



Association of  
Police and Crime  
Commissioners



**PCCs MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

# VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNITS (VRUs) IN FOCUS

A multi-agency and public health approach to support young people and divert them away from serious violent crime

# PCCs MAKING A DIFFERENCE **VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNITS (VRUs) IN FOCUS**

**Foreword from Mark Burns-Williamson OBE,  
APCC Serious Violence Lead and West Yorkshire's  
PCC**

I'm very pleased to introduce this latest 'In Focus' edition. PCCs have been working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Home Office, public health and many other key partners to help reduce the threat of Serious Violent Crime throughout England & Wales.



Serious violence can blight communities and lead to devastating consequences and although the impact is more often felt in our large cities, the problem also reaches into our towns and rural areas. Any approach needs to be evidence-based and consistent, investing in effective preventative measures over a sustained period of time. When the Government's Serious Violence Strategy was launched in 2018, the APCC and I were clear that early intervention and prevention with a public health, whole-system approach was key to success over the longer term. By taking such an approach we can collectively continue our vital work to support young people in particular and divert them away from serious violent crime. Establishing and embedding a sustainable approach to tackling violent crime and its underlying causes can only happen by working closely with our partners and engaging with the communities most affected.

Police and Crime Commissioners have a hugely important role in taking a lead to tackle serious violence in our communities. We have to intervene earlier where necessary, to ensure we are providing positive alternatives to those at risk and vulnerable to being drawn into violent crime. I believe PCCs are very well placed to do this working through local Violence Reduction Units, by further embedding a whole-system public health approach to make an impact on the ground. And many good examples of the progress already being made through VRUs are shown in this special 'In Focus' edition.

However, we know that violence is a longer-term generational challenge and that's why I have consistently called for sustained Government investment over at least a 3 to 5-year period covering the next Comprehensive Spending Review period.

Going forward, we will continue to work closely with the Home Office and all our wider community safety partners to ensure all our communities can benefit from the crucial work and initiatives VRUs are now undertaking.

## Foreword from Minister for Crime and Policing: Kit Malthouse MP

I am delighted to introduce this 'In Focus' edition on Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) produced by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners with support from PCCs, VRUs and the Home Office. I hope that PCCs across the UK find the report useful and can adapt and apply the productive practice of VRUs in their respective areas.



Violent crime has devastating, traumatic and long-lasting impact on victims, families and wider communities. It is concerning to know that there were 46,265 knife or sharp instrument crime offences in the 12 months ending in March 2020. Tackling this problem is a top priority, that is why the Home Office has: invested £70m over two years into the 18 areas worst affected by serious violence to develop multi-agency VRUs; developed the Youth Endowment Fund, a £200m investment targeted at funding and evaluating early intervention projects over 10 years; created the Safer Streets Fund, a £25m investment concentrated on addressing those areas disproportionately affected by acquisitive crimes; and invested £25m to tackle County Lines.

In their first year of delivery over 2019/20 VRUs have generally made good progress in embedding a local multi-agency approach, bringing together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key partners to identify the drivers of serious violence and agree a strategic local public health response to them, building on existing partnerships. Alongside strategic coordination and oversight, VRUs have invested over £24m in their first year on 175 initiatives, including a range of early intervention and preventative activity, many examples of which are demonstrated throughout this report. Our *independent evaluation* shows that during 2019/20 77% of VRU funded interventions targeted over 51,000 individuals who were identified as potentially high-risk and/or suspected to be involved in criminal and violent activity. Additionally, 19% of VRU funded interventions were universal, supporting over 50,800 individuals. The remaining interventions (4%) were aimed at professionals dealing with Serious Violence. VRUs are now using the Strategic Needs Assessments of serious violence in their area that they have developed to inform their interventions moving forward.

Furthermore, local communities and young people are the biggest stakeholders in this work, they experience violence and its devastating consequences at home, on the street and in their communities. Listening to them and ensuring they have a say in the design of local responses is essential if we want to see success. I am pleased to witness such innovative and bespoke activity which is really engaging with local communities.

I have been most impressed with the dedication and commitment of the staff in the VRUs, in the PCCs and their partners, in the continued fight against serious violence. Despite the challenging circumstances from COVID-19, VRUs continued to deliver and played a key role in co-ordinating local responses to the pandemic and keeping the public safe. It is fantastic to see the progress and development of VRUs and I am looking forward to seeing their continued achievements over the coming years.

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**MERSEYSIDE VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

MERSEYSIDE'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP (VRP) IS FOCUSED ON BRINGING AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONALS FROM ALL SECTORS TOGETHER, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY, TO IMPLEMENT A **PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH** WHICH ADDRESSES THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE. MUCH OF THIS WORK FOCUSES ON **EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS** DESIGNED TO GIVE **YOUNG PEOPLE A BRIGHTER FUTURE.**

**Merseyside's Police and Crime Commissioner, Jane Kennedy**, said:

*"Violent crime brings devastation and misery, blighting the lives of victims, families and whole communities. The best way to fight it is by preventing crime in the first place.*

*"For me, it was crucial the region's VRP took a long-term, evidence-based approach to tackling the underlying factors which lead to violent crime, to drive lasting change."*



**MERSEYSIDE PCC: JANE KENNEDY**  
**MERSEYSIDE VRP LEAD: DS ANDY RYAN**

Now entering its second year in operation, Merseyside's VRP has an established team with representation from all partners, a new lead, **Merseyside Police's Detective Superintendent Andy Ryan**, and well-developed partnerships in **the academic, voluntary, sports and culture sector.**

In partnership with academia and following consultation with **100 key stakeholders**, a comprehensive **three-year strategy** was developed which details the VRP's approach, its aims and objectives and success measures, both short and long term. (See Merseyside VRP's strategy as a **'Plan on a Page'**)

Central to the success of many projects has been engaging with the cohort of young people who are most at risk. This has been particularly challenging during Covid-19 when projects have had to be delivered remotely. Despite this, the VRP has had some major achievements from its first year in operation, and looks forward to launching new ones:

**YOUTH INTERVENTIONS - BASED ON EXTERNALLY SUBMITTED FIGURES 2019/20:**

-  **32,600+** young people engaged in universal interventions
-  **6,600+** pupils engaged in educational activities
-  Nearly **5,800** young people engaged in specific targeted interventions

- The introduction of a **'Navigators' scheme**, which sees youth workers based at **Liverpool's Alder Hey Children's Hospital's A&E department** to identify & support young people who present with injuries caused by serious violence.

## MERSEYSIDE VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

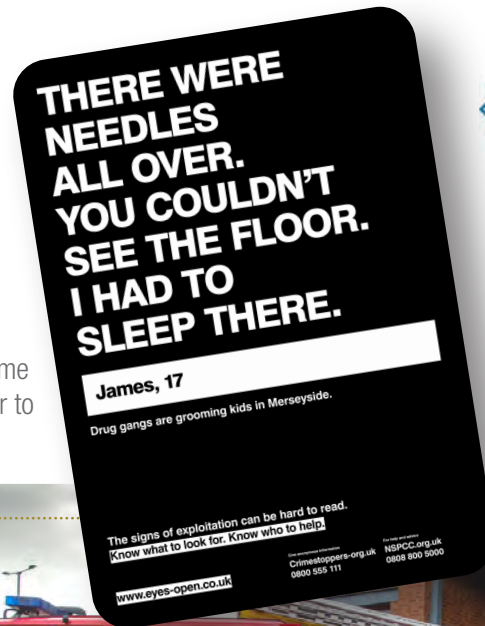
- **The SOS+ ‘mentors against violence’ programme** which is set to support vulnerable young people and those exploited through **County Lines** with a view to helping them escape the clutches of drug gangs.
- **‘To the Edge’** - a candid 24-minute film and education pack about **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**, County Lines and knife crime to be used in secondary schools from September to prompt discussion and interactive sessions.
- **A grassing and grooming education programme** delivered with local charity the **Ariel Trust** to change the perception of 9-12 year olds around reporting crime.
- The development of **42 intensive trauma-informed training modules**, covering ACEs, mental health and suicide which have been **delivered to 700 school staff** to prepare for an increase in safeguarding issues post lockdown.

The VRP is also working hard to raise public awareness of issues which relate to serious violence.

Its inaugural campaign was a hard-hitting push to encourage the public to keep its **EYES OPEN** to the signs of young people being groomed and to report their concerns. Using billboards, radio adverts and pocket education guides, the campaign run has received **national attention** and is already gaining traction with other forces.

**Merseyside VRP lead Andy Ryan** said: *“I have joined the VRP at a time when the team has already achieved great success with significant projects, both large-scale and hyperlocal. Through our public health approach, and by working with our established county-wide partners, we are now determined to achieve more. Given the opportunity to develop long-term projects aimed at reducing serious violence, we are enabled to produce long-lasting change that will positively impact the communities of Merseyside by providing the best life chances for all.”*

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**SUSSEX  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 PARTNERSHIP**

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER KATY BOURNE **SECURED £1,760,000 FROM THE HOME OFFICE OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNITS (VRUs)** BRINGING TOGETHER SUSSEX POLICE, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND, THE NHS AND OTHERS TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT CRIME.

**Mrs Bourne** said: *“In Sussex, we have embedded all the principles of a VRU into our already well-established, strong partnerships across the county. Consequently, we have decided to rename our VRU as a Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) to better reflect this, thus allowing us to adopt a more dynamic approach to tackling serious violence, targeting the areas where our interventions are most needed.”*



**SUSSEX PCC:** KATY BOURNE  
**VRP MANAGER:** TANYA MACKAY

**Three VRPs** have been set up in Brighton & Hove, East and West Sussex, with an oversight group to monitor their targeted activity.

Partners have adopted a **public health approach** that has included embedding tactics such as: early interventions to help vulnerable young people and educate them on the consequences of criminality; training staff in schools and hospitals; and working with local community organisations.

**VRP Manager, Tanya Mackay** said: *“We are commissioning and supporting a range of innovative projects that help to reduce vulnerability and risk in our young people, their families and the wider community. Whilst we are testing ‘what works’, we are also focusing on how we can build in long-term sustainable solutions.”*

**INNOVATIVE PROJECTS INCLUDE:**

**Brighton Streets**, a partnership of three charities that employ Youth Workers to use detached, youth work tactics to build trusted relationships with young people. In six months, they have helped **246 young people** reduce their risk of becoming involved in criminality.

**One young woman aged 15** said: *“The Youth Workers help so many young kids our age, and they give us such a safe space - we can tell them pretty much anything.”*



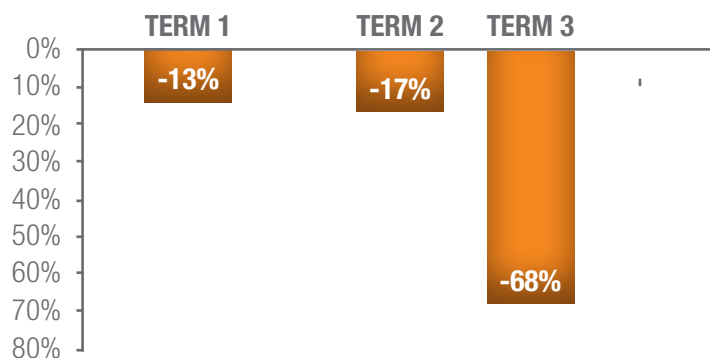


**SUSSEX  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 PARTNERSHIP**

Funding has been provided to the East Sussex Pupil Referral Network for two youth workers to target pupils aged 11-18 years who require additional support or have been permanently excluded from school. They have engaged with over 70 pupils who have taken part in lessons on knife crime and participated in diversionary activities like kickboxing.

**EXCLUSION RATES HAVE DROPPED AS A RESULT:**

**PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN EXCLUSIONS COMPARED WITH 4 YEAR AVERAGE**



**West Sussex County Council** has been working with the Youth Justice Service and other local organisations to embed the '**Learning to Advise Programme**'; hiring 15 qualified peer mentors within three districts and boroughs identified as hotspots for serious violence.

**Ask-me Ambassadors** will also soon be identified to involve local businesses and empower residents to take an active role in keeping their communities safe.

Sussex was also one of 18 police forces allocated 'surge' funding for targeted operational activity in 2019-21. This is known as '**Operation Safety**' and last year officers carried out 335 hotspot patrols, made 448 arrests, seized 251 weapons and engaged with over 116,000 young people.

**Mrs Bourne adds:** "We firmly believe that violence is preventable, not inevitable - but to really eradicate serious crime, it needs more than just a policing response."

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## ESSEX VIOLENCE AND VULNERABILITY UNIT

**ESSEX VIOLENCE AND VULNERABILITY UNIT (VVU)** IS A TIGHTLY-KNIT TEAM OF PEOPLE FROM **POLICE, YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM, PROBATION, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**. THE TEAM COORDINATES A WORK PROGRAMME OWNED AND DRIVEN BY A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MADE UP OF SENIOR STAKEHOLDERS AND CHAIRED BY THE POLICE FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PFCC).

Since its inception, the Unit has brought attention to the issue of violence and vulnerability. It has also secured financial support from the PFCC, Essex County Council, and the Home Office. The Essex VVU has played a vital role in directing funding, ensuring a strong evidence base is in place and effective measures monitor the impact and value of interventions.



**ESSEX PFCC: ROGER HIRST**  
**ESSEX VVU PROJECT MANAGER:**  
 SAM GRANT

### Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime

**Commissioner** said: *“Violence has no place in our society. As Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners, our mission must be to tackle violence and the root causes of violence; to work with the public and partners to create the safe and secure communities we all want and that allow all of us to flourish and prosper.”*

*“Gangs that exploit vulnerable people and coerce them into a life of crime are preying on some of the people most in need in our society. While no agency can tackle this alone, in Essex we know that working together, through our Violence and Vulnerability Unit, can turn the tide against these gangs, protect those in need and help to ensure we all live prosperous and productive lives.”*

### Sam Grant, Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit

**project manager** said: *“In 2018, Essex started the development of a shared **Violence and Vulnerability Framework**. From the beginning, we and our partners knew that to succeed we had to work together. We also knew that vulnerability and exploitation of vulnerability by organised gangs was at the heart of tackling this issue. A genuine partnership approach has grown over the last few years as more partners came onboard and we have grown in strength and ambition.”*





**ESSEX  
 VIOLENCE AND  
 VULNERABILITY  
 UNIT**

*“One recent success was negotiating funding of a **“reachable moment” pilot in a local A&E dept.** This saw two **highly skilled youth workers embedded in Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital A&E** to reach out to vulnerable young people arriving with injuries, indicating they had been involved in gang activity or had other vulnerabilities. By offering tailored support, the service engaged **96% of those young people** who had direct contact with a youth worker. One hospital staff member suggested that the service is **“giving patients and their family a lifeline”**.”*

In March 2020 the PFCC hosted a **“Perspectives on Violence”** conference where more than 250 partners and stakeholders came together to raise awareness and discuss the response to Essex's violence and vulnerability challenges. The conference featured real-life experiences of county lines and violence, as well as showcasing some local interventions such as the **Chelmsford Prison Finding Rhythm programme** that uses music to break the cycle of reoffending.

Building on the work to establish itself, the VVU is now considering how to sustain some of the positive elements of the programme without the need for year-on-year financial investment and how to influence long-term strategies of all agencies in responding to the risk and harm to the young people and communities of Essex.



CONTACT: [PFCC@essex.police.uk](mailto:PFCC@essex.police.uk)

# 4

## LANCASHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT ALL PARTS OF OUR SOCIETY WORK TOGETHER TO TACKLE KNIFE CRIME AND SERIOUS VIOLENCE HEAD-ON AND MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER, WHICH IS A KEY PRIORITY IN MY POLICE AND CRIME PLAN.



**Clive Grunshaw, Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner** said: *"I was pleased to secure government funding to set up Lancashire's Violence Reduction Network (VRN) in 2019.*

**LANCASHIRE PCC: CLIVE GRUNSHAW**  
**DIRECTOR OF LANCASHIRE VRN:**  
 SUE CLARK

*"Policing alone cannot prevent people offending and that is why I continue to support initiatives that work to tackle the underlying issues that often cause people to offend. I have seconded a member of my office to the VRN and have aligned my funding to **Community Safety Partnerships** to support this important work."*

**Sue Clarke** said, *"As **Director of the Lancashire VRN** I am proud to introduce our team of twenty-two partners who are working tirelessly to tackle the underlying causes of serious violence in Lancashire. These causes require a radically different approach and focus on prevention and early intervention."*



The team have produced a **Needs Assessment**, highlighting the drivers of serious violence and focusing on understanding the causes. A **Response Strategy**, supported by all their partners, has been produced taking **a public health and trauma-informed approach**.

This has enabled them to take an adaptive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work to develop **trauma-informed schools** has led them to produce a number of resources, disseminated to schools across Lancashire and shared with VRU colleagues nationally.

Needing a better understanding of the demands on domestic abuse services, the VRN led on a **survey of DA and Sexual Violence services**, capturing professionals' views on likely demand and trends.

Concerns about DA during the pandemic led them to influence a multi-agency campaign, launched across the county. This aimed to increase awareness of support services available to those affected, including victims and perpetrators.

# 4

## LANCASHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK

One area identified where further work was required, was on the impact on **children of having a parent incarcerated**. The VRN developed 'Mia's Story' - a series of letters between a girl and her father in prison. This resource will go into every school in Lancashire.



**LANCASHIRE**  
 VIOLENCE REDUCTION  
 NETWORK

In developing a whole systems approach to preventing violence, the VRN consulted, to draw upon existing language and synergies, leading to a **streamlined approach** to shared outcomes and measures across Lancashire. These outcomes and measures will be documented in their **Outcomes Framework**.

### CASE STUDY

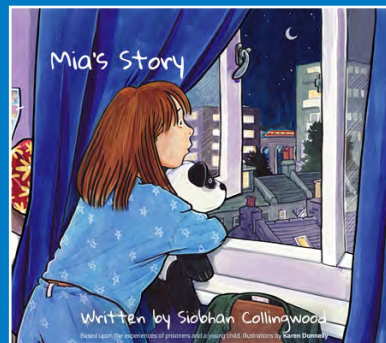
Rose and Danny, who run **Empower the Invisible**, said, "We can say with certainty at least one of them isn't carrying anymore as he swapped his knife with Danny for sweets and chocolates from the shop!"

**They have also had positive feedback from many young people:**

"You came back to see us. Everyone else just calls my dad to ask if I'm OK, but you actually come to see me."

"Everyone tells me I'm no good at anything and won't go anywhere with my life, so there's no point trying."

"I decided to go into school three days a week, even though my mates aren't, because you said I can be anything I want to be, but I have to work hard".



Knives collected from young people by Empower the Invisible

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**USEFUL LINKS: <https://www.lancsvrn.co.uk/resources/>**



**NORTHUMBRIA  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 UNIT**

PHASE ONE OF THE NORTHUMBRIA VRU SAW NEARLY **£1 MILLION INVESTED** INTO LIFE CHANGING INTERVENTIONS, AND WITH A REDUCTION IN SERIOUS VIOLENCE, THE FUNDING HAS SHOWN ITS VALUE.



**Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness** said:

*“People do not just wake up and decide to commit a crime that day. Something has happened in their lives that has unfortunately led to that moment. My VRU has worked with organisations and partners to embody a Public Health approach to our work and ensure that we are supporting the whole family and the community through our work, not just the person.*

*“Creating this protective network allows for more support to be given, and better outcomes to be achieved. This is evident in the fall of serious violence, even before lockdown, to the lowest levels in Northumbria since before 2018.”*

**NORTHUMBRIA PCC: KIM MCGUINNESS**  
**HEAD OF THE NORTHUMBRIA VRU:**  
 STEVEN HUME



Despite the challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, **Steven Hume, Head of Northumbria VRU**, praised the diversity and ability to adapt of the VRU's partners across Northumbria.

**Steve** said: *“The last few months have been challenging for everyone, but the Voluntary and Community sector has once again shown their importance - they managed to move their services online overnight and continue to provide vital services for families and young people.*

*“Our VRU has continued the important work started pre-lockdown, and services have maintained their engagement with participants, albeit in different formats, providing invaluable support to vulnerable families and individuals.”*

The VRU has worked particularly hard to **support education**; their **School Liaison Officers** delivering lessons virtually, our region wide consultation with young people about support they may need from September, or our trauma informed training session delivered to frontline workers.

The challenges schools and youth groups have faced have been clear, and we will continue to support the transition back to face to face delivery, increasing awareness of available support and referral pathways.”

**Kim** continued: *“In total we have provided over £1,000,000 of additional funding during lockdown and understand the importance of this. By enabling organisations to continue engaging and supporting participants, their risk of vulnerability will be lower when face to face delivery can resume, than if services had been forced to halt their delivery.”*



## NORTHUMBRIA VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

Post lockdown, Northumbria VRU will continue to deliver **Phase Two** of its work - focusing on **four key themes; Connecting Communities, Reduce Offending, Working with Families and Youth Diversion.**

**Kim** said: *"We've got staff ready to be deployed into schools to support the return to education, we have recruited professionals with lived experiences to integrate into communities and make them more resilient, and we have engaged with young people and collected their insights on how we best support them.*

*"Through this work, we will continue to improve lives to prevent crime, and ensure the region has a safe and successful recovery post-Covid."*



### THE STATS:

70 schools/colleges involved in the work of the VRU

23 Voluntary & Community Sector organisations funded

85 individual adults supported by a VRU intervention

183 families mentored as part of our early intervention work

**AT THE CONCLUSION OF PHASE 1 THE FOLLOWING WAS ACHIEVED BY THE VRU**

£926,726 awarded between 32 organisations

3687 young people engaged through funded interventions

1500 educated through the Knife Angel project

200 professionals upskilled through VRU training

There has been a **9% increase** in the number of possessions of knife offences forcewide

There has been a **56% increase** in the number of stop and searches by Northumbria Police for offensive weapons

Northumbria force is below the national average for knife enabled serious violent crime, per head of population

**IMPACT OF VRU TO DATE**

There has been an **18% reduction** in knife-enabled serious violence across the Northumbria force area, from **964 offences to 794**

The number of young victims of knife-enabled serious violence, **under the age of 25**, has **reduced by 23%**, from **254 to 195**

The Police have **removed 6,498 knives** from Northumbria streets

**£1,022,163 AWARDED TO PROJECTS AND INTERVENTIONS IN PHASE 2**  
 LINKED TO PROJECTS SUPPORTING THE 4 KEY THEMES OF:

- Connecting Communities
- Reduce Offending
- Working with families
- Youth Diversion

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**BEDFORDSHIRE VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION REDUCTION UNIT**

WORKING ALONGSIDE THE POLICE AND PARTNERSHIP COLLEAGUES, THE **BEDFORDSHIRE VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION REDUCTION UNIT (VERU)** HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN ENSURING THAT THERE WERE **200 FEWER VICTIMS OF SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE** IN BEDFORDSHIRE LAST YEAR, WITH THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS **REDUCED BY SOME NINE PER CENT.**

**Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway** said: *“This means, in effect, that this number of young people is both alive and well and does not have to suffer life-changing injuries from this point onwards. This represents an outstanding success and other PCCs and police forces are approaching Bedfordshire to learn more to spread this good practice.*”



**BEDFORDSHIRE PCC: KATHRYN HOLLOWAY**  
**BEDFORDSHIRE VERU MANAGER: KIMBERLEY LAMB**

*“Exploitation has been placed at the heart of our Violence Reduction Unit’s mission and narrative here in Bedfordshire.*”

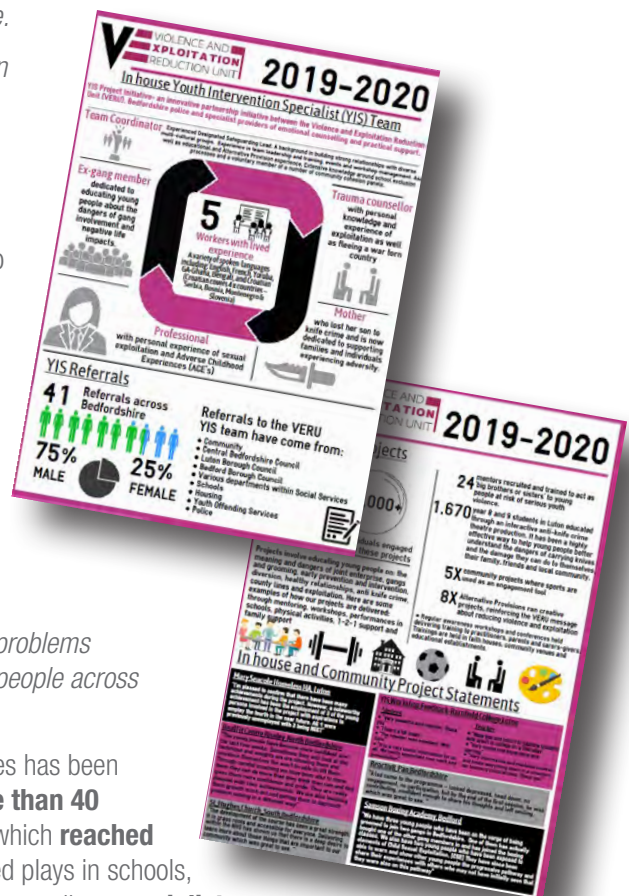
*“We are proud to be known as the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU), with the exploitation element acting as a constant reminder of how interchangeable ‘victims’ and ‘suspects’ can be when vulnerable young people get drawn into the **world of organised crime.**”*

The VERU is making a clear and demonstrable difference to **driving down violent crime** in Bedfordshire and in preventing both serious injuries and exploitation in the first place, through partners working more closely together than ever before to build plans around those at most risk and working with communities themselves to come up with **diversionary schemes** which work.

**VERU Manager, Kimberley Lamb** said: *“I am so proud of all the hard work and achievements that the VERU staff, projects and partners have accomplished.*”

*“Our focus on empowering the community to tackle these problems has made a real difference to the lives of countless young people across Bedfordshire.”*

Reaching out and **embedding** the VERU within communities has been one of the unit’s biggest strengths. They have funded **more than 40 community projects** in their first batch of commissions, which **reached more than 12,000 people** across the county. This included plays in schools, diversionary activities such as sport and media production, as well as **specialist projects aimed at girls, parents and children with learning disabilities.**





**BEDFORDSHIRE  
 VIOLENCE AND  
 EXPLOITATION  
 REDUCTION  
 UNIT**

This focus on **community-based interventions** has continued this year. **More than £40,000** is being invested into work in schools, parenting programmes and outreach projects, with a similar sum being allocated to local town councils to improve community spaces which can provide a safe haven for young people.

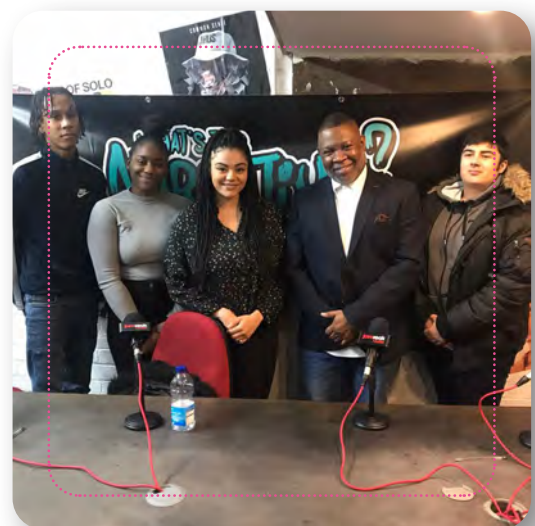
Yet the professionals working for and alongside the VERU have also played a massive part in its success. Their **Youth Intervention Specialists (YIS)**, under the leadership of Tasha Case, provide a comprehensive support service for young people at risk of criminal exploitation, as well as providing help in person for families and communities.

This team includes **Roseann Taylor**, whose son **Azaan Kaleem was murdered** when stabbed in Luton in March 2018, and **Sheldon Thomas**, the director of charity **Gangline**.

The YIS team is currently working with some **70 young people** and their families from across the county, taking the VERU's mission to the frontline when tackling exploitation and improving the prospects of these young people.

The VERU were also pleased to have been able to call on the services of **Dr David Kirby, an emergency medicine specialist** and joint medical director at the **Luton & Dunstable Hospital**. **PCC Kathryn Holloway** said: *“After my initial discussion with him concerning the benefits of involving those who are quite literally at the sharp end of knife crime to get the message to combat youth violence across to young audiences. David has given uncompromising presentations to young people on the **realities of knife crime** when seen through the prism of our Accident and Emergency teams. This has been part of a wide-ranging series of VERU projects targeted specifically at alternative education provisions.*

*“Other VERU staff have been working tirelessly to ensure issues such as data, governance and open communications between different agencies involved in preventing violence and exploitation, are now better coordinated, paving the way for a more cohesive system to tackle these issues in the longer term. We have much to be proud of - and good practice to share.”*



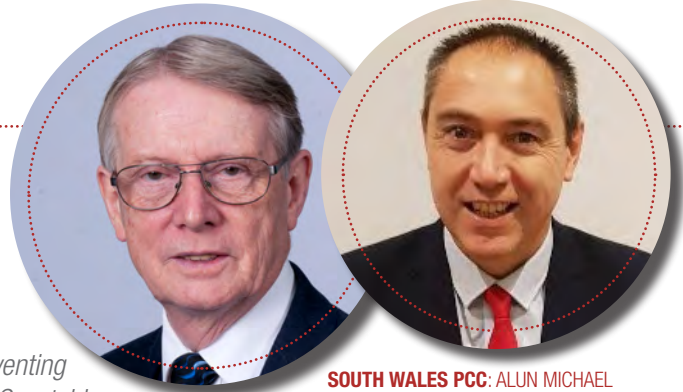
**CONTACT: Jonathan Vale** at [jonathan.vale@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:jonathan.vale@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)





## WALES VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT

THE WALES VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT IS A PARTNERSHIP OF PASSIONATE PEOPLE FROM AN ALLIANCE OF ORGANISATIONS WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN WALES THROUGH A **PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH**.



### Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, Alun Michael, explained:

*“Through collaboration across Wales we have made significant progress, reflected by praise in the recent **HMI Peel Report**. Reducing and Preventing violence is crucial, so Commissioners and Chief Constables in Wales established the Violence Prevention Unit, building on the ‘**Cardiff Model**’ which for 25 years has provided a **model for reducing violence**.”*

**SOUTH WALES PCC: ALUN MICHAEL**  
**DIRECTOR OF THE WALES VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT: JON DRAKE**

*“We’ve grasped the Home Office initiative with enthusiasm, to focus on tackling violence in key areas of South Wales especially Cardiff and Swansea. This focussed action is making a real difference.”*

*“Learning from this work will inform activity across Wales while we also recognise that all forms of violence are connected. The scourge of domestic violence and abuse is often in the background of **street violence and vulnerability** - sometimes feeding into organised crime. These issues are all connected, and so must be our response”.*

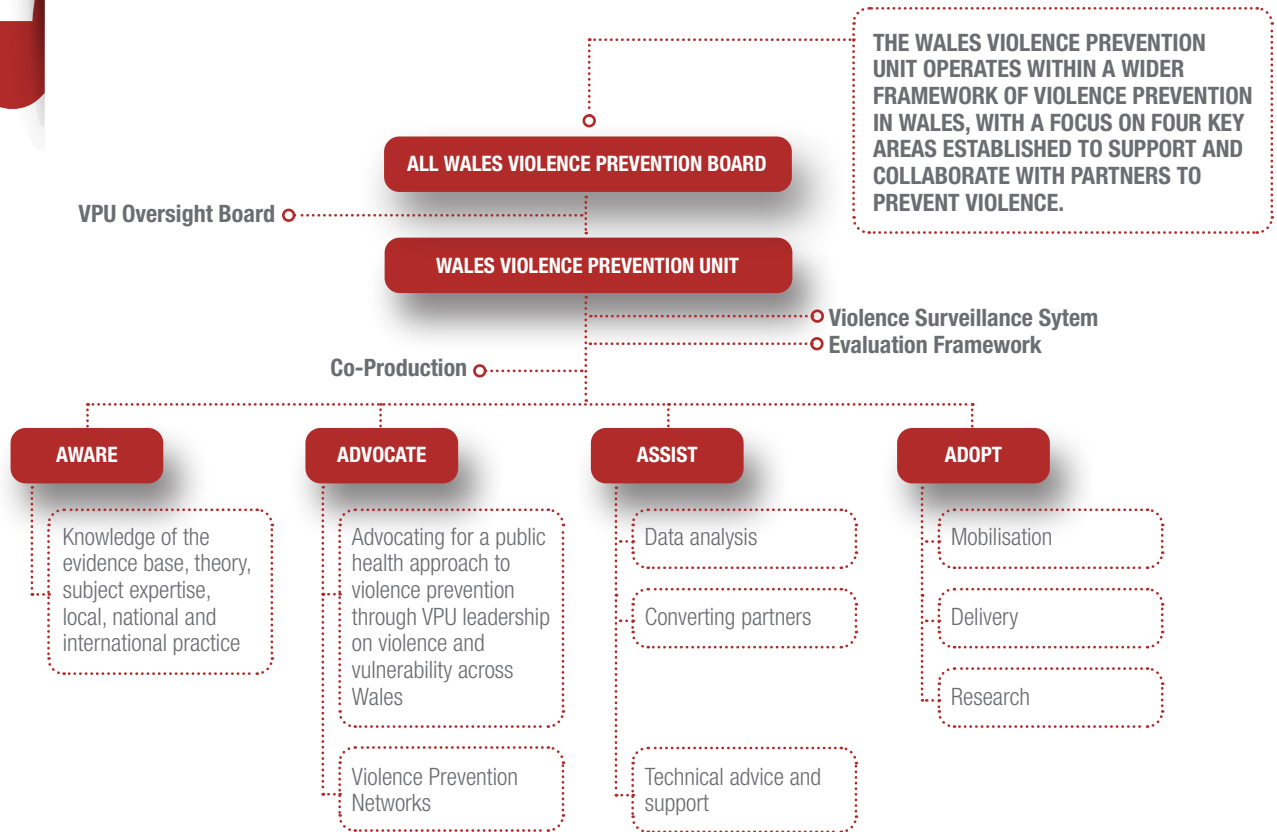
The Violence Prevention Unit team has worked actively and responsively with **Policing in Wales - the four Commissioners and the four Chief Constables** - to maintain and accelerate its mission of reducing and preventing violence in Welsh communities while adapting to the unique challenge of the **Covid-19 lockdown** period. As a non-devolved service operating in a devolved environment in Wales the police have benefitted from the unit’s close joint working with Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Local Authorities. In that environment the response of the Violence Prevention Unit has been to seize the opportunity to inform thinking and action on changing issues such as the reopening of the night-time economy and other local violence-related issues.

**Jon Drake, Director of the Wales Violence Prevention Unit** said: *“The key to prevention is twofold: prediction and partnership. This is demonstrated in the Unit’s ethos and uniquely broad membership. The only acceptable level of violence is zero. To make this figure a reality we must challenge the notion that violence is inevitable and instead demonstrate that it can be predicted and prevented like any other health problem. To do this, we seek evidence to understand the causes of violence and use this evidence to develop interventions that prevent it.”*

*“To be successful, we must work in partnership with a range of diverse bodies concerned in violence prevention and response. Our membership spans across health, policing, public policy, education and the voluntary sector, with our ever-expanding associate membership scheme ensuring the right voices are heard.”*



## WALES VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT



The VRU's multi-agency team has been in a unique position to support responses through the COVID-19 pandemic, providing knowledge, capacity and capability across our three work strands:

### PUBLIC HEALTH

Bringing in partnership data enabled them to analyse and monitor the scale, nature, and impact of violence and identify any trends, patterns, and hotspots emerging during and after the outbreak.

### PARTNERS

The VRU has supported its delivery partners to enable it to continue intervention work virtually wherever possible, and worked with them on planning ahead to ensure programmes are able to resume their proactive work as swiftly as possible.

### OPERATIONAL DELIVERY

The VRU has delivered webinars to police officers and community leaders to ensure frontline providers are equipped with the latest information and evidence on the violence landscape in Wales during the pandemic, and are able to adapt to the ever-changing circumstance.

**Mr Michael** said: "Our work requires a whole systems approach and embedded change will not be seen overnight. However, the Wales Violence Prevention Unit is fortunate to build on a strong foundation of collaboration between public agencies in Wales, including police and public health, to deliver real change for individuals and communities in Wales".

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**WEST YORKSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

THE VRU IN WEST YORKSHIRE STARTED IN 2019 WHEN THE HOME OFFICE SET ASIDE £35MILLION NATIONALLY AS PART OF A WIDER PACKAGE TO HELP TACKLE AND PREVENT SERIOUS VIOLENCE.



**WEST YORKSHIRE PCC: MARK BURNS-WILLIAMSON**  
**DIRECTOR OF THE WEST YORKSHIRE VRU: LOUISE HACKETT**

**Mark Burns-Williamson, West Yorkshire PCC and APCC Lead for Serious Violence** said: *“As the National Chair of the APCC at the time, as well as national lead on Serious Violence (SV), I attended and represented the APCC on the SV task force chaired by the Home Secretary and was keen to ensure an appropriate share of intervention and prevention resources were allocated for PCCs to coordinate and lead on locally.*

*“I was delighted that the West Yorkshire OPCC was able to quickly establish the Violence Reduction Unit and a strategy to better target SV trends throughout the county.”*

**Louise Hackett, Director of the West Yorkshire VRU**, said: *“We are tackling violence reduction in a fundamentally different way by using a **public health approach in West Yorkshire**. Public health approaches start from the principle that prevention is better than cure. Our unit brings together specialists from health, police, local authorities, education, youth justice, prisons, probation and community organisations.*

*“This means looking at early intervention, prevention, education and partnership working to tackle the root underlying causes of violent crime together.”*

The VRU does not just focus on high-risk individuals but seeks to tackle the causes of youth violence.

Up to March this year, the VRU has commissioned **35 local violence reduction interventions** who have **engaged with over 16,000 under 25s**. These have included local place-based interventions commissioned in each of the five West Yorkshire Local Authority areas, for example, **Sunnyvale** delivering in Calderdale and **Catch on Wheels** at The Nowells. Some interventions have also worked across West Yorkshire including the **Custody Diversion projection** between St Giles, West Yorkshire Police and Liaison and Diversion to support young people coming through police custody.





## WEST YORKSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT



### QUOTES FROM THE CUSTODY DIVERSION PROJECT:

*Frank stated he wanted support around positive decision making, anger management and attending school every day.*

*Since support started, he has started playing rugby again, which he is passionate about and he states that helps him let off steam, He is not spending time with the older friends anymore and spends more time with his partner*

*JD's mindset has been to get money, by any means necessary, which led him to commit a series of offences and mingle with a crowd of like-minded individuals.*

*He then went away for a few days suspected of selling class A drugs. He has now realized this was a massive error in judgment. . . His reason for going was he wanted to buy his mum a new fridge and fill it with food as a surprise, as she is struggling but won't admit it to him.*

*We have been visiting the studio with him so he can put his thoughts and feelings into a music track.*

Mr Burns-Williamson said: *"In partnership with the **West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health Care Partnership** we have also established a **Covid-19 Response Network** to support partners to share learning and practice, develop strategies, maintain delivery where possible and to address the changing needs in relation to violent crime. The priority was to ensure the communities of West Yorkshire could access the support to remain and feel safe during the pandemic. We are now looking at ways to build the work of the network into existing work streams as business as normal".*

Future plans include looking at the risk and vulnerability exposed by Covid-19, developing an **A&E navigator programme**, educational inclusion, domestic violence and abuse and reducing re-offending. Also, continued joint working with West Yorkshire Police on their operational activity **Operation Jemlock** and a focus on alcohol-related violence as lockdown restrictions ease.

### PROJECT PARTNERS:



**CONTACT: Dolores Cowburn at [dolores.cowburn@westyorkshire.pcc.pnn.gov.uk](mailto:dolores.cowburn@westyorkshire.pcc.pnn.gov.uk)**



**AVON AND SOMERSET VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

**SUE MOUNTSTEVENS, PCC FOR AVON AND SOMERSET**, RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE AGENDA RIGHT FROM ITS INCEPTION AND BROUGHT PARTNERS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP A **LOCALISED STRATEGY, TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM COLLECTIVELY**. THIS EARLY THINKING PROVIDED A ROBUST FOUNDATION FOR THE VRU APPROACH TO BE SET UP SWIFTLY IN SEPTEMBER 2019.

**PCC Sue Mountstevens** said: *“Serious Violence was starting to escalate in the area; lives were being lost and vulnerable people exploited daily. The police and our partners couldn’t respond to the issues in isolation, and thanks to the introduction of VRUs, we are now working together to make a change”.*

**Charlotte Pritchard, VRU Director**, and **Donna King, Programme Manager**, explained why Avon and Somerset’s approach is different; Donna said, *“Our model is unique in being a ‘hub and spoke’ approach; the PCC chose to devolve the Home Office funding to the five local authority areas (Bristol, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset). This approach really recognises the importance of local need and expertise.”* Charlotte added, *“Although it can be challenging working in five different ways, this approach gives the opportunity to really listen to our partners and communities. We have built on existing networks and initiatives, but also created new ones where gaps were evident”.*

The governance of their model comes from an overarching force-wide **Strategic VRU, chaired by Deputy PCC John Smith**. Both monitoring

and development are a key focus for this stakeholder group. John said, *“In bringing a core group of partners together at a strategic level, we have really been able to make changes. This year it is crucial that we use this governance function to understand our impact and build on our performance monitoring”.*

Locally, VRUs are using **an innovative app** developed by the police to identify groups and individuals who are at risk of being affected by serious youth violence. The predictive analytics and ensuing multi-agency discussions mean attention is given to young people early on, sometimes before they meet thresholds for other services. This then allows for targeted early interventions.



**AVON AND SOMERSET PCC: SUE MOUNTSTEVENS**  
**STRATEGIC VRU CHAIR AND DEPUTY PCC:**  
 JOHN SMITH





**AVON AND SOMERSET VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

One challenge has been finding interventions that will have long-lasting impact, particularly due to short-term nature of annual grant funding. One solution has been to include professionals' training in the menu of services offered to schools by the VRU, creating a legacy that reaches beyond the VRU. A recent training session delivered virtually to Academies across Bristol helped staff understand the complexities of child criminal exploitation and encouraged them to look at the vulnerable child and the traumatic experiences behind their risky or disruptive behaviour. One participant suggested, *"It would be helpful for all staff to receive the training as an insight to what some of our young people's lives involve and why engaging in lessons is hard"*.

Supporting the work of education partners will continue to be an area of focus. The police are investing in dedicated Officers and PCSOs who will be aligned to the VRUs. They will build relationships with staff and pupils as well as offering advice and support in high risk situations. They will work alongside local VRUs and community groups to help build resilience and skills and encourage young people back into school in the autumn following the disruption caused by Covid-19. Sue Mountstevens said: *"We will continue to ask our communities and young people what they need and strive to achieve this by working together"*.

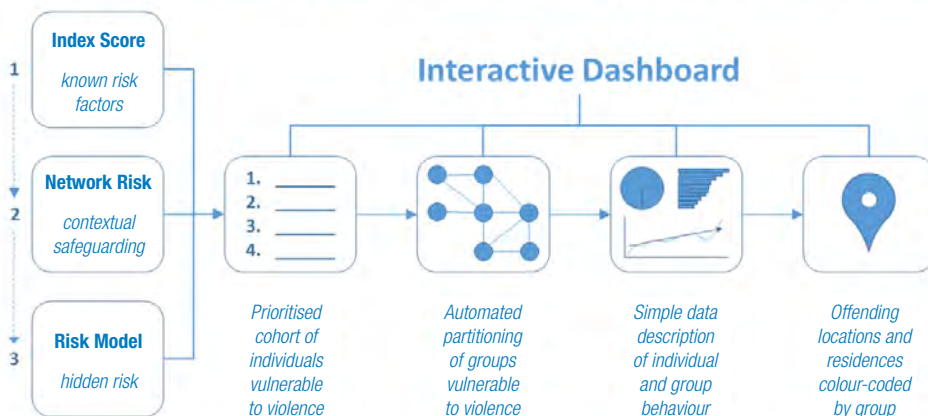
**PROJECT PARTNERS:**

**Bath & North East Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives



**AVON & SOMERSET POLICE – VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT DASHBOARD**



Individuals scored based on known risk factors, then contextual network risk, then modelled on a cohort of vulnerable individuals

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# 10

## KENT AND MEDWAY VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

THE **KENT AND MEDWAY VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT (VRU)** HAS DEVELOPED PROCESSES TO PROVIDE IT WITH DATA WHICH INFORMS PARTNERS WHERE INTERVENTIONS ARE MOST NEEDED.

A team of three dedicated analysts produces reports which feed into local adolescent safeguarding processes to ensure everyone understands the **Serious Youth Violence profile**, and ensures a joint approach is adopted. The VRU is actively developing a preventative and protective strategy around communities most at risk from **county lines and emerging gang activity**.

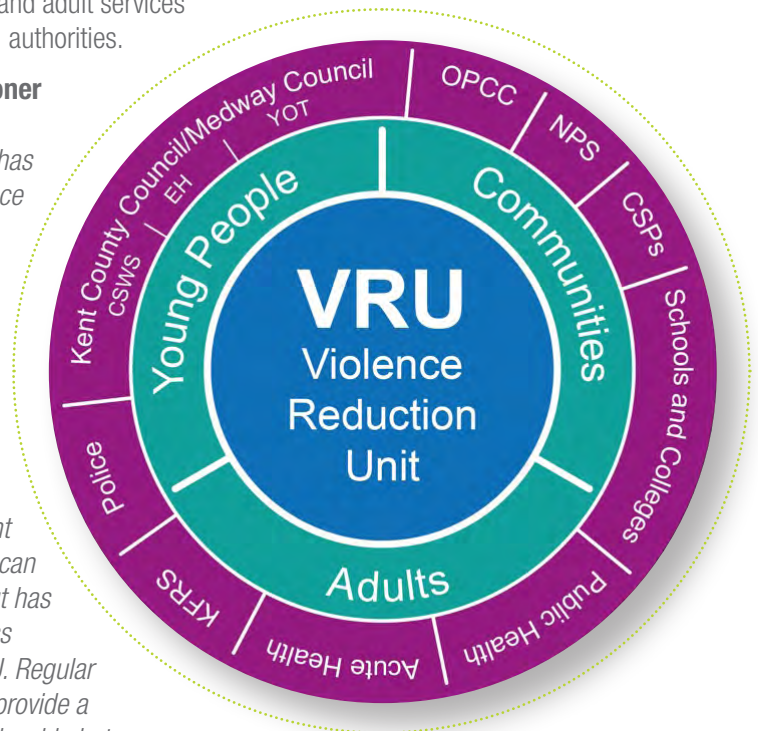
Another team of VRU Co-ordinators proactively reviews incidents of serious violence where a young person is involved. The VRU then ensures there is a **multi-agency response** to any identified risks. This work is creating new links across children's and adult services and has helped strengthen existing links between authorities.

**Matthew Scott, Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent**, said: *"Situated between London and mainland Europe, Kent has unique challenges. It has not experienced the same levels of serious violence as some other areas in recent years but in 2018 I launched a review encouraging partners to work together to tackle the issues we do face - particularly around county lines. Our VRU is now building upon that work to make our communities even safer."*

**Ben Loose and Mark Powell, Kent and Medway VRU Directors** said: *"The Kent and Medway VRU has shared leadership between Kent Police and Kent County Council. Joint leadership can create challenges in terms of decision making but has helped deliver a strong partnership as links across organisations are reflected at all levels in the VRU. Regular and open conversation has enabled the leads to provide a direction and focus that reflects the existing relationship between police and partners and responds to stakeholders' priorities."*



**KENT PCC:**  
 MATTHEW SCOTT  
**KENT AND MEDWAY VRU DIRECTORS:**  
 BEN LOOSE  
 MARK POWELL



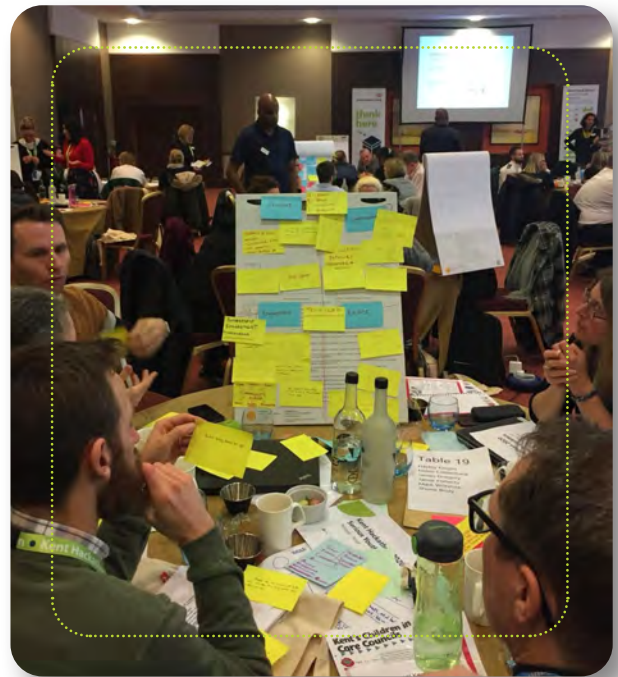
# 10

## KENT AND MEDWAY VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

Data from children's and adult services has been combined with **Public Health analysis** to identify the communities of most concern and has enabled the VRU to identify the communities where commissioned interventions will have the best chance of long-term success.

So far, the VRU has **supported more than 600 people** who were involved in violence. They received extra support to help them change their lifestyle from a number of agencies focused on sport, or practical skills like catering or building. Emotional and wellbeing support was also provided.

Other initiatives include a **welcome pack for Londoners** moving to Maidstone designed to signpost families to support and recognise potential risk factors; and peer-led training in understanding **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**. These were the winning concepts from a **Serious Youth Violence Hackathon** event where partners pitched ideas to a board of young people and VRU senior managers.



The VRU is still working hard to resolve some teething issues. For example, data is not always readily available, or there can be a reluctance to share it. Covid-19 also forced many initiatives to postpone or alter their delivery style. Lockdown has, however, provided an opportunity to refocus the VRU's commissioning programme. **St Giles trust is helping young people in custody identified as at risk of exploitation from county lines gangs.**

### OTHER SERVICES WILL:

- Help prisoners prepare for resettlement back into the community;
- Work with schools to promote positive behaviour and self-esteem;
- Create community leaders who will promote awareness of ACEs;
- Provide activities or support to young people.



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# 1

## LEICESTERSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK

LEICESTERSHIRE, LIKE MOST OF THE COUNTRY, HAS SEEN A RISE IN SERIOUS VIOLENCE OVER RECENT YEARS. WITH ENFORCEMENT OFFERING A LIMITED SOLUTION, LOCAL PARTNERS WERE KEEN TO WORK COLLECTIVELY AND DEVELOP NEW SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS.

Lord Willy Bach, PCC for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, said: *“In 2019, I hosted a seminar with **Niven Rennie**, the **Director of Scotland’s Violence Reduction Unit**, which inspired all of us to think outside of the box. Violence is not inevitable, and **people are capable of change if they receive the right support and intervention**. We were delighted when the Home Office agreed to fund the development of our own Violence Reduction Network (VRN).”*



**LEICESTER PCC: LORD WILLY BACH**  
**LEICESTERSHIRE VRN STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: GRACE STRONG**

Partnerships are at the core of the VRN’s vision. They believe all communities and organisations should play a part in reducing violence. People have stories and the VRN looks behind the facts and statistics to understand why they behave the way they do. They focus on serious violence in public places, initially prioritising the under 25s. They work alongside the existing **Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Strategic Partnership Board (SPB)** framework and the newer **Violence Reduction Board**, with representation from a wide field of sectors including the voluntary and community sector.



Grace Strong, VRN Strategic Director, said: *“With much to do, we had to establish the VRN at speed. Fortunately, lots of positive work had already been undertaken to prevent violence locally. Within three months of launching, the VRN had designed and mobilised its first service, the **Violence Intervention Project (VIP)**.”*



# 1

## LEICESTERSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK

*“This project sees youth workers intervening at a moment when young people are more receptive to changing their behaviour **after attending A&E with violence-related injuries.** **Leicestershire Cares’ Unlocking Potential (UP) Project** quickly followed - a scheme whereby partnerships are brokered with local businesses to **create work placements and employment opportunities** for young people at risk of violence. The charity has impressed local and national partners with its innovative delivery of virtual engagement through the **Covid-19 lockdown.**”*

Alongside youth work, the VRN launched a **Community Fund**, providing grants to social enterprises and community organisations to encourage communities to design and deliver solutions to solve local problems. However, the VRN is about so much more than commissioning new interventions. It is also working across the system to **improve data-sharing**, investing in our workforce to develop trauma-informed and contextual approaches to our work and supporting partners to articulate and strengthen their prevention offer.

Since its launch, the VRN has made quick and impressive progress. As the UK recovers from Covid-19, the VRN will continue its work in schools, for example through the **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme** which seeks to **empower young people** to take an active role in **rejecting violence.**

Lord Willy Bach said: *“There is still so much more we need to achieve but I’m confident that the VRN’s passionate and dedicated team, together with the support of our ambitious partnership, will continue to drive this work forward at pace”.*



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**MAYOR OF LONDON'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

BEFORE THE **COVID-19 PANDEMIC**, LONDON WAS LOCKED IN A BATTLE AGAINST SERIOUS VIOLENCE AND THERE'S EVERY EXPECTATION THAT POST-LOCKDOWN LONDON WILL FACE EVEN GREATER CHALLENGES UNLESS THE UNDERLYING DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE ARE ADDRESSED.

**Sophie Linden, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**, said: *"In 2019, 149 Londoners sadly lost their lives to violence. It's clear that the police can't solve this alone and that a different approach to keeping Londoners safe is needed. That's why, in September 2018, we established the London VRU - the first in England and Wales. The VRU is leading a long-term multi-agency public health approach to reducing violence and expanding opportunities, working alongside the police and a range of public, third-sector, corporate partners, and London's communities."*



**LONDON'S DEPUTY MAYOR FOR POLICING AND CRIME: SOPHIE LINDEN**  
**DIRECTOR, MAYOR OF LONDON'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT: LIB PECK**

London's VRU puts young people and their communities at the heart of what they do. In practice, this means that they must be prepared to be guided by their communities and for this to truly work, they need to be visible to, trusted by, and transparent with them.

**Lib Peck, Director, Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit**, said: *"COVID-19 has admittedly made it harder for us to connect with London's communities, but we've still managed to hold meetings with our charities network and our parenting group, provide **funding for grassroots organisations**, lobby on behalf of the youth services sector, and recruit **ten brilliant young Londoners** to form our new **Young People's Action Group**."*

The pandemic has had a significant impact on young people's education, their mental health, and their employment prospects. It has also put additional strains on families who might already have been struggling. The VRU's research and data indicate that some of the drivers of violence have been exacerbated. So, the VRU is responding by pulling together a **comprehensive programme of support** for London's most vulnerable young people and families that includes access to immediate **therapeutic support and diversionary activity**.

Unfortunately, the pandemic and its related measures have also had a serious impact on charities and grassroots organisations, and their ability to continue providing crucial services at a time when they're needed most.

The VRU has responded by redirecting and allocating funding to enable these organisations to continue the important work they do. They are also developing the **leadership skills** of the city's invaluable youth practitioners, adding a greater degree of professionalisation to an already trusted profession at a time when their local knowledge and their ability to reach vulnerable young people is needed more than ever.



**MAYOR OF LONDON'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT**

Examples include the **Social Switch Project** which provides young people with digital skills through an intensive three-week training course followed up by career coaching. Participants emerge with qualifications, contacts, and pathways to futureproofed, well-paid digital jobs.

The link between school exclusions and violence is well-established so, through **Nurture UK**, the VRU is supporting initiatives to keep children in school by promoting healthy ways of expressing themselves within the school grounds.



**The Divert programme** deploys specialist youth practitioners to speak with young people who have ended up in custody; it has just received VRU funding. For many young people, this programme is the first opportunity they have had in a long time to talk to someone independent about getting their life back on track and be encouraged towards positive choices and opportunities. Since 2018, Divert has helped more than 1,000 young adults aged between 18-25 turn away from crime and into employment, training and education.

Lib Peck said: *“The public health approach has proven to be effective in the long term, but there’s understandable pressure from the press, politicians, and the public to see results immediately. It’s important to remember that our best chance of **long-term success will come through well-designed and funded interventions that are based on evidence.**”*

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# 13

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

TACKLING SERIOUS VIOLENCE IS A PRIORITY IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND THEY HAVE LONG RECOGNISED THE NEED FOR A COORDINATED APPROACH.



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE PCC: PADDY TIPPING**  
**NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**VRU DIRECTOR: DAVE WAKELIN**

There is no doubt that Home Office funding for both surge and VRU activity has brought a significant boost to these efforts. Approaching the VRU's first anniversary, pre-lockdown, **knife crime** in Nottinghamshire **fell sharply by 13.5%**.

**Paddy Tipping, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Chair of the VRU**, said: *"This bucked national trends, which saw the number of similar offences in England and Wales rise to a record high. This could not have been achieved without dedicated focus from the force, and the multi-agency response driven by our partners. There is still a long way to go but this is a positive verification that our efforts to date have made a difference.*

*"The seeds of violence are sown long before they emerge in physical behaviour. The VRU's approach centres on listening to and working with communities and service providers who engage with young people and their families.*

*"As Police and Crime Commissioner, I drove the introductions of the **Nottinghamshire Knife Crime Strategy** in 2018. This harnessed the experience and insight of a number of partners. Understanding the social barriers and childhood experiences that drive violence has always been pivotal to our approach."*

Through investment in proven, evidence-based programmes, the VRU's goal was to replace negative experiences and patterns of behaviour with positive ones and **motivate young people to succeed**.



# 13

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

The VRU benefits from the skills and knowledge of reputable experts on the **Strategic Violence Reduction Board**, including **Adam Brooks**, a major trauma surgeon at **Nottingham University Hospital's Queens Medical Centre**, who has first-hand experience of the devastation violence can cause.

Every member of the Strategic Violence Reduction Board is determined to sustain recent progress in falling knife crime rates by ensuring young people in Nottinghamshire receive the support they need to thrive. The outcome of their collective work is very encouraging, and already a significant number of young people at high risk of offending through their involvement in gang violence have enrolled on training programmes or employment placements.

**Dave Wakelin, VRU Director, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**, said: *“There is no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Nottinghamshire. However, many of the VRU's commissioned projects have continued to operate.*

*“**Al-Hurraya**, a peer-led service which supports **Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities (BAME)**, and **Base 51** have delivered virtual counselling sessions to enable young people to manage their wellbeing. Youth outreach has also continued to take place in some of Nottinghamshire's most vulnerable communities to provide tailored support for individuals at risk.*



*“The **Voluntary and Community Sector** in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire has really pulled together during recent months, demonstrating that problem solving cannot be achieved without collaboration.”*

The VRU will continue to build on this energy as it moves forward with the **Community Ambassador programme** which will draw on the experience of a host of community stalwarts already taking proactive action in their communities.

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# 14

## HAMPSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

THE HAMPSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT BRINGS TOGETHER A RANGE OF PARTNERS WHO REPRESENT THEIR STRATEGIC VIEW OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE ACROSS HAMPSHIRE, ISLE OF WIGHT, PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON AND ALLOWS EACH AREA TO RESPOND TO LOCAL NEED.

Hampshire’s collaborative and flexible approach recognises the unique challenges faced by the different areas and adds value to existing multi-agency work within and across local authority boundaries.

**Police and Crime Commissioner Michael Lane** said: *“Reaching young people early, building their skills and resilience and supporting them to fulfil their potential is important and has been a significant focus for me. Police enforcement is an important part of tackling violence, but early intervention to prevent young people from becoming involved in violence at the outset is vital.*

*“Through the work of the VRU we have heard the voices of young people, the community and those who work with them, helping the partnership to secure greater understanding of the drivers of violence, and to establish what projects and initiatives are already working on the ground and where more resources, or different approaches are needed to reduce violence.”*

Hampshire’s **hub and spoke model** (one VRU led by the OPCC, comprising four ‘local’ VRUs in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton) supports a local response with a shared goal of preventing and tackling serious violence.

The **VRU Core Group** provides the governance function and has recently welcomed additional members including the **Regional Director** of the **National Probation Service** and the **Head of Violence Reduction** from **Winchester Prison**.



**HAMPSHIRE PCC: MICHAEL LANE**  
**VRU STRATEGIC LEAD: KAREN DAWES**



# 14

## HAMPSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

RESEARCHED  
 THE LIVES  
 OF **342**  
 OFFENDERS  
 OF KNIFE CRIME

**VRU Strategic Lead Karen Dawes** said:  
*“If we are to prevent someone using a knife and committing a life changing crime, we need to understand what might drive that behaviour. We have **researched the lives of 342 offenders of knife crime** using information captured on the police system and already know that many of those offenders grew up around mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse.”*

Hampshire is working with all four VRUs, Hampshire Constabulary and the Local Authorities to move to the second phase of having this data further populated with **Children’s Social Care** to see what more they can learn, share and put in place as a result. This will give a richer understanding of the lives of those **342 offenders of knife crime**, and help them identify children who are more likely to become offenders of the future, step in at an early stage, offer the right support, and change the destination.

The VRU continues to support and value the work of the Commissioner’s **‘Youth Commission’** which enables young people to help shape decisions about policing and crime. One of the priorities of the Youth Commission is Serious Violence. A Youth Commission survey was released during lockdown to understand views of young people around serious violence and COVID, and a second survey has just been circulated.

The VRUs worked with local authorities and Hampshire Constabulary to proactively identify vulnerable children during lockdown and find ways to support them and reduce risk of harm. This model has proved so effective



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**Kirsty Gunner** at [kirsty.gunner.47892@hampshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:kirsty.gunner.47892@hampshire.pnn.police.uk)



# 15

## GREATER MANCHESTER VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

IN GREATER MANCHESTER, THE LAUNCH OF THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN IN JUNE 2020, MARKED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE FOR THE CITY-REGION'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT (VRU). THE VRU PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DELIVERY OF THE ACTION PLAN, WHICH HAS FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE FOREFRONT.

This drives forward Greater Manchester's community-led, place-based, public health approach to preventing violence across the city-region.

**Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire, Bev Hughes**, said: *"In Greater Manchester, we are committed unequivocally to strong enforcement against violent crime.*

*"Enforcement alone is not enough. We have to prevent violence happening in the first place as well as mitigate its effects on those caught up in its wake. That means intervening early using all the available evidence, insight and data to ensure we have the best possible impact on reducing violent crime and its consequences."*

The VRU brings together Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the National Probation Service, health and education professionals, youth justice, local authorities, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. It is led by **Dan Diamond**, seconded from the probation service to bring a wealth of experience in dealing with the drivers and subsequent consequences of violent crime.

**Mr Diamond** said: *"Greater Manchester has a history of strong partnerships, working across sectors to innovatively tackle complex issues. The VRU is no different and boasts a membership who each bring unique insight to tackling serious violence. We also work closely with academics, health professionals and community leaders.*



**DEPUTY MAYOR:** BARONESS BEV HUGHES  
**VRU LEAD:** DAN DIAMOND

**Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit**  
**Between March 2019 and February 2020**

- 941 additional arrests linked to violent crime
- Partners seized over **1,700** weapons in Greater Manchester
- Through #ForeverAmnesty and partner working with UK Border Force, weapons destined for GM were intercepted
- CMP carried out 204 weapon sweeps recovering many hidden and discarded weapons
- Teamed up with Trading Standards to ensure retailers are responsible in the sale of knives
- 91 test purchases carried out on responsible retailers to gain evidence that will lead to prosecution
- Educating young people is the key to a safer Greater Manchester
- As such, knife crime awareness sessions have been held more than 3,000 pupils

**GREATER MANCHESTER**  
 DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

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## GREATER MANCHESTER VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

*“The VRU has also been bolstered by the appointments of **Dr Rachel Jenner**, a consultant in emergency medicine at **Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital**, and community coordinator **Michael Phipps**, who has 18 years’ experience in youth and community work.”*

The VRU is delivering a combination of early intervention, education and prevention, alongside police enforcement action. The VRU’s approach will use different interventions throughout a person’s life to help reduce the propensity for violence. It is also working to embed a **trauma-informed approach** across the workforce, particularly in those services working with vulnerable children and young people. This will ensure frontline workers can spot the signs of trauma, provide trauma-informed support and signpost people and families to appropriate services. An example is the pioneering work in Oldham involving contextual approaches to safeguarding in secondary schools.

More than **£4.5m** has been devolved to **Greater Manchester’s 10 Community Safety Partnerships** to develop local plans and initiatives, and a **£500,000 community-led pilot** is being rolled out in six Greater Manchester districts to allow residents and VSCE organisations to develop their own approaches and solutions.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, work to tackle serious violence and safeguard children and young people has not stopped.

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Developing a virtual reality programme to highlight the impact of violent crime. Young people in Wigan helped develop the storyboard and filming which was due to take place over the summer.
- Detached youth work and mentoring schemes have continued across Greater Manchester. Outreach sessions are being delivered virtually and one to one support is being given to more vulnerable children and young people.
- Gym equipment provided to young people to support their mental health and wellbeing during lockdown.
- GW Theatre Company has developed an online Home Learning Resource aimed at protecting nine to eleven-year-old children from abuse and exploitation.

The work of the VRU and partners is already having a positive impact. Data suggests a decrease of 16% for all age knife-related hospital admissions between April 2018 and March 2020, and whilst the data is still being verified, we also believe there has been an encouraging reduction in overall knife-crime.

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**GREATER MANCHESTER**  
 DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

**SERIOUS VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN**

Providing an effective response to violence and its causes

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## WEST MIDLANDS VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

THE WEST MIDLANDS HAS, LIKE THE REST OF THE COUNTRY, SEEN A BIG INCREASE IN VIOLENT CRIME IN RECENT YEARS. KNIFE CRIME HAS DOUBLED SINCE 2012 AND CREATED UNTOLD MISERY, HUNDREDS OF NEEDLESS VICTIMS, SCORES OF GRIEVING FAMILIES AND STRETCHED AN ALREADY BUSY POLICE FORCE EVEN FURTHER.

### BACKGROUND:

#### In the West Midlands ...

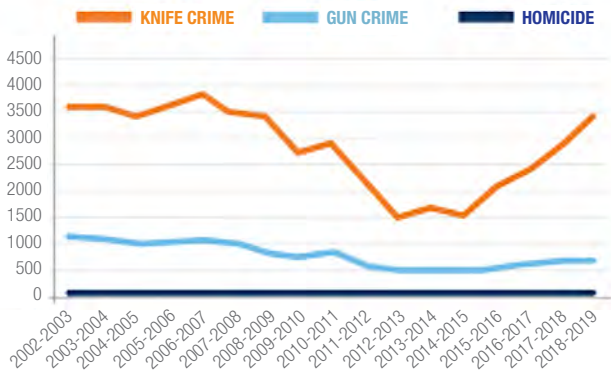
- Knife crime has doubled since 2012
- Gun crime has risen by more than 1/3 since 2012



**WEST MIDLANDS PCC:** DAVID JAMIESON  
**DIRECTOR OF VRU:** CLARE GOLLOP

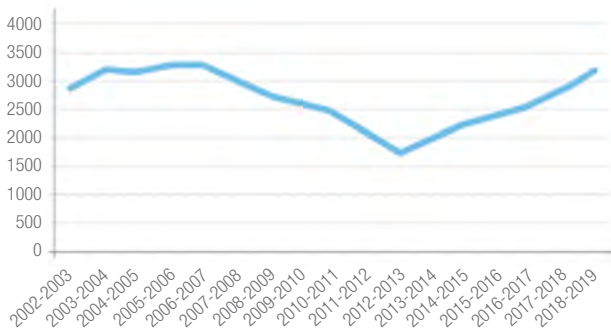
### THESE GRAPHS TELL THEIR OWN STORY:

#### GUN CRIME, KNIFE CRIME AND HOMICIDE RECORDED OFFENCES APRIL 2002-2019



SOURCE: WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

#### VIOLENCE WITH INJURY 2002-2019



SOURCE: WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

**David Jamieson, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner,** said: "In 2015 I set up the first Violence Prevention Alliance in England and a Gangs and Violence commission. It was a new and innovative partnership which pulled together West Midlands Police, Public Health England and my own office to work together to tackle violence.

"This early work put us in a strong position when we learnt last year that the Home Office was providing funding worth £3.37 million to create a Violence Reduction Unit. With that money I have employed a Director of the VRU to expand the work already taking place, build a bigger specialist team and create a wider partnership. That partnership will prove crucial if we are to continue viewing violence as everybody's business. It is a partnership which has to work. Lives literally depend on it."



**WEST MIDLANDS  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 UNIT**

**Clare Gollop, Director, West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit,** said: *“Our VRU is fortunate. It can lean on **decades of anti-violence alliances**, many of which were formed in the aftermath of tragedy. What’s different now is the commitment of organisations to work in a more coordinated way and the opportunity to **invest more heavily in targeted prevention**.”*

*“We have a strong foundation with which to work. The PCC’s **Gangs and Violence Commission**, our network of youth and community forums and the people of the **Faith Alliance** have all agreed to work with us. Together we’ll provide safe spaces across the region and use their platforms to promote positive role models.”*

Last year, the VRU helped **Walsall College** embed a **trauma-informed approach**, so staff asked what help could be offered to students who seemed troubled and whose behaviour was changing. This had a positive impact on a range of behaviours and performance indicators. Now other schools are following suit and over 70 educators and young people have formed a passionate violence reduction network.

VRU resources provide practical support in the communities that are most affected by violence. We ask local people for the answers, alongside professionals from a range of agencies.

In Coventry, the local project is centred around an **Early Years nursery** but works to embed protective behaviours across the whole of the community. Its resilience was tested when **gang violence led to a fatality** on the premises; by surrounding all the people caught up in the situation with support we were able to stop the violence spiralling further.

Covid-19 challenged them to transition services rapidly to remote provision, to working as safely as possible in open spaces, and to find new referral routes. Much of their work takes place in venues that became harder to access, like prisons, schools, custody centres, hospitals. Delivering safely across so many settings and ensuring violence reduction is being included in the recovery plans across the breadth of the partnership, will heavily influence the year ahead.



**west midlands  
 police and crime  
 commissioner**



**WEST MIDLANDS  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION UNIT**

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**THAMES VALLEY  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 UNIT**

LAST YEAR, THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR THE THAMES VALLEY RECEIVED £1.16M TO SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF A VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT (VRU). FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH THE FUNDING WAS RENEWED IN MARCH 2020.

The Thames Valley VRU has brought together organisations, including the police, local government, health, community and other key partners to **tackle serious violence by understanding and focusing on the root causes.**

**Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Thames Valley**, said: *“Serious violence is a community issue and requires a host of partners to tackle it. We have been looking at how we can collaboratively have a big impact on violence across our area and are actively helping partners to understand our collective role in violence prevention.*

*“Some of the work of the VRU is a continuation of business as usual such as our Early Intervention Youth Fund but with the added value of a multi-agency approach, such as working with our Community Safety Partnerships, and funding which helped us spotlight specific areas of concern.”*



**THAMES VALLEY DEPUTY PCC:  
 MATTHEW BARBER  
 VRU DIRECTOR:  
 SUPERINTENDENT STAN GILMOUR**



**Thames Valley VRU Director, Superintendent Stan Gilmour**, said: *“It is imperative we use the funding in a meaningful way. We now have a governance board which includes representation from a breadth of organisations and this has allowed us to see where we can tackle a variety of issues from small level solutions to high level strategic thinking.*

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## THAMES VALLEY VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

*“Whether it be using intelligence to achieve a shared understanding of local issues with county lines, developing a shared-outcomes framework to deliver more targeted interventions in schools, or supporting our local policing areas to develop their own violence reduction plans, we hope to tackle serious violence with extensive resources to have a big impact.”*

In February, the VRU funded a series of engagement events in Milton Keynes. Facilitated by **ROC Conversation**, residents, statutory agencies, community and faith groups, came together to understand shared concerns around violent crime. The events were attended by hundreds and led to the development of **local problem-solving action groups and community champions** to give longevity to the learning. Further events are planned for the coming months.

**Intensive Engagement** have also been brought on board to assist communities in Banbury, Slough and High Wycombe using an eight-step strategy to empower communities to work with VRU partners to tackle serious violence.

Another success in January of this year was the launch of the **DIVERT programme** between the PCC, police and **Reading FC Community Trust**. It was designed to prevent young people who have been arrested in relation to serious violence from re-entering the criminal justice system by using coaches as mentors.

Matthew continued: *“There have been challenges with the work of the VRU when COVID-19 hit including the postponement of a one-day multi-agency conference on leaving prison and reducing offending, which was set to take place in March. The pandemic has also had an impact on the community engagement we were doing which too has had to be delayed.”*

*“As the pandemic and lockdown hopefully ease, we hope to get back to some of the community engagement we planned. We know we can have a positive impact in our area and particularly in helping young people which is so important to influence violence reduction.”*

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**SOUTH YORKSHIRE  
 VIOLENCE  
 REDUCTION  
 UNIT**

THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT (VRU) WAS ESTABLISHED IN SEPTEMBER 2019 WITH £1.6 MILLION FUNDING FROM THE HOME OFFICE, ONE OF 18 AREAS IDENTIFIED AS HAVING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF WEAPON-RELATED ADMISSIONS TO A&E.

**Dr Alan Billings, the Police and Crime Commissioner** said: *“After visiting the **Glasgow VRU**, I knew we had to have a longer term, preventative approach to violence, as well as enforcement. We had to get upstream of crimes happening, finding ways of intervening to prevent people being drawn into violence in the first place, and giving offenders a **realistic chance to turn their lives round**. The Unit is unusual in being jointly led by Rachel Staniforth, with a public health background, and **Superintendent Lee Berry**, a serving police officer. My office support with finance, commissioning and contract management. The team also includes four partnership managers, seconded from each of the local authorities - Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield.”*



**SOUTH YORKSHIRE PCC:**  
 DR ALAN BILLINGS  
**SOUTH YORKSHIRE VRU:**  
 RACHEL STANIFORTH

The **VRU Executive Board**, which Dr Billings chairs, includes senior officers from local authorities, clinical commissioning groups, Public Health England, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company, Department of Work and Pensions, the police and the voluntary, education and faith sectors. We also have an elected members’ reference group to keep local councillors informed and ensure the Unit has political support.

**Rachel Staniforth** said: *“It has been extremely challenging meeting deadlines to produce the first-year products - a county-wide needs assessment and a strategy for the future - as well as distributing 50% of our funding to organisations making various interventions. A key part of our approach was to talk to community groups (selected by Voluntary Action organisations) about their experience of violence before the strategy was produced. This allowed their voice to influence it directly - something communities, who are often consulted late in the process, warmly appreciated. We also paid them the living wage for their expert contributions. We think both these initiatives made the strategy stronger.*



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**SOUTH YORKSHIRE  
VIOLENCE  
REDUCTION  
UNIT**

*“The outbreak of **Covid-19** meant that some interventions had to be re-imagined, into lockdown and with social distancing. But one that has continued was the **Navigators Project in custody suites**. Detainees have been met by navigators who acted as mentors to them, with the result that some have moved into employment and some into training.”*

This year, the VRU has further mandatory products to deliver as conditions of our funding. These include a local evaluation (working with **Sheffield Hallam University**), an annual report, a refresh of their needs assessment, local violence reduction action plans in each area of South Yorkshire (which are being led by **Community Safety Partnerships**) and a sustainability plan for the Violence Reduction Unit itself.

The year ahead will bring many challenges, especially with Covid-19, and Rachel Staniforth said: *“We have to think differently about how we engage with communities and continue to support those who need it. We will continue to work in partnership with as many organisations and community groups as possible to prevent and reduce violence across South Yorkshire.”*



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**LEICESTER PCC:** LORD WILLY BACH  
**VRN STRATEGIC DIRECTOR:** GRACE STRONG



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Although 'VRUs In Focus' features 18 Violence Reduction Units, all PCCs are working with partner organisations to provide a sustainable approach to tackling violent crime and its underlying causes.



  
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