



Serious Violence in London

A report prepared for London's Violence Reduction Unit
April 2025



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Foreword from the Violence Reduction Unit

Being safe and feeling safe are some of the key concerns of Londoners, and it's what drives the work we do as London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). Issues of safety are not unique to London as a city in the UK or globally, nor are they new. Our role, as London's VRU, has and continues to be to better understand the complex causes and drivers of violence and to lead a London-wide approach to tackling it through prevention and early intervention.

When we were set up by the Mayor of London in 2019, evidence had been stacking up for decades pointing towards links between high levels of violence being concentrated in areas profoundly impacted by poverty, deprivation, alienation and lack of opportunity. In the last six years, those underlying risk factors have been pushed to the extreme through cuts to vital public services, the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis. These are some of the challenges that continue to have an impact on children and young people living and growing up in London and across the country.

It's why understanding the landscape and nature of violence and how it affects young people, families and communities is absolutely vital to our approach to tackling violence. And whilst enforcement and a criminal justice response unquestionably play a key role, put simply, we are not going to arrest our way out of the issue.

The strength of the VRU is in partnership. We have forged key relationships across the capital, from youth and community organisations and young people, to health, education, the police and local authorities. We know we aren't going to tackle this alone and the partnership work over the last six years has been the bedrock of our approach.

It's enabled us to draw on connections to better inform our interventions, which is helping to build a clearer picture of the impact prevention is having in London. This Strategic Needs Assessment and the localised work that has fed into it are a great example of London's partnership working, and although data sharing challenges remain, progress is clear.

The VRU has invested in more than 400,000 diversionary activities, interventions and positive opportunities for children and young people. These interventions are working to keep young people safe in and out of school by providing help through youth work and mentors, and access to youth clubs and hubs.

Comparing 2024 to when the VRU was set up in 2019, there has been:

- 48 fewer homicides
- A 26 percent fall in knife crime with injury involving those aged under 25
- A 28 percent fall in hospital admissions of under-25s for assault with a sharp object, like a knife
- A 12 percent reduction in robbery

Every death due to violence is a tragedy, and it's clear there is still more to do to prevent this from happening. That means working to tackle the underlying drivers of violence and building on 2024, in which London recorded the lowest number of homicides of under-25s for 22 years.

We're committed to systemic change that involves young people and leads to better outcomes for them. We will take the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessment and work with partners in London by sharing its findings and better understanding where we can intervene and prevent violence from happening in the first place.

Our first pan-London Strategic Needs Assessment was published in January 2020, highlighting the links between violence and vulnerabilities brought about by deprivation and multiple disadvantages and recommending a hyper-local, community-centric, targeted and evidence-informed approach. Five years on and those principles are embedded in our strategy and the prevention work we lead, which is having an impact.

From establishing a London-wide network of 20,000 parents and carers to better navigate the criminal justice and education system, and to better support children online, to intervening to keep young people in school where they are safe, feel like they belong and are supported to thrive. Driven through London's Inclusion Charter, our work is making a difference with initial data showing that support for children with speech, communication and language needs in primary schools has led to 98 percent of children narrowing the gap to their peers, and teachers reporting fewer physical incidents in the playground.

We're also working to keep young people safe from exploitation and criminal gangs in the crucial after-school period and at weekends by funding the life-changing work done by youth workers and mentors. That also means investing in specialist youth workers in hospitals and police custody to help break the cycle of violence.

Monitoring data shows that nearly three-quarters of young people in hospital following a stabbing or violent incident reduced their risk of harm after the intervention from a youth worker. And last year, data reported by our projects showed that almost 90 percent of teenagers arrested for violent offences did not reoffend over the next 12 months following intervention and help from a youth worker based in the busiest police stations in London.

Our ongoing impact evaluations will be exploring the long-term outcomes of these crucial interventions, with our Evidence Hub capturing learning and best practice for the sector. We know that those who live and work in a local area or neighbourhood tend to know it best. That's why we're really proud of our award-winning MyEnds programme and its community-led approach in local neighbourhoods and estates.

The commitment and consistency of funding by the Mayor, both for and in prevention, has provided the platform for us to deliver this work and to invest in young people. We are also

encouraged by the Government's long-term strategy to drive down violence, which has been backed up by funding in the VRU to deliver our effective youth work intervention programmes in hospitals and in custody suites in the capital, and the responsibility we have been given to establish and oversee its Young Futures Prevention Partnerships.

Whilst our work is having an impact, it's clear there is more to do and we're committed to working in partnership across London to keep young people safe because we believe violence is preventable, not inevitable.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lib Peck', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Lib Peck
Director, London's Violence Reduction Unit

Executive summary

Background

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was set up by the Mayor of London in 2019 to pioneer a public health approach to tackling violence that is rooted in prevention and early intervention. In the last six years, it has invested in more than 400,000 diversionary activities, positive opportunities and access to quality youth work.

Alongside building an evidence base of how interventions contribute to the underlying factors driving violence and exploitation, a key foundation of the VRU's approach has been its role as a regional body in working in partnership and bringing organisations and sectors together. Working together to understand the landscape and nature of serious violence across London, its drivers and risk and protective factors is fundamental to this Public Health approach.

London's VRU commissioned Crest Advisory to carry out a pan-London Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) of Serious Violence in London. A Strategic Needs Assessment is an analysis of data to understand the presentation of a particular issue within a defined area, supporting an understanding of how best to respond. The VRU published its previous pan-London SNA in 2020, produced by the Behavioural Insights Team.

The report found that violence in London is highly geographically concentrated, highlighting the links between violence and vulnerabilities brought about by deprivation and multiple disadvantages. It also emphasised the protective nature of community cohesion and trust, recommending a hyper-local, targeted response to violence. The report's findings and recommendations informed the VRU's response and strategy. Five years on, this updated SNA draws on information and intelligence across partner organisations, including a thematic analysis of 32 Local Authority Strategic Needs Assessments, delivered in line with the Serious Violence Duty.

The research was broken into distinct phases, with key outputs including:

- A quantitative profile of serious violence in London (an overview of what was included can be found in the Annex)
- An SNA Review document to facilitate standardisation across London in line with the Serious Violence Duty
- A 'What Works' Index for evidence around violence reduction with external links, aligned to the VRU Evidence Hub
- Partnership roundtables and interviews, bringing together key stakeholders across the sector (including the VCS, young people, local authorities and delivery partners) to review the findings and develop recommendations
- This final report, which pulls together key insights from all of the above

Crest Advisory and the VRU convened a Project Oversight Group to provide expert input and oversight into the delivery, with representatives from Local Authorities, Health, MPS, MOPAC and the GLA.

London VRU's definition of serious violence covers violence affecting children and young people under the age of 25 (under-25s), domestic abuse and sexual violence. There is no nationwide definition of serious violence; the Duty allows local areas to develop their own definition - a common definition for London was agreed upon by the VRU and duty partners in 2022.

Key Findings

Serious violence continues to be heavily geographically concentrated, mostly in areas of high deprivation. Tourism and the night-time economy, and areas associated with higher footfall, are also likely to drive up levels of violence, particularly personal robbery and sexual offences. Evidence suggests there is a contextual risk around transport hubs, including train/tube stations and bus stops.

Whilst the majority of suspects of violence and exploitation continue to be male, the proportion of female suspects has increased since 2019. There is emerging evidence to suggest that suspects may be getting younger, with an increase in the proportion of 10 to 14-year-olds suspected of violent offending over the last five years; however, this must be investigated further.

There is a clear disproportionality in the way in which Londoners are affected by serious violence, with Black Londoners overrepresented as both victims and suspects, particularly Black women as victims. In non-domestic abuse-related offences, young Black males have the highest victimisation rate, and although the profile of victims can vary with offence type, Black victims are still overrepresented as victims of homicide, knife crime, lethal barrel offences, and in some boroughs, county lines.

Beyond the scale of serious violence, the vulnerability of people and communities to violence continues to present a challenge. However, there have been some positive developments over the last five years:

- the number of permanent exclusions in schools in Inner London has decreased
- the number of young people with access to positive opportunities appears to be growing, with more than 500,000 opportunities funded through the Mayor of London and his VRU in the last 5 years
- the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) in London has fallen consistently over the last five years. Rates in London are consistently lower than the average across England

Deprivation and the cost-of-living have put particular pressure on communities in

London. Deprivation is a well-known risk factor for violence, with a higher incidence of youth homicides in London noted in more deprived areas. Mental health and special educational needs continue to be an ongoing concern for stakeholders in London, both in terms of their relationship with those affected by violence and the ability of partners to respond appropriately. The main report pulls out localised reflections and insights across these risk and protective factors for violence.

Understanding violence

Understanding violence and interpreting trends is challenging. Rates of police-recorded crimes are in part driven by improvements in the recording of offences and reporting by victims, as well as changes in how offences are defined, making it more difficult to discern actual trends. Lower-volume, higher harm crimes, such as homicide, are too infrequent (in statistical terms) to draw firm conclusions. Our ability to discern trends over the last five years is further compounded by the impact of Covid-19 and the periods of lockdown, which saw reductions in almost all crime types. In this report, we make recommendations about the use of alternative data sources and further research to understand the trends in more detail.

The landscape of violence in London

Pan-London trends¹:

- The rate of homicides has fallen in London below pre-pandemic levels
- Violence with injury offences are marginally higher than pre-pandemic levels, although they have fallen in the last year, with rates currently below the National and 'Most-Similar Force' (MSF) average²³
- Violence without injury is 22 percent higher than before the pandemic⁴ and has increased by 8 percent in the last year, although London ranks below its Most Similar Forces for this offence group. The increases are likely to be driven in part by changes to the definition and greater recording and reporting of certain offences,

¹ Analysis describing trends in the last year compare year end June 2023 to June 2024. Analysis describing trends in comparison to before the Covid-19 pandemic compare year end March 2023 with year end March 2024. This difference is due to different data sources being used

² Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

³ Home Office, Police recorded crime open data: Police Force Area tables, year ending March 2013 onwards

⁴ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

- Personal robbery remains below pre-pandemic levels, but recent increases continue to be a concern, with rates above the national average⁵
- Domestic abuse and sexual violence cases are higher than pre-pandemic levels, likely in part due to improvements in recording and reporting

For children and young people⁶:

- Hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object involving under-25s have reduced by 28 percent when compared to before the pandemic⁷
- Volumes of violence affecting the under-25 cohort are 11 percent lower than they were in 2019 (this and the following bullet points covers offences where either the suspect or victim is under the age of 25). However, there have been increases in each of the last two years for which we have data⁸
- Knife crime affecting young people has been increasing since the pandemic, but has not yet returned to 2019 levels⁹
- The volume of rape and other sexual violence the under-25 cohort is higher than pre-pandemic levels but has fallen in the last year¹⁰

The response

Every day, serious violence affecting children and young people in London costs over £3.3 million. This economic and social cost includes that of police, criminal justice, health and victim services. Beyond these costs lie the devastating human consequences of this violence.

⁵ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁶ Apart from hospital admissions, data on under 25s compares year end December 2019 to December 2023. Hospital admissions compares year end May 2018 with May 2024

⁷ NHS Digital, Hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects April 2024 *Provisional data for 2023/24 . Comparing data with 2019/20

⁸ MPS Crime Dashboard (all ages) (London Datastore); Local data from the London Metropolitan Police, comparing year end December 2023 to the same time period in 2019. Data covering violence and exploitation affecting those under the age of 25 (where someone under the age of 25 is either a victim or a suspect). Violence and exploitation, as per the VRU's definition, excludes sexual offences and rape

⁹ Local data from the London Metropolitan Police, comparing year end December 2023 to the same time period in 2019. Data covering violence and exploitation affecting those under the age of 25 (where someone under the age of 25 is either a victim or a suspect). Violence and exploitation, as per the VRU's definition, excludes sexual offences and rape

¹⁰ Local data from the London Metropolitan Police. Data covering violence and exploitation affecting those under the age of 25 (where someone under the age of 25 is either a victim or a suspect)

In the face of challenges presented by serious violence and its causes, there has been a significant investment to respond, led by London's VRU. However, there remains a disparity between the cost of violence and national government funding arrangements. For comparison, total investment in prevention and early intervention through the VRU funding for 2023/24 amounted to £40 million, largely due to increased long-term funding through the Mayor and his commitment to tackling the causes of violence.¹¹ There is reassurance in the approach being taken by the VRU to commission and evaluate interventions and in the capacity-building support for the wider sector. The VRU's role in working with partners to ensure activities are evidence-driven will continue to be pivotal.

The VRU has played an important role as a convenor of partners from across local authorities, communities and young people, health, education and police, but there are areas where collaboration can go further. This includes how data is shared to better understand serious violence and how to respond. Partners have frustrations with data sharing as part of the Serious Violence Duty, particularly accessing crime data of sufficient granularity from the Metropolitan Police Service.

The VRU could also go further to ensure the right people inform decision-making, including non-statutory partners and the wider community. For example, working more closely with British Transport Police and Transport for London to reduce the risk of violence in and around transport hubs. It could also build on the success of the Young People's Action Group model to engage others such as parents, teachers and communities living in violence hotspots.

Public services are under an increasing financial strain, affecting the ability of partners to respond preventively and work together effectively. Local authorities have been under pressure financially, constraining many to reduce their provision to just core statutory requirements. While stakeholders continued to view the public health approach as a favourable model to underpin partnership working in London, many were pessimistic about its long-term success without additional funding.

The approach in London – with continued support and investment from the Mayor - remains a long-term one. It has a strong foundation, built on a bedrock of partnership, which puts it in a good position with which to build on in the coming years, including aligning to national priorities, as a regional body to support and deliver on the Government's ambitions of reducing knife crime by fifty percent over a decade.

The new government has committed to halving knife crime over the next decade, ensuring the ongoing relevance of the serious violence agenda. In particular, the Government has committed to the introduction of new 'prevention partnerships' aimed at identifying children and young people who might be drawn into violence and stated that it will

¹¹ Funding for London's VRU so far has been £175 million - these figures have been provided by the VRU.

fund and launch Young Futures Hubs, aimed at supporting children and young people across a range of issues, including mental health and employment. The Government has also committed to supporting the roll-out of youth workers in A&E departments, custody suites, pupil referral units and communities. There is a strong alignment in priorities between London VRU and the new government.

This can be evidenced by the VRU securing a £9.4m one-year settlement to deliver its youth work interventions in hospitals and police custody suites. London's VRU has also been given responsibility for establishing and overseeing the Government's Young Futures Prevention Partnerships, a key delivery programme for its broader Safer Streets mission. Established in all 32 local authorities across the capital, they will involve local multi-agency partnership working to ensure the right support is available to children and young adults at risk of being drawn into crime.

Overview of recommendations

We have made a number of recommendations around understanding and responding to serious violence based on our research that will support the VRU and partners to further develop their approach, alongside continued commitment and investment. These recommendations are discussed in more detail at the end of this report.

Improving the quality and consistency of existing data

Recommendation 1. London's VRU should support boroughs to strive for consistency and comparability across local SNAs.

The VRU and wider partners should also agree on a framework that sets out which data requests will be serviced at borough and pan-London levels, moving towards greater standardisation. Consideration should be given to the utility and functionality of the Greater London Authority's SafeStats platform in servicing the Duty requirements, with timely, high-quality Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) data a key priority.

Based on the framework developed, **London's VRU** should work closely with partners to coordinate data sharing agreements at a pan-London level and support boroughs around more localised data via a new data working group these data sharing agreements could support the Young Futures Prevention Partnerships pilot, especially the establishment of local authority panels tasked with identifying young people at risk of serious violence.

Recommendation 2. Borough partnerships should be encouraged to refresh their SNAs annually in order to continue to refine their understanding of key problems and priority cohorts.

Recommendation 3. London's VRU should undertake a scoping exercise to assess alternative data sources/approaches to improve our understanding of the scale and nature of

serious violence in London.

London's VRU should involve wider partners more closely in the development of the next iteration of the pan-London SNA. This could be by co-locating analysts, creating a standing advisory group or commissioning qualitative research into what agencies believe to be the key issues and needs in their local area.

Commissioning research to address known gaps

Recommendation 4. London's VRU should commission research to shore up hypotheses and facilitate answers to key evidence gaps, enabling partners to design a more robust response. Gaps in research that were identified include:

- Links between poor housing (temporary accommodation, overcrowding) and serious violence
- Disproportionality analysis, particularly in relation to young black girls & young women being disproportionately victimised by serious violence
- The age and gender of suspects of violent offences change over time
- Violence against women and girls offending characteristics and pathways
- Neighbourhood vulnerability and protective factors to violence, particularly in relation to deprivation
- The impact of the night-time economy and alcohol-related crime on violence in London
- The exposure of children and young people to online harms, including exposure through the use of social media, particularly in the development of harmful behaviours, as well as understanding social networks / harmful relationships with peers and adults

Addressing gaps in commissioning

Recommendation 5. London's VRU should undertake a detailed mapping exercise to ensure that its commissioning programme is (a) aligned with the evidence base and (b) targeted at the right groups and areas and identify any gaps in provision.

Recommendation 6. London's VRU should further its understanding of broader systemic barriers faced by children and young people and consider how it might respond to or support advocacy nationally to highlight these barriers.

Recommendation 7. Borough partnerships should consider how to optimise their place-based offerings to provide children and young people with more positive opportunities and, in doing so, assess the availability of these services to them.

Building on and deepening our understanding of ‘What Works’

Recommendation 8. London’s VRU should now look to mainstream interventions that have been successful as part of a focus on sustainability.

More widely, **the VRU** should look to support other partnerships, including other VRUs in England and Wales, to pilot and scale up projects that have been impactful in London, as well as learn from the work of other VRUs.

The VRU should use what it has learned in London to inform the Government’s commitments on knife crime and VAWG.

The VRU should also consider how it utilises its understanding of ‘What Works’ to commission impactful interventions and programmes (especially those delivered to or by VCS organisations) over a longer funding cycle.

Recommendation 9. London’s VRU should ensure that evaluations of the interventions it commissions include a cost/benefit analysis, in particular, the cost/benefit to Duty partners in London.

Recommendation 10. London’s VRU and wider partners should consider capturing a wider range of outcomes as part of their evaluation frameworks.

Supporting more effective governance

Recommendation 11. London’s VRU should build on its role as a strategic coordinator of the partnership approach to tackle serious violence in London with a focus on convening wider partners to support them in delivering their duties, even if they are not Duty-holders.

Recommendation 12. Wider partners should look to refresh partnerships and conduct an internal audit of roles and responsibilities to ensure that clear expectations are set for each Duty partner - consideration should be given to the resources required to achieve these expectations.

Recommendation 13. London’s VRU and MPS should continue to deepen their relationship, particularly to focus on opportunities for secondary and tertiary prevention, improving data sharing and developing tailored approaches to different offences/ the nature of violence in different locations.

Recommendation 14. London’s VRU should develop its engagement with communities, learning from the success of the Young People’s Action Group (YPAG) and Youth Practitioners’ Advisory Board (YPAB) models, and consider how it is able to engage with

other relevant groups within its priority areas.

Recommendation 15. Borough partnerships should consider developing the YPAG model, based on London VRU's model, to expand on existing youth engagement offerings.

Reviewing the VRU's strategy

Recommendation 16. London's VRU and duty partners should consider refining their definition to clarify the sub-categories of domestic abuse and sexual offences which classify as serious violence, as well as ensuring the whole definition is subject to violence of any kind affecting under-25s.

Recommendation 17. London's VRU should complete a scoping paper to inform the wider response strategy to assess how the VRU, with its partners and What Works centres such as the Youth Endowment Fund, can halve knife crime in the next decade in London. This includes how to best implement the Young Futures Prevention Partnership pilot in the next year.

Recommendation 18. London's VRU should commission further research to understand the cost/benefit of its work as well as the wider costs of violence to London's economy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Serious violence has a devastating impact on the lives of victims, families and their wider communities. Using data and insight from across our partners to understand the landscape of violence, as well as risk and protective factors, is a fundamental element of a Public Health approach to violence reduction. Building on the coordination of borough-level Strategic Needs Assessments completed in line with the Serious Violence Duty, the VRU commissioned Crest Advisory to conduct a pan-London Strategic Needs Assessment of Violence. This work aims to reflect on the scale, nature and drivers of violence across London, consolidate evidence of 'What Works' to prevent and reduce violence, and learn more about the VRU and wider partnership response to violence. In turn, this evidence can support the continuous improvement of partnership efforts to prevent and reduce serious violence in London.

The Serious Violence Duty

In January 2023, the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) commenced, a multi-agency duty requiring local areas to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence.¹² The Duty requires specified authorities (police, fire and rescue, health, local authorities, youth justice, and probation) in a local government area to work together to develop a plan to address serious violence within their area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

As part of preparations for the Duty coming into place, the VRU recognised the diverse needs and profiles of London boroughs and supported each of the 32 borough partnerships to produce their own SNA and develop their own localised response to serious violence (known as Violence Reduction Action Plans). SNAs were completed during 2023 (and ahead of the 31 January 2024 date set out by the Duty) to most accurately reflect the volume and nature of serious violence in each local area. Recognising that differences existed in analytical capacity, capability, and ways of working, the VRU produced a template to guide boroughs and support consistency; however, boroughs were ultimately able to choose how to complete their SNAs.

The project consists of a number of interrelated deliverables outlined below, with further detail on methodology in the Annex. This report brings together the key findings from each of these deliverables and makes a number of recommendations to support the response to serious violence in London.

¹² Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, Chapter 1 - Functions relating to serious violence

Table 1: Key components and methods

Review of borough SNAs	The VRU provided Crest Advisory with each borough's SNA. These SNAs were produced to meet the Serious Violence Duty at the borough level, with guidance provided by the VRU. Crest reviewed and compared these SNAs, looking at socio-demographic characteristics, trends in violence according to the VRU definition and the drivers of serious violence. This review informed the quantitative profile by indicating key themes as well as providing localised insight to inform the pan-London picture. Despite template guidance being shared by the VRU, insights have been difficult to draw across all SNAs due to inconsistencies in the application of the template. A series of recommendations has been produced to guide the future development of the evidence base in London.
Quantitative profile	Using existing insight, published data and data shared by the VRU (from the Metropolitan Police Service and London Ambulance Service), Crest Advisory produced a quantitative profile of serious violence in London, looking at high-level trends, particularly in the last five years. The analysis and report are structured in line with London's definition of serious violence and the VRU's SNA guidance. Other data sources, including data held by Duty holders, could be included in the future to deepen the level of insight.
Development of a 'What Works' index	This index is a summary of existing evidence reviews, containing 41 interventions aimed at preventing or reducing violence and exploitation affecting children and young people (under 25s), domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is intended to support the VRU and its partners in the development and implementation of appropriate and effective interventions as part of London's response to violence. Interventions were selected based on their estimated impact and quality of evidence from four sources: the Youth Endowment Fund, the College of Policing, the Early Intervention Foundation and previous research by Crest Advisory. The Index is limited by these sources - other evidence, including evaluations, may also be available that shows other interventions which have an impact on preventing and reducing serious violence.
Roundtables	Crest Advisory held three roundtables and a number of interviews with key stakeholders across the sector (strategic, operational, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), and children and young people) to test our findings and discuss the partnership approach and response to serious violence in London. This engagement was time-limited, and further engagement will support the VRU to develop further insight and inform the ongoing response to serious violence.

Limitations

As is to be expected with a project of this complexity, the research has a number of limitations, outlined in greater detail in the Annex. These limitations can be summarised as:

- significant variations between boroughs when it comes to the amount of detail included, the sources relied upon and the way in which data is reported. This has made it challenging to draw common themes and meaningful findings. Crest and London VRU have discussed opportunities for greater standardisation and alignment under the Duty.
- For the purposes of this report, we were only able to obtain data from the Met police and the London Ambulance Service. A range of alternative sources are available to draw from for future insight work.
- All available measures of violence have specific limitations. In particular, there are limitations to using police recorded crime (which we use mainly in this report), not least the fact that it is affected by changes to the law and recording practices, as well as reporting behaviour. We go into these in more detail in chapter 2.
- The qualitative engagement was based on three roundtable discussions and a number of interviews. Crest worked closely with the VRU to ensure that our engagement was representative of the VRU's partners and London's communities. Nevertheless, the findings only represent the views and experiences of the professionals and CYP who took part in the research
- The 'What Works' Index was not an exhaustive look at all programmes and interventions aimed at preventing or reducing violence. Our selection of interventions and programmes was limited by the four sources we used and therefore, the Index is not able to capture all relevant impactful interventions that have been evaluated

Background: An Overview of the VRU

London's VRU was set up by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in 2018. In 2019, the VRU received funding from the government alongside 17 others around England and Wales following a national drive to tackle rising levels of police-recorded serious violence.¹³ As part of taking an evidence-based approach, London's VRU published a pan-London SNA in 2020, produced by the Behavioural Insights Team.¹⁴ Among other things, the report found that violence in London is highly geographically concentrated, highlighting the links between violence and vulnerabilities brought about by deprivation and multiple disadvantages, and emphasised the protective nature of community cohesion and trust. It recommended the building of a hyper-local, targeted response to violence and emphasised the importance of driving a culture of iterative research, experimentation and evaluation, working with communities to adapt evidence for the local context. The report's findings and recommendations informed the VRU's response and strategy, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

As of December 2023, combined Home Office funding for VRUs (the Serious Violence Fund) and Grip programme funding (to support the police response to violence in hotspots) represented £315 million nationally over four years.¹⁵ In London, over £175 million will have been committed to the VRU's response to serious violence - this has increased year on year yet remains far below the costs to society and level of need, particularly given the preventive nature of the response.¹⁶ Mayoral funding accounts for 61 percent of this figure (over £100 million over seven years), with 35 percent provided by the Home Office and a further 4 percent from the Youth Endowment Fund.

The VRU's refreshed strategy to 2025 (which was co-produced with the Young Person's Action Group) sets out a roadmap for the partnership's progress to make London a safer city and create positive opportunities for all - this is supported by a logic model (which can be found on page 16).¹⁷ It follows the progression of a young person, from their early years, through to their education, the positive opportunities that they engage in, the youth work and mentoring that they are offered, to the role of communities and place in tackling local concerns. It establishes three impact goals:

- Violence is stabilised and reduced,
- Children and young people feel safer,
- Partnership-focused solutions.

The VRU's stated mission is to stop violence before it happens through an approach rooted in prevention and early intervention. The VRU aims to better understand the

¹³ In 2022, a further two VRUs in Cleveland and Humberside were established

¹⁴ Behavioural Insights Team (2020), Violence in London

¹⁵ Home Office (December 2023), Violence Reduction Units 2022 to 2023

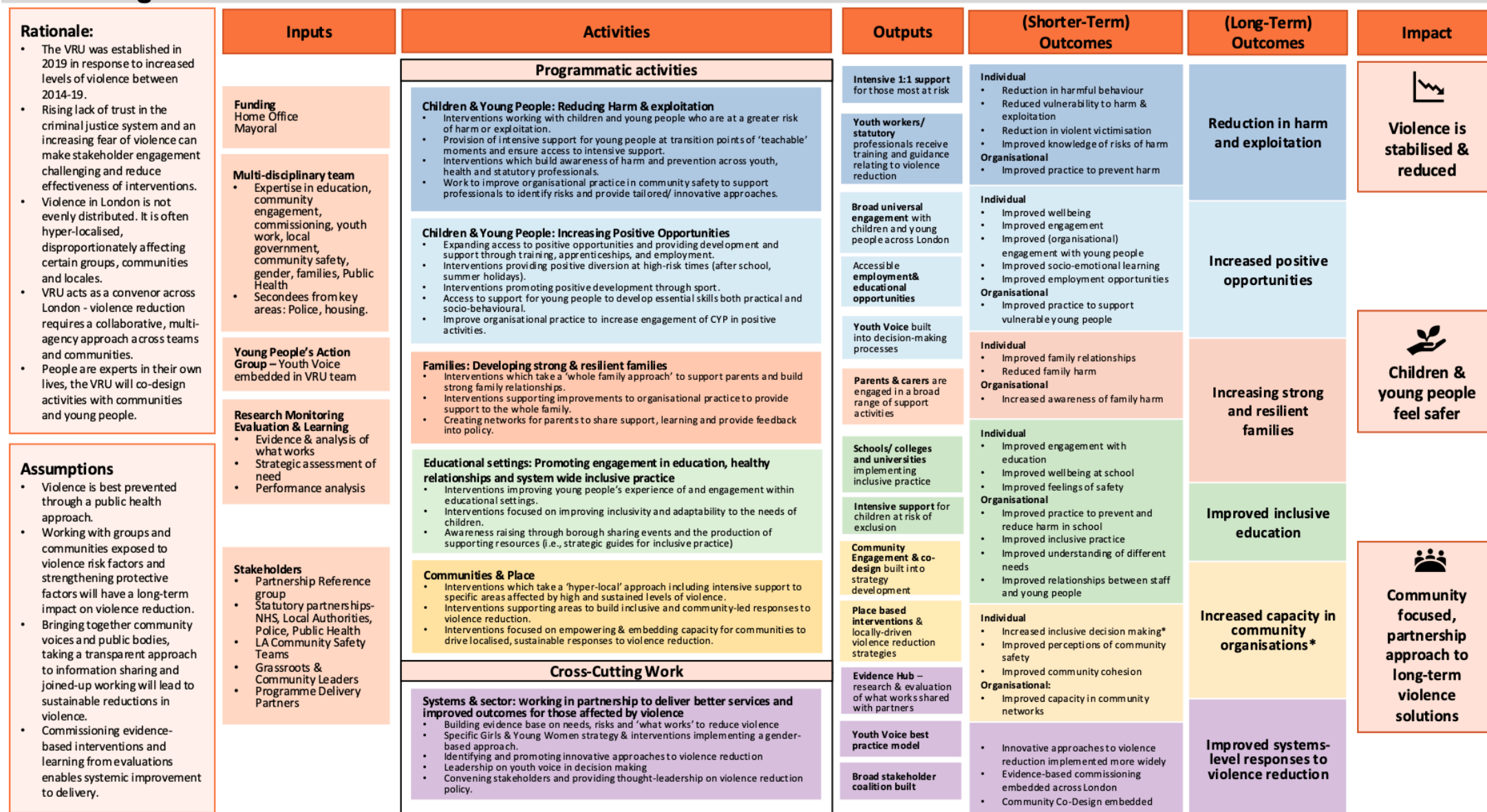
¹⁶ These figures have been provided by London's Violence Reduction Unit, looking at funding from 2018/19 to 2024/25

¹⁷ London's Violence Reduction Unit, Our strategy to 2025

“complex causes of violence and prevent it from happening” through an evidence-based, early intervention approach, prioritising working in partnership with authorities and third-sector organisations. The VRU has established six key priority areas:

- **Children and Young People - reducing harm and exploitation:** Improving identification of and support to prevent violence against children and young people at greatest risk of harm and exploitation.
- **Children and Young People - increasing positive opportunities, engagement and influence:** Expanding access to positive opportunities and providing development and support through training, apprenticeships, and employment.
- **Families - supporting stronger families:** Developing strong and more resilient families to better support young people.
- **Educational Settings - improving wellbeing and attainment in education:** Promoting healthy relationships and reducing exclusions and disengagement in education.
- **Communities and place - empowering and embedding capacity for a sustainable response to violence reduction:** Providing communities with support and resources to deliver sustainable reductions in violence.
- **Systems and sector:** Collaborating and working in partnership to deliver better services and improved outcomes to those affected by violence.

VRU – Logic Model



Overview of partnerships and governance

London's VRU, working closely with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), has a key role to play as a strategic coordinator of the partnership approach to tackle serious violence in London, with a focus on convening wider partners to support them in delivering their duties. The VRU also plays a key role in ensuring the effective engagement of London's children and young people and diverse communities.

Figure 1: Key partners in the pan-London response to serious violence



Table 2: Ways of working with partners across the pan-London response to serious violence

MOPAC Board	The VRU is represented on both the MOPAC Board and the MOPAC VAWG Board, collaborating to integrate VRU priorities into the Police and Crime Plan and the VAWG Strategy. This collaboration particularly addresses violence prevention for children and young people.	Partnership Reference Group	The Partnership Reference Group (PRG) is chaired by the Mayor and oversees the work of the VRU. The PRG is made up of representatives from the voluntary and community sector, health, education, policing, probation, and local government, including representation from all 32 London boroughs through the London Councils Executive Member for Community Safety.
MOPAC VAWG Board		Charity and voluntary sector	A charity network of 15 voluntary and community sector organisations in London. The VRU collaborates with these charities and grassroots groups that bring local insights and frontline experience to inform VRU efforts.
Police	The VRU works in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) on violence prevention through a public health approach, complementing the wider partnership work undertaken by MOPAC and the MPS. A serving Chief Inspector works full-time with the VRU to embed violence reduction efforts within the MPS.	Health	An NHS London Violence Reduction lead participates in the PRG and co-chairs a Violence Reduction Steering Group with the London VRU Director. This group, meeting every six weeks, seeks to strengthen NHS and VRU partnership efforts and integrates insights from health practitioners into the VRU's strategy
Education	Acting as a convener and system leader, the VRU collaborates with London boroughs and schools via pan-London networks, hosts London events to share best practices and has formed a strategic partnership with London Heads of Virtual Schools. The VRU launched London's first Inclusion Charter to tackle rising persistent absenteeism, suspension, and exclusion across London. Nearly all London boroughs and 20 national charities support London's Inclusion Charter.	Community Safety Partnerships	The VRU works closely with all London borough Community Safety Partnerships, engaging regularly with local authority leaders and coordinating responses through quarterly meetings and follow-ups after critical incidents. It supports the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) and youth involvement, providing a platform for community input on safety issues through the VRU Community Safety Partnership Chairs Network and engaging the Met Police and health representatives to enhance data-sharing.
Youth Practitioners' Advisory Board	The Youth Practitioners' Advisory Board (YPAB) comprises specialised frontline youth workers who guide the VRU's work with their perspectives and expertise. The board seeks to develop and build on the VRU's sector relationships, ensuring that youth practitioners' voices influence decision-making to effectively tackle violence and support young people.	Young People's Action Group	The VRU's Young People's Action Group (YPAG) is formed of young people with lived experience of violence, school exclusion or experience of campaigning for the rights of young people, exemplifying youth-led participation. These young people have helped shape the strategy, focus and programmes of the VRU.

Overview of commissioning

Within each priority area, the VRU has reported progress in reaching and engaging key cohorts, funding up to 400,000 targeted interventions and positive opportunities for children and young people. The VRU's portfolio of commissioned programmes is structured around the priority areas set out in the logic model. The VRU highlights key achievements such as establishing London's first Inclusion Charter to tackle suspensions and absenteeism, funding and training mentors in Pupil Referral Units, embedding youth workers in custody and hospitals, and delivering the community-led MyEnds initiative. Programmes are split across primary, secondary and tertiary intervention, which covers both universal, preventative approaches and targeted, intensive support to those impacted by violence. London's VRU releases quarterly performance reports, which provide an overview of all live interventions, their reach, intended outcomes, evaluation, and performance updates.

Table 3: Overview of London VRU commissioning

	Primary prevention <i>Interventions at a holistic level</i>	Secondary prevention <i>Interventions delivered to groups who exhibit risk factors</i>	Tertiary intervention <i>Interventions delivered to groups who have been affected by violence</i>	Mixed <i>Interventions delivered to groups across different prevention types</i>
Children and young people: Reducing harm & exploitation	The Social Switch	Girls and Young Women's Mentoring IRIS and ADVISE	DIVERT ENGAGE Hospital-based Youth Work	Your Choice CBT
Children and young people: Increasing opportunities, engagement & influence	Local Village Network Youth Practitioners' Leadership & Development Programme	Stronger Futures Young Persons' Action Group		Sports Programmes Multi-faith Network Youth Practitioners' Advisory Board
Families: Supporting stronger families	Parent Support Programme	Strengthening Fathers Bambu	CAPVA Programme	Parent/Carer Champion Network
Education Settings: Improving wellbeing & achievement in education	UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools and Inclusion Charter	Difference Matters PRU Mentoring Support Programme Talk Matters		Inclusive & Nurturing Schools Programme
Communities & place: Empowering and embedding capacity for a sustainable			Critical Incidents / Pre-Emptive Fund Additional Intensified Support	Innovation Fund London Crime Prevention Fund Research and Evaluation Fund

response to violence reduction			Community Capacity Building Serious Incident Manager	Robbery Fund Serious Violence Duty Fund MyEnds MyEnds Partnership
Systems & sector: Collaborating and working in partnership to deliver better services and improved outcomes for those affected by violence	Improved systems-level thinking and identification of innovative practices across interventions Empowering communities and marginalised groups Evaluation and evidence-based commissioning Specific research projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-Informed Research Project • Homicide Framework Project • London Sports Intervention Model • Local Authority Peer Review • Pan-London Strategic Needs Assessment • Online Harms / Social Media and Violence 			

Chapter 2: Scale and nature of serious violence in London

This chapter provides an overview of the scale and nature of serious violence across London, looking at pan-London trends on offences included in the VRU's definition, risk and protective factors and wider population considerations. These trends draw upon a combination of recently published and unpublished insight by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), the VRU and partners, borough SNAs and primary analysis of a range of administrative data, including datasets provided by the police and ambulance service. Borough-level evidence has been highlighted to give context to pan-London trends. Qualitative evidence has also been drawn from our engagement in roundtables and interviews to further add depth to the high-level trends.

Definition of serious violence

London VRU's definition of serious violence covers violence affecting children and young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.¹⁸ As there is no nationwide definition of serious violence, the SVD allows local areas to develop their own definition (although the Government sets out types of violence that should be included). A common definition for London was agreed between the VRU and duty partners, following an initial consultation with local Community Safety Partnerships¹⁹ and specified authorities²⁰ in 2022. The definition was developed using existing government documents (for example, the focus on violence affecting children and young people aligns with the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy 2018);²¹ domestic abuse was later added to the definition. The London Guidance advises that the definition should serve as a minimum standard that the borough can then expand upon.

Figure 2: Key elements of the serious violence definition



¹⁸ Domestic abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

¹⁹ Community Safety Partnerships bring together partners to collaborate around crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in their local area.

²⁰ Specified authorities refer to the public sector organisations who are subject to the Serious Violence Duty: these are police, justice (probation and youth justice), health, local authorities and fire and rescue.

²¹ Home office, Serious Violence Strategy (2019)

Within the definition, violence encompasses the following offence types: homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences.²²



Figure 3: Offence types within the serious violence definition

As part of meeting the SVD, there was an expectation that local partnerships would produce borough-level SNAs - these are documents that allow partners to understand serious violence locally, including who it affects and what is driving it, and are used to inform the local serious violence response. London's VRU produced guidance for local areas on how to complete their own SNA. This section on serious violence in London follows the thematic structure of this guidance:

- 1. Places and population**
- 2. Risk and protective factors**
- 3. Violence profile**
 - **Violence affecting children and young people**
 - **Domestic abuse**
 - **Sexual violence**

²² These offence types are listed alongside the definition of serious violence in the Strategic Needs Assessment guidance given to each borough as part of the VRU's support offer around the Serious Violence Duty.

1. Place and population

As the United Kingdom's economic and cultural centre, London has a significant resident and transient population. In 2023, London had an estimated population of 8.9 million spread across 32 boroughs, with more people commuting into London daily from surrounding areas.²³ In the same year, there were close to 11 million overseas visits to London.²⁴

London has a growing population. The capital experienced a 9 percent growth between 2011 and 2023, higher than the overall population growth for England and Wales, which was 8 percent for the same period.²⁵ The largest population growth in London was in the City of London and Tower Hamlets, where the population increased by 82 percent and 28 percent in respectively, over the same period.²⁶ Barking & Dagenham and Newham also had high rates of growth. A number of inner boroughs in West London experienced a population decline, with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea showing decreases of 4 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

London is a city with a young population, particularly in Inner London. The median age in England and Wales was 40 years according to the 2021 census - in London, the median age was 35, the lowest region nationally.²⁷ Tower Hamlets has the lowest median age of any local authority - 30 years. 15 other boroughs had a median age of 35 or lower.

London is the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales. 82 percent of the population identify as White in England and Wales compared to 54 percent in London.²⁸ Eight of the top ten most diverse local authorities are in London.

London has the highest proportion of people who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or 'other' sexual orientation in England – with 4.3 percent of people identifying with an LGBT+ orientation.²⁹ Of the 10 local authorities in England and Wales with the highest proportion of residents who identify as LGBT+, seven were in London, including 1 in 10 people living in the City of London.

London boroughs, especially those in Inner London, account for the 20 most densely populated areas in all of the UK. London is the most densely populated region in England and Wales, with 5,690 people per square kilometre.³⁰ The top 20 most densely populated local authorities are in London. Tower Hamlets is the most densely populated local authority, with 16,622 people per square kilometre.

²³ ONS, Analysis of population estimates tool for UK (July 2024)

²⁴ ONS, Travel trends estimates: overseas residents in the UK (May 2024)

²⁵ ONS, Analysis of population estimates tool for UK (July 2024)

²⁶ ONS, Estimates of the population for England and Wales (July 2024)

²⁷ ONS Census 2021

²⁸ ONS Census 2021

²⁹ ONS Census 2021

³⁰ ONS, Estimates of the population for England and Wales (July 2024)

2. Risk and protective factors

The underlying causes of violence are complex and highly intersected, varying across different geographies and populations. An understanding of the factors associated with serious violence is essential to effectively target prevention initiatives and support services. The vulnerability of an individual looks at the accumulation of these risk factors and lack of protective factors that may increase the likelihood of being involved in serious violence. For this report, we have looked at data around the following factors:

1. Deprivation (including housing)
2. Education, employment and training
3. Substance use and misuse
4. Mental health
5. Special educational needs
6. Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

Stakeholder perspectives: drivers of violence³¹

When we asked young people about what they thought the contributing factors to crime in London were, they said:

Economic deprivation

Despite London being one of the most affluent cities, it lacked funding in the right places, such as supporting social mobility, education and spaces for young people.

Lack of opportunity

Access to positive opportunities were frequently described as critical to giving young people safe and supportive options to fill their time after school. One young person believed that there were commonly financial barriers to accessing these opportunities.

Exclusions

Any form of exclusion was seen as a criminogenic risk factor for young people, with PRUs in particular described as “a breeding ground for bad kids essentially.” One participant described that the students who had been excluded at their school would loiter around the school at 3pm, because they had nothing to do during the day.

Lack of community cohesion

Participants believed that a sense of belonging in their communities was an asset to prevention, and that young people would become at risk “if you don’t have a sense of belonging or a group of people to identify with [...] if you don’t have that third space”. They called for more tailored youth spaces within communities to build community cohesion.

Healthcare

Several participants reflected on the risk factors posed by “special educational needs and the lack of understanding of what that means and what that looks like”, which makes these young people especially vulnerable to exploitation.

Temporary accommodation

Participants discussed examples of young people being moved outside of London or their local area, but having to remain at their school. This was seen as both costly, forcing young people to incur significant transport fees, and dangerous – these young people were seen as especially vulnerable.

³¹ These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons’ Roundtable.

1. Deprivation (including housing)

Deprivation and the cost of living have put particular pressure on communities in

London. Academic evidence suggests that poverty and deprivation are closely linked to violence - for example, analysis by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) found that people living in the most vulnerable wards were six times more likely to become victims of knife crime than those in the least vulnerable wards.³² Recent modelling from the London School of Economics (LSE) and MOPAC also found that a 10 percent increase in the cost of living was associated with an 8 percent increase in crimes.³³

London has eleven boroughs that fall within the top fifty most deprived local

authorities in England.³⁴ Furthermore, one in four children in London are eligible for free school meals, and the unemployment rate in London is higher than the national average.³⁵

Deprivation rates in London need to be further contextualised by reference to housing costs. In London, poverty rates increase significantly when housing costs are accounted for, increasing the poverty rate from 14 percent to 24 percent (compared with a 17 percent to 21 percent increase in the rest of England).³⁶ There are important economic disparities both between and within boroughs, with economic deprivation concentrated in specific neighbourhoods.

The 2020 Violence in London report noted the link between high levels of violence and high levels of deprivation, as well as the consequences of the 2008 recession and the austerity period on the vulnerability of Londoners.³⁷

Since then, the UK has reached a crisis in the cost of living, with inflation reaching its highest value in 40 years in October 2022. This has affected the financial resilience of individuals and families, putting them at greater vulnerability and risk.

³² Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (December 2018), Review of the Metropolitan Police Service Gangs Matrix

³³ Centre for Economic Performance (February 2024), Cost of living research and crime in London

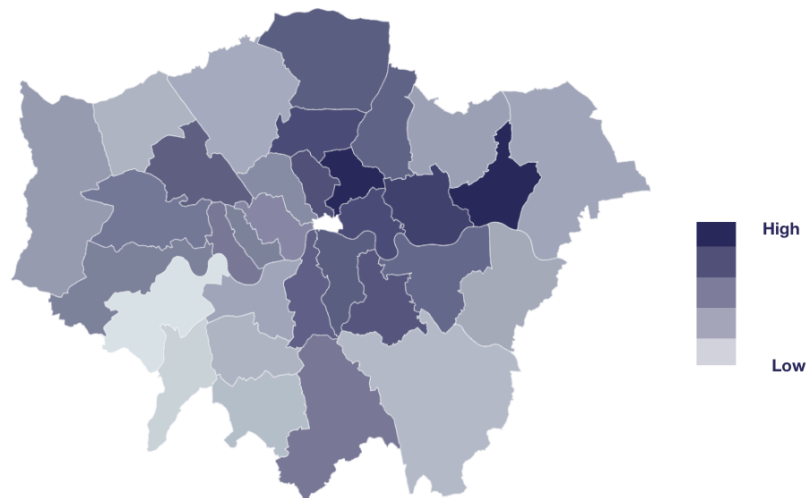
³⁴ Index for Multiple Deprivation (2019), Home Office Serious Violence Strategy (2018)

³⁵ Department for Education, Pupils eligible for free school meals by borough; ONS, Unemployment rate by London Borough 2005-2022. There is more recent data for London but this does not break down at a borough level. The most recent unemployment rate for London (February-April 2024) shows an unemployment rate of 5 percent

³⁶ Trust for London, Living Standards and Poverty (accessed October 2024)

³⁷ Behavioural Insights Team (2020), Violence in London

Chart 1: Average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score by borough, 2019



Poor housing (overcrowding, temporary accommodation, etc) was identified as a risk factor by some London boroughs in their SNAs, although there is a lack of data and evidence to substantiate this, suggesting more research is needed.

Local reflections

In their SNAs, several London boroughs reported overcrowding as a key concern in their local areas, and others raised broader issues around temporary accommodation:³⁸

- Tower Hamlets reported the highest rate of overcrowding at 15.8 percent, surpassing the London average of 11 percent, while Redbridge reported that it was the second highest in London for the proportion of households in temporary accommodation, with a rate of 24.96 houses per 1,000
- 13 percent of households are overcrowded in Enfield, above the London average of 11 percent and much higher than the national average of 4 percent. They are currently running a housing pilot project delivered between children's services and housing, which provides support for families with complex needs living in temporary housing and who have children involved in offending
- Brent found that cuckooing predominantly occurred in social housing properties related to a higher proportion of vulnerable people living there
- Kingston's SNA revealed that females residing within densely populated social housing estates experience considerably higher levels of domestic abuse and injuries

³⁸ Tower Hamlets, Serious Violence Duty: Strategic Needs Assessment (2024); Enfield Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment 2023; Redbridge, Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment; Brent, Strategic Needs Assessment (2023); Safer Kingston Partnership, Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2024)

2. Education, employment and training

Inclusion in education and opportunities to gain employment are key protective factors against involvement in serious violence. School absence, exclusions, lower attainment and unemployment are all risk factors that can be investigated to understand levels of risk.

Local authorities with the highest pupil attainment averages tend to be concentrated in London and the south of England. However, the educational attainment varies among boroughs. Seven of the top ten local authorities with the highest attainment 8 score (which measures how well pupils do in key stage 4) are in London.³⁹

Between 2015/16 and 2022/23, the number of permanent exclusions in Inner London has decreased whilst increasing nationally - however, the number of suspensions has increased across both Inner and Outer London (45 percent and 59 percent, respectively).⁴⁰ VCS and young people representatives both discussed the role of exclusions in fuelling serious violence. One young person described students at their school who had been excluded and become NEET as more likely to engage in trouble. Stakeholders were particularly concerned about hidden exclusions, where children and young people are moved between schools to avoid being documented as an official exclusion. One participant described these as frequently conducted without support.

The number of young people with access to positive opportunities appears to be growing in London. For example, the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) in London has fallen consistently over the last five years.⁴¹ Rates in London are consistently lower than the average across England.

Stakeholder perspectives: lack of access to physical spaces⁴²

Despite this, we heard from young people about a gap in opportunities, particularly when it comes to access to physical spaces. Participants at our young people's roundtables discussed these physical spaces as positive opportunities for practitioners to engage with children and young people (especially in a way that builds trust and confidence), and as safe areas for them to be in beyond their home or school (particularly if NEET), with limited risk of violence. This finding is based on qualitative insight and would, therefore, be worth exploring further with members of the VRU's YPAG to understand the extent to which the provision of these spaces affects children and young people in London.

³⁹ Department for Education, Ethnicity facts and figures: GCSE results (Attainment 8)

⁴⁰ Department for Education, Suspensions and permanent Exclusions in England

⁴¹ Public Health England, Not in Education, Employment and Training (16 and 17 years old)

⁴² These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons' Roundtable.

3. Substance use and misuse

Drugs can be a risk factor for violence as they have a number of economic-compulsive, psychopharmacological and systemic effects.⁴³ Violent offences can be committed under the influence, through the need to acquire goods to purchase drugs or through the operation of dangerous drug markets (including violence perpetrated by serious and organised crime groups and gangs).

Overall drug use is higher in London than in England, and reported use has increased over the past 5 years (since 2017-18) among children and adults. In the year to June 2022, self-reported drug use among individuals aged 16 to 59 was higher in London compared to the overall rate in England (12.2 percent in London vs. 9 percent in England).⁴⁴ Over the past decade, drug-related misuse deaths in London have steadily increased in line with wider trends in England. However, rates of drug-related misuse deaths in London are lower than the national average.

Local reflections: Ealing

Ealing has the highest rate of alcohol-related admissions of any London borough (496 per 100,000 residents), according to the latest available figures.⁴⁵ The estimated prevalence of problematic alcohol users is higher in the borough than in London, and the unmet need is relatively high - estimated prevalence data relating to residents using alcohol problematically is much higher than the numbers in treatment with an unmet need of almost 84 percent of this cohort (585 in treatment of an estimated 3,639).

4. Mental health

Mental health is often discussed as a particular risk factor for serious violence, particularly at the intersection with other risk factors such as substance use, school inclusion, exploitation and home environment. More children are coming to the attention of services due to concerns about their mental health. In London, the number of assessments when a child is referred to children's social care services, where there are concerns about the mental health of the child, has increased by 66 percent (and by 50 percent nationally) between 2018 and 2024.⁴⁶ A report in 2024 from the Children's Commissioner showed that close to a quarter of a million children and young people were waiting for mental health support in 2022/23.⁴⁷

⁴³ Goldstein, P. (1985), 'The drugs/violence nexus: a tripartite conceptual framework', Journal of Drug Issues 15

⁴⁴ MOPAC Evidence and Insight, A problem profile of Drugs in London (2024)

⁴⁵ London Borough of Ealing, Strategic Needs Assessment (2024)

⁴⁶ Department for Education, Children in Need: Reporting year 2023 (October 2023)

⁴⁷ Children's Commissioner, Children's mental health services 2022/23 (March 2024)

Local reflections: Harrow⁴⁸

In Harrow, 20 percent of 10 to 17-year-olds who committed serious violence were assessed by the youth justice service as having a high mental health need. For all suspects, not just young people, 39 percent of suspects had mental health needs.

5. Special educational needs, including speech, language and communication concerns and neurodiversity

Data shows that children and young people with special educational needs are disproportionately represented in the youth justice cohorts. The number of children receiving support for speech, language and communication needs is increasing nationally and in London (by 64 percent and 39 percent, respectively, between academic years 2015/16 and 2023/24).⁴⁹ Data collected on the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice system found that 71 percent of assessed children had a speech, language and communication concern.⁵⁰ A number of boroughs commented on this within their local SNAs. In Enfield, the highest proportion of referrals for specialist interventions for children known to the Youth Justice Service were for speech and language therapy.⁵¹ In Kensington and Chelsea, speech, language and communication or neurodiversity were found in 45 percent of the youth justice cohort.⁵²

Stakeholder perspectives: neurodiversity⁵³

Operational stakeholders we spoke to raised undiagnosed neurodiversity and special educational needs as risk factors. Participants mentioned a lack of support for children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, which participants believed comprised a significant proportion of young offenders of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). One participant also described that these young people had frequently been victims of sexual abuse themselves, and queried, “why was it at the point of post offence that they were getting picked up in the system?”. Several participants reflected on the risk factors posed by “special educational needs and the lack of understanding of what that means and what that looks like”, which makes these children and young people especially vulnerable to exploitation. Participants reflected on the significant volume of misdiagnosis of these children and young people, leading them to become NEET. One participant called for greater investment into interventions and programmes for children and young people with special educational needs, a group whom the participants felt were underdiagnosed and under-supported.

⁴⁸ Harrow, Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)

⁴⁹ Department for Education, Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2023/24

⁵⁰ Ministry of Justice, Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the youth justice system (2020)

⁵¹ Enfield Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Enfield Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)

⁵² Kensington and Chelsea, Serious Violence Duty: Strategic Needs Assessment (August 2023)

⁵³ These were the perspectives of stakeholders in our operational and voluntary and community sector roundtables

6. Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

There is a lack of long-term data on the prevalence of trauma, and by extension ACEs, in London. However, previous research has found that ACEs are particularly prevalent in youth justice cohorts, and trauma-informed responses are a key approach taken by practitioners, particularly in the youth justice system.⁵⁴ This was commented on by a number of boroughs in their SNAs, as well as at the Stakeholder roundtable, as a risk factor for cohorts involved in serious violence.

Stakeholder perspectives: trauma⁵⁵

Stakeholders also discussed the link between victims of serious violence – especially those with untreated trauma, including Adverse Childhood Experiences – and going on to perpetrate serious violence themselves. A strategic lead for the Youth Justice Board (YJB) told us that while most services do have an offering for victims, frequently the victims may not hear about it, or it might be offered too late, and services miss a key window of opportunity.

⁵⁴ His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, Serious youth violence and its relationship with adverse childhood experiences (2021); Crest Advisory, Trauma-Informed Practice within the Youth Justice System: How is it working and what needs to change? (2024)

⁵⁵ These were the perspectives of stakeholders in our operational and voluntary and community sector roundtables

3. Scale and nature of serious violence

In this section, we look at the trends in serious violence over the five years since the VRU was established.

Understanding data sources

Quantifying the scale and nature of serious violence can be challenging. In this report, we primarily use police-recorded crime to measure violence. While all available measures of violence have specific limitations, there are some important points to note when considering trends in police-recorded crime.^{56 57 58 59} These are considered below:

- **Changes to police activity and improvements in the quality and consistency of recording practices.** His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) 2021 to 2022 inspection of crime recording accuracy found that the Metropolitan Police Service had 91.7 percent accuracy - the lowest force was 84.0 percent, while the highest force was 96.7 percent. Pressure to improve accuracy may have led to a greater proportion of reported crimes being recorded and may also have had the perverse incentive of forces over-recording crime.
- **Trust and confidence in policing.** Crimes are only recorded if they are reported. If victims are confident in reporting and do so, this leads to more crimes being recorded (and vice versa). Certain offences, such as violence against the person and domestic abuse and sexual violence offences, are historically under-reported. HMICFRS found in 2014 that rates of under-recording were 33 percent for violence against the person offences and 26 percent for sexual offences.
- **Changes to legislation and recording practices, e.g.:**
 - Conduct crimes have been subject to two changes in the period looked at. In 2017, when multiple crimes occurred, stalking and harassment were recorded alongside the most serious crime. In 2023, this guidance was removed and conduct crimes (stalking, harassment and coercive/ controlling behaviour) are only now recorded if they are the principal crime
 - Domestic abuse offences rely on the police recording them as such. There have been varying degrees of interpretation among police forces on how to apply the domestic abuse 'flag' to a crime record. Up until the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there was no statutory definition of domestic abuse - the inclusion of children of victims who see, hear or experience domestic abuse may also increase the number of crimes recorded for one event. In 2023, a new methodology was also implemented to help identify whether an offence was domestic

⁵⁶ HMICFRS, Crime-recording: making the victim count (2014)

⁵⁷ Office for Statistics Regulation, The quality of police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales (2024)

⁵⁸ Office for National Statistics, Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2024: Data sources and quality (2024)

⁵⁹ Office for National Statistics, Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2022 (2023)

abuse-related

Other data sources, such as the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), can therefore be useful in providing a more balanced picture. The CSEW is generally considered to be a better reflection of long-term crime trends experienced in England and Wales than police-recorded crime data, as it is self-reported and is not affected by police recording practices. For example, while police recorded crime shows increases in police recorded violence between 2013/14 and 2018/19 (the period before the VRU was established), the CSEW suggest that there has been a decline in violent crime in recent decades.⁶⁰

Chart 2: Rates of violence per 1,000 people, CSEW and PRC, 2013/14 - 2023/24



Pandemic

Serious violence and its drivers since 2019 must also be understood in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 is important in understanding violence trends in London (and nationally) over the past five years. Almost all areas of crime experienced a reduction during the pandemic to varying extents, an effect of the public health restrictions, including the various periods of lockdowns.⁶¹ After the end of national restrictions, there was an expectation that crime would return to pre-pandemic levels. Although this has happened with some offences, it has not been the case for all crime types (see the section on overall rates of violence below). As a result of the pandemic, it is difficult to see key trends in crime data due to interruptions in 2019-2021, and therefore, it is still too early to be able to interpret crime types'

⁶⁰ONS, Crime in England and Wales: Appendix Tables, Year ending March 2024.

CSEW rate of violence: per 1,000 people aged 16 and over/households. PRC rate of violence: Per 1,000 population

⁶¹ Centre for Economic Performance, Covid-19, crime trends and lockdown (December 2020)

post-Covid trajectory. Finally, there are questions around the impact of restrictions on key risk factors for violence - including mental health and educational inclusion - although this wasn't explored in detail as part of this report. The ability of typical service provision and other interventions to be implemented was also affected during the pandemic, meaning risk factors were further exacerbated.

Trust and confidence

Trust and confidence are integral to understanding the gap between how crime is experienced by Londoners and how much is known to the police. Trust and confidence in policing have seen sustained declines over recent years.

While our research did not include engagement with members of the public other than young people, MOPAC's public voice surveys provide important information about the views of Londoners. In the first quarter of this year, just 46 percent of Londoners believe the police do a good job in their local area.⁶² This is 10 percent below where it was 5 years ago. However, this is in line with the England and Wales average and higher than similar force areas. Trust and confidence play an important role in the response to serious violence given the police's role - violence against women and girls in particular is historically affected by both under-reporting and under-recording.

Black/ Mixed ethnicity and LGBT+ Londoners are less likely to think the police treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are.⁶³

Policing in local communities and the use of police powers are also important factors that are interconnected to the response to serious violence, especially building positive and collaborative relationships with communities. Crest Advisory research on stop and search found that only 36 percent of Black children and teenagers trust the police compared with 75 percent of young White children.⁶⁴ This research concluded that children who have been stopped and searched have lower levels of trust in the police, are less likely to feel safe around police officers, and are substantially less likely to talk to the police if they had been threatened with a weapon in their local area. Gaining the trust of children and young people is an important factor in the response to serious violence; the most important factor, according to young people consulted for this report.

Measuring prevention

It is also important to note that attributing the impact of prevention-based approaches, particularly over short periods, can be challenging.

The VRU's public health approach is inherently long-term, using evidence-based solutions to address serious violence

⁶² Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Public Voice insights: Quarter 1 2024-25 (October 2024)

⁶³ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Public Voice insights: Quarter 1 2024-25 (October 2024)

⁶⁴ Crest Advisory, Forgotten voices: Policing, stop and search and the perspectives of Black children (December 2022)

and its drivers, underpinned by insights drawn from data.⁶⁵ The London landscape is complex, with multiple partnerships all operating in the same policy space, and five years is a relatively short period within which to expect to see a connection between the VRU's approach and high-level trends in serious violence. Indeed, the wider evaluation of all VRUs - which uses a quasi-experimental design (QED) called synthetic control methods (SCMs) to compare trends in outcomes in VRUs against areas to a synthetic control group (a weighted average of areas without VRU funding) - found no statistically significant effects of VRUs on homicides, sharp object hospital admissions or police-recorded crime outcomes. Although there were positive indications of change, evaluators noted that impacts on serious violence 'may take longer to materialise'.⁶⁶

Overall rates of violence

Violence with and without injury

Rates of police-recorded violence with injury have increased marginally higher than pre-pandemic levels (year end March 2020)⁶⁷, although they have fallen in the last year.⁶⁸ Violence with injury includes offences such as attempted murder and assaults where there is an injury. London's rate of violence with injury compares favourably to England and Wales and similar forces, which represent other major cities (Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds).⁶⁹

Table 4: Rates of violence with injury per 1,000 population, April to June 2024

London	England and Wales (excluding London)	Most Similar Forces
1.9	2.3	2.8

⁶⁵ The World Health Organisation says "by definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programmes for the primary prevention of violence based

on the public health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at a population-level." See the World Health Organization, the Violence Prevention Alliance approach.

⁶⁶ Home Office (2023), Violence Reduction Units 2022 to 2023

⁶⁷ Home Office, Police recorded crime open data: Police Force Area tables, year ending March 2013 onwards

⁶⁸ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁶⁹ Most similar force groups have been devised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services - the Metropolitan Police Service is grouped with the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

Violence without injury is 22 percent higher than before the pandemic and has increased by 8 percent in the last year, although London ranks below its Most Similar Forces for this offence group.⁷⁰ The increases are likely to be driven in part by changes to the definition and greater recording and reporting of certain offences, as previously mentioned. Violence without injury includes offences such as assault where there has been no injury, modern slavery, child cruelty/ neglect, threats to kill, stalking and harassment.

Homicides

The rate of homicides has fallen in London below pre-Pandemic levels (year end March 2020).⁷¹ The relatively low volume of homicides makes it difficult to draw out meaningful long-term trends. Compared to other global cities, London is similar to other European cities, fares better than North American cities and worse compared to cities in Asia and Oceania.⁷²

Table 5: Rates of homicides per 1,000 population, April to June 2024

London	England and Wales (excluding London)	Most Similar Forces (excluding London)
0.003	0.002	0.002

Table 6: Rates of homicides per 100,000 population, 2021

Note: the data sources for this table differs to the source for the table above

City	Homicide rate per 100,000 population
Chicago	29.8
Los Angeles	10.1
New York	5.4
Barcelona	3.1
Berlin	2.9
Greater Manchester	2.1
Madrid	1.9
Toronto	1.8
Paris	1.7
London	1.4
Rome	1.3
West Yorkshire	1.0
Milan	0.7
West Midlands	0.8

⁷⁰ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁷¹ Police recorded crime open data: Police Force Area tables, year ending March 2013 onwards; Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁷² Matt Ashby, Benchmarking crime in London against other global cities (2023)

Seoul	0.5
Sydney	0.5
Hong Kong	0.3
Singapore	0.1

Key

UK	Europe
North America	Asia and Oceania

Robbery

Rates of personal robbery (robbery of an individual rather than a business) have fallen below pre-pandemic levels but remain higher than the national average. Robbery (theft via the use and/or threat of force) is a key feature of violence in London and a persistent one - the 2019 SNA also identified robbery as a key crime type in London. Acquisitive crime notably fell during the Covid-19 pandemic and robbery remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. However, the rate of robbery offences is still the highest nationally, including higher than in areas with other big urban centres, including the West Midlands, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.⁷³ Westminster remains a significant hotspot for robbery in London, due largely to its transient and tourist populations.

Table 7: Rates of robberies per 1,000 population, April to June 2024

London	England and Wales (excluding London)	Most Similar Forces (excluding London)
1.0	0.2	0.5

Despite the fall in rates of personal robbery, the volume of knife-enabled robbery has increased by 23 percent in the last 12 months, and the rate of these offences remains the highest nationally.⁷⁴ Evidence suggests this increase in knife-enabled robbery is driven by organised criminality.

Business robbery is also a growing problem with levels higher than before the Pandemic - these offences have seen the largest increase in the last year among other serious violence offences, with a 78.5 percent increase.⁷⁵

⁷³ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁷⁴ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁷⁵ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

Local reflections: Westminster

Westminster experiences a disproportionate volume of all crime in London (10 percent)⁷⁶ **despite being the sixth least populated borough**, with theft and robbery key offence types. These offences are concentrated in the West End, an area associated with high footfall, being an important location for people visiting London for entertainment, leisure and tourism. The Westminster SNA found that offenders tend to have a high rate of re-offending and tend to proceed to more serious offending. There are also links between these types of acquisitive crime and wider organised crime.

Knife crime

London has the highest levels of knife crime and knife-enabled robbery in the U.K., and these crimes have increased in the last year - by 16 percent and 23 percent, respectively.⁷⁷ Knife crime does not represent a single offence, but offences involving a knife. MOPAC analysis suggests that this trend is likely to be driven by reporting changes rather than a change in levels of risk.

However, hospital admissions data for assaults by a knife or sharp object are lower than they were before the pandemic. Hospital admissions data show that, in line with longer-term trends, admissions for assault by sharp objects have been falling across all age groups.⁷⁸ In the last year, rates of hospital admissions in London are in line with similar forces and significantly higher than nationally.⁷⁹

Chart 3: Number of hospital admissions for assault by knife or sharp objects in London, 2012/13 - 2023/24



⁷⁶ Safer Westminster Partnership (January 2024), Strategic Assessment

⁷⁷ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁷⁸ NHS Digital, Hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects, April 2024

⁷⁹ NHS data, Hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects, April 2023- May 2024 (provisional data)

Table 8: Rates of hospital admissions for assault by knife or sharp objects per 100,000 population (all ages), June 2023 to March 2024

London	England and Wales (excluding London)	Most Similar Forces
9.63	3.55	9.84

Gun crime

Gun crime has increased (by 5 percent) in the last year, and London has the 5th highest rate of gun crime nationally.⁸⁰ Gun crime is not an offence but comprises offences involving a gun. Similarly to knife crime, this is likely being driven by reporting changes rather than a change in levels of risk. Lethal barrel discharges (when a firearm is used) are down in the last year; however, these are low-volume crimes and it is difficult to discern long-term trends.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

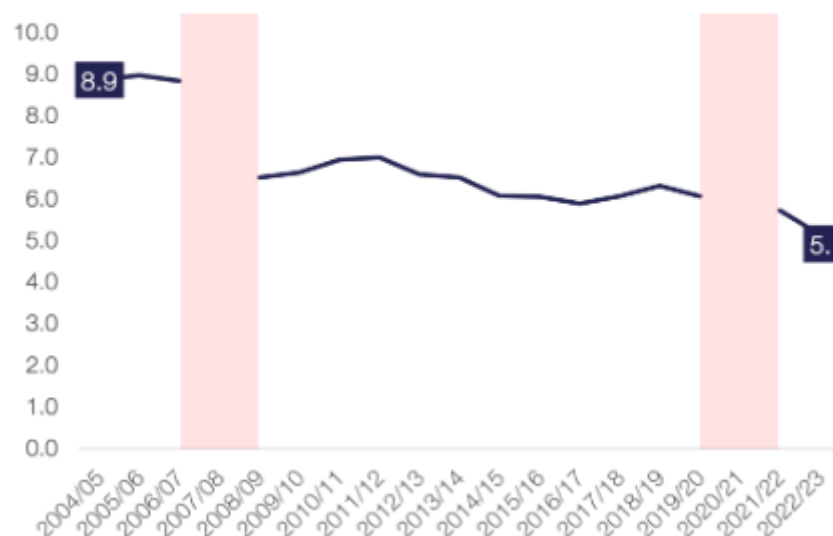
Recorded cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence are higher than before the pandemic, driven in part by improvements in recording and reporting due to cultural shifts over the last ten years (although this could have, in turn, been offset by falling levels of trust and confidence in policing). There have also been recording improvements for sexual offences linked to measures to improve the data integrity of police-recorded crime, as well as the introduction of new offences.

Domestic abuse offences recorded by the police have steadily increased over the last 5 years (6 percent increase between the year ending 2019 and the year ending March 2023) despite the Crime Survey for England and Wales indicating that experiences of domestic abuse are slightly decreasing over the same period.⁸¹ Again, this could suggest that more victims are reporting domestic abuse. It is also likely linked to changes in the definition: under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the definition of a victim has grown to include children living in households affected by domestic abuse, which is likely starting to appear in the data.

⁸⁰ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

⁸¹ ONS, Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics, year ending March 2023, MPS Crime Dashboard (London Datastore)

Chart 4: Estimated percentage of the population aged 16 to 58 years old who have been a victim of domestic abuse based on the CSEW, 2004/05 to 2022/23



The proportion of people reporting they experienced domestic abuse in the last year was lowest in London compared with all other regions. In the year ending March 2024, there were 94,609 domestic abuse offences within London, equivalent to 11 offences per 1,000 population.⁸² This is lower than the England and Wales rate, as well as lower than London's most similar forces.

Table 9: Rates of domestic-abuse crimes per 1,000 population, year end March 2024

London	England and Wales	Greater Manchester	West Midlands	West Yorkshire
11	14	21	19	23

However, since 2018/19, the number of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)⁸³ cases - the most serious domestic abuse cases - have increased in London. There are also more children coming to the attention of services for being a victim of domestic abuse in London, as well as living in families affected by domestic abuse. In London, the number of assessments when a child is referred to children's social care services where there are concerns that the child is a victim of domestic abuse have increased by 19 percent between 2018 and 2023 (compared to a 13 percent decrease nationally), and those where there are concerns that the parent is a victim have increased by 13 percent (and

⁸² ONS, Domestic Abuse data tool (year end March 2024)

⁸³ Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, where information is shared about the most high-risk domestic abuse cases in order to protect and support victims. It is worth noting that how MARAC's operate locally varies (in terms of identifying cases and triaging), with different local authorities using different processes/ operating models.

by 7 percent nationally).⁸⁴ This is despite the fact that the volume of domestic abuse offences affecting children and young people (under 25s) has been falling since 2020, which once again may reflect improved identification and recording practices on the part of local authorities and the changes made to the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021.

Local reflections: Barking and Dagenham⁸⁵

Barking and Dagenham had the highest rate of domestic abuse across London, with a third of all domestic abuse-flagged offences over a 24-month period falling under the VRU's serious violence definition. The number of domestic abuse offences has increased in Barking and Dagenham year on year from 2019 to 2023, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, which contrasts with other crime types. The SNA notes that these increases could be affected by better reporting and victim confidence, especially since the introduction of new offences such as coercive and controlling behaviour.

Recorded rape and other sexual offences have increased compared to pre-pandemic levels, with other sexual offences experiencing a more significant rise (although there have been decreases in the last year).⁸⁶ Compared to pre-pandemic levels (year ending September 2019), the number of rape offences have increased by 14 percent in London. In March 2023, a total of 24,776 cases of sexual violence were recorded in London, equivalent to a rate of 2.8 per 1,000 population, making it the highest level recorded in the past five years. Although these trends are once again likely to have been affected by reporting and recording practices, they indicate the level of demand facing the MPS and other services.

Violence affecting those under 25

Serious violence affecting children and young people (those under 25) remains lower than 2019 levels, but it has increased in each of the last two years.⁸⁷ Volumes of violence affecting the under-25 cohort are 11 percent lower than they were in 2019. However, there have been increases in each of the last two years for which we have data: an 8 percent increase between 2022 and 2023 and a 12 percent increase between 2021 and 2022.

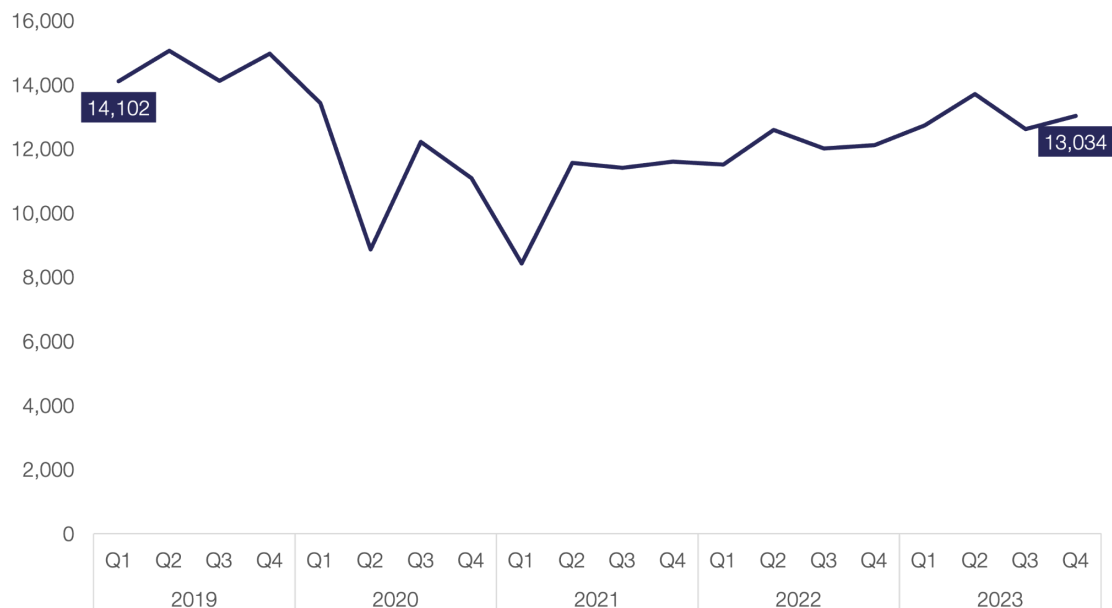
⁸⁴ Department for Education, Children in Need: Reporting year 2023 (October 2023)

⁸⁵ Barking and Dagenham Community Safety Partnership, Serious Violence Needs Assessment (2023)

⁸⁶ MOPAC Evidence and Insight, London Policing Board: Insights into Violence Against Women and Girls (December 2023)

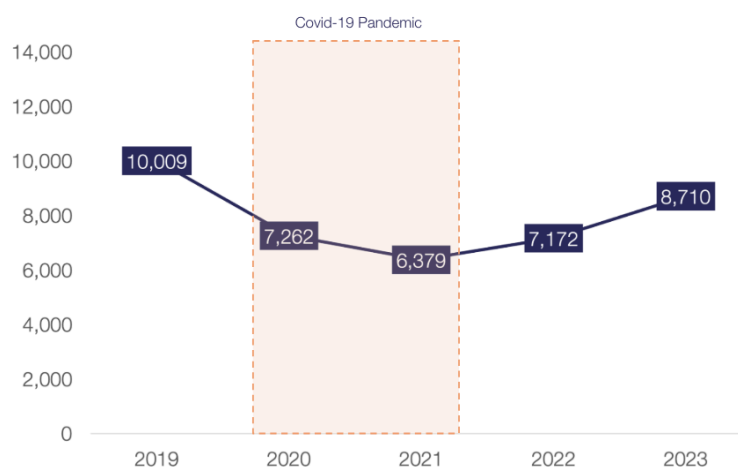
⁸⁷ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Data covering violence and exploitation under London VRU's definition affecting those under the age of 25 (where someone under the age of 25 is either a victim or a suspect).

Chart 5: violence affecting under 25s in London affecting under 25s, 2019 -2023



Knife crime affecting children and young people has also been increasing since the pandemic, but has not yet returned to 2019 levels.⁸⁸ The number of ambulance call-outs for assaults with a knife affecting children and young people has increased by 24 percent since 2020.⁸⁹ The rate of hospital admissions from assault with a sharp object for under 25s is substantially higher than similar forces and the rate nationally - however, in the last six years the number of admissions has been falling.⁹⁰

Chart 6: Volume of knife crime-related serious violence offences affecting under 25s in London, 2019 -2023



⁸⁸ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. This data only covers knife crime flagged within the VRUs definition of serious violence, not all knife crime flagged offences

⁸⁹ Local data from the London Ambulance Service

⁹⁰ Source: NHS data: April 2023- May 2024 is provisional data

Table 10: Rates of hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects per 100,000 population (under 25s), June 2023 to March 2024

London	England and Wales (excluding London)	Most Similar Forces
14.16	2.07	9.57

Local reflections: Havering⁹¹

The number of violent offences affecting children and young people had remained relatively stable in the period investigated by the SNA (2021 to 2022), except for the increase in the number of offences where a knife was threatened - this had increased by 42 percent. This was not compared to other boroughs in the SNA.

Stakeholder perspectives: knife crime⁹²

The use and threat of knives was discussed by stakeholders during our engagement: two participants in our young people's roundtable discussed the rise in 'g-checking', where both boys and girls would be threatened and harassed either with a knife or not by other members of their community. One participant described this as having been normalised in their community. They discussed it feeling 'embarrassing', especially because it would happen in their own area. They described their reluctance to report this to the police, saying they weren't sure if they would be treated as a victim or perpetrator. They described feeling "powerless".

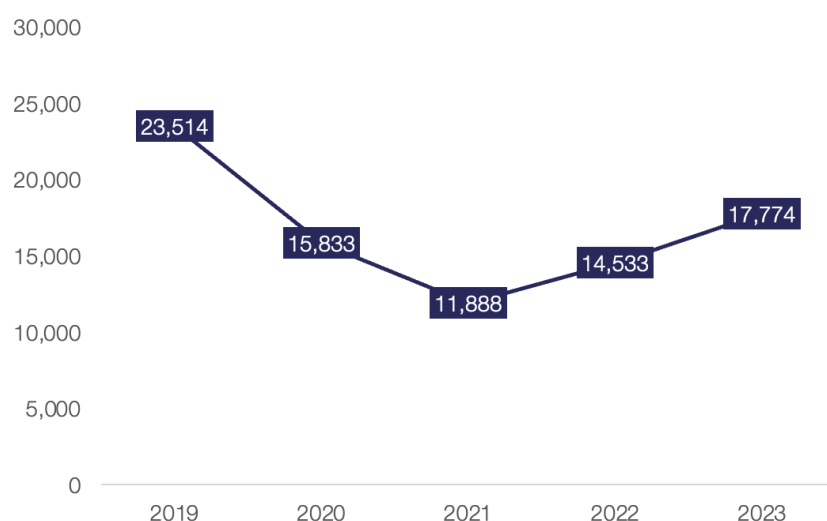
Personal robbery offences affecting children and young people (under 25s) remain 24 percent lower than pre-pandemic levels, however, these offences have also increased in each of the last two years.⁹³ In 2019, 30 percent of personal robbery offences affecting children and young people were flagged as knife crime offences. This has steadily increased to 34 percent in 2023.

⁹¹ Havering Community Safety Partnership, Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)

⁹² These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons' Roundtable.

⁹³ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Data covering violence and exploitation affecting those under the age of 25 (where someone under the age of 25 is either a victim or a suspect).

Chart 7: Volume of personal robbery offences affecting under 25s in London, 2019 -2023



The volume of rape and other sexual violence affecting children and young people are higher than pre-pandemic levels, but has fallen in the last year of data (year end December 2023)⁹⁴. Here again, improvements in police recording practices and increased reporting by victims have contributed to increases in recent years, but these trends provide a good indication of the demand for services.

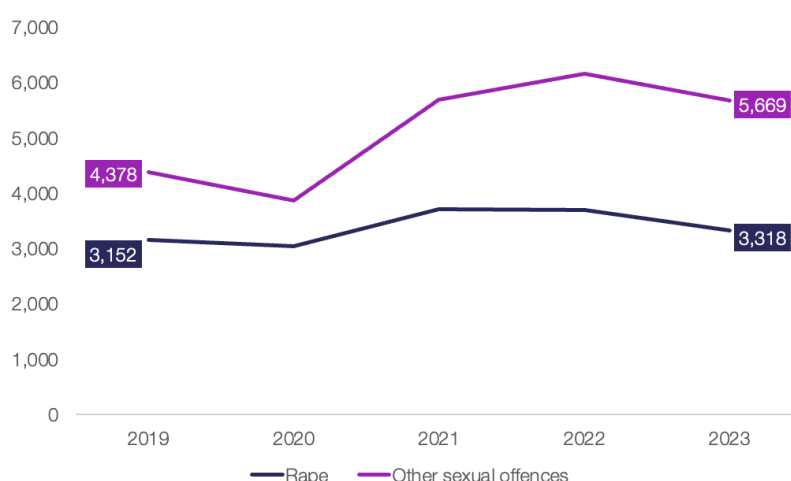
Local reflections: Tower Hamlets⁹⁵

Tower Hamlets identified male entitlement, traditional gender roles and misogyny as risk factors for committing sexual and domestic abuse. In particular, the borough underlined the prominent role of social media in the lives of young people and adults in exposing them to misogyny and other hateful ideologies. Our review of borough SNAs found that online activity was mentioned as being a factor in child exploitation as well as other offences such as harassment and stalking.

⁹⁴ Local data from the Metropolitan Police

⁹⁵ Tower Hamlets, Serious Violence Duty: Strategic Needs Assessment (2024)

Chart 8: Volume of rape and other sexual offences in London affecting young people, 2019 to 2023



Stakeholder perspectives: VAWG⁹⁶

All participants in our young people's roundtable reflected on 'street safety'. Sexual harassment was described as particularly problematic, especially on public transport where, increasingly, "no one calls out that behaviour anymore". There was also a perception that misogyny was rising in London. One young person was concerned about the prevalence of open misogyny, describing her experiences of being cat-called and saying she wouldn't ever feel safe in London, no matter what clothing she wore. Stakeholders from the voluntary and community sector were also concerned about violence against women and girls, in particular involving children and young people.

Perpetrators and victims of serious violence

Gender

Men are overwhelmingly likely to be suspects across the whole VRU definition. In

2023, 75 percent of all suspects aged ten to 24 were male and 16 percent were female - one in ten suspects had no gender recorded or their gender was not known.⁹⁷ Across offence types, there are more male suspects aged ten to 24, although over a quarter of all suspects aged ten to 24 for violence with injury offences, both domestic and non-domestic-related, are female (see table 11).⁹⁸

Between 2019 and 2023, almost all suspects of homicide cases under 25 were male.⁹⁹

During the same time period for rape and sexual offences, over four in five suspects under 25

⁹⁶ These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons' Roundtable and our voluntary and community sector roundtable

⁹⁷ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Data covering suspects of violence and exploitation affecting under the age of 25.

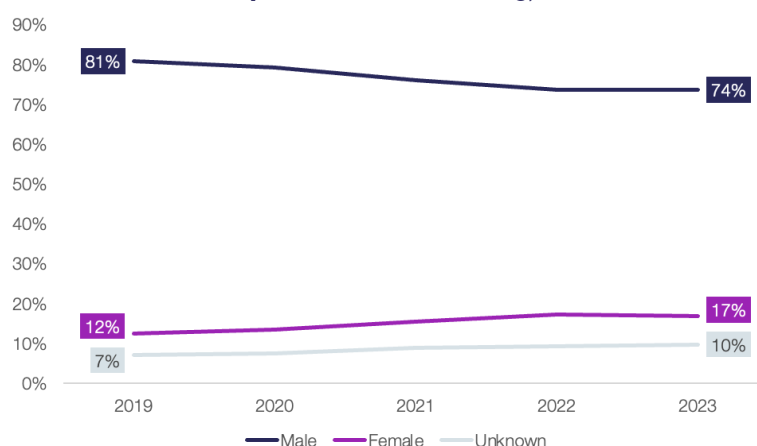
⁹⁸ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Personal robbery has not been included in any of the analysis for this table.

⁹⁹ MPS Homicide Dashboard

were male, with fewer than 5 percent of suspects being female.¹⁰⁰ For domestic abuse, 71 percent of suspects were male and 24 percent were female. For all other serious violence offences within the definition, 77 percent of suspects were male, with 15 percent female suspects.¹⁰¹

For violence against the person offences under 25¹⁰², the proportion of male suspects has fallen over the last five years. Over the same period, the proportion of female suspects and suspects with an ‘unknown’ gender has steadily increased.¹⁰³ This change was not observed with sexual offences. In 2019, the proportion of male suspects was 81 percent. This fell to 74 percent in 2023. Over the same period, the proportion of female suspects increased from 12 percent to 17 percent and the proportion of suspects with an unknown gender increased from 7 percent to 10 percent.

Chart 9: Suspects of violence and exploitation affecting children and young people by gender, 2019 - 2023 - this does not include rape and other sexual offences (percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding)



Stakeholder perspectives: Suspects¹⁰⁴

Stakeholders in our roundtables suggested that there have been more young women perpetrating violence, specifically gang-affiliated. This was seen as a marked change from five years prior, with one member of the roundtable saying that the “reasons why they’re being detained tends to have a violent aspect to it”. This trend needs to be monitored and investigated to understand it better.

¹⁰⁰ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Data covering suspects of violence and exploitation affecting under the age of 25.

¹⁰¹ Homicide, violence with/ without injury and personal robbery grouped together.

¹⁰² Homicide, violence with/ without injury and personal robbery grouped together.

¹⁰³ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Data covering suspects of violence and exploitation affecting under the age of 25

¹⁰⁴ This comment originated from our voluntary and community sector roundtable.

The profile of victims varies by offence type. Generally, domestic abuse and sexual violence offences are characterised by having a male suspect and a female victim. Conversely, males make up the largest proportion of victims of non-domestic-related violence and exploitation affecting children and young people (under 25s), although women still make up around 40 percent of victims of violence with and without injury. This aligns with wider analysis on all non-domestic-related serious violence, regardless of age, with higher proportions of male victims across violent offences.¹⁰⁵

Table 11: Proportions of female and male victims (under the age of 25) and suspects (aged 10 to 24) in 2023 (note - percentages in each row may not add up to 100 percent as some gender information is not recorded or is unknown)¹⁰⁶

Offences	Female victim	Male Victim	Female suspect	Male suspect
Domestic abuse flagged offences	75%	24%	24%	69%
• Homicide	100%	0%	0%	100%
• Violence with injury	73%	26%	28%	65%
• Violence without injury	71%	29%	18%	77%
• Rape	95%	4%	1%	91%
• Other sexual offences	84%	15%	13%	75%
Non-DA flagged offences	52%	47%	24%	66%
• Homicide	7%	93%	4%	70%
• Violence with injury	38%	61%	28%	61%
• Violence without injury	40%	58%	23%	65%
• Rape	90%	10%	1%	88%
• Other sexual offences	86%	14%	7%	83%

¹⁰⁵ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

¹⁰⁶ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. Personal robbery has not been included in any of the analysis for this table.

Age

For violence affecting children and young people, the 15-18 age group represents the largest proportion of offenders (44 percent), although this has decreased in recent years. The proportion of offenders in the 15 to 18 year group went from 48 percent to 44 percent in the last five years¹⁰⁷, while the proportion of suspects in the 10 to 14 age group has been increasing - in 2023, nearly 1 in 5 suspects of violence involving children and young people were under 15. Wider analysis of serious violence, regardless of age, indicates that the highest proportion of victims sit across the 1 to 17, 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups - victims aged 1 to 17 were most affected by robbery, including knife enabled robbery.¹⁰⁸

Stakeholder perspectives: Age of suspects¹⁰⁹

A number of the stakeholders we spoke to expressed concerns that the youth justice cohort was skewing increasingly younger (with a peak in the 11-15 demographic), engaging in more serious offending and displaying more complex needs and vulnerabilities. Looking at violent offenders under the age of 25, while the 15 to 18 age group represents the largest proportion of offenders, further data is needed to understand whether this represents a trend.

Ethnicity¹¹⁰

White victims are predominantly affected by violence when considering the volume of offences. When considering population demographics (using rates per 1,000 population), however, Black Londoners are disproportionately affected by violence.

For violence with injury, Black male victims aged 25 to 34 have the highest victimisation rate, and the victimisation rate for 18 to 24 and 35 to 44-year-old Black individuals is also high in comparison to other ethnic groups.¹¹¹ Young Asian men (18-24) have the highest victimisation rates for robbery offences, including knife-enabled robbery.¹¹²

Individuals who are Black, male and aged 18-24 also have the highest suspect rate for violence with injury. Across all age groups, this group also has the highest suspect rate for homicide, personal robbery, knife-enabled robbery, gun crime and lethal barrel discharge compared to others. For violence affecting children and young people, despite the increasing

¹⁰⁷ Local data from the Metropolitan Police.

¹⁰⁸ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

¹⁰⁹ This comment originated from our voluntary and community sector roundtable.

¹¹⁰ Where we draw from MOPAC evidence, rates have been used to compare the representation of different demographic groups. Where we draw from local data provided by the Metropolitan Police, we used compared proportions.

¹¹¹ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024). This data compares representation using rates

¹¹² Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

proportion of suspects with an ethnicity listed as 'unknown', Black Londoners still represent the highest proportion of suspects of violence and exploitation - 42 percent in 2023.¹¹³

Domestic abuse and sexual offences also show that Black Londoners are disproportionately affected. Black women aged 18 to 44 are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and Black men aged 25 to 34 are most likely to be suspects of these offences.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Local data from the Metropolitan Police. This figure excludes rape and sexual offences.

¹¹⁴ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insights into Violence Against Women And Girls (December 2023)

Chart 10: Victim rates per 1,000 population for violence with injury offences broken down by age, gender and ethnicity group¹¹⁵

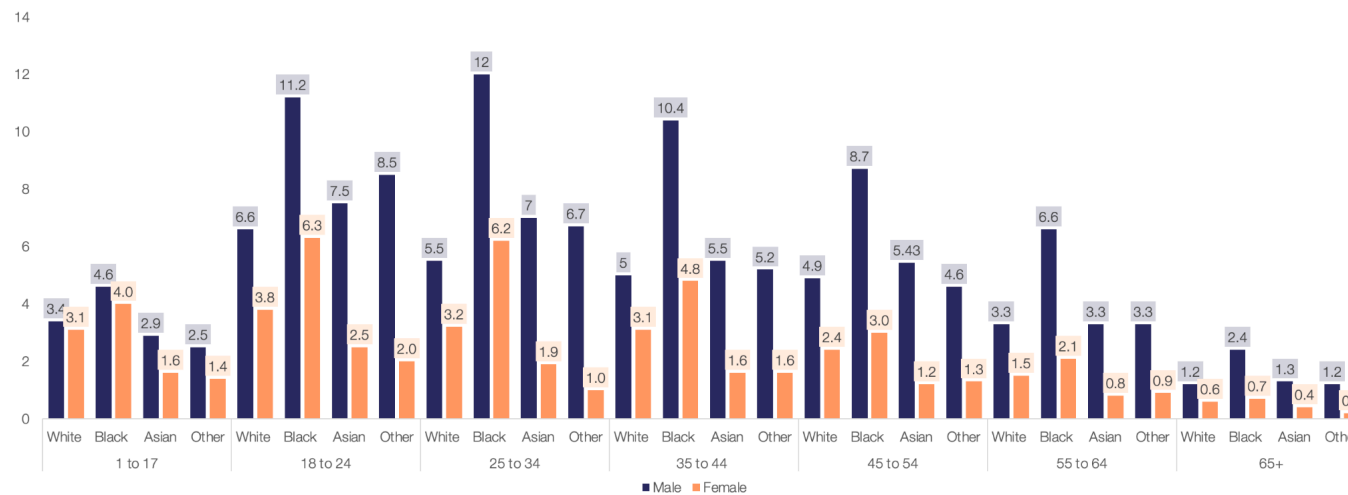
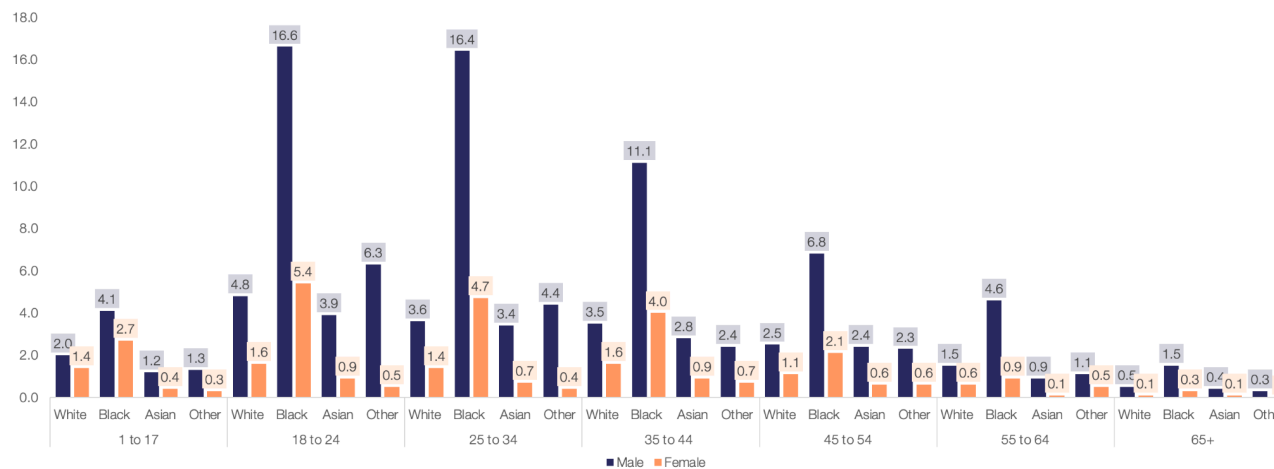


Chart 11: Suspect rates per 1,000 population for violence with injury offences broken down by age, gender and ethnicity group¹¹⁶



¹¹⁵ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

¹¹⁶ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

Communities and place

Violence is not experienced equally across London - it is geographically concentrated in certain boroughs, within which there are more localised hotspots.

For example, Westminster ranks the highest for a number of offence types (see table 12 on page 52), and St James's and the West End are the wards in Westminster with the highest number of offences in London. These are not surprising findings: the 2019 SNA came to similar conclusions.¹¹⁷ However, hotspots of serious violence vary, and it remains important to understand the characteristics of local hotspots in order to tailor the response to violence locally.

Violence and deprivation

Violence tends to concentrate in areas of high deprivation. Regression analysis has identified a significant association between youth homicides and deprivation within a ward, with an increased likelihood of youth homicides in more deprived areas.¹¹⁸ For example, there is a notable disparity in the geographical distribution of youth homicides, with a higher incidence observed in more deprived areas (62 percent in Very High/High deprivation areas versus 23 percent in Low/Very Low areas).¹¹⁹

Violence and footfall

Tourism and the night-time economy are also likely to drive up levels of violence in areas characterised by high footfall, a high proportion of commercial properties, and transient populations. For example, at a ward level, St James in Westminster had the highest number of violence against the person offences (2,575 offences) in the year ending March 2023. Following closely, the West End recorded 2,453 offences in the same year. St James and the West End were also the wards with the highest volume of sexual violence offences in London.¹²⁰ There is an inherent challenge in responding to this type of violence profile as offenders and victims might not be residents of the borough, which has implications for the type of intervention provided and where it is delivered.

Local reflections: Westminster

The Westminster SNA illustrates the impact of condensed levels of licensed premises and associated footfall with violence, robbery and sexual offences during the night-time.¹²¹ Of the incidents classed as 'serious violence', approximately 45 percent occurred within St James's and the West End wards and 62 percent occurred during the night-time economy across the borough.

¹¹⁷ Behavioural Insights Team (2020), Violence in London

¹¹⁸ MOPAC, Serious Youth Violence Problem Profile (2022)

¹¹⁹ MOPAC, Serious Youth Violence Problem Profile (2022)

¹²⁰ MOPAC Evidence and Insight, London Policing Board: Insights into Violence Against Women and Girls (December 2023)

¹²¹ Safer Westminster Partnership, Strategic Assessment (2024)

Violence and other contextual risks

There is a contextual risk in and around transport hubs, including train, tube and bus stops/stations. Stakeholders highlighted children and young people on their way to or from school as a particular risk factor for serious violence perpetration and victimisation, especially robbery and exploitation. Participants called for a greater understanding of the role of transient populations and businesses in areas of high crime. Including British Transport Police data in future pan-London SNAs (as several boroughs did within their own SNAs) would add further context.

Local reflections: Croydon

Croydon's Strategic Needs Assessment, using Met and British Transport Data, identified East Croydon Station as a hotspot and a key transport hub in the borough.¹²² Transport hubs are often interlinked with the night-time economy as they will align with high footfall areas and entertainment districts.

Violence, drugs and gangs

Violence is associated with the use and supply of drugs, resulting either from psychopharmacological effects (being under the influence) or economic-compulsive effects (gaining money/ goods to fund drugs).¹²³ Homicides in London are more likely to be drug-related compared to the rest of England and Wales - 56 percent of homicides in London are drug-related based on an analysis of homicides between 2012/13 and 2017/18.¹²⁴

Violence is also associated with the operation of gangs. Gangs vie for control of illicit markets, including drug markets, which can result in tension and violence.¹²⁵ Exploitation, including child exploitation, is also a feature of the operation of gangs. Several boroughs commented on the impact of gangs within their area in their SNAs, including reflecting on emerging trends which might indicate that traditional conceptions of gangs are being challenged.

¹²² Croydon Violence Reduction Network, Strategic Assessment (2023)

¹²³ Crest Advisory, Understanding what is driving serious violence: drugs (2020)

¹²⁴ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, A Problem Profile of Drugs in London (2024), drawing from analysis of the Review of drugs by Dame Carol Black

¹²⁵ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, A Problem Profile of Drugs in London (2024)

Local reflections: Camden and Barnet^{126 127}

The Camden SNA suggested that in the years before the pandemic, tension between gangs was an important driver of the most serious violence. However, since the pandemic, the drivers are shown to be more complex, drawing upon other drivers such as being a victim of violence alongside another offence (robbery), peer-on-peer violence and exploitation. Personal friendships are as important as gang relationships in understanding violence but are more complex.

In Barnet, anecdotal evidence suggested that younger leaders in gangs, taking the place of older leaders who have been incarcerated, are more volatile and involve a more nuanced understanding of interpersonal relationships that rapidly change.

Temporal trends

Seasonality trends show that violence with injury offences increase in the summer months across all aspects of the VRU's definition, including domestic abuse and sexual violence.¹²⁸

Violence with injury offences peak during the day between 3 pm and 5 pm during the weekday and between 12 pm and 1 am throughout the week, including the weekend.¹²⁹ These periods align with the end of the school day and the night-time economy. Similarly, robbery and knife-enabled robbery offences peak during the end of the school day and during rush hour times of 3 pm until 9 pm - nearly half of knife-enabled robbery offences (47 percent) take place between 3 pm and 9 pm. Knife-enabled robbery is particularly prevalent from 4 pm until 5 pm, with one in ten offences taking place during this time.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Camden Community Safety Partnership, Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2024)

¹²⁷ Barnet Safer Communities Partnership, Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)

¹²⁸ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

¹²⁹ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

¹³⁰ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Insight Background: London Policing Board - Serious Violence (non-domestic) (November 2024)

Table 12: Borough rankings for violence, year ending September 2023¹³¹

Borough	Violence with injury	Knife crime	Personal robbery	Domestic abuse	Rape	Other sexual offences
Westminster	1	1	1	24	4	1
Croydon	2	3	10	1	1	2
Lambeth	3	2	3	11	3	3
Newham	4	4	7	3	2	4
Greenwich	5	13	18	5	7	11
Lewisham	6	14	17	4	5	13
Southwark	7	6	2	15	8	7
Ealing	8	15	15	6	7	7
Brent	9	10	11	10	15	15
Tower Hamlets	10	7	9	2	6	5
Enfield	11	10	13	7	9	10
Hackney	12	8	6	16	19	9
Hounslow	13	21	24	9	20	18
Haringey	14	5	5	17	13	14
Camden	15	17	4	25	10	6
Hillingdon	16	22	27	13	22	22
Wandsworth	17	18	16	23	14	12
Redbridge	18	19	19	12	18	17
Islington	19	12	8	22	17	16
Barnet	20	16	14	14	16	20
Bromley	21	23	23	20	24	21
Barking and Dagenham	22	8	12	8	11	19
Havering	23	24	28	17	28	25
Waltham Forest	24	20	20	21	21	23
Hammersmith and Fulham	25	27	21	27	27	24
Bexley	26	29	30	19	26	27
Harrow	27	26	26	26	23	28
Kensington and Chelsea	28	30	22	31	25	26
Merton	29	25	25	28	27	31
Sutton	30	28	29	29	31	29
Kingston upon Thames	31	31	32	30	30	30
Richmond upon Thames	32	32	31	32	32	32

¹³¹ MOPAC Evidence and Insight, Insight Backgrounds (December 2023)

4. The cost of serious violence

London VRU's definition of serious violence covers violence affecting children and young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, and sexual violence

Cost of violence affecting under-25s and sexual violence

Looking at violence affecting children and young people and sexual violence, the cost was £1.8 billion last year.¹³²

In 2019, it was estimated that the annual cost of violence in London was £3 billion - this was using a much broader definition of violence, including all violence against the person offences. While there is a focused investment in serious violence from central government and the Mayor of London, this investment does not match the cost of violence. For comparison, total investment in prevention and early intervention through the VRU funding for 2023/24 amounted to £40 million, largely due to increased long-term funding through the Mayor and his commitment to tackling the causes of violence.¹³³

The £1.8 billion figure does not include all domestic abuse offences, as domestic abuse is considerably broader than the violent crime types outlined below. However, violence affecting children and young people and sexual violence offences may be domestic abuse-related. We have provided another cost estimate for domestic abuse further on in this section. The £1.8 billion figure is split between:

- Violence and exploitation affecting children and young people (under 25), which costs £1,190,424,480 a year - roughly £3.3 million a day
- Sexual violence which costs £602,988,400 a year, roughly £1.7 million a day

¹³² Home Office, The Economic and Social Costs of Crime, Second Edition (July 2018) - Table 1: Unit costs of crimes by category, using data from the Metropolitan Police and London Datastore, MPS Crime Dashboard

¹³³ These figures have been provided by London's Violence Reduction Unit.

Table 13: Social and economic costs (adjusted for inflation) of serious violence affecting children and young people in London, 2023¹³⁴

	Average unit cost in anticipation of crime	Average unit cost as a consequence of crime	Average unit cost of responding to crime	Volume of crimes in London in 2023	Total cost (to the nearest £10)
Homicide	£81,744	£3,137,150	£1,088,144	73	£314,413,770
Violence with injury	£455	£15,018	£3,346	30,776	£579,173,540
Violence without injury (threat to kill offences only)	£161	£5,019	£2,757	3,468	£27,525,520
Robbery of personal property	£442	£8,446	£6,264	17,774	£269,311,650

Table 14: Costs of crime in London to the criminal justice system and partners in 2023

	Total cost	Proportion of cost
Police costs	£93,033,754	6.5%
Other CJS costs	£271,109,174	19.0%
Costs to health services	£70,573,052	4.9%
Costs to victim services	£948,107	0.1%
Other costs*	£992,559,779	69.5%

* Other costs include costs in anticipation of crime, such as defensive expenditure and insurance administration, and costs as a consequence of crime, including physical and emotional harm, lost output and the value of stolen or damaged property.

Table 15: Social and economic costs (adjusted for inflation) of sexual violence in London, 2023¹³⁵

	Average unit cost in anticipating crime	Average unit cost as a consequence of crime	Average unit cost responding to crime	Volume of crimes in London in 2023	Total cost (to the nearest £10)
Rape	£1,312	£42,097	£9,289	8,869	£467,378,560
Other sexual offences	£214	£6,987	£1,539	15,516	£135,609,840

¹³⁴ Home Office, The Economic and Social Costs of Crime, Second Edition (July 2018) - Table 1: Unit costs of crimes by category. London Datastore, MPS Crime Dashboard * Unit cost of crime to the CJS and other partners x the volume of offences in London in 2023

¹³⁵ Home Office, The Economic and Social Costs of Crime, Second Edition (July 2018) - Table 1: Unit costs of crimes by category. London Datastore, MPS Crime Dashboard * Unit cost of crime to the CJS and other partners x the volume of offences in London in 2023

Cost of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse costs £5,464,808,100 a year, roughly £14.9 million a day.¹³⁶ This has not been added to the £1.8 billion figure to avoid double-counting domestic abuse offences within the offence types above. This figure was also not given in the 2019 SNA. Given earlier caveats about recording and reporting practices, it is likely that these costs are underestimated, as the police data does not yet fully capture a complete picture of demand across all forms of violence.

¹³⁶ Home Office, The Economic and Social Costs of Domestic Abuse (January 2019) Table 2: Unit costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales for 2016/171, using data from London Datastore, MPS Crime Dashboard

Chapter 3: Responding to violence in London

This chapter focuses on the response to violence by London's VRU and its partners, focusing on evidence-based commissioning and collaborative partnership working. The findings combine insights from the 'What Works' Index, which was created to provide a repository of evidence on impactful interventions, feedback from stakeholder roundtables and interviews on the strengths and weaknesses of the commissioning landscape and the partnership, and our understanding of what has already been commissioned and evaluated through the VRU. This project involved a limited amount of engagement and the findings presented here should be considered in this context. They are intended as a starting point to provide commentary and challenge to the work of partners in London so far, around serious violence. Further work is required from the VRU to triangulate these findings and progress recommendations around partnership working.

Evidence-based commissioning in London

A key part of implementing a public health approach involves understanding the evidence around violence reduction and using it to guide commissioning decisions.

Over the last five years, there has been an increasing focus on developing the evidence base in England and Wales. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), for example, is using their funding to understand 'What Works', including commissioning new evaluations and collating research on promising interventions to inform decision-making. Their toolkit was one of the sources of our 'What Works' Index. London's VRU has supported this by commissioning research to address gaps, utilising evidence and data to inform funding decisions, monitoring and evaluating the impact of programmes, developing an [Outcomes Framework](#) and publishing reports to inform the work of its partners, via its [Evidence Hub](#) (the Evidence Hub can be found on the VRU's website).

Figure 4: The commissioning cycle



The evidence base: ‘What Works’ to prevent and reduce serious violence

As part of this commission, we collated a ‘What Works’ Index, assembling the evidence base of practices to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation. The Index is designed to be incorporated in the VRU’s Evidence Hub, assisting those working in the violence reduction field to navigate the complex evidence base, signposting to external sources where appropriate. The Index covers violence and exploitation affecting under-25s and domestic abuse and sexual violence affecting those of all ages, in alignment with the definition and priorities of the VRU. Interventions were selected based on their estimated impact and quality of evidence, from across four different sources: the YEF, the College of Policing, the Early Intervention Foundation and previous Crest research on ‘What Works’ to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) for the Mayor’s Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC). These interventions operate across each level of prevention, targeting different cohorts with different short, medium, and long-term goals. The Index enables partners to filter the interventions by the strength of evidence to support interventions, both by their estimated impact on outcomes (especially to reduce serious violence) and the strength of evidence behind this estimation, as well as by other metrics. The full methodology can be found in the Annex.

The evidence base has grown over recent years and the Index highlights several interventions with promising or good results. Key highlights are listed in the table below.

Table 16: Interventions drawn from the 'What Works' Index

'What Works' to:	Strong estimate of impact	Overview
Protect children and young people from serious violence	Focused deterrence	Identifying those most likely to be involved in violence and encouraging desistance through support and community engagement.
	Social skills training	Intervention aimed at encouraging children to think before they act, empathise with others, communicate effectively and manage their aggression.
	Therapeutic foster care	Foster parents of children with behavioural problems receive training to provide a structured environment to promote the learning of prosocial and emotional skills as an alternative to custodial sentences.
Prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence	Multisystemic therapy for problem sexual behaviour	Targeted programme for families with a young person aged 10 to 17.5 years who has committed a sexual offence or demonstrated problematic sexual behaviour.
	Reducing alcohol consumption	A wide range of interventions aiming to reduce alcohol consumption, as alcohol consumption can increase the risk of VAWG.
	Community interventions challenging gender norms	Interventions aimed at shifting harmful attitudes and changing social norms around gender.
	Psychotherapy for victims	Psychological treatments intended to mitigate the harm caused by VAWG by addressing mental health problems, particularly PTSD, after experiencing violence.
	Electronic tagging for sex offences	Placing a tag around the ankle or wrist of an offender, therefore enabling authorities to verify and/or restrict their whereabouts at specified times.
	Motivational interviewing for domestic abusers	A counselling style designed to encourage domestic abuse offenders to develop their own desire to change their behaviour, thereby reducing future domestic abuse perpetration.

There are several weaknesses in the current evidence base, in particular, the ability to link interventions to long-term outcomes. The Index focuses on the impact interventions have on behaviours identified as being risk factors for violence. Demonstrating a clear and direct impact on reducing serious violence requires more complex and robust evaluation methods, such as randomised control trials (RCTs) or longitudinal studies, to examine whether these behaviour changes have led to a reduction in violence. Furthermore, only a few evaluations looked at whether children and young people felt safer as a result of the intervention.

A robust assessment of the cost-benefit of interventions was also frequently missing from evaluations. Cost-benefit analysis is an approach which seeks to establish the benefits of an intervention against its costs to consider if there has been a return on investment over time, which is particularly important in the current public sector financial landscape. A lack of cost-benefit analysis makes it hard to understand the value for money of some interventions or the financial viability of implementing them at scale. In addition, even when the cost savings of an individual intervention can be determined, these often accrue to organisations other than those providing the funding. Arriving at a framework which allows us to understand the benefits of preventative measures to the wider prevention partnership is an ongoing challenge.

Using and developing the evidence base in London

Ensuring that partnership activities are evidence-based is a key component of the VRU's role and crucial to the success of its mission. As mentioned, the VRU and other organisations, such as the YEF, have made progress in developing the evidence base. The VRU has successfully commissioned several research projects into less-understood areas. For example, based on evidence gaps highlighted in its 2020 SNA, the VRU commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team to work with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to create a framework to better understand homicides.¹³⁷

An independent evaluation process is critical to informing the commissioning cycle.

The VRU has invested in ensuring interventions are robustly monitored and evaluated, as well as feeding learnings back to improve delivery. An example of evaluation informing iterative programme development is the impact evaluation of MyEnds. The MyEnds programme aims to implement a hyper-local and community-led approach to violence reduction. The evaluation found that in the first two years of delivery, there was emerging evidence of stronger local networks within the voluntary community sector (VCS) and between community networks and organisations. Recommendations for improvement were directly informed reinvestment into the programme and expansion in May 2024. The second iteration of the programme included investment in a Community Needs Assessment to support local teams in early mobilisation.

The VRU has also sought to use data to better target funding and programmes. For example, in the commissioning of the MyEnds programme, the VRU developed and utilised an

¹³⁷ Behavioural Insights Team, Understanding homicide: A framework analysis (November 2022)

'Area Prioritisation Tool' to identify neighbourhoods most in need and inform strategic decision-making. This tool reflects the public health approach as it combines both crime statistics and wider public health data, as well as local perceptions of safety. This tool is being further developed to support local authorities and other partners in targeting their work and responding to public health needs linked to violence.

Drawing on evidence and learning generated over the last five years, the VRU has developed resources to inform the work of its partners.

This includes the recently launched Evidence Hub, a resource for all partners that pulls together accessible insights, key learning and full research and evaluation reports across the VRU's five priority areas, as well as the What Works Index developed by Crest Advisory.

Despite progress, there remain significant challenges in robustly measuring impact.

VCS Partners highlighted the difficulties in demonstrating impact under the public health approach. One partner called for greater recognition of 'invisible outcomes' beyond ETE, such as regular and on-time attendance at sessions and more open engagement in evaluating the effectiveness of interventions and programmes. These were seen as more easily observable in a shorter project lifespan and still as essential indicators of progress. Other participants agreed that KPIs should be able to be re-evaluated based on a project's length of funding and feedback from target groups.

VRU commissioning

Direct Commissioning

The VRU currently supports a wide range of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions and programmes.¹³⁸

A high-level analysis of the VRU's commissioning against the 'What Works' Index and local borough SNAs suggests that commissioning broadly aligns with the wider evidence base.

Evidence-led commissioning involves aligning the type and content of interventions being commissioned with 'What Works' to reduce violence, as well as targeting support around the profile of violence.

Examples of the strength of the VRU's commissioning include:

- The Your Choice Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) programme, which has delivered intensive therapeutic intervention to over 1,700 young people in London with the greatest need for support, is an example of this. CBT aims to help children and young people become more aware of negative or impulsive thought patterns which might make them more likely to lash out or act aggressively and learn to change or manage them - both the YEF and College of Policing rated CBT highly in terms of impact. The Your Choice programme is being evaluated by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and the Anna Freud Centre as part of a Youth Endowment Fund Randomised Control Trial; 'The

¹³⁸ Primary prevention focuses on interventions at a holistic level, secondary prevention focuses on interventions delivered to groups who exhibit risk factors, tertiary prevention focuses on interventions delivered to groups who have been affected by violence.

London Young People Study'. This gold-standard evaluation helps understand the impact of Your Choice on a range of outcomes, including school engagement, familial relationships, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

- The Stronger Futures programme, which responds to an established need – both from data and stakeholders – was aimed at providing better support for children and young people after school hours. Temporal analysis of crime data indicates that peak times for violence coincide with the end of the school day and the end of the day rush hour. The VRU also commissions a strong portfolio of sports programmes running during these critical periods and has leveraged its relationships with football foundations across London to provide children and young people with positive opportunities.

Looking both across promising interventions and target cohorts, our research has also identified some initial gaps. These include:

- Specialist secondary interventions for groups disproportionately at risk of violence - for example, those with special educational needs or those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). One example of a group not currently targeted by VRU provision, but especially vulnerable due to being disproportionately NEET may be Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller Children
- Interventions that show promise but are underused, such as focussed deterrence programmes, multisystemic therapy for children and young people, and special interventions delivered in schools, such as bystander programmes. The latter was identified as a gap by young people who did not feel that other children, young people or adults were equipped to become active bystanders.
- Place-based solutions to vulnerability after school. While many commissioned programmes as part of MyEnds and local authority funds have a place-based component, stakeholders felt that future investment in youth clubs and hubs is an important offering. Stakeholders also spoke about the opportunity to improve access to existing amenities, for example, local sports facilities providing 'youth' sessions and free or discounted bookings for these facilities (e.g. football pitches or studios).
- Interventions targeted at alcohol and drug-related crime associated with the night-time economy.

Overall, given the progress made, there is an opportunity for a wider and deeper review of the VRU's commissioning in line with the 'What Works' index to ensure it aligns with the evidence and identifies any gaps - there is potential to do this as part of implementing the Young Futures Prevention Partnerships pilot which will require an understanding of provision and gaps. Our high-level review was based on limited engagement and a more systematic exercise - combining a review of commissioning and stakeholder consultation - would be beneficial. There is also a wider array of work being done by other VRUs in England and Wales - promising work should be considered by the VRU to see if it can be implemented in London.

To ensure a continued focus on evidenced commissioning, there is also a need to continually refresh the understanding of target priority cohorts, including through products such as local SNAs. Local SNAs should aim to provide the VRU with information on local priority groups to identify opportunities across London. An example of local insights was identified in Tower Hamlets' SNA, which identified that a lower number of Asian victims report domestic abuse offences to the police when compared with the population.¹³⁹ The VRU could play a key role in further assisting local authorities by providing insight on a pan-London level on specific risk factors linked to violence as well as sharing best practice on how best to effectively engage and support these groups.

Enabling commissioning: support to local partnerships and the voluntary and community sector
Alongside direct commissioning, the VRU offers a comprehensive package of support to local areas through funds such as the Local Crime Prevention Fund and Serious Violence Duty funding. These grants allow the VRU to commission at a more tailored local level and support boroughs in their response to serious violence. Community safety programme managers at the VRU support local authorities to develop their interventions in response to these funds and meet with boroughs on a quarterly basis to understand progress towards local outcomes.

The VRU has also developed commissioning mechanisms which place commissioning power in VCS and grassroots organisations and encourage collaboration rather than competition over funding. The MyEnds programme allows local VCS organisations to form community consortia that deliver interventions at a hyper-local level. As part of the programme, these consortia provide support and capacity building to local grassroots groups through an onward grants programme. The first iteration of the programme provided funding for nearly 70 grassroots organisations.

The VCS partners we spoke to praised the VRU's consortium approach to commissioning but emphasised the need for longer-term projects. The VRU's commissioning was discussed at length by VCS practitioners, who praised the process's preference for consortium bids as a means of promoting better partnership working: "The whole element of consortia has been a benefit to us". VCS participants also praised the VRU's willingness to extend commissioning lengths to three years. However, a substantive proportion of the participants believed that three years was still not long enough for projects to see impacts. Voluntary and community sector stakeholders discussed the difficulties in demonstrating impact after such a short period of funding, especially when their work had a primary preventive focus, which was seen to limit the partnership's knowledge of 'What Works'. In their view, longer-term arrangements would allow projects to demonstrate impact on outcomes. These funding processes were also seen to create a short-term influx of support into a community, which, when funding would end two to three years later, would strip communities of this offer.

¹³⁹ Tower Hamlets, Serious Violence Duty: Strategic Needs Assessment (2024)

Partnerships and governance

The VRU model and the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) require a multi-agency response to serious violence, relying on shared governance, co-production and joint working, data sharing and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including communities.

In our roundtables and interviews, we discussed perspectives on partnership working, including with the VRU, and governance (see Annex for list of participating agencies).

It is important to note that while the VRU has strong connections to partners, it has no legal obligations under the SVD. The SVD guidance only mentions VRUs in a convening role. Despite this, the VRU has a number of strengths with which to convene, coordinate and influence the partnership response to serious violence, such as its position within MOPAC, its commissioning power and its prior work on research and evaluation.

It is also important to note that the partnership landscape in London is inherently complex. There is one police force, one fire and rescue service, 32 local authorities (or 33, including the City of London Corporation), five Integrated Care Boards and 18 probation delivery units. Beyond Duty partners, there are a myriad of other public sector partners, private enterprises and VCS organisations which may all have roles in preventing and reducing serious violence. Coordinating this landscape is difficult - there is a significant capacity challenge to engage and manage stakeholders, which in turn requires dedicated time and investment.

Ongoing collaboration

Participants across all sectors praised the work of the VRU in supporting partnership working. In the operational roundtable, one participant described the centralised role of the VRU as helpful in coordinating partnership working, response, and collating the evidence base on 'What Works'. The VCS roundtable identified the VRU's championing of consortium bids as useful in leveraging partnership working as part of intervention and programme design and delivery. Similarly, participants at the young people's roundtable believed that the VRU engaged them in a meaningful and non-tokenistic way and gave them paid opportunities to input into the partnership's response to serious violence. A senior strategic stakeholder praised the approach to youth participation and the collaborative nature of the Young Person Action Group (YPAG).

A number of participants queried the effectiveness of the partnership's governance, although this was more general and did not necessarily relate to the role of the VRU.

Some participants highlighted that as a result of partnership working sitting only at the strategic level, leads may not have a vested interest in participating meaningfully in partnerships. One participant summarised this as "(they) get really bogged down in red tape and bureaucracy, which takes away from our ability to actually develop". One VCS participant believed that it was important that partnerships reflect on and admit when they are not cooperating well together, and either look to end that partnership or make sufficient changes.

Capacity to deliver a preventative response

A lack of resources, compounded by a rise in duties beyond business as usual, was seen to strain the ability of partners to be able to respond preventively, as well as work together effectively. One participant highlighted the challenges facing the partnership and said that there was a sense that partners were being asked to “do more for less”. Local authorities were described as being under particular pressure, leading them to reduce the scope of their work. In general, the public health approach was seen as a favourable model to underpin partnership working in London, but it was described as under pressure due to resource constraints and the need to focus on urgent response issues. One participant said: “Even though we talk about wanting to take a preventive approach, there’s a lot of firefighting happening”, which makes “long-term solutions [...] pretty challenging”. Nevertheless, one senior strategic stakeholder identified that the VRU had been a “champion at taking an evidence-based approach and not a knee jerk” in contrast to the trajectory of many of its partners who have been forced to cut back on these offerings. The VRU should continue to utilise their position to provide support for boroughs to embed an early intervention, preventative approach where possible.

Partners also felt that contributions were unequal across the partnership and that there was a lack of alignment across agencies. Local authorities perceived a burden on them to progress local partnership activities and felt that “more is expected from Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and local authorities than ever before”. Local authority representatives reflected on the fact that the public health approach and preventative work is technically out of the remit of CSPs, who were set up to tackle crime in the short and medium term. There was also a sense that there was some duplication between the partnerships and duties that exist in London.

Overall, there was some pessimism about the long-term, with operational partners seeing the next year as decisive. Local authority representatives believed that in the next year, a significant number of further councils would enter a financial crisis, with an imminent rise in section 114 notices (this is the notice given under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which declares a council as effectively bankrupt). As a result, many local authorities are focusing on meeting their core statutory responsibilities and cutting back on anything additional, which means reductions in work on CCTV, domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, and youth engagement, amongst others. Partners called for more investment from the central government to alleviate these pressures.

Data and information sharing to support effective strategy and response

There was relative consensus from operational stakeholders around the fact that partnership data-sharing arrangements were challenging. This was seen to have a direct impact on partners’ ability to respond to violence, especially around hotspot work. The causes of this were seen as:

- Changing attitudes and policies from partners around data sharing
- Lack of strategic leadership support, with “too much red tape”

- Resourcing challenges, which in particular prevent data analysis

In particular, MPS data was highlighted by operational stakeholders as both difficult to obtain and difficult to use to derive an understanding of trends and changes over time (due to being inconsistent and difficult to compare with other data sources). Operational stakeholders cited a pulling back of access to MPS data for local authorities, which some participants attributed in part to a historically challenging relationship between the MPS and the VRU, and insufficient senior buy-in from the MPS. Partners identified “having the right people at the right level of seniority” as critical. One operational participant stated that “it’s about creating the professional environments for those conversations to happen in”.

Operational participants highlighted a number of gaps in the partnership’s data collection and storage. In particular:

- Accessing individual-level data is challenging, which has made it difficult to see relationships between offences and other data, such as whether offences are drug-related
- VAWG data is described as lacking, especially in the absence of a VAWG-specific needs assessment and data on the online perpetration of VAWG offences
- Qualitative data to support partners’ understanding of the *how* and *why* behind violence and what it means to be a vulnerable young person is not routinely collected
- Segmentation analysis to help partners understand sub-groups of offenders and the relationship between offence types is not frequently conducted

Young people’s perspectives of the serious violence response in London
Commissioning should respond to existing data but should also be driven by stakeholder insights, in particular through engagement with young people.

Stakeholder perspectives:

Views on the role of Duty partners in preventing and reducing serious violence¹⁴⁰

When we asked young people about what they thought the role of Duty partners should be in the response to serious violence, they said:

The Met police Preventing violence by keeping the streets safe, “rebuilding trust with boroughs”, and “understanding that community”	Probation and YJS “Giving the people they work with opportunities to stay away from [crime]”, “rebuilding their youth”, and “giving them back ownership of their life”	Local authorities Providing safe, affordable, adequate housing, rebuilding families and communities, supporting schools and the VCS
Education Signposting and referring, offering mental health support, focussing on the <i>why</i> instead of grades	Health Providing mental health support and quick diagnoses, reducing waiting lists, safeguarding young people appropriately	VCS Developing youth clubs, helping young people get home safely, and creating positive opportunities

Overall trust and confidence in authorities were seen by young people as a key challenge.

When we asked young people to prioritise their concerns around safety and the causes of violence, they ranked the lack of trust that young people have toward police and other authorities as the single most important issue related to serious violence. They felt that building up this trust would lead to more young people reporting being victims, witnesses, or even perpetrators of violence and would also boost the amount that police, in particular, know about crime in a local area.

Beyond statutory and VCS organisations, young people identified a number of key actors in the response to violence.

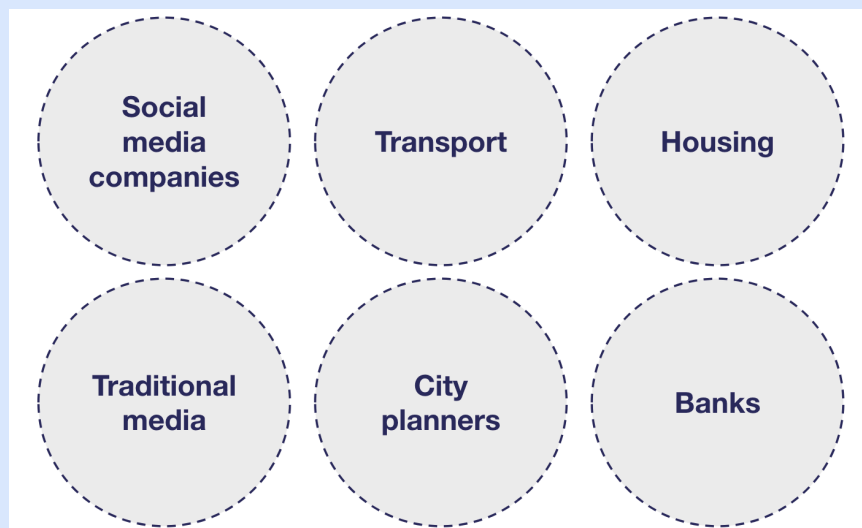
Firstly, they emphasised the importance of the media – both traditional and social - using language that does not inflame tensions. They felt that social media companies in particular have “a prerogative to limit the amount of violence we see on

¹⁴⁰ These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons’ Roundtable.

social media”, They also mentioned Transport for London, saying it had a responsibility to improve transport safety for young people and reduce the cost of tube travel to limit the amount of unsafe journeys home. Participants identified housing associations, architects, and city planners as important to provide opportunities for families to come together and to establish a sense of community. Finally, one participant discussed the importance of banks in financially safeguarding young people against abuse and exploitation.

Stakeholder perspectives: Views on other important partners/ sectors ¹⁴¹

When we asked young people whether they thought any other partners/ sectors had a role in supporting the response to serious violence. They said:



Participants praised the VRU’s engagement with young people and emphasised the importance of meaningful engagement across agencies. Two participants suggested that agencies should have an embedded group of young people, such as a panel, who “they can go to and ask [...] what are we doing correct, what are we doing wrong, how can we help you” - in essence, an extension of the YPAG model. It was seen as essential that these young people were representative of their communities and were not limited to those who were perceived as ‘well-spoken’ or ‘high achievers’. The young people identified pockets of good practice in councils that have youth councillors and the YPAG. All participants believed that agencies should avoid being tokenistic and pay young people for their input. The VRU and partners should ensure that commissioning strategies allow for time and resources to engage and co-design with young people in a meaningful way.

¹⁴¹ These were the perspectives of three young people who participated in our Young Persons’ Roundtable.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

This section is focused on supporting London's VRU and partners to build on existing work to better understand and respond to serious violence. We have outlined a number of recommendations based on the findings of this work as well as drawing upon our experience of supporting the Home Office to implement the Serious Violence Duty and supporting the VRU to achieve sustainability. These recommendations are addressed to:

- London's VRU
- Borough-level partnerships (e.g. CSPs)
- Wider statutory partners (e.g. Serious Violence Duty partners)
- Wider non-statutory partners (e.g. transport companies, banks)

Understanding violence

Improving the quality and consistency of existing data

While expectations have not yet been set by the Home Office on the next iteration of the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) from local areas, it is important for London's VRU to ensure the quality of the evidence base so that it can inform funding, policy and commissioning decisions. Local borough SNAs have the potential to be rich sources of information. The VRU SNA template is an initial step on a journey towards a more standardised approach. There remains room for improvement to ensure that these products can be used to develop rapid and effective local and pan-London responses in the future.

The effective exchange of data and information to understand serious violence and its drivers in local areas is essential to underpin an evidence-based response. It was clear from our roundtable discussions that local authorities were responsible for taking the lead on delivering local SNAs (with support from the VRU) and that they had struggled to receive key data to inform the needs assessment. In particular, case-level data and data from the MPS were seen as difficult to obtain. We also identified a range of data gaps in borough SNAs, which should be resolved going forward, for example, through the coordination of joint data requests.

Recommendation 1. London's VRU should support boroughs to strive for consistency and comparability across local SNAs. This could be achieved by:

- Promoting the consistent use of the VRU's SNA template
- Clarifying the purpose of the pan-London and borough-level SNAs (specifically, how they will be used to identify common gaps and challenges and inform funding, policy and commissioning decisions)
- Developing a series of questions to guide boroughs in providing insight that will ensure evidence is collected to inform these decisions
- Encouraging peer support/review between boroughs, as well as closer collaboration with the VRU in the development of the SNAs

The VRU and wider partners should also agree upon a framework with boroughs that sets out which data will be requested at a borough level (and therefore a borough responsibility) and which data will be requested on behalf of all boroughs (and therefore the responsibility of relevant specified authorities). Data requested on behalf of all boroughs can be standardised. Consideration should be given to the utility and functionality of the Greater London Authority's SafeStats data sharing platform in servicing the Duty requirements, particularly in the provision of standardised datasets. The provision of timely, high-quality and granular Metropolitan Police Service data is a key priority. Potential opportunities for innovative analysis facilitated by more granular data sharing and matching across partnership organisations should be a collective ambition going forward, for example, with reference to the Data for London Library.

Based on the framework developed, London's VRU should work closely with partners to coordinate data-sharing agreements at a pan-London level and work with partners to support boroughs to agree on individual sharing agreements for more localised data. This should be supported by the creation of a new data working group, involving senior representatives from all relevant agencies, whose aim would be to address the barriers to data sharing.

These data sharing agreements could support the Young Futures Prevention Partnerships pilot, especially the establishment of local authority panels tasked with identifying young people at risk of serious violence.

Recommendation 2. Borough partnerships should be encouraged to refresh their SNAs annually in order to continue to refine their understanding of key problems and priority cohorts - this could be by commissioning new or in-depth insight in response to particular questions. Partnerships should then look to use this data as a foundation to further develop their local plans.

Innovate to improve our understanding of serious violence

Borough-level SNAs should allow local areas to understand how serious violence is changing. However, partners across the country face inherent challenges in articulating trends in serious violence due to the limitations of commonly used datasets such as police-recorded crime and hospital admissions data. While police-recorded crime has been subject to improvements in terms of reporting and recording, following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary in 2014,¹⁴² these improvements often mask nuance within the trends, such as

¹⁴² This report found that the under-recording rates for violence against the person and sexual offences were 33 percent and percent respectively. HMICFRS, Crime Recording: making the victim account (2014)

changes in the commission and gravity/harm of violent crime, and changes to who the perpetrators and victims of serious violence are.

Recommendation 3. London's VRU should lead and coordinate research and analysis with partners, encouraging innovative analytical approaches and overlaying data, particularly at a case level. This might include:

- Analysing British Transport Police data as part of pan-London and borough SNAs
- Adopting a first-time/repeat offender and victim analysis, similar to youth justice data, to understand offending/victim trajectories around serious violence
- Completing a clustering analysis to understand typical offending cohorts and describe their key features, including wider offending trajectories. Crest Advisory completed similar research on the offending trajectories of domestic abuse perpetrators¹⁴³
- Conducting a larger-scale qualitative research project with professionals and communities in London to better understand the drivers behind crime trends

London's VRU should build upon the SVD-driven collaborative approach to further involve a range of partners in the development of the next iteration of the pan-London SNA. This could be by co-locating analysts, creating a standing advisory group or commissioning qualitative research into what agencies believe to be the key issues and needs in their local area. Ideally, future SNAs should be generated internally, allowing for efficient data sharing, analysis and insight.

Commissioning research to address known gaps

Although our understanding of violence and its drivers has improved over the last five years, this report has highlighted a number of gaps in our understanding, including:

- The links between poor housing (temporary accommodation, overcrowding) and serious violence
- The impact of reduced access to services (particularly mental health services and SEND assessments) on the prevalence of risk factors
- The pathology of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) perpetrators and the pathways into VAWG offending
- The profile of young people involved in violence: there are indications in the data that offenders are getting younger and that a greater proportion of suspects are female, but these need to be investigated further
- Disproportionality as a cross-cutting theme, particularly in relation to Black girls and young women being disproportionately victimised by serious violence, in order to inform a more evidence-based picture of priority cohorts in London
- Neighbourhood vulnerability and protective factors to violence, particularly in relation to deprivation

¹⁴³ Crest Advisory, Identifying offenders at risk of domestic abuse perpetration and intervention points in offending journeys (February 2023)

- The impact of the night-time economy and alcohol-related crime on violence in London
- The exposure of children and young people to online harms, including exposure through the use of social media, particularly in the development of harmful behaviours, as well as understanding social networks / harmful relationships with peers and adults

Recommendation 4. London's VRU and partners should commission research to shore up hypotheses and facilitate answers to key evidence gaps, enabling partners to design a more robust response.

Responding to violence

London's VRU has championed the public health approach to address violence in London, which focuses on prevention and early intervention, partnership working and evidence-based commissioning. The VRU should continue to emphasise this approach, particularly in the context of a challenging financial climate.

Addressing gaps in commissioning

Respond to gaps using the What Works Index

As a key commissioner in London, the VRU plays an important role in ensuring that funding is targeted and aligns with the evidence of what works to reduce violence.

Recommendation 5. London's VRU and partners should undertake a detailed mapping exercise to ensure that its commissioning programme is (a) aligned with the evidence base and (b) targeted at the right groups and areas and identify any gaps in provision. This report has identified some initial gaps, which include :

- Specialist secondary interventions for groups disproportionately at risk of violence (e.g. be Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children and young people in London).¹⁴⁴
- Under-provided activities such as focussed deterrence programmes, multisystemic therapy for children and young people, and bystander programmes.
- Interventions targeted at alcohol and drug-related crime associated with the night-time economy.

Consider the VRU's role in addressing wider gaps in provision

The VRU has enabled the delivery of primary prevention for children and young people in a landscape where it has been increasingly difficult for partner agencies to do so due to resources. However, we heard from many stakeholders that they felt that little progress could be made without also addressing what they referred to as "the causes of the causes" - access to mental health support, delays in assessments and plans for special educational needs, the use of exclusions, and temporary/unstable housing.

¹⁴⁴ Department for Education (2024) Pupil absence in schools in England

Recommendation 6. London's VRU and Duty partners should build on the example of the Inclusion Charter, by furthering their understanding of the broader systemic barriers faced by children and young people and consider how they might respond or support advocacy nationally to highlight these barriers.

Beyond the systemic barriers, we also heard from young people and other stakeholders about what they perceived to be the lack of physical spaces for young people beyond their home or school. This was seen as especially critical in the afterschool period when children and young people are most vulnerable and where crime spikes. For example, local areas may have a wealth of sporting facilities available to children and young people. Particular barriers to accessibility are where spaces are available at a cost or at hours when young people may not be able to access them.

Recommendation 7. Borough partnerships should consider how to optimise their place-based offerings to provide young people with more positive opportunities, and in doing so should assess the availability of these services to young people.

Building on and deepening our understanding of 'What Works'

Mainstream successful interventions

London's VRU has contributed to the development of the evidence base by ensuring that evaluations are attached to its commissioned programmes of work. Although evidencing causal impact is difficult, it is clear that the VRU has developed a wealth of evidence on the wider impact that its programmes are having on the opportunities of children and young people in London. The VRU Evidence Hub, a resource for partners to guide their own commissioning and prioritisation, is a good example of this. As well as continuing to address evidence gaps, the VRU should now consolidate and build on what it has learned

Recommendation 8. London's VRU should now look to mainstream interventions that have been successful as part of a focus on sustainability. This should include utilising its understanding of 'What Works' in order to commission impactful interventions and programmes (especially those delivered to or by VCS organisations) over a longer funding cycle.

More widely, the VRU should look to support other partnerships, including other VRUs in England and Wales, to pilot and scale up projects that have been impactful in London and use what it has learned in London to inform the Government's commitments on knife crime and VAWG.

Measure the cost/ benefit of interventions

Many of the evaluations carried out in relation to programmes included in the 'What Works' Index (and the VRU's Evidence Hub) did not examine the cost/benefit of interventions. While acknowledging that this is linked to the challenges in robust impact evaluation, it nevertheless makes it hard to understand the value for money of interventions or the financial viability of implementing them at scale.

Recommendation 9. London's VRU should ensure that evaluations of the interventions it commissions include a cost/benefit analysis, in particular, the cost/benefit to Duty partners in London.

Understanding how interventions reduce offending and reoffending

A persistent problem when it comes to evidencing the impact of violence reduction interventions is the difficulty in demonstrating an impact on offending and reoffending, particularly linking other outcomes to seeing a reduction in the involvement in and harm caused by known offenders. Emphasis is often placed on reoffending data as a measure of success, which can fail to capture the full picture of a young person's progress (away from crime). In the short to medium term, softer measures of impact are likely to give a better picture of the impact that service interventions are having on a young person. Yet there is currently insufficient evidence when it comes to the causal link between some of these measures and future offending/ reoffending.

Recommendation 10. London's VRU and wider partners should consider capturing a wider range of outcomes as part of their evaluation frameworks. It should work with the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and the College of Policing (as well as agencies such as the Youth Justice Board) to continue to investigate the links between "softer" outcomes and outcomes associated with crime & offending.

Supporting more effective governance

Further utilise the VRU's convening role to strengthen and expand the partnership

London's VRU has a unique position in the country in coordinating and delivering efforts to reduce violence (and now the Serious Violence Duty) across the 32 London boroughs. Over the last five years, the VRU has gradually shaped this role, convening partners across agencies, acting as an evidence-based commissioner and supporting local boroughs to develop localised responses to serious violence. The VRU is well-placed to continue to develop the partnership to ensure the right partners are engaged.

Recommendation 11. London's VRU should build on its role as a strategic coordinator of the partnership approach to tackle serious violence in London with a focus on convening wider partners, even if they are not Duty-holders. For example, the VRU should expand the

pan-London partnership to include stakeholders from the transport sector and the night-time economy, based on our understanding of violence hotspots. This will help to design and deliver more tailored responses based on our knowledge of serious violence and its drivers.

We heard from partners that they feel overstretched by the requirements of statutory duties like the Duty, alongside delivering business as usual. These additional obligations have meant that many agencies have had to strip back their offering to only what is statutorily obligated, and there was a sense from partners in our roundtable sessions that many requirements felt duplicative. There is a need to reset expectations around partnership contributions to meet the Duty to ensure they are meaningful but also realistic and achievable within wider constraints.

Recommendation 12. Wider partners should look to refresh partnerships and conduct an internal audit of roles and responsibilities to ensure that clear expectations are set for each Duty partner - consideration should be given to the resources required to achieve these expectations. There may also be opportunities to streamline partnerships to ensure strategic alignment around overlapping issues, look for opportunities to avoid duplication and make the most of available resources.

Ensure a more coordinated response with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

The MPS have a clear role in enforcement and secondary and tertiary prevention and their engagement is key to a successful partnership. Yet historically, the relationship between the MPS, the VRU and wider partners hasn't been as strong as it could be, leading to a more siloed and disjointed response. There are myriad opportunities to create a mutually beneficial relationship where the VRU and the MPS can channel their assets to deliver bespoke and targeted responses to serious violence across London.

Recommendation 13. London's VRU and MPS should continue to deepen their relationship, particularly to focus on opportunities for secondary and tertiary prevention, improving data sharing and developing tailored approaches to different offences/ the nature of violence in different locations (e.g. robbery, the night-time economy and the risk around transport hubs). There is also further work to be done to identify the highest risk serious violence perpetrators to target and manage offending, as well as to understand the offending trajectories of these perpetrators and inform better responses at key intervention points in these trajectories.

Expand co-production with London's communities

London's VRU consistently utilises community inputs in their response to serious violence, such as through the Young Person Action Group (YPAG), Young Person Advisory Board (YPAB), MyEnds programme, and consortium commissioning. London's VRU has co-produced its strategy, Inclusion Charter, and Girls and Young Women Plan (to name a few) with a range of stakeholder groups, including partner agencies, the voluntary and community sector, the YPAB

and YPAG. This is considered a strength of the partnership's work and continued attention should be placed on engaging the community on a regular and embedded basis in intervention planning, delivery, and evaluation.

Recommendation 14. London's VRU should develop its engagement with communities, learning from the success of the YPAG and YPAB models and consider how it is able to engage with other relevant groups within its priority areas (e.g. teachers and parents) on a regular and embedded basis in order to bolster their understanding of emerging issues.

Furthermore, given the importance of domestic abuse and sexual violence within the VRU definition, the YPAG model could also be extended to victim/ survivor groups to ensure that these valuable lived experiences are also heard.

Recommendation 15. Borough partnerships should consider developing local YPAGs, based on London VRU's model, to expand on existing youth engagement offerings. This would attract a wider and more representative cohort of young people and the VRU could support boroughs to develop these.

Reviewing the VRU's strategy

Consider further targeting the VRU's work

The VRU's definition of serious violence is arguably wide - in particular, the addition of domestic abuse and sexual violence affecting *all* ages to the VRU's definition of serious violence significantly broadens its focus. Given resourcing constraints on both the VRU and its partners, the VRU may consider further targeting its work.

Recommendation 16. London's VRU and Duty partners should consider refining its definition to clarify the sub-categories of domestic abuse and sexual offences which classify as serious violence, as well as ensuring the whole definition is subject to violence of any kind affecting under-25s.

Influence and establish a position on national commitments

The VRU should also consider how its work can align with and inform the new Government's priorities, including preparing to support the government to deliver its Taking Back Our Streets mission. London is uniquely positioned to offer insights and provide leadership in the response to knife crime and serious violence.

Recommendation 17. London's VRU should complete a scoping paper to inform the wider response strategy to assess how the VRU, with its partners, can halve knife crime in the next decade in London. This report should set:

- what the government needs to do to enable partners in London to meet this commitment, including potential legislative, policy and funding proposals, particularly highlighting and substantiating the concerns of stakeholders on the difficulty in providing a preventative response
- what the VRU and its partners need to do, whether it is developing the definition and evidence base, adapting the strategy and/or refining the commissioning approach

Understand and communicate the costs of violence

There is a significant cost and, therefore, opportunity around the prevention and reduction of serious violence. The ethos of the London approach has been to bring partners together to guide the strategic approach to serious violence. However, incentives are often misaligned when it comes to the cost of violence: those doing the prevention work often aren't the same agencies that would make savings from reductions in violence, and investments can take a long time to bear fruit.

Recommendation 18. London's VRU should commission further research to understand the wider costs of violence to London's economy and the cost/benefit of its work.

London's VRU should work with partners to set out and communicate the costs of serious violence to key audiences, including the new government, using the figure that violence affecting young people and sexual violence costs £1.8 billion a year in London.

Annex

Methodology

Review of borough SNAs

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) provided Crest Advisory with each borough's Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). These SNAs were produced to meet the Serious Violence Duty at the borough level, with guidance provided by the VRU. Crest reviewed and compared these SNAs against the template developed by the VRU, looking at socio-demographic characteristics, trends in violence according to the VRU definition and the drivers of serious violence. This review informed the quantitative profile by indicating key themes as well as providing localised insight to inform the pan-London picture. This review also informed a review setting out recommendations to guide the future development of the evidence base in London.

Limitations: We looked across the SNAs to understand localised experiences of violence in London to inform the pan-London trends - one of the limitations of the SNAs was consistency and comparability, which has meant that it has been difficult to draw out findings on similar and contrasting trends between boroughs. This lack of comparability meant we had to rely on other data sources to produce the pan-London quantitative profile.

Quantitative profile

Crest Advisory produced a quantitative profile of serious violence in London, looking at high-level trends, particularly in the last five years. The analysis and report are structured in line with London's definition of serious violence and the VRU's SNA guidance. We looked at analysis and data across a number of sources, including local data from the MPS and the London Ambulance Service.

The profile reviewed:

	Number of data sources	List of data sources
Local data	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offence, suspect and victim data from the Metropolitan Police Service• Incident-level data on assaults from the London Ambulance Service
Published data	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for IMD data• Department for Education data on free school meals• Public Health England data on substance misuse, mental health and NEETs• NHS Hospital Admissions Data• Home Office reports on the economic and social costs of crime• Youth Justice for statistics on youth offending• ONS data on police-recorded crime, crime severity and unemployment• Crime Survey for England and Wales• Census data on population sizes and demographic characteristics• MPS dashboards on crime and homicide

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safelives MARAC data
Evidence Reports	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● London Policing Board: Performance and Finance Delivery Committee Update (December 2023) ● London Policing Board: Insights into Violence Against Women and Girls (December 2023) ● London Policing Board: Insights for the Performance and Finance Committee (March 2024) ● MOPAC Problem Profile of Drugs in London (April 2024) ● MOPAC Serious Youth Violence Problem Profile (2022) ● London Policing Board: Insight Backgrounds on Serious Violence (non-Domestic) (November 2024)

Local data from the MPS:
Time period: 2019 - 2023 (calendar years)
Summary: The Met provided 3 data sets:

1. Offence data - This dataset lists the number of violent offences committed in London between 2019 and 2023, where either the victim or the suspect was under the age of 25. As well as the offence group and sub-group, this data also lists if an offence had a domestic abuse, knife crime, lethal barrel, or discharge flag.
2. Suspect data - this dataset lists the number of suspects of violent offences between 2019 and 2023 aged between 10 and 24 (10 is the age of criminal responsibility is 10 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland). It includes the demographic characteristics of the suspect, as well as whether the offence they committed had a domestic abuse, knife crime, lethal barrel or discharge flag.
3. Victim data - this data lists the number of victims of violent offences between 2019 and 2023, where the victim was under the age of 25, except victims with an age recorded as 0 (these records were excluded due to data quality issues). It includes the demographic characteristics of the victim, as well as whether the offence had a domestic abuse, knife crime, lethal barrel or discharge flag.

Caveats and limitations: Flags only apply to offences within the VRU’s definition of serious violence - they do not cover all offences.

Offences included in the Met data

Offence group	Offence Subgroup	Full offence name
Robbery	Robbery of personal property	Robbery of personal property
Violence against the person	Homicide	Murder
		Manslaughter

		Infanticide
	Violence with injury	Actual Bodily harm and other Injury
		Assault occasioning actual bodily harm on Emergency Worker (other than a Constable)
		Assaults Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm on a Constable
		Cause GBH with intent on Constable to resist/prevent arrest
		GBH on Emergency Worker (other than a Constable) with Intent to resist or prevent arrest
		Inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm without Intent
		Non-Fatal Strangulation and suffocation
		Racially or Religiously Aggravated Actual Bodily Harm and other Injury
		Racially or Religiously Aggravated Inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm without intent
		Racially or religiously aggravated non fatal strangulation or suffocation
		Unlawfully and Maliciously Wound / GBH an Emergency Worker (other than a Constable) with Intent to cause GBH
		Wounding or Inflicting GBH (with or Without Weapon) on Emergency Worker (other than a Constable)
		Wounding Amounting to GBH or Inflicting GBH (Inflicting Bodily Harm with or Without Weapon) on a Constable
		Wounding an Emergency Worker (other than a Constable) with Intent to resist or prevent arrest
		Wounding or Carrying out an act Endangering Life
		Wounding with intent on Constable to resist/prevent arrest
		Wounding with intent to do GBH on Constable
	Violence without injury	Threats to kill
Sexual offences	Rape	Attempted Rape
		Rape of a Female aged 16 and over
		Rape of a Female Child under 13
		Rape of a Female Child under 16
		Rape of a Male aged 16 and over
		Rape of a Male Child under 13
		Rape of a Male Child under 16

	Other sexual offences	Assault on a female by penetration.
		Sexual assault on a Female aged 13 and over
		Sexual Assault on a Female Child under 13
		Sexual Assault on a Male aged 13 and over
		Sexual Assault on a Male child under 13

Local data from the London Ambulance Service:

Time period: 2019/20 - 2023/24 (financial years)

Summary: The London Ambulance Service provided 5 years' worth of assault data. The data is based on caller-derived information (what was told to the call handler of the emergency services call). It includes weapon assaults (gun, knife and other weapon) as well as non-weapon assaults, rapes and sexual assaults. The data is broken down by the age of the patient involved in the incident (under 25 or over 25).

Caveats and limitations: For this report, we have looked at the volume of incidents rather than the volume of victims.

Limitations:

There are a number of limitations to the data that have been used, particularly about serious violence trends. For example, published datasets are often limited by the quality of recording practices, including police recorded crime. Police-recorded crime datasets are also limited by the willingness of victims or witnesses to report crimes. This means that there is an underreporting of victims of VAWG and overall reporting is also highly susceptible to trends in trust and confidence, which has been an issue, particularly for London, in recent years. This is why we have also included references to the Crime Survey for England and Wales at certain points as a point of comparison.

There are a number of datasets which have not been included due to the confines of the research. Furthermore, only two London-specific datasets have been used within this report - MPS and London Ambulance data. Wider partnership data may have added further detail to the published data used in this report.

Some of the analysis has also relied on using existing analytical products, which has reduced duplication, but we have not been able to interrogate the data which sits behind these reports.

‘What Works’ Index

This review aimed to complement the VRU's Evidence Hub and was used to compile an index of interventions that partners in London can use to inform decision-making around the response to serious violence. This index contains 41 interventions that aim to prevent or reduce violence (in line with the London definition of serious violence). It is intended to support the

London Violence Reduction Unit and its partners in making decisions and to inform pan-London and borough-level responses to violence. The index can be used to support collaborative decision-making and commissioning around the response to serious violence, including as part of the commissioning cycle. It should also support the mainstreaming of interventions, including ensuring that evaluation is built into the process from the start.

The index can be filtered to identify appropriate interventions according to a range of factors, including the VRU's impact goals and priority groups. This facilitates collaborative decision-making around the response to serious violence, including as part of the commissioning cycle. It should also support the mainstreaming of interventions, including ensuring that evaluation is built into the process from the start, to support a local understanding of 'What Works' and further develop the evidence base for interventions.

Interventions were selected based on their estimated impact and quality of evidence from four sources: the Youth Endowment Fund, the College of Policing, the Early Intervention Foundation and research by Crest Advisory.

Limitations:

The index was not an exhaustive look at all programmes and interventions aimed at preventing or reducing violence. Our selection of interventions and programmes was limited by the four sources we used and therefore, the index is not able to capture all relevant impactful interventions that have been evaluated. It is hoped the index can be iterated with further insight on an ongoing basis to more adequately reflect the evidence base as it develops.

Roundtable discussions

This report draws on three roundtables and two strategic interviews we held in September and October 2024. The objectives of these roundtables were to understand reflections on high-level trends in serious violence, perspectives on the effectiveness of partnership working and how the response should evolve in the future.

In each session, we asked about:

- **Data:** We presented a high-level summary of our key findings from our quantitative review of violence in London and invited all participants to consider the extent to which these findings resonate with their experience and expertise
- **Serious violence in London:** We invited participants to reflect on emerging trends or issues in serious violence that the data summary did not cover and invited them to reflect on how mobilised their agency is to deal with this.
- **Partnership working:** We asked participants to reflect on the response to serious violence, including how agencies work together in order to tackle it
- **Response:** We encouraged participants to reflect on what has been successful and what has been less effective in their response to serious violence. Where an approach had not been successful, we invited participants to discuss what could be improved in order to maximise the impact of their response.

Each roundtable comprised stakeholders from the following groups:

Strategic, consisting of a representative from:

- The Youth Justice Board
- The Metropolitan Police Service

Operational, consisting of representatives from:

- The Metropolitan Police Service
- The London Borough of Haringey
- The London Borough of Croydon
- The London Borough of Lambeth
- The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
- The Greater London Authority
- HM Prison and Probation Service

Participants from these services, as leaders or analysts in their organisation's response to serious violence, offered rich insights on the data trends that they are seeing 'on the ground' at their respective services and the strengths and barriers of the partnership and its response from a delivery perspective.

Voluntary and community sector and practitioners, consisting of representatives from:

- Redthread
- St Giles Trust
- NEWway Project
- West Ham United Foundation
- DIVERT
- Bounceback
- Jigsaw
- ENGAGE

We invited these stakeholders' reflections on data and trends in serious violence based on their understanding of the cohorts that they work with. We were also interested in their reflections on partnership working in London, both between other VCS organisations, the VRU, and statutory partners, and what they felt like the strengths and gaps in serious violence provision are.

We also spoke to young people, consisting of three representatives from the Young People's Action Group (YPAG):

- Safa Mehmood
- Samira-Caterina Monteleone
- Zakariya Shariff

It was critical in our research to hear about violence in London directly from young people, who are experts on their own and their community's sense of safety. This was an incredibly valuable exercise, where we encouraged the young people we spoke to to reflect on our key data findings and validate or dispute them based on their lived experiences in London. We also invited them to discuss the roles of each agency in preventing violence in London and encouraged them to propose interventions and programmes that would better respond to the drivers of violence.

Limitations:

Due to the confines of the research, it is important to note that we were unable to speak to an exhaustive list of stakeholders from each group – instead, we spoke to a select and representative group, with attendance from key agencies and organisations in London's response to serious violence. We were also not able to supplement our limited sample size with, for example, a broader survey of London VRU's partners. Despite this, we heard a broad range of perspectives through lively and engaged conversations with key stakeholders.

We adopted a semi-structured interview format for our roundtables, asking key questions for each section but encouraging conversation and challenges across attendees to flow based on the direction of the conversation. There are limitations to this approach – namely, that conversation is likely to dwell disproportionately on particular issues. We kept questions neutral in tone in order to avoid leading participants, however, we in several cases probed participants for specific strengths or barriers, especially in partnership working.

Overview of VRU-commissioned interventions

The Social Switch

Youth practitioner training around online harms and employability for children and young people in the digital sector and beyond.

Girls and Young Women community-based mentoring

Community-based targeted support service for young women through safe spaces and mentoring.

IRIS

Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) supports primary care practitioners with the training to identify domestic abuse and a direct referral into community domestic abuse services.

ADViSE

Supports primary care practitioners in sexual health clinic settings with the training to identify domestic abuse and a direct referral into community domestic abuse services.

DIVERT

Custody-based youth diversion for 18-25 year olds.

ENGAGE

Custody-based youth diversion project for under-18s.

Hospital-Based Youth Work

Diversionary service for vulnerable young people who attend adult A&E or Urgent Care Centres.

Your Choice CBT

Targeted Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as part of a high-intensity intervention to children at risk/harm of violence.

Sports

Pan-London sports-specific grant fund for vulnerable young Londoners.

Stronger Futures

Targeted funding for afterschool activities across 28 boroughs for 8-18 year olds at risk or involved in violence.

Young Persons' Action Group

Embedded in London's VRU to ensure the voice, opinions and ideas of young people influence policy and funding decisions.

Youth Practitioners Advisory Board

Advisory group of frontline youth workers bringing practitioners' perspective to the work of the VRU.

Youth Leadership Programme: Rise Up

VRU's Pan-London leadership programme for frontline youth practitioners working with young people affected by violence.

Local Village Network Mobile app

signposting where young people can access job opportunities, employment support and youth pupilprovisions within their local communities.

Multi-Faith Network

Community-oriented partnership approach with the faith sector in supporting young people affected by violence.

Parent/Carer Champion Network

Partnership programme empowering parents and carers through skills-based training and peer support.

Strengthening Fathers Pilot

Supporting prevention and early intervention for male carers/fathers seeking to strengthen relationships with their children.

Bambu

Therapeutic support to children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.

Project Response to child/ adolescent on parent violence or abuse (CAPVA)

Supports boroughs to develop their systems responses within Children and Safeguarding services and deliver direct interventions to families affected.

Parent Support Programme

Community-based parental support to reduce social risk factors for violence during the transition from primary to secondary.

Inclusive and Nurturing Schools Programme

Whole Schools programme with teacher training and targeted student strands.

AP/PRU Mentoring

Targeted mentoring support to vulnerable young Londoners who attend London's Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

Talk Matters Specialist

Targeted speech and language therapy in schools.

Difference Matters

Targeted programme to improve the experiences of neurodiverse young people in mainstream schools to reduce disproportionate exclusions, absences and suspensions, tackling the over-representation of young people with unmet special needs in AP/PRU and YOI settings.

UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award

Partnership with UNICEF UK, ensuring the Rights Respecting Schools Award is free for all state-funded education settings in London for the next 4 years.

Inclusion Charter

Partnership approach advocating and promoting inclusive practices.

MyEnds

Place-based, hyper-local and community-driven programme which provides support, capacity, and grassroots funding for a wide range of locally tailored interventions in neighbourhoods most affected by violence.

Additional & intensified support to key boroughs

Targeted community-oriented funding supporting detached youth outreach, community development and training.

Community Capacity Building Funding

Locally designed, community-driven interventions in neighbourhoods affected by high and sustained levels of violence, supporting trust and collaboration between local communities, VCS and statutory partners.

Critical Incidents / Pre-Emptive Fund

Supports the delivery of the Critical Incident Community response following a murder or other critical incident involving violence, providing one-off funding of up to £5,000 directly to local authorities.

London Crime Prevention Fund

The VRU, in partnership with the MPS and London Councils, has helped to support the development of Violence and Vulnerability Plans in each of London's 32 boroughs, which aim to offer support and guidance alongside promoting best policy and practice.

Serious Violence Duty Fund

Coordinating the delivery of local authority SNAs under the Duty, progressing a collaborative approach to problem identification and response to serious violence between agencies.

Serious Incident Manager

An app developed to assist and enable coordinated partnership when responding in the aftermath of a serious incident.

Robbery Fund

Available to the top 15 boroughs experiencing the highest levels of personal robbery in London. This will enable a programme of localised interventions to tackle robbery during the after-school period, focused on supporting young people.

Innovation Fund

Enabling innovative community-led approaches to supporting young people who are at risk of violence. The Fund aims to (1) Encourage Innovation, (2) Empower Communities and (3) progress the VRU's core mission to reduce violence.

Research & Evaluation Fund

The R&E fund provides grants of up to £50,000 to boroughs to fund evaluation and research into violence reduction and prevention interventions between December 23 and March 25.

MyEnds Partnership Fund

Funding for all LAs not receiving MyEnds to support place-based, hyper-local and community-driven programmes in neighbourhoods most affected by violence.

Trauma-Informed Research Project

Research mapping trauma-informed and trauma-responsive understanding and practice across Local Authorities, the Metropolitan Police Service and Integrated Care Boards. The research will establish a baseline of trauma-informed practice across London from which the VRU can support borough partnerships, cross-sector knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Homicide Framework Project

Working with MPS to develop and operationalise a framework to better understand homicide, how situational and behavioural factors interact, and how we can work in partnership to identify opportunities to intervene earlier.

London Sports Intervention Model

Development and validation of a robust model for sports interventions in London to maximise impact, learning and best practice.

Local Authority Peer Review

Supporting partnership working and sharing best practice across CSPs.

Pan-London Strategic Needs Assessment

The pan-London SNA, produced by Crest Advisory, will draw on information and intelligence across partner organisations, conducting a thematic analysis of the first iteration of 32 Local

Authority level Strategic Needs Assessments, delivered in line with the Serious Violence Duty. The SNA's findings will be used by the VRU and partners to inform a strategy containing specific recommendations for action.

Online Harms / Social Media and Violence

Developing our online harms strategy by commissioning research on the interaction between online and offline violence and the challenges/ opportunities to utilise social media data to prevent harm.