

SAFER CORNWALL Understanding Serious Violence

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Contents

Introduction	1
Violence in Cornwall: what the evidence says	5
Isles of Scilly	17
Our Response	18
Best practice in violence prevention	23
Further reading	26

Introduction

National & Local Context

The government's 2018 [Serious Violence Strategy](#) focused on **homicide, knife crime, and gun crime** and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and County Lines drug dealing.

These offences account for only around **1% of all recorded crime**, but they have increased in recent years and there is a **huge cost** to communities through **loss of life**, and the **trauma** caused through both the **physical and psychological injuries** suffered.

A new [Serious Violence Duty](#) on **partners to 'prevent and reduce' serious violence** commenced on 31

January 2023, after a lengthy period of consultation. It was introduced as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

The Duty requires partners to plan, **share data** and information, develop a **strategic needs assessment** and **publish a strategy** by January 2024. Local areas are encouraged to adopt a **public health approach**.

Flexibility has been given to local areas to agree the scope, geography, lead agency, partnership structure and local definition of serious violence.

The Duty also amends the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that **tackling serious violence is an explicit priority for all CSPs**.

In September 2020, pre-empting the new Duty, the PCC and the Chief Constable founded the Devon and Cornwall **Serious Violence Prevention Programme**, which aimed to understand the scale and nature of violence across the Peninsula and provide a strategy to tackle its drivers in partnership.

Crest Advisory¹ were commissioned to **develop an evidence base** to inform the strategy and from this a [new prevention approach](#) was launched that aims to break the cycle of violence, **focusing on young people under 25**.

¹ A crime and justice consultancy www.crestadvisory.com. Crest have since been appointed as the Home Office's support

partner to help local areas prepare and implement the Duty

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were provided with some funding to develop and deliver a local programme of work to support the Peninsula Strategy.

When the new Duty arrived, **CSPs looked to expand their approach to meet the new requirements**, including developing local needs assessments and strategies, **building on existing CSP work** to prevent and reduce violence in its various contexts and complementing the Peninsula Programme.

A **'hub and spoke' governance model** is being progressed to balance both local and Peninsula priorities and allocate funding and resources appropriately.

In Cornwall, governance for local delivery of the Duty sits with **Safer Cornwall as lead partnership**, and preventing serious violence is a specific partnership priority, in line

with the amendment to the Crime and Disorder Act.

For the **purposes of the Duty**, violence **includes domestic abuse, sexual** offences, violence against **property** and **threats** of violence but **does not include terrorism**. This is intended to ensure that local areas target serious violence in all the **relevant contexts in line with their local profile**.

Violence **spans many contexts** including domestic abuse and sexual violence, peer-to-peer violence amongst young people, exploitation and drug trafficking, with **significant overlap** between them.

We have a range of **specific strategies** addressing these as important issues in their own right, each drawing on their evidence and needs assessments. This document **brings together the relevant key findings** rather than attempting to duplicate or recreate existing work.



Why focus on a prevention approach?

A 'public health approach' means looking at crime not as isolated incidents or solely as an enforcement issue but instead, regarding it as a **preventable consequence of a range of factors**, such as adverse early-life experiences, or harmful social or community experiences and influences.

Experience of **violence is a risk factor for other negative health and social outcomes** across the life course, so preventing violence also makes a significant contribution to improving the **health and wellbeing of the population**.

Early identification and interventions are key to preventing violence and this requires a **long-term, whole system approach** and a shared, sustained effort by all key organisations working together **in and with communities**.

Public Health England² sets out **three levels** of violence prevention:



² [Preventing serious violence: a multi-agency approach](#), Guidance, Public Health England,

The ecological model for understanding violence

No single factor explains why some individuals behave violently toward others or why violence is more prevalent in some communities than it is in others.

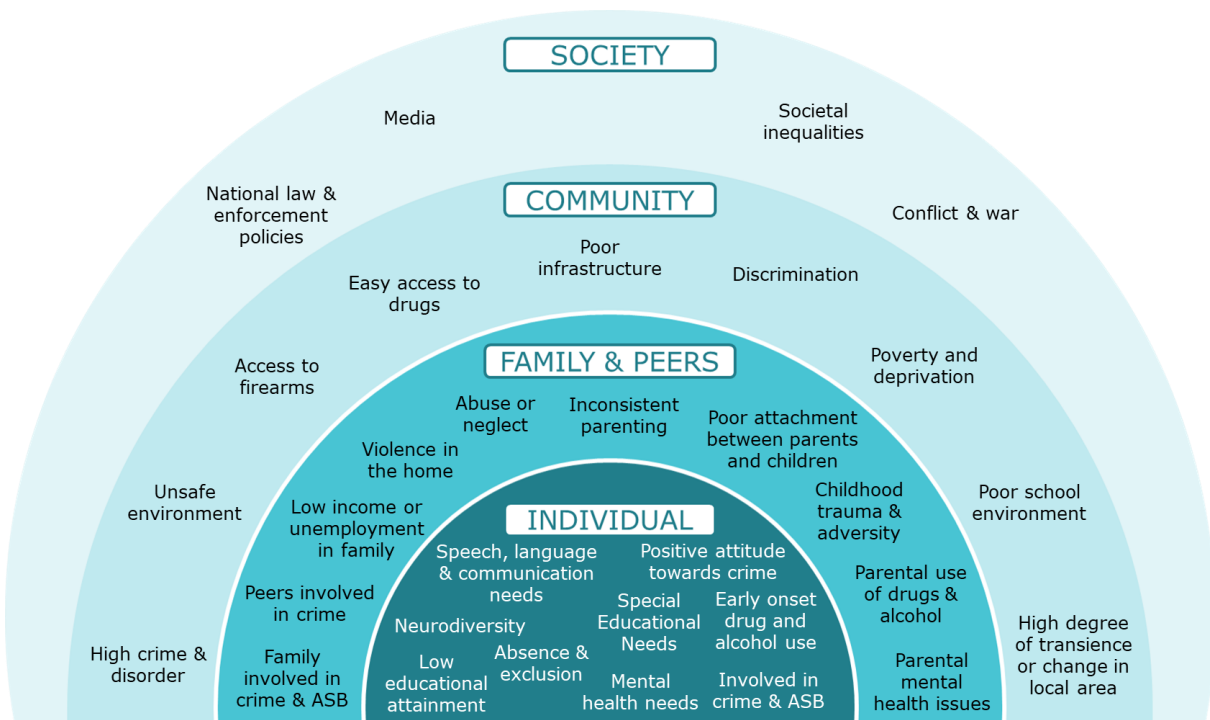
Violence is the result of the **complex interplay of factors** at an individual and family level, and at a wider community and society level. These can **change over time**, depending on other factors like age. Risk factors often **occur in clusters** (and **interact with each other** within the broader social, cultural and economic contexts).

Addressing **risk factors across the various levels** of the ecological model may contribute to decreases in more than one type of violence. For example, **healthy relationships education** addresses risk factors at an individual, family and community level, with the aim of preventing domestic abuse and addressing a key risk factor for youth violence.

Protective factors act against risk factors and can explain why children who face the same level of risk are affected differently. A **combination of protective factors** can prevent the harmful influence of risk factors that have accumulated over a child's development.

Department of Health and Social Care, and Home Office (2019)

Ecological model of violence



INDIVIDUAL

- Good school readiness
- Healthy problem-solving
- Emotional regulation skills
- Supported to achieve academically

FAMILY & PEERS

- A stable and secure home
- Nurturing and responsive relationships
- Consistent parenting
- Positive social interactions and friendship groups

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

COMMUNITY

- Positive teacher/other significant adult relationships
- A sense of belonging
- Opportunities for sport/hobbies
- A safe environment
- Access to services and social support
- Economic opportunities

SOCIETY

- Challenges to social and cultural 'norms' that promote inequality
- Policies that promote and support healthy relationships and respectful behaviours
- Enforcing laws that protect people from violence

Violence in Cornwall: what the evidence says

How do we define serious violence?

The World Health Organisation defines violence as *"The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."*

Violence **covers a wide range of harm** from minor assaults (such as pushing and shoving), to harassment and psychological abuse (that result in no physical harm) and, at the most serious end of the scale, life-changing injuries or death.

In responding to the Duty, local areas are encouraged to explore and agree a **local definition of serious violence** based on local needs.

In Cornwall, we have interpreted serious violence as **violence that causes life-changing injuries or death**, and our focus is on identifying our priorities based on

the **contexts in which violence takes place**.

At national and police force level, the success of the Duty will be measured through a reduction in three headline indicators:

- **Hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object** and especially among victims aged 25 and under
- **Knife-enabled serious violence** and especially amongst victims aged 25 and under
- **All homicides** and especially those that are non-domestic and among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.

Whilst we recognise these measures as the focus of the national Strategy, they **do not adequately reflect our local profile** of violence and do not align to a prevention approach. The numbers at local level are also **too low** to target effectively.

A note on the police data

In November 2022 Devon and Cornwall Police began **transitioning to a new record management system** (Niche), which will provide enhanced functionality and analytical capability. During the **transition period**, officers were able to view crime and intelligence records, but a range of process and data issues meant that **providing strategic information was not possible** for a 12 month period.

All crime analysis undertaken during this time (including the update to the Safer Cornwall Strategic Assessment) used the **last reference data** set provided pre-Niche, which related to the **12 month period ending 31 October 2022**.

A **limited data set** was provided in October 2023 which has allowed an update of the **headline key statistics**. More detailed data, including information about victims, offenders, types of location and links to alcohol, will not be provided until early 2024 and therefore the findings on contexts and risk draw on the reference data, supported by **insight from practitioners and relevant non-police data**.

Key statistics³

- **29,450 recorded crimes** ▶-0.3%
- **5 homicides** ▲ up from 4 the previous year
- **4,547 violence with injury crimes** ▼-6%
 - Of which **35%** relate to domestic abuse, 1,574 crimes ▼-5%
 - **338 serious violence** offences⁴ ▼-13%; 7% of violence with injury
- **366 weapons possession crimes** ▲+8%
 - 166 Knife/blade ▼-11%
 - 37 Firearm ▲+28%
- **631 rape offences** ▲+11% and **1,068 other sexual offences** ▲+8%
 - Of which 20% relate to domestic abuse, 333 crimes ▶+2%
- **131 robberies** ▲+24%
- Offences committed by **young people** [Youth Justice Service, 2022/23]
 - 211 violent crimes, of which 10 relate to serious violence ▶
 - 30 sexual offences ▶
 - 37 possession of weapons offences ▲
- **412 assault presentations** to ED/MIUs ▶-2% [2022/23]
- **91 ambulance call-outs** to stab/gunshot incidents ▲+30%

Force level statistics: [year to Sep-22]

- **791 knife crimes** (use of a knife) ▲+20%; 3% of all crime
- **117 gun crimes** (use of a gun) ▶-1%; <1% of all crime

Safer Cornwall's strategic assessment reports that, overall, Cornwall experiences comparatively **low rates of crime** and is **one of the safest places in the country** to live and work in and visit. The pandemic had a substantial impact on patterns of crime and the **local picture largely reflects national trends**.

COVID restrictions reduced opportunities for some violent crimes to occur, such as public place and Night Time Economy violence, and crime numbers fell dramatically. **Other risks increased** – including violence and **abuse in the home**, exploitation and **on-line risks**.

Since restrictions were lifted, we have seen **many types of crime**

returning to or exceeding the levels seen before the pandemic.

Violence and sexual violence are above pre-pandemic levels. **Alcohol-related crime**, violence involving **young people** and **public space violence (non-NTE)** are contexts where we have identified greater risk; evidenced by police data initially, partners have continued to flag concerns in 2023.

The level of **violence with injury crimes** have returned to pre-pandemic levels but not exceeded them, with the rising trend stabilising over the last year. The **rate of crime is now around the average** for similar community safety partnership areas nationally.

³ Police data covers the year to 31 July 2023 unless otherwise stated, and change from last year

⁴ Includes murder and attempts, grievous bodily harm (GBH) and wounding (with and without intent) and possession of a weapon with intent to do GBH

What presents the greatest risk of harm?

The threat, risk and harm assessment undertaken for the strategic assessment identifies **domestic abuse and sexual violence** as the **highest risk** contexts where physical and psychological violence take place. **Exploitation and drug trafficking** are also assessed as high risk.

Knife crime, robbery and violence involving **young people** are assessed as **moderate but increasing risk**. Public space violence, Night Time Economy violence and gun crimes are assessed as standard risk.

For all types of violence, the risk of **victimisation is significantly greater for younger people** and victimisation reduces with age. With the exception of sexual violence, where young people under 18 are at greatest risk, people **aged 18 to 34** experience the highest rates of violence.

Males and females are equally likely to be a victim of violence, but the type of violence experienced differs. **Females** are more likely to experience **domestic abuse and sexual violence**; whereas **males** are more likely to experience **non-domestic violence** (such as street violence).

Violence resulting in serious injury is more likely to be **non-domestic** and **involving a male victim**. This type of violence is also more likely to involve **alcohol**.

Violence, particularly domestic abuse, is strongly correlated with the presence of **multiple deprivation factors**, and most strongly linked to **income, employment, health, and education, skills and training** – in-line with the ecological model for violence prevention.

Across the board, **social media** is highlighted as playing a key role in **spreading misinformation** and amplifying **support for toxic narratives**.

Violence can be both **the consequence and the cause of social inequalities**. Many of the factors that shape health and health outcomes are also determinants of serious violence

The strategic assessment identifies the following **cross-cutting risk and positive factors** for Cornwall:

Increase vulnerability (risk factors)

- **Drug** use and problem **drinking**
- Experience of **trauma**
- Poor **mental health**
- Being a **child, young person** or **vulnerable adult**
- **Isolation** and exclusion
- **Poverty** and hardship
- **Multiple** vulnerabilities

Improve outcomes (positive factors)

- A secure **home**
- Skilled and **competent support**
- Open **communication**, trust and confidence
- A sense of **belonging**
- Positive and supportive **relationships**

Key messages by theme

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

Domestic abuse remains the main driver of harm in Cornwall; in terms of its contribution to **violence experienced now** and in the context of **adverse childhood experiences** and future impact.

Domestic abuse **reports to the police**, which stayed high during the pandemic, have been **fairly stable** over the last two years. **Referrals into services** for support have **continued to increase year on year** (+13% in 2022/23).

People seeking help have a **complex mix of vulnerabilities** and are increasingly needing longer, more resource intensive interventions. This is a reflection of the **escalation of harms during the pandemic**, and the impact on mental health and wellbeing – now compounded by the **cost of living crisis** and difficulties accessing essential support such as housing.

Since March 2020, there have been **16 deaths categorised as domestic homicide**, compared with 12 over the preceding 8 years.⁵

Witnessing violence or abuse is one of the Adverse Childhood Experiences that research shows will go on to significantly affect **short term outcomes for children** but also impacts across the life-course, with longer term effects on the **health, wellbeing and mortality**.

⁵ The statutory duty for CSPs to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews started in 2011

⁶ Bryant et al (2020), The rise of adverse childhood experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷ The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children affected by domestic abuse as victims in their own right

This is especially true for children from **lower socio-economic backgrounds**, certain **ethnic minorities** or from families who are **socially isolated**.⁶

Young people can **experience domestic abuse in many ways**. They can **witness domestic abuse in the family home**⁷ and may be directly victimised by the perpetrator of that abuse.

It is estimated that **1 in 4 children**⁸ in Cornwall live in households where an adult is or has been **affected by domestic abuse** – that's 26,700 children. For 6.2%, **6,620** children or 1 in 16, the abuse will have been **experienced in the last year** – around a quarter of that number are recorded in local services.

Experience of domestic abuse is a **strong theme across our most vulnerable cohorts** of young people, often present with other vulnerabilities such as mental health issues and substance use.

- Domestic abuse is present in the home for **61% of children at risk/experiencing exploitation** and referred to MACE.⁹
- **1 in 5 young people engaged with the Youth Justice Service** have witnessed/experienced domestic abuse
- **19% of young people in drug and alcohol treatment** are affected by domestic abuse, above the national profile of 15%.

⁸ Estimating the prevalence of the 'toxic trio', Children's Commissioner's Office (Chowdry, 2018)

⁹ The Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) Panel provides the operational response to all forms of exploitation, up to the age 25.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse in their **own intimate partner relationships**.

- Prevalence estimates¹⁰ suggest that **young adults (16-25) experience the highest rates of domestic abuse** with 10% of people aged 20-24 years and 8% aged 16-19 years disclosing that they had experienced abuse in the last 12 months.
- Although numbers have grown, **young people continue to be under-represented** in all DASV services, particularly amongst those seeking housing support. The Young Person's IDVA works with 40-50 cases per year.

They may also **demonstrate harmful behaviours themselves**, towards partners or family members.

Reports of sexual offences increased sharply from March 2021, with high profile national incidents, media coverage and campaigns cited as possible factors, as well as a potential rise in the number of victims. There has been a **further rise** in rape and other sexual offences over the last year.

Sexual offences involving a young person under the age of 18 account for just over half of all recorded sexual offences (56% in October 2022, when the trend was relatively stable).

Schools and services working with young people report concerns about a **rise in misogynistic language and behaviours** and the impact on young people's relationships.

These themes are explored in detail in the [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment](#).

Young people

Violence and knife crime

Coming out of COVID, we know that young people's **wellbeing and social functioning** have been affected – and for some this is impacting on their behaviour. This includes incidents of **peer-on-peer violence** and a rise in **behaving anti-socially**.

Post COVID, we are also seeing **less tolerance for young people**, particularly gathering in groups to socialise, which we need to balance against the actual risks.

Community organisations working with young people are concerned about a perceived **increased in knife carrying**, but anecdotal reports continue to outweigh the quantifiable evidence.

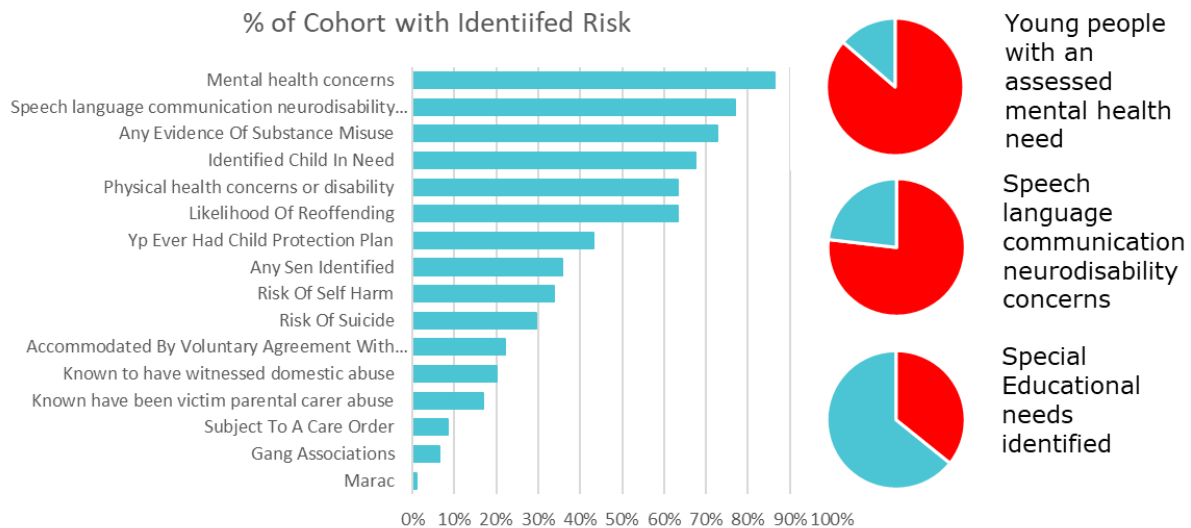
Risks may be more hidden from statutory services, particularly amongst children and young adults who are **not in school**. **Electively Home Educated children** are flagged as a particular concern.

A relatively low number of **serious violence and knife crimes** are coming to the attention of the **Youth Justice Service** in Cornwall and trends have been stable over the last 12 months. Whilst the numbers are small, it is recognised that the **impact on victims and communities is significant**.

Analysis of the profile of young people engaged with the Youth Justice Service shows that this cohort has become steadily **smaller in number but with more complex needs** over time. Over three-quarters of young people have mental health concerns.

¹⁰ Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2022

Information drawn from the **Youth Justice Service** case management system based on the **95 young people** receiving an ASSET assessment in the 2 year period ending November 2023. These factors are assessed in relation to the young person’s risk of reoffending.



- **Mental health and substance use** were often flagged as issues that could put the young person at risk of reoffending.
- **Speech, language and communication** needs and/or **neurodiversity** were identified in just over three-quarters of the young people being worked with.
- **Risk of self-harm** was identified in a third of young people whereas risk of suicide was assessed in 29% of cases.

Feeling safe

A recent survey of school age children in Cornwall found that **the majority of children feel safe** at school, out and about in their community in day-time and on-line.

There were, however, some **distinct differences by age**. Feelings of safety at school particularly were **lower for secondary-age children**

(12 to 15 year olds) and there was a **marked difference between boys and girls**, with girls feeling less safe. These figures ‘bounced back’ for boys and girls post-16.

From age 12 onwards, the greatest difference between girls and boys was in how safe they felt when **out after dark**.

When asked what would make their area a **better place** to live in, young people of all ages **unanimously** wanted more **things for young people to do and places to go**.

Around **one in four children** said that a safer area or **less crime** would make their local area better, although this dropped to only around one in six for 12-15 year olds.

Primary-age children were more likely to think that **less shouting, fighting and violence** would make

their area better. Older children were less likely to see this as an issue, but across all ages **girls showed higher levels of concern** about safety and violent behaviours in their local area.

Young carers and children living in areas in the **most deprived quintile** were more likely to say that less **shouting, fighting or violence** would make their area a better place to live in.

The majority of both primary age children and young people aged 12+ years said that they **'usually' or 'always' feel they part of their school community** – this was around 13 out of 20 for both groups. This was **substantially lower for secondary age pupils**, dropping to around 9 out of 20. **Girls are less likely than boys** to express a feeling of belonging in all age groups.

Drug use

There are indicators both locally and nationally of **increased drug use and risk taking behaviours amongst young people** (under 16), with some groups particularly vulnerable post-COVID.

Compared with the national profile, more young people locally **start using drugs before the age of 15** and use **multiple substances**.

We are seeing an increase in **complex mental health issues and other vulnerabilities**¹¹ in young people seeking help from treatment services, particularly when there are **other people using drugs at home** and when they have been **excluded from school**.

¹¹ Young people substance misuse commissioning support pack 2023-24: Key

For the first time for young people in treatment in Cornwall, **involvement in anti-social behaviour was above the national profile** (42% compared with 20%).

Young people are **developmentally younger**, due largely to the pandemic, and this makes **transition into adult services particularly challenging**; services need to be flexible to stop children from falling through the gaps.

Organised crime, exploitation and drug-related violence

Organised Crime Group activity continues to be a threat, driving strong police focus on **drug trafficking and weapons. High-potency synthetic drugs**, reportedly often several times stronger than the user believes them to be, are a **significant and growing threat**.

Analysis for the Force Drug Market Profile concluded that it was realistic that **drug-related violence is increasing** in the Force area. That being said, it is highly likely that **drugs were linked to only a minority of homicides** (14%). Nationally 52% of homicides are drug-related.

Contextual knowledge about serious violent offences is currently limited. We are unable to explore, for example, the links to organised crime gangs and drug-related exploitation or develop a better understanding of transition points from involvement in lesser to more serious offences.

In 2022/23, **952 children** were identified as at risk of or

data (OHID), young people (under 18) in treatment with wider vulnerabilities.

experiencing **child exploitation**, of which just under 1 in 3 were discussed at the Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) Panel.

83% have 4 or more vulnerability factors – poor self-image, drugs and domestic abuse are the most common. 1 in 3 have **parents that use drugs** and/or alcohol.

Information from the **Local Disruption and Support Meetings**¹² highlight that most children and young people have been **excluded from school** and **insufficient Alternative Provision places** means that many of them are not being supported in an APA. Young people not in any education are **more vulnerable** and at **increased risk of exploitation**.

For more information, see the 2022/23 [Drugs Needs Assessment](#).

Public space and night time economy violence

Public space and Night Time Economy violence have re-established in our town centres. The **Night Time Economy has not been fully restored** post-COVID, but we are seeing NTE-type issues happening in **other places and at other times** (day time and early

evening, festivals and events, parks, other public spaces).

Witnessing anti-social behaviour and violence in the day time in particular, has a **greater impact on the community** and people's feeling of safety.

One quarter of respondents to Safer Cornwall's Have Your Say survey felt that **crime and anti-social behaviour had a significant impact** in their local area. Another 37% felt that it had a moderate impact.

The majority of people said that they felt safe in their local area during the day but **only 43% felt safe after dark**.

Seeing **drinking and drug use on the street** and feeling **intimidated by groups of people** were commonly cited as reasons for feeling unsafe.

Just over a **third of respondents** (39%) had seen someone under the influence of alcohol being violent towards another person.

There have been a number of **serious events** like the fatal stabbings in Bodmin and shooting in Redruth and these have a '**signal effect**' on communities, driving up fear of crime.

¹² Local Disruption and Support Meetings (LDSMs) are a contextual safeguarding

response to any escalation in exploitation risk in a specific geographic area

Cornwall: risk factors in our local landscape

A place of contrasts

Cornwall is the **second largest local authority area** in the South West, covering an area of 3,559 km² and home to **570,300 people**. It is an area of many contrasts, where **affluence** sits alongside some of the **most deprived areas** in England.

The **population profile is older than the England average** with a proportionately fewer people aged 0-15 (16% vs 19%) and more people aged 65+ (25% vs 18%).¹³

Whilst **94% of Cornwall's population are White British** our communities are home to people from a broad range of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but in very small numbers.

Over **40% of residents** live in small settlements of less than 3,000 people. Rural **isolation** is a challenge in accessing social networks and essential services. This can result in **harms being more hidden**, such as domestic abuse and problem drug use.

Around **30%** of people **live in the main settlements** of Camborne, Pool, Illogan and Redruth, Falmouth, St Austell, Truro and Newquay. Whilst Cornwall's **larger towns** are small in a national context, they are **no less urban** in nature.

Cornwall's population is projected to grow overall, but some **coastal and rural communities** will see their population decline and/or age, which will add to the challenge to pressures on existing services in these areas.

¹³ Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

¹⁴ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

Some areas face multiple challenges

Although national measures do not highlight Cornwall as a deprived area overall, there are **pockets of significant deprivation** across the county.

70,200 people¹⁴ live in areas experiencing **multiple deprivation** factors. These areas face a combination of challenges in relation to **living standards, crime** and **health inequalities**.

21% of children in Cornwall live in **low income families**, compared with 19% in the UK.¹⁵ This equates to 25,400 children.

The UK is experiencing a prolonged **cost-of-living crisis**, with households having to cope with high costs of energy, food and housing and increasing interest rates.

Low-income households are being most **acutely affected**, including many families in work. **Wages** in Cornwall are **below the national average** and the job market is reliant on **vulnerable sectors** (such as retail and hospitality).

More people are now in **temporary housing** having to live in poor conditions or **homeless**, and this is coupled with a housing shortage and unaffordable rents.

Housing is a critical factor in providing a stable and secure base from which to engage and support people who need help.

¹⁵ Children in low-income families, Department for Work and Pensions (2021)

A safe place to live

Overall, Cornwall is a **low crime area** compared with similar areas nationally; this largely reflects very **low incidence of thefts** (except from shops) and property crimes.

Rates of **violence**, particularly domestic abuse and sexual violence, are more **in line with similar areas** nationally. During the **pandemic** public space violence reduced due to social restrictions. In Cornwall, however, violence rates appeared to be **disproportionately high** at this time due to domestic abuse, which continued unabated, accounting for a **higher proportion** of crime locally.

During hard times when people are struggling, **communities become more vulnerable** to crime and exploitation. We have seen **shoplifting escalate sharply** over the last year, which is commonly linked to cost of living pressures.

Although police data indicates that **anti-social behaviour** has reduced, this comes at a time when **public confidence in the police** is low, both locally and nationally.

Anti-social behaviour continues to be the **primary concern of local people**, outweighing concerns about crime and other community safety issues. Our larger towns experience **persistent anti-social behaviour**, with a complex mix of issues and **vulnerable people** needing help.

An increase in **rough sleepers** also plays a part in what people see as **signs of visible social disorder** in the local area. These factors can drive up feelings of unrest and **community tensions**.

More **hate crime** is being reported, particularly racist behaviours. This is a significant issue for the safe placement of **refugees and asylum seekers** as part of the national resettlement programme.

Drug and alcohol dependency affects individuals, families and the wider community

Drugs and alcohol are used to cope with increased psychological distress, bringing with it the associated **harms to health and family life** and costs to society.

Estimated rates of **problem drug use**¹⁶ in Cornwall are **below national** levels, whereas **alcohol dependency** is estimated to be **higher**.

Compared with the national profile, we have a **higher than average proportion of parents** in our local treatment system, both living with their children (23% vs 15%) and not (32% vs 18%).¹⁷

Young people known to the treatment system in Cornwall are more likely to start **using drugs at an early age** and to be affected by **parental drug and alcohol use**.

Communities have changed post-pandemic

The pandemic pushed our **work, education and social interactions on-line** and, whilst this provides opportunities for **greener, more flexible lifestyles** it also brings with it risks of increased **isolation** and **exposure to exploitation, harassment and abuse** on-line.

¹⁶ Treatment and recovery unmet need toolkit, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2023)

¹⁷ National Drug Treatment Monitoring System 2020/21

Cornwall has a **strong social infrastructure** with an active network of local councils, a **large and vibrant voluntary sector** and high levels of volunteering.

The **benefits of communities coming together** were evident during the pandemic, and talking to people now, we hear a strong desire for community action and **wanting to do more together**.

Local action to **improve our public spaces** or provide **more positive activities** for young people, for example, contribute to protective factors and play a major role in **boosting the safety and resourcefulness** of our people and our communities.

Mapping multiple vulnerabilities

The Community Safety Intelligence Team designed the Vulnerability Index as a **small area risk model**, to assess the **cumulative impact** of a range of vulnerabilities at town and small area (Lower Super Output Area¹⁸) level.

The model uses an index for each measure, created from rates of incidence per 1000 resident population relative to the Cornwall average.

The model uses 2 measures from **police recorded crime**:

- Domestic abuse incidents
- Violence with injury crimes

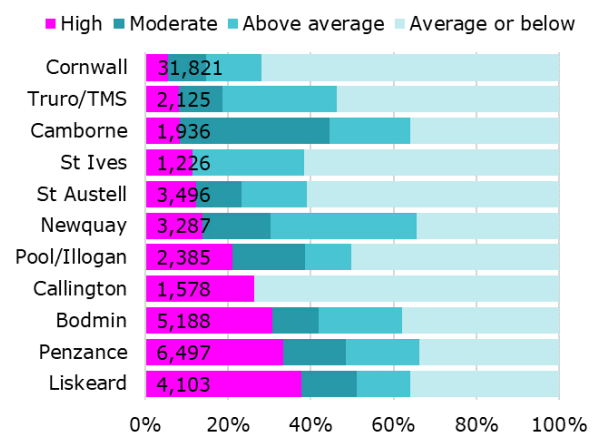
3 measures from **community services**:

- People receiving support in domestic abuse services

- People engaged with drug treatment services
- People engaged with alcohol treatment services

Alongside the national measure of **multiple deprivation**.

6% of people in Cornwall live in areas with a high level of combined vulnerabilities. These areas are spread over ten towns, with the largest clusters in **Penzance, Bodmin and Liskeard** where more than 30% of people live in areas with a high prevalence of vulnerabilities.



The small areas with the **highest combined vulnerabilities** across the selected indicators are shown in the next table, with the index for each measure showing which **risk factors are most prevalent** (a higher number means higher prevalence).

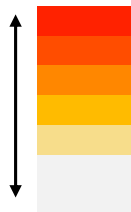
The Vulnerabilities Index is a developing tool and there is **scope to add other measures** into the model. A weighting methodology is being explored. It has been used primarily as a **descriptive measure for community profiles** so far, but we have also tested its application in **targeting schools** for healthy relationships education.

¹⁸ Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics

in England and Wales. The average population for these areas is approximately 1500 people.

Rates compared with Cornwall average

Most vulnerable (much higher than Cornwall average)



Least vulnerable (Cornwall average or below)

LSOA name	Town	Pop. all Ages	Police data		Community services data			IMD 2019 decile*
			Violence w/ injury	Domestic Abuse	DASV	Drugs	Alcohol	
Newquay Town Centre	Newquay	1,678	610	257	136	364	151	1
Truro Health Park and River Street	Truro/TMS	1,110	265	202	194	306	381	n/a
Liskeard Town Centre East, Sungirt, Plymouth Road	Liskeard	1,319	187	240	194	429	289	2
Bodmin Town Centre and Berryfields	Bodmin	1,932	237	262	258	304	263	1
Penzance St Clare and Town	Penzance	2,084	186	191	168	445	325	1
Liskeard Town Centre West, Dean Street, Lanchard	Liskeard	1,310	99	229	216	432	226	2
Newquay Narrowcliff	Newquay	1,609	219	200	218	309	210	1
Victoria Gardens and Truro Cathedral	Truro/TMS	1,015	429	130	159	223	208	n/a
St Austell Alexandra Road and East Hill	St Austell	1,895	230	252	241	179	246	1
Bederkesa Court, Elizabeth Close	Bodmin	1,672	141	234	298	311	152	2
Penzance Wharfside and Town	Penzance	1,594	236	141	135	383	239	2
Kinsman Estate and Monument Way	Bodmin	1,584	163	360	195	286	107	1
St Austell Penwinnick and Town Centre	St Austell	1,601	154	101	235	396	211	1
Heamoor Village	Penzance	1,317	116	201	164	292	289	2
Liskeard St Cleer Road and Bodgara Way	Liskeard	1,474	104	184	237	184	344	1
Penzance Treneere	Penzance	1,502	157	184	251	361	85	1
Callington West	Callington	1,578	157	175	213	301	188	2
Pool West and Tregajorran	Pool/Illogan	2,385	138	210	186	275	213	2
Camborne North Parade and Rosewarne Gardens	Camborne	1,936	140	119	195	280	284	1
St Ives Town Centre and Island	St Ives	1,226	192	136	55	240	380	3

*where available. The Index of Multiple Deprivation was calculated on LSOA boundaries in 2019; these have since been updated for some areas.

Isles of Scilly

Overall, the **Scilly has a very low crime rate** compared with Cornwall. Whilst it is not identified as a priority area for violence prevention, there are some **specific features** to consider – such as the impact of the **huge influx of seasonal workers** and **safeguarding risks for young people**, on the islands and moving to the mainland for education.

The islands have a **population of just over 2,200**, although this increases substantially in the spring and summer months, when there is a much higher incidence of crime.

Like other areas, crime dropped substantially during the pandemic; over the last two years numbers have steadily **recovered to pre-pandemic levels**.

There were 85 recorded crimes in the last 12 months:

- Crime is broadly split into three main groups – **violence and sexual violence** make up the greatest proportion at 41%, thefts (burglary, vehicle crime and other theft) and **criminal damage** and public order account for 20% each. The remaining 19% relate to drug offences, weapons and other crime.
- **Domestic abuse accounts for 23% of all violence** reported on the islands in the last three years.

Scilly is a safe place and this is appreciated by visitors and residents of all ages. It is a very **close community** which has both **positive and negative** effects.

Consultation to support the Isles of Scilly strategic assessment revealed some **issues around mutual**

intergenerational respect and ensuring that there is a **place for everyone**.

Anti-social behaviour is the primary concern, rather than violence. Anti-social behaviour is very **visible and can cause disproportionate negative feelings**, often fuelled by social media – however, these incidents are **low volume and low harm**.

Some issues raised in relation to **safeguarding young people** on the islands, which should remain a priority with the approach **informed by the voices of young people** to ensure this is delivered effectively.

Alcohol is a recognised risk factor in community safety on the islands, particularly in the busy summer periods, but the harm is mostly low level and **there is little associated violence**.

Problem drinking in the population is a more hidden issue and ongoing focus is recommended to reduce alcohol-related harms – safe drinking messages, opportunities for early identification and help and pathways into specialist services.

Safe and confidential spaces are needed to enable people to seek help and support – particularly for **domestic abuse** which is worryingly under-reported.

Prevention of serious harm should be prioritised through education, professional and community awareness in relation to drugs, alcohol, exploitation, domestic abuse and sexual violence. An **improved/consistent PSHE offer** in schools is needed.

Our Response

What is in place?

Safer Cornwall has recently launched [five-year strategies](#) to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence and violence against women and girls, supported by a comprehensive evidence base. **Both strategies prioritise prevention** and early identification as part of a holistic system response.

A tri-partnership event was held in October to launch the strategies, focusing on tackling the **root causes of unhealthy relationships** and **driving culture change** to end violence against women and girls.

These strategies form part of a **'matrix approach' to tackle violence** in Cornwall, alongside the local Drugs Strategy and the Exploitation Strategy (under the umbrella of the Partnership Plan) and Youth Justice Plan.

The **Serious Violence Steering Group** is developing local responses to prevent violence, with a particular focus on **young people up to the age of 25** – with funding provided through the Serious Violence Prevention Programme and wider work to implement the new Serious Violence Duty.

Expertise around NTE violence is well-established, with limited but generally adequate resources in place across a range of agencies to provide a response, targeted according to risk and vulnerability.

Schools are a **critical component** in any prevention strategy, providing an important context in which to deliver **universal preventative interventions**, and acting as a **protective factor** to reduce risk.

The support offer to schools has improved in relation to violence, including a new Weapons and Violence Protocol, School Safeguarding Reviews specific to violence and the redesign of the Education Welfare Service.

The new **Exploitation Strategy** includes the outcome "Children are **safe in school** and feel like they belong."

Safer Cornwall's **Compassionate Cornwall** strategy is focused on developing a **collective commissioning approach** that will improve engagement and support for all people experiencing the **impacts of trauma**.

This work aims to identify **good practice**, initiate a **self-assessment** phase for all services and organisations and agree on the development of a **safe and able workforce**. There is a focus on **whole family approaches and primary prevention** to break the cycle of intergeneration trauma.

This is planned as an **all-age framework** to be taken through the system in 2024/25.

These thematic strategies are set against a backdrop of the [Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) which focuses on **working together to tackle health inequalities**, so that everyone can enjoy good health and wellbeing, and grow, live, work and age well.

Challenges and gaps

The strategic assessment included a **multi-agency review of the effectiveness** of our specific responses to violence in its various forms – this took place within our series of **thematic workshops** over the summer. Note that the broader context of primary prevention approaches, however, was outside the scope for this piece of work.

Cross-cutting issues

Capacity pressures across the system were identified as impeding the Partnership's ability to manage the high risk issues effectively and there has been **little change** in this regard over the last year.

Voices of **lived experiences and peoples' stories** are critical to our understanding of community safety, and we need to support **safe and meaningful sharing** of these.

The **short term nature of funding streams** coming from central government, alongside the shrinking of core budgets, has a **significant impact on service resilience**, particularly in the VCSE sector.

Services are **struggling to find a strong platform to challenge** the messages promoting violent and misogynistic behaviours being spread by some **online influencers**.

To work towards a more public health approach, there needs to be a **greater focus on vulnerabilities** and tackling **broader risk factors**.

A preventative approach should identify and **focus on potential areas of increased risk** – for example, places where we have **clusters of young people with multiple vulnerabilities** (such as in certain housing provision).

Ofsted's 2023 SEND inspection found that children and young people with SEND in early years provision, and those moving into adulthood, generally have positive experiences and successful outcomes. It is noted, however, that **services do not currently consistently meet the needs of school age children and young people** (aged 5 to 16 years) in a timely way.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence services

Pressure on capacity to respond to an **increasingly complex caseload** is resulting in **longer waits for therapy** within domestic abuse and sexual violence services.

It was also noted that recruitment of **skilled therapeutic children's workers** is difficult due to the stigma around sexual abuse.

Education and schools

More support and training are needed for staff in **education settings** to enable them to support young people more effectively around sexually abusive behaviours.

A **more consistent approach to identifying and responding to drug-related behaviours** in schools was also highlighted – including recognising drug use as a sign of exploitation and **delaying/stopping exclusion** whilst finding the right pathway.

Insufficient Alternative Provision places means that not all excluded young people are being educated in an APA, which puts them at **increased risk of criminality and exploitation**.

Ofsted's 2023 SEND inspection identified that **permanent**

exclusion rates for children and young people with SEND are high in Cornwall.

Some children and young people with SEND are **not in education that best meets their needs** and are not receiving the specialist help they need. There is a recognised regional and national **shortage of specialist education places**. This is further complicated in Cornwall due to the geographical size of the local area, its rurality and the high contrast between different localities.

Police

Reduced visibility of the police is a recurrent concern from community engagement and has a strong impact on feelings of safety.

There is **clear intention to move towards a more public health**

approach to tackle organised crime, but this is **hampered by lack of police capacity**, with the focus still mostly on pursue.

Health

Waiting times for children with SEND to access the **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** have improved. Some children and young people still wait too long for **speech and language therapy**, but those waiting are reviewed regularly.

There are still **very long waits for neuro-development assessments**, however, which results in some children and young people not being able to access support when they most need it.

System mapping report

In 2022, using funding from the Serious Violence Prevention Programme, Safer Cornwall commissioned a project to research the collective views of **services across the system** providing support to **young people aged 16-24** involved in violence or at risk.

Local analysis was undertaken based upon the **data, expertise and experiences** provided by statutory and voluntary sector partners.

A map of local services was accompanied by a summary of conversations that explored **strengths, weaknesses and existing gaps** in provision for young people and their families.

There was a relatively even split between responses received from statutory (42%) and voluntary sector (58%) service providers.

Every participating organisation offered **multiple forms of community-based services** including restorative justice (23%), housing (29%), health (55%),

education (48%) and wider support (52%) e.g., coaching, mentoring and counselling.

Just under half (48%) of services represented in the study operate on a Cornwall-wide basis.

The following groups were widely supported:

- **Parents** of young people
- **Perpetrators** of serious violence against young people
- **Victims** of serious violence perpetrated by young people

Important gaps were identified that mirror high risk factors for young people:

- Foster **care and adoption**
- Children who are **electively home educated**
- Children who are **refugees** and asylum seekers
- The **children and siblings** of young people
- **Wider community** members

Strengths:

- Collaborative and committed **practitioners**
- **Multi agency approach** to high-risk cases
- Good **structures and referral mechanisms** between support agencies
- **Innovative projects and passion** to improve lives and reduce risk

Weaknesses:

- **Geographic characteristics** – isolated communities and deprivation challenges
- Lack of **outreach capacity** to identify issues
- Services are predominantly **reactive not proactive**
- **Transition support** to adult services was an area for focus

Gap analysis

Cornwall experiences unique challenges presented by **low volumes of high-risk young people**, dispersed across **disparate and often deprived communities**.

This means that gaps were identified because specialist services are costly and resource intensive, and **funding doesn't stretch to providing the flexibility** that is needed.

This study recognises that Cornwall benefits from **very good statutory services**, providing support to high-risk young people. Rated good and outstanding, in national comparative measurements ([Ofsted](#) 2019).

Collective analysis highlighted that support for **young people that fall below the statutory thresholds** is where additional prevention activity should be focused.

Young people in crisis that do not meet thresholds for statutory support

"We are not taking early contact opportunities to divert and risk assess... we are waiting for something to go wrong. The trigger point is too late. We should be acting at the first signs of drifting into drugs, alcohol or anti-social behaviour."

Escalating community need

Community-based practitioners explain how current constraints limit their capacity to respond to young people in crisis. For example, high caseloads with **little scope to engage in outreach support**.

Plus, **short-term funding cycles** that do not allow projects, or relationships with young people, to be sustained over long periods of time.

County Lines exploitation

"Based on the technical definition, Cornwall is under the threshold. [Gang violence] policy refers to an urban context. We do have gang violence – it often visits the region but is embedded in local areas."

"Organised violence uses vulnerable, in-county young people but few individuals are formerly referred for gang-related support."

Technology-facilitated violence

Discussions highlighted, 'COVID kickback' and the experiences of at-risk young people during, *"Lockdown and increased time spent online or in unsafe troubled family environments."*

Leading to practitioner observations of increases in stalking and harassment and the, *"Slow rise of far-right extremism, language and Nazi logo graffiti."*

Best practice in violence prevention

As part of the strategic needs assessment, Crest Advisory developed their **best practice guide** for local partnerships in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, to support the priorities identified in the Peninsula strategy, *Breaking The Cycle*.

The best practice guide provides the findings of a **rapid review of the evidence base of interventions** that address domestic abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and youth violence. Then the evidence review was linked with a **map of local service provision** and **recommendations** made for improvement. A summary of the most effective interventions is provided here.

Domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Overall, according to the evidence review, **secondary/tertiary prevention strategies appear to have a more promising impact** on both attitudinal change towards VAWG and domestic abuse but also on long-term violence reduction.

Primary prevention

- **Bystander programmes are effective** in changing attitudes towards VAWG and domestic abuse. They are also promising regarding their effectiveness in reducing both types of violence.
- **Interventions promoting equal relationships are effective** in changing attitudes towards VAWG and domestic abuse and they also seemed promising regarding their

effectiveness in reducing both types of violence.

- Interventions **modifying unsafe physical school environments have shown significant potential** for reducing sexual harassment and peer sexual violence – such as US-based [‘Shifting Boundaries’](#) programmes (primarily implemented in the US context so far).

Secondary/Tertiary prevention

- **Police responses to domestic abuse have shown effects** in reducing offending and victimisation through various interventions. Yet, it has a more **reactive nature** and effectiveness is likely to be greater once integrated with proactive interventions offered by other partners.
- **Early intervention with couples at risk** of domestic abuse are particularly promising in both changing attitudes, as well as in reducing domestic abuse. There are some promising UK initiatives, which yet require further monitoring and evaluation.
- **Early intervention with young people known to be at risk** of intimate partner violence had promising effects, but only in relation to changing attitudes towards VAWG and domestic abuse.
- **Victim-focused interventions** (primarily clinically focused and co-located IDVAs within health settings) and **domestic violence perpetrator programmes** appear to be the **most effective interventions** for reducing VAWG and domestic abuse.

Recommendations

- Expand the coverage of **bystander interventions**.
- Incorporate **group-based interventions with couples** at risk of domestic abuse within existing services.
- Explore addressing peer sexual violence through the **principles of the US-based 'Shifting Boundaries' programme**.
- Ensure that victim-focused interventions include **health-based IDVAs** and **clinically-focused interventions**, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Youth violence

Parenting and early childhood programmes

All parenting and early childhood programmes reviewed are effective in addressing the risk factors for youth violence and achieving long-term reduction in youth violence.

- Parenting programmes are associated with a **reduction in child maltreatment and problematic child behaviour**.
- Multi-component early childhood programmes have been shown to **improve children's cognitive skills and pro-social behaviour**.
- Home visiting programmes have been linked to significant reductions of child maltreatment and improvement in **children's emotional and intellectual** development.

Schools-based programmes

Life and social skills development programmes (both universal and targeted) and **bullying prevention programmes** were

evidenced to be **most effective** in both short and long term outcomes.

- School-based programmes that seek to develop young people's social, emotional and life skills have a **positive impact on violence perpetration and victimisation**.
- Anti-bullying programmes **improve bystander responses** (or attitudes and beliefs about bullying), as well as **reducing bullying perpetration and victimisation**.

Community level programmes

- The strongest evidence base for violence reduction amongst community and society level programmes is associated with **hotspot policing and community/ problem-oriented policing**. The most effective policing strategies will encompass **information sharing** between the police and other partner agencies, **suppression of violent crime** in hotspots and **proactive engagement** with local communities.
- A wide variety of **planning, design and infrastructure interventions** (such as improved lighting) that change the physical and environmental conditions seem to be promising in terms of preventing youth violence.
- Drugs interventions, in particular **schools drugs programmes** that adopt a health-orientated approach, are effective in tackling drug use, which is a key risk factor for youth violence and particularly relevant for Cornwall's profile (early onset drug use). Their **impact on youth violence seems promising**, yet few programmes have measured this.

Secondary/Tertiary prevention: young people at risk of or involved in violence

- The most effective programmes for young people either at higher risk of or already involved in violence are **therapeutic interventions**. More specifically, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Multi-systemic Therapy have a positive effect in both short-term outcomes, such as **reducing conduct problems and aggressive or anti-social behaviours**, and long-term impact **on reducing reoffending**.
- There is **mixed and inconclusive** evidence of the effects of **mentoring** programmes and **gang violence prevention** programmes.

Recommendations

- Given the good local coverage of parenting and early childhood interventions, the focus should be on **improving monitoring and impact assessment** of these programmes on reducing youth offending and victimisation to help **build the evidence base of 'what works'** locally.
- Compared with parenting and early childhood programmes, there appears to be **limited coverage of life skills programmes**. The Crest guide recommends exploring [Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies](#) (PATHS), which is a universal **social and emotional development programme**, delivered by teachers to young people between 3-12 years of age. It has been identified as a **model programme**; robust evaluations indicate significant **impacts on aggression and violent behaviours**.
- Strong local government and school policy focus could lead a more systematic implementation of **bullying prevention programmes** in schools.
- Due to the mixed and inconclusive evidence base of their effectiveness, **monitoring and evaluation of the variety of mentoring programmes** active across Devon and Cornwall is recommended, to inform what works in the local context.
- Further **expansion of hotspot policing initiatives**, combining information sharing, suppression of violence and community engagement.
- Extension of **targeted school-based drugs education programmes**.

Further reading

Home Office

- [Serious Violence Strategy](#) (2018)
- [Serious Violence Duty: strategic needs assessment guidance](#) (2021)
- [Serious Violence Duty: statutory guidance for responsible authorities](#) (2022)

Cornwall

- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and Strategies [DASV Strategy - Safer Cornwall](#)
- [Drugs](#) and [Alcohol](#) Needs Assessments and the [Young People's Substance Use Needs Assessment](#)
- Safer Cornwall Strategic Assessment refresh and thematic papers (circulated to Safer Cornwall partners)
- Youth Justice Plan (circulated to Safer Cornwall partners)
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly [Exploitation Strategy](#) and supporting evidence (being updated)

Peninsula

- [Breaking the cycle](#) of violence in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
- Best practice in violence prevention: an accessible guide to support the Board's Strategic Priorities, Crest 2021 (circulated to Safer Cornwall partners)

National

- Youth Endowment Fund – What Works Report [YEF What Works Report FINAL.pdf \(youthendowmentfund.org.uk\)](#) and Toolkit [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#)
- [Children, violence and vulnerability – A Youth Endowment Fund report into young people's experiences of violence](#) (2022)
- Crest Advisory Insights –
 - Youth Vulnerability and Violence [Youth Vulnerability and Violence: Reviewing the lived experiences of vulnerable young people \(crestadvisory.com\)](#)
 - The impact of social media on violence [Under the influence: how harmful is social media to children and young people? \(crestadvisory.com\)](#)
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation – [Serious youth violence and its relationship with adverse childhood experiences](#) (Gray et al, 2021)
- [A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention – a resource for local system leaders in England](#) (2019)