of Wolverhampton pupils achieving grade 4 or above in English and Maths rose above national average, in previous years the average grades in the city were below the national average.¹⁷



INCREASE

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs

Since 2016 there has been a significant increase in the number of young people across Wolverhampton with identified social, emotional and mental health needs.¹⁸



HIGHER

Young Claimants

Wolverhampton has significantly higher rates of Job Seekers Allowance claimants aged between 18-24 when compared to the West Midlands combined authority area and England average.

¹⁶ City of Wolverhampton Council, 2023. ¹⁷ Department for Education, 2022 ¹⁸ City of Wolverhampton Council, 2023

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Identification, intervention and support



There is a wide range of primary, secondary and tertiary support and interventions available for young people in Wolverhampton.

Targeted support is delivered to those who are identified as being at risk of, vulnerable to, or involved in violence or exploitation. Interventions are delivered by a range experienced of statutory agencies, partners and commissioned services.

Wolverhampton takes a partnership approach to delivering initiatives and interventions to address youth violence and exploitation. The approach brings together statutory and non statutory organisations who work collectively, offering specialist support for those at risk. Reflected nationally, funding for initiatives and activities is often allocated on an annual basis and is often short term, this can provide challenges to securing long term and sustainable interventions and retaining knowledge and expertise in the city.

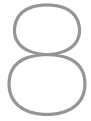
Youth provision exists across the spectrum of risk, the majority of provision delivered is however concentrated at secondary and/or tertiary intervention (supporting young people who have been identified as at risk of violence).





Activity includes:

- **Exploitation Hub** – a multi-agency partnership which facilitates a comprehensive understanding of risk, threat and harm from exploitation. Partners facilitate appropriate interventions and disruption planning to safeguard young people identified as at risk.
- **Divert** – promotes the diversion of young people away from the criminal justice system using a multi-agency panel to agree appropriate support and outcomes in a non-criminal space for those referred in to the programme.
- **Power 2** – a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency partnership supporting vulnerable young people aged 11-25 at risk of exploitation and violence. This partnership model provides continuation of support beyond the age of 18 to ensure that vulnerable young people are not exploited once they become an adult.
- **Gangs Forum** – trusted partners facilitate support to identified young people and their families; support includes detached outreach, targeted intervention programmes and lived-experience workers in Accident and Emergency departments.
- **Preventative activity to address the causes of violence** – including development of a needs assessment to understand local drivers of violence, cost of living support to address poverty and vulnerability, Men @ Work programme delivered in schools to address harmful views of masculinity, Love Your Community initiative to build community cohesion and opportunities for co-production and system-wide activity to address wider determinants of health.
- **Thematic reviews** – undertaken in both exploitation and knife crime to learn lessons from local cases and modify practice.



Recommendations

The SNA makes a number of recommendations. These are detailed below.

Strategic



- Review and update the current Serious Violence Exploitation Strategy to emphasise a city-wide focus on the prevention of violence
- Contribute to improving the regularity and consistency of data sharing across the partnership, particularly around drivers of violence and risk factors
- Secure sufficient representation from the Education sector in violence prevention forums to ensure understanding and links between education outcomes and risks of violence, including input into strategic planning
- Strengthen the strategic focus on a collaborative approach to addressing children's substance misuse
- Consider how to further engage communities and residents in the violence prevention agenda.

Operational



- Development of a coordinated communication plan to share key messages with communities and increase perceptions of safety amongst young people and the wider community
- Continuation and expansion of training to equip professionals, communities and businesses to recognise and respond to risks associated with violence
- Further consider the links between gender and serious youth violence and the benefits of piloting preventative programmes to challenge problematic views of masculinity
- Work to embed the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) programme across Wolverhampton to drive uptake and positive outcomes
- Raise awareness of the 'Teachable Moment Service' at New Cross Hospital and ensure that pathways are in place to increase referrals to support.

Commissioning



- Ensure that pathways to support for commissioned services are clear and accessible
- Ensure that commissioning across both local and regional partnerships is joined up and meet local need
- Develop a uniform evaluation framework for commissioned activity to improve understanding of successful interventions
- Continue to highlight the impact of short term funding for commissioned violence prevention services and risks around sustainability.

For further analysis



- Consider victims (aged 25+) of violence and exploitation, the drivers for this behaviour and the partnership response available to these victims.
- Better understand and consider the implications of the increased and regular use of electronic media and entertainment amongst young people.

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City of Wolverhampton Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square,
Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

