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Violence Prevention Unit

P R E V E N T

Strategy to prevent serious youth violence in South Wales
2020 -2023



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Introduction

Violence among young people is too often seen as an inevitable part of human life. Events that are responded to rather than prevented. A public health approach challenges this notion and shows that violence can be predicted and prevented like any other health problem.

Through a multi-sectoral, whole-system approach that is evidence and data-led we can seek to prevent violence before it occurs, and respond compassionately and effectively when it does, to stop the cycle of violence repeating itself. To do this, we must study the drivers of violence; why are some communities and individuals more affected by violence than others? And what makes some more resilient to violence?

Through this knowledge, programmes can be developed, based on scientific evidence, that work both universally and among targeted communities to prevent violence. Working in collaboration and combining the expertise of multi-agency partners and those with lived experience is the central asset of this approach. Together we can prevent violence, and we can ensure that 'the system' does not let people 'fall through the cracks' or re-traumatise survivors.

About this document

This strategy has been developed by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit. It is designed as a framework for the

prevention of serious youth violence in South Wales. The primary audience is policy makers and professionals working on preventing and responding to serious youth violence. It is designed to empower individuals, communities and organisations to take a public health approach to violence prevention, with the support and leadership of the Violence Prevention Unit.

This framework guides the implementation of a whole-system approach to violence prevention informed by the work of multi-agency partners, academics, and those with lived experience. It is developed based on the findings of the South Wales serious youth violence strategic needs assessment (Appendix 1); serious youth violence intervention mapping (Appendix 2); coproduction work lead by Barnardos Cymru; findings from stakeholder engagement workshops undertaken in 2019/2020; and baseline evaluation data collected by colleagues at the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention at Liverpool John Moore's University.

About the Wales Violence Prevention Unit

The Wales VPU is a partnership of passionate people who work together to prevent violence across in through a public health approach. This strategy was developed in 2020 thanks to funding from the UK Home Office with a focus on serious youth violence in the South Wales Police Force.



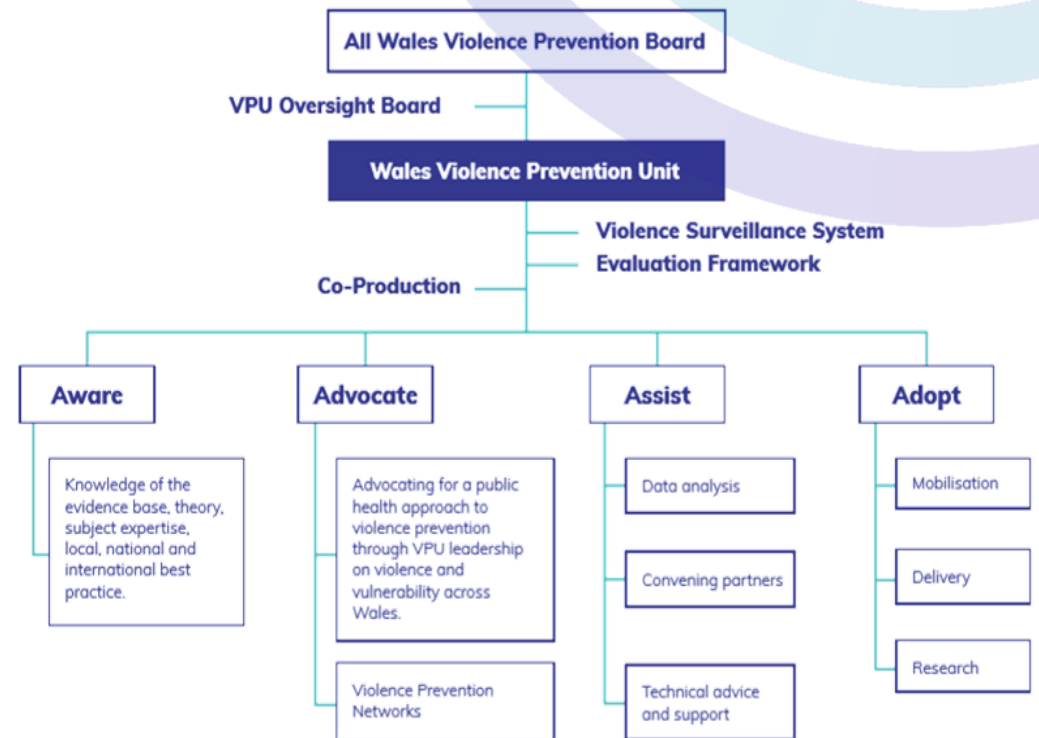
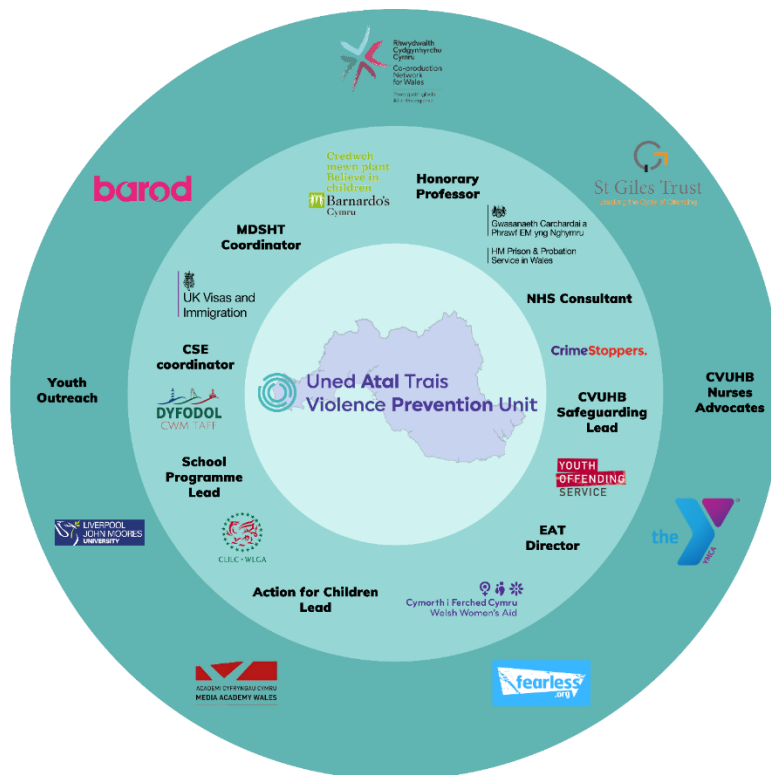
Our Operating Framework

The Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) is a partnership of passionate people from an alliance of organisations working together to prevent all forms of violence in Wales.

The VPU was established through funding from the Home Office in 2019. The core team comprises members from police forces, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Public Health Wales, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), and the voluntary sector. We take a public health approach to preventing violence.

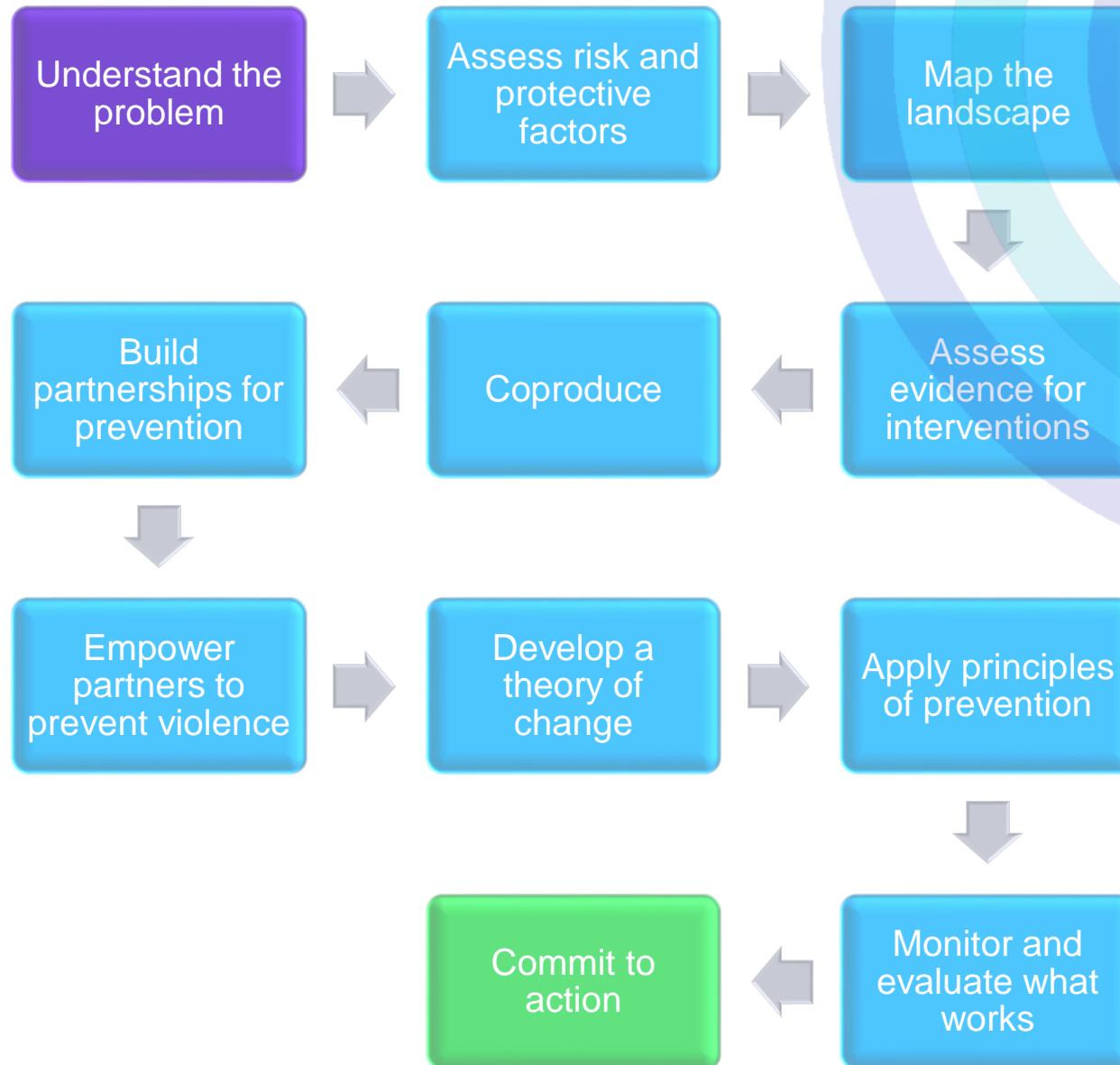
Find out more about us on our website: www.violencepreventionwales.co.uk

Twitter: @WalesVPU





Our Process





Serious Youth Violence: Understand the Problem & the Population¹

“Serious youth violence involves children, young and vulnerable people, likely to be characterised by knife and gun crime, and exploitative crimes such as modern slavery, sexual exploitation, and crimes relating to drug markets.”²

The cost of violence to the NHS in Wales has been estimated at £46.5million.

Children who suffer adverse experiences in childhood are more vulnerable to becoming involved in violence and weapon-carrying in adolescence.

Alcohol and drug use are strongly related to violence and weapon-carrying.

Exposure to other forms of violence and fear of violence in schools and the community increases young people’s risk of involvement in violence among young people and knife-related violence.

Income and social inequality and deprivation are strong risks factors for violence.

Multi-sectoral collaboration is critical to preventing violence. The consequences of violence affect all sectors – health, education, criminal justice, social welfare, community safety, housing and employment – and all have a big role to play in preventing it.

Violence among young people is preventable. To prevent violence, mitigate the risk factors and amplify the protective factors.

Violence can affect every aspect of young people’s lives, hampering their prospects for education, employment and health, and reducing their ability to form healthy personal and social relationships

Primary prevention approaches to avoid involvement in violence include:

- promoting family environments that can support healthy development
- providing quality education in early life
- strengthening young people’s skills
- connecting young people to caring adults and activities
- creating protective environments

Secondary and tertiary prevention approaches for those already involved in violence, include:

- reducing harm from violence
- preventing reoffending
- preventing intergenerational impacts of violence.

1 Appendix 1: Wales VPU Serious Youth Violence in South Wales: Strategic Needs Assessment

2 Definition adapted from the Home Office (2018) *Serious Violence Strategy*, HM Government, London, available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf



Assess the risk & protective factors

Key messages for policy-makers:

- No single factor causes violence among young people, but a wide range of factors can interact to increase young people's risks.
- Protective factors include good social skills, self-esteem, and academic achievement, strong bonds with parents, positive peer groups, and good attachment to school, community involvement and access to social support.
- Reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors is a cost-effective way of preventing violence and weapon-carrying among young people.
- Strengthening the evidence base of risk factors across the life-course approach should be a key priority for research.

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

SOCIETY	COMMUNITY	RELATIONSHIP	INDIVIDUAL
High income and social inequality	Gangs and local supply of illicit drugs	Adverse childhood experiences	Psychological: ADHD, conduct or other behavioural disorders, low self-esteem, socially isolated, impulsivity, low self-control, depression, feelings of hopelessness about the future
Poor national law and enforcement policies for education and social protection	Weapon availability	Poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents	Education and employment: low intelligence and educational achievement, truancy and exclusion, unemployment
Urban areas	Access to and misuse of alcohol and drugs	Harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices	Behaviour: involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour, early involvement in drugs and alcohol and tobacco, positive attitude towards offending
Poverty	Exposure to others forms of violence and fear of violence in schools and the community	Low levels of attachment between children and parents	Male sex, young age (most common age 17 in SW), ethnicity- (White British)
Use of mass media portraying violence		Parental substance abuse or criminality	Traumatic brain injury ↻
Violence: legitimising norms of masculinity	Community spaces designed to increase visibility, control, access, promote positive interactions and appropriate use	Exposure to violence in the family	Past victimisation or fear of violence
Social and cultural norms supportive of violence	Access to services and social support	Parental depression	
	Resident's willingness to assist each other and collective views that violence is not acceptable	Warm parent-youth relationships	
	Schools, parks, business and residential areas that are regularly repaired and maintained	Parents who set consistent, developmentally appropriate limits	
	Household financial security	Interacting with prosocial and non-violent peers	Healthy problem solving skills
	Safe and stable housing	Positive relationships with teachers and other caring adults	Good school readiness
Economic opportunities		Children feeling connected to their school	Emotional regulation skills
		Parents demonstrate interest in their child's education and social relationships	Academic achievement
SOCIETY	COMMUNITY	RELATIONSHIP	INDIVIDUAL



Focus on Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been defined as “stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence)”.³ They are an important subset of risk factors for all types of violence, including serious youth violence.

The Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences Study which involved over 2000 participants aged between 18 and 69 years suggested that 53% of respondents had suffered no adverse childhood experiences. However, 14% had suffered four or

more adverse childhood experiences. This group of individuals were approximately 15 times more likely to have perpetrated violence against another individual in the preceding 12 months than those with no adverse childhood experiences, and 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence in the preceding 12 months (ibid).

Because of this association, our work must be underpinned with a trauma-informed approach designed to prevent ACEs. To do this, we will work with partners to embed learning from the Early Action Together Programme⁴ and the ACE Hub Wales⁵ to build an ACE aware Wales.

People who have experienced four or more ACEs are 15x more likely to have perpetrated violence, and 14x more likely to have been a victim of violence, in the preceding 12 months (compared to people with no ACEs).

Welsh ACEs study, 2016



³ Bellis et al., (2016) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Wales and their Impact on Health in the Adult Population, European Journal of Public Health, Volume 26; 1(1), available online: https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/26/suppl_1/ckw167.009/2448496

⁴ <https://www.aces.me.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.aceawarewales.com/about>



Map the Landscape

A landscape mapping research project was undertaken in South Wales in January - March 2020 to provide a 'snapshot' of current interventions designed to prevent and respond to serious youth violence in the region (Appendix 2). Through interviews and stakeholder workshops, the research identified a wide range of interventions, policies and projects likely to have an impact on violence.

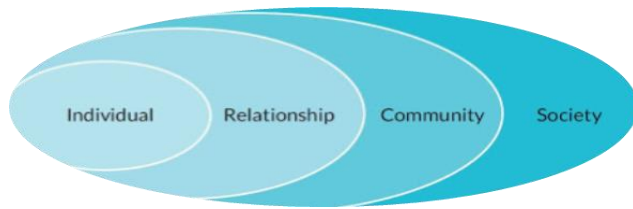


Figure 1: WHO socioecological model for violence prevention

Data on violence prevention interventions can be mapped to help us analyse the current system. This can be done:

- geographically
- across the spectrum of prevention (by categorising interventions as primary, secondary and tertiary prevention)
- according to the socio-ecological model (figure 1)
- By delivery setting (i.e. schools, online, or in the community)
- Across the life-course

Through this process, gaps, opportunities and system biases can be identified and addressed.

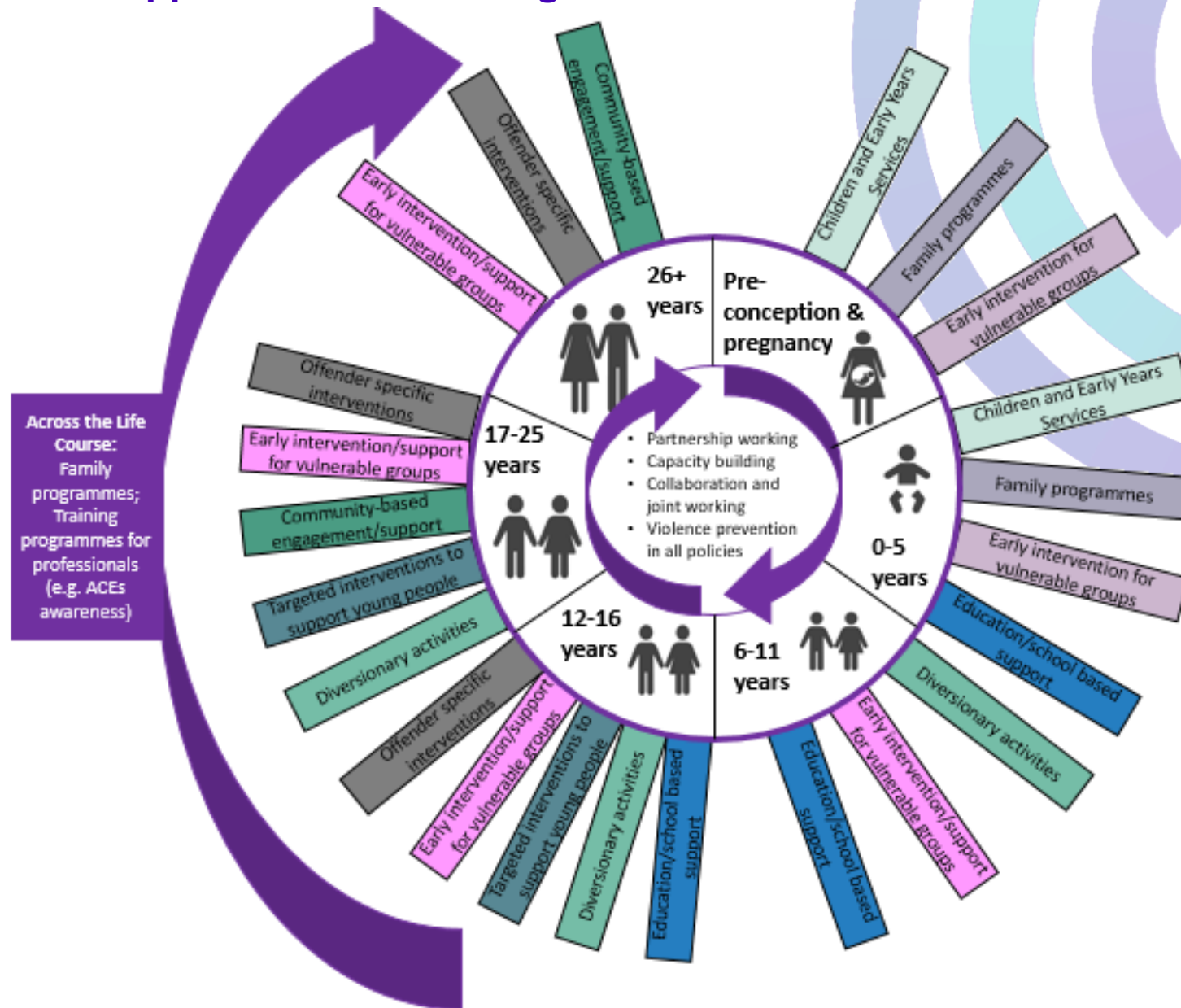


Key Recommendations from our mapping research:

- A database of interventions should be held by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit and updated regularly. This will enable the identification of gaps, opportunities and overlaps.
- Further investment should be targeted at primary and secondary prevention. The system is currently biased towards tertiary prevention.
- Building the evidence base for violence prevention interventions should be a priority for the Wales Violence Prevention Unit. Partners should be supported to evaluate interventions.
- Understanding the costs and benefits of different interventions should be a priority for research, as should the impact of cross-cutting interventions that impact multiple forms of violence.



A Lifecourse Approach to Preventing Serious Youth Violence in Wales





Assess the Evidence for Effective Interventions⁶

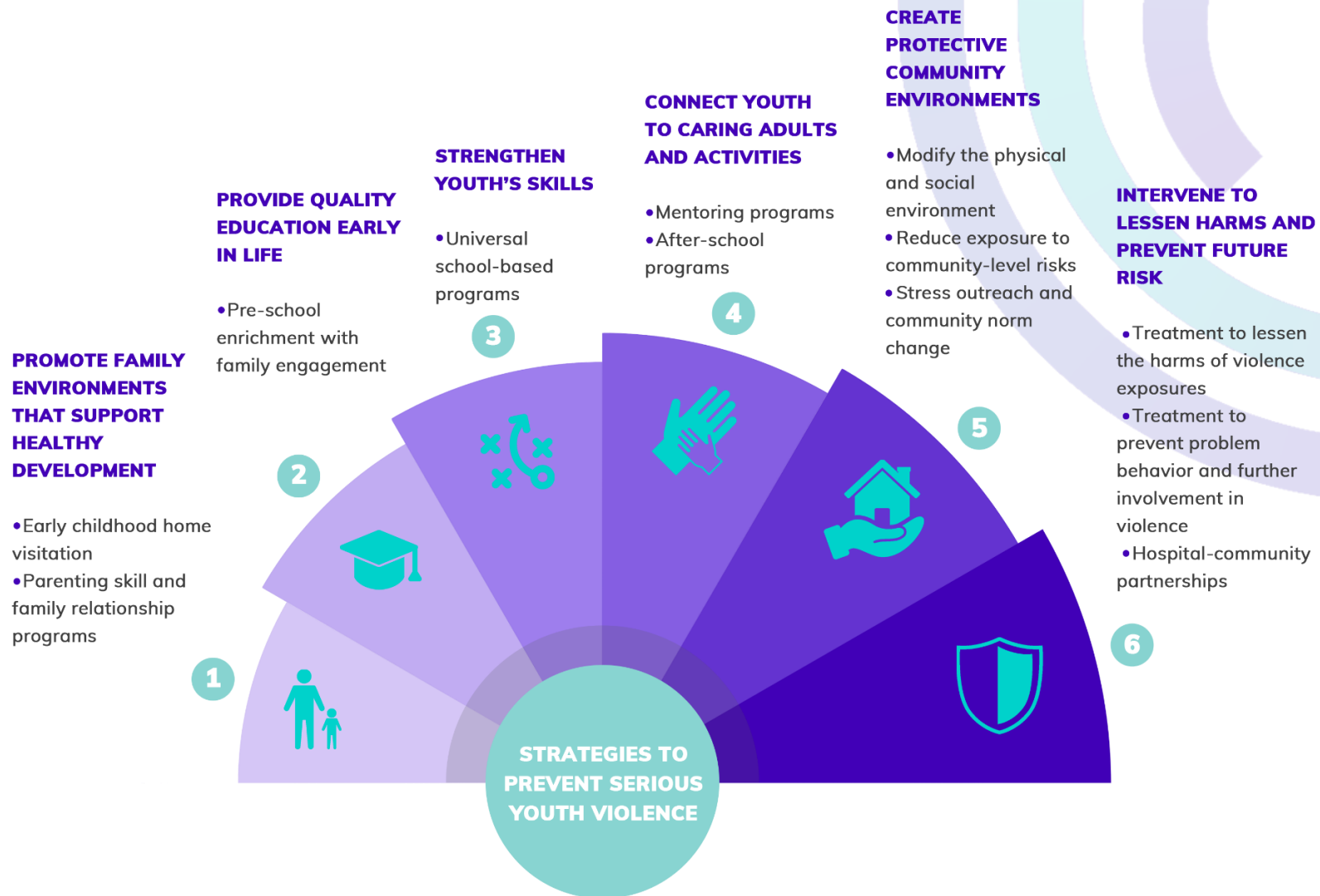
	Good evidence from multiple reviews	Limited or emerging evidence	Mixed effects	Not effective or harmful	Examples
<p>Promote family environments that support healthy development</p> <p>Across all of the major reviews of global evidence, promoting supportive family environments was identified to be one of the key approaches with the most promising evidence base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parenting programmes Home Visiting 				<p>The Incredible Years⁷ - a series of interlocking, evidence-based programmes for parents, children, and teachers, supported by over 30 years of research. The goal is to prevent and treat young children's behaviour problems and promote their social, emotional, and academic competence.</p>
<p>Provide quality education early in life</p> <p>Good quality early education has been acknowledged to be effective in addressing violence prevention risk factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good quality early education (preschool/early childhood development programmes) 				<p>Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management - variety of creative classroom management strategies for teachers to use to meet children's developmental milestones and teach emotional literacy, friendship skills, self-regulation and problem solving skills.</p>
<p>Strengthen young people's skills & connect of caring adults and activities</p> <p>Multiple reviews have identified strengthening skills in young people and connecting youth with caring adults to be promising approaches, particularly with regards to promoting development of life and social skills, bullying prevention programmes, and also with regards to therapeutic approaches in young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life and social skills development Bullying prevention programmes Relationship violence education Financial incentives for adolescents to attend school Afterschool and structured leisure time activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring Peer mediation Therapeutic approaches for young people at risk Vocational training for young people at risk Boot camps Prison visits 			<p>Bullying has been recognised as a form of violence and a risk factor for other forms of violence (World Health Organization, 2015). School-wide bullying prevention programmes, such as STR and the Olweus Programme have been associated with reduced rates of bullying (DavidFerdon, et al., 2016).</p>
<p>Creative protective community environments</p> <p>The importance of creating protective physical and social community environments was highlighted in most of the reviews examined</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing access to and the harmful use of school Alcohol pricing Limiting alcohol sales Drug control programmes Reducing access to and misuse of firearms Spatial modification and urban upgrading Poverty de-concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotspot policing Street lighting Community and problem orientated policing Hospital and community partnerships for youth at risk of being involved in violence Youth Curfews 			<p>A Business Improvement District approach in Los Angeles that involved partnership working between the public and private sector to improve commerce, for example, through street cleaning, improved security and "beautification" was reported to have led to an 8% reduction in violent crime compared to control districts.</p>
<p>Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk</p> <p>Secondary and tertiary prevention approaches designed to lessen harm and future risk for those who are victims or perpetrators of serious youth violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restorative justice "Therapeutic approaches" in general in WHO 2015 (Family therapy in EIF What Works, multi-systemic therapy in Serious Violence Strategy) Trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for offenders Therapeutic Foster Care Mediation between offender and victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational training (Skills building in Serious Violence Strategy) Mentoring A second visit to the home of domestic abuse victims (24 hours - 14 days after initial response) "Scared Straight" programmes Trying youth as adults 			<p>Safer London is a charity that is working with councils across London to support women and girls in escaping gang involvement through a programme called Empower (for 11 to 18 years olds) and London Gang Exit (for 16 to 24 year olds). This programme provides support generally for six months, working closely with councils to identify and support those at risk in accessing health and social support provision, as well as creative activities, for example dance groups. Over 3000 people were supported through Empower over 12 months, with reported improvement in 80% of outcomes, on average, by the end of the intervention (Local Government Association, 2019).</p>

6 <http://westmidlands-vru.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Youth-violence-interventions-evidence-review-2019.pdf>

7 <http://www.incredibleyears.com/>



Implement Six Strategies to Prevent Serious Youth Violence⁸



⁸ http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/121314/E94277.pdf

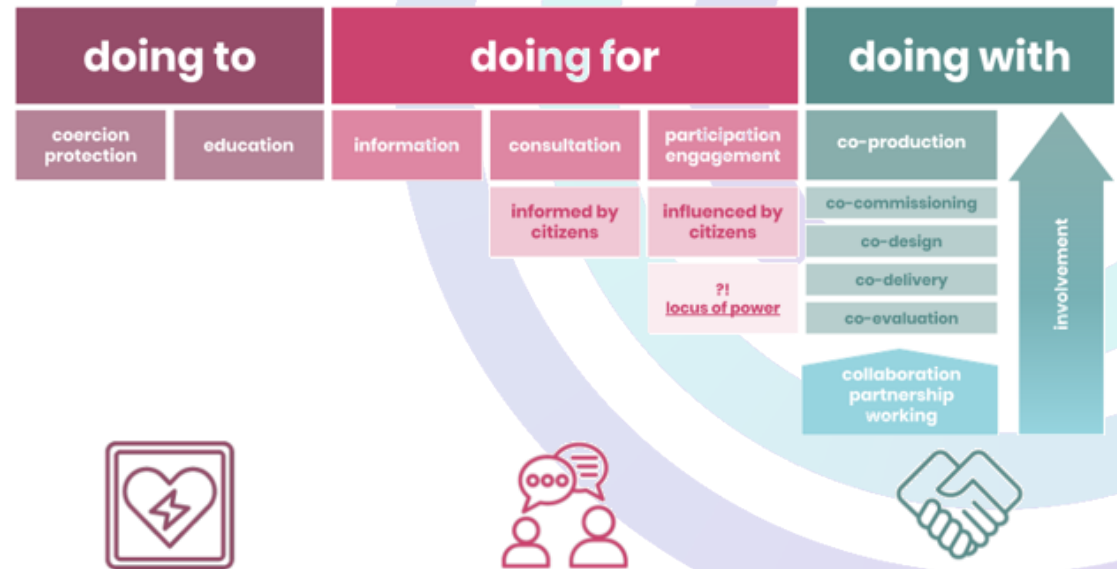


Coproduce

Violence prevention interventions should be co-produced with communities and individuals with lived experience of violence. If violence is an expression of power, then we must genuinely power share with communities and individuals at risk of or with lived experience of violence if we are ever to successfully prevent violence. The Wales Violence Prevention Unit commissioned Barnardo's and Cardiff University to carry out coproduction with young people to understand their experiences of violence and what solutions they feel would be effective for their community (Appendix 3).

“All of the young people stated that they do not have anywhere they feel safe, as their communities are unsafe and at home they have experienced abuse, neglect and domestic abuse. All the young people shared that they have witnessed significant and scary violence, including incidents of knife crime”

Co-production with communities is recommended in NICE (2016) guidelines for community engagement in public health interventions. This type of service-user involvement is also recommended by research guidelines for the development of complex interventions.



The diagram illustrates the aim of our coproduction work. To be 'doing with' young people, including co-producing, co-commissioning, co-designing, co-delivery, co-evaluation.

In 2020/21, we are working with Co-Production Network for Wales and Barnardo's Cymru to realise this vision for the Violence Prevention Unit.



Rhwydwaith
Cydgyhyrchu
Cymru
Co-production
Network
for Wales
Pawb gyda'i gilydd
All in this together





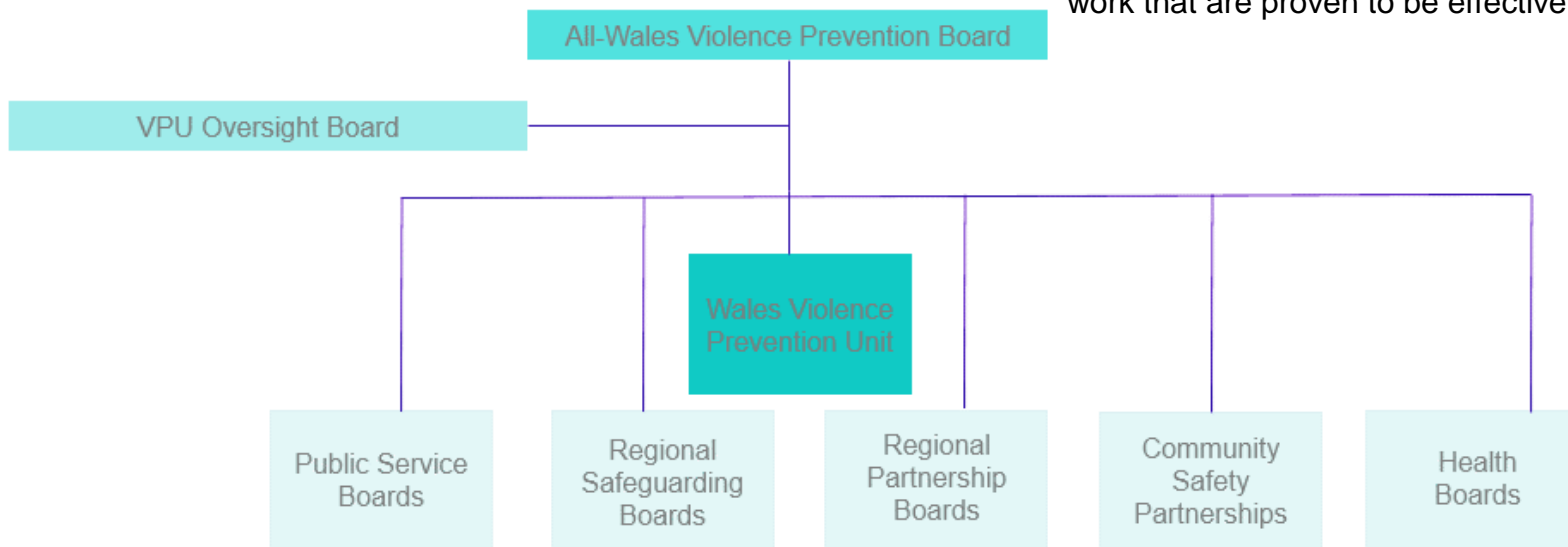
Partnerships for Prevention

The Wales Violence Prevention Unit and its partners share a collective responsibility to create systemic change to protect the most vulnerable people and communities across Wales. We feel passionately about ensuring that those with lived experiences of violence are placed at the heart of what we do, informing and shaping the development of transformative approaches to early intervention and prevention.

We will continue to maximise our efforts to liaise and connect partner organisations to develop a collaborative approach to identifying and reducing drivers of serious violence. The coordination of a public health approach is supporting services to work together to achieve real and sustained progress in organisational thinking, attitudes, behaviour and communication, in line with UK and Welsh Government policy and strategy.

The Wales Violence Prevention Unit will support and work alongside local partnership structures such as Public Service Boards, Regional Safeguarding Boards, Regional Partnership Boards, Health Boards and Community Safety Partnerships to ensure that strategic responsibility for work around health, education, safeguarding and communications in relation to violence prevention are embedded within these structures. Local areas tackle issues specific to them while as a region, we can work towards tackling the causes of serious youth violence.

As evidenced by the mapping exercise that has been undertaken in recent months, along with the All Wales Serious Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Review 2019 (Appendix 3), there are numerous examples of existing and emerging practice in Wales, and a real appetite amongst partners to tackle issues associated with serious violence and vulnerability through innovation, whilst safeguarding existing programmes of work that are proven to be effective.





Empower Partners to Prevent Violence

The Wales Violence Prevention Unit aims to create an environment which empowers partners to work collaboratively to develop and implement violence prevention activities. We have listened to partners. This is what we have heard:

Develop a **sustainable commissioning model** that supports a long term approach to the provision of evidence based, transformative early intervention and prevention approaches to serious violence and associated vulnerabilities, bringing key partners together to identify opportunities for joint commissioning and service delivery.

Advise on trends and ensure that programmes and interventions are developed in line with **key strategy, policy, legislation and research**, both at a local and national level, and act as a driver for policy and legislative change.

Provide a mechanism for people, particularly those with lived experience of serious violence, to **be heard and to influence** issues that affect them, influencing and shaping the development and delivery of a spectrum of services that are both reflective of need and available at the earliest opportunity.

Recognise that both a **robust legislative and criminal justice framework** to disrupt and prevent serious violence, and, **community based interventions** to prevent and intervene at the earliest opportunity, are key to tackling these issues

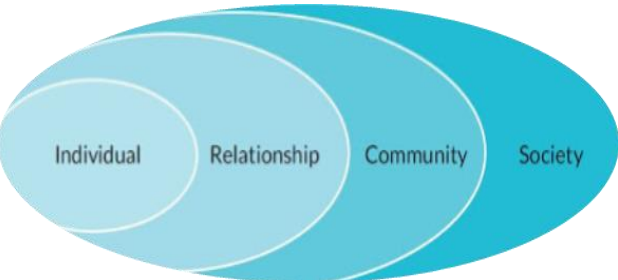
Apply a **trauma informed, person-centred approach** to violence prevention, where collectively partners build on the needs and strengths of individuals and communities, and that services, processes and systems are able to adapt and respond to this, rather than individuals needing to fit within an existing, pre-defined service delivery landscape

Work within a bespoke evaluation framework to **assess the impact and effectiveness** of violence prevention activities in Wales

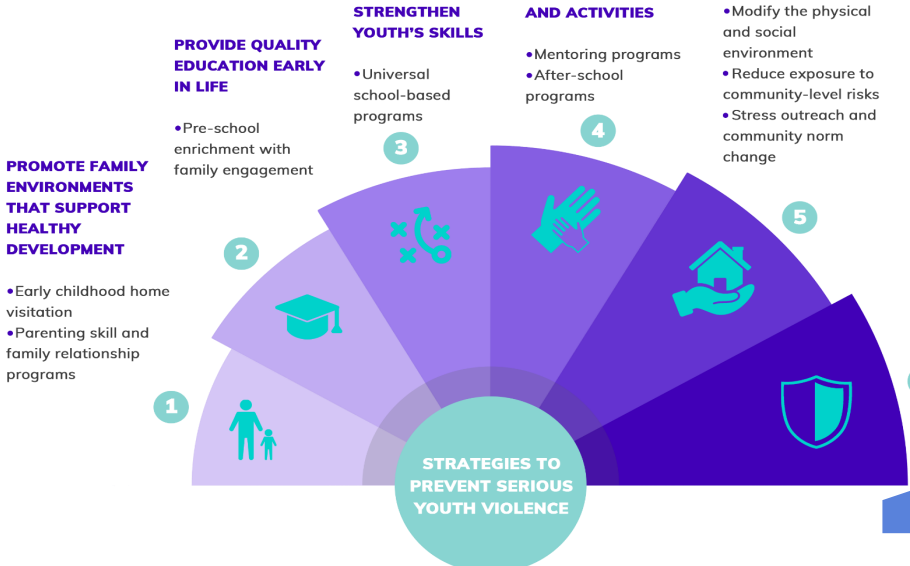


Theory of Change

Whole Systems Approach to Violence Prevention



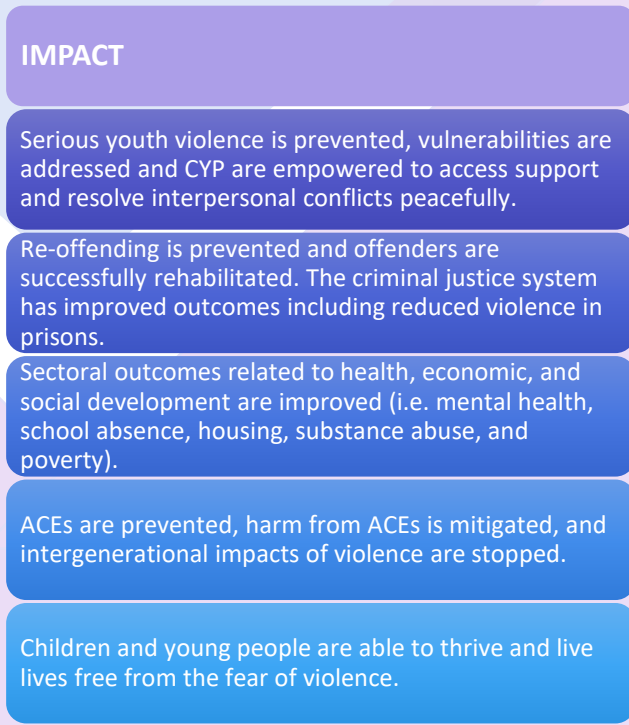
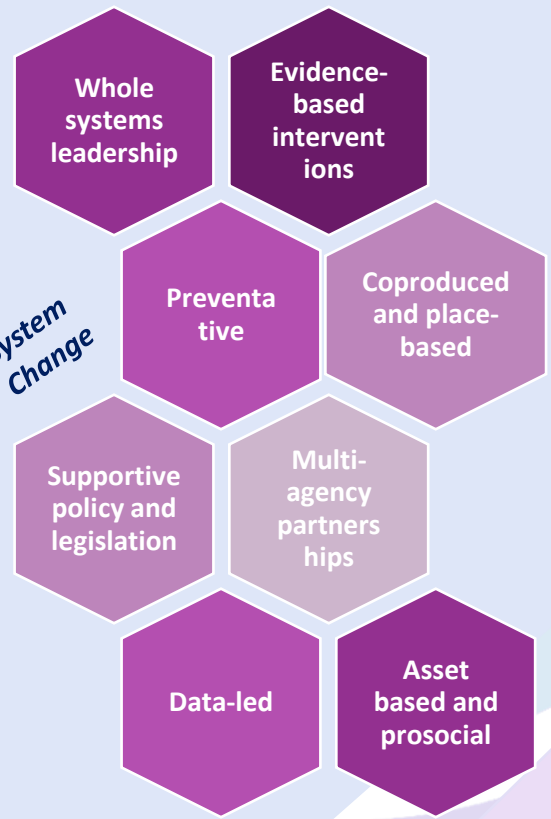
Evidence-based strategies to prevent serious youth violence:



Empowering individuals, communities, organisations and society to prevent serious youth violence



System Change





Apply for Principles of Prevention

Comprehensive - Effective programmes should include multiple components to address a range of risk and protective factors across the socio-ecological spectrum. Prevention should be complemented by improved responses and support to people who disclose experiencing violence.

Appropriately-timed - There is a consensus that young people are at a particularly high risk for violence perpetration and victimization, making this a key population for intervention. Research suggests that there are specific, time-limited windows of opportunity for intervention with young people, such as expulsion from school, or attendance at A&E.

Varied teaching methods - Research indicates that prevention is most successful when it includes interactive instruction and opportunities for active, skills-based learning. Evidence suggests that engaging participants in multiple ways (e.g. writing exercises, role plays) and with greater participation is associated with more positive outcomes.

Sufficient dose - Prevention approaches must provide a sufficient 'dose' of the intervention, as measured by total exposure to programme content or contact hours, particularly for behaviours as complex as serious violence. No matter how brief or low-cost an intervention may be, if it does not impact the outcomes of interest, implementation will not be an efficient or effective use of resources.

Fosters positive relationships - Strategies that foster positive relationships (prosocial interventions) between participants and

their parents, peers, or other adults have been associated with better outcomes. For example, using existing peer networks to diffuse positive social norms.

Sociocultural relevance - Prevention programmes that are sensitive to and reflective of community norms and cultural beliefs may be more successful in recruitment, retention, and achieving outcomes. Involving members of the target population in development and implementation can improve programme relevance to the community needs.

Well-trained staff - Effective programmes have implementers who are stable, committed, competent, and can connect effectively with participants. Sufficient buy-in to the programme model is also important to credibly deliver and reinforce messages.

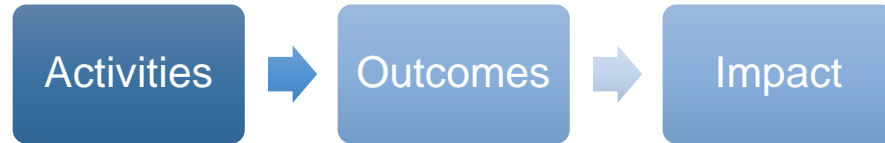
Theory-driven - Etiological theories that identify modifiable points for intervention in the development of health risk behaviours are extremely valuable as a basis for programme development, especially when supported by evidence that the factors identified represent causal influences in a theoretical model (i.e. a theory of change).

Includes outcome evaluation - Programmes should be evaluated in accordance with the theoretical aims underpinning its design, to assess changes in both the desired and undesired direction using validated measures where possible.



Monitor, Evaluate and Measure Progress

Progress against preventing serious youth violence can be measured in the short term and long term.



In the long-term, the impact of prevention programmes can be measured as reductions in prevalence of serious youth violence. There are also short and medium term outcomes that will impact on our longer term vision of preventing violence.

Progress in preventing serious youth violence in South Wales can be measured using a systems approach. The following methods will be used in our evaluation:

South Wales Serious Youth Violence Strategic Needs Assessment: the Violence Prevention Unit has undertaken a strategic needs assessment (Appendix 1) to assess the level of need relating to serious youth violence in South Wales. This assessment provides baseline data for the evaluation.

South Wales Violence Surveillance System: Our violence surveillance system combines data from the Police, Ambulance and Accident and Emergency Departments to gain a holistic picture of serious youth violence in South Wales. Trends and patterns in this data will be collected over time to understand where changes have taken place.

Network analysis: will measure improvements in collaborative whole systems approaches to violence prevention in Wales and the organisations who prioritise violence as a public health

issue. This method will map how different people or organisations connect to one another to identify key influencers within the system (the people or organisations who have more influence than others) and identify whether some parts of the network are isolated or working in silo. The data can be mapped and repeated over time to identify change.

Concept mapping: will gather information about the evidence-based primary, secondary and tertiary preventative programmes that are delivered in Wales and understand whether pathways for referrals are comprehensive and understood by partners. This method will also be used to identify problems, challenges and solutions through stakeholder engagement.

Qualitative research with a systems lens: will explore the impact of the Wales Violence Prevention Unit on relationships and change, and understand how different parts of the system affect one another. This method will gather qualitative data to understand feelings of safety amongst children, young people, parents, families and communities, by gathering insight at various time-points of strategy implementation. It will also gather qualitative data to understand psycho-social, health, education and socioeconomic outcomes at various time-points of strategy implementation.

Adaptation of traditional evaluation approaches with a systems perspective: will be implemented to understand pre and post-changes of individual Violence Prevention Unit interventions, analysed within a systems perspective. This method will:

- Use intelligence to measure a reduction in reoffending and in all forms of violence, a reduction in children and young people involved in criminal activity.
- Use intelligence to measure improvements in psychosocial, health, education and socioeconomic outcomes.
- Use survey data to measure changes in feelings of safety amongst children, young people, parents, families and communities, at various time-points of strategy implementation.

Sampling participants from different parts of the system will explore the impacts of the Violence Prevention Unit on relationships and change and understand how different parts of the system affect one another. We will use existing evidence to inform the development and implementation of violence prevention programmes. Where new interventions are

developed and tested, or existing interventions are adapted in to new settings or population groups, we will support our partners to implement robust evaluation before scaling up. Monitoring the impacts of programmes over time will ensure that resources are invested in programmes that work for Wales, that unintended and potentially harmful outcomes are reduced, and that programmes are implemented with consideration of the local community and context.

Development of a standard evaluation framework and support for organisations delivering violence prevention interventions: The Wales Violence Prevention Unit is working with partners to develop a standard framework and guidance for the evaluation of violence prevention interventions. This framework will provide support for partner organisations to deliver evidence based interventions and to build the evidence base for violence prevention interventions.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Strategic Needs Assessment

Appendix 2 – Intervention Mapping

Appendix 3 – Interim Coproduction Report

Appendix 4 – Violence & Vulnerability Unit SOC Review



COMMIT TO ACTION



**Embrace
Change**



**Act On
Evidence**



**Work
Together**



**Start
Today**