

Lancashire Violence Reduction Network

Evaluation and Impact Framework

June 2023



LANCASHIRE
VIOLENCE REDUCTION
NETWORK

About the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network

Established in 2019, the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (LVRN) is a collaboration of public, private, third sector, community and lived experience organisations and individuals, which aims to prevent and reduce violence.

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Foreword

Since 2019 the LVRN has worked on contributing to the national and international evidence base around what works to tackle the root causes of serious violence. Our commissioned programmes and interventions have been specifically developed with our data and knowledge of the communities in Lancashire.

This framework will enable us to continue to focus on how we measure the impact of this work. It will direct us to make the necessary changes to the programmes; all this is focused on making a positive contribution to safer Lancashire.



Susannah Clarke

Director of the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network

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Introduction

This framework outlines the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (LVRN) approach to jointly developing evaluation of the LVRN work programmes and interventions.

The LVRN is committed to understanding and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its strategy and activities; evaluation is fundamental to this. A robust evidence-base helps us to ensure and demonstrate that we are getting value for money from public funding and continuously improving our approach, to preventing and reducing serious violence.

This framework sets out our approach to evaluation.

It builds on guidance from:

- HM Treasury's 'The Magenta Book';
- HM Treasury's 'The Green Book';
- The Scottish Government's 'Evaluation for policy makers: A straightforward guide';
- Insights from the national Violence Reduction Units Learning and Evaluation Network
- The Department for Business and Innovation Skills' 'Evaluation Strategy';
- Our own experience of designing, commissioning and carrying out evaluations.

Evaluation is complex and challenging. The nature of serious violence prevention and reduction – and the intersecting risk and protective factors for violence – make it a difficult area to evaluate. Rather than striving for perfection, we aim to make our evaluations as insightful and robust as possible.

Since the LVRN's inception, back in 2019, we have significantly developed our evaluation work. We are also passionate about contributing to the national and international knowledge-base and supporting other organisations, violence reduction units and police force areas to develop their evaluation work, to contribute to preventing and reducing serious violence on a global scale.

What is evaluation?

Evaluations use research methods to:

1. Understand whether interventions have been implemented as intended;
2. Measure whether outcomes and impact have been achieved and how;
3. Assess whether the benefits of an activity outweigh the costs.

Well-designed evaluations provide robust, impartial evidence about how strategy and interventions are working and enable timely inclusion of the findings and recommendations into decision-making processes (The Scottish Government, 2018).

Evaluation is not about judging an individual or team personally, rather, evaluation provides feedback, recognises achievements, identifies ways of improving and supports evidence-based decision-making. It is an opportunity to involve key stakeholders to identify aims and contributing factors to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of an intervention design and implementation process.

The figure below, adapted from the Wales VRU website, provides a simple explanation of what evaluation is.

Evaluation is a process that assesses the value, quality and impact of a service, programme, intervention or project. An evaluation allows us to:

1. Ensure interventions are evidence-based and data-led
2. Assess whether a programme is progressing according to plan and meeting objectives'
3. Identify strengths and weaknesses of a programme, and identify areas for improvement
4. Inform decision making, including funding, sustainability, scale-up and wider roll-out



What do we mean by impact?

“Impact is the effect that interventions have on people, organisations or systems”.

(CDC, 2011)

The core LVRN team observed that when key stakeholders were asked to describe the impact of an intervention, often focus was on a programme’s reach. By reach, we mean the extent to which a programme attracts its intended audience. Reach is an important consideration and can include the number of people trained, the number of people who have attended a follow-up appointment, the number of people who attended a conference or the number of people whose awareness has increased. Sometimes, reach might also capture secondary beneficiaries, such as 50 teachers were trained, who each taught a minimum of 25 pupils, therefore 1250 pupils were indirectly reached. It is important to clearly define reach when monitoring programmes. For example, when referring to the number of people trained, does that mean those who registered to attend, attended the training or completed the training? Once reach is clearly defined, it is important to

agree how and where that data will be documented to evidence reach, such as an attendance register and to be clear about any data quality issues.

By impact, we mean the intended or unintended, positive or negative, direct or indirect effects that are caused by an intervention (Stern, 2015). Impact should be measurable and should identify a realistic level of change within the timescales of a programme and funding (CDC, 2011). If an impact evaluation fails to systematically establish the cause of the changes, there is risk that the evaluation will produce incorrect findings and lead to poor decisions, such as scaling up an intervention that is ineffective or deciding to end a programme that is bringing about benefits (Better Evaluation, n.d.).



Why is evaluation and impact important?

An understanding of how interventions work – both in terms of effectiveness in delivering outputs and the longer-term impacts of those outputs – is essential to inform decision-making, allocation of resources and continuous learning and improvement. Without rigorous evaluation, we are unable to understand what is working well.

For the LVRN, as a public sector body, there is an important additional need to demonstrate the impact of public spending and to justify future funding. Evaluations provide a mechanism to demonstrate accountability. Well-designed evaluations can help to inform or review how best we can prevent and reduce serious violence. As we build our evidence-base, we can better design our interventions, maximise the benefits of our spending, and provide better services to people to prevent and reduce serious violence.

Five key reasons why the LVRN carries out evaluation:

1. There is a mandate to do so, as per the Serious Violence Duty and Home Office funding of the LVRN;
2. To identify best practice and learn lessons to improve our programme and intervention-level success;
3. To demonstrate accountability for our spending;
4. To assess whether there is strong enough evidence to roll-out an intervention on a wider-scale;
5. To increase evidence to counter critique and strengthen our case for future funding and sustainability.

How does evaluation help delivery of our response strategy?

Evaluation helps us to:

- Make sure our Response Strategy is delivering the greatest benefit;
- Guide decision-making about how to allocate and re-allocate resources based on which interventions have the best evidence-base and therefore the greatest likelihood of making a difference;
- Know if we are contributing to agreed outcomes;
- Understand which interventions are working and why;
- Ensure interventions do not have negative unintended consequences;
- Demonstrate accountability;
- Learn how we can improve;
- And ultimately, learn how we can prevent and reduce serious violence to make society safer and people's lives better.

When is evaluation useful?

Evaluation can inform thinking and decision-making before, during and after an intervention's implementation.

Different questions are relevant at different stages, for example:

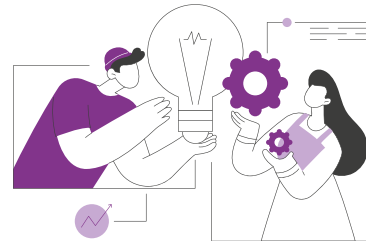
Before

- What can we learn from previous evaluations?

- How is the intervention expected to work?

- How is it expected to be delivered?

- Are the assumptions valid?



During

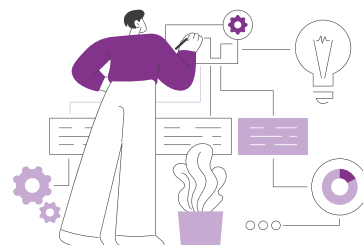
- Is the intervention being delivered as intended?

- Is the intervention working as intended?

- What are the emerging outcomes and impacts?

- Are there any unintended consequences?

- How can it be improved?



After

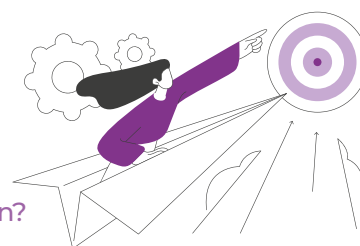
- Did the intervention work?

- By how much?

- What was the cost?

- What is the learning about its design and implementation?

- Are the changes sustained?



Who is involved?

We will strive to include all key stakeholders in our evaluation activity, including:

- Clients and experts-by-experience
- VRN core team members
- Work stream and programme leads
- Operational meeting members
- The knife crime and VRN funding oversight group
- VRN partnership board members
- Multi-agency partners

Our LVRN evaluation and impact work is governed via our usual LVRN governance structure (see Appendix A for further details).



Independent evaluation

In most cases, we commission external, independent researchers to conduct evaluations on our behalf, overseen by the LVRN Evaluation Steering Group. This is partly due to the volume of work that evaluations entail, and more importantly, to enhance credibility and ensure impartial evaluation work.

To date, we have worked with:

- The Public Health Institute, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention, Liverpool John Moore's University;
- The Centre for Criminal Justice Research and Partnership, University of Central Lancashire;
- The Law, Criminology and Policing Department, Edge Hill University;
- The Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia;
- The Centre for Child and Family Justice Research, Lancaster University;
- The Social Sciences Department, Northumbria University;
- The Law School, Lancaster University;
- The School of Justice, University of Central Lancashire.

Since April 2021 until March 2025, the LVRN has commissioned the National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North West, Lancaster University to carry out independent evaluation of all our work programmes. ARC has expertise in a range of themes to improve whole health and care systems that address the social determinants of health inequalities. The team of researchers also have practice-level expertise in health, social care and psychology.

National evaluation

Since 2019, the LVRN has been working actively with the Home Office commissioned evaluation partners Ecorys, Ipsos Mori, the University of Hull and the University of Exeter to contribute to the national evaluation work of Violence Reduction Units (Craston et al., 2020; MacLeod et al., 2020; Home Office, 2022; Home Office, 2023). We plan to continue to work collaboratively with any Home Office commissioned evaluation partner moving forward.

Principles of good evaluation

The LVRN is committed to using the principles of good evaluation, taken from HM Treasury's Magenta Book (2020) as a guide to our evaluation work. A summary of the four principles is provided below for reference:

Useful

- Designed to meet the needs of many stakeholders
- Produces useful and accessible outputs in a timely manner
- Clarity about the limits of the evaluation

Credible

- Degree of objectivity / independence
- Transparency

Robust

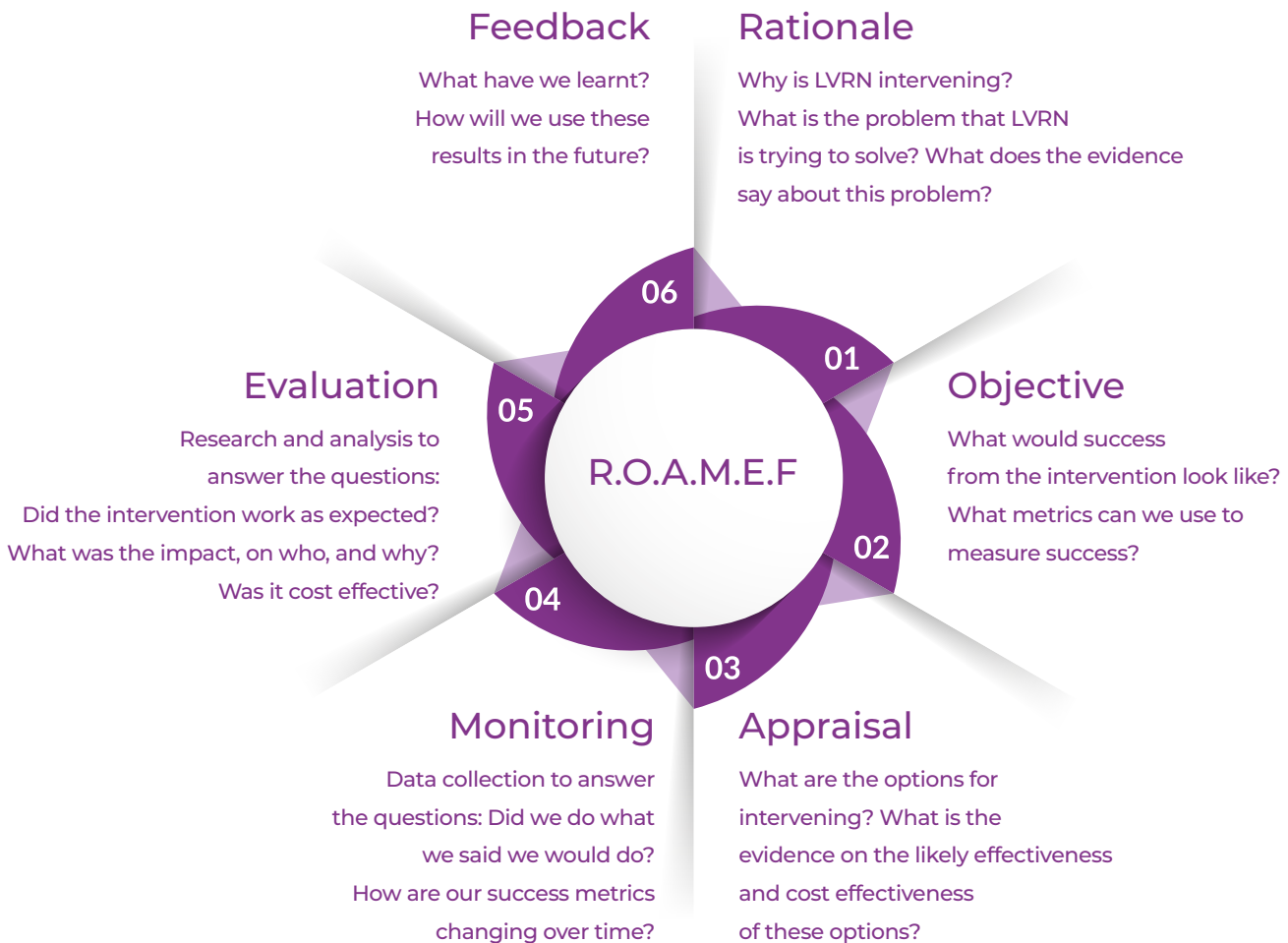
- Appropriate approach and methods
- Adequate sampling strategies and sample sizes
- Identification of statistically significant change
- Sufficient power in experimental designs
- Qualitative sampling to ensure a range of voices
- Adherence to ethical principles
- Comparison (either in time or between groups)

Proportionate

- Not all interventions require the same level of evaluation and learning
- Low-cost, low-risk interventions are more suited to light-touch monitoring and evaluation
- High-cost, high-risk interventions are likely to be more suited to larger-scale evaluation

Evaluation as part of a cycle

Furthermore, HM Treasury's (2022) Green Book presents a framework for the evaluation known as 'ROAMEF' (see details below). Although, rarely is the process of evaluation linear, ROAMEF provides a useful and simple way of expressing a complex process.



Types of evaluation

There are three main types of evaluation activity: process, impact and value-for-money evaluation.

1. Process evaluations look at how an intervention, programme, strategy or policy was delivered.
2. Impact evaluations look at the difference that a programme has made.
3. Economic evaluations (value-for-money evaluations) look at whether the benefits of a programme justify the costs.

The table below (adapted from HM Treasury's Magenta Book, 2020) provides examples of key questions under the three different types of evaluation.

Process evaluation questions: What can be learned from how the intervention was delivered?	Impact evaluation questions: What difference did the intervention make?	Value-for-money evaluation questions: Was this a good use of resources?
<p>Was the intervention delivered as intended?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there enough resources? • Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention? • To what extent has the intervention reached all the people that it was intended to? <p>What worked well, or less well, for whom and why?</p> <p>What could be improved?</p> <p>What can be learned from the delivery methods used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the intervention have been procured and delivered for less cost? <p>How has the context influenced delivery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did external factors influence the delivery and functioning of interventions? • How did external factors influence the attitudes and behaviours of target groups? 	<p>Did the intervention achieve the expected outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent? <p>Did the intervention cause the difference?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent can the outcomes be attributed to the intervention? • How confident can we be that the intervention caused the observed changes? • What causal factors resulted in the observed impacts? • How much can be attributed to external factors? • What would have happened anyway? <p>How has the context influenced outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes? • Have the outcomes been influenced by any other external factors? <p>To what extent have different groups been impacted in different ways, how and why?</p> <p>Can the intervention be reproduced?</p> <p>What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?</p>	<p>How cost-effective was the intervention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per unit (outcome, participant, etc.) • What were the costs of delivering the intervention? • Has the intervention been cost-effective (compared to alternatives and compared to doing nothing)? • What is the most cost-effective option? <p>What was the value-for-money of the intervention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the benefits? • What are the costs? • Do the benefits outweigh the costs? • What is the ratio of costs to benefits? <p>Is the intervention the best use of resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the ratio of costs to benefits compare to that of alternative interventions?
<p>Future Learning. The different types of evaluation can together help answer questions used for future learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the intervention's goals relevant, in different contexts? • Can the policy be expected to work in other contexts? • Is the intervention sustainable from financial, economic, social and environmental perspectives? • What has been learned about how to intervene in this intervention space that can be transferred to other initiatives and future appraisals? 		

Evaluations are described as 'formative' or 'summative'. Where we are in the intervention design and implementation process determines the nature of the evaluation. Both formative and summative evaluations include sub-types that serve different purposes.

Formative evaluations

Formative evaluation takes place while an intervention is being formed, in the process of being developed or redeveloped in order to make modifications (early on) to help improve the intervention.

Needs assessment

A needs assessment is a strategic approach to analysing the needs of a population. Once the needs of a population have been identified, a programme or interventions can be developed to meet those needs. A strategic needs assessment should be conducted prior to the development of a programme or intervention and before making programme changes. It can improve the use of limited resources by effectively focusing services on priority needs, including particular issues and geographical areas.

Evaluability assessment

An evaluability assessment helps to determine if a programme or intervention is ready to be evaluated and whether an evaluation is likely to produce meaningful results. It examines the objectives, design and implementation of an intervention, and the availability of data and resources to produce findings.

Process evaluation

Process (or implementation) evaluations focus on the implementation of an intervention to determine if specific activities were implemented as intended. They involve reviewing inputs, activities and outputs.

Summative evaluations

Feasibility study

A feasibility study is a smaller version of a full-scale evaluation study. This type of evaluation is important to check in advance if the evaluation designed will work. This is especially important for more expensive evaluations, such as comparative studies. The main idea is to carry out a smaller-scale study recruiting participants similar to the people that would be involved in the full evaluation. It helps to pilot the study design, recruitment and data collection methods.

Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation focuses on the short- to medium-term changes that result from an intervention.

Impact evaluation

Impact evaluation focuses on the long-term, sustained changes that result from an intervention.

Value-for-money evaluation

A value-for-money evaluation (otherwise known as a 'cost-benefit analysis') is a process used to measure the benefits of an intervention minus the associated costs. Cost-benefit analysis can include financial metrics such as costs saved as a result of an intervention. This type of evaluation can be useful to determine how to allocate resources within or across programmes to maximise the value for investment. Value-for-money evaluation can also include intangible benefits, such as client satisfaction.

Evaluation designs

Evaluators often refer to a 'hierarchy of evidence' for assessing the effectiveness of an intervention. The evaluation design that is thought to produce the most powerful evidence that an intervention works is situated at the top of the hierarchy. Evaluation hierarchies usually have randomised controlled trials (RCTs) at the top, followed by quasi-experimental

designs using comparison groups. There are also a range of other non-experimental designs such as pre- and post-test studies or case studies; these are not considered to produce such strong evidence of intervention effectiveness but may be more appropriate for certain interventions.

Experimental:

- RCTs are a method of systematically testing for differences between two or more groups of participants. This usually means one group receives the intervention that is being evaluated (the 'intervention' group) and the other does not (the 'control' group).
- Differences in results between the groups can indicate whether an intervention is effective or not. Besides comparing the results between the groups, the main distinctive feature of an RCT is the random allocation of participants to the control and intervention groups. Randomisation provides each participant with an equal chance of being allocated to receive or not receive the intervention.
- Random allocation is important because it means there is a greater chance that the people in the intervention and control groups will have a similar mix of attributes such as gender, health, attitudes, past history or life circumstances. Without randomisation there is more chance of systematic bias; which means that one group is different to the other and this difference can affect the results.

Quasi-experimental:

- Quasi-experimental evaluations use a counterfactual (a comparison group) but not one achieved through randomisation.

Non-experimental:

- Pre- and post-test (before and after) studies and case studies, but not comparison group.

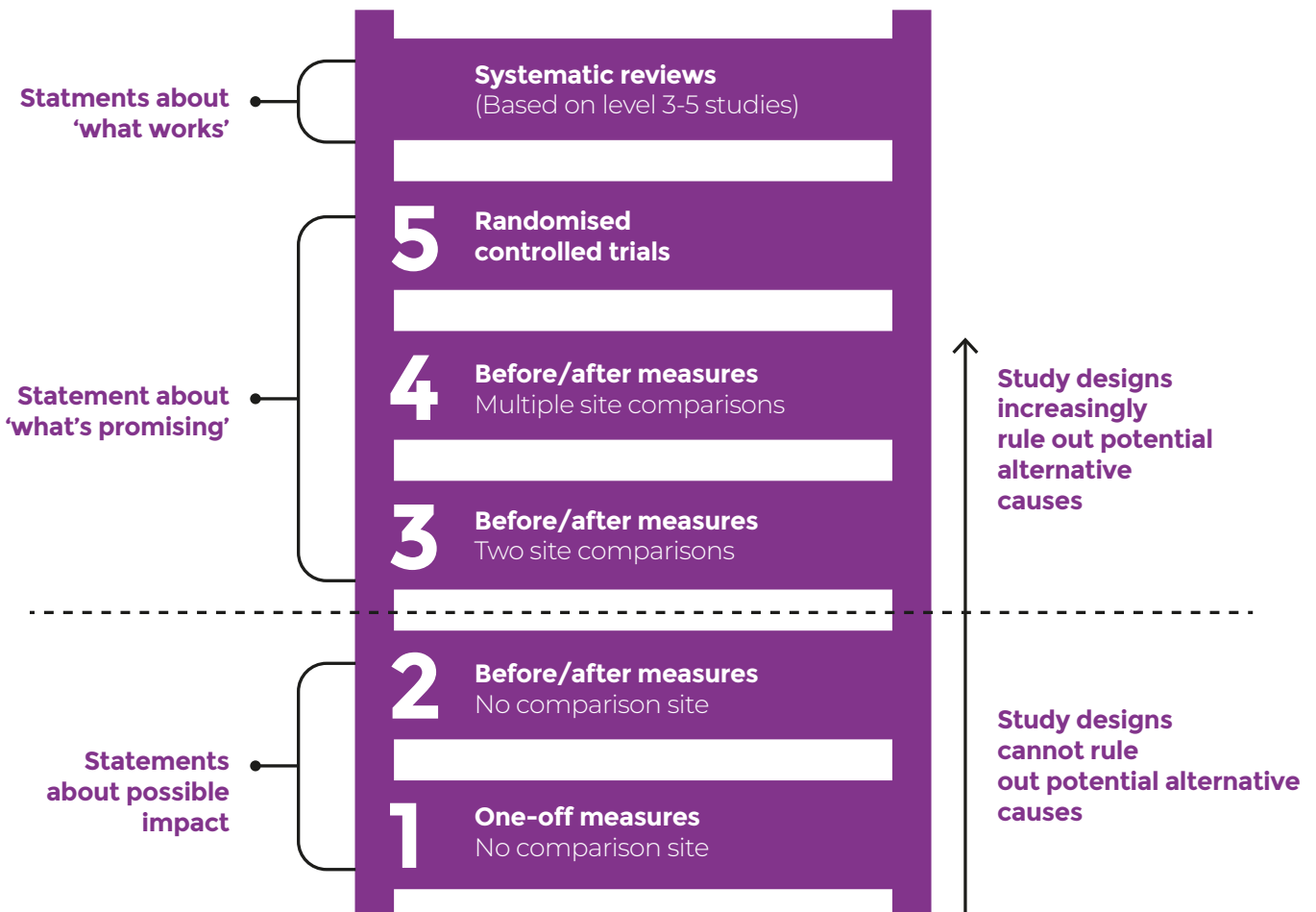
The Maryland Scale

During the December 2022, Violence Reduction Units Director’s Conference, the Home Office discussions on evaluation were focused on the Maryland scale with the view that a good proportion of interventions should be evaluated at level 3 or above.

The diagram below and the following summary is a simple explanation of the Maryland Scale, adapted from the What Works Centre for Policing, College of Policing, webpage on evaluation. The information included in purple wording

overleaf was shared by Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Unit (Hibberd, 2023) during the February 2023 National Violence Reduction Unit’s Learning and Evaluation Network, to provide additional, interpreted wording for VRU activities.

How can we be confident our activity makes a difference?



Systematic reviews and meta-analyses

are at the top of the hierarchy. High-quality systematic reviews are used to establish the existing evidence-base; they summarise all the available primary research in response to a research question. A meta-analysis is a statistical analysis that combines the results of multiple independent scientific studies. By combining information from all relevant studies, meta-analysis can provide more precise estimates of the effects of an intervention.

Level 5

is often described as the “gold standard” and consists of randomised control trials (RCTs). A RCT provides confidence that an intervention directly resulted in the outcomes, as alternative explanations for the change are ruled out.

Level 4

involves before and after measures across multiple test and control sites. Level 4 enables some management over variables that cannot be controlled, e.g. staff sickness, leadership, organisational culture, different sociodemographic characteristics and different crime or demand profiles. The evidence helps us to determine whether the introduction of an intervention led to a positive effect.

For LVRN purposes, there is the ethical situation that we would not choose to exclude clients identified as vulnerable. We would therefore interpret this as people that chose to accept or decline support.

Level 3

is similar to level 4 but only has a before and after measure across two (rather than multiple) sites, one where activity was implemented and another which remains business as usual. Any change is likely to be a result of the intervention being introduced, rather than other factors.

As per level 4, for LVRN purposes, there is the ethical situation that we would not choose to exclude clients identified as vulnerable. We would therefore interpret this as people that chose to accept or decline support.

Level 2

has a before and after measure but no comparison site. Before and after measures provide a baseline to compare to but, although we can conclude if there is change, we cannot determine if it is related to the intervention. The influence of other factors cannot be ruled out.

For LVRN purposes, the before and after measures would involve risk factors for serious violence such as substance misuse, mental health, physical health, school exclusions, criminality and family life.

Level 1

is a one-off measure with no comparison site. If there was any change, we cannot say whether the intervention had anything to do with it.

For LVRN purposes, level 1 would include the Theory of Change diagram, complemented with simple measures, e.g. number of individuals engaged.

Please see Appendix B for current levels of evaluation for our main interventions.

Quantitative and qualitative methods

The use of qualitative methods, alongside quantitative analysis, helps to explain why observed outcomes and impacts are happening.

Qualitative approaches are especially beneficial in cases where some aspects of an intervention's logic model are difficult to quantify. They can also help us

to understand more about what helps or hinders a programme's success, enabling us to make improvements to the design of an intervention.

Designing evaluation while planning an intervention

The relationship between an intervention's design and evaluation is crucial. Over the past three years, we have learnt that the way that an intervention is designed and implemented can have a beneficial or adverse impact on the ability to robustly evaluate it.

Changes to an intervention's design can make the difference between being able to carry out a high-level, high-quality and useful evaluation and one that is not able to answer key questions, such as 'does it work?', 'for whom?' and 'to what extent?'. Therefore, it is important to try whenever possible to plan evaluation alongside planning an intervention so that the intervention design and evaluation options can be developed to complement one another.

Changes, for example, might include allocating the intervention randomly to establish a treatment and control / comparison group, to support a RCT or by preparing questionnaires to be completed by all (willing) clients of a service, from the outset, to gather data both before and after an intervention. If data is not collected, it may limit the ability to conduct appropriate evaluation, and cost significantly more to carry out evaluation that is feasible. It may also be that clients are more willing to become involved in evaluation, if they are approached while they are engaging in an intervention.

Challenges in evaluating our work in preventing and reducing serious violence

Challenges in measuring the impact of violence prevention make traditional evaluation methods less readily applicable. This section of the framework summarises some of the key areas of complexity:

1. The LVRN is involved with different levels of intensity in such a wide variety of initiatives to prevent violence, it can be a challenge to evidence a direct causal relation between the LVRN activities and impact for people at risk of or involved in serious violence.
2. Assessing effectiveness and efficiency in prevention can be particularly challenging due to the multidimensionality of risk factors and outcomes involved.
3. It can be difficult to be certain what would have happened in the absence of preventative interventions.
4. There is an ethical dilemma when assigning clients to a 'control' or 'intervention' group, in that we would not choose to intentionally exclude clients, who are eligible to take part in an intervention, if they are identified as vulnerable and it is believed that they would benefit from the intervention's support.
5. Preferably, we would always make evaluation plans at the same time as developing an intervention, so that the intervention design and evaluation options can be designed to complement one another, however this has not always been possible. There are a number of reasons why doing so was challenging in the set-up phase of the LVRN, including in-house capacity and delays in evaluation work commencing due to procurement processes.
6. A needs assessment should ideally be conducted prior to the development of an intervention. However, timings in the first year of LVRN created difficulties in following this staged approach, spend requirements meant that violence reduction unit interventions were being set-up, and in the early stages of implementation, before local needs assessments were finalised.
7. In the initial years, it can appear that returns are low. Violence prevention tends to happen over long timeframes:- support may last years and impact can take a long period to play out; the impacts of interventions can occur later than the life of the intervention; understanding of whether people become involved in violence later in life requires a whole life-course approach; and, even longer timeframes are required to understand intergenerational outcomes and impacts.
8. Ideally, we would opt for evaluations to be designed to span a long-time frame from the start of interventions to years beyond their end. And, preferably, we would have process, impact and value-for-money evaluations for all of our interventions, with evaluation designs being at the highest-level, to provide the most confidence about 'what works'. However, short-term, limited funding, means that long-term, high-cost, experimental evaluations are particularly challenging.

Tackling evaluation challenges

The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network is committed to innovating in terms of evaluation. We have been working to overcome challenges over the past three years and continue to work with commissioned evaluation experts to use the most robust available, proportionate techniques.

The multi-years funding has brought about key benefits in being able to commission consistent evaluation consultants for three-years. The information below provides some examples of ways we have adapted our approach to progress our evaluation work:

1. Instead of randomly assigning clients to a 'test' or 'control' group, we make comparisons between those who choose to accept or decline support, as well as 'before' and 'after' comparisons.
2. Data is fundamental to our ongoing monitoring of programmes and evaluation. We have made significant progress with our data workstream, including setting expectations and agreements with programme leads about what data is collected and reported; developing data platforms; and creating bespoke data collection toolkits. This progress enables data to be collected as things happen, even if evaluation work is not guaranteed to be long-term or is not carried out until a later date.
3. Despite all efforts, some interventions

will continue to be difficult to evaluate robustly. Where this is the case, it is important that we acknowledge the challenges and recognise the limitations of any evaluation we have, while striving to ensure that the most robust approach possible is implemented, as well as making improvement, where possible, for future evaluation. For some interventions, it will mean relying on more qualitative methods to complement the quantitative analyses we are able to conduct. Our commissioned evaluations will seek to set out challenges, our actions to reduce them and where limitations remain.

Data linkage

Monitoring and evaluation can be enhanced by looking at our whole-LVRN programme-level and intervention-specific data alongside existing data. Doing so enables us to gain a better understanding of the performance of our strategy, activities and interventions. It also reduces our reliance on self-reported data.

A key area of focus for the LVRN is sustainability of violence prevention; performance data is crucial to building a case for mainstreaming interventions and embedding practice across the system. In order to assess the baseline picture, change and impact, the LVRN draw on the following sources of data and information:

- Public Health England fingertips;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- Home Office statistics;
- Department for Work and Pensions data;
- Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT);
- Lancashire Insight and Multi-Agency Data Exchange (MADE);
- Trauma and Injury Intelligence Group (TIIG) data;
- Lancashire Constabulary Business Intelligence (BI) dashboards.

However, these datasets are not a solution to all issues faced when trying to capture serious violence-related performance data. For example, there can be difficulties in relation to data accuracy, changes in recording practices, lags in uploading data, and data access, making it challenging to be able to confidently ascertain cause-and-effect between the LVRN's work and serious violence-related outcomes.

Additionally, there are many variables of interest when looking at the social determinants of violence and serious violence, otherwise known as the 'causes of the causes'. These variables are not included in any single existing dataset and there are limitations of each individual database, which are important to understand, explain and, where possible, account for when linking data for evaluation purposes.

Due to the complexities in serious violence data, we have found that there is a need for a multi-agency data platform that can provide a holistic view of the Lancashire population, at various levels (e.g. whole population and district-level). The LVRN are currently partnering with Lancashire County Council in developing the 'Family Hubs Information Sharing Service' (FHISS), which will link multi-agency data for the purposes of identifying risk, targeting support, facilitating research and supporting evaluation.

Being evidence-based from the start

Evidence-based interventions are more likely to work so it is important to consider the existing evidence-base when making decisions. Literature reviews, systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses can be used to look for evidence on a topic.

The 'What Works Network' has produced toolkits, which outline the level of evidence and likelihood of impact.

- The Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit: provides an overview of existing research on approaches to preventing serious youth violence, including the evidence quality, estimated impact on violent crime, and costs;
- The College of Policing Crime Reduction Toolkit: summarises the best available research evidence on reducing crime, including the effect on crime of the different interventions, how and where interventions work and how to implement interventions and their costs;
- The Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook: provides information about early intervention programmes that have been evaluated and shown to improve outcomes for children and young people, including the strength of the evidence for a programme's impact and its relative costs.

The LVRN uses the 'What Works' toolkits as a guide when making strategic decisions and when designing and reviewing interventions.

Considering evaluation in decision-making

When making strategic decisions about which interventions to invest in, the LVRN takes into consideration:

- The Lancashire Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessments (Jackson et al., 2020; Whiffing & Youansamouth, 2021; Whiffing & Youansamouth, 2022; Whiffing & Snape, 2023) to understand the local population needs, the prevalence of serious violence, underlying social determinants and particular priority issues in specific geographical areas.
- The Lancashire gap-analysis to ascertain which interventions already exist across pan-Lancashire or in specific locations.
- Existing evidence and evaluations, particularly robust evaluations which form the 'What Works' evidence-base. The LVRN focuses on YEF interventions with a minimum evidence rating of 3 (moderate, high and very high confidence), and a moderate or high impact rating.
- Available resources (e.g. time, staffing and funding), drawing on information, such as the YEF cost ratings for interventions.

In addition, we invest some resources in 'new(er)' initiatives, where the evidence-base is less well developed, but where professionals and experts-by-experience anecdotally report there is value. In particular, we fund trauma-informed training (see information below taken from the YEF Toolkit) and trauma-informed education interventions despite the evidence quality and impact currently being unknown.

YEF evidence ratings: 1 very low confidence, 2 low confidence, 3 moderate confidence, 4 high confidence and 5 very high confidence.

YEF impacting ratings: harmful, low, medium or high.

YEF cost ratings give a general indication of the cost of an approach, relative to other approaches in the Toolkit.

Trauma-informed training and service redesign

Training staff and redesigning services with an explicit focus on recognising trauma and avoiding re-traumatisation.

Insufficient evidence of impact



Evidence Quality



Cost



Prevention Type

Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

Setting

Community, Custody, School and college

Themes

Presence in schools, Trusted Adults

Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit

The table below provides details of 'core' LVRN-funded interventions, alongside the YEF research on each approach.

LVRN Name of Intervention	YEF Name of Intervention	Lead Organisation(s)/ Networks/ Systems	Cost	Evidence Quality	Estimated Impact on Violent Crime
Champions	Mentoring	LVRN	3	3	Moderate
(Youth and Adult; previously known as Divert Youth and Divert Adult)	Pre-Court Diversion	LVRN	3	4	Moderate
Emergency Department Navigators	A&E Navigators	LVRN, Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Integrated Care System	2	1	High
GRIP activity (including hot spots policing)	Hot spots policing	LVRN and Lancashire Constabulary	?	3	Moderate
Strong Inside and Out (Prisons Programme)	Trauma-specific therapy	LVRN and Lancashire and Cumbria Prisons	2	1	High
Trauma-informed education	Social skills training	Education and Children's Social Care	2	4	High
Trauma-informed training	Trauma-informed training and service redesign	LVRN	?	0	?

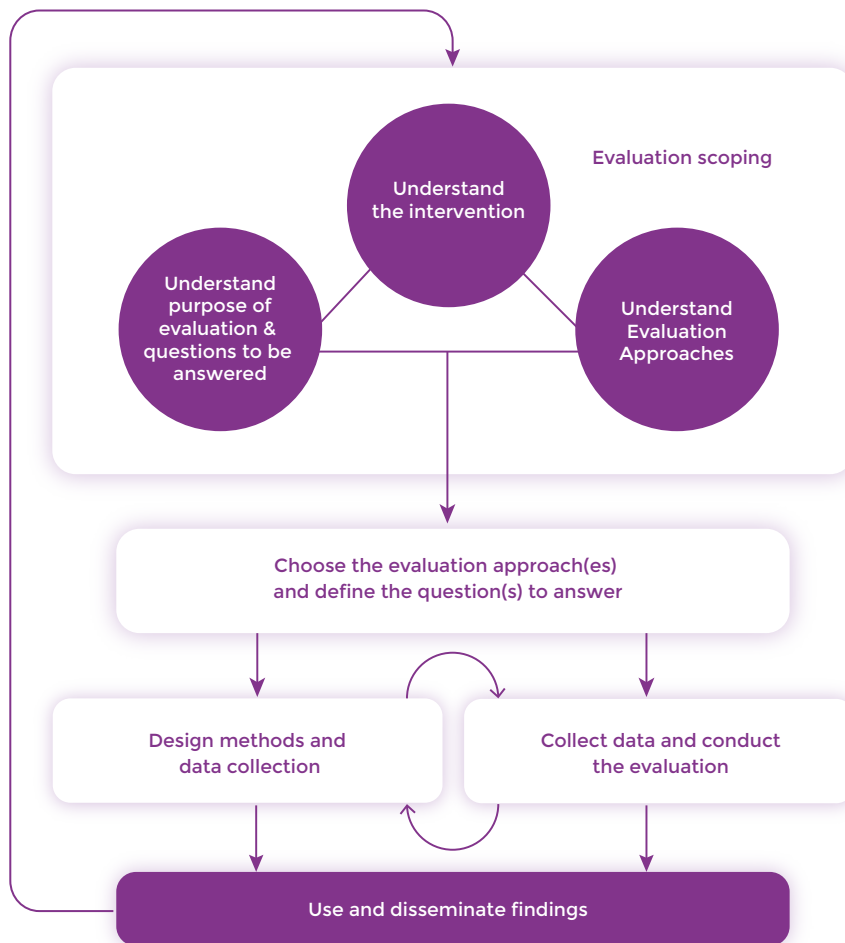
Please note the Toolkit is updated at regular intervals so the ratings may vary over time.

The YEF Toolkit identifies other approaches, with ‘moderate’ and ‘high confidence’ evidence ratings, such as those listed in the table below. Our LVRN gap-analysis identified that these interventions already exist within Lancashire. The LVRN does not prioritise investment in interventions that are already well-established/mainstreamed in Lancashire.

LVRN Name of Intervention	YEF Name of Intervention	Lead Organisation(s)/ Networks/ Systems	Cost	Evidence Quality	Estimated Impact on Violent Crime
Solution-focused therapy	Multi-systemic therapy	Integrated Care System	3	3	Moderate
Restorative Justice	Restorative justice	Prominent feature across Lancashire (various organisations e.g. Lancashire Constabulary)	1	3	Moderate
Healthy relationships, Caring Dads and Domestic Violence (Perpetrator and Victim) Programmes	Relationship violence prevention	Education, Children’s Social Care and Domestic Abuse Services	1	4	Moderate

Evaluation process

For those who are less familiar with the process of evaluation, the diagram below provides a simple overview:



Logic models

A logic model provides a graphic representation of an intervention's expected journey. It shows a sequence of anticipated steps to reach the intended outcomes and impact. Logic models provide a useful framework for understanding how to monitor and evaluate an intervention, including information about what data needs to be captured through monitoring and evaluation. Instead of focusing on the end result, which might take years to happen, a logic model includes the expected short-term outputs and outcomes.

Logic models usually include the following:

- **Inputs:** resources required to achieve the outputs, outcomes and impact.
- **Activities:** what the inputs aim to deliver.
- **Outputs:** the direct results of the activity.
- **Outcomes:** changes or benefits from the activity and outputs.
- **Impacts:** the final, end result.

A template logic model can be found in Appendix C.

Having logic models for each intervention helps to ensure that any evaluation measures things that are expected to occur, while also capturing unintended outcomes and impacts.

Theories of change

Whilst a logic model provides an illustration of a chain of events used to describe an intervention it does not tell us how or why the change occurs (Quigg et al., 2020).

Defining a theory of change is recommended in order to define what success will look like and the assumptions associated with the delivery of an intervention. To be effective, the theory of change should explain how and why an activity will result in a change, with reference

to wider influences at various socioecological levels. A theory of change and logic model are not fixed, they should be adapted as evidence of what works or not, and for whom and why is developed. A template logic model can be found in Appendix D.

A theory of change describes how the programme is intended to work and bring about change for individuals, groups and communities that it is targeted towards. (Quigg et al., 2020)

Monitoring activities

The LVRN monitors its programme and intervention-level activity. Our monitoring processes include quarterly reports, submitted to the Home Office. The reports include details, such as:

- Delivery of the 'core' function (e.g. leading and coordinating a local response to preventing serious violence; involvement of partner organisations and systems change);
- Delivery of a multi-agency approach;
- Data sharing and Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV);
- Funding spend for each intervention;
- Number of clients supported by each intervention;

- Outputs and outcomes achieved;
- Updates to theory of change;
- Data about progress towards key success measures;
- Community engagement;
- Any barriers to effective delivery;
- Key risks and measures to mitigate them;
- Progress on evaluation;
- Local and national knowledge sharing;
- Sustainability planning.

Details of LVRN progress are also disseminated via our LVRN newsletters and annual reports.

Monitoring seeks to check progress against planned targets and can be defined as the formal reporting and evidencing that spend and outputs are successful delivered and milestones met'. (HM Treasury, 2020)

LVRN evaluation progress

Since establishing in 2019, the LVRN has launched eleven process and ten outcomes evaluations, covering all of our key workstreams.

We have published reports relating to the following activities:

- The Trauma-Informed Police Training (process and outcomes);
- The LVRN programme-level approach (process);
- Empower the Invisible Community Outreach (process and outcomes);
- Preston United Community Engagement (process and outcomes);
- Emergency Department Navigators (process and outcomes);
- Champions (previously known as Divert Lancashire) (process and outcomes);
- Trauma-Informed Early Adopters (process);
- Trauma-Informed Education (process and outcomes);
- Trauma-Informed Workforce Development (process and outcomes);
- Caring Dads (process and outcomes);
- Multi-agency Risk Reduction Assessment and Coordination approach (process and outcomes);
- LVRN Culture Change and Networking (process and outcomes);
- GRIP Hotspots Policing (outcomes).

The core LVRN team and intervention leads are involved in evaluation from the beginning to help ensure that the results are fed back into improvement plans regarding intervention design and implementation. The LVRN has developed an evaluation action plan (a 'live' document), which collates the learning and recommendations from all of our evaluations in a single source to support us to act on the findings and apply the learning in practice, tailoring our approach, response strategy and interventions accordingly.

As a result of local and national evaluation findings and in consideration of the evidence about 'What Works', we act on new knowledge to improve our programme and intervention design and activities, embedding a process of continual learning and improvement.

Serious Violence Duty

In preparing for the rollout of the Serious Violence Duty, implemented as part of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Home Office commissioned Crest Advisory to assess all police force areas in England and Wales, in terms of their readiness to implement the requirements outlined in the new statutory duty.

In preparing for the rollout of the Serious Violence Duty, implemented as part of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Home Office commissioned Crest Advisory to assess all police force areas in England and Wales, in terms of their readiness to implement the requirements outlined in the new statutory duty. As part of Crest's Joint Readiness Assessments (1) the evidence base; and (2) change and impact were assessed.

The LVRN is very proud of its achievements and our progress made in evidencing impact and evaluating serious violence prevention, reflected in Lancashire being judged as "mature, demonstrating best practice" (the highest rating/level).

**"Local areas should be able to robustly demonstrate the change made and impact as a result of their strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence that allows other local areas regionally and nationally to follow best practice and adopt What Works"
(Crest 2023).**

**"Having developed a strong Strategic Needs Assessment, Response Strategy and Performance Framework Lancashire are mature, demonstrating best practice"
(Crest, 2023).**

LVRN evaluation plans

Appendix E sets out our high-level evaluation work plan.

The notable concentration of activity is over the next two years, reflecting the timescales involved in designing and implementing interventions and evaluations, and providing sufficient time for impacts to materialise. The aim, by July 2023, is to have an agreed LVRN evaluation approach.

This will include:

1. Understanding of current levels of evaluation, based on the Maryland scale, for each intervention;

2. A goal level for each intervention;

3. An assessment of whether there needs to be any intervention or programme-level changes (e.g. new data collection processes; set-up of a comparison group) to evidence impact;

4. An up-to-date logic model for each intervention;

5. An up-to-date theory of change for each intervention;

6. An evaluation plan – including a data (collection) plan – for each intervention to address the gaps over the next couple of years of LVRN funding.

Uncertainty about, year-on-year, funding meant that we were only able to commission short-term evaluation work for the first few years of the LVRN's existence. Now, with multiple years funding over the next two years, we will focus on working in partnership with our commissioned evaluation consultants to:

- Build on the learning and recommendations from our existing evaluations;
- Continue to explore how best to evaluate serious violence interventions;
- Design robust evaluation work to evidence how our strategy and interventions are working;
- Further develop our understanding of the implementation of interventions;
- Focus on capturing medium- and longer-term outcomes and impact achieved;
- Assess whether the benefits outweigh the costs;
- Enable timely incorporation of findings and recommendations into decision-making processes;
- Include evaluation in our sustainability plans.

Our usual approach to evaluation has been to take an intervention-by-intervention approach. This approach has benefits in providing evidence of the process, outcomes, impact and cost-benefits of each intervention. However, it does not capture the impact of the LVRN's strategic approach, the complexity of the serious violence prevention system that the LVRN supports, or how the network interacts. We will therefore also seek to evaluate the programme-level impact of the LVRN to build a more holistic picture of the LVRN's impact, combining the evidence from intervention-level evaluations with additional findings to understand the wider impacts and additional value of the LVRN in preventing serious violence and socioecological factors associated with serious violence.

Conclusion

Since establishing in 2019, the LVRN has made significant progress in understanding how to evaluate our activities more robustly. We have implemented a programme of evaluation covering almost all of our interventions and we continue to ensure that our activities are evaluated by the most rigorous methods practical, taking into account the development stage of each intervention.

Over the next two years, we will draw upon key points of learning to date, as follows:

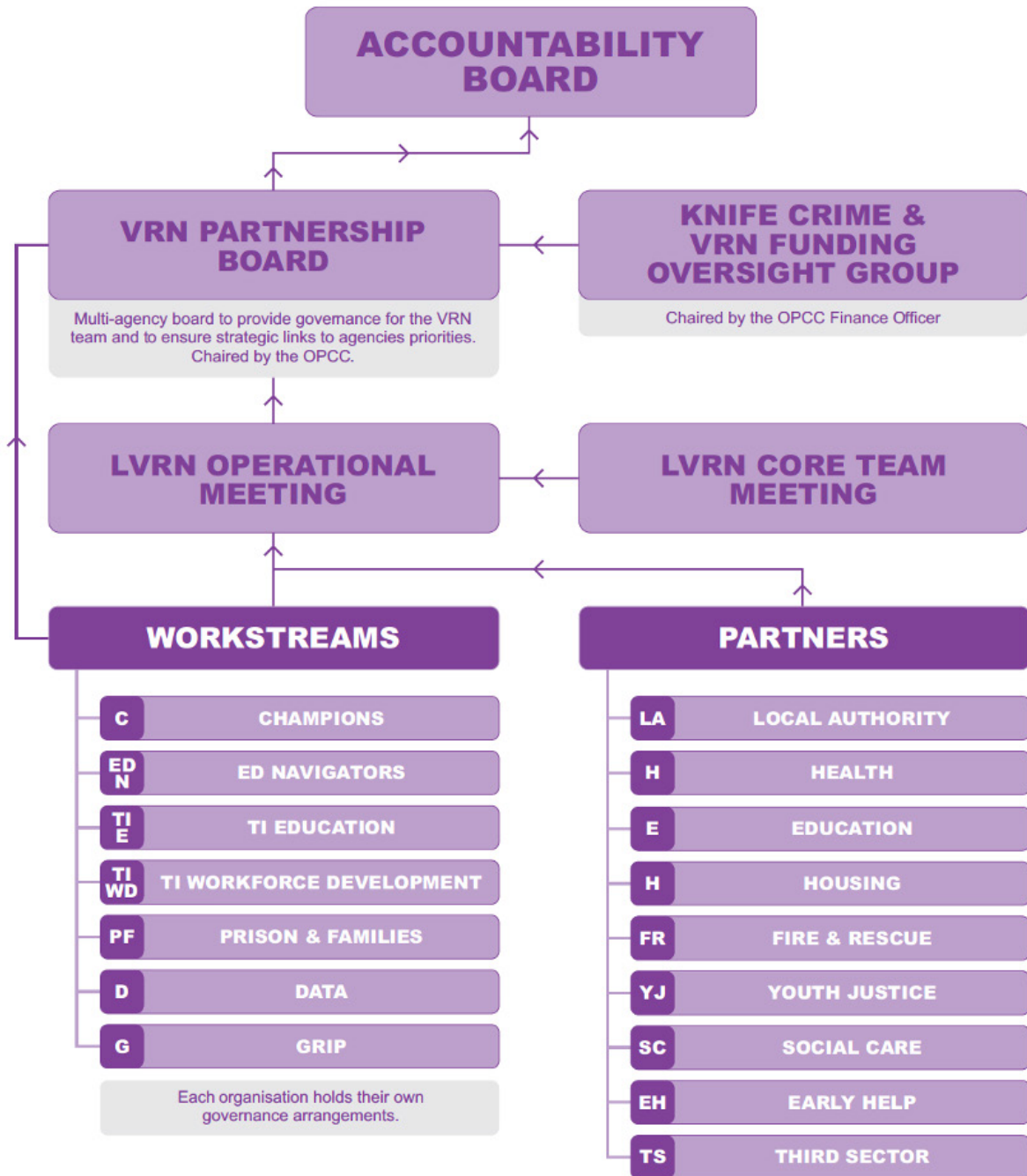
- Evaluation should be designed into interventions from the start;
- Data is critical to evaluation and evidencing impact – we must ensure that we know what data is required for evaluation and that appropriate data collection processes and systems are in place;
- Accepting that there are challenging when evaluating serious violence prevention initiatives and that we do not have solutions to all the challenges we face;
- Complexities mean that ‘gold standard’ evaluations of an intervention or programme’s impact on preventing serious violence will not always be possible;
- Difficulties in evaluation should not prevent us from being ambitious and ensuring that the most robust methods feasible are applied;
- Where rigorous methods are not feasible, we implement the most robust and proportionate method possible.

This framework has aimed to summarise some key information about evaluation and our LVRN approach to evaluation. We will continue to improve our data collection, monitoring and evaluation work in order to understand what works, both in terms of evidencing impact and the interventions that we fund. In turn, as we gain greater insight into the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of our interventions and strategic approach – alongside (inter) national evidence of what works – we will improve the design and delivery of our interventions and programme based on the knowledge gained, in order to prevent serious violence and the associated harms to society.

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Appendix A: LVRN governance chart



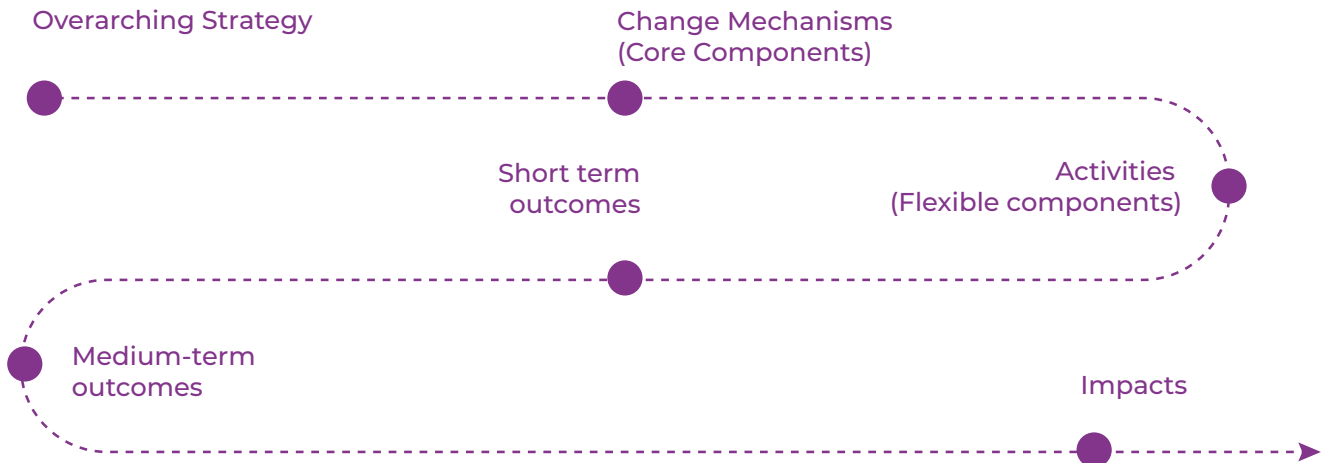
Appendix B: Levels of evaluation, based on the Maryland scale

Name of Intervention	Current Level of Evaluation	Target Level of Evaluation
Trauma-Informed Police Training	Level 1	N/A – now incorporated into the Trauma-Informed Workforce Development work stream
Empower the Invisible	Level 1	N/A – no longer funding
Preston United Community Engagement	Level 1	N/A – no longer funding
Trauma-Informed Early Adopters	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Caring Dads Blackburn with Darwen	Level 3	N/A – funded by local authority
Multi-agency Risk Reduction Assessment and Coordination Approach	Level 2	N/A – no longer funding
The LVRN programme-level approach	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Emergency Department Navigators	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Champions Youth and Champions Adults	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Trauma-informed Workforce Development	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Trauma-informed Education	Level 1	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Prisoners and Prisoners' Families	N/A – not yet evaluated	To be confirmed with commissioned evaluators
Police Surge Activity and GRIP	Level 5	Level 5

Appendix C: Template logic model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	
List here all the resources that are required to deliver the intervention	Provide information of what is being delivered, e.g. is it an intervention programme, project service and what are the contents?	What are the outputs and reach, e.g. the numbers of people completing training or a programme?	Short Term	Longer Term
			Primary and secondary outcomes that happen in the short term, e.g. what does the intervention aim to achieve?	Changes that happen as a result of the short-term outcomes, e.g. what are the overall aims and objectives?

Appendix D: Template theory of change diagram



Individual Level					
Service Level					
System Level					
Assumptions			Risks		

Appendix E: Existing high-level evaluation activities

Details	Leads	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Lancashire Gap Analysis	Core LVRN Team & University of Central Lancashire	Work Underway	Final Report					
Strategic Needs Assessment	Core LVRN Team	Work Underway	Final Report					
Annual Updates to the Strategic Needs Assessment			Work Underway	Final Report	Final Report	Final Report		
Lancashire Serious Violence Strategy	Core LVRN Team in consultation with partners	Work Underway	Final Report					
Annual Reviews of Lancashire's Serious Violence Strategy			Work Underway	Final Report	Final Report	Final Report		
Home Office Monitoring Returns	Core LVRN Team & Work Programme Leads	Final Report	Final Report	Final Report	Final Report	Work Underway		
National Process evaluation of the Violence Reduction Units	Ecorys, University of Hull, Ipsos Mori	Work Underway	Final Report					
National Violence Reduction Units - Impact evaluation feasibility study	Ecorys, University of Hull, Ipsos Mori	Work Underway	Final Report					
Programme-level evaluation of the LVRN	Liverpool John Moore's University	Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report				
Empower the Invisible evaluation	Liverpool John Moore's University	Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report				
Preston United Community Outreach evaluation	Liverpool John Moore's University	Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report				
Emergency Department Navigators evaluation	Liverpool John Moore's University	Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report				
Divert Lancashire evaluation	Liverpool John Moore's University	Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report				
Trauma-Informed Training - An Evaluation	University of Central Lancashire & Edge Hill University			Work Underway	Final Report			
National Evaluation - Violence reduction unit year ending March 2021 evaluation report	Ecorys, University of Hull, Ipsos Mori			Work Underway	Final Report			
Caring Dads Blackburn with Darwen Evaluation	University of East Anglia		Work Underway	Work Underway	Final Report			
National Evaluation - Violence reduction unit year ending March 2022 evaluation report	Ecorys, University of Hull, Ipsos Mori				Work Underway	Final Report		

Completed
 In Progress
 Related Activities
 Work Underway
 Interim Report
 Final Report

Details	Leads	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Multi-agency Risk Reduction Assessment & Coordination Approach evaluation	Northumbria University, Lancaster University and University of Central Lancashire		Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report			
Trauma-Informed Early Adopters evaluation	Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University			Work Underway	Final Report			
Trauma-Informed Education evaluation	Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University			Work Underway	Final Report			
Trauma-Informed Workforce Development evaluation	Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University			Work Underway	Final Report			
Divert Lancashire evaluation	Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University			Work Underway	Final Report			
Emergency Department Navigators evaluation	Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University			Work Underway	Final Report			
LVRN Culture Change and Networking Report					Work Underway	Final Report		
Develop a framework for evaluation and impact	LVRN Core Team				Work Underway	Final Report		
Understand current levels of evaluation for each intervention	LVRN Core Team				Work Underway	Final Report		
Update the logic model for each intervention	LVRN Work Programme Leads and Core Team					Work Underway		
Update the theory of change for each intervention and the LVRN programme-level theory of change	LVRN Work Programme Leads and Core Team					Work Underway		
Produce an evaluation plan, including target levels of evaluation for each intervention	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway		
Produce a data collection plan for each intervention	LVRN Core Team					Work Underway		
Trauma-Informed Education evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report
Trauma-Informed Workforce Development evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report
Champions Lancashire evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report

Completed
 In Progress
 Related Activities
 Work Underway
 Interim Report
 Final Report

Details	Leads	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Emergency Department Navigators evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report
Prisoners and Prisoners' Families evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report
Lancashire Violence Reduction Network programme-level evaluation	Commissioned evaluation consultants & Applied Research Collaboration North West, Lancaster University					Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report
GRIP Evaluation	LVRN Core Team				Work Underway	Interim Report	Final Report	Final Report

- Completed
- In Progress
- Related Activities
- Work Underway
- Interim Report
- Final Report



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