



Review: Emerging trauma and poverty informed strategies among police and crime commissioners



Acknowledgements

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About Revolving Doors Agency

Revolving Doors Agency is a national charity that aims to change systems and improve services for people 'in the revolving door' – people who come into repeat contact with the criminal justice system due to multiple unmet needs such as mental ill-health, substance misuse, homelessness, poverty and other traumatic life events.

We work to create a smarter criminal justice system that makes the revolving door avoidable and escapable. We do this by working alongside national and local decision-makers. We combine lived experience insight, robust research, and system knowledge to create policy and practice solutions that work.



Introduction

This review assesses how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are planning to, or are practically addressing, poverty and trauma in the local criminal justice system landscape; focussing on how that work supports young adults at risk of entering the revolving door of crisis and crime.

People in the revolving door are characterised by repeat low-level, non-violent offences, such as theft and minor drug offences, which are driven by multiple unmet needs, including mental ill health, problematic substance use, homelessness and domestic abuse. Their health, care and offending-related needs go hand in hand with trauma, persistent poverty, long-term unemployment, and social exclusion. Evidenceⁱ shows that these offences are driven by persistent poverty and profound trauma.

We have previously published a reviewⁱⁱ of all Police and Crime Plans across England and Wales which explored how PCCs address the issue of people trapped in the ‘revolving door’, who as a result of homelessness, poor mental health and substance misuse, come into repeated contact with police and courts, and how they support young adults to grow out of crime. We also recognise that racism and discrimination pull people into the Criminal Justice System, but this review does not look at those issues. The Black Training and Enterprise Group published the first Race Equality Audit of Police and Crime Plansⁱⁱⁱ, which highlighted that three quarters of police and crime plans lack any reference to race equality or improving outcomes for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.



Methodology

The review took a three-pronged approach:

- **Desktop review:** The primary source of this review is the most recent Police and Crime Plans for each PCC – the principal document that sets out for the public what PCCs are prioritising in their areas. As part of our desktop review, we tried to incorporate, as much as possible, any publicly available information, including meeting notes of Community Safety Partnerships, interviews with local newspapers, and news releases on PCC websites to get an overview of activities in this area.
- **Survey:** We contacted each PCC's office to fill out a short survey to share their strategic activities, to address the combined impact of poverty and trauma, to break the cycle of crisis and crime. This was done to give PCCs and their office an opportunity to comment on the activities which may not be referred to in the published Police and Crime Plan or other publicly available information.
- **Interviews:** We interviewed staff at 20 PCC offices in the development of this review.

Key findings

- **Trauma is increasingly recognised as a key issue for victims:** Across the country police and crime plans demonstrate an increasing recognition of the trauma victims of crime experience and make commitments to provide good quality support for victims of crime. Encouragingly, the victim support strategies developed by PCCs demonstrate a clear understanding of the traumatic impact of domestic violence on women and children.
- **There is a great divide between victims and offenders:** There is a great divide between PCCs' victim support strategies and reducing reoffending strategies, with little or no recognition of the links between victimisation and offending/reoffending. There appears to be a discrepancy in how PCCs plan to support people who present only as victims and people who present as victims and offenders. However, there are



exceptions, and interestingly these are all areas with a well-established women's centres: Avon and Somerset, Greater Manchester, MOPAC, Norfolk and Nottinghamshire.

- **Systems change programmes are making a difference for people with multiple needs:** The Fulfilling Lives programme and the Making Every Adult Matter partnerships that aim to improve support available for people who experience multiple disadvantage have a tangible local impact on the recognition of complex trauma as a key contributing factor that brings people into the revolving door. We found emerging good practice supported by the Police and Crime Commissioners of Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Surrey and Nottinghamshire. However, it is important to note that these programmes are designed to support all adults, and their reach to people aged 18-24 can be limited. For example, a recent evaluation^{iv} of Fulfilling Lives programme found that less than 7% of all people in the programme are aged between 16-24.
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is a growing area of interest:** We found five PCC's (Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire and MOPAC) police and crime plans include specific commitments to address ACEs as part of their ambition to reduce the level of first-time entrants in the criminal justice system. However, it is not clear how an adversity-informed framework will support children and young adults who have already had multiple contacts with police.
- **Adversity-informed practice does not reach beyond children:** There is some evidence that ACE- informed practice is developing in a handful of local areas, including Dorset, Hampshire, Lancashire, Northumbria, and Staffordshire. However, the practice is currently focused on generalist support for children, rather than children in the criminal justice system or young people transitioning into adulthood.
- **Youth violence is dominating policing concerns:** The recent Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund is making a difference in acknowledging the link between trauma and economic disadvantage and serious crimes. The PCCs for who were awarded¹ the Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund to develop partnerships to

¹ Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Devon and Cornwall, Essex, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Lancashire, Merseyside, MOPAC, Norfolk,



prevent and tackle serious violence and there is emerging good practice in these areas.^v However, these initiatives have not yet translated into diversionary activity or tailored support for young adults who are entering the revolving door, i.e. those who commit repeated low-level, non-violent offences.

- **The link between crime and poverty is often overlooked:** Only six police and crime plans (Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Lancashire, North Yorkshire and MOPAC) explore the relationship between poverty and crime. This group of PCCs report on inequalities in education and employment opportunities, inequalities in income (particularly in-work poverty), deprivation and housing density, and consequently inequities in health as contributing to involvement in the criminal justice system, higher rates of offending, and higher rates of victimization; not just at the individual level but also for neighbourhoods. The police and crime plan for Lancashire is particularly interesting in the way it assesses need both in terms of income and ethnic inequalities.
- **Place-based assessments are rare:** In Cheshire, we found an example of place-based assessment of multiple indices of deprivation, crime and victimisation. The PCC for Cheshire does not refer to this strategy in their police and crime plan, however the Pan-Cheshire Crime and Disorder Strategy^{vi} (which acts as a single plan for PCC, local authority leaders and Community Safety Partners) evaluates the relationship between social and economic disadvantage and crime to inform commissioning activity.

Northamptonshire, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, Suffolk, Sussex, Thames Valley, West Midlands and West Yorkshire



Emerging trauma informed practice in the CJS

LANCASHIRE

The PCC for Lancashire provides grants to schemes that aim to support previous offenders and work to prevent and reduce reoffending. The most recent tender for the Commissioner's Reducing Reoffending Fund, which closed on 2 December 2019, specifically asks providers to demonstrate how they take a prevention-based approach to crime reduction, focus on early action as well as a trauma informed approach.



STAFFORDSHIRE

Staffordshire PCC uses Proceeds of Crime Act and People Power Fund to implement a prevention and early intervention programme including support for adverse childhood experiences. They use a "Routine Enquiry about Adversity in Childhood (REACH)" process which involves systematically asking individuals about traumatic/adverse experiences during routine assessments with a view to responding positively, following any disclosures. The Office of the PCC, in conjunction with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Lancashire Care Foundation Trust, is looking to assist three Staffordshire organisations to pilot this approach with their service users.



WEST MIDLANDS

Youth offending teams in the West Midlands are working beyond current assessment frameworks to explore wider childhood adversities. They are also exploring new ways of working. This includes purchasing resources relating to neuropsychology and brain development including a building resilience informed practice. Others are translating practice into arts based therapeutic services and using sport as an intervention. One of the fundamental changes some practitioners have made is asking children, 'what has happened to you' rather than 'what have you done'. In some areas this has led to a reduction in those children breaching orders and being sentenced to custody.



AVON AND SOMERSET

The PCC for Avon and Somerset brought together the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Services and Early Intervention capabilities to embed ethos of IOM at all levels of policing from prevention to reducing harm. Currently the IOM scheme operates as part of Bristol Fulfilling Lives programme, which aims to develop and sustain trauma informed approaches to support people with multiple needs and break the cycle of crisis and crime.



DORSET

The PCC for Dorset funds the pan-Dorset Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Project, which aims to raise awareness of and improving responses to child sexual abuse. The project also involved developing data to better understand the scope and nature of child sexual abuse locally and the mapping of the service pathways available to support victims and their families.



NORTHUMBRIA

The Office of the PCC for Northumbria works closely with Health and Wellbeing Board and the Police to address the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences. This work includes improving mental health pathways to ensure that their mental health services are trauma informed and all interventions include ACE screening; analysing the impact of school exclusions, crime and other key indicators of high need on individuals and the wider family.



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Police and Crime Plan states that: "The changing nature of crime requires different types of support, for example therapeutic support services for victims dealing with the impact of trauma, particularly young people and male victims of abuse and exploitation...The proportion of young offenders with complex needs and vulnerabilities linked to mental health, substance misuse and family and relationships has increased."



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

The PCC for Northamptonshire has been awarded the Home Office Early Intervention Fund to provide targeted interventions to young people involved in or at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, particularly where there is a link to gang involvement. A dedicated resource from within the local careers service will provide bespoke support to the cohort to get them into suitable and sustainable post-16 education and training provision.



GREATER LONDON

Police and Crime Plan says: "If we ignore [young people's] needs as victims then we risk perpetuating their offending as they seek to cope, by themselves, with the trauma of being a victim of crime. Only by addressing these two in parallel will we be able to help turn their lives around."



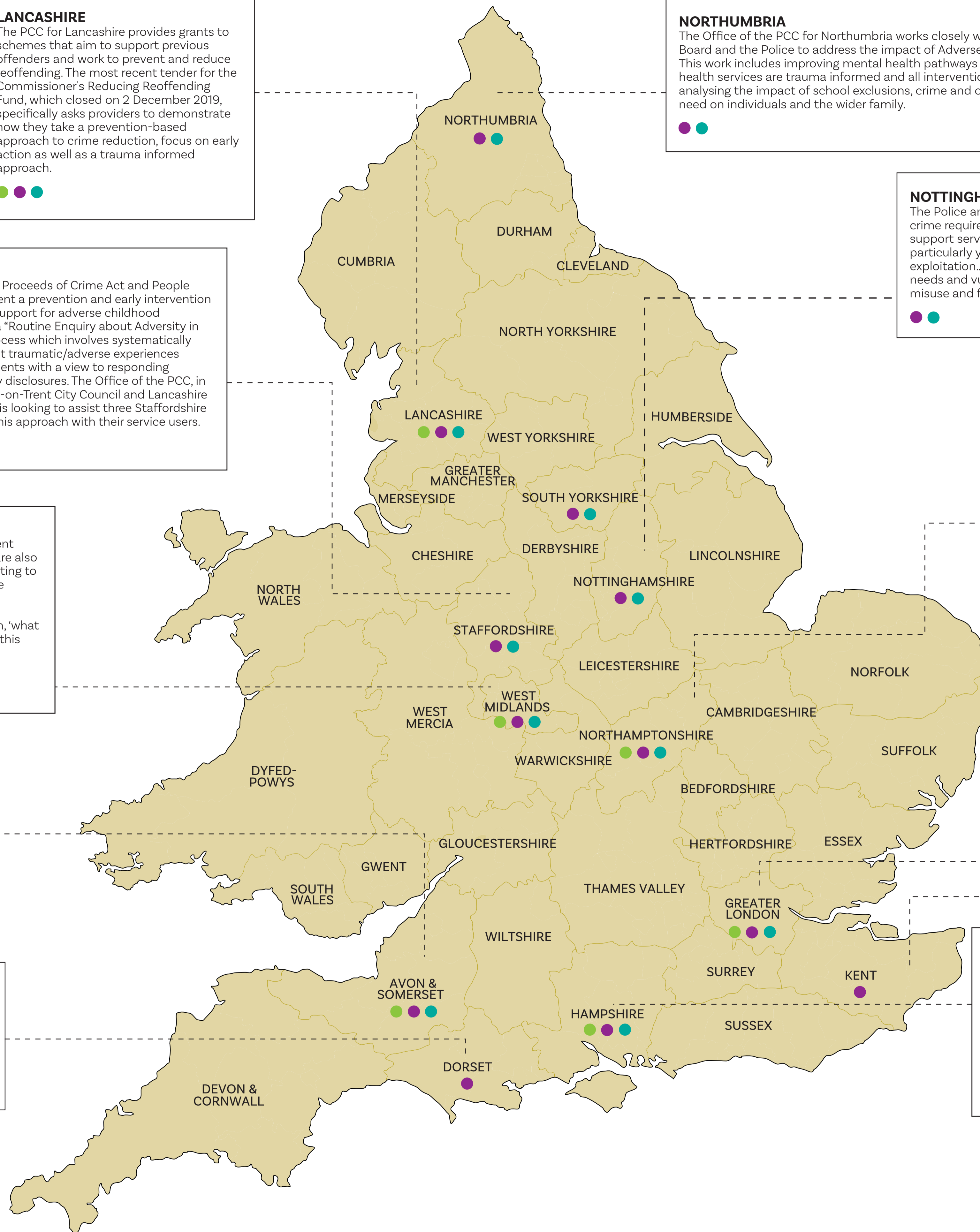
KENT

As part of the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan, the PCC for Kent makes a commitment to provide more specialist support services for victims presenting with complex and specialist needs. These services include support for domestic abuse victims, underrepresented groups, sexual assault victims, or trauma counselling.



HAMPSHIRE

A partnership bid to the Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund, led by the PCC for Hampshire has successfully secured funding to provide better support for young people who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (or ACEs) and as a result may be at increased future risk of offending. The project will see 138 professionals trained to be trauma informed and ACE aware, and nine 'Trusted Adult Workers' will be recruited to mentor and support young people (aged 5-17 years) to deal with ACEs. The programme aims to support young people to learn coping strategies and build increased resilience to reduce future crime and victimisation.

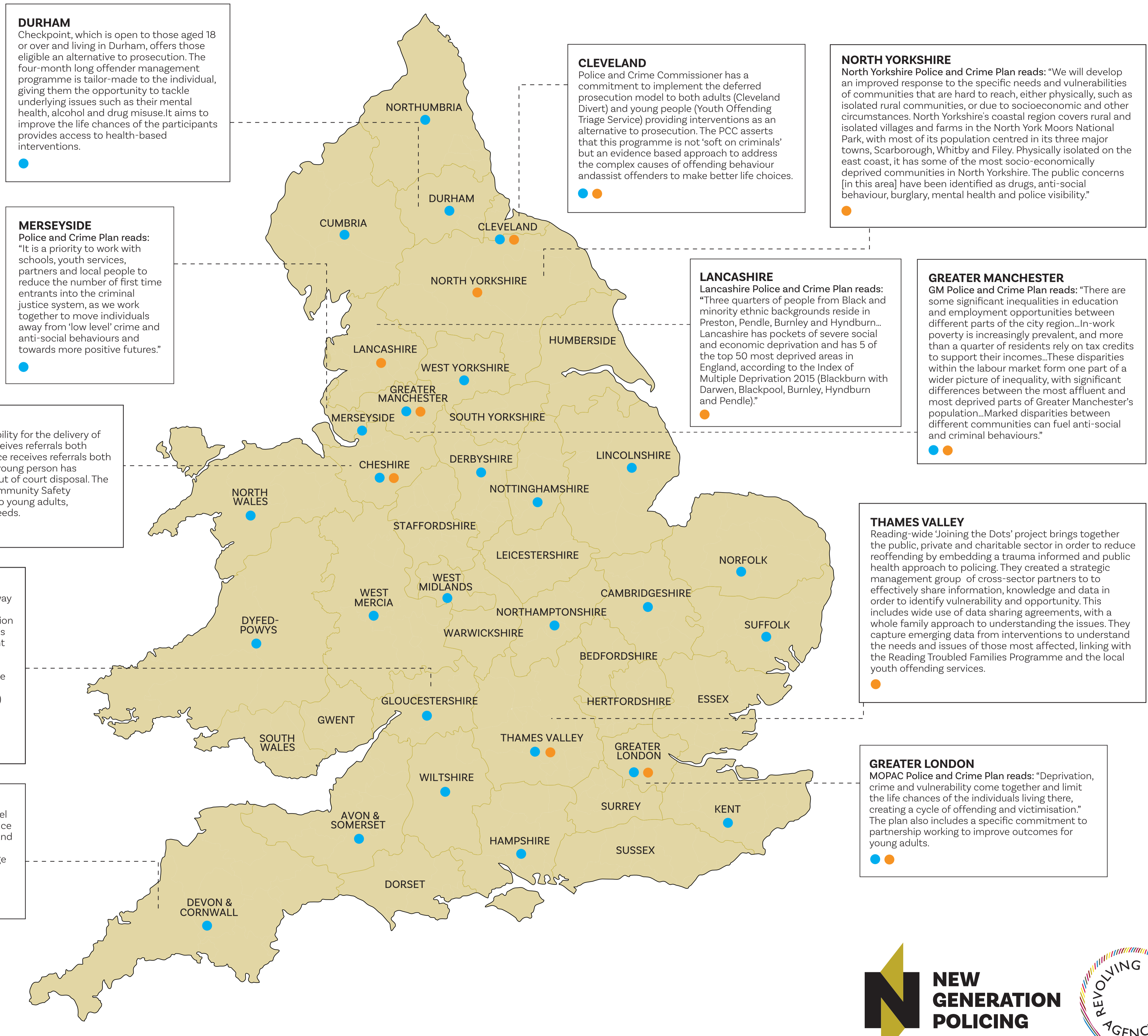


Focus of intervention

- Youth violence
- Victims
- Young people



Emerging approaches that address social disadvantage among young adults in the CJS



Focus of intervention

- Strategic commitment to young adults
- Multiple deprivation

References

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- vi Pan Cheshire Community Safety Strategic Needs Assessment. 2019. <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/csna-community-safety-needs-assessment-pan-cheshire-final.pdf>



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