



London's Violence Reduction Unit

Our strategy to 2025

We believe violence is preventable, not inevitable



Tackling violence and supporting positive opportunities for young people, families and communities

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was set up by the Mayor of London in 2019 to pioneer a partnership approach to tackling violence that is rooted in prevention and early intervention. We believe that violence is preventable, not inevitable.

Our focus on stopping violence from happening is centred on investing in and providing better access to positive opportunities for young people, families and communities.

It's also about providing strategic support in partnership with all 32 local authorities to prevent further violence following a critical incident, and supporting councils with a consistent approach through the Serious Violence Duty and sharing of learning and best practice.

This strategy sets out how we will bring all this together to tackle violence both in the short-term and how our partnership approach will lead to more sustainable long-term reductions in violence.

We pride ourselves on being a listening and learning organisation. Our strategy refresh has been informed by young people, families, communities and stakeholders.

We will continue to use evidence, insight, data and speaking to diverse communities to build on what works and on the reductions we have seen through the investment in and positive opportunities we've provided for 150,000 young people in our city.

But we must go further.

Our strategy sets out how, alongside our agenda-setting Young People's Action Group, we will put children and young people at the heart of everything we do. We will also champion the life-changing impact that youth workers play in our city.

Over the next two years, we will have a specific focus on young people up to the age of 25. Our work recognises that some young people and communities are disproportionately affected by violence.

We will focus our investment, support and partnerships to advocate for systems change because we recognise there is structural inequality in our society. This will include investing in tackling violence against women and girls, and in support for marginalised or minoritized communities.

Our aim is to reduce violence, increase feelings of safety and promote hope and positive opportunities for young people and communities. There are challenges to this approach because violence is deeply complex.

Evidence clearly shows there is a strong link between violence and poverty. The cumulative impact of challenges for families and communities, which includes austerity and the pandemic, is likely to be exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, and food and fuel insecurity.

We will stand up for our communities and work in partnership with local authorities, the NHS, charities, the education sector and others, to make the case for prevention.

Together, we'll prevent violence and create the conditions that give children and young people the opportunities to thrive.



Statistics



150,000 positive opportunities funded for young people since 2021



5,600 young people supported in the first year of our community-led approach



9,000 children and young people, and **70** schools to be supported over the next three years as part of tackling exclusions campaign

3 Positive opportunities: The role of sport, music, art, training, apprenticeships and employment

What we're doing:
Investing in after-school activities and provision; funding sport activities and opportunities in areas under-served.

"Young people need greater support and training in the everyday life skills that matter. The things we need to know about and prepare for when we're adults, like how to save for mortgages, money management, coping mechanisms, how to access non-traditional jobs. That's important but missing for young people."

4 Youth work: The role of youth workers and mentoring

What we're doing:
Funding a youth worker leadership programme; investing in mentoring for girls and young women; police custody and hospital-based youth worker programmes to support young people at 'reachable moments'.

"Better training for youth workers and investing more in mentoring would be a positive move forward in helping young people take that next step into work or a career."

"Youth workers bring social cohesion and can help prevent neglect and isolation amongst young people and in our communities."

"Providing support and investment at the earliest possible stage is the most effective way of intervening in a young person's life."

"Parents and carers participating in networks and peer groups gives them an insight into greater support available to them and how to better access it."

5 Communities and place: The role of communities, the importance of neighbourhoods

What we're doing:
Community-led networks delivering interventions locally to tackle local concerns; investment and support for local authorities, health and others to run prevention alongside communities.

"Where we live matters. Getting to know your neighbourhood really builds a community."

"Events and interventions by communities, for the community, are most impactful."

"A community voice helps bring local people together."

"Schools must empower students by understanding their cultural backgrounds and tailoring learning to meet and celebrate their experiences."

1 Early years: The role of parents, carers and families

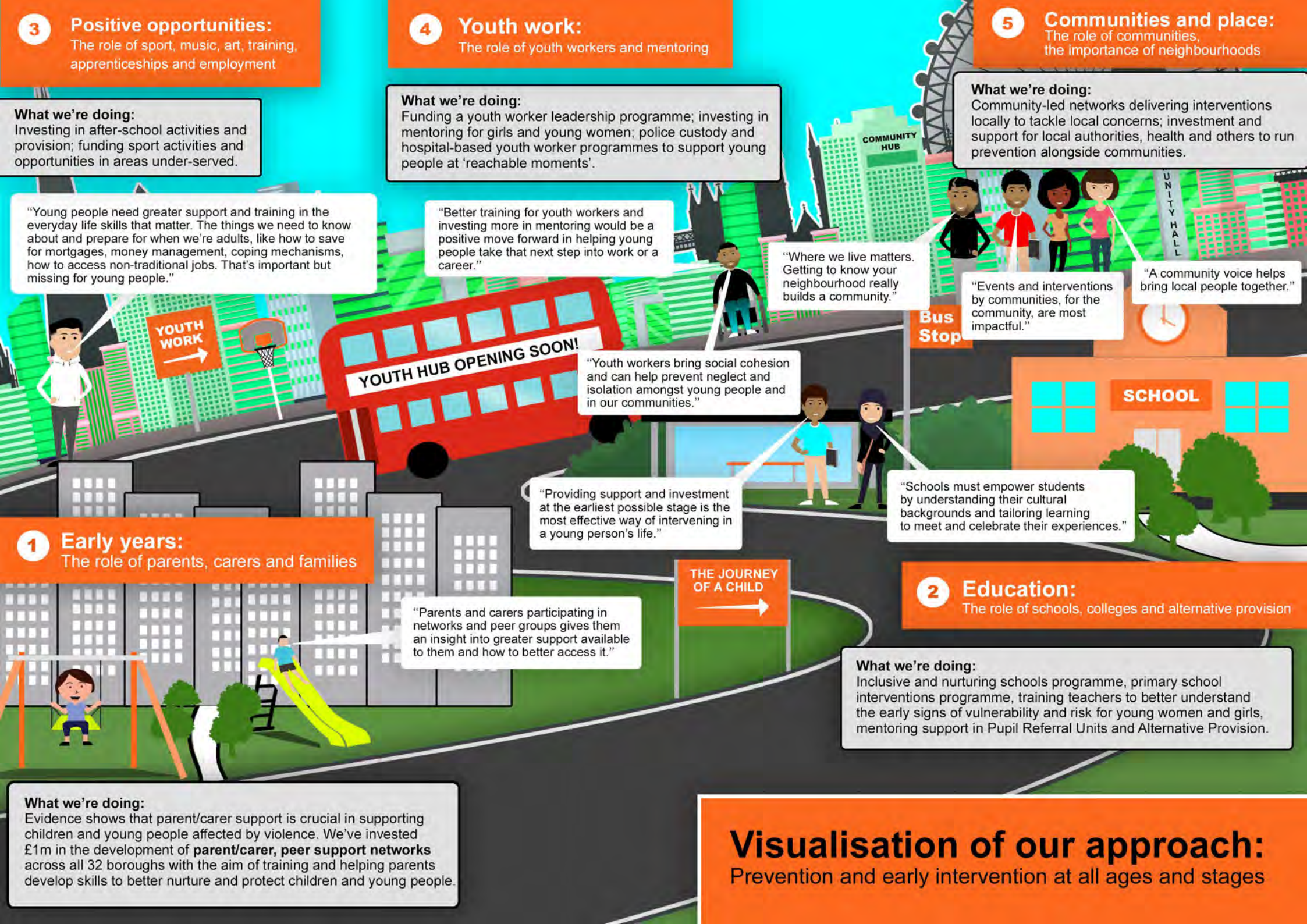
What we're doing:
Evidence shows that parent/carer support is crucial in supporting children and young people affected by violence. We've invested £1m in the development of **parent/carer, peer support networks** across all 32 boroughs with the aim of training and helping parents develop skills to better nurture and protect children and young people.

THE JOURNEY OF A CHILD

2 Education: The role of schools, colleges and alternative provision

What we're doing:
Inclusive and nurturing schools programme, primary school interventions programme, training teachers to better understand the early signs of vulnerability and risk for young women and girls, mentoring support in Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision.

Visualisation of our approach: Prevention and early intervention at all ages and stages



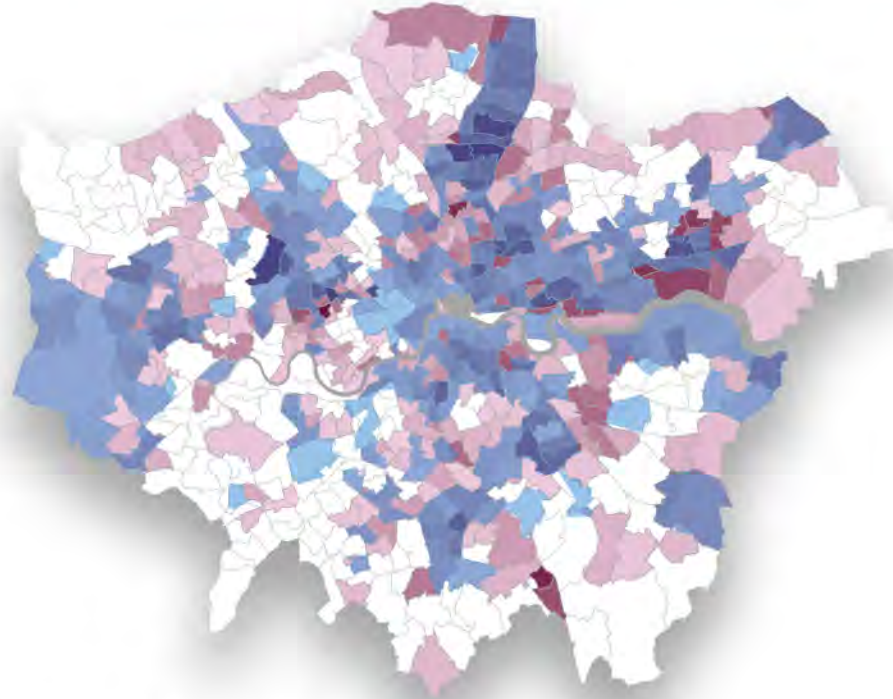
London Landscape

Violence is deeply complex. Evidence shows the key drivers include poverty, inequality, deprivation and lack of opportunity.

The impact of violence on families and our neighbourhoods is immeasurable. Alongside the tragic loss of life and misery experienced as a result of violence, the economic impact is also substantial. Evidence shows that responding to homicides alone costs the police and criminal justice system around £120 million a year.*

The cost spent on prevention would go towards tackling the very drivers of violence – taking people out of poverty and creating a more equal society.

Areas with high violent crime and deprivation



Areas with more than 350 incidents of violence with injury (blue) and high levels of deprivation (pink)

Data sources: MPS and MHCLG

This image illustrates how areas of high deprivation map against violence levels across the capital using MPS and IMD data. It shows areas with high volume (violence with injury) against areas of London with high deprivation. It demonstrates how violence is clustered both within and around neighbourhoods and wards with the highest levels of deprivation in the city.

Historical context



History shows us that deprivation and violence go hand-in-hand. Evidence shows the majority of areas of high violence and deprivation today were the same in 1900.

According to research carried out by the London School of Economics, just over half of all the poorest neighbourhoods in London were also the poorest over a hundred years ago.* It also showed areas of higher violence and gang territories today map well to streets identified as poor in 1898 and 1900.

London Landscape

Impact of austerity measures and violence in London



Violence 2011-2019

Hospital admissions for assaults with a sharp object **increased by 32%** between 2013 and 2019

Source: Metropolitan Police Service

*Pre-2014 data excluded due to unreliability and improvements in police recorded violence



Youth service budgets:

Between 2011 and 2019
£35.5m - **reduction in youth budgets**
733 **fewer** youth workers

Source:

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sian_berry_londons_lost_youth_services_july_2020.pdf



Police officers:

32,370 in 2011
29,978 in 2019

Source: Metropolitan Police Service

Towards the end of 2021, City Hall figures showed that three-quarters of the boroughs in London with the highest levels of violent offending were also in the top 10 most deprived, while the same boroughs also had higher proportions of children under-20 living in poverty than the London average.

On top of this, the **Covid-19 pandemic** disproportionately impacted young people. We saw:

- ▶ Universal Credit claims rose by an increase of **128%** in London, higher than for the rest of country*
- ▶ **26,000** fewer under-25s in payrolled employment in Sept 2021 when compared to pre-pandemic*
- ▶ In 2020/21, the number of food parcels given out by the Trussell Trust **more than doubled** in London from 204,187 in 2019/20 to 421,426. **



Future threats: **Cost-of-living crisis**

The economic situation facing Londoners over the next two years risks further exacerbating the drivers of violence and inequalities in society.

- ▶ Polling by YouGov showed that 39 per cent of Londoners think they will struggle to pay energy bills in the next 6 months
- ▶ Half of Londoners say they are using less water, fuel or energy to keep warm in order to keep bills down



*Source: <https://airdrive-secure.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/london/dataset/serious-youth-violence/2021-12-08T23%3A19%3A21/Crime%20speech%20report%20December%202021.pdf>

**Source: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

Our Mission and Vision



Mission:

- Violence is preventable, not inevitable
- Our approach is rooted in prevention and early intervention



Vision:

- Together we can make London a safer city
- Positive opportunities for all – more equal society

What is our ambition now and long-term?

Impact goals:



Children and young people feel safer

Young people feel safe and are safe where they live, go to school and when online.



Partnership approach to delivering solutions

Everyone can play their part. We'll connect people to make change and support communities.



Violence is stabilised and reduced

Through prevention and enabling positive opportunities, we'll tackle violence in the short, medium and long-term.

Making a difference

Working together, we all have a role to play in sustainably reducing violence and making London a city that everyone feels safe in.

Our vision is to work alongside communities to create change and opportunities for all.

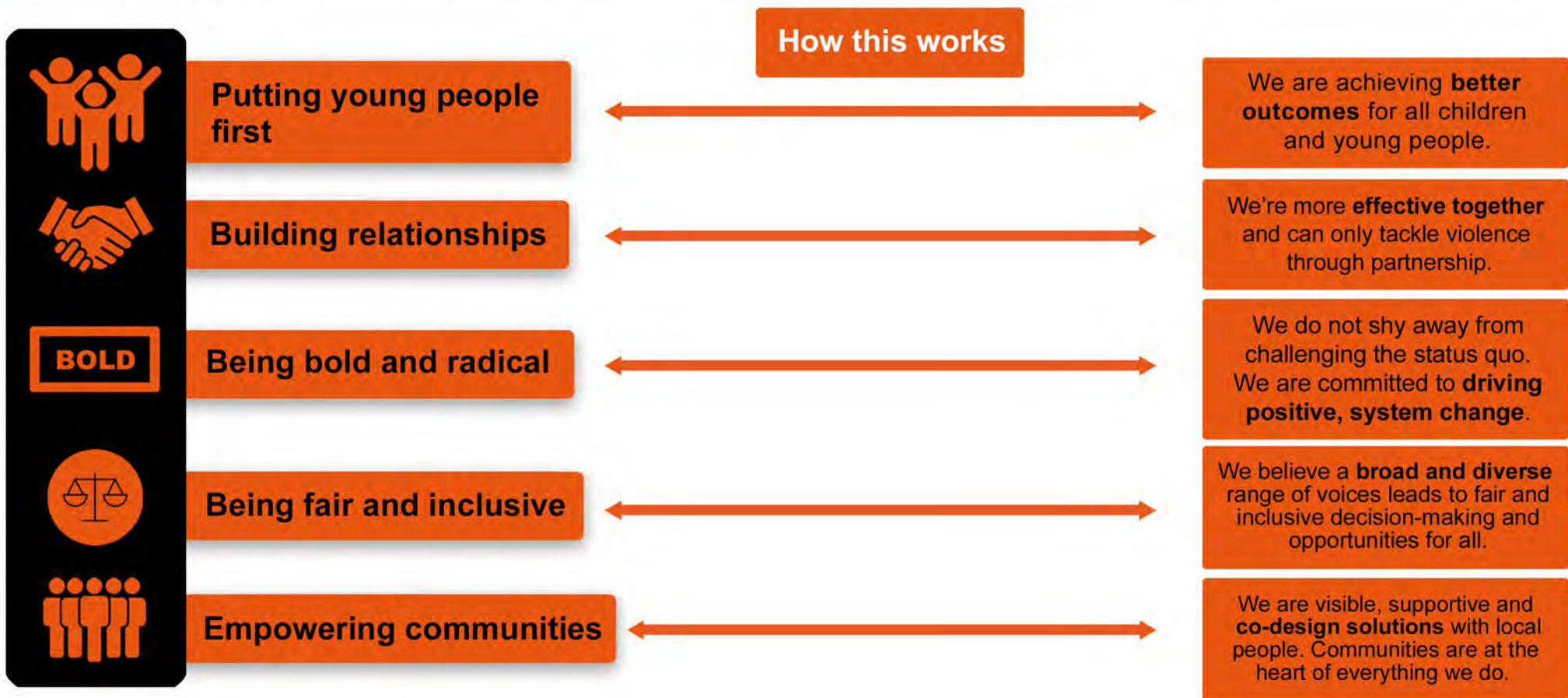
Our three impact goals set out what we want to help change in our communities and how we'll work in partnership to achieve them.

Our values and culture

Our values set out the type of organisation we are. They are constant, they shape how we work in partnership with others and are the bedrock of everything we do.

We hold ourselves to the highest standards and are driven to make change and to take action.

We strive to make change to improve outcomes for young people, to support better access to positive opportunities and a determination to work in partnership to create a safe, fairer and more inclusive society for all.



Guiding Principles

Our **four** guiding principles set out and shape how, through prevention and early intervention, we will deliver our strategy and support for children and young people over the next two years.



Be informed by learning and listening to communities

- > We will root our philosophy and approach in **learning** and build our knowledge through **evidence and listening** to diverse voices and communities
- > We will be **agile** in our approach to meet changing needs and environment
- > We will build our evidence and understanding so we know **what works** and what doesn't
- > We will listen, co-design and engage with young people, practitioners and communities to support the **sustainability** of our approach of prevention and early intervention



We will build and develop relationships

- > We will work with and **alongside communities** on solutions to tackle violence and inequalities, and support access to positive opportunities
- > Our approach will be centred on supporting and **amplifying the voices** of young people, and parents and carers
- > We will bring local people, charities, public bodies and all those with an interest in preventing violence **together**



Advocate for change

- > We will support and champion young people and continue to adopt a Child First approach throughout our work
- > Our focus is on **advocating for policies** that support people and we will lobby for investment and resources for our communities
- > We will use our investment, levers and partnerships across London to tackle inequalities and **deliver systems change**
- > We will continue to adopt a **trauma informed approach**, to develop **culturally sensitive**, safe services that people trust and want to use. We will provide support and learning on this approach across all organisations and systems.

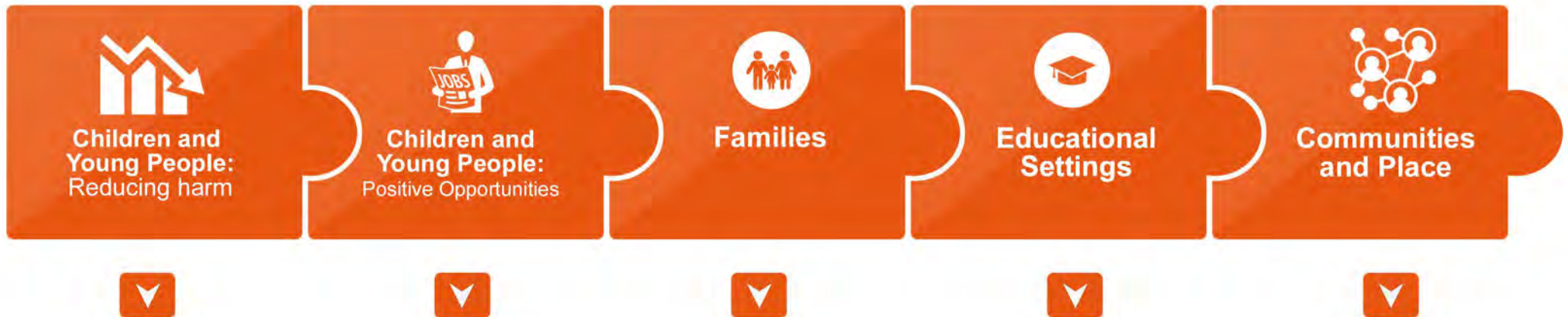


Embed equality, diversity and inclusion

- > We will promote **inclusive cultures** across our programmes and all areas of work
- > We will work in partnership with others to tackle the **structural barriers** to engagement for young people, families and communities
- > Our approach will be to **celebrate diversity, including neurological diversity, and promote equity** to make London a fairer and more inclusive city.

How we work

We measure the outcomes of our investment in prevention and early intervention across **five Priority Areas**. We use insight, evidence and gather intelligence about what works and what doesn't by working with and alongside communities. This will ensure our support and our investment works to tackle structural barriers to inequality and that all young people have access to the opportunities they deserve.



What that means:

How we'll support the **prevention** of violence and exploitation of children and young people, and disadvantage, particularly race and sex

What that means:

We'll expand access to **positive opportunities** and provide development into employment, training, apprenticeships and further education

What that means:

Focus on developing **stronger and more resilient** families to better support young people

What that means:

Promoting healthy relationships and inclusive practices to **reduce exclusions** and disengagement with education

What that means:

Providing communities with the **support and resources** to deliver sustainable reductions in violence

How it all fits together

What we do:

Five priority areas:

1. Children and Young People:
Reducing harm
2. Children and Young People:
Positive opportunities
3. Families
4. Education
5. Communities and place

How we will do it:

Four guiding principles:

1. Be informed by learning and listening to communities
2. We will build and develop relationships
3. Advocate for change
4. Embed equality, diversity and inclusion

Who with:

Partnerships:

- » Young people
- » Communities
- » Voluntary and charity sector
- » Local authorities
- » NHS and public health
- » Families
- » Schools and colleges
- » Policing

Our objective: Three Impact Goals

1



Children and young people feel safer

2



Partnership approach to solutions

3



Violence is stabilised and reducing

We believe **violence is preventable, not inevitable**. Our ambition will always be to invest in an approach that is rooted in prevention and early intervention because we believe all young people should have access to positive opportunities to thrive. We will do this by ensuring our interventions are joined up and delivered through our priority areas, and informed by our guiding principles.

This approach will sit alongside the relationships and partnerships we have built and will continue to develop over the next two years. Our partnerships and relationships build collective strength and together help us to achieve our ambitions and impact goals.

How we'll achieve change

Our approach will be rooted in prevention and early intervention to improve the lives of young Londoners.

Our investment is focused, targeted and evidence-led, ensuring our interventions are joined up and follow the journey of a child and the key relationships they hold.

We will support this by listening to communities, through research, evaluation and performance monitoring to get a greater insight of what works.

This approach will give us the platform to advocate for policy and systems change.

We will do this across our five **Priority Areas**, measured through our Outcomes Framework.

Children and Young People



Reducing harm

Our aim is to identify vulnerable young people at critical moments and make sure they are supported to access the help they need. We also aim to support organisations working with young people to enable professionals to better identify risks, provide tailored support and encourage adoption of trauma-informed approaches.

Key interventions:

- Hospital-based youth work
- Tackling online harms
- Custody-based youth work
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Training for health professionals in tackling DA
- Is This Ok? Online support to tackle exploitation



Outcomes:

- To reduce harm and risk of harm for vulnerable children and young people
- Improved understanding of the risks and issues relating to violence
- Reduction in violence
- Reduction in harmful behaviour
- Reduction in victimisation
- Improved practices by organisations to prevent harm

Key policies we will support here to 2025:

- Support our health system find space to do more prevention than reactive work, including its response to domestic abuse
- Hold social media companies to account to reduce online harms



Positive Opportunities

Our focus is on expanding access to positive opportunities. We aim to improve the lives of young people through early intervention, improving their wellbeing and access to support they need. We strive to help young people develop essential skills to increase access to sustainable income.

Key interventions:

- After-school and weekend provision
- Sports activities
- Youth worker leadership programme
- Young People's Action Group
- Mentoring for girls and young women

Outcomes:

- Improved wellbeing
- Improved engagement
- Improved interaction with peers
- Improved employment opportunities
- Improved practice by organisations to support young people



Key policies we will support and develop to 2025

- Make the case for greater national investment and recognition of youth work, and support mentoring for those young people with greatest disadvantage
- Develop businesses and employer pathways to increase routes to employment and apprenticeships



Families

We strive to develop stronger and more resourceful families to better support young people. We do this by building strong family relationships and supporting organisations and agencies to work together to engage families and support their needs.

Key interventions:

- Parent and carer champion networks (all 32 boroughs)
- Islington and Camden parent support pilot
- Community-based parent/carer mental health support
- Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse
- Children and young people impacted by domestic abuse

Outcomes:

- Improved family relationships
- Decreased family harm (Families supported to feel safer and family conflict, stress and harm is reduced)
- Increased service awareness of family harm
- Improved pathways for families to access support



Key policies we will support and develop to 2025

- We will advocate for a national Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse policy, with guidance for services on how to support families affected
- Improving signposting of guidance and support networks for parents and carers



Education

VRU | Partners of London
Inclusion
Not Exclusion

We focus on working to make schools and all educational settings inclusive to all children and young people. Our interventions focus on those at risk of exclusion and support them while in education.

Key interventions:

- > Inclusive and Nurturing Schools programme
- > Primary Schools Education Matters programme
- > PRU and Alternative Provision mentoring
- > Supporting Resilient Schools programme

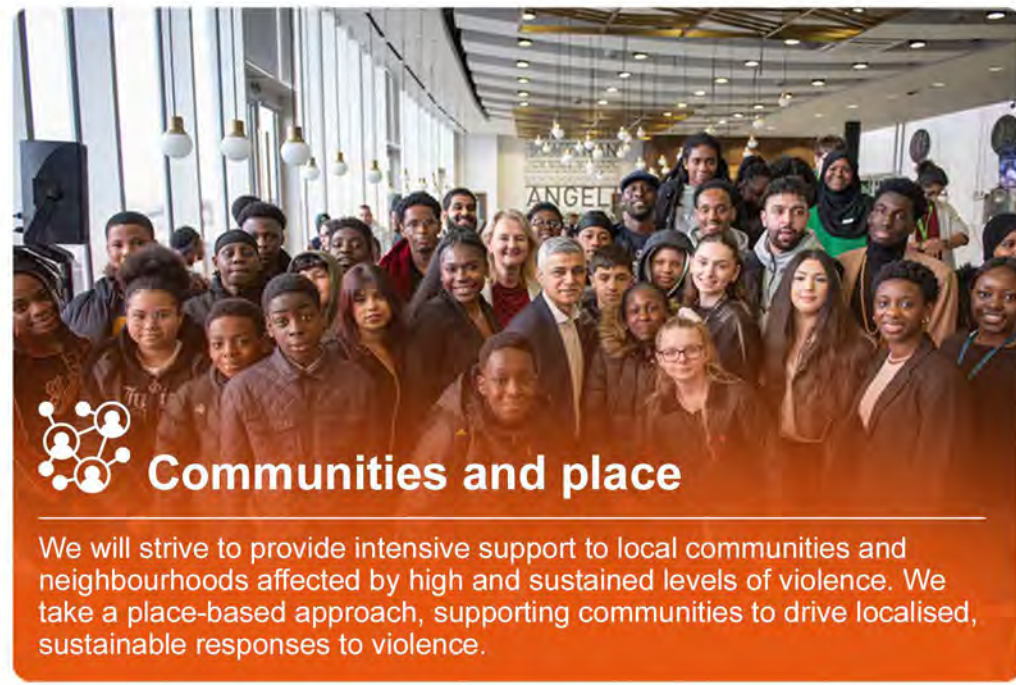
Outcomes:

- > Improved engagement with education
- > Improved wellbeing at school
- > Improved understanding of different needs
- > Improved practice to prevent harm and reduce harm
- > Improved inclusive practices



Key policies we will support and develop to 2025

- > Education that prioritises inclusion, backed up by Ofsted
- > Make the case for greater investment for training of professions to be trauma informed and culturally sensitive
- > Support calls to embed youth workers/mentors in schools



Communities and place

We will strive to provide intensive support to local communities and neighbourhoods affected by high and sustained levels of violence. We take a place-based approach, supporting communities to drive localised, sustainable responses to violence.

Key interventions:

- > My Ends – 8 community-led networks across London
- > London Crime Prevention Fund
- > Community Capacity Building Fund
- > Critical Incidents Fund

Outcomes:

- > More connected communities – to their neighbours and sense of belonging
- > Improved inclusive decision-making – strategies locally-led, inclusive and accessible
- > Improved perceptions of community safety
- > Improved capacity in community networks



Key policies we will support and develop to 2025

- > Foster a culture that trusts communities and puts local people first
- > Promote reducing inequality within and amongst communities
- > Support community-led groups to grow and be sustainable

We can achieve more together

Tackling violence is deeply complex. There is no 'quick fix' nor is there one single solution or organisation capable of making change. Both evidence and history shows us that while enforcement has a role in suppressing violence, it will not deliver sustained reductions or improve a young person's life chances.

The foundation of our approach is to stop violence before it occurs. That's because we believe violence is preventable, not inevitable.

There are community organisations, charities, public sector institutions and others all working towards tackling violence. Our role is to bring those together through a common message and narrative. Why? **Because we believe we're stronger together and can achieve more together.**

HELP SHARE OUR STORY

We believe violence is preventable, not inevitable.

We are committed to exposing and working in partnership with others to tackle the complex causes of violence, such as poverty, inequality, deprivation and lack of opportunity.

A commitment to stopping violence from happening is rooted in prevention and early intervention. It's about putting children first and investing in our young people which means a brighter future for them, for our communities and for all.

Prevention and early intervention means:

- Listening, learning and testing what works
- investing in measures to support families
- funding to keep young people in education
- investing in access to positive opportunities
- championing the role of youth workers and mentors
- support and resources for communities to tackle the issues affecting their neighbourhoods.

It's how we'll work together, with you and partnerships in a trauma informed and culturally sensitive way to put young people first. This way we reduce violence now and in the long-term.

Because working in partnership, we'll achieve more together and create a brighter, safer future for all young people.



How you can help

1

Help us make the case for prevention.

The emotional cost of violence and the cost to society simply doesn't add up.

If the investment in reacting to violence was spent on prevention, it would help towards ending poverty and deprivation, and could be invested in better access to opportunity.

Significant investment and focus is needed to properly address poverty and its impact on our communities, and should be a focus both in London and nationally.

Share our story

We can achieve more together

Find out how you can get involved where you live

2



Local Village Network

A FREE downloadable app with 2,500 free opportunities, including apprenticeships, training schemes, employment
www.lvn.org.uk/signpost



Through your local council

We support local authorities who have their own prevention plans and invest in activities for young people, families and communities.



Parent Carer Champion Network

A network system of support for parents and carers across London. Contact your local council about to join or to find out more.



Community-led networks

Our flagship MyEnds programme has been running in Brent, Croydon, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. Find out how you can work with community-led networks where you live through your local authority.

3

Further support for young people and families

We work in partnership with organisations through commissioning services for young people, families and communities.

Find out more about how you can get involved through london.gov.uk/vru

Helpful links to a variety of national charities offering support are:

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline www.childline.org.uk or 0800 1111

Citizens Advice www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Barnardo's www.barnardos.org.uk

Save the Children www.savethechildren.org.uk

Shelter www.shelter.org.uk

Action for Children www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Is this Ok? www.isthisok.org.uk

Missing People www.missingpeople.org.uk

Women's Aid www.womensaid.org.uk

Refuge www.refuge.org.uk

Lib Peck, Director of the Violence Reduction Unit

When London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was established in 2019, there was no blueprint for how we would work or where we would direct our resources.

There was a huge ambition by the Mayor to set up the first VRU in England and Wales to establish prevention and early intervention. There was a desire to follow a public health approach and a commitment to involve partners from across the public sector with communities, and young people at its heart.

This strategy clearly articulates what we have learnt, developed and achieved. It demonstrates how we have embraced the concept of a young person's needs and ambitions to shape our interventions, alongside a critical look at how to deliver change to a system that is both unequal and unfair.

As we look to the next two years, what we have as a VRU are a set of values built around putting young people first and empowering our diverse communities.

We'll continue to listen, learn and adapt to new challenges, using our funding, support, evidence and policies to address them.

Working together is an easy thing to say but genuinely if we are to dismantle structural violence, put young people at the centre of a safer society, then we need to do this in partnership if we're to truly tackle this complex problem.

Our commitment to you is to work with you, to listen to you, to support your efforts, all in the continued drive to make the case that violence is preventable, not inevitable.



'Nothing about us without us' Young People's Action Group

All too often, there is a lack of awareness of what young people need and want to thrive in London.

Our generation needs to be given the attention it deserves, because we have a stake in the society we live and grow up in.

Tackling violence is everybody's issue. The Young People's Action Group's motto: "Nothing about us without us," embodies our aim to amplify the voices of young people and to deliver effective solutions to tackle violence.

The YPAG works closely with the VRU to do exactly this. Our goal is to create and promote positive and accessible opportunities, and work to sustainably reduce violence by tackling its long-term, underlying causes. With this approach, we hope to make London a safer, opportunity-rich and prosperous place.

Our city is known for its diversity and culture, but what accompanies this is our individual lived experiences and unique stories that makes us who we are. It is imperative that London is a reflective society not just in the vibrancy in cultures that it has to offer, but in the needs of its communities and individuals.

This strategy acknowledges and celebrates young people and our diverse communities, both of which are crucial in developing the future leaders of tomorrow.

VRU

MAYOR OF LONDON
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

For more about our work, find us at: london.gov.uk/vru

Follow us on social media:

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Designed by:

 ILLUSTRATED
PRINTS