

11 March 2024

Youth Justice Partnership – Reduction of Youth Violence

**Ward(s): All**

**Portfolios:** Cllr Stacey Elson, Children's

1 **Aim**

To provide an overview of

- The aims, roles and responsibilities of partners within the Youth Justice Partnership to reduce serious youth violence in Walsall.
- How the Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2022-25 aligns with and feeds into the Serious Violence Delivery Plan, overseen by Safer Walsall Partnership.

2 **Report detail – Know**

2.1 In September 2023 Youth Justice Partnership Board presented the refreshed Youth Justice Strategic plan setting out the 5 priorities for 23/25:

- Transitions and Resettlement.
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence:
- Responding to Disproportionality
- Identifying and responding to unmet need (health).
- Voice of our children

The priority around reducing Serious Youth violence is Strategically led by Pervez Mohammed, Superintendent Walsall Police and Vice Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership and performance Board. This priority is aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership and recognises the Serious Violence Duty (2021) and the delegated responsibilities on agencies and partnership.

2.2 **The Serious Violence Duty (SVD)**

The Serious Violence Duty was introduced by government through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, to commence on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023. It requires specified authorities within a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence.

The Duty places several requirements upon local areas and includes agreeing a local partnership arrangement to lead on the duty, agreeing a definition of serious violence, having consistent data sharing, analytical processes to produce a strategic needs assessment and the production of a strategy to set out how the duty will be implemented locally.

The Duty does not require the creation of new multi-agency structure or specify a lead agency. Existing local partnership structures can be used to comply with the requirements of the Duty, to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence in their local areas and in doing so improve community safety.

For Walsall, it has been agreed that the **Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP) will lead this area of work**. SWP is the borough's multi agency Community Safety Partnership of which Youth Justice is a member. In order to deliver this priority a Violence and Harm Reduction Delivery Group has been established by SWP and this group has the main responsibility for delivering against the Duty and driving forward this cross cutting and important area of work.

The duty set out some clear responsibilities of the Youth Justice partnership board in the delivery of the Duty, these are:

Youth Justice Teams are multi-agency teams responsible for helping to cut crime and for the supervision of children subject to pre-court interventions and statutory court disposals.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Youth Justice teams have a duty to co-operate as a multi-agency entity to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area and drive a strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people. They play a critical role as they are well placed to identify children and young people known to relevant organisations and agencies who are likely to be involved in perpetrating serious violence. Through existing partnerships, they collaborate with partners to aid early identification and diversion from involvement in serious violence.

The Youth justice Teams must comply with the duty, and should nominate a representative from the team who should be able to:

- engage fully with the relevant local partnership to prevent and tackle serious violence, and where applicable, as a core member of the local Violence Reduction Unit
- share relevant aggregated and anonymised data, where practicable, to support the development of the evidence-based problem profile/strategic assessment (for example; information on local serious violence hotspots, information on county lines drug dealing networks and wider child criminal exploitation etc.)

- support publication and implementation of the strategy to address the risks identified, ensuring that children and their interests are fairly represented in such discussions
- identify and act to ensure children's best interests, including safeguarding requirements and reducing vulnerability to criminal exploitation, are kept at the forefront of any strategic planning
- advise on appropriate responses to increase levels of safety within the local partnership area, and enable children to be able to move beyond their offending
- assist in the delivery of prevention and early intervention initiatives where possible, and explain to partners how their input can help enhance this work
- work across local authority areas and organisational boundaries where children are not located in the partnership area (for example, when leaving custody or in county lines cases where children may be far from their home area)

### 2.3 **Serious Violence Needs Assessment (SVNA)**

To facilitate this work and comply with our statutory duty a comprehensive Serious Violence Needs Assessment was undertaken. The SVNA is the key driver for this work and to ensure a detailed and robust document was produced, its development was supported by a Task and Finish Group, which included officer from a number of teams and partners. The SVNA adopts a Public Health and Life Course Approach and in doing so identified risk and protective factors that impact on an individual, becoming either a perpetrator or victim of violence. The SVNA concludes with a series of Operational and Strategic Recommendations.

These detailed recommendations include, a multi-agency violence prevention strategy, an evidence-based commissioning and resource plan, ensuring we adopt an ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) and trauma informed response, a shift towards primary prevention, work on school engagement and inclusion, a joint communications plan, support for communities and individuals impacted by violence, youth services and community interventions and work around disproportionality. The SVNA can be accessed via the Walsall Insight Website or via the link below:

[Publications - Walsall Insight \(walsallintelligence.org.uk\)](https://walsallintelligence.org.uk)

### 2.4 **Serious Violence Delivery Plan**

The identified evidenced based recommendations from the SVNA have been translated into a series of robust and deliverable actions to be delivered in the short, medium, and longer term. These are detailed in a comprehensive Serious Violence Delivery Plan, the development of which was facilitated by a number of cross partner workshops. The delivery plan breaks down the recommendations into key deliverables and importantly recognises and incorporates good work already taking place across the borough. Leads for

each area of work have been identified and progress will be monitored through the Violence and Harm Prevention Group, which then reports to the SWP Board.

#### Key objectives of the Delivery Plan:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of strategic boards including Safer Walsall Partnership, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership, Youth Justice Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board, and Education. Evaluate their roles in violence prevention, ensuring synergy and prioritisation of violence prevention efforts.
- Develop a collaborative and evidence-driven commissioning plan for Violence Prevention, ensuring strategic partnerships, holistic causal analysis, integration with mainstream funding sources, consideration of broader influences, and enhanced access to regional funding opportunities.
- Implement a comprehensive ACE and Trauma-informed approach across Walsall, encompassing training, policy reform, behavioural shifts, and cultural change for a safer and healthier borough.
- Establish a Data and Intelligence Violence Prevention Task Group that ensures seamless real-time data sharing among all Duty 2022 specified authorities within Safer Walsall Partnership, enhancing evidence-based decision-making and reporting directly to the partnership.
- Develop and Implement an Integrated Family-Centered Violence Prevention and Support Strategy
- Enhance School Inclusion: Collaboratively support the continued education of all children and young people, particularly those with special needs, fostering engagement, and ensuring inclusive policies and targeted assistance.
- Develop proactive policies, leveraging planning, licensing, and street safety initiatives, to effectively reduce crime and violence through the Safer Walsall Partnership
- Develop a unified communications plan among partners and stakeholders for clear, objective public messages, enhancing a cohesive approach to violence prevention effort.
- Through our partners and our diverse communities, we should continue to support people who are impacted by violence, such as focusing on cohesion and community activities, and that consideration is given to rehabilitating perpetrators of violence.
- Enhance awareness of available mentoring support for Walsall's youth to establish strong partnerships and optimize effectiveness in tackling serious violence.
- Strengthen youth engagement through expanded sports, music, and art programs, fostering community connections and providing opportunities that divert children, young people, and families from the path of violence.
- Enhance Disproportionality Assessment: Broaden focus to encompass age, gender, ethnicity, and deprivation. Extend scope to vital services like substance misuse and mental health. Inform partner agencies' collaborative efforts.

- Establish a comprehensive data sharing agreement among relevant authorities for the 2022 Serious Violence Duty. This will facilitate both reactive and proactive audits, evaluations, and assessments.
- Understanding Pathways to Youth Violence: Identify common risk factors and pivotal points for prevention among young people.
- Enhance our capacity to assess and address youth services and provision by comprehensively mapping assets and needs across the borough, aligning with the National Youth Agency's requirements.
- Strengthen partnership with West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership to ensure all relevant authorities contribute to Walsall's needs assessment and strategy. Improve the accuracy and usefulness of health data, specifically from Emergency Departments and Ambulance services, to enhance the effectiveness of our violence reduction efforts.

The Serious Violence Delivery Plan and Walsall Violence Reduction Strategy is currently in draft form awaiting sign off from partners but is due to be finalised by end of March/early April 2024. The strategy adopts a 5 Pillar approach. These are: Collaboration and Integration, Life Stage Focussed Intervention, Primary Prevention, Targeted Community Support and Community Engagement and Empowerment.

Children's services, including Youth Justice is leading on the following actions:

- Strengthen youth engagement through expanded sports, music, and art programs, fostering community connections and providing opportunities that divert children, young people, and families from the path of violence.
- Enhance Disproportionality Assessment: Broaden focus to encompass age, gender, ethnicity, and deprivation. Extend scope to vital services like substance misuse and mental health. Inform partner agencies' collaborative efforts

## 2.5 **Violence Reduction Priority Governance and Delivery Structures**

The Delivery of Serious Youth Violence is implemented through a number of Strategic, delivery and operational groups, all of which have Youth Justice representation.

Safer Walsall Partnership  
Violence Reduction Priority Governance & Delivery structures



On 19/02/24, Walsall Police, Community Safety and Walsall Children's Service chaired a virtual briefing with Headteachers of schools within Walsall in relation

updates regarding the trial of BA, as well as details about the work being undertaken in the borough to reduce youth violence from a collaborative perspective. Useful contact information was shared with the Headteachers and following their request, further regular briefings and communication sessions will be scheduled, the next one being 15/04/24.

A working pilot group has been set up focussing on the Blakenall, Bloxwich and Mossley areas. This group is chaired by Walsall Police but has representation from all key partners. The terms of reference of this group are currently being mapped out, but the main focus will be on improving outcomes for children, young people and families within these areas.

Walsall has seen a series of serious youth violence incidents in 2023 leading to 16 young people being remanded and 9 children given a custodial sentence within the secure estate. Following the scale of the serious incident, the Youth Justice partnership instigated a coalition with the Safeguarding and Safer Walsall Partnership to seek assurance that:

- We are effectively supporting the young people remanded into custody.
- There is an effective plan to respond and safeguard children and the wider community.
- Effective structures are in place to identify learning for the medium and long term.

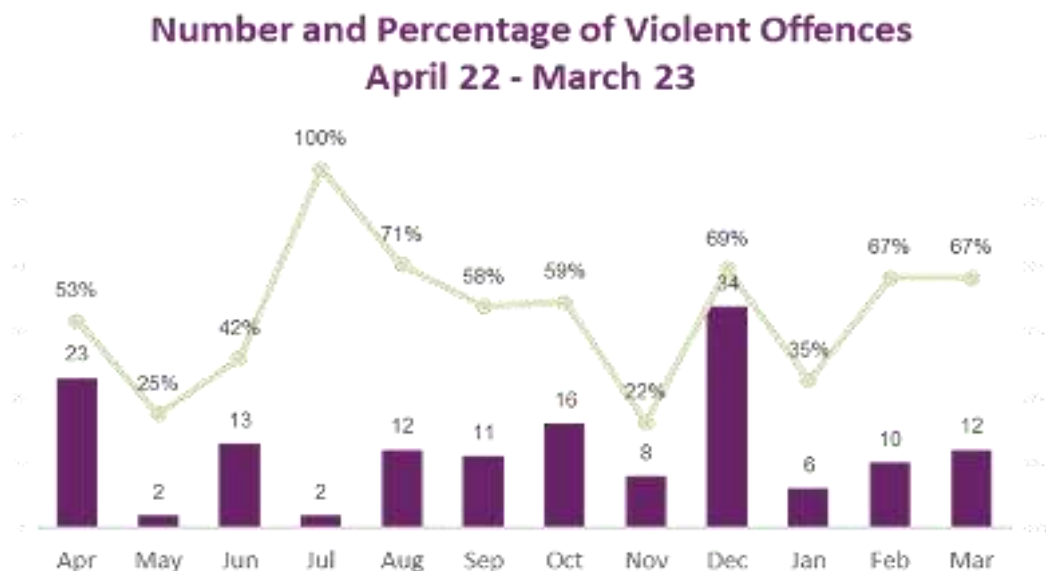
The coalition, which meets monthly, sits outside of normal governance procedures and indicates a shared vision to approach the violence problem with creativity and desire to change.



## 2.6 Youth Justice Performance information

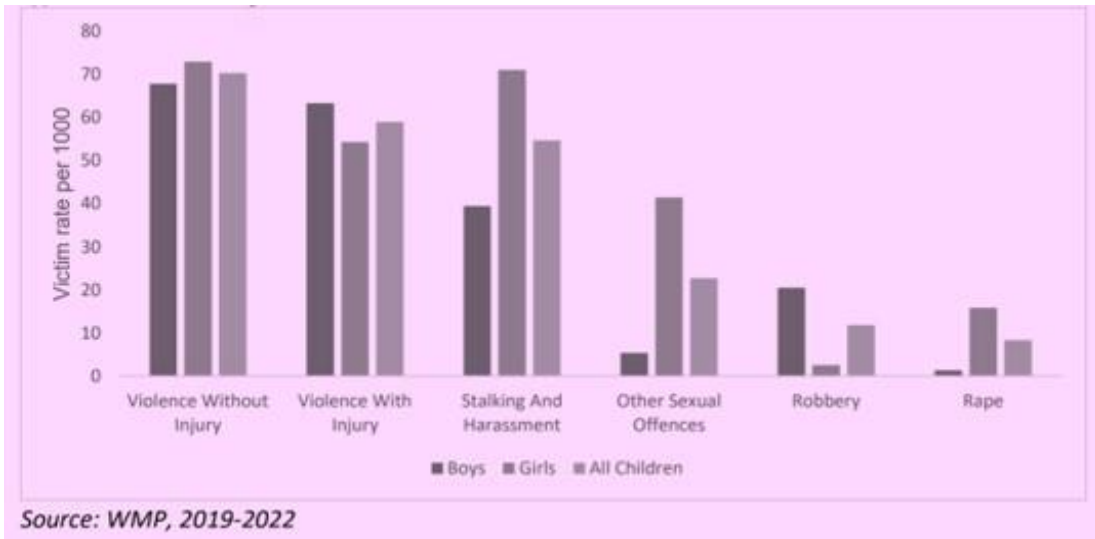
Between April 2022 and March 2023, Walsall YJS reported serious incident notifications for a total of 14 children in relation to offence such as wounding, attempted murder and murder. Violence is the most common offence type we see, and we are seeing a larger number of children entering the formal youth justice system for the first time by receiving custodial sentences. Work to address the strategic priority to prevent and reduce youth violence is detailed within section 8 of this plan.

Violent offending is monitored on a monthly basis through the YJS performance scorecard. If we consider the period between April 2022 and March 2023, we can see that violent offences make up a significant percentage (56%) of all offences committed with a youth justice outcome.



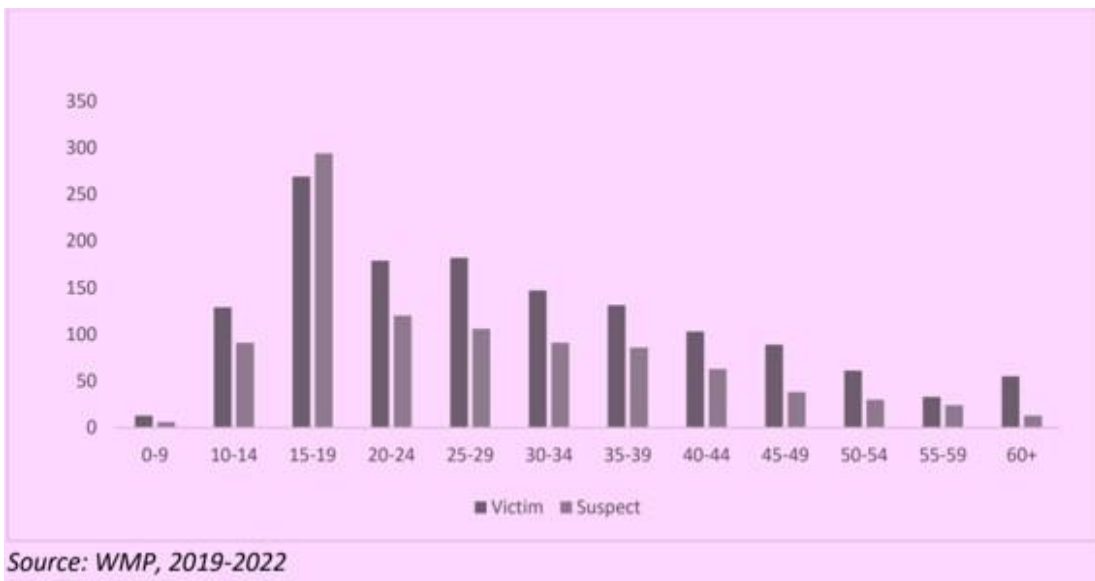
Further data can be found in Walsall's Serious Youth Violence Strategic Needs Assessment. Information from the Police suggests that girls were similarly impacted by violence when compared to boys and for some offence types, more likely to be victims.

**Rate of children aged 13-17 years who were victims of violence, Walsall residents, by type of violence and gender.**



We can see from the chart below that knife crime predominantly impacts upon children aged 15-19 and the probability decreases with age.

**Volume of Knife Crime, victims and suspects, by age group, living in Walsall.**



**2.7 Youth Violence reduction offer**

**2.7.1 West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP)**

The West Midlands VRP is supporting this work regionally and has developed a regional Violence Reduction Strategy. Walsall's delivery plan is supportive of and aligned to the



regional strategy, which will identify cross cutting themes and support the commission of regional services and support:



WM-VRP-Strategy-2  
023-26.pdf

### [VRP offer for professionals:](#)

- Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences – 3 hours either face to face or virtual which covers the concepts behind the *potential* impact of childhood adversity and trauma across the life course, how to understand how to recognise the signs of trauma in behavior and to gain a basic understanding into how an organisation can begin a journey towards a trauma-informed organisational culture.
- Trauma Informed Practice – 4.5 hours either face to face or virtual which builds on the concepts behind the potential impact of childhood adversity (ACEs) and trauma across the life course. To understand what trauma-informed practice looks, sounds and feels like.
- Exploitation Training -Introduction and Awareness that gives participants an insight into experiences of those affected by child exploitation. Thought-provoking training helps participants to develop an understanding of exploitation, spot signs of grooming and understand how they can help to protect and support children and young people. This approx. 90 min Webinar will support professionals and workforces across a number of sectors at introductory level. Participants should leave with understanding of what exploitation is, how it manifests and the impact to victims.
- Public Health Approach To Violence Prevention & Reduction – The one-hour Webinar aims to introduce learners to the public health approach and to increase awareness of the role everyone in society can play in violence prevention and reduction. The course will cover: principles of the public health approach; an understanding of the causes and consequences of violence; addressing underlying risk factors that make violence more likely; primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention; and the importance of evaluation and evidence.
- Ending Male Violence Against Women - A online course offering an introduction to Ending Male Violence Against Women and Girls (EMVAWG). Violence against women and girls covers a range of distressing and unacceptable crimes, they take place in every locality across the UK and can happen within current or previous relationships, in families, and in communities. West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP) is working with partners,

local authorities and communities to prevent these crimes from happening, starting at an early age.

[VRP offer for children/young people:](#)

- Mentors In Violence Prevention (Change Makers) Primary and Secondary - This is a peer mentoring programme that gives children/ people the chance to discuss and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence, bullying and other forms of violence. As a PSHE programme it promotes character development and leadership in children/young people, equipping them with skills to resolve conflict, develop critical thinking around risk management and concepts of safety, while providing a counter narrative to violence.
- Round Midnight – Virtual Decisions Primary and Secondary - Virtual Decisions is a multi-award-winning, interactive virtual reality in education programme. The use the science of adolescent decision-making to create immersive virtual reality experiences that tackle gang culture, youth violence and risk-taking behaviour. The workshops can be tailored to a primary audience (Year 5 & 6), a secondary audience (Year 7 to 11), children/young people in the criminal justice system, parents & families, and for training purposes for professionals. The session is followed by a workshop where participants have the opportunity to reflect and share on the experience and their own journey. It should be followed up with the curriculum which is provided to continue these decisions.
- REAL Exploitation Resources Year 6+ - To help educate children/young people about county lines and knife crime. The education packs allow young people opportunities to not only discuss all avenues in life but to see the visual representation of how these choices may affect their life in the present and future if they follow through with those decisions. The digital and educational resources have been developed to work directly with children/young people around youth violence and gang grooming. To guide and support children/young people to remain on the right side of the law; avoiding criminal activity, criminal records, detention or even death.
- Precious Lives Primary and Secondary - Workshops for children/young people from age 10-18 and is delivered by lived experienced trainers giving them an unparalleled insight into their experiences of knife crime. This aims to help children and young people understand the real consequences of carrying or using a knife.
- Stop & Search – Know your rights workshops are becoming increasingly more in demand in line with levels of crime across the region. Sessions seek to help your

young people understand the role stop and search can play in reducing knife crime and youth violence.

- TimeToTalk – Women and girls empowerment programme has been developed to provide safe spaces where women and girls can share their views, opinions and lived experience. It covers misogyny, victim blaming and limiting gender stereotypes. In response, #timetotalk women and girls aims to support girls and young women to think critically about the world and influences around them.

## 2.7.2 Walsall Youth Justice Service

Below are some our programme of activities within the Youth Justice Service to address knife crime and serious youth violence:

### Operation Checkpoint: Knife Crime Simple Possession Offences and Offensive Weapons

West Midlands Police, in partnership with the regions Youth Justice Services, introduced a 'deferred prosecution' pilot for young offenders, aged 10 – 17 who commit offences of:

- Possession of a bladed article with no aggravating circumstances
- Possession of an offensive weapon with no aggravating circumstances

In both cases Checkpoint would only be open to those with minimal previous criminal history.

### The Youth Justice Partnership Panel:

To better support Operation Checkpoint, the Youth Justice Partnership Panel has evolved over the past 12 months in line with His Majesties Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) criteria. We also recognise that a significant proportion of possession of knife offences are dealt with by the Police at a pre-court level. The Youth Justice Partnership Panel provides oversight to children who are eligible for crime diversion intervention or a police disposal such as a Youth Caution. Children involved in crime at an early level are discussed at the panel and following assessment, the partnership make a joint decision as to outcome and the most appropriate agency to support the child and family.

### Youth Crime officer:

Integrated within the team is a deployed Youth Crime Officer who supports the YJS with the YJS Partnership Panel and Operation Checkpoint. We also have 2 named Police Offender Managers who work with the YJS to support and have oversight of the most vulnerable and at risk of serious harm children in Walsall.

### Exploitation Hub:

The YJS is one of the three main partners within the Exploitation Hub alongside the Police and Social Care. We are now co-located with the exploitation team and the MASH and therefore we are expecting that our partnership work will improve over the next 6 months. The YJS also provides a manager to support and chair the daily exploitation triage meetings, on a rota basis. We are working with the partnership to undertake a needs analysis of the work coming through exploitation triage and we have in place a pathway linking triage into our Youth Justice Partnership Panel to provide diversion interventions.

#### Street Doctors:

This programme is delivered by junior doctors and medical staff who, by teaching children first aid and life-saving skills, improve the awareness of the dangers of knife carrying. Our children enjoy these sessions, find it practical and informative and improve their understanding of the devastation of knife crime.

#### Virtual Reality Knife Crime Interventions:

Similar to the VRP's offer for schools, the YJS has brought in Round Midnight to enable us to run individual and group work intervention with children involved with or at risk of knife crime. Children engage well with this different type of intervention.

#### InPower- Mixed Martial Arts (MMA):

InPower Academy deliver programmes that use MMA as a tool to engage our participants MMA is a sport that has become extremely popular with young people in the recent years but their teachings take a very eastern approach where, character building is at the forefront. Martial arts is a journey, along this journey young people will build mental focus, confidence, self-worth, resilience, emotional well-being and a positive outlook on life. Children involved in the programme have targets to deter children from violence and crime, to engage them in activity and sports, and to develop their own personal objectives.

#### Open Lens:

In response to the HMIP thematic report into the experiences of black boys in the justice system, we have sought funding from the OPCC through the Safer Walsall Partnership to deliver services to respond to disproportionality. We know that knife crime and violence disproportionality impacts upon black boys and boys with mixed ethnicity. The Open Lens Programme provide a mentoring and engagement intervention for these boys. They supported the YJS to make a film in 2023, learning practical skills along the way, exploring their experiences of the justice system and discrimination.

### Co-Lab YTH:

Our music studio mentoring programme has continued since 2021 and we are looking for ways to fund the project for 2022 onwards. Co-Lab YTH consists of a local music artist, producer and Walsall youth worker who provide our young people with a safe space to express themselves through music who also receive support to avoid exploitation, issues around gangs and knife crime.

### Lived Experienced Mentors:

The YJS was successful in securing funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), through the Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP), to work with St-Giles and provide a mentor for our children involved in serious violence and criminal exploitation. Through this partnership we have also delivered staff training and group work programmes for young people and parents. We have had positive outcomes for young people and as such we have committed to providing lived experienced mentors for the next 12 months.

## **3 Decide**

Although, primarily, governance sits with the SWP Board and its appropriate subgroup, the cross-cutting nature of violence, its causes and solutions is clear. It is therefore essential that the findings of the SVNA are shared widely and that there is collective ownership of the actions and necessary system changes required to have a significant and lasting impact upon violence within the borough. This includes ensuring that links are made with the other SWP priorities and importantly with other strategic boards. In order to facilitate this cross thematic working a Collaborative Board has been established that includes representation from SWP, the Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board, the Safeguarding Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. This higher level, cross-cutting board has been constituted to oversee and support delivery of this work and to ensure that appropriate linkages are made.

Whilst there is no decision for scrutiny to be made around the priorities, scrutiny is asked to support the direction of travel and endorse the achievements made so far.

## **4 Respond**

The Youth Justice Partnership is responding to reducing serious youth violence in line with the aims and key priorities laid out in the SVNA, SV Delivery Plan, and SVD, whilst the key governance sits with the Safer Walsall Partnership Board. The final Violence Delivery Plan and Strategy will be available by early

April 2024 and this will clearly outline each partner's responsibility for reducing serious youth violence.

## 5 Review

A review report to scrutiny could be scheduled if further assurances are required.

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