



**VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
UNIT**

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR
GREATER MANCHESTER'S COMMUNITIES

GREATER MANCHESTER
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

Strategic Needs Assessment

for

Violence

Update: 2023/24

Contributors

This Strategic Needs Assessment Update 2023/24 was written and produced by a multi-agency working group, with additional key partners contributing throughout its development.

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Acknowledgements

The completion of this strategic needs assessment would not have been possible without the participation and assistance of so many people. Their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. In particular, we would like to express deep appreciation and thanks to members of each of the 10 Community Safety Partnerships and their Managers.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY





Violence is not inevitable

Violence is preventable

Together we can stop violence

As we are aware, many people suffer non-fatal forms of violence. Unfortunately, too many people also suffer from fatalities related to violence. Across England and Wales, 591 people were victims of homicide in the year ending September 2023. In Greater Manchester (GM) there were 36 homicides over the same time period. This is a 10% decrease since the previous year.

The comprehensive GM Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) strategic needs assessment for 2022/23 can be found [here](#). This strategic needs assessment was ambitious and extensive in both approach and content. The overarching narrative, themes and recommendations identified in 2022/23 remain the core evidence base driving our response to violence reduction. By taking a Public Health Approach to strategic needs assessment, a comprehensive needs assessment is undertaken every three years, whilst an updated assessment is produced annually.

Over the past 12 months the VRU has gone from strength to strength. As well as undertaking a wide range of interventions, evidence analysis, and partnership opportunities we have produced an ambitious 10-year multi-agency violence reduction strategy. This strategy was developed and based on the evidence and recommendations from the VRU's strategic needs assessment for violence, 2022/23. The work and content from the 2022/23 assessment must be utilised to develop local plans. Hence, we are developing an implementation plan that will be influenced by the content of both strategic needs assessments.

Since January 2023 the Serious Violence Duty has been implemented. This strategic needs assessment captures where both VRU and the specified authorities are via the 10 community safety partnerships in relation to this agenda.

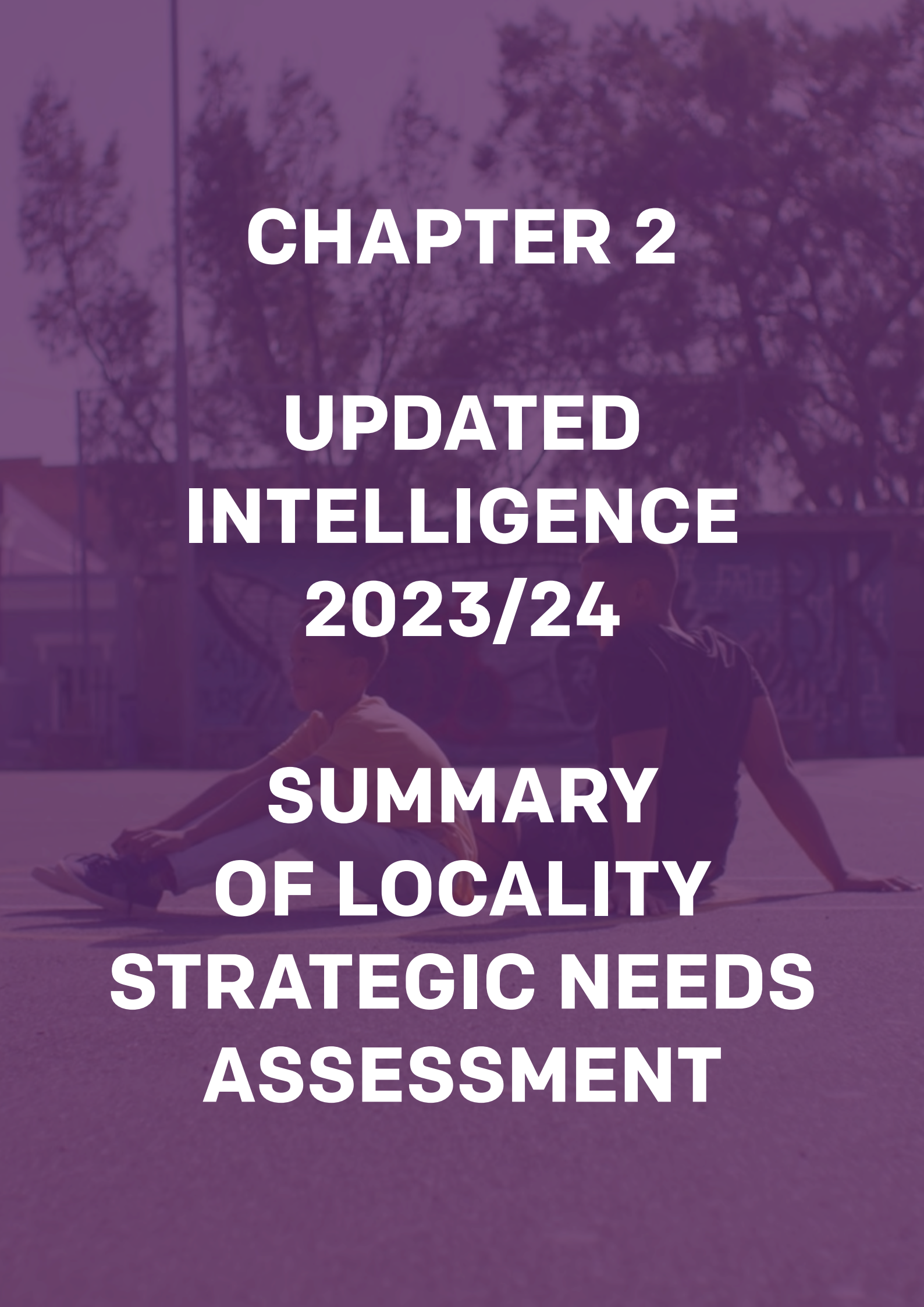
Scope and Methodology

A comprehensive, whole-system and life-course approach was taken for the strategic needs assessment 2022/23. A different approach has been taken for this year's strategic needs assessment update. This is to ensure that the 2022/23 report is referred to, but also to reflect the work that has taken place over the past 12 months, including any key changes in the data and intelligence.

The Strategic Needs Assessment Multi-Agency Working Group was re-established so that all key partner organisations were included and all components considered. The focus of the 2023/24 strategic needs assessment was to:

1. Assess the 22/23 strategic needs assessment and to consider it from a data and intelligence perspective, identifying any key changes in trends and to update data where necessary.
2. Ensure compliance with the Service Violence Duty, including an independent review of all 10 local community safety partnerships' strategic needs assessment for their locality.
3. Capture the VRU's strategy, 'Greater than Violence' and its governance and the various interventions that have been implemented in partnership over the past 12 months to reduce and prevent violence.
4. Provide recommendations.





CHAPTER 2

**UPDATED
INTELLIGENCE
2023/24**

**SUMMARY
OF LOCALITY
STRATEGIC NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**



Introduction

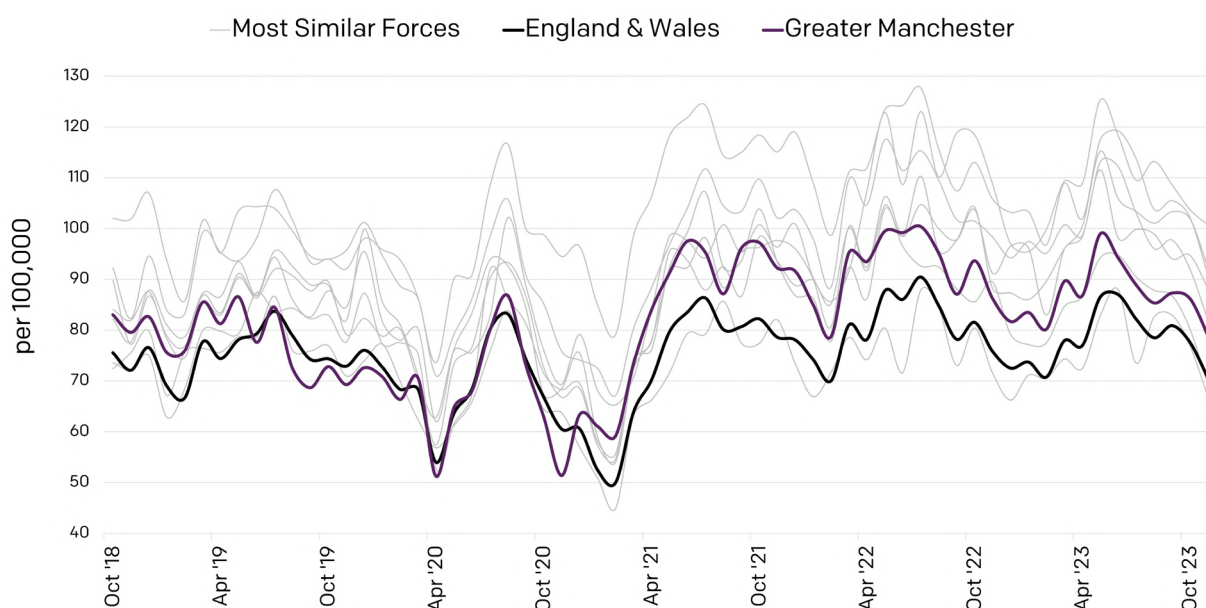
In 2022/23 a comprehensive strategic needs assessment was produced and published on the VRU's [website](#). This assessment provided large amounts of data and intelligence, over a period of time, and from a life-course perspective. Whilst we now have a further 12 months of data, few trends and patterns have changed, and the core themes and narrative identified within the previous strategic needs assessment continue to form the evidence base driving our work. Therefore, only key updates or significant changes to the picture of violence in Greater Manchester have been provided here. If there are changes to overall trends, then this will be highlighted and shown. If there are not any changes, then only the most recent figures will be shown.

New Intelligence for 2023/24

Although the core challenges and themes identified in the comprehensive VRU strategic needs assessment 2022/23 remain the same, the latest data shows an improving picture of violence over the last year. Although improving at a slower rate than previous years, there is much progress still to be made, meaning we must avoid complacency and keep strengthening our partnership approach and focus further upstream, being led by our communities.

After a sharp rise following the Winter 2020 COVID lockdown, which was in part due to significant improvements made to crime recording during the same period, rates of police recorded violence with injury have stabilised in Greater Manchester. In 2023, rates of violence with injury were 11% higher than the national average, but lower than most of our peer police force areas, and 5% lower than 2022 (Figure 1).

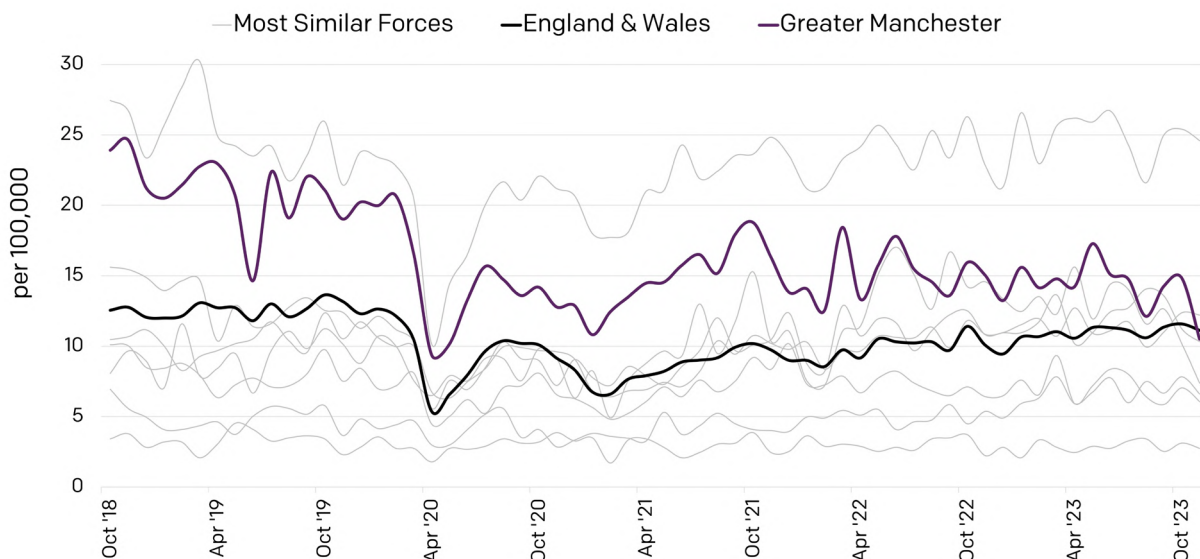
Figure 1. Police recorded violence with injury per 100,000 residents, Greater Manchester and most similar force areas, October 2018 to November 2023



Source: ONS Police Recorded Crime

Rates of robbery have continued to fall over the last year, despite rising rates nationally. Rates of robbery in Greater Manchester fell 5% in 2023 compared to 2022, and currently stand 29% below pre-COVID rates (Figure 2). Despite this, the rate of robbery in Greater Manchester was 31% above the national average, and among the higher of our peer regions nationally. Robbery continues to disproportionately affect younger age groups and be spatially concentrated in city and town centres.

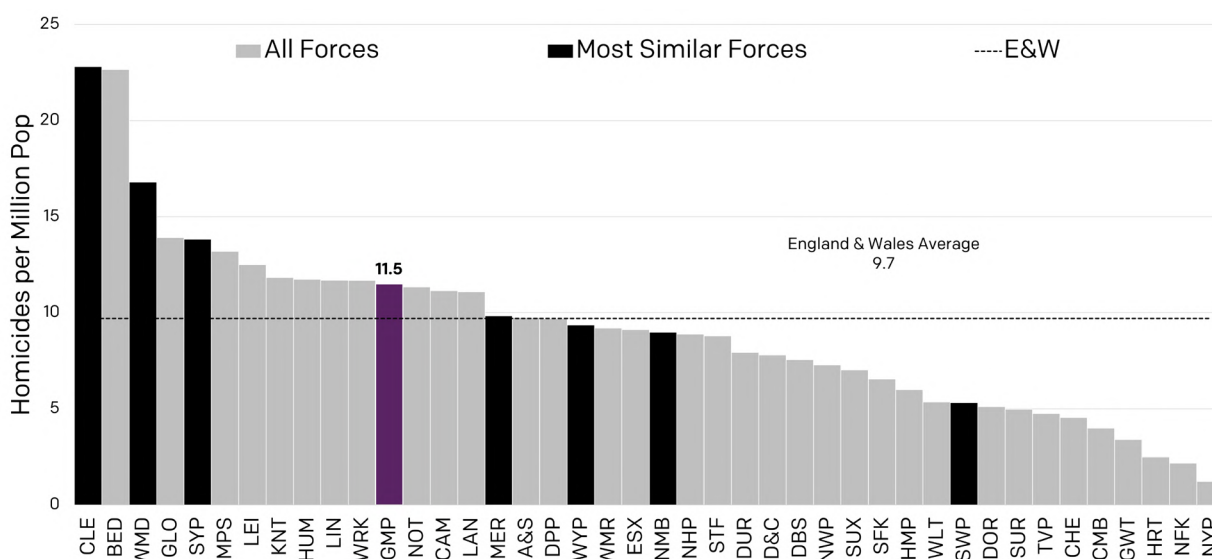
Figure 2. Police recorded robbery per 100,000 residents, Greater Manchester and most similar force areas, October 2018 to November 2023



Source: ONS Police Recorded Crime

Rates of homicide have continued to fall since their 2021 peak and pre-COVID rates, although with a less marked change in the last year. Rates of homicide in Greater Manchester were around 3% lower in 2023 compared to the previous year, but 35% below their recent peak in 2021, and 10% below the year pre-COVID. As a result, while rates in Greater Manchester are still around 19% higher than national rates, they are in line with our most similar police force areas, and 12th highest of all police force areas compared to being the highest nationally only two years earlier (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Police recorded homicides per million residents, all police forces England and Wales, year ending September 2023 (Greater Manchester highlighted)

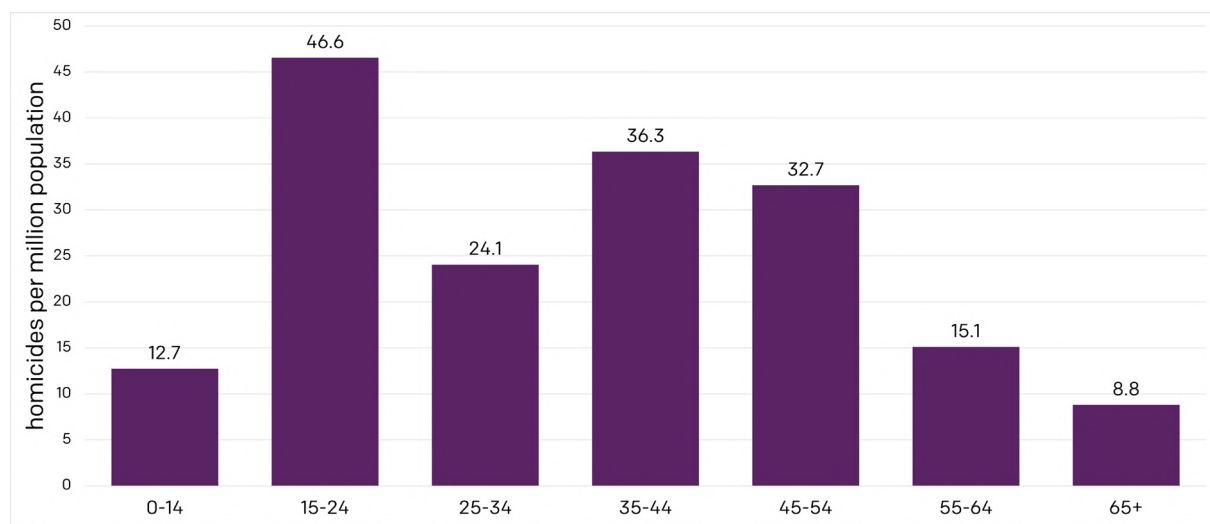


Source: ONS Police Recorded Crime



Across the city-region, the peak age for both victims and suspects of most violent crimes, including robbery, non-domestic violence, and sexual offences tends to be between 14 to 22 years. The profile of homicide victims has changed. Whilst the Greater Manchester strategic needs assessment 2022/23 found that homicide victims in 2020 and 2021 tended to be older than the national average, in our most recent data, 2022 and 2023, homicide rates are now highest among those aged 15-24, in line with national trends. Despite this, rates have fallen across all age groups.

Figure 4. Homicide rate per million population by age band, Greater Manchester, 2022-23



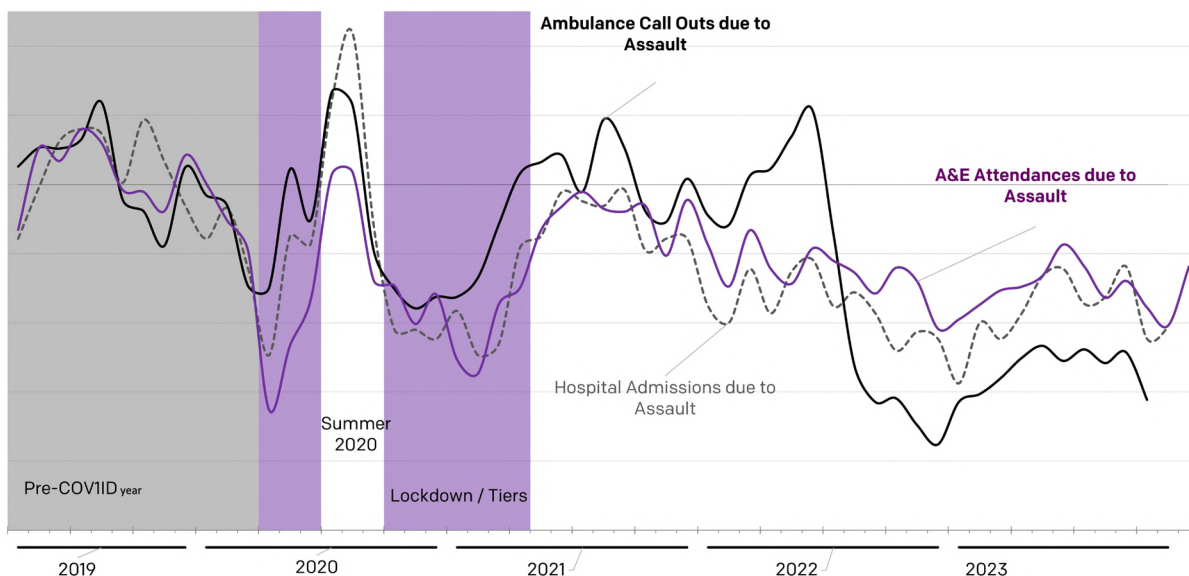
Source: Greater Manchester Police

While the police are a core part of our approach to reducing violence in Greater Manchester, data on recorded crimes only captures one part of the system. Many victims of violence are also seen and supported through our health services: in emergency departments; hospital wards; and by ambulance services.

Health data captures a more consistent picture of the actual levels of violence experienced in the city-region than police recorded crime. This is because police data is more impacted by the willingness of victims to report incidents compared to health data, changes to recording procedures, and increased detection rates following on from more proactive policing. Health data is a valuable resource in understanding more serious incidents of violence, i.e. those resulting in injury severe enough to require medical treatment, and communities that do not want to engage with the criminal justice system.

Data on attendances at emergency departments in Greater Manchester show a continuing decline since the removal of COVID restrictions, although with less marked progress in the past year. There were 6% fewer A&E attendances due to assault in 2023 compared to the previous year, and 30% fewer than the year pre-COVID. This is the equivalent of over 3,500 fewer attendances at emergency departments per year compared to pre-COVID (Figure 5).

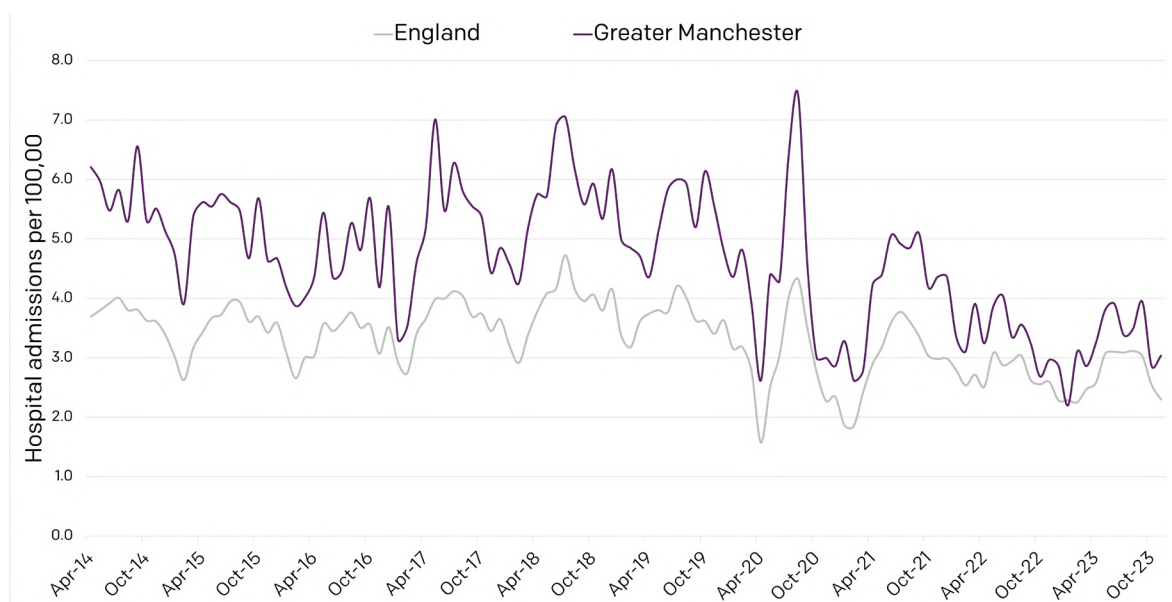
Figure 5. Health data on violence showing monthly ambulance call outs due to assault, A&E attendances due to assault, and hospital admissions due to assault, indexed to year pre-COVID, Greater Manchester, 2019 to 2023



Source: Liverpool John Moores University TIIG, GM NHS

Ambulance data is unfortunately less comparable in the last 18 months due to a change to the national records system used by the ambulance service in mid-2022, which resulted in a significant drop in recorded incidents. However, the comparable data that is available paints a more mixed picture. There were 12% more ambulance call outs due to assault in August to October 2023 than the same period one year earlier (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Monthly hospital admissions due to assault per 100,00 residents, Greater Manchester and England, 2014 to 2023

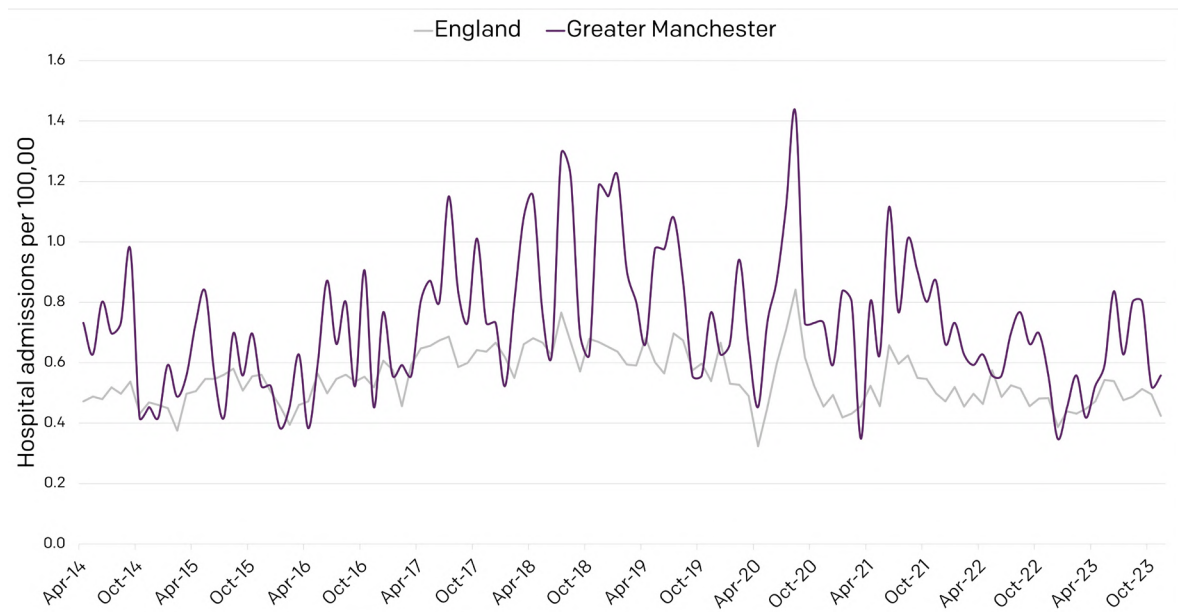


Source: GM NHS

Hospital admissions due to assault show similar trends to A&E attendances over recent years and the last decade. Rates of victims of violence admitted to hospital wards for treatment are down by 7% in the year ending November 2023 compared to the previous year and down 38% since the year pre-COVID. This places annual rates at their lowest levels in the past decade and outperforming national change, which has seen a 3% fall in the last year and a 25% decline since pre-COVID.



Figure 7. Monthly hospital admissions due to assault by sharp object per 100,00 residents, Greater Manchester and England, 2014 to 2023



Source: GM NHS

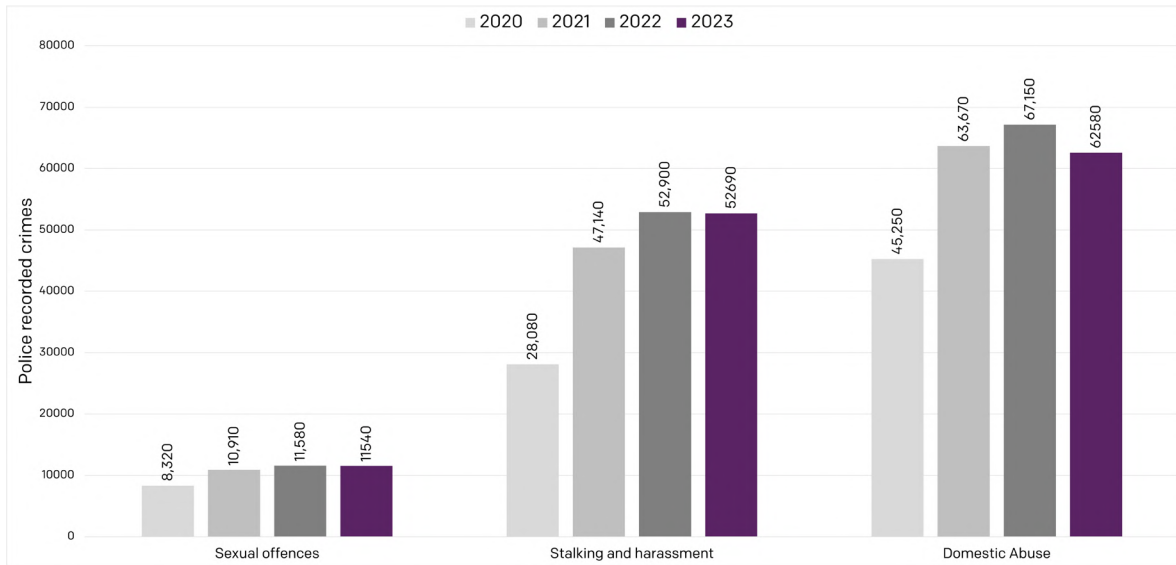
Hospital admissions due to assault by sharp object show similar positive trends in the city-region, falling by 9% in the year ending November 2023 compared to the previous year, and 25% lower than the year pre-COVID. This places annual rates at their lowest levels since 2016 and again outperforming national change, which has seen a 5% fall in the last year and a 21% decline since pre-COVID.

Despite these positive changes in a variety of indicators, many of the challenges identified in the 2022/23 strategic needs assessment remain. Levels of violence in the city-region remain above the national average in most measures, although now in line with our peers where comparisons are available. Violence continues to disproportionately affect young people, our most deprived communities, and more marginalised groups.

Levels of gender-based violence have changed very little over the last year but remain too high. Since the end of 2020, when changes to recording procedures resulted in an increase in recorded crime, there has been little year-on-year variation in police recorded sexual offences, stalking and harassment, and domestic abuse.

While these are crime types that more frequently affect female victims and follow a particularly gendered dynamic compared to other crime types, both male and female victims and offenders are included within this data as these behaviours affect people of all genders.

Figure 8. Annual police recorded gender-based violence, all genders, 2020 to 2023

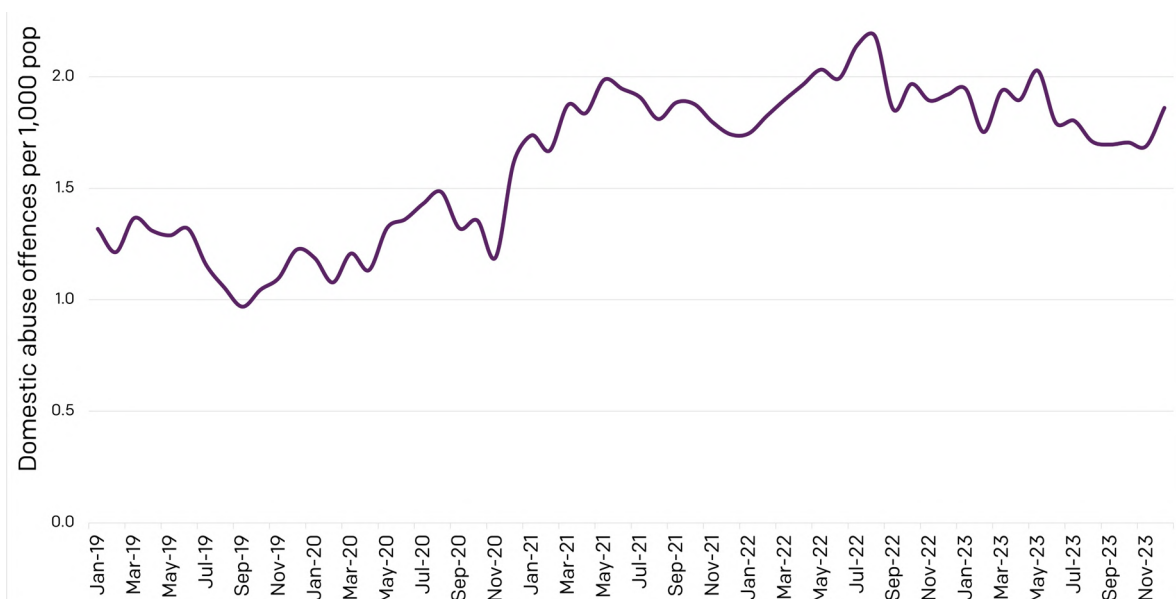


Source: Greater Manchester Police

There has been a 7% fall in recorded domestic abuse offences in 2023 compared to 2022 (Figure 9). However, this is likely driven by changes to national crime counting rules introduced in mid-2023 around certain behavioural offences. While previously a single domestic abuse related incident could result in multiple recorded offences, new national guidance means multiple crimes are now less likely to be separately recorded from one incident. The number of domestic incidents responded to by Greater Manchester Police remains static in 2023 compared to 2022 (a 2% rise), indicating that the change to crime rates is likely to not reflect a significant change in actual prevalence of domestic abuse.

Police recorded stalking and harassment offences remain similar in 2023 compared to 2022 (a less than 1% change).

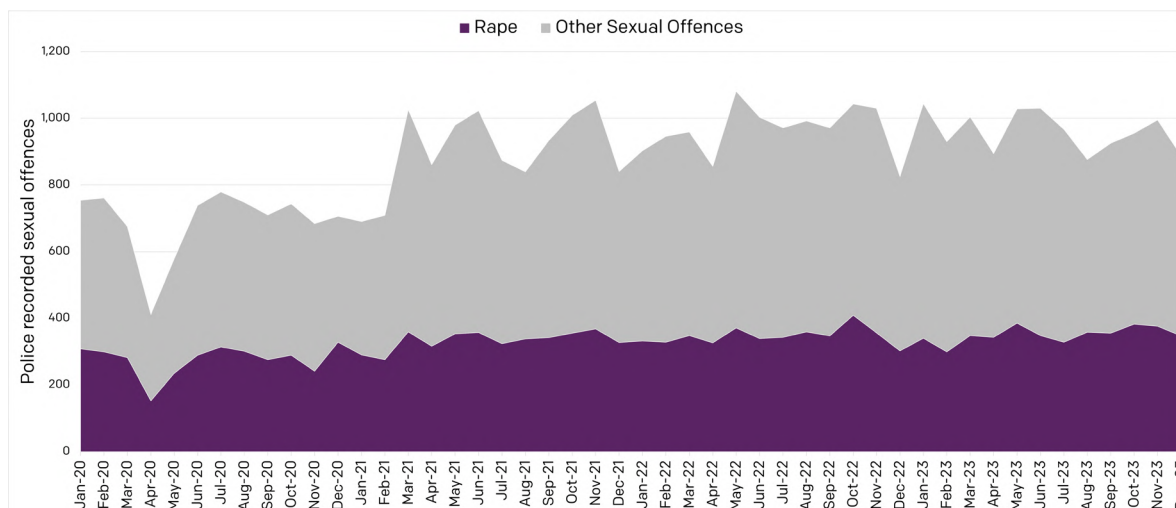
Figure 9. Monthly police recorded domestic abuse flagged offences, Greater Manchester, 2019 to 2023



Source: Greater Manchester Police

Police recorded sexual offences in Greater Manchester have similarly remained static over the last three years, with a less than 1% change in 2023 compared to 2022. However, the sexual offences in Greater Manchester remain at higher levels than seen historically (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Monthly police recorded sexual offences, Greater Manchester, 2020 to 2023

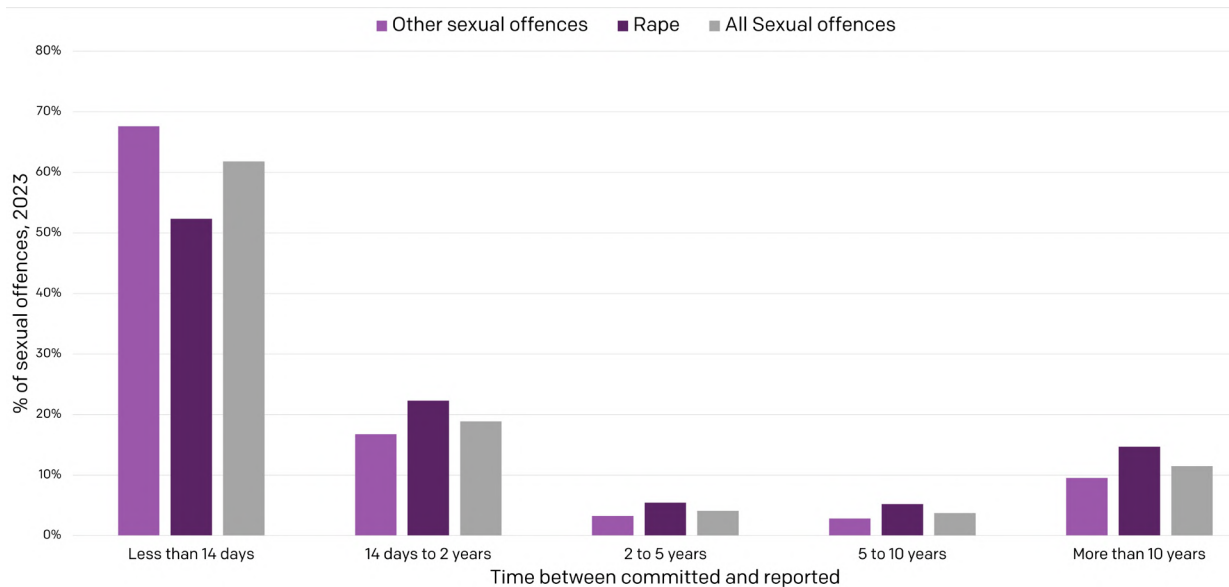


Source: Greater Manchester Police

It is, however, hard to interpret whether this reflects the true and current picture of sexual offending in Greater Manchester. There is extensive evidence to indicate that sexual offences are underreported, and often reported long after the incident itself, meaning that changes to rates of police recorded sexual offences may not indicate changes in the level of current offences occurring. Only 62% of sexual offences in 2023 were reported to Greater Manchester Police within 14 days of the incident, whereas for rape, around 25% of offences were reported more than two years after the incident itself.



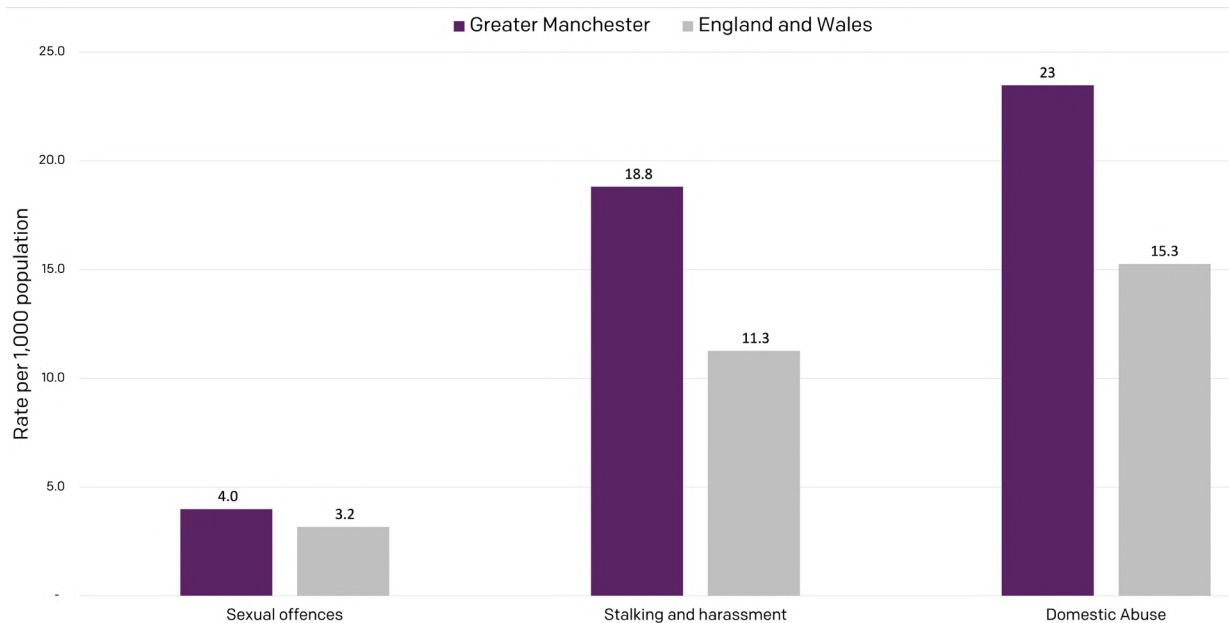
Figure 11. Time from incident to date of police recorded crime for sexual offences, Greater Manchester, crimes recorded 2023



Source: Greater Manchester Police

The challenges around changes to recording practices and the underreporting of many gender-based violence offences make long-term and national comparisons difficult. While Greater Manchester continues to have much higher rates of police recorded gender-based violence in 2023 compared to the national average, this may reflect more effective measures to challenge harmful behaviours and encourage victims to engage with the police, enabling us to identify and offer better support to more people affected by these offences.

Figure 12. Police recorded gender-based violence, year ending September 2023



Source: ONS police recorded crime

Dashboards and/or Profiles

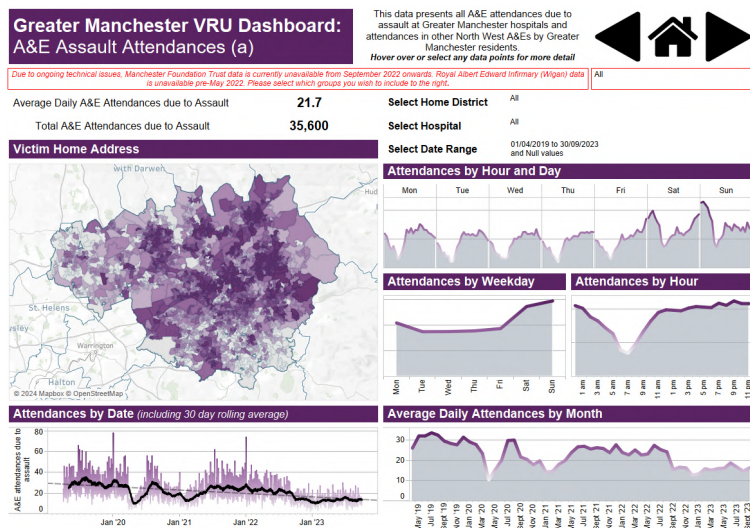
In addition to the updated data and intelligence, there has been further work developed to ensure better sharing of information and to ensure compliance with the Serious Violence Duty. As such, dashboards and profiles have been produced at a Greater Manchester level but also at the 10 local authority level geographical footprints. This ensures a city-wide understanding whilst also ensuring granular local data is shown. Below, a short description of the dashboards/profiles is provided.

Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit

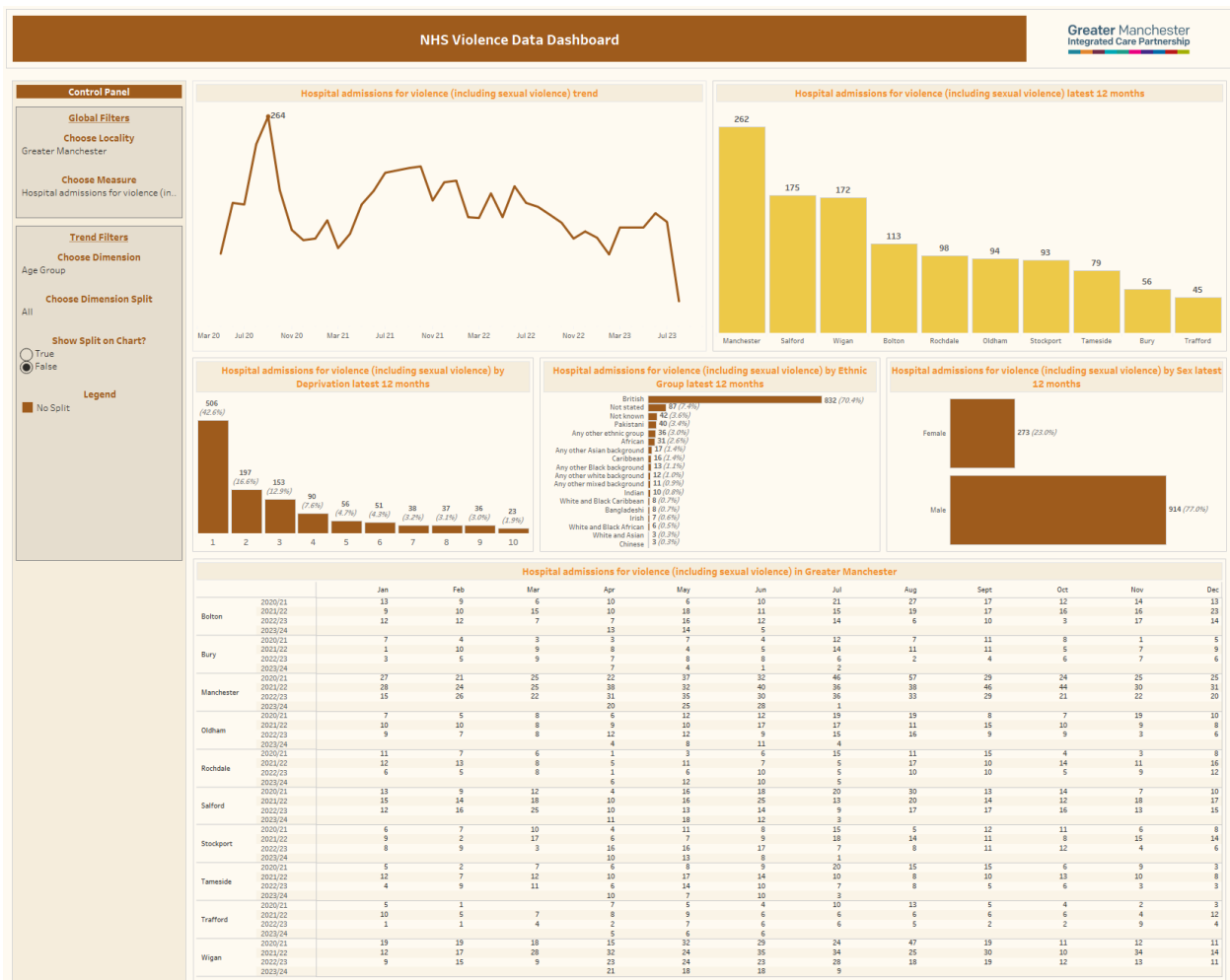
Since 2020, the VRU has provided a secure access online data dashboard to statutory partners across the city-region. This dashboard draws together anonymised data from multiple sources including police, health and probation into one secure regularly updated central resource. This dashboard is updated monthly.

Local partners also have access to a range of other relevant local dashboards produced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority reflecting the Mayor's role as police and crime commissioner, and which can be sustainably maintained on an ongoing basis due to the organisation's broader role, and ability to pool resources beyond the violence reduction unit. This includes dashboards covering gender-based violence, Youth Justice, and the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan.

In addition, as the Combined Authority shares dashboards on thematic areas not directly related to violent crime, it can support local partners with a richer understanding of linked risk and protective factors. This includes dashboards on the Cost of Living, Housing Market, Economic Resilience, Digital Exclusion, COVID, local labour market and the Greater Manchester Strategy.



In October 2023, an NHS Violence Dashboard was produced. This dashboard gives an overview of NHS data relating to violence as part of the Serious Violence Duty. Sources of data include hospital admissions, emergency attendances and ambulance calls. Analysis is available for each of Greater Manchester's 10 locality areas by age group, gender, ethnic group, and deprivation. The dashboard is available to stakeholders in all partner organisations and will be developed further, with additional data sources also being added over time.



GMP

In 2023 Greater Manchester Police provided an insight into Serious Violence for all 10 districts. These Local Profiles were produced in two parts. Part one covered a strategic overview of all serious violence themes and part two contained a more in-depth analysis of the identified key themes. Themes identified included Modern Slavery, County Lines, Personal Robbery, Violence with Injury, Possession of Weapon Offences, Firearms Discharges, Knife Offences. These products are being used to drive operational work and future plans to reduce and prevent serious violent crime.



Serious Violent Crime ELEMENT 2 – PROBLEM PROFILE APPROACH Partner Version Bury District

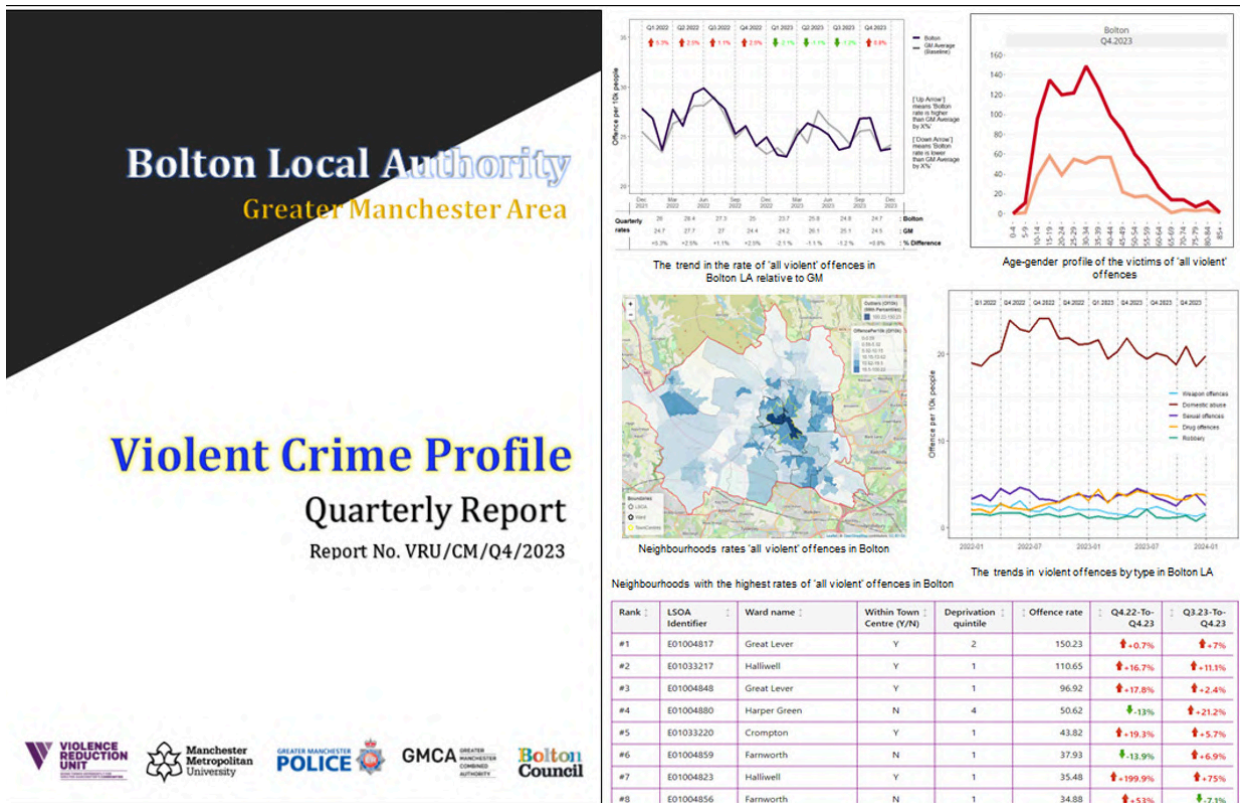
Produced By: R & A Team E. Nichols; J. Dutton; M. Clarke; B Balentine	Version:	1
	Date of First Production:	July 2023
	District SLT Sign Off Date:	September 2023
	Handling Conditions	Official – Not to be disseminated further without prior approval from Bury SLT
	Circulation List:	Bury SLT, FIB, GMCA, Bury Partner Agencies – if approved by Bury SLT

FIGHT, PREVENT AND REDUCE CRIME
KEEP PEOPLE SAFE · CARE FOR VICTIMS



Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

Since 2023 Manchester Metropolitan University has produced quarterly Dynamic Violent Crime Profiles (DVCPs) for each of the 10 local authorities within Greater Manchester. These profiles provide a comprehensive review of violent crime trends, offering insights into the spatial and temporal patterning of violent crime, and the demographic characteristics of offenders and victims. This initiative, demonstrating a commitment to data-driven decision-making, enables a nuanced understanding of local violent crime dynamics. The profiles are shared with local stakeholders, facilitating strategic planning and the targeting of interventions to meet the needs of each authority within Greater Manchester.



Serious Violence Duty Implementation and summary of Locality Strategic Needs Assessments

In November 2022 the Deputy Mayor appointed the VRU to help coordinate the requirements of the Service Violence Duty (the Duty). A Serious Violence Duty Steering Group was established under the leadership of the Director of the VRU.

Given the existing structures and relationships across the 10 local authority areas in compliance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Community Safety Partnerships), it was agreed that because of the differing priorities and challenges across Greater Manchester, the Duty would be delivered at Local Authority level thereby requiring a strategic needs assessment and Strategy for each area.

In April 2023 the central analytical support began to provide localities with data from Police, Health, North West Ambulance Service and Criminal Justice. A total of two comprehensive reports were provided for each locality (March 2023 and Oct 2023). Localities were also able to request bespoke data if required and had full access to the various dashboards and utilised their own local data too.

Between April and August 2023, the VRU held online and in person events for all community safety partnerships and the Specified and Relevant Authorities across the city-region, as well as input from Crest advisory and additional inputs from the VRU's Public Health lead and Greater Manchester Police Force Intelligence Bureau. As part of the Home Office support package, Crest was able to provide each locality with a bespoke three-hour support workshop.

As such, 10 strategic needs assessment and 10 strategies have been produced at the Community Safety Partnership footprint, which were reviewed by the VRU and submitted to the Home Office as per the Duty's requirements.

The GM VRU's 10-year Strategy, 'Greater than Violence' has been developed with all specified authorities and has been adopted in line with the Duty's requirements. The development of this strategy involved input from those working on locality level strategic needs assessments and strategies. This single strategy fulfils the requirements of the Duty. However, each locality published their own strategy by 31 March 2024. The Governance for this approach and its completion has been approved by the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Governance Board, chaired by the Deputy Mayor.

All strategic needs assessments took a public health approach, ensuring that both a life-course and whole-system approach was considered. They highlighted similar challenges as were found in the VRU's assessment, including domestic abuse, gender-based violence, knife enabled violence, and elder abuse. Many also considered at the local level the impact of availability and affordability of alcohol and the impact that this had on local levels of violence, the impact of substance misuse and the impact of stalking on individuals, as well as the impact on their communities.





CHAPTER 3

GREATER THAN VIOLENCE STRATEGY, INTERVENTIONS AND EDUCATION



Greater than Violence Strategy

The VRU has been working with and engaging partners to produce a Greater Manchester Strategy: 'Greater than Violence'. This 10-year strategy brings partners together to drive forward systematic and fundamental change and to take a truly public health approach to violence prevention.

The development of this strategy was based on intelligence from the strategic needs assessment 2023/24, the 10 locality needs assessments and extensive engagement over the past 12 months to listen to the voice of community members, together with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector.

In developing the 'Greater than Violence' strategy a large event was held at the Manchester Cathedral to hear the views, experiences and opinions of a vast array of people from diverse and varied backgrounds, bringing together essential expertise and insights in one conversation that would go on to inform the strategy. Attendees were also invited to give feedback on the recommendations of the 23/24 strategic needs assessment and the key themes which this work had produced.

Throughout the latter half of 2023, further insight was gathered from the 'Community-led Programmes' which take place across each of the 10 localities of Greater Manchester. This culminated in a series of bespoke visits to each site by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, coordinated by the VRU in partnership with the local community-led programme alliance lead. This was an opportunity to showcase the work that had taken place and to discuss what local people and community members thought should be included in the new violence reduction strategy. This provided a solid foundation on which to build and help to shape the direction of the 'Greater than Violence' Strategy.

To ensure that young people's voices were heard, the VRU commissioned an in-depth programme of engagement. The engagement work took a qualitative approach to investigate six key research questions over 11 participatory workshops. In total 68 young people were involved, ranging from 14 years to 18 years of age. The voices from the young people helped to shape the content of the strategy.

In addition, the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (1 of 7 GM equality panels), the VRU and Deputy Mayor came together to discuss young people's perspectives on violence reduction priorities in person. Everyone concerned made a great effort to contribute a range of perspectives and experiences which resulted in some very useful conversations and subsequent content for the 'Greater than Violence' strategy and planning work.

The 'Greater than Violence' Strategy aims to improve lives by preventing violence, supporting victims, families and communities affected, and providing positive opportunities to those at risk of becoming victims, witnesses, or perpetrators, including education programmes, community sports, targeted mentoring, opportunities to develop new skills and therapeutic support and can be found here: ['Greater than Violence' Strategy](#).

The strategy is founded on two pillars:

- **Preventing violence from happening**
- **Responding swiftly and appropriately when it occurs**

By constructing the strategy around these two pillars, we recognise that to effectively tackle violence it needs to be prevented from happening in the first place and that a swift and effective policing, health, and criminal justice response must be adopted when violence does occur, to apprehend those responsible, as well as protecting victims and communities. Spanning these two pillars are five core principles for how the strategy will be delivered which are aligned to wider strategic priorities for Greater Manchester.

The 'Greater than Violence' Strategy is being translated into an implementation plan overseen by the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Governance Board. The strategy is grounded in a public health approach and is multi-agency in its design and implementation. Its long-term vision and ambitious priorities demonstrates the importance of this strategy for the city-region. As the strategic needs assessment is refreshed, any key changes to any patterns or any new evidence will be fed into the implementation plans.



Greater Manchester Interventions

There has been a significant amount of work to prevent and reduce violence across Greater Manchester. As always, a multi-agency approach has been taken, founded upon strong community leadership and an upstream ethos. Below is just a small sample of such interventions. More can be found on the [Greater Manchester VRU website](#) and through the [Greater Manchester VRU Annual Report](#).

Some of these interventions are universal, such as ‘Stop the Bleed’ Day which is freely available to any young person in a school setting. Others are targeted, such as the Navigator Programme whereby hospitals with the greatest prevalence of violence have been selected in order to identify and support young people who are at greatest risk. The VRU responds to the local data, intelligence and evaluation to ensure that interventions are appropriately delivered relative to need.

Stop the Bleed Day

On the 26 April 2023 Greater Manchester piloted the country’s first ‘*Stop the Bleed*’ day - a collaboration between Greater Manchester VRU and first aid charity citizenAID.

In total, 14 schools from across Greater Manchester took part with training delivered to students in Years 6 and 7. Students learned how to identify a life-threatening bleed, how to apply pressure, pack a wound, and use a tourniquet.

Each school was supported by volunteers including doctors, first aid trainers and personnel from the ambulance and fire and rescue services. Students were shown an instructional film and then practiced what they had learned – improvising with everyday items that can be used to stop bleeding. The skills taught could be used in a number of scenarios including a stabbing, an accidental injury, a car accident or animal attack.

Before the training, 140 students completed a survey which revealed that only 10% of young people would be very confident in giving first aid to a person who was bleeding, but 62% said they would like to learn more about how to stop a bleed.

The day resulted in the following findings:

Recognising when bleeding is life-threatening increased from

55% → **88%**

Confidence applying a tourniquet increased from

5% → **92%**

Improved confidence in stopping bleeding from

35% → **90%**

‘Stop the Bleed’ day will be rolled out more widely across the city-region, with the next day taking place on the 26 April 2024.



1,687
YOUNG PEOPLE
TRAINED TO
STOP A BLEED



Navigator Project and Greater Manchester healthcare data

The Greater Manchester Navigator project works with young people aged 10-25 years who have presented to a hospital emergency department with an injury that is the result of an assault, or who have been referred into the project because they are at risk of violence, either as a victim or perpetrator. Since the programme began across four hospital sites in 2021 (Royal Bolton, Salford Royal, Manchester Royal Infirmary and Manchester Children's), it has expanded to accept referrals from all hospitals, North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), Police, Youth Service providers and schools. Approximately 75% of all referrals now come from community settings.

Navigators work with young people by identifying areas in their life that they would like to change, creating a support plan, referring them to local services and acting as their advocate. Part of the VRU's public health approach, the Navigator project involves a multi-agency response to provide early interventions to prevent people becoming involved in violent crime.

Since its launch, 1,327 referrals have been received, with support varying from telephone advice or short-term support to 340 young people having received longer term, bespoke support.

Of all referrals, 75% are male. Nearly half (46%) of navigator referrals are age 14-16 years.

The team of 12 navigators include domestic violence, education and a partnership development specialist, with an increasing amount of preventative education work taking place across schools.

At the beginning and end of the change programme participants were asked to complete a survey. On average across all indicators, the distance travelled for participants was an 11.6% improvement. Indicators which on average had the greatest distance travelled include:

"I could ask professionals for help if I needed it"

"I feel safe"

"I've been feeling relaxed"

More information can be found here: [Navigator](#) | [Oasis Greater Manchester](#)



Hope Hack

The Greater Manchester VRU is a member of the Hope Collective operations group, which includes membership of young people, charities, services and professionals from across the UK. The Hope Collective provides an opportunity to engage in youth voice events and access the ever widening and valuable thoughts of young people on matters that impact them. An example of this participation is a Greater Manchester VRU and police engagement event in March 2024: a collaboration between young people from across a broad spectrum of educational settings, to redesign the job specification for school engagement officers, and to ensure the role exists to support young people. This in turn will contribute to a wider UK 'Hope Hack' being held in May 2024, where young people will discuss their experiences of policing and produce recommendations for police forces to consider.

The Greater Manchester VRU will be participating in a 'Hope Collective' residential weekend in April 2024. A number of young people who experience multiple disadvantage and who are willing to speak on behalf of their peers will attend a weekend of outdoor activity and discussion facilitated by youth workers and trusted adults. It is an excellent opportunity for young people to discuss their local issues with peers from across the UK, and for them to recognise the value of their contribution. This is a pilot initiative entirely funded by the 'Hope Collective' and their sponsors and will hopefully provide learning and a template for future events.

People in Prison and on Probation

The VRU recognises the importance of engaging all young people, including those who we are least likely to engage. The VRU is working with probation colleagues to deliver an engagement event for June 2024 where 50 young people on probation will come together and discuss their experiences of the criminal justice system and suggest what support may have prevented their offending. A smaller but equally valuable engagement event will take place at Hindley Prison later in 2024. The outcome of both these events will be communicated to the GM Violence Reduction Governance board and more widely across our networks.

Standing Up for Women and Girls

The VRU is working with 'Positive Steps' and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Centre for Youth Studies to bring partners and organisations together to strengthen the work that we all do to support women and girls who are at risk of exploitation. Through this partnership approach we want to increase awareness and gain a deeper insight into the challenges faced by young women and girls; we want to identify best practice and explore evidence-based approaches; and we want to harness expertise and engage with experts by experience, including service users and frontline professionals, thereby, charting the path forward to collaboratively devise strategies to sustain support efforts and drive meaningful change in our communities.



Parent and Carer Support (PACS)

Parent and Carer Support (PACS) works with parents and carers through a small team of five full time workers, an administrator and a triage worker. Since its launch in October 2023, the PACS project has contacted 103 parent and carers, of which:

- **38 have enrolled onto the Encounter programme (group support)**
- **32 are receiving one-to-one support**
- **27 have been signposted to alternative services or they declined the service**
- **7 have been closed successfully**

The team members have attended 121 professional meetings with parents and carers and conducted 113 one-to-one sessions. In total, 11 Parents/Carers attended, or have been referred, for counselling sessions with third party providers.

The Encounter programme also provides a necessary peer-to-peer support network for parents and carers who feel particularly isolated. Advocating for parents and carers during school and professional meetings has been hugely beneficial as both parent and third-party service are supported. One headteacher reported that all previous meetings with a parent resulted in escalation. He described the PACS involvement as 'working wonders' for the situation. One parent who had not left the house for a year after her son's death received counselling sessions. After four weeks she reported that she had been out shopping and had opened her curtains and was delighted with her progress.





StreetDoctors

StreetDoctors is a national charity which trains young people across the UK in the physical and psychological consequences of street violence and develops their knowledge, confidence and willingness to support themselves and others. StreetDoctors have a number of different initiatives.

The StreetDrs Save Lives e-learning course provides innovative digital training for young people affected by street violence across the UK. StreetDrs Save Lives delivers three app-based e-learning courses for self-directed or small groups, and focused training in secure and semi-secure locations. Our young healthcare volunteers lead you through the peer-to-peer training, carefully created with healthcare professionals, digital education experts, violence reduction units and young people affected by violence.

The VRU is currently funding approximately 1,500 licences across educational establishments, which is then free for them to use.

The StreetDrs Stepwise programme runs for 8-10 sessions with the focus on youth engagement, training and social action. The Stepwise programme supports young people affected by violence and trains them in life saving skills and social skills, whilst developing their self-confidence, communication skills and inspires them to engage in social action to support others. Through a peer education approach, it enables young people to learn and share their knowledge with others in their community. Greater Manchester commissioned this programme for 10 participants based in HMP Hindley in December 2023.

Alison Cope – Anti-violence campaigner

The Greater Manchester VRU became aware of Alison's campaigning through colleagues in other areas and invited Alison to present to the team and Community Safety Partnership members (May 2022). Alison's presentation was powerful and touched everyone in the room. Although Alison lives in the West Midlands, her life experience reflects that of many women across Greater Manchester and elsewhere.

The VRU commissioned Alison to present to an audience of over 150 young people and

professionals at the [Greater Manchester Hope Hack](#) (Oct 2022). The event was high energy, Alison captured the audience. She had an obvious impact on young people and professionals alike, generating much discussion.

Alison has delivered 33 sessions in 13 high schools across Greater Manchester (as of May 2023) reaching over 1,500 children. The schools were selected because of concerns of risk raised by headteachers.

Each session provided an opportunity to find out what young people think about knife crime, offer reassurance, bring home the realities that picking up a knife will never resolve a situation, and empowering young people to speak so support can be provided if needed. Several safeguarding referrals and requests for more engagement with the VRU were generated because of the sessions.

Below are just a few comments:

“

A parent said:

***“Alison, you delivered an assembly to Year 7 at my son’s school today. He came home and spoke to me about it, and it was immediately clear to me that it had a deep impact upon him.*”**

“Whilst like all parents I would hope he wouldn’t consider being involved in knife crime, I know the prevalence of it means that frighteningly, no child is immune. However, I am certain that what you spoke to him about today will influence his choices as he gets older, I know that your messages will remain in his memory.”

“I really believe that if it was ever to cross his mind to carry one, what you said to him will stop him. Thank you is just not enough but thank you.”

”

“

A young person said:

***“You came into our school today and I had absolutely no idea that it was going to turn out like that, being honest I thought it would be another boring assembly telling us the dangers and to not carry a knife... but hearing your story from a first-hand account gave me chills.*”**

“I’ve never gotten so emotional, and I hope you have many blessings coming your way, your message definitely stuck with so many people. Thank you for coming in today and teaching us such an important message.”

”

“

A school Principal said:

“The staff and the children were deeply moved by Alison’s presentation – I have received nothing but positive feedback.

“One of my pupils have been through some recent trauma and for the first time, he is now speaking about it. He came into my office today to tell me about how he was feeling and to ask for advice - that is all due to the powerful message that Alison delivered.”

”



Building on her success and feedback, Alison will deliver presentations in 30 more schools across Greater Manchester in early 2024.

Alison’s message is both personal and powerful, and her strength of character and ability to relive her devastating experiences in memory of Joshua and to protect other young people and families from harm is truly amazing. Alison does not pull any punches, but her experience as a mother and from her 10 years of campaigning enables her to adjust her presentations to the audience, to make sure they are impactful, but always with a message of love and hope.

Taking a public health approach to violence reduction which includes the education of younger children, and indeed parents and teachers, is an important part of this. Alison’s engagement is testament to her selfless campaigning and positive impact on our communities, and we fully support recognition of her work in Greater Manchester.

Greater Manchester Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Responsive Movement

On 9 January 2024, Greater Manchester took its next step in becoming an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and trauma responsive city-region by bringing together over 550 people to highlight the impact of ACEs and trauma on individuals and communities, hear from people with lived experience, and share an update on progress made to date.

In partnership with the VRU, the event showcased the innovative work that is happening across Greater Manchester, including how local expertise is leading the way in shifting thinking, and how public services can better support people to both prevent trauma and support them through their recovery.

Speakers with lived experience of trauma shared their experiences and thoughts on how to create change. This included:

- Back on Track, a Greater Manchester charity that supports adults facing multiple disadvantages
- We Are Survivors, a survivor focused voluntary sector organisation that aims to create and facilitate safe spaces for male survivors of sexual abuse, rape, and sexual exploitation across Greater Manchester
- Bollyfit Active, a fitness movement that aims to create a community of empowered women
- The Armed Forces Community Head Quarters, providing a safe space for the Armed Forces Community to belong, become socially included and access better life chances
- The Art and Trauma Network, a network of freelance creatives from across Greater Manchester that explore trauma-informed approaches
- Nestac, a community organisation aimed at supporting refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants from new emerging communities

The Executive Leads for this movement, Professor Helen Lowey, Dr Paul Wallis, and Debbie Blackburn jointly hosted the event and encouraged attendees to share their ideas, their experience, and find out more about the excellent work that is already happening.

Greater Manchester Police shared updates from the development of their child-centred policing strategy which includes ensuring the force are ACE and trauma responsive. Insight was also shared on best practice through the system wide evaluation that has been undertaken, including ensuring a coordinated population approach to reducing exposure to ACEs by Liverpool John Moores University. The Greater Manchester Resilience Hub shared best practice on how to navigate the impact of trauma and loss at work, and Anthony Benedict, Executive Headteacher from Tameside Pupil Referral Service, shared the principles of relational inclusion and how these can be applied in an education setting.

Watch a short clip from the event here: [Greater Manchester hosts first ACEs and trauma conference \(youtube.com\)](#)

Keep up to date with the latest information and upcoming events by visiting - [Trauma Responsive Greater Manchester \(trgm.co.uk\)](#)





I am Greater – than Violence Campaign

'I am Greater' is Greater Manchester VRU's behaviour change campaign aimed at reducing violence amongst young people. The main 'I am Greater' campaign has been developed in collaboration with and input from young people from across the region.

This part of the campaign showcases inspirational examples of local young people who have a positive story to tell about their lives and their ambitions for the future. This phase of the campaign also included out of home advertising across Manchester's Metrolink network.

The 'I Am Greater...Than What I See Online' is a digital outreach campaign that highlights and tackles the growing challenges that arise for our young people through social media.

Through this sub-campaign, the VRU wanted to highlight some of the behaviours that exist on social media and how they can be a direct cause of violent behaviour. This strand of the campaign operated exclusively on platforms where such behaviour takes place.

Using paid adverts on TikTok and Snapchat, young people living across the 10 key locations across Greater Manchester were targeted. The campaign landing page enabled them to access more information so that they could learn more about violent online behaviour and how it can be avoided.

Operation Venture

Operation Venture was set up in December 2022 as part of Greater Manchester Police's answer to the threat of serious violence and knife crime. Team members are specifically selected and focused to respond to serious violence and over the past four months they have roamed across Greater Manchester helping to detect and deter violent crime. As well as reacting to reports of violent crime and making arrests, the team are also continually building the intelligence picture around violence crime hotspots across Greater Manchester. This ensures that officers are sent to where they are needed the most and is a positive targeted intervention to reduce violence and crime. For 2023, the activity for Operation Venture included:

- **391 Arrests**
- **785 Intelligence Submissions**
- **103 Weapons Seized**
- **350 Total positive Stop and Search**
- **In excess of £200,000 cash seized**
- **173 Partnership Referrals**
- **169 Disruption Visits**
- **788 Adult Stop and Searches**

Please keep checking the VRU website for more interventions that take place and up to date evaluations.

Education Initiatives

Ensuring that young people are positively engaged with education is one of the Greater Manchester VRU's key priorities. We know from the evidence children and young people who are not in education face multiple risk factors, and we know that having a positive and engaging experience with education is a protective factor for children and young people. The following represents a snapshot of some of the work that we are doing across the city-region. We are developing a long-term programme of work with high aspirations including collaboration cross-partnership projects and more targeted interventions.

Wider school engagement

Post 16 provision issues

Several colleges have approached the VRU to seek support due to increasing instances of violence and/or increased perceptions of violence. The education lead for the Violence Reduction Unit, Dr Antony Edkins, has convened a working group comprising safeguarding leads, police, VRU colleagues, supported by the Vice Principal of The Manchester College.

The intention is to identify concerns, review policy and practice, and progress any recommendations. Rather than rely only on any 'quick fix' enforcement options, the intention is to address longer term cultural issues and develop and share best practice.

Primary and secondary education

The reach of the violence reduction agenda into schools has increased significantly over the last 12 months thanks to wider communication, a dedicated education lead being based within the VRU and a recognition of the importance of violence prevention by Ofsted. The VRU is bringing together a register of schools and colleges that have expressed an interest or sought support in tackling violence. This will enable the VRU and its partners to quickly communicate any training or activity opportunities to schools and provide a pool of interested schools willing to take part in any future pilot activity. The VRU is exploring the provision of an online resource specifically for teachers and learners.



Relationship between Violence Reduction Unit, Gender-Based Violence board, schools, the personal development curriculum, and Ofsted

Headteachers want this approach to professional development. School leaders have responded well to the prospect of this project. The success of a school's personal development curriculum is not just about highlighting risk, recognising risks, and knowing how to avoid these risks. The personal development curriculum is also about drawing on local context issues and showing how the school's delivery of lessons promotes a strong culture of personal development.

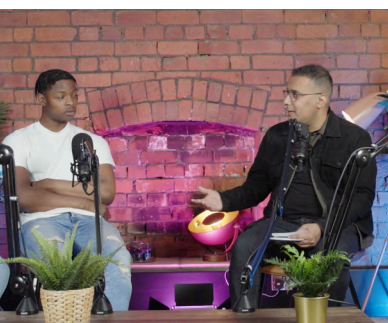
Schools that have engaged in content linked to personal development, equality, diversity, and inclusion issues, as well as issues linked to gender-based violence have been written about positively in their Ofsted inspection. This is because their inspection grade for personal development will cover how well pupils, especially those with SEND, are prepared now for adult life. No headteacher ever delivers any curriculum for Ofsted. Indeed, Ofsted want to report on those areas that matter to parents, especially how well a school prepares a pupil for adult life.

The overall grade includes other factors such as careers and advice guidance, compliance with the [Baker Clause](#) and how well-prepared pupils are for the next stage in their education, employment, or training. There are strong examples of how VRU funded work in addressing concerns about knife crime has enabled schools to engage pupils to be responsible, aware of their surroundings and others and able to make good choices.



Reducing Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a priority for Greater Manchester Combined Authority and there is a GBV Strategy, in which the VRU is a partner and actively contributes to the priorities and implementation. The GBV project that the VRU is heavily involved in is currently in its mobilisation phase and is delivered by Salford Foundation NHS Trust. The project is based on the views offered by local voices, young and old. Their message speaks in union about the value of the Greater Manchester GBV Strategy. For these people, as well as colleagues in the VRU, it is about building trust, confidence, and respect amongst pupils. The project runs over an 18-month period and involves working across a number of primary and secondary schools. A curriculum is being designed and tested to enable a wide adoption.



Working in partnership, we are keen that young people recognise the consequences of what they say and do, as this impacts upon how others feel. This means that this project supports positive interactions between groups of pupils – no more so than with those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is relevant too for some individual pupils, who report feelings of isolation or exclusion, often because of some of the comments their peers may make. Throughout this project the voice of pupils, teachers, school leaders and those supporting the work in schools across Greater Manchester is essential. Their voices have informed the levers and drivers behind this project. Elements of this project specifically involve engagement with faith schools, creation of an education strategy to tackle misogyny, and work to support female teachers in relation to channelling negative behaviour of boys when they engage in gender-based dialogue.





CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

The strategic needs assessment for 2022/23 was ambitious in its approach, was used to develop a 10-year strategy and contained system-wide and large-scale recommendations, which are still being implemented, remain a priority for the VRU and should continue to be referred to.

The following recommendations are provided for 2023/24.

1. It is essential that any work to reduce and prevent violence across Greater Manchester is designed around voices, lived experience and influence of its local communities. The VRU's success to date, including the development of the 'Greater than Violence' Strategy, has been focused around the recognition of its community voices. The VRU and its partners should build upon and expand this approach over the next 12 months to ensure that local communities are at the heart of the violence reduction work.
2. Strong governance is critical to violence prevention. The VRU should continue to maintain its clear governance structure. Governance structures will be reviewed and adapted to ensure delivery of the Serious Violence Duty and to support the new implementation plan.
3. The next stage of the 'Greater than Violence' Strategy is the development of the implementation plan. The voices of our communities and partners should remain a strong feature as we progress this, enabling a system wide response and partnership working.
4. The importance of gender-based violence is recognised within the VRU and partnership interventions have been developed to address this issue together. The VRU should continue to work with members of the Gender-based Violence board and ensure alignment of both important work programmes.