

MERSEYSIDE
Violence
Reduction
Partnership



Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership
Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Table of Contents

Foreword	<u>2</u>
Introduction	<u>3</u>
Beneficiaries	<u>4</u>
Research and Evaluation	<u>5</u>
Governance	<u>6</u>
Steering Group	<u>7</u>
Strategic Themes	<u>8</u>
Early Years	<u>8</u>
Education	<u>9</u>
Health	<u>10</u>
Whole Family Approach	<u>11</u>
Preventing Offending	<u>12</u>
Summary	<u>13</u>
Concluding remarks	<u>14</u>

Foreword

Serious violence is falling. That's what our data from the past 12 months shows.

Knife crime is down by 19% and the number of young people who have fallen victim to violence has decreased by 9%.

Crucially, no young people lost their life due to serious violence during 2023/24 and no 10 to 19-year-olds are suspected of carrying out a homicide.

These figures are hugely significant, for they represent real people – fewer of whom have been harmed or scarred by violence in the past year.

We all want to see these numbers dropping and it's what the dedicated team within our MVRP, in partnership with so many other organisations, have been working so hard to achieve.

Early intervention and prevention is critical and this year we reached - and surpassed - the milestone figure of 100,000 young people supported through our interventions. In fact, we've now engaged with more than 114,000 under 25-year-olds – educating, supporting and intervening to give them better opportunities and divert them away from harmful behaviours.

Following a successful pilot, our Trauma Informed Training is going from strength to strength, with nearly 2,000 professionals now signed up to undertake our free course and join our network committed to building a trauma-informed region.

While this is all progress to be celebrated, we know there is no time to waste or opportunity to pause when it comes to tackling serious violence.

Our analysis with Liverpool John Moores University shows that preventing violence could save our region more than £200m a year.

But so much more than that, we can end the misery, suffering and heartache it brings – and that remains at the forefront of our minds.

Supt Georgie Garvey
Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership Director

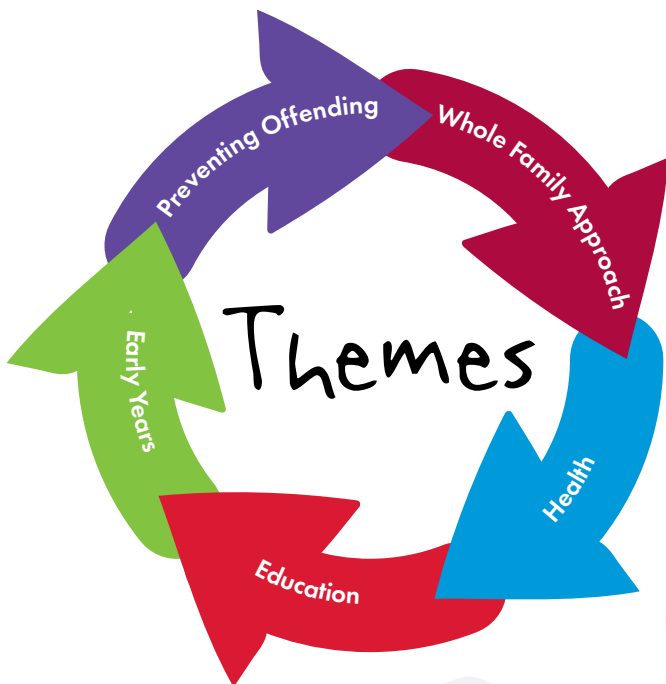


Introduction

Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) is one of 20 Home Office funded units, following their 2018 Serious Violence Strategy. MVRP decided to rename from a `Unit` to a `Partnership` to better reflect the coming together of agencies to reduce violence in Merseyside. Through a public health and whole family approach we aim to reduce violence in Merseyside by providing young people (0-25 years) with tools, interventions, and guidance to lead a positive lifestyle.

Our team consists of public services that have the expertise to help with our overall aim. Within the team we have representation from Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health, Department for Work and Pensions, Early Years, Prison and Probation Service, Youth Offending Service, Community Engagement, Education and Health.

The MVRP have five themes: **Early years, Education, Health, Preventing Offending and Whole Family Approach.**



There is no question the cost of living and multiple demographic characteristics has an impact on serious violence. To get a better understanding of this, you can review this year's SNA where there is a detailed breakdown of the impact it can have. Throughout 2023/24 MVRP has continued to support our communities, through a variety of funded projects including via our Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), HAF funding, and Arts Culture Sport activities. Examples of all projects can be found on the MVRP website [Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership \(merseysidevrp.com\)](https://merseysidevrp.com).

Also integral to our five themes is ensuring we adopt a trauma informed approach. This year we rolled out free Trauma Informed Practice Training to all public services in Merseyside. The contact young people and their families have with public services is vital to ensuring they can lead a positive life. Young people can come from all different types of backgrounds, and public services must build a trusting and impactful relationship in a trauma informed way to give them the best chance.

[Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership - What We Do](#)



Beneficiaries

Local Authority	Total Beneficiaries
Knowsley	3,428
Liverpool	10,933
Sefton	8,897
St Helens	2,791
Wirral	4,251

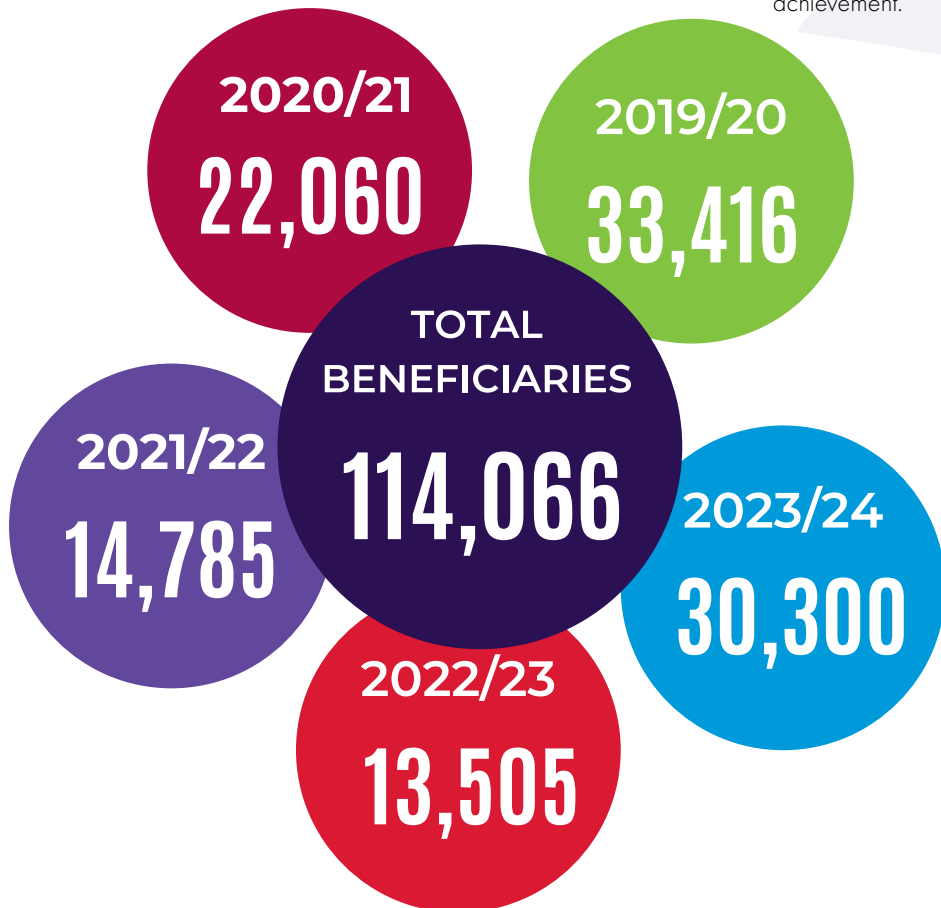
This year a total of 30,300 children and young people benefited from MVRP funded projects, the highest it has been since pre covid, which gives signs of positivity that the delays and struggles faced due to Covid are diminishing. We strive to impact at a population level via universal interventions, however, we understand that our communities are all unique, so support our local partners to work at a localised level. Above is a breakdown of the number of children and young people we reached in each local authority; however, we recognise that our communities live, work and socialise across numerous boroughs.



[Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership passes 100,000 interventions](#)

In its inception, the aim of MVRP was to take a public health approach to reducing serious violence. This means it can sometimes take time to fully understand and experience the positive impact and behavioural change that has come about because of the fantastic work of many partners.

With this in mind, after 5 years of MVRP at the close of 2023/24, we reached a total of **114,066** children and young people under the age of 25 via our interventions. *This is not including secondary beneficiaries or professionals that have received the training we provide.* The below shows a breakdown of each year since the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership began to show this huge achievement.



Research and Evaluation

A key aim of the MVRPs overarching strategy is to ensure that all decisions are based upon the best available evidence. We work closely with TIIG, [About - TIIG \(ljmu.ac.uk\)](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/tiig), which provides us with up-to-date data regarding serious violence from NHS Emergency Departments, Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue (MFRS), and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS). We can see the trends across our blue light services to ensure we are delivering to the right areas and that we are responding to the needs of our communities.

MVRP ensure they look at further opportunities to expand knowledge and information. These can vary from academic research, community feedback, and publicly available datasets, to complement our understanding and allow informed decision making throughout. Examples include our commissioned work and independent evaluation with Liverpool John Moores University, and the [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#), which can support our partners to understand models and approaches more readily with a more solid evidence-base.

In 2019 the Home Office recognised that Merseyside is in the top five regions nationally to experience high levels of violence, and as such we must respond effectively. It is important that we can demonstrate that working and collaborating with partners is having a positive impact on Children and Young People. Through the work of our interventions and collaborations with agencies and blue light services, we have seen a decrease in our region. However this is not always the wider understanding. Working closely with our Serious Violence Duty team, and understanding the voice of respondents of a SVD survey, 75% of respondents believe violence had increased. This shows that there is more we can all do as a partnership to improve the understanding and knowledge for our communities living in Merseyside so they too can feel the positive impact and decrease in serious violence.

A review of data highlights that victims of violence with injury under the age of 25 has decreased by **9%**, and when comparing to pre pandemic levels the victims of violence with injury have decreased by **15%**. The peak age group, under 25 years, who fall victim to violence with injury are 20-24 years and in comparison to last year there has been a decrease of **10%**.

Data relating to suspects in homicides who are under the age of 25 years have seen a significant decline this year of **97%**. This is not the only change we have seen in young people who are suspects in homicides, last year 10-19 year olds made up **44%** of suspects. This year, 10-19 year olds **did not appear as suspects** in any homicide.

Another positive reflected in data, from ONS, are reports that knife crime is down by 19% compared to last year. When looking at our emergency department for knife related attendances there was a very small increase of 1% compared to last year. As we know, not all victims of serious violence report incidents to the police and it is important to ensure that we are able to look at all blue light service data to understand a serious violence picture here in Merseyside.

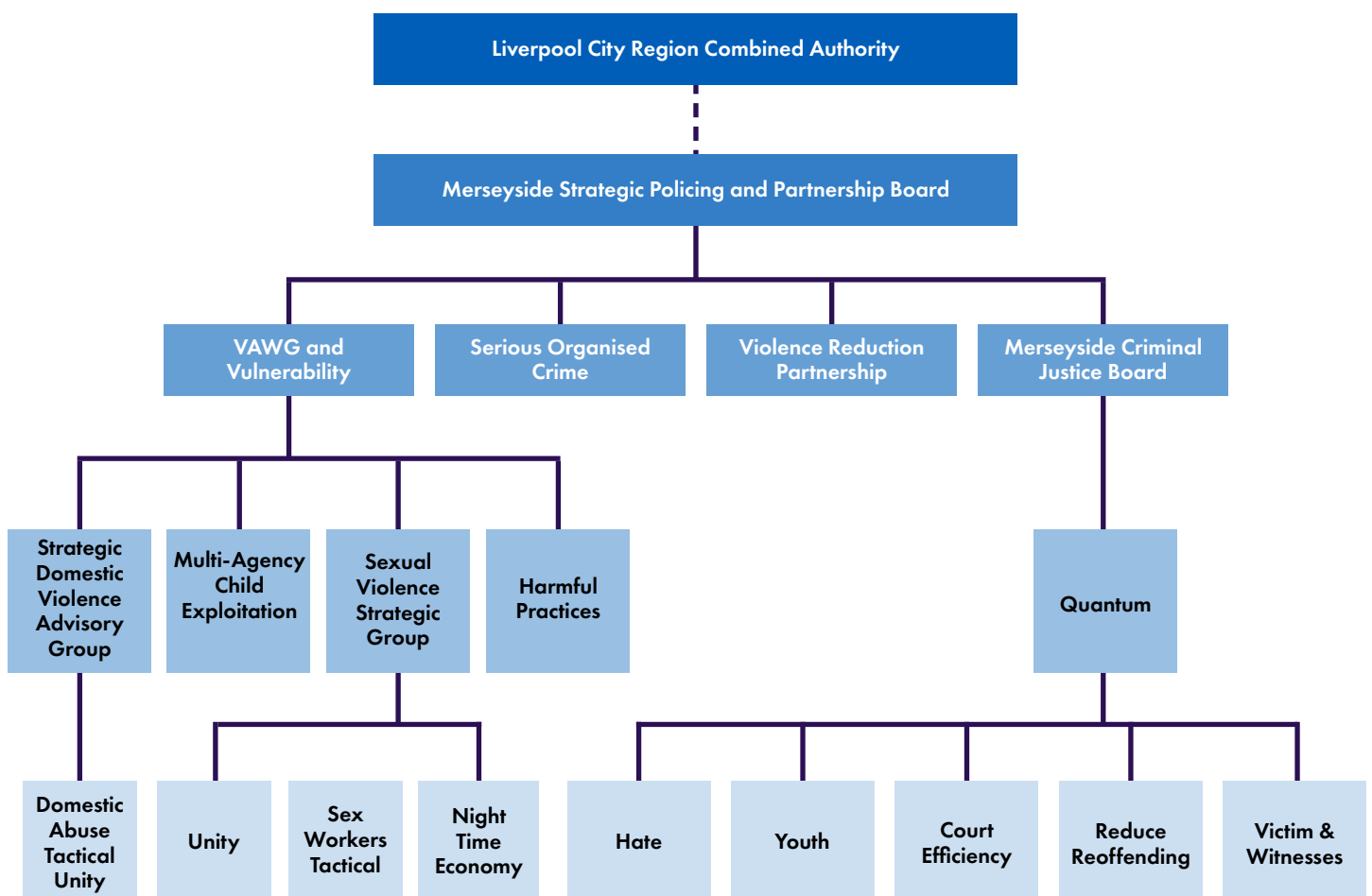
Since inception MVRP have commissioned Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) to conduct evaluations and research, evaluation examples of projects we fund and ourselves as a violent reduction partnership. This year LJMU, were commissioned to update the [Economic and Social Costs of Violence report](#). For the year ending 2023, the cost of violence within Merseyside (health, police, lost productivity) is estimated at **£209.6 million**.

Governance

The Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) provides oversight of the delivery of national strategies across Merseyside, whilst simultaneously maintaining a commitment to community safety. The PCC therefore has full oversight of the MVRP, and this oversight is driven through the PCC's Merseyside Strategic Policing and Partnership Board (MSPPB) which brings senior leaders together to focus on key policing and community safety issues across Merseyside.

The Board acts as an oversight body for several existing sub-groups which focus on improving the effectiveness of the response to policing and community safety issues, including serious violence. The governance structure is set out below.

This work is also supported through the MVRP Steering Group. The steering group are responsible for providing governance and direction to the MVRP team by contributing their expertise. The MVRP steering group meet every quarter to provide governance, oversight and guidance to the work of the core team. The steering group utilise the Strategic Needs Assessment and the response strategy to ensure the vision, aims and performance of the MVRP are progressing as planned. During this meeting, the Director of MVRP will report on progress against the Problem Profile and response strategy.



Steering Group

Steering Group membership is as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Merseyside Police | Co-Chair, Assistant Chief Constable |
| 2. Office of the PCC | Co-Chair, Chief Executive |
| 3. Merseyside Police | Director of VRP, Superintendent |
| 4. Office of the OPCC | Serious Violence Duty programme Manager |
| 5. Wirral Local Authority | Assistant Director Neighbourhoods, Safety & Transport |
| 6. Sefton Local Authority | Locality Service Manager |
| 7. Knowsley Local Authority | Head of Community Safety |
| 8. St Helens Local Authority | Director of Communities |
| 9. Liverpool Local Authority | Head of Safer and Stronger Communities |
| 10. NHS ICB | Head Nurse, Liverpool |
| 11. Public Health | Director of Public Health, Liverpool |
| 12. LJMU | Public Health Institute |
| 13. Education/Schools | Secondary Education |
| 14. Education/Schools | Primary Education and PRUs |
| 15. Youth Offending Service | Head of Targeted Services, Liverpool |
| 16. Merseyside Fire and Rescue | Group Manager and Community Safety Lead |
| 17. Probation | Head of North Liverpool Probation Service |
| 18. Housing | Director of South Liverpool Homes |
| 19. Prisons | Head of Reducing Re-Offending (TBC) |
| 20. Voluntary sector | CEO, Liverpool CVS |
| 21. DWP | Merseyside Senior Operations Leader |
| 22. Merseyside Police | Head of Investigations PVP |
| 23. Merseyside Police | Serious Violence Lead |

The MVRP Steering Group continue to support and challenge the core team to deliver against its key objectives. It is responsible for holding the head of the MVRP (Director) to account for delivery but also for providing both support and guidance, which is invaluable given the professional expertise across the membership.

Strategic Themes

Early Years

The first 1,001 days of a young person's life are crucial to their wellbeing and development. That's why we work on projects that start early – even while a child is still in the womb like Reading to Bump, which involves:

- Familiarisation with the parent voice
- Establishing a routine
- Stimulating brain activity
- Making for better communicator later in life

We put a focus on supporting children to reach their full potential and to break negative life cycles. From supporting children to engage with their feelings and to cope after times of trauma; to guiding and advising adults to help them be the best possible parents, and working with schools and early years centres to offer immediate support to children in crisis, giving them a better tomorrow. Ultimately, our goal is to build brighter futures; building resilience and strength to create better life choices for young people and their families. Working with young children is essential if we are to improve their health, wellbeing and life chances.

This year we saw the launch of Building Attachment and Bonds Service (BABS) in St Helens, following its delivery in two other Merseyside areas, Knowsley and Sefton. BABS is a multiagency programme to support parents and their infants in a safe space. Their aim is to build secure bonds and attachment relationships to remove the negative and to change the whole families lives for the better, removing risks. BABS offers:

- Support to parents to identify their own issues and/or struggles brought forward through becoming a parent themselves
- Interventions to provide parents with the tools to increase sensitivity, responsiveness, harmony and reflective functioning
- Support to better parental mental health, reducing depression and increasing confidence
- Reducing parents and infant's isolation by building on the family's relationships

The BABS programme launch event brought together agencies throughout St Helens to create awareness of their services and began delivery to Parents with young children living in the St Helens area. MVRP have committed to two years of continued funding to ensure BABS' success in the St Helens area.

Community By Nature, ACS



Strategic Themes

Education

Young people are at the heart of our work. Using a public health approach, we support and deliver educational activities that provide better life opportunities for young people across Merseyside; in primary, secondary, further education and alternative education settings. In primary schools, we're equipping thousands of children with the skills to protect themselves from exploitation, grooming and abuse. We also run targeted programmes focused on keeping children safe and supporting their development. All while building self-esteem and confidence and helping break down any barriers with blue light services. We fund projects in the areas which have seen the highest levels of violence and the biggest cuts to youth services to give young people access to better opportunities to prevent them getting involved in trouble – unlocking their potential. By intervening in a positive way, we are helping young people find the right – positive path – as they journey into adulthood.

We deliver educational programmes to primary and secondary schools. Ariel Trust delivers training events and supports teachers to deliver plans to their students on one of their subjects such as 'Grassing and Grooming'. Grassing and Grooming provides young people with the skills and knowledge to stay away from exploitation, through role play and discussion in a safe space within their schools. This year Ariel trust have:

- Trained **213** teachers in their programmes
- **129** schools have provided plans giving the total reach of **5063** young people in this academic year

Through our Mentors in Violence Prevention programme across secondary schools, just under **18,000** secondary school pupils have been reached. MVP empower young people to become active bystanders and leaders within their school and community by giving them the tools to challenge the behaviour, language and mindsets that can act as a trigger for violence.

We understand that classroom learning is not always the best way to educate our young people on how to keep safe. We support targeted interventions based on data that tells us what schools are in hotspots that can have an impact on young people. 480 young people have been reached through MFRS ran projects Beacon and Fire Champions. These projects are aimed at primary school ages to those on the cusp of transitioning into high school. They are given skills that are useful to them to apply into everyday life, such as:

- Teamwork
- Resilience
- Safety
- First Aid Training
- Build relationships with blue light services



Mentors in Violence Prevention Graduation

Strategic Themes

Health

From community hospitals to emergency departments, healthcare is in a unique position to intervene to reduce serious violence. We understand those that attend emergency departments do not always inform police or other services, therefore the only blue light service they can come across to support them is our health service. That's why we work closely with public health professionals, doctors, nurses, and mental health counsellors to identify and address those issues. Serious violence costs our health service **£33,496,042** a year. We have initiatives that intervene early during the patient's journey, providing crucial links that can support an individual and their family to break the cycle of violence.

One example of this is the four Hospital Navigators in three of our Merseyside trauma hospitals; Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Aintree University Hospital and The Royal Liverpool University Hospital. In 2023/24 there were a total of **209** referrals, with most referrals from Alder Hey hospital. Some of the support the Hospital Navigators provide includes:

- Pathway back to education or employment
- Physical activities such as boxing or gyms
- Mental Health
- Discharge plans from hospital
- SEN support and signposting
- Positive relationships
- Networking with wider health departments regarding the referral pathways

The positive impact the Navigators can have on Young People and their families can be life changing. Below demonstrates some of the impact Navigators have had this year.

"We needed somebody to come in and just listen to us, which you did. We felt that we could trust you"

Parent/Guardian

"The navigators have given me the opportunity to change my life and make it better. They have put me on things that I would not have known about. These things are making me think differently and I need to keep making the right decisions as I know the consequences now, so it makes me think a bit before I do anything."

Young Person

"Navigators' knowledge of the help that is available and understanding of our situation has helped our family"

Parent/Guardian

"I feel better in myself since working with the Navigators, I feel like I have moved forward and have more of a plan with what I want to do with my future"

Young Person

"I was completely left in the dark and felt very alone and my navigator made sure that wasn't the case, he gave me direction when I didn't have any and has truly made all the difference to not just myself but importantly my daughter and our whole family."

Parent/Guardian



Strategic Themes

Whole Family Approach

We put family at the heart of the work we do. That means we are committed to supporting the whole family – as a unit. Sadly, we know some young people have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect in the household and other adverse childhood experiences which can leave them vulnerable.

We are focused on bridging the gaps between parents and children to prevent the impact of violence, supporting adults to be better parents, and putting targeted interventions in place to support and protect the children who are most at risk. This includes providing wraparound support for families where risk factors are identified based on their specific needs. This can involve support groups, coaching and mentoring and therapeutic care. This is all complemented by providing direct support for those children who are affected.

We're also working with children who have a parent in prison to support them and try to ensure they don't have similar experiences, while also working with prisoners to improve their relationships with their children and families – boosting emotional and mental well-being to reduce re-offending. By helping families forge greater bonds we can prevent the impact of violence and adverse childhood experiences to build brighter, safer futures.

All interventions have an impact on a whole family but with some providing a more targeted style such as Flourishing Families, Crea8ing Communities, Time to Thrive, Building Attachments and Bonds and Invisible Walls. Some of the services these interventions offer include:

- Therapeutic Interventions
- Half term activities
- Information and Guidance
- Rebuilding family bonds
- Workshops and activities
- Mental health support
- Families in prison support

MVRP commissioned LJMU to conduct research into Child/ Adolescent and Parent Violence Abuse (CAPVA) the purpose of this piece of research was to highlight:

- What CAPVA is and what it looks like here in Merseyside
- The factors involved in exposure to CAPVA
- The impact of CAPVA on those around them such as families and communities

“A significant portion of both parents (64.7%) and practitioners (84.8%) agree that CAPVA is a problem in Merseyside. A majority of practitioners (65.5%) perceived an increase in CAPVA incidents in the past year compared to the previous year, while none reported a decrease.”

[2023-12-merseyside-violence-reduction-partnership-child-adolescent-to-parent-violence-and-abuse.pdf \(ljmu.ac.uk\)](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/2023-12-merseyside-violence-reduction-partnership-child-adolescent-to-parent-violence-and-abuse.pdf)



Crea8ing Communities Graduation

Strategic Themes

Preventing Offending

Prevention is a primary focus in all aspects of our work. By stopping those who are young and vulnerable from ever getting drawn into crime, we can get upstream and stop violence from ever taking place. That's why we support targeted programmes and initiatives that intervene when a child or young person is identified at risk. There are different factors that can cause young people to be vulnerable to criminality such as education and unemployment. Our work is focused on these young people but also those who are already in the Criminal Justice system. Through positive interventions and being trauma informed we are determined to help them address the issues they face and turn a corner towards a brighter future.

There are different risk levels for young people in relation to links to criminality, this year young people who have been part of our interventions have been assessed as:

Universal (low or no immediate risk)	29,590
Potentially high risk	402
Known risk	195
Involved in criminality	113

When working with our young people we take this into account, we want to ensure that an intervention best fits them and what their needs are. Time Matters UK works with young people and their families who have a parent in prison, by helping the family to explain to that young person why the dynamics have changed, offer positive support, therapies, and fun activities for the young person to attend and express how they feel.

This year Time Matters supported **242** young people whose parent in Merseyside had gone to prison, this does not include all their family members/guardians that they have supported through using a whole family approach. Through the support of Time Matters, young people are supported to express their emotions, build their family connections with an absent parent and to understand they can still all lead a positive lifestyle away from criminality.

Through our Arts Culture Sport programmes, we invested over **£200,000** to support Merseyside based programmes supporting our young people. In total there were 18 grassroots projects, **3,220** young people were a part of this. Although these programmes involved different activities, they all had outcomes to support young people such as preventing or reducing offending, mental health, fitness or creating positive futures. Notably, one thing all the projects achieved was the relationships and connections young people built with peers and those in their community from being on the project. For young individuals who may have been or are at risk of criminality communicating, and working with others who have had similar experiences and now have built skills that are transferable in their life, sets out a positive example of a promising future.

[Arts | Culture | Sport Fund - Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership \(merseysidevrp.com\)](https://www.merseysidevrp.com)

Toxteth El8te, Basketball



Summary

Throughout this year, our strategy (objectives and thematic areas) have continued to be at the forefront of all of our decision making, including who we collaborate with and what projects we fund. Our five themes and some of the projects mentioned in this report, showcase how we take our work from theory to practice ensuring effectiveness to all beneficiaries and what our communities need.

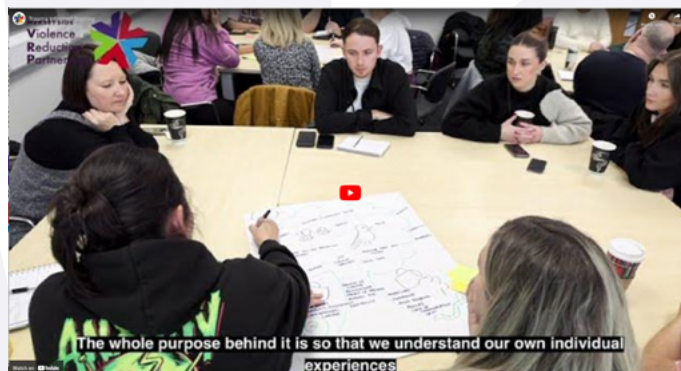
With thanks to the Serious Violence Duty, we have learnt that from those respondents across Merseyside, approximately 75% felt that violence had increased. We can see from our data that this is not the case, in fact across all the blue light services; Emergency Departments, Merseyside Fire and Rescue and Merseyside Police there was a decrease in incidents of Serious Violence. It is our responsibility and that of our partners to ensure this message is getting across to our communities. This year we have seen an increase in North West Ambulance call outs, this can be explained through a change to the data set in the previous financial year, not necessarily through an increased amount of Serious Violent call outs.

Throughout the work of the MVRP we have used a trauma informed approach with the expectation that those we fund do the same. This year we saw the roll out of Free Trauma Informed Practice Training (TIPT) to all our public services. Over four sessions our public services become further informed on the neurological understanding of trauma and taking a different approach will allow our young people to feel safe and supported during interactions. There have been over 700 public service employees already trained since the beginning of delivery in October 2023 from services such as teaching, Social Work, Police, Fire Service, Health Service, Youth Work and many more. This course is free to all public services and can be booked [HERE](#). To get a better understanding of what the Trauma informed training looks like, please watch the video to the right.

As we move forward into 2024/25, it could potentially be the MVRP's last year with the uncertainty of further funding. We want to continue the work following our key themes ensuring that the work we do and interventions we fund help to create a safer Merseyside for all our communities and young people. We want to ensure sustainability and legacy as we move forward, through our guidance documents, evaluations of our interventions through LJMU and other agencies for potential future funding to keep the hard work they deliver, with the clear change that is being made, going.

With the success of Arts Culture Sports over the years, we have collaborated this fund with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Youth Diversion Fund to create the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). Giving us an increased funding pot to support projects in the Merseyside Region in areas where serious violence is most prevalent.

[Trauma Informed Training](#)



Concluding remarks

There are no quick fixes or overnight solutions when it comes to reducing or preventing serious violence in our communities.

But the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) should take great pride and encouragement in the results set out in this report.

They provide clear evidence that we are going in the right direction when it comes to serious violence in our region.

By investing in our young people, by prioritising early intervention and prevention, and by putting effective support in place for those who have suffered trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), our MVRP is effectively getting upstream of serious violence.

Not only helping to reduce violence now, but also preventing our young people from going down the wrong path and protecting future generations.

To have reached more than 30,000 young people in the past year alone – the highest number since pre-Covid – and bringing the total number who have benefitted from its programmes and projects to a staggering 114,000 in its five years of operation, is a huge achievement.

Each and every one of those young people is now better prepared and equipped to keep themselves safe and away from harm.

The testimony from the young people and their families who benefit from these interventions is inspiring and it is always a privilege to see these programmes in action.

But this isn't just anecdotal success. Evidence is key to the work of our MVRP. Each and every intervention is assessed by the MVRP's evidence hub in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University to ensure its effectiveness and by adopting a data-driven approach, the team are ensuring scarce resources are being used in the most impactful way for the benefit of those who need it most.

Five years ago, very few people understood what a 'public health approach' meant when it came to combatting serious violence. Through its effective collaborations, our MVRP has helped embed this methodology, ensuring partners across the region not only understand it and are implementing it, but are also more alive to the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). All of which is helping to ensure our region better supports those who are vulnerable to prevent issues in years to come.

If we are to continue to push serious violence down even further, it is vital we secure guaranteed funding for the MVRP for the future – way beyond the current end point of March 2025. I will be urging our new government to commit to a sustained investment in this critical work.



While no-one organisation can tackle serious violence on its own, there is no doubt the work of our MVRP is effectively complementing and supporting the work of Merseyside Police, our wide-ranging community safety partners and our inspiring community and third sector.

And together it is clear we are making a difference – fewer people hurt, less families devastated and safer, stronger communities.

My ongoing thanks go to all the team for their determination and commitment to building brighter futures for our young people and our region.

Emily Spurrell
Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner