



Serious Violence Strategy

Working in partnership with communities to prevent and reduce serious violence and the harm it causes

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Foreword

Lewisham's Serious Violence Duty Strategy, led by the Responsible Authorities* agrees that tackling serious violence is everybody's business. This review demonstrates an important part in our review and refresh of our Public Health Approach to violence reduction, which we began in 2019 and will be relaunched in summer 2024. We want to ensure that Lewisham is a safe borough for people to live, work and visit. One of the ways to do this is to take a collaborative approach to addressing violence in our borough.

We know the impact of serious violence is far-reaching. It affects victims, their family and friends, and the wider community, which is why it is essential that we remain inclusive in our approach. Listening, hearing, and understanding experiences will help us to deliver the right services and responses, but it will also help us to be more proactive. Our multi-agency, partnership approach has agreed five commitments that will underpin the delivery of this Strategy and hold us to account, whilst keeping communities at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

We will improve how we engage with communities, by building on existing partnerships and co-developing bespoke interventions with communities based on need. The approach is multi-layered, involving multiple partners, interventions, and activities. Partners will have different roles and responsibilities to play, however the key to achieving the commitments is to ensure that priorities are aligned as often as possible.

By being bold and ambitious in our approach to preventing serious violence, we are determined to reduce its impact on individuals and their community. In delivering this Strategy, and the wider Public health approach to violence reduction, we are collectively committed to building trust, listening, and learning from our partners, staff, businesses, and residents to ensure Lewisham is a thriving, vibrant and safe place to live in and visit.

Thank you for taking the time to read Lewisham's Serious Violence Duty Strategy.

Cllr Juliet Campbell
Cabinet Member for Communities, Refugees and Community Safety

* Fire and Rescue, Integrated Care Board, Local Authority, Police, Probation and Youth Justice Service



Introduction

- This is our strategy for preventing and tackling serious violence in Lewisham. It was produced in January 2024 by organisations based in the borough who have a role in violence reduction.
- It aims to provide those in Lewisham with information on how we plan to develop and deliver better approaches to reducing violence and its impact.
- To keep things digestible, we have not included full detail on current violence rates in Lewisham, or on our previous work and future plans. More information is available in our strategic needs assessment.
- Work to prevent and tackle violence in the borough is not new. Local organisations and communities have been collaborating for many years on this issue. But there is still much more than we can achieve together.
- 2024 is the first time we have published a serious violence strategy. This is one of our responsibilities under the new [Serious Violence Duty](#), which we will review every year.
- This will help to make sure it reflects Lewisham's needs and priorities; and captures the ways we are working together to understand violence and its causes, and to reduce violence in the borough.
- The strategy is shared with London's Violence Reduction Unit and with the Home Office.

Why do we need a serious violence strategy?

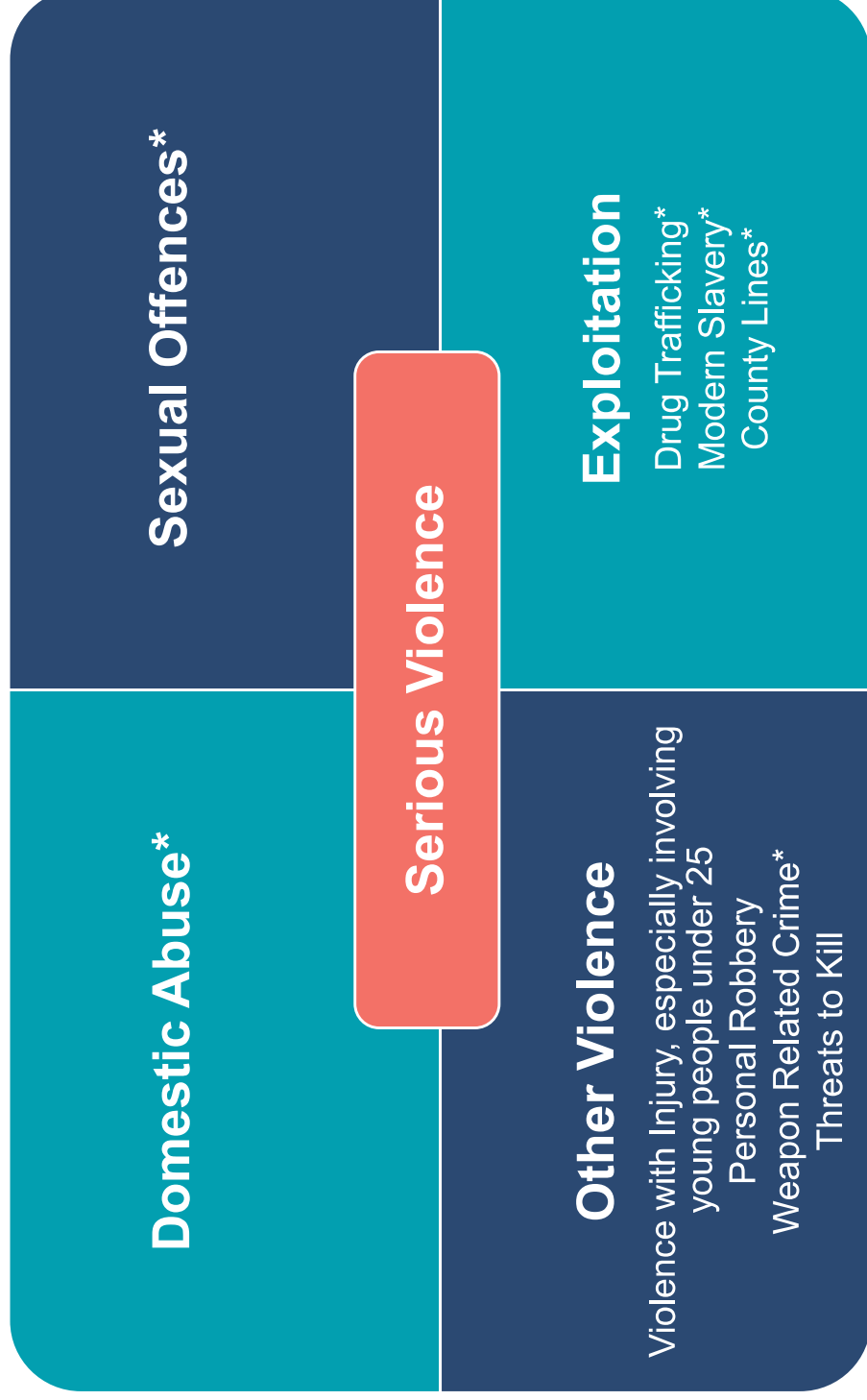
- Reducing violence and its impact is everyone's business.
- People in Lewisham are negatively affected by a range of different types of violence.
- Some people and communities are more affected than others by violence and its consequences.
- We are ambitious about preventing violence from happening and reducing its negative impacts when it does happen. This will not happen overnight; it requires consistent and concerted effort over time.
- To do this well, people and organisations who can prevent and tackle violence need to collaborate, with a joint approach and plan of action.
- Working inclusively with communities to understand experiences of violence and develop ways to reduce it is crucial to success.

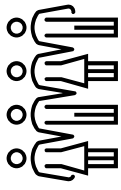
This strategy outlines our commitments to you, how we will build trust and work together to better address violence in Lewisham, and how we will hold ourselves accountable for making progress.

Please note: In this strategy, terms highlighted with * are explained in a glossary.



What do we mean by Serious Violence?





Who has a role in preventing serious violence?

Consulted Authorities:

required by law to participate in preventing violence

Education

Prisons and Youth custody

Local Authority

Probation & Youth Justice Service

Integrated Care Board

Police

Fire & Rescue

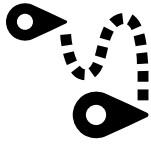
Tackling serious violence is everyone's business

Other key Partners:
preventing violence will not succeed without them

Communities

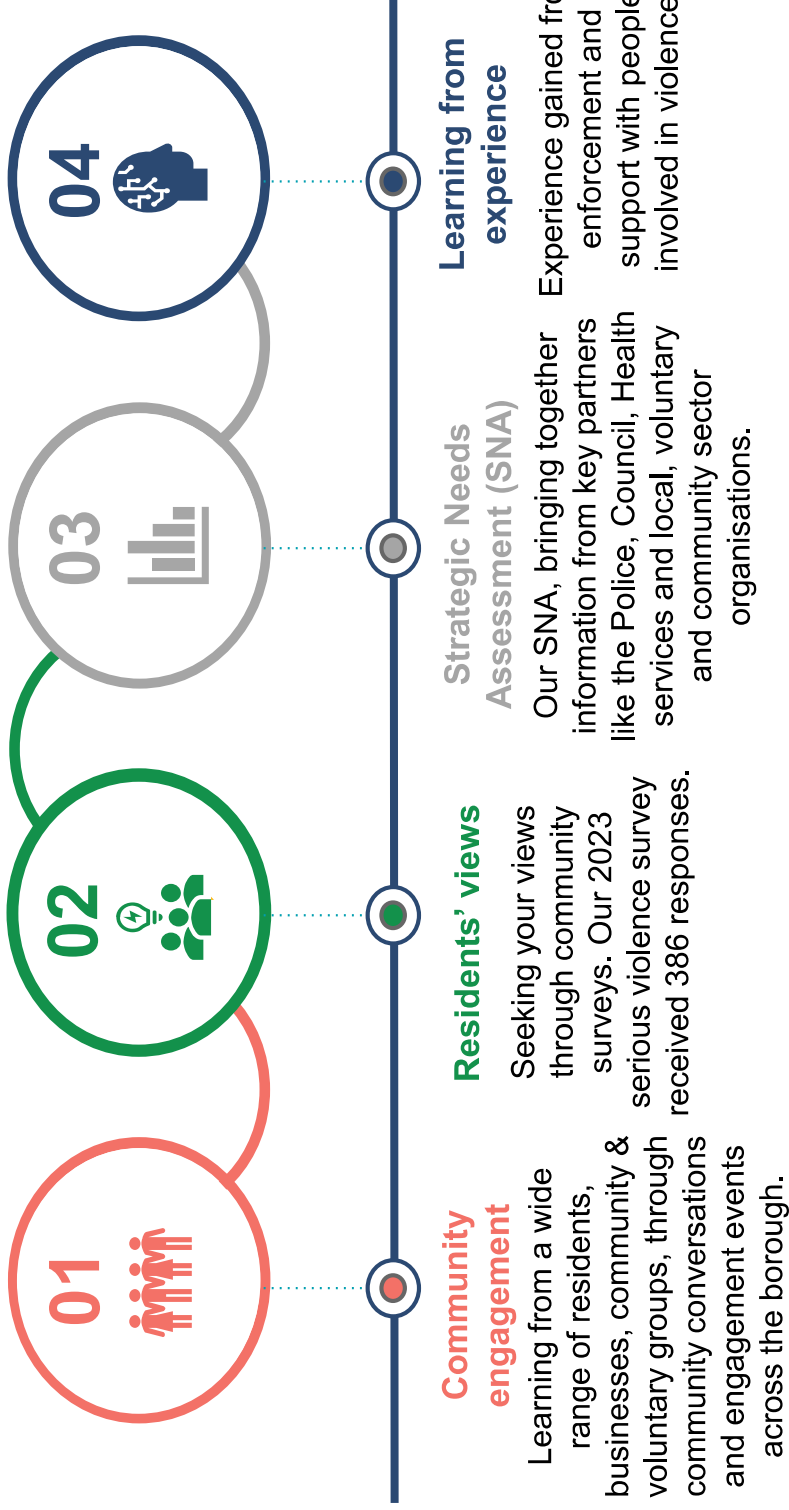
Voluntary, youth & community sector organisations

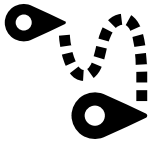
Responsible Authorities: required by law to lead on preventing violence



Our journey so far

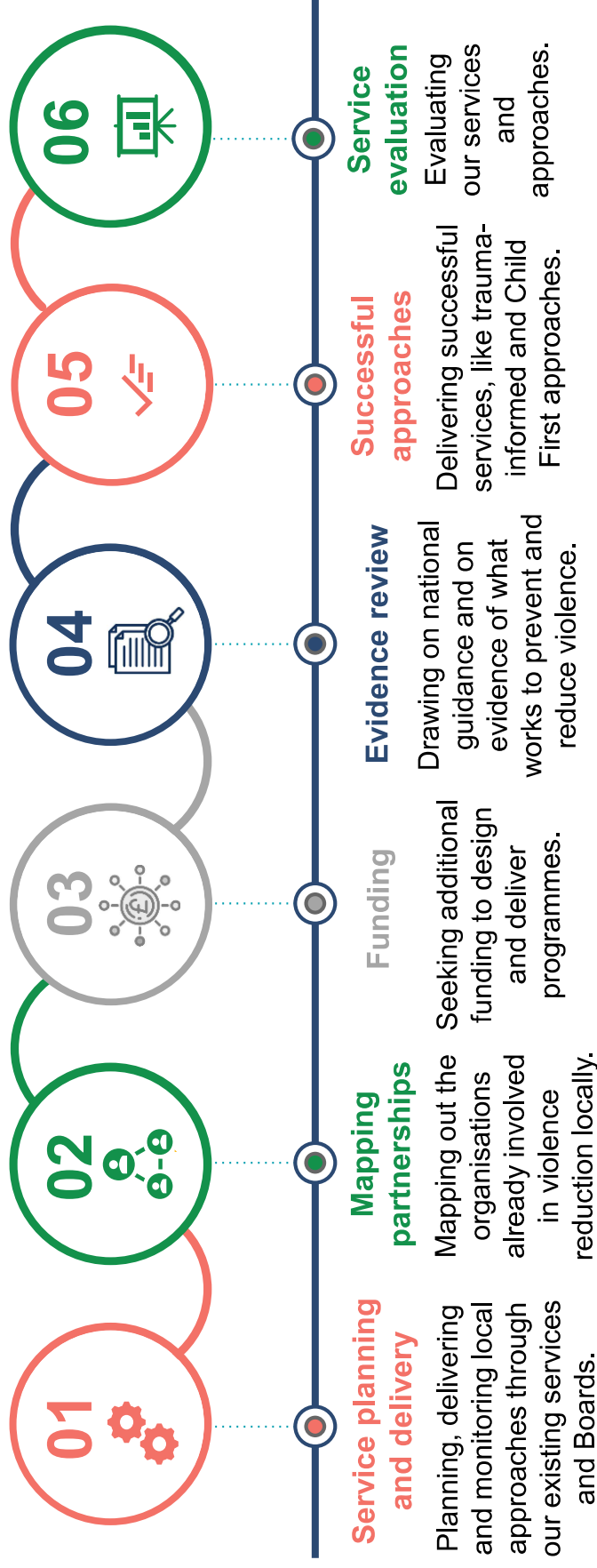
Understanding violence and its causes





Our journey so far

Exploring and delivering approaches to reducing violence





Understanding violence and its causes

You told us...

Violence in Lewisham takes many forms, including all the types of violence covered by this strategy.

Violence impacts on communities as well as the people directly involved in incidents.

The frequency and impact of violence can be greater in some areas of the borough than others.

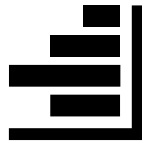
Social issues, such as poverty, lack of opportunities and housing can contribute to violence.

People become involved in violence for many reasons. They can be influenced by others, and, also, by difficult earlier events and experiences.

People's perceptions of who is involved in violence and why are not always the same as the reality.

We could prevent more violence if people had better access to support and services.

Strong community links, and provision of spaces for people to gather and connect is important in preventing violence.



Understanding violence and its causes

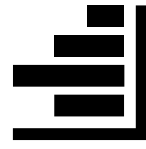
Our local crime data shows...

We know that violence and exploitation are often not reported. This means that our local crime data only gives part of the picture of serious violence in our borough.

Lewisham has the ninth highest reported serious violence rate in London. There were nearly 9,000 serious violence offences recorded in the 12 months to October 2023, an increase on last year.

Some Lewisham wards are in the top 10% of all London wards for some violence types. Rates and common types of violence vary in different parts of the borough. The patterns and hotspots do not always match our perceptions of where violence occurs.

Different groups are disproportionately affected by different types of violence. For example, women and people 25 and over are more likely to be victims/survivors of domestic abuse while men and people under 25 are more likely to be victims/survivors of other types of serious violence.



Understanding violence and its causes Our local crime data shows Lewisham has...

The **third** highest rate for exploitation of all London boroughs. There was a 14% increase in the 12 months to October 2023. Younger people are over-represented as victims of exploitation. Criminal exploitation is most common; with drug trafficking increasing.

The **second** highest rate of domestic abuse of all London boroughs. It makes up 46% of all serious violence offences in the borough. Women and people 25 and over are over-represented as victims of domestic abuse.

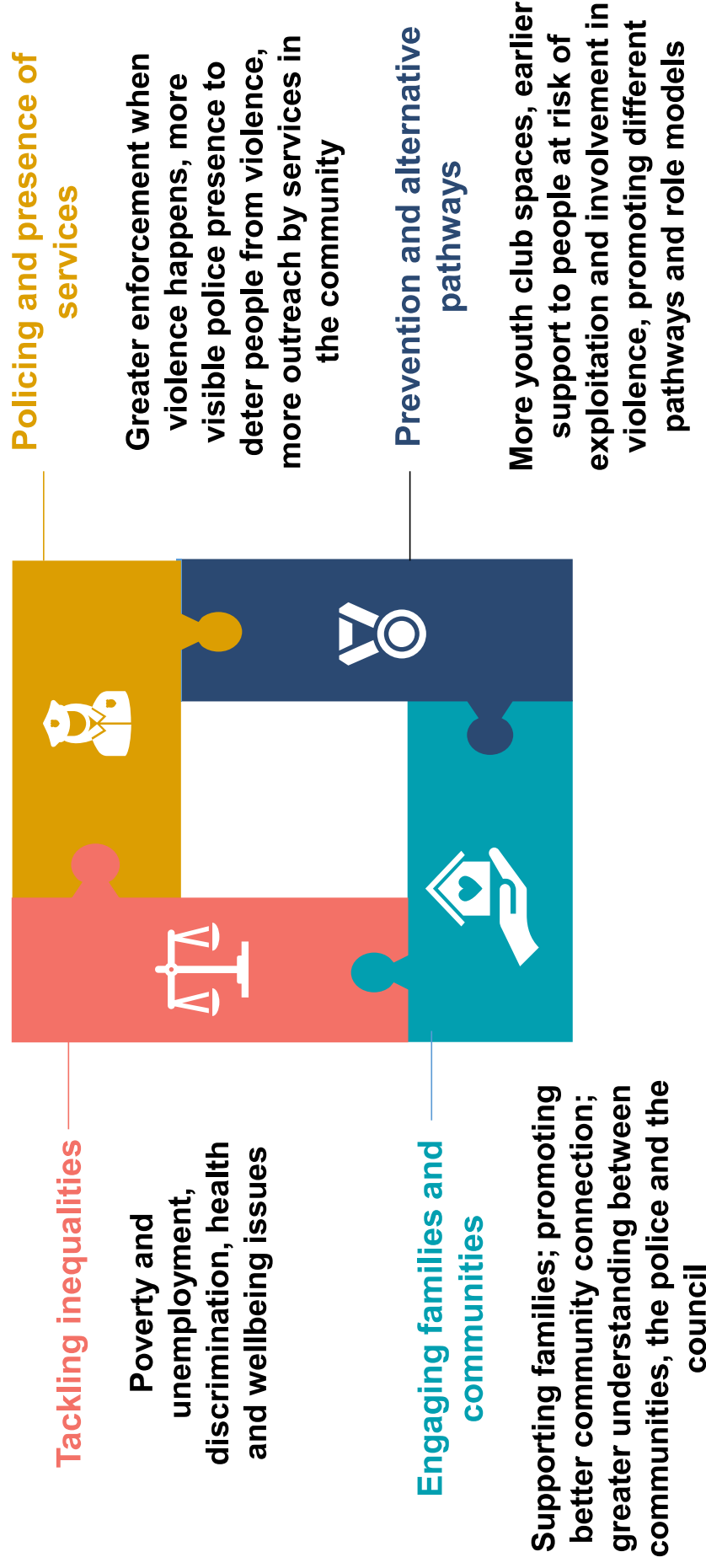
The **sixth** highest rate of violence with injury involving under 25s of all London Boroughs. People under 25 are over-represented for carrying and use of weapons, especially knives. Weapons are often used in personal robbery offences, the majority of which is committed by under 25s.

The **eighth** highest rate for sexual violence of all London boroughs. There was an 8% increase in the 12 months to October 2023. People under 25 are over-represented as victims of sexual violence.



Approaches to reducing violence

You have told us you would like...





Approaches to reducing violence

Our commitments to you. We will...

- 1 Improve how we engage with communities to understand experiences of violence aiming to reduce inequality and create opportunities.
- 2 Take a public health approach to understand and act on violence, its causes, and ways to prevent or reduce it.
- 3 Develop specific approaches to different types of violence and for different groups of people.
- 4 Build on our existing partnerships and successful approaches, and test and learn from new approaches and evidence of what works elsewhere.
- 5 Deliver solutions co-developed with communities and local grassroots organisations, focusing on local priorities, strengths and challenges.

1

Improve how we engage with communities to understand experiences of violence aiming to reduce inequality and create opportunities.

- We want to hear more of your views on violence and how it affects you. This will help us understand more about your priorities in preventing and tackling violence and guide us in developing interventions. To do this we will create a feedback mechanism, a system to receive, respond and act on feedback and suggestions, from you. This system will include regular updates on the actions taken and the influence you have had in making these changes.
- We will work more closely with voluntary and community groups and others who can help us to connect with local communities and create opportunities, to reduce inequality and improve outcomes. This means drawing on networks we already have, but also finding new and better ways to connect with you and share information.
- We recognise that there are communities whose voices are seldom heard and others who may feel they are not heard at all. We will develop an approach to engaging communities that is fairer, accessible, and even more inclusive.
- We will create spaces and ways to hear more from children and young people, victims/survivors of violence, and those who have used violence.
- We will consult with you in ways that suit you. For example, we will meet with you in your local area, and we will explore alternative platforms for you to share your views.

Take a public health approach to understand and act on violence, its causes, and ways to prevent or reduce it.

- We will ensure that a public health approach runs through all our work to prevent and tackle violence.
- This approach recognises that serious violence does not just happen but is a result of many reasons like traumatic or harmful life experiences and influences.
- It focuses on providing support early and preventing future violence by addressing the root causes, and on responding to violence that has already happened. It recognises that the experience and impact of violence is greater for some people and seeks to reduce this imbalance.
- It draws on evidence to understand violence, its causes and what works to prevent and tackle it. This includes local evidence about violence taking place in the borough and the experiences of people in Lewisham. It also includes wider evidence, like research into causes of violence and programmes that reduce it.
- It can involve focusing on smaller areas or key places within Lewisham to make sure that activities to prevent violence are targeted in places where it happens the most and that support for people affected is tailored to local communities.

3

Develop specific approaches to different types of violence and for different groups of people.

- We will develop specific responses to different types of violence in order to:
 - Understand what is causing them.
 - Address these root causes to prevent or reduce future violence.
 - Ensure that violence is identified, reported and enforced robustly.
 - Provide high-quality support that reaches victims/survivors and helps them to recover and feel safe.
 - Prevent people from becoming involved in violence and help them to move away from violence if they are already involved.
- We know that the same approach does not work for everyone. We will identify groups of people who are not well served by our current services and approaches, and we will find ways to work better with and for them.
- We will be honest about what is not working and focus on improving our approaches, based on evidence of what works and on new ideas from communities and people providing services.

4

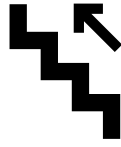
Build on our existing partnerships and successful approaches, and test and learn from new approaches and evidence of what works elsewhere.

- We will develop existing approaches that are working locally, to make the most of specialism and expertise in our workforce and communities.
- We will challenge ourselves to improve and use different approaches. This includes testing new ideas to see whether they work and using ideas that have been proven to work in areas other than Lewisham.
- We will strengthen relationships and structures to help improve the Partnership, to increase the collaborative approach to tackling violence.
- Alongside this strategy, we will be guided by our strategies and plans on specific aspects of serious violence, such as domestic abuse and violence against women and girls; child exploitation; modern slavery and substance use.
- We will utilise our connections with organisations outside of Lewisham (like London's Violence Reduction Unit, and the Youth Endowment Fund) to continue to learn about funding opportunities and evidence of what works elsewhere.

5

Deliver solutions co-developed with communities and local grassroots organisations, focusing on local priorities, strengths and challenges.

- We will increase our emphasis on co-producing solutions to violence with our communities, including at ward and neighbourhood level.
- We know that community-led solutions have the potential to be more relevant to local people and to encourage people at risk of involvement in violence to participate.
- We will seek ways to make more funding and support available to community partners to develop and deliver activities locally.
- We will also work with community partners to get messages out to the wider community about violence and its causes, available support and opportunities to participate in co-design.
- We will do more to help people to get involved with local grassroots organisations, like making sure they know about all the organisations out there.

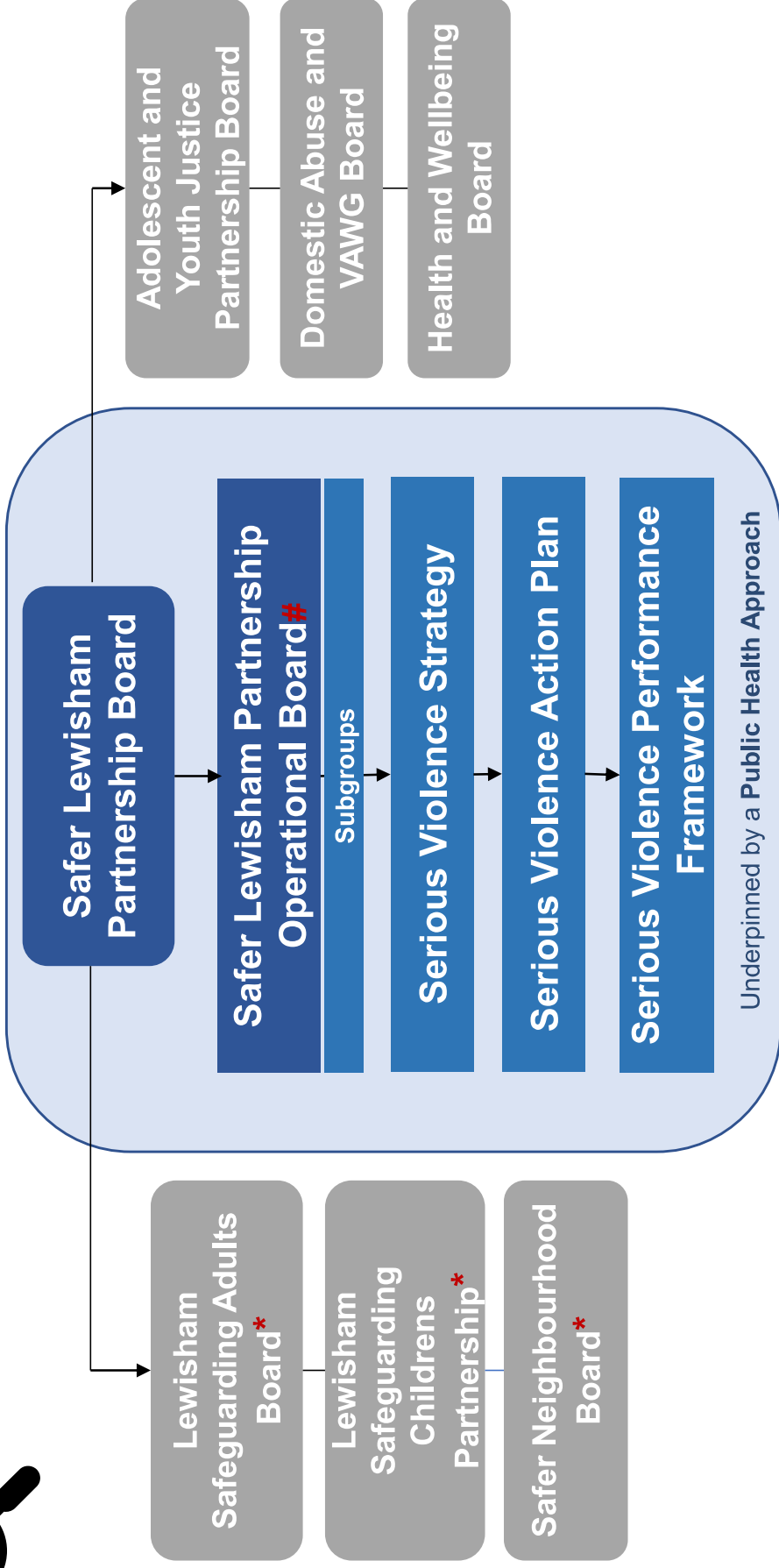


Next steps

- This strategy has been developed by people in a range of organisations working in Lewisham. The main organisations named in the Serious Violence Duty have been involved, as well as some other organisations who are already involved in preventing and tackling violence. Whilst some voices of those that live and frequent the borough informed our assessment, we recognise that more is needed to be fully collaborative with the wider Lewisham community.
- The strategy outlines our main commitments but does not detail how we will achieve them. This means it is a starting point for explaining and guiding our approaches.
- One of our main next steps as partners is to develop an action plan of how to deliver on our strategy and commitments.
- As part of improving our engagement and co-production with communities, in future years we would like to co-produce the strategy and related action plans with community members.
- This year we will consult with community members and community-based organisations to find out the best ways to co-produce the strategy and action plans. We will then make and agree plans for how to do this next year.



Making decisions and reviewing progress



*To include relevant associated meetings for example, Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Partnership, Strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) group, # To include relevant sub-groups



Get in touch

You can contact us with questions
about this Strategy at

saferelewishampartnership@lewisham.gov.uk

Glossary

- **County Lines** is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries. This is usually by children or vulnerable people who are forced or manipulated into it by gangs. For the statutory definition, see [here](#).
- **Domestic Abuse** refers to any incident of abusive or violent behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are in an intimate relationship or belong to a family, regardless of gender. Domestic abuse includes many forms of abuse, including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. For the statutory definition, see [here](#).
- **Drug Trafficking** involves illegally manufacturing, transporting, distributing, selling, or moving illegal substances or substances that are subject to drug prohibition laws. For the statutory definition, see [here](#).
- **Modern Slavery** happens when people are forced, deceived, or exploited to work without pay or against their will. It includes keeping someone as a slave, making them do hard labour, or helping them travel with the plan to use them for unfair/exploitative purposes. For the statutory definition, see [here](#).

Glossary

- **Public Health Approaches** to tackling violence view violence not as isolated incidents or solely a police enforcement problem. Instead, such approaches see violence as a preventable consequence and caused by different factors such as difficult early-life experiences, or harmful social or community experiences and influences. For the official definition by the World Health Organisation, see [here](#).
- **Sexual offences** refer to sexual acts directed against another person without their consent or to exploit them. Rape, stalking, and sexual abuse of children are common examples of sexual offences. For the statutory definition, see [here](#).
- **Weapon-Related Crimes** are offences where an illegal weapon is used to cause injury or instil fear of violence against another person. For the statutory definition(s), see [here](#).