

Plan to Prevent and Reduce Serious Violence in B&NES 2024-2025

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Executive Summary

Serious violence has profound societal impacts, necessitating a collaborative public health approach for prevention and reduction. The 2022 Serious Violence Duty mandates specified authorities, including Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES) and the ICB, to contribute to a strategic needs assessment and strategy to reduce serious violence. The Avon & Somerset (A&S) Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy are concurrently being produced to fulfil this mandate. In parallel, this document outlines a high-level plan specific to B&NES which will complement and inform A&S work to address serious violence in 2024-2025.

In line with national trends, B&NES is experiencing increasing levels of violent crime. The quantitative data for knife crime is less clear, however local qualitative data highlights a perceived increase in knife crime and antisocial behaviour. Data analysis reveals high concentrations of serious violence in high footfall areas. It also shows repeat victimisation and offending with notable gender and ethnic disparities.

Our health needs assessment identified a variety of risk factors for serious violence including exposure to previous violence, familial factors, mental health issues, substance misuse, educational challenges, the influence of organised crime and technology. This was reinforced by community engagement which has highlighted some of these factors, such as social media, recurrent violence, exclusion and exploitation and county lines. The importance of early intervention, youth voice, youth work and collaborative working was also highlighted by the community engagement.

This work has informed the development of four priorities:

1. Prevention and Early Intervention (i.e. Primary Prevention)
2. Response and Support (i.e. Secondary and Tertiary Prevention)
3. Community engagement and ongoing assessment of need
4. Alignment and collaboration within and across organisations

Four measures of success will be used:

1. Improving key determinants of serious violence
2. Harm reduction
3. Perception of safety
4. Delivery of our commitments

Next Steps:

An implementation plan for 2024-2025 will operationalise the priorities outlined, ensuring a coordinated, evidence-based approach to reducing serious violence in Bath and North East Somerset.

Introduction

Serious violence has a devastating impact on the lives of victims, perpetrators, families and communities. It instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. As a result of this impact, the recent 2022 Serious Violence Duty¹ sets out a requirement for specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes producing and implementing a plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. The duty encourages a public health approach to the reduction of serious violence. This involves identifying risk factors, intervening early, ensuring community voices are heard and ensuring plans are rooted in evidence, ultimately fostering a safer and more resilient community.

The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level plan for Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) and the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) to reduce serious violence in its area for 2024-2025. It has been informed by the 2023 B&NES Strategic Needs Assessment and wider literature, through multi-agency collaboration and from conversations with members of B&NES community.

Governance

As set out by the Serious Violence Duty¹, local authorities, police, justice, fire and rescue and health are all specified authorities who have a statutory duty to collaborate in order to produce a plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. The Avon & Somerset (A&S) Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) are convening a regional West of England response through the regional Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) to fulfil the serious violence duty for the specified authorities. Furthermore, each of the five local authority areas within the A&S Police area have a local Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) to identify local needs and to consider the most appropriate local response to reduce and address serious violence. This document and the supporting needs assessment are specific to B&NES, reflecting the local need and response. This over-arching plan is intended to be used alongside an upcoming implementation plan, which will set out allocated actions that have been agreed by partners. The B&NES VRP will oversee the implementation of the B&NES plans, however collaboration across partners will be necessary throughout.

The B&NES VRP is made up of police, justice, fire, health and the local authority as the specified authorities, with additional support from other agencies including education and the third sector as required. As summarised in Figure 1, the B&NES VRP is accountable to the Community Safety Partnership which in turn has a line of governance into the Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP)² and also feeds into the overarching Avon and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-duty>

² <https://bcssp.bathnes.gov.uk/>

Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner³.

Serious Violence Definition

The Avon & Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership, of which B&NES is a member, use the following definition for serious violence:

“The A&S VRP embraces a priority focus on the prevention and reduction of public space violence for under 25’s (children and young people); including homicide, attempted homicide, robbery, wounding, grievous bodily harm, knife and gun crime, alcohol and drug related violence and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as county lines and modern slavery.

We also recognise and commit to supporting a joined-up response to existing partnership work to tackle serious violence across the whole pathway and in the broadest sense, including domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences and violence against women and girls more generally.”

Examples of existing partnerships that tackle serious violence in these areas include:

- Offender management schemes such as IRiS, MOSOVO, IMPACT and MAPPA for people aged over 25
- MARAC, the specific high harm team in the IOM and Southside for domestic abuse
- The Bridge (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) and Operation Bluestone for rape, serious sexual offences and violence against women and girls

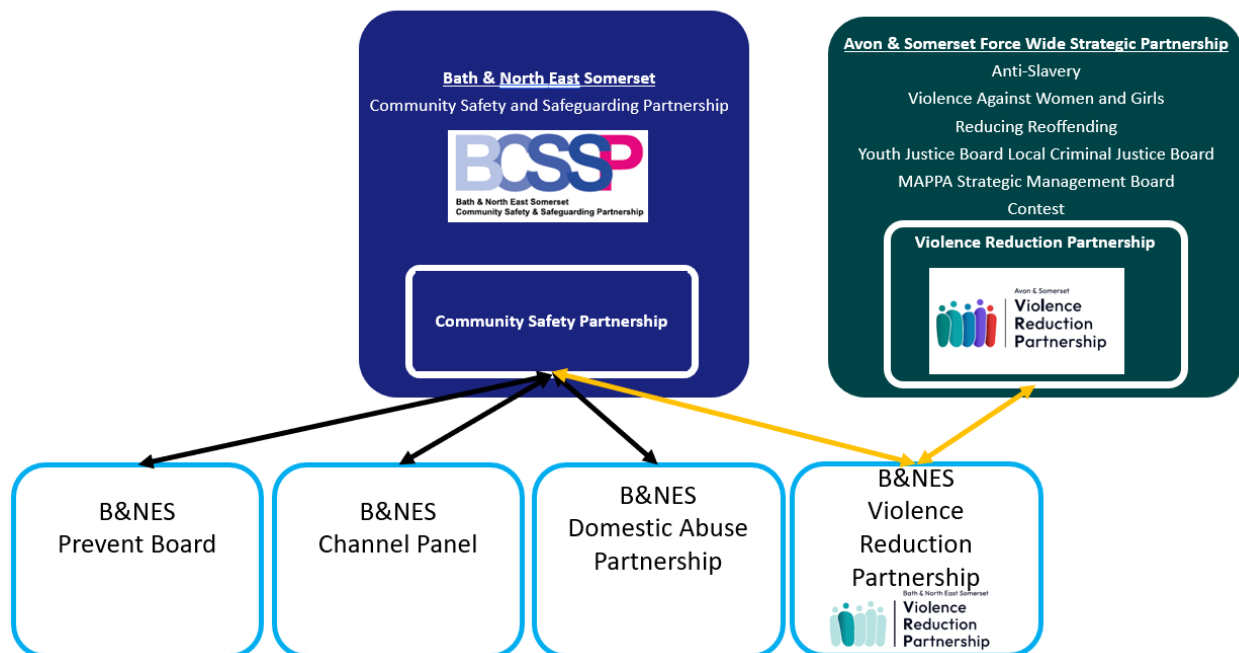


Figure 1 –Local Serious Violence Governance

³ <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/working-for-you/partnerships/violence-reduction-units/>

B&NES 2023 Strategic Needs Assessment Findings Summary

Serious violent crime is increasing nationally and not just within larger cities. There is particular concern around rising levels of serious violence and knife crime amongst children and young people aged under 25. When reviewing the data and trends around serious violence, we should bear in mind that what is recorded may not always reflect the true extent of the situation, as not all incidents and risks are reported or recorded.

Bath & North East Somerset is an area of relatively low deprivation. However, in line with national trends there appears to be an increasing level of violent crime. This crime is concentrated in areas of high footfall such as the City Centre, Keynsham, Somer Valley and Radstock.

The majority of perpetrators are male and there is a disproportionate representation of black ethnic minorities amongst both perpetrators and victims⁴. The evidence is for both repeat offending and repeat victimisation. Though our data shows a smaller proportion of offences being committed by women, amongst local youth there is a perception of increasing violence being perpetrated by young women and girls⁵.

When focusing on weapon possession and knife crime, the data shows an unclear picture of whether offences are rising or falling. However, anecdotal evidence from young people and professionals suggests an increase in knife carrying amongst young people. This is associated with a perception of rising violent antisocial behaviour.

Determinants of serious violence were reviewed and are summarised in Figure 2. Domestic abuse remains a common flag in young offenders and although levels do not appear to have changed in B&NES, we should remain aware of the significant impact that domestic abuse can have. Further familial factors such as a lack of parental supervision and parental substance misuse are also known determinants.

Mental health needs are rising nationally and the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have seen an increase in demand and waiting times. Mental health and emotional dysregulation are recognised to increase the risk of involvement in serious violence. However, it is a topic which is infrequently reported and discussed amongst young offenders.

B&NES has higher than average rates of fixed and permanent school exclusions, and high-risk individuals are overrepresented in these groups⁶. Furthermore, gaps in attainment for those who are disadvantaged or on free school meals persist. There are links between poor attainment, exclusion and serious violence. Serious violence can be linked to unmet needs in children, there is no reason to suggest this does not apply to B&NES.

⁴ 2023 Avon and Somerset Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment

⁵ 2023 Violence and Intimidation against young women and girls in Bath and North East Somerset – Galdem Report.

⁶ 2020 https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/serious_violence_in_bnes_2020.pdf

Nationwide illicit drugs are reported as a key factor in a high proportion of cases of criminal behaviour including youth violence and homicide. In B&NES the use of illicit drugs is comparatively high given its levels of deprivation, and substance misuse is the most common non-family vulnerability amongst young offenders. Similarly, alcohol is known to be a contributing factor to youth violence. B&NES has relatively high rates for the admission of <18s to hospital for alcohol specific conditions⁷.

The influence that organised crime and gang involvement have on serious violence is well known. County lines and drug selling gangs have been linked to violent crime in B&NES⁸. Though support is available for exploited people, it is not possible to determine at this time if it is sufficient to meet the extent of exploitation in the young people of B&NES.

The impact and role that technology can have in perpetuating violence was highlighted in focus groups and surveys. For example, in a survey of year six students in B&NES almost a quarter had searched for violent images, films or games.

Other risk factors identified include adverse childhood experiences, children in need, deprivation, unemployment and housing. Importantly these risk factors may not occur in isolation and in fact many determinants identified are risk factors for each other. For example, substance misuse shares many of the same determinants as serious violence.

⁷ OHID Public Health Data <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-profiles/data#page/4/gid/1938133228/pat/6/par/E12000009/ati/402/are/E06000022/iid/92904/age/173/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/3/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0> reference

⁸ 2018 Centre for Crime and Justices Studies. Young People Violence and Knives <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/young-people-violence-and-knives-revisiting-evidence-and-policy-discussions>

		DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE					
ECOLOGICAL LEVEL		CONCEPTION AND EARLY INFANCY 0-1 YEAR	INFANCY 1-3 YEARS	CHILDHOOD 4-11 YEARS	EARLY ADOLESCENCE 12-14 YEARS	LATE ADOLESCENCE 15-18 YEARS	EARLY ADULTHOOD 18-29 YEARS
Individual risk factors		Attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder or other behavioural disorders					
		Male sex					
		Genetic factors					
		Low intelligence					
				Involvement in crime and delinquency			
		Low academic achievement					
		Parental drug use			Illicit drug use		
					Harmful use of alcohol		
		Child maltreatment					
						Unemployment	
Family and close relationship risk factors		Poor parental supervision					
		Harsh and inconsistent discipline by parents					
		Divorce of parents					
		Teenage pregnancy					
		Parental depression					
		Family history of antisocial behaviour					
		Unemployment in the family					
		Harmful alcohol use during pregnancy					
					Delinquent peers		
					Gang membership		
			Bullying perpetration and victimization				
Community and society level risk factors		Access to alcohol					
		Illicit drug markets					
			Harmful use of drugs				
		Access to firearms					
		Poverty					
		Inequality					

Figure 2 - Risk factors for serious violence. Source: World Health Organisation⁹

⁹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/preventing-youth-violence-an-overview-of-the-evidence>

Community Engagement

Ensuring that the voices of the community of B&NES are heard is a key part of the public health approach to serious violence. The voices and experiences of the B&NES community were integrated through contributions from:

- Serious violence specific focus groups with staff from: primary and secondary schools, third sector organisations linked to reducing serious violence, the ICB, police and different roles supporting a reduction in serious violence from across the council.
- A knife crime awareness event which included discussion and questions from parents.
- Surveys of residents including the Galdem Report (a survey of 11-19 year olds focusing on violence against young women), the voicebox survey (a residents survey for people >18 years that asks questions about community safety) and the schools survey (targeting ages 8-19 and including questions about safety and knife crime).

Below is a summary of some of the findings from this engagement:

What are the reasons young people are getting involved in serious violence in B&NES?

- 1. Exclusion from school**
Due to multiple long-lasting impacts and by exacerbating other risk factors.
- 2. Exploitation through county lines and involvement in illicit drugs**
- 3. Having additional educational needs**
This was thought to be particularly impactful if undiagnosed or resources were not in place to support the young people.
- 4. Previous links to serious violence**
This was thought to be true both in terms of exposure to previous parental violence or the individual having been previously involved in violent incidents.
- 5. Being a current or previous victim of bullying**
- 6. Recent violent events**
Violence stemming from fear for their own safety or for retribution for past incidents of violence.
- 7. Peer pressure and “bravado”**
- 8. Glamorisation/Normalisation of violence**
This was occurring online but also through the violent actions of their role models (e.g. older peers or family members).
- 9. Technology and the online world**
In addition to glamorising violence through sharing violent content, social media at times was acting as a platform for arguments to escalate.
- 10. Feeling Disempowered**
For some violence was a route to power which they did not have through other avenues (such as financially, academically or socially).

11. A lack of understanding of the impact of serious violence

For some this was a lack of knowledge but for others it was felt to be due to a lack of deterrence.

Additional Concerns Highlighted

1. That violent and aggressive behaviour may be occurring at an **earlier age**.
2. That more young people are **resorting to violence** during arguments.
3. That more young people are **left unsupervised**.
4. A **fear of criminalisation** if parents seek support for their children being involved in serious violence.

Suggestions from focus groups to reduce serious violence

1. **Community Involvement**
Strengthening community support and relationships with adults outside of school.
2. **Cross-Border Working**
Emphasising the importance of collaboration across borders to address violence.
3. **Young Voices in Planning Future Interventions**
4. **Preventative Measures**
Early identification and clear preventative measures and pathways for high-risk children.
5. **Support in School**
More support within schools to build relationships and address struggling children, as well as resources to provide information to students about serious violence.
6. **Improved information sharing across schools**
This was particularly highlighted in regard to ensuring excluded students could be supported as best as possible when they move schools.
7. **Build Community Trust in Public Services**
So that community members feel able to seek help and work with partners working in this space.

What has been done so far in B&NES

There is much work already occurring across the determinants of serious violence as well as targeting serious violence more specifically.

Interventions linked to serious violence in B&NES

Many of these interventions will have broad benefits beyond reducing violence, including improving educational outcomes, self-esteem and behaviour. There are also many further interventions that target the determinants of serious violence that aren't specifically identified in this list including, but not limited to, the Early Help platform and its offerings.

Education Setting Focused Interventions

- **Education Inclusion Project**
A short term funded project that aims to reduce school exclusion by addressing the root causes of incidents and behaviour that lead to exclusion from school.
- **County Lines Awareness Workshop**
Workshops for year 5 and 6 children aiming to tackle county lines drug trafficking and grooming and addressing the consequences of both.
- **Be The Change**
Further education and University staff training to identify and prevent harassment.
- **Alternate Provision**
A variety of different education options available to B&NES residents to support pupils with additional needs.

Community Focused Interventions

- **Detached Youth Work**
A collaborative partnership between Youth Connect South West and Project 28 in which youth workers go to target hotspot areas at risk of serious violence and engage with children in these areas.
- **Youth Work and Community Engagement**
In addition to the detached youth work, Youth Connect South West also deliver youth work at locations throughout B&NES.
- **Youth Sport Mentor**
Relationship building and sport for children not in school.

- **Street Doctors**
Emergency first aid training sessions which empower young people and professionals affected by violence to keep themselves and others safe.
- **Lived experience mentoring**
A peer mentorship scheme delivered by community provider Southside targeting those who have been exploited, involved in serious violence or who are at risk of involvement in serious violence.
- **Night Time Economy Joint Briefings**
Includes Police, Taxi Marshals, Street Pastors, businesses and the street medics.
- **Safe and Secure Bath**
A partnership to prevent and deter crime and antisocial behaviour in the city centre.
- **Surrender Bins**
A place to safely dispose of weapons.
- **Bleed control kits**
Lifesaving kits to help control bleeding located in similar places to defibrillators.
- **Parent Engagement Events**
Community events such as the Knife Crime Awareness event which hosted speakers with lived experiences as well as Street Doctors.
- **Parent Support Groups**
Supportive groups for parents struggling with challenging behaviours.
- **CRUSH – Domestic Abuse Support**
Delivered in partnership with Julian House, it is a structured programme of group support for children and young people aged 13-19 who have witnessed, experienced and/or are at risk of domestic abuse.
- **Youth Connect South West Postvention Support**
The Youth Connect South West team were involved in delivering some of the immediate, short term and long term support following a number of recent local fatalities. Their work involves relationship building, directing people to other services and providing a safe space for people.

Planned interventions

- **Social Media and Youth Violence Training**
Planned for 2024, workshops and training on the effects of social media on

youth violence.

- **VRP Conference – Social Media, Music and Language**
Planned for Spring 2024, a conference to explore the impact of social media, music and language on youth violence.

Partnerships and Strategies Supporting Serious Violence Reduction

- **Partnership to Reduce Exploitation and Violence (PREV) Meetings**
PREV seeks assurance that the right support is available for those at risk of serious violence and exploitation. Multiagency members include the VRP, ACE and the police.
- **Adolescent Child Exploitation (ACE) Team**
Acts as a hub to direct children at risk of exploitation to necessary services.
 - **Willow Project**
Preventative work aiming to prevent children from being exploited.
 - **Complex Strategy Work**
Multiagency mapping of vulnerabilities across groups of children.
 - **Case Discussions**
Multiagency platform to discuss emerging concerns in children.
 - **Exploitation and County Lines Film**
VRP and ACE Teams in partnership made this film highlighting the risks and challenges of exploitation.
- **Domestic Abuse Partnership**
A multiagency group that works to provide early help, protection and support to victims of domestic abuse.
- **B&NES Health and Well Being Strategy - Our Vision for 2030**
A broad strategy that considers many of the determinants of serious violence, including improving educational attainment and strengthening inclusive communities.
- **B&NES Corporate Strategy 2023-2027**
Highlights the corporate importance to focus on prevention.
- **B&NES Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2022-2027**
Aims to focus on prevention to reduce the harms of alcohol and substance misuse.
- **B&NES Economic Strategy Review 2014-2030**
Outlines the strategy to improve some key determinants of serious violence including employment and housing.

- **B&NES Local Plan 2022-2042 (Currently under development)**
Outlines a plan to improve some key determinants of serious violence including employment and housing.
- **B&NES Early Help work**
A new needs assessment and strategy is currently under development. Early help provides a first focal point for residents to come to find support.
- **Youth Justice Service Partnership Board**
Takes responsibility for all aspects of youth justice service governance and leads strategically across relevant partners, including local authorities; education and social care; health; police; and probation to fulfil their statutory duties effectively and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children.

Priorities

1. Prevention and Early Intervention

Primary Prevention – preventing serious violence from occurring.

Objectives:

- Promote a public health approach to reduce serious violence by ensuring interventions are targeting the determinants of serious violence.
- Ensure findings from our community engagement are used by exploring determinants that are important to our community e.g. the impact of social media.
- Provide a variety of interventions that can target multiple areas of an individual's life i.e. home, community and school.
- Evaluate the impact of current interventions to ensure that the interventions offered give the most value to the community.
- Ensure that residents of B&NES know how to seek support and that existing referral pathways are appropriately linked.
- Seek out individuals at highest risk of being involved in serious violence and ensure that appropriate support is readily available to them.

2. Response and Support

Secondary Prevention – Immediate response after violence to manage short term consequence and prevent reoccurrence or progression.

Tertiary Prevention – Reducing long term harm after violence and preventing further reoccurrence.

Objectives:

- Ensure support is available for those who have been impacted by violence.

- ii. Develop and disseminate a local toolkit to guide the immediate and long-term response to those impacted by serious violence.
- iii. Provide information so that the general public know how to appropriately respond to serious violence.

3. Community engagement and ongoing assessment of need

Objectives:

- i. Conduct further community engagement to better understand the causes of, impacts of and ways to mitigate serious violence and its determinants. This should include, but not necessarily be limited to, children and young people <18 years, young adults 18-25 years and adults involved in delivering higher education.
- ii. Monitor the perception of serious violence in B&NES and share information with communities so that they are aware of current data and trends.
- iii. Share work that is being done to reduce serious violence with our community so that they can feel confident that actions are being taken.
- iv. Collate and respond to upcoming releases of information related to serious violence in B&NES, including police and health data from the A&S strategic needs assessment, the findings from investigations of recent fatalities in B&NES and new data dashboard for serious violence in B&NES.

4. Alignment and collaboration within and across organisations

Objectives:

- i. Respond to the findings from the A&S OPCCs serious violence reduction needs assessment and strategy by collaborating with those involved to ensure a joint up approach to reducing serious violence in B&NES.
- ii. Ensure that the findings from the B&NES councillors Knife Crime Prevention Task and Finish group inform ongoing serious violence plans in B&NES.
- iii. Ensure that those strategies targeting determinants of serious violence acknowledge the potential impact on serious violence.

Measures of success

The Serious Violence Duty sets out three key success measures for the prevention and reduction of serious violence:

1. A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object.
2. Homicides recorded by the police.
3. A reduction in knife and sharp object enabled serious violence recorded by the police.

In B&NES these first two measures are relatively low which may lessen the usefulness of interpreting them as key indicators. Furthermore, inconsistent coding of the first measure may limit its accuracy. Additionally, these measures don't factor in perceptions of safety amongst residents, nor do they reflect the longer time frame for a public health approach targeting determinants.

We will therefore develop measures specific to B&NES. They will be developed with the implementation plan. These locally agreed measures will reflect the priorities and broadly cover the following aspects:

- 1. Improving key determinants of Serious Violence**
We need measures to reflect our public health approach of targeting determinants of serious violence.
- 2. Harm Reduction**
We need to continue to monitor and reduce end outcomes of serious violence.
- 3. Perception of safety**
The perceptions of safety in residents and its impacts on the lives of communities should be monitored through community engagement and aimed to be improved.
- 4. Delivery of our commitments**
An implementation plan for 2024-2025 will be developed to operationalise our priorities and can be used to track our progress.