

# **Neighbourhoods affected by violence**

## **Research**

VRU MyEnd project participants

## **Key information**

Publication type: General

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## **The research**

A key finding from our 2020 Strategic Needs was that violence is highly geographically concentrated and as such, a London-wide picture of violence masks significant variation.

In light of this, the VRU commissioned research focusing on nine local areas in London to examine perceptions and experience of violence and how best to prevent it from those that live and work there.

## **Research questions**

The research aimed to better understand the underlying drivers of violence and best approaches for interventions at a place-based level. It sought to understand experiences and perspectives on:

- living in areas with high levels of violence
- the impact of violence on themselves and the local area
- how things can change for the better.

## **Methodology**

Taking a mixed methods approach, quantitative analysis was conducted on a range of administrative datasets to measure vulnerability to violence, including crime, health, deprivation, education and housing data.

Examining correlations between individuals or combinations of factors linked to high or rising levels of violence informed a cluster analysis to identify nine geographical areas for further research.

In these areas, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys with people living in the area as well as professionals familiar with local knowledge such as community leaders, local policing teams, local authority staff and volunteer workers.

## **Key findings**

### **Drivers of violence**

The report identified core themes already established as key correlates of violence such as:

- economic and social deprivation
- racism in all its forms
- substance misuse
- age-related risk, with younger people at much more risk of experiencing and/or perpetrating violence
- influence of ‘gang’ cultures.

The research also identified emerging drivers that are less well understood or not yet receiving the co-ordinated attention they need in London. These included:

- the negative impact of social media as a focus for the expression and organisation of violent behaviour
- housing policies that move individuals and families who have been involved with violence as victims without support, or perpetrators who then ‘export’ violence from one area to another
- universities as locations that attract crime and violence.

### **Impact of violence reduction initiatives**

In addition to drivers of violence, the research found themes relating to the ways key agencies such as the police, local authorities and health services work that impact violence reduction initiatives. These included:

- short-term initiatives and pilot projects that only fund up-front costs can have limited impact due to the ongoing service costs needed to make projects sustainable
- a need for communities and young people to be equal partners and be able to co-produce solutions to the problems in their own communities
- a recognition that partnership working is crucial to tackling violence but needs to be improved. Place based developments such as MyEnds were seen as a positive way to address these issues.

Two other broader themes were highlighted in the report for future spending and service development. These were:

- early years intervention – exploitation of ever younger children was reported
- a trauma-informed approach in the planning, commissioning and delivering of services and community interventions.

# Recommendations

The report provides recommendations across four themes. These relate to:

1. Strengthening long-term investment in violence reduction initiatives.
2. Improving data and focusing on granular geographical units to more precisely understand the nature and extent of violence.
3. Continuing to embed a culture of robust research and evaluation across programmes.
4. Strengthening work with other agencies, delivery partners, wider civil society, and universities.

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