

## **Violence prevention- a role for public health: using evidence to inform local violence prevention**

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Major international and national reports have called for stronger recognition of prevention of violence as a public health problem, requiring public health approaches to needs measurement, assessment of evidence of effectiveness, and leadership and partnership development in responses. There is a growing evidence base for effective intervention to improve health and reduce crime. Among these are methadone maintenance and harm reduction for drug problems; early year's interventions including High scope, interactive schools drug education programmes; youth mentoring programmes, street lighting, neighbourhood policing and situational crime prevention, particularly in the control of alcohol-related violence. Examples of strongly evidence-based programmes from Sandwell's Crime and disorder reduction partnership demonstrate how the translation of evidence into practice has delivered improved outcomes locally. Among these are: Methadone maintenance and harm reduction: produced a 30% fall in domestic burglary when clients in treatment doubled in 2004 and acquisitive crime has continued to reduce. This programme has been accompanied by target hardening and repeat victim programmes, *designing-out crime* planning guidance and other measures to reduce burglary.

Streetlighting: The Greets Green New Deal for Community area reported substantial community satisfaction with improved street lighting and a reduced fear of crime; consistent with what research evidence says.

Extensive early years and other educational interventions have been shown to have a substantial long-term impact on child protection, preventing a cycle of deprivation and abuse and preventing crime as the young people reach adulthood. In Sandwell these have contributed to a massive increase in school readiness of 5 year olds, and to higher GSCE outcomes and reduced teenage pregnancy rates, which can be taken as proxies for better outcomes for young people and reducing likelihood of engagement in crime.

Public health services in local authorities need to recognise violence as a priority and develop their role to prevent violence.