

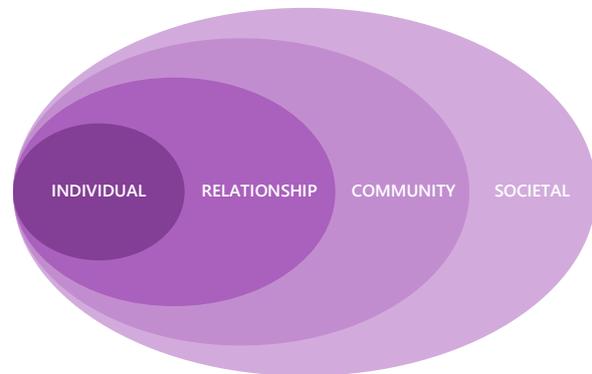
Risk and Protective Factors for Youth Violence

The Violence Reduction Network's (VRN) Strategic Needs Assessments explored the research and literature concerning the risk factors and protective factors relating to youth violence and serious violence.

A **risk factor** is 'a characteristic that increases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of youth violence'.

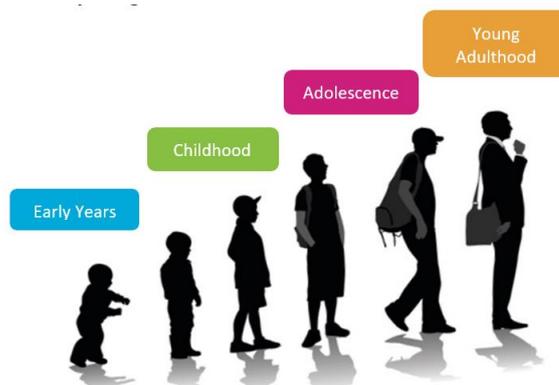
A **protective factor** is 'a characteristic that decreases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of youth violence or buffers against the effects of risk factors'.

The **causes of youth violence** are multiple and arise from a complex interplay between a wide range of risk and protective factors which operate at different levels (individual, relationship, community and societal). As such, the VRN's approach involves identifying and reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors within and across these levels.



The ecological framework for violence prevention (World Health Organisation, 2011)

In relation to violence, it is also important to understand risk and protective factors within the context of the **human life-course** from birth to young adulthood.



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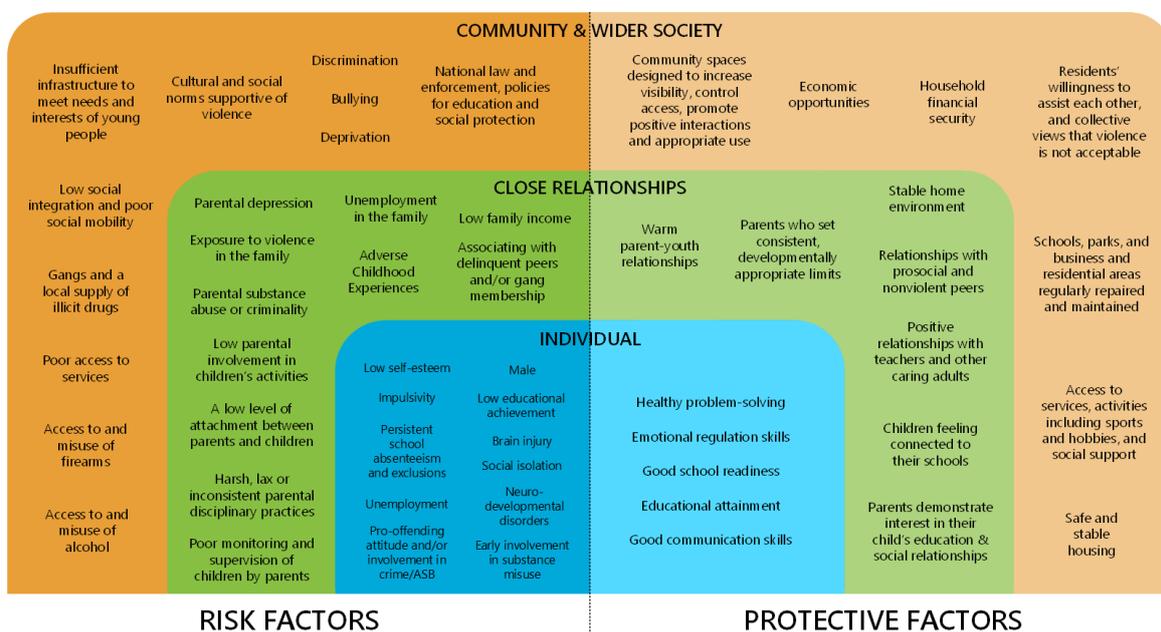
This is because violent behaviour and many of the conditions which contribute to its occurrence develop over time and like with almost every other aspect of human development, the foundations are laid in early childhood. Throughout life, a child may be exposed to different risk factors at an individual, relationship, community or societal level. For example during adolescence and young adulthood, developing maturity together with a changing social and environmental context gives rise to new potential risks as well as opportunities for new protective factors to develop.



Pair of Aces Tree (Ellis et al, 2017)

Many of the known risk factors for youth violence are also known **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** which are stressful events occurring in childhood which can have a detrimental impact on children, young people and adults across the life course. The figure above shows the range of adverse experiences and environments that can impact on both children and adults across the life-course. You can find out more about ACEs on our website.

The **known risk and protective factors for youth violence** are summarised below:



There are some **important things** to remember about risk and protective factors:

The majority are modifiable. This means risk factors can be prevented or reduced and protective factors can be strengthened, thereby having a positive impact on preventing violence.

There is no simple causal relationship between risk factors and violence. It is important to remember that at an individual level, presence of risk factors does not mean someone will be violent or become a victim of violence.

However, accumulation of risk factors and an absence of protective factors increases individuals' levels of vulnerability. Importantly the vulnerability of young people is the key factor that increases the likelihood that they may become involved in behaviours and activities that put them at risk.

There are many similarities between the risk and protective factors for youth violence and other forms of harmful behaviour, so by understanding and addressing them the impact could be far-reaching.

Risk factors are not distributed evenly across society. For example, the lower an individual's socio-economic status, the more likely it is for them to experience risk factors and for those risks to have a greater impact

The prevalence of risk factors in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR)

Data drawn from several sources in 2019, largely obtained through PHE's Fingertips, was used to inform an initial analysis of the prevalence of risk and protective factors in LLR. Key findings of the SNA demonstrated that children and young people living in Leicester have more risk factors, when compared against their peers in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Social, Emotional and Mental (SEM) health needs

Children in secondary schools across Leicestershire and Rutland have poorer SEM than their primary school counterparts. Children in both primary and secondary schools in Leicester are disproportionately affected by poorer SEM health

School readiness

Leicester is below the national average of school readiness, although there is an improved trend in closing the gap. School readiness is similar to the national average for children in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Educational attainment

Educational attainment levels amongst 15 to 16 year-olds in Leicester are below the national average. Educational attainment in Rutland is above the national average. In Leicestershire it is similar to the national average.

Low school attendance and exclusions	58% of children received permanent or fixed period school exclusions across LLR due to severe behavioural problems. There is a higher rate of persistent absenteeism in secondary schools than in primary schools. Leicester has a consistently significantly higher rate for both primary and secondary schools.
Access to substance misuse and alcohol treatment	This appears to be an issue although the extent of this issue for young people is not currently known
Children in the youth justice system and first time entrants	National and local analysis demonstrates that the proportion has been falling across all areas in LLR and England, however, the levels in Leicester remain significantly higher than the national average.
NEET and unemployment	Levels are higher than the national average for those young people living in Leicester.
Deprivation	Leicester has a higher prevalence of deprivation, being significantly worse than the England, Leicestershire and Rutland averages. It is known though there are also hotspots of deprivation across LLR, such as in Loughborough.
Known drivers of serious violence	National reports and local analysis indicate the following are present within our area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised Crime Groups responsible for county lines and the supply of drugs Urban Street Gangs Changing drug markets

Prioritising Risk Factors

The VRN is committed to preventing and reducing all known risk factors whilst also strengthening protective factors. However, throughout 2020/21 we will be prioritising strategies and interventions aimed at tackling the following risk factors amongst children and young people:

