



Response Strategy

**Preventing harm,
saving lives and
protecting futures.**

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Foreword



Steve Turner, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

In May 2021, I was elected as Cleveland's Police and Crime Commissioner and immediately established my 10-point plan to make Cleveland a safe place for those who live and work here. One of my priorities was to prevent, reduce and tackle serious violence, which I aimed to

deliver through the establishment of a Violence Reduction Unit.

After successfully lobbying Government, I secured the funding to establish Cleveland's Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV), creating a multi-agency partnership that will work together in tackling serious violence.

Violence Reduction Units are a Home Office initiative that work on an evidenced based approach to identify which activities will deliver successful outcomes for those at risk of becoming involved or being affected by serious violence. They operate by recognising and understanding the underlying causes of violence in order to develop approaches that seek to reduce the prevalence of these causes, and empower people to avoid and address the causes themselves. It is vital therefore, that the voices of communities, and specifically young people are part of this process.

Every act of violence is one too many as the scars can be felt by the victims, families and whole communities long after the event has passed. We will never prevent all serious violence, but I am confident that the establishment of CURV will make a real difference, as it galvanises the collective effort of all those people and agencies who are already working to eradicate serious violence across Cleveland.

CURV is in its infancy but has already begun to make inroads in developing the partnerships across the many organisations that will deliver the improvements we all seek.

We will continue to learn, adapt, and apply best practice at pace. In collaboration with partners, CURV will seek out new approaches, and we will explore ways to scale up those that prove most effective so that we can live, learn and work in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence.



John Holden, Head of CURV

I feel immensely privileged to be given the opportunity to assume the role of Head of CURV and work with a range of partners and stakeholders who are all determined to prevent and reduce serious violence across Cleveland.

Violence is not inevitable but when the evidence shows how engrained it is across all aspects of society throughout Cleveland, it is clear that there will be no quick fix to the problem. It will take time to understand the key issues and develop specific interventions that work. We will have to be honest with ourselves and challenge existing ways of working if the evidence tells us they don't work, and we will have to work more closely than ever before.

CURV is a partnership where all members have agreed to follow the evidence to find solutions that really work. This mission is the responsibility of everybody, including those living in the affected communities, so we will be

reaching out more often to ensure their voices are truly heard. We can no longer pass the burden on to others. We must address this issue as one if we are to ensure that everyone can live, learn and work in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence.

INTRODUCTION

“Violence is a disease, a disease that corrupts all who use it regardless of the cause.”

Chris Hedges
US Journalist

In April 2018, the Government published the Serious Violence Strategy¹ in recognition of reported increases in violent crime across the country, specifically in relation to knife and gun crime, and homicides.

The Government subsequently established 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the following year. Backed by dedicated funding, the VRUs' remit was to bring together police, local government, and professionals from health and education, as well as other key partners, such as community leaders in order to develop a multi-agency public health approach to preventing and reducing serious violence. In 2022, the number of VRUs increased to twenty, after Cleveland successfully secured funding for 3 years to establish its own VRU. This became known as Cleveland's Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) and represents a Cleveland wide partnership of core members and key stakeholders.

The CURV Team was recruited once funding was secured, and a Governance Group was established from the core members. One of the first actions was to commission a strategic needs assessment in order to identify the main drivers of serious violence in Cleveland, as well as the strategic priorities. With the structure in place, the Response Strategy was developed to provide the framework upon which these priorities would be addressed, against a vision that allows...



individuals, families and communities to live, learn and work in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence.



This Strategy's lifespan is from April 2023 until the end of March 2025, with a review at the midway point, in order to adjust priorities and approaches as more evidence becomes available.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf

KEY FINDINGS

On its establishment, CURV commissioned a report² – the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) - to understand the categories of serious violence across Cleveland, as already defined in the Home Office metrics:

Hospital admissions as a result of assault with a sharp object:

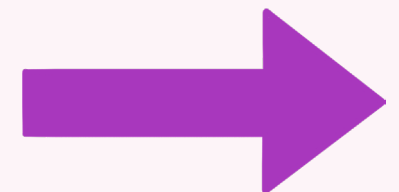
Cleveland has the 7th highest rate nationally (11.4/100,000), while Middlesbrough's rate exceeds that of Merseyside, which has the highest rate nationally.

Police recorded knife crime:

Cleveland records the 2nd highest rate nationally (154/100,000)

Homicide:

Cleveland's current ranking of 17th nationally for non-domestic homicide rates (1.2/100,000) represents a percentage rate increase over 3 times higher than the national rate of increase between 2020 and 2022.



The overall findings of the SNA can be summarised as follows:

² Based on data up to June 2022

Scale

Fewer than 300 individuals were convicted of a serious violence offence in the most recent year of data.

Despite over 7,500 offences in 2020, just 289 people were convicted.

Serious violence has a profound impact on victims and the wider community.

59% of children and young people had changed their behaviour to feel safer.

Cleveland's serious violence problem is one of the most significant in England and Wales.
1 in 20 crimes in Cleveland are serious violence offences.

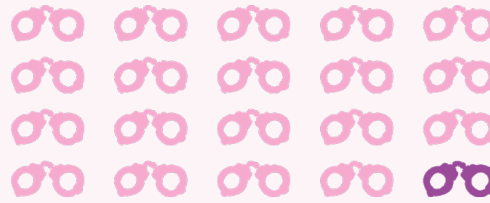
Nature

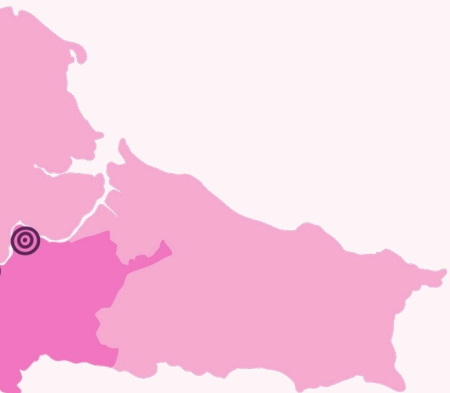
Serious violence takes place in concentrated hotspots.

16% of violence takes place in just two wards in Middlesbrough.

Offences are most commonly linked to domestic abuse, drugs or alcohol and weapons.

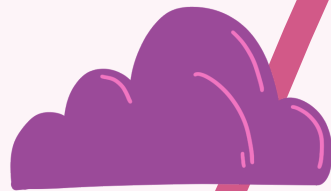
24% of serious violence offences were flagged as domestic abuse-related.





Drivers

Cleveland has high levels of deprivation.
Middlesbrough is the local authority with the highest levels of income deprivation.



There are high levels of domestic abuse in Cleveland.
39% of young people known to youth offending services had experiences of domestic abuse.

There is a question around to what extent violence is normalised in Cleveland.
41% of children and young people have seen fights involving young people on social media.

The majority of violence in Cleveland is committed by a small number of suspects.
25% of offenders committed half of serious violence offences.

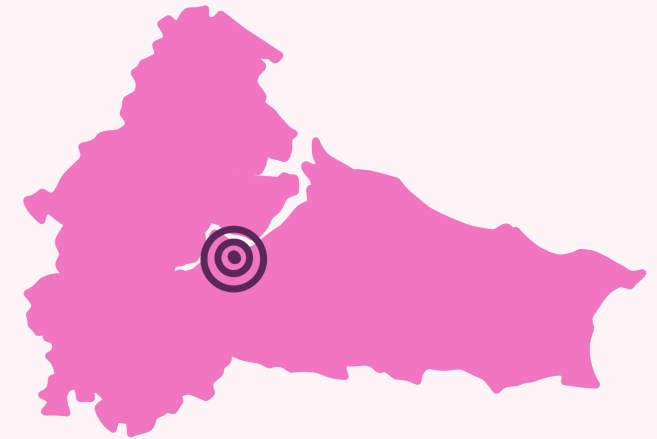
The SNA enabled CURV to identify the key offences, drivers and areas of thematic focus which are capable of forming proportionate, clear and actionable strategic priorities for the CURV. These priorities are summarised briefly below:

Assault with intent to cause serious harm:

Since 2015, Cleveland's rate of increase in this offence type has far exceeded both the national average, and local rates of less harmful forms of assault. This comparatively accelerated increase in near miss offending, combined with Cleveland's small population presents a real risk of rapid and increased rates of recorded homicide in the near future. The increased risk associated with weapon-enabled violence (22% of recorded offending) provides the same justification for prioritising this subset of offending.

Robbery and Rape:

When combined with violence with injury, rape and robbery comprise two thirds of serious violence. In the last 5 years, rape and robbery represent an estimated costs on Cleveland of £34Million, over 40% of the total estimated cost of serious violence. Prioritising offending in public spaces is consistent with existing partnership priorities and recognises the disproportionate impact on public perception of risk of violence such offending has.



Locality:

Although the SNA shows serious violence is concentrated in specific areas, further work is required to identify patterns associated with priority offence categories, specific behaviours and cohorts to help shape future, specific initiatives.

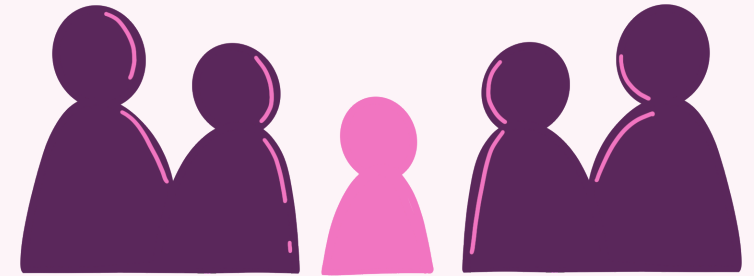


Drugs:

Drug use and supply, organised crime group activity, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and fire-setting are perceived as being enablers, potential gateway offences or intrinsically linked to serious violence. Further research into the local nature of these links is required to inform future strategic and tactical decision making.

Youth Experiences:

Survey results identified alarming trends around youth experiences of violence, and the resulting behaviours adopted to reduce the risk of further victimisation – including joining a gang, carrying a weapon, missing school. The survey also highlighted the prevalence of children informing family members (65%), friends (35%) and teachers (10%) of their victimisation, providing an opportunity to introduce protective factors in these relationships.



Deprivation and Exclusion:

Deprivation, experience of services, exclusion from school, experience of domestic abuse and prior exposure to the criminal justice system were identified as strongly correlated with serious violence offending. To inform future decision making around which predictors of violence should be given most weight for targeting interventions, further research will be required to better understand their prevalence, causal link, and value as a risk indicator.

DEFINITION



The Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy defines serious violence as:

“specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing.”



Cleveland's definition of Serious Violence is:

“Offences which cause significant harm to individuals and communities”

and includes the following categories:

- **Homicide, attempted murder, and manslaughter.**
- **Assault with intent to cause serious harm.**
- **Malicious wounding, wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm.**
- **Arson with intent to endanger life.**
- **Aggravated burglary.**
- **Death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving.**
- **Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking.**
- **Kidnap.**
- **Sexual violence offences**

Knife crime and/or firearms enabled/threatened offences based on the following categories (in addition to those already listed)-

- **Robbery (business and personal).**
- **Threats to kill.**
- **Assault with injury.**
- **Assault with injury on a Constable.**
- **Racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury.**

Based on this definition, 15,014 serious violence crimes have been committed over a 5-year period from October 2017 to October 2022, which equates to 8 serious violence crimes every day, and where 5%, or 1 in 20, of all crimes are serious violence offences.

1 in 20
CRIMES IN CLEVELAND ARE SERIOUS VIOLENCE OFFENCES

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse has far-reaching repercussions for all of society. It has devastating effects on families, children as well as local communities. In 2021, Parliament passed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which defined it as behaviour consisting of; physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, or psychological, emotional or other abuse.

A number of these behaviours do not fall under the definition of serious violence and for this reason Domestic Abuse is excluded so as not to conflate two issues, but any offence that qualifies as serious violence and conducted within a domestic setting will remain within the scope of this strategy.

As a result, CURV will embed into Cleveland's existing architecture that leads on reducing domestic abuse, and supporting survivors, and will work with those agencies that deal with perpetrators.



CONTEXT

***“Nothing stops a bullet
like a job.”***

G Boyle
Founder, Homeboy Industries

Cleveland accommodates over half a million people comprised of an increasingly diverse population, including over 18,000 university students from over 100 different countries, all compressed into 597km² and governed through the four unitary authority areas of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees.

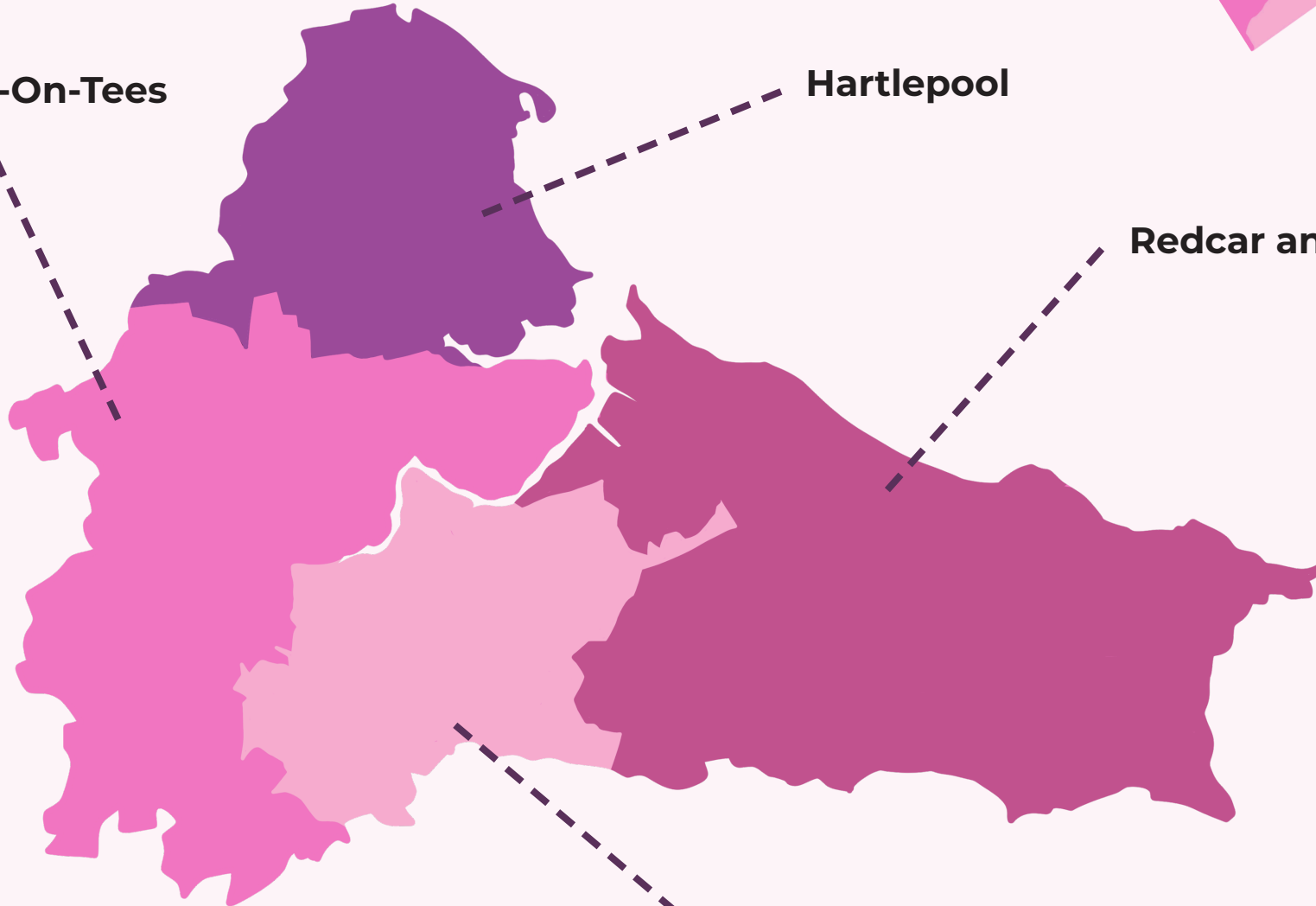


Stockton-On-Tees

Hartlepool

Redcar and Cleveland

Middlesbrough



Even though the area has a long and proud industrial history with a significant petrochemical industry, a nuclear power station and the busy seaport at Teesport, Cleveland has some of the most deprived areas in the country, with Hartlepool and Middlesbrough ranked within the top 10 most deprived local authority areas in the categories of income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment.



Middlesbrough in particular ranks first among all local authorities in England and Wales for income deprivation. It is of little surprise, therefore, to see that Cleveland records alcohol misuse as more than 50% higher than the national average, twice the national average for rates of substance misuse, and more than three times the national average for opiate misuse. Although there is no direct link between violence and deprivation, 16% of Cleveland's 15,014 serious violence offences occur in just two wards in Middlesbrough, and 40% of serious violence offences were most commonly linked to drugs and/or alcohol and weapons.

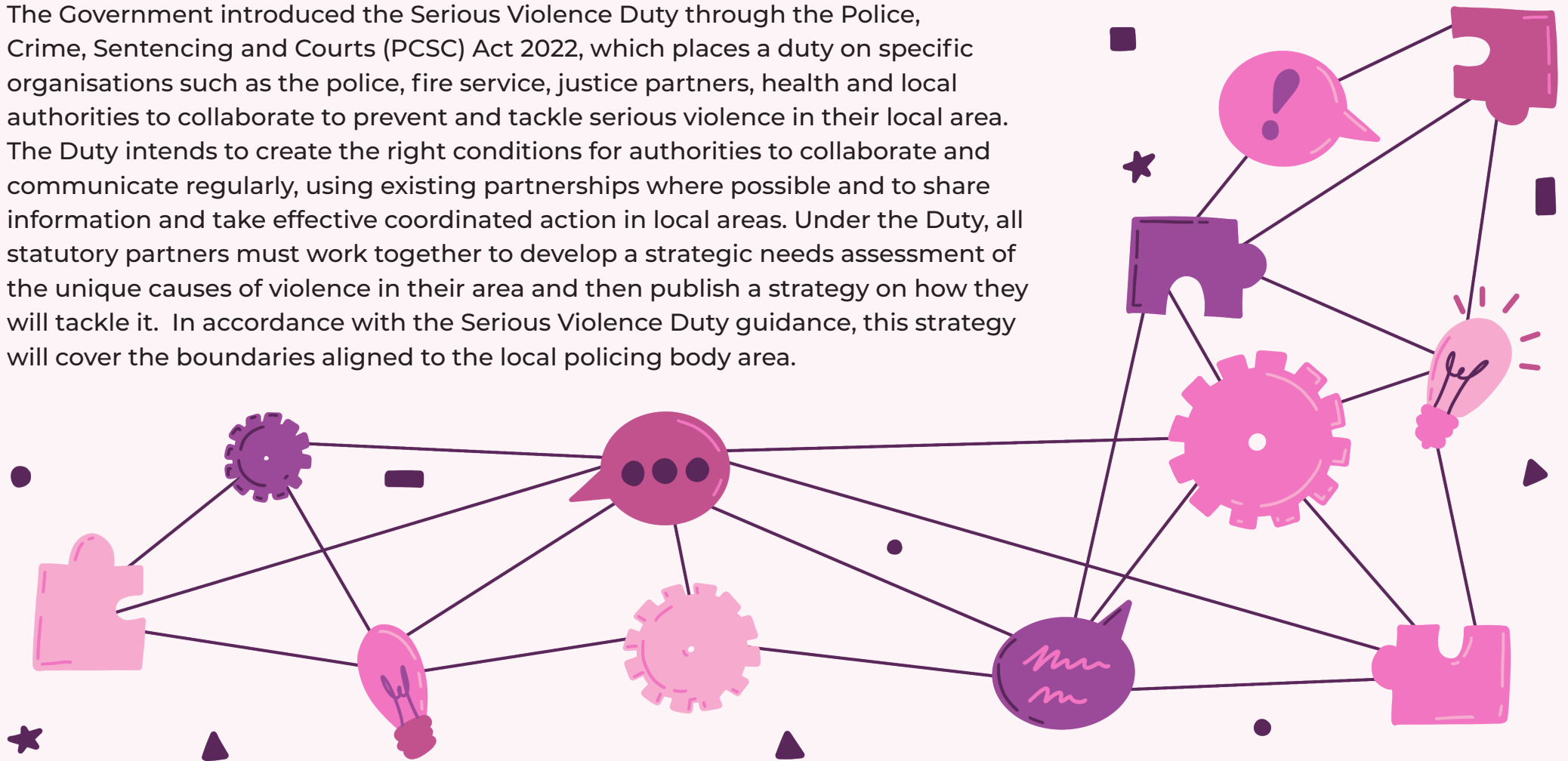
The SNA suggests meaningful protective factors do exist in areas of the community that support in reducing levels of serious violence. It is hoped that further research into the local picture, combined with trials of interventions with an evidential base can extend the protection offered and mitigate against future violence.

What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that Cleveland is witnessing some of the highest levels of serious violence in the whole of England and Wales. Not only is this making people feel unsafe, but it is making them change the way they live their lives. To make matters worse, the proportion of violent crime is increasing, and has risen a lot since pre-COVID. Although the lack of well-paid jobs is not helping, there are many reasons why Cleveland is affected this way.

SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

The Government introduced the Serious Violence Duty through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022, which places a duty on specific organisations such as the police, fire service, justice partners, health and local authorities to collaborate to prevent and tackle serious violence in their local area. The Duty intends to create the right conditions for authorities to collaborate and communicate regularly, using existing partnerships where possible and to share information and take effective coordinated action in local areas. Under the Duty, all statutory partners must work together to develop a strategic needs assessment of the unique causes of violence in their area and then publish a strategy on how they will tackle it. In accordance with the Serious Violence Duty guidance, this strategy will cover the boundaries aligned to the local policing body area.



What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that a number of authorities and agencies now have a legal responsibility to act to help prevent and reduce serious violence, and are required by law to work together closer than before.

PURPOSE

The Home Office outlined three key success measures for the nation's VRUs to deliver against:

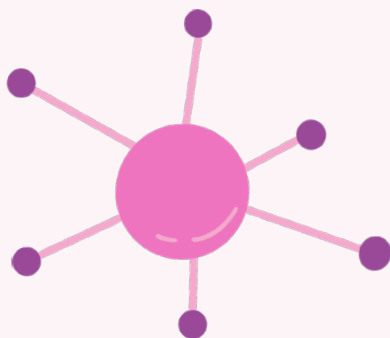
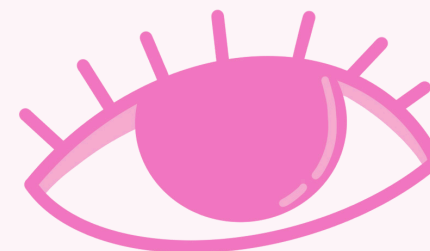
- **A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among victims aged under 25.**
- **A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among victims aged under 25.**
- **A reduction on all non-domestic homicides and especially among victims aged under 25 involving knives.**



Cleveland ranks among the top ten local areas for police recorded knife crime and hospital admissions for knife sharp object assault, and so CURV will work together with partners and the specified authorities to prevent and reduce serious violence by aligning partnership arrangements and through joint planning. Beyond these success measures, VRUs were given the freedom to set their own parameters. Based on the themes identified through the Strategic Needs Assessment, CURV developed a Cleveland specific vision, core function and objectives that will shape the Response Strategy.

Vision

CURV's vision is for individuals, families and communities to live, learn and work in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of serious violence.



Core function

CURV's core function is to provide leadership and strategic coordination of Cleveland's response to serious violence. CURV will deliver this by strengthening partnerships, working with communities, and ensuring specified authorities, partners and key stakeholders collaborate across the whole of Cleveland to deliver against agreed objectives.

What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that the authorities and agencies will work together to make Cleveland a safer place to live, and will agree ways of working that make this happen. We will ensure we work closely with communities and young people in particular, and will never be afraid to try new ideas.

PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

“When Peel set up the police force, he did a litmus test of good policing, he said it was to protect the poor. That’s the litmus test of great policing, a

***dn't say that filling the jails was the
as prevention of crime and disorder.
and that's about prevention."***

Karyn McClusky
'Prevention is better than the cure'
1919 Magazine, June 2021

As stated in the 2012 publication “Protecting people, Promoting health: A public health approach to violence prevention for England⁴”, violence is not something that just happens, nor is it normal or acceptable in society. Many of the key risk factors that make individuals, families or communities vulnerable to serious violence are changeable, including exposure to adverse experiences in childhood and subsequently the environments in which individuals live, learn and work throughout youth, adulthood and older age.

This strategy aims to adopt a public health approach in reducing the likelihood of serious violence. In doing so, CURV will apply a four-steps approach⁵:

Defining the problem

It is essential that we understand the causes, or drivers of serious violence. For this reason, the gathering of data and intelligence is of prime importance and so the establishment of a comprehensive strategic needs assessment, and a robust information sharing infrastructure was the first task for the new CURV team. Once established, however, the need for data and intelligence continues, and so achieving this will remain at the heart of the CURV Response Strategy.

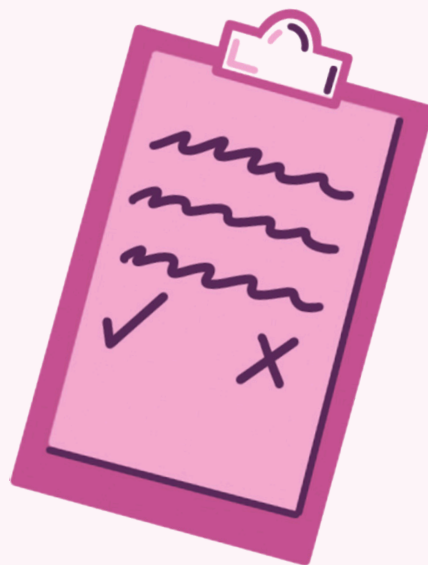


Identifying the causes of serious violence

Intelligence alone is not enough. It is essential to go further in order to identify the factors that contribute to people being at risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of serious violence, as well as recognise factors that may help protect people from those outcomes. Identifying these ‘drivers’ will help in prioritising scarce resources to be earmarked against specific localities or in support of specific identifiable groupings.

Test and evaluate evidence-based

Recognising the ways in which serious violence manifests across Cleveland, it is essential that the CURV Response Strategy results in both broad based as well as focussed activities that address early intervention. It is essential that all such interventions include robust evaluation methodologies in order that those identified to be successful can be scaled up.

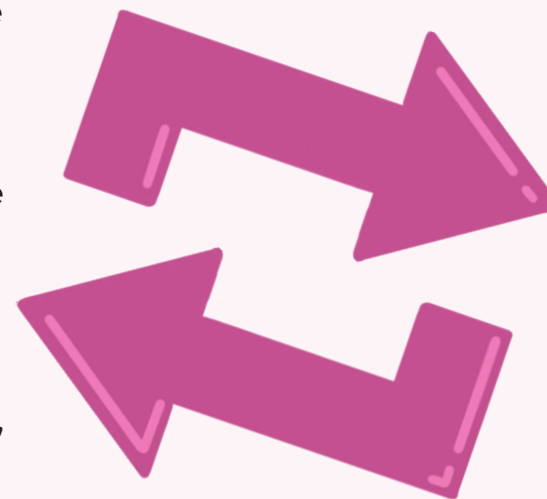


Continuous learning

There is no 'quick fix' to the reduction of serious violence. The original concept of VRUs recognised this and were established to ensure there is effective planning and collaboration to support the adoption of a long-term approach to preventing serious violence⁶. The approach enables VRUs to address the underlying causes of serious violence, diverting resources and adjusting methodologies accordingly, while continually adding to understanding, creating a continuous loop of learning, adaptation and implementation.

What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that all agencies will work together to help protect the whole population. In doing so, we may have to focus on some specific areas, or individuals and families. Our main goal is to reduce risks to the people of Cleveland over time and we aim to do this by identifying the causes of problems and dealing with them as early as possible, rather than waiting until the problem has occurred.



⁶ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/how-is-the-government-implementing-a-public-health-approach-to-serious-violence/>

CORE PRINCIPLES

“Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.”

Alfred Adler

In addition to the adoption of a public health approach, CURV will adopt four core principles, that will shape this Response Strategy:

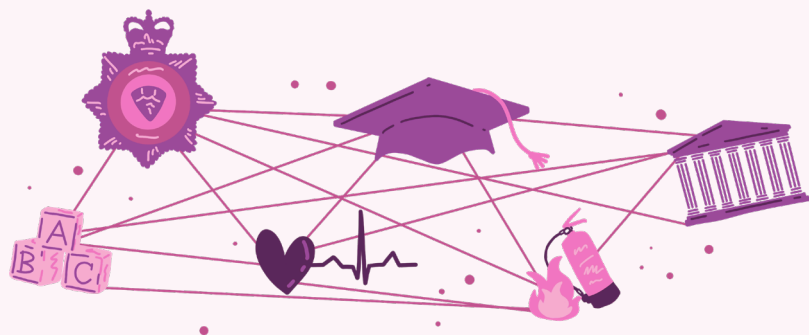
An inclusive approach

CURV will adopt a 'with and for' approach of working to ensure individuals and communities are included in and empowered by the process of preventing and reducing serious violence across Cleveland, especially in the most affected areas. We will widen involvement, particularly amongst those most affected by serious violence, and we will move beyond the barriers of cultural stereotypes and biases based on gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race or ethnicity ensuring that policies, protocols and processes are responsive to the needs of all individuals served.



A whole-systems approach

CURV will continuously seek opportunities to implement whole system ways of working, promoting joint working and problem-solving between all partner agencies, including affected communities.



A sustainable approach

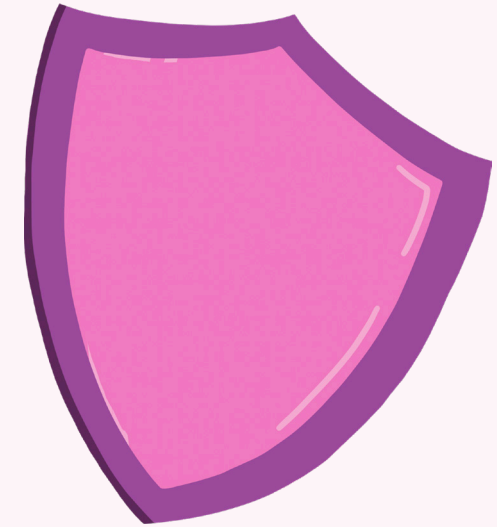
CURV will seek to invest in Cleveland's capacity by strengthening existing structures and services, harnessing the assets of existing local partnerships embedded throughout Cleveland's communities to ensure the long term sustainability of successful interventions.



A trauma-informed approach

A Trauma informed approach helps to build trust among staff, service users and the wider community through the transparency of organisations' policies and procedures where staff explain what they are doing and why, and doing what they say they will do rather than over promising. This approach also seeks to help organisations and staff see beyond the presenting behaviours of individuals and approach all engagements from a perspective of 'what happened to them?' and 'what do they need?' rather than 'what is wrong with them?'

The adoption of a trauma-informed approach ensures the physical, psychological and emotional safety of service users and staff is prioritised, by: people knowing they are safe or asking what they need to feel safe; there being reasonable freedom from threat or harm; attempting to prevent re-traumatisation; putting policies, practices and safeguarding arrangements in place.



What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that we will do what's right to ensure we make this work. We will genuinely listen to the ideas of the communities affected by serious violence, especially young people as well as include them in our decision making. We will make sure that whatever we build is built to last and becomes a way of working, and most importantly of all, we will make sure that all those who are involved in making this work see the world through the eyes of those affected by serious violence.



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

Henry Ford

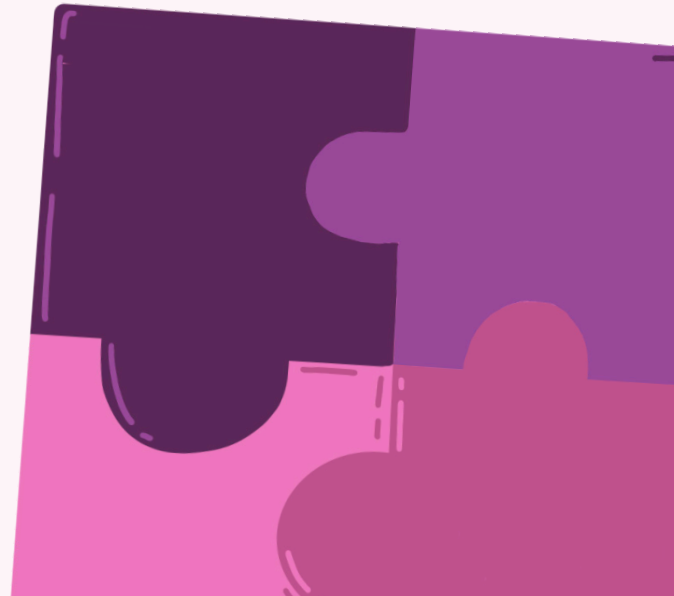
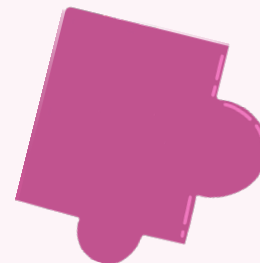


What does it mean for Cleveland?

CURV is a partnership where all members have agreed to follow the evidence to find solutions that really work.

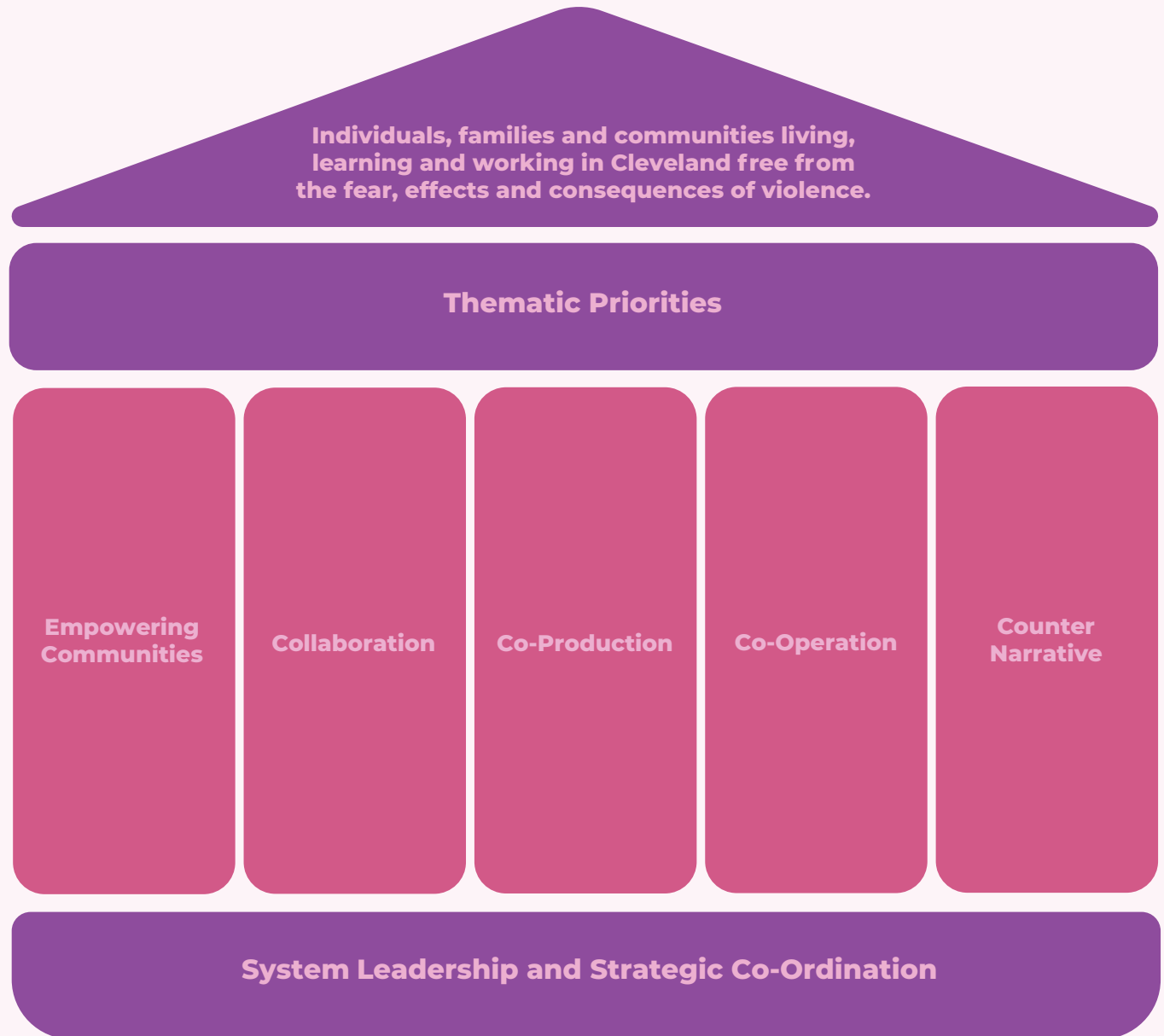
This Response Strategy forms the framework for partnership working. It is recognised that this will not occur overnight, but CURV aims to embed a common philosophy and approach through the development of a robust partnership, which seeks to encourage the alignment of the visions, shared objectives and deliverable outcomes of partners' strategies through collaborative working and co-production. A Partnership Agreement, approved by CURV's core membership, sets out CURV's organisational structure and governance arrangements, and a list of partners' associated strategies and plans of partners and specified authorities, all of which contribute to the reduction of serious violence can be found at Appendix 1.

It means that there is already a lot of plans and policies out there that are already tackling serious violence, but they are not as joined up as they could be. We will do better.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

CURV has adopted a strategic framework for preventing and reducing serious violence, which will provide a structure for delivering the strategic priorities. This framework relies on system leadership to deliver the agreed vision by addressing prioritised activities within thematic priorities, the output of which will be shaped by the adoption of agreed ways of working.



System leadership

CURV's leadership will remain dynamic so that representatives from across the whole of Cleveland, who can contribute to creating the solutions to serious violence, can have a seat at the decision-making table. Robust system leadership will help to ensure that expectations remain aligned, while maintaining a shared determination to overcome the challenges of collaborative and partnership working.

Robust system leadership will assist in ensuring that other relevant Boards, such as Health and Well-Being Boards, Safeguarding Partnerships and Youth Offending Management Boards, include serious violence within their agendas. It will also ensure greater consistency in strategic messaging around serious violence, including engagement with elected members on evidence-based priorities, principles and methodologies, in order to identify and harmonise partners' work-strands to enable joined-up working.



What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that CURV will deliver leadership across Cleveland by the consent of all partners.

Ways of Working

“Nothing about us, without us.”

James Charlton
Author

Empowering communities

Genuine empowerment of communities in identifying workable solutions that contribute to the prevention and reduction of serious violence is a central tenet of the Response Strategy.

We will achieve this by including Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSO) membership at all levels of the CURV’s structure, establishing forums for youth and community groups to come together to discuss their concerns, and identify possible methodologies for reducing serious violence amongst their communities. We will go further by investing in approaches that genuinely amplify the voices of Cleveland, and providing genuine opportunities for young people and community representatives to have a seat at the decision-making table. We will also seek to develop and agree a model for community involvement so that communities have a stake in the activities undertaken.



Collaboration

It is essential that all partners play their part in reducing serious violence as no single agency will be able to achieve this on their own. The greatest impact in collaborative working will be in all partners jointly identifying and addressing system issues that adversely impact on delivering serious violence prevention work, and in identifying where priorities, methodologies and deliverables specifically in relating to early years, parent and family-based interventions, knife crime, sexual violence, and re-offending can be aligned and even merged.

Collaborative working must rely on an open-door policy, bringing in new members as opportunities arise. Serious violence is not deterred by geographical or organisational boundaries and so collaborative working must cut-through boundaries to ensure the causes of serious violence are addressed in a manner that is sympathetic to a whole-systems approach by exploring opportunities for closer alignment and jointly developing new initiatives between related areas of business. This has already commenced in work across the councils in relation to activities in support of reducing serious violence around the Night-time Economy, which should set the template for scaling up further work. Cleveland's Community Safety Partnerships naturally sit at the heart of collaborative working and true collaboration would come from harmonisation of their agendas, work-strands and key action-plans. With the Serious Violence Duty now in place, the opportunity to embed collaborative working must not be overlooked.

Collaboration will support the sustainability agenda by ensuring that effort is not duplicated, and in aligning the OPCC and CURV's grant system to ensure a more consistent approach, agreeing joint priorities to ensure the greatest impact.





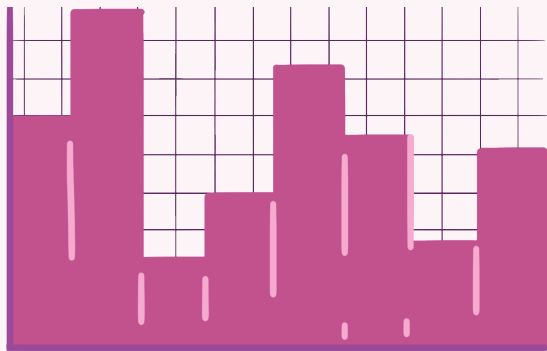
Co-production

CURV will seek to legitimise its work by ensuring all stakeholders are involved in the design and delivery of the response in preventing and reducing serious violence. Co-production is an extension of community engagement and is necessary to ensure that the communities who engage can see the results of their involvement across all aspects of violent reduction activity, including involving people with 'lived experience', and including peer mentoring into interventions where appropriate, while ensuring all CURV campaigns are developed using target-audience input. Another way of empowering our communities will be to give control of a 'community grants' fund to the established young persons and community forums so the response is owned by those with a vested interest in positive outcomes. The aspiration will be for co-production to become business as usual across all partners.



Co-operation

Cooperation between partners will be achieved through the embedding of an evidence-based approach drawn from multi-agency data that has been gathered on the basis of robust data sharing protocols, as this will help partners work from a common operating picture. This common understanding will help amplify the collective response to agreed areas of priority, which will only be achieved over time but will commence with CURV and its partners investing in the data sharing architecture, including agreements and software that will enable the establishment of a serious violence data dashboard. In addition to establishing the necessary architecture, there is a need to undertake further research into areas where analysis has identified areas of intelligence gaps in order to build on our collective understanding of the prevalence of risk factors in order to identify opportunities for earlier intervention and prevention responses that would deliver positive outcomes.



It is imperative that we cascade learning from CURV's SNA and partners' problem profiles to support a shared understanding and common language across CURV as this is an essential pre-cursor to partners having the confidence to work together to test new and innovative approaches and ensuring robust evaluation measures are built in to provide the necessary evidence to help decide whether to continue, scale up or cease activity. This will require a joint commitment of working towards an evidence-informed approach, prioritising the development of interventions which have the most robust evidence-base.

Counter narrative

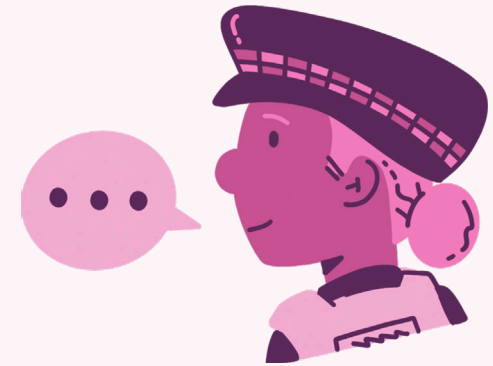


Timely and accurate messaging that supports all partners is essential in countering that narrative that challenges the violence reduction agenda. In order to achieve this, CURV and its partners will develop a serious violence reduction communications strategy and work towards ensuring consistency throughout all strategic messaging around serious violence, working proactively with local media to influence messaging. All of this will aim to equip the general population as well as specific groups with accurate information about the causes of serious violence and information on alternate pathways to help people navigate themselves away from negative outcomes. By working with young people and people with 'lived experience' we will help provide positive role models to young people and we will include them in developing our messaging to help maximise its impact.

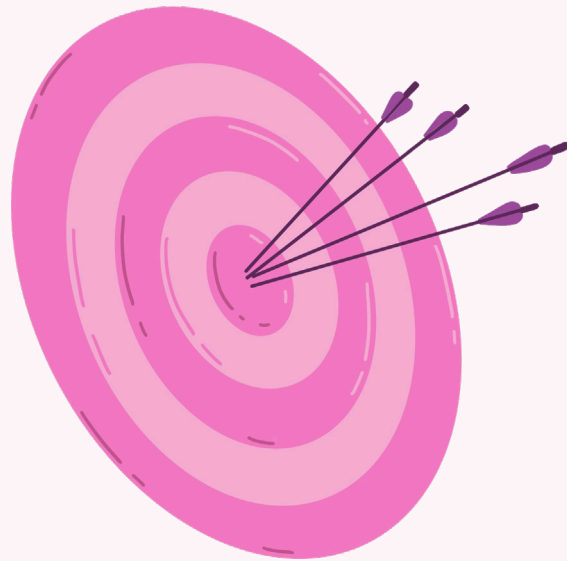
The counter narrative is more than just messaging. It is about helping to provide a better alternative to serious violence. We will, therefore, work with partners to ensure accessibility to volunteering work, leisure, arts and sport opportunities, as well as peer mentoring, and credible and resourced 'exit strategies' for those young people who have become victims of harmful lifestyles.

What does it mean for Cleveland?

It means that the voice of young people and Cleveland's many communities will be represented and have a say in what CURV and its partners do in reducing serious violence. It means an end to working in isolation and towards including all partners in designing, delivering and funding everything we do. It means we will work towards agreeing common goals so that everything we do has a purpose beyond our own agendas, and it means we will communicate all this better.



Thematic Priorities



It is essential to set the conditions for delivery, with the priority aimed at early years support and intervention, resulting in partners focussing on enhancing support to families, school inclusion policies, and understanding the needs of young people, including those who are neurodiverse.

CURV has identified several key areas of focus and activity, each of which contributes to the main mission of reducing serious violence across Cleveland. We drew on the Strategic Needs Assessment in identifying the four thematic work priorities that represent systems and groups of stakeholders with whom CURV can collaborate, with early years support and interventions a priority. The aim is for these thematic areas is to be cross-cutting through 'place based' targeting of interventions.

Research & Evaluation

- Develop and maintain the CURV 'data hub' to become the portal of choice for data and intelligence.
- Build a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to evidence outcomes against interventions.
- Support the adoption of an evidence-based approach approach to commissioning - prioritising activities based on outcomes.
- Challenge existing ways of working across all partner agencies.
- Advise on and commission new areas of research, analysis or evaluation.
- Link in with other VRUs for opportunities of collaboration on research and evaluation.
- Where appropriate, offer support with analysis, research and/or evaluation, including linking with appropriate partners outside the research group or direct involvement of members.
- Support the dissemination of research findings and learning from across Cleveland and beyond.
- Provide a space/forum to share research and best practice.
- Ensure that research/evaluation findings are embedded across commissioned projects.
- Contribute to learning.

Early Intervention

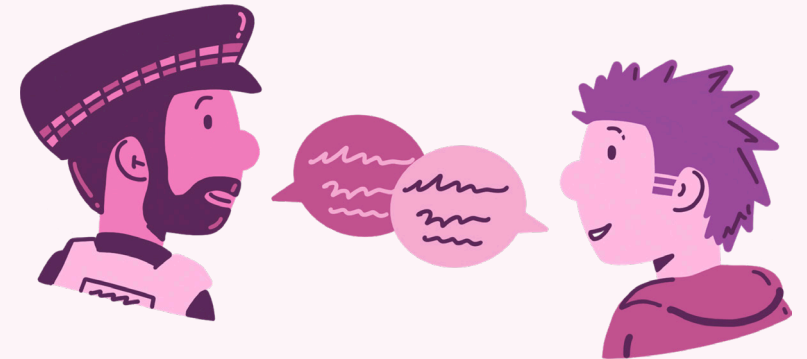
- Influence intergenerational 'system' change by prioritising early years, parent and family-based interventions.
- Collaborate with partners to identify 'at risk' children and young people who are below current intervention thresholds for 'hyperlocalised' evidenced-based intervention.
- Embed a trauma informed approach into all partner interventions.
- Contribute to an improved understanding of violence in Cleveland through better use of data and research.
- Identify examples of good practice in systems to prevent and reduce violence and criminal involvement, and identify opportunities to test or deliver at scale across Cleveland.
- Support training and education around violence reduction for professionals working in areas of Children and Adult Services, Safeguarding, Education and Health.
- Support in commissioning services that impact risk or protective factors for violence including domestic abuse, Wsubstance misuse, mental health, learning disability and neurodiversity, safeguarding and family support.
- Contribute to the broader public communication and engagement.

Secondary & Tertiary Intervention

- Support early intervention through the development of a communications strategy.
- Identify and facilitate effective criminal justice interventions for young people & adults (prioritising under 25s), and identify ways to improve current provision and interventions.
- Promote best practice to improve the use of out of court disposals across Cleveland so that opportunities to intervene as early as possible are identified and addressed effectively.
- Promote effective information and intelligence sharing amongst all partner agencies to advance a 'whole systems' approach.
- Promote and facilitate a trauma informed approach throughout all stages in the criminal justice process, from arrest through to assessment, in order that opportunities to intervene early and appropriately are not missed.
- Promote key learning and development from Criminal Justice activities.
- Monitor commissioned activity to ensure best value and impact.
- Promote collaborative working with the other VRU thematic delivery groups to maximise funding opportunities.

Community Engagement

- Support early intervention through communications strategy.
- Involve communities and young people into the violence reduction agenda, decision making, and commissioning.
- Identify and facilitate community-based interventions.
- Ensure feedback "you said - we did - change happened".



“You said - we did - change happened.”

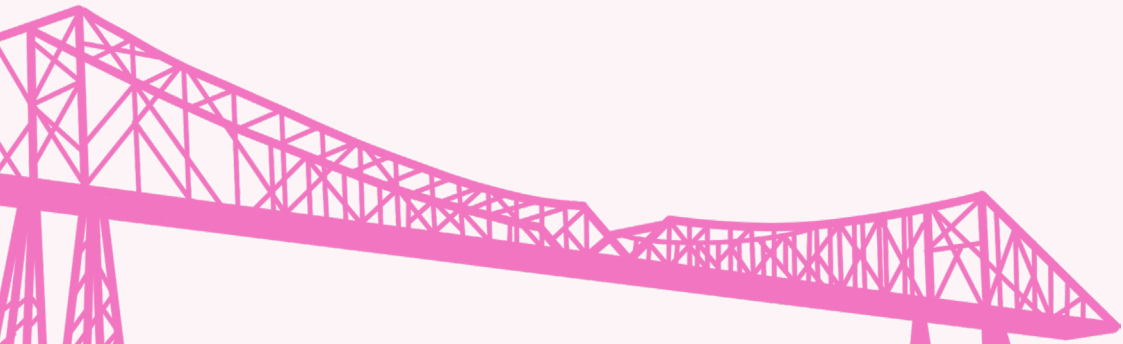
Placed Based Approach

CURV will encourage a place-based approach, which will include:

- Use of intelligence and analysis to identify specific locations for prioritised interventions.
- Build and maintain a comprehensive mapping of local systems, stakeholders, existing projects and interventions, resources, service provision gaps, and known protective factors
- Build on existing or establish authentic relationships with local communities that ensure decisions are made with them.
- Utilise local governance arrangements across all partners and key stakeholders to ensure that all activity is sustainable in its delivery.
- Encourage the whole system approach in prioritised areas.



Over one in ten violence with injury offences take place in Central ward in Middlesbrough - 47% of all violence with injury offences take place in just ten wards (there are just under 80 wards in Cleveland).



Hotspot map of violence with injury offences within the CURV definition, October 2017 - October 2022

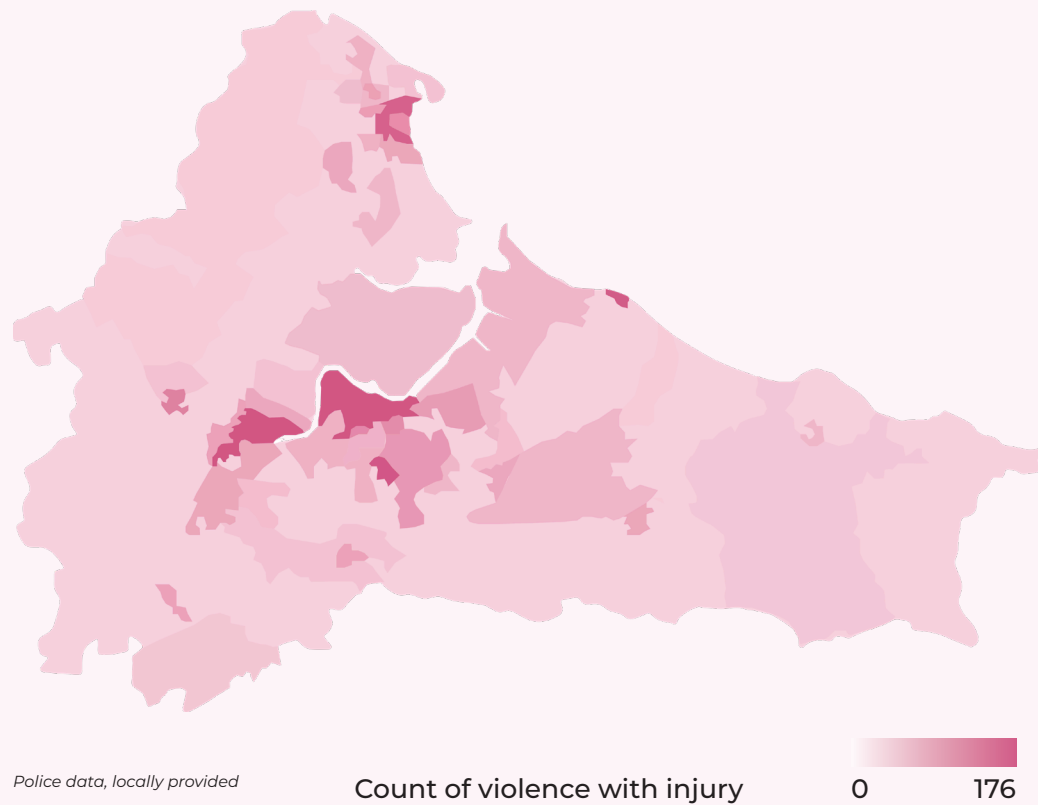
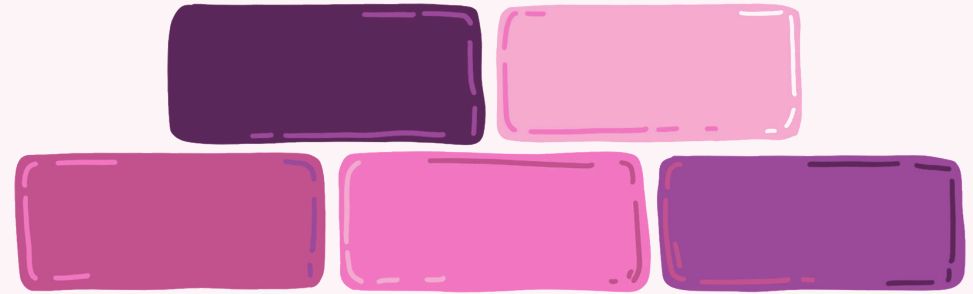


Table showing highest counts of violence with injury offences in Cleveland, October 2017-October 2022

Ward	Local Authority	Count
Central	Middlesbrough	436
Newport	Middlesbrough	251
Parkfield and Oxbridge	Stockton-on-Tees	216
Stockton Town Centre	Stockton-on-Tees	176
Longlands & Beechwood	Middlesbrough	158
Headland and Harbour	Hartlepool	147
Burn Valley	Hartlepool	120
Mandale and Victoria	Stockton-on-Tees	118
Coatham	Redcar and Cleveland	114
Brambles & Thorntree	Middlesbrough	100

2023: Priorities

The strategic priorities for 2023 reflect the needs for Cleveland as identified in the SNA. They support the national aims, our own vision and thematic priorities.



Build understanding.

- CURV will work to enhance information sharing arrangements so that partners can work together from an all-informed knowledge base.
- The published SNA was just the beginning and highlights the gaps in our understanding that is needed to make more informed decisions on future interventions. We now have a clear idea on what else we need to know in order to target our efforts and resources towards those risks and causes of serious violence.
- We will continue to engage with all communities, and we will continue to build robust and sustainable ways of doing this

Undertake evidence-based interventions.

- We will introduce ‘navigators’ into custody and A&E settings. This tried and tested approach will undergo extensive piloting in order to allow us to undertake robust evaluation, to help us make sure the model works for Cleveland before we look to scale up further.
- We will support other targeted interventions through direct and match funding in areas of activity that directly support the CURV serious violence reduction agenda, and we will work with organisations to access other sources of income who work in the area of violence reduction but who do not qualify for CURV funds.
- We will work with partners to help expand and enhance existing interventions that are already commissioned, which address the underlying causes of serious violence or support those protective factors that help prevent it.

Help create safer public spaces.

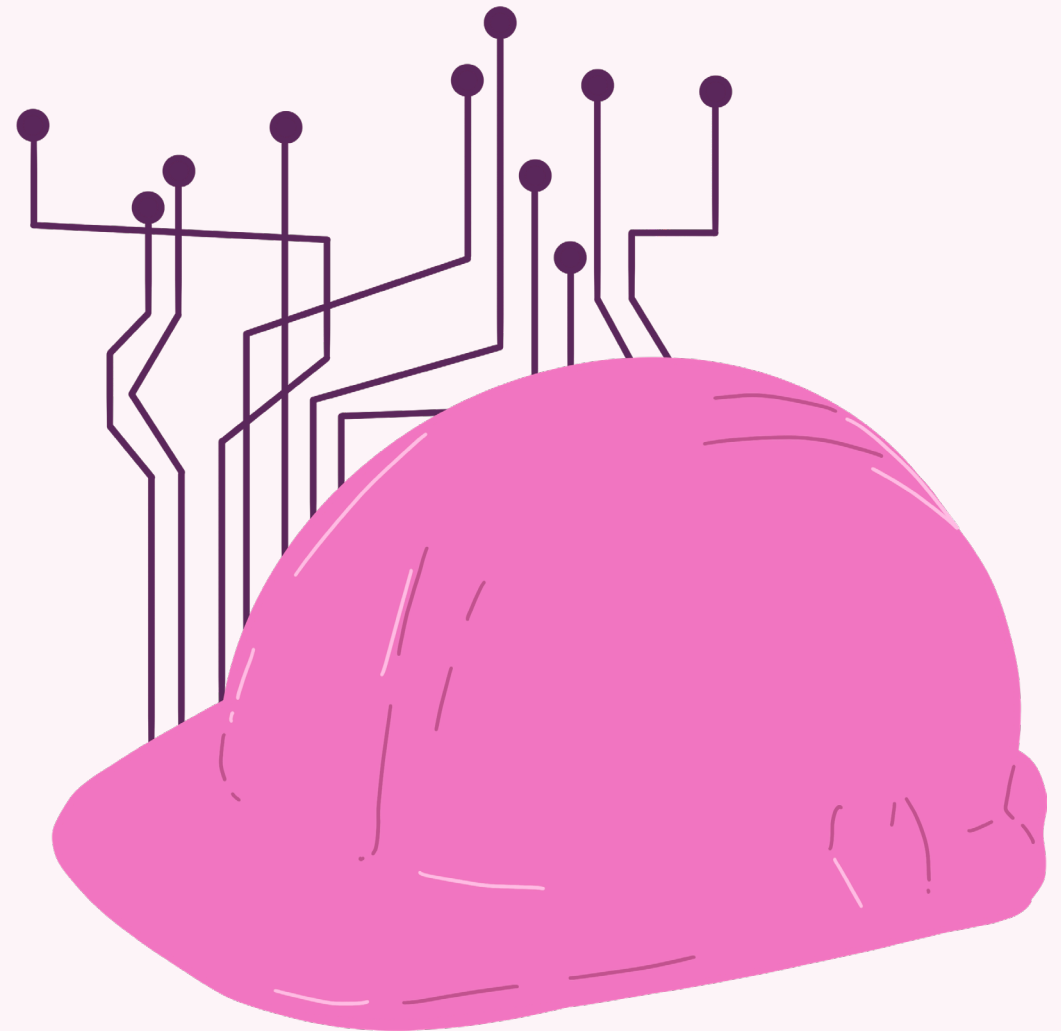
- We will focus on activities that reduce serious violence in public spaces, prioritising areas that contribute to the local economy.
- We will listen to and work with affected communities to ensure that agreed approaches are supported.
- We will work with partners to build on existing plans and capitalise on new initiatives to ensure that the impact of any joint or collaborative plan is greater than the sum of its parts



Monitoring and Evaluation Feedback

CURV is committed to improvement through learning. By remaining true to the agreed core principles, we will follow the evidence to identify ways to reduce serious violence, and we will seek to intervene as early as possible for the benefit of the whole of Cleveland. In order to evidence success and justify either further investment in specific methodologies or approaches, as well as contribute to the national evidence-gathering process, it is essential that CURV's analytical infrastructure and capacity is among the best.

There are established examples from which CURV can learn, but it will adopt what is best for Cleveland. The data we gather will allow CURV to determine what works and justify whether it is worth 'scaling up' the response to deliver greater effect. Analysis will help us make the right decisions, and so it will be essential that we seek ways to gather data in all areas of life where serious violence impacts individuals and communities.



CURV's framework for monitoring and evaluation is based on 4 pillars:

Individuals, families and communities living, learning and working in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence.

Dashboard

An established CURV Serious Violence Data Dashboard will provide timely and accurate data on the following:

- A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among victims aged under 25.
- A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among victims aged under 25.
- A reduction on all non-domestic homicides and especially among victims aged under 25 involving knives.
- Reduction in violence-related hospital admissions.
- Improvements against known/identified risk factors.

Interventions

Any intervention funded or part funded by CURV will be subject to the establishment of specific measurable outcomes that will support data gathering to determine the effectiveness and impact of the intervention in reducing serious violence. Key considerations will include:

- Key demographics as identified in the SNA.

Communities / Young People

An essential component of the analysis will be to understand how the data and evidence is seen by the communities it is intended to help. The routine and gathering and analysis of feedback from affected communities and young people will focus on:

- Perceptions on violence and safety within affected communities
- Feedback on the effectiveness of CURV funded interventions
- Intervention providers

External Evaluation

CURV will participate in national and local independent evaluation programmes.

CURV Response Strategy and Action Plans

ACCOUNTABILITY

The CURV's Executive Assurance Board (EAB), co-chaired by the PCC and Chief Constable has overall oversight of the serious violence agenda. The Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) is responsible for developing and delivering the strategic framework, aligning delivery through operational groups, and sharing best practice. Membership of the EAG and SDG form the core-membership of the CURV as set out by the Home Office, and include the specified and relevant authorities as outlined in the Serious Violence Duty. The SDG will report to the EAG, updating on the agreed metrics that will define success, the delivery of agreed goals, and will seek approval of the quarterly reports required by the Home Office. CURV's structure and governance arrangements will continue to evolve, and will expand to include new partners as learning and our understanding directs, and our accountability structure will evolve to adapt.

The development of our understanding through the collection of data is central to CURV's approach of delivering an evidenced based response. CURV will establish and maintain a data dashboard, coordinate the annual refresh of a partner-wide SNA, and will monitor all CURV funded or match funded interventions against their outcomes in order to assess the level of success in contributing to a reduction in serious violence. The Research and Evaluation Steering Group will use the SNA to identify and recommend areas of further research.



CASE STUDIES

The SNA examined large quantities of data to help understand the scale, nature and drivers of violent crime in Cleveland. To better understand this data, researchers engaged with people with lived experiences of serious violence, and with the professionals who support people at risk of, or involved in, violent crime.

Interviews were conducted with victims and perpetrators of violent crime, whilst focus groups were held with professionals working in education and probation services. Young people were directly engaged with through interviews and a survey, which was completed by 851 respondents.

The following stories were captured as part of this work.

Victimisation Case Studies

Alice: a victim of armed robbery



Alice was working as a loan provider in Middlesbrough. On the day of the offence, Alice visited the house of a man who wanted a loan, she described the property as a 'shithole'. When Alice arrived she saw that a second man was also at the property. Alice took the man's ID but his loan was declined as it was unaffordable. When Alice started to leave the property, the two men left the room.

Alice remembers that the first man returned with a gun, pointed at her head. He demanded that Alice give him the money, which she did - fearing that she would be raped and killed.

“I’ll never forget his eyes, I’ll never forget the feeling... is this a dream? Is this a nightmare? What’s going on? I thought they were going to kill me”

The two men fled. Alice ran out onto the street and told a passerby that she had been robbed at gunpoint. However, the passerby walked by and did nothing. She managed to call the police and a short time later the police arrived at the scene.

George: a victim of serious injury by dangerous driving

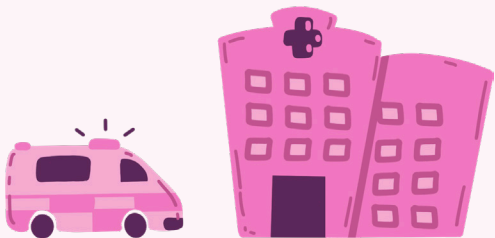
George was involved in a head-on collision while on his way to work early in the morning.

The journey is about 11 miles and is not a dangerous road. He was alone in the car. The other driver was driving with his son when he pulled out to overtake a car and wagon. Following the collision, George's initial reaction was that he didn't want to be late to work, as he had a busy week. He then realised his situation and didn't think he would survive.

George suffered an instant spinal injury meaning he now cannot feel anything from the chest down. One of his arteries was severed, he broke all his ribs, sternum, collarbone and had a punctured lung. He bruised his heart, his kidney, pneumothorax, and had burst eardrums, flail chest and broken legs. He was airlifted to James Cook Hospital and put into an induced coma. George doesn't remember anything until the point at which he woke up in hospital.



George: "I made a video recording to leave to my family because I didn't think I was going to make it."



Anecdotal evidence from stakeholders working in education settings suggests children are starting to engage in violence using weapons while they are in school.

In the last year or so I'm getting more referrals from primary schools to do knife crime interventions and some of those have been in relation to young people actually physically taking the knife into primary school."

- Early intervention police officer

It's hit a new milestone - six was my youngest, five is my youngest now - and that's against parents in the home, drawing a knife, threatening with a knife or taking it into a primary school.

- Early intervention police officer

Perpetrator Case Studies

Mark: armed robbery

Mark said that all of his offending was linked to violence, some of which was driven by alcohol use. Mark was typically violent towards people he knew in the community or strangers, rather than in a domestic context.

Following a number of convictions in prison for violence, Mark was convicted of an armed robbery offence. This was the offence which led him to be identified for an interview. Mark's friend had asked him to help him rob a shop. Initially, he was reluctant but under the influence of alcohol Mark agreed, incentivised by financial gain - his friend told Mark he had previously taken £80,000. Mark insisted he only played a supporting role in the robbery as the driver, and a more passive role in the shop itself. He was sentenced to eight years in prison.



Richard: Attempted Murder

Richard attacked his wife Kate while under the influence of cannabis. Kate told the police how Richard had tried to hit her with a hammer while she was in the bath in view of the children. Richard says that he blacked out when this happened and does not remember the events around the attack, but thinks that his mental health was the catalyst for his attack on Kate.

“I was fearful for my life, for the kids, but it all links in with my mental health and what I had been viewing.”

Richard said he felt immense pressure as a result of his mental health and drug use, and had delusions that he was being targeted by a malicious group who were threatening his family. Richard appeared in court and was convicted of attempted murder, receiving a 10 year sentence.

Appendix 1

- **South Tees Youth Justice Plan⁷**
- **Hartlepool Borough Council's Youth Justice Plan**
- **Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board – Strategic Business Plan⁸**
- **Hartlepool Borough Council's Community Safety Plan⁹**
- **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Community Safety Strategy¹⁰**
- **South Tees Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **Hartlepool Borough Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy¹¹**
- **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy¹²**
- **Cleveland Police:**
 - **Homicide Prevention Framework¹³**
 - **Serious Organised Crime Strategy**
 - **Serious Violence Strategy**
 - **Problem Solving and Prevention Strategy**
- **Fire:**
 - **Arson Reduction Strategy**
 - **Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

⁷ <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding/south-tees-youth-justice-service>

⁸ <https://www.tsab.org.uk/?s=strategic+business+plan>

⁹ <https://ehq-production-europe.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/ssp>

¹¹ https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/downloads/download/817/joint_health_and_wellbeing_strategy_2018-25

¹² https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/2499/Stockton-on-Tees-Joint-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2019-2023/pdf/Joint_Health_and_Wellbeing_Strategy_2019_-_2023.pdf?m=637807144047870000

¹³ Based on the framework set by the College of Policing: <https://www.college.police.uk/article/homicide-prevention-framework-launched>

