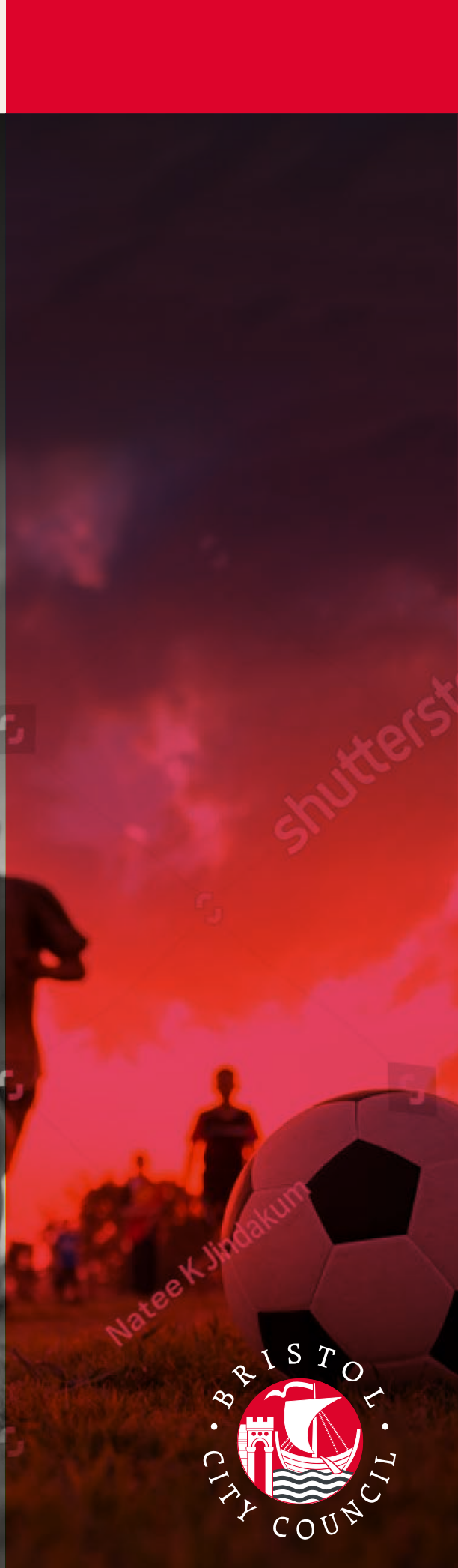


Bristol Safer Options Approach

to Serious Youth Violence and
Child Criminal Exploitation

2020–2030



March 2020

Contents

Introduction.....	4
The impact of Serious Youth Violence on Bristol’s families and communities	6
Risk and resilience factors	8
Services in Bristol	10
Guiding values	13
Leadership, governance, ownership and accountability	14

Priorities:

Priority 1: Positive, safe and accessible activities for children and young people	18
Priority 2: Investment in community assets.....	20
Priority 3: Raising awareness of Serious Youth Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation.....	22
Priority 4: Improving police presence and disrupting crime.....	24
Priority 5: Improving education and learning for a successful future	26
Priority 6: Targeted help.....	28
Priority 7: Help for families who are struggling.....	30
Priority 8: Young people’s activism and mentoring	32
List of supporting briefings	34

Introduction

The Bristol response to Serious Youth Violence is overseen by the Serious Violence Executive and the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, which includes;

- Avon & Somerset Constabulary
- Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner
- Avon Fire & Rescue Service
- Bristol City Council
- Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group
- National Probation Service
- VOSCUR
- Community Representative



“Any strategy to reduce youth violence must address root causes and involve collaboration. This will take time.”



This document describes our collective ambition to reduce Serious Youth Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation in Bristol in the coming decade, and how we as services, projects and communities will work together to achieve this ambition.

As the national Youth Violence Commission says:

“There are no quick fixes to youth violence... Any strategy to reduce youth violence must address... root causes and will need to involve collaboration across central and local government as well as between practitioners, service providers, charities and community leaders at the local level. This will take time. It will need to have cross-party support and not be vulnerable to shifting parliamentary priorities. It will need to have the voice of young people themselves at its core”

(The Youth Violence Commission 2018)

This document therefore spans a decade, to allow us to embed new ways of working and to invest long term in our young people. However, young lives are being tragically lost and blighted, and we must act immediately and urgently. The effectiveness of Safer Options will be evaluated with input from our communities in 2023, and the priorities may then be refreshed.

By Serious Youth Violence we mean:

Violence that occurs among young people aged 25 and under, outside of the home. It is between young people who are not related, and who may or may not know each other.

In April 2018, the UK Government introduced a Serious Violence Strategy to address national increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide. As part of the Serious Violence Strategy, a Serious Violence Fund was announced. This included funding to establish or develop Violence Reduction Units around the country, which would support multi-agency, ‘public health’ approaches to preventing and tackling serious youth violence. Avon and Somerset Police Crime Commissioner was one of the 18 police forces to receive additional funding.

We believe that we will have the best chance of success if we are led by the experiences and priorities of our communities, as well as being guided by academic evidence and having a strong eye on what data and intelligence tells us about our neighbourhoods. This document was therefore written drawing on local data, national and international evidence of best practice, and most crucially, with the input of almost 500 local people – young people, parents and carers, community members and service providers. With the guidance of these people and rooted in evidence, this document sets out eight priority areas for action in Bristol.

To keep this document short, its supporting material and lists of references for evidence are presented in a series of briefings. Please see the end of the document for a list.

Is the problem getting worse?

In England and Wales, serious violence and particularly youth violence has been a major public concern in recent years. While overall crime has fallen, since 2014 crime data for England and Wales and rates of admissions to hospital have shown a continued rise in offences using a knife or a sharp instrument.

Similarly, Bristol has experienced a recent increase in Serious Youth Violence offences, with 1092 incidents of Knife Crime, Actual Bodily Harm, Grievous Bodily Harm and Gun Crime in the year 2018–19. The rate of Serious Youth Violence offences overall rose by 24% between 2016/17 and 2018/19 and serious knife crime offences increased by 45% in the same time period.



“It makes us afraid and paranoid”

Parent

“It can really affect youth spirit and morale”

Young person

“We are all a bit nervous when we go it after dark and some of us are really scared of what might happen”

Young person



The impact of Serious Youth Violence on Bristol's families and communities

First and foremost, we are aware of the loss and disruption to young lives, and the shock and trauma to families and communities following each incident of violence. In 2018/19 two young people have lost their lives to Serious Youth Violence in Bristol.

To understand the impact better, we asked young people and people in their communities how they thought young people were impacted by Serious Youth Violence, and by use of knives and drug activity. They told us about:

- Impacts on mental **well-being**; about a third of the people we spoke to felt that Serious Youth Violence had an impact on young people's mental wellbeing, including impacts of fear and trauma on mental health.
- Young people feeling **less safe**. Around a quarter of stakeholders said that they thought young people felt unsafe most of the time in their neighbourhoods, and a significant majority felt that they were unsafe at least some of the time. Parents were particularly concerned about their children's safety. Worries about safety were expressed across all areas of Bristol but affected some neighbourhoods more than others. This is leading to young people going out less, and so having less access to positive experiences such as sports and leisure.
- People told us about **family pain and breakdown**, through the trauma of incidents and the impact of separation and stress.
- Young people told us about **peer pressure** as a result of their exposure to Serious Youth Violence- of feeling a need to look strong and tough.
- Young people also told us about a vicious cycle, where fear, peer pressure and exposure to Serious Youth Violence fuelled getting into arguments, fights and carrying knives for self-protection.
- People told us about impacts on **school and learning**, particularly with attendance and so attainment being negatively impacted.
- Young people told us that they felt the **stigma on young people and communities** of youth violence.



"Lives were ruined, families were torn apart."

Parent

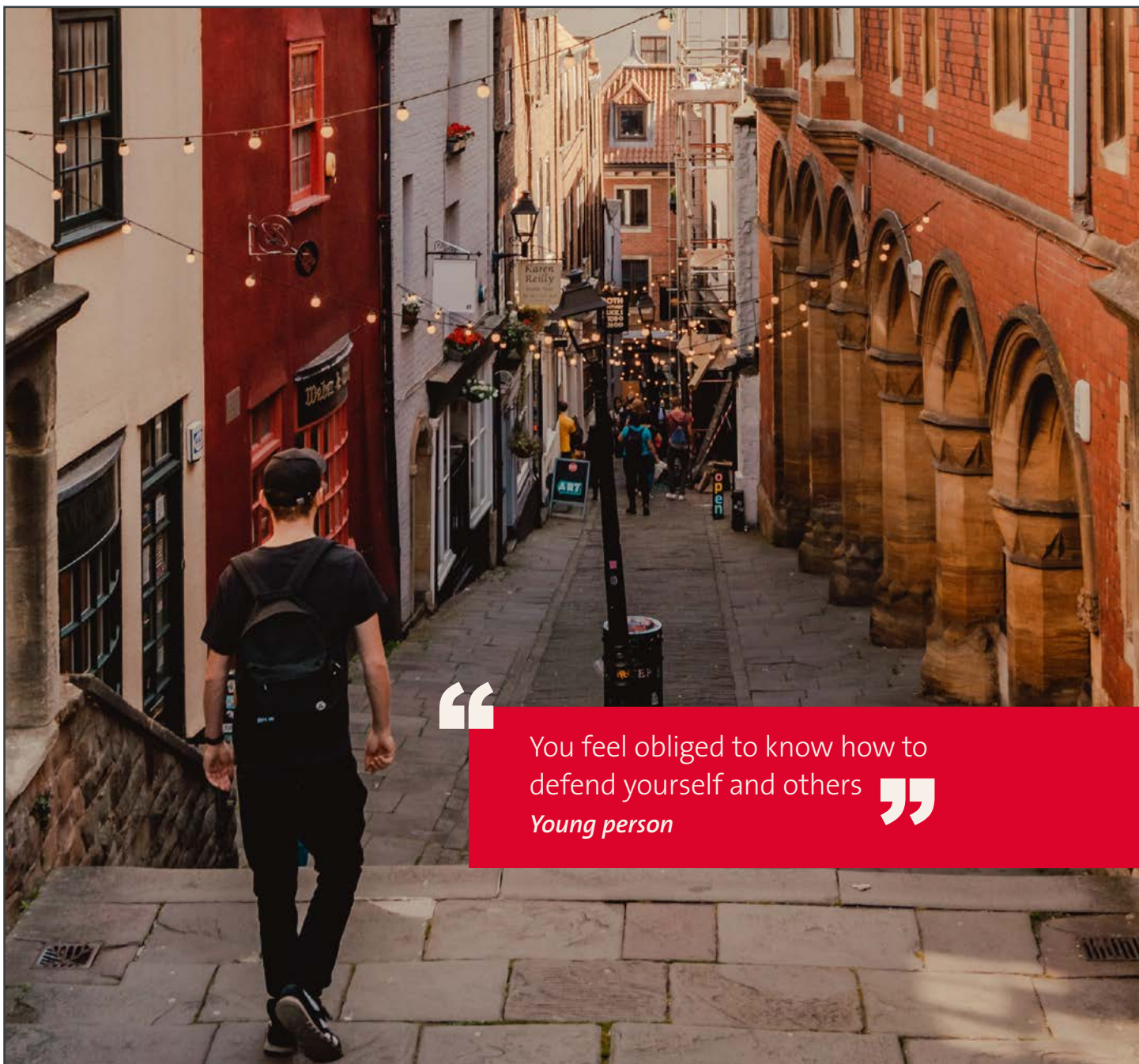


There is also a financial cost to Serious Youth Violence. The table below sets out the average estimated cost to society of some crimes, as **estimated by the UK government in 2018**, including costs in anticipation (insurance etc), consequences of crime and responses to the crime, such as prison and police activity.

Crimes	Estimated costs of crimes, per crime
✘ Homicide	£3,217,740
🚑 Violence with Injury	£14,050
⚙️ Violence without Injury	£5,930
📄 Criminal damage - other	£1,350

We can also identify the **average costs of NHS treatment** and support:

Treatment	Estimated costs of treatment
🚑 Weighted average of ambulance calls (including non-attendances and non-transfers)	£125 per call
🚑 See, treat and convey ambulance calls	£258 per call
+ A&E attendance	£138 (2015 costs)
+ Non-elective inpatient stays	£3,053 per long stay £631 per short stay
+ CAMHS outpatient attendance	£307 per contact



“

You feel obliged to know how to defend yourself and others

”

Young person

Risk and resilience factors

We know that not all young people are equally at risk of being affected by serious youth violence. Understanding and addressing risk factors underpins our approach

When looking at risk and resilience we think about:

- Individual factors
- Relationship factors
- Community factors
- Societal factors

The table below shows the nationally evidenced risk and resilience factors for Serious Youth Violence. Please see [**Briefing 2: Bristol Safer Options Approach Literature Review**](#) for more detail and references.

Individual factors

Risk

Young men/boys

Both victims and perpetrators appear to be getting younger

Young people who have mental health problems or low self-esteem

Young people with problematic substance misuse

Young people with impulsive or aggressive personality traits

Young people who have been in conflict with authority, such as anti-social behaviour

Young people living in poor families

Special Educational Need

Young people who are achieving less well at school

Resilience

Young women/girls are at lower risk, though we know that girls are increasingly victims

Young people with low levels of impulsiveness

Young people with above average intelligence

Young people living in medium income families

Relationship factors

Risk

Young people who have been exposed to childhood trauma either in families (such as abuse) or in society (such as racism)

Young people whose parents are in conflict with each other, are involved in criminal activity or who are not supervising them closely

Young people who have peers involved in violence or antisocial behaviour, are affiliated to gangs or exposed to criminal exploitation

Resilience

Young people with close relationships to parents who show strong parental supervision

Young people with strong bonds to their schools

Young people with peers who are not involved in violence or antisocial behaviour

Community factors

Risk

Young people living in poorer communities

Young people who are excluded from mainstream learning (formally or informally)

Young people exposed to illicit drugs markets

Young people living in areas with poor housing quality and stability

Resilience

Young people living in non-violent and non-deprived communities

Young people living in communities with good access to transport, lighting, green spaces and other assets

Societal factors

Risk

Young people in societies that are more accepting of violence

Young people living in societies with poor educational and economic supports and opportunities

Resilience

Young people in schools and other settings that promote positive cohesion and inclusion

Young people with access to good education and work opportunities

When we asked people in Bristol about risk and resilience, their answers were very similar to the above evidence. They added that boredom and lack of things to do put young people at more risk of getting involved in Serious Youth Violence. They felt strong cohesive communities and good role models protected young people.

Services in Bristol

We know that Serious Youth Violence is both predictable and preventable. Across the world, areas are increasingly turning to “public health” approaches, where interventions at the individual and family level are accompanied by measures to reduce social inequalities and change the cultural norms that accept violence.

Bristol established its Youth Violence Reduction Unit called “Safer Options” in April 2019. This unit aims to coordinate a response to those young people at the highest risk of becoming involved in Serious Youth Violence, but in addition many agencies including local and Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations, Schools, Health Services and Local Authority Services have been working to reduce the risk of violence for all young people.

Leadership, accountability and governance

The oversight of the Safer Options Approach falls within the Serious Violence Executive and the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership. Numerous other strategic bodies oversee work that reduces the risk of, and responds to, Serious Youth Violence. We will ensure that we communicate and cooperate effectively with these bodies.

Commissioning and funding

Services in Bristol that relate to Serious Youth Violence are commissioned from a number of agencies including Bristol City Council, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, Avon and Somerset Police, and Education Trusts. In addition, a large amount of funding comes to Bristol each year from philanthropic sources such as Trust and Grant givers, Corporate Social Responsibility and community fundraising.

Services

Services and projects in Bristol work across a spectrum of approaches to increase the resilience of children and young people against Serious Youth Violence, and to reduce risks around them. We asked over 100 organisations to tell us about what they are doing now, and what they would want to do in future, to reduce Serious Youth Violence.

A fuller mapping of services is given in Briefing **4: Bristol Safer Options Approach Service Mapping.**

Across this spectrum, we see:

- **Whole community responses to reduce risk and increase resilience** including improving the built environment and families’ access to green spaces and safe community buildings, community development approaches that map and capitalise on community assets, whole community programmes that promote positive parenting, skills development for children and young people, awareness raising and preventative education and open access youth clubs, out of school activities and sport.
 - We identified over 60 projects and organisations in Bristol working in these ways, the majority of which were youth clubs, out of school activities and community centres.



- **Services to reduce the risk to vulnerable young people** by identifying those at risk and working to reduce risk and put in resilience measures. These include social care teams, mental health services, intensive family interventions and targeted parenting support, support in schools, and drug use reduction programmes.

- We identified over 30 projects and organisations in Bristol working in these ways, ranging from statutory safeguarding and mental health services, targeted help for some young people to alternative education providers.

- **Services to support young people involved in Serious Youth Violence** by helping young people to withdraw from risky lifestyles and learn strategies for avoiding violence. Some young people are subject to punitive and containment measures. Projects include diversionary approaches, therapeutic interventions, mentoring, mediation, contextual safeguarding, combatting Child Criminal Exploitation, street policing approaches, Youth Offending teams and interventions in custody.

- We identified nine projects and organisations in Bristol working in these ways, including Safer Options, YOT and targeted interventions for young people engaged in crime.

Bristol Safer Options

Launched in April 2019 Bristol Safer Options is a coordinated multi-agency response to Serious Youth Violence, gang and knife crime, putting in place protective plans for those involved or at risk of becoming involved, engaging agencies and communities to take an active role. The approach has a central coordinating team and then locally relevant approaches in each area. Safer Options involves holding weekly meetings to share information, identify young people about whom there are concerns, stratify risks and facilitate their access to services. Safer Options does not deliver face to face services but works with existing lead professionals. Currently 64 young people are at the highest tier of risk, 72 at tier 2 and 177 at tier 3.



“

“You should be talking to young people – seeking their views and then building it up from there... also talk to adults who got through it.”

Young person

”

Over 100 organisations in Bristol were engaged in the writing of this document through survey, interviews and events. There is a strong motivation across sectors to do more, with more than half of the organisations we spoke to wanting to extend their services. We asked them what they would need to do this, and while 60% needed more income, there were also calls for more help to develop partnerships, better access to information and training and coordinated pathways to reach young people and families.

Guiding values

It is important to do the right things to reduce the risk of Serious Youth Violence in Bristol and to support and divert those already affected. It is just as important to do this work in the right way.

We asked people what was important to them about how Bristol responds to the problems we have identified. Their answers have been used to write the guiding values underpinning the Safer Options Approach. These values will be embodied in our leadership and governance, and we expect to be held to account for how we have delivered on these values:

- 1. With authentic and long-lived community leadership and ownership**
- 2. Celebrating strength and assets in communities**
- 3. Prioritising long term work**
- 4. Investing early**
- 5. By challenging prejudice and stigma**
- 6. By making a choice of services and support equally accessible to all**
- 7. By respecting the different neighbourhoods of Bristol**
- 8. With joined up thinking and working**
- 9. By structuring accountability and transparency into how we work**



“It’s probably to late for the ones causing trouble now but catch the younger ones now before it’s to late”

Young person

“Accountability”

Parent

“We have a late intervention workforce- until we invest in an early intervention workforce, we won’t see the change”

Worker

“community influence... collaborative working with trusted community figures”

Parent

“Shifting the culture of blaming and shaming to compassion and support”

Worker

“Developing an evaluation plan to track and measure the implementation of the youth violence prevention plan”

Worker

“Bristol is a city of villages- so you know people in your village. There was always inequality but there was more equity between villages. Places had pubs, and clubs spaces. People who lived there had their own culture”

Worker



Leadership, governance, ownership and accountability

Why is this important?

People in Bristol told us that they wanted to be more involved in and better informed about the response to Serious Youth Violence. They want to be able to hold themselves and each other to account for the effectiveness and impact of what is being done.

They told us that our leadership and governance should:

- Involve continued meaningful involvement of young people and their communities
- Celebrate local neighbourhoods and their assets
- Establish accountability and transparency about performance of services
- Connect to a wide range of engagement activities
- Focus on action rather than more consultation

The evidence

While there is limited research evidence to indicate effective leadership and governance systems for local responses to Serious Youth Violence, national policy responses suggest:

- That responses will need to be multi-layered and that systemic change is needed
- That resilience in young people and communities is developed by a wide range of factors in their ordinary lives
- That success will only come when multiple agencies, groups and individuals collaborate
- That the voice and influence of young people and their families must be at the heart of the response

Our goal

The leadership and governance of the Safer Options Approach will be transparently shared with the communities and neighbourhoods of Bristol, with good multi-directional communication. Children, young people and their families will know what is being done and how effective it is. Projects and organisations will be able to contribute their efforts and will be assisted to do more for their communities.



Impact has to be measured and people accountable





LO-RES

“

“Asking youths directly what they want to do”

Parent

“Improved community and agency cohesion”

Worker

“Youth Violence Ambassador someone who will speak on behalf of young people and agencies at grass root levels”

Parent



Priorities



“things
to do”



PRIORITY 1:

Positive, safe and accessible activities for children and young people

Why is this important?

This was the highest priority area for all groups of stakeholders we spoke to; young people, parents and carers and workers. A third of young people gave this as an important priority.

People told us there should be:

- More youth clubs- safe, locally accessible and appealing spaces
- Enjoyable and uplifting activities such as sports, arts and play
- Opportunities for making friends and being with different groups of people
- Activities that are equally available for everyone



“More youth centres”

Young Person

“be inspired and try new things”

Parent/carer

“Having fun, be outdoors, active”

Young people’s discussion

“We must not underestimate the importance of youth spaces”

Worker

“[doing sport] helps with concentrating on one thing, changes your mindset in school, and the social part – speaking to adults is good, they encourage you, takes the frustration away. Aggression is natural, but I don’t have to prove anything to anyone after doing [my sport] – it changes how you feel about yourself, influences other aspects of life”

Young Person

The evidence

A meta-analysis of after-school programmes in the United States found that participants demonstrated significant increases in protective factors against youth violence. Evidence shows that “diversionary approaches” have been successfully used to reduce both risk of engaging with youth violence and as a means of recovery from youth violence, and sports activities show particular promise in this area.

Our goal

There will be more positive and enjoyable activities available to more children and young people in Bristol, with a joined-up approach to growing and co-delivering children and young people’s activities that are easily accessible for all.



“Shore
up our
communities”

PRIORITY 2:

Investment in community assets

Why is this important?

International research has highlighted the importance of local infrastructure in order to successfully deliver interventions that reduce Serious Youth Violence. People in Bristol also told us how important it was that the assets in their communities are protected and developed.

They told us about the need for:

- Bespoke plans for neighbourhoods
- Financial investment in communities
- Safe and welcoming buildings
- Investing in people who are working in communities with training, support and co-working models
- Transport for young people



“infrastructure and better transport routes, more options for shops and healthy eating and family activities”

Worker

“Bigger diverse community centres”

Young person

“Village mentality, community cohesion.”

Parent

“Make community look nice not run down”

Young person

“More money for the young people services”

Young person

The evidence

Evidence tells us that deprivation and poverty in communities is a predictor of increased Serious Youth Violence. A systematic review of a broad range of physical environment interventions found that improved transport, lighting, buildings, police accessibility, higher vegetation levels, business improvement districts and neighbourhood initiatives to decrease physical disorder all showed promise in preventing youth violence. Community development approaches such as “asset-based community development” can have an impact on some risk factors for youth violence.

Our goal

All children and young people and their families will have access to safe, welcoming spaces within their communities, which can accommodate a variety of activities such as sports, arts and leisure. We will work towards consistency and quality in the providers of activities and ensure that young people and families know what is available in their areas. We will break down barriers to mobility for young people.

A black and white photograph of a person from behind, raising their right hand in a classroom or meeting setting. The person is wearing a watch on their left wrist. In the background, other people are visible, some with their hands raised, and a whiteboard or screen is partially seen.

“To
tell us
about it”

PRIORITY 3:

Raising awareness of Serious Youth Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation

Why is this important?

Awareness-raising and training have been key features of national initiatives and were often suggested by stakeholders in Bristol. We know there are a number of different approaches to awareness-raising being developed, including work on healthy relationships and choices, whole school approaches to wellbeing, inspirational speakers and speakers with lived experience and raising awareness of the risks of injury or death posed by knife crime. With this diversity of messages, we see it as vital to establish consistent and high-quality messages and information for our communities.

People told us these things were important to them about awareness-raising.

- For parents, young people and workers
- Focus on strategies – “what to do”
- Draw on positive lived experiences – people who turned it around
- Throughout childhood



“Schools need to talk about the issue a lot more and tell us how to prevent it and keep safe”

Young person

“Education”

Young person

“Strong messages to parents in first instance”

Parent/carer

“Awareness being raised in schools”

Worker

The evidence

From research we know that a dominant driver, particularly of knife crime among young people, is the belief that they need to be prepared to defend themselves. The #knifefree campaign has been informed by qualitative and quantitative research that adverts should seek to change attitudes and behaviour by challenging the perception that carrying a knife is normal. Researchers caution that too much focus on the impact of knife crime may escalate fear and so inadvertently raise motivation to carry a weapon, and so if a serious incident occurs, there needs to be a concerted effort by the police and other agencies to reassure young people that they are safe.

Our goal

Children, young people, parents/carers and workers will have access to accurate, consistent information about the risks of Serious Youth Violence and the best ways to stay safe, in a way that maximises their sense of safety, skills and confidence to contribute to their own and community safety. Within this, young people will have information about Criminal Exploitation and strategies to combat it. These messages will be identified, and material coproduced with young people, and available through a range of platforms.



“ I am too
scared to
let my son
out ”

PRIORITY 4:

Improving police presence and disrupting crime

Why is this important?

While much of youth violence does not reach the attention of the police, they are key partners in the response to and prevention of Serious Youth Violence. There are some key areas of criminality that can drive Serious Youth Violence; robbery, the illicit drugs market, use of drugs and exploitation.

When we asked people in Bristol about this, they told us they want to see:

- Visible police on streets
- Knife controls
- Intelligence sharing
- Disrupting the drugs market
- Stopping exploitation



“community policing where the officer actually knew the people of the community they serve”

Worker

“Less drug dealers on the street people would feel safer”

Young person

“Lots more on-street police presence”

Parent

“It’s not nice to see and intimidating”

Young person

“If there were police patrols then the police could arrest the drug dealer”

Young person

The evidence

There is evaluation evidence suggesting the effectiveness of problem orientated policing and “Hot Spot” policing as opposed to more traditional “beat” policing. Research suggests that Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV) is effective, and there is a growing focus on Trauma informed policing. As drug use and the illicit drugs market are both risk factors, interventions to disrupt drug supply and treat drug use are effective. We know that trauma-informed practice in YOTs and the secure estate show promise in reducing reoffending.

Our goal

Children, young people and communities will have good, trusting relationships with their local police force, and know how to get help and report concerns. We will work together to avoid criminalising children and young people wherever possible. Agencies will be joined up and share data and intelligence about risk, particularly of criminal exploitation, with good links to a well-informed contextual safeguarding offer.



“Better **schools**,
better
opportunities
for young people”

PRIORITY 5:

Improving education and learning for a successful future

Why is this important?

Low academic achievement, poor bonding with school, frequent changes of school, truancy and dropping out are all risk factors for youth violence. School exclusions are associated with poor long-term outcomes such as access to further education and employment. People in Bristol told us they were concerned about young people being disengaged, pushed out or excluded from learning, and how this could put them at higher risk of getting involved in Serious Youth Violence.

They said that we should:

- Stop excluding young people from the classroom
- Have more supportive schools
- Prepare young people for secondary school
- Offer a wider range of learning and opportunities that give ambition and opportunity



“Stop school exclusions. Provide more supportive environments instead of criminalising children at school”

parent

“When they do groups in school... talk... about why they do the things they do... explain feelings”

Young person

“More schemes to give those who have switched off to education another route”

Parent/carer

“sometimes teachers aren’t being helpful, respect is not two-way... ..it works better if they do activities with the students... [some find] it very hard to sit there for a whole hour”

Young person

“work prospects”

Young person

The evidence

Following many years of decline, national rates of both fixed period and permanent school exclusion have risen since 2013/14. Some children are at higher risk of exclusion and “exclusion-in-all-but-name”; those with special educational need, children-in-need, Black Caribbean and Mixed White/Black Caribbean young people, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children and those eligible for free school meals. There is reason to believe that restrictive practices (exclusion, isolation, restraint) in schools impact young people’s mental health and can exacerbate poor behaviour.

Evidence based interventions include projects and programmes that aim to improve children and young people’s interpersonal, emotional and behavioural skills, positive behavioural

support (especially for students with SEND) and trauma informed schools- which seek to minimise the trauma-causing potential of the school environment.

Our goal

Every child and young person in Bristol will learn in a high quality provision that is the right educational setting for their needs, irrespective of the needs of the settings. All young people will have access to broader experiences of work to inspire them to reach for real work aspirations, coupled with a wider school curriculum to help them achieve these aspirations. We will ensure that all educational settings are appropriately sharing information to understand each child/young person’s specific needs and vulnerabilities.



“ Full
wrap around
service for
young people
who are at **risk** ”

PRIORITY 6:

Targeted help

Why is this important?

Our understanding of the risk and resilience factors at individual, relationship, community and society levels tells us that Serious Youth Violence is both predictable and preventable. It follows that providing more intensive support to those young people at risk of being involved in Serious Youth Violence will be an efficient use of resources.

People in Bristol told us that support targeted at Serious Youth Violence should be:

- Assertive – with determination to reach the young people
- Mental health and trauma informed
- Understanding of risk factors
- Using longer term approaches with young people and families
- Strongly connected into local neighbourhood and projects



“more talking therapies”

Parent/carer

“Better services for those at risk”

Young person

“Provide more support for families where children are at risk”

Parent

“services are not being assertive enough in monitoring [some young people]”

Worker

“Targeted interventions aimed at young people who have the social indicators that we know are high amongst those young people who commit knife crime and work to reduce those social indicators”

Worker

“Conflict resolution and restorative justice for small situations before it escalates”

Worker



The evidence

There are a number of targeted interventions that have a good evidence base:

- Violence Reduction Units, using public health approaches
- Intensive Family Interventions (e.g. Troubled Families)
- There are a number of therapeutic interventions aimed at individual young people and their families which have been shown to be effective with young offenders in some; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, Multi-systemic Therapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Mediation
- Accident and Emergency Department interventions
- Information and intelligence sharing

Our goal

We will roll out the Safer Options approach across Bristol, ensuring that every young person at risk receives a bespoke response within their area or neighbourhood supported by a central coordination team. Each child or young person supported in this approach will be enabled to access a range of services to help them for as long as they need them. In particular, we will work to ensure that mental health services are able to respond to the needs of these young people.



“That
it’s whole
family”

PRIORITY 7:

Help for families who are struggling

Why is this important?

People in Bristol told us that we should be intervening earlier in children’s lives, and understanding the issues faced by whole families. We know that early experiences and family relationships have a large impact on risk of Serious Youth Violence. Experiences of traumas such as neglect or abuse or family breakdown are risk factors, and good relationships with parents who supervise their children closely are protective. We also know that poor mental health is a risk factor for Serious Youth Violence. In Bristol and nationally, there are indications that young people are getting involved in Serious Youth Violence at a younger age.

People told us that we should:

- Focus on early years, primary age and transitions
- Offer more support to parents
- Improve access to mental health support
- Address trauma in communities and families



If the stress levels were lower and people were helped when things went wrong

Young person

“more support early on in life, e.g. sure start centres and free nursery places”

Parent

“Better mental health support for both yps and families.”

Worker

“good parenting”

Young person

“If we carry on meeting the statutory need and we are not responding to the growing level of demand at a preventative level then all we are going to be is absolutely overwhelmed by the statutory need further down the line”

Worker



The evidence

With risk and resilience factors interlinked and layered, we know that wrap-around services that aim to surround families with preventative factors have good success in reducing the risk factors of Serious Youth Violence. Examples of evidence-based interventions include:

- Promoting positive parenting (e.g. Incredible Years)
- Early Years Programmes (e.g. Sure Start)
- Intensive Family Interventions (e.g. Troubled Families)
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Functional Family Therapy

- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care
- Multi-Systemic Therapy
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Our goal

Every family will have information and help to enable their children to thrive, and to develop mental health and resilience skills that protect young people from Serious Youth Violence. Services will understand and monitor vulnerabilities in the families they know and share this information to make sure that families get help, especially at key educational transition points in their children’s lives.



“Positive
role
models”

PRIORITY 8:

Young people’s activism and mentoring

Why is this important?

People in Bristol told us that young people and their families should be at the heart of the response to Serious Youth Violence, and young people told us how important it was for them to get support from people who they could relate to or who had similar experiences to them. Many young people felt that friends and peers had an important role to play.

People told us they wanted to see:

- Teaching of informal formal peer-to-peer and bystander approaches
- Authenticity of the service
- Involvement of people with lived experience
- Positive and inspirational “feel”
- Varied and numerous ways of young people being involved



“people who ‘look like them’ who are succeeding”

worker

“Mentoring”

Young person

“For them to meet and work with people who have been involved with or affected by these things”

Parent

“Every area has a guy respected so if they support him in making change to youth around their area”

Young person

“Positive community role models to inspire them.”

Parent/carer

“Peer to peer support”

Worker

“Up skill members within the community, identify major players to play as role models to YP’s”

Worker

The evidence

Mentoring is increasingly adopted in the UK, however we know that the effectiveness of mentoring depends heavily on the quality of the scheme and they have potential to do harm as well as good. The positive effects of mentoring tend to be stronger when these features are in place:

- emotional support is a key part of the mentoring provision
- mentors are motivated to participate as part of their own professional development rather than just wanting to volunteer
- mentors and mentees meet at least once a week and spend more time together at each meeting
- the mentoring takes place over a prolonged period
- the mentoring is part of a wider suite of interventions: mentoring on its own may not reduce re-offending
- the programme is well-run with effective training and support

While there is some evidence of the effectiveness of peer support models for young people affected by drug addiction or poor mental health, we did not find any specific evidence in relation to youth violence. From other projects though, there is good guidance available on the elements of effective peer support projects.

There is more evidence from developments of Bystander approaches; an approach to gender violence and bullying prevention that was first developed in 1993 in the United States is being used to address all kinds of violence in schools in Scotland with promising results.

Our goal

We will engage and involve young people in meaningful ways at all levels of our response to Serious Youth Violence, from individual decision making, to helping deescalate situations in friendship groups, through to volunteering, paid and leadership roles. We will connect mentoring projects across the city and offer the mentor workforce opportunities to develop and enhance their offer to young people.

List of supporting briefings:

Bristol Safer Options Problem Profile

Briefing 1: How we wrote the Bristol Safer Options Approach 2020-2030

Briefing 2: Bristol Safer Options Approach Literature Review

Briefing 3: Bristol Safer Options Approach Service Mapping

Briefing 4: Findings of the Stakeholder Engagement for the Bristol Safer Options Approach

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or CD rom or plain text please contact: [INSERT CONTACT NAME & NUMBER]

