



NORTHUMBRIA  
**POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**

violence  
reduction  
unit

*Improving lives to prevent crime*

# SERIOUS VIOLENCE RESPONSE STRATEGY

## 2023-24

Northumbria  
Violence  
Reduction  
Unit





# CONTENTS

02	<b>CONTENTS</b>
03	<b>FOREWORD FROM THE COMMISSIONER</b>
04	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
05 - 06	<b>OUR VISION</b>
07	<b>SERIOUS VIOLENCE AND POVERTY</b>
08 - 09	<b>GOVERNANCE, PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERDEPENDENCIES</b>
10 - 13	<b>OUR PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH</b>
14	<b>KEY CHALLENGES</b>
15 - 18	<b>DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24</b>
19 - 20	<b>APPENDIX 1 - THEORY OF CHANGE</b>
21	<b>APPENDIX 2 - OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23</b>
22 - 38	<b>APPENDIX 3 - OUR INTERVENTIONS</b>





## FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Our region has come a long way over the last few years in terms of preventing violent crime, but the strategy set out here shows there is still more to do.

When the Violence Reduction Unit was first created, we knew the scale of the task before us, and we knew that a public health approach could help steer people away from criminality.

We are starting to see progress in our approach and we aim to build on it further as the Violence Reduction Unit enters its fifth year. We are educating young people, we're working closely with high risk individuals and we are doing our bit to rebuild those neighbourhood services lost to austerity.

Nowhere is this approach more obvious, and more rewarding, than in our youth diversion efforts. What unites the football coach with the neighbourhood police officer is the common sense belief that we cannot just arrest our way out of our problem.

We need somewhere to send young people where they can feel inspired and motivated – and by ensuring they have access to positive opportunities, we can steer them away from crime, and support them in making better decisions for the future.

A range of interventions have been set out to identify and work with those causing significant harm in our communities and address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour, as well as ensuring support is always available to improve the lives of those most vulnerable to exploitation.

With the Serious Violence Duty now in place, the Violence Reduction Unit will play its part in bringing together key services and organisations, with the shared goal of tackling violent crime.

I firmly believe that we are stronger when we work together to make our region a safer place to live, work and visit.

**KIM MCGUINNESS**

*NORTHUMBRIA POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER*

# INTRODUCTION

Serious violence impacts on the lives of individuals and communities with long lasting consequences and is causing widespread public concern. In April 2018, the Government published its Serious Violence Strategy setting out an ambitious programme of work to respond to increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide. The Government's Strategy places a strong emphasis a 'whole systems approach' to preventing serious violence by focusing on early intervention and prevention to tackle the root causes of violence and prevent young people from getting involved in crime in the first place.

In response to this, the Home Office announced that they would provide funding to 20 police forces across England and Wales to establish local Violence Reduction Units to tackle and response to violence in local areas. The aim of Violence Reduction Units is to: -

*Provide leadership, establish core membership and work with all relevant agencies operating locally, to provide strategic co-ordination of the local response to serious violence.*

A mandatory requirement for all Violence Reduction Units is to produce the following products:

STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT	RESPONSE STRATEGY	ANNUAL REPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify the drivers and cohorts most at risk.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Outlining our response to tackling Serious Violence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Highlighting issues and how they were tackled and resolved.</li></ul>

# OUR VISION

Northumbria is a place where individuals, families and communities thrive, making the most of the opportunities to live, learn and work free from the fear of violence.

## OUR VALUES

The Response Strategy and associated delivery plans are underpinned by a number of core values. These are the foundations that will support our strategic and operational activity:

- **Focusing on Prevention** – preventing violence
- **Tackling Inequalities** – challenging and taking action to address root causes
- **Building on Community Assets** – recognising individual and community strengths
- **Working Collaboratively** – everyone playing their part and sharing responsibility
- **Being led by Intelligence** – using data and intelligence to shape responses.

## OUR SERIOUS VIOLENCE DEFINITION

For the purposes of this strategy, the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit, including all specified authorities has adopted the World Health Organisations (WHO) definition of serious violence: We have consulted with partners and agreed that the following crime types will be included in our performance framework.

The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (WHO, 2002)

We have consulted with partners and agreed that the following crime types will be included in our performance framework.

CRIME TYPE	OFFENCE
Homicide	Domestic Homicide Non-Domestic Homicides
Knife Crime	Knife/Bladed Weapon Enabled Serious Violence Possession of a Bladed Weapon
Serious Violence	Attempted Murder Robbery Threats to Kill Assault with Intent to Cause Serious Harm Assault with Injury Sexual Assault Rape



We will know we have made an impact if we can demonstrate a reduction in the following Home Office Measures:

Hospital admissions and presentations for assaults with a knife or sharp object.

Knife enabled serious violence.

Homicides.

We will measure the impact of our commissioned interventions during the year using measures linked to the reduction of risk and increase in protective factors for each intervention. These measures will be monitored quarterly and will contribute to our understanding of what works to reduce serious violence.

Monitoring our key performance measures ensures that our focus on reducing serious violence is maintained across all VRU activities. Our measures align to the findings of our Strategic Needs Assessment. We use our Theory of Change to identify any gaps or barriers in our processes and inform the activity of the Serious Violence Strategic Board. Within our VRU we value our engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders and those who access our services or interventions and use their views to develop and where possible co-produce any new approaches required. As we develop our response to serious violence further in 2023/24, we will refresh our current Theory of Change. **(Appendix 1)**

# SERIOUS VIOLENCE AND POVERTY

The wider determinants (Causes of the Causes) have the greatest impact on our physical and mental health. These are the core elements into which we are born, how we grow up and where we live. Poverty and social inequalities are major drivers for increases in serious violence and set a pattern of risky lifestyle behaviours. The pressures of housing, debt, food and energy costs and the current cost of living crisis on families can lead to exploitation with the lure of financial rewards offered by criminal gangs through exploitation and coercion.

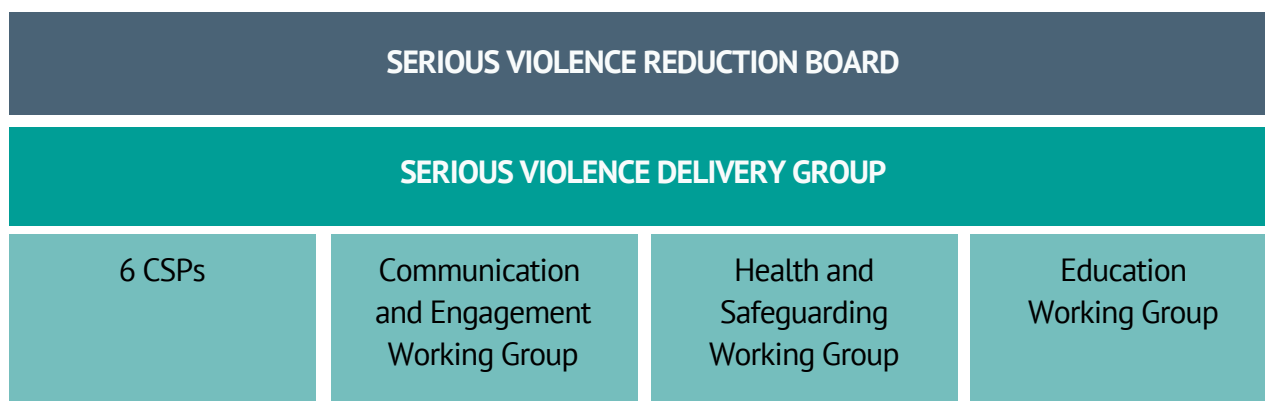
Over the last 10 years the number of people being drawn into poverty has increased, recent data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that during 2021, 20% of individuals in the UK were living in poverty and due to the current cost of living crisis it is anticipated that this figure will increase. Regionally, the Northeast has seen the sharpest rise in child poverty levels during 2020/21 increasing to 38%. Data published from the North East Child Poverty Commission in 2020/21 found that the top 20 local authorities with highest rates of Child poverty in the UK included Newcastle, (42.4%) Sunderland (39.7%) and South Tyneside (39.1%) Local Authority areas. The table below shows the areas with the highest rates of child poverty.

AREA	% OF CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY
National Average	27%
North East	38%
London	35%
Wales	34%
Yorkshire & Humberside	34%
West Midlands	30%
North West	30%
East of England	27%
South West	25%
South East	24%
Northern Ireland	24%

# GOVERNANCE, PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERDEPENDENCIES

The VRU is governed by the Violence Reduction Board which is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and includes representatives from all specified authorities. The Violence Reduction Board provides strategic direction of the local response to serious violence in line with our strategic priorities. The board oversees all serious violence activity and ensures the effective implementation of this strategy and associated delivery plan. Key to our approach is collaboration with all six Community Safety Partnerships as well as relevant agencies operating locally.

The Serious Violence Delivery Group has been established to provide oversight and governance in delivering the aims and objectives of the **Serious Violence Delivery Plan**. This Group will support the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty for specified authorities and will monitor performance of interventions and report to the Strategic Board. This Group will shape the future delivery plan to ensure that the key priorities of the Response Strategy continue to be delivered locally. The Group ensures that links are in place with other current work programmes with partners ensuring violence reduction approaches cut across wider areas of work such as substance misuse, mental health, and links to deprivation. We will continue to build partnerships and continue to work collaboratively as we strive to achieve our vision.

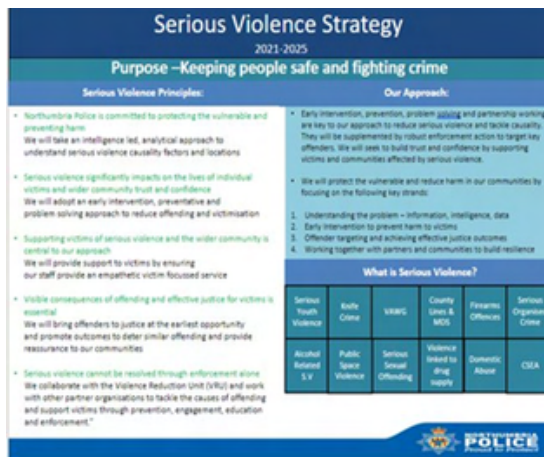


## INTERDEPENDENCIES

There are several established partnerships which interrelate with the priorities of the VRU. We continue to work collaboratively with partners from community safety partnerships, domestic abuse partnerships, health and wellbeing boards, criminal justice boards, children’s safeguarding partnerships and adult arrangements, and youth justice boards, to ensure that we align our strategic priorities to reduce the impact of serious violence in our communities.



We support the delivery of local strategies as a part of the ‘whole systems approach’ to preventing serious violence.



### Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria has developed a Police and Crime Plan and this sets out how the three identified priorities, **Fighting Crime**, **Preventing Crime** and **Improving Lives** will be acted on by Northumbria Police. We support the delivery of each priority by using a Public Health Approach to reduce serious violence. The priorities detail how the VRU have supported the aims and objectives of the Police and Crime Plan below:

**FIGHTING CRIME**

- CASPS (Community Alternative to Short Prison Sentences)
- Out of Court Disposals
- Focused Deterrence

**PREVENTING CRIME**

- DIVERT - Custody Diversion Scheme
- YOLO - Sports Diversion Mentoring Programme
- VRU Education Team
- Student Support Champions
- Education Transition Worker

**IMPROVING LIVES**

- Community Support Service
- Local Youth Fund
- Domestic Abuse - Findaway Programme
- Workforce development response in relation to DA perpetrators
- Multi-agency response to high-risk DA perpetrators

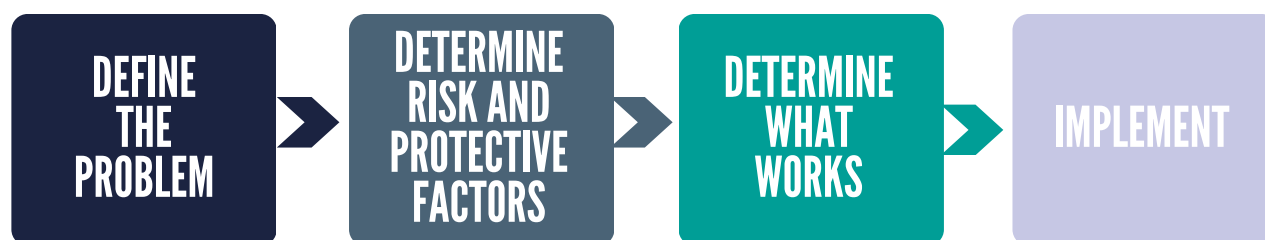
### The Northumbria Police Serious Violence Strategy 2022–25

We work in partnership with Northumbria Police to tackle the causes of offending and support the delivery of their Serious Violence Strategy, by developing a collaborative response that includes prevention, engagement, education and enforcement.

# OUR PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

Our approach focusses on responding to the risk and protective factors associated with serious violence. There is growing evidence that violence is preventable and by having a greater understanding of the risk factors that may make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to violence, and to use the protective factors that exist to the strengthen the strategies used to prevent it.

We continue to deliver our public health approach which consists of **4 key functions**:

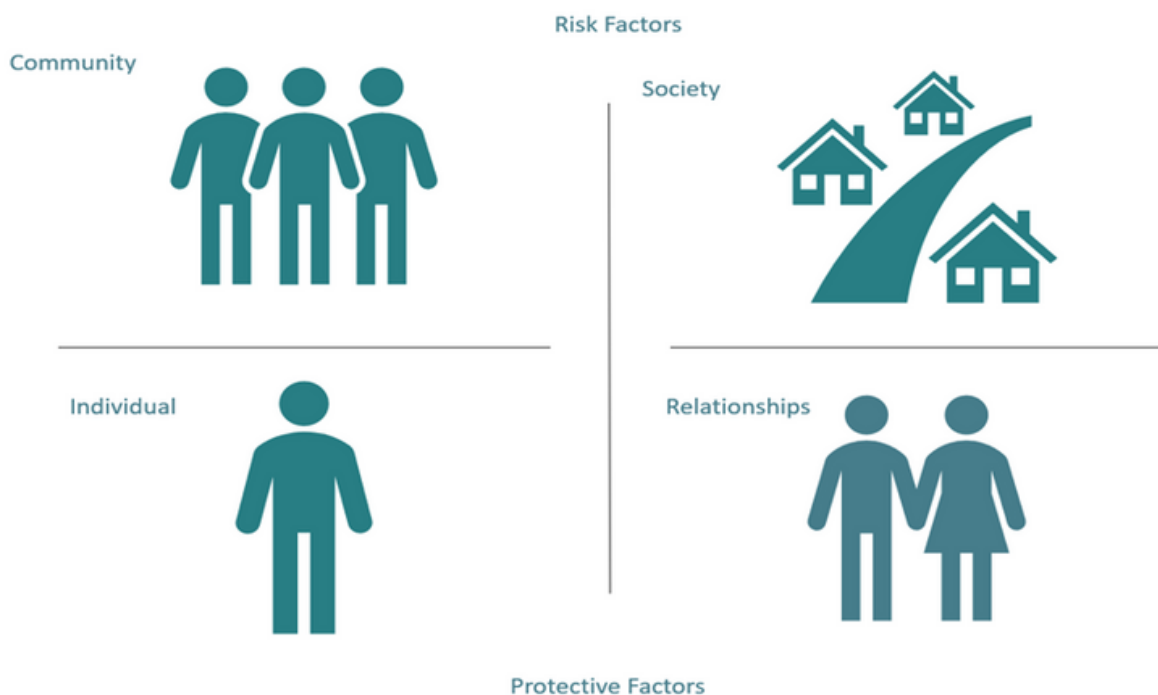


- **Define the Problem** - The collection of data and intelligence allows for the identification of individuals, community risk levels and protective factors, and can be used to target interventions at those most at risk and monitor progress.
- **Determine Risk and Protective Factors** - Many risk factors that make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to violence are changeable, including exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences and the environments in which we live and learn throughout the life course. Understanding the wider determinants of violence and protective factors, such as good social networks, access to employment, housing and education can lead to developments in public health approaches to violence.
- **Determine what works** - throughout the life course to reduce an individual's chances of becoming involved in violence and lower the chances of those who are at risk of violence by providing evidence-based interventions to support communities, families, and individuals on prevention and early intervention approaches.
- **Implement** - The changing landscape of the NHS and Public Health structures and the development of the Health and Wellbeing Boards provides an opportunity to co-produce and work collaboratively to develop and evaluate interventions, and lead multi agency plans to support violence prevention across a range of sectors.

## Risks and Protective Factors

Serious violence cannot be tackled in isolation and must be addressed through prevention strategies which address multiple risk factors which cause violence and promote protective factors.

Risks are factors that can predict an increased likelihood of violence occurring such as unemployment, poverty, unstable housing, homelessness, social isolation and stigma. Protective factors are those that reduce the likelihood of violence occurring in the first place, for example doing well at school, healthy relationships, positive role models, academic support and employment opportunities. These are broken down into different categories shown below:



In addition to tackling the wider determinants to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors, we understand the importance of place based multi-agency approaches to addressing serious violence. We use the **5'C's Approach** to support our response to serious violence prevention which includes:



## Our Strategic Needs Assessment

When developing our strategy to respond to serious violence it is important to understand our local need. Our Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) provides an evidence based public health assessment of serious violence across Northumbria. The aim of the SNA is to increase understanding of the types, distribution and extent of serious violence within the local area to support the VRU and partners to identify the most vulnerable communities across Northumbria, and to help deliver coordinated, impactful interventions.

### What does our data tell us?

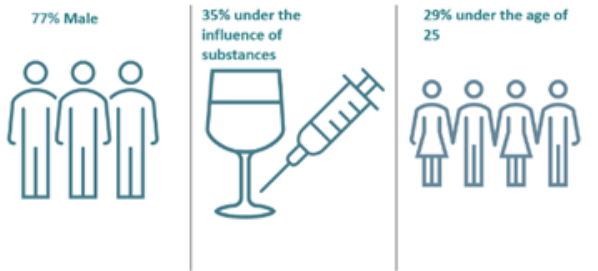
- The table below summarises our key performance measures and highlights that homicides are showing an increasing trend across the Northumbria Police Force Area, increasing by 16% within the last 12 months.
- Knife enabled serious violence has also seen an upward trend, rising by 12% in 2022.
- Serious violence offences have also risen by 15%, this can be attributed to an increase in robberies across Northumbria.
- Hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object has seen a reduction of 9.2%
- The North-East experienced higher school exclusions and suspensions rates across the board for the 2020/21 academic year with the autumn term having the highest suspension rate and the summer term having the highest exclusion rate.
- The Northumbria force area are above the national average for NEET (Not in Education Training and Employment) aged 16–17-year-olds. Sunderland and Newcastle local authority areas have seen an increase of 4.8%.
- The Northeast region has more children who are placed on Child Protection Plans or are classed as Children in Need, when compared to the England average.

	2021	2022	% Change
Serious Violence	19,860	22,889	+15%
Knife Enabled Serious Violence	865	973	+12%
Homicides	19	22	+16%
Hospital Admissions for Assault	770	960	+12%
Hospital Admissions for Assault with a Sharp Object	152	138	-9.2%

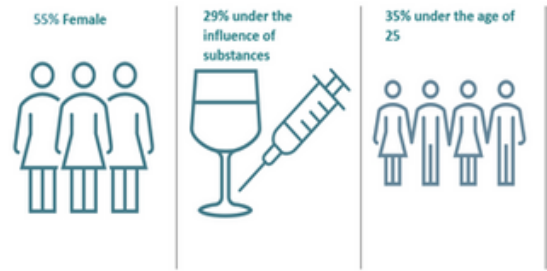


A breakdown of offender and victim profiles below shows that offenders across the area or most likely to be male (77%) and be under the influence of substances at the time of the offence (35%). 29% of offenders were below the age of 25 years. When comparing this to the victims profile, our data informs us that 55% of victims are female and 29% were under the influence of substances when they were assaulted. A higher proportion of victims are also under the age of 25 years (35%).

### Offender Profile



### Victim Profile



# KEY CHALLENGES

Findings from the latest data in relation to the three headline measures have worryingly seen an increase across all these crime types. The North-East has seen an increase in knife related homicides, amongst young people under the age of 25 years and requires further in-depth analysis.

Our evidence suggests that there are new and emerging trends in relation to serious violence which are contributing to the devastating impact of violence across our local communities. A shift in [drug markets](#) through an increased production of cocaine and [organised crime groups](#) with an escalated [vulnerability of young people](#) who are being drawn into violence. The role of [social media](#) and the emergence of 'drill music' amongst young people is a contributing factor to escalating conflicts amongst rival peer groups. [A lack of deterrence](#) for young people may have contributed to the rise in serious violence nationally.

## The Serious Violence Duty

The Serious Violence Duty acts as a key part of the Government's programme to adopt a multi-agency approach to prevent and reduce serious violence. It was introduced as part of the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(PCSC\)](#), alongside Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVRO's) and Homicide Reviews.

The Duty requires and reaffirms that specified authorities must work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, we must prepare a Serious Violence Needs Assessment to identify the key hotspot areas as well as the specific types of violence that are most prevalent. This SNA has been used to develop this Serious Violence Strategy which will bring together all elements of activity and will be monitored throughout the year.

The following authorities are subject to the duty:

- [Police](#)
- [Local authorities](#)
- [Fire and Rescue](#)
- [Health authorities](#)
- [Probation](#)

Educational institutions and prison/youth custodial institutions will be under a separate duty to cooperate with core duty holders. As strategic leaders the VRU are looking to coordinate the local arrangements via the current Serious Violence Reduction Board governance structure and the Serious Violence Delivery Group. This Group will have operational representation from all specified authorities to oversee performance, the development and implementation of the [Serious Violence Delivery Plan](#).

# DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24

## Strategic Priorities 2023 - 2024

The Northumbria VRU Response strategy delivers by prioritising action, leadership and system change in five priority areas listed below and set the plan of action for work programmes for 2023-2024. Each priority has been designed to address the findings identified through strategic needs assessment process and developed in collaboration with partners of the Serious Violence Delivery Group. These priorities may change and develop over the period of the strategy in accordance with identified and any changes in emerging trends and local need.

- Priority 1:** Create Stronger Systems to address serious violence.
- Priority 2:** Data, Evidence and Evaluation
- Priority 3:** Prevention and Early Intervention
- Priority 4:** Criminal Justice and Enforcement
- Priority 5:** Communication, Engagement and Reassurance

The Serious Violence Delivery Plan builds on what we know in relation to each of the identified priorities and provides a response with key actions to tackling serious violence. We will continue to use a Public Health Approach and work closely with local partners and communities to understand these impacts and address the risks that we know contribute to violence.

### Create stronger systems to address serious violence.

A whole systems approach brings stakeholders together from a broad range of backgrounds and disciplines to jointly develop and take ownership of preventing violence. and consider it to be a shared problem. We work with partners to jointly deliver a response to serious violence which capitalizes on different expertise to continually learn and adapt. The introduction of the Serious Violence Duty supports this and places an emphasis on specified authorities to work in partnerships and demonstrate a range of multi-agency approaches that prevent and reduce serious violence.

1	Work with partners to develop a whole systems approach to reduce Serious Violence.
2	Co-ordinate the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty on behalf of all specified authorities.
3	Work with Northumbria Police to develop a Homicide Prevention Strategy.
4	Facilitate the sharing of Homicide Review learning across boundaries.

## Data, Evidence and Evaluation

The sharing of data and intelligence are critical to understanding the nature of serious violence and has the potential to transform our response and the impact of serious violence. Being data informed allows us to target resources into 'hot spot' areas and to those most in need of an intervention. By using data in this way, we use public health approaches to commission interventions delivered at population level which will contribute to the evidence-base for tackling serious violence.

1	Develop a Northumbria VRU Datahub as a response to tackling Serious Violence.
2	Develop Standard Operating Procedures with Northumbria Police to share information in relation to Serious Untoward Incidents.
3	Produce an annual Strategic Needs Assessment to identify needs including risk and protective factors associated with Serious Violence.
4	Gain an understanding of the local drugs market to identify emerging trends for young people.
5	Conduct annual internal and external project evaluations of identified interventions to monitor impact, effectiveness and contribute to the evidence base.

## Prevention and Early Intervention

The strategic needs assessment identified priority areas for the prevention of violence across the Northumbria Police Force Area. These priorities were identified as focusing on the risk factor of specific cohorts including demographics, crime types and victim and offender problem profiles. This priority will be achieved through three levels of prevention:

- **Primary prevention:** Preventing the problem occurring in the first place. Acting to prevent the 'risk factors' for serious violence. Action to reduce inequalities in the risk factors for violence.
- **Secondary prevention:** Early intervention of risk factors of serious violence. Intervening early when risk factors of serious violence are identified to prevent violence incidents.
- **Tertiary prevention:** Reducing reoffending or the negative consequences of serious violence.



Several projects have been commissioned to take into consideration opportunities to maximize primary prevention across all six local authority areas. This includes a review of the VRU Education Team to enhance educational resources across the region to increase public awareness and consequences of serious violence.

**Appendix 2** details evidence-based prevention projects currently commissioned by the VRU.

<b>1</b>	Improve the offer of primary prevention to prevent violence occurring.
<b>2</b>	Commission and promote early intervention approaches to reduce Serious Violence.
<b>3</b>	Utilise the multi-year funding settlement to sustain evidence based early interventions to tackle serious violence.

### **Criminal Justice and Enforcement**

This priority aims to reduce serious violence in communities and places a strong emphasis upon the recognition that we cannot enforce our way out of the problem of serious violence. However, enforcement activity remains a component of the overall strategy as a complementary element of the approach. It is essential that we pursue, disrupt, and prosecute those who commit serious violent crimes, ensuring an effective policing and criminal justice system response.

This will be achieved by applying a Focused Deterrence approach by using problem analysis to identify the offender and location which will inform the multi-agency operational response. This will include the use of proportionate enforcement, disruption and support activity that is focused on the identified priority offender.

<b>1</b>	Develop Tertiary responses to reduce re-offending by implementing a Focused Deterrence Model. Use first year of delivery to set a baseline.
<b>2</b>	Develop an effective response to high risk, high harm, and serial perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.

## Communication, Engagement and Reassurance

To support the delivery of this priority, we have developed a Communications and Engagement Plan that focuses on keeping partners and members of the public informed of VRU activity. The following graphics outline how each communications channel will be used to promote the work of the VRU.

<b>Inform</b>	Provide communities and partners with information on understanding the impact and consequences of Serious Violence, and any opportunities to tackle the problem in communities.
<b>Consult</b>	Consulting with communities to obtain feedback through clearly defined channels, listening to concerns and aspirations and gathering information.
<b>Involve</b>	Involve communities by working directly with them through processes to ensure there is a common understanding of the issue and that community views, concerns and aspirations are reflected in the development of options or approaches.
<b>Collaborate</b>	Collaboration is working in partnership with communities as a team, incorporating their input and advice, jointly formulating solutions and/or options, and sharing agenda setting and deliberation of issues.
<b>Empower</b>	Empowering is about placing final decision-making in the hands of the community - the community decides what will be implemented.

We aim to understand what causes violence and inform members of the public and key partners on the impact and experiences of violence across the Northumbria Police Force Area. An example of this is our knife crime campaign where we commissioned a campaign, co-produced with young people to deliver key messages through different methods of communication channels most used by our target population through messaging and imagery.

<b>1</b>	Develop a Communications and Engagement Plan to raise awareness of the consequences of knife crime and inform the direct responses to tackling Serious Violence.
<b>2</b>	Establish a forum for young people to have a voice in relation to their experiences of Serious Violence.

# APPENDIX 1 - 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 that includes:

- Strategic Management via the Northumbria Violence Reduction Strategic Board.
- Engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders, communities and beneficiaries.
- Governance arrangements that support and enable our Insight work, Impact Assessment, Co-Production and the delivery of our violence reduction interventions.
- Evaluation and impact assessment that demonstrates the effectiveness of our work and overall contribution to reducing serious violence and the contribution to the Northumbria Police and Crime Plan.

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 and will measure the reduction in;

- Knife enabled serious violence
- Hospital admissions for knife related serious violence
- Homicides
- Anti-social behaviour in intervention areas
- First time entrants into the criminal justice system
- Repeat offending within harm hotspot/intervention areas

Tracking these measures ensures our focus on reducing serious violence is maintained across all VRU activity. In turn the ongoing monitoring of our measures of success through the implementation of our Theory of Change will help identify any gaps or barriers in our processes which will then inform the activity of the Serious Violence Strategic Board, our engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders and intended beneficiaries and the development of any new approaches required.

# THEORY OF CHANGE

## Inputs:

- Funding
- Staffing
- Partners
- Stakeholders

## Activities:

- Strategic Board
- Sub groups
- Insight work
- Local partnerships

## Outputs:

- Governance
- Knowledge exchange
- Co-production
- Stakeholder engagement
- Initiatives

## Outcomes:

- Year 4
- Year 5

## Impact:

- Reduce knife enabled serious violence
- Reduce hospital admissions
- Reduce homicides



# APPENDIX 2 - OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

340

Knife crime awareness sessions have been delivered to...

9,135

young people in school and community settings.

29,126

individuals have received violence reduction themed learning from our Education Team, or have taken part in our training sessions.

71%

of those who complied with one of the out of court disposal pathways have not re-offended since accessing the interventions.

Our Student Champions have supported...

100

students, from school years 7-11, for a number of referral reasons, including carrying weapons in school, anger/violence in school, ASB, and violence in the community.

56

young people on our YOLO intervention now have a reduced risk of committing serious and violent offending.

UP TO  
16.9%

reduction in ASB thanks to targeted activity taking place through our Seasonal Violence Fund.

## THE LOCAL YOUTH FUND

In **Round 3**, we supported **20** young people's projects which directly benefited 1,980 individuals.

In **Round 4**, we have supported **16** knife crime-related projects, directly benefitting **559** individuals.

# APPENDIX 3 - OUR INTERVENTIONS

## FIGHTING CRIME



### **What will we do:**

We will fight crime 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 phase one in Sunderland and then replicate our learning across the Northumbria Police Force Area.

The principles that underpin this approach is the identification and intensive case management of a targeted cohort of young people under the age of 18 years and up to 25 years (in line with children's Services). The cohort will include those both at risk of committing serious harm to themselves, and others in relation to their involvement of serious violence within Sunderland City Centre.

It will be managed through a collaborative multi-agency approach, with use of intelligence to inform the most appropriate response formulating an intervention plan that will reduce risk and increase protective factors for the individual with use of innovation and problem-solving responses. It will not only assess and profile each individual but will have a heavy focus on identification of and implementation of individual needs led support that puts the child at the centre of all response.

The intervention plan will include enforcement sanctions that can swiftly be acted upon on any breach of terms or continuation of violence. This approach can be viewed as a final opportunity to get the support needed and has been designed to have a lasting change in their actions now and in the future.

The cohort have been identified as those who are willing to change and can be attributed to the rise in violence within the City Centre that is negatively impacting on residents, businesses and communities.

### **Benefits:**

This multi-agency approach consists of an individualised approach including disruption and enforcement tactics, increased access to existing interventions, tailored support for the individual and their family to deal with the causes of their offending behaviour. The Youth Endowment Fund describe it as "A strategy that combines communicating the consequences of violence with support for developing routes away from it".

### **Measures of success:**

The implementation of this approach will contribute towards the following outcomes:

- Reduce Serious Violence affecting Young People.
- Reduce fear of crime and increased feelings of safety for all who frequent the City Centre for Work or Leisure.
- Cost benefit saving for statutory agencies.
- Improved life outcome for Individuals within the cohort.
- Young people will have support tailored to their needs.
- Young people identified through Focused Deterrence will have improved engagement with protective factors (employment / education / training / positive activities).

## **Community alternative to short prison sentences (CASPS)**

In 2021-22 the partnership between the VRU and the Probation Service developed further on this project. Throughout 2023-24 we will continue to build on this and in partnership with the Ministry of Justice we will continue to support a cohort of individuals into community-based sentence as an alternative to prison. As part of this process individuals will be connected to community-based support as well as have the opportunity to both address their offending behaviour as well as the contributory needs that led to them offending in the first place. This could include support with an undiagnosed need such as substance misuse, mental health and addressing some immediate issues such as stable accommodation, training and employment.

### **Benefits:**

This approach provides opportunities for individuals to seek stable and sustainable solutions to reduce their risk of re-offending and to assist with reconnecting with communities and their families.

### **Measures of success:**

- Reduction in frequency and gravity of offending by cohort.
- Reduction in number of short sentences of cohort.
- Increase in compliance with associated orders/programmes.
- Improved life outcome for individuals within the cohort.
- The cohort will have support tailored to their needs.
- Young people identified through Focused Deterrence will have improved engagement with protective factors (employment / education / training / positive activities).



## **Continuation of the Out of Court Disposal pathways**

Out of Court Disposals (OCD) 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. We will commission the following OCD;

- Men's 18-25 Pathways
- Women's Pathway
- V-Aware Pathway

### **Benefits:**

This approach seeks to increase opportunities to address offending behaviour, diverting individuals to other avenues of support and reducing the risk of re-offending.

### **Measures of success:**

- Number of restorative justice/community resolution interventions.
- Increased level of victim satisfaction.
- Increased referrals and compliance with V-awareness Programme.
- Increased use of Conditional Cautions for both male and females.
- The cohort will have support tailored to their needs.
- Reduction in repeat offending.

# PREVENTING CRIME



## What will we do:

We will prevent crime by taking a direct approach to intervening with those who are showing signs of vulnerability or are on the fringes of criminal/antisocial activity.

This will take the form of direct intervention with young people as well as working with other services and organisations to address wider needs of other family members such as siblings.

The overall aim is to reduce crime and instances of violence as well as reduce the risk of vulnerable individuals being exploited by others.

We will commission the following interventions as a priority:

## **Custody Diversion**

The Custody Diversion intervention aims to proactively engage 10-17 year olds, who are being brought into Police custody, to determine the degree in which serious violence, exploitation and vulnerability feature in their lives. In addition, a more targeted approach will be made to 18-24-year olds who are known to be involved in serious organised crime and violent offending. This intervention will be based in all three custody suites across Northumbria. Young people will be supported into interventions within their community and there will be opportunities to engage with the wider family to address underlying causes.

### **Benefits:**

Custody Diversion provides young people with an opportunity to stop and reflect on what has brought them into Police custody and provides an opportunity to address the issue and look to make a positive choice to reduce their risk of further offending.

### **Measures of success:**

- The cohort will have improved engagement with protective factors (employment / education / training / positive activities).
- Number of young people reporting improved confidence and making positive choices.
- Number of young people with improved feelings of safety.
- Number of young people demonstrating reduced risk-taking behaviour.
- Number of young people with reduced involvement in the criminal justice system.

## **Youth Mentoring (YOLO)**

YOLO has continued to have a positive impact on some of our most vulnerable young people, and there is a commitment to continue and develop this provision to ensure that it is accessible to the most vulnerable young people within the areas of most need. Continuation funding for Year 4 will ensure that this provision continues to be offered and develops further. Work is ongoing to expand the referral process to offer up the provision to more young people and this will be reviewed throughout the year. Tailor made interventions will be developed with each young person and this will include some agreed outcomes and measures of success. There will be a closer link to all other VRU interventions to ensure that young people and their families have access to the correct level of support

### **Measures of success:**

There will be a range of individual measures of success agreed with each young person as part of their involvement with the intervention. There will also be a number of individual case studies shared throughout the year to support evidence of impact. However, in terms of high-level measures of success it is envisaged that the following will be used:

- Reduction in young people involved in serious violence.
- Reduction in reported ASB in areas where interventions are taking place.
- Reduction in offending behaviour of young people involved in the project.
- Number of young people engaged with the project.
- The cohort will have improved engagement with protective factors (employment / education / training / positive activities).
- Number of young people with improved feelings of safety.
- Number of young people demonstrating reduced risk-taking behaviour

## **Education Engagement Team - Working with schools, communities and practitioners**

Our Education Engagement team continues to evolve and build a varied range of resources and opportunities for young people. This commitment will continue during Year 4 with a more focused approach within our harm hotspots, targeting schools in areas with peaks in serious violence and wider disorder. We are still committed to the roll out of Adversity Awareness Training to community settings and local partners as well as a commitment to the delivery of a practitioner-based knife crime awareness sessions to support teachers, health professionals and community leaders. Our project-based learning approach developed significantly during year 3 and we will continue to develop our approach working with a wide range of schools and providing young people with the opportunity to tailor projects to best meet their needs.

### **Benefits:**

An effective Education Engagement Team is key to the continued success of the VRU. The range of interventions on offer to schools and community settings has expanded and will continue to develop. The team will continue to enhance the community offer as well as continue to expand interventions into Colleges and Universities.

### **Measures of success:**

- Number of sessions delivered, per subject.
- Number of participants (young people and adults).
- Number of PRUs/SEND engaged Number of PBL activity.
- Number of times resources downloaded from the website.
- The number of people who reported an increase in understanding in [the subject].
- Number of young people surveyed following an intervention.
- Number of young people involved in shaping delivery model Impact – on the young people, what difference has the session made to their thinking and behaviours

## **Education Transitions (Primary to Secondary education)**

We know that moving from primary to secondary school is a difficult time for young people, particularly for those who are facing a number of different challenges within the home or in their immediate community. This can often lead to young people finding it increasingly difficult to adapt and engage in a new school environment. Often this difficulty can manifest itself in problematic behaviour leading to an increased risk of short term and long-term exclusion. We know that young people who have reduced attendance at school also have an increased risk of being exploited by others and being drawn into other forms of vulnerability. As our education engagement approach has developed, we are committed to working with schools in hotspot areas to explore how we can provide additional support to young people with identified needs to make their transition to secondary school easier.

### **Benefits:**

By focusing on a number of young people who require additional support we will increase the chances of them integrating it to a secondary environment as well as provide additional support to address identified needs at the earliest opportunity. The aim here is to create an A positive experience on a positive relationship for both young people their families and schools

### **Measures of success:**

- Reduced number of fixed term and permanent exclusions within the identified school.
- Increased and improved school attendance.
- Increased communication and contact with wider family.
- Reduced risk of young people being involved in associated ASB.



## **Student Support Champions**

Our needs assessment shows us that there are areas where young people are involved in, or have an increased risk of becoming involved in, serious violence. Schools have told us that issues linked to these concerns are now presenting in the school environment. A partnership of local schools will work together with the VRU, police, local authority and youth organisations to identify bespoke support for young people at risk. We will embed Student Liaison Officers into secondary schools in Newcastle on a pilot basis throughout year 4. The Liaison Officers will offer 1-2-1 support for young people, providing a listening ear and different approach to problem solving. The Liaison Officers will be advocates for young people at various meetings to ensure their voice is heard and their circumstances explained. The Liaison Officers will also develop a pilot to offer interventions for weapon/knife carrying as opposed to exclusion and be able to deliver education packages around key violence reduction themes.

### **Benefits:**

It is anticipated that this approach will improve the day to day relationship between schools and services as well as enhance intelligence and information sharing, allowing increased opportunities to identify issues at the earliest point. Young people should feel more supported in their school environment, knowing they have a trusted adult they can go to for guidance and support. It is anticipated that this project will increase opportunities for young people to report concerns as well as reduce the risk to young people.

### **Measures of success:**

This project is in the early stages of development, however initial measures could include the following:

- Number of young people engaged with the School Liaison Officer.
- Increased feelings of safety.
- Increased sharing of local intelligence to reduce the impact of serious organised crime.
- Reduced exclusions for possession of a bladed article.

# IMPROVING LIVES



## What will we do:

We will seek to improve lives through the provision of family and youth support within areas of most need.

This will include improvement of access and the promotion of services that support individuals and families within their local area.

The key emphasis is on early intervention with a focus on utilising the expertise of local practitioner's as well as ensuring that services are shaped by individuals with 'lived experience'.

This approach has two elements; the promotion of universal services to all and the targeting of specific services to those who need them at the earliest opportunity.

We will commission the following interventions as a priority:

## **Community Engagement (Young People and Whole Family Approach)**

This intervention seeks to engage with vulnerable individuals in communities. Typically, the focus is on those individuals who are not accessing or being offered support. The result of which being the risk of increasing vulnerability to exploitation and serious violence either as a victim or perpetrator. The primary focus will be individuals aged 10-17 years old with the potential for wider family support should the need be identified. This whole family approach recognises the need to address familial influences, norms and behaviours that may impact on a young persons ability to change their behaviours if they are not addressed. This will include offering bespoke interventions within the community adopting a social prescribing approach delivered by staff with lived experience.

### **Benefits:**

Peer to peer interventions offer an opportunity to work in a way that demonstrate not only empathy but a genuine understanding of the circumstances and push and pull factors that influence individuals lives, this support rapport building leading to increased trust and confidence in the support being offered.

### **Measures of success:**

- Number of young people demonstrating reduced risk to violence and ASB.
- Number of community activities and services adapting / improving their local offer for the benefit of young people.
- Number of young people with improved feelings of safety.
- The cohort will have improved engagement with protective factors (employment / education / training / positive activities).

## **The Local Youth Fund**

We will implement an opportunity for young people to directly bid for VRU funds to allow them to participate in activities that will have a benefit for them or their local community. This could include youth engagement, increased sport and recreation opportunities, intergenerational projects and community action. We will work with NE Youth to administer the fund and this will include working with young people to promote the opportunity and evaluate the submitted bids.

In addition to providing young people with an opportunity to bid for funds the local youth fund helps the VRU link directly with groups of young people with a view to conversations about how they can help shape and support the development of VRU policy, strategy and interventions.

### **Benefits:**

Providing young people with the opportunity to develop their own project will help to build confidence, experience and skills that young people can apply to other aspects of their lives.

### **Measures of success:**

As part of successful grant allocations there will be a varied range of measures agreed depending on the project. However, in terms of general measure of success for the Fund, the following have been identified:

- Number of young people involved in the Youth Safety Ambassador forum who develop new skills; promotion of funding, evaluation and planning.
- Number of youth enterprise organisations that supported the development of a bid.
- Number of individual young people who participate in developing a Violence Reduction Youth Fund bid.

## **Findaway**

Findaway is a ground-breaking friends, families and communities led intervention that seeks to address the missing link between victims and services. Friends, families and communities (protective others) act as the first line of defence for those experiencing domestic abuse. We will work with delivery partners to build and refine this approach across Northumbria, developing a replicable model that can be used in other areas, and by other services. This will progress the development of a set of high level outcomes that; reduced domestic homicides through earlier intervention; ensures increased safety for adult and child survivors through a wider support network, builds domestic abuse informed communities who challenge the cultural acceptance of abuse; and increases the co-production of responses to domestic abuse.

Findaway will also support existing domestic abuse 'Ask Me Ambassadors' many of whom have lived experience of domestic abuse to ensure the 'community' element of the project is developed alongside the 'friends and family' element.

### **Benefits:**

The Findaway intervention will bring together domestic abuse service delivery partners, and their existing community based Ask Me Ambassadors, with the wider VRU partnership to improve the quality and availability of primary and secondary prevention interventions to tackle domestic abuse.

### **Measures of success:**

- Number of contacts (Year 1 to act as a baseline) with demographic data agreed once target groups are established.
- Case Studies to highlight issues raised and outcomes.
- Numbers engaged in 'Supportive Persons' training.
- Number of website views/resource downloads.
- Development of peer support group with numbers engaged in peer support.
- Case Studies to demonstrate impact of training and resources

## **Bystander approaches that tackle the root causes of violence and abuse**

Tackling the root causes of domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) requires a primary prevention and long-term approach. There is an identified need for a preventative approach to engage men and boys (as a key part of the solution) around issues connected to masculinity, gendered social norms, misogyny and sexism. Primary prevention work in this field will also not only impact on men's violence towards women and girls, but towards other men and boys. Active bystander interventions can help equip people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to challenge harmful social norms and call-out sexism and misogyny wherever it is seen. It will help give men and boys the chance to develop identities and behaviours that are healthier for themselves and others - to generate a shift in norms and attitudes not just in themselves but importantly in their peers.

### **Benefits:**

Bystander training in targeted communities/sectors (in particular with men and boys) will enable them to become active prosocial bystanders who can:

- Notice and be aware of harmful behaviour or a situation.
- See the situation or behaviour as a problem.
- Feel responsible and motivated to act.
- Have the necessary skills to be able to act/intervene safely and effectively.
- Disrupt the normalisation of violence and abuse

### **Measures of success:**

- Communities, especially men and boys in a range of settings (e.g. schools, sports, workplaces) will have the knowledge, skills and tools to challenge harmful social norms and generate behaviour change at an individual and peer group level.
- Increase in level of confidence after the receipt of training to recognise and have the intention to make an intervention.
- Change in community culture with less tolerance and social acceptance of harmful gender norms, violence and abuse within our communities.
- Bystanders feel an increased responsibility, confidence and intention to make an intervention.



## **Responses to high risk, high harm perpetrators**

The completion of a pilot of the Drive model in 2021-22 in Northumbria, alongside the well established Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) perpetrator panels has identified the need for longer term stabilisation, support and behaviour change work with high risk, high harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse. A localised model is required for Northumbria that builds on the work of the MATAC and also takes the learning from the Drive pilot. Currently, there is some behaviour change work commissioned by the local authorities for standard/medium risk perpetrators. However, this leaves a gap around the high-risk high harm cohort. An options appraisal will identify the best localised model to address this gap.

### **Benefits:**

- Reduced harm caused to adult and child victims.
- Reduced serial perpetration of domestic abuse.
- Reduced repeat victimisation and reduced risk of new victims.
- Support, stabilisation and behaviour change helps safeguard families living with high harm domestic abuse

### **Measures of success:**

- Reductions in the use of abuse and intake and exit points around:
  - Physical abuse.
  - Sexual abuse.
  - Harassment and stalking behaviours.
  - Jealous and controlling behaviours.
- Reduction of risk and changes in domestic abuse behaviours reported by victims-survivors (as reported via their IDVAs / DA workers).
- Reductions in risk and attitudinal change in perpetrators (as reported by Perpetrator workers).
- Reported domestic abuse (and other offending) to the police pre and post intervention.

## **Workforce Development – Domestic Abuse Perpetrators**

Workforce development is key to early responses to domestic abuse perpetration and should be viewed as a secondary prevention intervention in its own right. In a national survey of multi-agency professionals by SafeLives (2018), 89% stated that they felt they should be working more with perpetrators of domestic abuse. In the same survey 89% of respondents also stated that they lacked the confidence to do so. There is an identified need to focus on earlier identification of those perpetrators not known to the criminal justice system by equipping staff with the confidence and tools to have conversations with perpetrators about their behaviour; to hold them to account; and to help them get to a stage where if a referral to a behaviour change is appropriate, then they are more likely to engage. Given the increased likely demand for interventions with perpetrators, there is also a need to enhance the training and skills of those already delivering support to perpetrators.

### **Benefits:**

- A more skilled, confident and competent multi-agency workforce who are able to engage in exploratory conversations about domestic abuse with their own service users. This will help to move away from a risk avoidance culture.
- Improved identification and referral into support for perpetrators at an earlier stage in their abuse.
- A more skilled and competent specialist workforce who are able to work more intensely with a high-risk high harm cohort of perpetrators in order to facilitate support, stabilisation and behaviour change.
- More perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviour

### **Measures of success:**

- Number of staff with increased confidence in engaging with domestic abuse perpetrators.
- Number of staff with improved competencies in responding to domestic abuse by giving them the tools, skills, knowledge and strategies to hold perpetrators to account about their behaviour.
- Number of staff with the skills to work with high risk, high harm perpetrators.



**NORTHUMBRIA  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**

**violence  
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*Improving lives to prevent crime*

## **NORTHUMBRIA VRU RESPONSE STRATEGY 2023-24**



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