



**PARTNERSHIP
INTELLIGENCE**

LANCASHIRE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

2025 - 2028

December 2024

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www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/community-safety/

Aim

The strategic assessment (SA) is a statutory requirement for community safety partnerships as outlined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The aim of this SA is to provide an account of long-term issues and threats from crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) across Lancashire. This SA is produced on a 3-year cycle, which increases capacity to develop partnership intelligence assessments on significant threats, issues, and gaps in knowledge. These assessments provide extensive research and understanding of strategic issues.

Purpose

The purpose of this SA is to highlight significant crime and ASB threats and issues that impact on community safety. It is the key evidence base that supports the community safety agreement, local partnership plans, the policing and crime plan and the Constabulary control strategy. Research, study and analysis draw out key conclusions to aid strategic decision-making in developing control measures to reduce the threat and harm from crime and ASB.

This assessment is a concise account of key strategic issues impacting across the county. For a more in-depth understanding of localised issues, this assessment should be read alongside the strategic assessment local profiles (14 in total, 1 for each of the 12 district authorities plus 1 each for the two unitary authorities), existing partnership intelligence assessments and strategies, the Violence Reduction Local Profiles, and Serious and Organised Crime Local Profiles. The serious and organised crime local profile provides detail on organised crime groups and gangs and the impact of their activity within the local communities. The local profile is based on Home Office guidance for police and community safety partners – these will be updated during 2025.

This assessment does not provide an exhaustive account of all threats and issues: The North West Counter Terrorist Unit (at Lancashire Constabulary) produce a separate assessment that details the threats and issues from terrorism and extremist activity.

It is not the purpose of this assessment to provide a commentary on performance or management information.

Method

This assessment (along with 14 SA local profiles) is the result of 6 months research, analysis, engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, community safety partner agencies and all 15 local authorities. The process included 3 area workshop consultations (June 2024) attended by councillors, partners, and service providers. The Lancashire Talking community survey tool has been used to gather the concerns of the residents of Lancashire regarding crime, ASB and community safety. The Trading Standards Young Persons Survey 2022/23 has also provided an insight into young persons behaviours, thoughts and perceptions around alcohol and knives.

This assessment is accompanied by 14 local SA profiles that detail significant issues in each area of the county. Existing partnership intelligence assessments, and local analytical profiles have been used to provide supporting evidence, additional research, and analysis.

Executive Summary

This assessment highlights some of the key issues and risks across Lancashire which affect the local communities. They require multi-agency engagement to improve safeguarding, reduce vulnerability, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and improve the well-being of our residents. These key issues have remained similar through a number of the Strategic Assessment processes in recent years as the victims are those often most vulnerable within society.

- The key risks and threats impacting across the county include:
 - Domestic abuse
 - Violence against Women and Girls
 - Serious violence (includes gun and gang crime, and knife crime)
 - Exploitation – criminal and sexual
 - Organised Crime
 - Road safety
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Cyber crime

A number of the risks have cross cutting themes so cannot be looked at in isolation – for example – organised crime linked to exploitation of the vulnerable, both sexual and criminal (County Lines – drugs), which can also then lead to increased levels of violence, which in turn have an impact upon the local communities across Lancashire.

- Across Lancashire, there is a recognition that a public health and trauma informed approach is required to tackle issues, by looking at the wider determinants of crime and health and understanding root causes to enable an early intervention and preventative approach. These include:
 - Childhood experiences
 - Education
 - Unemployment
 - Health care
 - Housing
 - Income
 - Our communities
- Crime rates across Lancashire are lower than both the national and regional rates. When comparing 2021/22 to 2023/24 there has been a 6% reduction in all crime. During this time, reductions have been seen in violent crime, sexual offences, and reports of domestic abuse to the police. Theft offences have increased – in particular offences of shoplifting, which is a trend seen across the country.
- Victims, vulnerability, and safeguarding remain a theme throughout the assessment. Below is a summary:
 - Research from Project Empira provided insight into opportunities which are evident in terms of child sexual and criminal exploitation. Child criminal exploitation in the form of drug networks were found hand in hand with scenarios of child sexual exploitation.

- Live streaming is an emerging method of indecent imagery of children (IIOC) production, distribution, and grooming.
- The widespread practice of sharing self-generating imagery among children is a continued and increasing safeguarding risk.
- Organised crime groups engaged in coerced drug distribution often prioritise children during recruitment, targeting vulnerabilities such as social isolation, poor economic opportunities and being in social care.
- Almost two-thirds of British victims of modern slavery and human trafficking are children being exploited for criminality, many through county lines drug distribution.
- Sexual exploitation typically occurs in brothels and escort agencies. Victims, particularly women and girls, are subject to sexual and often physical abuse, with many victims suffering long term psychological distress as a result of their exploitation.
- Cannabis is still the most widely used illegal drug in the UK particularly amongst young adults. Cannabis cultivation in the UK continues at an industrial scale and is often linked to other offences including benefit fraud, energy theft, modern slavery, robbery, and violence.
- The secondary impact from drug dealing is the associated violence and threats, including the use of weapons and firearms by Organised Crime Groups to enforce territories and establish new drugs markets. Drug related violence continues at all stages of the supply impacting within the local communities.
- A greater understanding is required about the reasons individuals engage in criminality of this type to inform preventative strategies for education, early help/intervention and for the protection of those identified as high risk of exploitation from County-Lines.
- Domestic abuse is a complex issue and has a significant impact on people's lives. Protection and support for victims is paramount as well as a swift and effective response to all reports of domestic abuse.
- People experience domestic abuse regardless of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, or disability.
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has created a statutory definition of domestic abuse. The Act also places a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.
- The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, also known as Clare's Law, enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending.

- Partners across Lancashire support the White Ribbon campaign with its aim to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. The work undertaken is preventative as the aim is to stop violence before it starts.
- Tackling violence against women and girls in the night-time economy, involves proactive work including the deployment of uniform and plain clothes officers in key areas to ensure that women and girls can enjoy a safe night out in the county.
- In respect of homicides across the county it was found that spontaneous/random violence, youth knife crime and domestic abuse account for a significant proportion of homicide and near-miss offences.
- Most shootings in the UK are committed by street gangs involved in many types of criminality, such as armed robberies and drug distribution. Victims of gun crime are generally known to the police which indicates that criminals use firearms in feuds with other criminal groups for protection, punishment or to extend their criminal enterprises.
- Prioritisation of targeting areas experiencing high levels of gang activity is undertaken in order to reduce the number of people killed, injured or exploited as a result of gangs and serious violence.
- Whilst volumes of knife crime are increasing within Lancashire, the proportion to which it makes up the total amount of crime is consistent and reflective of the national and regional picture.
- Through the 'Youth Violence Consultation' many young people felt the main reason for carrying a knife was for protection.
- Operation Edge encompasses Lancashire's knife crime enforcement activity and includes knife bins, weapon searches in public spaces, high visibility patrols and education in schools and colleges.
- Rape and Serious Sexual Offences are committed primarily by men against women and girls but can also be perpetrated against men and boys. They occur in all communities and involve offenders and victims with different protected characteristics, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.
- In many cases there will be no visible sign of injury and rape is most commonly perpetrated by someone known to the victim.
- Given the unique nature of this offending, the significant amount of public concern relating to the offenders, and the need to improve confidence that the justice system appropriately addresses and punishes these offences, they have therefore been the focus of the Serious Sexual Offences Sentencing and Release Arrangements reforms.
- Road safety continues to be seen by many residents as a key issue across the county. The Road Safety Teams consider groups in society that are most at risk and the data shows that currently these groups are young road users, motorcyclists, cyclists, child pedestrians, and over 65's. Continued education

and engagement targeting these groups is undertaken across the county to increase safety.

Recommendations

1. The Strategic Assessment enables continued and further work streams to be identified. More work and research will help to better understand the issues across the county which are affecting the communities of Lancashire. Governance will be provided by the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership Board (LCSPB). Further work is planned for the coming 3-year period and includes:
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Violence against Women and Girls
 - Rape and Serious Sexual Offending
 - Serious Organised Crime Profiles
2. The Strategic Assessment informs the development of the Community Safety Agreement. This enables partners to work together to tackle the key issues and themes. For Lancashire these include violence, Organised Crime, drugs, exploitation, sexual offences, anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood crime, communities, and victims.
3. The Strategic Assessment and Local Profiles are also to be used as evidence to support and enable districts to create plans around their local priorities and direct resources where needed to have the largest impact upon the issues affecting the communities of Lancashire.

Overview

Census data 2021, shows the population of Lancashire was estimated at around 1.5 million people (Lancashire Insight, 2023). The population is almost evenly split between gender with 51% female and 49% male.

The ethnic breakdown of Lancashire consists of White (86.6%), Asian (10.4%), mixed race (1.6%), Black (0.7%). Other ethnic groups make up 0.8% of the population. The proportion of 'other than white' groups is less than both the North West (14.4%) and England and Wales (18.3%) totals. The 'other than white' groups have increased across Lancashire from 9.6% to 13.4% of the population from 2011 to 2021.¹

The largest 'other than white' groups populations are found in Blackburn with Darwen (39.7%), Pendle (29.6%) and Preston (27.6%).

Across Lancashire the average age is 41.3 years compared to the England and Wales average of 40.4 years. The age population varies across the region and some areas such as Blackburn with Darwen have a relatively young population with approximately a quarter of their population (25.7%) under the age of 18 (Blackburn with Darwen JSNA, 2023).

¹ [Population by ethnicity and change 2011-21 - Lancashire County Council](#)

The indices of deprivation measure each local authority against the rest of the country, with number 1 being identified as the most deprived area in England (Indices of deprivation, 2019). There is a wide variation across the county with Blackpool identified as the most deprived area in England, whereas Ribble Valley ranks 282nd of the 317 local authority areas in England.

Over 40% of lower super output areas within Blackpool fall into the 10% most deprived areas nationally, whilst Burnley has 38%, Blackburn has 36%, Pendle 32%, and Hyndburn 27%. All other districts have between 0% (Ribble Valley) and 19% (Preston) in the 10% most deprived areas.

Crime rates

Recorded crime volumes and rates have been reducing over the last few years. The rate per 1000 population for 2023/24 was 83.5, which was lower than the North West and England and Wales rates, which were 97.4 and 89.7, respectively.²

All recorded crime has reduced across Lancashire by 6% when comparing 2021/22 to 2023/24. In that time violence against the person offences have reduced by 10%, sexual offences by 5%, and reported domestic abuse offences by 9%. Theft offences have increased during this time, and in particular shoplifting offences – this has followed the national trend.

Work undertaken by Community Safety Partnerships comprises of statutory and non-statutory partners, and include:

- Health
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Local Authorities
- Police
- Probation Service
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Voluntary sector/community groups
- Town and Parish Councils
- Commissioned services

Teams within the local authority structure that impact on community safety include:

- Public Health
- Business Intelligence
- Children and Family Wellbeing
- Childrens Social Care
- Adults Safeguarding
- Education
- Road Safety
- Trading Standards
- Equality and Cohesion Service
- Youth Justice Service

The organisations and agencies work collectively in a partnership approach with the aim of reducing crime and disorder across Lancashire and its local communities. There has previously been a focus on enforcement, but there is now a recognition that a public health

² [Community safety dashboard - Lancashire County Council](#)

approach is required to tackle issues, by looking at the wider determinants of crime and understanding root causes to enable an early intervention and preventative approach – included within these are childhood experiences, education, unemployment, health care, housing, income, and our communities (see image below).



Risk/Threats

The MORILE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement) assessment tool has been used to rank various threats and issues identified by Lancashire Constabulary. There has been a review of a number of documents which have identified priorities/issues which impact upon Lancashire. These documents include

- UK Strategic Policing Requirements 2023³
- UK Home Secretary's Strategic Priorities 2023/24⁴
- National Crime & Policing Measures 2021⁵
- National Strategic Assessment of Organised Crime 2024⁶
- Lancashire Partnership Strategic Assessment 2022-2025⁷
- Lancashire Police & Crime Plan 2024-2029⁸
- Serious Violence in Lancashire (Strategic Needs Assessment) 2024⁹

A number of similar priorities and themes were seen throughout the above documents and included:

- Violence related (serious, DA, etc)
- Organised crime
- Drugs
- Exploitation
- Sexual offences
- ASB
- Neighbourhood crime/communities
- Victims

The risk matrix considers the mitigation of the organisational position through scoring its capacity and capability.

Rank	Thematic area	Organisational Risk Score
1	County Lines / Violence related to Drug Supply	4
1	Knife Crime	2
3	VAWG	2
4	Gang Crime	3
5	Domestic Abuse	3
6	Homicide	2
7	Cyber	3
8	Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking	3
9	Exploitation of young people – Child Criminal Exploitation	3
9	Road Safety	2
9	Fraud	3
12	ASB	2

³ [Strategic Policing Requirement 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Home Office main estimates memorandum 2024 to 2025 \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁵ [Beating crime plan - GOV.UK](#)

⁶ [NSA 2024 - Home - National Crime Agency](#)

⁷ [lancashire-strategic-assessment-2022.pdf](#)

⁸ [The Police And Crime Plan - Lancashire Police Crime Commissioner](#)

⁹ [LVRN-Strategic-Needs-Assessment-2024.pdf](#)

The 'organisational risk indicator' is a numerical indicator from 1 through 5. It describes how effectively the organisation is currently positioned to effectively tackle the threat. The higher the ORI the less effectively the risk is being mitigated or managed – therefore a score of 5 is a higher risk than 1. The effectiveness to achieve results against the threats/issues is not the sole responsibility of one organisation across Lancashire, and continued partnership working is necessary to make Lancashire a safer place for its communities.

Crime Severity¹⁰

This measure of crime considers both the volume and the severity of offences, by weighting offences differently. By "severity", it is intended to reflect the relative harm of an offence to society and the likely demands on the police, given that the police resource requirements are likely to be greater for offences that are more serious and therefore weighted more highly. These offences are often low in volume but equate to a high level of harm with the victims often being those most vulnerable in society and having the greatest impact within the local communities.

The top 10 crime types by severity have been:

- assault with intent to cause serious harm
- rape of a female aged 16 or over
- assault with injury
- robbery of personal property
- residential burglary
- rape of a female aged under 16
- blackmail
- sexual assault on a female
- rape of a female child under 13
- stalking/harassment – controlling behaviour

Vulnerabilities/victims

Exploitation & Abuse of Young People (Criminal & Sexual)

Partners across Lancashire are committed to preventing the exploitation of children, helping victims, and bringing offenders to justice. The exploitation of children can affect any child, anytime, anywhere – regardless of their social or ethnic background.

Research from Project Empira provided insight into opportunities which are evident in terms of child sexual and criminal exploitation. Child criminal exploitation in the form of drug networks were found hand in hand with scenarios of child sexual exploitation.

The research also showed that more extensive networks (cross divisional/force boundaries) were evident between victims rather than the perpetrators, particularly if the child was in a looked-after setting, their associations typically borne out of social connections as they moved between care locations.

Child sexual abuse covers a range of offence types, occurring online, offline or moving between both. It is estimated that there are between 680,000 and 830,000 UK based adult offenders who pose varying degrees of risk to children, equivalent to 1.3% to 1.6% of the UK adult population. Estimates indicate that one in ten children experienced child sexual abuse before the age of 16 and the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse estimates that

¹⁰ [The Cambridge Crime Harm Index \(CCHI\) | Institute of Criminology](#)

this occurs to one in six girls and one in twenty boys. However, all forms of child sexual abuse remain consistently underreported.

Our assessment based on local data and the national threat landscape is that demand will continue to increase steadily with the evolution of new technologies and online behavioural changes. Rising trends of live streaming and self-generated imagery will be exploited by online criminals and translate to there being more victims of crime. Live streaming is an emerging method of indecent imagery of children (IIOC) production, distribution and grooming which creates challenges in respect of detection by law enforcement agencies including the increased use of crypto currency. The widespread practice of sharing self-generating imagery among children is a continued and increasing safeguarding risk. Partner agencies will continue to tackle these issues holistically through a 4P (prevent, prepare, protect, and pursue) approach.

Understanding physical offending, including group-based offending, remains an ongoing priority for law enforcement. It is likely that a significant proportion of victims and survivors do not recognise themselves as such. Victims and survivors of group-based offending who had previously witnessed or experienced unhealthy relationships are more likely to be vulnerable to controlling, violent and otherwise abusive behaviours. This emphasises the need to continue to support and encourage victim disclosure.

Peer on peer offending has received regular media attention over time and publication of studies and surveys highlighting an indication of the scale of the issue in schools and the level of under reporting has potentially increased awareness and reporting will impact on law enforcement resources.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery (HTMS) and Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) is a strategic Serious Organised Crime (SOC) priority nationally and for Lancashire.

Modern slavery relates to exploitation of children and adults in slavery, servitude, or forced or compulsory labour. Human trafficking is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children and adults through force, coercion, or deception for the purposes of exploitation.

HTMS can be a hidden crime and is proven to be difficult to prosecute as victims invariably will not engage and evidence led prosecutions are limited.

The most sophisticated groups engaged in HTMS are likely to be pan-threat, involved in OIC, cannabis production and drugs distribution, including through County Lines offending models.

To disrupt and dismantle the highest harm human trafficking /modern slavery and organised immigration crime networks operating across the county, threats are identified through effective investigation and disruption supported by the comprehensive use of all legislation and engagement with partners. Proactive intelligence gathering is undertaken to inform the threat, risk and harm picture.

The National Referral Mechanism is a framework to identify potential victims of modern slavery and ensure they receive the appropriate support. Referrals for modern slavery and human trafficking have increased nationally as well as locally. It is likely this represents an improved awareness of the modern slavery and human trafficking threat, alongside increased movement across the UK border since COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted. All forms of exploitation are underreported.

UK nationals are the most commonly identified victims of modern slavery and human trafficking occurring in the UK and in Lancashire, followed by Albanian, Vietnamese, Romanian and Indian nationals. However, for Lancashire, those involved in cannabis cultivation are mainly Albanian or Vietnamese.

Criminal exploitation occurs when victims are forced or coerced to commit crime. This is the most commonly reported form of exploitation seen in National Referral Mechanism referrals, and victims are often UK nationals. The most common examples, including for UK nationals, involve drugs offences, such as distributing drugs or cultivating cannabis. This is reflected in Lancashire investigations and is likely in part due to use of S.45 Modern Slavery Act which offers a defence for those who are faced with criminal liability for a criminal act they committed because of their modern slavery or human trafficking experience.

Labour exploitation is where a person is forced to work by way of threats, violence, deception, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, or abuse of position. It is typically seen in labour sectors with lower skilled and lower paid workforces. Ongoing labour shortages in some of these sectors have likely contributed to a rise in labour exploitation in the UK. Foreign nationals with travel debts or sponsorship fees have featured strongly in Lancashire intelligence with threats of visa breaches and deportation subsequently being the means of control.

Organised crime groups engaged in coerced drug distribution often prioritise children during recruitment, targeting vulnerabilities such as social isolation, poor economic opportunities and being in social care. It is highly likely that increased rates of absence and children missing in education provide opportunities for drug distribution organised crime groups to recruit victims, while also creating barriers to identify those already recruited. Almost two-thirds of British victims of modern slavery and human trafficking are children being exploited for criminality, many through county lines drug distribution in which organised crime groups transport and sell drugs in other areas, usually moving from cities into smaller towns and rural areas.

The war in Ukraine has reduced the number of seasonal workers coming to the UK from Ukraine. This has resulted in workers being recruited from countries further afield where there are typically fewer labour protections than in Europe. These seasonal workers from outside of Europe are at an increased risk of being exploited in their home countries during the recruitment process, such as in the payment of fees to local brokers leading to potential debt bondage.

Sexual exploitation typically occurs in brothels and escort agencies. Victims, particularly women and girls, are subject to sexual and often physical abuse, with many victims suffering long term psychological distress as a result of their exploitation.

Adult Services Websites remain the most significant enabler of sexual exploitation; however, the recent introduction of the online safety bill may result in displacement onto more clandestine advertising spaces, creating opportunities for OCGs to evade law enforcement detection.

The rising cost of living has almost certainly exacerbated and increased the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking. It is likely that organised crime groups will consider alternative ways to maintain profitability and offset rising costs onto victims, such as spending less on victim welfare. For victims of sexual exploitation, other likely adaptations include coercing victims into providing more risky sexual services, such as unprotected sex, to attract and retain a steady customer base.

Drugs and County Lines

Drug use, drug seizures and drug offences continue to increase within the UK with a total annual cost to society of over £21 billion. Cannabis is still the most widely used illegal drug in the UK particularly amongst young adults. Cannabis cultivation in the UK continues at an industrial scale and is often linked to other offences including benefit fraud, energy theft, modern slavery, robbery, and violence.

The threat of harm linked to the misuse of synthetic drugs such as benzodiazepines and gabapentinoid drugs has increased. This is particularly through poly drug use which remains significant and indicates an overall upward trend. Reported use of ketamine by those in treatment has seen an increase in recent years – with the numbers of young persons in treatment stating it as the 4th highest common substance, behind cannabis, alcohol, and ecstasy.¹¹ Overall, the latest information from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)¹² shows no significant change in overall drug use with 6.8% using cannabis. Prevalence of use in the last year was below one percent for all other individual drug types, except for ketamine (2.9%) and new psychoactive substances (1.7%) in those aged 16 to 24 years. There was no statistically significant change in ketamine use, compared with YE March 2023 and YE March 2014 in those aged 16 to 24 years. However, there was an increase in those aged 16 to 59 years (0.8%), compared with YE March 2014 (0.6%).

The most direct harm from serious and organised crime continues to be through the distribution and supply of controlled drugs. The adverse impact of drugs and vulnerabilities associated with this crime remains one of the most significant threats within Lancashire. OCGs involved in drug supply can have a significant impact on local communities, particularly, the most vulnerable and deprived communities.

The secondary impact from drug dealing is the associated violence and threats, including the use of weapons and firearms by OCG's to enforce territories and establish new drugs markets. Drug related violence continues at all stages of the supply impacting within communities and the police are working with partners to target businesses and locations that are enabling serious violence or County Lines activity.

Tough targeted enforcement continues to break the business models of criminal supply chains and professional enablers of the drugs market in Lancashire. Through Operation Warrior targeting activity, disruptions will likely have substantial impacts on the supply networks, whilst fulfilling a number of key intelligence gaps. Development of partnership intelligence regarding drug activity to disrupt offending and bring offenders to justice is continuing.

In its ten-year Drugs Strategy (Harm to Hope), the Government has set out a whole-system approach of how we are doing more than ever to cut off the supply of drugs by criminal gangs and give people with a drug addiction, a route to a productive and drug-free life, whilst also reducing the recreational use of drugs. Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Partnership (LDAP) and local partners are working to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduced likelihood of drug and alcohol related deaths.
- A reduction in drug and alcohol related reoffending amongst prolific offenders within local areas.
- Increase in the numbers of drug and alcohol users, especially offenders, engaging in treatment as well as increases in those achieving and sustaining recovery.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/substance-misuse-treatment-for-young-people-2023-to-2024/children-and-young-peoples-substance-misuse-treatment-statistics-2023-to-2024-report>

¹² [Drug misuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

- Reduced costs for local health services and police forces due to lower health and crime harms, and lower costs to the criminal justice system (as fewer people are dealt with by the courts).
- The strategy sets out several national targets and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) have set local (Lancashire) targets based on the national delivery expectations.

Legislation is used to promote the use of preventative measures such as ancillary orders and SOC offender management to protect individuals, control offenders and prevent criminality. The aim to address drug use through more meaningful consequences and focus on prevention to help reduce demand and shift behaviour and attitudes is a priority for all. Partners will continue to deliver ongoing safeguarding of vulnerable individuals being exploited through drugs supply, especially County Lines, including through cuckooed premises. Early engagement with perpetrators of violent offences linked to drug supply is hoped to divert and disrupt activity.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Nearly every town and city across England and Wales is affected by county lines supplying heroin and crack cocaine. Most drugs are sourced from major cities including, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Nottingham, and Sheffield. (*National Strategic Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2023*)

It is recognised that the threat from County Lines OCGs will not be solved from disruption and prosecution alone. A greater understanding is required about the reasons individuals engage in criminality of this type to inform preventative strategies for education, early help/intervention and for the protection of those identified as high risk of exploitation from County-Lines. Lancashire is working closely with North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU) and neighbouring forces to ensure that themes, trends, tactics and ‘cross border’ safeguarding opportunities are being addressed at an early stage.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse accounts for over 17% of all recorded crime across Lancashire. Recorded domestic abuse crime by the police has reduced by 9% since 2021/22. The rate of recorded domestic abuse crimes per 1000 population for 2023/24 is similar to the national rate, but lower than that of the North West¹³.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over (1.4 million women and 751,000 men) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023 a prevalence rate of approximately 5.7% of women and 3.2% of men, but there was no significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year compared with the previous year. It was also highlighted that in the year ending March 2023, the victim was female in 73.5% of domestic abuse-related crimes. The latest data for Lancashire (2023-24) shows that female victims account for 73% of domestic abuse related crimes.

¹³ [Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool - Office for National Statistics](#)

Domestic abuse is a complex issue and has a significant impact on people's lives. Protection and support for victims is paramount as well as a swift and effective response to all reports of domestic abuse. People experience domestic abuse regardless of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, or disability. It can, and does, happen to anyone, irrespective of their background or social standing.

The definition of domestic abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members. This can include but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional.

An effective response to domestic abuse requires the support of partnership agencies including the local authority, police, social care, health, support groups, education, so that there continues to be improvement in support for victim survivors of domestic and sexual violence or abuse; and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable through timely, rigorous investigation and utilisation of the full range of tools available.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021¹⁴ has created a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive and economic abuse. The Act places a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children and there are now 190 units of safe accommodation across Lancashire. Other aspects of the Act include the response to domestic abuse, to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure there is support for those in need. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme¹⁵, also known as Clare's Law enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending.

Op Provide has been highlighted as National Best Practice by the Home Office and forms part of the Homicide Prevention Tool kit. It is a partnership-based approach which sees police officers responding to domestic abuse reports alongside a trained NHS domestic abuse specialist. An independent evaluation of this approach by Liverpool John Moores University has shown that the number of victims engaging with safeguarding advice was increased by 45.7% to 67.2%. It also saw the number of victims engaging with prosecution increase by 26.9%.

Funded projects from the OPCC have included the Drive Project which aims to reduce the number of persistent repeat offenders and reduce the harm caused to victims and their children. The Drive Project is being delivered by Victim Support in close partnership with other local services to achieve long term behaviour change and reduce incidents of domestic abuse.

December 2023 #noexcuseforabuse launched. Local councils, Lancashire Police, support agencies and NHS have come together to create this campaign to raise awareness and

¹⁴ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁵ [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme factsheet - GOV.UK](#)

understanding of domestic abuse and the help and support available to victims and perpetrators and how and where people can report their concerns.

Partners across Lancashire support the White Ribbon campaign¹⁶ with its aim to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. They work with men and boys to change long-established, and harmful, attitudes, systems and behaviours around rigid gender norms and masculinity that perpetuate inequality and violence. The work undertaken is preventative as the aim is to stop violence before it starts.

Serious Violence

Serious Violence Duty

The Serious Violence Duty¹⁷, effective from January 2023, requires local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Prisons, youth custody agencies and educational authorities may also need to work with these core partners.

The legislation grants these authorities the power to share data and information with each other for the purpose of preventing and reducing serious violence. Authorities are encouraged to place an emphasis on early intervention with young people in order to prevent them from becoming either a victim or perpetrator of serious violence in the first place. Local areas are encouraged to adopt a 'public health' approach to tackling violence. The Serious violence in Lancashire Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) is a significant contribution towards agencies and communities understanding the underlying root causes of violence in their local areas.

When we look at the risk factors for individuals, in close relationships and in communities we can see the often-fundamental unfairness which impact on health and life chances of our citizens. These inequalities drive poor mental health, substance misuse and the large numbers of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). In Lancashire we have a long history of strong partnership working. The 'Serious Violence Duty' strengthens that joint work and gives us the opportunity to tackle those root causes of crime more effectively together. We must recognise that in 2023 serious violence costs the public purse in Lancashire circa £356.5 million. Only by working together, acknowledging the social determinants that drive this violence and learning from the lived experience of our communities will we tackle this deep-rooted problem.

The Lancashire definition of serious violence (as agreed in 2019) includes:

- Homicide
- Knife & Gun crime
- Assault resulting in injury
- Rape
- Robbery
- Aggravated Burglary
- Domestic Abuse & Violence
- Child Exploitation (Sexual & Criminal)

¹⁶ [White Ribbon UK](#)

¹⁷ [Serious violence duty: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 factsheet - GOV.UK](#)

Violence and the fear of serious violence can affect every member of Lancashire's communities and occurs in multiple scenarios, contexts, or situations. It is not bound by any restrictions as it crosses cultures, race, gender, socio and economic statuses, e.g., hospital admission rates for violence are around five times higher in the most deprived communities than in the most affluent (Bellis et al 2012).

Nationally serious violent offences typically make up just 1% of all crime recorded by the police, however, they cause some of the most serious harms to individuals, communities, and societies. It is clear that there is a strong link between drugs and serious violence and the related harm and exploitation from County Lines operations. The changing drugs market is identified as one of the drivers of violent crime.

Violence Reduction Network

The Lancashire Violent Reduction Network was created in 2019 and through a public health approach and highlighting the causes of the causes, it has become apparent that partnership working is necessary to impact upon serious violence and all violent crime. The causes of the causes can be placed under a number of headings with many factors to be considered

- Alcohol and drug use
- Child poverty and unemployment
- Education, employment, and training
- Parenting, families, and communities

Within each of these are a number of factors which include health, mental health, hospital admissions for substance misuse, alcohol specific conditions, child development, school attendance, levels of children in low-income families, deprivation, and adult unemployment amongst others.

The image below highlights the risk factors for serious violence.



The LVRN produces a Strategic Needs Assessment annually citing not only crime data, but other partnerships data relating to the risk factors mentioned above (see Appendix 1).

In 2024 there was a JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) which looked at the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to children aged 10 or over who are at risk of or affected by serious youth violence and/or criminal exploitation¹⁸. Appendix 2 details the strengths and improvements stated within the inspection. The headline findings stated that leaders from across the local area partnership of agencies have a shared commitment to addressing the causes and impact of serious youth violence and the criminal exploitation of children. Underpinned by a helpful single strategy, leaders across the partnership have developed a unified public health and trauma-informed approach to addressing serious youth violence and criminal exploitation. There is clear understanding of the causes of serious youth violence and the work to tackle it is extremely well supported by the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (LVRN). There is a high degree of visibility and connectivity between leaders who are determined in their aspiration to prevent serious youth violence and to deliver trauma-informed and child-centred services that improve children's lives.

Homicide

The term homicide covers offences of murder, manslaughter, and infanticide. The loss of life through homicide has a devastating impact, shattering families, affecting local communities, increasing the fear of crime, and challenging the trust and confidence that the public have in policing.

Offences of homicide can be varied in their nature and are ultimately the most tragic ending to a broad range of criminal offences, types or behaviours. These crimes include but are not limited to domestic abuse, knife crime, drug-related crime, and serious violence. In July 2022, the government published the Beating Crime Plan, which places an absolute focus on homicide and reducing homicide rates in communities.

A Lancashire Homicide and Near-Miss Problem Profile was produced in 2023 and informed a national Problem Profile. The findings were that spontaneous/random violence, youth knife crime and domestic abuse account for a significant proportion of homicide and near-miss offences.

A particular vulnerability of victims was identified due to age and lifestyle. 55% of homicide victims were aged over 40 years with 19% being specifically in the age group of 46 to 50 years. Three quarters of the 35 older victims were male and in 86% of offences, the victim was classed as White North European ethnicity.

In a number of offences, the older victim had been subjected to a period of abuse and exploitation (County Lines cuckooing) or for financial gain by the offender and this has culminated in the killing of the victim. In the majority of cases the victim had been beaten to death.

There are a number of Lancashire strategies that aim to tackle and reduce threat, harm and risk across different areas of policing and the reduction of homicide cannot be achieved by a single activity or by focusing on one area of criminality – it must run as a golden thread throughout all that Lancashire does. If there is success in reducing all crime and in particular violent crime, then by consequence there will follow a reduction in homicide occurrence. Compared with other offences, homicides are relatively low volume and year on year

¹⁸ [Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Lancashire - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

variations need to be interpreted with some caution. However, the occurrence of homicide in Lancashire has steadily increased over recent years in line with the national trend.

Strategic Themes for Lancashire homicide prevention:

- Spontaneous violence and knife crime
- Serious organised crime
- Domestic abuse
- Gender-based violence including VAWG
- Child homicide
- Mental health, drugs, and alcohol
- Organisational reviews and learning processes
- Data and intelligence

Gun and Gang crime

Serious Organised Crime is often hidden and/or unreported, and while the type of crime evolves, the adverse impact of drugs and the associated vulnerabilities and violence remains one of the most significant threats to Lancashire. Organised Crime Groups (COGs) supplying controlled drugs use violence, threats, weapons, and firearms to enforce territories and establish new drugs markets.

Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)/gangs involved in drug trafficking are commonly involved in a wide range of criminality including firearms. Access to and misuse of firearms has been identified as a risk factor for serious violence. The level of gun crime in the UK is one of the lowest in the world. Nevertheless, the potential for harm from OCGs/gangs with access to firearms, make eliminating the criminal use of firearms a priority threat for UK law enforcement.

Most shootings in the UK are committed by street gangs involved in many types of criminality, such as armed robberies and drug distribution. Victims of gun crime are generally known to the police which indicates that criminals use firearms in feuds with other criminal groups for protection, punishment or to extend their criminal enterprises.

It is the aim to identify and deter young people from engaging in or being drawn into OCGs through working with partners to deliver awareness and education programmes for them and their families and identify opportunities for offenders to be diverted away from criminality and prevent them from being pressurised into returning to gangs once they leave custody.

Prioritisation of targeting areas experiencing high levels of gang activity is undertaken in order to reduce the number of people killed, injured or exploited as a result of gangs and serious violence, by the use of environmental enforcement and planning processes as well as Civil Orders.

Multi-agency partnership tactic, 'Clear, Hold, Build'¹⁹ is being used to rescue areas in Lancashire most blighted by organised crime groups. This approach sees the pursuit of gang members to clear an area; maintain grip and hold the location, so another gang cannot take control in the vacuum; and then work to build the community into a more prosperous area, less susceptible to the draw of crime groups.

¹⁹ [Government announces crackdown against organised criminal gangs - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-crackdown-against-organised-criminal-gangs)

Knife crime

In 2023/24 knife crime (Home Office criteria) accounted for 1% of all recorded crime, whilst the use of knife or other sharp instrument accounted for 3% of all crime, and all violence against the person 42% of all crime.

Knife crime accounts for 2% of all violence against the person. Whilst volumes of knife crime are increasing within Lancashire, the proportion to which it makes up the total amount of crime is consistent and reflective of the national and regional picture and therefore not highlighted as an outlier. Knife crime has been a national issue for decades; however, it has become an increasing concern and fear for communities following greater media focus.

Using national data to understand the prevalence of knife crime, whilst Lancashire as a police force area was found to have a lower proportion of knife crime than the national average, and indication that levels may be lower than forecasted, a year-on-year increase has been found for knife crime in Lancashire since 2019 meaning it is still of great concern. Knife crime over this period has been estimated to cost Lancashire's services over £152 million.

Reasons for knife crime can vary dramatically depending on the context, however, there have been recognised influential factors such as children growing up in toxic environments where violence has become normalised, young people fearing becoming a victim of crime and therefore carrying a knife as protection, and young people having a lack of trust for authorities to protect them and therefore feeling a need to 'take it into their own hands'. This is something that has been reflected by the young people in Lancashire through the 'Youth Violence Consultation' where many feel the main reason for carrying a knife is for protection, which may indicate why it is non-serious knife crime that is increasing as opposed to serious. These young people emphasised that the way to resolve this problem is centralised around feeling safer and more trusting of services.

When reviewing all crime types contributing to knife crime within Lancashire from 2019 to 2023, 7 categories made up over 90% of the total:

- Violence with injury (26.8%)
- Possession of weapons (25.2%)
- Violence without injury (13.4%)
- Robbery of personal property (9.1%)
- Criminal damage (5.9%)
- Public fear alarm or distress (5.2%)
- Other offences public order (4.6%)

During this period, serious violence related knife crime equated to 41% of the total.

A Lancashire Knife Crime Problem Profile was produced in October 2023 by the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network which provides a localised picture of the issue, identifies hotspot areas, opportunities for reducing the impact and harm caused by knife crime, and targeted interventions to be considered in all areas across the county.

The Home Office recently published 'Consultation on new knife legislation proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime' (June 2023).²⁰

²⁰ [Consultation on new knife legislation proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

Operation Edge encompasses Lancashire's knife crime enforcement activity and includes knife bins, weapon searches in public spaces, high visibility patrols and education in schools and colleges.

Violence against Women and Girls

The term 'violence against women and girls' refers to acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and 'honour' killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online. It is also recognised that victims of any of these offences are not exclusively women and girls. (VAWG National Strategy 2021)²¹.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been referred to as a 'global pandemic' due to the magnitude of women and girls affected by violence. Almost a third of women aged 15 to 49 years who had been in a relationship reported that they had been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.

The World Bank highlighted that not only does VAWG have devastating impacts on survivors and their families, but there are also significant social and economic costs of VAWG. It has been estimated that the cost of VAWG is up to 3.7% of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equating to more than double what most governments spend on education.

There has been an upward trend of VAWG in Lancashire over the past few years with the most common investigations being for stalking and harassment and violence with injury. Lancashire has a long-standing commitment to tackling domestic and sexual violence abuse and this commitment is embodied in the prioritisation of the Chief Constable's Plan on a Page, the OPCC's strategic priority to tackle domestic and sexual violence within the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029²², and the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) and Lancashire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) priority re: domestic abuse.

Many of the factors that affect individuals' risk of violence arise through their circumstances and experiences in early life at an individual, relationship, community and societal level. To successfully prevent violence against women and girls in the future it is essential to tackle the root causes of violence, addressing the risk factors at each level with equal importance which includes challenging societal and cultural norms that can lead to violence. There is a need to place greater emphasis on the wider determinants of health and address wider system issues such as parenting, poverty, unemployment, education, housing, and homelessness.

Op Night Guardian – tackling violence against women and girls in the night-time economy, involves proactive work including the deployment of uniform and plain clothes officers in key areas to ensure that women and girls can enjoy a safe night out in the county.

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences

Sexual offences account for less than 4% of all recorded crime but with 4888 offences reported during 2023/24, this equates to 13 offences daily. Reported rape offences to the police equate to 4 per day. In 2023/24 all sexual offences were similar to the previous year from 4890 to 4888. Reporting of rape offences increased from 1450 offences to 1490 (an increase of 3%).

²¹ [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK](#)

²² [The Police And Crime Plan - Lancashire Police Crime Commissioner](#)

Nationally and locally there has been a small reduction in rape and sexual offences in the last 3 years (comparing 2021/22 to 2023/24)²³.

Rape and sexual offending are among the most serious and high-impact crimes against the person. The impact of Rape and Serious Sexual Offending (RASSO) on victims, their families and their communities cannot be underestimated. These crimes are committed primarily by men against women and girls but can also be perpetrated against men and boys. They occur in all communities and involve offenders and victims with different protected characteristics, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Rape cases are complex by nature and maintaining positive and supportive engagement with the victim / survivor will encourage stronger lines of communication and connection to the case. RASSO victims are all too often targeted by offenders because of one or more protected characteristics or other form of vulnerability. These factors may provide ease of access or opportunity for the offender, who may also hope that a vulnerable victim will be less likely to report the crime, and less likely to be believed if they do.

In many cases there will be no visible sign of injury and rape is most commonly perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Significant psychological evidence shows that the neurological response to the trauma of rape and sexual assault can impair a complainant's ability to give a clear and coherent account of the event. Some victims may return to the suspect after the event and/or contact them with friendly messages to reduce the risk of being targeted again by the perpetrator, or because they want to block out the abuse in order to return to a sense of normality. To those who are not experts in this field, these responses to rape can appear counter-intuitive and impact unfairly upon perceptions of the credibility of a complainant and an allegation.

Shame, guilt, fear of the process, fear of not being believed, shock, cultural context, embarrassment, language barriers and fear of reprisal from the community are just some of the hurdles that victims might need to overcome to report an incident to the police and support a prosecution.

Operation Soteria Bluestone - In December 2022, Lancashire Constabulary was one of 14 forces to join a nationwide expansion programme which aims to transform the way rape and serious sexual offences are investigated. The programme is led by National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) and Home Office funded research and will result in a national operating model which will be rolled out to all 43 Home Office forces. This evidence-based, academic-led project aims to ensure consistency and quality in the investigation of Rape and Serious Sexual offences.

The government report that there were 68,000 offences of rape recorded by the police in the year to June 2023 within a wider backdrop of high numbers of all types of sexual offending. The Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy research shows that 'many perpetrators of these crimes continue to offend even if they have been prosecuted, with some cases resulting in an escalation of behaviours'.

Given the unique nature of this offending, the significant amount of public concern relating to the offenders, and the need to improve confidence that the justice system appropriately addresses and punishes these offences, these offences have therefore been the focus of the Serious Sexual Offences Sentencing and Release Arrangements reforms (Sentencing Bill 2023)²⁴.

²³ [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK](#)

²⁴ [Sentencing Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

The Bill and sentencing reforms aim is that rapists (and those convicted of the most serious sexual offences) remain in prison for the whole of their custodial term, and that they are subject to proper supervision in the community on their release, with a suitable licence period.

Neighbourhood Crime

Acquisitive crime

During 2023/24 there have been 16215 reports for the three areas of Organised Acquisitive Crime combined i.e. Burglary, Robbery, Vehicle offences. This is similar to the previous year where 16258 offences were recorded. These three areas of OAC account for 13% of all crime. Burglary has seen a decrease of 2% , robbery a 9% increase, and vehicle crime has shown no change.

Serious and/or organised acquisitive crime (SOAC) strikes at the heart of people's feelings of safety in their homes and communities. It is not just a 'volume crime'. It affects people daily and failing to target it damages public confidence in policing. It can have long-lasting and profound effects on victims. Offences are increasingly characterised by higher levels of violence and a greater proportion are being committed by organised criminals. A partnership approach is undertaken to protect communities and build resilience to SOAC.

SOAC covers a large area of criminality, which for the Lancashire Control Strategy, has been defined as:

serious or organised
burglary (domestic & commercial),
personal & business robbery,
theft from a person, and
theft of and from a motor vehicle.

Methods of theft have continued to evolve, with offenders turning to new technology to facilitate thefts such as electronic compromise thefts often committed by organised crime groups. Offenders also continue to employ traditional methods of theft such as car key burglaries. High levels of organisation have been demonstrated through the use of new technologies and subsequent disposal via 'chop shops' and exports. The high levels of organisation make it difficult for law enforcement to recover vehicles with criminals using further methods such as tampering with vehicle information to avoid detection. Additionally, the breaking down of vehicles into component parts again reduces the chances of a vehicle being recovered, making identification more difficult.

Lancashire Constabulary's approach to effectively prevent, reduce and investigate acquisitive crime is rooted in the development of a clear understanding of the nature of offending, the type of perpetrators (their motivation), the sphere of operation (both geographically and in terms of their organisation) and the scope of the offending (local, regional and national). Local partnership working aims to prevent offending/reoffending.

Robust intervention is needed to change offending behaviours of those committing SOAC. Without this many will reoffend and impose further misery and harm on victims. SOAC often funds drug misuse and addiction and can lead to a cycle of crime, particularly when offenders are using heroin and crack.

Offending

Proven reoffending rates²⁵ across Lancashire, produced by the Ministry of Justice, have increased from three years ago, when they were at the lowest during the last ten years. The figures have increased from 24% to 28% which puts them on parity of five years ago and pre-Covid. The number of offenders and reoffenders from three years ago are the smallest recorded during the last ten years, but it must also be recognised that the last two years have also seen smaller numbers than previously recorded with the exception of three years ago.

During the last ten years the cohort size for adults has reduced by 59% (n=2675), whilst juveniles has reduced by 89% (n=120). The juvenile reoffending rate is higher than the adult rate, and the latest 12-month period has seen the number of reoffences per juvenile reoffender be at its highest recorded rate during the last ten years.

HM Prison and Probation Service (for the North West Region) aims to:

- Strengthen partnerships to reduce the impact of organised crime in custody and in the community.
- Develop the Indeterminate Public Protection Prisoners action plan to support IPP prisoners towards successful reintegration into society.
- Develop a model of best practice for the effective management of women in the Criminal Justice System which will inform the way in which other national and regional teams work with women.
- Explore and where appropriate implement alternative delivery models for Interventions across HMPPS, delivering high quality interventions to the right prisoners and people on probation at the right time.
- Improve employment outcomes by having a more integrated and collaborative approach across HMPPS and with key stakeholders.
- Improve accommodation outcomes by having a more integrated and collaborative approach across HMPPS and with key stakeholders.
- Explore innovative ways of maximising the availability of unpaid work opportunities across the region.
- Improve the offender journey by implementing a more seamless and coordinated approach during critical transition points from prison to Approved Premises, from closed to open prison and from the Youth Custody Service into the main estate.
- Explore and identify opportunities for joint leadership development, interchanges and joint succession planning for our staff across HMPPS to improve understanding of the whole system and foster a whole system approach.

In taking the priorities forward HMPPS will engage with stakeholders and partner agencies as appropriate at national, regional, and local level and where applicable take account of the voice of “lived experience”. The needs of all groups of offenders will be taken into consideration as will all the protected characteristics represented within this population.

Child and Youth Justice Service

Lancashire Child and Youth Justice Service (CYJS) is a statutory, multi-agency service co-ordinated by the local authority and overseen by the Youth Justice Management Board. CYJS supports children aged 8-18 who have either committed an offence or have been identified as at risk of doing so (children under the age of 10 are supported via the Prevention arm of the

²⁵ [Proven reoffending statistics: October to December 2022 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/proven-reoffending-statistics-october-to-december-2022)

service). The service is underpinned by three core values when working with children, families, the local community, and victims:

- Child-First
- Trauma-Informed
- Restorative

CYJS aims to:

- Prevent and divert children from the youth justice system.
Intervention to prevent and divert children from the youth justice system addresses key community safety issues such as violence, exploitation, and anti-social behaviour. These initiatives provide early intervention for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
- Reduce re-offending and harm.
Working as a partnership alongside children and families we tackle multiple factors crucial for reducing re-offending. This includes providing access to housing, education, employment opportunities, health support, and family assistance.
- Reducing the number of children entering custody.
We offer the Youth and Crown Courts strong alternatives to custody for children at risk of being remanded to youth detention accommodation or facing a high likelihood of a custodial sentence.
- Increasing victim and public confidence.
With the victim's consent, CYJS reaches out to all victims to offer tailored services and interventions that meet their specific needs.

Cyber crime

Cyber crime accounted for 4% (n=5152) of all crime during 2023/24 and saw a reduction in reporting of 12% from the previous year.

Cybercrime is the term used to describe crimes committed online – through computers, laptops, game consoles, tablets, and smartphones. There is an ever-growing and diversifying threat from cybercrime. Cybercrime tools and techniques continue to evolve in complexity. The borderless nature of cybercrime provides a challenge, particularly for length and outcomes of investigations.

The harm to the public is not always so visible. More crime is online, taking place behind closed doors, on the dark net and through encrypted apps. There are many different types of cybercrime, including online fraud, phishing, cyber bullying, revenge porn and sexual grooming. The National Crime Agency (NCA) now estimates that there are between 680,000 and 830,000 people in the UK (1.3% to 1.6% of the adult population) who pose varying degrees of sexual risk to children and assess that viewing indecent images of children increases the risk of offenders escalating to contact abuse. (Strategic Assessment of Organised Crime 2023)

Investigations involving crypto currency have grown exponentially. It is not only the number of investigations which is increasing – it is also their complexity. Greater knowledge within frontline policing resource has increased requests for support and assistance. This is positive, but places additional demand on the Lancashire Cybercrime team. Operation Eucalyptus, in

which £20 million pounds' worth of crypto currency was recovered, showed how much demand is generated when crypto currency is part of a larger criminal investigation.

An area of significant growth in cyber-crime relates to ransomware attacks and there has been a huge increase in demand for these investigations. In 2021 there were four reports of ransomware attacks in Lancashire. In March 2022 there was an average of three ransomware attack reports a week. Offenders are predominantly based outside the UK and there is minimal opportunity for a positive criminal justice outcome. There is, however, a significant demand to gather the data and intelligence required on a national level.

The NCA report of cyber criminals offering ransomware as a service online and enabling fraud, and drug cartels using encrypted apps to communicate and cryptocurrency to launder their proceeds. Also, major tech companies are rolling out end-to-end encryption in a way that they know will make it harder for law enforcement to detect and investigate crime and protect children. Online is the new frontline.

Trading Standards highlight various forms of online scams which can be aimed at different age groups. They include purchase scams which often begin on platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, with items appearing much cheaper than can be found through trusted retailers. Prize draw scams are often a way for the perpetrators to obtain financial information from the victim, as are phishing scams – which aim to obtain your personal details, often by the victim clicking on a link that downloads a virus onto their device.

Community issues

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour accounts for 11% of total incidents recorded by the police in 2023/24. Yearly totals have been reducing over the last three years. Compared to 2022/23 there was a 7% reduction during 2023/24.

There has been significant progress in getting tough on anti-social behaviour (ASB) with a focus on Neighbourhood Policing (NHP) improving engagement; partnership-working; and targeting those issues and people who cause the most harm in Lancashire's communities. Numerically the number of reported ASB incidents to the police has been reducing.

Previously it was identified that Lancashire Constabulary had a gap in understanding the issues that concerned communities. This could be considered communities' "silent demand" on policing around the problems they want solved and the crimes they want prevented. They feel these factors directly affect their lives and safety. The ability to understand and address these is critical to their feelings of confidence and legitimacy.

In July 2022, a Lancashire-wide anti-social behaviour survey was launched to get a full picture of the scale and types of antisocial behaviour (ASB), to identify hotspots and to look at how the police and local partners can work better together to get tough on ASB and to keep local communities safe. Results from the survey were independently evaluated and shared with partners through Lancashire's Community Safety Partnerships to form a joined-up response to tackling anti-social behaviour across the county.

Survey results showed that 27% of residents had witnessed ASB in the previous 12 months, while 39% had been directly affected by anti-social behaviour. Most incidents of ASB occur close to residents' own homes with 42% occurring at people's home address or on their street and 23% within a 15-minute walk of where they live. Intimidating behaviour, verbal abuse and drug dealing were reported as some of the top concerns for residents across the county.

Some national priority areas such as knife crime (0.8%) and sexual offences (0.4%) appear to be of less concern to Lancashire communities. While in comparative surveys the public rank these issues as more serious than those above, this suggests a difference between the conventional understanding of risk and harm, and people's lived experience.

Alcohol remains a significant factor in crime and ASB in Lancashire. Alcohol-related hospital admissions are nearly three times the national average in Blackpool, double the national average in Blackburn with Darwen and 50% higher in the rest of Lancashire. There are no significant trends in the alcohol harm data. Alcohol-related crime and ASB have peaks associated with Friday and Saturday evenings, and that remains unchanged. The night-time economy (NTE) remains significant for crime and ASB related to alcohol, but it has not changed significantly. The key locations remain Blackpool and Preston. Operation Night Guardian is the Lancashire wide response to NTE issues, including drink spiking. (*FMS 2022*).

The full survey insights formed a key part of a series of ASB summits held to tackle the issue across Lancashire in a joined-up partnership approach.

In March 2023, the Government's ASB Action Plan announcement saw Lancashire benefit from £2m to pilot new ways of addressing anti-social behaviour and tackle hot spots. Lancashire was one of only 10 forces chosen for extra funding. The boost means increased, visible police patrols, dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour and the issues that matter most to people. It is vital for community confidence that these crimes will be quickly and visibly addressed.

Under the branding of Op Centurion, a partnership response was launched in Lancashire in July 2023 to tackle ASB across all fourteen districts. Lancashire Talking, the Constabulary's online and in-person survey, also reported confidence in the police response to ASB increasing since the launch of Op Centurion, particularly in the hotspot areas that have seen additional foot patrols.

Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAP) are in place across Lancashire and are part of a UK wide initiative to tackle underage drinking and reduce the risk and vulnerability for young people in communities. Localised action plans are put in place to:

- Tackle alcohol/substance related anti-social behaviour, vulnerability, and risk-taking behaviour under 18's.
- Prevent young people becoming involved in violent crime.
- Ensuring compliance with Check 25, enhancing a responsible retail ethos within the specified geographical area.
- Reduce the proxy sale of alcohol to under 18s.
- Enhance alcohol awareness for young people and adults, including parents.
- Enhance diversionary activities for young people.

Hate crime

2023/24 saw 2483 crimes with a Hate Crime flag recorded - an 8% decrease compared to the previous year - 2700 offences. Recorded hate crime accounts for 2% of all crime across Lancashire. Nationally there has been a 10% reduction in recording of hate crimes since 2021/22, compared to 18% across Lancashire.

The national definition of Hate Crime is used across Lancashire: "Any incident that constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice or hostility."

Hate crimes do not just affect the individual victim, but also their communities who share the targeted protected characteristic and so it is vital that hate crime reports are dealt with robustly, but with sensitivity. The majority of reported hate crimes are racially motivated, but an increase has been noted in the reporting of sexual orientation and transgender motivated hate crimes recently.

A joint approach is used by all local authorities to tackle Hate Crime, with direction and focus from the Pan-Lancashire Strategic Hate Crime Strategy and Delivery Plan and the governance body the Strategic Hate Crime & Cohesion Group (SHCCG).

Lancashire aims to prevent hate crime by addressing and raising awareness of the beliefs and attitudes that can lead to hate. The importance of preventing Hate Crime is recognised and partners are committed to challenging those attitudes that can lead to discrimination and divisions within the local community.

It is aimed to reduce the number of Hate Crime incidents, improve detection rates of Hate Crime in the county and provide positive outcomes for victims. The partnerships will focus on several settings that have emerged as high-risk environments for Hate Crime, including public transport, the night-time economy, educational institutions, key occupations, and the internet.

Road Safety

The 1988 Road Traffic Act, Section 39, puts a statutory duty on the local authority to promote road safety. This is undertaken through investigating road casualties, introducing engineering solutions, providing education and engagement, and seeking to reduce killed and serious injuries on our roads. Key partners in road safety include the local authority, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and Lancashire Constabulary.

Whilst the council have a duty to promote road safety, they also work closely with constabulary colleagues who are responsible for the enforcement of many traffic offences. The police play a key role in providing road safety in Lancashire and utilise their enforcement powers which includes:

- Enforcement of speed limits
- Dangerous driving
- Drug/drink driving
- Failure to wear a seat belt.
- Mobile phone usage whilst driving

Lancashire covers a wide geographic area with a mix of rural and urban centres that make a one size fits all solution for road safety impossible. The number of people killed or seriously injured in a road traffic collision in Lancashire have broadly returned to pre-pandemic levels, though are still significantly below what they were ten years ago (24% reduction since 2014). There were less reported casualties in 2023 than in 2022 and fewer were killed or seriously injured. Lancashire, when compared with similar Counties has a higher rate of road traffic collisions when population is accounted for.

Whilst we seek to minimise the number of persons killed and seriously injured on the roads of Lancashire, accidents will happen. The aim is therefore to, where possible, mitigate the severity or outcome of the accident through, education, engineering, and awareness. Focus on the most vulnerable groups or those at higher risk remain the priority as these are the areas that can have the biggest impact.

Other road safety considerations for Lancashire include:

- The afternoon school run, and evening rush hours are peak times for collisions and casualties.
- 1 in 4 casualties are in the 16-25 age range.
- Males make up 59% of all casualties.
- Cyclists and powered 2 wheelers account for 16% of casualties.
- In all accidents the top contributory factor was either an error by the driver/rider or a reaction failure which includes, for example, failing to look properly or misjudging another user's direction or speed.

Any work that the Road Safety Teams undertake will consider those groups in society that are shown to be at a greater risk. The data for Lancashire shows that the following groups are at a higher risk:

- Young road users (16-25 years of age)
- Motorcyclists
- Pedestrians who are children
- Cyclists

Another cohort identified in the data are the over 65s who continue to be a concern and therefore remain a focus for the road safety team.

Education and engagement have been undertaken across the County, and this includes targeting the groups mentioned above to increase their safety whilst using the road networks across Lancashire. Whilst the police enforce speed limits across the county, Councils and partners actively promote behavioural change by undertaking speed surveys, deploying temporary road safety signs, and supporting the siting of Speed Indication Devices in local areas. Other partner interventions to improve road safety across the county include local safety schemes, speed limit orders, 20mph zones, and minor road safety improvements.

Disorder and protests

There were 99 events in the year 01/12/23 to 30/11/24²⁶, which represents a reduction from 122 the previous year, i.e. a reduction of 19%. The majority of events were football/sport related. Other events included public safety events, concerts/festivals, cultural nationalism, and internationally inspired.

Public Order/Public Safety covers 14 thematic areas:

Public Safety Events, Football, Other Sports, Organised Cultural Marches, Cultural Nationalism, Anti-Fascism, Animal Rights, Environmentalism, Workforce Disputes, Anti-Racism, EU Exit, Anti-Government, Other Community Tension-driven Public Order and Unlicensed Music Events (UME).

Protests and disorder throughout 2023/24 in the UK and which may continue into 2024/25 include:

- Public sector strikes (particularly NHS)
- Israel/Palestine war
- Ukraine/Russia war
- Climate change
- Football

²⁶ [Lancashire Constabulary, Special Operations Section](#)

In 2023 the government reported that the serious disruption caused by a small minority of protestors has highlighted that more needs to be done to protect the public and businesses from these unacceptable actions. New measures were needed to bolster the police's powers to respond more effectively to disruptive and dangerous protests.

The following measures in the Public Order Bill²⁷ (as below) commenced in May 2023 with an aim of improving the police's ability to manage protests and take a proactive approach to prevent such disruption happening in the first place:

- the definition of serious disruption in the Public Order Bill
- locking on
- going equipped to lock-on
- interference with key national infrastructure
- amending the seniority of police officer in London who may attach conditions to an upcoming protest or prohibit a trespassory assembly to match that applicable in forces outside of London

Following the disorder and protests in the summer of 2024 that took place nationally following the tragic incident in Southport, partners in Lancashire including the police, local authorities, Fire and Rescue Service, North West Ambulance, and members of the voluntary, community and faith sectors worked alongside communities across Lancashire to minimise any escalation in community tension.

Engagement/Consultation

Partnership consultation/workshops

Three local consultation workshops were held with partners in June 2024. Below is an overview of the responses to the discussions held at each event.

Discussion 1

Do the Pan-Lancashire threats match the local partnership ones?

- What do we know
- What information/intelligence do we currently have
- What are the gaps

The audience were shown a list of the current top 12 threats across Lancashire which had been assessed using the MORILE matrix (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement)

- Anti-Social behaviour
- County lines/ Violence related to drug supply
- Cyber crime
- Domestic abuse
- Exploitation of young people
- Fraud
- Gang crime
- Homicide
- Knife crime
- Modern Day Slavery/Trafficking
- Road Safety

²⁷ [Public Order Bill: factsheet - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118888/public_order_bill_factsheet.pdf)

- Violence against women and girls

Key points included:

- Anti-social behaviour
 - The differences between urban and non-urban areas – location.
 - Youth behaviour, neighbour behaviour, alcohol related behaviour.
 - Youth provision.
 - Vulnerable people.
- Health
 - Mental health – service provision.
 - Links to deprivation, poverty, housing conditions.
 - Drugs – substance misuse linked to different types of drugs (cocaine, ketamine, cannabis), vaping amongst young people.
 - Health inequalities.
- Domestic abuse
 - Vulnerable people/families.
 - Lenient sentencing for perpetrators.
- Night time economy
 - Vulnerable people – in particular, females.
 - Drugs use.
 - Violent behaviours/general behaviour.
- Shoplifting was mentioned at all three events – with the national/local increase in the number of offences. It was suggested that it was still an under-reported offence. Questions were raised as to whether it was out of need (poverty), cost of living, or a more organised crime element to it.

Discussion 2

What data/ information do partnerships need to enable us to deliver a public health approach to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour?

- There were lots of discussions around additional datasets that could be of use including:
 - Education
 - Health (mental health, general health data etc)
 - Social care
 - Substance misuse
 - Trading Standards
- Timeliness of data – up to date.
- More ward level information – to enable specific targeting of problems.
- Lived experiences.
- Community information/intelligence.

Discussion 3

What has worked well (best practice) and what would improve the success of Community Safety Partnerships?

- Lots of positive responses with partnership working and examples of how it has worked effectively.
- Promote successes more, share good practice – also a better mechanism for doing this.
- More effective data sharing.
- Have data/intelligence available to enable be more proactive rather than reactive.

Lancashire Young Peoples Alcohol & Tobacco Survey 2022

The results of this latest survey were published in 2023. The participants were surveyed from the end of 2022 to February 2023.

17 schools participated across 10 districts. The target age group was 14–17-year-olds with the majority of respondents being in the 14-15 age range.

Alcohol Consumption

The trend in Lancashire since 2005 has shown an increasing proportion of young people who say that they never drink alcohol. However recent national surveys indicate that youth drinking is no longer declining, but stabilising; this is also reflected in the Lancashire data.

- 60% young people claim to drink alcohol this is 9% higher than the North West regional average and 2% higher than the national survey.
- 1 in 10 are claiming to drink at least once a week and 7% identify themselves as regular binge drinkers (4% decrease since 2015,).
- 40% have never drunk alcohol (decrease of 5% since 2017).
- 71% are drinking at home under the supervision of their parents (increase of 6% since 2020). 71% also source alcohol from parents/guardians.
- 10% are drinking in pubs / clubs.
- 16% drink outside on the streets or in parks.
- 31% claim to buy alcohol themselves. A large increase in the number buying from shops (up from 7 to 21%) As well as an increase in the number buying from pubs/clubs (up from 1 to 7 %).
- There is a general trend towards a more controlled attitude towards alcohol. 69% feel in control when drinking with 16% drinking due to peer pressure and 35% drinking just to get drunk.
- There are clear differences in behaviour by gender. Females appear to be slightly more reckless but also more worried about being left on their own or their drink getting spiked.
- 51% think that 'getting drunk is fun' (increase of 2% since 2020).
- 52% think that 'it is normal to get drunk' (increase of 5% since 2020).
- 36% are not worried about the long-term health effects (increase of 6% since 2020).

Tobacco

- There has been a decrease in the prevalence of smoking cigarettes. National surveys showed 32% smoked in 2008, down to 16% in 2018, and down further to 12% in 2021.
- 6% of young people surveyed in Lancashire are smokers (a decrease of 4% from 2020). The North West average is 6%.
- Most young people start smoking at 13-14 years old (56%) – this is similar to the North West region (53%).
- 32% get cigarettes from their friends under 18 years old (reduced from 54% in 2020).
- 24% claim to buy cigarettes themselves from shops (an increase from 16% in 2020).

Vaping

- Nationally vaping behaviours have increased with use up to 9% from 6% in 2018.
- In Lancashire 1 in 6 young people claim to vape regularly.
- 46% claim to have tried vaping which is higher than the North West average of 41%. This is also double the volume from those surveyed in 2020.
- Almost half of young people (48%) claim to have never smoked a real cigarette but have tried an e-cigarette (an increase from 39% in 2020).

- 40% claim to buy e-cigarettes from shops, and 14% e-liquids (increase from 10% in 2020).
- 6% claimed that they were asked for ID when buying e-cigarettes/e-liquids (reduction from 11% in 2020).
- 40% say that liking the flavours is the main reason for vaping.
- 17% say they are addicted to vapes.
- 29% say they enjoy using vapes.

Experience of knives

- 15% of young people have witnessed an incident (increase of 4%, was 11% in 2020).
- 8% have considered going out carrying a knife (was slightly less than 9% in 2020).
- 3% have actually gone out carrying a knife (a decrease of 2% from 2020).
- 2% have taken a knife from home (decrease of 2% from 2020).
- 2% have been a victim of knife crime, the same as in 2020.
- 50% who had bought knives, bought it from a shop.
- 53% were not asked for ID when buying a knife.
- Males are more likely to consider going out carrying a knife than females.

Attitudes Towards Knives

"I don't really come across any issues with knives where I live"

60% of young people agreed with this statement (North West figure 61%).

"I feel more on edge about knives because of all the stories in the news and on social media"

58% agreed with this statement, with more females being worried (North West figure 59%).

"It is easy for young people to buy a knife if they wanted to"

54% agreed with this statement (North West figure 55%).

Lancashire Talking

Community feedback has been obtained using Lancashire Constabulary's community survey tool 'Lancashire Talking'. The survey asks the residents for their top 5 community issues. The results have been taken from an 18-month period from April 2023 to September 2024.

The key community issues include

- Road safety (speed, nuisance motorbikes, parking, highways obstruction)
- Anti-social behaviour
- Drug dealing and drug taking
- Environmental (rubbish/litter, dog fouling)
- Burglary

The survey also asks the question around confidence that issues are being dealt with. Similar questions are also asked within the OPCC Public Perceptions Survey and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

Public Confidence –

The police are dealing with ASB –

- Agree 49%
- Disagree 30%

The police are dealing with crime issues that matter in this area –

- Agree 53%
- Disagree 26%

I have confidence in the police

- Agree 63%
- Disagree 28%

OPCC Public Perceptions Survey – Winter 2023/24

The police are dealing with ASB –

- Agree 45%
- Disagree 39%

The police are dealing with crime issues that matter in this area –

- Agree 52%
- Disagree 33%

I have confidence in the police

- Agree 59%
- Disagree 35%

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

Police and local council are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area (12 months to June 2024)

- 43% agree for Lancashire – there has been a steady decline since 2020 from 57%.
- Nationally 47% - there has also been a decline since 2020 from 52%.
- The range for the most recent period varies from 34% to 62%.

Conclusion

The strategic assessment process has considered local and national risks and threats to enable the local Community Safety Partnerships to identify their priorities for the coming 3-year period. This assessment document provides a Pan-Lancashire overview and has been compiled using local data, information from local and regional strategies, and consultation events with local partners. The local district profiles will provide further information to enable the partnerships to create their local plans and priorities.

Victims have been at the heart of this process whether that be a specific characteristic or group. A number of the risks and threats identified do not sit in isolation and require a partnership approach to tackle the issues. Cross cutting themes are evident throughout – the links to organised crime, exploitation, violence, health issues, and probably most of all – vulnerability. There is now a recognition that a public health approach is required to tackle issues, by looking at the wider determinants of crime and understanding root causes to enable an early intervention and preventative approach.

As the process continues, the Community Safety Agreement will be updated, and partnership plans developed to combat these issues within the communities of Lancashire. The governance will be provided by the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership Board (LCSPB).

Appendix 1 – Violence Reduction Network

Key findings from the **Lancashire Violence Reduction Networks Strategic Needs Assessment 2024²⁸** includes:

Individual Factors

Across all local and unitary authorities in pan-Lancashire:

- a) Self-reported high anxiety is worse than the England national average.
- b) Good level of development in relation to the expected early learning goals at the end of reception is below the England national average.
- c) Average attainment 8 score (academic performance) in secondary school is below England national average.

Education is an extremely important factor when looking at opportunities and life outcomes. Good education is strongly linked to a reduction of violence for individuals (Blum & Libbey, 2004). Persistent school absence is more common in children from families with multiple problems (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government, 2017), which can have an impact on individuals becoming involved in violence.

Close Relationship Factors

Across all of the local and unitary authorities in pan-Lancashire, there is a higher rate of:

- a) children in care.
- b) domestic violence and abuse in households with children.
- c) 11 out of 14 of the pan-Lancashire Districts have a higher than the national average percentage of unemployment.

When reviewing the breakdown of looked after children across Lancashire the largest proportion is due to abuse or neglect. Those children who are in care or classed as 'looked after' are identified as having poorer health outcomes, more vulnerable and a strong link between children in care and offending with over a 1/3 of children in young offender institutes and over a ½ in secure training centres identified as previously being in care (Taylor, 2016).

Income and unemployment are two of the domains linked to deprivation and health inequalities. Nordin and Almen (2016) identified evidence that demonstrated there is a relationship between long-term unemployment and violent crime. Across the region there is wide variation regarding salary and employment. Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley have the highest unemployment rates with Burnley, Blackpool and Rossendale having the lowest average salaries. These statistics should be taken into account in preventing serious violence.

Communities and Wider Society Factors

- a) Across all of the local and unitary authorities in pan-Lancashire, there is a higher rate of children in absolute low-income families and living in fuel poverty.
- b) There is a wide variation in deprivation levels across Lancashire-14, with Blackpool identified as the most deprived area in England, with Ribble Valley ranked 282 out of 317 local authorities.
- c) Blackpool, Preston, and Blackburn with Darwen have the highest percentage of serious violence across the Lancashire-14 districts.

Across Lancashire the average age is 41.3 years compared to the England and Wales average of 40.4 years. However, the age population varies across the region and some areas

²⁸ [LVRN-Strategic-Needs-Assessment-2024.pdf](#)

such as Blackburn with Darwen have a relatively young population with approximately a quarter of their population (25.7%) under the age of 18 (Blackburn with Darwen JSNA, 2023).

Knowing the age demographic for our area is important to ensure we develop interventions relevant to the appropriate age cohort to ensure we reduce the risk of them becoming a perpetrator or victim of violent crime.

There has been extensive research to highlight the correlation between deprivation and violence within communities, with strong arguments for social factors determining both ill-health and violence hence the need for a public health approach.

The estimated cost of serious violence in Lancashire has increased year on year since 2021, showing a 6% increase from 2022 to the most recent year, 2023. This trend is reflective of the rate of serious violence overall.

Some of the highlights of the last 12 months for the network have included the launch of the 'Champions' mentorship programme which is now supporting children/young people all over the county age 10-25 to divert them from crime and focus on their positive life chances. The 'ED Navigator' service has now been devolved to the local ownership of each hospital trust and we have therefore developed a greater understanding of the health data which allows us to target unreported violent crime in hot spot locations. Lancashire Violence Reduction Network has delivered free 'Trauma Informed' training to over 10,000 frontline professionals. We hope that a lasting legacy of our network will be more empathic and compassionate communities in which our populations foster a sense of belonging in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. To this end, Lancashire system leaders have pledged their commitment to making Lancashire a 'Trauma Informed' county. Our work in driving trauma informed practice in schools and the closer working relationships with the Lancashire and Cumbria prisons are also worthy of note in terms of prevention and public protection. The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network remains resolute in its vision for our county to be a place where young people and their families can live and work free from violence.

Appendix 2 – Joint Targeted Area Inspection – Serious Youth Violence

JTAI – Serious youth Violence²⁹

This was a JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) which looked at the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to children aged 10 or over who are at risk of or affected by **serious youth violence and/or criminal exploitation**.

Inspectors evaluated how we as a partnership:

- collate and share information and intelligence to understand risk and the implications of serious youth violence within the local community/ies
- use this information and engage with communities to inform our decision-making in relation to interventions and commissioning services
- engage meaningfully with children, parents, and carers to understand their needs and views

²⁹ [Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Lancashire - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

- develop and implement approaches to prevention, including the role of education providers and multi-agency interventions in places and spaces to address risk and improve safety for children
- support the workforce, so they have the skills, the knowledge, and the right working conditions to help and protect children
- evaluate and oversee our responses to serious youth violence

Strengths

- The positive impact of the partnership's public health and trauma-informed response to children affected by serious youth violence.
- The scale and reach of place-based interventions, which are highly effective in educating and diverting children away from risk within the community.
- The strength and maturity of partner relationships at both a strategic and operational level.
- The range of multidisciplinary preventative and early help services, including youth services.
- The effectiveness of the health offer for children supported by the Youth Justice Service and the flexible and needs-led support provided by the emergency department navigators and community and primary health services.
- The positive impact of police-led targeted operations, disruption activity, safeguarding action, and the diversion of children away from the criminal justice system.

Areas for Development

- How consistently staff in partner agencies understand and apply the thresholds for holding child protection strategy meetings and conducting child protection enquiries. This includes increasing awareness of formal escalation processes.
- The quality and impact of practice across partner agencies for children at the highest level of risk.
- How quickly the partnership is acting to shape and target services in the light of the increase in numbers of children from British Asian backgrounds at risk from serious youth violence and criminal exploitation.
- How well the increased vulnerability to criminal exploitation, serious youth violence and potential unnecessary criminalisation of children with special educational needs and who are neurodiverse is recognised and acted on, including the timely access to specialist diagnostic health assessments.
- The quality and effectiveness of record-keeping, information-sharing in the MASH and other multi-agency meetings, and quality assurance systems across the partnership.

- How consistently staff from all agencies recognise children at risk from serious youth violence and criminal exploitation as children first and use appropriate child-centred language to describe their risks, needs and behaviours.
- The depth of professional curiosity and the frequency of appropriate professional challenge, and in particular, how well these behaviours support assessment and planning.
- The inclusion of key practitioners from across the partnership at meetings for individual children and groups of children.
- The access to, and provision of, education for children at risk of serious youth violence, in particular those who are excluded from schools.
- The timeliness with which education, health and care plans for children affected by serious youth violence are reviewed and updated.
- The robustness of the response and the effectiveness of the interventions when working with families who are more difficult to engage, who are resistant to services offered, and who withdraw their consent to working with practitioners.