

Violence in London: what we know and how to respond

London skyline in the evening

Key information

Publication type: General

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The research

In 2020, the VRU commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to develop a Strategic Needs Assessment to inform its approach to violence prevention in London.

This report identifies current and future health needs of local populations to inform and guide the planning of services within a local authority area and pave the way for significant reductions in violence now and for future generations of Londoners.?

Research questions

The research brings together existing research and analysis to present an assessment of what is known about violence in London, highlight what is not known and set out recommendations for how the VRU and partners should respond.?

Methodology

The Behavioural Insights Team conducted interviews with academics, experts and VRU stakeholders to identify lines of enquiry. Published analysis and data, such as policy documents and academic papers, were reviewed and

synthesised to understand the nature of violence in London. Finally, a rapid evidence review was conducted on existing violence prevention approaches.?

Key findings

The report consolidates what is already known about violence in London and its drivers.??

What do we know about violence in London:?

- Violence in London is highly geographically concentrated- just six (fewer than 1 per cent) of all of London's neighbourhoods showed a large and increasing violence crime rate between 2013 and 2017.??

What drives violence in London:?

- Neighbourhoods that have suffered high levels of violence are also likely to have higher levels of deprivation, with income deprivation is the strongest predictor of high violence in a specific neighbourhood.??

Why has violence increased:?

- The 2008 recession, along with subsequent reductions in spending, is likely to have increased the vulnerability of some London neighbourhoods to violence. The effect of changes in labour market conditions and public sector safety nets may have been compounded by changes in drug market.?

The report also evaluates current approaches to violence prevention, with consideration given to the level of available evidence, noting that there are significant limitations to the evidence base.?

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Recommendations

The report makes several recommendations on how the VRU can optimise its efforts to stabilise and reduce violence in the immediate term, before presenting a framework for driving long-term reductions in violence.?

In the immediate term:?

- Target the most vulnerable neighbourhoods: Conduct street and neighbourhood level analysis to identify severe vulnerability and target resources for maximum impact.?
- Help people feel safer: Support local police, statutory partners and communities to deploy their resources to best effect. Build the trust of those who may typically have lower levels of trust and confidence in the police.?

In the medium to long term:?

- Understand the problem: Commission research on the neighbourhood and situational drivers of violence in London to identify predictors of risk and intervention opportunities.??

- Design Solutions: Design solutions drawing on evidence of what works, working with communities to adapt evidence for the local context and removing any obstacles to accessing services,?
- Evaluate: Incrementally build existing programme capability to be ready for evaluation. Longer term, work with partners to generate a pipeline of interventions that can be more rigorously evaluated.?
- Make it work: Provide the resources, incentives and connections to drive iterative research and experimentation. Make multi-agency working as easy as possible.

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