



Serious Violence Duty: Strategic Needs Assessment Summary Version

January 2024



Executive Summary

Introduction

This needs assessment on serious violence has been conducted to help plan, organise and deliver services and interventions that meet the needs of the local population in Tower Hamlets. It will consequently help to develop and implement a serious violence strategy with solutions to prevent and reduce serious violence and exploitation in the area.

The definition of serious violence for the purpose of this document is violence and exploitation affecting people under 25, including violence related hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Approaches for preventing and responding to violence and exploitation

An [evidence review](#) of serious violence highlights that developing a whole-system public health approach is key to preventing and reducing violence. There are several interventions at various levels, and across the system, that help to prevent and address violence from community safety measures to supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Risk factors and profile of violence

This needs assessment identified that key risk factors for violence and exploitation include high levels of local deprivation, high demands for drugs and existing drug markets. At an individual level, exposure to adverse childhood experiences such as parental substance misuse, being a victim or being exposed to abuse or violence, and having undiagnosed speech, language and communication needs, along with school exclusions and truancy are the key risk factors identified for being affected by serious violence and exploitation. There are significant links between exploitation and violence, therefore the resultant strategy needs to address this together to reduce its impact on the local community.

Long term trends in MPS data shows violence affecting those under 25 has been increasing year on year since the 2020, drop caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This disproportionately affects boys between 15-19 years old, including knife crime. More than 80% of male victims under the age of 25 live in the most deprived areas of the borough (IMD decile 1-4).

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) reports in Tower Hamlets largely reference incidents of grooming into criminality by gangs or individuals, where the victim is being encouraged to partake in drug dealing, county lines, gang related activities, violent offending, or holding weapons. The biggest category of child sexual exploitation (CSE) falls into the online category, accounting for 34% of the CSE reports between March 2022 and February 2023. This highlights the influence of social media and digital platforms as a catalyst for exploitation. National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data reveals that there are exploitation cases affecting adults (aged 18-25) in the borough. This is particularly linked with modern slavery and other forms of criminality including drug distribution and county lines.

Violence against women and girls is also high in Tower Hamlets. Domestic abuse and sexual violence rates in Tower Hamlets are one of the highest in London. There are differences between the rate of ethnic groups accessing the Solace support service for domestic abuse. The conclusions and recommendations in relation to violence against women and girls have

been collaborated alongside the [Violence and Against Women and Girls needs assessment](#). Recommendations for domestic abuse and sexual violence are primarily around increasing support to victims/survivors including mental health provision, as well as improved provision to support for children exposed to domestic abuse.

Gaps in intelligence

This needs assessment identified some [gaps in intelligence](#), in relation to risk factors such as parental conflict and adverse childhood experiences. Modern slavery was also highlighted including prevalence of cuckooing, other forms of adult criminal exploitation such as trafficking of migrants into sexual or labour exploitation. There is data recording which also needs to be improved to help better capture local need including around ethnicity, occupation status in police-recorded data. The lack of sexual violence support service data is a limitation within this needs assessment, as they are not funded by the local authority, and this needs to be addressed for any future needs assessments.

Current local provision

Tower Hamlets has a strong existing governance structure which will incorporate a new strategic board that will drive delivery of the subsequent Serious Violence and Exploitation strategy that will be implemented. There are a range of interventions that exist in Tower Hamlets across the whole system, that help to prevent and tackle violence and exploitation: with some requiring review to effective provision.

There is ongoing partnership working between the police, probation, local authority and other statutory services to address some of the key risk factors identified such as the demand for drugs and drug markets, through innovative solutions such as the Project ADDER-funded roles. Place-based programmes and community-led work play a key role in the local response to providing early intervention and support, however these have their own challenges with the limited resources and funding available. Improving trust in statutory organizations and feeling of connection between residents is vital to improving the safety in the borough.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this needs assessment help to inform future planning of services and interventions: highlighted in the ["Conclusions and Recommendations" chapter of this document](#). The recommendations include focusing on early intervention and prevention activities, implementing identification and screening within existing data systems, safeguarding children and young adults at risk of exploitation, enforcement and tackling offenders, increasing support to victims/survivors and finally incorporating a strong governance structure and information sharing for the Serious Violence Duty.

Background and Context

Serious Violence Duty

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) was introduced by government through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022: which commenced on 31st January 2023. The duty places several requirements upon local areas, including agreeing a local partnership arrangement to lead on the duty, agreeing a definition of serious violence, having consistent data sharing,

analytical processes to produce a Strategic Needs Assessment, and production of a Strategy to set out how the duty will be implemented locally.

This needs assessment on serious violence has been conducted to help plan, organise and deliver services and interventions that meet the needs of the local population. It will consequently help to develop and implement a serious violence duty strategy with solutions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area.

Definition of Serious Violence

The definition of serious violence for the Serious Violence Duty, is defined as:

Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25¹, domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime. Within the context of these types of violence, it encompasses homicide, grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, personal robbery, threats to kill and violence against property caused during the commission of one of these offences.

Domestic abuse is as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Hate Crime (affecting those of all ages) was added to this definition of serious violence, after this needs assessment was conducted and therefore this document does not provide any insight on hate crime.

Whilst there will be some overlap of findings with the Violence Against Women and Girls Needs Assessment, this serious violence needs assessment will not cover crimes committed in the name of 'honour', forced marriage, harmful practices (e.g. female genital mutilation), prostitution and sexual harassment.

Taking a public health approach

This needs assessment focuses on the use of a public health approach to prevent and reduce serious violence. This is aligned with the national and local approach to preventing and tackling violent crime.

Methodology

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data has been used in the needs assessment

Quantitative data:

- Crime Survey for England and Wales
- Police-recorded crime data
- Health-based datasets such as Hospital Episode Statistics, ISTV, London Ambulance Service
- Transport data
- Local statutory services data e.g. YJS, ASC, CSC

¹ The age bracket of under 25 only applies to 'any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25', and the definition encompasses all domestic abuse and sexual violence, impacting on any age.

- Support services data

Qualitative data

- Survey of children at risk and harm from exploitation and/or violence
- MOPAC public attitude survey data
- Toynbee Hall's 'Making Tower Hamlets Feel Safer'
- Pupil Attitude Survey

Place and Population

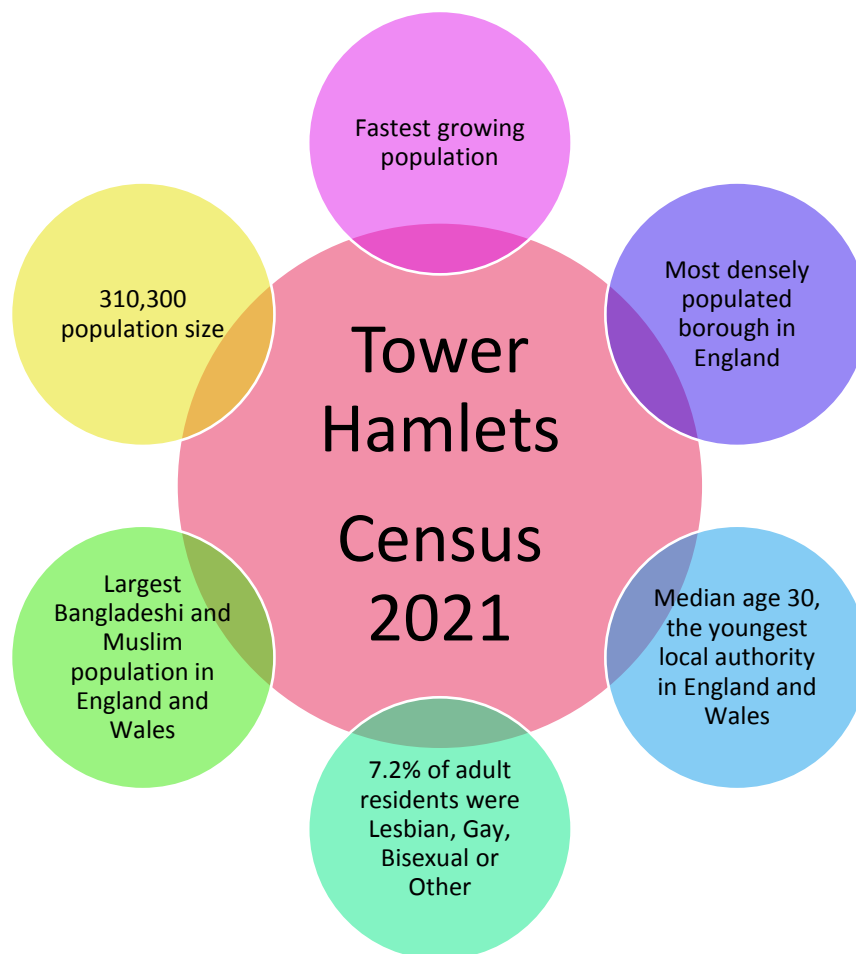


Figure 1: Summary of Tower Hamlets population based on Census 2021 data.

Risk and Protective Factors

Key findings

- The risk factors identified can often be affected by the external environment e.g. the cost of living crisis can increase economic inequalities with victims of domestic abuse often facing choices of whether to remain in unsafe homes or face financial destitution or homelessness². This can also jeopardise the progress made in preventing and reducing violent crime and its underlying causes.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on crime and those affected including challenges to accessing support services. Mental health issues, isolation, financial hardship, anxiety around police investigations and delays to trials and reduced access to statutory services has exacerbated the impact of crime and recovery³
- There is extensive evidence linking deprivation and violence and exploitation⁴⁵. Tower Hamlets is the 6th most deprived borough in London based on the Crime domain based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IoMD).
- There is strong evidence highlighting correlations between speech, language and communications needs and offending⁶. Tower Hamlets has a lower percentage of children achieving school readiness for communication and language skills compared to London and England
- There are high demands for drugs and drug markets in the borough that are driving violence and exploitation in the borough.
- Attendance data from one of the local alternative provisions in the borough shows that persistence absence in pupil referral units is highest in school years 10-12, and amongst boys.
- Suspensions from all schools in Tower Hamlets shows that those suspended are more likely to be boys, and in secondary school particularly in year groups 8-11.
- Social media can be a catalyst for online harm and violence exposure in young people, and can act as a driver for violence in real life.

Violence Profile: Violence and Exploitation Affecting Children and Young Adults Under the Age of 25

Definitions and clarifications

The MPS dataset used in this violence profile defines violence and exploitation affecting children and young adults as any offence, where either the victim or the suspect was under 25, for crimes in the following categories:

- Violence Against the Person
 - Homicide, Violence with Injury, Violence without Injury
- Sexual Offence

² <https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-cost-living-crisis>

³ https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020_Crime_and_Covid19_Impact_report.pdf

⁴ <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/crime-and-income-deprivation/>

⁵ <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/communities-and-social-justice/londons-violence-reduction-unit/link-between-poverty-and-violent-crime>

⁶ <https://evidence.nihr.ac.uk/alert/young-offenders-with-undiagnosed-language-problems-are-twice-as-likely-to-reoffend-within-a-year/>

- Rape, Other Sexual Offences
- Robbery
 - Robbery of Business Property, Robbery of Personal Property

Key findings

- Using Home Office estimates on the cost of crime alongside offences reported to the police and estimated levels of underreporting, shows that the cost of violence affecting children and young people under 25 for incidents in 2022 was £140 million.
- Tower Hamlets is largely in line with London and Northeast London, on rates of violence

	London	NE London	Tower Hamlets
Robbery	11.3	10.7	10.1
Robbery of Business Property	0.3	0.3	0.3
Robbery of Personal Property	11	10.4	9.8
Sexual Offences	11	12.1	11.4
Other Sexual Offences	8	8.6	7.9
Rape	3	3.5	3.5
Violence Against the Person	77.7	77.2	78.4
Homicide	0	0	0
Violence with Injury	26.2	25.6	26.1
Violence without Injury	51.5	51.6	52.3

Table 1: Data Source: MPS 2021-2022

- Within the 'violence without injury' category, the most common types of offences reported to the police are 'Assault Without Injury', followed by 'Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety'. Offence categories with higher-than-average rates are 'Harassment' and 'Wounding or Carrying out an act Endangering Life'
- The rate of knife injuries for victims is 0.7 per 1,000 in Tower Hamlets, which is 0.3 higher than the London average.
- MPS data shows higher rates of male victims for violence with injury, and higher rates of female victims for violence without injury. Hospital Episode Statistics data shows that majority of under 25 crime occurs from 15 years onwards, most often assault by a sharp object. Tower Hamlets is an outlier, with higher rates in boys between 15-19 years compared to London and North-East London.

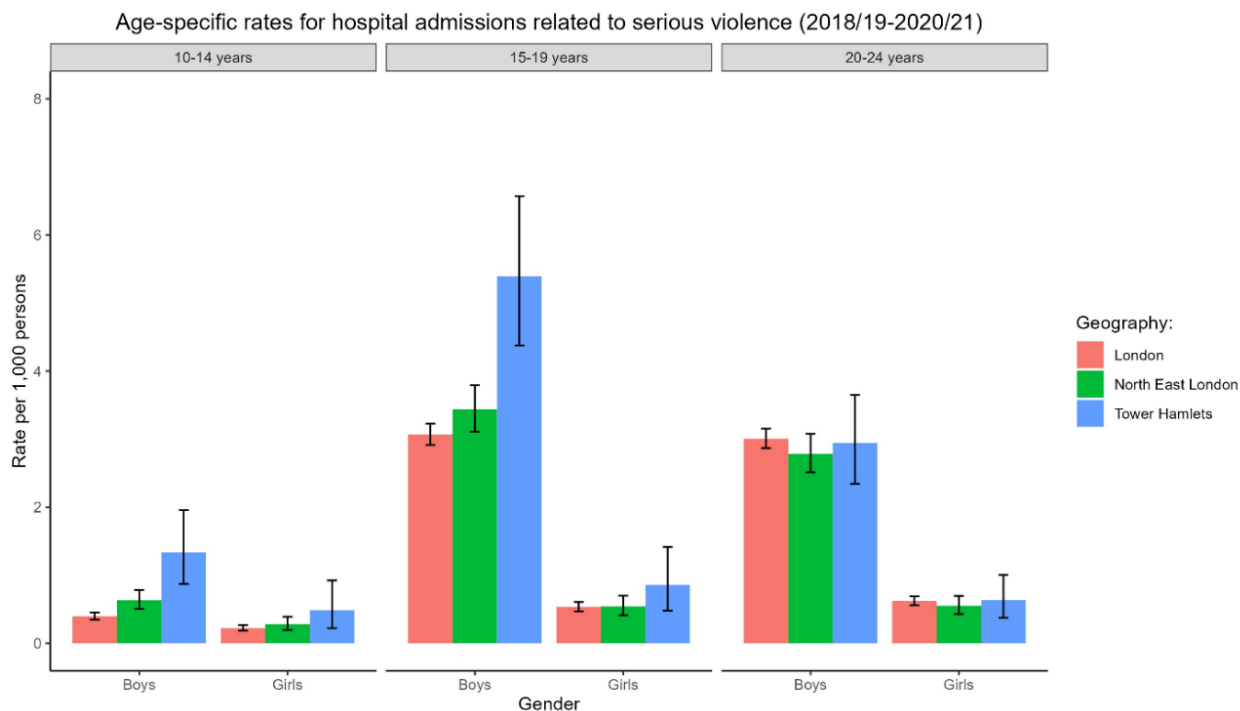


Figure 2: Data from Hospital Episode Statistics – Tower Hamlets

- For all violent offences reported to the police, peaks are seen at gam for under 18s, and fall in August/December: possibly linked to school hours and holidays.
- For the most serious violence, there are peaks in the evening and in the East of the borough (Bow, Mile End, Isle of dogs, Poplar).

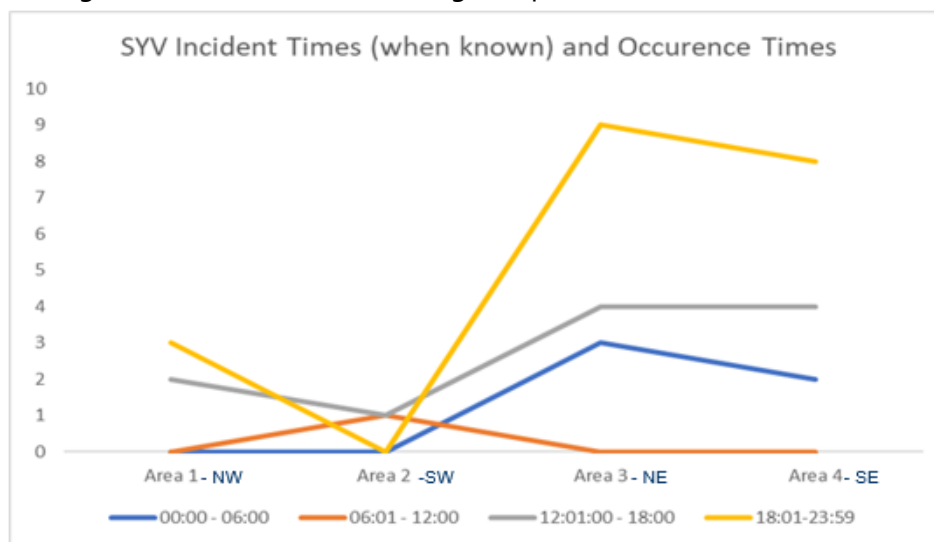


Figure 3: Data Source: MPS

- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) in the borough often takes the form of grooming into criminality by gangs or individuals: where the victim is being encouraged to engage in drug dealing, county lines, gang related activities, violent offending, or holding weapons.
- It was identified that the majority of victims of CCE had demonstrated experiencing/exposure to several risk factors. 75% of victims considered to have additional vulnerabilities including poor mental health, learning difficulties or past

experiences of abuse. 50% of victims had a missing episode reported: many of which were during school hours and truancy was also mentioned. Past exposure to violence was present in just under half including the victim getting into the fights, being on the receiving end of violence or domestic abuse at home.

- The most prevalent category of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) falls into the 'online' category, accounting for 34% of the CSE reports. This has been an increase since the CSE profile in 2020, likely due to continued and increasing use of technology and access to social media amongst children and young adults.
- There are relatively high numbers of Albanian victims in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data.

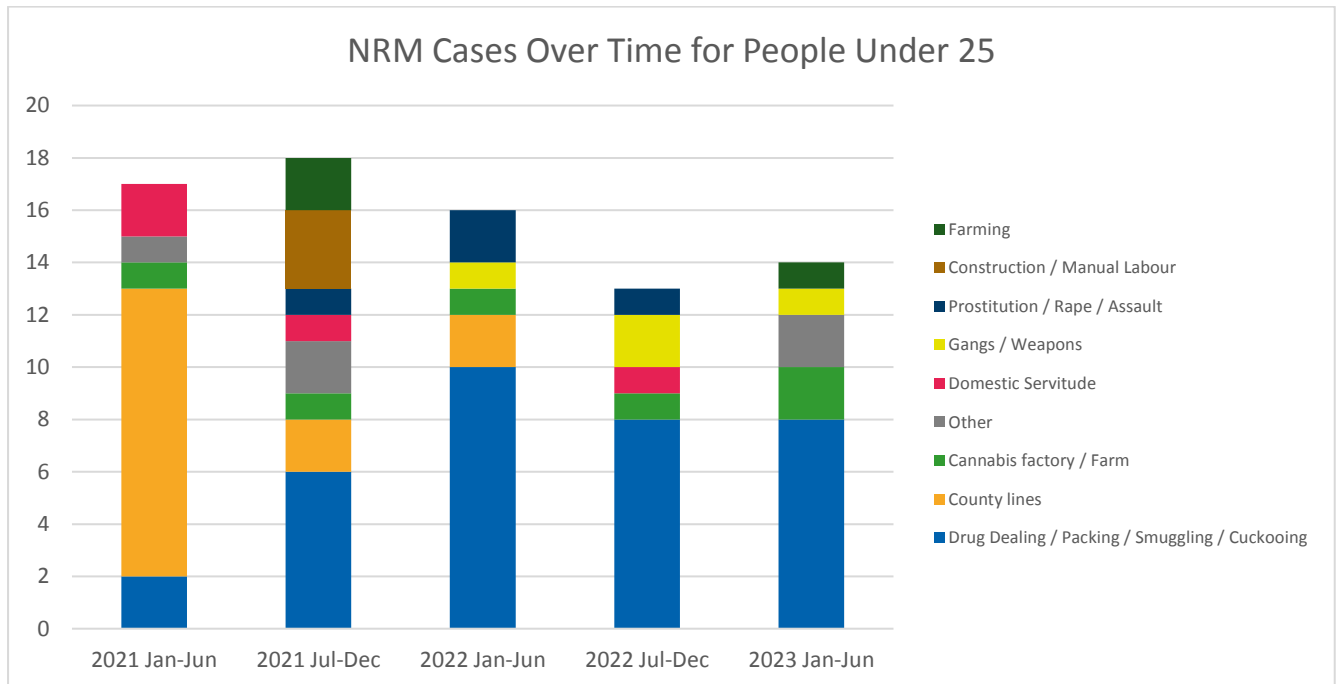


Figure 4: Data Source: New Scotland Yard Modern Slavery Tool

Violence Profile: Domestic Abuse

Definitions and clarifications

The analysis shown below covers domestic abuse within Tower Hamlets, as reported by the Metropolitan Police Service between 2021-2023: with longer-term trends shown where available. Domestic Abuse within the MPS data includes any offence with a domestic abuse flag associated with it.

Key findings

- In Tower Hamlets, there are lower numbers of victims/survivors reporting domestic abuse offences to the police than that expected, if the national CSEW prevalence estimates were to apply locally.
- MPS monthly crime data shows that Tower Hamlets has the fourth highest rate of domestic abuse offences (per 1,000) out of all London boroughs, with a rate of 11.7 per 1000 over the period August 2022 – August 2023.
- Tower Hamlets has had consistently higher rates per 1000 of domestic abuse offences compared to England from 2015-2022. Data from 2021-2023 shows that Tower Hamlets also has higher rates than the NEL average for all the 6 most common DA offences.
- The most common type of domestic abuse reported to Solace was emotional abuse, followed by physical abuse and then jealous/controlling behaviours.
- 61% of victims were female and over half of all victims are between the ages of 18 to 39.
- Proportionally, there are lower numbers of victims of Asian ethnicity that reported domestic abuse offences to the MPS: when compared to the general population in the borough and those accessing local support services for domestic abuse. This is similarly seen in victims that identify as LGBT+.

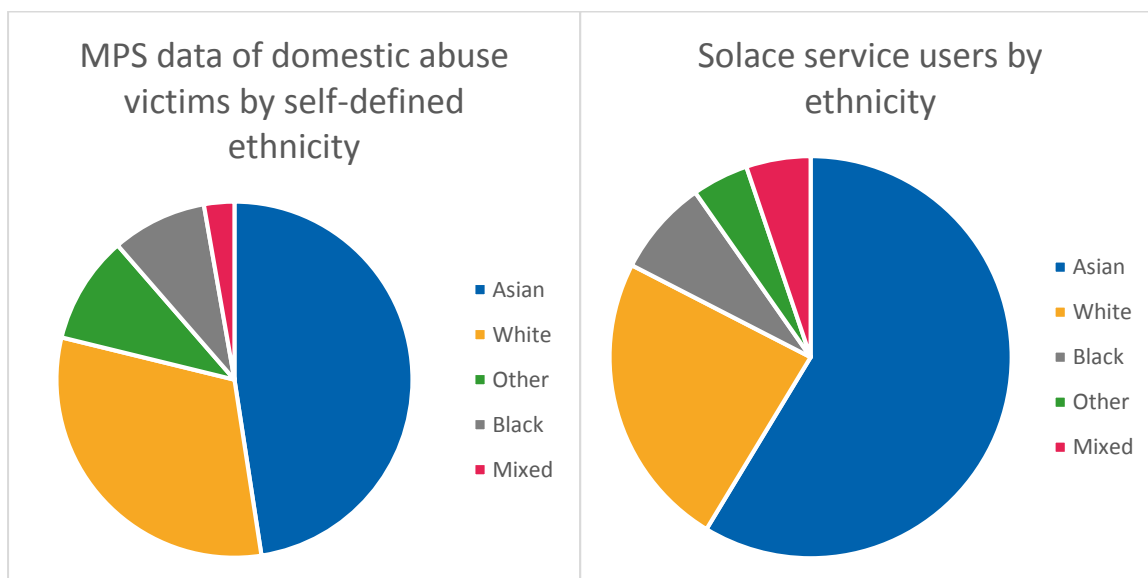


Figure 5: Data source for graph on left (MPS 2021-2023). Data source for graph on right (Solace April 2022-June 2023)

- Partners or ex partners, of either gender, make up for around 70% of relationship between victim-suspect.

- Police-recorded data shows that 77% of suspects are male. The most common age range is between 18-40.
- 67% of domestic abuse incidents were reported as occurring in the victim's home, based on police-data.
- Service-level data shows that there are low numbers of women of a Somali background accessing Solace, in comparison to the population profile in the borough.
- There has been a decrease in the number of children having single assessments where DA is flagged from Children's Social Care Data.

Violence Profile: Sexual Violence

Definitions and clarifications

The analysis below covers sexual violence within Tower Hamlets, as reported to police (MPS) between 2021 to 2023, with longer-term trends shown where available.

Sexual offences within MPS data includes rape and other sexual offences. The data provided is for all ages

Key findings

- Tower Hamlets is the 5th highest borough in London, for rates of sexual offences based on police-recorded data. The rate of sexual offences since 2021/2022 has increased, however this is similarly seen in both London and England.

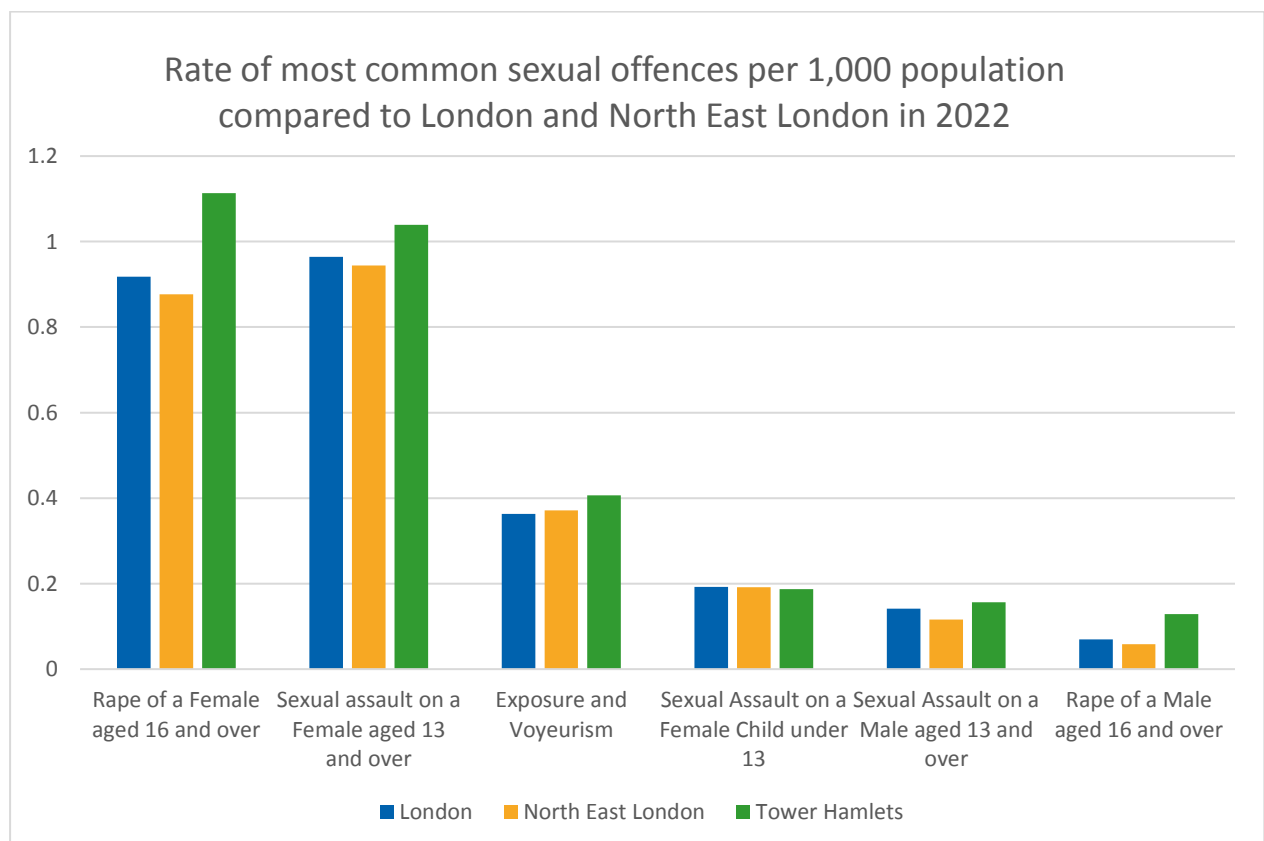


Figure 6: Data source: MPS

- Tower Hamlets has lower numbers of people reporting offences to the police, based on if the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) prevalence were to apply locally.
- Females, of younger age groups (under the age of 34), high volumes of students and school children (from available occupation data of victims) reported being victims of sexual offences to the police
- Suspects were more likely to be male (younger age groups between 18-39)
- The most common relationship between victims and survivors was acquaintance, followed by ex-boyfriend and husband of victim
- Data by LSOA (the Lower Layer Super Output Area) shows that offences are occurring throughout the borough, with specific areas showing as hot spots (e.g. there were high numbers of offences reported in the Mile End Area, possibly linked to higher education institutions in the area)

Community Voice

Key findings

- A local research project by Toynbee Hall highlighted that one in three (33%) people felt safe in Tower Hamlets. 22% said they felt unsafe in Tower Hamlets every day, and another 20% felt unsafe on a few occasions per week. Those of Bangladeshi background felt particularly unsafe. Residents felt unsafe at night, particularly women e.g. when leaving their homes at night
- The most common reasons for feeling 'unsafe' and 'disconnected' mentioned in surveys were financial difficulty, lack of policing, and a lack of people caring for one another. The issues of financial difficulty were particularly highlighted by those aged 18-24.
- The most common reasons for children and young adults to be involved in anti-social behaviour were temptation of joining gangs, family conflict, lack of rules and boundaries at home, lack of youth clubs, lack of affordable leisure activities.
- Young adults aged 18-24 highlighted that not being listened to and lack of support in schools as reasons for being involved in ASB.
- Police mistrust is particularly high in people of Black or Mixed ethnicity, and the those who identify as LGBT+.

Mapping Current Provision

Key findings

- Tower Hamlets boasts a range of services provided across the borough, by duty holders, to prevent and reduce serious violence in the borough.
- Services such as the Probation service, Exploitation service, Youth Justice service and Children's Social Care are vital in this work.
- Partners including the police, local authority and health services work together to tackle drug addiction and to reduce crime caused by the supply of illegal drugs

- The local voluntary community sector (VCS) embodies a whole-system approach that is needed to prevent and tackle violence in the borough: with innovative programmes such as the MyEnds programme operating in the Isle of Dogs, to deliver initiatives that prevent and deter young people from becoming involved in criminality or advancing from the operating on periphery of crime to criminal activity.

The table below is a depiction of existing services and initiatives that address violence, exploitation and VAWG: highlighting identified gaps in service delivery and/or funding.

What works	Current provision	Gaps
Violence and Exploitation under 25s		
Parenting programmes	Strengthening Families Strengthening communities, Triple P etc.	Lack of joined offer around helping parents to identify children at risk of becoming involved in gangs or violence or exploitation. Long-term support programme after long-term incident of violence occurs with their child.
Social skills programmes		Lack of targeted social skills programme focussed on children who need more intensive support e.g. Incredible Years Child Training, PATHS elementary
Mentoring	Local VCS organizations providing mentoring e.g. Osmani Trust, Spotlight.	Short funding cycles for VCS projects. Lack of external evaluation of projects. Some projects available only in certain areas of the borough. Lack of dedicated LA service that provides targeted youth support e.g. mentoring in secondary schools.
Trauma-informed training and service redesign	Trauma-informed approaches pilot	Lack of trauma-informed training. Low uptake amongst sectors beyond health and care e.g. education.
Speech and Language Therapy	Most SALT for school-aged CYP is purchased by individual education providers (service-level agreements) in Tower Hamlets, for majority who are not eligible for the current NHS-funded offer.	Lack of workforce strategy across the local authority and VCS sector that includes basic and advanced training in SLC needs. Information and advice not easily accessible for CYP, parents and professionals. Commissioning landscape is complex, inequity in provision in education settings, lack of FTE staff to develop training and specialist provision.
Domestic Abuse		

<p>Early Parental Conflict Intervention</p>	<p>Early Repair Dads Course for very “low-level” domestic violence and abuse.</p> <p>Reducing Parental Conflict programme</p>	<p>Lack of offer around providing education and empowerment on healthy relationships and greater understanding of abuse dynamics to survivors of DA and whole population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For survivors of DA: examples such as the Freedom programme, for survivors which focuses on awareness and self-esteem. Currently not available in Tower Hamlets.
<p>Counselling</p>	<p>Specialist therapeutic support provided by The Ascent Counselling Service</p> <p>Faith Regen Foundation have a counsellor for Domestic Abuse specifically for BAMER/Muslim women although it is open to all for 1-1 support.</p>	<p>Ascent Counselling Service is currently closed for new referrals.</p> <p>There is a greater need for local specialist and dedicated counselling provision for BAME women survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG that is culturally sensitive to their needs e.g. London Black Women’s Project which is a regional provision.</p> <p>Lack of 1-1 trauma counselling for survivors in Tower Hamlets.</p>
<p>Specialist support for people from minority groups</p>	<p>2.6 FTE Bengali Speaking IDVA within Solace.</p> <p>South Asian focused support provided by Hestia</p> <p>Somali focused support- WIT and the HAAWA Project which supports Somali women and children through 1-1 direct support and advocacy, outreach work, and raising awareness.</p> <p>London Muslim Centre – safe space for survivors of DA with community language where it can interpret and give advice about rights of women and use faith as a driver for change.</p>	<p>Greater service provision for Bengali-Speaking IDVA to meet demand whilst addressing issues related to recruitment (could consider increasing salary to solve recruitment issues with Bengali-Speaking IDVAs rather increase in quantity of service)</p> <p>Improve promotion of DV services in Bengali and Somali through communication and engagement.</p>

Hot spot policing	<p>MPS Autumn Nights plan includes high visibility patrols and hotspot targeting to prevent sexual assaults and harassment. Police targeting of kerb crawlers.</p> <p>THEO's as previously discussed are a core aspect to policing – they are provided safeguarding and violence against women and girls (VAWG) training.</p>	<p>Reduction in police officers staffing levels despite increase in borough size population so activities not always possible.</p> <p>Increasing provision of female professionals working in policing such as within the THEO team to ensure representativeness of borough.</p>
Training of health care professionals	<p>The Havens provide bespoke outreach training and/or victim support teams e.g. best practice in forensic examination.</p> <p>Sexual Health Service at Bart's use their Safeguarding Lead to provide supervision and training to staff including regular updates.</p>	<p>Lack of trauma informed training to healthcare professionals in sexual health services and primary care.</p>
Specialist support for minority groups		<p>There is currently a lack of funded BME-specific independent-sexual violence advocates within the East London Rape Crisis centre after funding temporarily ended.</p>
Counselling	<p>The Havens and the East London Rape Crisis Centre provide specialist mental health counselling.</p> <p>Advice and counselling service within Queen Mary University London for students affected by sexual assault or harassment.</p>	<p>Lack of capacity for mental health counselling was highlighted as key a challenge by sexual violence support services.</p> <p>No immediate mental health support available due to long waiting times for Havens from sexual health services. Consider increasing provision for providing immediate/crisis support for mental health support within 6 weeks of assault. Support could be integrated within sexual health service.</p>

The understanding around what works and where the gaps are for sexual violence services can be limited: due to lack of availability of service-level data for this needs assessment. However, there is high need for mental health support for survivors, alongside trauma-

informed counselling. Not having a BME-Specific Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) was also highlighted as a gap in the current service provision.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Intelligence Gaps

Certain areas of interest were not examined fully due to intelligence and data gaps amongst the duty holders. These gaps are:

- Accessibility of non-local authority funded services: data for sexual violence support services
- Improving recording of occupation status (victims and suspects) in police-recorded data
- Lack of estimates around local need regarding parental conflict and ACEs
- Lack of detailed ethnicity breakdown beyond major categories in police-recorded data
- Lack of prevalence surveys of sexual misconduct in HEI available nationally and locally
- Vulnerable adult criminal exploitation, modern slavery, prevalence of “cuckooing”, and perpetrators of exploitation
- Qualitative data from children and young people involved in violence and exploitation programmes.

Where it is seen as necessary, improving the intelligence available in some of these areas is included in the recommendations below.

Conclusions

The London borough of Tower Hamlets has a relatively young population and is the fastest growing borough in the country. Data from sources such as the Metropolitan Police Service and local support services shows that Tower Hamlets has relatively high levels of population need around violence and exploitation affecting children and young adults, as well as for domestic abuse and sexual violence.

This needs assessment identified some key risk factors that contribute to children, young people and young adults, becoming a victim or perpetrator of serious violence. Some of these include the high levels of deprivation in the borough, high demands for drugs and the existing drug markets, exposure to negative experiences (e.g. parental substance misuse, being a victim of or being exposed to domestic abuse or violence), undiagnosed speech, language and communication needs, and school exclusions and truancy.

Violence affecting children and young adults under 25 in the borough is high, with rates for ‘Violence Against the Person’ offences being slightly higher than average rates across London. Tower Hamlets is an outlier, with higher rates of violence for boys between 15-19 years old compared to the London average, for assault with a sharp object requiring hospitalisation.

Criminal exploitation of children in the borough often involves grooming into criminality by gangs or individuals for drug dealing, county lines or holding weapons. The largest category of child sexual exploitation is online exploitation.

Rates of Domestic Abuse locally mean Tower Hamlets is one of the boroughs with the highest number of Domestic Abuse offences in London: with the majority of victims and survivors being female. There are also many cases of male victims of domestic abuse in the police dataset. Sexual violence offences reported to the police ranks Tower Hamlets as one of the boroughs with the highest volume of offences in London: with the majority of victims being female and under the age of 34, including those who are students.

To help address this, Tower Hamlets provides various services to prevent and reduce violence and exploitation in the borough, as well as to support victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence. There is ongoing partnership working between the Police, Probation, Local Authority and other statutory services to address some of the key risk factors identified. This includes the demand for drugs and the drug markets: through innovative solutions such as the Project ADDER-funded roles.

Place-based programmes and community-led work, play a key role in the local response to providing early intervention and support. However, these have their own challenges such as the limited resources and funding available.

Improving trust in statutory organisations and the feeling of connection from resident to resident is vital to improving the safety in the borough.

The Serious Violence Duty Strategy will highlight the partnership approach to addressing the gaps highlighted within this needs assessment: taking a joined up public health approach to preventing and reducing violence in the borough.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the findings from this needs assessment, along with recommendations provided by residents and professionals.

As this needs assessment has been developed alongside the [Violence and Against Women and Girls needs assessment](#), the recommendations set out in the VAWG needs assessment will be used to inform future planning to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and sexual violence in Tower Hamlets.

Additionally, the new Substance Misuse Strategy is a critical interdependency to this work, to enhance recommendations around the links between drugs, violence and harms on communities.

Early intervention and prevention activities

1. Develop a whole-system public health approach to all violence prevention activities in the borough.
2. Address the risk factors and drivers of violence highlighted in the needs assessment including the link between drugs, OCGs and violence and exploitation occurring in Tower Hamlets.
3. Recognize and utilize the critical role of universal services in prevention and early intervention e.g. through existing investments made by the Council for universal youth provision and by investing in greater opportunities for leisure activities, employment/work for young people, providing early years social skilling training programmes.

4. Work with communities and community organizations to increase community trust, resilience and reduce the harmful impacts of violence and exploitation.
 - a) work with communities and groups e.g. Black or Mixed people, LGBT+ to improve trust in police through community days and outreach to normalise crime reporting through various tools available e.g. online, apps.
 - b) address short funding cycles for projects commissioned to the VCS sector, upskilling youth workers with lived experience in the VCS sector and implementing formal external evaluation of VCS projects that tackle and prevent violence and exploitation.
5. Increased focus and funding to support educational interventions for prevention of relationship violence.
 - a) Provide further training to RSE teachers and deliver sessions in different settings for high-risk participants such as YJS cohort.
6. Review of current design out crime processes opportunities in the borough including CCTV coverage, street lighting, crime prevention street stencils, tighter control of e-bike hires on the borough.
7. Work with partners to retain children in school and minimise the exclusion of vulnerable children particularly during secondary school period e.g. through targeted youth mentoring through caseworker and wrap-around support as offered in alternative provision.
8. Address the complex SALT commissioning landscape, lack of workforce training strategy on SCL needs and easily accessible information and advice available on speech, language and community needs for children and young adults.
9. Address the critical link between drugs, violence, and harms on communities.
 - a) Continue to reduce demand for drugs and restrict supply of drugs from criminal gangs through the ADDER work programme and new Substance Misuse Strategy.
 - b) Disrupt local drug markets by focussed deterrence on the threat posed by organised crime groups.
 - c) Support recovery from substance misuse for those in the community including those not in treatment.

Identification and screening within existing systems

10. Adoption of an exploitation/violence screening tool within healthcare settings to provide proactive, preventative support e.g. onward referral to MASH. This should be implemented in specific settings such as GP, 0-19 services, LAC health services, community and inpatient mental health, substance misuse and maternity services aimed at service users under 25 years old.
11. Develop flags/warnings on clinical systems such as EMIS to provide warnings for those at risk of being exploited or violence using indicators to code e.g. recent trauma

and loss, exposure to domestic abuse. This could prompt clinicians to provide proactive early intervention through referral to MASH for example.

12. Develop the current training model for serious youth violence across practitioners to ensure partnership delivery of the programme.

Safeguarding children and young adults (aged 18-25) at risk of exploitation

12. Enhance the focus on modern slavery due to links with other forms of criminality including criminal exploitation of children in drug distribution, criminal exploitation of vulnerable adults and cuckooing or trafficking into sexual exploitation.
13. Review the use of National Referral Mechanism to ensure that this is being used effectively to recognize children and young adults aged 18-25 who are victims of exploitation require support and intervention.
14. Retain existing links between children and adult services where management of risk is necessary and address any gaps in the transition period between childhood and adulthood that exists where there is potential for harm from exploitation or violence
 - a) Develop and map the current multi-agency intervention offer for early intervention and prevention pathways for 18-25 year olds with experience of or at risk of criminal exploitation.
 - b) Develop a more robust, multi-agency approach for ensuring transition meetings take places for all young people at risk transitioning to adult services
 - c) Consider how 18–25-year-olds can be integrated into existing approaches to prevent and tackle exploitation e.g. MACE, the Exploitation team structures.
15. Develop multi-agency disruption plans for children open to social care and the police, who are being harmed outside the home.
16. Use local risk information from exploitation detached team to support the development of tasking in the community.

Enforcement and tackling offenders

17. Review the community safety target operating model and ensure alignment with the strongest ever neighborhoods police structure to achieve maximum impact in reducing violence and increase trust in confidence in the council and police.
18. Undertake an analysis of nighttime economy related violence in Tower Hamlets to provide an evidence base for licensing enforcement activity and use of the Night-Time Levy.
19. Continue to support local VCS place based interventions to tackle violence through the My Ends Programme and the GLA Violence Reduction Unit.

20. Continue to support Trading Standards and test purchase arrangements to undertake prosecutions of retailers who sell knives to under-18s.
21. Continue to reduce demand for drugs and restrict supply by criminal gangs through the ADDER work programme and the new substance misuse strategy. Disrupt local drug markets by focussed deterrence on the threat posed by organised crime groups. Support recovery for those in the community.
22. Improve information sharing between duty holders regarding enforcement and tackling offenders
 - a) Between police and local authority via existing monthly local tasking coordination group (TTCG) meeting to jointly task police and local authority resources to tackle problems identified
 - b) Between police and housing/probation for when IOM subjects are released from HMP into accommodation in Tower Hamlets.
23. Increase in precision-based policing to target offenders via the new Police Pro-Active Syndicates tasked by a bespoke and dedicated TTCG that exists in the borough.
24. Establish a multi-agency HT Gangs and Serious Violence panel similar to that exists in other boroughs e.g. Hackney; to discuss the status and identify the need for enforcement/diversion around returning perpetrators of serious violence. This should include police, HT, Probation, Child & Adult Social Care, Housing and Education.
25. Improve data categories available for monitoring ethnicity and sexual orientation within MPS datasets for suspects and victims.

Increasing support to victims/survivors

26. Address the victim/perpetrator overlap of children affected by exploitation and violence, given the current binary nature of systems, support and interventions.
27. Increase provision for support for children exposed to domestic abuse by working with other partnership groups such as Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children's Partnership and through providing a dedicated children's worker for the Positive Change Programme.
28. Consider the recommendations highlighted on 'Supporting victims' in [the VAWG needs assessment](#).
29. Address gaps in immediate mental health support available for survivors within 6 weeks of sexual assault.
30. Review of processes and support available for students in Tower Hamlets around sexual violence reporting and support for those in education settings.

Incorporate strong governance structure and information sharing for Serious Violence Duty

31. Introduce a new Serious Violence Board, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, to oversee the delivery of the new Serious Violence Duty, with appropriate resources provided to facilitate accountability and delivery of strategic aims.
32. Establish an effective data set to monitor and evaluate performance that supports all duty holder's accountability and enables constructive challenge between duty holders.
33. Establish strong information sharing arrangements
 - a) Actively work across the partnership to ensure effective information sharing to manage and minimise risk to children in the community.
 - b) Continue to work with partners to develop serious and organised crime local profiles and drug market profiles which consider threat, risk and harm on communities.
 - c) Develop an annual partnership profile on exploitation of children and young adults