



WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON

Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2029



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Foreword

This is Wiltshire and Swindon's first Serious Violence Strategy. It describes the local response of the two Local Authority areas of Wiltshire and Swindon to the Serious Violence Duty, and our efforts to reduce Serious Violence across the Wiltshire Police Force Area. This strategy is based on a systems approach which embeds the public health principles of long-term solutions.

The overarching aim of this strategy is to reduce serious violence incidents in the Wiltshire Police Force Area and enabling people to access help and support. This increases resilience, promotes better life choices, makes best use of the resources available, and empowers residents to take more ownership of their neighbourhoods.

Since the publication of the UK Government's Serious Violence Strategy in 2018, the Government has delivered an ambitious set of programmes to tackle serious violence across England and Wales. To reinforce this work to date, the new Serious Violence Duty has been introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022.

The Serious Violence Duty places a legal obligation on specific organisations - police, local government, integrated health boards, youth justice service, probation services and fire and rescue authorities - to plan and collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence. The PCSC Act creates powers for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to convene and assist the specified authorities in the exercise of their functions under the Duty and monitor their exercise of those functions. PCCs have a highly important role to play in convening partner agencies and are responsible for the totality of policing in their area.

This strategy is the first of its type for Wiltshire and Swindon. It is developed by the Community Safety Partnerships of Wiltshire and Swindon, informed by community consultation, and strengthened by the evidence base of "what works" to reduce serious violence.

The strategy remains a fluid document, being reviewed annually, and updated with emerging serious violence issues taken from both the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and intelligence from partners.

What is serious violence?

OUR DEFINITION

Under the Serious Violence Duty specified authorities need to work together to identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in their area as far as possible.

To do this, specified authorities need to agree a definition of serious violence. The PCSC Act does not define serious violence for the purposes of the Duty. In determining what amounts to serious violence in their local area, the specified authorities must take into account the following factors listed in Section 13 (6) of the PCSC Act:

- the maximum penalty which could be imposed for any offence involved in the violence;
- the impact of the violence on any victim;
- the prevalence of the violence in the area, and
- the impact of the violence on the community in the area.

In Wiltshire and Swindon we have agreed that we will adopt the World Health Organisation's definition of serious violence:

“Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.”

A public health approach

The Serious Violence Duty requires the specified authorities to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. In doing so, Wiltshire and Swindon have adopted the World Health Organisation's definition of a public health approach.

The WHO approach consists of four steps:

- To **define the problem** through the systematic collection of information about the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence.
- To **establish why violence occurs** using research to determine the causes and correlates of violence, the factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions.
- To **find out what works** to prevent violence by designing, implementing and evaluating interventions.
- To **implement effective and promising interventions** in a wide range of settings. The effects of these interventions on risk factors and the target outcome should be monitored, and their impact and cost-effectiveness should be evaluated.

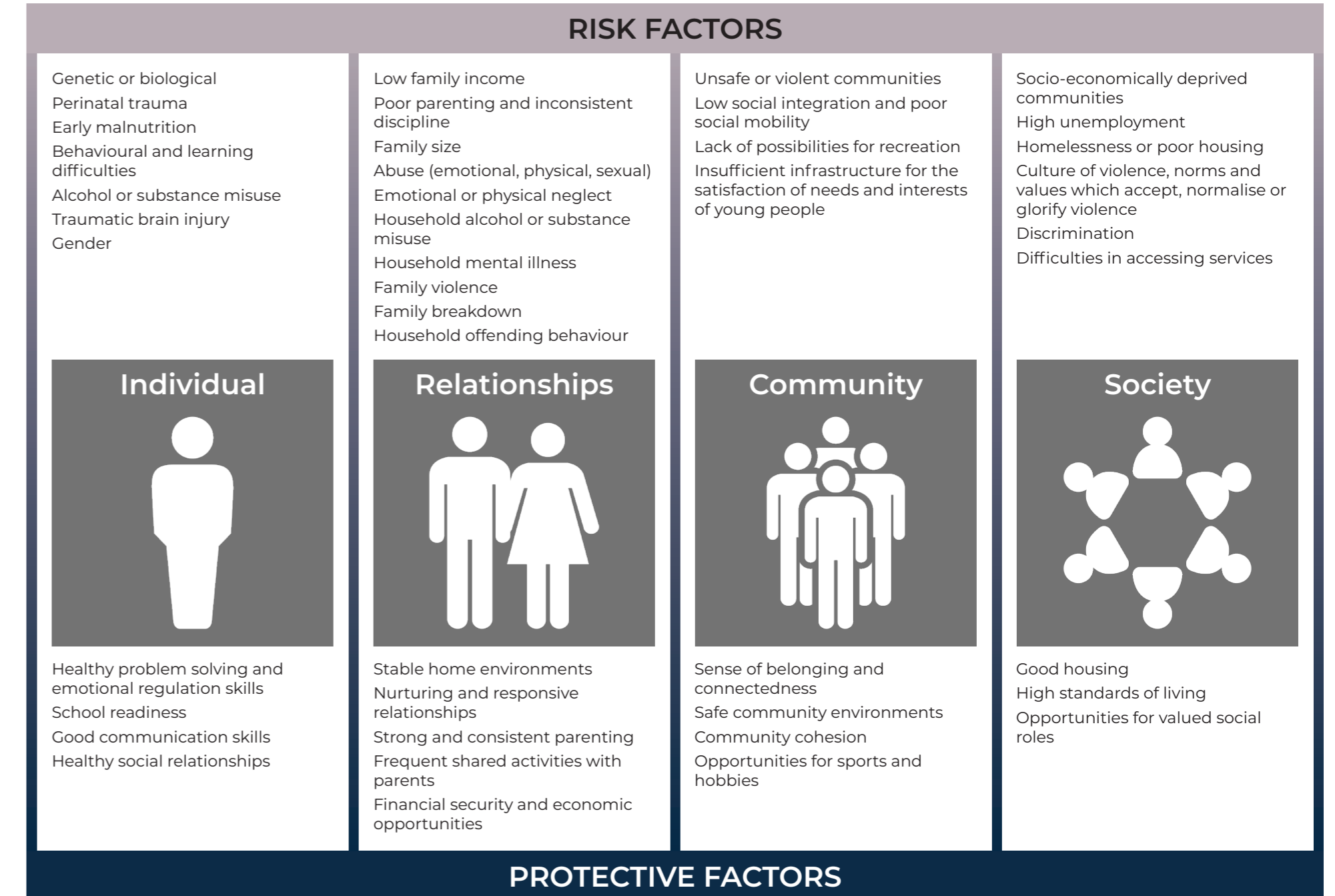


Understanding risk

The Public Health approach adopts an ecological framework which understands that there is not a single factor making people or groups vulnerable to violence, but that interpersonal violence is the outcome of interaction among many factors at four levels – the individual, the relationship, the community and the social.

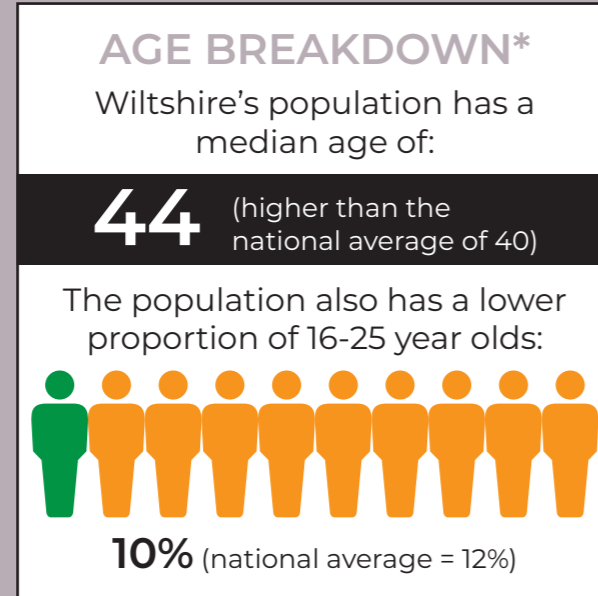
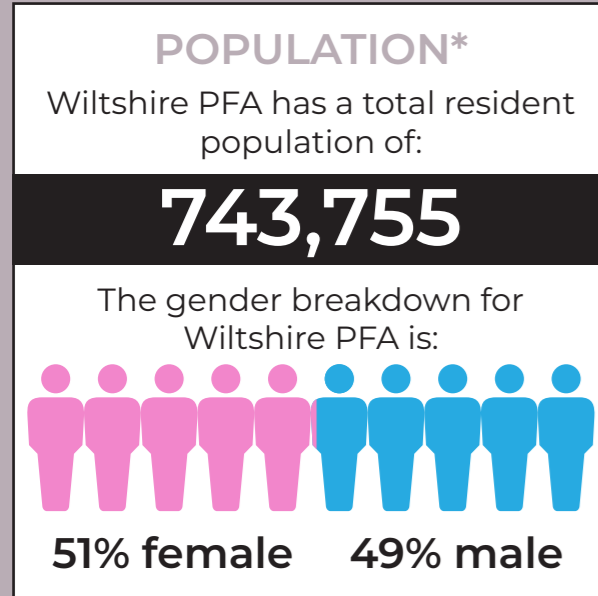
- At the **individual** level, personal history and biological factors influence how individuals behave and increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Among these factors are being a victim of child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse.
- Personal **relationships** such as family, friends, intimate partners and peers may influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. For example, having violent friends may influence whether a young person engages in or becomes a victim of violence.
- Community** contexts in which social relationships occur, such as schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces, also influence violence. Risk factors here may include the level of unemployment, population density, mobility and the existence of a local drug or gun trade.

- Societal** factors influence whether violence is encouraged or inhibited. These include economic and social policies that maintain socioeconomic inequalities between people, the availability of weapons, and social and cultural norms such as those around male dominance over women, parental dominance over children and cultural norms that endorse violence as an acceptable method to resolve conflicts.



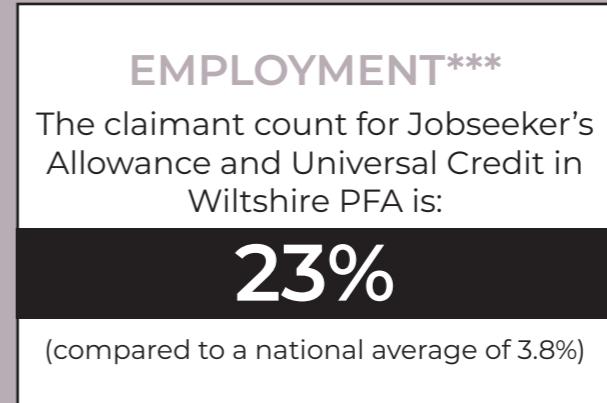
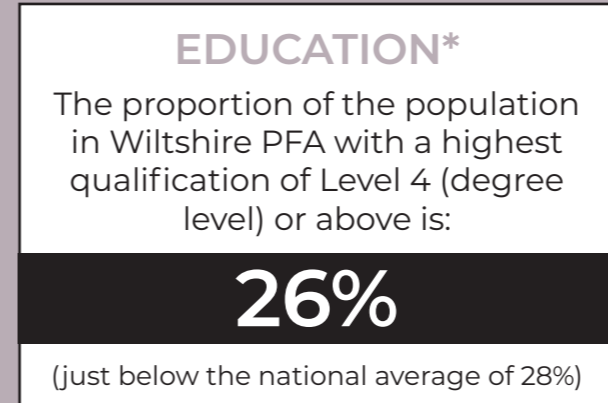
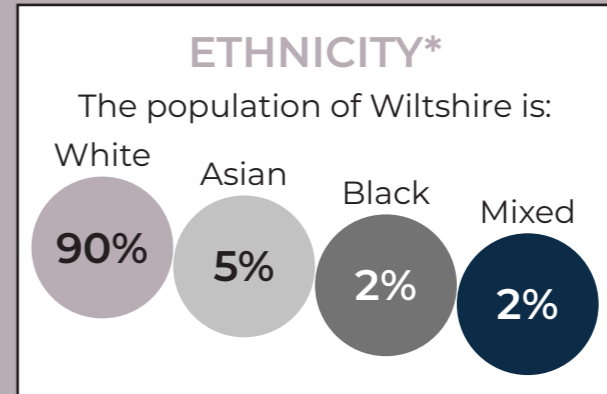
Understanding serious violence in Wiltshire

Wiltshire Police Force Area (PFA) consists of two Community Safety Partnerships (CSP): Wiltshire CSP which is largely rural and Swindon CSP which is largely urban.



POPULATION DENSITY AND RURALITY

Wiltshire has a population density	Wiltshire CSP has a population of:	Swindon CSP has a population of:
156.8*	510,400**	233,400**
residents per square kilometer	(Wiltshire CSP covers a largely rural area)	(Swindon CSP covers a largely urban area)



*Census 2021 **based on 2011 LSOA boundaries ***ONS 2023

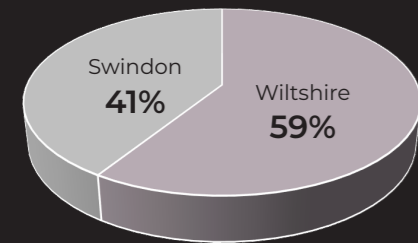
Violent crime in Wiltshire is very low in comparison with other areas in England and Wales. The Wiltshire Police Force Area (PFA) has the second lowest level of crime in England and Wales, and the seventh lowest level of knife crime.

Violent crime is the most common crime type in Wiltshire and Swindon

41% of all crimes are violent

Compared to similar areas, violent crime in Wiltshire and Swindon is below average.

Crime in Wiltshire PFA



Although Wiltshire Council has a higher volume of crime, Swindon has higher crime levels per head of population.

Devizes Town Centre is the ward with the highest count of violent offences per year.

	COUNTY	SWINDON
Devizes Town	677	
Trowbridge Central	570	
Salisbury City Centre	564	
Swindon Town Centre		563
Calne Town	517	
Warminster Town	474	
Melksham Town	456	
Amesbury Town	396	
Adcroft and Paxcroft	390	
Westbury Town	390	

Per year, violent crime in Wiltshire and Swindon costs in excess of

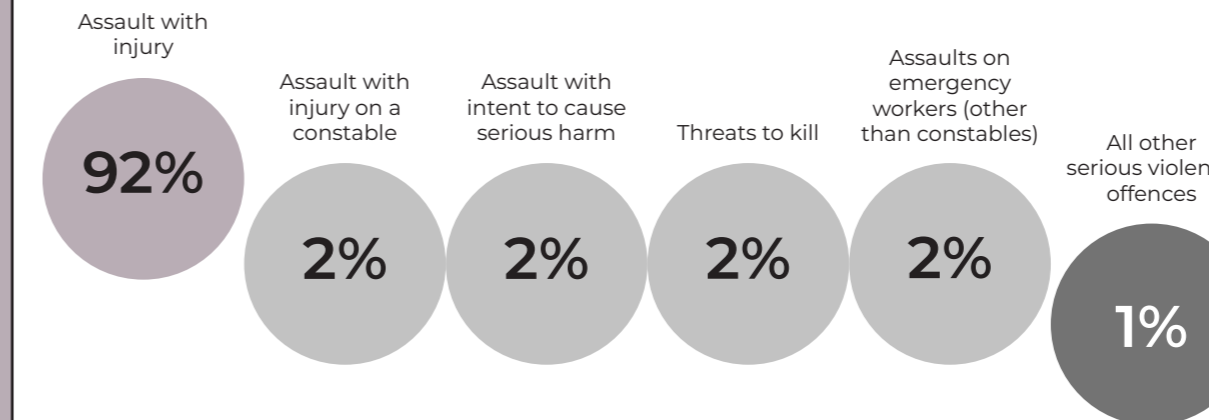
£90m

		Swindon	Wiltshire	Total
2020/21	Homicide	1	2	£9.65m
	Violence with injury	2,132	3,194	£74.8m
2021/22	Homicide	2	1	£9.65m
	Violence with injury	2,251	3,710	£83.8m

In 2022/23 rates of serious violence per 1,000 population were higher in Swindon Community Safety Partnership (CSP) area than in Wiltshire CSP area



Proportion of most common offences out of all serious violence offences based on local definition (2022/23)



The majority of offences occurring in Wiltshire PFA that fall under the local definition of serious violence are 'assault with injury'.

Any offences not included in the five most common offences have been grouped together under the category 'all other serious violence offences'

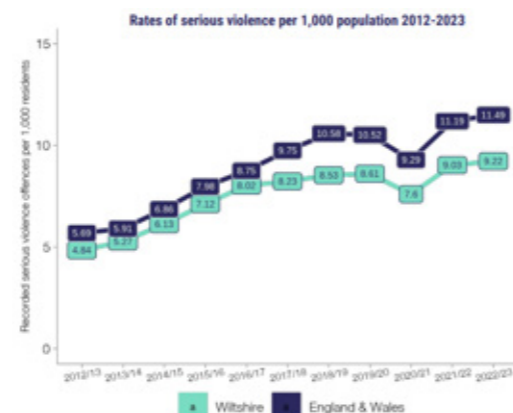




In the force area, Central ward in Swindon had the highest count of recorded serious violence offences between 2018 and 2023

WARD	CSP	COUNT
Central	Swindon	1,917
Eastcott	Swindon	1,321
Walcot and Park North	Swindon	1,201
Trowbridge Central	Wiltshire	1,012
Gorse Hill and Pinehurst	Swindon	995
Salisbury St Edmund's	Wiltshire	918
St Andrews	Swindon	777
Rodbourne Cheney	Swindon	755
Liden, Eldene and Park South	Swindon	686
Mannington and Western	Swindon	680

Over the last 10 years, there has been a notable increase in the rate of serious violence offences recorded within Wiltshire (PFA), however, this rate of increase remains relatively in-line with changes seen across England and Wales.



Recorded serious violence has increased at a **slower rate** in Wiltshire (PFA) than nationally. The rate of recorded serious violence in Wiltshire (PFA) has increased by 90% from 2012/13 to 2022/23, compared to an increase of 102% in England and Wales.

Police forces in England and Wales have made **significant improvements in how they record crime** overall, since new rules from the Home Office in 2014 brought in a uniform standard on how offences were counted.

Between 1981 and 1999, the police recorded 5-6 crimes for every 10 that the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) found. There are **now more than 12 crimes recorded by police for every 10 reported to the CSEW.**

The mean and median ages of victims and offenders did not differ significantly between Swindon and Wiltshire (CSP)

There were **38,691 unique incident codes** for serious violence in Wiltshire (PFA) between April 2020 and March 2023

There were **27,664 unique victim codes** in the dataset (26 incidents had no recorded victim ID).

5,682 victim codes appeared in connection with more than one incident code, indicating **repeat victimisation**.

There were **2,990 unique offender codes** in the dataset (34,302 incidents had no recorded offender ID).

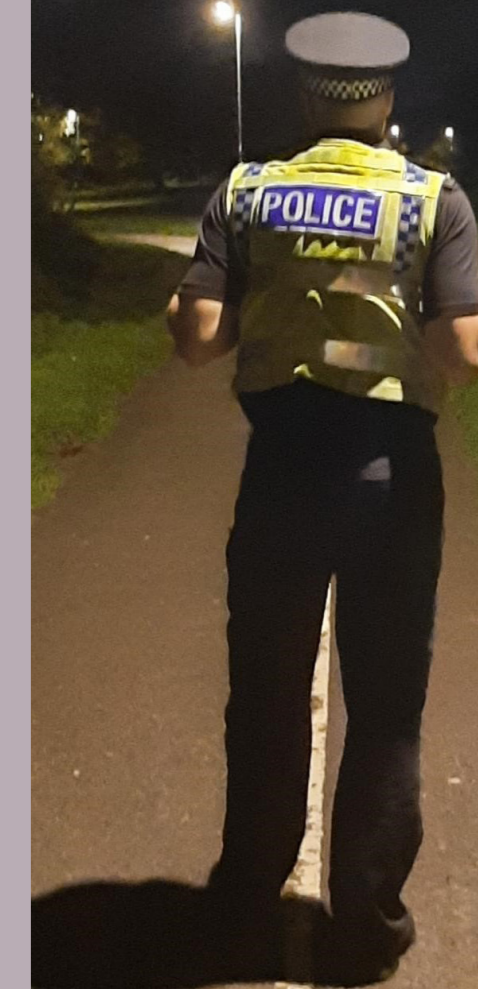
766 offender codes appeared in connection with more than one incident code, indicating **repeat offending**.

In Swindon, the median age of a victim was **32** and the mean age was **33**.

In Wiltshire (CSP), the median age of a victim was **32** and the mean age was **35**.

In Swindon, the median age of an offender was **31.5** and the mean age was **32**.

In Wiltshire (CSP), the median age of an offender was **31** and the mean age was **32**.



Local arrangements

A dedicated Serious Violence Duty Coordinator has been appointed and will work from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner as a partnership resource until March 2025.

Under the Serious Violence Duty, partnerships are required to define a “local area” in respect of which the Duty applies. At a minimum this is a local government area, but a local partnership can extend its coverage to a wider area such as a police force area if that is what is agreed for the area.

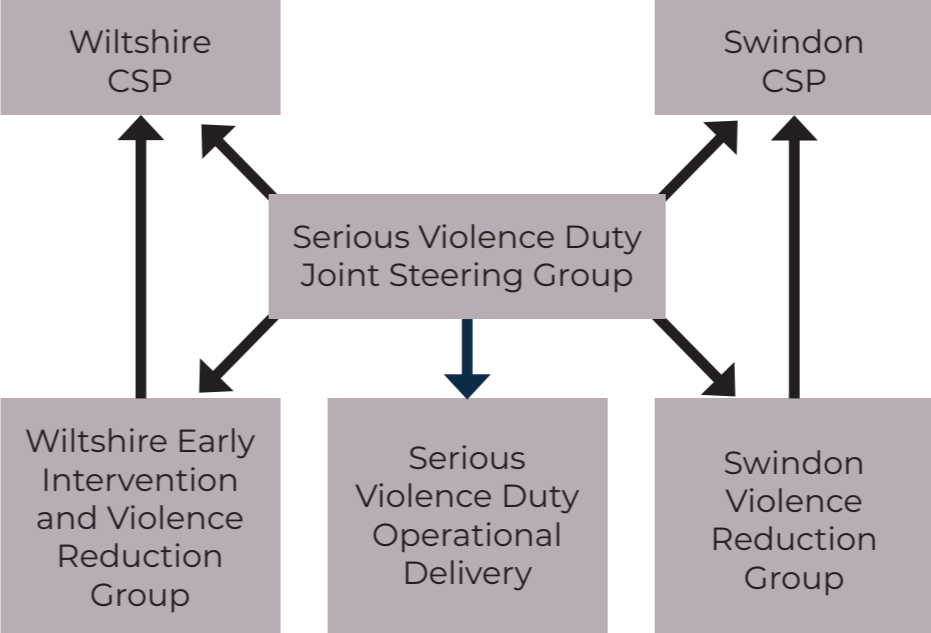


It is agreed that in Wiltshire and Swindon the “local area” will be the Wiltshire police force area, covering both the Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council Community Safety Partnerships. The Joint Steering Group (JSG) will oversee the delivery of the Duty within this area.

The JSG will work across both Community Safety Partnership structures in the Wiltshire Police force area. The JSG will be the key delivery function of all issues relating to serious violence, providing assurance to the Executive CSP Board on strategies in place to deliver the serious violence strategy. The operational delivery of the Serious Violence strategy in Wiltshire and Swindon will be undertaken by the relevant Early Intervention and Violence Reduction (EIVR) group (Wiltshire Council area) and Violence Reduction group (Swindon Borough Council area).

The JSG will report to the Swindon and Wiltshire Community Safety Partnerships Joint Executive boards on a quarterly basis.

There are several established partnerships which interrelate with the priorities of the Wiltshire and Swindon JSG. We continue to work collaboratively with partners from community safety partnerships, domestic abuse partnerships, combating drugs partnerships, health and well-being boards, criminal justice boards, children’s safeguarding partnerships and adults arrangements, and youth justice boards, to ensure that we align our strategic priorities to reduce the impact of serious violence in our communities.

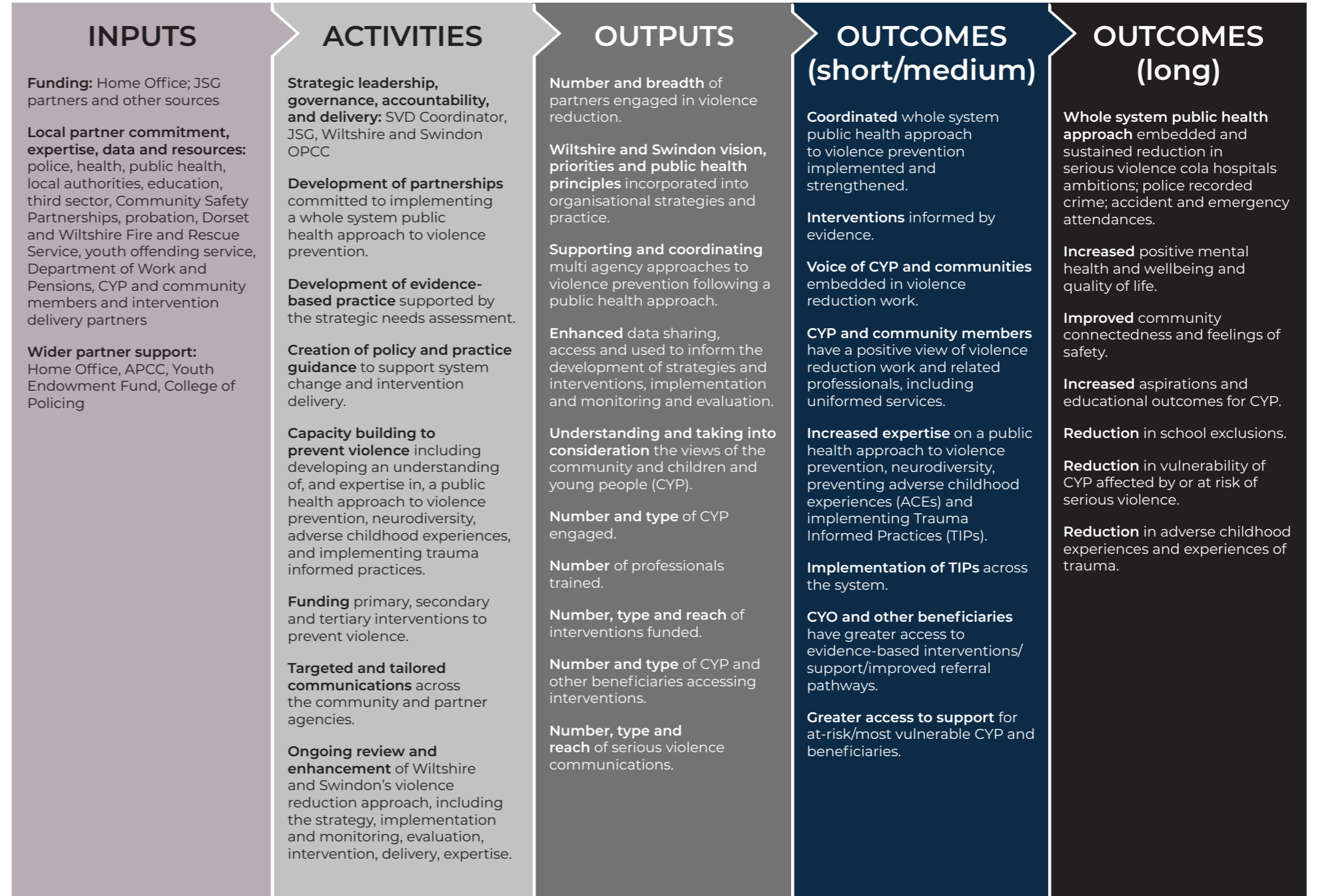




Theory of change

Our Theory of Change sets out the activities, anticipated outputs, and outcomes and intended impact we will deliver throughout the year. In delivering our Theory of Change we will work collaboratively with partners, stakeholders and intended beneficiaries facilitating a range of activities.

The short and long-term success measures that are linked to our Theory of Change will enable us to track the progress of our activities and impact during the year. These measures will be monitored quarterly.



Prevention

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Factors such as adverse childhood experiences, poverty and racism can have a significant impact on a person's life. Serious violence can be prevented by ensuring that all children have the best start in life and that they and their communities are supported to develop the ability to safely negotiate risk throughout their journey to adulthood.

We are seeking to prevent violence by providing young people, parents, professionals and the wider community - with a raised awareness of issues leading to violence and the ability to keep themselves safe, make positive choices about their behaviour, and improve resilience.

We know that if we can intervene early in both the life course and in the stage of the problem, positive and sustainable outcomes are more likely to be achieved for individual children and communities alike.

SECONDARY PREVENTION

We recognise that people can experience harm from those within their home and outside of their home, which is known as extra-familial harm, or Risk Outside The Home.

Early identification of these people is paramount as they are vulnerable to being affected by violence and exploitation. We aim to target those at risk of or affected by youth violence and provide them with the support they need, including enabling parents and professionals to support the young people with whom they are involved.

Evidence shows that if we can target resources at the communities and children most in need of our help, wider outcomes will be achieved for the residents of Wiltshire and Swindon as a whole.

TERTIARY PREVENTION

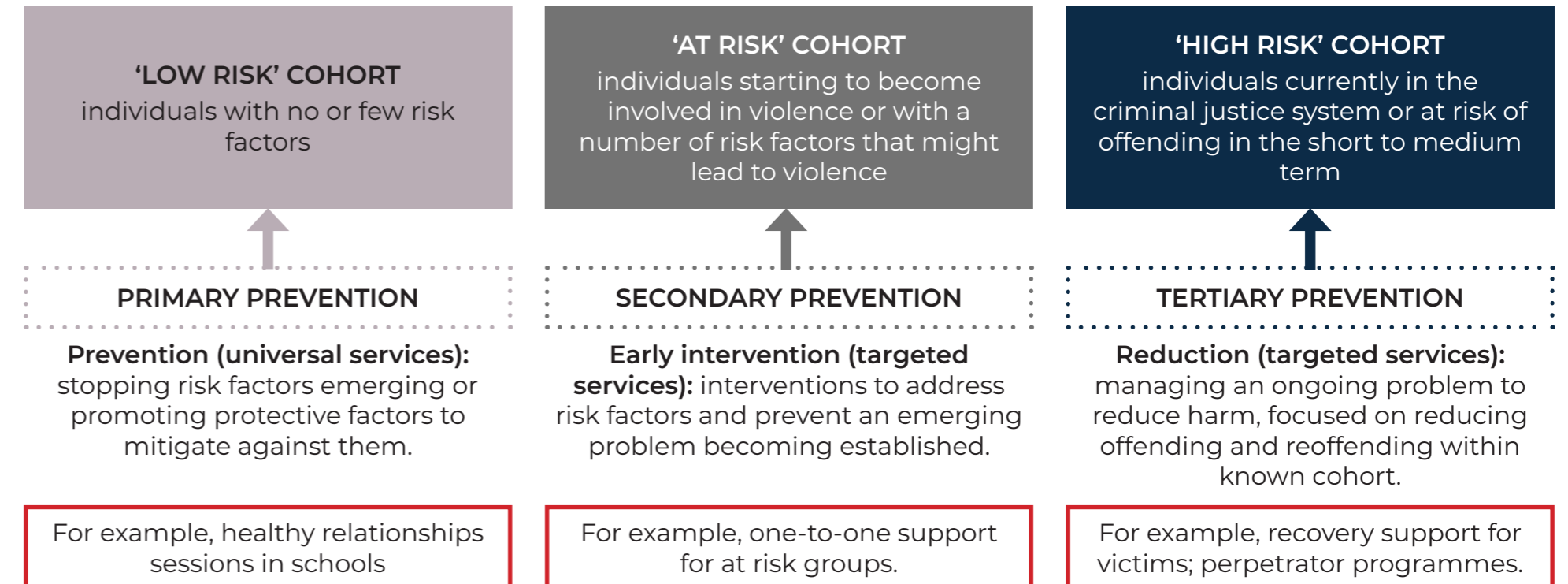
We recognise that disrupting the patterns of youth violence, interrupting the activities of perpetrators and inhibiting the grooming and targeting process will make Wiltshire and Swindon a safer place. It has been recognised that the best way to tackle such a complex matter is terrain through a multi agency problem solving approach. The four P's: Prepare, Prevent, Pursue and Protect - provide a structure to highlight the different opportunities that are available to be used.

Our plan will assist in the formulation of problem-oriented policing (POP) plans which relate to violent crime. This plan is formulated to have an evidence-based

approach and should be used in conjunction with POP plans. Furthermore, it links into the College of policing Pillars of Neighbourhood Policing themes of Engaging Communities, Solving Problems and Targeting Activity.

Where appropriate, we will take a Focused Deterrence approach, targeting groups of individuals working

together in a criminal enterprise. We will seek to engage with these groups, offering support and pathways out of offending, but utilising stringent enforcement should individuals choose not to cooperate with us.



Our priorities

This strategy sets out our local ambitions, which are in line with national guidance, and details how these ambitions will be achieved.



Prevention and Early Intervention

We will seek to prevent and reduce violence and its social determinants

in Wiltshire include the illicit drugs market, rural and heritage crime, and acquisitive crime (theft, burglary and robbery).



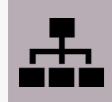
Identification of those at risk

We will support individuals, organisations and communities to work together to identify young people and vulnerable groups at risk from serious violence and address the underlying risk factors.



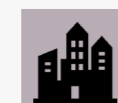
Communications and Engagement

We recognise that community and youth engagement is a fundamental principle of the public health approach to serious violence. We are keen to develop a consistent approach to engagement and consultation with our communities.



Structure and Organisation

We will continue to build upon current relationships and multi-agency networks with strategic partners, organisations, and communities to ensure a collaborative and coordinated approach to the prevention of knife crime and serious violence across Wiltshire and Swindon.



Managing Places and Spaces

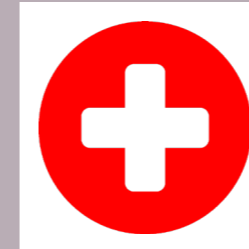
We will seek to further enhance the feeling of safety within and around outdoor public spaces by improving the physical infrastructure of our local environment and preventing the development of problematic areas



Drugs, Exploitation and Organised Crime

Across Wiltshire and Swindon there are numerous Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) conducting a range of organised criminal activities. The main areas of criminality connected to violence

Our outcomes



A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with knife or sharp object



A reduction in knife and sharp object enabled serious violence



A reduction in homicides recorded by the police



Our interventions

We will reduce serious violence through intensive intervention and diversion for those involved in serious violence and vulnerable to wider criminality.

We will bring key agencies together to provide an operational and problem-solving response in areas of most need, identifying and working with those who are at risk of causing the most harm to communities.



We will commission the following interventions as a priority:

FOCUSED DETERRENCE

Focused deterrence seeks to prompt a fundamental re-design to our multi-agency response to tackle most serious violence with a targeted cohort of young people. It will involve tailored response for each individual that will include intensive support, deterrence and enforcement. We will pilot and implement this in Devizes and Swindon and then replicate our learning across the Wiltshire Police Force Area.

OUT OF COURT DISPOSALS

Out of Court Disposals (OOCDD) provides the opportunity to engage people at the earliest opportunity as they enter the criminal justice system with a view to diverting them



away from the criminal justice system via a structured intervention designed to reduce the likelihood of reoffending via a conditional caution.

STREET DOCTORS

We will provide emergency first aid training for young people affected by violence, including information on what to do if someone is bleeding or knocked out.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND MENTORING

We will provide youth engagement opportunities in our highest risk neighbourhoods, offering support and diversion. Those most at risk will be able to access mentoring programmes to help enhance attitudinal and behaviour changes.

A&E BEACONS

WAY Beacons aims to break the cycles of hospital readmissions, crime, violence, and risk-taking behaviour by engaging with young people aged 11 to 25 at a reachable moment within hospital and connecting them to ongoing support within their community.

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

We will support practitioners and organisations to embed a trauma-informed approach through the provision of dedicated training, helping understand community resilience and toxic stress.

Review and evaluation

We are committed to evaluating what we are doing effectively, ensuring that our interventions evidence clear impact on our high-risk cohorts, that they support the public health approach to serious violence, and that we can articulate their value for money.

Central to an effective public health approach to reducing violence is the implementation of interventions that successfully address risk and protective factors in individuals, families, communities and populations to reduce violence at a community and/or population level.

Understanding those factors that can make individuals vulnerable to violence can help identify at-risk populations and target preventive interventions accordingly. Viewing the ways in which these risk factors come together and influence patterns of behaviour throughout the life course provides insights into the key points at which interventions to break the cycle should be implemented.

As part of our strategy development, we looked at interventions from the Youth Endowment Fund and College of Policing toolkits and highlighted the interventions which showed a high positive impact on reducing crime/serious violence.

Whilst we will continue to look at 'what works' in reducing serious violence, we recognise that high-quality evaluation is key to informing toolkits and other good-practice documents.

We are committed to evaluating what we are doing effectively, ensuring that our interventions evidence clear impact on our high-risk cohorts, that they support the public health approach to serious violence and that we can articulate their value for money. In doing so our ambition is to be able to inform the developing national evidence base on serious violence intervention models.

We will undertake an annual review of our strategy and delivery plan, including evaluating the impact of our interventions, approaches, and partnership structures, and adjust our delivery as required.

Acronym glossary

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experiences

PFA – Police Force Area

PCSC – Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner

SNA – Strategic Needs Assessment

WHO – World Health Organisation

CSP – Community Safety Partnership

JSG – Joint Steering Group

CYP – Children and Young People

APCC – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

OPCC – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

SVD – Serious Violence Duty

TIPs – Trauma-Informed Practices

POP – Problem Orientated Policing

OCGs – Organised Crime Groups

OOCD – Out of Court Disposal

Wiltshire and Swindon
pcc



NHS
Bath and North East Somerset,
Swindon and Wiltshire
Integrated Care Board

Wiltshire Council


HM Prison &
Probation Service