

Safer Dudley – Preventing and Reducing Serious Violence in Dudley

Strategy for 2023-2026

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Prevention and Reduction Partnership

Review October 2025

safe & sound

Dudley's Community Safety Partnership

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Foreword

Our aim for Dudley is a safe and healthy borough: our residents will live in safe communities where people are protected from harm, and where crime and exploitation are prevented.

From children to the elderly, violence affects the lives of millions across all stages of life. Many survive serious violence but suffer long-lasting consequences of on-going physical, mental, or emotional health problems.

Violence is preventable, not inevitable!

Interventions, especially those in early childhood, not only prevent individuals developing a propensity for violence but also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes¹. Our commitment to Child Friendly Dudley will support us to tackle violence and its root causes, improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities and providing wider positive implications for the economy and society.

Since the publication of the 2020 Safer Dudley “Strategy to prevent violence in Dudley”, the country has lived through the Covid-19 pandemic and faces a cost-of-living crisis. The recent Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill places a statutory duty on specified authorities to work in partnership to tackle serious violence in our communities. We are committed to stopping serious violence before it begins by approaching the issue as a whole system “public health” problem. We aim to achieve sustainable reductions in serious violence, improve the health and quality of life of all people in Dudley and encourage inward investment to the area and boost the local economy.

It will require the involvement of a range of partners including health, public health, Integrated Care Boards, education, local authorities, police, criminal justice agencies, the voluntary sector and, importantly, the communities of Dudley². Only with this joint effort can we prevent the loss of life and physical and psychological damage that serious violence causes.

¹ HM Government (2018) Serious Violence Strategy

² Home Office (2021) Serious Violence Duty: draft guidance for responsible authorities.

What is serious violence?

The National Serious Violence Strategy³, defines serious violence as

“...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... and other forms of serious assault”.

This includes domestic abuse, sexual offences and violence against people or property, but excludes terrorism related offences.

The impact of serious violence

Violence has devastating impacts on people, communities, and society

Individual - there are health, social and economic impacts for individuals such as:

- Death or physical injuries which could be long-term or permanent.
- Mental illness such as anxiety and depression and behavioural problems.
- Fears for personal safety, loneliness, suicidal behaviour.
- Unwanted pregnancy and sexual health problems, long-term health effects.
- Financial problems, loss of home or job and relationship breakdown.

Communities and society - there are impacts and costs such as:

- Communities feel unsafe, so people are less likely to connect or integrate with others, and investment in the area may be deterred.
- Health, social care, legal and criminal justice system costs.
- Absenteeism from work, exclusion from employment and lost productivity.
- Mental health of key workers dealing with the effects of violence and family members and friends.
- Widening inequalities as the costs of violence are not evenly distributed - with those living in the poorest areas being more seriously affected.

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf

Serious violence in context

The National context ⁴

Serious violence continues to be a national priority due to its growing incidence and impact, with increases in homicide, knife, and gun crime across England since 2014⁵. Although these offences only account for around 1% of all recorded crime, the impact of serious violent crime on society is significant.

Patterns of crime over the last two years have been substantially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and government restrictions on social contact. However, since restrictions were lifted following the third national lockdown in early 2021, police recorded crime data show violence and sexual offences now exceed pre-pandemic level.

There is a well-established and complex link between drugs, alcohol, and crime. Alcohol is a factor in 40% of all violent crimes in England, as well as contributing to public disorder and anti-social behaviour in our communities. There is significant hidden harm associated with alcohol due to its contribution to domestic violence and child neglect⁶.

Violence is also often gang related and the association with drugs markets. Too frequently, children are the victims of gun crime, knife crime and exploitation, in many cases by organised criminal groups running 'county lines'.

In response, the government published its Serious Violence Strategy in 2018 followed by its Beating Crime Plan in July 2021. Both documents advocate an end-to-end approach, from prevention and early intervention to law enforcement, and a strengthened partnership response involving statutory and non-statutory partners, including the local community and businesses.

Local context

Violence in the West Midlands has mirrored the national trend and has risen consistently for several years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Between 2020 and 2021, violent offences increased by 38.9% in the West Midlands. This has led to an increased fear of crime, a rise in the mental and physical injuries suffered by members of our community and preventable deaths.⁷

Over the last ten years, serious violence in Dudley has steadily increased in line with this trend. However, local hospital admissions following assault have fallen, along with first time entrants to the youth justice system. Dudley remains one of the safest parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Dudley has not experienced the same incidence of serious violence as many other areas in the West Midlands⁸ and, as such, it is important that we take this opportunity to further improve this position through intervention and prevention.

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2022) Crime in England and Wales: year ending December 2021

⁵ Crime in England and Wales, Appendix tables - year ending March 2022

⁶ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2022) Local Alcohol Profiles for England – alcohol and Crime

⁷ West Midlands Violence Reduction partnership

⁸ Crime in Dudley compared with similar areas

Risk Factors

	Individual	Relationships	Community	Society
Protective factors	<p>Healthy problem solving and emotional regulation skills</p> <p>School readiness</p> <p>Good communication skills</p> <p>Healthy social relationships</p> <p>Personal resilience</p>	<p>Stable home environment</p> <p>Nurturing and responsive relationships</p> <p>Strong and consistent parenting</p> <p>Frequent shared activities with parents</p> <p>Financial security and opportunities</p> <p>Positive role models/peers</p>	<p>Sense of belonging and connectedness</p> <p>Community cohesion</p> <p>Opportunities for sports and hobbies</p> <p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>Safe physical environment that allows people to connect</p>	<p>Good housing, jobs, and education</p> <p>High standards of living</p> <p>Opportunities for valued social roles</p> <p>Gender equality</p>
Risk factors	<p>Genetic or biological</p> <p>Injury during birth</p> <p>Early malnutrition</p> <p>Behavioural and learning difficulties</p> <p>Alcohol or drug misuse</p> <p>Mental illness</p> <p>Traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Victimisation</p> <p>Risk taking</p> <p>Early puberty</p> <p>Isolation</p>	<p>Low family income</p> <p>Poor and inconsistent parenting</p> <p>Childhood abuse and neglect</p> <p>Household alcohol or drug misuse</p> <p>Household mental ill-health</p> <p>Family breakdown</p> <p>Domestic abuse</p> <p>Culture of male aggressive behaviour</p> <p>Household offending behaviour</p> <p>Large number of siblings</p>	<p>Unsafe or violent communities</p> <p>Low social integration and poor social mobility</p> <p>Lack of possibilities for recreation</p> <p>Insufficient infrastructure for the satisfaction of needs and interests of young people</p> <p>Fragmented communities – lack of cohesion</p>	<p>Deprived communities - poverty, poor Education</p> <p>High unemployment</p> <p>Homelessness and poor housing</p> <p>Culture of violence, norms and values which accept, normalise, or glorify violence and societal desensitisation</p> <p>Discrimination and inequality</p> <p>Difficulties in accessing services</p>

Our approach

Serious violence cannot be tackled in isolation; it must be addressed through prevention strategies that address the multiple complex factors. Preventing children and young people from becoming perpetrators or victims of violence is a key consideration to avoid escalating levels of harm to both children and wider society.

Our strategy is based upon a Public Health approach as recommended by the World Health Organisation. A Public Health Approach is often termed “going upstream” – examining the evidence to understand the wider influences, causes and consequences of serious violence, focusing on early intervention and prevention, and informed by evidence and evaluation of interventions.

As this approach seeks to address the root causes of serious violence, it is anticipated that the actions taken will address not only this issue but also other social and health challenges we face, as the underlying factors can frequently be similar.



Figure 1 The WHO 4-step process for implementing a Public Health approach

Forward View and Horizon Scanning

A 'political, social, technological, environmental, legal and organisational' (PESTEL) analysis was undertaken. The table below summarises this.

<p>Political</p>	<p>Pre Covid, the decade of austerity from 2010 reduced public spending across both civil service and local government at the same time as increasing demand for services. Public services worked to ensure the most cost-effective way of providing statutory services, creating innovation, and reducing bureaucracy. Organisations are finding new ways of working, using community assets, and becoming facilitators of, rather than providers of, services.</p> <p>However, financial pressures have reduced the timeliness and availability of services to protect the most vulnerable in society. Social inequalities have increased, and this has been highlighted and exacerbated by the Covid-pandemic. Partner organisations may respond to these pressures by focusing on areas of crisis and reducing preventative and early intervention.</p>
<p>Economic</p>	<p>The UK is estimated to have entered recession at the end of 2022, which is likely to last through 2023. Consumer inflation peaked at around 11%, largely driven by increased energy costs and knock-on effects on food. Following the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic impact of the September 2022 mini budget, the population impact has been termed the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Only 4.2% of economically active adults are currently unemployed. However, the impact on the population of Dudley includes increasing debt and requests for support from Food Banks and local charities including from working households.</p>
<p>Social</p>	<p>The 2021 census indicated an increase in population in Dudley of 3.4% between 2011 and 2021. This was lower than the overall increase for England.</p> <p>High numbers of people arriving in the UK and pandemic related delays to processing of claims have led to an increase in people within the UK asylum system. As the Home Office seeks to ensure the pressure of housing those seeking asylum is spread across local authorities, Dudley is likely to host those recent arrivals requiring initial accommodation. Local services are responsible for wrap around care including health and education.</p>
<p>Technological</p>	<p>Use of technology including mobile phones and internet is ubiquitous with high levels of digital inclusion. This has improved connectivity including innovations in shopping, application processes and replacing face to face interactions. However, this may increase risks of loneliness, particularly amongst those who are digitally excluded. New technology has also increased the opportunities for cybercrime.</p>
<p>Environmental</p>	<p>The UK Met Office predicts extremes of weather to become routine due to climate change. Heat waves have been linked to an increase in violent crime, potentially linked to alcohol consumption. Cold weather increases pressure on households in fuel poverty, whilst flooding can lead to displacement.</p>
<p>Legal</p>	<p>The 2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill placed a Statutory Duty on specified authorities to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce serious violence.</p>

Serious Violence Duty

The 2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill places a Statutory Duty of specified authorities to work in partnership to prevent and reduce serious violence in their local areas.

Specified Authorities

Fire and Rescue
Integrated Care Boards
Local Authorities
Police
Probation
Youth Justice Teams

Working with relevant authorities

Education
Prisons
Young Offenders Institutions

Dudley's Safe and Sound Partnership recognises the need to include other key partners, including the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership and third sector organisations.

As crime and criminals do not recognise boundaries, regular liaison and engagement with neighbouring Local Authorities and stakeholders is essential.

The Serious Violence Duty emphasises the highest risks to young people under the age of 25, with key delivery metrics regarding serious violence involving knives and nondomestic homicide.

Due to the nature of the approach, most of the actions planned will not have an immediate impact or be a short-term fix; while the effect of enforcement or disruption actions may be experienced in the short term, preventative actions are more likely to be seen in the medium or longer term

Our aim

We will work collaboratively to understand local issues, enhance, and complement local arrangements to prevent serious violence and minimise any associated harms, resulting in cohesive and inclusive communities living safe and fulfilling lives.

As such, we will:

- Ensure children and families remain at the heart of all decisions and interventions with implementation of Child Friendly Dudley.
- Develop a live, multi-agency strategy supported by strong partnership governance and delivery arrangements.
- Understand the risk and profile of serious violence within our communities.
- Base our interventions on data and intelligence, ensuring timely and appropriate sharing of data between agencies.
- Develop a public health approach that understands and addresses the root causes of serious violence, using a trauma informed approach.
- Root our response in evidence of effectiveness, from primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention to enforcement action.
- Target interventions to help address risk factors that can impact on an individual's vulnerability and susceptibility to becoming a victim or offender of serious violence.
- Involve communities in shaping and delivering responses to serious violence.
- Adopt a framework of continuous learning, including evaluation of interventions.
- Implement robust workforce and community development.
- Ensure synergies with related strategies and services, to avoid duplication and maximise efforts, for example, the Dudley Domestic Abuse Strategy.

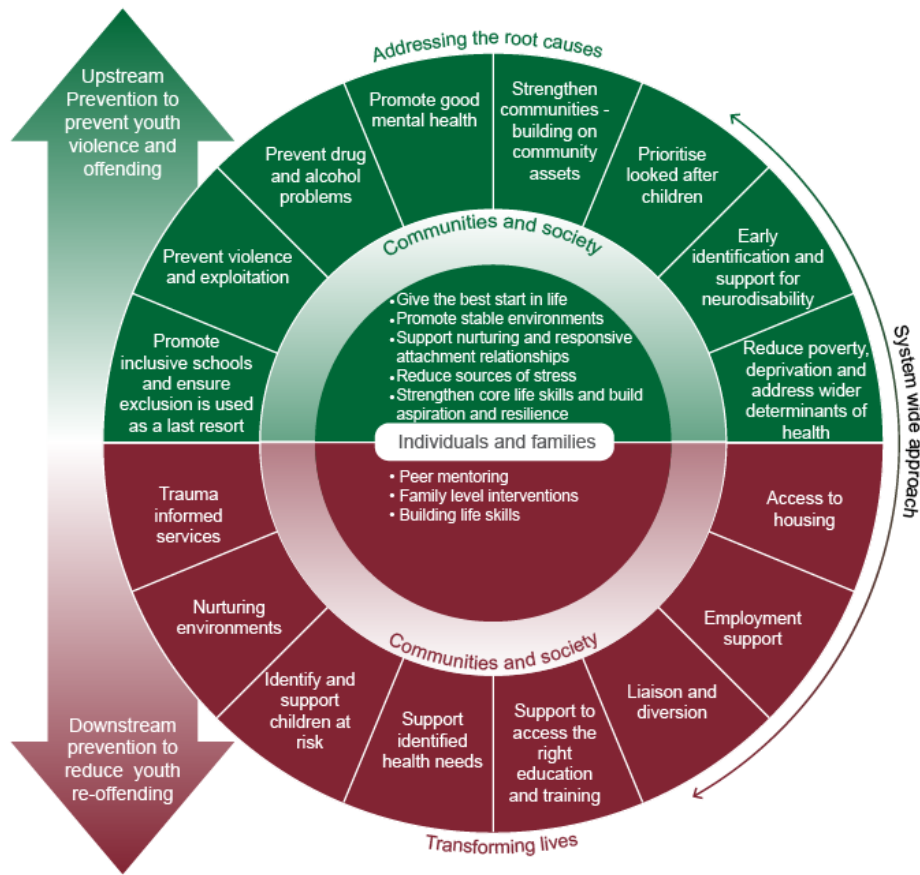


Figure 2 Collaborative approaches to preventing offending and re-offending by children (CAPRICORN), Public Health England, 2019

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Our priorities

To deliver our strategy we will focus on delivering five priority areas:

1	Wider determinants – identify and influence society to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors. This includes changing attitudes and behaviours towards all types of serious violence at a societal, community and personal level
2	Prevention – seeking to prevent the onset of serious violence or to change behaviour so that serious violence is prevented from happening
3	Diversion – halting the progression of serious violence once it is established. This is achieved by early identification followed by prompt, effective support
4	Intervention – rehabilitating people with established serious violent behaviour, or supporting victims
5	Enforcement and criminal justice – developing innovative criminal justice practices that reduce offending behaviour and recidivism

Underpinning all five priority areas is the need to minimise impact on victims and ensure appropriate support for those affected.

Wider determinants

By challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster serious violence, we can help prevent it from happening. If we are to reduce serious violence, it will take all community members and professionals to change mind-sets and believe that it is preventable.

With this in mind, we will:

- Champion the agenda.
- Inform and educate to help adapt society's views about the nature and causes of serious violence.
- Seek to influence public opinion and the role of a responsible media.
- Facilitate a more positive relationship between communities (members and leaders) and service providers.
- Integrate with other work areas tackling poverty, isolation, and discrimination.
- Advocate the role of communities in preventing serious violence.
- Design a more targeted media approach to more vulnerable or at-risks groups.
- Engage with traditional and non-traditional media to promote a positive image of the borough.
- Implement Child Friendly Dudley to promote positive community views of children and young people as valued and contributing members of society.

Prevention

Our aim is to prevent serious violence before it occurs. Gathering data to identify new trends is core to prevention and changing outcomes in the longer term. Critical to this is support for the development of programmes which help children and families to be the best they can be.

Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and improving resilience and protective factors for children could reduce acts of violence in adults by 60%.

With this in mind, we will:

- Recognise serious violence as a shared strategic issue and priority.
- Establish a resourced, multi-disciplinary prevention approach to serious violence
- Ensure relevant bodies are sharing timely information to understand and respond to local needs and prevent serious violence.
- Work with a range of early intervention services to identify potential victims and potential offenders.
- Maximise opportunities to work with children and families in a universal way, before issues arise and when they do arise, respond in a swift and co-ordinated way, utilising the Early Help offer.
- Work across the partnership to adopt trauma informed, attachment aware practice.
- Work with parents and communities in designing and delivering safer communities.
- Advocate the importance of equitable, respectful relationships and being a good citizen.
- Develop a strong and consistent approach to PSHE with schools and other educational establishments to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviour and to increase social competence and resilience.
- Ensure parents, businesses, professionals, and communities are knowledgeable about support services.
- Equip professionals with the skills to identify and respond to Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Support the development of peer mentoring, encouraging people who have previously accessed serious violence-related services to become mentors.
- Promote a whole-system approach to serious violence-related issues, tackling disproportionality amongst black and mixed-race youth.

Diversion

By developing prevention mechanisms that specifically target those at risk of either committing serious violence or being the victim of serious violence, we will reduce both the number of future assaults and make a sustainable positive change.

With this in mind, we will:

- Work with the licensed trade to help reduce serious violence.
- Work with schools to agree a standardised approach to partner and police support and input.
- Establish asset-based policing as a way of co-producing better outcomes in communities.
- Support families experiencing serious violence to stop the intergenerational cycle of violence from continuing.
- Work with voluntary and faith groups in developing and supporting the mentoring of our most at-risk young people to change behaviour.

- Ensure commissioned services are effective, collaborative and able to meet the needs of potential victims and potential offenders.
- Develop and deliver targeted education and prevention programmes and support to those more vulnerable to, or at risk of, serious violence.
- Identify an array of options and interventions available to stakeholders to decrease the risk of serious violence.
- Focus deployment of these interventions in areas of great risk of serious violence identified using up to date intelligence
- Divert children away from harm through positive activities.
- Deliver conflict, anger management and self-defence techniques to children.
- Introduce mentors into targeted schools.
- Support education in reducing exclusions, long-term absenteeism, and off-rolling from school

Intervention

By providing effective support for victims and interventions for those who have previously committed serious violence, we will reduce re-victimisation and reoffending. We will capitalise on making every contact with individuals count to change behaviour.

With this in mind, we will:

- Provide training so all public services can identify and respond to serious violence.
- Establish sustainable employment for those with convictions.
- Develop a 'Brief Intervention' programme and train appropriate staff to deliver it.
- Utilise "reachable moments" for those admitted to hospital with injury related to serious violence or those taken into police custody.
- Build a network of people with 'lived experience' who volunteer to mentor and support those who seek to change their lives.
- Ensure we conduct a multi-agency domestic homicide reviews in a timely manner.

Enforcement and criminal justice

While prevention is our focus, we remain committed to swift, visible justice for those committing serious violence.

With this in mind, we will:

- Operationalise a "Child First" approach in the Youth Justice Service, highlighting that young people are primarily children rather than offenders.
- Continue to operate MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) for high-risk, violent offenders.
- Process map 'no proceedings' and 'no further actions' decisions in cases of serious violence.
- Ensure victims receive justice which is not hindered by procedural or training issues.
- Promote an increased range of effective, evidence-led sentencing options.
- Support police, fire and local authority partners to undertake enforcement and innovative practice to tackle emerging or persistent serious violence.
- Support police and local authority partners in taking targeted enforcement and disruption action (county lines, drug markets, cheap and illegal products, scams etc).
- Work with partners to highlight the difference between youth offending and child exploitation, encouraging use of the support via the National referral Mechanism.

- Work with prisons to develop pathways, smooth discharge process and support for those with violent offending histories being released to Dudley Borough.
- Maximise enforcement opportunities through effective partnership work across the Criminal Justice System and through Integrated Offender Management, the Youth Justice Service, custodial settings, and probation

Measuring our impact

Given the nature of the approach being taken, and the intention to address the root causes of serious violence, it is anticipated that while there will be some short-term progress, the main impact of the strategy will be seen over the medium to longer term. A baseline Strategic Needs Assessment will be completed in Spring 2023. To demonstrate improvement, a performance framework relating to the strategy and priority areas will be developed, including a mixture of inputs, outputs, and outcomes to be measured annually.

Working in partnership

We recognise that activities to address the root causes of serious violence overlap with many related agendas and strategies, both nationally and locally (such as drugs and alcohol, county lines, child exploitation, domestic abuse etc). We also acknowledge that a significant amount of related work is underway. As such, we will seek to co-ordinate, support, and complement, rather than duplicate, existing activity. We will ensure the strategy and supporting action plan builds upon this existing activity and, where possible, is delivered through established partnership arrangements.

Implementing the strategy

The implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Dudley Safe and Sound Board (figure 3 below), which will ensure that planning and programmes are delivered effectively, in a structured, coherent manner, in the appropriate communities. It will govern the agenda, establish strategic priorities, and align commissioning intentions, challenge, and manage performance, share good practice, champion achievements, and identify and manage risks.



Figure 3 Dudley Safe and Sound Board Governance Structure, November 2022