



Violence Reduction Strategy 2022-2027

A community partnership response to tackle serious violence and crime in Islington

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Foreword/opening statements

Cllr Sue Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety and Chair of the Safer Islington Partnership foreword will be added following Executive Board, this will highlight in particular the importance and success of the engagement around this strategy. We will invite comments from Executive and the partnership as to further key points to include.

Andy Carter, Borough Commander of Islington/Camden Borough Command Unit, Metropolitan Police

Tackling violence in all its forms remains the Met's number one priority. This is the main issue that Londoners have made clear is important to them and that underlines our ongoing commitment to tackling violence.

Violent crime devastates the lives of individuals, families and communities. The police are determined to do all they can to prevent and disrupt such violence but we are clear that we cannot achieve this alone. Tackling the root causes requires a combined effort with our partners and our communities. We need to properly understand the issues, addressing the risk factors that increase the likelihood of somebody becoming an offender or a victim of serious violence, and to work together to reduce this risk. As such, prevention is central to our approach. We are constantly developing our capabilities and our response through a range of initiatives, such as:

- Problem-oriented policing (POP), also known as problem-solving policing, an approach to tackling crime and disorder that involves the identification of a specific problem, thorough analysis to understand the problem, the development of a tailored response and an assessment of the effects of the response.
- Focussed deterrence, also called "pulling levers," a focussed strategy that attempts to deter specific criminal behaviour through fear of specific sanctions (or "levers"), as well as anticipation of benefits for not engaging in crime.
- 'Hotspot's policing, a strategy that involves the targeting of resources and activities to those places where crime is most concentrated. The strategy is based on the premise that crime and disorder is not evenly spread within neighbourhoods but clustered in small locations. Focussing resources and activities in 'hotspot's aims to prevent crime in these specific areas and potentially, reduce overall crime levels in the wider geographic area.

We are also focussing on solving more violent crime in order to bring justice for those affected and improving the outcomes for victims.

This strategy sets out a new challenge for our partnership. We are determined to end the misery serious violence can cause. Only with this joint effort can we begin to achieve sustainable reductions in serious violence and improve the health and quality of life of those who live, work and visit Islington.

Introduction

Violence is a universal challenge. It has devastating consequences for victims, perpetrators, and their families, instils fear within and sows division into our communities, and has major financial and public health consequences for society.

As a category, 'violence' covers a broad range of incidents. The scope for violent crimes within this strategy encompasses exploitative and criminal activities where there is an inherent threat or reality of serious violence in the public realm and connecting to violence in the home. This includes: homicide, violence against the person (with injury) including knife and gun crime, organised crime (including county lines drug trafficking), serious youth violence, violence against women and girls (including domestic abuse), hate crime, modern slavery and human trafficking, cuckooing, and sexual offences (including rape and sexual assault). Within this scope, our remit is focussed specifically around reducing harm in the context of victims, offenders, and the location of where the actual or threat of serious violence took place.

Tackling this challenge is no easy task. Although the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) has shown long-term reductions in estimates of violent crime over the last two decades overall¹, incidents of serious violence have increased in England and Wales since 2014. Certain types of violence have increased sharply in recent years – knife crime, for example, increased by 84% between June 2014 and June 2020.² While we have recorded a decline in crime and violent incidents in Islington between 2020 and 2021 (compared to 2019-2020), this can be partly attributed to the Covid-19 lockdown. As restrictions ease and activities return, now is a time to refresh our ambition and approach towards serious violence reduction.

This is not a single agency issue. In order to truly tackle the root causes and examples of violence effectively, we must work in co-ordination and collaboration with local partners, as well as adapting a whole-community approach. We know that ethnicity, gender, and age

¹ Office for National Statistics, 'The nature of violence crime in England and Wales', [The nature of violent crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violence-crime-in-england-and-wales/2019-01-01)

² Home Office, 'Serious Violence Duty', [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft Guidance - Serious Violence Duty.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft_Guidance_-_Serious_Violence_Duty.pdf), p4.

shape the lived reality of violence³; a 'whole-community' approach also means understanding and addressing the differences in lived experience within our borough. Our commitment to addressing the disproportionate impact of violence on certain groups, such as young Black men, women, and vulnerable adults, is essential to our vision.

Although there have been positive reductions in the level of violent incidents across Islington, even one violent incident is an incident too many. We know there is more to do to make our community safer. This strategy sets out the framework for how we will take ownership of our ambition as a partnership to effect long-lasting change and reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence, specifically around six key priority strands:

- Places and Spaces
- Women's Safety
- Youth Safety
- Organised Crime
- Wider Adult Crime
- Drugs as a driver for crime

Our aim is to place the reduction of violent crime at the heart of community safety: to promote a coherent collective vision, priorities for collaborative partnership working, and shared and sustainable measures of success.

Our work to reduce violent crime links to wider community safety concerns, and we recognise the community feedback we received on experiencing factors such as inequality, poverty and mental ill-health and anxiety, which have negative consequences on individuals and communities. **To reaffirm however, the purpose of this work is a reduction in the scale and impact of actual, and perceived fear of, serious violent crimes in the borough – making Islington a fairer, safer borough for all.**

³ Office for National Statistics, 'The nature of violence crime in England and Wales', [The nature of violent crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violent-crime-in-england-and-wales/2019-01-22).

Creating this strategic framework has allowed us the opportunity to reflect on the extensive engagement that has taken place with communities and partners across Islington over 2021, ensuring diverse voices from across the borough and key learning from previous actions are analysed for us to build on. It has provided us with a strong steer and support for the work we must do in the coming years, including identifying underdeveloped areas of understanding or provision, and an opportunity to assess effective use of resources towards common objectives. However, this is only the start of our journey.

There is much work to do and we will continue to put the community at the heart of this partnership effort. This will include the development of an action plan through a process of community consultation and engagement with partners, community groups and residents. The plan will allow us to robustly, continuously and regularly monitor the progress, outputs and impact of our work as a partnership. Our intention is for this to remain a 'live' document; the strategy and plan will evolve and develop in response to the changing nature of serious violence and crime in Islington as well as through our improved intelligence and understanding of issues.

With this in mind, we have collated violence reduction actions from various plans across the Safer Islington Partnership (SIP) - Islington Council, the police, London Fire Brigade, health sector, schools, probation services and representatives from the voluntary, community, faith, and business sectors - into a draft action plan. We recognise that this document, attached as an appendix to the strategy, requires much work to ensure that the resources and collective effort align with – and can be measured over time against – our strategic objectives. This work is underway and will continue through year one of the plan.

We recognise that lots of community safety activity takes place in Islington, but the landscape can present a confusing and incoherent picture. Our primary action for year one of this strategy will be to further develop a clear summary action plan of the things which have greatest impact in reducing violent crime and which offer the community greatest assurance. This action plan will be a lens through which we can view changes in violent crime over time.

Further development, governance and monitoring of this strategic framework and plan will form part of our next steps, but first we will look to establish the context and purpose of our actions.

Our vision

Our ambition is to reduce the long-term scale and impact of violence – making Islington a safer, fairer borough for all.

We will adopt a whole-community approach: supporting all victims, families and communities affected, providing positive opportunities to those at risk of becoming involved in violence, and rehabilitating offenders. Integral to this vision is our commitment to addressing the disproportionate impact of violence on certain groups – namely, young Black men, women, and vulnerable adults. Through realising these aims, we aspire to:

- Save lives and significantly reduce serious injury
- Improve community resilience and cohesion
- Empower local people to take ownership over their neighbourhoods and communities
- Improve trust and confidence in public services and the police, particularly among Black and minoritised ethnic groups.

Taking ownership

In May 2021, the UK Government published guidance on the new Serious Violence Duty⁴, which obligates Community Safety Partnerships to reduce serious violence through implementation of a violence reduction strategy. Although this Violence Reduction Strategy is informed by this statutory duty, it is predominately inspired by our aspiration in Islington to promote a fairer, safer borough.

We know that tackling violence is a multi-faceted challenge that cannot be resolved by any single organisation. Only a partnership approach can be effective in delivering tangible reductions in violence on a local level, one that listens to and involves all our communities.

In Islington, the Safer Islington Partnership (SIP) is responsible for coordinating and overseeing efforts to reduce violence in the borough and improve community safety.

⁴ Home Office, 'Serious Violence Duty', https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027878/Draft_Guidance_-_Serious_Violence_Duty.pdf

This includes ownership over and monitoring of this strategy, which brings together and builds upon several existing or in-development strategies, as illustrated below:



Our Summer Violence Reduction and Safety work in 2021 focussed on responding to the predicted escalation of serious violence and homicide from late June to September 2021 saving young Black lives and ensuring our residents continue to feel safe in Islington.

Although centred on the short-term as an emergency response, our plan utilised the principles of a public health approach and has provided the foundation for the development of this longer-term comprehensive strategy. These principles include using data and intelligence to work with and for communities and identify levels of risk for the population and are outlined further in the 'Our Approach' section of this strategy. We have learnt from the opportunity to trial initiatives such as daily multi-agency tasking huddles, which were excellent in allowing sharing of information and joint quick tasking, and up-scaled community reassurance messaging and engagement outlining the range of work going on in this space and providing ways for residents to get involved.

With this strategy, we now turn to build on and take forward our action so far in support of our medium and long-term vision, responding to the picture of violence in Islington.

Violence in Islington

Defining violence

Violence is a broad category, encompassing numerous different kinds of violent incidents. In Islington, our scope includes particular violent crimes alongside exploitative and criminal activities where there is an inherent threat or reality of serious violence. This includes:

- Homicide
- Violence against the person (with injury) including knife and gun crime
- Organised Crime, including County Lines drug trafficking
- Serious Youth Violence
- Violence Against Women and Girls, including domestic abuse
- Hate Crime
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, including cuckooing
- Sexual offences, including rape and sexual assault

The causes of violence are complex and its consequences can touch anyone in the community. However, some people are at much greater risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence, such as those who experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (such as growing up in a household with domestic abuse, childhood trauma, abuse or neglect), or struggle with substance misuse and addiction. People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can also be more vulnerable.

We also know that ethnicity, gender, and age shape the lived reality of violence. Perpetrators of most forms of violence are predominately men aged 16 – 39, while young Black men are disproportionately represented as both victims and perpetrators in terms of youth violence⁵. These differing experiences in-part influence communities' trust in public services and the police; Black and Mixed groups have significantly less confidence in the police compared to

⁵ Office for National Statistics, 'The nature of violence crime in England and Wales', [The nature of violent crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violent-crime-in-england-and-wales/2019-01-22).

White ethnic groups according to data from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) on public perception and victim satisfaction with the Metropolitan Police Service.⁶

What does violence look like locally?

Islington experienced a 24% decline in crime and violent incidents between April 2020 and March 2021 (compared to the same period in 2019/2020). However, this can be partly attributed to the impact of Covid-19 – as restrictions have eased, violence and crime are likely to rise again.

Every year the Safer Islington Partnership carries out a strategic assessment of crime in the borough to give an overview of the current and long-term issues affecting or likely to affect the London Borough of Islington. This is then used to determine local priorities. In March 2021, our strategic assessment found that the experience of violence in Islington is also gendered; men are more likely to be a victim of robbery and non-domestic violence against the person (including serious violence), while women are more likely to be a victim of sexual offences, domestic abuse, other theft and theft from person.

The below figures outline the borough's performance data for different types of crime, which also forms part of the yearly strategic assessment. Data is taken from MetStats2, the Metropolitan Police Service business intelligence tool⁷, and compares the period between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 to the same period in 2019/20:

- **Knife crime** – although knife offences declined by 23% between 2019/20 and 2020/21, Islington remained the tenth highest London borough for knife crime offences. Incidents with injury declined by 18% overall, but only by 5% for young people under 24 – meaning we have more work to do to specifically protect our young people from knife harm.

⁶ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, 'Public voice dashboard', <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/public-voice-dashboard>

⁷ Data is taken from MetStats2 and reported internally by the Community Safety Intelligence Team, Islington Council. For statistics available to the public online see also: Metropolitan Police Service, 'Crime data dashboard', <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/crime-data-dashboard/>; Metropolitan Police Service, 'Annual crime summaries: 2020-2021', <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/>. Please note that the categories for the types of crime may vary in the public police statistics compared to data shared with the council and partners internally.

- **Youth violence** – overall youth violence incidents declined by 35%, a reduction higher than the London average (31%), and serious youth violence declined by 37%. However, significant ongoing tensions among groups of young people in the borough remain.
- **Robbery** – whilst recording reductions, Islington still ranked highly across London for personal robbery (sixth out of 32 boroughs). This was partially driven by pedal cycle and moped enabled crime, which is often connected to organised crime.
- **Sexual offences** – overall the number of sexual offences declined by 25% between 2019/20 and 2020/21, higher than the London average reduction of 8%.
- **Domestic abuse** – Islington recorded a 2.5% increase in detections of domestic abuse offences and the borough was ranked 1 out of 32 in London for the highest level of detections for the 12-month period between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 at 18%. While this may reflect well on our borough and our commitment to this work, it is a real challenge to all involved to drive up this unacceptably low rate.

How did Islington rank in London according to the Metropolitan Police Service across this period from April 2020 to March 2021?



Trust and confidence

Within our ambition to make Islington a safer, fairer place for all, we acknowledge the paramount importance of both reducing the scale and impact of serious violence so our communities are safe, and addressing fear of violence so our communities feel safe. Fear can have a profound impact in itself, adversely affecting health and wellbeing outcomes, disrupting community cohesion and resilience, restricting choices and mobility, and undermining the impact of positive reductions in violence.

We understand that the perception of safety within our borough is not always necessarily linked to evidential factors, such as living in an area with a high concentration of crime. We also know that perception or fear of safety impacts not only those who experience violence as victims and/or perpetrators but the whole community, including friends, family and neighbours. Following the past two years of feeling uncertain and unsafe in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, our residents may be feeling a heightened sense of vulnerability. We have heard from our communities and recognise the role high-profile incidents of serious violence may play in shifting how someone feels and acts in their area short or long-term. We have listened to experiences showing how multiple factors – such as age, disability, gender expression, race, visible religious affiliation, expression of sexuality, language barriers, care and support needs, experiences as a refugee or asylum seeker – may influence some residents to have a higher fear of violence. Ultimately, we also understand that the trust and confidence our communities have in public services and the police shapes feelings of safety in our streets.

Through consultation such as our Safer Spaces engagement platform run in 2021⁸, residents are encouraged to tell us not only where they feel safe and unsafe in Islington, but why. . This engagement exercise will help us develop actions to deliver practical, community-led responses based on the key locations, types of activity, environment and violence reported, and what we learn about the experiences of key demographics such as women and young people. Initiatives such as Safe Havens⁹ have already been developed in line with this thinking to reduce fear by providing a safe space within public and commercial premises for those who feel threatened on

⁸ Islington Council, 'Safer Spaces Islington', <https://saferspacesislington.commonplace.is/>

⁹ Islington Council, 'Safe haven scheme', <https://www.islington.gov.uk/community-safety/safe-havens-scheme>

the street. In conjunction with Public Protection, our Community Safety teams work to carry out environmental visual audits and make physical changes to minimise the risk of crime and the perception of that risk in an area.

As we look to further develop our strategy, we will continue to acknowledge this distinction. We will work with and engage with our residents to ensure we have a more accurate picture of what safety feels like in the borough and that we take a trauma-informed approach to understanding how we can tackle this challenge. Understanding that the perception of safety is influenced by concerns beyond the focus of this strategy on serious violence and crime, we will work to establish a wider community safety communications and engagement plan to set out in more detail how we capture, measure and address feelings of safety.

Our approach

Developing our approach

Our strategy has been informed and shaped – at every step of the process – by extensive engagement with communities and partners across the borough, including residents, service-users, voluntary and community sector organisations, and our statutory partners.

This consultation and development process has included:

- Islington Council development of an initial **Summer Violence Reduction Plan** with Islington police including actions centred around four key steps: preventing violence, minimising impact, supporting victims and offenders, and empowering communities
- **Partnership roundtable event** – consultation on the Summer Plan with organisations across Islington involved in violence reduction work
- Our **Safer Spaces physical postcard campaign**, targeting all households in the borough, encouraging residents to tell us where and why they feel unsafe locally
- Our **Safer Spaces engagement platform**, open to all who live, work, study or socialise in Islington, attracting approximately 1600 responses so far by November 2021.

Additionally, our '**Islington Together: Let's talk about a safer future**' engagement week was the largest safety consultation in London in 2021, engaging over 700 people. Almost 50

separate community conversations took place within the community in conjunction with residents and voluntary and community sector groups:

Islington Residents	Somali communities	Faith groups	Voluntary Groups
Young People	Muslim communities	Businesses	Schools
Tenancy Management Organisations	Parents affected by violence	LGBTQ+ residents	Councillors and Youth Councillors
Women	Parent champions	Ward Panels	Police
Tenants and Residents Associations Organisations	Residents with complex needs (e.g. substance misuse)	Staff who work directly with young people (including LBI staff)	Residents with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

From the launch event at the Islington Assembly Hall, our virtual Community Conversations, visits at three libraries, sixteen community centres, ten virtual partnership meetings, and five service user group meetings, a range of events were carried out in each ward. Each event had a fierce dedication to intensive, quality engagement with the diverse voices across all of our communities in Islington.

Our approach focussed on gaining insight from people with first-hand experience or interest in this work, putting local people at the heart as experts on their own neighbourhoods. This also involved asking voluntary and community groups to host discussions with their service users with which they had established relationships. This included: Arsenal in the Community, One True Voice, Caxton House, Better Lives, Centre 404, Forum+, Voluntary Action Islington, Parent Champions, Copenhagen Youth Project, SoapBox Youth Hub and the Violence Reduction Unit Parent Champions. In this way, we were able to lead with quality participation from people who have been affected by violence, giving voice to their experiences, and desire to be a part of the solution to these challenges.

Across these community spaces, everyone who lives and works in Islington was invited to share their experiences and feedback, answering five key questions:

- 1) How should the police, council and partners tackle violence in Islington?

- 2) Who do the police and council need to work with to tackle violence in Islington?
- 3) How can we keep you informed about the work we are doing to tackle violence in Islington?
- 4) How would you like to be involved in tackling violence in Islington?
- 5) What can we do as a community to tackle antisocial behaviour?

Five key themes emerged, highlighting what communities want us to prioritise and address within this work:

- Invest in early intervention and prevention by deploying a joined up approach between schools, families and social services.
- Work with communities to tackle violence and equip them with the skills and confidence to report antisocial behaviour and crime.
- Prioritise working with young people and parents/carers, to understand and tackle the root causes of violence.
- Make spaces safer for communities, particularly women and young people.
- Build relations between the police and communities.

What you had to say about a safer future in Islington

- "Tackle poverty and inequality from the beginning of young people's lives"
- "Early intervention is crucial and once individuals are identified you need an intensive intervention with a clear action plan"
- "We need a more holistic approach, including having role models within the system"
- "Women would like workshops on safety advice"
- "There is a lot of trauma in the community. We need to do more work in areas where we know there is a lot of trauma surrounding incidents of violence"
- "We need to empower and deliver training to parents. Taking part in the Parent Champion project has made me feel empowered and it would be nice to share this with other parents"
- "We can tackle violence as a TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More)"
- "Professionals speak about violence in terms of statistics; even one death is one death too many"
- "We know the police are there to protect us and we need to respect them but respect goes both ways"
- "We need to keep on talking and having these meetings. But we want solutions to follow"

This engagement week was only a starting point. We know there is still more to be done to ensure the voice of all of our community are truly heard in this strategy as it is implemented. Adopting a 'you said, we did' communications approach will allow us to continue the conversation with our communities, partners and residents across the borough and improve transparency and accountability in our delivery.

A public health model

While often regarded as simply a criminal justice matter, violence is a significant public health issue. It impacts the broader health and wellbeing of the general population (alongside the individuals directly affected) and causes poor physical and mental health through fear, injury and loss or grief, affecting individuals and communities. Like a disease, it is contagious, with clusters of incidents linked by varying factors, and it is distributed unequally across the population, connected to underlying inequalities.

In Islington, we recognise that tackling both the root causes of and manifestation of violence requires a partnership approach – led by and for the local community. Although the origins of violence are complex and challenging to tackle, it is not inevitable – patterns of violent behaviour and incidents can be predicted and prevented.

In developing our strategy and action plan, we have been guided by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 'public health' model of violence reduction. This approach is summarised by the following points:

- Focussing on a defined population
- With and for communities
- Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- Focussed on generating long-term as well as short-term solutions
- Based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities
- Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem

In adopting this approach, we seek to avoid over-criminalising those groups most at risk of or already offending, particularly as this can undermine trust and confidence in the police.

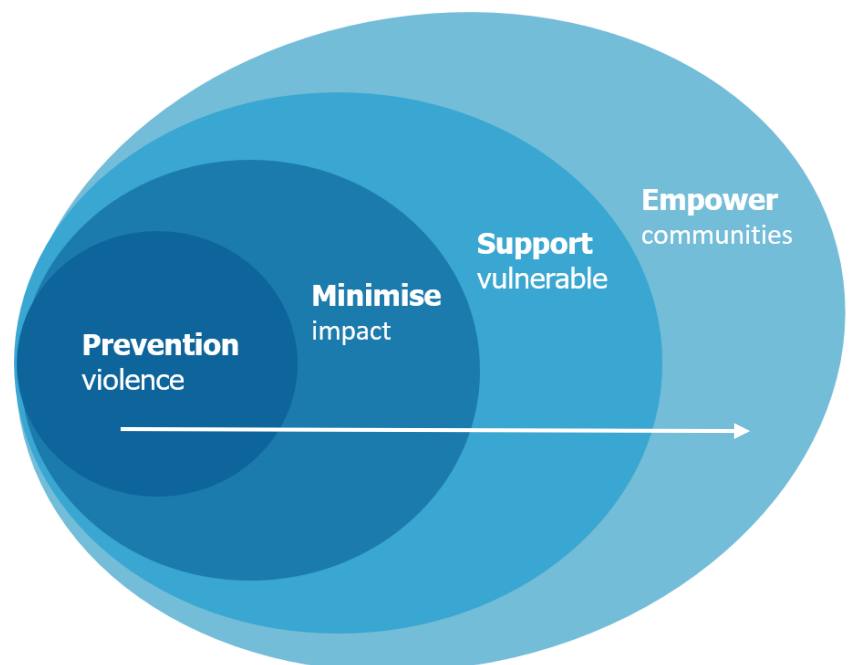
However, we recognise that use of the law and law enforcement are critical aspects of a cohesive approach to tackling violence – our public health approach is complementary to, not in conflict with, enforcement and criminal justice activities. In the short-term, more people may come into contact with the criminal justice system because of increased police interventions while prevention and support services operate in tandem.

This model informs our whole-system approach – a multi-faceted challenge requires a multi-faceted response from across the community. SIP will therefore draw on the full resources of the partnership – Islington Council, the police, London Fire Brigade, health sector, schools, probation services and representatives from the voluntary, community, faith, and business sectors – to deliver evidence-based interventions and engagement work with young people, adults, families and communities.

Four steps to reducing and preventing violence

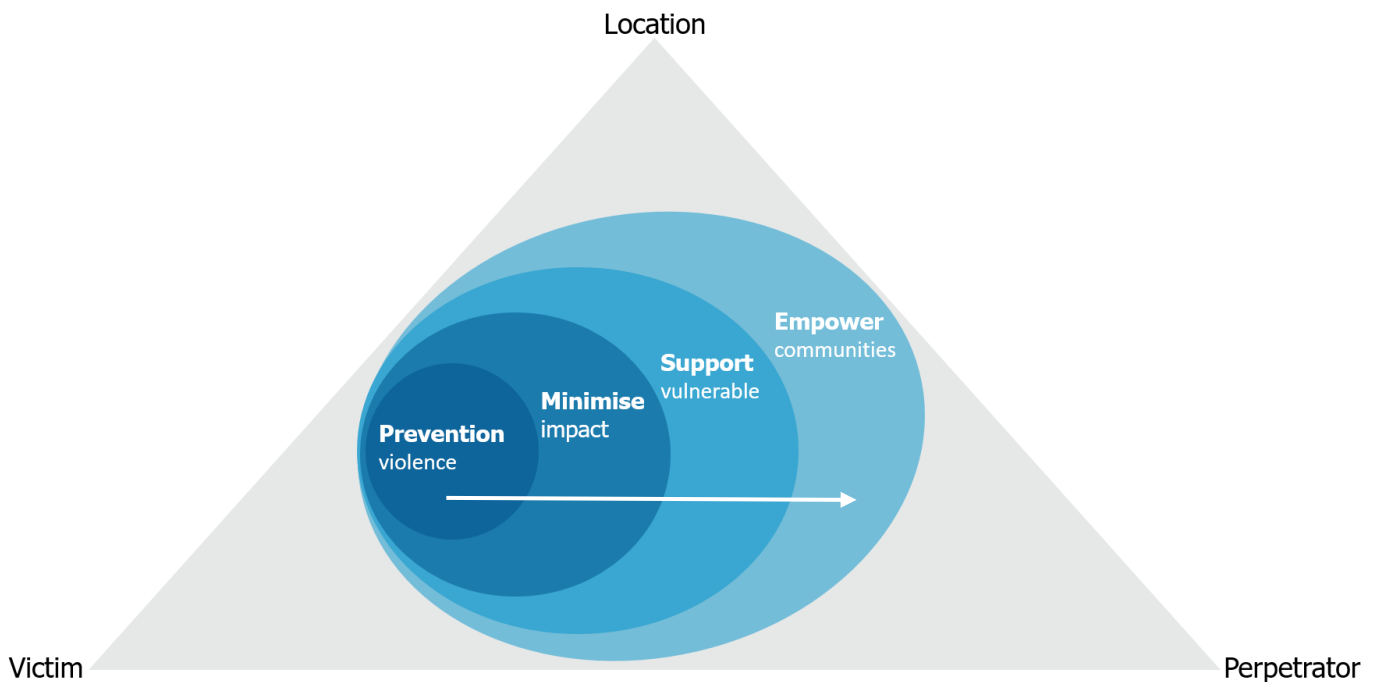
Our approach is a four step, integrated approach that centres community empowerment as the most sustainable outcome for long-term, positive change:

- **Prevention** of serious violence before it occurs by providing violence-diverting information and opportunities alongside targeted interventions towards individuals most at-risk of committing violence.
- **Minimise** the impact of serious violence on the community by scaling-up the partnership and communications response to swiftly de-escalate and contain violence.
- **Support** those vulnerable to, at-risk of or affected by serious violence by providing them with adequate support and interventions.



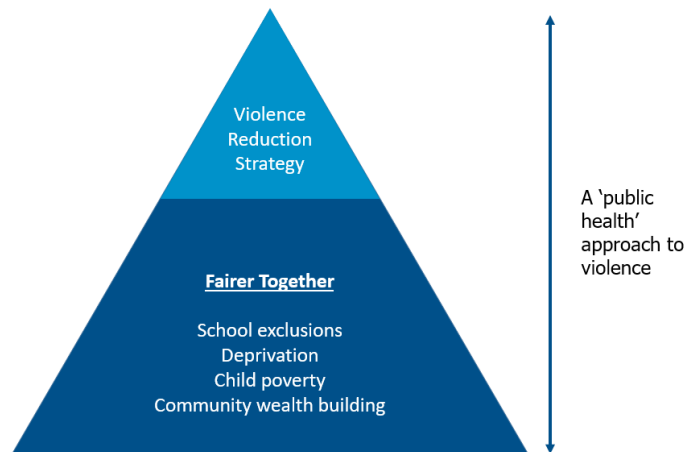
- **Empower** communities to strengthen their own resilience and knowledge, make positive behavioural choices, and to work with others to prevent and reduce serious violence.

In order to effectively tackle violence, our approach also encompasses a focus on victims, offenders, and locations as the three ingredients for an incident (or threat) of violence:



As a part of our Fairer Together partnership, Islington is influencing the prevention and reduction of violence through a range of early intervention, prevention, and targeted approaches tackling the underlying causes of violence such as school exclusions and deprivation.

However, as illustrated below, the remit of this strategy (and SIP) is focussed specifically around reducing harm in the context of victims, offenders, and the location of where the actual or threat of serious violence took place.



Putting community at the heart of our approach

Engaging, building trust with and collaborating with communities in Islington is vital to the success of this strategy. Local people are experts of their own neighbourhoods, providing valuable understanding into the trigger points for tensions and violence.

Ensuring communities are involved from the beginning also ensures long-term sustainability of our approach. This means empowering our communities, whether through offering forums for people to share concerns, exchange ideas and build networks, or exploring funding options to implement initiatives – such as the council's new community chest funding for small community groups to get involved in making spaces safer and preventing violence.

By educating local people on violence reduction and equipping them with the tools to engage their networks, we will uplift communities to work alongside us in:

- preventing serious violence before it occurs through provision of positive opportunities and education
- minimising and containing the impact of violence on the wider community
- supporting those at-risk of or affected by serious violence, including children, family and friends
- developing and promoting positive alternative opportunities, away from violence, within the community

Essential to our approach is engaging with residents who seldom engage with or lack trust in public services. This includes targeted engagement with Black and minoritised ethnic groups to

build confidence in and access to statutory partners' services. This approach will be built upon in our development of a trust, accountability, and engagement action plan based on the Mayor of London's Action Plan for Transparency, Accountability and Trust in Policing¹⁰.

Some of our engagement plans could include:

- Developing 'community conversations' – an open forum for questions and discussion with residents and partnership organisations
- Establishing an annual memorial event of loss to provide an opportunity for people to come together and reflect, celebrate, and mourn those who have lost their lives through violence within the borough
- Developing trusted sources of information within community spaces – including barbershops, takeaways, religious sites, youth centres, and sports clubs – to deliver positive violence reduction messages
- Proactive involvement with ward partnerships to give local residents, community groups and businesses the opportunity to voice concerns, shape services, and receive information relating to violence reduction in their particular ward
- Using data from our Safer Spaces engagement to explore opportunities with specific communities, or in specific locations
- Adopting a 'you said, we did' communications approach to improve transparency and accountability in our delivery
- Establishing a Violence Reduction Ambassador scheme and/or support of empowerment initiatives such as Parent champions
- Working with the Arsenal/Adidas No More Red initiative to encourage young people who can work to reduce violence and increase confidence in their communities to seek mentoring and support from the scheme
- Youth safety parenting workshops targeted towards Black and Minority Ethnic communities

¹⁰ Mayor of London, Greater London Authority, 'Action Plan – Transparency, Accountability and Trust in Policing', <https://www.london.gov.uk/publications/action-plan-transparency-accountability-and-trust-policing>

- Working with colleagues across the Fairer Together Partnership to identify shared engagement opportunities to support, involve and work with residents early

Our priorities

We have developed five key priority focus areas for 2022-27. Each priority area will form a separate strand of work. There are six strands of work in total. A strand of work has been added to ensure we maintain a focus locally on the impact of drugs as a driver for serious violence and crime that cuts across each focus area.



Each of our strands of work will includes focusses and corresponding actions connected to our four integrated spheres of violence reduction: **preventing** violence, **minimising** impact, **supporting** victims and offenders, and **empowering** communities.

1. Places and Spaces

Some locations in Islington are known as areas of 'high harm' or 'hotspots', which means there is a high concentration of violence or crime. Our knowledge of these more susceptible areas, whether that be transport hubs or places of work, such as hospitals, retailers and those within the night-time economy, already informs the prioritisation and resources we put into our everyday work.

Through our focus on 'Places and Spaces' we will continue to monitor, review and safeguard high harm locations we are already aware of, as well as expanding our knowledge of these locations in the borough through data analysis and engagement to target actions effectively. This includes commitments from the police for the use of 'hotspot' policing and patrols, focussing resources and activities to prevent crime in specific concentrated areas and potentially, reduce overall crime levels in the wider geographic area. It also involves broader

work within the council to 'design out' crime through environmental changes and empower residents to take control to support the improvement and safety of public places and greenspaces across the borough. This means taking a whole-systems approach in line with successful pilot projects in areas such as Finsbury Park, and the 'Parks for Health' programme to transform greenspaces to tackle health challenges for now and future generations.

Alongside, 'hotspot' locations, we know that how safe local people feel in the spaces across our borough can be influenced by many factors – including age, gender expression, race, ethnicity, visible religious affiliation, and expression of sexuality, as well as how dark it is and how many people are outside. We also know that 'high harm' spaces are not only physical – violent incidents (or the threat of violence) can also take place in the online world.

Our aim is that no one should feel afraid in Islington, regardless of your personal identity, the time of day, or how busy it is: everyone should feel and be safe in our streets.

Safer Spaces

Our priority is to continually improve how we identify locations where violence occurs, or where people feel unsafe. Our aim is to reduce the level of criminality, violence and threat, working with communities to ensure those spaces become safe and welcoming for all.

Night-time economy

The night-time economy is a fundamental part of our community in Islington that everyone should be able to enjoy. However, it can be associated with issues related to drug and alcohol-fuelled violence, sexual harassment and assaults, so we have introduced the late-night levy and subsequent strategies to protect these assets and help ensure everyone can enjoy a safe night out.

Retail

We will work closely with local businesses to address retail crime and associated abuse perpetrated against business owners and staff. This includes access to police officers tasked to specific business communities in specific cases, such as work undertaken at Blackstock Road in 2021, and maintaining a strong dialogue between retail groups, the

council's Inclusive Economy team, the police and community safety partners to highlight emerging issues.

Borders

Violence is not contained within administrative borders; as such, we will work closely with the surrounding boroughs of Haringey, Hackney and Camden, particularly in key locations of high harm. We expect all Safer Islington partners to work closely with colleagues across different boroughs to ensure effectiveness of services and support.

Online Space

We will reduce harm for local people in the online space by focussing on identifying and tackling the avenues for exploitation and grooming – particularly of young people and vulnerable adults, or those with learning disabilities – and supporting those affected to recover. We will also prioritise improving our understanding of how social media and online developments are used to facilitate the illegal drugs market.

Hate Crime

Crimes committed against someone because of any protected characteristic is a hate crime and should be reported to the police. Islington Council has also passed a motion to treat gender-based violence as a hate crime¹¹; our priorities around the safety of women and girls in particular are outlined in our next priority area below. Although Islington is a proudly diverse borough with a history of tolerance and openness, hate crime is a serious issue for some members of our community and has a history of being underreported. Given this history, we will take a nuanced approach to the data on hate crime in Islington, recognising both the work still to be done to deliver the best outcomes for our residents, and that improved identification and reporting is in itself one of our priorities.

¹¹ Islington Council, 'Islington women stand in solidarity: none of us are safe unless all of us are safe', <https://www.islington.media/news/islington-women-stand-in-solidarity-none-of-us-are-safe-unless-all-of-us-are-safe>

We are determined to tackle hate crime and promote cohesion and good relations in our community. Our strategy for this is dealt with in more detail in our 4-year Hate Crime Strategy¹². This focusses on a number of areas ranging from encouraging the reporting and identification of hate crimes through communications and engagement and victim support, to providing challenge to the police through measures such as dip sampling of cases to ensure quality investigations are carried out and improve the response and outcomes for victims who report a hate crime.

In our support of the Islington Hate Crime Forum, we are committed to continuing to work with community organisations, specialist support groups and individual members of our community who work with and represent protected groups. Our aim is to better understand and address lived experiences regarding risk, reporting, support and outcomes of those who become, or fear becoming, victims of hate crime in Islington.

2. Women's Safety

While men disproportionately represent victims (and perpetrators) of violent crime, women are significantly more likely to experience gender-based violence in the home and sexual assault or harassment in public spaces. Younger women aged 16 – 24 are particularly more likely to be victims of sexual assault and experience domestic abuse than any other age group.¹³

Our work around women's safety prioritises providing those experiencing or fearing violence with the support they need to be and feel safe. This includes doing more to hold people who use violence and abuse to account, supporting practitioners to address the gap in services engaging with men who use violence and, where appropriate, supporting them to change their harmful behaviour. For example, our Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and housing teams have previously carried out communications campaigns aimed at people using violence, which has been continued with a winter campaign specifically aimed at the behaviour of men placed in public spaces such as toilets and bars. Our commitment to take action is detailed

¹² Islington Council, 'Islington is 'no place for hate' as strategy to tackle hate crime is launched',

<https://www.islington.media/news/islington-is-no-place-for-hate-as-strategy-to-tackle-hate-crime-is-launched>

¹³ Office for National Statistics, 'Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales', [Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/sexualoffences/articles/sexualoffencesvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/2017)

more broadly in the council's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-2026, one of the three focus areas for action as set out below.

Our aim is for women in Islington to live life free of fear – of domestic abuse, gender-based violence, sexual assault or harassment – both at home and in our public spaces.

Our priorities for action include:

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Islington Council has developed a VAWG 2021-26 strategy, encompassing a range of actions which aim to reduce all forms of VAWG including domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and sex trafficking. This was published in November 2021 and focusses on a number of areas ranging from creating and delivering a coordinated community response, to preventing violence and abuse from happening and challenging inequality throughout the delivery of our VAWG services to prevent discrimination and address the impacts of intersectionality.

Making public spaces safer

We have developed a number of initiatives to improve women's confidence and safety in public spaces around Islington, including:

- Islington Safer Spaces – whole-borough initiative to encourage residents' feedback about where and why they feel safe or unsafe in locations around Islington. We will work with women's organisations to engage with women and develop practical, community-led responses and initiatives
- Supporting the Women's Night Safety Charter
- Women's Safety walks, developed by Islington4Women to encourage women to go out in their neighbourhoods and work with partners to make their routes safer
- Promoting Safe Havens – initiative encouraging public and commercial premises to register as a 'safe haven', providing a safe space for those in danger, feel threatened or harassed on the street

Nightlife

The police and council are committed to working closely with local businesses to promote women's safety in clubs, pubs, and other spaces connected to the night-time economy. This includes through providing easily accessible support if women feel unsafe or threatened, for any reason, such as through the 'Ask for Angela' initiative, and work to address people carrying out sexual violence, for example targeted communications aimed specifically at men placed in public spaces such as toilets and bars.

3. Youth Safety

Young people are particularly important to target in the violence reduction space, as young people (aged 16-24) in the UK are more likely to be victims of violence than any other age group.

In Islington, young people are also disproportionately involved in perpetrating some forms of violence – in Camden and Islington, 78% of people known to be involved in organised crime are between 18 and 28 years old. Young people are particularly vulnerable to be exploited as part of drug trafficking activities – 63% of individuals linked to 'county lines' trafficking in Islington are 18-25 years old, with the average age of 'runners' (those recruited to transport drugs and cash) becoming younger.

Islington has developed a comprehensive, five year youth safety strategy (Islington Youth Safety Strategy, 2020 – 2025) that underlines our commitments to: protect young people from violence, abuse and exploitation; safeguard young people and support families, parents and carers; address inequality and disproportionality within the youth and criminal justice system; and reduce re-offending for young people who have become more persistent in their offending behaviours.

Our priorities for action, as detailed in the strategy, include:

- Prevention
- Identification
- Engagement
- Diversion

- Support
- Protection
- Disruption
- Enforcement and Prosecution

The strategy aligns with our principles under Fairer Together to give our young people the best possible start in their lives.

4. Adults

Some adults – including those with learning disabilities, drug addiction, and poor mental health – are much more vulnerable to being affected by or becoming involved in violence than others.

Vulnerable adults are often targeted by perpetrators of violence specifically because of their perceived vulnerability. Adults with learning disabilities, for example, have a higher risk of being the victims of crime and abuse than the general population – yet they are also much less likely to report the crime or abuse they have experienced or seek help.¹⁴

We also recognise the broader impact that the incidence and manifestation of serious violence can have on feelings of safety across all adults within our community, whether that be in relation to intergenerational dynamics, experience of and connection to ‘high harm’ locations or areas facing higher levels of deprivation. Through our communications and engagement plan, we aim to actively engage this cohort, including vulnerable and older adults, to improve our intelligence, measures and action to address feelings of safety in a way that centres community empowerment.

Our ambition is to prevent vulnerable adults from being exploited into violence and support adult offenders to move away from crime, whilst holding them to account for their actions.

¹⁴ Joint Committee On Human Rights, ‘Seventh Report: TREATMENT OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM’, [Joint Committee On Human Rights - Seventh Report \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/jchrs/seventh-report/)

Vulnerable Adults

Three key vulnerability factors increase the risk of adults being affected by or becoming involved in serious violence: a learning or developmental disability, drug or alcohol addiction, and poor mental health.

The CCG's Adults Safeguarding Board, working closely with Islington police, the council, and health partners, have identified three priority areas of work in order to reduce violence affecting vulnerable adults:

- **Cuckooing** (a practice where organised criminals take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation or criminal activities)
- **Online exploitation and radicalisation**
- **Modern Day Slavery**

These will be developed and monitored as part of the Adults Safeguarding Board's 2021-22 action plan.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work together with the Safeguarding Adults Board to identify and strengthen areas for collaboration in relation to violence reduction. This may include, for example, opportunities for action through emerging joint work with the Children's Safeguarding Board regarding transitional safeguarding; focussing on young people with complex needs who require transition planning to protect them against harm. Further exploration to identify key issues and actions the partnership can take long-term to prevent violence, minimise impact, support those affected and empower communities around wider adult crime forms part of our initial action plan.

Repeat Offenders

In order to understand and address the root causes and manifestations of violence, we are committed to predicting, preventing and breaking patterns of violent behaviour and incidents. Whilst holding adults who continue to perpetrate violence to account for their actions, this means supporting repeat offenders to move away from crime. Through effective rehabilitation, we not only protect the public from the act and spread of

violence, but also enable offenders, including vulnerable adults, to change their behaviour, participation and outcomes in our community.

We will work closely with the London Probation Service and key focus areas for our work will look to include:

- Holding offenders to account
- Supporting adult offenders to move away from violence
- Stopping the grooming and exploitation of others
- Use of the new Integrated Offenders Management framework to proactively manage local, priority offenders and make best use of shared resources and information
- Regular probation work to provide bespoke community sentence interventions and opportunities for training, employment, education and housing to reduce the risk of violence, weapon offending and improve personal well-being

5. Organised Crime

Across Camden and Islington, there are numerous Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) conducting a range of organised criminal activities. The main areas of criminality connected to violence in Islington include gang conflict, the illicit drugs market, and acquisitive crime (theft, burglary, fraud and robbery).

Of the OCGs identified in Islington and Camden, 51% are involved in organised acquisitive crime while 70% are involved in the drugs market. Although it is the police who take the lead on tackling this large subsection of organised crime related to the drugs market in Islington, the council and local partners are committed to taking responsibility for their role- from supporting the police to identify local hotspots and providing local information profiles, to co-ordinating enforcement between partners to disrupt criminality and protect local communities.

Although a relatively small number of individuals are directly involved in OCGs, their impact on communities is corrosive and wide reaching – 31% of residents in Islington feel that gangs are a problem. Organised crime tends to flourish in more deprived and vulnerable areas – young

people from deprived backgrounds or excluded from school are particularly at risk of becoming involved. This contributes to even those not involved in organised crime feeling less safe and disempowered.

Overall, our aim is to better safeguard local residents from organised criminal violence by preventing at-risk individuals' involvement with organised gangs, disrupting criminal behaviour, and providing support and gang exit strategies for those who want to leave.

Our approach, which is an emerging area of work, will focus on the following:

- **Improving our understanding of organised crime locally**, including working with communities to cultivate local intelligence and keeping ahead of developments in technology
- **Advancing our understanding of local predictors of recruitment into criminality**, enabling earlier intervention and prevention
- **Disrupting organised criminal networks and prolific offenders** through targeted and legislative interventions
- **Empowering communities to intervene and support local people at-risk** through education, training and awareness-raising on organised crime
- **Supporting young people who wish to leave gangs and organised criminality** with tailored support and positive opportunities

6. Drugs as a driver for serious violence and crime

We know that the illegal drug market drives many issues related to violence and safety across our borough. Drug dealing is often highly visible to local communities and is a main economic driver of gang conflict, undermining community cohesion and public safety. It brings other forms of violence, and a heightened awareness of the possibility of violence, into our streets and estates.

For individuals, drug use can seriously detrimentally affect physical and mental health, as well as cause significant financial precarity – leading to reoffending cycles that perpetuate repeat victimisation of innocent people. Substance misuse and abuse can also make people highly

vulnerable to being victims of violent crime themselves, although crimes experienced by this cohort in the context of drug use often go largely unreported.

We recognise the unique challenges of this area across our borough and the way it intersects with other themes featured in this strategy. Alongside work to tackle violence in relation to the illegal drugs market as a subset of our organised crime focus area, we will also seek to better understand and address how drugs impact our local community through a separate strand of work. Here, our emphasis will lie on the role of drugs as a fuel for crime, and the impact on people made vulnerable by and through this trade. We will learn from lived experiences and intelligence gathered locally, as well as reflecting on the recommendations and outcomes of the recent independent review of drugs commissioned¹⁵, and following strategy produced¹⁶, by the Government nationally.

In Islington, our aim is to reduce the harm that we know drugs cause to individuals and communities by supporting those with drug-use issues to recover and break free from perpetuating violence.

Our approach will incorporate work from across our focus areas and be outlined fully in our forthcoming Drugs Strategy. Here we will focus on four key areas:

Reduce demand

We will work with communities to strengthen resilience and design out issues by joint problem solving. We will also work with partners to change the appeal and image of drug dealing and drug taking, and take a prevention and early intervention approach to reduce the uptake of drugs. Within this work, we will maintain a focus on lived experiences of substance misuse and abuse, multiple complex needs and adverse life experiences, as well

¹⁵ Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care, 'Independent review of drugs by Professor Dame Carol Black', <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-drugs-by-professor-dame-carol-black>

¹⁶ Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions and Ministry of Justice, 'From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives', [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives)

as recognising inequalities of impact and consequence in connection to illegal drug trade across our communities.

Reduce supply

We will coordinate approaches to enforcement that further connect the police and local partners to tackle the supply of drugs, recognising the role of access to means. We will ensure strong enforcement wherever possible on those involved in organised crime and profiting from the drugs trade.

Reduce harm

We will reduce the harm caused to, and use of drugs by, those caught up in the drugs market, and support recovery from dependence and reintegration into local communities. Our actions will be outlined fully in our forthcoming Drugs Strategy

Reduce crime

We will engage widely with local communities and partners, sharing information to fully understand the nature and scale of the problem across our borough. We will create a feedback loop with local communities on actions taken, creating positive cycles to increase future reporting.

Next steps: governance, action plans and monitoring progress

The Safer Islington Partnership (SIP), Islington Council, the police, London Fire Brigade, health sector, schools, probation services alongside representatives from the voluntary, community, faith, and business sectors, will take overarching responsibility for this strategy as the lead for reducing violence in Islington.

Our primary action for year one of this strategy will be to develop a clear summary action plan of the things which have greatest impact in reducing violent crime and which offer the community greatest assurance. This plan will be produced in consultation with the partnership and community and allow us to robustly monitor our progress, and ultimately our impact, towards our overarching ambition to make Islington a fairer, safer borough for all while holding the Partnership to account.

As part of a first phase of work, a draft plan has been appended to this strategy, setting out an initial picture of the tangible activities and resources attached to this strategic framework to be developed further in year one. The focus here has been bringing together the wide variety of violence reduction actions from across the Partnership, as well as highlighting gaps or opportunities in provision that have been identified through the development of our strategy, including community engagement and equality impact assessment processes; this is our starting point.

Actions will be delivered by SIP's working sub-groups, with short-term progress and updates monitored at SIP's quarterly meeting.

Long-term progress will be reviewed annually with an accompanying community safety report shared publicly.

In addition, we will continue to involve and engage our community to address the work outlined in this strategy through a range of other existing forums and activities, such as:

Safer Neighbourhood Board

- The Safer Neighbourhood Board was set up in 2014 by Islington Council and the police, funded through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), to give local people and victims a greater voice in setting policing priorities and improve consultation between the community, the council and other partners. The board is independent of the police, council and other statutory bodies and its role includes monitoring and engagement to hold these bodies to account.
- Due to Covid-19 the Safer Neighbourhood Board meetings are taking place online. If you are interested in attending then please contact Johnathon.Gallagher@islington.gov.uk, or for more information visit the Islington Council website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/community-safety/crime-and-policing/neighbourhood-watch-and-safer-neighbourhood-board>

Safer Neighbourhood Panels

- Safer Neighbourhood panels are held by the police within each ward a minimum of four times a year, offering residents the chance to raise their concerns and opinions on a range of issues at a local community level to be fed back through the Safer Neighbourhood Board.
- For more information about your local safer neighbourhood panel please contact your local neighbourhood policing team sergeant or dedicated ward officer via the Metropolitan Police website at <https://www.met.police.uk/>

Ward Partnership

- Islington's ward partnerships are led by ward councillors and give local residents, community groups and businesses the opportunity to shape services, improve their neighbourhoods and have their say on important issues affecting their area. Agendas vary across each meeting and ward.
- For more information on past and future meetings including dates and venues, you can visit the Islington Council website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/about-the-council/have-your-say/ward-partnerships>

SIP's Annual Strategic Assessment

- Every year the Safer Islington Partnership carries out a strategic assessment of all crime in the borough in the form of a data-driven analysis report, this is then used to determine local priorities. The work of delivering on these priorities is devolved to partnership subgroups which specialise in specific issues included across this strategy such as Violence Against Women and Girls, Hate crime and Youth crime.

Emergency community meetings

- Engagement activities will also continue to take place in response to specific events or issues raised within the community. The necessary processes and procedures for emergency or ad-hoc meeting are already established.