

**Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children.
Response from Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.**

The report, published on 20th November 2024, presents the findings from six joint targeted area inspections (JTAs), carried out between September 2023 and May 2024. These inspections examine the responses to serious youth violence, offering a comprehensive look at how local agencies, including Local Safeguarding Partnerships (LSPs), are working to address this growing concern. Serious youth violence, particularly knife crime, has seen an alarming rise, impacting children and communities in profound ways. Notably, the increasing normalisation of knife-carrying among young people in certain areas, is identified as a critical issue requiring immediate attention.

One of the report's main concerns is the lack of effective guidance and consistent responses from some LSPs, regarding harm outside the family unit. This lack of a consistent approach to extra-familial harm makes it challenging to address the complexities of youth violence comprehensively. The report highlights that some local authorities are not treating serious youth violence as a strategic priority, which hampers the ability to deliver sustained interventions that can break the cycle of violence.

The report underscores the importance of multi-agency collaboration in responding to this issue. It highlights that, when serious youth violence is treated as a priority, local partnerships can make significant strides in reducing violence and harm. Effective collaborations involve analysing data, engaging with children, families, communities and ensuring that interventions are trauma informed. This approach not only addresses immediate concerns, but also builds long-term resilience by offering young people the tools to overcome adversity and thrive.

A positive example highlighted in the report is Coventry's approach to the Serious Violence Duty, which has shown promising results. The joint efforts of the Coventry Serious Violence Prevention Partnership, the West Midlands Regional Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), and the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership, have led to the creation of an effective ten-year strategy for addressing serious youth violence. By adopting a public health model that focuses on the root causes of violence, Coventry has made significant progress in reducing harm and creating safer environments for children and young people.

The Coventry model stands as an example of how local authorities, when working collaboratively and strategically, can make a tangible difference to prevent and reduce serious youth violence. The commitment to tackling root causes such as poverty, exclusion, and lack of opportunity has proven to be essential in reducing both the frequency and severity of violent incidents. The collaborative action has also prioritised building trust and confidence among the community, which is essential for the long-term success of any intervention.

In addition to the successful model in Coventry, the report calls for further government support and guidance to help LSPs prioritise serious youth violence, particularly in areas where it is less visible. More consistent efforts are needed to engage with and support at-risk youth to prevent the escalation of violence. The report highlights the vital importance of a coordinated approach involving police forces, social services, education, and healthcare in effectively managing and preventing serious youth violence. It also notes the progress made during the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty, attributing this success to strengthened collaboration, both nationally and across the West Midlands region.

In 2024, the West Midlands saw a significant reduction in serious youth violence, with recorded crime dropping by 13.73%, from 7,675 in 2023 to 6,621. This reduction was also reflected in the number of serious youth violence cases involving a knife, which decreased by 11.35%, from 370 to 328 incidents. These positive trends indicate a successful collective effort to address this issue. Furthermore, there was an increase in the number of positive outcomes related to serious youth violence, with 858 offenders being charged or held accountable in some capacity. This rise in positive outcomes resulted in an overall positive outcome rate of 12.96%, demonstrating the effectiveness of policing efforts in bringing offenders to justice and improving safety in the region.

Reflecting on the findings in this report, it is clear that multi-agency collaboration is not just beneficial, but vital in combating serious youth violence. The role of the government in providing adequate resources, strategic guidance and a framework for collaboration cannot be understated. I am resolute in my support for these collaborative efforts. The work being done in Coventry and across the West Midlands region illustrates that, with the right resources and focus, we can begin to address the root causes of violence, ultimately ensuring a safer, more supportive environment for all children and young people.

By continuing to work together with partners across the public and voluntary sectors, we can build on the promising practices outlined in this report. Our collective aim must remain focused on reducing harm, providing better opportunities and ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has the chance to succeed without experiencing the threat of or actual violence. I am committed to supporting these efforts and will continue to work closely with local partners, to ensure the West Midlands is a safer and more supportive environment for everyone.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner