

# Merton Serious Violence Delivery Plan

## January 2024



# Foreword

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Preventing and responding to Serious Violence is a strategic priority for Merton's Safer Merton Partnership. This delivery plan sets out our partnership commitment to work together with the voluntary and community sector, alongside our statutory partners, to prevent Serious Violence in the borough.

It is essential that all victims have access to co-ordinated support at the time they need it and through raising community awareness we want to ensure that victims and witnesses feel confident and safe to report crimes. We want to ensure that perpetrators are held to account, and residents and visitors feel and are safe in Merton.

Early intervention and prevention work continues to be essential for the Safer Merton Partnership. This will be achieved by following a public health approach and working with our schools and youth settings and building resilience in families.

We will achieve these outcomes by working in partnership to continue to review and develop our services, raise awareness, provide early intervention, support victims and their families, seek to develop the intelligence picture, tackle disproportionality, and by bringing perpetrators to justice. It is only through a collective effort that we can make a difference for the communities in Merton.

# Introduction

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## Serious Violence Duty

The Delivery Plan has been produced by Merton Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as part of the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty, introduced by the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

The Duty places requirements upon local areas, including agreeing a local partnership arrangement to lead on the duty, agreeing a definition of Serious Violence, having consistent data sharing, analytical processes to produce a Strategic Needs Assessment, and production of a Delivery Plan to set out how the duty will be implemented locally.

The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce Serious Violence, including identifying the kinds of Serious Violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, and to prepare and implement a delivery plan for preventing and reducing Serious Violence.

The responsible authorities (also known as ‘duty holders’) in the Serious Violence Duty will be:

- Police
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Justice Organisations (youth offending teams and probation services)
- Health Bodies (Integrated Care Boards)
- Local Authorities

*Note: Educational institutions, prisons and youth custodial institutions will be under a separate duty to co-operate with duty holders, but they are not duty holders.*

In addition to the responsible authorities, Merton is committed to working with all partners both statutory and non-statutory, voluntary and community based.

This delivery plan takes account of guidance issued by the government, as well as London guidance, developed by the London Violence Reduction Unit, in collaboration with London Councils, the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, the Metropolitan Police, NHS London and Probation Service.

This Delivery Plan sets out:

- The definition of Serious Violence for the borough,
- Summarises the key findings of the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment,
- Outlines the partnership arrangements that have been agreed locally to lead on delivery of the duty,
- Highlights areas of activity to prevent and reduce Serious Violence,
- Describes activity to engage with voluntary sector organisations, communities - including young people, as well as businesses.

# Definition of Serious Violence

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The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 states that, for the purposes of the Duty, Serious Violence includes Domestic Abuse, Sexual Offences, violence against property and threats of violence, but does not include terrorism.

In considering Serious Violence within their area, specified authorities should encompass Serious Violence as defined for the purposes of the Government's Serious Violence Strategy and include a focus on issues such as public space youth violence. The Government's Serious Violence Strategy sets out specific types of crime of concern, including homicide, violence against the person which may include both knife crime and gun crime, and areas of criminality where Serious Violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing. These crimes should be at the core of the Serious Violence duty for the purpose of its reduction and prevention.

Whilst the government guidance sets out types of violence that should be incorporated within the definition of Serious Violence, there is no definition provided and it allows each local area to define Serious Violence.

It is important that there is consistency across London, to ensure that analysis of violence and the Strategic Needs Assessment are comprehensive and comply with the duty. The London Violence Reduction Unit has therefore collaborated with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, London Councils, the Metropolitan Police Service, NHS London and Probation Service to develop London Guidance to support local areas in how they implement the duty.

The London Guidance advises that Serious Violence for the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty in London, is defined as:

Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence. Within the context of these types of violence, it encompasses 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.

*Domestic Abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Additional notes can be found in appendices 1.*

There was a consensus that London would follow a consistent approach for the Duty to enable each local area to be confident that it has covered all aspects required within the local strategy as well as providing a minimum standard for the Strategic Needs Assessment.

**In the London Borough of Merton, as agreed by Merton Community Safety Partnership, we have agreed to adopt this definition of Serious Violence for the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty.**

# Merton Partnership Arrangements

## Local Partnership Arrangements

Within the Duty it is for the specified authorities to come together to decide on the appropriate lead and structure of collaboration for their area. The government guidance references the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP), or other partnerships such as the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, Criminal Justice boards or Health and Wellbeing boards. It also suggests it may also be the case that collaboration via several different partnership structures is preferred depending on the local context.

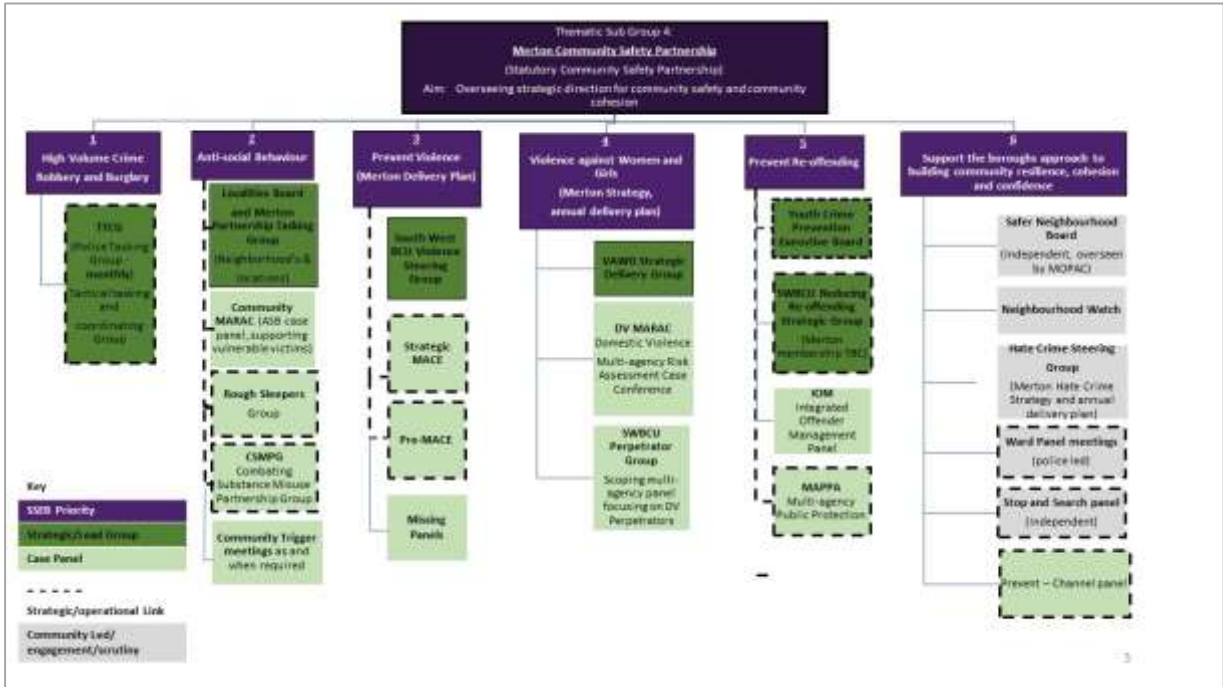
### Strategic Governance in Merton

Of the statutory partnership arrangements, only the Community Safety Partnership has all the “duty holders” within its membership, and it is not restricted by the age criteria for children and adult safeguarding partnerships. The London Guidance recommends that the Community Safety Partnership be the local partnership and in Merton this is the arrangement we have adopted, and the diagram below illustrates how the Merton CSP is linked to the other strategic partnership boards in the borough.



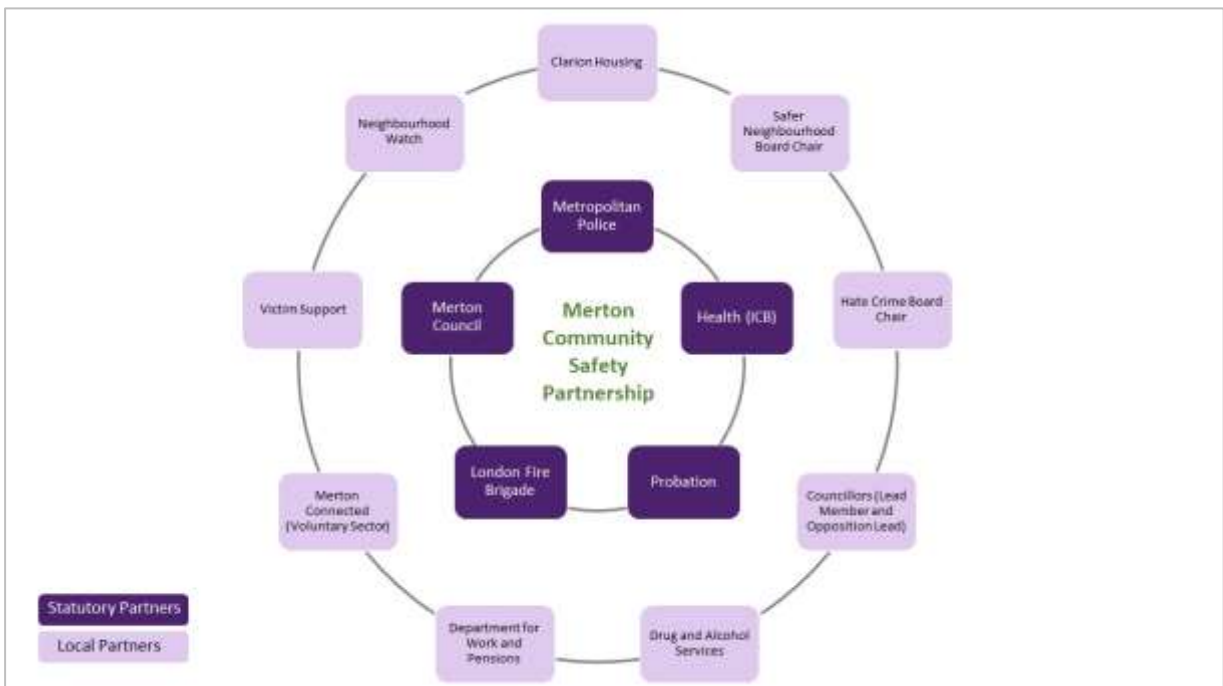
## Merton CSP Structure

The CSP cannot deliver the vast agenda of community safety alone. Many boards and subgroups help to inform the direction of the partnership, provide strategic insight as well as operational delivery.



## Membership of Merton CSP

Whilst the CSP Board has the statutory members as specified in legislation, there are a number of local partners who are key contributors to the work that is delivered locally.





# Serious Violence in Merton

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## Serious Violence Needs Assessment

The strategic needs assessment is intended to enable partners to identify current and long-term issues relating to Serious Violence and those most vulnerable to involvement in the local area. This provides a greater understanding of established and emerging Serious Violence trends, priority locations or other high-risk issues.

The strategic needs assessment has been developed following an evidence-based analysis of data relating to violence, as well as broader datasets including those in relation to deprivation and health. It has looked at the critical areas of violence and vulnerability within the definition of Serious Violence, including violence affecting those under the age of 25, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

In assessing each of the critical areas, the analysis has looked at locations that have a higher risk of violence and temporal factors, such as the times of greater and lesser offending, including the seasonal trends through the year. The analysis has also looked at the profile of victims and offenders of violence, to understand the risks and opportunities for prevention.

## Population and Deprivation

- Merton is an outer London borough situated to the southwest of central London, neighbouring the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Sutton and Wandsworth.
- The Census 2021 data shows 110,500 were female (51.3%) and 104,700 were males (48.7%).
- Merton has a higher number of young working age population (73,500) compared to the housing led projection (64,958).
- In 2022, 37.3% of the Merton population are from an Ethnic Minority group which is lower than London (44.5%).
- Young people population is more diverse than overall borough population.
- As of June 2022, 4.3% of people were estimated to be unemployed in Merton, which is lower than London but higher than Great Britain
- East of the borough has higher rates of unemployment. There are higher levels of deprivation in the East of the borough. However, there are also some LSOAs in wards in the West.

## Picture of Violence in Merton

### Violence With Injury (VWI)

- In Merton in 2022 31% of all notifiable crimes recorded by the Police were under the broad heading of Violence Against the Person (VAP). Within the VAP total, 32% were sub classified as Violence with Injury (VWI) which are offences where a visible physical injury has been recorded. There were 1421 VWI offences, an **increase** of 16% on 2021's total of 1222. For the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) there was an **increase** of 8% in VWI offences.
- In 2022, 28% of victims of VWI offences in Merton were aged under 25 compared to 30% in 2021. In 2022, 26% of suspects of VWI offences in Merton were aged under 25 which was down from 28% in 2021.

### Personal Robbery

- In Merton in 2022, just over 3% of all crime was Personal Robbery (464 offences). 68% of Personal Robbery victims were people under the age of 25 compared to 60% in 2021. Merton saw a sharp increase in Personal Robbery reports in 2022 up 58% on 2021 whereas the MPS saw an increase of 20%.
- In 2022, 62% of suspects were recorded as being under 25 which is unchanged from the 2021 figure. It should be noted that in over a quarter of all reports the age of the suspect was recorded as unknown.

### All Sexual Offences

- In Merton in 2022, 3% of all crime were Sexual Offences (416). Sexual Offences rose by 5% (19 offences) compared to 2021, whereas the MPS saw an increase of 6%.
- In Merton in 2022 48% of victims of all Sexual Offences were aged under 25 compared to 56% in 2021. In respect of offences of rape 23% were against a child.
- In 2022, 29% of suspects were recorded as being under 25, a slight increase compared to 2021 26%. It should be noted that in 16% of all reports the age of the suspect was recorded as unknown.

### Domestic Abuse

- In Merton in 2022, 14% of all offences were flagged as Domestic Abuse related; increase of 10% to 1928 offences compared to 2021, whereas the MPS saw an increase of 0.5%.

- In Merton in 2022, 18% of victims of all Domestic Abuse offences were aged under 25 compared to 19% in 2021. In 2022 16% of suspects were recorded as being under 25, which is a small increase on the 2021 figure of 15%.
- It should be noted that in 5% of all reports the age of the suspect was recorded as unknown.

## Summary of findings

Merton's Strategic Needs Assessment followed the template provided by the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and looked at crime data for the period January to December 2022 to identify patterns and trends of Serious Violence noting comparisons to the calendar year 2021 and further historical data where appropriate and available.

The headlines from this work identified the following:

- 22% of the population of Merton are aged 5-24 this is projected to decrease by 2035.
- Of the four crime themes specified in the Serious Violence duty, young people in Merton are disproportionately affected by Robbery and Sexual Violence.
- Slightly more of residents under 25 (53%) live in the east of the borough.
- Wards with the highest levels of Robbery and Sexual Violence are in the east of the borough.
- Offences involving knives rose steeply in 2022 and most of these were Robbery offences.
- There was a 25% increase in reports of Sexual Violence in the 12 months following the murder of Sarah Everard. Offence levels increased by a further 5% in 2022.
- There are comparatively low levels of Serious Violence offences reported occurring on areas under the jurisdiction of British Transport Police
- The numbers of Domestic Abuse flagged offences continues to increase but it is unclear whether this is because of increased reporting/flagging or increased offending.
- Ward boundary changes from April 2022 have seen the new ward of Wimbledon Town and Dundonald become a top three ward for Violence with Injury and Sexual Offences.
- Not being in Education is a significant risk factor linked to young people being involved in offending.

### **Intelligence gaps identified.**

- What is the extent of repeat victimisation of Sexual Violence offences and what risk factors make victims more vulnerable?
- To review and assess learning from case studies of prolific offenders to identify trends and patterns where services could have intervened earlier. For example, the Integrated Offender Management Cohort.
- Greater understanding locally on the impact and relationship between substance misuse and violence.
- The Needs Assessment has focused on data at a borough level. Do we need to look at the data from neighbouring boroughs to see what bearing this may have for Merton?
- Is the projected fall in the under 25 population by 2035 likely to lead to lower crime levels in Merton in the longer term? As a partnership we need to ensure that any short term increases in the under 25 population are monitored.
- To better understand the demographic breakdown of our victims and perpetrators.

# What has engagement told us?

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## Engagement in Merton

Local communities, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), local businesses and young people have an important role to play in Violence reduction. Our local Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan contains a range of activities that involve communities and neighbourhoods in reducing Violence and these actions should support the implementation of the Delivery Plan.

In developing the local delivery plan to reduce Serious Violence, we have consulted with:

### Partners

- Engagement through working groups with the specified authority partners have taken place to assist in the development of the Strategic Needs Assessment and Delivery Plan.
- Regular engagement with the CSP updating them on progress and providing a strategic oversight to the development of the Delivery Plan.

## Voluntary Sector

### Meeting with Merton Connected

We are currently working to strengthen our partnership with the community and voluntary through regular group meetings and site visits to get a better understanding of local projects and explore ways to support successful Serious Violence reduction initiatives. This is an area that we want to develop further over the next 12 months.

### Consultation with the Merton Youth Partnership Forum

We have also engaged with voluntary sector organisations specialised in youth engagement. We are committed to improve the partnership with the voluntary sector by setting up regular meeting to discuss serious violence initiatives, ensure their voice is heard and can actively contributes to our serious violence plans and strategies. The Merton Youth Partnership Forum is the space where partners who are passionate about doing the best for our young people have the opportunity to present their projects aimed at engaging the young people in the borough in positive activities. At the November session, the Young People Against Violence (YPAV) Steering Group work programme presented the Sport Unites VRU Safe Spaces Pilot.

## Business Sector

Consultation with the business sector highlighted the key areas of work they do to support the wider partnership effort to reduce crime and violent crime on the borough.

- Wimbledon Town Centre has a town link digital radio scheme. The radios allow for the quick, 'real time,' effective communication of messages, and intelligence.
- Web based intelligence sharing platform to help the business community of Wimbledon prevent and report crime and anti-social activity in the town.
- Bimonthly Pubwatch meetings for the Night-time Economy in Wimbledon (Bars, Pubs, Theatres, Restaurants and Hotels) this is also attended by the Police, CCTV and Licensing.
- SCan Counter Terrorism Training

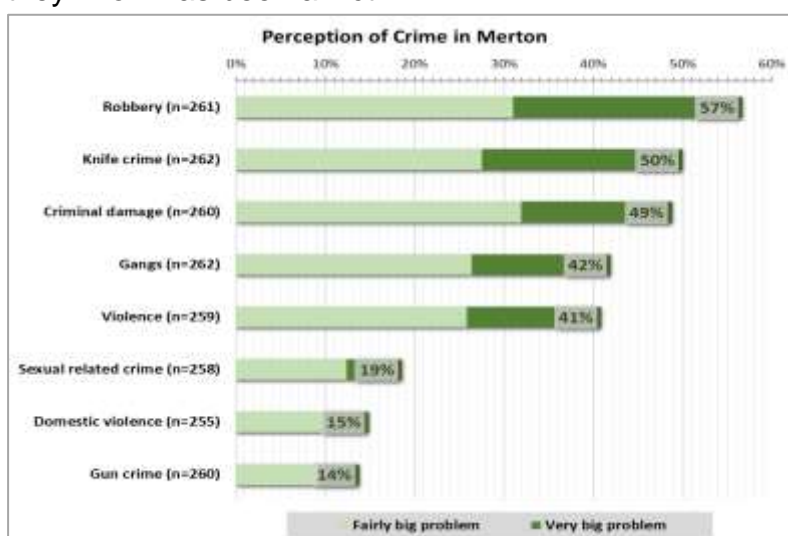
Engagement and visits have taken place with businesses in other areas of the borough; however, it is our aim to develop our engagement with this sector over the next 12 months to better understand their challenges, perceptions, and views.

## Community

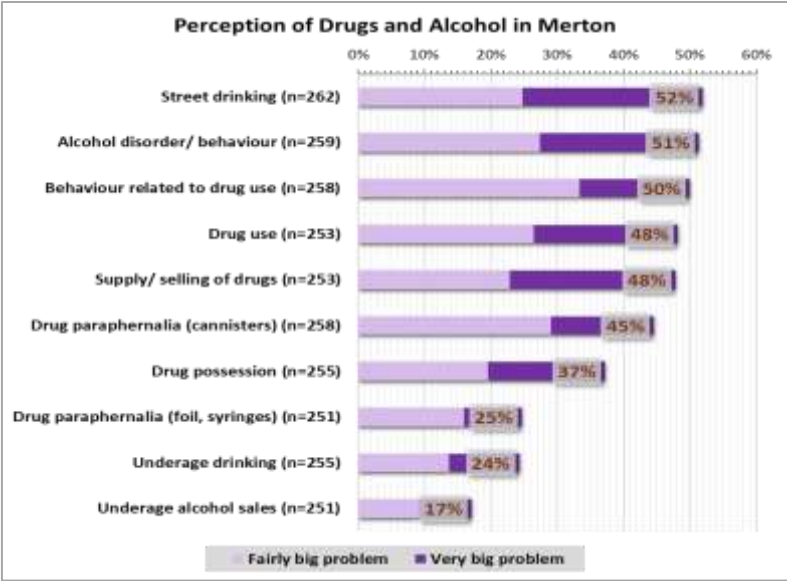
There are multiple surveys and forms of engagement that take place on the borough by various agencies. Attendance at community events, walk and talk events with the community and partners, articles in My Merton the borough magazine, email alerts and crime figures via Merton Neighbourhood Watch and online messaging and articles via social media. Every two years the CSP undertakes a community safety survey with those living and working on the borough.

### Community Safety Survey – Summer 2023

Of the crime types covered by the duty, the community feel that Robbery, knife crime and criminal damage are the biggest problems. The greatest influences for these perceptions are local media, social media and whether they themselves or someone they know has been a victim.



Drugs and alcohol and the perception of these and the links to Violence picture. This question showed that behaviour related to drugs and alcohol was seen as the biggest problem.



**Hotspot area consultation**

In 2022 a consultation exercise was undertaken with the community in one of the Violence hotspot areas on the borough. Key findings were:

- Parents and carers displayed altruistic fear of crime and took measures to protect their children such as dropping and picking them up from schools and activities.
- Most felt relatively safe during the day, but this dropped significantly after dark.
- Felt more changes to the physical environment such as lighting and better CCTV and increased policing would improve feelings of safety.

**Metropolitan Police Community Engagement**

The 'New Met for London' event on September 9th, 2023, was a milestone, collecting insights from nearly 200 residents. A further event, focusing on young people, will take place January 2024. These invaluable inputs are guiding our renewed focus on visibility, communication, engagement, and collaborative efforts. The local Police Teams are also engaging with young people and schools to ensure there is a better understanding as to why young people may feel unsafe.

**Young People**

**2021 Survey of over 2000 young people on the borough**

- Feelings around Safety - There is a mixed experience of safety in Merton: Young people feel safe across Merton; however, this varies for certain groups of young people. Many being aware of safety issues like knife crime and gangs but not personally feeling unsafe.
- Views of the Police - Young people are separated on their views on the police, depending on their ethnicity, and whether they had been stopped and searched. We found that overall, twice as many young people had a positive view of the police than a negative one.

### 2023 LBM Survey of approximately 2323 young people across the borough.

- 25% felt safe all the time, a further 56% felt safe most of the time, another 16% felt safe some of the time and a further 4% never felt safe.
- Of those who never felt safe, some of the reasons included gangs and groups of other young people, approaches by older males, fear of violence, perception of crime levels or from hearing about incidents in the borough or surrounding boroughs, response from the Police, fear of theft and strangers.
- The key people that young people go to for support and to help them feel safe include, parents, family members, teachers, youth workers, Police, firefighters, nurses and doctors and friends.
- The things that help young people to feel safe include, kind adults, security, community, family and friends, clean environment, lighting, shops, CCTV, knowing the area they live, low crime rate, law, using common sense and knowing how to look after themselves, police patrolling.

### Youth Parliament Engagement Session.

- In November we attended the Youth Parliament Forum to get the young people's view on the serious violence in the borough. 80% of the participants responded that the serious violence is a problem that needs to be addressed in Merton. We are planning to continue our engagement with the Youth Parliament and at their request we will create a serious violence survey in 2024 to get a better understanding of the young people's perception of serious violence.

## Ongoing Engagement

As a partnership we will:

- continue to engage with all sectors of the community to ensure that the projects and strategies are reflective of the picture of Violence in the borough.



- ensure that all relevant partner groups and boards are kept informed and contribute to the future development and governance of the Violence work in Merton.
- strengthen our communication with the voluntary and business sectors to ensure the valuable work they do, and their voice informs the direction of Violence prevention work. This may be achieved by more frequent dialogue and consultation.
- Engage and consult with our community leaders.
- Listen to what partners and the community are telling us is missing and look for funding opportunities to fill the gaps. Particularly for smaller grass roots projects.
- Ensure that we are listening to the voice of the victims and perpetrators through our work.

Listening to the local community will be key, not only in terms of preventing Violence but ensuring that local communities feel safe in the areas they live. We will continue to attend community events, consult regularly, and ensure information is shared by various means to keep them informed about the work the partnership is doing.

# Learning, Current Provision and Strategies

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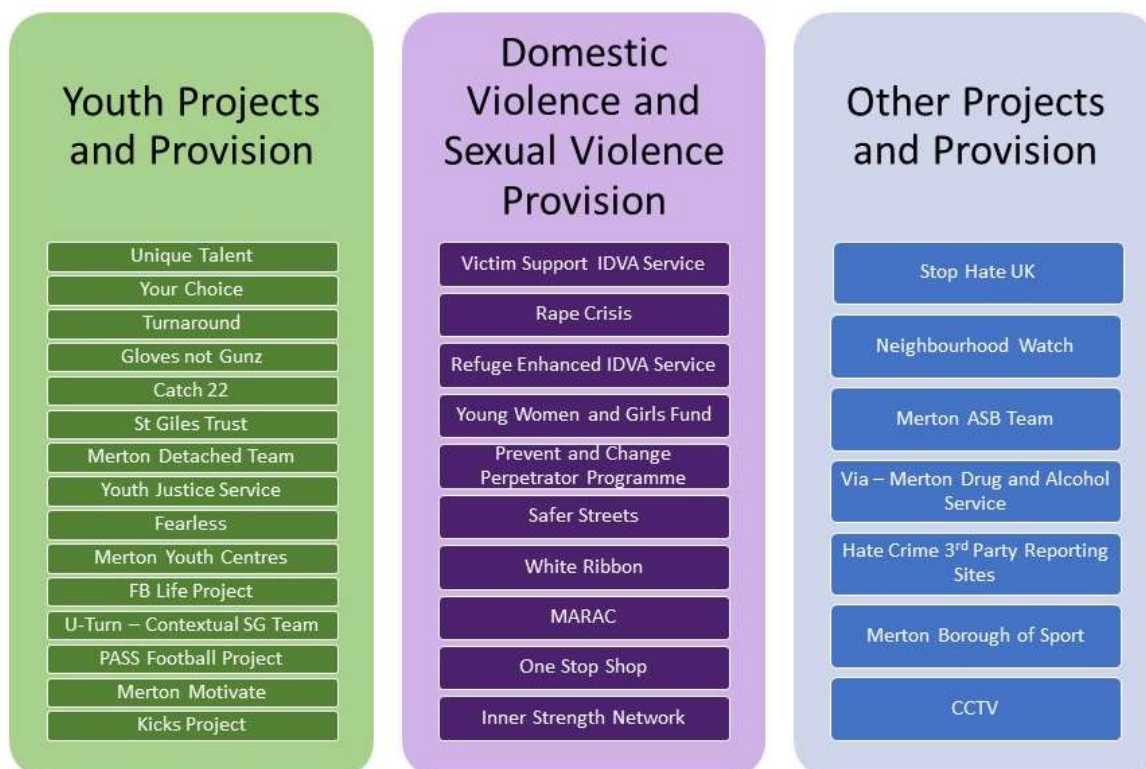
## Learning from Reviews

It is essential that as a partnership we learn from incidents and reviews. Key learning points from several safeguarding reviews on the borough have included:

- The need for good multi-agency practice
- Trusted relationships
- Practice improvement
- Education/Understanding and Meeting Needs
- Assessing Risk and Safety Planning
- Safeguarding First Approach/ Information Sharing

## Current Provision and Projects

There is already a wide variety of projects and provision on the borough, including early intervention and prevention, to targeted support for children young people impacted by Violence. Our aim is to maintain this and further expand the offer based on the funding and intelligence available.



## Local Strategies and Assessments

The Serious Violence Delivery Plan will not operate in isolation to tackle Serious Violence in Merton and there are several other key local strategies which this work is aligned to. Through ongoing partnership working and alignment to strategic boards, we will ensure there is coordination and join up, avoiding duplication.

### **Merton Strategic Assessment**

The Strategic Assessment undertaken on an annual basis and uses data and analysis to set the Community Safety Priorities for the forthcoming year. Currently Violence and Violence against women and girls are priorities for the borough. This is a restricted document

### **Merton Drugs Needs Assessment**

The 2023/24 adults' substance misuse needs assessment has been completed and includes data on drug and alcohol related crime. The needs assessment will be used to guide the work of the Combating Substance Misuse Partnership and will support the recommissioning of local specialist treatment services in 2024/25.

### **Merton VAWG Strategy**

This strategy sets out our vision for ending Violence against women and girls. This is an ambitious vision which will be realised through a robust action plan.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Mertons%20VAWG-Strategy%202022%20to%202025.pdf>

### **Merton Hate Crime Strategy**

This strategy is specifically targeted at tackling the issue of hate crime in the London borough of Merton however, it also feeds into the wider aim of the Community Safety Partnership to encourage community cohesion and ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Merton%20Hate%20Crime%20Strategy%202022-26.pdf>

### **Merton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-24**

This Health and Wellbeing Strategy focuses on creating a healthy place through our key attributes and key settings. The Strategy forms a core part of our work to tackle these health inequalities and bridge the gap between the east and west of the

borough, acting across the whole life course so that all Merton residents can Start Well, Live Well and Age Well. The strategy includes hidden harms and emerging issues such as air pollution, loneliness, Violence, exploitation, safety of the physical and social environment. These are recurring themes of importance for people of all ages.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files?file=health20and20wellbeing20strategy20201920final20web.pdf>

### **Merton Contextual Safeguarding Strategy**

Merton is seeking to expand its response to vulnerable young people to safeguard them from the risks and negative influences they may encounter outside the family home. Although time spent in different contexts, such as with peers, in schools and in public places, are an important part of growing up, young people may also be vulnerable to exploitation and risk in relation to these.

<https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Contextual-Safeguarding-Strategy.pdf>

### **Merton Safeguarding Adults Board Three Year Strategic Plan 2021 to 2024**

The Care Act 2014 sets out the Board's specific functions. Merton Safeguarding Adults Board has produced an overarching plan for the three years from 2021 to 2024. Adults from all communities will feel supported to keep safe. Partners, service users and residents will recognise risk and be confident in their response.

<https://www.mertonsab.org.uk/what-we-do/priorities-plans-and-reports/>

### **Merton's Community Plan**

The Merton Community Plan sets out the Merton Partnership's long-term ambitions for the borough and the overall direction and priorities the Partnership will focus on. The Community Plan sets out the key priorities that Merton Partnership members want to work on together, one of which is tackling Serious Violence.

<https://www.mertonpartnership.org.uk/community-plan>

### **Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan 2023 – 2025**

It is the vision of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) that all statutory partners and relevant agencies work together to ensure that everyone does everything they can to ensure that all of Merton's children are safe, supported, and successful. This commitment is highlighted in the MSCP Partnership Agreement. The MSCP Business Plan sets out the strategic commitment of the partnership in making

its vision a reality and will form the basis of its work over the next two years. This Business Plan, in addition to the core functions, sets out a number of key priorities that have been defined locally.

<https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/MSCP-Business-Plan-2023-2025.pdf>

### **Children and Young People's Plan**

As a demonstration of our commitment to the children and young people across Merton, we handed the consultation and construction of the plan over to the children and young people themselves, led by our Young Inspectors. This plan focuses in on their priorities and demonstrates how we can help achieve their aims. This plan will be monitored by the Children's Trust Board and progress will be scrutinised by our young residents, so that we can all make sure that every child in Merton matters.

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s28508/Children%20and%20Young%20Peoples%20Plan%202019-23%20Final.pdf>

# Actions to Prevent & Reduce Serious Violence

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To support the implementation of the Serious Violence Delivery Plan and the Strategic Objectives set out below, Merton will capture progress and measure success in our Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan. We will also ensure that our work locally feeds and aligns with the wider regional work being co-ordinated by the Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

## Merton's Strategic Objectives

### Early intervention and prevention,

As the Mayors Policing and Crime Plan sets out, London has adopted a “public health” approach towards violence, this involves using data and evidence to support decision making, ensure there is early intervention and prevention, engagement with our local communities and develop immediate and long-term solutions in partnership. Evaluation is pivotal to understanding what works. In Merton we are working closely with the Violence Reduction Unit at the Mayor's Office, through the numerous projects we are funding, sharing evaluation findings and seeking funding to deliver opportunities in areas of most need.

### Our Objective

Merton is committed to addressing Serious Violence through a robust local partnership by adopting a public health approach. Collaborating with the youth justice service, police, schools, families, and substance misuse experts, we are set to implement pro-active prevention projects. We will maximise the opportunities that being a Borough of Sport will bring in terms of initiatives and diversionary projects.

Our delivery plan encompasses a holistic support framework that integrates community engagement, educational support, and diversion programmes, targeting the root causes of Serious Youth Violence. Our early intervention panels will identify and support the children and young people at risk of becoming involved in crime.

By building partnerships with specialist providers, we aim to work closely with young people on the verge of the youth justice system. Through tailored sessions and precisely targeted interventions, our goal is to foster a stable environment, inspire aspirations, and reduce the likelihood of turning to Violence as a coping mechanism by presenting viable alternatives.

## Contextual Safeguarding

Our vision places a strong emphasis on implementing a Contextual Safeguarding Strategy. Merton will provide an effective response to vulnerable young people to safeguard them from the risks and negative influences they may encounter outside the family home. As a partnership, we want to improve the way we work together to be able to identify vulnerable young people across wider contexts. There is a strong collaborative working between agencies in Merton which come together via a number of panels to share information and intelligence and agree mechanisms to address exploitation and risks to young people. Our established Pre-MACE and Strategic MACE forums provide a multi-agency response and oversight to concerns relating to serious youth violence, radicalisation, and exploitation.

## Holistic View to Prevent and Support

We will continue to invest in embedding a strategic and operational approach to trauma-informed practice. Working towards becoming a Trauma Informed Service is a key priority for Merton Youth Justice Service and we have in place regular training sessions for professionals.

The Combatting Substance Misuse Partnership is an integral part to our Delivery Plan. By improving the transition between young people's and adult services, it has been noted that there are improvements in how local adult and young people's substance misuse services are working together. Commissioners are working to ensure that there is an effective transition of care between these services and that young adults (18 to 24) are getting treatment in the most appropriate service. Additionally, The Merton Combatting Substance Misuse Partnership provides a forum in which activity to disrupt county lines can be discussed, this includes ensuring there are effective pathways into specialist treatment for vulnerable people involved in drug dealing.

Police will continue to play a key role in our early intervention efforts, employing operations and dedicating resources to identified violence hotspots. Through this collective and multifaceted approach, we aim to create a safer community and empower young people to make positive choices.

## Recommendations from the Needs Assessment

- Review current levels of service for 18-24 year olds
- Consider other ways in which children at risk can be kept in education.
- Look at educational inputs on the impact of gun and knife crime for year 7/8 students.
- Work with commercial partners and delivery providers to disrupt young people purchasing knives particularly via the internet.

## **Those already known to the criminal justice system,**

The London strategy to tackling violence as set out in the Mayors Policing Plan is to focus on overall offending levels. The Plan highlights a relatively small proportion of offenders are responsible for a disproportionate volume of crime so a focus on reoffending is needed. Locally in Merton this will be achieved through the ongoing work of Probation and the Youth Justice Service as well as the many other agencies and services that they work with.

### **Our Objective**

The Youth Justice and Probation Services are determined in their commitment to address the rehabilitation and integration of individuals already known to the criminal justice system, with a dedicated focus on reducing reoffending.

### **Youth Justice**

Through clear formulation intervention planning, effective diversion programs, and the implementation of restorative justice initiatives, the Youth Justice Service will continue to demonstrate its commitment to a child-first approach, ensuring compliance with statutory obligations and that children and young people have access to services like CAMHS, SALT, ETE, substance misuse intervention and activities that would divert them from violence.

### **Probation Service**

The Probation Service, working with offenders aged 18 and above, remains dedicated to delivering statutory interventions. In addition, a proactive response to local needs will lead to a close collaboration with commissioned services that specifically target priority offences, including knife crime, sexual offending, and Domestic Abuse. Furthermore, the Probation Service are supporting the victims of violence through the delivery of Information Services.

### **Disproportionality**

Addressing Disproportionality is a clear ambition at a London level. The Mayors Policing and Crime Plan outlines the importance of continuing to implement the Ethnic Disproportionality in Youth Justice Action Plan and as part of the Mayors Action Plan for Transparency, Accountability and Trust in Policing, a Disproportionality Board was established to review key work relating to disproportionality across a wide range of policing issues. Locally we will aim to take forward and implement this learning.



## Our Objective

We will learn from the initial outcomes raised by the task group and expand our knowledge and understanding around adultification. We will also continue to learn and review the Stop and Searches in the borough through the established panel.

## Disproportionality Task Group

We continue as a Partnership to focus our attention on disproportionality as a key theme and to listen to our young people, learn and challenge ourselves to continually improve outcomes for young people in the youth justice system. The Disproportionality Task Force Subgroup (formed out of the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board) is aimed at addressing the overrepresentation of Black/Mixed-Heritage and Asian ethnic groups in the youth criminal justice system. One of the key objectives is the implementing of plans and actions to reduce overrepresentation of Black/Mixed Heritage children involved in the youth justice system.

## Adultification

To further address disproportionality and eliminate any potential prejudice towards children from minority groups the Adultification Task and Finish group will continue to deliver actions in response to adultification scrutiny.

## Stop and Search

Police will continue to run The Stop & Search Charter and our Stop and Search panel will look at the appropriate use of stop and search powers while to prevent escalation of and incidents of violence. We are further looking to set up a Youth Voice Stop and Search panel to capture the views of the young people impacted by this violence reduction initiative.

Following the issues raised by young people in the Post Covid Youth Survey a reverse mentoring project was undertaken between senior police officers and expert by experience young people. We are now looking to build on this work with a new cohort of young people linked to the new Neighbourhood model of Policing.

## **Trust and confidence with statutory partners**

Building Trust and Confidence is a key priority for Merton but also regionally at a London level. The Mayors Policing Plan for London sets out its aim to increase public trust in the Metropolitan Police Service by reducing gaps in confidence between

different groups, engaging with communities and treating them fairly. We will strive to implement this ambition through the work we do in Merton.

### Our Objective

Through strong partnership working we will promote our shared goal to create a safer environment and address Serious Violence through a collaborative approach. We will also endeavour to work with and listen to the local community to build confidence and trust.

### Trust and Confidence in the Partnership

Building trust and confidence among statutory partners is at the core of our efforts to tackle Serious Violence effectively. We will continue to focus on transparent communication and create a culture of sharing information. Our clear governance structure will serve as the foundation for consistent information sharing protocols that will help to build a comprehensive intelligence picture. We will develop a critical incident response procedure and undertake incident reviews so learning can be shared across the partnership. Our tasking group meetings and forums demonstrate our commitment ensuring alignment with our goals and ability to review and respond in a timely and effective manner. We will also look to ensure our services are in the areas of most need.

### Community's Trust and Confidence of Statutory Agencies

The Delivery Plan is shaped to serve the needs of our communities therefore we will continue to actively listen to their views and concerns. Our aim is to ensure the residents develop a sense of communication and trust and feel confident to report their concerns around Violence through our established channels.

### Recommendations from the Needs Assessment

- Review the current Independent Domestic Violence Advocate provision considering the increasing number of Domestic Abuse flagged offences.
- Is there a need for additional services for repeat victims of Sexual Violence.
- Ensure that victim support services are physically located in the areas of most need.

## Hyper local focus and community engagement

As the Mayors Policing and Crime Plan says, putting communities at the heart of what we are doing is key to seeing change. Locally we want to identify those areas most in need through the intelligence gathered in various partnership meetings and using resources such as CCTV in hotspot areas to provide prevention and community reassurance. We also want to engage with communities to fully understand the problem and work in partnership to put measures or programmes in place to help make a difference.

### Our Objective

Focusing on local engagement and intelligence led actions by implementing local short and long-term solutions to respond to Serious Violence in a hyper local manner.

### Partnership forums

Our Partnership Tasking Group will continue to work collaboratively to identify and prioritise the challenges in the areas of concern. This targeted approach brings together the key stakeholders from across the partnership including community and business sector representatives.

### Community Engagement

Engaging residents in the implementation and the delivery of our plan will ensure our response is tailored to their specific needs. We will develop our community engagement initiatives to tackle Serious Violence through community outreach, awareness campaigns and surveys and communication channels including social media. We are currently working to strengthen our partnership with the community and voluntary through regular engagement.

### Detached Youth Work

Detached youth workers will continue to deliver programmes including one to one mentoring and group work in community areas identified as potential Violence hotspots. This runs alongside a wide range of diversion initiatives and positive activities projects that will improve the engagement with the young people and their families.

### Recommendation from the Needs Assessment

- Look to develop the safe zone concept currently operating in Wimbledon town centre to other transport hubs in the borough.

## Violence and Vulnerability Plan

Merton CSP has agreed a range of activities to reduce the risks of violence and vulnerability, in support of the strategic objectives. These are set out within a Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Action Plan. This plan contains information for which disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

### The Themes of the Plan

The plan template contains seven different themes each with a set of mandatory actions as well as a menu of optional actions. The themes within the local plan are:

#### **Governance-**

this provides an oversight of the leadership and governance of violence reduction locally, detailing the senior leadership structure as well as interoperability between Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Children Partnership, Adults Safeguarding Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board, to support a public health approach to reduce violence.

#### **Analysis and Enforcement-**

understanding of how analysis and local enforcement tactics are used to disrupt violence locally, including the Strategic Needs Assessment, monthly tasking meetings and using wider public health data.

#### **Reducing Access to Weapons-**

how partners are working jointly to minimise access including using Trading Standard initiatives and weapons sweeps.

#### **Safeguarding and Educating Young People-**

contains actions that include focussing on reducing exclusions, contextual safeguarding, support for children in care and care leavers, working with parents and carers and ensuring schools are safe and inclusive spaces.

#### **Working with Communities and Neighbourhoods to Reduce Violence-**

ensuring that local delivery works closely with communities to reduce violence including the Voluntary and Community Sector and in particular young people, who are most adversely affected by violence.

#### **Supporting Victims of Violence and Vulnerability-**

ensuring co-ordinated referral and support to victims and those who are most vulnerable to being exploited.

#### **Positive Diversion from Violence-**

recognising that children and young people should be offered interventions which help them before or to move away from criminality.

## **Violence Against Women and Girls**

a range of actions considering the wider context of VAWG, specifically the associated behaviours and offences that contribute to violence such as crimes committed in the name of 'honour', forced marriage, harmful practices (e.g., female genital mutilation), prostitution and sexual harassment.

### **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence actions:**

As the Serious Violence definition includes Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, activity is also being undertaken in support of this through the following actions.

- To ensure strong referral pathways from statutory services into local and pan-London specialist support services, including 'by and for' provision for all victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences.
- To ensure all victims and perpetrators can access the support they need- including information on how they can access this support and where they can find more information. This might include the consideration of cross-borough reciprocal agreements.
- Co-ordinate an appropriate local awareness training offer for key professionals coming in to contact with survivors and/or perpetrators- such as health, education, social care and justice- which is refreshed annually.
- Local Authority departments such as children's social care, housing, adults social care and community safety, to ensure policies are in place regarding working with perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences when safeguarding children and the non-abusive parent.

## Funding and Resource Allocation

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Below is a high-level summary of the resource's partners are investing work in, beyond core services, to reduce Serious Violence in the borough. In the next 12 months we will be mapping the delivery of our services to look at areas of the borough where we have identified gaps and needs.

Name and source of fund	Amount per annum	Description of activity	Funding breakdown
VRU LCPF	£50,000.00	Dedicated officer to lead on the partnership response to serious violence and youth specific work in the Pollards Hill ward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence Reduction Officer</li> <li>• Pollards Hill Youth Project</li> </ul>
VRU Serious Violence	£39,728.87	Money split into labour and non-labour costs. The labour costs will contribute to the violence officer post and non-labour will support dedicated 1:2:1 mentoring work to be delivered by St Giles who are already embedded in a number of the secondary schools in Merton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence Reduction Officer</li> <li>• St Giles 1:2:1 mentoring</li> </ul>
VRU Community Capacity Building	£86,105.00	This programme is a continuation of the work funded by 'Capacity Building' 2022-23. We will continue the work to engage with young people who live and attend school in our key violent crime hotspots to enhance the existing contextual safeguarding work that is already being undertaken in Merton. We believe reaching young people early through preventative work and education, will have an impact upon their futures. Also through the work with Crime Stoppers Fearless we can give young people an alternative way to report crime in their area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Giles Schools and Community Project including mentoring group work and partner education.</li> <li>• Fearless campaign to promote anonymous reporting</li> </ul>

Home Office Young Women and Girls Fund	£43,000.00	This project is working with young women and girls in two of the secondary schools, offering 1:2:1 mentoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Women and Girls mentoring</li> </ul>
VRU Serious Incident Fund and Pre-emptive Work	Maximum £5,000 per ad hoc application. In 2023/4 to date £48,376.50	Violence Reduction Unit Funding pot where bespoke bids can be submitted to both prevent violence or respond when a violent incident has occurred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knife crime interventions in secondary schools</li> <li>• Detached youth work</li> <li>• Parent sessions and family support</li> <li>• Action plans and consultancy work</li> <li>• Safe Zone</li> <li>• Bystander Training</li> <li>• Summer programme</li> <li>• CCTV</li> <li>• Youth Workshops</li> <li>• Partnership action plan following incident</li> <li>• Contextual awareness day</li> <li>• Stop Hate</li> </ul>
MOPAC Safer Neighbourhood Board	£13,879.00 for 2023/24	Fund to support local crime reduction projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement</li> <li>• Intergenerational work through music activities</li> <li>• Girls football project</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Watch Crime Prevention</li> </ul>
Motivate Merton Youth Mentoring Project	£590,117 (over two years).	<p>Merton Connected, as lead partner, secured £590,117 to coordinate delivery of mentoring to 420 vulnerable local young people youths, over a two-year period.</p> <p>Merton Connect is leading the initiative in partnership with 10 local delivery partners, who all have experience of working with young people and delivering mentoring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring</li> </ul>
Additional Youth Detached work in violence hotspot	£15,000	Detached Youth Work Team will be starting a new piece of work from January 2024. This has been identified from a local housing provider and the PHCC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detached youth work</li> </ul>

# Publishing and Date for Review

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**Published:** The Delivery Plan document will be published on the council's website by 31st January 2024.

**Reviewed:** This Delivery Plan will be reviewed annually, with the next review due by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025. There are a number of recommendations throughout the Delivery Plan and we will endeavour to bring these back regularly to the CSP for review.

**Progress:** The objectives set out within the Delivery Plan and the local action plan, will be reviewed quarterly at the Merton CSP.