

# Parents and Carers Views on Community Safety and Help and Support Available to them

August 2023



**Violence  
Reduction  
Alliance**

Stoke-on-Trent  
and Staffordshire

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## Introduction

Formed in March 2021, the Violence Reduction Alliance (VRA) is a multi-agency partnership working together **to strengthen the visibility, early identification and partnership response to prevent violence and its associated harms.**

The VRA takes a public health approach to tackling violence by working with a range of agencies to address the root causes of violence. Our work specifically focuses on early intervention and prevention, with the ultimate aim to stop violence before it begins. We use data to understand violent crimes better and take an evidence-based approach to ensure the interventions we use are likely to work. By understanding the root causes of violence both short- and long-term solutions are generated.

The Staffordshire Commissioners Office, on behalf of the VRA, has commissioned Chit Chat 4 U to undertake an engagement exercise with parents and carers to:

- inform the development of the new VRA strategy;
- meaningfully inform decision makers in the future commissioner of services;
- help shape future awareness campaigns.

## Research Aim & Objectives

Research Aim: To ensure parents and carers living in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are given the opportunity to have their voices heard by professionals.

Research Objectives:

- obtain a better understanding of the main concerns parents and carers have;
- understand what help and support parents and carers have previously received;
- identify gaps in the help and support available to parents and carers on keeping their child safe;
- identify potential future initiatives that parents and carers would like to see locally.

## Evaluation Methods

- Online Survey – The VRA developed an online survey for completion by all parents and carers. The survey was designed to be quick for parents and carers to complete (average completion time 4 minutes) and was launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> April for 7 weeks until 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023. The survey was shared via Chit Chat 4 U's Facebook page.
- Targeted focus groups – Chit Chat 4 U held 6 focus groups with parents and carers whose child(ren) have been directly affected by violence.

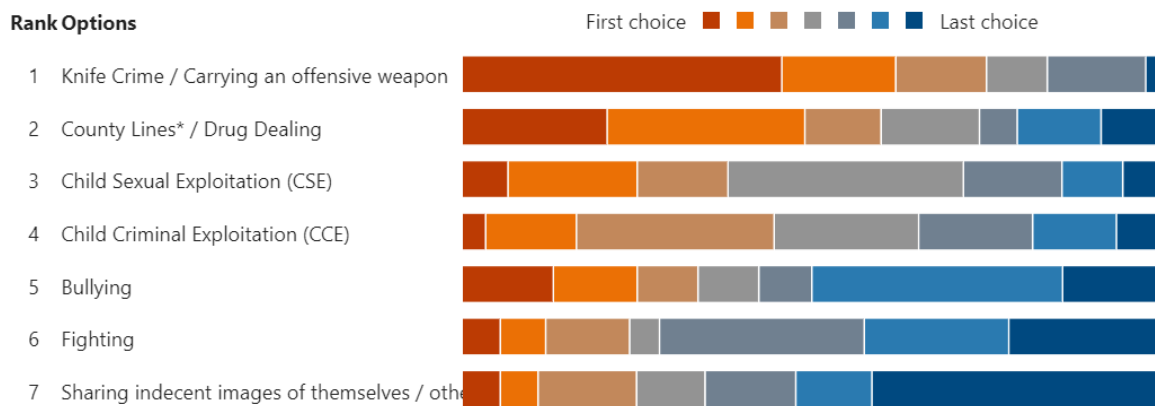
# Online Survey

## Findings

This section will present and summarise the findings from the online survey.

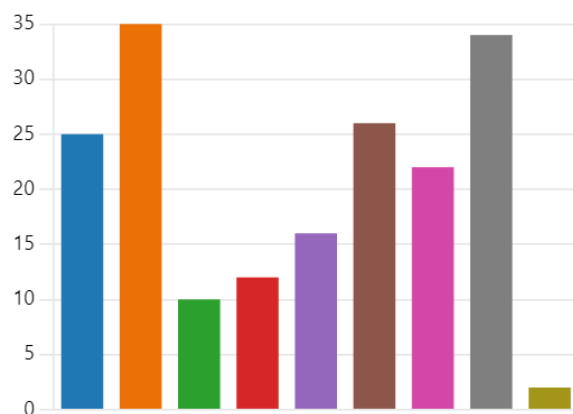
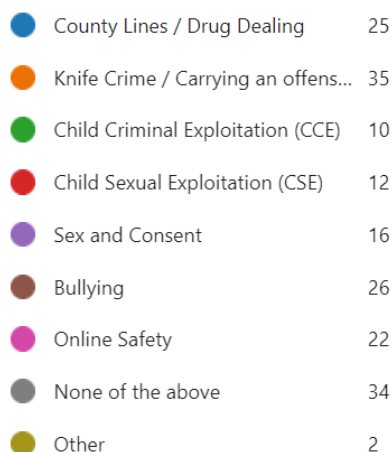
### What are your main community safety concerns for you child?

Out of 92 responses, 46% of parents and carers stated that Knife Crime / carrying an offensive weapon was their top concern. 21% of respondents answered County Lines / drug dealing as their top concern, with 28% stating that this was their second top concern. Furthermore, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was the third topic with the highest number of respondents choosing this as their top concern.



### Have you ever looked for help and/or support on the following topics to help keep your child safe?

In line with the findings from the last question, the highest percentage (38%) of parents and carers stated they had looked for help/support on knife crime / carrying an offensive weapon. Moreover, 28% of respondents stated they had looked for help/support on bullying and 25% had looked for help/support on County Lines / drug dealing. Interestingly, 37% of parents and carers stated they had not looked for help/support on any of the above. Respondents were also given the option to provide their own answer with 1 respondent stating they had looked for “mental health support”.



### If yes, were you able to find help and support easily?

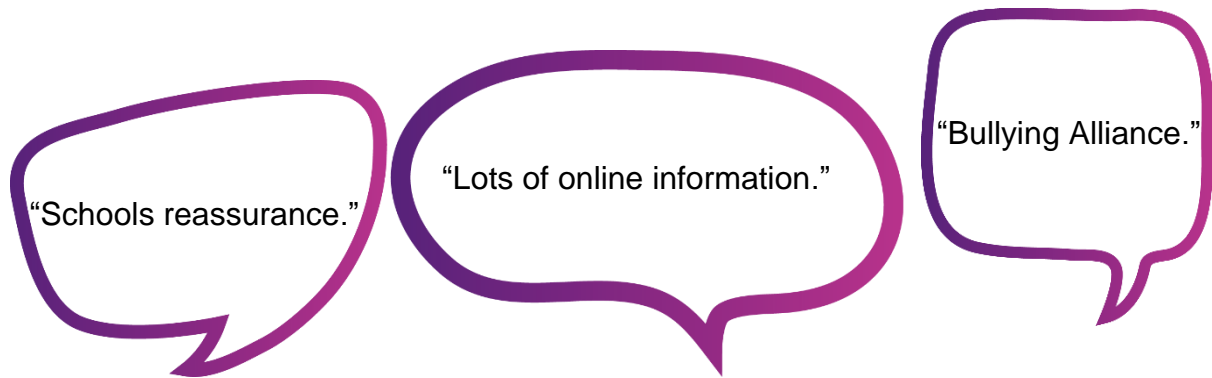
Out of the 58 respondents who said they had looked for help/support, 66% said they were not able to find help and support easily.

● Yes	21
● No	38
● N/A	33



### What help and support did you find or receive?

Those that answered 'yes' to the previous questions, were then asked what help and support they found or received. 29% of respondents answered 'Chit Chat 4 U' with others answering:



### How useful did you find this help and support?

From the same 21 respondents, 7 of them said they found this help and support extremely useful and 11 said they found it somewhat useful.

● Extremely useful	7
● Somewhat useful	11
● Neutral	1
● Somewhat not useful	2
● Extremely not useful	0

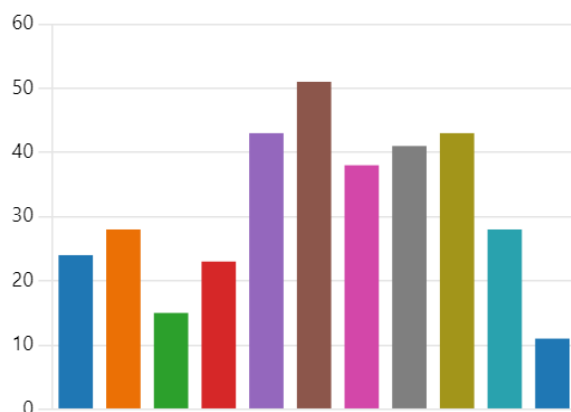


Select all of the topics you feel you have the right tools and knowledge about to be able to start a conversation with your child about.

All respondents were asked the above, 55% of respondents felt they had the right tools and knowledge to start a conversation with their child about bullying, 46% selected fighting and 46% social and digital media.

Only 16% of parents and carers said they would be able to start a conversation with their child about Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and 12% stated they did not feel they had the right tools and knowledge to start a conversation with their child about any of these topics.

● County Lines / Drug Dealing	24
● Knife Crime / Carrying an offens...	28
● Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	15
● Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	23
● Fighting	43
● Bullying	51
● Sharing indecent images of the...	38
● Sex and Consent	41
● Social and Digital Media (i.e. ga...	43
● All of the above	28
● None of the above	11



If you would not feel confident in starting a conversation with you child about any of these topics please specify why.

“CSE, due to my religion this would be a hard one to discuss with my children.”

“Confidence.”

“Not enough knowledge.”

“My son does not listen to me. He thinks he knows it all.”

“I can’t talk to my daughter about anything she would trash the house or run off.”

“Because sometimes it’s better coming from someone not so close to you also it can cause friction between us parents and child as if accusations are being made which can make matters worse.”

“What happens isn’t what is taught so its confusing. Professionals don’t seem to get it at all so no idea what to tell me kids.”

What would help make you feel more confident in starting a conversation with your child about this topic? *(Tick all that apply)*

Out of the 92 parents and carers that completed the survey, 67% stated that education / training on these topics would help them to feel more confident in starting a conversation with their child. 65% of respondents said guidance on the language used by individuals when referring to illegal activity (i.e. drug dealing) would help so they could listen out for if their child was using it. 52% stated guidance on how to start a conversation with their child on these topics would help to make them feel more confident and 59% answered ‘guidance on what services /agencies to contact if following a conversation, they had further concerns’.

- Education / Training on these to... 62
- Guidance on the language used... 60
- Guidance on how to start a con... 48
- Guidance on what services / age... 55
- Other 10



“Confidence.”

“Generic conversation.”

“Having a support person that is trained in such topics.”

### How well do you feel schools support parents / carers in keeping your child safe?

26% of respondents felt that schools support parents and carers somewhat well in keeping their child safe; however, only 7% stated they felt like schools do this extremely well. Furthermore, 25% of respondents answered 'somewhat not well' and 21% answered 'extremely not well'. Impartially, 22% of respondents stated 'neutral'.

Extremely well	6
Somewhat well	24
Neutral	20
Somewhat not well	23
Extremely not well	19



### Do you currently receive support / guidance from your child's school on how to keep your child safe?

Out of the 92 respondents who completed the survey, 71% of respondents said they do not currently receive support / guidance from their child's school on how to keep their child safe. Only 29% answered 'yes'.

Yes	27
No	65



### Would you want to receive up to date information on how to keep your child safe (e.g. new social media trends)?

The majority of respondents (83%) said they would like to receive up to date information on how to keep their child safe which could include new social media trends and/or new concerns within the area.

Yes	55
No	11





Are there any other services or initiatives you would want to see locally to support parents and carers with keeping their child safe?

“More visible patrols, engagements with young people, meaningful activities.”

“Family sessions on the subjects discussed.”

“Help for parents to be able to deal with children’s behaviour whilst at home, this would be a big help for families and society in general. More PCSO’s on the streets.”

“Community Liaison work to bring communities together more, local parent groups to discuss improving changes for young people.”

“Training on supporting my son. How to talk to him and understand what he is talking about.”

“Initiatives to give kids purpose BEFORE they get involved in crime.”

“Things for children and young people to do in the community.”

“Parent groups, support leaflets, more services to support.”

What would you like to see locally to help keep children and young people safe whilst out in the community? (e.g. 1-1 support, education on violence, knife amnesty bins)

"More 1-1 support for victims and their parents."

"More youth facilities, more education, more 1-1 support."

"Youth activities, support sessions."

"Education."

"More places for them to enjoy leisure activities whilst also being able to ask for help and support whilst doing so."

"Visual presence of the law in communal areas daily such as parks, lots of teenagers access these areas from 4~9pm and at weekend's."

"A local support group for families experiencing these issues. Also drop in centre for children to talk to someone who is trained to help with community safety and make children aware of the danger that is about in their community. They don't necessarily hear the news etc so this could be the first they have heard about it. They often react to parents as if they are being over dramatic."

"Prevention."

"High level of family support for at-risk individuals. Prevention of perpetrator activity."

"Knife amnesty bins."

## Targeted Focus Groups Cohort of Parents and Carers

Was your child a victim of violence, involved in violence, or both?

Victim	Involved In	Both Victim & Involved In
16/59	23/59	20/59

Do you feel that you received adequate support form services and agencies during this time?

Yes	No
12/59	47/59

What services were in contact with you during this time?

Service	Total
Police	59/59
Social Care	28/59
Catch22	20/59
Hospital	17/59
Doctors	2/59
Mental Health (CAMHS)	5/59
YOT	16/59

## Findings

What type of support would you have expected during this time?

Parents expressed that when their child was stabbed they had to wait between 6-8 months before any mental health service contacted them.

“Support when my child will not attend hospital after being attacked.”

Those who had children involved have been requesting mental health support for their child as they have experienced trauma but haven't received any.

Most parents whose children has eventually received mental health support stated that after the first two sessions the case was closed due to non-engagement. Parents stated they would have expected services to understand they needed to build a relationship with their child before expecting them to disclose traumatic information.

Parents stated support needs to be given to a young person who has been attacked as soon as they are in the hospital. This is the children who are willing to talk because they are scared. After a few weeks they have learned how to deal with the trauma but not in the right way. They turn to drugs, alcohol and refuse to talk and trust anyone.

Parents expressed that they felt like services blamed them for the situation that their child was in.

Parents stated that they felt as though they had been in the middle of all agencies.

Parents stated they felt scared of their children, especially when they were under the influence.

Parents expressed a frustration with the decisions made by services as the reasons behind their decisions weren't explained.

Parents stated they had to retell their story to every different professional. Parents reported that they found this traumatic and upsetting having to re-live the incident.

“A worker to come out and rebuild confidence.” Most parents stated they had lost all their confidence and strength to be able to protect their child(ren).

The majority of parents stated that their child had started to smoke cannabis and drink alcohol after being attacked and/or involved in violence.

Parents of victims stated that if their child had received support the moment their children were rushed to hospital their child would have less likely become involved and would have been less like to be addicted to drugs.

Do you think there is a gap in services available to parents and carers whose children have been involved in or affected by violence? If so, what type of service would you like to see locally?

"Everyone tells me it's my duty to stop my child, what else can I do? I search his room but then he comes home and trashes my house."

"The reason there is so much crime is because everyone is so poor, kids just want to make some money."

"Tell me, how do you stop your child leaving the house when you are being physically assaulted? They broke my wrist, give me a black eye, strangled their sister, and everyone says I have a duty of care to stop them? Really?"

"I have adults well elders taking my child to Blackpool to buy knives and then they are selling them here. I have repeatedly told professionals, but I get told there is nothing they can do and it's my responsibility to stop them."

"Services just don't understand."

"When elders hurt the youngsters, of course they are going to influence my child more than me. What can I do? Take his phone? What good will that do?"

"Vapes and weed, what support is there for that? This is why my boy got involved it's about dealing. What services are there to help me with that?"

"Knife crime is bad and gangs it's just normal nowadays but why can't professionals accept it? I spoke to a councillor the other day and he said it wasn't bad, what planet are they living on?"

“Alcohol should be banned. I can’t stop my kids drinking and coming home drunk. I try and ground them, but they run out the house, I then report them missing and then a missing worker comes to see them, asks why they have gone missing, my child just says don’t know and the meeting ends. What is the point?”

## Key Recommendations

- More support from services and agencies, including better support from local authorities and increased police patrols
- More mental health support for parents, carers, children and young people when a child has either been involved in, or victim of violence
- Support for victims of violence immediately after the incident/crime has occurred
- Services to help children who are addicted to drugs and alcohol
- Services and agencies to better understand gangs, youth violence and knife crime
- Better communication between services and agencies
- 1-1 support for parents and carers when their child is at risk or involved in violence
- More groups for parents and carers to gain support from others who have had similar experiences
- Produce training and education material for parents and carers on topics such as, knife crime, County Lines/drug dealing and CSE including:
  - guidance on language used by individuals when referring to illegal activity (i.e. drug dealing)
  - guidance on how to start a conversation with a child on these topics
- More facilities/positive activities for children and young people including, more training and employment opportunities
- Up to date information for parents and carers such as, new social media trends





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