

Delivering the Serious Violence Duty in Dudley

What is the Serious Violence Duty?

A statutory duty launched in January 2024, requiring local agencies—such as Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, West Midlands Police, health services, schools, and youth justice — to work together to prevent serious violence. The duty places an emphasis on protecting young people by not just responding to violence, but addressing the root causes and strengthening early intervention. For more detail on the [Serious Violence Duty](#) visit the GOV.UK webpages.

What is serious violence?

Whilst the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 does not define serious violence for the purposes of the duty, it asks local areas to define serious violence within their area. Serious Violence does include the use of weapons to threaten or cause injury, and other violence resulting in serious injury. Serious violence can also be connected to particular activities, such as drug dealing and criminal exploitation (sometimes referred to as County Lines). This page will explore what the data tells us about serious violence in Dudley.

Who are the partners?

- Black Country Integrated Care Board - Dudley Place
- Dudley and Sandwell Probation Delivery Unit, West Midlands
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Dudley Youth Justice Service
- Education Providers
- Prisons and the Secure Estate
- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service

Alignment with other areas of work

Serious Violence is not a new issue, and there has been a steady rise in knife crime nationally over the past 10 years which often involves people under 25 years of age. However, there are positive indications that serious youth violence is decreasing across the West Midlands including Dudley. The Serious Violence Duty was introduced as a way of ensuring that partners can share data, and work together to develop a rich understanding of serious violence in their area and plan accordingly.

Understanding and tackling serious violence is an inherently complex challenge for agencies to address. The root causes of violence are very rarely straight forward or simple. There is a well-established link identified in academic research that suggests a link between poverty and deprivation with higher levels of violence. This means deprived communities are at risk of experiencing higher levels of violence than more affluent areas.

For many young people who engage in violence, it is often for a relatively short period of time. When violence occurs, it is often linked to traumatic experiences in that young person's life which have not been identified or addressed. This leaves them without the support and tools required to manage their traumatic experiences which may result in violence. Where violence is commonplace in a community it can become normalised and contribute towards a collective trauma and a lack of safety in that area.

Whilst additional police resources in an area can offer a short-term relief from violence, it does not address the underlying causes and the violence can resurface once resourcing priorities shift. Dudley's partners, including the Police, are committed to ensuring a long-term approach to address the root causes of violence in our local communities. This means we can not just respond to violence when it happens, it gives us the opportunity to prevent it happening in the first place. This is known as a Public Health Approach, which has been evolving in Dudley since 2020 and in this time, we have seen a steady decrease in serious youth violence.

As the root causes of violence are complex, a lot of the work being done to address these are being tackled across the breadth of work taking place in Dudley. The partnership approach to addressing these root causes can be seen throughout a variety of local strategies and partnerships within the borough to embed sustainable change.

Relevant strategies and plans already in place are:

- Dudley All Age Exploitation Strategy and [toolkit](#)
- [Dudley Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Dudley Early Help Strategy](#)
- [Dudley Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Dudley SEND Sufficiency and Alternative Provision Strategy](#)
- [Dudley Youth Justice Plan](#)
- [Financial Wellbeing and Mitigating Poverty Strategy](#)
- [Plan for Neighbourhoods](#)
- [West Midlands Reducing Re-offending Plan](#)
- [Safe and Sound Community Safety Plan](#)
- School Attendance and Inclusion Policies
- Schools Violence Reduction Plans
- [West Midlands Combatting Drug and Alcohol Partnership Delivery Plan](#)
- [West Midlands Police and Crime plan](#)

Relevant Partnerships include:

- Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership
- Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership
- Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board
- Dudley's Youth Justice Service Management Board
- Regional Youth Justice Partnership Board
- West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

What the data told us

In 2023, the partnership refreshed and analysed their data as part of the Strategic Needs Assessment, to better understand the problems in the borough. The needs assessment had a particular focus on the following:

- Find out what things can help prevent violence in different parts of the borough, depending on what's needed.
- Focus on understanding 'hidden harms' that impact on children, young people and families, like problems at home that affect their mental or physical health but nobody outside the family knows about, for example, domestic abuse.
- Use information better across the partnership to spot people who need help early on, so things don't get worse.
- Understand why some people carry weapons in Dudley and try to address this to stop them from picking up weapons in the first place.
- Team up more with health experts to notice problems early and share worries with other agencies so they can step in sooner.
- Make good use of information about early help to decide what kinds of services the partners should offer and who they are most suitable for.

Purpose of the Strategic Needs Assessment

The aim of the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) was to provide a richer understanding of serious violence in Dudley, some of the contributing factors and how they can be addressed.

The SNA's main focus is how violence impacts young people under the age of 25. The data indicates that this group tends to experience more violence than other age groups. All this information is used by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership ([WMVRP](#)) to produce a regional strategy for tackling serious violence in the West Midlands Police Force Area.

[Read the regional strategy.](#)

Main findings and recommendations based on the data

The 2018 Government Serious Violence Strategy was published in response to the rise of certain types of public space violent crimes. The Serious Violence Strategy sets out specific crimes of particular concern, including:

- Homicide
- Violence against the person (including knife crime and gun crime)
- Areas of criminality where serious violence or threat is inherent, such as county lines drug dealing.

The SNA has focussed on these areas. Violence could potentially include such a broad range of incidents, that the SNA had to be kept to three issues listed.

The demographics of Dudley and how this impacts levels of serious violence

According to the 2021 Census:

- Dudley's population is approximately 323,500, which is a 3.4% increase from 2011.
- Median age is 41 years (UK and West Midlands median: 40), this remains the same as in the 2011 census.
- Ethnic diversity: 84.9% white, 8.4% Asian, 2.5% Black, 2.8% Mixed, and 1.4% identifying with other ethnicities.
- Significant faith communities: 49.3% Christian, 36% no religion, 6.2% Muslim, 1.6% Sikh, 0.7% Hindu, 0.2% Buddhist, 0.5% other religions, and 5.5% did not answer in the 2021 Census.

Key Findings from the April 2025 Needs Assessment Refresh

1. Serious Youth Violence

- The volume of serious youth violence decreased by 17% between November 2022 and October 2024 in Dudley.
- The harm caused by serious youth violence decreased by 10.4% between November 2022 and October 2024 in Dudley.
- Dudley represents 9% of serious youth violence offences in the West Midlands, the second lowest in the region.

2. Knife Crime

- Knife crime accounted for 1.36% of crimes reported in Dudley for 24/25
- Knife crime decreased by 8% between October 2022 and September 2024.
- In the same time period, 41% of knife crimes in Dudley were attributed to robbery, and 45% were due to violence with injury.
- Males aged 15-19 were most likely to be both a victim and a suspect of knife crime, with the most common age being 16.
- 78% of children who carried a knife were victims of violence in the past year, compared to 16% who do not carry a knife.

3. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- Dudley accounts for 9% of both VAWG victims and suspects in the West Midlands.
- Dudley saw the largest decrease in VAWG in the West Midlands, with a 23% decrease between the 2023 and 2024 calendar years.

4. Health

- Hospital admissions for assault were consistent across 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- Hospital admissions for assault with a knife or sharp object related decreased slightly from 2022/23 to 2023/24

5. Youth Justice

- Dudley saw a slight increase in first time entrants to youth justice in 2023, but remains lower than the average across England and Wales.
- Dudley saw a 21% decrease in children cautioned or sentenced between 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- Boys account for 78% of children cautioned or sentenced in Dudley, and girls accounted for 22%.

Next steps and follow-up actions

Context

As with all areas, the driving factors of serious violence in Dudley are inherently complex, but there is a significant body of academic research exploring why violence occurs. This helps professionals to not just identify risk factors for violence, but explore what can be done to help protect people from experiencing violence. These are known as protective factors, and any work done to address serious violence should uplift protective factors, and mitigate risk factors.

The below diagrams outline two lenses that can be used to identify risk and protective factors in a young person's life.

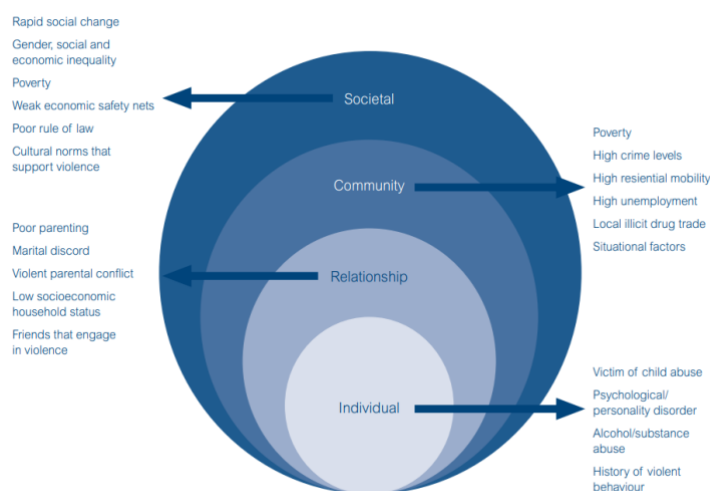


Diagram from The Local Government Association (2018) Public Health Approaches to reducing violence.

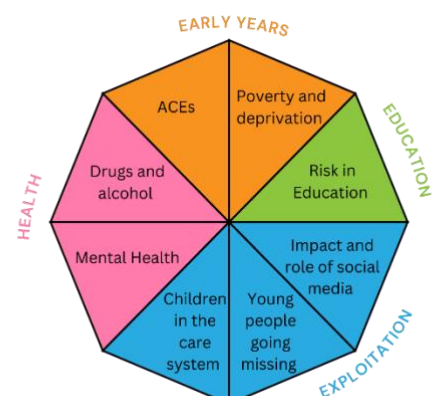


Diagram taken from West Midlands VRP

Looking specifically at protective factors, the below are some examples of protective factors in a young person's life, using an ecological framework.

Individual	Relationships	Community	Societal
High educational aspirations	Close relationships with positive peers.	Involvement in pro social activities outside of school.	Access to hardship support.
Positive social orientation	Ability to discuss problems with parents and/or carers.	Positive environment in schools.	Access to health services.
Popularity acknowledged by peers	Membership in peer groups that do not condone anti-social behaviour.	Positive relationships with peers at school.	High standards of living.
Developed social skills	Perceived parental expectations about school performance.	Strong engagement with school.	Access to good housing.
Skills for realistic planning	Shared time and activities with parents and/or carers.	Access to safe community spaces.	Access to education and employment.
Religious beliefs			
Intolerant attitude towards deviance			
Academic achievement			

What we are already doing

Dudley has long recognised the importance of collaboration to address serious youth violence, and the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty helped to formalise the existing local efforts. Since the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, Dudley has continued to work closely with partners to develop a rich understanding of the role all agencies can play to safeguard and protect our young people through strategic data sharing.

Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership, have introduced the Violence Prevention Partnership into its governance structure, which incorporates all partners named within the Duty alongside other relevant partners operating within the borough. The aim of this group is to:

- Oversee local work to prevent and reduce violence
- Share learning and resources
- Strengthen collaboration across Dudley and the wider region

Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) has demonstrated its commitment to reducing harms at all ages with the development of an all age exploitation strategy, this will ensure young people's vulnerability is recognised and addressed post 18 and will contribute to better life long outcomes.

Professionals across the borough have accessed Trauma Informed Practice training and have effectively embedded this in their practice. This has equipped professionals with an understanding of the potential impacts of trauma when working with vulnerable

young people. The voice of the child has also been embedded throughout the borough's referrals to ensure young people's needs and experiences are understood and addressed.

What works to reduce serious violence?

The Youth Endowment Fund has produced a toolkit outlining what works to tackle serious violence, and how strong the evidence is. Dudley currently commissions [A&E Navigators](#) at Russell's Hall Hospital and a range of [mentoring](#) as part of the range of support offered to local children and young people.

How will we know if we are focused on the right things?

The partnership is confident that they understand what serious violence looks like in the borough, and that there is a good understanding of the driving factors. Part of this understanding is gained through working closely with children and young people through initiatives such as the Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire and the work of the Dudley Health Champions. Alongside using youth voice, the partnership are continuing to develop a range of analytical tools to understand the impacts on our young people, and refine what we're able to offer.

Dudley also work closely with the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the [Violence Reduction Partnership \(VRP\)](#) who commission a range of support available in Dudley, and actively contribute to the regional understanding and of violence and vulnerability.