

Violence and Vulnerability

February 2021

About and acknowledgements

This programme of work

Funded by The Dawes Trust, Crest has been undertaking a two-year programme of work over 2019/20 designed to investigate the drivers of serious violence. This has been informed by priorities set by the Home Office, and will conclude with a suite of practical policy recommendations for government and policing leaders.

About Crest

We are crime and justice specialists - equal parts research, strategy and communication. From police forces to public inquiries, from central government departments to tech companies we have helped all these organisations (and more) to play their own part in building a safer, more secure society.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Dawes Trust for their generous support and all those who shared their insights:

- The team at Redthread for sharing information and insights about the young people they work with
- The Youth Offending Team at a London Borough for sharing information with us

As well as other organisations who shared their insights more generally:

- The Difference
- New Horizons
- Hackney Integrated Gangs Unit
- The University of Bedford
- Research in Practice
- The Domestic Abuse Commissioner

Executive summary (1)

About this report: This report explores the issue of vulnerability as a driver of serious violence, focusing on young people. It summarises the current trends in violence and patterns of vulnerability among children and young people, including the rise in poverty and deprivation.

We look at the backgrounds and circumstances of a group of offenders and victims of serious violence to explore vulnerabilities that are thought to be connected to greater risks of violence and draw together common themes.

Finally, we look at the effectiveness of current approaches to protecting and supporting young people who are at risk of serious violence, offering some recommendations for change.

National context: The recent rise in serious violence in England and Wales has been characterised by a shift towards younger offenders and younger victims. There is evidence that many young people involved in violence are very vulnerable due to their backgrounds and circumstances. Some of these vulnerabilities appear to have been rising for the past five years including levels of poverty and deprivation.

Numbers at risk of violence due to poverty and deprivation: Over 213,000 children in England aged 11 to 17 are vulnerable to serious violence due to deprivation and neighbourhood crime. The number of children is unevenly spread across England: nearly 40% live in ten local authority areas. There is growing evidence that Covid and lockdown measures will exacerbate the risks of vulnerability.

Executive summary (2)

Victims and perpetrators are not distinct groups: Crest analysed a group of perpetrators and a group of victims of violence and found they are not distinct groups. Many violent offenders are also victims - often at the same time. There were high levels of vulnerability among both groups. Details about the young people treated in a London Major Trauma Centre show that experiencing violence, witnessing violence and living in a violent area are by far the most prominent risk factors; many had suffered a traumatic bereavement.

Almost all of the 57 young people in the perpetrator group had previously been victims of violence, either inside or outside the family. Details about the group, provided by a London Youth Offending Team, showed they had serious mental health needs. Many of them were not in education, employment or training - critical protective factors against involvement in violence.

Social network analysis: Crest conducted a Social Network Analysis of the Youth Offending Team sample and found that many of them were connected to each other. In the criminal justice sphere, such analysis is commonly used to find links between members of organised crime groups. **Our prototype shows the value of Social Network Analysis for safeguarding teams who need to understand the risk a young person faces outside their family setting in order to develop effective services and interventions.**

The effectiveness of current responses: Our assessment indicates there's a lack of grip and urgency around those at risk of, and involved in, violence, with many gaps in arrangements to protect them - in particular for victims of violence

- Current **safeguarding** arrangements are not designed for adolescents at risk of violence outside their home
- **Early help services** focus on younger children; as cases grow, families with older children at risk are not treated as a priority

Executive summary (3)

- A greater focus on **diverting young people away from prosecution** may have missed some whose offending has escalated into violence. At the same time, **prevention work** by youth offending teams has been significantly reduced
 - **Community safety approaches** are not being fully utilised to keep young people safe
 - Children who are more likely to be at risk are spending long periods of **out of school**, and informal practices such as 'off-rolling' appear to be more common
 - **Childhood trauma** can make it hard for people to trust services so they disengage. But support often focuses on managing immediate risks rather than building trust over the longer term.
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- Local authorities should be required to undertake a **strategy and action plan** on how they will safeguard children at risk of violence and criminal exploitation outside the home, as they have for child sexual exploitation
 - **School funding arrangements should provide incentives** for children at risk of exclusion to be kept in school wherever possible
 - **Youth Offending Teams** should be given a role in assessing the risks of children who are **victims of violence**
 - **Trauma-informed training** should be rolled out across law enforcement and other services who come into contact with perpetrators or victims of violence
 - The government should dedicate resources to **supporting 18-24 year olds** who are vulnerable to violence
 - Government should commit to simplifying the current patchwork of prevention-oriented bodies to **ensure a single body is charged with preventing violence locally** (such as community safety partnerships) underpinned by a duty to cooperate



**Chapter 1:
National
context: is
vulnerability
driving
serious**

Patterns of violence

It is a well-established criminological finding that most crime is committed by a small number of people - and that a person's background and upbringing is linked to the likelihood of them using violence

The Millennium Cohort Study reveals that only 3% of individuals reported carrying a weapon at any one time. The 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice survey found that most young people had not committed any offence, those that did, did so only occasionally and committed relatively trivial offences. Only 1% of the cohort had frequently committed serious offences.

Academic literature suggests the more vulnerable someone is, the more at risk they are of using violence or being the victim of violent crime.

School: A number of links have been made between education and serious violence. Knife possession offenders were more likely to be absent or excluded from school, and less likely to achieve headline education attainment levels at the end Key Stages 2 and 4.

Peer group: The influence of friends and people of the same age has a particular influence on knife crime and weapon-carrying offences. There are links between weapon carrying and having friends who also carry weapons.

Individual risk factors: A number of studies have proven links between childhood maltreatment (such as abuse and neglect) and criminality. 30% of 786 men convicted of homicide had been physically abused and 17% had been sexually abused.

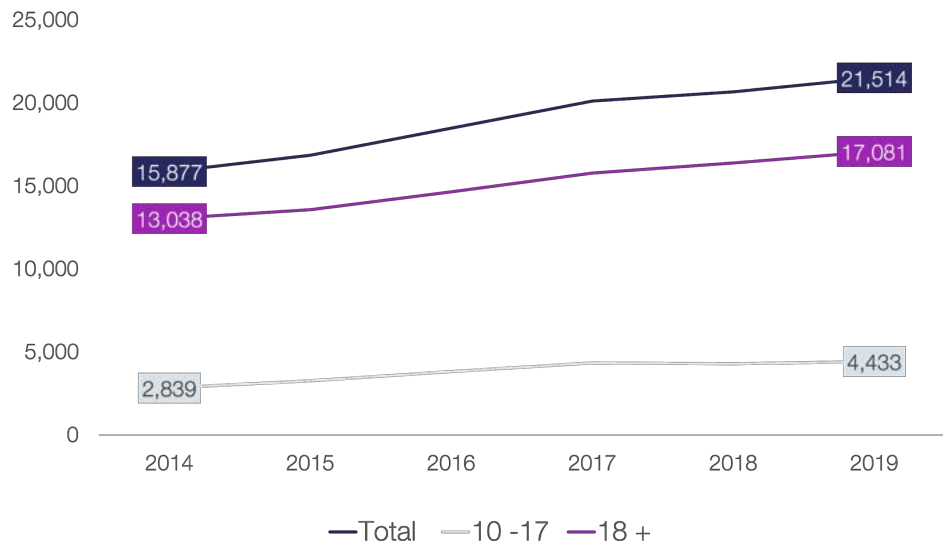
Family: Several elements of familial life can serve as risk factors for criminality. This includes family structure, family relationships and social class.

Community: Levels of community safety and deprivation have also been tied to serious violence. Young people involved in gangs have been found to live in neighbourhoods with high levels of crime.

There is evidence that the recent rise in serious violence in England and Wales is linked to a shift towards younger offenders...

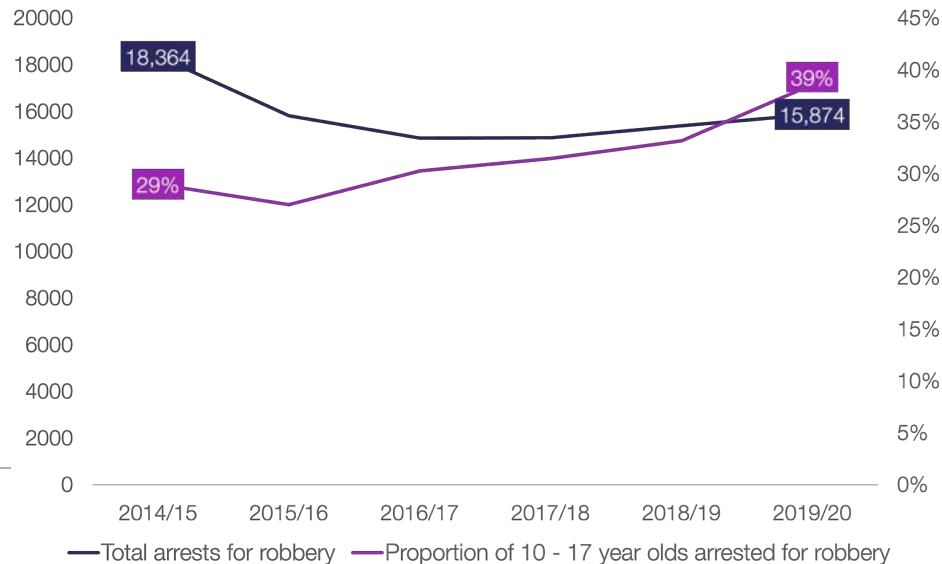
From 2014-2019 there was a 36% rise in knife possession offences for 10-17 year olds compared to a 26% rise overall. Part of the increase may reflect changes in police tactics

Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or conviction by age, 2014 - 2019.



Trends in arrests for robbery show that an increasing proportion of arrests for robbery are among 10-17 year olds

Recorded robbery and arrests by age, year ending March 2006 - 2020

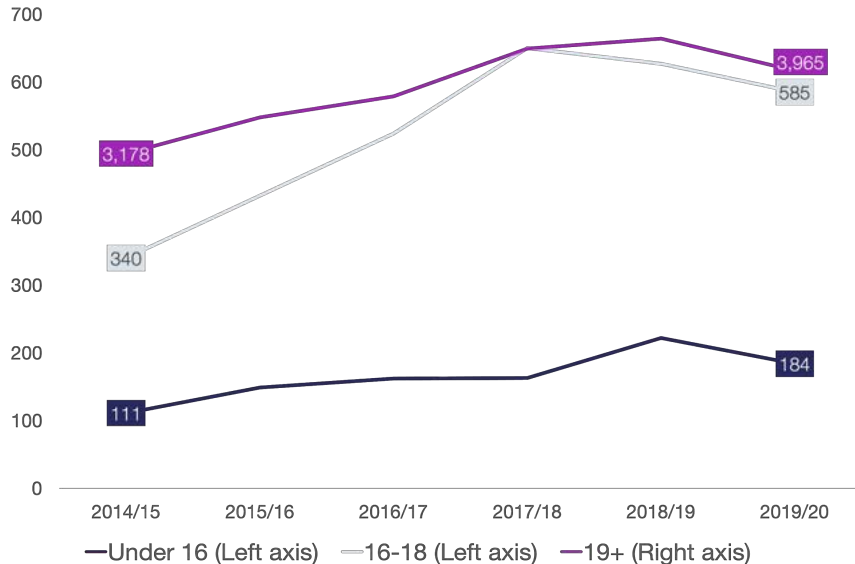


Source: House of Commons Library, Knife Crime Statistics. Note: figures for Q2-Q4 of 2019 are estimates which are subject to revision. Home Office, Arrests open data tables from the Police powers and procedures England and Wales year ending 31 March 2020. Note: Lancashire could not supply complete data for 2017/18 and 2018/19, and Greater Manchester could not supply data for 2019/20.

...similarly, the *victims* of serious violence appear to be getting younger

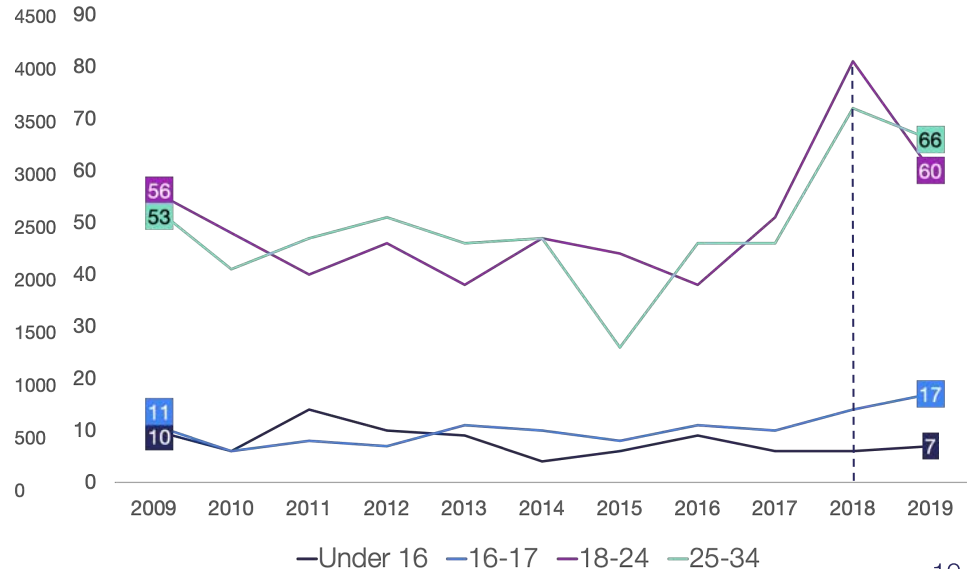
In the last five years, there has been a increase in the number of under 19 year olds being treated in hospital for stab wounds

Number of times hospital consultants treated people for assault by sharp object, by age group, 2014/15 to -2019/20



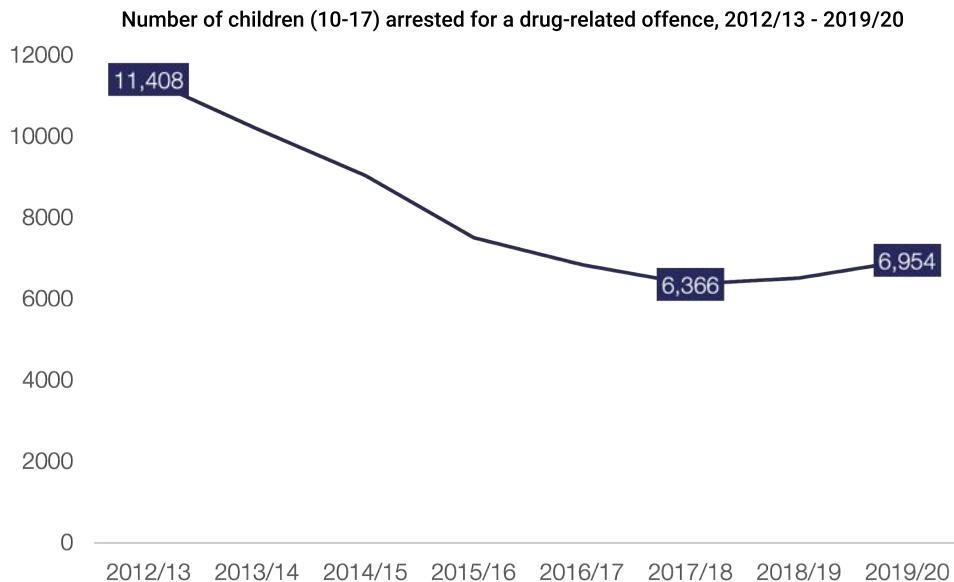
And in the last 10 years, more homicide victims killed by a sharp instrument are under 24

Homicide by a sharp instrument offences, by age, year ending March 2009 - 2019

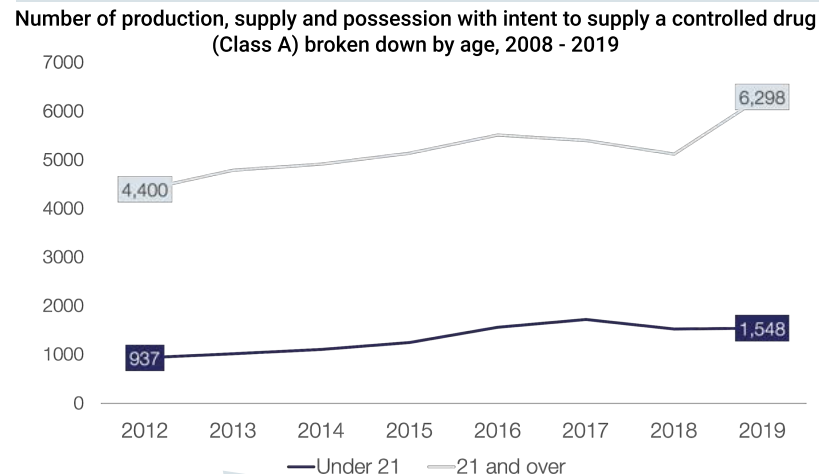


Child drug arrests are rising and Class A drug offences have increased among young people - an indication of involvement in a criminal trade closely linked to violence

Data on arrests of children aged 10 to 17 for drug-related offences is a good indicator of how many children are being exploited by criminal groups - and shows increases since 2017/18



The number of young people (under 21) convicted of Class A drug offences has increased by 63% since 2012, compared to a 16% increase for 21 and over



Since 2013, the number of younger people convicted of offences relating to powder cocaine has gone up 61%; crack cocaine 54%; and heroin 46%. Each increase was larger than the rise in offences committed by those aged 21 & over.

Recent research carried out in the UK suggests those involved in street-based gangs are disproportionately young and vulnerable and often unknown to services

Research on the involvement of 'gangs' in the drugs market in Scotland suggests a four-tier model - highly dependent on young and vulnerable people

Hierarchical model of gang involvement in the drugs market (Scotland)

Early offenders in young street gangs are typically involved in social supply and only rarely involved in retail-level drug supply

Groups may move beyond social supply and mature into young crime gangs that can penetrate higher levels of the illicit drug market

Gangs that are able to avoid law enforcement action and grow may eventually move on to wholesale buying

If sustained, wholesale activity and increased market share create the potential for development into serious organised crime, including the adoption of business-like principles

Some gangs evolve to be 'sole suppliers' in a given domain (drugs, firearms) and come to resemble / become OCGs

Analysis by the Children's Commissioner revealed that children in gangs were 37% more likely to be missing/absent from school than other children who offend

34,000 children in England were identified as being in a gang or on the periphery of a gang, but just 19% (6,560) - were known to children's services or youth offending teams.

- Children in gangs were assessed as having much higher levels of vulnerability than those who weren't in gangs:
 - 41% more likely to have a parent or carer misusing substances
 - eight times more likely to be misusing substances themselves
- Child offenders in gangs compared to other young offenders:
 - 76% more likely not to have basic care needs met at home
 - 37% more likely to have witnessed domestic violence
 - 37% more likely to be missing/absent from school

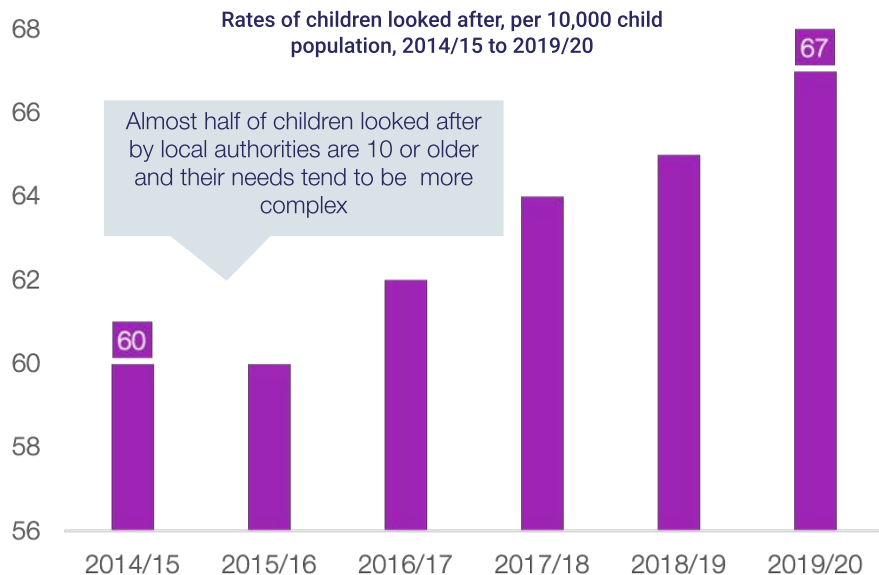
"The St Giles Trust found that all of the 100 teenagers referred to it after being caught up in county lines gangs had all been excluded or spent time in a pupil referral unit (PRU) because of their behaviour." - [The Telegraph](#), Jan 2020



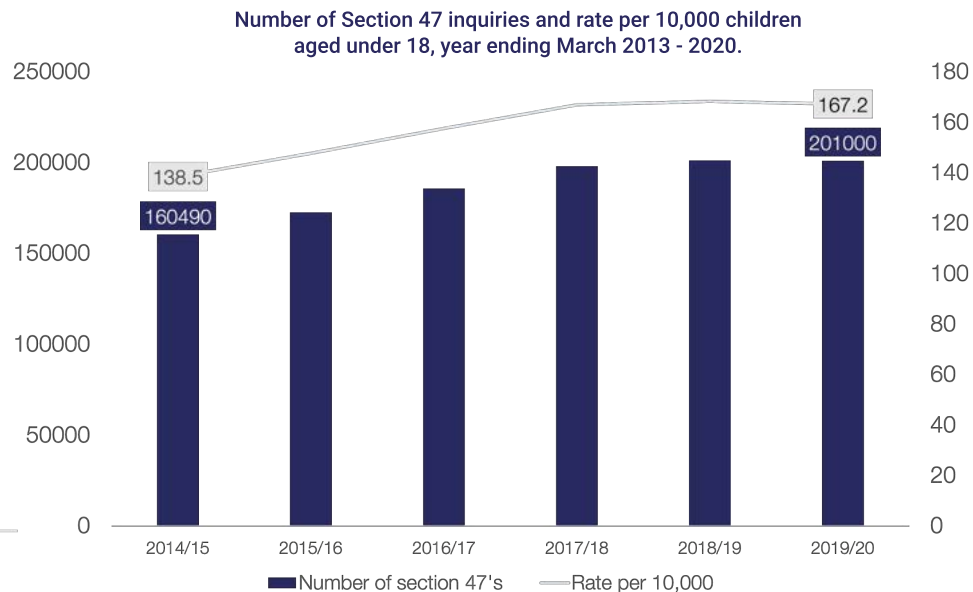
Patterns of vulnerability

The proportion of children in England who have entered care has been growing and the number of assessments of children at risk of serious harm has also grown

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of children who have become 'looked after' (children in care)...



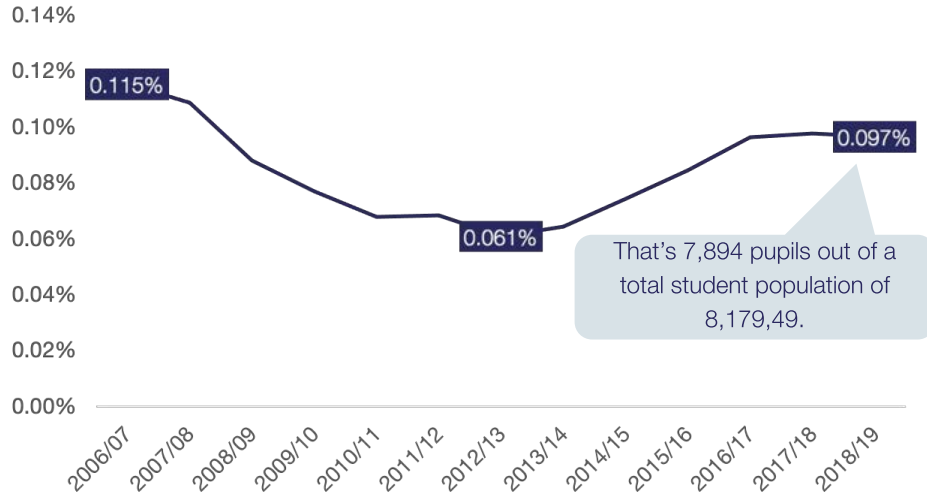
...and a rise in the number of Section 47 local authority investigations to assess if a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm



...and in Education: permanent exclusions in schools increased significantly from 2012-13. Exclusions from Pupil Referral Units have risen sharply since 2013-14

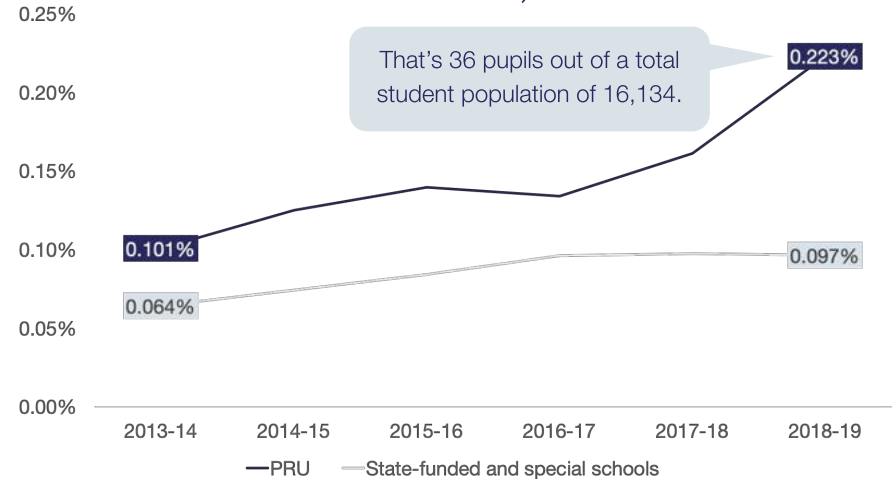
The rate of permanent exclusions has been growing steadily since 2012-13 but has remained roughly stable since 2016/17

The percentage of children excluded in state-funded and special schools in England (2006/7 - 2018/19)



Permanent exclusions are also growing within Pupil Referral Units although the actual numbers are very small

The percentage of children excluded in Pupil Referral Units, and State-funded and Special schools, in England (2013/14 - 2018/19)



Poverty and deprivation have also been linked to the risk of violence. Both have grown over the last 5 years

Academic evidence suggests poverty and deprivation are closely linked to violence

Lesley McAra and Susan McVie (2016)

Study design: Analysis of Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, a longitudinal study of over 4,000 young people.

Conclusions: Violence was strongly associated with poverty (at a household and neighbourhood level). This was still true when other risk factors were accounted for. The findings applied to girls — who were much less likely to become involved in violence overall — as well as boys.

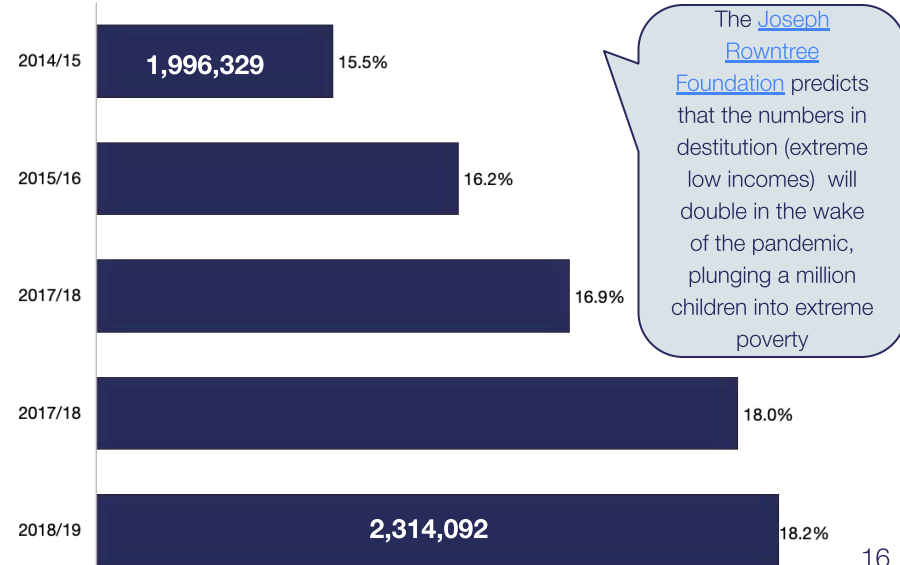
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (2018)

Study design: [Review of the Metropolitan Police Service's Gangs Matrix](#), in London.

Conclusions: People living in the most vulnerable wards (the top 10%) were six times more likely to become victims of knife crime than those in the least vulnerable wards (bottom 10%). Potential gang members were eleven times more likely to live in the most vulnerable wards.

The number of children in low-income families has grown significantly

Children in low-income families in England as a proportion of total 0–19 year old population, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Crest analysis estimates that over 213,000 children in England aged 11 to 17 are vulnerable to serious violence due to deprivation and neighbourhood crime

There are no official figures on the number of children who are at risk of being involved in serious violence*, either as victims, perpetrators or witnesses, because of deprivation. So we have made three estimates using the 2019 Index of Deprivation. We looked at two factors which make a child more vulnerable to serious violence: (1) levels of crime in each local area, including serious offences like murder, wounding and infanticide, as well as robbery, theft, burglary and criminal damage; and (2) levels of income deprivation (families on low incomes) which are known to affect access to education and childcare. Group C is a conservative estimate of the number at risk.

Group A: Children at risk of serious violence due to levels of crime in the community

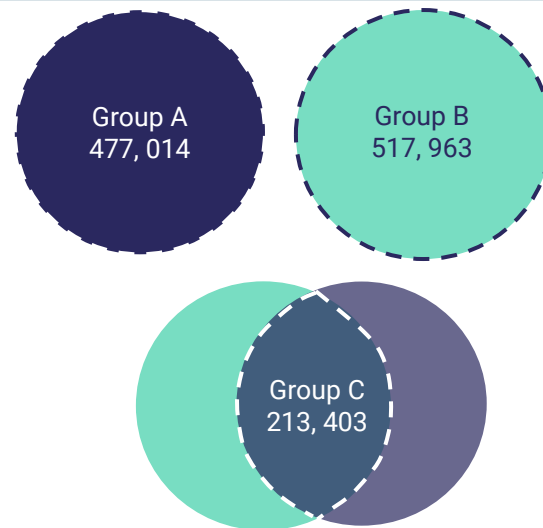
477, 014 (11% of the 11-17 population)

Group B: Children at risk of serious violence due to high levels of income deprivation in their community

517, 963 (13% of the 11-17 population)

Group C: Children at risk of serious violence due high levels of crime in their community AND high income deprivation

213, 403 (5% of the 11-17 population)



The number of children at risk of serious violence is unevenly spread across England: nearly 40% live in ten local authority areas

Mapping our estimates shows that the distribution of children at risk of serious violence due to high levels of neighbourhood crime and income deprivation in England is very uneven.

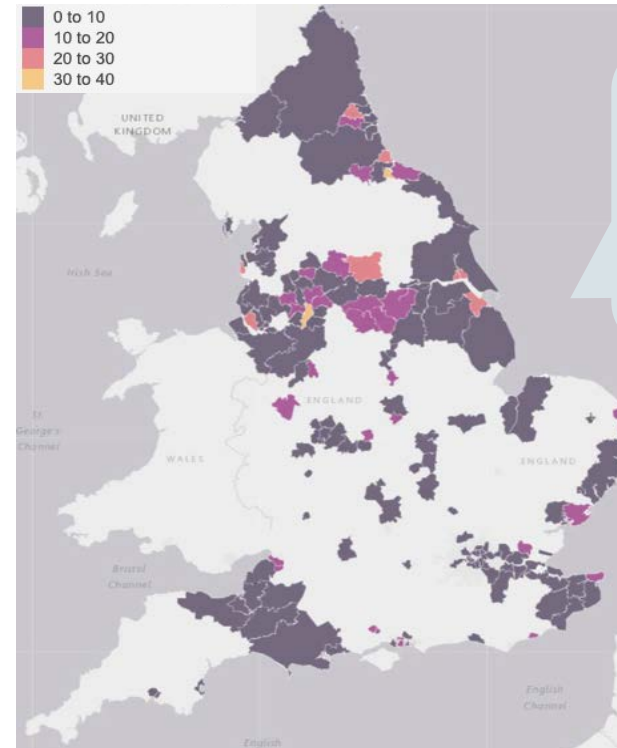
Of the estimated 213,403 children at risk, around 40% of them live in just 10 local authorities:

1. Manchester
2. Leeds
3. Bradford
4. Liverpool
5. Birmingham
6. Sheffield
7. Kingston upon Hull
8. Bristol
9. Bolton
10. Newcastle upon Tyne

When controlling for population size, local authorities with the highest *proportion* of children at risk are:

1. Middlesbrough
2. Manchester
3. North East Lincolnshire
4. Blackpool
5. Kingston upon Hull
6. Hartlepool
7. Liverpool
8. Leeds
9. Newcastle upon Tyne
10. Rochdale

Proportion of 11-17 year olds at risk due to income deprivation and neighbourhood crime



The analysis includes only the local authorities with the highest levels of children at risk of serious violence due to deprivation in England

Covid, and lockdown measures, exacerbate the risks of vulnerability

- With school closures across the country, many vulnerable young people lost a key protective factor - as teachers are often the first to report abuse and raise **safeguarding concerns**
- [Figures](#) show that approximately **41% of pupils with a social worker** were in school during the most recent lockdown (21/1/21), compared to 75% when schools were open to all pupils (16/12/20)
- A **learning gap** opened up in the first lockdown - with some groups, including children who receive free school meals, devoting significantly less time to school-work at home
- Education was substantially cut for **children in custody**

- Roughly one in five offences in England & Wales from April to June 2020 were flagged by police as relating to **domestic abuse** - higher than in previous years
- **Social care referrals** fell by almost a fifth in the first lockdown, meaning fewer children at risk were identified and provided with support
- **Mental health support** services were often unavailable in lockdown. Young Minds found that 31% of young people receiving support pre-COVID were no longer able to access it
- Young people were most at risk of being made **jobless** in the first lockdown: under 25s were more likely to be furloughed or made redundant than any other age group and make up a third of new Universal Credit claims.

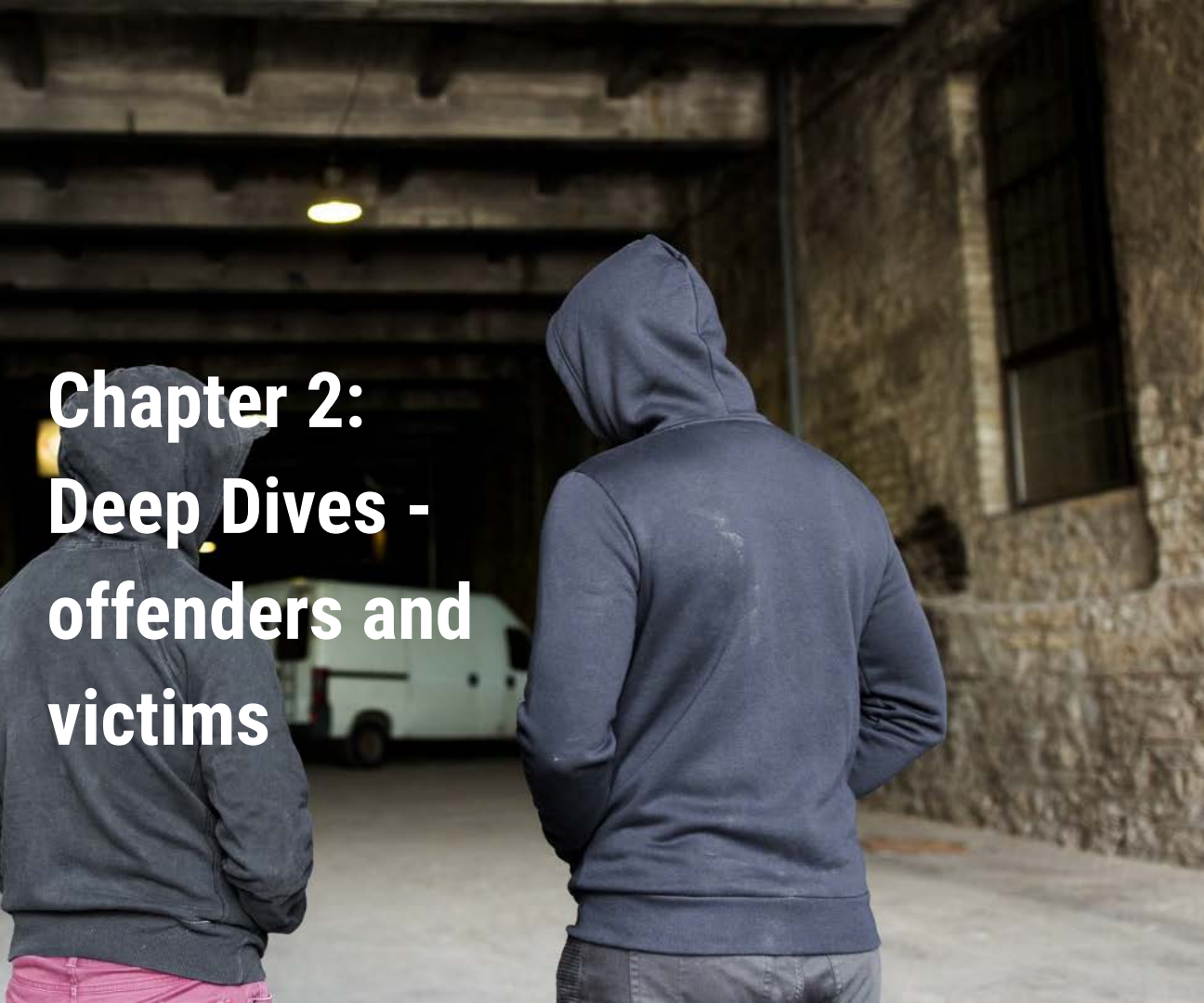
Summary of key findings

Vulnerability and youth are key drivers in recent patterns of violence

- **A shift towards younger violent offenders:** knife crime and robbery figures
- **Victims of violence are getting younger:** NHS hospital data and homicide profile
- **A growing number of children are involved in drug dealing:** arrest and conviction figures
- **Gangs are more reliant on younger children:** research in Scotland and research by the Children's Commissioner

Patterns of vulnerability have been increasing - making it more possible for violence to take place

- **The proportion of children at risk and children in care has grown:** child protection and looked-after children data
- **More children are out of school:** permanent exclusion figures
- **Poverty and deprivation have increased:** children in low-income families stats
- **The pandemic has made life worse for the vulnerable:** data on education, social care, support services

A photograph of two individuals wearing dark hooded sweatshirts, standing with their backs to the camera in a dark, industrial or underground setting. A white van is visible in the background. The scene is dimly lit, with a single light source visible in the distance.

Chapter 2: Deep Dives - offenders and victims

To complement national data, Crest analysed two groups of young people - offenders and victims of serious violence - to examine their links with vulnerability

The charity Redthread provided us with data on young people who had been treated in hospital as a result of a serious violent incident to provide a profile of victims

Redthread runs a Youth Violence Intervention Programme in hospital emergency departments which supports seriously injured young people who have been involved in youth violence:

- Redthread provided data on **479 young people at five London hospital trauma centres** in 2019/20.
- The charity also supplied data on a **subset of 57 of the young people** and gave us further details of specific cases and organised **interviews with their practitioners**.

A London Youth Offending Team provided us with data on young people who had committed violent offences or been caught up in serious violent incidents to provide a profile of offenders

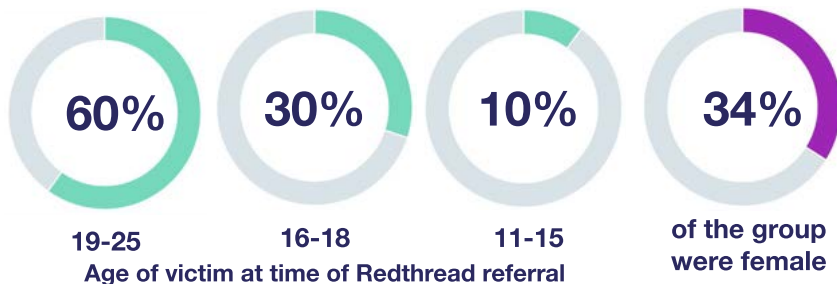
The Youth Offending Team provided us with data on young people who had committed or were some way involved in carrying out assaults, robberies and other crimes of serious violence:

- **32 young people who had been cautioned for or convicted of an offence** associated with serious youth violence
- **25 young people who had been identified as being involved in serious violent incidents** between August 2019 and August 2020, alongside anonymised reports on those incidents.

The majority of victims identified as Black, African, or Mixed Black, were over 18, and a third were female

GENDER

Victims and perpetrators of serious violence are assumed to be male. The involvement of women and girls in violence is a blind spot in our understanding of the problem. In this grouping, more than a third (34%) were female.



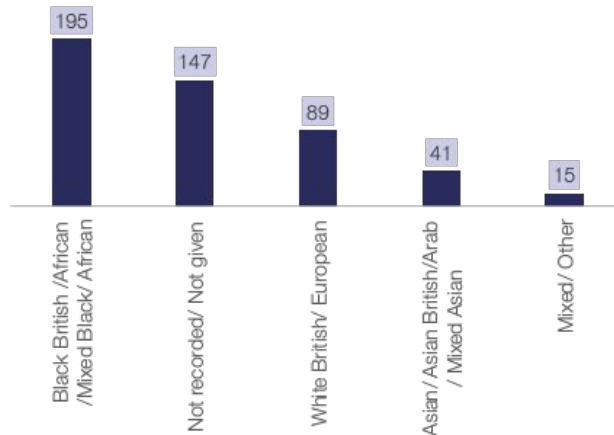
AGE

Most of the grouping were aged 19-25: 'too old' for safeguarding services. At 18 youth offenders move into the adult system. Support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) ends and there is no automatic handover to adults' services. Practitioners told us repeatedly that this represents a 'cliff-edge' in service provision for vulnerable young people.

ETHNICITY

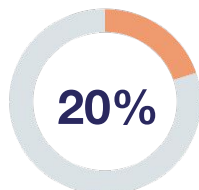
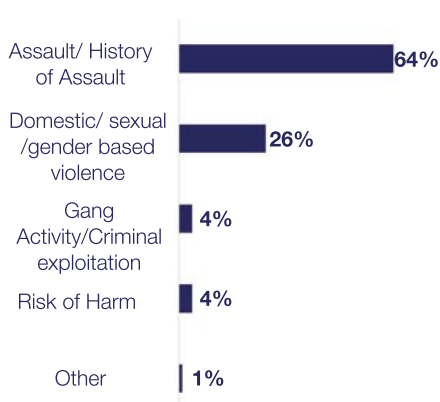
Most of the group (40%) identify as Black British, African, Mixed Black, and Mixed African, although nearly a third of the group did not provide any detail about their ethnicity. Our previous report identified that the male homicide rate was substantially higher for Black victims.

Reported ethnicity of the Redthread cohort

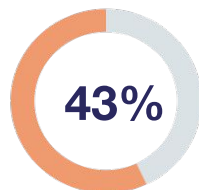


The violence that took these young people to hospital was not a one-off incident in their lives

Reason for referral to Redthread



previously admitted to A&E due to serious violent or sexually violent incident



of hospital cases due to an assault with a knife or bladed object



Analysis of the group of young people where more risk data was available shows they'd been exposed to substantial levels of violence:

- 97% reported witnessing or experiencing violence
- 23% had previously attended hospital for an injury related to abuse or violence
- 68% were known to official agencies at the time of hospital admission

CASE STUDY: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP A VICTIM OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE

After being released from prison with no secure housing, a young man became homeless. Three days later, the man was attacked. He suffered many stab wounds. After a long period of engagement with Redthread, it became clear that the young man had a severe history of domestic abuse. He'd witnessed his mother being attacked by his stepfather - she was taken to hospital - and he'd also suffered abuse himself.

At no point did his school notice the signs of abuse. There was no child protection plan when his mother was taken to hospital. It was not until an attack on his life that the young man came into contact with support services. In his final Redthread assessment, it was reported that the young man felt people had not been able to help him as they had not been asking the right questions - and he hadn't been ready to give answers.

Many young people had lost loved ones in traumatic circumstances leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence

The widespread experience of loss is not always recognised in discussions of serious youth violence...

Practitioners said they often came into contact with young people whose siblings, partners or friends were already known to them. This represents a further type of trauma: anxiety and bereavement from growing up in neighbourhoods where loved ones may be seriously or fatally injured.

One girl lost her stepdad to murder when she was in her mid-teens. He had been around since she was a toddler and was like a dad to her. For the next year, she had to prop up her grieving mum while processing the loss herself. The grief likely contributed to her exploitation by a 'county lines' drug gang.

Other young women experienced physical symptoms of trauma. One had severe chest pains, a symptom of extreme anxiety, after the murder of her boyfriend; another turned up in hospital shaking and showing other signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after witnessing a shooting.

... but our research suggests that it is a significant vulnerability in itself, leaving young people at greater risk of exploitation

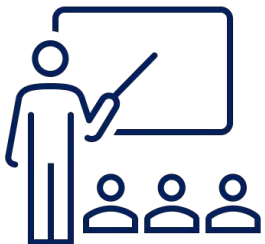
Academic research shows that 'traumatic bereavement' — bereavement through suicide or murder — is especially painful, and can be a driver of offending. Similarly, our interviews suggested that traumatic bereavement places young people at greater risk of exploitation.

One young man became involved in offending after the murder of his best friend. He was sixteen at the time; he is now nineteen, and has 'aged out' of the youth justice system. Despite his recognised mental health needs, he was not known to have had any contact with mental health services.

His mum and his Youth Offending Team believe the grief from his best friend's death left him emotionally vulnerable, and that older gang members capitalised on this. Although he would like to get a legitimate job, he feels trapped — with no friends other than those he's committing crimes for.

A striking finding was how many of those involved in violence were not in education, employment or training

Educational profile of victims referred to Redthread:



- 36% of total cohort were not in education, employment, training (NEET)
- 44% of under 18s were NEET (17% of 13-15 year olds and 27% of 16-18s)
- 45% of those aged 18+ were NEET

Those in the NEET group experience greater disadvantages and risks:



- 63% were known to official services, 6% higher than the wider grouping
- 28% had previously been admitted to A&E for a serious violent incident, 8% higher than the wider grouping
- 48% were referred for stabbing or assault with a bladed object, 5% higher than the wider grouping

Schools are often a safer place for those with troubled homes, and a focal point to keep children away from exploitation. Teachers and other staff are able to report the signs of abuse.

CASE STUDY: SCHOOL AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

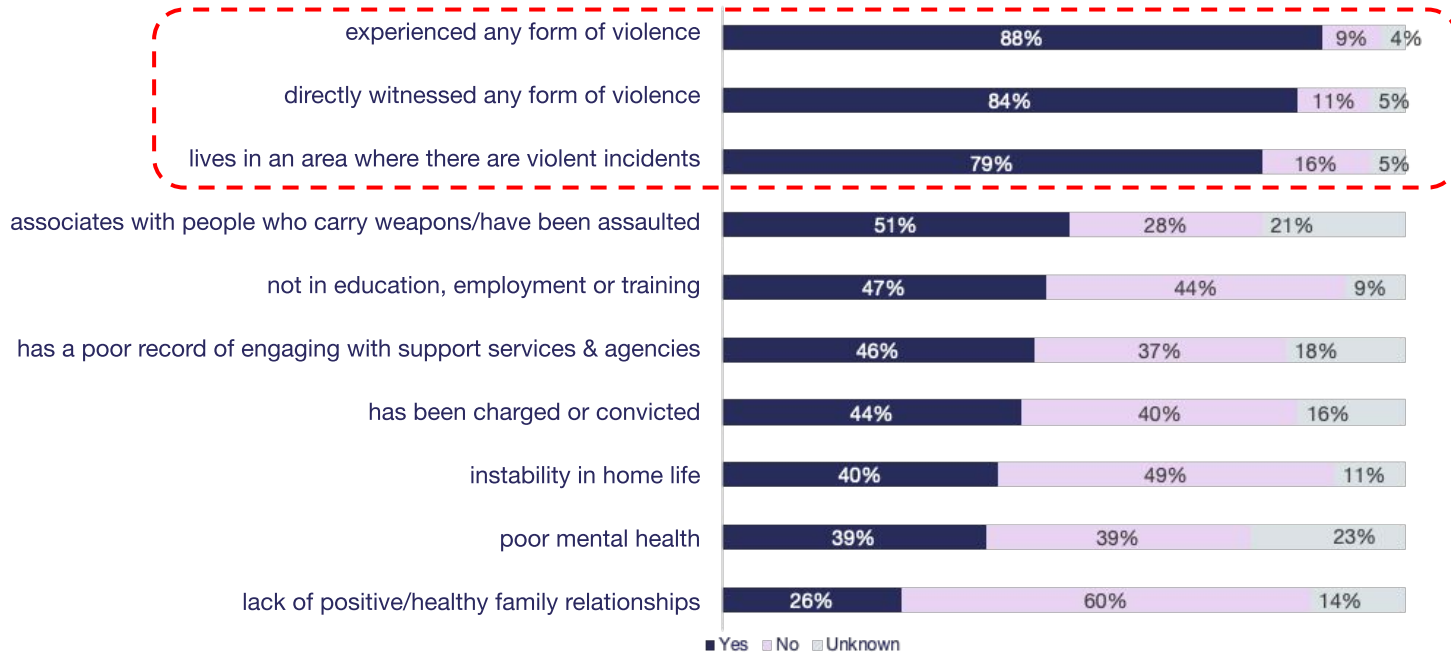
A young teenage girl went to hospital after an incident of group sexual violence. At the time, she was in mainstream education. Police told her that the school was unsafe for her because the perpetrators had associates there. The school perceived her as the risk, and actively fought for her not to return. The girl was out of education for almost a year.

After her exclusion, the girl often went missing for long periods; there was poor support or help from her parents. It meant that without her school being able to intervene, the occasions when she was missing were not recorded. As a result, signs of criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation and 'county lines' drug dealing involvement - later identified by Redthread - were missed.

The parents decided to move the girl while Redthread was still supporting her so the opportunity for effective intervention was missed.

Details about the young people treated in a London Major Trauma Centre - and later referred to Redthread - show that experiencing violence, witnessing violence and living in a violent area were by far the most prominent risk factors

Redthread provided us with details about 57 young people who had been treated in hospital. The top four risk factors related to violence. A large majority said they had experienced and/or directly witnessed some form of violence beforehand - incidents inside or outside their home.

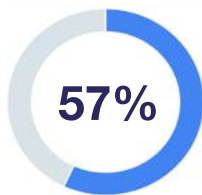


Repeated and visible incidents of violence and vulnerability had often been overlooked, misinterpreted or dealt with in isolation

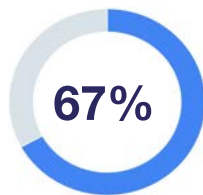
Too many of the young people had been failed by the services they'd been referred to because they weren't assessed as "severely vulnerable". We were frequently told that they did not come across as conventional victims so were presumed to be architects of their own exploitation. Trauma was seen as flippancy and coping mechanisms as showing a lack of respect. Victims were treated as perpetrators (though some are perpetrators), and signs of grooming are still being taken as lifestyle choices made freely by the young person.



of the group had a confirmed history of neglect and/or abuse



previously known to statutory services



of those known to services were from Black British, African or Mixed Black backgrounds



31%
'INVISIBLE' KIDS
(NOT KNOWN TO SERVICES)

CASE STUDY: PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIMHOOD

A teenage girl went to an emergency hospital department with severely broken bones suffered after riding in a stolen car with her much older gang-affiliated boyfriend. The case worker discovered that the boyfriend had physically abused her and criminally exploited her to conceal drugs and weapons. The girl said that although her male counterparts were often cautioned and searched, she was always overlooked, even though she was being threatened and was scared.

At school, the girl wasn't counted as a missing child despite going missing for weeks at a time. The caseworker reported that the school did not seem concerned by her absence and treated it as a choice that she'd made freely.

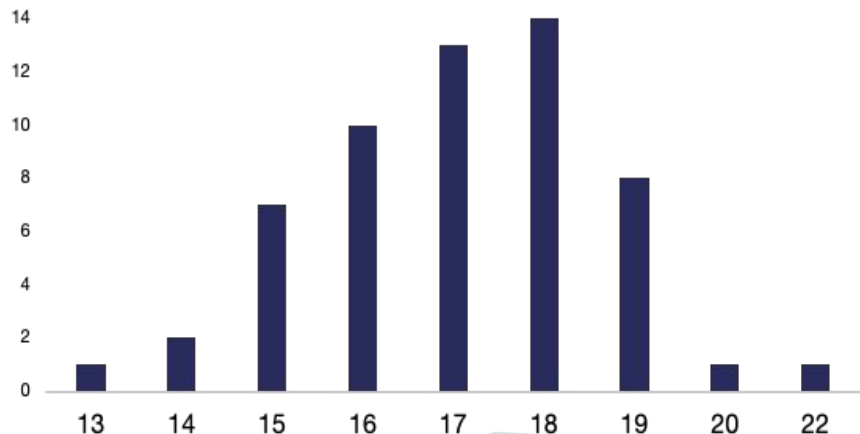
The girl had a perfect storm of risk factors and vulnerabilities, but it wasn't spotted. Eventually, through hard work and sustained advocacy, Redthread was able to move her to a safe location outside London. But that was only after years of harm and exploitation that could have been prevented if action had been taken earlier.

Most of the young offenders analysed were male; the average age was 17. They had similar markers of vulnerability as the victims' group including a history of social care and mental health needs

The group consisted of people aged under 25 known to the Youth Offending Team (YOT) who had committed a robbery, drugs offence or violent crime, or been involved in such an incident, in the previous year. Unlike the victims we studied, this group were overwhelmingly male, 50 out of 57, and were predominantly aged 16-18 years old.

Overall, we found strikingly high levels of vulnerability among these young people. The vast majority had a social care history, and most had recorded mental health needs and a difficult educational history that led to periods of not being in education, training, or employment (NEET)

Recorded age of the YOT group to the nearest year



Because so many young people in the group of offenders are 15, 16 or 17 there is little time for intervention before they are out of the care, education and youth justice systems. Our case studies describe some young people who turned 18 in custody.

43 had a social care history and **25** had been looked after

34 had recorded mental health needs

34 had been NEET at one or more YOT assessments and **25** had been permanently excluded from school

32 had been identified as a child in need

Almost all of the 57 young people in the group had previously been victims of violence, either inside or outside the family

Half of those in the Youth Offending Team group had experienced domestic abuse or maltreatment at home

Just under half had experienced harm outside their homes, i.e. from peers or older exploiters

14 had been exposed to domestic abuse.*

27 had experienced familial harm — defined as being on child protection plans and/or exposed to domestic abuse.

23 were or had been on a child protection plan.

14 had indicators of criminal exploitation or 'county lines' concerns.

4 had indicators of gang or sexual related exploitation.

In total, 20 of the young people had experienced, or were at risk of, harm outside their family.

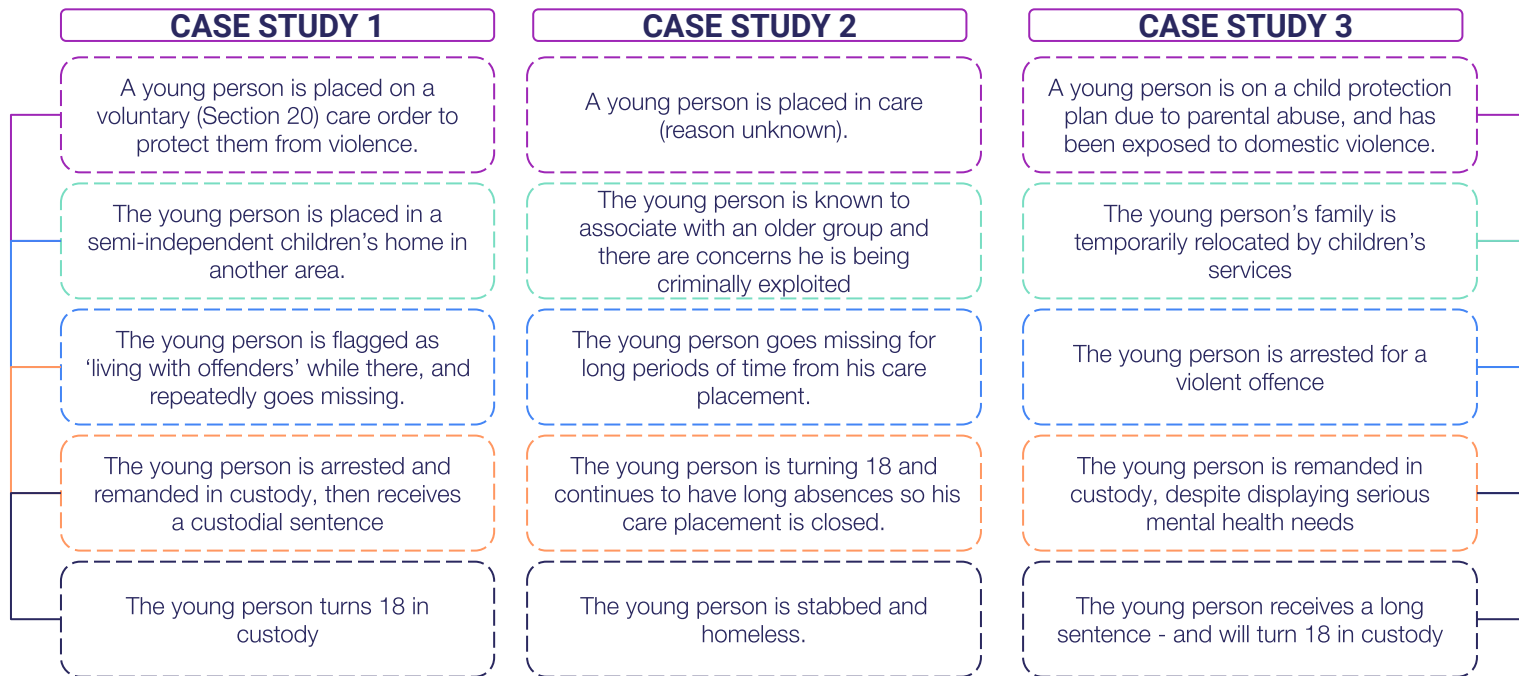
5 young people had indicators of sexual exploitation

* 11 of these young people had also been on child protection plans

In some cases the local authority intervened to protect the young person from harm, but our case studies show that frequently, risks were not well understood or managed

The vast majority of 57 young people in the YOT cohort had a social care history (45), and nearly half (26) had been looked after.

The incident reports showed that social care involvement did not manage young people's risks, as the case studies below illustrate



Young people displayed serious mental health needs which were not always met by support services. More than half of those with mental health issues had spent time in custody

Though a wide variety of services were involved with these young people and tried to address their needs, the data points to significant unmet mental health needs. More than half were placed in custody

The incident reports suggest that, even where mental health support is offered, services may be unable to deal with the complexity of young people's lives and past experiences. The case study below offers an example



A young person is thought to have experienced trauma in their country of origin. In the UK, they are identified as a child in need and engaged by the Troubled Families scheme

The young person is later exploited by a 'county lines' drug gang, and is officially recognised as such by the National Referral Mechanism

The young person is referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services but is unwilling to talk about their past trauma or their experience of county lines exploitation

The young person is a victim of a violent offence - which is likely to make their symptoms of trauma even worse

Those involved in robbery were more likely to have recorded mental health needs and to have been permanently excluded from school. This warrants further investigation

Robbery is the fastest-growing violent offence, and is predominantly committed by young people - over half of the people arrested for robbery are under 21

The number of children arrested for robbery has **increased by 40% since 2015/16, and most people arrested for robbery are now under 21.**

We know from previous [Crest research](#) that the UK is an outlier on its high levels of robbery. More work is required to understand why those in this sample have certain vulnerabilities.

The youngest was 13 at the time of his involvement in a serious incident (as a victim of violence). He was living in residential care and had a history of going missing.

The young people charged with robbery were especially likely to have social care histories, mental health concerns and difficulties with education

14 of the 28 young people in the group charged with robbery had identified special educational needs, and **the same proportion** had been permanently excluded from school.

21 had recorded mental health concerns

21 had a social care history and 17 were or had been identified as children in need

9 had Child Criminal Exploitation indicators

Crest conducted a social network analysis of the 57 young people in the Youth Offending Team sample to understand the connections between them

Social Network Analysis is a way of understanding more about groups of people by mapping the links between them. In the criminal justice sphere, it is commonly used to provide information about the reach and nature of organised crime groups, to help highlight the key individuals, explore tensions and alliances and to target responses. Our prototype shows the value of this analysis for safeguarding teams who need to understand the risk a young person faces outside their family setting in order to develop effective services and interventions.

The Data

18 serious incidents 2019 - 2020

We were given anonymised details about victims, witnesses and offenders involved in:

- 10 stabbings
- 2 murders
- 2 kidnaps
- 2 attempted murders
- 1 gang-related incident
- 1 incident of GBH

Seven incidents were connected to at least two of the people in the group

57 young people

32 had been cautioned or convicted of an offence associated with serious youth violence.

25 were noted in the incident reports to be a victim, perpetrator or relevant witness.

Of all the young people, 33 were connected to at least two others in the group

72 schools, colleges and other institutions

We analysed 72 schools, colleges, alternative educational establishments, such as Pupil Referral Units, and Young Offender Institutions to see if and when each young person attended.

41 institutions were connected to at least two people in the group

HEALTH WARNING: This is a limited prototype of a social network analysis map. Ideally, it would be overlaid with intelligence from other local agencies and services to provide a fuller picture of the connections between young people involved in violence. **All names have been removed to maintain confidentiality.**

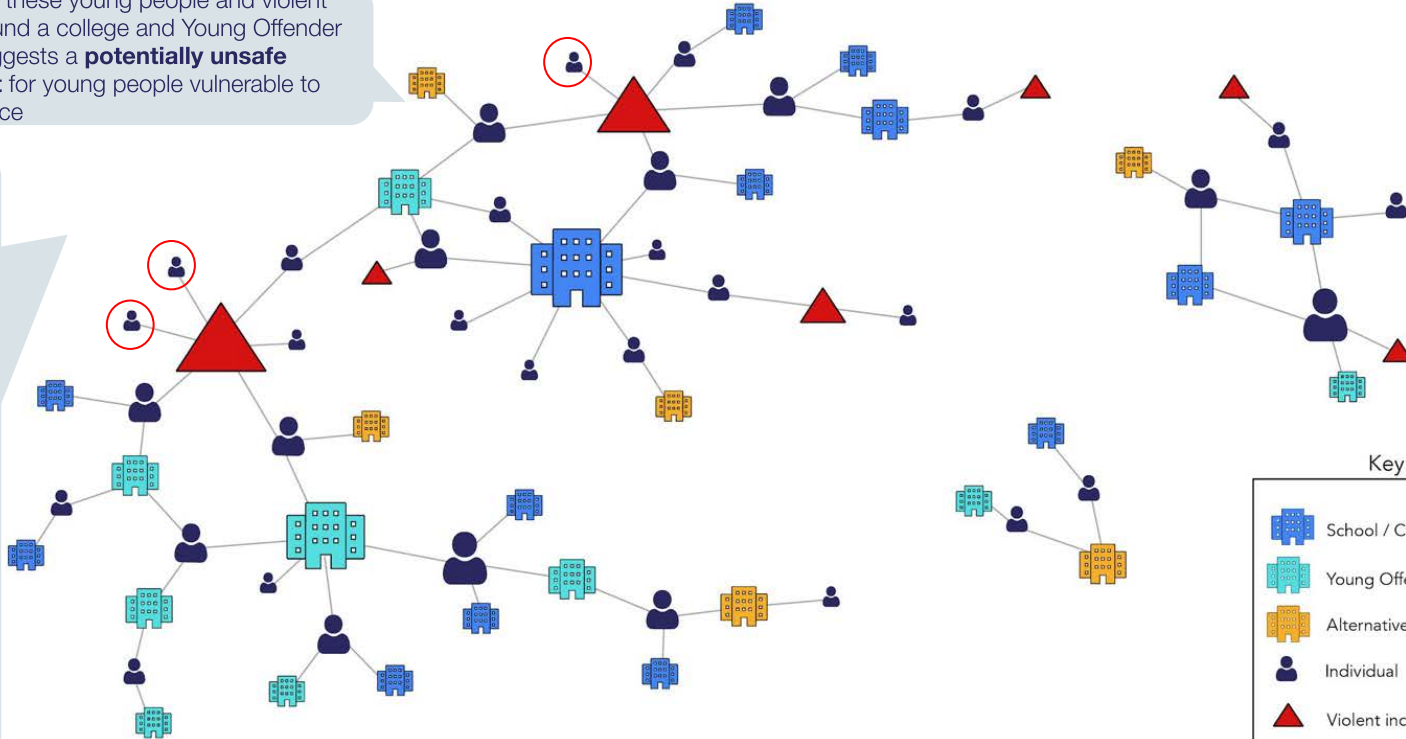
The Process

We mapped the data to visualise the potential connections between the young people. **We only mapped those young people, serious incidents and institutions which had at least two connections** - this represents 71% of the data. It suggests the group were highly interconnected outside the home.

Our social network map highlights areas in which young people might be exposed to harm outside family settings

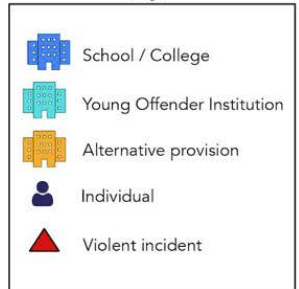
The cluster of these young people and violent incidents around a college and Young Offender Institution suggests a **potentially unsafe environment** for young people vulnerable to serious violence

Mapping a witness to a violent incident or linking a friend to a suspect may reveal their **connections to a group of young people with much more involvement in violence** and offending - which **warrants a quick response**. This may be the case for the young people circled in red.



These young people are not linked to the others, but are highly connected to one another *and* two very serious violent incidents, which suggests a **potentially toxic peer group**.

Key:

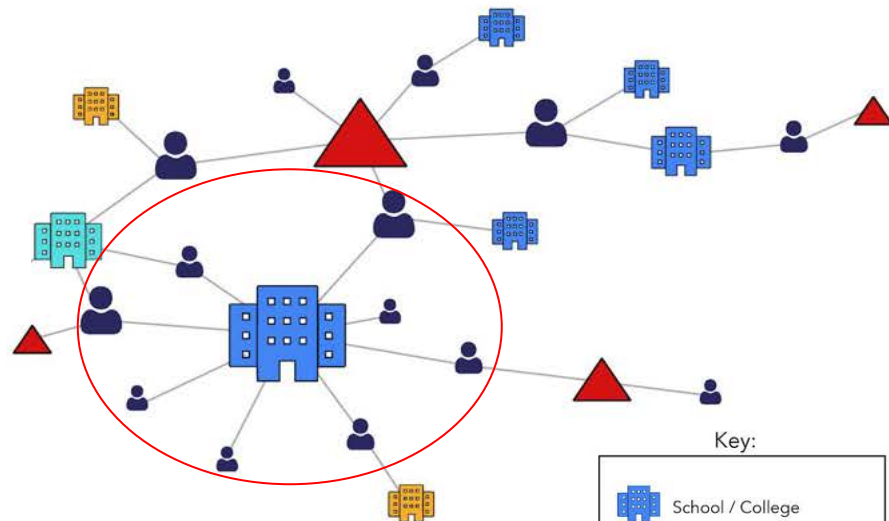


The larger the size of the icon, the more links it has

The potential networks identified within the Youth Offending Team sample demonstrate the value of Social Network Analysis for keeping young people safe, especially when used alongside local intelligence

Preventing further harm:

The children circled do not seem to be well known to services. It would be useful for safeguarding services or a social worker to see the links to others involved, who are in turn linked to a number of Young Offender Institutions. Social networks analysis like this allows for the pivotal individual and harmful networks to be more easily identified.



Key:

-  School / College
-  Young Offender Institution
-  Alternative provision
-  Individual
-  Violent incident

Targeting crime prevention work:

To tackle violence, delivering intervention programmes at the college in the circle may have more impact than many individual interventions.

The larger the size of the icon, the more links it has

Covid-19 has made vulnerable young people with a history of serious offending even more vulnerable

Youth Offending Team workers recorded concerns about the living arrangements of most young people they assessed during the pandemic

Of the 37 young people assessed by the Youth Offending Team in or after April 2020, **concerns were logged about the living conditions of 23 of them**

- 12 had **gone missing** during the pandemic
- 10 were living in **overcrowded, unhealthy or unsafe accommodation**
- 3 of 6 young people in **residential care** continued to go missing


We heard about the social, economic and emotional impact of Covid-19 on the young people involved in violence either as victims or perpetrators

- Young people in abusive households were trapped there
- Those in custody were isolated
- It was even harder to find legitimate work
- Many no longer had face-to-face support.

We also heard about a young man whose foster carer had died from Covid-19, and who had isolated himself in his room ever since.

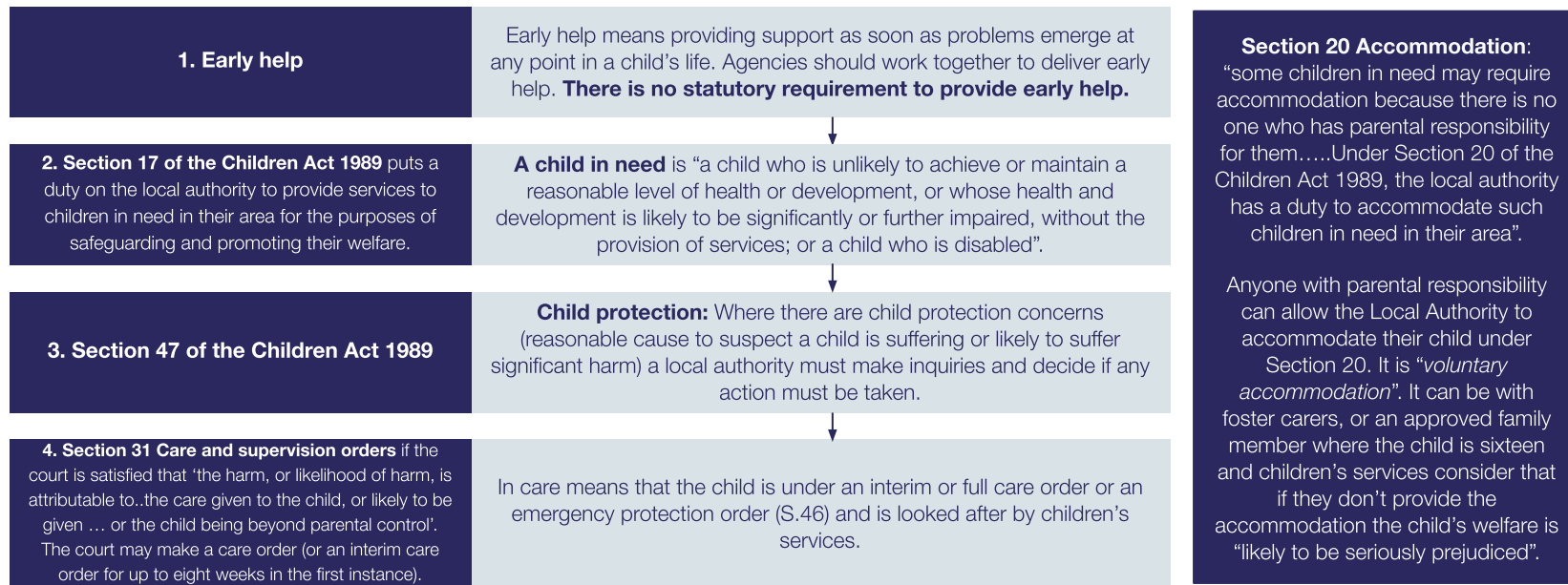
Summary of findings from the deep dives

- **Victims and offenders are not distinct groups.** Large numbers of violent offenders are also victims of violence - often at the same time. Many have chronic histories of violence growing up which are likely to have left a traumatic legacy and may make them more susceptible to violence, either as victims or as perpetrators.
- **Peer networks are important for understanding vulnerability and risks.** Methods like Social Network Analysis could help safeguarding teams target initiatives to prevent crime and reduce harm.
- **A large proportion are out of education even though legally they should be at school.** Young people with no routine and long periods with nothing to do tend to mix with others in similar situations.
- Many have not been helped by **long, complex and often unsatisfactory engagements with public services.**
- **Covid is exacerbating existing risks and problems**, which are likely to increase the vulnerability of young people and their involvement in violence.



Chapter 3: The effectiveness of current responses

Child protection: on paper, there is a comprehensive and robust legal framework for protecting young people up to 18 in England (Children Acts 1989 and 2004)



Statutory guidance makes it clear that children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats might include: sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation (*Working Together to Safeguard Children DfE, 2018*).

Child protection: in practice, major gaps remain. In particular, the existing framework is not designed for adolescent young people at risk - outside the home

At first sight, this doesn't make sense: children who are at risk from exploitation, injury or abuse from peers or criminal gangs should be judged at risk of significant harm and require safeguarding. But in practice, the child protection system has evolved to protect children from harm experienced within the family. This is reinforced by the legal framework, social work training as well as culture and practice within the system.

Interviewees acknowledged that staff working with children recognised that it was their responsibility to address the exploitation of teenagers. But the combination of cultural, organisational and legal barriers prevailed over the will of individuals and services.

1. The legal provisions specify that when instigating care proceedings, the local authority must show that the harm to the child is attributable **to the care and control provided by parents**. For a child who is at risk of violence from outside the home, this will rarely or solely be down to the actions of parents. Social workers may therefore be reluctant to start a process where there is no further escalation point.

2. Cultural issues: We were told that people become social workers because they want to protect 'vulnerable children' (as they imagine them), and now they find themselves working with teenagers who don't fit their image of childhood or vulnerability.

3. Practical skills: Social workers are trained to recognise family abuse but not necessarily equipped to deal with peer abuse, exploitation or serious violence. They may also feel that they have fewer legal and procedural levers over the external environments in which significant harm is present - whether that be a local park or school - as they do in family settings.

Child protection: recent research highlights that those at risk in the community are far less likely to have action taken to support them than those facing abuse in the home

Out of 43 cases where young people were assessed to be at risk of serious harm in a non-family setting, 40 were given a 'no further action' decision.

Among the cases were young people arrested for, or the victims of, violent crimes and those involved in gang-related behaviour.

Cases of young people 'A' and 'B' involved violence, including knife possession and stabbings.

"A' was admitted to [hospital] in the early hours of Saturday with stab wounds.'A' has reported this has happened...following him being at a party and on his way home."

"On Sunday police were called to 'B's home address as his father stated that there were **people trying to kill his son with machetes**. Local neighbours had also witnessed this and called police."

Cases of 'C' and 'D' involved gang affiliation or exploitation to sell drugs.

"Patient 'C' attended A&E...following head injury during assault. Patient attended with sister...Sister reports **he has been selling drugs and as a result has been threatened multiple times by other teenagers in the area and assaulted.**"

"The referral from police reports 'D' was being **groomed by other students who are members of [name] gang to sell drugs**. When he refused to take some cannabis he was then punched in the face... 'D' remains fearful that speaking to police will result in further reprisals and **he and his mother are concerned about his safety at school (as he reports many [gang] members attend)** so are exploring a managed move."

A [report](#) by the Children's Commissioner found that of the 27,000 children that identify as a gang member, only a small proportion (5,230) are known to children's services and had gangs identified as a factor in their latest assessment.

Child protection: safeguarding services are struggling to meet the needs of vulnerable children due to financial pressures

Responding to these pressures, local authorities in England have scaled back what they do, to meet their legal obligations - this means fewer resources for early help and a focus on children coming into care.

Overall, local authority spending on children's services **went down by £1.7bn (16%)** between 2010/11 and 2017/18.



Spending on early intervention services **halved** in this period.



At the same time, spending on 'late' intervention services (safeguarding, looked after children) **rose by 12%**.

This has led to functions required by law being protected & spending focused on looked after children.

Almost half of all council spending on children's social care is now directed towards support for the 70,000+ children already in the care system, leaving the other half for the remaining 11.7 million children in the country



Child protection: safeguarding services have limited options to protect exploited children

As Crest highlighted in our [recent report on county lines and looked after children](#), local authorities increasingly place young people out of their area because they are unable to find suitable placements locally. In one case, a judge found that a 16-year-old girl who was at risk of suicide ought to be placed in a secure setting or a regulated children's home - but no such placements were available in the UK. She was instead moved to an unregulated home.

Relocation is sometimes viewed as the only way to protect young people from harm by non-family members. However, it can be counter-productive because they lose protective relationships, as well as those which are risky. We have also heard there is inadequate provision when young people return to the area they have been moved from, especially if they have turned 18.

Securing Safety project,
University of
Bedfordshire:

Local authority survey respondents identified **2,128 young people who had been affected by harm in non-family settings** and were supported by social care.

215 (10%) had been placed out of area, with a further 29 relocations planned

92 (43%) had been placed in a residential children's home

17 (8%) had been placed in a secure placement

Case study: out-of-area placement

In our 'deep dive' borough, a young man was voluntarily taken into care to protect him from harm outside his family setting. But he was placed in an out-of-area, semi-independent home which was unable to manage his risk. He continued to go missing — with indicators of county lines exploitation. He later committed an offence and was taken into custody. The young man also had other vulnerabilities: a history of neglect; special educational needs; and school exclusion.

Child protection: a new approach to protecting young people at risk, 'Contextual Safeguarding', is promising - but there are real barriers to widespread adoption of the model

After [discovering](#) that child protection systems were failing victims at risk of abuse in non-family settings, Dr Carlene Firmin suggested an alternative approach - the Contextual Safeguarding Model. It has been piloted in several areas including north London

The [Contextual Safeguarding project in Hackney](#) is designed to respond better to adolescents facing serious problems outside the home - in the real world and online. The project helps those at risk of child sexual and criminal exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, youth violence and involvement with gangs.

Young people in Hackney, who were questioned for the project, described violence in their area as endemic. **They wanted to see more youth clubs, increased access to formal and informal support, peer-led interventions, youth participation in community safety work and better lighting. Some called for more police in unsafe areas.**

Despite the model's popularity and logical appeal, the findings of an initial evaluation are mixed - and show that the organisational culture of social work cannot be changed easily

The evaluation, published in November 2020, said it was far too soon to say if the project had made a clear difference. It found that:

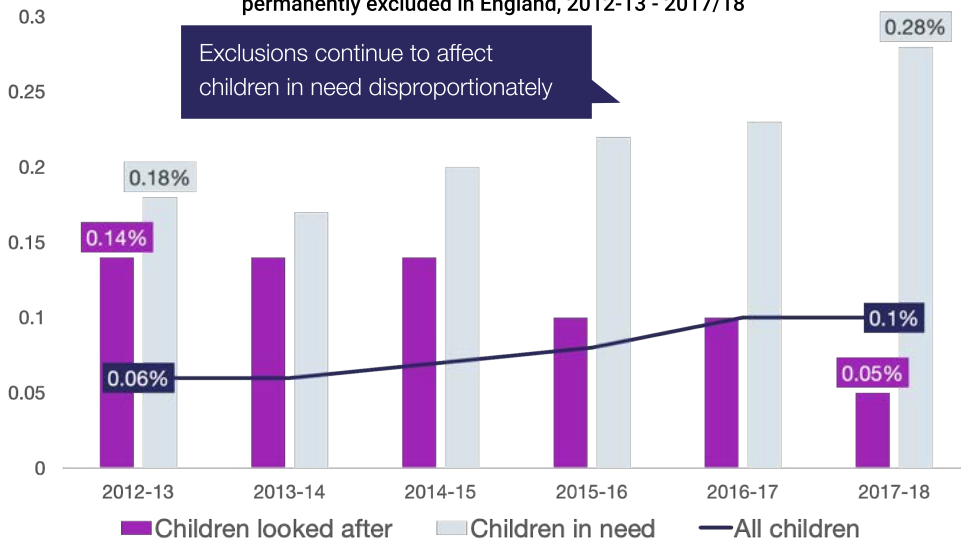
- The new safeguarding approach had been **experienced positively** by local businesses and schools
- New practice included building relationships between schools and fast food outlets; establishing peer listeners and parents' forums in schools; & increasing police visibility
- Residents reported **feeling safer** in parks, and there was a reduction in **anti-social behaviour**
- Social workers were more aware of, and confident about recording, harm in non-family settings but many **continue to struggle with the culture change** under the new model

Education: while there are signs that permanent exclusions have flattened, the performance and funding systems for schools do not incentivise schools to use exclusions only as a last resort

The rate of permanent exclusions has remained roughly stable since 2016/17 and has fallen for children in care - after the Department for Education issued guidance

But schools are not responsible for the educational outcomes of children who are excluded - which does not give schools an incentive to keep children in school

Percentage of looked after children, children in need, and all children, permanently excluded in England, 2012-13 - 2017/18



When a child is excluded from school, more expensive alternative provision will be needed such as a Pupil Referral Unit. Here costs are higher and must be met out of the local authority high needs budget. The excluding school is no longer responsible for the costs of that provision or for the educational attainment. As one respondent to the Timpson review put it:

“Simply put, if a child is displaying behaviour or performance that requires additional management and support, it is often easier and cheaper to permanently exclude them, than for the school to implement what they need.”

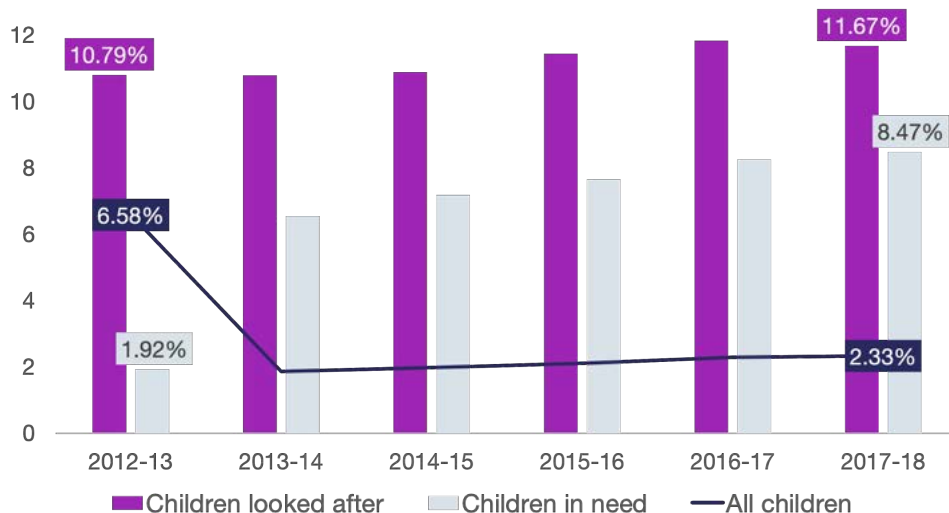
The Timpson Review of Exclusions recommended schools are made responsible for the outcomes of excluded children. The Government accepted the recommendations in principle - but so far there has been no progress on the issue.

Education: Meanwhile fixed term exclusions continue to rise and informal practices such as 'off-rolling' appear to be more common

Fixed-term exclusions are increasing, particularly for children in care and other vulnerable groups. These can be made for a up to 45 days over a year, leaving many children out of school for long periods

Practices such as as off-rolling have been strongly linked to school performance and some children are likely to fall out of education altogether.

Percentage of looked after children, children in need, and all children, with at least one fixed period exclusion in England, 2012-13 - 2017/18



Off-rolling means a child being **removed from a school roll because it's in the school's best interests, not the child's.**

A survey for Ofsted found that while schools may say to parents that pupils are off-rolled due to behaviour, teachers privately believe the decisions are taken to boost the school's academic record. Parents may be pressured to accept off-rolling - especially those with the least understanding of their children's rights. Teachers who have seen off-rolling also believe the practice is on the rise.

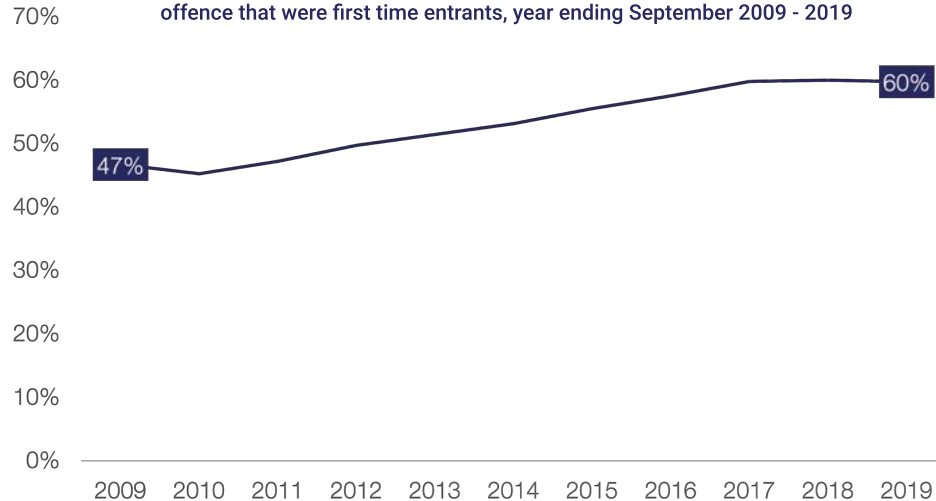
A third of teachers thought off-rolled pupils went on to other mainstream schools, and only a fifth of those with experience said there was any follow-up from the school.

Youth Justice: A greater focus on diversion (out of court disposals) has likely kept more children out of the Criminal Justice System. However, there is also some evidence that offending by young people is not being picked up early enough

60% of children who've committed violent crimes have no previous convictions or cautions - compared to 47% ten years ago. Are some first-time offenders not receiving effective interventions until too late?

Previous [Crest research](#) found that funding cuts have severely affected Youth Offending Team (YOT) prevention work. Prevention work has never been explicitly included in YOTs' statutory functions.

The proportion of Juveniles convicted or cautioned for a violence against the person offence that were first time entrants, year ending September 2009 - 2019



In 2010/11, 21% of Youth Justice Board (YJB) funding was ring-fenced for prevention programmes: £31m out of £145m. Ring-fencing was then removed and the central government grant to the YJB was cut to just £72m in 2019/20.

With no ring-fencing and an overall decline in funding, YOTs focused more on their statutory functions - duties they are legally obliged to carry out - which do not include prevention.

A YJB and Ministry of Justice audit in 2017 found that although nearly all YOTs still did prevention work, it was limited. A fifth of YOTs said less than 10% of their caseload related to non-statutory interventions - indicating that prevention work is in a precarious position.

...

Children on the cusp of violence: The way in which adolescents appear or present to adults in authority does not always fit with notions of vulnerability - this may affect how they are treated

The young people who are most at risk of involvement in serious violence – teenage boys – are the least likely to be viewed as vulnerable.. A 2016 study found that 15 to 17 year olds were generally perceived as ‘streetwise’, ‘cocksure’ and ‘switched-on’ by custody officers

The Violence and Vulnerability Unit (2018) noted that criminally-exploited children did not always meet the threshold for support. Instead, there was “a tendency to view these young people’s behaviour, especially in the case of boys, as a sign of criminality, almost a lifestyle choice, rather than evidence of a vulnerable child in need of protection”.

“The reality for lots of those children is that the recording of the journey of vulnerability is too broken ... these are children who will have had frequent interactions with social care potentially from birth, school exclusion, multiple primary schools, police, youth offending, CAMHS referrals potentially without much success. Those records stop and start so often, and are passed between so many people, that a genuine understanding of vulnerability is lost. They are and remain challenging, dysregulated of one mind, of another naughty, bad, not worthy of a place: rejected and moved on.”

(Programme Lead, The Difference)

A [report](#) by the policing watchdog, HMICFRS and others on how criminal exploitation was tackled, found evidence of attitudes and practices similar to those which characterised the early response to child sexual exploitation. For example, children were not always treated as victims; there was a view that ‘this does not happen here’; and a lack of curiosity about this group of children:

“We must ensure that the mistakes that some partners made in being slow to recognise the risk of child sexual exploitation are not repeated”.

HMICFRS et al (2018). “Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum”

Children on the cusp of violence: Research shows that childhood trauma can make it hard for people to trust services. But support often focuses on managing immediate risks rather than building trust

Trauma can reduce an individual's trust in adults and the wider environment, leading to disengagement or a lack of trust in services

Recent research suggests that **trauma from early abuse erodes children's ability to trust new people and new information - including professionals and the information they provide**. This helps to explain why these young people are described as 'hard to reach' or disengaged. They may struggle to manage their emotions. However, anger and non-engagement can often lead to disqualification from support services. To engage may require open-ended support from people with the skills, empathy and time to build meaningful relationships with them.

"Young people...**detach to survive**" (youth intervention worker)

'Hard' performance measures, such as getting children back to school or securing employment, may not be appropriate for children suffering trauma

The relationship-building process takes time, is not linear and requires persistence and must be balanced with moving at a person's own pace.

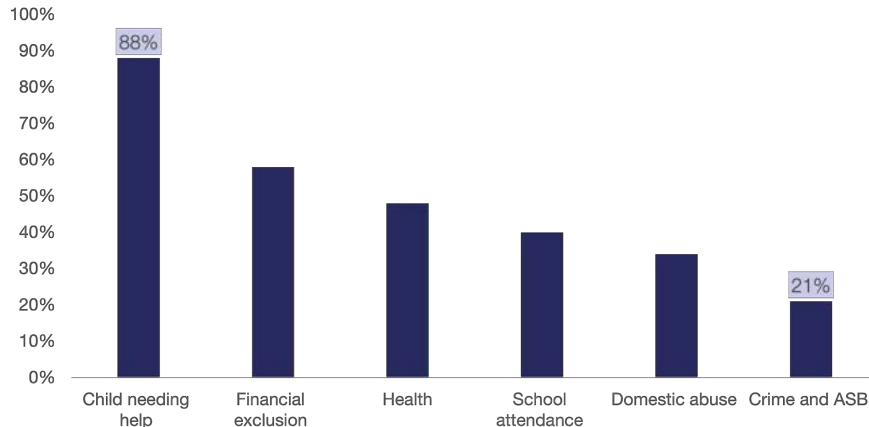
Redthread say progress for a young person occurs in an "**upward spiral**", which allows for mistakes, rather than in a continuous, linear way. This is built into Redthread's operating model, so they do not have 'hard' performance indicators on re-offending or educational outcomes.

'Soft' indicators, which can reflect increased resilience and participation outside rigid timeframes, are more appropriate for work with traumatised young people but this is challenging for commissioners to use..

Early intervention: early help services are a key means of supporting children and families who may be at risk of violence. But growing caseloads mean families with older children at risk are not treated as a priority

Funding from the Troubled Families Programme is a core part of the early-help provision in most areas of England. Under the programme, services are delivered through a 'whole family approach', with support to deal with unemployment, ill-health, vulnerability, domestic abuse and crime. The programme shows excellent results for reducing numbers of looked-after children. There are also positive results for families affected by crime and anti-social behaviour - but few such families benefit from the programme.

Of the many issues faced by families, crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) is now the least common problem, experienced by **only one in five families entering the programme**:



This is partly because the programme is increasingly used to support families with younger children: 34% have at least one child aged two or under; 49% of families have at least one child under five. But the absence of families affected by crime in the programme has been attributed to the **smaller role that police now play in the programme** - while the 'whole family' approach, adopted by agencies involved, has been least well-embedded in the police service.

Community safety approaches are not being fully utilised to keep young people safe

Community safety services have a vital role to play in ensuring that public spaces where violence occurs are safe...

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are responsible for reducing crime and offending in their areas. Serious violence which affects young people occurs in parks, outside schools, in stairwells and town centres. They become places of risk and harm for young people.

These are all areas where the local authority and its partner agencies have a presence, powers and responsibilities which can be used more proactively to enable young people to feel safe. They could make the physical environment safer, bring in more adult or authority figures, disrupt risky activity and take enforcement action where needed. But in the absence of community safety, the police become the only service which has a presence in these areas.

...but community safety approaches are often criticised for failing to protect young people, in particular

CSPs are not always well integrated with children's and safeguarding services and there are concerns that local authorities are not robust partners with the police. These concerns have previously been seen as contributing to previous safeguarding failures - for example in relation to [Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham](#).

In other contexts, the use of civil powers and enforcements under the auspices of community safety [have been criticised](#) for excluding young people. Contextual Safeguarding approaches also recommend that safeguarding children from violence outside the home should not be led by a community safety approach but by children's services.

Local accountability: Vulnerable children who do not meet the criteria for support and young victims of violence fall through the gaps - while responsibility for them is unclear with too much 'silo' working

Children not considered to be 'at risk enough' fall through gaps in support - and young victims of violence are not treated as a priority

The proportion of children referred for **child protection** services for a second time in 12 months [has been rising](#) for five years. It suggests safeguarding concerns have not been addressed.

There is no established means to raise concerns about children repeatedly **stopped and searched** with no further action.

There is no real-time monitoring of **children who are out of school** for safeguarding purposes. Such data - on exclusions and other moves out of education - is not routinely shared.

Children turning 18 who have been at risk and supported under child protection arrangements will not automatically be transferred to adult safeguarding services.

Child protection services, early help groups and youth justice agencies have no legal responsibility to identify and support child **victims of violence**.

No one has ultimate responsibility for prevention, with funding for early intervention projects reinforcing silo working

Decision-making and services for vulnerable children are split between many organisations, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships.

No agency takes **overall responsibility** for preventing children becoming victims or offenders.

The Government funds **specific projects** such as the Youth Endowment Fund (£200m over 10 years), the Early Intervention Youth Fund (£22m over 2 years) and the Trusted Relationship Fund (£13m over 2 years). However they are not adequate replacements for core funding and can be uncoordinated. Programmes for victims of violence treated in hospital, such as [Redthread](#) and [Navigator](#), remain the exception.

Summary of key findings

- **Safeguarding services - and child protection more generally - are not systematically keeping young people safe from violence outside the home**
- **Schools struggle to manage behavioural problems, leading to exclusions and removal from education**
- **Youth Offending Teams can play a key role in prevention - but they often become involved too late to make a difference**
- **The police and other agencies lack specialist training in identifying and responding to trauma**
- **There is a 'cliff-edge' of support at 18 - it particularly affects young people not in education or training**
- **Local accountability is weak - services are in silos, no one is incentivised to take charge of a problem**
- **Support is often short-term and crisis-driven, focused on managing immediate risks, and may exclude people who most need help**



Chapter 4: Recommendations



Recommendations

Problem

Safeguarding services are not keeping young people safe from violence outside the home

Schools struggle to manage behaviour, leading to exclusions and off-rolling

Youth Offending Teams can play a key role in prevention - but they often become involved too late to make a difference

Solution

Each local authority should be required to set out a **strategy and action plan** to demonstrate how children at risk of violence outside the home will be safeguarded, as they are for child sexual exploitation.

Tools such as **social network analysis** can help safeguarding services better recognise how the influences of peer networks can rapidly increase risks of violence.

School funding arrangements should provide incentives for children to remain in school:

- Schools should be responsible for a child's attainment when excluded and jointly responsible for funding the cost of alternative provision with the local authority
- A 'vulnerability' premium for schools to provide additional support for children designated 'children in need'
- Safeguarding services should have access to real-time information about children not currently in school

Given the overlap between victims and offenders, **YOTs should be given a role in assessing the risks of children who are victims of violence**, and if appropriate, diverting them to relevant interventions

Prevention of offending should be an **statutory function of the youth justice system** with ringfenced funding, so Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) can focus on identifying those most at risk of offending.

Recommendations

Problem

The police and other agencies lack specialist training in identifying and responding to trauma

There is a 'cliff-edge' in support at 18

Local accountability for preventing violence is weak - services are in silos

Solution

Trauma-informed training should be rolled out across law enforcement and other services who come into contact with perpetrators or victims of violence. Commissioners of services should be trained in the importance of practice models which focus on strengthening trust in the face of detachment from those who need help and ensuring providers are given appropriate flexibility (around budgets, time frames etc) in building long-term relationships

The government should dedicate resources to supporting 18-24 year olds who are vulnerable to violence: including ring-fenced education, training and employment opportunities. Support is also required to help the transition of children who 'age' out of the youth justice system to prevent them moving straight into the adult system. This should build on the [Government's Shared Outcomes Fund](#), set out in the Spending Review.

There is already a patchwork of prevention-oriented partnership bodies, including Violence Reduction Units, Community Safety Partnerships and more operational bodies, such as Local Safeguarding Boards. Government should commit to simplifying local arrangements, **ensuring a single body is charged with preventing violence locally** (possibly via rejuvenating community safety partnerships), underpinned by a duty to cooperate

THANK YOU



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