



SERIOUS VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN

Providing an effective response
to violence and its causes

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Foreword

Greater Manchester is renowned for doing things differently, working with local people to develop innovative approaches to tackling some of the ongoing and emerging challenges we face as a society.

At the heart of this is instilling a sense of safety, security and strength within our communities. Serious violent crime is a significant concern for local people, particularly our young people, and that's why we are responding with this action plan.

The Government's austerity agenda has decimated police numbers and stripped youth service provision to the bone over the years, and this has clearly had an impact on rising crime. Despite this, Greater Manchester has faced up to the challenge of tackling what is undeniably a complex, far-reaching and devastating issue. It's clear this issue cannot be solved by one agency alone, but we also can't solve it without the support of communities. That's why one of the central threads of our approach is to embed a community-led approach to prevention and enforcement.

This will build on the principles of our public service reform work, ensuring that public service delivery is built around the unique and diverse needs of people and places, not the policies of fragmented service providers. This involves integrating public services at a local level, with professionals from a range of services co-locating where possible to better share information and use resources more flexibly and intelligently.

When it comes to tackling serious violence, we are committed to bringing communities and professionals together in those areas most affected by violence. We want to empower local people and involve them in co-designing the solution to make our streets safer and protect our children and young people from violence. This is about communities leading the way and having a real say on how services should be delivered and how budgets should be spent.

By standing together we can make a real difference and change the lives of Greater Manchester's people and places for the better.



Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester



Foreword

Violent crime causes serious harm and blights the lives of victims, families and communities. In Greater Manchester we are committed unequivocally to strong enforcement against violent crime. But enforcement alone is not enough. We also have to try to prevent it happening in the first place as well as mitigate its effects on those caught up in its wake. That means intervening early using all the available evidence, insight and data to ensure we have the best possible impact on reducing violent crime and its consequences.

This action plan builds on what we know from evidence and research to shape a coherent, consistent and innovative approach to tackling serious violence across the city-region. Since the COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown measures that were put in place to control it, we have had to adapt some of our thinking to review how the pandemic has and may continue to impact on serious violence. We will continue to work closely with local partners, the voluntary community and social enterprise sector, and communities to understand these impacts and address the risks that we know contribute to violence.

This action plan sets out the scale and impact that violence is having on our communities, and identifies a number of priority areas we must focus on to tackle it effectively.

One of those priorities is to establish a dedicated Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for Greater Manchester. This unit launched in October 2019, and brings together Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the National Probation Service, health and education professionals, youth justice and local authorities to address the underlying causes of violent crime and work together with communities to prevent it.

The work of the unit is part of the wider approach to tackling violent crime, as outlined in this action plan. This includes: making sure victims of violent crime get the right support; improving the criminal justice response to all forms of serious violence; working with schools to increase awareness of the consequences of getting involved in violent crime; identifying and working with young people at risk of violent crime; and developing a community-led approach to prevention and early intervention.

At the centre of our work is a commitment to work with citizens, families and communities to understand and address how and why people, particularly young people, get drawn into violent crime. This golden thread runs throughout the action plan, and drives our determination, collaboration and overall passion to tackle serious violence and build safer, stronger communities. Ultimately, if we can turn young people away from violence at the earliest possible opportunity, we can make a real difference to them and our communities.

We know change will not happen overnight although there will be things we can and will do in the short-term. But our approach must be sustained over the long-term, involving communities and professionals working together with us to tackle the underlying causes of violent crime to make fundamental change for the better.



Baroness Beverley Hughes
Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire

2. Introduction

2.1 Violence is a universal problem, which affects individuals, families and communities across the world. It comes in multiple forms, takes place within different contexts and situations and transcends culture, race and socio-economic status. Violence is used to express emotion and seems to occur without reason or logic but it can also be used as an instrument to alter or control environmental, social, economic and interpersonal circumstances. However, whatever the motivation, the results of violence can have a profound and devastating impact upon those caught up in it.

2.2 Whilst the effects of violence are experienced broadly by society, there exists a range of factors that increase the risk of its occurrence in people's lives, such as living in a household with domestic abuse, adverse childhood experiences, neglect, sexual and physical abuse, poor and inadequate housing, substance abuse (including alcohol) and poor mental wellbeing. Research tells us that violence shows one of the strongest inequality gradients, with emergency hospital admission rates for violence being around five times higher in the most deprived communities than in the most affluent (Bellis et al 2012). However, being a victim of violence can also lead to further violence and some victims can become perpetrators and so the phenomenon spreads. Paradoxically, violence is often regarded as both a cause and a consequence of the same set of challenging social detriments.

2.3 Whilst the act of violence can be an offence in and of itself such as homicide, serious assault and knife and gun crime, violence or the threat of violence is also a by-product of an assortment of crime types such as personal robberies, kidnapping, false imprisonment and blackmail. As outlined in the 2018 national Serious Violence Strategy, too frequently young and other vulnerable groups of the population are targeted or caught up in serious organised crime and within the hidden recesses of exploitation, such as 'county lines' drug dealing where violence is a constant threat or reality for those trapped in that world.

2.4 In order to provide an effective response to violence it is also helpful to consider the various concepts of harm to which the violence may be linked, these are:

- **Actual Harm - where physical and/or psychological harm has taken place.**

- **Intentional Harm - where harm was intended, but for one reason or another did not occur.**

- **Potential Harm - where individuals may not intend to harm others but their actions are such that they put others at risk and, regardless of intent, harm is a strong possibility.**

- **Accumulative Harm - the impact experienced by victims from repeat lower levels of harm but from either the same perpetrator or similar contexts over a prolonged period.**

2.5 Managing the reality versus the perception is important because raising the profile of violence, however well intentioned, can have unintended consequences such as increasing public fear and anxiety. However, from a review of national hospital emergency department data we know there are some important facts that require urgent attention. Nationally, in 2017/18 people aged 20-29 accounted for more than 1,900 of the 4,986 admissions to hospital as a result of knife or sharp object assault – an increase of 24% since 2012/13. Admissions involving 10 to 19 year olds increased even more rapidly from 656 to 1,012 – a rise of around 55%.

- 2.6** It seems sensible to conclude that violence is a multi-faceted problem and therefore demands not only a statutory response but also the full attention and involvement of the wider community. In accordance with the Greater Manchester Standing Together Police and Crime Plan, a Greater Manchester response to reducing violence must be delivered by a wider coalition of organisations and community groups. It must draw on local assets such as teachers, GPs, community leaders, volunteers, faith groups, the business community, etc. and enable the credible voices from within those communities most affected by violence.
- 2.7** In this regard, the Greater Manchester approach to tackling violence will be led by communities, particularly in areas most affected by these issues and where inequality is most stark. This community-led approach recognises that our citizens are the experts about what is happening in their neighbourhood as well as often knowing what approaches are most effective at responding to these problems. But without feelings of trust towards statutory organisations and a sense of empowerment, we know that residents are reluctant to engage and offer their time and insight. For these reasons our commitment to communities is clear and bold: over the next 12 months we will pilot a new community-led approach, supported by more than £500,000 funding, to ensure that residents are given responsibility for decision-making in their community about what issues are priorities, how financial investment is made and how interventions are delivered, in line with our Greater Manchester-wide commitment to place-based, public service delivery.
- 2.8** Central to this commitment of a community-led, place-based approach is our recognition that inequality is a driver for violent crime and that some of our communities feel that they are treated unequally, including by the criminal justice system. These issues are particularly stark in areas where there are higher levels of deprivation, where communities feel there is a lack of opportunity and in some black and minority ethnic communities. In response to these issues, GMCA has established an Independent Inequality Commission to review our approach to equality and inclusion, which will take evidence from a range of sources including the newly formed Race Equality Panel. Our community-led approach to tackling violence will be informed and guided by the recommendations from this Commission.
- 2.9** Over the years, successive governments and policymakers have tried hard to address the issue of serious violence through a number of approaches, but often directing much of the responsibility to the criminal justice system. Whilst a strong and robust response from law enforcement and offender management will always be required, violence reduction must be a system-wide and community responsibility. One such approach is the public health model, which was founded over twenty years ago but has since been adopted across many countries and cities around the world, including in Scotland. Fundamentally, the public health approach is a methodology which emphasises prevention, early intervention, identification of the most affected areas or groups and the concentration of resources and activity where it is most needed in order to achieve long-term benefits.

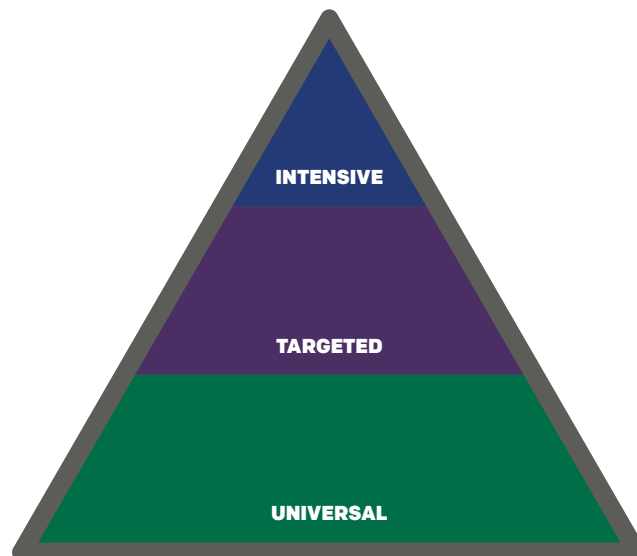
Interrupt transmission
Reduce risk
Change norms

Intensive
Targeted
Universal

Tertiary Intervention
Secondary Intervention
Primary Prevention

2.10

Responding to incidents and managing the immediate spread of violence will always be a requirement of any method, but our approach will focus on changing social norms. As a direct result of primary and preventative work, the majority of people in the UK automatically wear seatbelts and don't smoke in public places, which we know has had a direct impact on better and sustainable outcomes for people's safety, health and wellbeing.

**2.11**

By embracing a community-led public health approach, the Serious Violence Action Plan aims to set out an ambitious and inclusive programme to reducing violence across Greater Manchester. To aid and coordinate delivery of the plan we have created the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), an interdisciplinary team incorporating education, youth justice, public health, police and criminal justice, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, victim services and a broader network of organisations and stakeholders. Working closely with academics, health professionals and community leaders, the VRU aims to provide a much richer insight into the problem of violence and how to best target resources to more effectively tackle the issue.

'By adopting a public health approach violence can be prevented. A range of different interventions throughout the life course can reduce individuals' propensity for violence, lower the chances of those involved again and ensure that those affected by violence get the support they require' (Bellis et al 2012).

2.12

Whilst this Serious Violence Action Plan will retain a bold focus on early intervention and preventative outcomes amongst the younger population, it recognises the influence of other key elements of the violence problem – domestic abuse, organised crime, and illicit drug trade to name three – and will work with lead officers across these programmes to ensure effective collaboration. The VRU will be cognisant of other important and successful strands of work specific to violence and vulnerability and will incorporate the relevant learning, such as a Greater Manchester violence against women and girls' strategy as well as the complex safeguarding programme.

2.13

Violence is experienced more by our most deprived communities and we know that the impact of both COVID-19 and the Government's lockdown measures have been felt most acutely by those same communities. Our commitment to addressing inequalities and to a dedicated, unique community-led response to violence reduction are now more important than ever, and are central to this plan. The VRU is committed to testing how best to support a community-led approach through a pilot project in six sites across Greater Manchester, working closely with the VCSE sector.

2.14

Following the COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown, we will need to continue to adapt our approach and the ways in which we implement this plan as we assess the short, medium and long-term impacts of the pandemic on serious violence and the factors that contribute to it.

- **We know that violence is associated with the night-time economy and alcohol, and while public place violence has reduced during the lockdown it is likely to return to previous levels. Many of our partners are preparing for this now.**

- **Supporting education establishments is central to this plan. Teachers, school staff, students and parents have worked tirelessly to try to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on children's learning and social needs. Our support for them now recognises the extra pressures they will face in returning students to their settings, including the role of education establishments to support young people who may have struggled with mental health in lockdown or experienced trauma at home.**

- **Young people may be hit hardest by the long-term economic impacts of the lockdown as workers aged under 30 are more than twice as likely to work in a 'shutdown sector'. GMCA and the VRU have always recognised the vital importance of education, training and work, especially for the most vulnerable. We will continue to support young people to access education, training and employment resources to avoid a 'pandemic generation' of young people and young adults whose prospects and hopes for the future suffer long-term damage.**

- **We know that violence experienced in the home is likely to have increased during the lockdown and that it may have been difficult for those affected to get away or seek support, despite the best efforts of many organisations. The Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Partnership Board moved quickly to have a comprehensive and joined up response in place to deal with concerns about a rise in prevalence and severity of domestic abuse and violence.**

2.15

The Serious Violence Action Plan recognises that meaningful community consultation and ongoing collaboration are essential elements of the overall work and will be strong determinants of any success as agencies 'stand together' to reduce violence on Greater Manchester's streets, within its communities and lives of its citizens.

3 Defining the problem of serious violence in Greater Manchester

3.1 There is no set definition of serious violent crime. For the purpose of the Serious Violence Strategy, the Home Office chose to focus on homicide, knife crime and firearms offences. Following discussions with a range of organisations including the police and others in the criminal justice system, our view is that there is value in broadening out the definition to include other forms of violent offences. This is particularly helpful in informing the development of problem profiles and strategic needs assessments.

3.2 There is value in examining the behaviour of offenders and the change in their violent offending over time. Furthermore, we are interested in the interplay between various types of violence and related criminality from a spatial and temporal perspective. This includes a focus on domestic abuse and violence as well as violence that occurs in our communities and public spaces, whether perpetrated by young people or by adults.

3.3 Therefore, for the purpose of this work, the following crimes will be included in our definition of serious violence:

- **Violence with injury**
- **Violence without injury**
- **Domestic abuse**
- **Homicide**
- **Stalking and harassment**
- **Possession of weapon offences**
- **Robbery**
- **Sexual offences, including rape**
- **Public order offences such as inciting religious or racial hatred**

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

3.5 The term 'knife crime' is used to describe any criminal incident involving a bladed instrument. This includes incidents of possession, threats or use of the bladed instrument. Therefore, the issue of knife crime is much broader than assaults with a knife as is often reported in the media and includes domestic incidents involving a bladed instrument, incidents associated to the night-time economy and serious and organised criminal activity.



4 Extent of the problem of serious violence in Greater Manchester

4.1

In order to understand the true extent of the problem of knife crime and serious violence in Greater Manchester, we have been working in collaboration with GMP and Manchester Metropolitan University to examine trends in the data and intelligence we hold since 2013. The findings of this exercise demonstrate a deeply worrying increase in these offences, particularly knife crime, over that period. Headlines from that work are as follows:



Knife crime almost doubled in the period **2015 to 2018**



This is broadly **in line** with the national trend across the UK



During that time, the proportion of violent offences involving a knife has fallen from **40% to 30%**



Whereas the proportion of possession offences has increased from **33% to 41%**



Robberies (personal and business) have **increased** at a **disproportionate** rate to the overall violence trend



A **third** of knife crime offences are linked to **domestic incidents**



Despite the increase in the number of incidents, on average the **severity** of these incidents has remained **constant**



33% of all knife crime and **39%** of robberies were in **Manchester**



In the last three years the number of knife crime offences in schools increased from **61 to 127**, a rise of **108%**



Knife crime occurs **disproportionately** in the most **deprived** areas

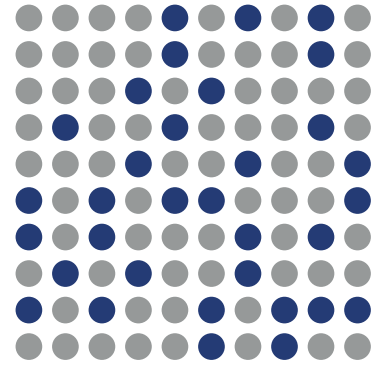
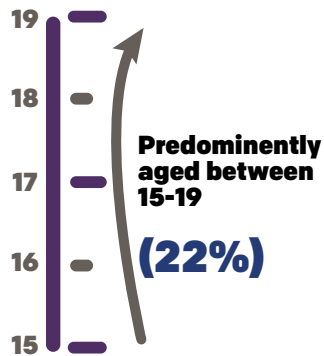
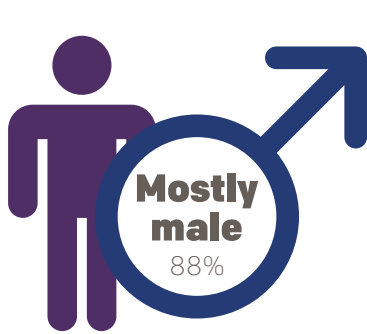


10% of all knife crime was linked to **organised crime groups**



Positive action from the police and criminal justice system has remained stable.

Offenders are:



Live in the 20% most deprived communities

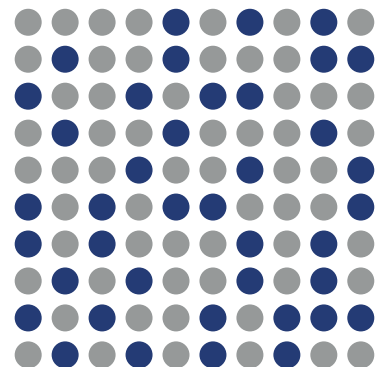
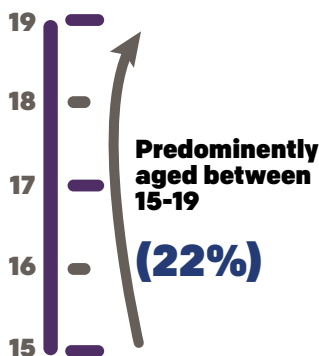
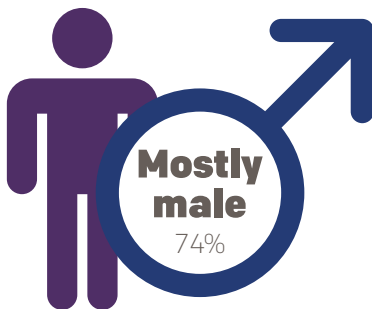
67%

Have
offended
on only



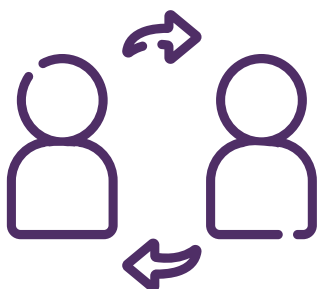
occasion
(83%)

Victims are:



Live in the 20% most deprived communities

60%



Often offended
against by someone
from their own age
group (25%)

5 Views from the community

5.1 To assist in the development of this action plan and the work of the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit, in 2019 we commissioned the Innovation Unit to engage with communities in every district of Greater Manchester on the subject of violence and crime. This included discussion on, but not limited to, violence affecting young people, knife crime and offences involving other weapons.

5.2 This research is grounded in the voices and views of over 650 people, community groups and organisations from across Greater Manchester and sought to understand the drivers of recent increases in violent crime. The researchers talked to a range of people who may not ordinarily participate in this kind of consultation and asked them about their perceptions and experience of violent crime in their communities. Included in this research was a specific focus on the experiences of young adults and young people (aged 10-25) about their perceptions and fears in relation to violence, including people convicted of violent offences and those that have been a victim of violence on at least one occasion.

5.3 During this research we heard that drugs, alcohol and domestic abuse are often common factors in violence and in public perception of where and when violence occurs. Many people cited concerns that an increasing number of young people are carrying weapons, including knives, out of fear or a misguided notion of being better protected if they carry a weapon. This finding, amongst others, will inform our communications with the public on this subject, with the aim of raising awareness of the dangers of carrying a weapon and reassuring communities that carrying a weapon is not as common as they may perceive it to be.

5.4 The six key concerns that emerged from the totality of these conversations with the public are as follows:

- **Social media is viewed as amplifying and exacerbating violent conflict.**

- **There are concerns that young people are growing up in school, home and community environments in which conflict and violence are normalised.**

- **Changes to neighbourhood policing are seen as the cause of a worsening relationship between communities and police.**

- **Vulnerability and fear are important drivers in the increase in young people carrying weapons.**

- **'Toxic masculinity' and pressure to conform appears to increase the likelihood of young men being perpetrators or victims of violent crime.**

- **Communities feel there is an urgent need to create safe places and strong relationships to divert young people from violent crime.**

The full report is available online at:

www.innovationunit.org/thoughts/listen-to-the-community-to-tackle-violent-crime/

6 **Priority 1: Support an improved criminal justice response to all forms of serious violence**

6.1

Years of underinvestment from Government has placed great strain on all aspects of the criminal justice system. That is all too often resulting in a slow and inadequate service for victims, which communities have told us often impacts on their relationship with the police. Despite these financial challenges we have to ensure that offences involving serious violence are given the highest priority at every stage of the criminal justice process, so that offenders are brought to justice and that there is a strong message to the community that this type of criminality – including carrying knives or other weapons – will not be tolerated.



- 6.2** The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) is in agreement with us that in order to address the problem of serious violence in our communities and to improve the rapport between communities and the police, there needs to be more investment in neighbourhood policing across Greater Manchester. This involves the recruitment of more police officers in those neighbourhoods, as well as the targeting of in-year government funding to ensure more frontline officers are on the beat at the times when they are most needed by the public. This activity will be delivered in line with our commitment to place-based working, where police officers work closely with key partners and the community to find local solutions to local problems. Intelligence-led policing is fundamental to this approach and we will ensure sufficient analytical support is in place to assist the police in targeting their response to serious violence to the areas of highest need. GMP is committed to prioritising the investigation of serious violence, particularly offences involving knives or other weapons and personal robberies.
- 6.3** Youth Justice Services across Greater Manchester have also felt the impact of government funding cuts and sadly a lot of the outstanding preventative interventions that were previously so successful at keeping children and young people out of the criminal justice system have been forced to end. Despite these financial challenges, Youth Justice Services continue to develop innovative programmes to engage young people that challenge them to change their offending behaviour. Salford Youth Justice Service has developed a particularly impressive programme of violence desistance which is delivering good outcomes with a particularly challenging cohort of young offenders. We are committed to building on this good work and have earmarked funding for a pilot project in Salford to provide coaching to violent young offenders (and their families) upon release from custody.
- 6.4** The justice devolution programme for Greater Manchester will deliver a range of positive benefits, including having a single offender management structure across the city-region for all offenders, including those with a history of violent offending. This ambitious programme will provide improved opportunities to manage the business both on the partner and strategic engagement side but also for the actual delivery of higher quality management and engagement with convicted offenders.
- 6.5** To support this work we will:
- **Increase the number of police officers on our streets, targeted to the areas of highest demand.**
 - **Ensure the involvement of local communities in problem-solving issues of serious violence in their communities alongside neighbourhood policing.**
 - **Bring about improvements to the use of information and data from a range of sources to enable a more intelligence-led operational response.**
 - **Provide funding for Youth Justice Services for violence desistance and prevention programmes.**
 - **Provide funding for targeted policing operations and the intelligence-led use of stop and search to tackle knife crime.**
 - **Focus our collective efforts on ensuring that the transport system is safe, including all modes of public transport and at stations, stops and interchanges.**

- **Undertake a deep dive review of repeat violent offenders in Greater Manchester to inform a better criminal justice response, particularly the management of violent offenders.**
- **Ensure that the management of offenders is supported by robust systems and interventions and that the Probation Service workforce is appropriately equipped to protect the public by managing and reducing harm through meaningful offender rehabilitation.**

**Increase in
the number of
police officers
on our streets,
targeted to
the areas
of highest
demand.**

7 **Priority 2: Support community and voluntary organisations to deliver activities and interventions in areas of highest need**

7.1 Greater Manchester has a rich and diverse voluntary and community sector and there are lots of organisations delivering outstanding interventions with children, young people and families across our city-region, often in very challenging circumstances and with limited budgets. Any attempts to bring about significant changes to the attitudes and behaviour of our communities in relation to violence needs to include the voluntary and community sector at its core. It is imperative that the public sector forges even closer working relationships with these voluntary and community organisations than at any previous time. We want to hear from them about their experiences of what is working well, where the challenges lie and how we can strengthen collaboration to address the root causes of serious violence and reduce fear of crime in communities. Voluntary and community sector organisations need to be given the opportunity to shape and influence strategic intent at a local level through Community Safety Partnerships and Safeguarding Boards, as well as at a Greater Manchester-level through the Health and Justice Board and Police and Crime Panel.

7.2 In addition to strategic influence, voluntary and community organisations require sustainable funding to deliver projects and interventions to engage children and young people and provide them with positive alternatives to involvement in serious violence and gangs. These activities will assist us all in keeping children and young people safe, as well as giving them hope, aspiration and a sense of purpose. We are committed to ensuring that funding for these activities is a priority in this action plan, in the work of the Violence Reduction Unit and in funds which are devolved to Community Safety Partnerships. We are particularly keen to provide funding for interventions with a strong evidence of impact and positive outcomes or where organisations have demonstrated innovation in responding to some of these challenges. It is also crucial that wherever possible, community and voluntary organisations collaborate to strengthen their offer to the community and there are some fantastic examples of this across Greater Manchester.

7.3 On 15 July 2019, GMCA and our voluntary and community sector infrastructure partner 10GM, hosted a serious violence summit with a range of organisations delivering services across our city-region. The summit was very well attended and some clear messages emerged from the discussions between organisations. Firstly, that the narrative with communities needs to be a positive one which values the contribution of children and young people to making Greater Manchester a fantastic place to live. Most children and young people are law abiding and care about their community and we need to amplify these messages, alongside communication about the ambitions and aspirations of children and young people. Secondly, it's important to recognise the importance of involving children, young people and families in designing services and interventions, rather than professionals assuming we know what they want or need. Thirdly, many organisations provided fantastic examples of collaboration with private business, both in terms of funding for projects but also in providing opportunities for young people, to promote social mobility and youth aspiration. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, organisations stressed the importance of learning lessons from the past including examples of how we have achieved similar goals through collaboration with communities, such as the successes in south

Manchester to address gang and gun crime in the 2000s. There is a blueprint there for positive action, we just need to empower and support communities in delivering this positive change.

7.4

There are occasions when some young people (and their families) require a more targeted youth intervention in order to change their behaviour and prevent them entering the criminal justice system or coming to serious harm as a result of violence. Often services know who these young people and families are but the right interventions may not be available or waiting lists for working with those young people are sometimes too long. We have seen first-hand the impact that schemes offering mentoring, peer support or coaching can have in the lives of vulnerable young people. One such example is the Steer project in Salford, bringing together the police, local authority and charity Salford Foundation to provide intensive mentoring for young people who are on the fringes of involvement in gangs or organised crime. Using government funding, we are working with all ten Community Safety Partnerships and Salford Foundation to roll out the principles of Steer across Greater Manchester. In addition to targeted provision, there is clear evidence that a universal offer for young people – including youth centres and community outreach – can contribute greatly to engaging often hard-to-reach children and young people to help to keep them safe. Community sport in particular has a huge reach into our communities, whether delivered by large national organisations, or local community sports clubs. Often these small organisations go unnoticed by the public sector, despite many of them providing positive activities for thousands of children and young people every week. We acknowledge the value of all of these organisations and through this action plan we will ensure that their efforts are recognised and championed.

7.5

To support this work we will:

- **Ensure that community and voluntary groups are given the opportunity to contribute to and shape the strategic intent of our work to address serious violence.**

- **Make funding available to voluntary and community groups to provide universal and targeted activities and interventions to engage children, young people and families and divert them from involvement in serious violence.**

- **Involve community and voluntary organisations in finding place-based solutions to the issues in their communities.**

- **As a method of desistance, champion the role of community sport and physical activity as a method to engage and challenge young people at risk of being involved in serious youth violence by:**
 - **being community focused;**
 - **being insight led;**
 - **having a continued commitment to quality.**

- **Give young people and parents a voice in how services are designed and delivered, including the function of the Violence Reduction Unit.**

- **Assist community and voluntary groups in attracting financial investment from external sources, including by endorsing programmes with strong evidence of impact.**

8 **Priority 3: Ensure that families and communities that are affected by serious violence are effectively supported through our place-based offer**

8.1

We know the significant impact that violence of any kind can have on the lives of families. We also know that families can be both an important protective factor and a deterrent. It is therefore vital that all families that are affected by serious violence are able to benefit from the high quality integrated support that has developed through local innovations in Greater Manchester alongside learning from national initiatives such as the Troubled Families programme. We need to build on the place-based early help on offer in Greater Manchester that is already helping many families to improve their lives.



8.2

Our Greater Manchester Model of Unified Public Services helps us to do this and puts in place the conditions, which support us to work as one, being more responsive to the needs of residents. We want public services to spend more time focusing on prevention and early intervention and less time on reactive, unplanned crisis intervention. Promising work is already underway in our efforts to divert young people from entering the criminal justice system through the provision of a more tailored and earlier response, to prevent escalation to more serious offending behaviour. We must recognise the assets of individuals and communities. This is vital if we are to be able to help families to be resilient and make changes to their lives. However, in order to experience these benefits, essential ingredients such as trust and confidence must first exist and be strengthened. We know that community members understand better the local challenges and have a unique perspective on them and how to address the issues. Therefore, we are committed to a community-led approach by empowering and enabling the credible voices of those who can influence and improve things on a local level. There is also evidence that a population of around 30,000-50,000 is the right spatial level for integrated working between public services – small enough to be locally sensitive and large enough to create some economies of scale.

8.3

To further embed unified public services for the people of Greater Manchester, we commit to the following in responding to families that experience serious violence:

- **Promoting the importance of intervening earlier in Greater Manchester so that families can get help when and in the place they need it and not just when they hit crisis point.**

- **Working in partnership with national and local research institutes and families themselves to get a better understanding of what families that experience violence need so that we can be smarter and more creative about the services we offer to them.**

- **Promoting the importance of all agencies taking a holistic and asset-based view of what is happening in the family, their previous experiences and working with them to find solutions.**

- **Promoting the use of data and intelligence to identify when a family may need support earlier and better equip professionals in place-based teams to be able to problem-solve, recognising that there isn't a one size fits all approach.**

- **Investing in activities that have a good evidence base of helping families to work through issues, such as family group conferencing.**

- **Creating the environment for innovation around families that experience violence supported by a dedicated investment pot.**

- **Promoting place-based campaigns in primary and secondary schools of high need as well as an awareness programme for families, community and frontline staff.**

- **Recognising the significant impact that family and parental conflict can have on all members of the family, working with partners locally and nationally to explore best practice in this field.**

9 Priority 4: Ensure victims of violent crime receive appropriate and timely support

- 9.1** Evidence from academia clearly demonstrates that victims of violent crime are significantly more likely to be either a victim or perpetrator of a future violent offence (World Health Organisation, 2007). Yet, many victims of violent crime in Greater Manchester are reluctant to report the crime to the police, even in instances where they have needed to seek medical assistance to deal with their injuries. There are many reasons why victims and witnesses of violent crime may not want to cooperate with the police, particularly fear of their perpetrator, the risk of further violence, a mistrust of the police or a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system. It is vital that we challenge these perceptions and give victims the confidence to report these offences in the knowledge that the justice system will protect them and that the perpetrator of the violence will be appropriately dealt with. To assist with this, we have created the post of Victims' Champion for Violent Crime who is independent of the police and criminal justice system to advocate for the rights of victims, safeguard victims and ensure they receive the help and support that they need.
- 9.2** Often hospital emergency departments and ambulance crews have the most accurate information about serious violence. Victims of serious violence may require medical assistance and in the most serious cases, be admitted to hospital. Even in these very serious cases, some victims will not disclose to the police the full details of what has happened to them, who assaulted them and where the assault took place. Therefore, we need to become smarter at sharing information between professionals and organisations, including overlaying data from the ambulance service, with all Greater Manchester emergency department data, crime data and any other relevant sources of information, in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the serious violence picture. Whilst victims of serious violence may choose to not speak to the police, we can still offer them support, advice and guidance while they are accessing medical support. We will work with all Greater Manchester hospitals and the North West Ambulance Service to implement an improved victim offer in these instances.
- 9.3** Being a victim of violent crime can often be a very traumatic experience. Victims of assault, knife crime, robbery and gang violence often report Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a similar response, which can leave them feeling

**Victims will be at
the heart of criminal
justice practice**

depressed, anxious, angry or withdrawn. These victims deserve access to trauma-informed services which is why we are committed to ensuring that our workforce in Greater Manchester understands trauma and the impact on a victims' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. We need all public service frontline workers to be able to spot the signs of trauma and provide trauma-informed support and to signpost victims to specialist services if they are required. We are committed to ensuring that the trauma-informed workforce extends into Children's Services and schools, with a focus on contextual safeguarding for children and young people whose experience with trauma is manifesting in worrying behaviour and risk-taking. An example of emerging good practice in this field is the pioneering work in Oldham currently being piloted involving contextual approaches to safeguarding in secondary schools.

9.4

Restorative Justice gives victims of violent crime an opportunity to tell the offender how that crime has affected them. This can be done in person or through correspondence, all of which is overseen by a trained professional. The offender is then given an opportunity to repair the harm and make amends. Restorative Justice can have a very powerful impact on both the victim and the offender, which is why we have invested in a Greater Manchester Restorative Justice Service and will ensure that all victims of violent crime are offered the opportunity to participate in the scheme.

9.5

Our pledges to victims of violence are:

- **If you report a serious violence incident to the police it will be prioritised and investigations will pursue all reasonable lines of enquiry.**

- **A serious violence Victims' Champion will be brought in to advocate for the rights of victims and to work with all organisations who come into contact with victims of serious violence to ensure services are delivered to meet the needs of that victim.**

- **All key organisations will work together to give victims the confidence to report violent crimes to the police and those victims will receive support at every stage of the criminal justice system.**

- **Victims will be at the heart of criminal justice practice and their views will be considered in the management of all violent offenders.**

- **We will gain a better understanding of serious violence in Greater Manchester by overlaying data from all emergency services, including data from hospital emergency departments and then using this data to improve our response to the issues.**

- **We are committed to having a trauma-informed workforce across all relevant services, particularly those working with vulnerable children and young people.**

- **Adolescents who have experienced extra-familial abuse or exploitation will have access to services from teams that include psychotherapists so that our policing and safeguarding response is trauma-informed.**

- **All victims of serious violence will be given the opportunity to tell the offender how the incident has affected them through the Greater Manchester Restorative Justice Service.**

10 **Priority 5: Create a dedicated Violence Reduction Unit for Greater Manchester**

- 10.1** Greater Manchester is seen as leading the way nationally in respect of political cooperation and public sector collaboration. Our devolution deal with government for health and social care is a model of best practice and is delivering better outcomes for the people of Greater Manchester. These partnership arrangements are the solid foundations on which we will build a Greater Manchester violence reduction programme, which will be overseen by the Greater Manchester Health and Justice Board, co-chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime and the Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership.
- 10.2** A cornerstone of this programme is the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for the whole of Greater Manchester. This is the first unit of its kind in Greater Manchester and comprises a dedicated team of co-located professionals from a range of organisations, collectively making decisions about the most effective way to deploy resources across Greater Manchester to tackle the problem of serious violence, as well as commissioning and delivering interventions aimed at preventing violence from occurring in the first place. The VRU will enable us to get a much deeper understanding of the nature and extent of the problem of serious violence, as well as gathering evidence about the most effective approaches to tackling these issues.
- 10.3** The VRU has a strong police presence, which is led by a dedicated violence reduction Superintendent. This policing team works closely with neighbourhood police teams to ensure their officers are deployed to the areas of highest need and that those officers use the most effective tactics and equipment available to them. The VRU also has representation from the voluntary and community sector to ensure that all of the unit's activities – including those of the police – are in line with the views and priorities of our communities, including the voice of children, young people and parents. Any projects or activities that the VRU delivers will be done with the involvement of the voluntary and community sector, rather than assuming we know what communities want or need.
- 10.4** The VRU also includes representation from youth justice, schools, colleges, hospitals, public health, probation services and local authorities. Having this balanced approach will yield better results and will enable us to bring about lasting improvements in violence reduction rather than short-term sticking plaster approaches that only respond to the here and now.
- 10.5** To ensure that the VRU is adhering to the principles of a community-led, public health approach to tackling violence and is effectively collaborating with key partners, we will hold a regular Violence Reduction Governance Board comprising senior leaders from health, local government, education, child safeguarding, policing and criminal justice.

10.6 The COVID-19 period has seen significant reductions in violence within the night-time economy as licensed premises have been closed. As we build back better, we must learn from this and not return to the previous culture of excessive drinking and violence. With our partners across Greater Manchester, we will consider what measures we can take to ensure a safer night-time economy.

10.7 The Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit will:

- **Adhere to the principles of a community-led, public health approach to violence reduction.**

- **Forge strong multi-agency responses to the identification of and intervention in those communities with significant experiences of violent crime.**

- **Have meaningful, ongoing conversations with the community (including young people) to understand the issue of violence in our communities and to influence the strategic intent of the violence reduction programme.**

- **Implement medium- and long-term prevention strategies aimed at having a more lasting impact in the reduction of serious violence.**

- **Engage with and align to other important programmes of work in Greater Manchester, such as those aimed at tackling domestic abuse, serious and organised crime, drugs and alcohol, and mental health.**

- **Put the needs of victims and their families at the centre of its decision-making.**

- **Deliver interventions with a strong evidence base of successful outcomes.**

- **Use data and intelligence from a range of sources to improve our collective understanding of the problem of violence across all our communities.**

- **Commit to working with our academic partners to ensure we learn as we go, building a process of evaluation into everything that we do.**

- **Focus on the issue of the perceived normalisation of violence and seek to address this across the population of Greater Manchester.**

- **Review the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on serious violence to inform the city-region's recovery agenda and adapt our plans in order to build back better.**

- **Implement changes based upon the work of Greater Manchester's newly established Independent Inequality Commission and Race Equality Panel, and review our approach to equality and inclusion.**

11 **Priority 6: Work with Community Safety Partnerships and Local Safeguarding Boards to implement a place-based approach to tackling serious violence**

11.1 Each of the ten districts of Greater Manchester has well established partnership boards with strategic responsibility for community safety, health and wellbeing and the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults. Issues such as serious violence cut across those community safety, wellbeing and safeguarding agendas and so we are calling on the Chairs of all of those boards to ensure there is effective collaboration between those boards not just within their districts but across geographical boundaries. It is clear that our communities want us to tackle serious violence and it should therefore be given highest priority by those local senior leaders and their partners. To assist with this, we devolved over £3million of Home Office funding to Community Safety Partnerships for 2019/20 and we will be working with each of these partnerships to develop a plan that prioritises the following:

- **Work with education settings (including primary, secondary, alternative provision, further education and pupil referral units) to keep pupils safe and reduce the likelihood of fixed term and permanent exclusions.**

- **Targeted youth justice prevention and desistance programmes.**

- **Mentoring, coaching or other forms of targeted interventions with children and young people at risk of involvement in violence or knife carrying.**

- **Positive youth activities (including outreach) for all young people, before and at the point at which they show signs of needing support, with a focus on communities most affected by violent crime.**

- **Action to identify and prosecute irresponsible retailers who sell knives and other weapons to children and young people.**

11.2 Each plan has been co-signed by the local authority Director of Children's Services and Director of Population Health to ensure a balanced, place-based approach that understands and responds to the needs of children, families and communities. We will assist with the development, implementation and scrutiny of these plans, including a commitment to evaluating the success of interventions to help gain a better of understanding of good practice.

12 **Priority 7: Collaborate with schools, colleges and alternative provision to prevent violence**

- 12.1** In developing this action plan, we have spoken to hundreds of professionals working in education across Greater Manchester, including representatives from primary schools, secondary schools, further education, pupil referral units and other forms of alternative provision. Universally, teachers are saying that the range and complexities of the problems they are having to deal with are greater than ever and that they are having to face these challenges with ever diminishing budgets. This is impacting their ability to provide adequate pastoral services and step-out provision for pupils who are struggling with mainstream education.
- 12.2** The vast majority of teaching professionals care a great deal about the welfare of their pupils and are doing all they can to manage the risk to them often in very difficult circumstances. However, it cannot be right that some schools are off-rolling pupils and more needs to be done to ensure information about pupils moves around the system better, particularly where there are concerns about the welfare of a child and especially at transition points in the education system. We are concerned that children with special educational needs are over-represented in the numbers of pupils receiving fixed-term and permanent exclusions. In Manchester and Rochdale, the local authorities and schools are moving away from strategies that focus on “behaviour” to those that are primarily concerned with “inclusion” into mainstream education for all pupils and we very much welcome this approach.
- 12.3** Our communities told us that they want all educational establishments to be safe places for children and young people, including the journey to and from school or college and we are committed to making this happen. We have heard first-hand about some outstanding projects to keep children safe after school, for example, the approach taken by Manchester Communications Academy to bring food into school from popular local take-away restaurants so that many of their pupils remain on school grounds rather than congregating in large groups in the community, which is when violence can occur. This is an outstanding example of place-based ‘problem solving’ in action, in which the school has had a positive impact on violence against their pupils by understanding the problem and working with the local community to put strategies in place to keep pupils safe.
- 12.4** Many senior leaders in schools and colleges have asked for dedicated police officers or community support officers to assist them in preventing knife crime and serious violence, as well as more quickly and effectively responding to incidents when they occur. We want the police presence in schools to be a vehicle for building positive relationships between young people and the police. Not only can this help to promote awareness of risk amongst young people, how to keep safe and inculcate pro-social behaviour, it can also support individual young people who are vulnerable. Schools are often the first to identify changes in a young person’s behaviour or life circumstances and having a police officer on site would help those schools develop an appropriate package of support for that young individual, such as coaching/mentoring schemes, increased skills development support or by directly referring the young person into more specialist support agencies. We want the officers to be personable, approachable and to become figures of trust for the young people with whom they’re working. We believe the best way for this to be done is by being a permanent presence in the school where they can engage and support the school and the development of our young people.

- 12.5** We are particularly interested in the cohort of young people who are not in education, employment or training (often referred to as "NEET") and are determined to ensure that across Greater Manchester, every effort is made to prevent young people from becoming NEET and when this happens to align services to better meet their needs to support their reintegration into education, employment or training. In order to do this, there is already a commitment across Greater Manchester to broadening the experiences of our young people and support them to become 'life ready' through a series of programmes and initiatives. The groundbreaking Our Pass scheme offers free bus travel to 16-18 year olds to help remove the barriers to accessing education, training and cultural opportunities.
- 12.6** Through our work with schools and colleges we have connected more than 500,000 young people to experiences with businesses as well as the Meet Your Future work shadowing campaign to help young people connect to the world of work. The latest offer to young people has been the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship and Careers Service (GMACS); an online platform that will support all young people to develop plans for their futures, hear from business and connect to opportunities to help develop skills and wider experiences. At a more targeted level, the Care Leaver Guarantee has been supporting young people who are care experienced with an offer of support to improve transitions into adulthood. The Life Readiness work will evolve and include a Young Person's Guarantee encompassing much of what has been done and put the youth voice at the heart of reforming the system to prevent further disadvantage for young people as a result of COVID-19.
- 12.7** The underlying personal and social factors that may lead to young people becoming NEET are closely aligned to criminogenic risk factors. The Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit will work closely with colleagues leading on the life readiness agenda to explore cultural norms supportive of entrenched beliefs and attitudes that serve to justify antisocial and even pro-criminal solutions to unemployment and resource inequality.



12.8 To encourage collaboration with all aspects of the education system, we will:

- **Create a dedicated education expert role within the VRU, who will work with schools, colleges and alternative provision across Greater Manchester to improve and standardise our approach to keeping pupils safe.**

- **Work with the education sector to improve the sharing of information across the system, particularly in relation to pupils with additional needs and those deemed to be most vulnerable.**

- **Provide all educational establishments in Greater Manchester with a named link within a neighbourhood policing team and at least 20 officers will be dedicated full-time to the schools of greatest need across Greater Manchester.**

- **Make an investment in improved policing and security on public transport to make the journey to and from school and college safer.**

- **Where it isn't already happening, encourage schools and colleges to participate in local strategic boards such as the Community Safety Partnership and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards, to ensure they – and their pupils – are able to influence the strategic intent of these boards.**

- **Ensure that schools, colleges and pupil referral units benefit from additional funding for step-out provision and schemes that seek to reduce fixed-term and permanent exclusions.**

- **Make training available for teachers and staff in schools and colleges, focusing particularly on tackling serious violence, trauma-informed practice, mental health and adverse childhood experiences.**

- **Find interesting and innovative ways to educate children, young people and parents about the impact of serious violence and the dangers of carrying a knife or similar weapon.**

13 Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit Outcomes Framework

We will know that this programme has been a success if we achieve a reduction in:

- **Hospital presentations and admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25.**

- **Knife-enabled serious violence, especially against victims aged under 25.**

- **Non-domestic homicides, especially against victims aged under 25 involving knives.**

- **Personal robberies.**

- **The severity of serious violence incidents.**

- **Fear of knife crime and serious violence across all our communities.**

The framework helps to monitor the VRU's public health approach to violence reduction. This approach includes prevention of violence, interventions with groups or individuals and improving the systems and processes around communities and between partners. The framework has four areas:

- A. Feelings of safety and perceptions of risk
- B. Experience of violence (and demand on services)
- C. Response to victims and offenders
- D. System enablers and performance

There is a large range of drivers and protective factors at the individual, community and societal level that influence violence (such as poverty, experience in education, mental health or alcohol use). The VRU outcomes framework does not explicitly include measures of these wider drivers, given their breadth and the fact that there are many other people and programmes working to influence these. However, they will be monitored closely by the VRU and will form part of performance monitoring for any relevant programmes the VRU commission. A dashboard of nationally available data for some of these wider drivers has been set up on the Fingertips website run by Public Health England. This is open access and broken down by local authority: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/indicator-list/view/eyTWSULyck>



The outcomes framework will be updated quarterly where possible and owned by the GMCA Research Team. It feeds into Priority 1 in the wider Greater Manchester Health and Justice Outcomes Framework. The framework will be reviewed periodically and new measures will be added as projects and interventions are commissioned, to support VRU delivery plans or as new data sources are identified.

Risk factors

As referenced above, the following risk factors will be closely monitored through the programme's governance arrangements as we know them to be key contributory factors to violence.

Risk factors within the individual	Risk factors within close relationships	Risk factors within the community and wider society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other behavioural disorders • Involvement in crime • Early involvement with alcohol, drugs and tobacco • Low intelligence and educational achievement • Low commitment to school and school failure • Unemployment • Exposure to violence in the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents • Harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices • A low level of attachment between parents and children • Low parental involvement in children's activities • Parental substance abuse or criminality • Parental depression • Low family income • Unemployment in the family • Associating with delinquent peers and/or gang membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to and misuse of alcohol • Access to and misuse of firearms • Gangs and a local supply of illicit drugs • High income inequality • Poverty • The quality of a country's governance (its laws and the extent to which they are enforced, as well as policies for education and social protection)

