

# **South Yorkshire Serious Violence Reduction Strategy**

**2024-2027**



City of  
Doncaster  
Council



South Yorkshire  
**FIRE & RESCUE**



South Yorkshire  
**POLICE**



Our aim is to reduce and prevent Serious Violence in South Yorkshire

## Foreword



Serious Violence causes devastation and has a detrimental impact for individuals, families, and communities. It can lead to severe trauma, both physical and psychological, and in the worst cases, it can result in lives being lost.

We do not believe serious violence is inevitable. But we do believe we can achieve sustainable reductions in serious violence which can improve the health and quality of life of the people of South Yorkshire.

# Introduction

In 2023 the Government introduced a Serious Violence Duty (SVD). The Duty requires 'specified authorities' in a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area and the causes of it; and preparing and implementing a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

The named authorities are:

- South Yorkshire Police
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
- Youth Offending Service
- Probation Service
- Integrated Care Board
- Sheffield City Council
- Doncaster City Council
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Three other sectors have a duty to cooperate with the duty as required: the Prison Service, Education, and the Secure Youth Estate.

The Serious Violence Duty is being established in the 43 police areas in England and Wales, and for many areas it is a new expectation. However, South Yorkshire already has a Violence Reduction Unit, established in 2019, and has good levels of cooperation between organisations across the county, so in South Yorkshire we are building on and expanding from a strong, collaborative base.

## Strategic Approach

The Serious Violence Duty Strategic Approach is founded on organisational cooperation and collaboration. It is based on a Public Health Approach, meaning we start with prevention by engaging and influencing young people before they get involved in violence. We then include other approaches for people identified as at risk or already involved.

A Public Health Approach consists of 5 elements: using the available data and evidence base, working across the whole population, working in partnership, a focus on prevention and looking at the causes of the causes. A Public Health Approach means we define the problem (in this case, violence), find out the causes of the problem, design, develop and evaluate interventions that address the causes, and scale up and implement solutions that work.

The approach identifies priorities to address violence. The priorities are identified through information gathered in the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), from the priorities set by the Home Office, and priorities identified through engagement with the people of South Yorkshire.

Each partner organisation will then identify the actions they will take in response to the priorities, relevant to their service and sphere of influence. Further, a central commitment in this strategy is to use interventions that are evidenced as effective, and to share evidence and information to help partners and other organisations make informed choices about the activities they deliver or commission.

The SNA collects relevant data sources to map violence, the predictors of violence, and the response to violence across South Yorkshire. The SNA is a collaborative piece of work, coordinated by the Violence Reduction Unit. Many organisations from across the statutory partners contributed both data and narrative about violence to the SNA. The VRU also collected information on the community response to violence, beyond statutory partners, as community action is of considerable importance in reducing violence.

The result of the SNA is a comprehensive picture of violence, its causes, and the response to it across South Yorkshire. This allows statutory partners to direct their violence reduction activity in South Yorkshire. Please refer to SNA document for the detailed content.

The Strategy will be refreshed annually, allowing for attention to be given to new emerging trends and themes.

The Serious Violence Duty Specified Authority leads will provide joint leadership to ensure an integrated and accountable delivery model. Holding specified authorities to account for delivery of this strategy will be the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Executive Board. The Executive is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner, who will continue to oversee the activity until May 2024, and includes representatives from all the Specified Authorities, community groups, faith groups, and the voluntary sector.



## Key Priorities

Initial Priorities have been identified based on the results of the Strategic Needs Assessment, building on results from previous Area Profiles undertaken by the Violence Reduction Unit.

The Area Profile is a document researched and written by the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit which discusses the social determinants of life, such as housing, employment, basic income, where we live, our environment, access to education, access to healthcare, our relationships, whether we are isolated, our relationship networks, community cohesion, social exclusion, poverty and deprivation and looks at the causes of the causes of violence.

Those priorities have been reviewed and now adopted specifically for the SVD Strategy by our partners:

- Promote gender equality to reduce and prevent Violence Against Women and Girls.
- Work in partnership to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and substance misuse.
- Tackle Domestic Abuse and work to ensure that survivors can access the support they need.
- Reduce access to lethal weapons and knife crime.
- Work to change the cultural and social attitudes that contribute to violence.
- Work with partners to promote safe, nurturing and stable relationships between children and their parents and caregivers.
- Encourage all professionals and organisations to become trauma-informed, to an approved standard for South Yorkshire.
- Work in partnership to ensure that children and young people have equal opportunities to access education and that their different starting points and situations are taken into account.
- Reduce violence in the Evening and Night-Time Economy.
- Support effective rehabilitation for those who are already involved in violence.

## Definition

Violence is defined by the World Health Organisation as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a higher likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

The Government 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. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon”.

The Serious Violence Duty 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 and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.”

## Serious Violence in context

For the year ending March 2023, South Yorkshire had the 9th highest rate of homicides in England and Wales at 13.8 per million. South Yorkshire also had the 4th highest rate of offences involving knives or sharp instruments, at 119.0 per 100,000. For all age groups, South Yorkshire had the 4th highest rate of admission in hospitals due to injury from knives or sharp objects in the year ending March 2023, at 91 admissions per million population, and the 8th highest for those aged under 25 at 86 per million.

A significant predictor of violence is deprivation, and all districts in South Yorkshire score above the England average for deprivation. Many areas in South Yorkshire are in the top 10% for the most deprived in England.

Since the inception of the Public Health Approach to reduce violence in South Yorkshire, we have seen some progress in reducing violence in the priority age group of under 25s. Between April 2022 and March 2023, there were no public place homicides of victims under 25 in South Yorkshire. We have also seen decreases in serious violence, serious violence involving a knife, hospital admissions due to injury by a sharp object, and ambulance calls for stab / gunshot wounds for under 25s since the introduction of the Public Health Approach to reduce violence.



## Consultation

As part of South Yorkshire's work to develop a Serious Violence Reduction Strategy, an analysis of people's priorities to prevent and reduce violence has been conducted, using responses to a number of consultations.

The consultations were conducted by a range of South Yorkshire partner organisations. A number of these surveys focused on community safety and violence reduction priorities, including a survey from the office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, which helped to determine priorities when bidding for Safer Streets funding, and a South Yorkshire Police consultation on community safety.

Alongside these were a consultation from City of Doncaster Council, which was used to inform the Doncaster Community Safety Strategy, a consultation from Barnsley Council which formed part of their 2023 Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment, and research from Measurements Evaluation Learning (MEL) Research, commissioned by the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

This commission directed MEL to develop a series of community focus groups with people across South Yorkshire, to gather people's views on local crime and anti-social behaviour, which can lead to serious violence.

In addition to the above, three further consultations were carried out.

Two of these surveys asked what priorities people would like to see reflected in South Yorkshire's Serious Violence Duty Response Strategy.

The first was with members of the Preventing Violence Forum, a group convened by the VRU to bring together community and third sector organisations.

The second was with members of the South Yorkshire Police Violence Against Women and Girls Independent Advisory Group, which brings together organisations and individuals working to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, to provide advice and guidance which shapes South Yorkshire Police's approach to the issue.

The third consultation was carried out by the VRU, in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University. This face-to-face survey asked members of the public about their feelings of safety, concerns related to crime and anti-social behaviour in their local area, and their priorities to prevent and reduce violence in their community.

Through conducting an analysis of these various consultations, the key themes and trends have been identified in how people in South Yorkshire view their local communities; how safe they feel; the impact of crime and violent anti-social behaviour; and priorities for preventing and reducing violence. This analysis informed the priorities included in South Yorkshire's Serious Violence Reduction Strategy.

The consultations mentioned above involved 6868 participants.



## Priorities identified through consultations

In response to what people have told us based on Preventing Violence Forum feedback, face-to-face questionnaires, and Survey Monkey surveys, top themes have been identified.

- **Increase police presence and visibility.** There is a perception that police presence and visibility need to be increased, to ensure crime and anti-social behaviour can be tackled to their fullest extent.
- **Provide more support and opportunities for young people.** There is a recognition that early intervention is important to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime and violence. Respondents call for more support and opportunities for young people.
- **Raise awareness and importance of a long-term approach to violence reduction.** This approach would focus on preventing violence before it happens, rather than simply reacting to it after it has occurred.
- **Continue challenging and changing the longstanding social and cultural attitudes and norms** which contribute to violence occurring in the first place, alongside our efforts to support victims, survivors, and communities, as strategic partners.
- **Promote positive role models, behaviours, and diversionary activities, as well as mental health support,** with a particular focus on intervention with young people.

## Our Approach

When we consider the Public Health Approach, we start from the idea that prevention is better than cure. The South Yorkshire Strategy will focus on the whole spectrum of prevention opportunities available, from preventing the social factors of serious violence (the 'causes of the causes'), to early identification of those who are at risk of serious violence and appropriate interventions to address this.

We will also work with those who have committed serious violence to prevent re-offending, to reduce the harm of crime for victims, families, and communities. We will use the available data and evidence base to work to prevent violence across the whole spectrum of risks. We will do this through five types of violence prevention techniques:

## Primary prevention

Is seeking to prevent the onset of serious violence or to change behaviour so that serious violence is prevented.

We will:

- Evolve a South Yorkshire wide approach to prevent knife crime ensuring all inputs with children and young people are high quality and evidence based.
- Continue to develop a strong and consistent approach to PSHE with schools and other educational establishments to develop healthy relationships and attitudes.
- Equip professionals and community staff with the skills to provide a trauma-informed service.
- Work to address Domestic Abuse to reduce violence by holding perpetrators to account and investing in behaviour change work, and to reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for children in violent households.
- Challenge social norms and beliefs to promote positive health-related behaviour.
- Support work that reduces homelessness for families to help give children and young people a secure and settled start.
- Strengthen communities and develop their response to violence in their local areas, building relationships with other agencies, including the police.
- Continue to mitigate and address poverty and work towards poverty-free region.
- Help unemployed youth through co-design projects and local partnerships.
- Work in partnership to provide a response to drug misuse, restricting supply and promoting recovery.

## Secondary Prevention

Is aiming to provide support early when violent behaviour starts, to stop it from becoming established.

We will:

- Divert children away from harm through positive activities.
- Commission a range of effective, joined up, related services able to meet the needs of potential victims and potential offenders.
- Establish asset-based policing as a way of co-producing better outcomes in communities.

- Cooperate with the licensed trade to help reduce serious violence.
- Explore the role of faith groups to help to reduce violence.
- Continue engagement with schools to reach as many young people as possible, providing bespoke lessons around violence and knife crime.

## **Tertiary Prevention**

Is looking to provide ways out for people already involved in violent crime.

We will:

- Continue the Navigator programmes in South Yorkshire hospitals and custody facilities to interrupt serious violence and prevent further injury.
- Provide excellent statutory supervision of offenders in custody and the community.
- Invest in, design, and develop effective interventions to address offending behaviour.
- Work to expand the network of women and men with 'lived experience' who volunteer to mentor and support those who seek to change their lives.
- Employment scheme to support rehabilitation of ex-offenders.
- Improve victim support.

## **Criminal Justice and Enforcement**

Is holding people accountable for their actions.

We will:

- Continue to operate Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for high-risk and serious violent offenders.
- Support South Yorkshire Police to undertake enforcement and build on innovative practice.
- Direct proactive operation of enforcement activity within hotspot areas to target serious violence.
- Maximise enforcement opportunities through effective partnership work across the Criminal Justice System and through Integrated Offender Management, Prisons, and Probation.
- Ensure smooth transitions from Youth Justice Services (YJS) to adult supervision to maximise the effectiveness of interventions.

- Continue the arrangement to share police information directly with Probation to assist them in providing timely court reports and effectively manage offenders.

## **Attitudinal Change**

Is aiming to shift cultural norms in society.

We will:

- Champion the agenda and build on existing local initiatives to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls and the attitudes that perpetuate it.
- Seek to influence public opinion and the role of the media.
- Build and sustain positive relationships between communities and service providers.
- Support and promote role models for young people.
- Continue to engage with and support public health campaigns.

## **Measures of success**

### **Headline measures**

A Public Health Approach will take time to take effect, but these are the main targets set by South Yorkshire, which are aligned with Home Office-outlined key success measures for the nation:

- A sustained decrease in public place homicides.
- A sustained decrease in knife-enabled public place serious violence.
- A sustained decrease in admissions to hospital due to knife or sharp object injuries.

Other measures will be considered:

- A sustained reduction in domestic homicides.
- A sustained reduction in knife enabled homicides.
- A sustained reduction in non-weapon enabled most serious violence.
- A sustained reduction in knife enabled robberies.

## What partners have to say

### Probation:

The Probation Service (Yorkshire and the Humber) is committed to working in Partnership to define and tackle serious violence.

By delivering a quality service we aim to protect the public, reduce the risk that people will reoffend, and help people to live law abiding and positive lives.

Every person on probation, including those in and leaving prison, will have a risk assessment, risk management plan, and sentence plan to outline the interventions required to meet this aim.

### Fire and Rescue Services:

The primary role for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) is to support intervening early to keep young people safe and away from violence. FRS also work with at-risk adults and occupy a position of trust in many local communities.

As diversionary activities, FRS run seven fire cadet branches and a Prince's Trust team programme and aim to support partners in the reduction of anti-social behaviour and deliberate fire setting. FRS have a collaborative approach to safeguarding with FRS represented at Local Authority Safeguarding Children and Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Boards.

The cornerstone of all FRS prevention work has been how services can prevent fire, fire fatalities, and serious injuries in the home setting. FRS also support the community through a programme of Community and Business Fire Safety work.

### Police:

South Yorkshire Police (SYP) continues to invest significant resources to tackle and prevent violence across the county. The Force has a dedicated Armed Crime Team and local teams in each district focussing on drugs and organised crime. The Home Office funds a Grip team which provides visible hot spot patrols and coordinates problem solving activity to reduce violent crime in these hot spots. The Force continues to look for innovative ways to tackle issues such as knife crime linking in with best practice nationally. Domestic Abuse continues to be a priority and we have invested in training the workforce to respond effectively to calls for service, securing prosecutions wherever possible, safeguarding vulnerable victims and managing repeat offenders. We will be working with the CPS, statutory and third sector organisations on the Domestic Abuse National Joint Justice Plan which aims to increase the number of successful prosecutions for DA. The Force is adopting a holistic view towards violent crime and homicide prevention and is making progress towards tackling it. SYP aims to create a police service representative of the communities we police. As part of the National Police Uplift Programme, the Force has recruited an additional 1400 officers over last 3 years.

### Community Safety Partnerships:

As a statutory partner Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) have an explicit role in evidence based strategic action to prevent serious violence. In South Yorkshire reducing violence across the spectrum of risk is a priority for all CSPs, robust multi-agency action plans sit within thematic or task and finish working groups as a core function of each CSP structure.

Community Safety Partnerships strive to work alongside partners and communities to drive forward actions whilst reviewing the data available; with the evidence base to ensure resources are effectively utilised to achieve successful outcomes. By continuing to take a Public Health Approach to violence we will achieve sustainable reductions in violence, improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life for all communities we serve within South Yorkshire.

### Education:

Inclusion is a high priority agenda item for the education sector. South Yorkshire areas are working hard to try to reduce exclusion, and are working with schools, Community Safety Partnerships, and the Violence Reduction Unit to improve partnership working, analyse data, and ensure that the strategy is based on emerging evidence of effective practice. The education sector is working to minimise exclusion rates through early intervention programmes and collaboration with support services.

### Youth Justice:

Our 4 Youth Justice services share a commitment to working with children, families, victims, and partners to reduce serious and violent crime. Our Child First approach recognises the importance of addressing the 'behaviour' of violence, through focused assessment and defensible planning that leads to evidence-based intervention that effectively manages and seeks to reduce risks posed. Our approach ensures that wherever possible, children are diverted from a trajectory of habitual violence and criminality; and central to this is the partnership work undertaken with Police, CPS, victim services and where relevant, the courts, to ensure each child 'perpetrator' receives an appropriate disposal.

Strategically, and in recognition that the challenges faced in reducing serious crime are shared by all, we are committed to creative responses that disrupt and prosecute the individuals and groups that manipulate children. Operationally, we ensure all children engaged by Youth Justice, have the opportunity to undertake work and engage in activities that can ensure future desistance from the use of violence, or from further serious offending.

### Integrated Care Boards:

The NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) remains dedicated to bringing the NHS and partners together locally to improve population health, reduce inequalities, and establish shared strategic priorities in order to support the prevention and response to serious violent crime.

The ICB will play a vital role in system leadership, supporting a Public Health Collaborative Approach with other duty holders and wider partners. This will include an assessment of the needs of victims of abuse, which includes children and young people, through facilitating appropriate commissioning within the local health system to prevent, treat, and manage serious violence. Where possible, the ICB will support co-commissioning with partners of services for those at risk of becoming involved in or already involved in serious violent crime.

