NORTHUMBRIA SERIOUS VIOLENCE RESPONSE STRATEGY

2024 – 2029

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy has been developed in consultation with the following partners, and sets out our shared commitment and approach to tackling serious violence across Northumbria.

INTRODUCTION

The Serious Violence Response Strategy 2024-2029 is Northumbria's collective response to tackling the causes and impacts of serious violence.

Violence is a symptom, often an outcome of a number of factors, requiring a range of solutions and approaches. Across Northumbria we are committed to adopting a public health approach to tackling serious violence and since 2019, we have been working collaboratively to:

- Better understand what serious violence looks like across Northumbria.
- Test and adapt approaches to tackle serious violence.
- Develop and maintain strong links with key partners.
- Work towards applying a whole system approach to tackling serious violence and wider vulnerability.

The Northumbria Serious Violence Response Strategy sets out our approach to tackling serious violence over the next five years. The strategy outlines five key priorities to take this work forward as well as key challenges and the measures we are committed to achieving to meet our aims.

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

In January 2023, the Government announced the introduction of the Serious Violence Legal Duty, which places responsibilities on specified authorities to work in collaboration to tackle serious violence in their local area.

Who are the Specified Authorities:

- Police
- Probation Services
- Youth Offending Teams
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Integrated Care Boards (ICB)
- Local Authorities

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has convening responsibilities for the Duty on behalf of all specified authorities. As system leaders, the VRU led several Serious Violence Duty Consultation Workshops and two Theory of Change development sessions throughout September 2023. Specified authorities and partners from different disciplines worked to develop strategic outcomes, contributing to the development of key priorities and actions, advocating place-based approaches to tackling serious violence.

INTRODUCTION

The priorities outlined below were designed to address the findings of the strategic needs assessment.

- Create stronger systems to address serious violence.
- Data, evidence, information sharing and evaluation.
- Prevention and Early Intervention.
- Criminal Justice and Enforcement.
- Supporting communities through communication, engagement, and reassurance.

In 2024, changes to Northumbria Police Force Operating model will come into effect, this will see the establishment of six area commands, with a new prevention department to address serious violence. Introducing new local Serious Violence Disruption Units across the police force will help to tackle and reduce serious violence within local neighbourhoods. The Serious Violence Disruption Units will use an evidence-led approach while working with partners to tackle violence in identified hotspot areas.

This strategy reflects a system wide commitment to tackling serious violence locally and includes the strategic aims of the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit and its partners.

THEORY OF CHANGE

We developed a Theory of Change with partners to define milestones, determine outcomes and evaluate impact. Our Theory of Change guides the development of this strategy:

01 > DEFINITION OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE

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

02 > RATIONALE

- Increased prevalence of serious violence across Northumbria.
- Co-ordinate a strategy and intervention activity.
- Tackling serious violence and its root causes improves health and wellbeing, along with wider positives for the economy and society.
- Continue to promote and adopt a public health approach to tackle serious violence and address the root causes to prevent it from happening.
- Maximise limited resources to address serious violence.
- Co-ordinate data and intelligence to identify need and target resources.
- Requirement to convene a Northumbria wide approach as part of the Serious Violence Legal Duty.

03 > BENEFICIARIES

- Communities
- Businesses
- Families
- Individuals
- Children and young people
- Victims of serious violence
- Statutory Services

04 > INPUTS

- Funding (e.g. Home Office funding)
- Staffing – VRU staffing structure, additional labour support and SPOCs within specified authorities.
- Strategic governance via SVRB Board.
- SVR Delivery Group (operational delivery support for the SVR Board).
- Existing partnerships, including in the 6 Local Authority areas.
- Existing needs assessment and identification of 'hot spot' areas demographics.
- Data and Insights Group supported by a Data Hub.
- Resources such as IT, work spaces and equipment.

05 > ACTIVITIES

- Commission and deliver interventions, including 6 CSP seasonal violence plans.
- Quarterly performance management of interventions and associated serious violence activity.
- Co-produce a Northumbria-wide Needs Assessment.
- Develop and embed revised governance arrangements.
- Share messaging via education, social media, campaigns and community engagement.
- Shared learning locally, regionally and nationally.
- Continued implementation and promotion of a public health approach to tackle serious violence.
- Regular contact with identified partnerships and networks.
- Develop and implement effective information sharing processes.
- Annual internal and external evaluation of progress and impact.

06 > OUTPUTS

- Revised 5-year Northumbria Serious Violence Reduction Strategy.
- Agreed quarterly performance reporting frameworks.
- Co-produced Serious Violence Needs Assessment.
- Embedded communication & community/partnership engagement plan.
- A programme of serious violence interventions with a clear commissioning framework.
- A range of co-produced education resources.
- Initiatives to improve responses to DA Perpetrators
- Embedded homicide near miss process.
- Revised information sharing arrangements including expanded use of the Serious Violence datahub.
- Annual training and awareness programme agreed with increased exposure to new opportunities.

07 > OUTCOMES

- Reduction in Homicides, knife enabled serious violence and knife enabled hospital admissions.
- Improved and sustained engagement in serious violence interventions.
- Established multi-agency data and intelligence processes.
- Established and effective governance framework for serious violence.
- Collective decision making and shared problem solving.
- Clear referral routes for individuals and families to access interventions.
- Public health approach to tackle serious violence is embedded across Northumbria.
- Improved engagement with communities & young people with clear, consistent messaging.
- Collaborative approach to commission services to support communities and reduce vulnerability.
- Improved and sustained partnerships across Northumbria.
- Improved understanding of what works and a greater evidence base of impact.
- The escalation of harm is prevented.

08 > IMPACT

- Reduction in Violence
- Hotspot areas targeted and review process defined and monitored
- Co-production of Services
- Collaborative and Pooled Resources

Success for Participants of targeted interventions;
- Improve wellbeing and self-esteem
- Reduce harm, offending and risk
- Access support services
- Improve peer and family relationships
- Improve physical and mental health
- Access education, training and employment
- Feel safer in their communities

GOVERNANCE & INTERDEPENDENCIES

Governance Arrangements:

STRATEGIC VIOLENCE REDUCTION BOARD	SIX COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS	NORTHUMBRIA POLICE DELIVERY MODEL
Serious Violence Delivery Group	Local Serious Violence Action Plans	Serious Violence Disruption Units
Data Working Group / Engagement Working Group		GRIP

In Northumbria, the Strategic Violence Reduction Board brings together the six Community Safety Partnerships, providing oversight in delivering the priorities and measures of the Response Strategy. This includes exception monitoring of local area action plans. The Board will contribute to the delivery and implementation of this strategy by capitalising on existing local arrangements to ensure partners work effectively across the system to avoid duplication.

The Serious Violence Delivery Group will oversee progress made against the recommendations identified in the Strategic Needs Assessment and commissioned interventions. We will use the Delivery Plan to build on what we know in relation to each of the priorities, developing key actions to address serious violence.

To support our governance arrangements, there are two thematic working groups which will contribute to the success of achieving our identified priorities.

Each of the thematic groups have an agreed Terms of Reference and there is representation from each of the specified authorities on the Groups, which include:

- Data and Insights Group – has led the planning and co-ordination of the Strategic Needs Assessment including information sharing arrangements to obtain relevant datasets from partners.
- Engagement Group – has developed an Engagement and Communication Framework to ensure engagement work with individuals, families and communities is co-ordinated across the six local authorities.

GOVERNANCE & INTERDEPENDENCIES

Domestic Abuse Boards

Serious Violence Strategy

Children & Adults Safeguarding

Combatting Drugs Partnerships

Health and Well-being Boards

This strategy and its priorities will interface with other partnerships to complement their strategic plans. Through delivery of the duty there is a need to maximise the resources available across Northumbria. We will identify opportunities to apply good practice to address wider vulnerability and explore the feasibility of mainstreaming interventions and practices that can make the most impact.

SERIOUS VIOLENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA

Within Northumbria, we have adopted the World Health Organisation's definition of serious violence:

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.,

(World Health Organisation, 2002)

The definition was agreed to include the following crime types:

- Homicides
- Attempted murder
- Rape
- Sexual assault
- Robbery
- Assault with injury

At the time of writing, domestic abuse related offences accounts for a third of all serious violence across Northumbria. The impact of domestic abuse can be felt across all communities, and the approaches and responses to this issue are varied and complex. This strategy seeks to interface with the existing partnerships and approaches across Northumbria complementing existing activity and supporting the development of interventions and emerging practice.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has developed a Northumbria Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) strategy. This complements the local Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategies developed by each of the Domestic Abuse Boards, which deliver against the statutory duties under Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

An additional key area of focus is how we are responding to the harm caused by alcohol. This remains a contributing factor to violence alongside drugs, county lines and associated exploitation.

IMPLEMENTING THE DUTY

An overview of the <u>Serious Violence Duty</u>:

WHAT IS THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

The Government introduced the Duty through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, alongside Serious Violence Reduction Orders and Homicide Reviews.

This amends the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to include a requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to formulate and implement a strategy, making Serious Violence a statutory priority.

The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local areas

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

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 on 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. The Violence Reduction Unit, established since 2019, takes a public health approach and has been able to bring much needed funding to the region to support this agenda alongside Police Operational GRIP funding, forging strong partnerships to tackle serious violence.

HOW WE DID THIS?

Through CSPs the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit was tasked by specified authorities to undertake a convening role to co-ordinate and implement the Serious Violence Duty across Northumbria. In doing so support specified authorities to prepare, and or consider their role in the following:
- Serious Violence Needs Assessment (VRU led).
- Serious Violence Strategy (VRU led).
- Compliance - who must comply with the duty.
- Planning and collaboration within existing multi-agency arrangements.
- Engagement with local policing bodies, violence reduction units and the voluntary and community sector.
- Develop locality based Action Plans to respond to Serious Violence.
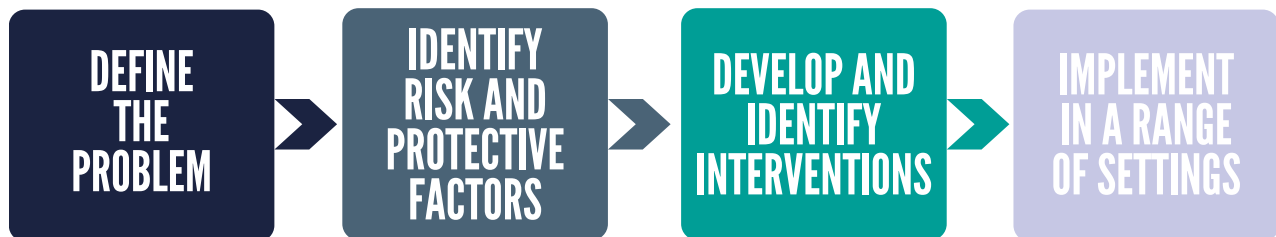- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the duty.

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit has been tasked by specified authorities to undertake a convening role to co-ordinate and implement the Serious Violence Duty across Northumbria.

In working to achieve this the 5 C's Framework was adopted, using a set of principles for multi-agency partnerships to prevent serious violence at a local level. This promotes a public health approach to violence reduction through embedding a whole systems approach which include:

- **Collaboration –** with specified authorities and key partners.
- **Co-production –** with young people and local communities.
- **Co-operation** – improving the collection and sharing of data though the Data Working Group.
- **Counter narrative –** create opportunities to divert people from serious violence through commissioned interventions.
- **Community consensus** – empowering communities to take a place-based approach to tackling serious violence.
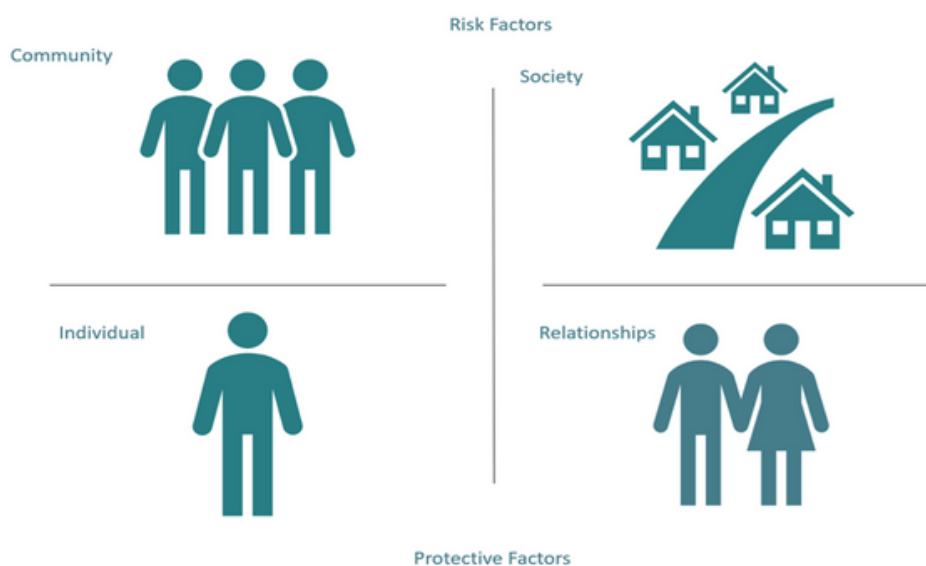
ADOPTING A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

We are committed to adopting a public health approach to tackling serious violence. The principles of a public health approach provide a useful framework to develop approaches which consists of 4 key functions:

| DEFINE THE PROBLEM | ▶ | IDENTIFY RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS | ▶ | DEVELOP AND IDENTIFY INTERVENTIONS | ▶ | IMPLEMENT IN A RANGE OF SETTINGS |

We know that 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, 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, employment opportunities. These are broken down into different categories shown below:

By adopting a Public Health approach, there is a strong focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

- **Primary Prevention** - Universal, aimed at the general population, to prevent the problem from happening in the first place.
- **Secondary Prevention** - To identify characteristics indicating greater risk for particular individuals.
- **Tertiary Prevention** - To prevent identified problems from continuing by providing targeted interventions.

We work with partners in the development and commissioning of a wide range of evidence-based interventions that aim to prevent serious violence. When responding to youth violence and risk of, responses are based on the findings and recommendations from the **Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit**.

WHAT OUR DATA TELLS US

The annual Strategic Needs Assessment provides an overview of data used to understand and inform responses to tackle serious violence and knife crime. Within this process we value the importance of consultation to understand the levels and perceptions of violence against what is reported.

The most recent SNA covering 2023 highlighted that whilst we continue to see a rise in serious violence and knife enabled violence the rate of increase is now starting to slow. There are some positive reductions too and local area profiles provide details on locality-based patterns of violence that shows the prevalence of certain types of violence in different locations. Domestic Abuse and the impact of organised crime-related violence occur across the region. Through monitoring and analysis, we can target response depending on the specific area need. Alcohol misuse remains a concerning factor. We continue to work to understand more around alcohol consumption and the harm caused within the home and other means that are outside of the Night-Time Economy (NTE).

Historically most of our data was reliant on police reported crime but by using our VRU Datahub we continue to work towards a broader understanding of the patterns of violence within our region. Our increasing datasets made available through the Data Hub enable is to work towards creating a clearer picture of violence within the region.

Anecdotally VRU consultation this year on knife carrying among young people has been linked to self-protection and fear, rather than links with gangs. We continue to work as partners to understand perceptions from wider consultation that engages with adults and children to monitor their perceptions and experiences of violence and overall feelings of safety.

Over the last 12 months, serious violent crime has risen by 4% and knife enabled serious violence has increased by 12%. Hospital admissions due to a sharp object has seen a decrease of 11% and there has been a 28% reduction on homicides.

Measure	2022	2023	% Difference
Homicides	25	18	-28%
Serious Violence	22,857	23,757	+4%
Knife Enabled Serious Violence	1,012	1,130	+12%
Hospital Admissions for assault with a knife or sharp object	148	131	-11%

WHAT OUR DATA TELLS US

The below provides an overview the types of violence and the number of crimes within each local authority area:

Gateshead:

- 3,174 total recorded violent crimes, an increase of 179.
- 149 knife related crimes (+31)
- 18 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 168 robberies, 42 knife related.
- 3,811 domestic abuse crimes (+4.4%)

Northumberland:

- 4,078 total recorded violent crimes, an increase of 225.
- 125 knife related crimes (+8)
- 25 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 90 robberies, 23 knife related.
- 4,503 domestic abuse crimes (+2%)

Newcastle:

- 6,697 total recorded violent crimes, a decrease of 104.
- 335 knife related crimes (+9)
- 39 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 468 robberies, 109 knife related.
- 5,446 domestic abuse crimes (+1.1%)

South Tyneside:

- 2,435 total recorded violent crimes, an increase of 220.
- 97 knife related crimes (+27)
- 11 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 79 robberies, 20 knife related.
- 3,198 domestic abuse crimes (+6.1%)

North Tyneside:

- 2,805 total recorded violent crimes, an increase of 218.
- 116 knife related crimes (+10)
- 22 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 102 robberies, 31 knife related.
- 3,480 domestic abuse crimes (+8.1%)

Sunderland:

- 4,568 total recorded violent crimes, an increase of 147.
- 190 knife related crimes (+33)
- 16 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object.
- 202 robberies, 48 knife related.
- 5,809 domestic abuse crimes (+2.4%)

The annual Strategic Needs Assessment will provide a range of recommendations which will be used to support the development of local action plans. Further information can be found within the Strategic Needs Assessment.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

The Home Office has identified three Key Outcome Measures, which are:

A reduction in Homicides.	A reduction in knife enabled violence.	A reduction in hospital related admissions due to a knife or sharp object.

In addition to the above Home Office Key Outcome Measures, board members agreed the success measure for Northumbria should be based on the reduction of serious violence definition crime types.

Strategic Priorities:

Across Northumbria our approach is built on the five strategic priorities that have been agreed to address the outcomes from the Theory of Change. Each year we consider the findings from the Strategic Needs Assessment, which is used to inform the Local Area Action Plans.

1. Create stronger systems to address serious violence:

We are committed to implementing a whole systems approach to tackling serious violence. We will create stronger systems which will bring stakeholders together from a broad range of backgrounds and disciplines to jointly develop and take ownership of preventing serious violence.

- Established and effective governance framework for serious violence.
- Collective decision making and shared problem solving.
- Public health approach to tackle serious violence is embedded.
- Collaborative approach to commission services to support communities and reduce vulnerability.
- Improved and sustained partnerships across Northumbria.

2. Data, evidence, information sharing and evaluation:

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

- Established multi-agency data and intelligence processes.
- Improved understanding of what works and a greater evidence base of impact.

3. Prevention and Early Intervention:

Violence is a symptom of wider vulnerabilities, if we can prevent and disrupt at the earliest opportunity there is a greater chance of improving the life chances for our most vulnerable communities and individuals.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Improved and sustained engagement in serious violence interventions.
- Clear referral routes for individuals and families to access interventions.
- The escalation of harm is prevented.
- Alcohol related crime is reduced.
- There is a decline in Hospital admissions for alcohol related admissions and admissions for Serious violence.

4. Criminal Justice and Enforcement:

Enforcement activity remains a component of the overall strategy as a complementary element of the approach to tackling serious violence in local communities. It is essential that we pursue, disrupt, and prosecute those who commit serious violent crimes, ensuring an effective policing and criminal justice system response.

- Evidence based targeted enforcement action across hotspot locations.
- Creative use of orders and powers to disrupt, deter and reduce serious violence and wider criminal exploitation.
- Clearer pathways for offenders to access behaviour change and restorative processes.

5. Supporting communities through communication, engagement, and reassurance:

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 by establishing communication channels with local communities and provide reassurance that we are working to tackle serious violence.

- Improved engagement with communities and young people.
- Clear and consistent messaging on our approach to tackling serious violence.

Impact:

Short Term	• Marked reduction in violence in hotspot areas.
Medium Term	• Collaborative approaches to tackling violence in place and resources pooled.
Long Term	• Co-produced services established. • Violence is reduced.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Service User Impact:

- Improved self-awareness, self-esteem and increased confidence of those engaged in interventions.
- Reduced risk of offending and harm.
- Increased and sustained access to support services at the right time.
- Improved health and well-being.

Key challenges to achieve success:

- The Sharing of data and intelligence, particular health data.
- Engagement with education, health, diverse communities including faith based.
- Sustainability of interventions that work with reduced budgets.
- Uncertainty of VRUs beyond 2025.
- The ability to identify and measure sustained outcomes from primary prevention interventions will take time to achieve and need to be part of a long-term plan.
- Effectively measuring impact, the challenge will be to continually develop approaches to both highlight and understand impact locally as well as reiterate the importance or targeted early intervention.

LOCAL AREA ACTION PLANS

Each area has worked to develop a local area action plan to address serious violence. Follow the links within the map below:

Northumberland

North Tyneside

Newcastle

South Tyneside

Gateshead

Sunderland
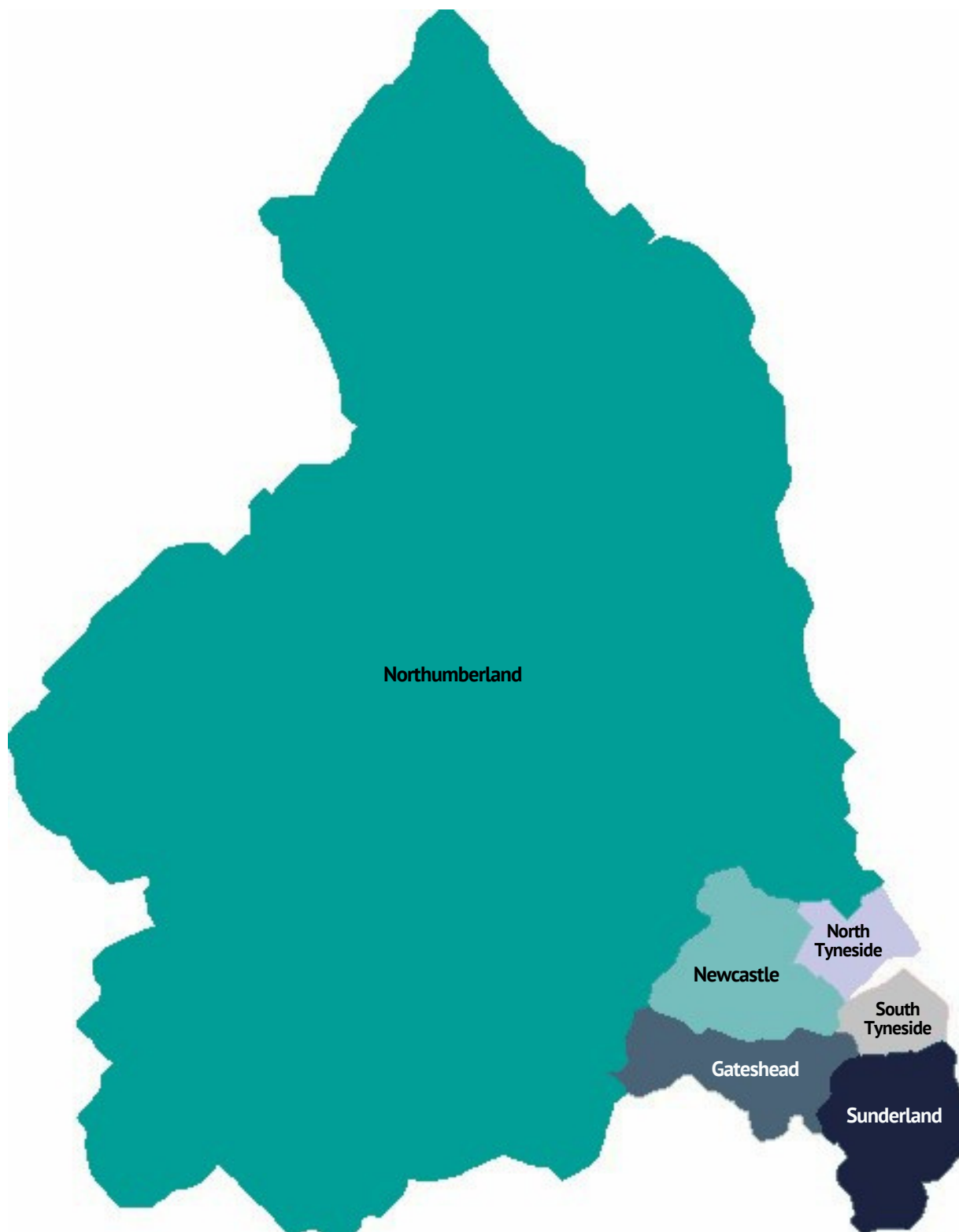
COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

We have developed a Communications and Engagement Plan that focuses on keeping partners and members of the public informed of activity. The table below outlines how each communications channel will be used to promote the work of the VRU.

Inform	Provide communities and partners with information on understanding the impact and consequences of Serious Violence, and any opportunities to tackle the problem in communities.
Consult	Consulting with communities to obtain feedback through clearly defined channels, listening to concerns and aspirations and gathering information.
Involve	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.
Collaborate	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.
Empower	Empowering is about placing final decision-making in the hands of the community - the community decides what will be implemented.

Through these channels, we aim to understand what causes violence and inform members of the public on the impact and experiences across the Northumbria Police Force Area. We have therefore identified the following actions:

1	Continue to review our Communication and Engagement Plan to ensure clear and consistent messaging around series violence is delivered to target audiences.
2	Continue to co-produce campaigns to reflect the views of our target audience and to ensure the delivery of key messages through the communication channels they use most.
3	Build on our Engagement Working Group, which already features engagement leads from across the six Local Authority areas, by extending the membership to the VCS, ensuring the views of partners and the wider public are included in all aspects of our work.
4	A key focus on engaging with diverse communities such as has faith based or BME.

Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit

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Local Authorities

Gateshead: www.gateshead.gov.uk

Newcastle: www.newcastle.gov.uk

North Tyneside: www.my.northtyneside.gov.uk

Northumberland: www.northumberland.gov.uk

South Tyneside: www.southtyneside.gov.uk

Sunderland: www.sunderland.gov.uk

Northumbria Police

Website: www.northumbria.police.uk