
Executive Decision

Knife Crime & Serious Violence Strategy

Decision to be taken by: Assistant City Mayor
Neighbourhood Services

Decision to be taken on: 9 July 2021

Lead director/officer: John Leach

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Daxa Pancholi/Jo Russell
- Author contact details: 0116 4540245
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

- 1.1 The aim of the strategy is to prevent knife crime and serious violence within Leicester, and to support people away from this activity. The strategy will encourage provision of relevant intervention support and education, using a collaborative approach of various partners, community members and organisations and is attached as **APPENDIX 1** (pre graphic design).
- 1.2 Performance management arrangements will be through the Safer Leicester Partnership (with reports as to City Mayor Briefings and Scrutiny). Clear success measures and outcomes which occur as a result of delivering the strategy and related action plan will be overseen and will include:
 - Demonstrable compliance with the Serious Violence Duty contained within the New Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts legislation.
 - Continue to work collaboratively with partners and the Steering/Task group in order to provide mutual support that maximises the use of our collective resources regarding this and related agendas
 - Reduced incidents of knife crime and serious violence within Leicester, and related hospital admissions
 - Increased community understanding and awareness around knife crime and serious violence
 - Recognising achievements which are related to upskilling local groups and community leads
 - Increased feeling of community safety and community cohesion

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 Assistant City Mayor Neighbourhoods is asked to:
 - a) Make a formal decision to adopt and publish the Leicester City Council Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy.

3 Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 Steering Group and Taskforce; In order to take this work forward, two groups (steering and taskforce groups) were established, outlined below is the roles of these groups: -

- **Steering group:** strategic and statutory partners (internal & external) who promote, highlight and steer the work undertaken to develop and implement the strategy
- **Taskforce group:** community leads within various local communities of Leicester city (from 8 areas identified through datasets that report on knife related crime). Group members will be able to deliver community related work to support the development and implementation of the strategy.

3.2 Community Conversations

3.3 The formation of this strategy has been very much community-led, with that in mind a series of meetings and events were arranged and have taken place to date to support the development of the strategy. The intention in establishing these meetings with the groups outlined above, was to liaise with the groups and take stock of their thoughts in progressing this work.

3.4 Meetings/events with community and others were organised to elicit their thoughts on knife crime, serious violence and underlying issues around this agenda; these were termed “community conversations”.

3.5 In order to decide the location for the community conversations, police data and analysis was used, from which the top eight locations across Leicester City which recorded the greatest number of knife crime offences in 2018 and 2019 were identified.

3.6 Each of the community conversations were arranged for a duration of 1.5 hours, and face-to-face sessions took place in a key community facility within the local area. Online sessions were trialled but due to the limitation of IT within the community, conference meetings presented some challenges. A significant benefit from the arrangements made for community engagement was achieved through the community leads “taking the reins” for organising and running these events.

3.7 Other contributors

3.8 Whilst the community conversations have been undertaken, there has been the absolute need to ensure that a range of other groups of individuals are also consulted. This is to provide officers with a wealth of information and a further in-depth understanding of the issues and possible actions needed to address knife crime. Below is an extensive list of meetings and events which have taken place, with the sole objective of consulting with and capturing the broadest possible perspective around this agenda: -

- Regular steering group meetings
- Regular taskforce group meeting
- Joint steering & taskforce group meeting
- Community conversations
- Designated Safeguards Leads Forum (Presentation of Knife Crime Strategy)

- Meeting with De Montfort University Students/Volunteers (recognising support for community conversations)
- Victim First- VRN commissioned research
- Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, Leicester City Council
- Meeting with Elected Members
- Meeting with Young Peoples Council
- Meeting with University of Leicester & De Montfort University criminology academics
- Session with families and parents of victims
- Remaining community conversations (via online platforms)
- Meeting with those who have 'lived experience'
- Session with Gang experts (Nationally)
- Online survey with De Montfort University criminology students
- Discussions with Executive leads and LCC Directors

3.9 Strategic Officer Commitment

3.10 Directors from key areas of work have been both consulted with and pledged commitment to the Knife Crime & Serious Violence Strategy along with driving forward key recommendations in their area of work.

4. **Background**

4.1 The Issue – Nationally

4.2 Knife crime affects our communities and families, devastating lives and leaving an everlasting impact. Serious violence, including knife-enabled violence has been receiving national attention due to their emerging prevalence in society and the significant consequences of these crimes. National figures for the year ending March 2020 showed a 6% rise in offences involving knives or sharp instruments recorded by the police in the latest year to 46,2651. Offences involving knives or sharp instruments have been experiencing a rising trend since the year ending March 2014, although in recent years the rate of increase has slowed. That said it is important to note that the figure for the latest year was 51% higher than when comparable recording began in 2011 and is the highest on record. (ONS, 2020).

4.3 The Issue - Locally

A strategic needs assessment carried out by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC's) Violence Reduction Network project identified that the highest proportion (57%) of local serious violence by all ages took place in Leicester, with the highest proportion of serious violence under 25's occurring within the central neighbourhood policing area (37.3%). This was followed by East Leicester (26.6%) and West Leicester (25%). The East and West Leicester national policing areas of the City were also identified as having a high proportion of offender residency, with 32% of serious offences being committed by those living within these areas (all ages). East Leicester NPA also saw the highest proportion of knife-enabled serious violence offences by under-25's within Leicester, and

Leicester had the highest rates within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) overall (70.3%).

It was found that males under 25 years, who reside in Leicester, are most at risk of both committing serious violence in public spaces or being victims of serious violence in public spaces. Females under 25 years in Leicester, are more at risk than their counterparts in Leicestershire and Rutland from committing or being a victim of serious violence in public spaces.

When analysing hospital data, it was found that violence-related hospital admissions for under 25's (15-19s) living in Leicester were higher than the national average from 2016 to 2019. Of the admissions, 14% were related to alcohol misuse which is again, higher than the England average. Finally, almost a third of hospital admission from Leicester from 2016-2019 (32%) were residents living in the most deprived areas. The VRN strategic needs assessment also provided some initial analysis about the potential risk and protective factors which may result in young people becoming involved in serious violence offences in Leicester. It was found that Leicester is below the national average for school readiness and educational attainment and there is a higher rate of absenteeism in both primary and secondary schools. In Leicester, the number of young people who can be classified as "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) are higher than the national average, and the levels of children within the youth justice system are higher than the national average.

4.4 Leicester's Knife Crime & Serious Violence Strategy – A Community Led Approach

4.5 It was agreed that the city council needed to put in place a strategy and action plan in order to address national and local concerns regarding knife crime and serious violence. Indeed, this has been reflected as a commitment (manifesto) to "work with the Police and other partners to establish a city-wide knife crime strategy" and with this in mind;

- to do more to help prevent and deter individuals and groups committing acts of serious violence and carrying/using knives.
- There is an understanding that a **collaborative approach** with the Community, the OPCC office and their Violence Reduction Network, Partner Agencies and Voluntary Groups will be taken to understand the causes of serious violence and the use of knives to develop a strategy which is part of a broader City/County approach with partners.
- This joined up, coordinated approach will be used to confront serious violence and knife crime and to ensure that there is **early intervention, prevention and provision of appropriately designed services**
- The approach used to establish this strategy is very much a **community-led** one, involving individuals and groups from local communities who are well known and are seen as credible in terms of representing their community and any associated concerns. This approach was seen as innovative as well as more open and transparent in order to encourage community buy in but also to

help combat the perception that statutory partners tend to talk at and to their “community audience” as opposed to with their “community partners”, a scenario which if not mitigated against offers very few opportunities for continuous input and development from the community/communities of interest regarding this important work..

- Furthermore, this approach is one where actions put in place will seek to ensure a **system-change** with greater community input which is **sustainable** going forward.

4.6 The New Serious Violence Duty

- 4.7 The Government plans to impose a new Serious Violence Duty. The duty will be placed on the following sectors: Local authorities; Police; Justice; Fire & Rescue; Probation and Health, and the duty will fall to organisations rather than to individuals. The Serious Violence Duty will put a new duty on public sector bodies to collaborate and plan where possible through existing partnership structures, to prevent and reduce serious violence.

It will ensure that relevant services work together to share data, intelligence and knowledge to understand and address the root causes of serious violence including knife crime. It will also allow them to target their interventions to prevent and stop violence altogether. The work proposed through this strategy links directly to the OPCC and its Violence Reduction Network and will help to pave the way for the implementation of the duty within the City. Whilst it is understood the Government is committed to delivering the duty, no date has yet been set for the first reading in Parliament although progress is anticipated early this calendar year. It is proposed through the design of this strategy that it will enable the City Council to be better prepared to respond to the new duty and then therefore able to further adapt to meeting its statutory requirements once further information is made available.

5. **Detailed report**

- 5.1 The aim of the Knife Crime & Serious Violence Strategy is to prevent knife crime and serious violence within Leicester, and to support people away from this activity. The strategy will encourage provision of relevant intervention support and education, using a collaborative approach of various partners, community members and organisations.
- 5.2 Over the course of this work, a range of issues together with recommendations have been identified. This information has been used to produce a detailed action plan and key themes which requires ongoing input from a range of partners and agencies. The issues of knife crime and serious violence can only be addressed through solid and sustained partnership work. With this in mind it is proposed that this work is adopted within the work of the **Safer Leicester Partnership** (alongside

the work of other relevant partnerships/agencies) and that it will incorporate actions associated with what is likely to be the Serious Violence Duty (once it has passed through parliament).

5.3 This work has identified and continues to identify themes regarding what communities believe to be issues related to this agenda. The emerging themes identified to date include: -

- It was felt that individuals may carry knives because of **peer pressure, fear, protection or attachment/revenge**
- **Influences from media** including social media, music and gaming
- **There is a need for enhanced community provision**, including the need for grass roots involvement in the shaping and designing of projects alongside employment and training opportunities
- **Lack of role models/mentors**
- **Negative perceptions of local areas**, related to violence & other crimes
- Need to **increase support provision** such as youth provision, mental health support, family support and better collaborative working between services
- **Links to other crime** including gang related crime, serious violence and drug/alcohol abuse issues
- **Lack of employment and financial opportunities**; there is a need to increase ambition and provide aspirational opportunities

5.4 Our core set of recommendations with rationale have been informed by the community conversations. The recommendations have been shared with members of the Executive and key officers; feedback received to date has been very positive with several recommendations shaped and adopted following discussions. This work both internally and externally with partners will to be very fluid to allow us to adapt quickly to emerging trends and local threat profiles.

5.5 Resource Implications

5.6 As this strategy has been shaped it has been done consciously with the reality of the financial challenges we and partners face. Work towards system change is importantly encouraged and sought to be emphasised. Noting the constraints on resources this is a key part of the work that is being and is proposed to be undertaken. Within this approach opportunities are also promoted to work across sectors to reduce duplication and maximise the benefit achievable through existing resources.

5.7 With the above in mind, Leicester City Council would seek to fund initiatives to the value of £250K with additional funding being contributed by partners such as the OPCC and VRN to the sum of £200K (this has been indicated to be available subject to agreement). This will facilitate continued joint working arrangements and along with the alignment of priorities to this area of work.

- 5.8 It is expected that this funding will be promoted as / provide an impetus and stimulus for partners both internal and external to the city council to help establish initiatives to develop and become sustainable going forwards. Post year one of the strategy, it is expected that the initiative will be subsumed into “business as usual” and as such the expectation of project leads (benefactors) is for them to seek to ensure their initiatives are sustainable going forward.
- 5.9 The below provides a summary of initiatives/areas of work to support delivery of the strategy: -

Leicester City Council Funded

a) Community Safety (Knife Crime) Co-ordinator

Co-ordinator post to facilitate delivery of the knife crime strategy, monitoring programme and promotion of anti-knife crime activity, media campaigns etc. This post will be to drive the recommendations and seek to ensure they are part of credible system change, embedded without the requirement for continuing pump prime resource. The funding for this post will be reviewed at the end of year one. The aim will be to incorporate this post within the Safer Leicester Partnership workstream going forward subject to grant funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (Locality Partnership Funding).

(b) Community Outreach / Gang Exit Programme

This is a proposed pilot project between the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the police and voluntary sector including the Council and the Violence Reduction Network that seeks to reach out to those most at risk and already engaged in serious violence in order to lead them towards a safe exit that enables them to change their lifestyles and behaviours for the better. This pilot is seen as crucial to capture those most at risk and causing most harm in our communities and to ensure other valuable resource is used effectively in reducing this risk.

(c) Community programmes

Including peer mentoring work and developing and extending a programme to work with Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) groups to establish expertise and appropriate delivery through network meetings in hot spot areas. This is proposed to be one year of initial seed funding to support key local community organisations to assist with the implementation of the city’s knife crime strategy.

(d) Implement education, prevention campaigns and programmes

Including development of the Prevention of Offending Pathway (POP) and recognising and aligning intervention programmes to ensure support is available for each category of need. Other suggested potential initiatives include improving the physical infrastructure of localities to increase community accessibility and improvement of problematic areas and providing discounted rates/free hours access to local community facilities. Work with Clinical Commissioning Groups to recognise support through a public health campaign including mental health wellbeing and mental health support has also emerged as part of the recommendations. The majority of this work will be delivered by council services and partners in order to progress system change activity with the onus on them to embed within their working practices going forward with very little if any additional funding to be required going forward.

5.10 Additional opportunities to support violence reduction in Leicester

5.11 In addition to the work that has been progressed through the development of a city Knife Crime and serious violence strategy it is important to note that the OPCC's project the Violence Reduction Network has also contributed **£610,214** towards violence reduction work in the city during 2020/21. The OPCC's office has secured an additional years funding of approx. £900k for the LLR VRN that it is understood will facilitate a number of city based workstreams. The work of the VRN is taking place in partnership with the city's community safety partnership, the **Safer Leicester Partnership** and aligns to the knife crime and serious violence strategy.

5.12 We also propose to seek additional funding (where opportunities present) through a range of platforms both nationally and locally, utilising our community partners where possible to draw down funds that we as a Local Authority are unable to access. The range of programmes identified in the report alongside the recommendations will support any ongoing bids we can submit as the programme evolves.

5.13 Governance and Oversight

5.14 Governance for the project will be through the City's Community Safety Partnership, the Safer Leicester Partnership (SLP), which has its own framework and structure. The strategy itself has been incorporated into the city wide SLP broader strategic plan. The strategic group that has been established for the development of the Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy will become the Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy Delivery Group Chaired by the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhoods, Cllr Kirk Master. Reporting on delivery will take place into the SLP and City Mayor Briefings (CMB). Scrutiny will be via Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission.

5.15 The work of the VRN will also be reported as appropriate into the SLP and alongside the knife crime strategy to ensure maximum City and LLR collaboration on this agenda and serious violence, thereby also offsetting risks associated with duplication etc.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The City Council has made available £250k of one-off monies to support the actions and initiatives outlined within this report, identified from departmental underspends and reserves.

Amy Oliver – Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

The report outlines a few potential partnerships with 3rd party organisations which will need to be caught in partnership agreements. There also appears to some funding contributions which may trigger the new subsidy regime. Legal services should be engaged to draft said partnership agreements and provide further detailed advice on any potential subsidies.

Dominic Taylor – Solicitor 3560

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The recommendations of the report do not request that the strategy or actions be approved at this point and therefore there are no direct equality implications arising from the recommendations. However, the equalities implications of the strategy and the supporting actions must be assessed prior to the final decision to adopt them.

Work has already commenced to do this via the range of engagement methods outlined within the paper. It is important to ensure that the range of input is representative of a range of people from across different protected characteristics and that the proposals are assessed robustly in relation to their impacts specifically on people with different protected characteristics and also to consider how we and any partnership will meet peoples' needs to ensure that they are able to access any support and that the aims of the PSED are paid due regard in the design of the proposals.

Where any disproportionate negative impacts are identified on those with a specific protected characteristic/s, steps must be taken to reduce or remove that impact.

Whilst the overall approach is intended to have a positive impact on people (including for victims, offenders, families and wider communities) from across all protected characteristics, the strategy already references some protected characteristics that are likely to be more relevant such as age and sex and outlines the geographical areas most affected.

There is also mention of some other possible factors which may need to be unpacked further to understand the equalities impact. An assessment of the equality impacts can be undertaken utilising the Council's Equality impact assessment tool. The Equalities Team can provide further equalities support and advice where required.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

Whilst there are limited direct implications from this report, some of the proposals may have related carbon emission impacts. This includes those actions which involve the use of buildings and equipment, and those where staff will need to use transportation. To minimise these impacts all staff can contribute to reducing energy use through simple actions such as switching off unused equipment and lighting and using sustainable travel options or digital communication methods where possible and appropriate.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

N/A

7. Background information and other papers:

None

8. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Knife Crime & Serious Violence Strategy

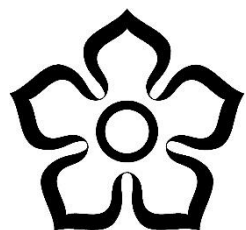
9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No

APPENDIX 1



Leicester
City Council

Leicester Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy 2021-23

Working for the Community – Led by the Community
Our Approach to Tackling Knife Crime and Serious Violence in Leicester

Contents

Foreword.....	14
1. Our Vision and Commitment to Addressing Knife Crime and Serious Violence.....	15
2. Introduction	16
2.1 What does the Data Tell Us?.....	17
2.1.1 National statistics.....	17
2.1.2 Local statistics (Leicester)	19
2.2 What did the Community Tell Us?	29
2.3 Community Testimonials (provided by some of the individuals who were engaged in the development of the strategy).....	30
3. A Community Led Approach to Tackling Knife Crime and Serious Violence in Leicester: Understanding the Issues (Community, Experts & Others) .	32
3.1 The Journey with Our Community	32
3.2 Conversations with Community, Experts & Others	32
3.3 Understanding the Issue (Community, Experts & Others)	34
4. Bringing it all Together to Make Positive Change Happen	35
5. Next Steps and Monitoring Progress	38
6. Appendix A – Caveats.....	39

Foreword

After an evident trend in national/local statical data showing us that knife crime and serious violence was on the rise, it was necessary to take some proactive action here in the city with the innovation of Leicester city's first knife crime and serious violence strategy. Knife crime affects our communities and families, devastating lives and leaving a lasting impact. Tragically there are families in the city that have lost loved ones and many more have seen their loved ones injured and affected. This is totally unacceptable and more needs to be done to address not only the root causes of knife crime and serious violence, but also to ensure that those who do use knives to commit crime are supported away from this.

This strategy was a manifesto commitment and has now been commissioned by Leicester's City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby. As nominated executive lead for this important piece of work I am very clear that the solutions rest with our local communities. Their voices needed to be heard and reflected in any actions or recommendations that we developed.

With this in mind, the approach we used to develop this strategy had a unique and sole focus of being led and designed by communities. Established community leads and groups (well known for representing their community and voicing any associated concerns) have led the engagement from the front, with a range of sessions where we have gathered ideas and views from the community.

In addition to working with the community (which included those with lived experiences), we also involved a wide range of partner agencies to understand the causes of serious violence and the use of knives. This joined-up, coordinated approach has been used to confront serious violence and knife crime and to ensure that there is early intervention, prevention, and provision of services. We will be asking those delivering the action plan to demonstrate the positive process changes that have occurred as a result of the strategy, and to monitor and evaluate the success of the action plan going forward.

This is an important strategy for the city and its communities. I am hugely grateful to everyone who has taken part in its development and I look forward to working together with all those who share our ambition to deliver the strategy, as we strive to address the problems of knife crime and serious violence within our streets and society.

Cllr Kirk Master, Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhoods, Leicester City Council

1. Our Vision and Commitment to Addressing Knife Crime and Serious Violence

Our Vision

Our vision is to strive to help prevent and deter individuals and groups from committing acts of serious violence and carrying/using knives.

Our Commitment

Leicester City Council Commitment: “Work with partners to establish and deliver a city-wide knife crime and serious violence strategy”

2. Introduction

Wherever you are in the country, serious violence and knife crime are issues affecting many communities, families, and individuals. The use of knives to gain power, control, money and belongings cannot be accepted. Knife crime is a devastating blight on today's society. Leicester City Council is the lead agency for the city's community safety partnership, the Safer Leicester Partnership (SLP). As such, the council has prioritised actions with partners to address knife crime and serious violence. This is reflected in the SLP's community safety plan, but it is also, importantly, a commitment made by the council under the leadership of the City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby. This area of the council's work is being led by Cllr Kirk Master who has executive responsibility for this strategy across the city.

Leicester City Council is also a core member of the local Violence Reduction Network (VRN) which has been established to take an evidence-informed, whole system approach to preventing serious violence. Established in September 2019 and funded through a Home Office grant, the VRN is an alliance of organisations, groups and communities which has the core function of providing joint leadership and co-ordination of the local response to serious violence.

The VRN sits within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and is governed by the Violence Reduction Board. The Violence Reduction Board provides strategic leadership and coordination, holds accountability for the VRN team and Serious Violence Delivery Group, and is included within the Strategic Partnership Board infrastructure. This strategy complements the work of the VRN by ensuring there is specific focus on the issue of knife crime in our city. Both the city council and VRN will continue to work together to drive areas of joint interest forward with partner organisations and communities. There is also a Serious Violence Delivery Group comprising of managers from across the partnership, including the City Council, which undertakes joint work on behalf of the Board. The work of the VRN will also be reported as appropriate into the Safer Leicester Partnership and alongside the knife crime and serious violence strategy to ensure maximum city and LLR collaboration, whilst offsetting risks associated with duplication.

Under the City Mayor and Cllr Master's leadership the city's knife crime and serious violence strategy has been developed through an innovative community led approach. Looking at the data (the incidents and locations of knife crime and serious violence in the city) and hearing the voices of our community has helped to direct us towards recommendations that will assist us in finding solutions to these important issues.

2.1 What does the Data Tell Us?

2.1.1 National statistics

National figures for the year ending March 2020 showed a 6% rise in offences involving knives or sharp instruments recorded by the police in the latest year to 46,265. Offences involving knives or sharp instruments have been experiencing a rising trend since the year ending March 2014, although in recent years the rate of increase has slowed. However, the latest year was 51% higher than when comparable recording began in 2011 and is the highest on record. (ONS, 2020) (Please note: the definition used within this report is different to the national figures shown in this section)

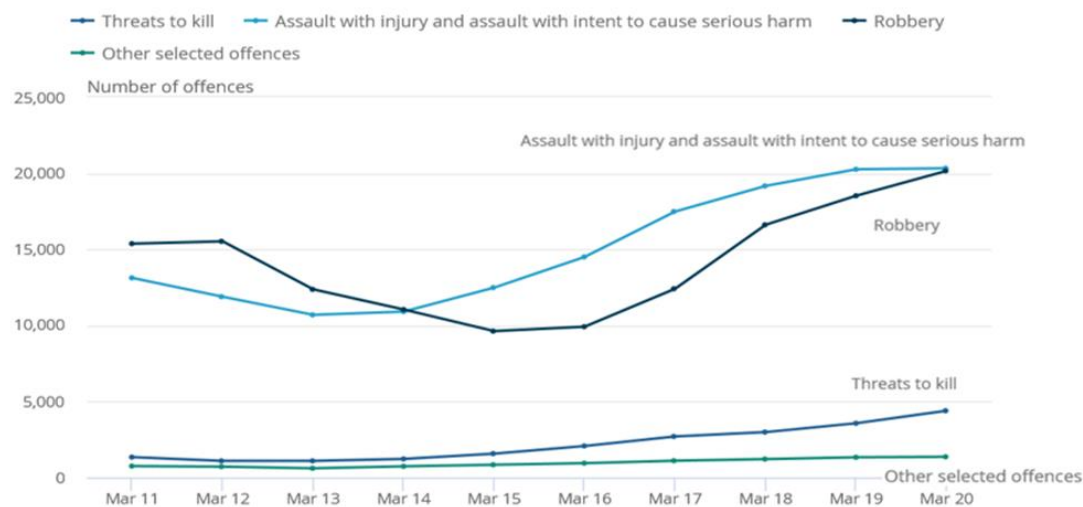


Figure 1: Rising trend in crimes involving knives or sharp instruments, driven by increases in assaults with injury, assaults with intent to cause serious harm and robberies (Source: Office for National Statistics, England and Wales, Year ending March 2020)

The serious violence definition used for the purpose of the rest of this section is that adopted by the VRN partnership:

‘Public place violence resulting in significant physical injury with or without weapons’

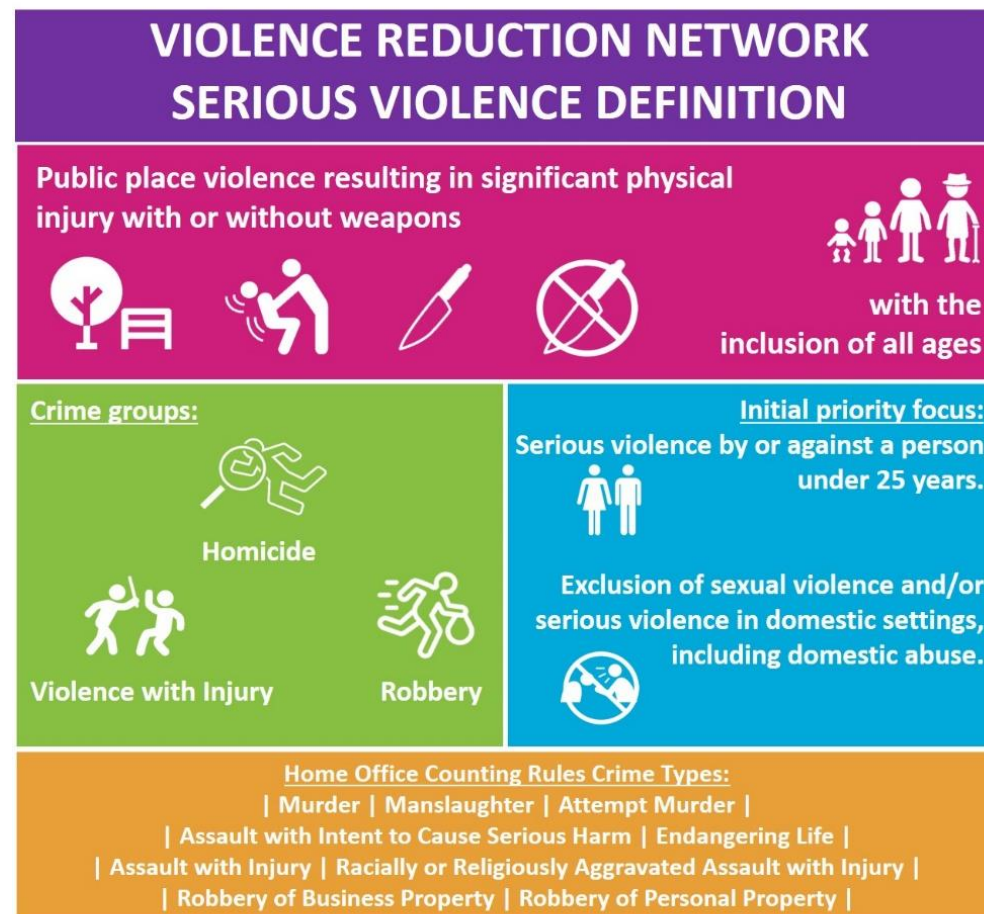
The definition includes all ages and the following crime groupings:

- Homicide
- Violence with Injury
- Robbery of Personal Property
- Robbery of Business Property

The focus of the VRN and the city knife crime and serious violence strategy is on public place serious violence and the data in this section refers to this. It does not include sexual violence and/or serious violence in domestic settings, including domestic abuse as there are other strategies in place to tackle these.

VRN’s Knife-enabled Serious Violence Definition

Knife-enabled serious violence is defined by offences which fall under the above definition which mention knife, as well as mentions of stab, sharp, blunt, blade etc. The offences are reported as involving a knife or sharp instrument when the weapon is present during the offence or the threat is believed to be real. The weapon does not necessarily have to be used. Offences of “possession of an article with a blade or point” are not included within this category.



2.1.2 Local statistics (Leicester)

All Serious Violence Offences

The following information is based on data from Leicestershire Police. It is important to note that National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) has influenced local delivery in relation to the management of crime data integrity. In response to NCRS, Leicestershire Police have designed and implemented a number of improved practices which has, as anticipated, seen a rise in record crimes including those linked to low level and non-injury violent crime offences. The caveats outlined in Appendix A should also be noted.

In the 2019/20 financial year, 57.5% of serious violence across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) involving all ages occurred in Leicester. The chart below (Figure 2) shows the volume of serious violence offences in public places across Leicester over the last three financial years with a peak in Q3 2019/20. When comparing 2018/19 with 2019/20 there was a 0.8% decrease in the volume of serious violence offences in Leicester.

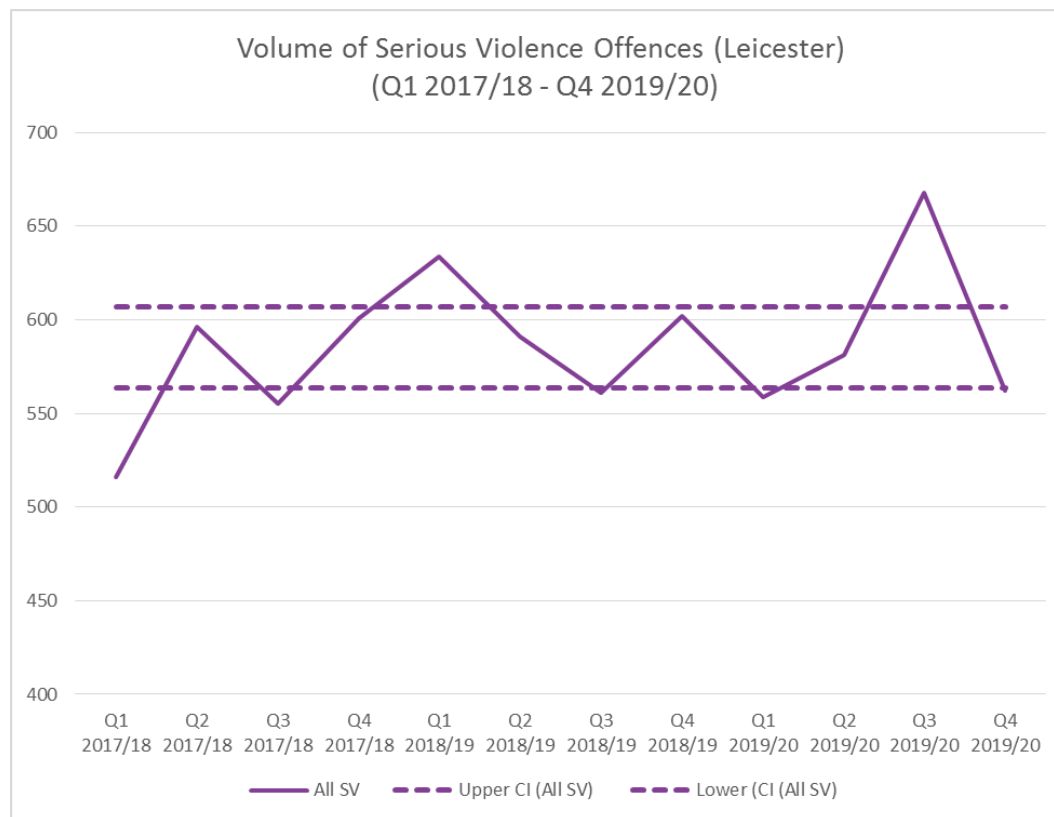


Figure 2: Quarterly volume of serious violence offences in public places across Leicester (Q1 2017/18 – Q4 2019/20) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Knife-enabled Serious Violence Offences

In the 2019/20 financial year, 72.8% of serious violence across LLR involving all ages occurred in Leicester. The chart below shows the volume of knife-enabled serious violence offences in public places across Leicester over the last three financial years. When comparing 2018/19 with 2019/20 a decrease of 10.7% was observed.

Looking at the offence breakdown within knife-enabled serious violence, ‘Robbery of Personal Property’ offences make up 44.6% of all knife-enabled serious violence – the trends seen for this offence type have fluctuated but remained relatively stable over this period. When looking at the total volume of serious violence offences as shown above, 15.6% of all serious violence in Leicester in 2019/20 was knife-enabled. It should also be highlighted that 14.4% of public place knife-enabled serious violence in Leicester has been flagged as involving alcohol.

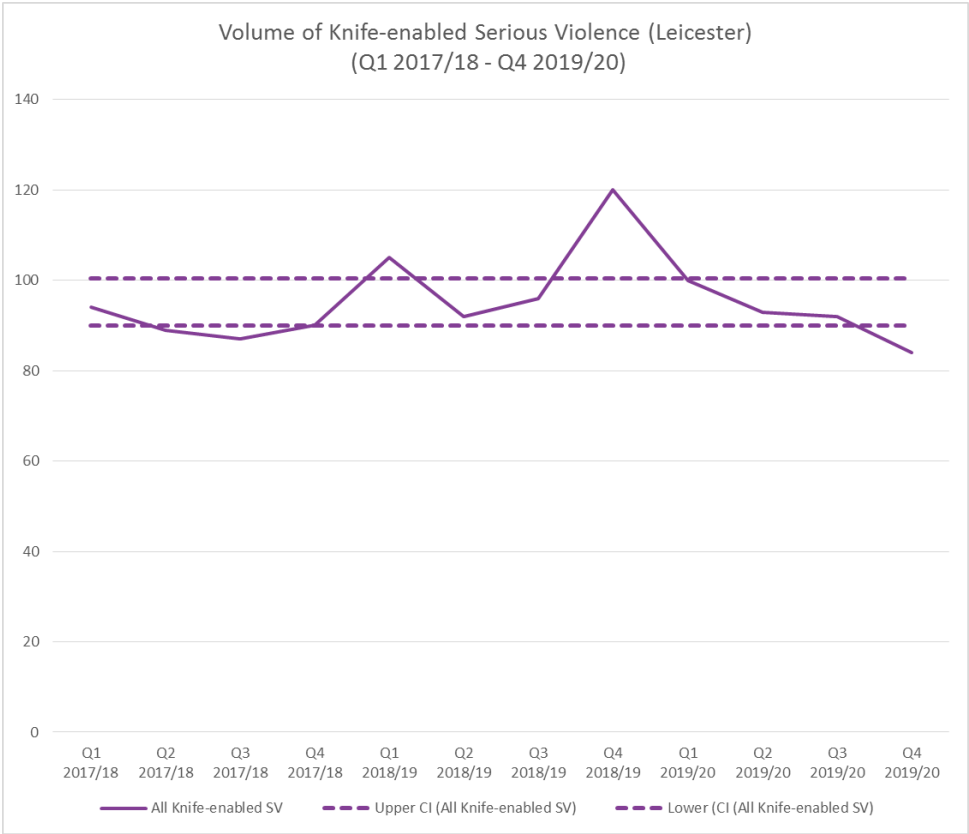


Figure 3: Quarterly volume of knife-enabled serious violence offences in public places across Leicester (Q1 2017/18 – Q4 2019/20) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Person Demographics

Gender

All Serious Violence

The charts below show the gender of victims and suspects/offenders for public place serious violence offences committed in Leicester in the 2019/20 financial year. The data shows that males are most likely to be a victim or suspect/offender of a serious violence offence with the proportions being 75% and 78% respectively.

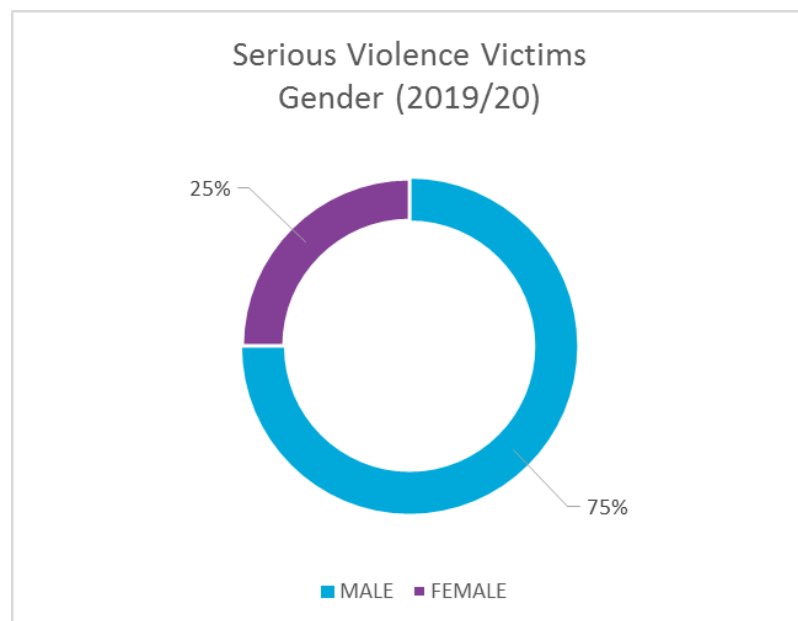


Figure 4: Gender of serious violence victims (Apr 19- Mar 20)

(Source: Leicestershire Police)

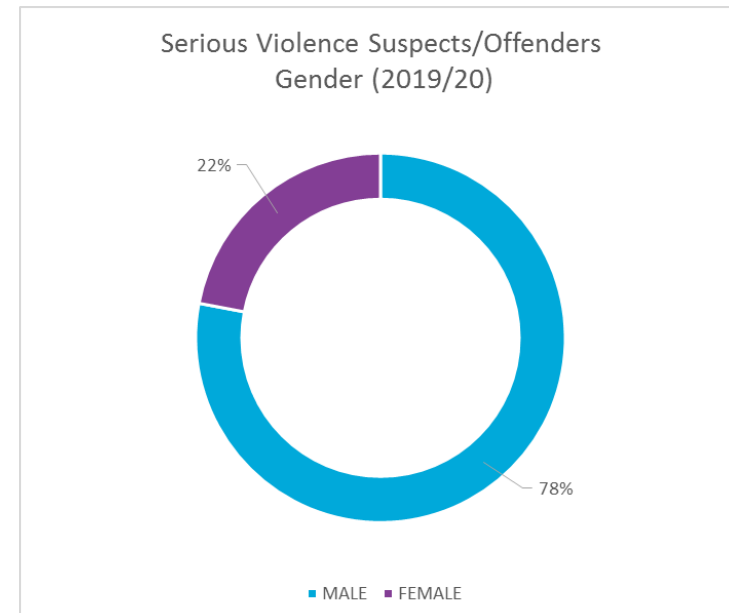


Figure 5: Gender of serious violence suspects/offenders (Apr 19- Mar 20)

(Source: Leicestershire Police)

Knife-enabled Serious Violence

The charts below show the gender of victims and suspects/offenders for public place knife-enabled serious violence offences committed in Leicester in the 2019/20 financial year. The data shows that males are most likely to be a victim or suspect/offender of a knife-enabled serious violence offence with the proportions being 93% and 92% respectively.

Looking at the data above, it shows there is a higher risk of a male being involved in a knife-enabled serious violence offence compared to all serious violence offences.



Figure 6 : Gender of knife-enabled serious violence victims (Apr 19 - Mar 20)
(Source: Leicestershire Police)

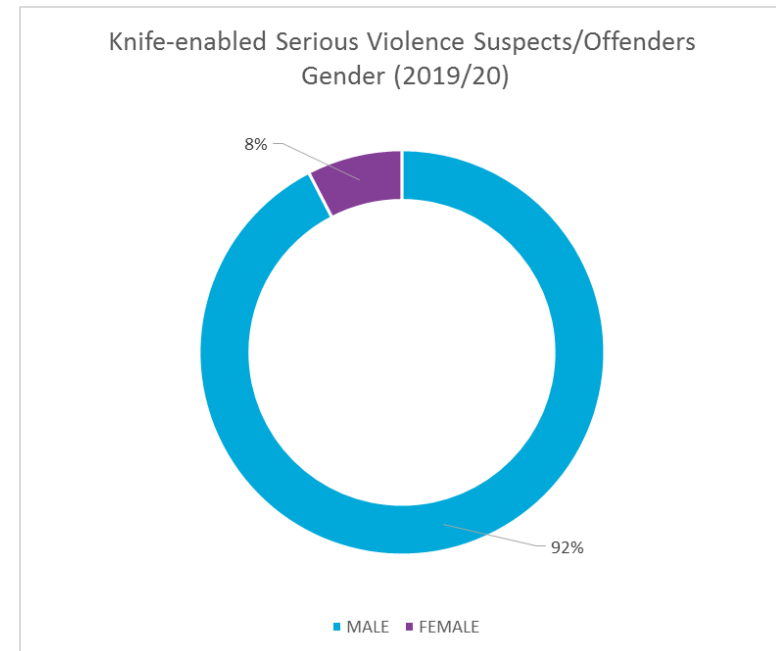


Figure 7: Gender of knife-enabled serious violence suspects/offenders (Apr 19 - Mar 20) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Age Profile

Victims

The chart below shows the volume of victims of serious violence and knife-enabled serious violence in Leicester by age group in the 2019/20 financial year. It can be seen that both victim cohorts are skewed towards the under 25 range and have a peak in the 15-19 age group making up 19.0% of all serious violence victims and 28.2% of knife-enabled serious violence victims. (Please note: volumes less than 5 have been removed)

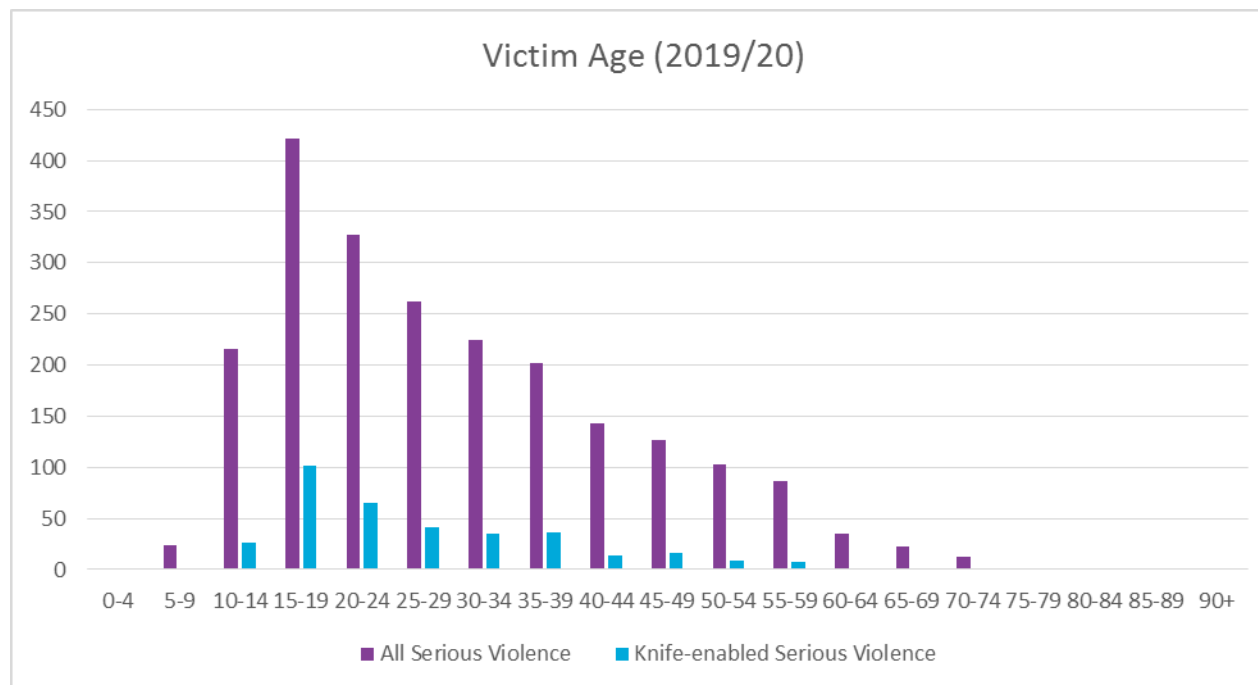


Figure 8 : Volume of victims of serious violence and knife-enabled serious violence in Leicester by age group (Apr 19 - Mar 20) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Suspects/Offenders

The chart below shows the volume of suspects/offenders of serious violence and knife-enabled serious violence in Leicester by age group in the 2019/20 financial year. It can be seen that similarly to the trends seen for victims, both suspect/offender cohorts are skewed towards the under 25 range and have a peak in the 15-19 age group making up 23.3% of all serious violence suspects/offenders and 35.2% of knife-enabled serious violence suspects/offenders. (Please note: volumes less than 5 have been removed).

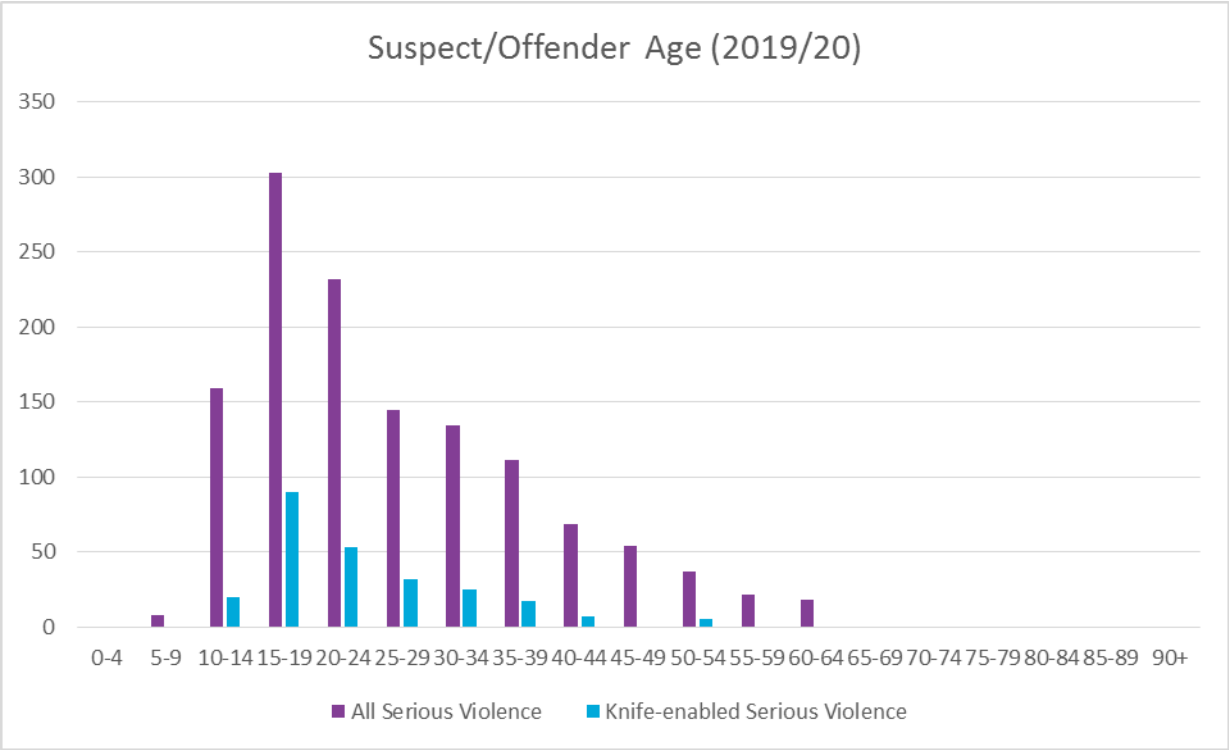


Figure 9: Volume of suspects/offenders of serious violence and knife-enabled serious violence in Leicester by age group (Apr 19 - Mar 20) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Impact of COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, national lockdown restrictions were put into place on 23rd March 2020 and caused a change in the nature and geography of serious violence which was typically observed across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland.

Focussing on Leicester, a sharp decrease was seen in the volume of serious violence and knife-enabled serious violence offences for the month of April 2020 following the implementation of a lockdown. However, despite the decreases observed, public place serious violence was still occurring in the city in the tightest of lockdown restrictions.

As restrictions eased, the volume of serious violence for both cohorts increased as expected, particularly for the all-ages cohort where the volumes in August and September 20 rose to levels observed in peak months prior to COVID. Following this peak levels remained relatively stable until decreases were observed from November 20 through to February 21, with increases beginning to be observed from March 21. Similar trends were observed for knife-enabled serious violence, however following a peak in September and a decrease in December, volumes of offences have been increasing on a monthly basis. However, they have not yet reached peak levels. A change in the geography of serious violence has also been observed. The central Leicester (NC) neighbourhood policing area (NPA) typically observes the highest frequency of offences, however over the last year the volumes of serious violence in East Leicester (NE) and West Leicester (NW) exceed the volume recorded in NC indicating that during the lockdown restrictions, public place serious violence has moved from the city centre to the surrounding areas.

Healthcare Data

Hospital Episode Statistics

Using the Hospital Episode statistics (HES) database counts of first finished admission episodes in patients with a recording of violent crime diagnosis codes (excluding sexual assault codes) were acquired for those residing in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland under 25 years of age. A first finished admission episode is the first episode in a 'spell' of care; a 'spell' is used to describe a stay in hospital from admission to discharge and can be made up of one or more episodes.

The chart below shows the overall rates of hospital admissions due to violent assaults in those aged under 25 in Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland and in the LLR area combined. The corresponding England rate of 0.48 admissions for violence (0.48 per 1,000 population aged 0-24 years) is also shown

for comparison. It can be seen that the admission rate for violence in Leicester (0.51 admissions per 1,000 population aged 0-24 years) is the highest and performs statistically similarly to the national average.

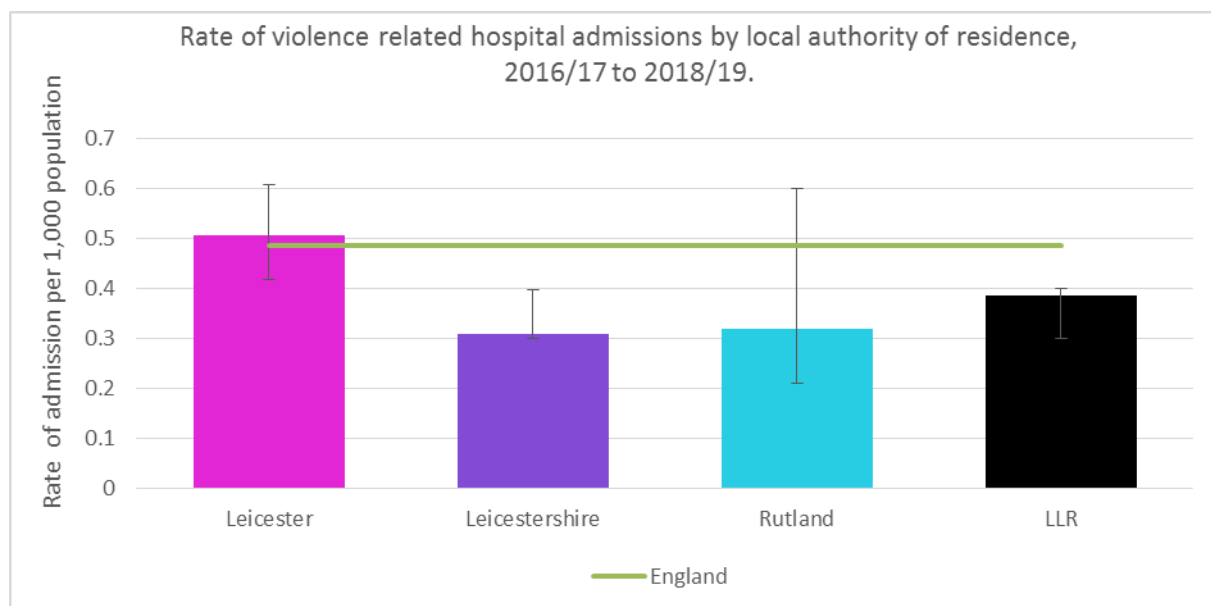


Figure 10: Rate of violence-related hospital admissions for LLR local authorities 2016/17 to 2018/29 (Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, ONS 2019)

Following further analysis for Leicester, the age group with the highest rate is 15-19 year olds and is statistically similar to the rates seen for England but a higher rate compared to LLR. Leicester also has the highest hospital admission rate for violence for males under 25 compared to the other local authorities, however the rate is similar to the value for England.

2.2 What did the Community Tell Us?

Knife crime and serious violence destroys lives and devastates families. During our community conversations the following was shared with us:

- “I’ve lost more than 10 people in 5 years”
- “My closest friends always carry knives – it doesn’t faze me anymore”
- “My next-door neighbours son died of a knife crime. This affected me deeply because I watched that boy grow up in front of me, he was like a son”
- “Lost a family member to knife crime”
- “Now I carry a knife for my own protection. Everyone carries one, it isn’t a big deal, I am not going to stab anyone”
- “if young people felt more supported, it would deter them from making bad decisions. It is necessary for authority figures to show young people that making the right moral decision will lead to a more rewarding life”
- “there is not enough engaging activity for young people to steer them away from gang culture”
- “young people that commit this type of violence feel they have no support and that no one is helping them”
- “financial hardship, drug and alcohol abuse. As well as young people feeling pressure to feel part of a group. Tackling these issues would lower youth crime and encourage young people to create better life choice’s”
- “I worry more now about my teenager’s safety than I ever did when he was little”

2.3 Community Testimonials (provided by some of the individuals who were engaged in the development of the strategy)

“Cheryl’s Story”

I have been involved in community work for over thirty years. My professional role was in welfare to work as an employment coach. My first role in working in Leicester carrying out a community project was 2004 campaigning against street crime and creating opportunities for young people using the arts.

But when my son was murdered in 2013 I took over his business, continuing his work with children and young people delivering intervention and prevention workshops.

I had the opportunity to then join the Violence Reduction Network along with becoming a member of the panel, which is led by former Deputy Police Commissioner Kirk Master

Joining these groups has helped to empower me, giving outstanding support to my organisation. I find meeting with members from other community groups beneficial sharing ideas, solutions and good practice.

Sharing my personal experiences as a victim enables me to help others understand the impact of crime, whilst playing a therapeutic part in the healing of the community.

“Aaron’s Story”

My name is Aaron. During my period at secondary school, I went through a rebellious stage of my life, where I wanted to run a school gang. I left secondary school with no qualifications and was told by teachers that I would never get far and just end up working in a supermarket as a shelf-stacker.

When I went to college, I eventually got a BTEC level 3 in media and my results ended up being top 10 in the country. I also passed my GCSEs and now I’m going to university. I’ve got my youth worker’s certificate and working to get my FA level 1 coaching badge. I’ve also got a DBS check and I have done a safeguarding course as well.

The reason why I want to change things in my community is because I know how it feels to be written off and told you ain't gonna go nowhere with nothing to my name. I use my experience to tell the next generation: don't let people write you off. You can achieve your full potential because I know what it's like to feel like nothing. I also want the kids to feel that there are people here in the community to show them love and help them grow.

“Dinehas’ Story”

I am Dinehas. At the age of 15, my friends influenced me to start shop lifting in town. After one attempt, it became a daily occurrence. As I got older, I started hanging around drug dealers and armed robbers. At the time I wanted what they had- the cars, money and the women. Eventually I got caught in armed robbery and spent most of my 20s inside prison.

I look at it now and realise that I was groomed by elders and they only showed me love, false hope and belonging that I never felt at home, so that I would do their dirty work for them and face the consequences.

I use my experience from what I have witnessed and done to help teach the next generation what it's about. I've been there and wore the t shirt.

To move forward, I feel that we should listen to people's stories before judging them on their past. Recently in 2019, I was working as a delivery driver, but I was released from that job because of my past on a piece of paper. People don't realise that I've changed and won't give me a chance. People in the area always come to me because they realise I listen to them and give them a chance to realise that they can change from bad to good. Even though I've changed and I'm not the same person anymore, my past still haunts me and affects if I was to apply for a job.

“Martin’s Story”

My name is Martin and I have a passion for community development. I am determined to make a difference in the communities where I live and work. My specialisms are in education, change management and project management.

There is a growing problem of serious violence in our communities that is particularly relevant for young people, specifically young men who are more likely to be perpetrators or victims than any other demographic group. We have a serious problem in Beaumont Leys, there is under-reporting of violent crime and a reluctance to engage with uniform services. However, we have anecdotal evidence that we are losing the battle on the streets with our young people and the problem is getting worse.

I am involved in this work because I want to make difference; last year my organisation worked with a young boy aged 8 years old who was hiding knives across the Beaumont Leys estate, since then we have had a number of new referrals of habitual knife carriers, one of them being only 9 years old.

Furthermore, I have been a victim of knife crime, just before Christmas 2019 I was assaulted when a 15-year-old boy threatened to stab me.

3. A Community Led Approach to Tackling Knife Crime and Serious Violence in Leicester: Understanding the Issues (Community, Experts & Others)

We are clear that we need a community-led approach to understand the causes of serious violence and the use of knives. That said, we need a joined-up, coordinated approach, working in collaboration with the Violence Reduction Network, partner agencies and voluntary groups to confront serious violence and knife crime and to ensure that we commit to early intervention, prevention and provision of services.

3.1 The Journey with Our Community

To support the development of the strategy, a wide variety of community sessions and meetings have taken place to gather the views, knowledge and expertise of strategic partners, community members, young people and various organisations. The involvement of individuals with vast experience and insight into this area of work has been essential in shaping and implementing the strategy going forward.

3.2 Conversations with Community, Experts & Others

With the use of police data and analysis, we were able to identify the top eight locations across Leicester city which recorded the greatest number of knife crime offences in 2018 and 2019. This data informed the chosen areas in which community conversations were carried out. Community leaders started the conversations, asking questions such as: -

- What and where knife crime issues exist within the local area and community.
- Why people carry knives and become involved in knife crime and other serious violence.
- How knife crime has impacted on and affected local communities.
- How communities, organisations and services can help to reduce knife crime and serious violence.

The identified areas for community conversations were: -

- Belgrave
- Braunstone
- Beaumont Leys
- New Parks
- Saffron / Eyres Monsell
- Highfields
- St. Matthews
- City Centre

Conversations were also had with the following groups: -

- Regular steering group meetings
- Regular taskforce group meeting
- Joint steering & taskforce group meeting
- Designated Safeguards Leads Forum (Presentation about the development of a Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy)
- Meeting with De Montfort University students/volunteers (recognising support for community conversations)
- Victim First - VRN commissioned research
- Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, Leicester City Council
- Meeting with Elected Members

- Meeting with Young People's Council
- Meeting with University of Leicester & De Montfort University criminology academics
- Session with families and parents of victims
- Remaining community conversations (via online platforms)
- Meeting with those who have 'lived experience'
- Session with gang experts (nationally)
- Online survey with De Montfort University criminology students
- Discussions with Executive leads and Leicester City Council Directors

3.3 Understanding the Issue (Community, Experts & Others)

- The issues identified by this work include the **lack of community provision, support provision and role models/mentors**. Other popular issues that were identified are related to **peer pressure, culture, fear, finances, and issues associated with other crimes (mainly related to drugs and alcohol)**.
- Respondents felt that **people carry knives and become involved in knife crime** and other serious violence out of **fear, cultural related issues, peer pressure, protection, results of other crimes (drugs/alcohol), financial difficulties and lack of discipline**.
- Respondents were asked to share **their experiences and explain the impacts of knife crime** and serious violence within their community; respondents said the impact manifested itself in different ways such as **mental health problems, family disputes, negative perception/ fear of the area and de-sensitised the view of knife crime for some**.
- Some respondents identified that the **media (such as social media/games) was a contributing factor to knife crime**.

- We asked respondents to explain **how communities and organisations could help to reduce serious knife crime** and other serious violence. The responses that were received included the **need to improve the provision of various support services** and in particular **youth service**. It was recognised that there is a **need to involve the family and increase the provision of family support** and **create role models/mentors within the communities**.
- Respondents also felt that **communities and organisations** could **provide time in the form of volunteering** and identified the need to **improve community facilities and increase community hubs**. It was recognised that **more education and information** is required (including a presence on social media), and there is a need to improve collaborative working between services. Finally, respondents felt that communities and organisations could **increase opportunities related to funding and employment**.
- Respondents identified that the strengths of the **local community involvement** in addressing these issues **will be of benefit to the whole community on an on-going, sustained basis**, it was recognised that the community are knowledgeable about the issues within their local area.

4. Bringing it all Together to Make Positive Change Happen

Given the extensive amount of work and investment from communities, a number of recommendations were established and have been grouped into five core concepts that capture the range of activities, interventions and strategic policy directives.

Throughout the development of the strategy, a range of issues together with recommendations have been identified. They have been adopted as the commitments that are provided below. This information has been used to produce a detailed action plan which requires ongoing input from a range of partners and agencies. As this work progresses, the issues of knife crime and other serious violence will need to be addressed through solid and sustained partnership work that can be delivered in an organic environment.

a) Providing support and opportunities

We will work to ensure that young people feel supported and motivated through the provision of varied education and training. We will also help to support employment opportunities (where they exist) which are inclusive and empowering. We will identify alternative education provision, seek to

reduce school exclusions, create links with local arts and culture groups, and improve signposting to diversionary activities that promote aspirational futures and encourage financial stability.

b) Preventing crime and ensuring people feel safe and protected

It is a priority to ensure that young and vulnerable people feel safe within their community and have the opportunity to actively seek appropriate, effective and bespoke support services. The strategy will raise awareness of the various support and intervention services that are available to those in need, in particular for individuals who have been identified as being at risk of offending or re-offending, or those who may be vulnerable to criminal exploitation (e.g. County Lines). The safety and wellbeing of young and vulnerable people is paramount, and our focus will seek to ensure that contextual safeguarding is integrated within the strategy, and trauma-informed practices are adopted to support individuals with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). We recognise the need for workstreams to be aligned and connected to looked after children, missing persons, children in need and public health/mental health plans and campaigns. We will develop targeted community engagement programmes which will include detached youth work and street-based sessions with an aim to encourage people away from crime, alongside a new innovative community lead project with partners to work directly with young people most at risk, either as perpetrators or victims.

c) Involving the community

We will ensure that the approach used to prevent knife crime and serious violence is significantly led and informed by the community and those with lived experience. We will continue to listen to and support our community as part of our efforts to increase community resilience and by identifying opportunities for sustainable community-led solutions. We will develop a platform for active community leads to network and share their expertise, and we will work closely with voluntary community sector groups to determine the appropriate mechanisms of delivery for various intervention programmes. We will empower community leads, front-line workers, residents and volunteers to feel more confident and equipped to deliver community-led solutions by providing training opportunities, seeking to identify sustainable funding streams, and by supporting safe spaces where advice and guidance is offered.

d) Collaborative working with partners across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland

We will continue to build upon current relationships and multi-agency networks with strategic partners, organisations and communities to ensure a collaborative and coordinated approach to the prevention of knife crime and serious violence within Leicester. These will include the Violence

Reduction Network, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and other partners across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland. This joined-up approach will encourage effective sharing of knowledge, information, and best practice around this agenda. Collaborative working with partners ensures that there is a provision of mutual support which maximises the use of collective resources and financial contributions. This will enable organisations to confront serious violence and knife crime together through early intervention, prevention and provision of appropriately designed services. By working together and taking a public health approach, we can share data and intelligence to understand and address the root causes of serious violence, including knife crime. This will include a new multi-agency process for professionals to review incidents of serious violence and knife crime that have sadly resulted in serious injury or death.

The Government intends to legislate a new Serious Violence Duty (via Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, 2021). The duty will be placed on several sectors which include Local authorities, Police, Youth Offending teams, Fire & Rescue, Probation and Health authorities; the duty will fall to organisations rather than to individuals. The proposed Serious Violence Duty will put a new duty on public sector bodies to collaborate and plan (where possible through existing partnership structures) to prevent and reduce serious violence. It will also allow services to target their interventions to prevent and stop violence altogether.

e) Enhancing the Feeling of Safety in Outdoor Spaces and Developing Community Resilience

We will seek to further enhance the feeling of safety within and around outdoor public spaces by improving the physical infrastructure of our local environment and preventing the development of problematic areas. We want to increase the feeling of safety within our neighbourhoods and promote a greater sense of community by increasing networks and cohesion between groups and residents. We will enforce effective use of Public Space Prevention Orders within Leicester and we will have a targeted approach to the misuse of illegal drugs in our city. We understand the need to challenge negative stigmas within communities, whilst also celebrating and utilising community assets. We aim to develop a 'People Zone' in Highfields; a People Zone is a partnership between local organisations and communities who work together to design specific objectives to improve their neighbourhood and quality of life. We will also commit to offering greater and affordable access to council and school community facilities across Leicester.

5. Next Steps and Monitoring Progress

Governance and performance management arrangements for the strategy will be through the city's community safety partnership, the Safer Leicester Partnership (SLP), which has its own framework and structure. This partnership is made up of agencies including the city council, the police, emergency services and the NHS. The strategy itself will be fully incorporated into the city wide SLP broader strategic plan. It is proposed that the strategic group that has been established for the development of the Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy will become the strategy delivery group, chaired by the assistant city mayor for neighbourhoods, Cllr Kirk Master.

Leicester's Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy is a two-year document that will be reported on annually to the SLP. Reporting on delivery will take place into the SLP, City Mayor briefings and the Council's Executive as required, with scrutiny provided through the neighbourhood services scrutiny commission. The work of the VRN will also be reported as appropriate into the SLP and alongside the Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy to ensure maximum City and LLR collaboration on this agenda, thereby also offsetting risks associated with duplication.

Delivery of the strategy actions/adopted recommendations will be monitored by the SLP. The work will continue to be driven by Leicester City Council with input as appropriate from partners, and with the generous support of the city's Knife Crime and Serious Violence Strategy taskforce group.

There is a need to determine and demonstrate the success of each recommendation/commitment, including how processes have been changed and improved as a result of implementing the strategy

.

6. Appendix A – Caveats

Data Source	Explanation and Caveats
All data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Police data has been downloaded from live systems and as such is a snapshot at that point in time.Data has been analysed from April 2017 to March 2020 and each chart has specified the time-period which it covers.Where possible 95% confidence intervals have been calculated and displayed in order to report on any significant differences when making comparisons.
Leicestershire Police data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incidents reported or identified by the police where there is an identified victim and, on the balance of probability, the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law and there is no credible evidence to the contrary.Police recorded crime are not designated as National Statistics¹.Police recorded crime statistics are affected by changes in police activity (for example, an increase in stop and search may lead to an increase in knife-possession offences)A renewed focus on the quality of crime recording by the police since 2014 is thought to have led to a greater proportion of reported crimes being recorded by the police, which means caution must be taken when interpreting the dataThe data analysed and reported in this quarterly report was extracted from Leicestershire Police's NICHE system via Business Objects. It is important to acknowledge that the data stored within NICHE is not static and is subject to change.The quality of the data is reliant on information availability and input to NICHE. Any errors, lack of details or blank data fields will reduce the accuracy of the analysis.When referring to suspected perpetrators, it should be noted that this includes both named suspects which may have remained as suspects and some which have been proven to have committed the offence.

¹ [National Statistics](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/) are produced to high professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics \(https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/\)](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/). They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Data Source	Explanation and Caveats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis relating to the characteristics of the suspected perpetrator relate only to offences where a suspect has been identified and therefore, the data presented could be an underrepresentation of the under 25 cohort as well as the over 25s group. ▪ A number of fields, including location and alcohol related offences, are not mandatory on NICHE and therefore are not always completed when every offence is recorded. Caution is therefore recommended when interpreting the data as the accuracy of completion is unknown.
Healthcare data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hospital admissions from HES data can capture more serious incidents due to the need for such medical attention. ▪ Hospital admissions from HES data excludes some victims who may have needed / received treatment such as from a walk-in clinic or pharmacy. ▪ It should be pointed out that the NHS data reported in this chapter (from the LRI and HES) cannot distinguish the age of the suspected perpetrator nor the location of the offence (i.e. public place). Therefore, there are limitations in any read-across to the Leicestershire Police reported data and care should be taken when interpreting and drawing any conclusions.

