

# Southwark - Serious Violence Duty Strategy 2023-2024



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 The Serious Violence Duty is a legal requirement for local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies, and health authorities to work together to tackle serious violence in a local area, via an assessment and a strategy. The definition of Serious Violence for the purposes of the Duty in London includes violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25 (including VAWG & Domestic Abuse).

2 The direct link between violence and drug supply is accepted by a range of agencies and practitioners across the borough. This means that our approach to tackling serious violence needs to look at preventative work – reducing demand for drugs, working with families and young people to mitigate the risk factors – as well as effective enforcement work.

3 Southwark reported 1,794 Violence Against the Person (VAP) *offences* in 2022/23, similar to the previous year. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> highest rate in London for serious violence. The majority of serious violence is committed by younger people, against young people, and tends to take place consistently in certain wards and areas across the borough. In Southwark VAP offences where the victim was aged under 25 occurs more in the northern half of the borough.

4 The most common offences are Assault without Injury and Actual Bodily Harm. In Southwark, knives are the most common weapon used to inflict injury in VAP crimes. The *gender* of victims under 25yrs has been 50% male and 50% female for both 2021/22 and 2022/23. Those from black ethnic groups are overrepresented as victims when compared to the population in Southwark. Suspects under 25yrs have been most commonly male, accounting for 70% of suspects in 2022/23. Suspects from some ethnic groups have been most represented across all periods and are increasing in proportion compared to other groups.

5 Southwark ranks 10<sup>th</sup> highest in London for sexual offences, and 9<sup>th</sup> highest for rape. The five-year trend for sexual offences in Southwark is upward. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Southwark is more prevalent in areas with high foot traffic, such as transport hubs and high street locations. Southwark ranks 13<sup>th</sup> highest in London for domestic abuse offences. The five-year trend for domestic abuse in Southwark is downward.

6 Along with illegal drug market activity driving violence within the borough, risk factors can make young people more vulnerable to committing violence or being the victim of violence. These can include trauma, mental health, Looked After Children, poverty and deprivation, poor parental control, school exclusion, bullying and learning difficulties. Southwark has interventions planned and in place aimed at tackling the causes of violence, preventing it from occurring, as well as enforcing against those who commit violence.

7 There are clear links with serious violence reduction activity across the work of the various statutory partnerships across the borough. Strategic and operational oversight of the Serious Violence Duty in Southwark is held by the Community Safety Partnership, which has the following priorities - violence against women and girls, reducing drug related harm, violence & vulnerability reduction, trust & confidence, safe & sociable estates and neighbourhoods. Southwark's forthcoming Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Plan will pull together all strands of violence reduction activity across the partnerships, overseen by the CSP. We aim to tackle serious violence by addressing its root causes, providing meaningful interventions and robust enforcement, keeping communities safe and healthy and making Southwark a safer place.

## INTRODUCTION

For many years violence and criminal exploitation have been national problems, and every area of London has been touched by its devastating effects. Southwark has not escaped this trend and is recognised as a high harm borough, which means we see high incidents of violence and exploitation. Violence, community harm and exploitation is and has historically been a key focus for Southwark Council, Police and partners from both

the statutory and voluntary community sector. Across the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), we agree we all have a role to work together to make residents feel safer.

We understand that violence affecting our communities has many forms, the most visible include personal robbery, knife crime, sexual exploitation and crimes associated with the Southwark drugs market. However, we must acknowledge there are many forms of community harm, many of which are hidden. In order to have the fullest understanding of our issues and provide effective interventions and support we must understand all elements of community harm. The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) allows Southwark to continue its work to further understand our issues and continue to work to reduce violence and vulnerability in our borough.

Our ambitions are that as a partnership, we refresh and evaluate our work annually to ensure that all residents who live, work, are educated and visit the borough can be safe.

## **SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY**

In 2023, the Home Office (HO) introduced the Serious Violence Duty (SVD). The SVD states it is a legal requirement for local authorities, the police, fire, and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies, and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues.

Tackling the issue of violence and the causal factors behind it is everybody's responsibility – the local authority, the voluntary sector, health agencies, local community, and the judiciary, as well as the police. Areas overseen by Health (Public Health, Primary Care, major trauma centres and the Integrated Care Board and Health and Wellbeing Board) are embedded in the partnership at all levels - strategic, delivery and frontline.

## **SERIOUS VIOLENCE DEFINITION**

The definition of Serious Violence for the purposes of the SVD has been formulated for use in London and includes offences such as homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill, and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences. The age bracket of under 25 has been used due to this aligning with the Home Office "definition" of serious violence in their 2018 strategy, however, the the London definition encompasses all domestic abuse and sexual violence, impacting on any age

## **OUR APPROACH AND OUR FOCUS**

There is a multiplicity of strong joint working across the borough and the CSP believes it has a strong understanding of violence and vulnerability issues (including county lines). Southwark has all the ingredients necessary, and the will and drive to change things. However, we also know that we can collectively improve our response to serious violence.

In line with the SVD our partnerships have been reflecting on what can be done to further develop our approach. The vision is to create a continuum of both safeguarding and interventions to ensure there are no gaps in support and provision. This work is ongoing at both a strategic and delivery level.

Our front-line delivery work, where possible, is based on the principles of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and allows agencies to identify high risk cases and for the identified risk to be managed through a multi-agency response.

The Violence Reduction Action Plan (VRAP) from the London wide Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) will be the foundation of our delivery. The themes within the VRAP are:

- Governance to support a public health approach to reduce violence
- Analysis and enforcement
- Reducing access to weapons including safeguarding and educating young people
- Supporting victims of violence and vulnerability
- Positive diversion from violence
- Tackling violence against women and girls

The plan is overseen by the Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Board which is accountable to the CSP. The delivery plan will be developed to have a Southwark focus in line with local data, existing and refreshed partnership strategies, and plans, and what our communities are telling us.

Within our work we are constantly exploring the interconnectivity of the areas of violence and where we see repeat perpetrators and victims in different areas. The first area of work has been with the CSP and the Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) with a piece of local research led by our Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) - 'Hidden in Plain Sight' examining how the Southwark drugs market drives our violence whether violence against the person, gangs or VAWG.

## THE SOUTHWARK CONTEXT FOR VIOLENCE

Southwark reported 1,794 Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences in 2022/23, similar to the previous year. For the current financial year (Apr-Sep), Southwark reported 971 offences, a 2% increase compared to the same period the previous year. This is the 10th highest rate in London for serious violence.

Most of the serious violence is committed by young people against young people and tends to take place consistently in certain wards and areas across the borough. The following section looks at quantitative data from our Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), but also notes the perspective from frontline staff and protagonists too.

The illegal drug market is worth millions every year to the local economy. This market (along with domestic abuse) drives most of the violence across the borough, either directly or indirectly. The violence takes place both in the private and public sphere, making it traumatic to individuals and communities alike. This isn't about problematic users roaming the borough committing random acts of violence, or young people committing acts of serious violence randomly or seemingly without reason to each other. This is a business model that uses violence and coercion as control mechanisms to service a multi-million-pound illegal business. It impacts on the lives of young children, young adults, and the community in the most direct and harmful way possible.

*"Drugs keep everything running and supports the group in a variety of ways – it feeds them, heats them, provides money for clothes." – Ex-gang member*

County Lines, the activity of a gang or crime group running one or more drug lines outside their home borough through a phone number and a network of dealers and runners, largely dried up during the pandemic, with local gangs choosing to focus operations on the home market. However, in the couple of years the county lines operating model has once more begun to gather pace, with young people from across Southwark being found in a variety of locations across the UK.

Southwark is currently home to two high harm gangs and several smaller emerging gangs. A large proportion of gangs and organised crime groups within the borough are centred around drug supply to the internal market. Not all of these are high profile 'named' gangs, as there are discrete business focused groups that are just about drug supply. Some of these groups meet the criteria of an Organised Crime Group (OCG) whilst others do not.

Whilst there are variations across Southwark, most of the identified street level drug dealing is undertaken by young gangs and dealers. The gangs do not control all the street level market, with several independent

dealers operating too. It appears that ever younger individuals are rising through the ranks of gangs to positions of authority and power. To do this they need to be ruthless and show a propensity for violence, that is less controlled than previous generations. This observation is shared by both the police and an ex-gang member (aged 24), who expressed concern at the escalation in violence.

Additional police data indicated, as of late 2022, there were 43 organised crime groups (OCG) whose primary area of criminality was drugs within Central South BCU covering both Lambeth and Southwark. These identified OCGs provide an indication of the scale of the distribution market.

*"The whole drug debt model is being controlled by violence as a business model and very often it isn't just threats of violence to the individual young person but also threats to family and siblings – it affects all of them."*  
Probation Service

*"Of course, there is an obvious and clear link between the drug markets in the borough and violence. The link manifests itself in so many ways to the detriment of the borough."*  
Change, Live, Grow front line practitioner.

*"Drug debts are a huge thing – if a young person is arrested, they will have a debt and must work/pay it off"*  
Police

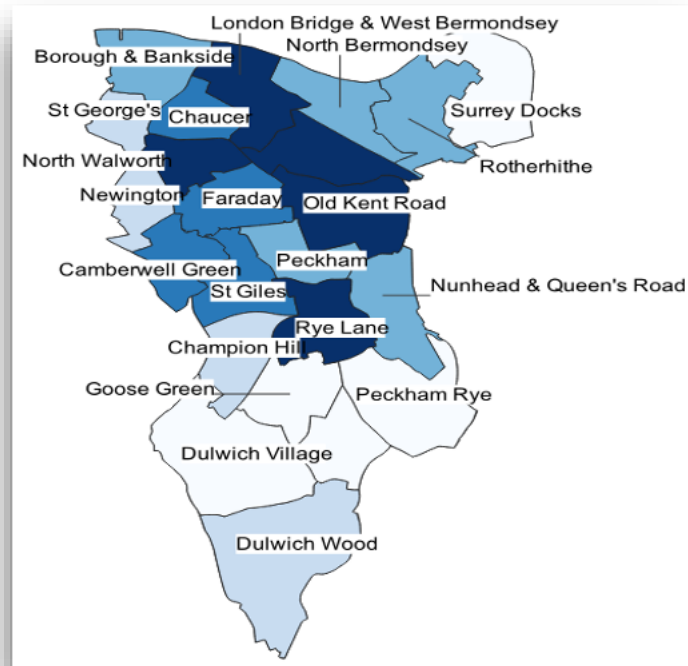
In our work we acknowledge it is important to not only consider police recorded crime, but the factors known as wider determinants. Wider determinants are a diverse range of social, economic, and environmental factors and related data. Often as these determinants worsen, we see an individual's life opportunities and outcomes become worse. In Southwark we have looked at the wider determinants of poverty and deprivation, diversity and equalities, health, education, and crime data in the Strategic Needs Assessment that provides support for our strategy.

By expanding the social, economic, and environmental factors and data we have considered provides a deeper and richer understanding of our violence issues in Southwark. On all areas of work, we have engaged with residents, with a dedicated conversations with various youth groups in the borough.

Our analysis and engagement with residents provide an insight into the direct link between violence and drug supply, which is accepted by a range of agencies and practitioners across the borough. It is seen as an intrinsic driver for levels of violence within the borough, although obviously not the only catalyst. The actions and dynamics of the drug market within the borough is having a disproportionate effect on certain areas of the borough and communities in terms of violence, mental health, physical health, and is the cause of substantial inequalities.

This means that our approach to tackling serious violence needs to look at preventative work – reducing demand for drugs, working with families and young people to mitigate the risk factors – as well as effective enforcement work with both the Police and Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU) through criminal and civil enforcement routes.

## **Violence against the person under 25 years - location, victims, and suspects' overview**



The map shows the volume density for where offences occurred between Apr 2021 and September 2023 at ward level. The darker the shade of blue infers the higher volume of crime present in that area.

In Southwark VAP offences where the victim was aged under 25 occurs more in the northern half of the borough.

The most common offences are Assault without Injury and Actual Bodily Harm, accounting for half of violence offences in 2022/23, similar to the previous and current financial year (Apr-Sep).

*“So much violence is hidden as clients are not going to police to report – anecdotally we have heard of acid being placed on tips of knives before assaults over the last 12 months. This lack of reporting and disclosure is difficult to manage.”*

*“We know of an 11-year-old boy having £15,000 pounds worth of drug debt after being robbed by the holders of the drugs that he was carrying for – he’s now stuck and can’t get out.”*  
Youth Justice Service

Southwark reported 1,806 victims of VAP crime aged under 25yrs in 2022/23, slightly higher than the previous year. For the current financial year (Apr-Sep), Southwark reported 1,086 victims, an 18% increase compared to the same period the previous year.

For victims of VAP offences aged under 25yrs, the degree of injury inflicted has not seen much change year on year. In 2022/23, 57% of victims had no injuries inflicted, 29% had minor injuries, and 7% had moderate or serious injuries.

In Southwark, knives are the most common weapon used to inflict injury in VAP crimes. However, there was a slight decrease in the use of knives in 2022/23 compared to the previous year. Lethal barrel discharges saw an increase in 2022/23 compared to the previous year, but still remain low in volume and proportion out of all VAP offences. Due to low figures, effective analysis is difficult to determine for threats to kill offences, with the offences accounting for 2% of all victim based VAP offences in 2022/23.

*“Young men carrying big knives not just for protection but to show off too – we’re talking about young boys aged 11 upwards. Social media is an obvious driver with constant references to drugs, gangs, and violence.”*

Police

Based on available data, the gender of victims under 25yrs has been 50% male and 50% female for both 2021/22 and 2022/23. For the current reporting year, this has shifted to 54% male and 46% female respectively.

The ethnicity of victims aged under 25yrs has seen a change in recent years. Those from black ethnic groups have been most represented since 2022/23 and are overrepresented as victims when compared to the population in Southwark (25%).

In 2022/23, 40% of suspects were known to their victims, which has seen little change across all reporting years. Suspects are more commonly aged below 18yrs, with 56% of suspects in 2022/23 falling into this range, higher than the 50% reported for 2021/22. For the current reporting year, this is 55%.

Based on available data, the gender of suspects under 25yrs has been most commonly male, accounting for 70% of suspects in 2022/23. Although males are the most common gender across all periods, the proportion of female suspects has been gradually increasing since 2021/22 from 27% to 32% in the current reporting year.

Some ethnic groups have been most represented across all periods and are increasing in proportion compared to other groups. However, this is more nuanced than initially appears. In line with the borough's work around equality and diversity our Strategic Partnerships will continue to monitor equality and diversity, and in particular disproportionality for those affected by violence crime for both victims and perpetrators and their families.

*"We have stopped young boys visibly pleased to be arrested and remanded because of the threats and pressure they're under. It's not unusual for 16 years on arrest to sleep solidly for 14 hours after arrest – they have perhaps only snatched sleep in a trap house for 2 hours at a time."*

Police

*"Some people are built for trapping, others for enforcing and threats – the business will find a way of using people that fits their skill set."*

Ex-gang member

## **VIOLENCE ON TRANSPORT**

### **British Transport Police summary**

Across the reporting periods Southwark has seen a steady increase in violence related offending. 2022/23 saw 354 offences, an increase of 31% from the previous year (271). 95% were violence with injury related. There is no information available regarding victims and suspects for these offences.

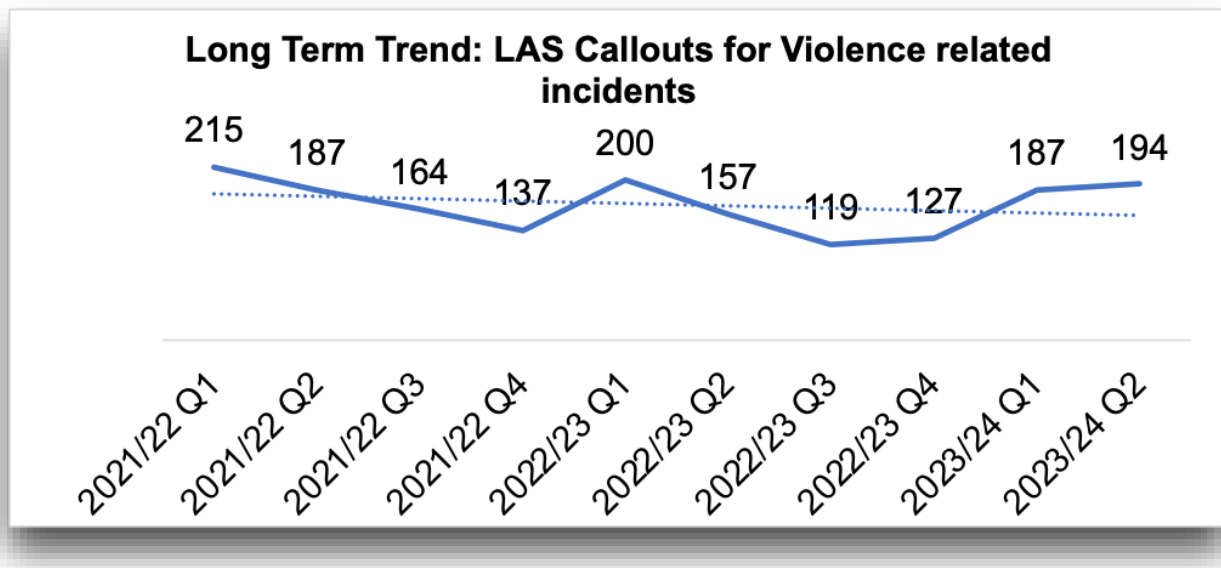
Across both 2021/22 and 2022/23 combined, the majority of offences occurred on a station, and the busiest station for offences was London Bridge, which also aligns with violence hotspots for Police offending and accounted for 61% of all incidents. We understand transport hubs can very often be hotspot areas for crime due to the very high foot fall. We want to carry out further analysis to understand whether all the recorded incidents happen in the environs of Southwark transport hubs or are the incidents taking place on the journey and then recorded as a Southwark crime.

### **Transport for London summary**

Due to small numbers, analysis is difficult to effectively determine, although the most recent data indicates that levels of violence on TFL services are increasing. There is no information related to victims and suspects of these offences available. The bus routes with the most incidents occurring were the 343 (Aldgate – New Cross Gate) and 136 (Grove Park – Elephant & Castle).

### **LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE CALL OUT DATA**





Proportionally there are slightly more weapon related incidents occurring. 2022/23 reported 85 incidents, 14% of all violence for the year. This is higher than the 11% (77) reported the previous year. There is no data available regarding victims or suspects. Peak periods for all violence related incidents across both years are in June at weekends between 4-5pm and throughout the evening, peaking between 12-1am.

The top 3 highest ward locations incidents occur across both years were North Walworth (11%), London Bridge & West Bermondsey (9%) and Camberwell Green (7%), accounting for 26% of all incidents.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) OVERVIEW

Locally, VAWG is a priority for Southwark. Currently there is an agreed strategy in place, and this will be refreshed and will complement the work set out in the VRAP.

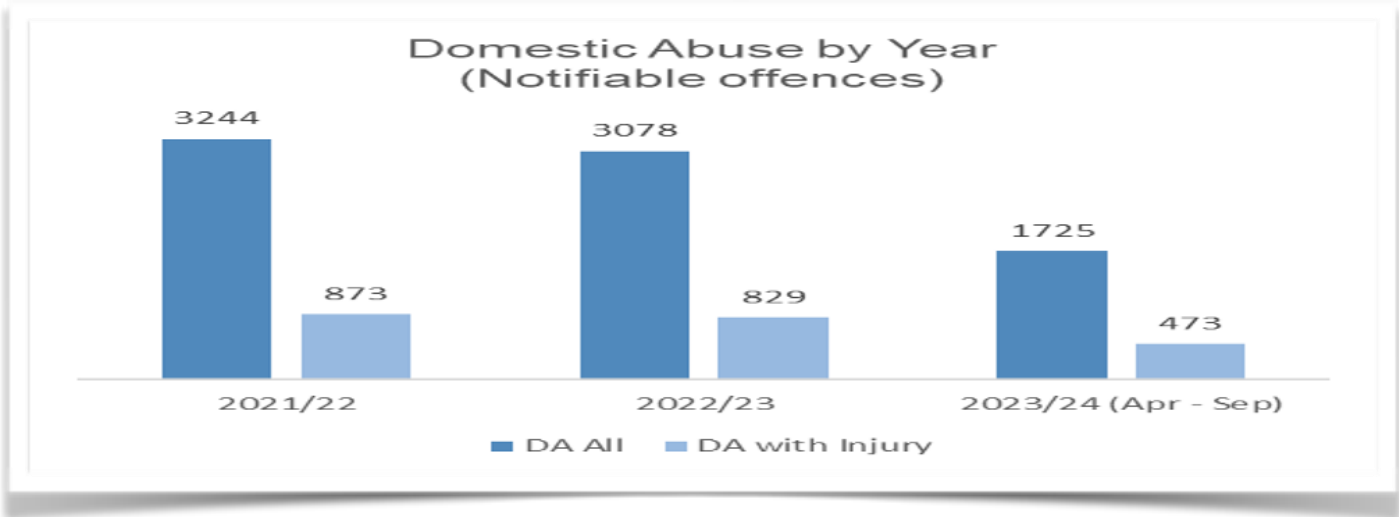
VAWG offences are defined as sexual or violent crimes that occur away from a private residence. The offences that are covered by this definition range from stalking, harassment, and voyeurism through to rape, sexual assault, and violence. Southwark ranks 10th highest in London for sexual offences, and 9th highest for rape.

VAWG saw a 64.7% decrease in offending in 2020/21 compared to the previous year largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions in 2020/21 would have heavily influenced accessibility to key locations where VAWG most commonly occurs. When moving into 2021/22, compared to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019/20, VAWG in Southwark increased by 24.7%.

VAWG in Southwark is more prevalent in areas with high foot traffic, such as transport hubs and high street locations. VAWG hotspots are similar to those for violence against the person offences, and we will renew our focus on the public realm in 2024.

*“Debt violence and problematic drug use go hand in hand. I tried to work with a woman sleeping on a neighbour’s floor as she was scared after row over £200 pounds worth of drugs. She was being threatened, had no support, and didn’t want to go back to her flat.”*  
Change Grow Live

The five-year trend for sexual offences in Southwark is upward, having increased from 2.8 offences per 1,000 population in 2018/19 to 3.1 offences per 1,000 population. Southwark remains higher than the London rate across this five-year period, both decreasing to the lowest rate during the pandemic, then increasing since.



Rape offences remain stable, dropping from 1.2 per 1,000 population in 2018/19 to 1.0 during the pandemic, and has since returned to a rate of 1.2 offences per 1,000 population. In comparison, the London rate saw a larger decrease and has yet to return to the 2018/19 level. Data for the current year suggests these rates will continue through 2023/24.

**DOMESTIC ABUSE OVERVIEW**

Southwark ranks 13th highest in London for domestic abuse offences. The five-year trend for domestic abuse is Southwark is downward, having dropped from 11.2 offences per 1,000 population in 2018/19 to 9.6 offences per 1,000 population. Southwark reported 2,915 victims of domestic abuse in 2022/23, slightly higher than that reported the previous year (2,876). For the current financial year (Apr-Sep) Southwark reported 1,519 victims, higher when compared to the same period the previous year (1,397) with an increase of 9%.

Although our reported cases show a downward trend anecdotally, we have seen an increase of approaches and subsequent referrals to our domestic abuse services. There was a significant rise during the pandemic but the level of has not reduced significantly since lockdown ended.

Where gender is recorded, the female to male ratio is approximately 3:1. 2022/23 saw a slight shift with an increase in male victims however the first 6 months of 2023/24 suggests a return to the ratio seen in 2021/22. The 2021 Census suggests the population of Southwark is 51.5% female and 48.5% male.

**WHAT ARE WE DOING TO REDUCE SERIOUS VIOLENCE?**

We believe the key elements for success to reduce serious violence are as follows:

- Further developing our partnership by building an accountable and borough wide network who work together to reduce serious violence, implementing evidence-based initiatives
- To further strengthen our safeguarding approach
- Improved data, research and evaluation
- Amplify the voice of residents in our work, especially young people

The underlying causes and drivers of violence in Southwark are similar to those highlighted by the work of the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF). The interventions planned and in place as outlined below are aimed at tackling the causes of violence, preventing it from occurring, as well as enforcing against those who commit violence.

No single organisation can do this on their own. For example, if we can't reduce the use of drugs within the borough via effective treatment services then we know that violence levels will stay high because of the link between illegal drug markets and violence. Southwark's Director of Public Health co-chairs the Combatting Drugs Partnership, and other senior officers from a variety of health agencies sit on the CDP or chair CDP sub groups. They are all clear about how the need to improve drug treatment services is vital if Southwark is to reduce violence within the borough.

We also recognise that we must consult locally and recognise some of the wider societal issues that can underpin violence. Southwark Council, together with local partners, have launched Southwark 2030. Between January and April over 2,000 residents shared ideas and ambitions for Southwark in 2030. One of the eight ambitions identified is SAFETY - All people in Southwark feel and are safe on the streets, in their homes and at work.

The CSP has also responded to the Casey Report into the Metropolitan Police Service through reviewing its implications for current local priorities, reinforcing the need to ensure trust and confidence and VAWG/Women's Safety remain high priorities.

It is also important to build trust between the police and the community. Work has been started with extra monitoring and scrutiny groups being created both in Southwark and across wider London to monitor stop and search arrangements. The newly created Youth Independence Advisory Group (YIAG) have held several events with Metropolitan Police Officers to discuss 'stop and search' and the effect it has on young people across Southwark and London. Also, the Youth Parliament and the Peer Navigators, a young person's group linked to the Youth Justice Service, carry out work to reduce serious youth violence.

## **GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP**

There are clear links with serious violence reduction activity between the work of the various statutory partnerships across the borough. Strategic and operational oversight of the Serious Violence Duty in Southwark is held by the Community Safety Partnership, and the decision making, and approval of the strategy will be governed through the CSP and its subgroup the Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Board. The VAWG Strategic Group will also be crucial to delivery of the strategy given its responsibility for domestic abuse.

The Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) is another key strategic alignment. The need for effective treatment services, in order to reduce demand for drugs within the borough will play a crucial role in reducing violence. The CDP has responsibility for holding treatment services to account and overseeing performance.

The Southwark Safeguarding Boards, the Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP), and the Southwark Safeguarding Adults Partnership (SSAP) both oversee governance arrangements for safeguarding across the borough, which include violence prevention and activity around the SVD.

The community and voluntary sector is integral to our work in violence reduction and are working with us at every level in our work to reduce violence. Community Southwark are the umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in the Borough. They support charities, community groups and individuals by providing services, linked to funding, capacity building, volunteering opportunities. We have senior managers from our CVS attending strategic boards where they are able to inform and influence strategy across work streams and partnerships.

In order to ensure that senior leadership oversight is in place, we have set up an annual Cross Partnership Strategic meeting, which will straddle Safeguarding and CSP partnerships and its first piece of work will look at the SVD, formally reviewing current in year progress with strategic priorities and share forthcoming priorities for 2024/25.

The local Youth Justice Service (YJS) work closely with community safety partner agencies at both senior management and operational levels. Substantial joint strategic and operational planning occurs between

departments, particularly around responses to serious youth violence, criminal exploitation, and transitional cases between YJS and Probation. Southwark's forthcoming VRAP will pull together all strands of violence reduction activity across the partnerships, overseen by the CSP. This all has to be enabled through the prism of joint working, and Southwark has already a number of multi-agency teams set solely to deliver support to those affected by violence.

## **WHAT DO OUR SERIOUS VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS LOOK LIKE?**

The organisations listed below include some of the interventions being delivered to support Southwark young people and their families affected by serious violence:

### **Community Harm and Exploitation Hub (CHEH)**

The CHEH is Southwark's Violence Reduction Unit overseeing all elements criminal exploitation for all those 18-25 years.

The operational delivery is provided by the Community Harm Exploitation Operational Group (CHE-OG). The CHE-OG works with some of the most high-risk individuals and their families, both victims and perpetrators linked to serious violence and criminal exploitation. An offer of support is made including life coaching, access to physical and mental health alcohol and drugs addiction support services, education, training and employment mentoring, assistance with Dept of Work & Pensions and assistance with benefits where relevant. This is a multi-agency team which includes St Giles, Southwark Works, Together for Mental Health, CGL, Red Thread, Probation, DWP, Southwark Housing, Youth Justice Service and Police.

### **The Southwark Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG)**

This is a community-led group of young people aged from 14 to 19 years old (up to 25 with a disability) who have a unique partnership with Community Safety & Partnership team and the CHEH and provide independent advice to the Community Safety Partnership on issues that affect young people regarding crime, policing and safety issues.

### **Youth Justice Service**

The YJS delivers a trauma informed weapons awareness programme at Southwark academies. This is one or two academies per term, plus on a 1 to 1 and group basis at the YJS with the aim is to assist participants to feel safe without needing to resort to carrying weapons.

Impact of harm programme delivered at the YJS by YJS victims' workers to enable participants to "think victim" and thus will be less likely to use violence in future.

Youthink is a group work programme. This intervention, delivered by a 3rd sector partner, allows participants to address a whole range of issues relating to serious youth violence with the aim of empowering them to avoid becoming involved in serious youth violence.

Turnaround is a new intervention delivered on a voluntary basis to children and families. The one key aspect of the intervention is to help the child to feel safe and avoid committing offences such as carrying weapons.

Interventions delivered by YJS clinical practitioners will work on a 1:1 basis with children to assist them to identify alternative methods of conflict resolution, anger, and emotion control to reduce the likelihood of the child responding violently to others.

### **Extra-Familial Harm and Missing Team**

The Head of Southwark YJS oversees Children's Services 'Extra-Familial Harm and Missing Teamwork with statutory social care teams and the wider multi-agency partnership to lead and develop the borough response to children and young people at risk of extra-familial harm and exploitation or who go missing from home or care

### **Cuckooing Forum**

The Forum brings together a range of relevant agencies and services to work in partnership to ensure those subjected to cuckooing are supported and safeguarded, and to identify contextual themes pertinent to the borough.

### **Your Choice**

The Your Choice programme offers intensive, therapeutic approach centred on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to support young people aged 11-17 who are at most risk of being affected by violence or exploitation. It is being delivered by borough frontline practitioners working with children and young people in Southwark and boroughs across London. The programme is funded by the London wide VRU.

### **Schools SAFE Task Force**

The SAFE task force programme aims to reduce children's vulnerability to the harms of serious violence by supporting them to engage in education.

### **Active Citizen Network (ACN) - MyEnds**

ACN's Unheard Voice project became one of eight MyEnds programmes funded by the London Violence Reduction Unit. For the past two years, Unheard Voice has empowered different parts of the Southwark community to speak up about the root causes of violence in their areas. Through work in targeted areas of Southwark, ACN have found that working with young people's families is as important as working with young people themselves.

The next phase of the work is to highlight parents' views and identify the support they need to help their children access positive pathways and navigate the complex systems they face within school and statutory services.

### **Rescue and Response**

Rescue and Response is a pan-London County Lines support service for children and young people up to the age of 25 who are caught up in County Lines drug distribution networks and subject to criminal exploitation. In Southwark, this works closely with the Community Harm and Exploitation Operations Group.

### **Project ADDER**

Run by Southwark Police, ADDER is a whole-system response to addressing drug-related deaths and offending, drug use, and disrupting high-harm criminals and networks involved in middle market drug/firearms supply and importation.

### **Operation Yamata and Operation Orochi**

These new and innovative projects aim to dismantle drug supply networks at scale & thereby reduce serious violence, homicide, and drug related deaths. It will target those controlling the drug supply within and emanating from identified London high harm boroughs.

### **Serious Incident Management System**

Trust and confidence in all agencies are particularly relevant when there is a critical incident. The Community Safety and Partnership team work alongside the Police and with the community when there is a critical incident. The Police, either at a borough or London wide level will be the primary agency leading a critical incident linked to serious violence, but all partners have a support role. The London wide VRU have funded an electronic notification platform known as SIMS. It is being piloted in several London boroughs including Southwark. As part of our critical incident protocol and approach we have prepared a briefing document for Elected Members which will strengthen their role when an incident occurs. Our local Elected Members will act as advocates and the local VRU will work with them and local Police teams to provide reassurance and access to support agencies through the Southwark Wellbeing Hub and when relevant, information about Crimestoppers and Fearless.

### **Violence Against Women & Girls**

Southwark's Domestic Abuse Service (SDAS) delivered by Refuge provides an integrated support and advocacy service to survivors of domestic abuse. 8 Independent Gender Based Violence Advocates (IGVAs)

provide safety planning support and advocacy, including legal, financial and housing advice. Survivors can also receive 1-2-1 counselling or participate in a structured group programme. The Sanctuary scheme offers security assessment and improvements to help survivors feel safer in their own homes. A Child therapeutic programme provides 1-2-1 play-based therapy to children who have experienced domestic abuse in their homes.

Southwark's Iris Programme provides support and advocacy to survivors together with training and advice to clinical and administrative staff across 25 General Practices.

Southwark has 31 units of supported refuge accommodation for female survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Provision includes a dedicated child support worker offering play-based 1-2-1 and group activities for children of all ages.

The Yuva service works with young people who are displaying abusive behaviours towards parents/carers or intimate partners. 1-2-1 interventions are provided to both the young person and those affected by their behaviour.

Prevent and Change (PAC) is a multi-agency programme working with perpetrators of domestic abuse, offering behaviour change interventions alongside enforcement interventions with the aim of reducing the risk to their victims

Southwark Safe Spaces provides more than 50 locations across the borough where people who are experiencing domestic abuse can make a phone call to get help. Safe Spaces are located in venues such as schools, children and family centres, libraries, cafes and community organisations.

In 2021 Southwark conducted its first ever Women's Safety Consultation to learn about women's experiences in the borough and understand how safe women feel living, working, going to school and travelling in Southwark. The second round of the survey is now underway and will be completed by May 2024.

The Women's Safety Charter is being relaunched in Southwark with 500 individuals/businesses targeted to receive training. These sessions will incorporate the Women's Safety Charter, Ask for Angela, WAVE (vulnerability training), and our joint initiative with Lambeth, Safe Havens.

A network of Safe Havens are being developed across the borough. Staff at Safe Haven locations have been trained to support anyone who feels unsafe or has been harassed, including helping organise safe transport home or calling family, friends or the police. There are currently 8 in operation, with 10 additional locations to join by the end of the financial year.

Southwark's "Through her Eyes" communications campaign was developed during 2022 by the Southwark Young Advisors. It is aimed at young males 16-24 years, and challenges them to consider their behaviours and attitudes towards girls and women and challenge the negative attitudes of those in their peer groups. An accompanying workshop on Women's Safety has also been developed and is being offered to every secondary school, college, university in Southwark.

### **Children and Family Centres**

Southwark's Children and Family Centres are a key service as part of the council's 0-19 Early Help offer. The purpose of Early Help is to prevent issues from getting worse by offering support at the right time. Children and Family Centres work with children aged 0-5 in universal and targeted groups sessions, supporting their primary development needs. They also offer support to children aged 0-10 and their families through targeted support, including assessment and support plans. Services include in school readiness, parenting aspirations and parenting skills and child and family health and life chances.

### **Community and Voluntary Sector**

Much of the vital face to face work with our young people and their families is delivered by committed and skilled frontline workers from the numerous voluntary organisations we work with, from restorative justice to

behavioural change, from advice and guidance, to education, training and employment. The CVS are at the core of our violence work.

*“Without them we would struggle to reach some of the most vulnerable young people in the Borough when they most need us”*

Community Safety & Partnership officer

### **Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews (OWHR)**

To date Southwark has one OWHR. The PCSC Act includes a requirement to be placed on the police, local authorities and clinical commissioning groups / Integrated Care Boards to carry out a review into the circumstances of adult homicides involving the use of offensive weapons.

### **The Vanguard programme**

This aims to provide meaningful support for children, young people and families who have complex and unmet needs, and who are at risk of – or are affected by – violence. The South East London (SEL) Community Multi-System Violence Reduction (Vanguard) Programme officially went live in October 2022, and had its first formal review in March this year.

### **Redthread**

This is a charity with over 20 years' experience of delivering pioneering youth work in hospitals and other health settings, with 11-25 year olds who are affected by grooming, sexual and criminal exploitation, violence, emotional and physical harm, mental health issues, domestic violence and modern slavery.

### **OASIS**

OASIS is a mental health service for young people (14-35 years old), living in the London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Croydon. They provide support for up to two years, for people struggling with experiences like hearing voices or feeling paranoid, which may be linked violence and associated trauma. SLAM are partners within the Combatting Drugs Partnership. They support work linked to the continuity of care for individuals into treatment. Discussions under the CDP have begun regarding a potential intervention for cannabis use which is an issue we are seeing with our 18–25-year-olds who are involved in violence and robbery, often to pay off cannabis debts.

## **OUR CHALLENGES AND GAPS**

As part of our preparatory work for the Serious Violence Duty, our partnerships and agencies have looked at what they could be doing to tackle serious violence more effectively across the Southwark. Even though our work continues to develop, we have much more to do, and this includes the following:

### **Community Safety Partnership**

- Further integrate partners from wider NHS, criminal justice, education, and secure estates in our work.
- Additional data analysis on our victims and perpetrators aged 25 -30 years and understand how this may align with our Integrated Offender Management (IOM) cohort and work.
- Work with our housing colleagues both internally and externally across the Borough and London to improve the housing approach and offer for individuals and families at risk.
- Develop a better understanding of how robbery is linked to the violence landscape in Southwark especially for those under 18 years and develop a robust and proportionate partnership response. Work with Police colleagues and partners on an effective joint approach to this priority.
- Create a community friendly communications strategy for all the work that is being delivered across Southwark to reduce violence.

### **Children's and Adult Safeguarding Boards**

- Local partnership strategic arrangements, including the interface between the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the CSP and the local VRU will be evaluated to determine how effective they are in addressing and preventing serious youth violence.

- The MACE is under review and has set up an Extra Familial Panel to provide multi agency support to young people under 18. We will examine how this links with the CHEOG (and this links to the transitional problem above too).
- We will examine current partnership arrangements for complex adult safeguarding, such as cuckooing (which has clear links to serious violence), looking at governance and oversight, aiming to ensure that the Adult Safeguarding Board is best placed to manage and support such cases.

### **Education/Schools**

- Ensuring there are education representatives linked to all areas of the serious violence duty work and the duty of the Virtual Head Teacher to include Serious Violence.
- The development of a Personal Development Programme for young people not at school who commit and are victims of serious violence.
- We are proposing to develop the Family Information Advice and Guidance (Family IAG) team with education colleagues from April 2024, to provide the service to parents and younger siblings. The purpose of the team is to work in an integrated way with the Community Harm & Exploitation Hub Operations Group to provide the highest quality independent, impartial information, advice and guidance and representation for those who are excluded, at risk of exclusion, or affected by vulnerabilities and disadvantage. An evaluation of the pilot, funded by the London Violence Reduction Unit, demonstrated reductions in risk and offending.

### **Southwark Youth Justice Board**

- Review the policy on knife crime to ensure that the level of risk is determined by the evidence in the child's assessment.
- Ensure that Police approaches to relevant crime e.g. serious youth violence, knife crime and personal robbery are integrated with Youth Justice Service priorities.

### **Police**

- Work with Police teams to align and integrate work on our most prolific robbers in the borough into the Violence Reduction Action Plan (VRAP).
- Police and Young Advisors to continue their engagement and training linked to Stop & Search.
- Integrate the borough Police knife crime initiative into the VRAP.
- Continue to work with the Police to pilot and launch Serious incident Management system across Southwark.
- Recruit a Head of Victims Services as a joint funded appointment with the Council
- Deliver the Offensive Weapons Homicide Review (OWHR) pilot with relevant Police teams.

### **Probation**

- Review of the IOM working arrangements and how this will be managed across the partnership, particularly within the refreshed London wide working practices.
- To further develop the work of the Probation lead for violence group offending and the CHEH with regard to increasing the number of female referrals.
- Identify possible opportunities for additional co-location of teams linked to the CHEH.

### **Fire & Rescue**

- Fire stations are being considered as possible safe spaces for vulnerable people, in particular young people and women linked to violence reduction programmes and VAWG work. Safe spaces are where people can go if they feel threatened or unsafe and contact family, friends or services that may be able to provide assistance and support.
- Discussions have been started for the Fire Service to link with our multi agency meetings to provide education, training and employment opportunities to young people who have been affected by violence through Fire Service taster days held at stations in the Borough. These taster days will allow further information about the Firefighter Apprenticeship programme.
- The Fire Service also provides community space for the voluntary sector for meeting and training sessions e.g. Street doctor, and sessions are being organised for young people in the later part of 2024.



## WHAT MORE CAN WE DO?

Southwark is a borough that strives to deliver the best support it can for its residents, especially to young people as its future residents. For those delivering the Serious Violence Duty whether involved strategically or on the frontline, it is imperative we continue to work together to understand our issues in a dynamically changing landscape, our emerging trends and provide the best support services we can. To that end we need to:

- Ensure our strategies and plans will be reviewed and refreshed annually as part of a borough Serious Violence SNA to make sure the priorities are on track and that we understand the impact the partnership work is having, both in terms of the communities' perceptions of change and how safe they feel and also reported levels of crime. We will ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are threads that run through all workstreams.
- Ensure the SVD work continues to deliver value for money and the qualitative impact we want to have for individual, families, and the wider community, via a robust evaluation programme for all our work linked to serious violence.
- Ask ourselves at every level of our delivering the question "so *what*"? meaning what is better because of our intervention and has it made a positive different to an individual, their family or the wider community.
- Learn from strategic reviews such as domestic homicide reviews (DHR), serious case reviews and offensive weapons homicide review (OWHR) how we can continue to improve our delivery.
- Continue to put the voice of all our communities, including victims and survivors of crime at the centre of work with partners working with communities to create shared solutions for tackling issues experienced across the borough.
- Examine themes within our VAWG work that are becoming more prevalent especially with offences linked to the internet and social media.
- Increase our work to prevent young people becoming involved in violence crime and work with parents for them to understand the risk factors for their children and the support available when they need help.
- Communicate to all our diverse communities the outcomes of the work we are doing and the impact our work is having. This will be done through a coordinated series of events consultations, focus groups and, where relevant, community surveys.

There will be other areas where we will need do work and we will record and manage those through our Strategic Boards.

## CONCLUSION

Southwark is continually working to improve its approach to serious violence and to progress our work effective communication is key at all levels. There will need to be discussions and negotiations as priorities and approaches differ, but whatever our differences across the partnership, we are working to keep the residents of Southwark safe.

As a borough we have embraced the SVD in its first year and we will use this strategy as a platform to overcome the gaps and challenges identified, at both a strategic level and delivery level. Throughout the document we have placed quotes from those who are linked to our serious violence landscape, whether they're ex-gang members or police officers. The comments made illustrate it is important to understand as many perspectives as possible, to allow us to better understand what we are dealing with and to provide the best services we can.

Our SNA that supports this strategy provides us with an understanding of our issues in recent years and where we are currently. We are already mapping emerging trends through our multi agency meetings. The practitioners in these meetings, both statutory and voluntary are experienced and skilled in working in the serious violence arena and with those affected by violence. Our staff are passionate about their work and the contributions they make to reduce violent crime in the borough to keep residents safe.

Finally, a quote which encompasses our next steps:

*“No problem is so deep that it cannot be overcome, given the will of all parties, through discussion and negotiation rather than force and violence.”*

Nelson Mandela

## GLOSSARY

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Meaning</b>
<b>ASB</b>	<b>Anti -Social Behaviour</b>
<b>ACN</b>	<b>Active Citizens Network</b>
<b>CDP</b>	<b>Combatting Drugs Partnership</b>
<b>CGL</b>	<b>Change, Grow, Live (Drugs support organisation)</b>
<b>CHEH</b>	<b>Community Harm &amp; Exploitation Hub</b>

<b>CHE-OG</b>	<b>Community Harm &amp; Exploitation Operations Group</b>
<b>CSP</b>	<b>Community Safety Partnership (Strategic Group)</b>
<b>CS&amp;P</b>	<b>Community Safety &amp; Partnership team</b>
<b>DAAT</b>	<b>Drugs &amp; Alcohol Action Team</b>
<b>DWP</b>	<b>Dept. of Work &amp; Pensions</b>
<b>EFH</b>	<b>Extra Familial Harm (&amp; Missing team)</b>
<b>HO</b>	<b>Home Office</b>
<b>IOM</b>	<b>Integrated Offender Management</b>
<b>LAS</b>	<b>London Ambulance Service</b>
<b>MARAC</b>	<b>Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Conference</b>
<b>MACE</b>	<b>Multi-Agency Child Exploitation</b>
<b>SASBU</b>	<b>Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit</b>
<b>SNA</b>	<b>Strategic Needs Analysis</b>
<b>SSAP</b>	<b>Southwark Safeguarding Adults Partnership</b>
<b>SSCP</b>	<b>Southwark Safeguarding Childrens Partnership</b>
<b>SVD</b>	<b>Serious Violence Duty (sometimes referred to as The Duty)</b>
<b>VAP</b>	<b>Violence Against the Person</b>
<b>VAWG</b>	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>
<b>VRAP</b>	<b>Violence Reduction Action Plan (from the London-wide VRU)</b>
<b>VRU</b>	<b>Violence Reduction Unit</b>
<b>YIAG</b>	<b>Youth Independent Advisory Group</b>

