WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON

Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment

January 2024

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This work was commissioned to comply with the Serious Violence Duty in the first year of the Duty's introduction.

The Serious Violence Duty

The Duty was introduced in January 2023 and "**...requires specified authorities for a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.**"

Measures of success or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are:

- A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object.
- A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence.
- A reduction in all non-domestic homicides.

To accomplish this, there are three strands to implementing the Serious Violence Duty (SVD):

1) **Strategic Needs Assessment** – all the statutory agencies must support the collection and analysis of information held/obtained in each agency relating to serious violence (a local definition of serious violence must be agreed). This should attempt to understand what violence looks like locally and why it happens.

[1]A public health approach to understanding the issue must be taken. This means the data should attempt to understand risk and protective factors which may be relevant in individuals' broader lives; looking at individual, relationship, community, and societal factors which may affect the likelihood of an individual becoming involved in serious violence.

2) **Serious Violence Duty Joint/Partnership Strategy** – a multi-agency /partnership agreement amongst the statutory agencies named in the Serious Violence Duty, which outlines how they will tackle serious violence in their local area. It will outline how they will work together to tackle the problem of violence, including the risk factors which the data suggests makes violence more likely.

3) **Delivery** – the local leaders of the Serious Violence Duty, comprised of representatives from all the statutory agencies named in the Duty, will decide how to spend the additional funds provided through the Duty to tackle serious violence. Decisions will be evidence led, using the combination of data brought together in the Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment. All SVD funded interventions will need to be reviewed and evaluated to ascertain their success rate.

[1]Risk Factors diagram taken from A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention (publishing.service.gov.uk)

RISK FACTORS

Individual

Genetic or biological
Perinatal trauma
Early malnutrition
Behavioural and learning difficulties
Alcohol or substance misuse
Traumatic brain injury
Gender

Healthy problem solving and emotional regulation skills
School readiness
Good communication skills
Healthy social relationships

Relationships

Low family income
Poor parenting and inconsistent discipline
Family size
Abuse (emotional, physical, sexual)
Emotional or physical neglect
Household alcohol or substance misuse
Household mental illness
Family violence
Family breakdown
Household offending behaviour

Stable home environments
Nurturing and responsive relationships
Strong and consistent parenting
Frequent shared activities with parents
Financial security and economic opportunities

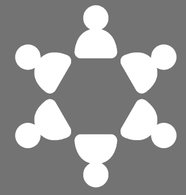
Community

Unsafe or violent communities
Low social integration and poor social mobility
Lack of possibilities for recreation
Insufficient infrastructure for the satisfaction of needs and interests of young people

Sense of belonging and connectedness
Safe community environments
Community cohesion
Opportunities for sports and hobbies

Society

Socio-economically deprived communities
High unemployment
Homelessness or poor housing
Culture of violence, norms and values which accept, normalise or glorify violence
Discrimination
Difficulties in accessing services



Good housing
High standards of living
Opportunities for valued social roles

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Violence data profile

In the national context, Wiltshire remains a very safe to place to live:

- Wiltshire Police Force Area (PFA) has the second lowest levels of crime nationally[2].
- Wiltshire Police Force recorded the 5th lowest levels of knife crimes in the country[3].
- Wiltshire Police Force recorded the 8th lowest levels of homicides in the country[4].

There was a total of 41,753 crimes in the Wiltshire PFA in 2023.

The PFA encompasses the Wiltshire Local Authority (LA) area and the Swindon Borough Council LA area. Wiltshire Police also break the entire PFA into eight Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) localities, seven in Wiltshire, and Swindon as its eighth[5].

59% of crimes (24,698) were in the Wiltshire LA area. With a population of 703,698[6], this is equivalent to:

34 crimes per 1,000 people

41% (17,055) were in the Swindon LA area. With a population of 233,400[7], this is equivalent to:

73 crimes per 1,000 people

Wiltshire Police's strategic reporting highlights that Swindon sees significantly higher levels of Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) than Wiltshire county.

Violence Against the Person (VAP) is however the most common crime type in the Wiltshire PFA and reducing violence and serious harm is a policing priority in the 2022-2025 Policing and Crime Plan[8].

Within the VAP crime type, the most common crime subgroup is Violence Without Injury, followed by Violence with Injury, then Harassment, and finally Homicide being the lowest volume.

	TOTAL CRIMES IN 2023	% OF ALL CRIMES IN WILTSHIRE PFA
Violence without injury	7,105	17%
Violence with injury	5,732	14%
Stalking & harassment	3,976	10%
Homicide	<5	<1%

[2] 'Crime rate per 1,000 population in England and Wales in 2022/23, by police force area' | Statista
[3] Knife crime statistics: England and Wales, House of Commons Library, pg13, SN04304.pdf (parliament.uk) figures for 2022/23, per 100,000 people
[4] Number of police recorded homicides in England and Wales in 2022/23, by police force area, Statista
[5] NPTs are territorial areas which split Wiltshire in eight 'zones' used for operational policing purposes
[6] Total population calculated using each Community Area population total/profile from the Community Area Profiles Community Area Wiltshire Intelligence
[7] How life has changed in Swindon: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk)
[8] Priorities and performance | Wiltshire Police

Community Voice

The 2021 Wiltshire 'Use Your Voice' survey[9] showed that only **11% of local people felt either 'quite unsafe' or 'very unsafe' during the day**, though this **increased to 36% at night**. 'Knife crime and other serious violence' was also ranked as a top five crime type of concern, more so amongst under 40s surveyed, however 'drug use and dealing' was the primary concern.

The 2022 Wiltshire School Survey found:

55% of secondary school pupils felt safe from crime

Males were more likely to feel safe compared to females in all school phases

Feelings of safety were lower amongst vulnerable groups and lowest amongst children who have/had a family member in prison:

Primary phases	AFL children in secondary phases	Year 12/FE phases
73% (84% average)	**32%** (63% average)	**75%** (86% average)

3% of children surveyed said they carried a knife

The perception of those surveyed was that around 19% of their peers carried knives, indicating perception is much higher than reality. This misconception could be why some carry a knife as we know from speaking with professionals that most children claim that if they do carry a knife it is for self defence. For all risk factors measured in the survey, children perceive that many more of their peers were active in behaviours such as drug taking, alcohol use, sexual activity etc, than actually were (according to the survey results).

Swindon School Survey showed that participation in risk behaviours such as alcohol use, drugs use and vaping were almost identical to the Wiltshire results, indicating a cohesion amongst children of similar ages in the region.

Swindon also surveyed aspirations amongst local children. This showed that:

64% plan to continue education at school or college post 16	**12%** plan on looking for an apprenticeship	**15%** don't know and **5%** selected 'other'

Aspirations into adulthood/post 18 indicated that:

36% go to university	**23%** find a job	**8%** appren-ticeship	**7%** take a gap year	**20%** don't know

[9] Commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Definition of serious violence

For the purpose of this project, we will adopt the WHO definition as defined in the World Report On Violence and Health (WRVH), which states that violence is:

"The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."

Most notably our definition excludes domestic violence, driving offences and sexual assault and rape. These forms of violence are managed in other partnership spaces and don't align with the focus of the SVD KPIs. This work will attempt to focus on violence in public spaces, specifically violence with the use of a weapon/knives/bladed articles.

Health data

Home Office KPIs require improvements in health data as well as crime figures, however, health data may be less reliable due to the difficulties in interpreting data collected in this field, especially in a service where the focus in on treatment and care for the patient rather than on the incident leading to the injury[10].

However, local reporting indicates there were 35,301 ambulance incidents during 2022/23 in Swindon which comprised 1,512 incidents per 10,000 populatio[11]. Of these, 367 incidents (1.0%; 16 incidents per 10,000 population) featured a serious violence and/or assault pathways code.

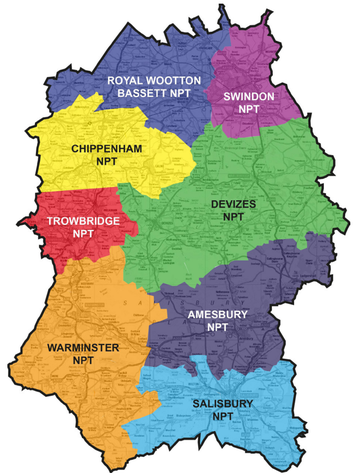
Total A&E attendances featuring Swindon patients with a serious violence and/or assault code exceeded pre-COVID levels during 2022/23 (79,568 attendances: 3,409 attendances per 10,000 population).

A total of 602 ambulance incidents featuring serious violence and/or assault were recorded in Wiltshire during 2022/23, which was the equivalent of 12 incidents per 10,000 population[12].

Total A&E attendances featuring Wiltshire patients with a serious violence and/or assault code exceeded pre-COVID levels during 2022/23 (138,633 attendances: 2,716 attendances per 10,000 population).

[10] The local Integrated Care board analyst caveated this data with "It remains unclear as to whether there is a genuine upward yearly trend in attendances associated with assault and/or serious violence or whether this trend is due to data quality issues."
[11] Census 2021 figure: 233,400
[12] Census 2021 figure: 510,400

Places [13] [14] [15]



[13] English Indices of Deprivation 2019: Wiltshire Report
[14] Community Area overview
[15] Deprivation percentage calculated as an average of all community areas in each NPT area

SWINDON NPT/LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA

Swindon is represented as one Police Force NPT area and Wiltshire county has seven NPTs, so whilst Swindon has the most crime per NPT area, Wiltshire county often has the highest volume when comparing counties.

Population of **230,000** of which **22.8%** are U18

Swindon places **98th** out of 151 LA's nationally for deprivation

Between Sep 21 and Aug 23 Swindon accounted for:

- **39%** of all Violence Against Person offences
- **38%** of all Violence with Intent offences
- **45%** possession of drugs offences
- **54%** trafficking of drugs offences
- **43%** possession of weapons offences

Swindon Town Centre (Policing) Beat area had the second highest number of VAP and Violence With Intent suspects and offenders.

VIOLENCE WITH INJURY OFFENCES
(Sep 22 - Aug 23)

- **61 (50%)** Actual Bodily Harm assaults against Constables
- **1,270 (39%)** Actual Bodily Harm assaults
- **57 (53%)** Grievous Bodily Harm with intent
- **30 (44%)** Grievous Bodily Harm without intent

This shows that out of all eight NPT areas in the Wiltshire PFA, Swindon saw the most serious violence.

Most serious and organised crime in the Wiltshire PFA is located in Swindon. This is reflected in the higher proportion of high harm offences, and the fact that it accounted for 60% of the last years' (Sept 22 – Aug 23) knife crime offences. Young people are often connected to violent offences here, but it also sees high levels of child criminal exploitation, indicating many children and young people need to be safeguarding against serious violence.

Having a separate report on Swindon may provide a clearer, more proportionate summary as opposed to comparing it to the wider Wiltshire PFA which includes the Wiltshire Local Authority area, which has lower levels of deprivation and has a different geographical identity i.e., Swindon is an urban, densely populated area, whereas Wiltshire is largely a rural county made up of less populated towns and villages.

ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT (RWB) NPT AREA (including Malmesbury)

Population of **52,881** of which **21%** are U18

6% live in the lowest two national deprivation categories

7% of U19s live in poverty making this one of the most affluent areas in the county

Between Sep 21 and Aug 23 Royal Wootton Bassett accounted for:

4% of all Violence With Injury offences

Wootton Bassett Town (Policing) Beat area had the highest number of Violence With Intent and VAP suspects and offenders in this NPT area. However, RWB NPT had the lowest number of VAP offenders and suspects - accounting for 5% in the PFA or 8% of Wiltshire counties offenders.

VAP OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS (Sep 21 - Aug 23)

38%	6%	62%	38%
U18	18-24	Male	Female

WARMINSTER NPT AREA (including Mere, Westbury and Tisbury)

Population of **58,647** of which **19%** are U18

12% live in the bottom two (out of five) national deprivation categories

Between Sep 22 and Aug 23 Warminster NPT area accounted for:

10%	10%	2%
VAP offences	Violence with injury	Knife crime offences

Making it the 3rd lowest NPT area for violence and 2nd lowest for knife crime

SUSPECTS AND OFFENDERS

Violence against person		Violence with injury
61% Male	**39%** Female	**69%** Male

DEVIZES NPT AREA (including Pewsey and Marlborough)

Population of **65,475** of which **20%** are U18

8% live in the bottom two national deprivation categories

8% of U19s live in poverty

14% of pupils in Devizes Community Area have either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Special Educational Needs

Devizes Town (Policing) Beat area had the highest number of VAP and Violence With Injury suspects and offenders of any Beat in the Wiltshire PFA, second only to Swindon Town Centre.

4th highest number of VAP offenders and suspects in Wiltshire county

VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSON OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS

28%	10%
were U18	were 18-24

VIOLENCE WITH INJURY OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS

33%	13%
were U18	were 18-24

OFFENDERS

67%	33%
were male	were female

This figure represents the lowest proportion of female offenders compared to the other NPTs

CHIPPENHAM NPT AREA (including Calne and Corsham)

Population of **91,205** of which **21.5%** are U18

7.5% live in the lowest two national deprivation categories

17% of pupils in Calne Community Area have either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Special Educational Needs

3rd highest number of offenders and suspects (**11%** of PFA or **17%** of Wiltshire counties)

OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS

63% were male | **37%** were female

Violence against person		Violence with injury	
37% U18	**9%** 18-24	**40%** U18	**11%** 18-24

Calne Town (Policing) Beat had the highest numbers of VAP suspects and offenders, and the highest number of Violence With Injury Offences, followed by Chippenham Town Centre.

KNIFE CRIMES (Sep 22-Aug 23)

31 offences

3rd highest out of the eight NPTs

18: Violence with injury	**5**: robbery

TROWBRIDGE NPT AREA
(including Melksham and Bradford on Avon)

Population of **95,049**

30% of people in Trowbridge community area (CA) live in the bottom two national deprivation categories

10.2% of U19s live in poverty

17% of pupils in Trowbridge CA have either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Special Educational Needs (Wiltshire average = 13%)

Highest levels of VAP and Violence With Injury offences in Wiltshire county

In the last year (Sept 22 - Aug 23) Melksham Town (Policing) Beat area had the highest levels of VAP suspects and offenders (19%) and Violence with Injury suspects and offenders (17%). Trowbridge Central Beat came second in both categories.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Rates of domestic abuse are higher in the Trowbridge CA than the Wiltshire average

12 per 1,000 persons

(Average: 8 per 1,000 persons)

Trowbridge NPT has the highest levels of VAP and Violence With Injury offences in Wiltshire county, it has 14% of all VAP offences in the PFA or 23% of Wiltshire county's and 23% of Wiltshire county's Violence With Injury offences (Sep 22–Aug 23).

KNIFE CRIME

Trowbridge NPT has had the highest levels of knife crime in the Wiltshire county area for the last two years:

31 crimes (Sept 21-Aug22)	**40** crimes (Sept 22-Aug23)

Of the 40 knife crimes in Sept 22–Aug 23, 23 were violence with injury and 5 were robbery. People aged 20-24 were the most common knife crime offenders in this NPT area. Followed by people aged 35-44.

AMESBURY NPT AREA
(including Tidworth)

Population of **57,927** of which **24.5%** are U18

7.5% of U19s live in poverty

16% of pupils in Amesbury CA have either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Special Educational Needs

Amesbury Town (Policing) Beat area had the highest volume of VAP and Violence with Injury offences.

OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS
(Sept 21 - Aug 23)

Violence Against the Person		Violence With Injury	
37% U18	**8%** 18-24	**39%** U18	**9%** 18-24

KNIFE CRIME

16 crimes (Sept21 - Aug22)	**12** crimes (Sept22 - Aug23)
5: Violence With Injury	**6**: robbery

SALISBURY NPT AREA
(including Southern Wiltshire and Wilton)

This is the only city and largest urban settlement in Wiltshire county, though only the 3rd most populated area.

Population of **43,141** of which **21%** are U18

30% live in the bottom two national deprivation categories

13% of pupils in Salisbury Community Area have either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Special Educational Needs

Salisbury City Centre (Policing) Beat area had the highest number of VAP and Violence With Injury offences.

OFFENCES (Sept 22-Aug 23)

Violence against the person offences

12% of PFA offences	**20%** of Wiltshire county offences

Violence With Injury offences

12% of PFA offences	**19%** of Wiltshire county offences

OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS
(Sept 21 - Aug 23)

Violence against the person		Violence With Injury	
66% Male	**34%** Female	**70%** Male	**30%** Female

OFFENDERS AND SUSPECTS
(Sept 22 - Aug 23)

Violence against the person		Violence With Injury	
23% U18	**11%** 18-24	**20%** U18	**12%** 18-24

90% of VAP offenders defined their ethnicity as White British

KNIFE CRIME

15 crimes (Sept21 - Aug22)	**32** crimes (Sept22 - Aug23)
20: Violence With Injury	**6**: robbery

25% of the 32 knife crime offences in this NPT area had a domestic abuse flag, indicating it related to a domestic abuse incident.

Problems

Crime data analysis relates to September 2021 – August 2023 and domestic abuse flagged crimes were removed[16]

Violence Against the Person – Violence Without Injury

Violence Without Injury was the most common crime subgroup for the past few years, with little difference (<1%) between the volume of crimes this year (5,204) compared to last year (5,216).

Common Assault and Battery was the most common offence in that subgroup and amongst all Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences due to the 4,401 crimes in the one year period between Sept 2022 – Aug 2023. This represented 85% of the Violence Without Injury offences and 38% of VAP crimes. 2,748 (62%) of them were in Wiltshire county and 1,653 (38%) in Swindon. These are less serious assaults which can result in up to six months in custody.

The next most common offence in this category was Assaults Against a Constable, of which there were 285 in the last year in the Wiltshire PFA accounting for 5% of Violence Without Injury offences. 108 (38%) were in Wiltshire county and 177 (62%) were in Swindon. The much higher number of assaults on Constables in Swindon than in county is significant due to the much smaller population and ratio of Violence Without Injury crimes in Swindon. These offences can result in up to two years in custody.

Whilst the other most common offences in this subcategory were fairly stable over the two year period covered, Cruelty to and Neglect of Children saw a steep rise of 114%, from 101 last year (Sept 21 – Aug 22) to 216 this year (Sept 22 - Aug 23). Of the 216 in the last year, 120 (56%) were in Swindon and 96 (44%) were in Wiltshire county. As domestic flagged incidents were removed from the SVD definition of violence, the narrative around these incidents is less clear and further scrutiny of this data is required.

[16] As per the local SVD of definition, domestic violence (identified as a 'flag' in police data) have been removed.

Violence With Injury

Violence with Injury relates more to the definition of serious violence, and this was the second most common type of VAP. This year's figure of 4,102 (Sept 22 - Aug 23) was down 10% on the previous year's 4,548 (Sept 21 – Aug 22).

The most common offence in the Violence With Injury subgroup and second most common VAP offence was Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm (ABH), of which there were 3,238 in the one year period (Sept 2022 – Aug 2023). This represented 79% of the Violence With Injury offences and 28% of all VAP crimes. 1,968 (61%) were in Wiltshire county and 1,270 (39%) were in Swindon. These are more serious assaults which can result in up to five years in custody.

The next most common offence in the Violence With Injury subgroup was Person/Owner in Charge of a Dangerous Dog[17]. There were 384 of these which made up 9% of the Violence With Injury offences. However, these offences do not appear to be linked with activity related to the SVD and consideration should be taken to remove these in future.

The next/third most common offence in the Violence With Injury subgroup was ABH Assaults Against Constables of which there were 121 in the year between Sept 21 – Aug 22 in the Wiltshire PFA, making up 3% of the Violence With Injury offences. 60 in Wiltshire county and 61 in Swindon representing a 50/50 (%) split between the two LAs. Again, this is significant due to the much large population in Wiltshire county compared to Swindon.

Much more serious assaults result in charges relating to Grievous Bodily Harm, of which there is GBH with Intent (Section 18) or without Intent (Section 20). GHB without Intent (Sec 20) can result in up to five years in custody and GBH with Intent (Sec 18) can result in up to life imprisonment. There were 107 GBH with Intent crimes in the Wiltshire PFA in the last year (Sept 22 - Aug 23) and these accounted for 3% of the Violence With Injury offences or 1% of all VAP offences. 50 offences (47%) were in Wiltshire county and 57 (53%) were in Swindon. This highlights a prevalence of more severe violent incidents in Swindon compared to Wiltshire county. There were also 68 GBH Without Intent offences in the same one year period. 30 (44%) of these were in Swindon and 38 (56%) in Wiltshire county. On this occasion, there were more in Wiltshire county than in Swindon, however, with the larger population size, this is expected.

'Fist/boot/physical' was the most recorded weapon (55%) for all VAP offences and for Violence With Injury offences (70%) in the past year (Sept 22 - Aug 23). 'No Weapon' was the next most recorded weapon in both categories.

140 Violence Against the Person offences were flagged as a knife crime across the Wiltshire PFA in the past year (Sept 22 - Aug 23). This represented 1% of all VAP offences. This is similar to the previous year (Sept 21 - Aug 22) when there were 130 flagged knife crimes in the VAP offences. 82 of the 140 occurred in Swindon, and 58 occurred in Wiltshire county.

Knife Crime

Looking at all offences involving knives/bladed articles across all crime categories over the period September 2021 – August 2023.

There were 362 knife crime offences in one year between Sept 22 - Aug 23. This is an increase of 31% on the 277 seen in the previous year (Sept 21 - Aug 22).

59% (215) of these knife crime offences in the Wiltshire PFA were in Swindon, compared to 41% (147) in Wiltshire county.

[17] Actual offence called "Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control in any place in E&W (whether or not in public place) injuring any person or assistance dog"

This equates to 0.3 knife crimes per 1,000 population in Wiltshire and 0.6 per 1,000 population in Swindon. This indicates a much more significant knife crime problem in Swindon than in Wiltshire county, however the numbers for this crime type in both areas are very low, especially compared to national levels. However, this is weighed against measuring the severity and community impact of these crimes, which are higher than others.

Of the 362 offences in Sept 22 - Aug 23, the majority (228, 63%) fell into the VAP category. This is because Actual Bodily Harm was the most common crime where a knife was used in the PFA; the 122 ABH offences marked as a knife crime in police data represent 34% of all knife crimes in that year.

Violence Against the Person (VAP)	228	63%
Robbery	99	27%
Possession of weapons	22	6%
Sexual offences	8	2%
Public Order offences	<5[18]	-
Theft offences	<5	-

However, in Swindon robbery was the most common offence where a knife was used in the last year (Sept 22 – Aug 23). Of the 217 knife crimes in that period in Swindon, 71 (20%) were robberies. In the whole Wiltshire PFA, more than a quarter (27%) of knife crimes were robbery offences.

The third most common knife crime offence was Wounding with intent to do GBH (Section 18) of which there were 51 in the Wiltshire PFA in Sept 22 – Aug 23, making up 14% of knife crime offences. These are the more serious violent offences. 21 out of the 51 (58%) of Wiltshire's Section 18 knife crime offences were in the Swindon NPT area.

Very few knife offences related to possession (6%). However, this is a harder offence to detect.

Over the two years between Sept 21 - Aug 23, 23% of knife crimes had a domestic abuse flag[19]. 12% in Swindon and 11% in Wiltshire county. Offenders with a domestic abuse flag had an average age of 26 and 55% were 30+, notably higher than those linked to gang related knife crimes. 8% of offenders in the DA flag category also had a 'domestic abuse victim' person flag indicating that they had been a victim as well as an offender of domestic abuse. This demonstrates the relationship between victims of violence becoming perpetrators of violence.

Thirteen percent of knife crimes had an 'alcohol' flag. The average age of offenders in this cohort was 26 and 64% were 30+.

9% of knife crimes had a 'drugs' flag. However, it's unclear whether the drugs were related to the victims, offender or offence itself. This would require an important improvement in data collection. The average age of this cohort was 21. Only 20% of this cohort were 30+ years old.

11% of knife crimes had a 'mental health' flag. The average age of this cohort was 17.5. 53% however were over 30+ years old indicating a specific demographic was less clear in this category.

Serious Violence Amongst Children and Young People

Age 14 was the most common age for Violence With Injury suspects and offender in the last year (Sept 22 – Aug 23). 239 children made up that statistic.

[18]Figures below 5 throughout this document are not provided to protect the identify of those involved

[19]Flags connected to crimes in police data often reference a risk and or vulnerability linked to the offender(s) and victim(s) and be useful to better understand the crimes though their reliability is not clear.

Children aged 15 were the 2nd most common age for Violence With Injury suspects and offenders in the same period (206 children) and children aged 13 were the 3rd most common (178 children). These age trends were reflected in both Wiltshire county and Swindon.

Most ABH offences were committed by children aged 14. However, when the offence was more serious, such as GHB with Intent, the most common age for an offender in this category was age 17, followed by age 18, then age 15.

The majority (36%) of VAP offences committed by U18s was Common Assault which falls into the Violence Without Injury subgroup.

Top 3 VAP offences by under 18s:

	Female	Male	Total
Common Assault and Battery	14.33%	22.11%	36.44%
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm (Sec 47)	13.27%	20.19%	33.46%
Harassment	4.81%	6.42%	11.23%

Amongst U18s, the second most common VAP offence and the most common offence in the Violence With Injury subgroup was Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) (1953 offences). It accounted for 92% of U18s Violence With Injury offences. Only 3% of Violence with Injury U18 suspects and offenders (65 children) were linked to the more serious offence of Grievous Bodily Harm. 1% (31 children) of U18 Violence With Injury offences were Assault (ABH) Against a Constable and another 1% (30 offences) were GBH Without Intent.

80% of the more serious GBH offences (both with and without intent) were linked to male suspects and offenders. Whereas more females were involved in the lesser Violence With Injury offences as ABH was split 60/40 male and female U18s and ABH Against a Constable was split 52/48 female and male U18s. ABH Against a Constable and ABH against an Emergency Worker were the only Violence With Injury offences where U18 females represented (slightly) more suspects and offenders than their U18 male counterparts.

36% of VAP U18 suspects and offenders and 35% of Violence With Injury suspects and offenders, were in the Swindon NPT area. Trowbridge had the next highest level of U18 suspects and offenders for VAP offences and Violence With Injury offences, accounting for 15% in both categories. Chippenham was next, as that NPT area accounted for 13% of VAP suspects and offenders and 12% of all Violence With Injury suspects and offenders.

However, the (Policing) Beat area with the highest number of U18 Violence With Injury suspects and offenders in the Wiltshire PFA over the last two years (Sept 21 – Aug 23) was Devizes Town. Second was Warminster Town, then Calne Town. A Swindon Beat area doesn't appear until 10th amongst this offence list. However, these numbers can be affected by the ability of local policing to track/trace/identify suspects and offenders compared to other areas.

85% of U18 suspects and offenders linked to Violence With Injury offences were White British. 'Mixed White and Black Caribbean' was the most common minority group though they accounted for only 4% of the cohort.

Top 3 VAP offences by 18–24-year-olds:

	Female	Male	Total
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm (Sec 47)	8.04%	23.07%	31.11%
Common Assault and Battery	7.59%	20.77%	28.36%
Harassment	3.84%	4.29%	8.13%

Amongst the 18-24 cohort, ABH is the top offence in the Violence With Injury subgroup. It represents 75% of all Violence

With Injury offences by this age group in the Wiltshire PFA over the past two years (Sept 21 – Aug 23). It is noteworthy that ABH is also the most common of all VAP offences (accounting for 31% of offences) amongst this age group, whereas looking at all ages, Common Assault and Battery is usually the much more significant offence. This shows that offenders in this age group (18-24) are more likely than other ages to commit a more serious assault (i.e., more likely to commit ABH whereas other groups are more likely to commit a lesser offence of Common Assault).

Wiltshire Police reporting using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index to ascertain harm per crime also found that the average harm (CHI[20]) per crime committed by those under the age of 25 in Swindon (which is 114) is higher than the U25s in Wiltshire county (which is 94), despite county's overall U25s crime harm score totalling 410,811.50 being higher than Swindon's, 328,586.50. This means that whilst more U25s crimes occur in county than in Swindon, more high harm crimes are occurring in Swindon in comparison to Wiltshire county. Suspects aged 14 – 16 caused the most harm to victims meaning that the most harmful offences are caused by some of the youngest offenders. The crime harm suffered by their victims totalled 35% (310,252) of the overall crime harm across both Swindon and county (898,151).

Amongst 18–24-year-olds, 74% of Violence With Injury offences (Sept 21 – Aug 23) were linked to male suspects and offenders and 26% were linked to female suspects and offenders. Devizes had the highest proportion of female to male Violence With Injury suspects and offenders age 18-24 out of the eight NPT areas (38% were female versus 62% male) but it only had 26 young women in this category, whereas the area with the highest numbers of young women age 18-24 were in Swindon (93) and then Trowbridge (27).

Swindon had the most young people (age 18-24) (163) connected to a Violence with Injury offence in the past year Sept 22 – Aug 23). The Swindon NPT accounted for 51% of the young people connected to Violence with Injury offences in that period. Salisbury was next with 13% (42) of the 18–24-year-olds connected to Violence With Injury offences. Trowbridge had 12% of the PFA's 18–24-year-old Violence With Injury suspects and offenders, making Trowbridge 3rd in the PFA or 2nd in Wiltshire county for this age group.

The (Policing) Beat area with the most suspects and offenders aged 18-24, who were linked to Violence With Injury offences, was Swindon Town Centre and Salisbury City Centre, as both had 58 linked young people.

Amongst the 18–24-year-old Violence With Injury offenders, 84% were White British.

70 Violence With Injury offences in the last year (Sept 22 – Aug 23) involved the use of a knife where the suspect and/or offender(s) were U25. 51 (46% of offenders) were U18 and 19 (17% of offenders) were age 18-24. This also means 36% were adults (25+).

76% of the Violence With Injury offences that involved a knife amongst the U18s were in Swindon (39 children). The number of children (U18s) in other NPT areas all totalled less than 5 per area[21]. The numbers were so low, no trends are discernible.

Wiltshire police reporting noted that when an U25 knife crime offender was linked to a gang, the offence had a higher harm score, indicating serious incidents involving a knife are more likely to be linked to a gang related incident than not.

[20]Cambridge harm Index used to measure 'harm' per crime based on the estimated length of a sentence if convicted for that crime.
[21] Totals less than 5 individuals are not provided to protect the identity of those involved.

People [22]

63% of all VAP suspects and offenders were males, 37% females. Whereas 53% of victims were male, 46% were female. However, with Violence With Injury offences, 68% were male and 32% female.

The Amesbury NPT area had the highest proportion of VAP female offenders per NPT in the whole Wiltshire PFA where 43% of suspects and offenders were female versus 57% male, followed by the Warminster NPT area, where 41% of suspects and offenders were female and 59% male. Comparatively, the Swindon NPT area had 36% rate of suspects and offenders who identified as female, versus 64% male.

If we look at just the U18's age group, the Amesbury NPT area still has the highest rate of female offenders, but it increases to a rate of 50% recorded as female. This is interesting as crime rates are rarely this proportionate between male and female offenders. And, although Amesbury had the highest females proportionately to male U18s, the Police Beat with the highest numbers of female U18 offenders was Warminster Town, followed by Calne Town, followed by Tidworth. Tidworth is the only Beat area in the top three that is in the Amesbury NPT. Common Assault and Battery and Actual Bodily Harm are the main offence types amongst this cohort of U18 female suspects and offenders.

Notably both Swindon and Wiltshire Youth Justice Services also both highlighted that they had higher numbers of female offenders than the national average. However, there is not currently a clear narrative/explanation for this, therefore it requires further examination.

[22]This data will reflect crimes recorded by Wiltshire Police from Sept 2021 – August 2023 as provided in December 2023.
[23]Offenders refers to both recorded offenders and suspects.
[24]Note, there is a separate response for 'stranger'.

Most 52% were adults (age 25 – 69). However, with such a wide range of ages in the 'adult' category, this is expected. 11% were committed by young people (age 18-24). 31% were committed by children (under 18s). 6% were committed by pensioners (age 70+)[23].

31% of relationships between the offenders and victims were recorded as 'Acquaintances'. This was the most common type of relationship in the violence against the person crimes. However, a significant number of responses were described as 'None[24]' (11%) or 'Other' (11%) or 'NULL' (1%), making inferences on this data more difficult.

85% (8,581 people) violent suspects and offenders gave their self-defined ethnicity as 'White British' in the Wiltshire PFA (79% of Swindon offenders and 90% of Wiltshire county offenders). 3% described themselves as 'Other White'. The nearest minority group was those defining their race as 'Mixed – White and Black Caribbean' (2%, or 219 people) then 'African' (<2%), then 'Any other Black Background' (<2%).

86% of victims also defined their ethnicity as 'White British'. And >3% said 'Other White'. Similar to offenders self-defined ethnicity, the nearest minority group was 'African' and 'Mixed–White and Black Caribbean', both with <2%.

Risks/Vulnerability/Safeguarding

Flags are used on Police systems to indicate there is a risk and/or vulnerability present regarding a person or event. They show that 21% of suspects and offenders of all VAP offences[25] had a 'domestic abuse victim' flag. 9% had a 'Child Protection Plan' flag. Twenty-five percent had a 'Troubled Families' flag (now known as Supporting Families). Three percent were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Two percent were also at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation. And whilst the reliability of these figures is debatable, these give an indication of the multiple and complex needs of many suspects and offenders, especially

child suspects and offenders. This reiterates the importance of taking a trauma informed approach to safeguard people who may be at risk of involvement in serious violence.

Indeed, as of Sept 2023, Wiltshire Police had 55 children tracked as being criminally exploited. Thirty-three of these (60%) were in Wiltshire county and 22 (40%) of these were in Swindon. 51% were male and 49% were female and the most common ages were 15 and 16. Sixty percent were 'White Northern European', 16% 'Black' and 24% had no registered ethnicity. Whilst this shows that white, likely British children are the most vulnerable to child criminal exploitation in the Wiltshire PFA, this also

[25]As per the SVD definition of violence described on page 7

indicates a disproportionate number of black children are victims of child criminal exploitation.

55% of children tracked as being criminally exploited are also believed to be carrying a weapon and 29% are believed to have been involved in serious violence further demonstrating the risk to children and young people and highlighting the complexity of the victim and offender labels, especially when talking about children.

MASH/ Safeguarding

Many of C&YP who are identified as vulnerable will first go through the local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Those who are identified as being at risk will go through to a decision makers meeting, which is represented by various local statutory authorities to best understand the risk and refer the individual to the most appropriate route for safeguarding.

Between July and November 2023, 654 of these meetings took place about individuals in the Wiltshire PFA. MASH referrals are on a general upward trajectory, indicating safeguarding concerns in the community are increasing.

Unborn and children aged 13-16 were the most common ages to be referred to MASH, with age 14 being the most referred age.

49% of all referrals were male and 45% female (6% were unborn – sex unknown). However, of those that had been arrested, 88% were male and only 12% were female.

Nearly all of those who had been referred into MASH who had been arrested were also recorded as being at risk from risk outside the home (ROTH) as opposed to risk from in the home. This demonstrates a challenge for traditional safeguarding / child services who are primary focused on addressing risk in the home.

71% of the children in the ROTH category resided in Swindon, 25% resided in Wiltshire county (and 4% were OFA). This shows that whilst overall reporting into MASH was fairly even between Swindon and Wiltshire, the proportion of those who's risk related to ROTH was significantly higher for Swindon. This is reflected in the above figures indicating serious violence (as opposed to all VAP offences) was higher in Swindon than Wiltshire county and Swindon had higher levels of risk relating to gangs.

Amongst the ROTH cohort, in both Swindon and Wiltshire the most common risk identified amongst children was drug misuse. This is despite the results in the school surveys indicating a similar level of children in both areas used illegal drugs.

In Swindon this was closely followed by risk due to the child's links to local gangs and then risk relating to child criminal exploitation. County Lines is a form of CCE and adding CL to the CCE count would elevate CCE to the highest risk amongst Swindon children.

Similarly in Wiltshire, if you added the count of children at risk from county lines to number linked to CCE, this would also be the largest risk to children.

Although there was a fairly even split of males and females referred into MASH on the whole, amongst those in the ROTH cohort, the ratio of males increases to 64%. In all risks relating to violence, males/boys were clearly over-represented.

- For risk associated with local gangs, males/boys accounted for 89%.
- For risk associated with county lines, males/boys accounted for 79%.
- For risk associated with MSHT, males/boys accounted for 75%.
- For risk associated with serious youth violence, males/boys accounted for 93%.
- For risk associated with CCE, males/boys accounted for 79%.

And for the other risks linked to the ROTH cohort, males/boys mostly accounted for the higher proportion of victims too:

- For risk associated with (ROTH) alcohol misuse, males/boys accounted for 69%.
- For risk associated with (ROTH) drug misuse, males/boys accounted for 81%.
- For risk associated with (ROTH) peer on peer abuse, males/boys accounted for 77%.
- For risk associated with (ROTH) missing episodes, males/boys accounted for 59%.

The only ROTH risk factor where females/girls accounted for a higher proportion than their male counterparts was child sexual exploitation (CSE), where females/girls accounted for 80% of referees and males/boys accounted for 20%.

The age of children in the ROTH cohort was also notably different to the overall MASH cohort. Where amongst the overall cohort only 5% of children were age 17, in the ROTH cohort 18% were age 17. Overall, there was a much heavier concentration of children aged 13 – 17 in the ROTH cohort and those in the arrested cohort were only age 13 – 17.

71% of those in the ROTH cohort were recorded as being in some form of education, which is important as attachment to education/school is a known protective factor in violence prevention. However, it should be noted that this figure may not reflect attendance, educational attainment, or engagement in schooling. This reinforces the importance of involving schools in violence prevention work.

28% of those in the ROTH cohort were recorded as not in education, employment, or training (NEET) which is a significant risk factor for engagement in serious violence. This figure goes up to 42% amongst the ROTH cohort who were also recorded as having been arrested. This further reinforces the risk amongst children who are NEET.

10% of the 71% in education were recorded as being in an alternative provision, which could mean they are not in mainstream schooling and the figures goes up to 12% amongst those who have been arrested which indicates that being in some form of education, including an alternative provision here in Wiltshire, does provide some protection against involvement in serious violence.

Summary / concluding remarks

Children and young people are at significant risk of involvement in serious violence, including knife crime in the Wiltshire PFA. However, children believe many more of their peers are carrying knives than actually are.

Knife crime is not solely a youth violence issue, it is also linked to robberies and domestic violence, often linked to older offenders. However, young people are significantly at risk of knife related gang activity which can result in higher levels of knife related harm, including homicide.

Swindon sees higher numbers of violence, especially amongst children and young people than other NPT areas and it sees higher harm amongst its violence offences, meaning it sees higher levels of serious violence than the Wiltshire LA area. This could be linked to the higher levels of gangs and gang related violence seen in Swindon than Wiltshire.

However, the Wiltshire LA area sees a higher volume of VAP and Violence With Injury offences and its rurality and geographical spread of more populated towns and villages causes further complexity in addressing these issues.

Data quality on serious violence risk factors needs to improve and align to the values of taking a trauma informed approach amongst statutory authorities. Statutory authorities need to collect data in a way that is more easily comparable so data can be overlayed and cross referenced. Multi-agency working can improve violence prevention.

Prevention of serious violence is possible where data highlights known risks and where risks are quickly identified and addressed. Safeguarding therefore must be the focus of violence prevention.

Numerous reports, including those from MASH/Safeguarding, Police Flags and CCE reporting highlight the narrow / blurred lines between someone being labelled a victim or offender.

Wiltshire and Swindon pcc

Swindon Borough Council

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

Wiltshire Council

HM Prison & Probation Service