

GREATER THAN VIOLENCE

A 10-year strategy for preventing and
reducing violence.



**VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
UNIT**

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR
GREATER MANCHESTER'S COMMUNITIES

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We want Greater Manchester to be a place where everyone can live a good life, growing up, getting on and growing old in a greener, fairer, more prosperous city-region. Our strategy for Greater Manchester sets out a route to deliver this vision for the benefit of our people, our places and our planet.

In Greater Manchester we have already seen reductions in knife crime - between the year ending June 2022 and the year ending June 2023, knife crime decreased by 12.5% across all ages, and 13.5% for victims under age 25. However, there is obviously more work to do.

Violence has a devastating impact on victims and their families, as well as local communities. Violence, and the fear of violence, can also impede some of our ambitions. That's why it is vital that we address the underlying causes of violence and work with our partners and communities to prevent it.

Greater Manchester now has a police force with strong leadership and a powerful neighbourhood policing model that brings together officers, partner agencies and communities to fight crime and solve local problems.

However, policing alone will not prevent violence. A whole system approach is needed to tackle the underlying causes and prevent violence from occurring.

We are committed to taking a community-led approach to deliver our vision for Greater Manchester. The Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Strategy is a 10-year commitment to working to reduce violence and improve the lives of young people and families across the city-region.

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester



Since taking on the role of Deputy Mayor in January 2023, I have been struck by the strength of partnership working across Greater Manchester, and the volume of work already taking place to tackle violence and its root causes.

Violence harms individuals, families and communities, and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the wider legal system will work to ensure that those who perpetrate it face consequences. But policing and the law can't tackle violence on their own. That's why the work of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has focused on preventing violence from occurring in the first place. That approach is essential if we are to make the kind of long-lasting changes needed.

Since the inception of the VRU in 2019, tens of thousands of young people and families have been supported through early intervention work, mentoring, and engagement in positive activity. Our Navigator service has supported over 800 young people involved in or at risk of serious violence. Many of these young people have now turned their lives around and are on a more positive path for the future.

We are firmly committed to a community-led approach to violence reduction and including the voices of people with lived experience in decision making. Our community-led programmes are now live in every borough of Greater Manchester, providing place-based support and opportunities to local communities.

However, there is much more to do. There are still far too many weapons on our streets, and too many incidents of people being killed or seriously injured through violent crime. We need to show young people in particular that there is an alternative route for them and offer hope and inspiration for a future where they can achieve their ambitions and live

safely in our city-region.

In all this work, we must ensure that no community is disproportionately impacted by violence or our response to it. We'll align this strategy to Greater Manchester's Gender-Based Violence Strategy, and to our efforts to reduce hate crime.

Greater Manchester should be a place free from violence. I call on partners, services, and communities to work with us to make Greater Manchester a safe and prosperous city-region for all.

Kate Green
Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire



The 10-year 'Greater than Violence' strategy marks a significant milestone in our commitment to creating safer communities.

This strategy builds upon the foundation laid by the VRU, harnessing its expertise and experience to drive positive change. Our mission is clear: to reduce violence in its many forms, from street crime to knife-enabled serious violence to homicide. We will do this by addressing root causes and providing holistic support to individuals and communities and through the determined pursuit of those intent on harming others.

Through multi-agency collaboration, we aim to tackle the underlying social determinants of violence, with a robust evidence base, engagement, and consultation. We will also continue to invest in early intervention programmes and neighbourhood policing to prevent violence before it escalates.

Together, with the dedication of our partners and the resilience of our communities, we are committed to making Greater Manchester a safer place for all, where violence is removed as a barrier to a better future.

Stephen Watson
Chief Constable, Greater Manchester



VISION

To work together with communities to tackle violence and improve lives.

The Greater than Violence strategy commits to working together with individuals and communities to understand their strengths, challenges and ideas to tackle violence. This strategy will work to improve lives by supporting all victims, families and communities affected by violence and by providing positive opportunities to those at risk of becoming victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of violence. The strategy is founded on two pillars: preventing violence from happening and responding swiftly and appropriately when it occurs.

Constructing this strategy around those two pillars recognises that to truly tackle violence effectively, it needs to be prevented from happening in the first place, and in instances where violence does occur, there needs to be a swift and effective policing, health, and criminal justice response to apprehend those responsible and protect victims and communities. Spanning these two pillars are five core principles for how the strategy will be delivered which are aligned to wider strategic priorities for Greater Manchester.

GREATER THAN VIOLENCE STRATEGY

PILLAR 1 PREVENTION

PILLAR 2 RESPONSE

PRINCIPLE 1
Community-led Approach

PRINCIPLE 2
Early and Timely Intervention

PRINCIPLE 3
Partnerships for Change

PRINCIPLE 4
Equality, Equity and Justice

PRINCIPLE 5
Trauma-Responsive City-Region

BY WORKING TOGETHER GREATER MANCHESTER WILL REDUCE:

- ↓ Hospital presentations and admissions for assaults, especially among victims aged under 25.
- ↓ Knife-enabled serious violence, especially against victims aged under 25.
- ↓ Non-domestic homicides, especially against victims aged under 25.
- ↓ Robberies.
- ↓ The severity of serious violence incidents.
- ↓ Fear of knife crime and violence across all our communities.

BY WORKING TOGETHER GREATER MANCHESTER WILL INCREASE:

- ↑ Feelings of safety across the city-region.
- ↑ Aspirations and hope for young people.
- ↑ Decision-making power of communities.

INTRODUCTION

WHY VIOLENCE MATTERS TO GREATER MANCHESTER

It is clear from extensive consultation and engagement with communities across Greater Manchester that tackling crime, particularly where it involves any form of violence, is a high priority for residents. Violence and the fear of violence is an inhibitor to realising Greater Manchester's ambition to be a place where everyone can live a good life, growing up, getting on and growing old in a greener, fairer more prosperous city-region. When violence occurs, it can have a devastating impact on victims, families, communities and wider society, and the effects of violence can be traumatic and long lasting. Our strategy clearly sets out the conditions required not just to respond to violence when it occurs in the city-region, but it also makes a set of commitments about how organisations will work together to address the root causes of violence and prevent it from happening in the first place.

Violence is a complex issue, it can take different forms and can happen in a variety of contexts, with some people being victims of multiple and prolonged forms of violence. Some of the most serious types of violence such as homicide, knife-crime, and gun related crime do happen in Greater Manchester but fortunately these types of crime remain relatively low in number and only accounted for one per cent of all recorded crime in Greater Manchester between June 2022 and June 2023. Unfortunately, other types of violence are much more common, and it is clear we need to do more to tackle them. For example, domestic abuse accounted for 18 per cent of all recorded crime in the same period. Violence or the threat of violence is also a by-product of other crime types such as robbery and burglary, which accounted for 1.4 per cent and 5.3 per cent of all crime in

Greater Manchester in the year ending June 2023. In some cases, violence is so serious that people require emergency medical care and so data from health partners, alongside police data, is crucial to inform a comprehensive understanding of the issue. From June 2022 to June 2023 there were a total of 1,022 hospital admissions and 8,263 Emergency Department attendances in Greater Manchester due to violent assaults with an injury. There are also clear trends across both ambulance call outs and hospital Emergency Department attendances, with Friday and Saturday evenings being the peak times. This mirrors the night-time economy data and shows how drugs, including alcohol, can bring out violent tendencies in individuals (Johnson and Belfer, 1995).

Often violent crimes are perpetrated by repeat offenders. For example, in Greater Manchester over half of all serious violent crimes are perpetrated by fewer than a quarter of all offenders. Male and female offenders and ex-offenders are an often over-looked group who disproportionately experience poor physical and mental health, commonly engage in high risk behaviours and whose needs are often multiple and complex. Taking a trauma-responsive approach to police and criminal justice pathways requires an acknowledgment that most perpetrators of violence are also victims. It is vital that all key partners work together to provide targeted support for people who are caught in a repeat cycle of victimhood, violence and offending and take collective action through co-ordinated preventative, health and well-being and criminal justice pathways to stop this repetitive cycle.



The association between early exposure to violence and premature death in adulthood has been long recognised. More recent evidence documents the biology of violence, demonstrating that traumatic stress experienced in response to violence may impair brain architecture, immune status, metabolic systems, and inflammatory responses. Early experiences of violence may present lasting damage at the basic level of nervous and immune systems and can even influence genetic alterations of DNA (Hoeffler and Fearon 2014).

In addition to death, physical injury and disability, violence can lead to stress that impairs the development of the nervous system and immune system; thereby leading to ill-health in later years. People who are exposed to violence are at increased risk of a wide range of immediate and lifelong behavioural, physical, and mental health problems, including being a victim and/or perpetrator of further violence. Violence can also undermine the social and economic development of whole communities and societies (WHO, 2022).



PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN GREATER MANCHESTER

The evidence in relation to preventing and tackling violence is clear: violence is not inevitable and can be stopped. In 2006, Glasgow pioneered a public health approach to understanding violence, tackling its root causes to prevent it occurring again. A public health approach seeks to improve the health and safety of all communities by addressing the underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Many studies have provided evidence to determine what these risk factors are, such as living in a household with domestic abuse, adverse childhood experiences and inadequate housing. This groundbreaking work has had a demonstrable impact in reducing violence in Glasgow and Scotland as a whole, and has contributed greatly to improving the lives of its citizens.

The Greater than Violence Strategy embraces the principles of a public health approach and seeks to go even further by taking a community-led approach in which residents of Greater Manchester, including children and young people, have a voice in deciding how priorities are identified and how services are delivered. Only by treating residents as experts in their own lives and knowing what is best for their communities will there be the true change needed to deal with the root causes of violence.

Across Greater Manchester, communities and partners have already started to come together to find collaborative solutions to reduce violence and create healthier and more inclusive communities.

For organisations to form effective partnerships, they need to understand the full picture of violence across Greater Manchester as there are many inter-dependencies and similar root causes, but levels and types of violence across groups are not the same. For example, young people

are most at risk of experiencing violence, and in Greater Manchester, between 2020 and 2022, the most common age for both victims and suspects of knife crime, non-domestic violence with injury, robbery, and sexual offences was between 14-17 years old. A bold focus on prevention and early intervention is needed to provide young people with supportive environments to help them avoid violence and create opportunities for them to flourish.

It is important also to recognise the landscape of violence among adults and be clear that a different approach may be required to intervene and stop violence from occurring. For example, over a 12-month period it was estimated one in six people aged 60 years or older were subjected to some form of abuse (Yon et al., 2017) and knife-crime in older age groups is most likely to have a gendered dimension and be domestic related.

Furthermore, people living in areas where there is greater poverty and higher levels of deprivation are significantly more likely to be a victim of violence when compared with more affluent areas of the city-region, and it is clear from the research that inequality is a significant factor in predicting violence. Evidence shows that there is over-representation of black children as both a victim of or witness to violence (Youth Endowment Fund, 2022) and an over-representation of black and Asian minority ethnic groups in cohorts of people arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of violent crimes (Stott et al., 2021). Some groups are also likely to experience certain types of violence more than others. For example, one in four women in the UK will experience some form of sexual assault or domestic abuse during their lifetime. It's clear violence and its consequences disproportionately impact some groups and communities more than others. Equality, equity, and justice must be at the heart of Greater Manchester's

approach to ensure fairness in public services and to direct resources where they are needed most to improve the lives of those most affected by violence.

Preventing violence is broader than focusing on the violence alone. It is about ensuring good emotional wellbeing, resilient communities, engagement and cohesion, as well as good employment, good education and supportive and nurturing environments for people to flourish. This cannot be achieved by a single organisation and must be delivered by a wider coalition of partners across education, health, criminal justice, housing, local government, business and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector. Collaboration will ensure that the approach to violence prevention is sustainable and harnesses opportunities across the wider Greater Manchester system.



RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE IN GREATER MANCHESTER

When a violent crime is committed, it is imperative that there is a swift and robust response from policing, health, and the criminal justice system and that those experiencing violence are protected. The public rightly expect GMP to use its powers effectively and proportionately to deal with all forms of violence and take weapons off our streets, followed up by enforcement action against those who perpetrate violent offences.

Police officer numbers are now the highest they have been for many years. Since April 2023, GMP has recruited 2,044 new police officers, bringing total officer numbers to 8,067. These officers are making an impact through initiatives such as Operation Vulcan which aims to tackle endemic criminal issues in parts of Cheetham Hill and Strangeways, including violence, drug dealing, modern slavery and exploitation. The latest figures show that since Operation Vulcan was introduced there has been a 50 per cent reduction in crime in that area. Following the success of Operation Vulcan in Cheetham Hill, it was rolled out to Piccadilly Gardens in September 2023. A specialist taskforce, alongside neighbourhood officers and PCSOs, have been embedded into Piccadilly Gardens to identify the root causes of existing problems, including violence and the fear of violence, and work closely with local residents, businesses and partners to eliminate all forms of criminality in that part of the city centre, helping to create a safer community and supporting businesses to thrive.

Intelligence-led policing has also resulted in large numbers of knives and weapons being seized and offenders arrested. In the period January to March 2023, GMP's Operation Venture team, dedicated to responding to and reducing knife crime and violence, made 85 arrests and seized 35 weapons across a number of serious violence hot spots across the city-region.



This success will continue to grow through GMP's neighbourhood policing model, which was launched in March 2023. This will see an additional 264 police officers posted to neighbourhood teams across Greater Manchester in the next two years, creating a greater focus on police and partner agencies working together in communities to fight crime, identify threats and crime 'hotspots', and tackle local problems.

In 2022, Greater Manchester launched its first Gender-Based Violence Strategy which sets out a radical 10-year programme to enhance the safety of women and girls, while preventing gender-based violence from occurring in the first place and challenging the attitudes and inequalities that enable it. Central to this is the public engagement campaign #IsThisOK? which calls on men and boys to take a much more active role in challenging gendered abuse and misogyny to help tackle all forms of gender-based violence. GMP is also playing a crucial role in stopping gender-based violence, and in 2022-2023 increased arrests for domestic abuse cases by 61% and almost doubled the number of arrests for stalking and harassment, the majority of which were offences perpetrated by men against women.

Those who commit violence must be dealt with swiftly, and victims, families, and communities need to know that the criminal justice system has responded effectively and is there to protect them. A fair criminal justice system must have the needs of victims at the centre. Greater Manchester is committed to the Victims' Code to ensure victims receive the support and assistance they need, that they are treated with respect and dignity, and their voices are heard. Being a victim of crime can often be a traumatic experience which is why it is so important that staff across Greater Manchester's public services are trauma-informed, so they can confidently and effectively meet the needs of those who have experienced or been affected by violence.

A crucial part of the response to violence is managing perpetrators of violence and

holding them accountable for their actions. Greater Manchester has invested in the Restorative Justice Service which provides victims with the opportunity to tell the offender how their crime has affected them, and the offender is given the opportunity to repair this harm and make amends. This can have a powerful impact on both the victim and offender.

Youth Justice Services in Greater Manchester operate under 'Child First' principles and continue to develop innovative programmes to engage young people and challenge them to change their offending behaviour. For example, Salford Youth Justice Service has developed a particularly impressive programme of violence desistance which has delivered good outcomes with a particularly challenging cohort of young offenders. There are critical challenges within the secure estate which prevent adoption of child first approaches in practice and effective rehabilitation. A new approach to effective resettlement, in line with child first approaches, constructive resettlement and learning from the national secure schools model is an aspiration for Greater Manchester criminal justice services. The Probation Service also needs to be appropriately equipped to protect the public by managing and reducing harm and preventing individuals from reoffending through meaningful offender rehabilitation.

Prioritising offences involving violence at every stage of the criminal justice system will ensure that offenders are brought to justice and that there is a strong message to the public that this type of criminality will not be tolerated.



GREATER THAN VIOLENCE STRATEGY

In 2019, the Mayor of Greater Manchester recognised the need for a dedicated team of specialists working on the issue of violence and announced the formation of Greater Manchester's first VRU. The VRU is a team of subject leads and experts from the police, probation, public health, health, education, community and voluntary sector, youth justice and local authorities. This unique partnership draws upon a wide range of cross-sector expertise to put in place evidence-based solutions to prevent violence and target services to the most vulnerable and those with the highest need.

Since its launch, the VRU has worked with schools, colleges, hospitals, police, criminal justice partners, charities, and most crucially with communities. The VRU's objective has been to tackle violence and its root causes, with a primary focus on children, young people, and families. The VRU has provided a multi-million-pound investment and commissioned a range of interventions to help achieve these ambitions. Key programmes have included community sports, targeted mentoring, support for parents, work in primary and secondary schools, youth work in hospitals and in the community.

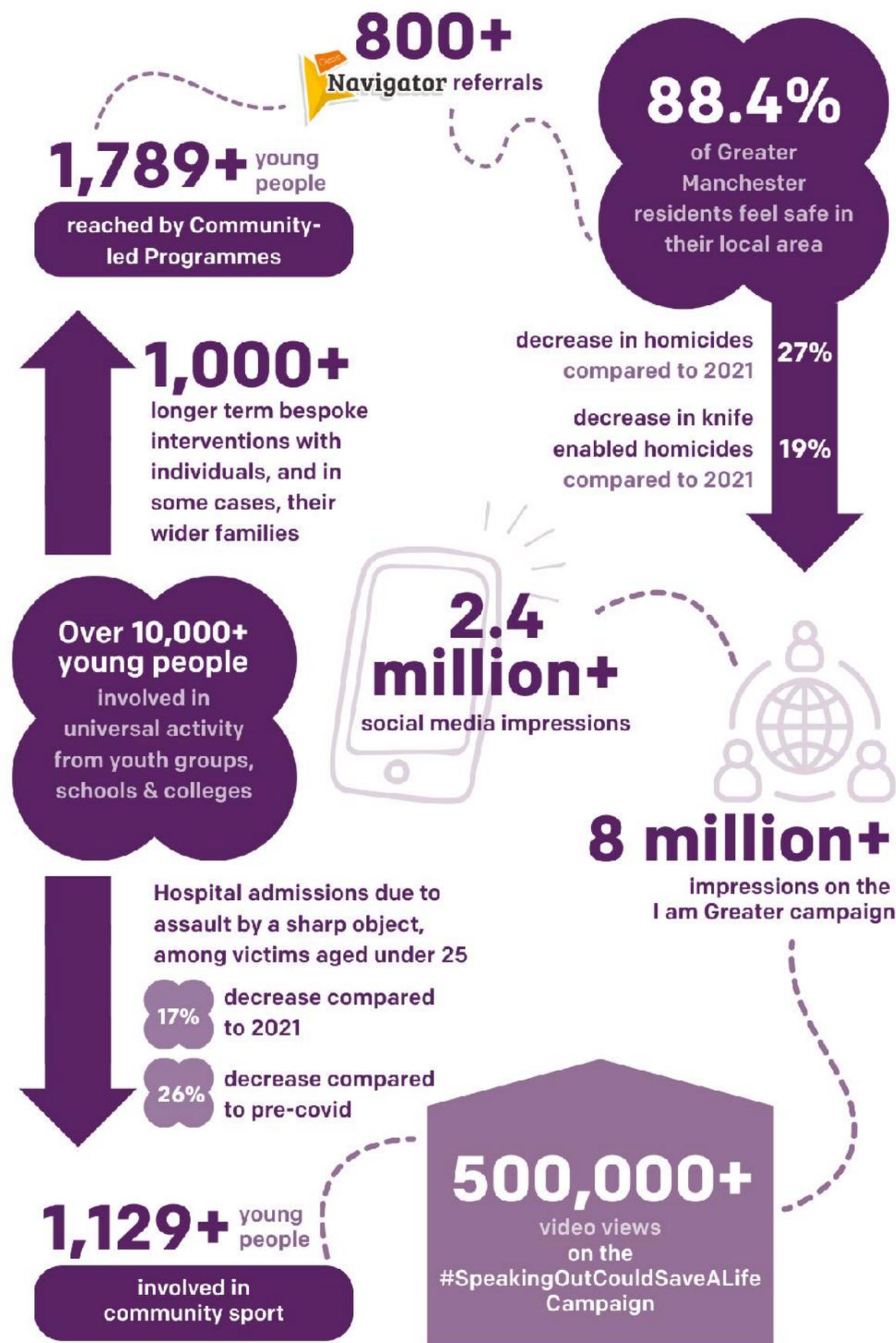
The work of the VRU and wider partnerships, such as with local authorities, GMP and other key agencies including the voluntary sector, is making an impact. Between June 2022 and June 2023, there was a 27% reduction in homicides, a 19% reduction in knife-enabled homicides and a 17% reduction in hospital admissions for under 25s due to an assault with a knife or sharp object. But despite these reductions, there is clearly still much more to do.

The Greater than Violence Strategy builds on this work and sets out an ambitious 10-year journey to prevent and reduce violence. The

foundations of this journey will be built on a public health approach which prioritises prevention and instils safety and security across the city-region. By working together with communities, this strategy will tackle violence and improve lives.



IMPACT OF THE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT AND PARTNERS, 2022-2023



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

An aerial photograph of Greater Manchester, showing a dense urban landscape with various buildings, including several prominent skyscrapers. A white text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text of the guiding principles.

Since 2019 the VRU has developed significant knowledge and understanding of violence across Greater Manchester, and what prevents and reduces violence. The VRU has conducted engagement across Greater Manchester to learn more about the change people want to see, including with young people, communities, partners, and the public.

These insights have led to the identification of five principles which set out how violence will be addressed across the city-region and the commitments that organisations, agencies, and partners will come together to deliver. These principles will be applied across the two pillars of the strategy: prevention and response. It is crucial that violence is prevented from happening in the first place and is responded to effectively by police and criminal justice partners in instances when it does occur.

PRINCIPLE 1 COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH

ENSURE COMMUNITIES ARE AT THE HEART OF PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING TO PREVENT AND REDUCE VIOLENCE.

A community-led approach is vital to the success of violence prevention because community members know the strengths, challenges and needs of their local area best. Communities need to be empowered to co-design solutions, direct investment, and deliver services in their local area. Putting communities at the heart of decision making ensures preventative initiatives are better aligned to local needs and positively impact the lives of people in the community.

The community should also inform local policing activity and act as a source of intelligence for GMP, helping to identify where policing activity is needed and what solutions will help address threats and hotspots of violence. GMP relaunched its neighbourhood policing model in March 2023, recognising the importance of police and partners working together with communities to fight crime and tackle local issues. This approach ensures members of the public know their dedicated officer teams who are visible, accessible and a trusted policing presence in their community.

The VRU has led the way nationally in reducing serious violence by investing in programmes led first and foremost by the community. The VRU has already invested over £2.6 million in voluntary and community-led violence reduction programmes in all 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

The benefits of a community-led approach are clear and have resulted in successes across Greater Manchester. For example, the close working between the Bolton community-led alliance, Bolton Council and Bolton College resulted in the reopening of New Bury Community Learning Centre in

Bolton to allow for community use in the evenings and at weekends including youth work, dance classes, parenting work and a boxing club.

The next step is to build upon the successful work of the community-led approach and grow these programmes to improve outcomes across education, work and skills, and digital inclusion. This will ensure that Greater Manchester public service delivery is built around the unique and diverse needs of people and places.

A community-led approach will continue to be invested in to provide people across Greater Manchester with the opportunity to influence and create change in their local areas. It is crucial that community-led initiatives are provided with stable, long-term funding to have the greatest impact. The Greater than Violence Strategy recognises this and will harness opportunities and seek to align funding streams across the Greater Manchester system, including in the trailblazer devolution deal, whilst also optimising the work of all public services to prevent and reduce violence.

CASE STUDY – OLDHAM COMMUNITY-LED ALLIANCE

In July 2022, four organisations in Oldham were awarded funding from Greater Manchester's VRU to create an alliance of organisations to support local young people – Fatima Women's Association, Greenhill Community Sports and Recreation Club, Chai Ladies and Ghazali Trust.

The Oldham programme provides mentoring, youth work and sports programmes for young people at risk of or vulnerable to serious youth violence and exploitation, programmes that empower young females, and projects that engage young people and their parents.

The programme works with young people aged between 10 and 25, and their families, to develop projects to address the underlying causes of violence and build aspirations and opportunities.

When the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester visited the community-led programme in Oldham, Tafreen Akhtar, social worker, said:

"I started attending CHAI Ladies group, a couple of years ago. It has made a huge impact on my life, my daughters and other mums and their young children who attend the group. It boosts your confidence, mental health, and wellbeing.

"The CHAI group has many projects, including the aunty-crime project, which has been amazing for myself and my children. We have learnt so much about crime awareness and crime prevention and we hope to make a difference to young people and our community.

"CHAI provides a safe environment for mothers who can express themselves, it is vital for the community, and I am proud to be a part of this group, the work we complete and the outcomes we achieve.





COMMITMENTS

- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with Community Safety Partnerships to identify the people most at risk of involvement in violence and will provide them with targeted services such as mentoring, coaching, counselling, or other forms of interventions.
- For young people engaged with the Greater Manchester VRU's community-led programmes who are at risk of involvement in violence, clear pathways into employment, skills and education will be created.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will make investing in safe spaces for young people a top priority for the next 10 years, as requested by the young people consulted in the development of this strategy.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will further strengthen its partnership with the voluntary sector, ensuring the voices of communities – including those with lived experience – inform and influence the approach to tackling violence in the city-region.
- GMP will continue to strengthen its work with communities to inform the work of neighbourhood policing teams in preventing and responding to all forms of violence by being a visible and trusted presence, particularly in areas of highest need.

PRINCIPLE 2 EARLY AND TIMELY INTERVENTION

INVEST IN AND PROMOTE SERVICES WHICH TAKE AN EARLY INTERVENTION APPROACH TO INDIVIDUALS AT RISK OF VIOLENCE AND ASSOCIATED HARMS. RESPOND SWIFTLY WHEN VIOLENCE OCCURS TO PREVENT REOCCURRENCE, KEEP PEOPLE SAFE, AND BRING PERPETRATORS TO JUSTICE.

The first 1,001 days of any child's life are vital to their development, as well as the families that support them. This is a crucial period for supporting prevention and early intervention and steering towards positive outcomes later in life. This is why work in early years transformation has a strong focus on addressing speech, language and communication delay, children's emotional wellbeing and their physical development. It also seeks to provide families with the support they need to raise their children and live their lives in a happy and healthy home environment.

Prevention and early intervention programmes are crucial to tackle violence and to create the supportive environment that children and young people need to thrive. Providing individuals with support in early life can reduce the likelihood of future involvement in violence and can divert individuals away from violence.

Programmes designed to equip young people with the skills to deal with life's risks and challenges have been delivered in schools and colleges across Greater Manchester, from how to stay safe online to how to stop a potentially life-threatening bleed. For example, in 2023 Greater Manchester and Merseyside joined forces to launch 'StreetDrs Save Lives,' a first aid e-learning app which provides innovative digital training for young people affected by violence across the UK.

Use of creative media, theatre productions and training to respond to interpersonal threats and harms have played a substantial role in helping to educate and protect young people. The VRU partnered with Unity Radio's

New Talent Academy to raise awareness of serious violence and knife crime through a series of conversations led by young people which aired live on Unity Radio's Next Gen Youth show.

The VRU has developed relationships with schools and has undertaken extensive education activity accompanied by over £1 million pounds in investment. GMP's School Engagement Officers and education leaders continue to prioritise prevention and constructively support young people to live safe and law-abiding lives. GMP commits to putting children and young people at the heart of its plans through its Child Centred Policing Strategy.

GMP is also ensuring that it prevents and responds to violence in a proactive and timely manner through initiatives such as Operation Venture. This team of dedicated officers is continually building the intelligence picture around violent crime hotspots across Greater Manchester and has submitted over 660 intelligence reports to help to map violence and ensure police officers are focused on targeted areas where they are needed most. This intelligence has enabled Operation Venture to seize and remove over 90 weapons from the streets of Greater Manchester since December 2022. Operation Venture has made over 130 partnership referrals into diversionary programmes to help re-direct offenders and prevent further violent crime from occurring.

These programmes are all in addition to the significant early intervention and prevention work taking place across Greater Manchester by organisations with direct responsibility for children and young people, such as local authorities and Local Safeguarding Boards. Under Greater Manchester's trailblazer devolution deal there is an opportunity to work differently with government to secure pathways for young people, improve the standing of technical education, help young people's experiences of the workplace, and ensure the curriculum is backed by local skills improvement plans and intelligence about local employment opportunities.

Early intervention and prevention programmes and services must continue to be prioritised across Greater Manchester to prevent violence and to support children, young people, and families to succeed in life and to promote a more harmonious, safe, and resilient city-region.

CASE STUDY: MENTORING

A 17-year-old male, with care experience and currently living in a residential home, was on bail for street robbery, not in education, employment or training, and at risk of child criminal exploitation. The young person had a fear of rejection and abandonment and little understanding of how vulnerable he was. There were several missing-from-home reports for him and a lack of engagement with any external services. His behaviour could be aggressive and challenging both in and out of the home and he regularly used cannabis.

The young person was referred to a mentoring programme delivered by Matthew Norford from 1Message, though the VRU's community-led programme. Matthew has lived experience of exploitation and of being part of a gang. An initial meeting took place between the young person and Matthew where they agreed to work together. After a few sessions, Matthew was able to support the young person at a Careers Connect appointment, attending an apprenticeship fair, and applying for Universal Credit.

At one session, the young person disclosed that a close friend had taken their own life and he was struggling with his emotions and how to deal with this. Matthew was able to inform the home and ensure he received appropriate support.

The young person started an apprenticeship in April after attending an interview with Matthew's support and receiving an offer. There have been no additional arrests, only one missing from home episode, a greater understanding of risks and keeping safe, engagement with external agencies such as Catch 22 and Careers Connect, and improved relationships with staff at the home.



GREATER MANCHESTER NAVIGATOR SERVICE

The Greater Manchester Navigator service is a youth-focused, violence reduction programme that has now supported over 800 young people to cope and recover from their experience of violence and assist with access to local support networks to prevent the potential of further violence.

Watch Jermaine's Story



COMMITMENTS

- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with Community Safety Partners and Integrated Care Partners to invest in early years, housing, education, employment and health to prevent violence across the whole life-course.
- GMP's dedicated locality prevention hubs will focus on problem solving, high demand crimes, vulnerable individuals and community threats to prevent and reduce violence.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with partners such as GM Moving and the voluntary sector to grow the number of high-quality sport provisions in Greater Manchester to engage thousands of young people in positive activities, including those most at risk of violence.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with education settings to find creative ways to engage children and young people – including those with special educational needs – in positive activities to improve attendance and exclusion rates and keep young people safe on their journeys to and from school and college.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with youth justice services to go even further in identifying young people at risk of involvement in violence at the earliest possible stage and diverting them away from harm using appropriate tools and interventions such as out of court disposals.
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) will develop fire service programmes that incorporate activities and messages to prevent and address violence, such as Fire Cadets and child and adult fire setter interventions.

PRINCIPLE 3 PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

ALL PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS GREATER MANCHESTER WILL COME TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE.

Tackling violence is a multi-faceted challenge that cannot be resolved by any single organisation. A partnership approach is essential to effectively prevent violence so that activities and investments can be maximised, building on one another to achieve bigger and better outcomes.

The Greater Manchester VRU makes it clear that tackling violence should involve both prevention and a strong criminal justice response when violence has taken place. To achieve this the VRU takes a multi-agency approach and involves a range of partners and agencies such as education, health, social services, transport, housing, GMFRS, youth and victim services. Taking a partnership approach helps ensure the safety of people who live, work and study across Greater Manchester, from being able to take safe and accessible transport to work, to having safe and affordable housing, to accessing safe and high-quality leisure spaces.

A partnership approach is also central to tackling illegal drug markets. People who seek to profit from selling illegal drugs are causing real harm to our communities, especially when violence and intimidation are used. GMP target Organised Crime Groups where drugs are the primary threat through Programme Challenger. In parallel, GMP work closely with partners to support victims and those at risk of drug-related modern slavery and county lines exploitation. This twin track approach will be further expanded in a forthcoming GMP Drug Strategy. In addition, partners, including local authorities, the NHS and VCSE, work together to secure availability of and access to treatment services to tackle addiction and reduce harm.

The VRU has played a key leadership role in

bringing partners and communities together to prevent and reduce violence. The VRU benefits from an established governance structure which incorporates leadership at the highest level, through to operational and tactical expertise throughout various delivery groups. This structure has enabled the VRU to lead the oversight and implementation of the Serious Violence Duty in 2023 which places a statutory duty on specified authorities such as police, fire, probation, and health to work together more closely to address the root causes of violence. The Serious Violence Duty has already started to bring organisations together to develop a data and intelligence sharing agreement to better understand the picture of violence across Greater Manchester.

This approach clearly works, as in 2022/2023, thanks to partnership working and direct VRU funding, more than 10,000 young people were involved in prevention activities such as mentoring and youth work, and over 1,129 young people took part in community sport. Multi-agency initiatives have also been successful in responding to violence, such as Operation Vulcan that aims to rid Cheetham Hill and Strangeways of criminal activity. Since Operation Vulcan was introduced, crime has reduced by almost 50 per cent in the area, including violence with injury. A combination of effective law enforcement by Vulcan officers and unwavering support from dedicated partners, including Manchester City Council, GMFRS, HMRC and immigration officials, has brought about real changes for that community.

This partnership approach will be built upon and strengthened over the next 10 years to develop innovative solutions, reduce violence, and create change across the city-region.

Greater Manchester Police's School Engagement Officer (SEO) programme was initially launched in 2019, dedicated to reducing violence across Greater Manchester. The programme is a clear example of effective partnership working and was developed after extensive consultation with hundreds of education professionals across Greater Manchester, including representatives from primary and secondary schools, further education, pupil referral units and other forms of alternative provision.

SEOs provide generic crime prevention and safety advice, make better use of diversion schemes to lead young people away from criminality and onto positive pathways to help prevent them from entering the criminal justice system, and develop activities that help build positive relationships between police and young people.

CASE STUDY: GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, SEOs

Two SEOs were deployed to a school in Salford and identified a small group of children in each year group that they believed were either involved in criminal activity, or on the periphery of group criminal activity.

The children met with the SEOs weekly to discuss topics, such as county lines, gangs, knife crime, and cyber bullying. The children were also given free time to chat with the officers around issues that concerned them, either personal or community based. One young male clearly distrusted the police and had previously verbally assaulted a PCSO. His father was a known member of an organised crime gang and was serving a long prison sentence.

When the sessions started, he refused to engage with the SEOs, but over time, as he saw his peers engaging with the officers, he began to speak in sessions. When he realised the officers were listening and responding to him in a non-judgemental way, he slowly began to engage more with them, explaining his concerns and lifestyle and chatting about how he saw his future. When the COVID-19 lockdown occurred, the SEOs agreed with the school that they would continue their sessions online - he didn't miss a single session.

He began to work harder in school, and with the help of the school staff attended extra lessons to prepare for his GCSEs. He told the SEO that he now understood that they were people behind the uniform, and he stopped the local PCSO in the street to apologise for his previous actions. He went on to pass most of his GCSEs.

In the following September, after he had left school, he waited at the school gates on the day he knew the SEO would be attending, to proudly tell them that he had secured an apprenticeship over the summer and would be starting a trade and was adamant that he would not be following in his father's footsteps.

COMMITMENTS

- Align the violence reduction programme with those aimed at tackling gender-based violence, youth justice transformation, serious and organised crime, drugs and alcohol, and mental health.
- Recognising that many young people and women in particular report sometimes feeling unsafe on public transport and on their journeys to and from stations and stops, the VRU will work with the Greater Manchester TravelSafe partnership to prevent and tackle violence across the public transport network.
- The Greater Manchester VRU reaffirms its commitment to GMP's team of SEOs and will continue to invest resources into helping them to develop trusted relationships with children, young people, parents, and their communities.
- GMP will work with the Greater Manchester VRU and other key partners to ensure its officers use problem-oriented policing approaches to prevent and tackle violence and ensure victims and those at risk of involvement in violence are referred to the Navigators programme or similar projects.
- In line with the Serious Violence Duty, the Greater Manchester VRU will work with key partners to build upon existing information sharing arrangements so that partners can more effectively prevent and respond to violence.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with academic partners to evaluate interventions to produce a strong evidence base of what works in preventing and tackling violence.
- Communications campaigns that include the voice of the community and aim to raise young people's aspirations will be developed and deployed consistently and creatively across the city-region.

PRINCIPLE 4 EQUALITY, EQUITY AND JUSTICE

REDUCE THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY IT.

The way different communities experience life in Greater Manchester is vastly different, for example five per cent of the population experiences 25 per cent of all crime. It is individuals and families that face the sharpest social, economic and health disadvantages that are likely to be at greater risk from violence. Those experiencing these multiple disadvantages often have a heightened risk due to issues relating to intersectionality which is how different types of discrimination are connected to and affect each other. Some individuals and groups are also more likely to experience certain types of violence.

For example, in Greater Manchester 36 per cent of all violent crime reported to the police entails domestic abuse, the majority of which involves offences perpetrated by men against women. Through our engagement work with communities and young people, we know that some communities are treated unequally by the Criminal Justice System. They have told us that the harm they experience can often be structural and institutional. The Lammy review clearly highlighted the unjust consequences on marginalised individuals and communities in 2017. For example, analysis undertaken as part of GMP's efforts to reduce ethnic disproportionality found that residents who identify as black are 2.1 times as likely to be stopped and searched than residents who identify as white (GMP 2021).

Inequality and disproportionality damage the lives of people, both here and now and in the long-term, with widely varying crime, health, education, skills and economic outcomes for residents. Greater Manchester needs to work collaboratively to empower marginalised groups and to improve the lives of those who are disproportionately affected by violence

and its consequences. Greater Manchester Combined Authority has established a range of equality panels and other networks to engage with diverse communities and to work together to ensure equity and fairness in public services.

The VRU's programme has equality, equity, and justice at its heart, including commissioning services and interventions to ensure they are targeted at individuals, families and communities of highest need. The VRU has also invested in interventions to support young women and girls at risk of violence, recognising they often have different needs and vulnerabilities. For example, the VRU invested £88,000 to deliver a mentoring service for girls and young women aged 14 to 21 who are at risk of serious group related youth violence, criminal and sexual exploitation, and modern slavery.

The Greater than Violence Strategy will drive ways of working that ensure policies and services are responsive to the needs of diverse communities and are informed by those with lived experience. Working together will ensure people at risk of violence in Greater Manchester are able to access the opportunities to progress, develop and flourish in their lives. Through the arrangements offered through Greater Manchester's latest devolution deal and learning from responding to homelessness, the Greater Manchester wide response will be developed to ensure the needs of those experiencing multiple disadvantages are better met, including deescalating the risk from violence and victimisation.

CASE STUDY: 84YOUTH

84YOUTH are a youth led organisation that address youth issues resulting from social inequalities. 84YOUTH receive funding through the VRU's community-led programmes to provide mentoring and positive role models for young people at risk or vulnerable to serious youth violence and create community conversations leading to positive change.

In October 2023, 84YOUTH created and led the 'How Can We Create Peace' conference designed to demonstrate the impact of preventative work using learnings for Moss Side and around the world.

The day consisted of speakers, panels, Q&A sessions, and workshops delivered by family members of young people who have been killed or are serving long prison sentences, police officers and professionals. Legislative Theatre was used to encourage attendees to imagine serious violence through the eyes of those it impacts most.

84YOUTH stress the importance of violence being viewed in a societal context and as a response to systemic inequalities, their works aims to reduce these inequalities and therefore prevent violence.





COMMITMENTS

- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with partners across the city-region to implement policies to dismantle structural and systemic inequalities across Greater Manchester's criminal justice system.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will prioritise tackling all forms of gender-based violence through a range of measures, including investing in dedicated projects and interventions aimed at supporting women and girls at risk of violence.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will invest in and support dedicated organisations to confidently and effectively meet the needs of members of the LGBTQ+ community who are identified as being at risk of violence.
- Raise aspirations of young people by working across public, private, business and voluntary sectors to create accessible opportunities for volunteering, internships, apprenticeships, and work, such as those provided by the Manchester Baccalaureate.
- Work with partners and communities, including faith groups, to raise awareness of hate crime and provide information on how to report it and seek support, and to provide a platform for communities to come together to challenge prejudice and celebrate diversity.
- Ensure the needs of neurodiverse young people and those with special educational needs are considered and appropriately acted upon in the VRU's policies and programmes.
- GMP will tackle violence through conducting stop and search and removing knives and weapons off the streets in an intelligence-led and proportionate manner.

PRINCIPLE 5 TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE CITY-REGION

ALL PARTNERS WILL WORK TOGETHER ACROSS GREATER MANCHESTER TO BECOME TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE SO WE CAN PREVENT CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY AND TRAUMA AND MITIGATE HARM ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE.

Research has consistently found that a significant proportion of children in the criminal justice system have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and other traumatic incidents whilst growing up (Gray et al, 2021). Unaddressed, these ACEs and trauma can significantly impact these children's future livelihood and way of living as well as potentially increase the risk of becoming a victim, witness, or perpetrator of violence.

It is important that a whole system approach is taken to prevent adversity, trauma, and re-traumatisation. This will be achieved through the promotion of trauma recovery because we want people across Greater Manchester to have positive and healthy lives.

To enable people to live well across this city-region, trauma-informed and responsive services are needed to ensure workers can spot the signs of trauma and can provide trauma-informed support. This means connecting people and families to appropriate services. Organisations' policy and practice must have a trauma-responsive lens that supports not only those in need but also the wellbeing of those working in this area.

Since 2019, the VRU has given over £800,000 to Trauma-Responsive Greater Manchester (TRGM), a multi-agency and whole-system programme that has a range of interventions and opportunities, such as investing in our voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to help shape our public services and engage with our communities.

TRGM has also supported training across the public sector, so that our staff are trauma aware and responsive. For example, we have enabled GMP SEOs to undertake enhanced training in trauma-informed practice. This helps to ensure that all decisions made are considered through a trauma-informed lens with the young person in the centre.

More organisations now recognise the importance of being ACE and trauma-responsive and invest in their own strategies and workforce to be part of this movement. GMP has ensured that ACEs and trauma is a cross-cutting theme for its child-centred policing strategy. By Greater Manchester becoming trauma-responsive, we can work together to break the cycle of trauma.

CASE STUDY: RESTORATIVE LIVES PROJECT, HINDLEY PRISON

The VRU commissioned Magistra to deliver their Restorative Lives project in Hindley Prison as part of the VRU's work to reduce reoffending among young people and build aspirations.

The programme involves delivery of Magistra's early engagement, restorative practice Life Skills interventions, including the Lifeboat programme which focuses on attitudes and community identity, Restoring Minds focusing on emotional management, and Connect focusing on the impact of imprisonment on family relationships.

Magistra's programmes use trauma-informed, early engagement and restorative approaches, which encourage prisoners to evaluate their own personal circumstances and improve their confidence to seek available support.

94 men, primarily under the age of 25, have successfully completed the programme, aimed at individuals who want to make changes to their behaviour and gain greater control over their lives.

On completion of the programme, 90% of participants went on to engage with their Offender Managers and applied for education and employment opportunities and other support services introduced to them. None of the men engaged in any further violent incidents at the prison.

A participant on the programme, said: "This course has made me start doing things differently for myself. I now take a step back when I speak to family as I understand their perspective and can be more sympathetic. I understand the bigger picture and don't just react."

COMMITMENTS

- By 2028, ensure that all Greater Manchester public sector bodies are trauma-informed and responsive, by making training widely available.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will support the embedding of trauma-responsive approaches across voluntary services and community organisations in Greater Manchester, particularly those that work with children and young people.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will work with academic partners to build an evidence base to demonstrate the most effective and impactful trauma-responsive interventions.
- The Greater Manchester VRU will offer education settings a series of well-sequenced and age appropriate trauma-informed curriculum sessions that create a supportive and inclusive approach to everyone's well-being and extending this as appropriate into early years settings.
- Ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are likely to be more vulnerable because of ACE and trauma, can access appropriate wrap around intervention and care.

GREATER MANCHESTER VRU'S STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In April 2023 the VRU produced a new Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) for violence, which provides an overview of our knowledge and understanding of violence across Greater Manchester, and what drives and what prevents violence.

A public health approach to violence prevention and reduction underpins this assessment. It considers what the data tells us, listens to the voices of our communities, assesses the published evidence, and gathers good practice from other areas and within Greater Manchester.

The SNA shows how we should take a life-course approach to understand the relationships between victims, witnesses, and perpetrators of violence, as well as what drives and what prevents violence at individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. To achieve this, partners across Greater Manchester were involved in the SNA's development, including: the VRU, GMP, Integrated Care Board, Greater Manchester Substance Misuse leads, GMFRS, Probation, Education, Social Care, and voices of the community through the VRU's Community Delivery Group.

The SNA considers the impact of violence starting in pregnancy and early years, including domestic abuse and adverse childhood experiences. It addresses violence towards and in the presence of children and young people and what they are exposed to as victims, the impact of school exclusions and the types of violence young people may be involved in. It considers violence within adulthood

including domestic abuse, sexual violence as well as violence within communities such as county lines and exploitation.

The SNA makes a number of system-wide recommendations to address the full causal pathway of violence which have been used to shape our strategy. The SNA recommendations are grouped into the following themes:



PARTNERSHIPS



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



EDUCATION



COMMUNITIES



DATA AND INFORMATION SHARING

[READ THE FULL SNA HERE](#)



ENGAGEMENT UNDERTAKEN

In addition to learning and insights gained by the VRU since 2019, a variety of engagement activity has been conducted in 2023. This was to ensure the diverse individuals and communities of Greater Manchester had an opportunity to have their say and influence the development of the Greater than Violence strategy.

GREATER THAN VIOLENCE STRATEGY PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The public consultation was launched on 14th July 2023 and remained open for four weeks until 11th August 2023. It aimed to gather views and opinions from as many people living in Greater Manchester as possible on their perceptions of safety, experience of violence and change they would like to see. Every resident had the opportunity to respond. A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken by the VRU to ensure a wide variety of people, organisations and partners were able to respond to the consultation. Greater Manchester Combined Authority invited its seven equality panels to participate, including Young People, Women and Girls and the LGBTQ+ community.

The survey received 259 responses. Key findings are outlined below.

People generally feel safe in their local area but are concerned about specific crimes such as anti-social behaviour and knife crime.



of respondents said they felt very concerned about anti-social behaviour in their local area.



of respondents said they felt fairly safe in their local area.

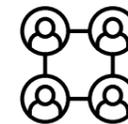


of respondents said they felt very concerned about knife crime in their local area.



63.3%
of respondents said they felt a service(s) were missing in their local area which could help to reduce violence.

Of the respondents that are aware of services in their local area, there is an emphasis that there is a lack of funding for staff to deliver these services. This is where shortfalls are being perceived in supporting children and young people.



80.3%
of respondents said yes to a community-led approach

Overwhelming majority of participants believe a community-led approach to violence reduction is needed and important.

There are calls for better provision of mental health support for children and young people. As well as to address the lack of community centres and youth clubs, to bridge the gap for children and young people who may fall into antisocial behaviour and crime.



73.7%
of respondents said they wanted to see mental health support services in their local area for young people.



68.7%
of respondents said they wanted youth centres.



64.1%
of respondents said they wanted community sport.



61.4%
of respondents said they wanted coaching and mentoring.

COMMUNITY-LED PROGRAMME VISITS

As part of the VRU's community-led approach to violence reduction, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester have visited local communities impacted by the VRU's work. At visits throughout 2023, community members have had the opportunity to share their experiences of violence and their ideas for change.

Key points from these discussions have been woven throughout the strategy and include:

- Long-term funding for community-led initiatives.
- Support that is trauma-informed.
- Work to address disproportionality.



10GM 'THE BIG CONVERSATION'

The VRU recognises the vital role the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector plays in preventing violence. This is why it was crucial that VCSE organisations had the opportunity to share their insights and views to develop the strategy.

The VRU and 10GM, a joint venture to support the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, co-chaired an event at Manchester Cathedral which brought together 90 people from VCSE organisations across the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

During the event, four workshops took place to discuss the strategy's emerging principles. A report was shared with VCSE organisations summarising key points from discussions. These findings were then used to inform the strategy's development and include:



CONTINUE A COMMUNITY-LED ALLIANCE APPROACH TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION WHERE ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER.



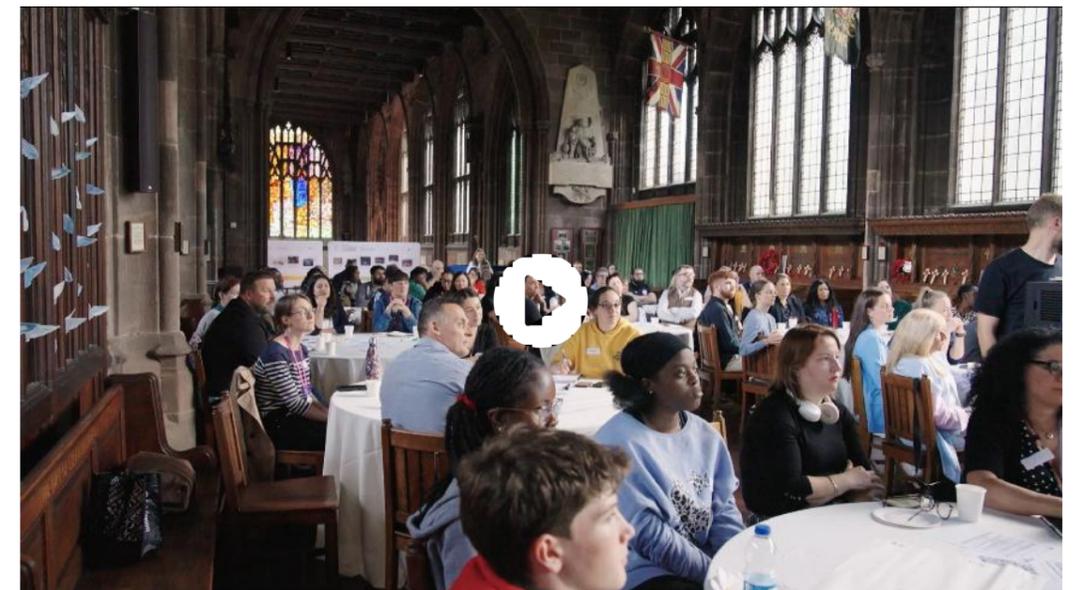
RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANT ROLE VCSE ORGANISATIONS PLAY IN EARLY INTERVENTION.



ENSURE ALL STAFF RECEIVE TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING AND THESE SKILLS ARE SUSTAINED.



EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO BE THE DECISION MAKERS.



ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The VRU prioritises voices of young people so have been working with Manchester Metropolitan University to deliver a series of participatory workshops with young people across Greater Manchester related to their experiences of violence.

Young people told us:

- **Fear, anger, unsafe places, social media and discrimination are the key causes of violence.**
- **Consistent, trusted, long-term relationships with adults in services would help to reduce violence.**
- **More safe spaces and places for sports and physical activity are needed.**
- **More free community activities are needed.**
- **Regeneration of disadvantaged areas would help as the area people live in affects their behaviour.**



#BEEWELL SURVEY

The #BeeWell survey was co-created with young people and delivered in partnership with secondary schools to find out what affects young people's wellbeing and what can be done to enhance it. Since 2021, #BeeWell has listened to the voices of more than 60,000 young people across Greater Manchester.

In 2022, 34,208 pupils in Years 9 and 10 across 67 neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester completed the #BeeWell survey.

Key findings are outlined below:

81% of young people reported that their area is very safe or safe to live in, 14% reported that their area is fairly or very unsafe, with the remainder feeling neither safe or unsafe.

There has been a decline in young people reporting that they have good places to spend free time.

In 2021, 75.5% of young people in Year 8 agreed or strongly agreed that they had good places to spend free time, compared to 67.6% of those young people when they were surveyed again in Year 9 in 2022.

Girls are reporting significantly lower levels of wellbeing than boys.

LGBTQ+ young people have significantly lower wellbeing than their cisgender heterosexual peers.



NEXT STEPS

The Greater than Violence Strategy is the start of a 10-year journey to tackle violence and improve lives. All partners and organisations need to work together with communities to achieve this vision and to make the city-region a safe place to live, study, work, grow up, and grow old in.

The VRU will continue to play a leadership role to bring partners and communities together. The VRU will develop a detailed delivery plan setting out specific actions, interventions and investment required to deliver the strategy's five principles.

The Deputy Mayor leads the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Governance Board which will have oversight and responsibility for monitoring the strategy's progress. The strategy will continue to evolve over the next 10 years and be responsive to changing needs and challenges across Greater Manchester. Partnerships will be crucial to this to ensure opportunities are harnessed across other Greater Manchester strategies and the approach to violence reduction is sustainable. By working together, the ambitions of the Greater than Violence Strategy will be turned into reality.

