

STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

Tuesday, 21st December 2021

Report: Serious Youth Violence – Paper B – VRU Submission

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Reducing Violence
Presented by: Clare Gollop, VRU Director

Purpose of paper

1. This is the Violence Reduction Unit partnership's annex to accompany the paper submitted by WMP on Serious Youth Violence. It provides additional detail about the areas that the VRU partnership were specifically asked to comment on;
 - the VRU's funding context and governance arrangements
 - the way that the VRU and WMP are working together
 - the VRUs progress towards delivering its response strategy
 - the work that the VRU is doing with the education sector
2. This paper is presented to open a discussion between the Board and VRU partners.

Background

3. Developing a multi-agency partnership which encourages various systems across the region to work together more effectively to tackle the root causes of and to prevent violence is a core requirement of accessing the Home Office VRU funding.
4. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police are two of the core members within the VRU partnership. The other core partners are local authorities, clinical commissioning groups/ICS, public health, probation, youth offending services, CPS, NHSE, the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Regional Schools Commissioner, and representatives from education partners, voluntary sector and from community groups. The prison service has recently joined the partnership.
5. The involvement of partners in decision making is mandated, and the funding must be used to work across the system, rather than to extend any one partner's function.
6. The VRU is funded in totality by national funding, through a number of grants which are administered through the Police & Crime Commissioner on behalf of the partnership.

Key points

7. Being part of the VRU is making a difference to the way that partners in the region are collaborating on long-term activity to prevent violence. The unit is also influencing the way that individual systems (such as policing, education, health) are delivering their core functions and supporting them to do so with prevention in mind.
8. Children and young people are at far higher risk of harm or of involvement in violence and exploitation than we should consider tolerable in our society. The levels of complexity, risk and need within the region are significant and should cause leaders across the system to be concerned. For many, the pandemic context has increased risks and decreased protective factors.
9. Much of the VRUs work is designed to make a difference in the longer term, which means that while indications are positive, it is too early to see and feel the full impact, for example, of working with very young children to promote protective behaviours.
10. The VRU is funded to test and to incubate projects and activity. Many of the interventions are pilots and are taking place on a far smaller scale than will be required to bring about the level of change needed. For communities across the region to feel the difference, the VRU does not just need to prove if these approaches can work, it also needs to create a climate where partners support their adoption and choose to invest in these over other activities.
11. Together with the PCC, the VRU partnership must also create a national and local context in which long term, sustained funding is identified for interventions that we already know make a real difference. Many of the communities that we are working with have seen 30 years - more than a generations worth - of short term initiatives, and are more than ready to move on from pilots of the next new thing.
12. The VRU is focused on early prevention, but it also recognises that too many of our children and young people are in danger right now. Each incident that causes a young person to be harmed, or to feel at risk of being harmed – reported or otherwise - generates a wave of impact across our society. The VRU works alongside partners to disrupt those who would hurt our young people, and has response in place to stop the transmission of violence and trauma.
13. The unit has strengthened the support that partners - schools, youth groups, childrens services, police, and more – can provide to those children, young people, parents, communities, and professionals who have been caught up in the devastating and frightening ripples that surround a serious incident. Along with providing access to bespoke services the unit supports partners to coordinate activity between partners. This type of support is now deployed on a near-daily basis.
14. The VRU's reachable moment and peer support services provide an off-ramp and a chance for young people to exit incredibly complex and dangerous situations.
15. The partnership now provides peer mentors with relevent life experience in A&E/hospital settings, in exploitation hubs, mental health services, sexual health services, following police contact, to support return home interviews for those who have been missing, and to support young people at risk of exclusion from school.

16. In a new initiative, peer mentors will collect and support young people from the West Midlands who have been arrested anywhere in the country linked to criminal exploitation through county lines.
17. The VRU partnership has also extended its place-based work and as restrictions eased, was more physically present in the geographical communities that are most affected by serious violence. The partnership is now using this approach with faith communities. Community navigators and education intervention advisers have begun to demonstrate the value to a range of partners of having a presence, a relationship-building, a coordination and a delivery capacity in and with communities.
18. The VRU is performing well against its funding criteria. The partnership is currently on track to deliver the majority of its response strategy for 21/22 despite continued challenges in the operating environment, and many new opportunities arising quite suddenly which caused some plans to be recalibrated.
19. More than 3000 young people were supported by the VRUs commissioned interventions during the first six months of the financial year. This number is expected to increase sharply as Q3 data (when many interventions launched or upscaled) becomes available. Behind each number will be a frightened person, often in a chaotic situation. The support is normally neither straightforward nor short-term, and can sometimes only follow a protracted period of building trust.
20. The VRU helps partners to secure and deliver on a range of grant funds. Partners have successfully secured more than £30M in grant funding for activity related to violence reduction activity this year, through a range of government grants into local authorities, education, and the OPCC. Just over £7M of this is held by the OPCC on behalf of the VRU partnership, just under half of this being the VRU core grant of £3.37M.
21. Whilst it seems likely that the VRU network will secure continuation funding for its core grant, and probable that this will be a multi-year arrangement, it is also highly likely that continuation funding will come with a number of new conditions. It is almost certain that the core grant will step down during a multi-year arrangement, necessitating a commitment in the near future to some level of match-funding.
22. The VRU core grant is highly unlikely now to be secured prior to the end of the financial year. In the past it has been around a four month process from the point that an allocation was announced to the grant being secured.
23. Without intervention, all of the VRUs current commissioned services (bar Step Together) will need to begin to reduce service delivery at the end of December. Services will begin to trigger closure plans, reducing the number of staff, turning away referrals from January. Funding is unlikely to be confirmed through the Home Office until after these services have had to reduce to a skeleton level and in some cases to close completely.
24. Local bridging arrangements are required if services for young people are not to close, only for some to then to reopen (slowly) during Q1. The potential impact for young people of reduced services between January and June is significant. The potential impact of precarious employment on our incredibly valued youth workers and lived experience mentors is particularly concerning.
25. Bridging costs for extending a comparable suite of commissioned interventions, stripped down where feasible, are approximately £180,000/month.

26. The earlier that even month-by-month extension can be actioned, the less interruption to service delivery will occur. The financial risk linked to bridging decreases once the VRU allocation has been announced.
27. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, as the host organisation for the VRU, has already stepped in to underwrite the core staffing costs of the VRU until July 2022. This action was taken to reduce staff attrition during quarter 4 and to enable the unit to confirm its operation until the close of the academic year.

Funding arrangements

Context

28. VRU funding comprises a number of government grants with specific funding criteria, which mainly run to the end of the financial year. For a part-year in 19/20; and for full years in 20/21 and 21/22, the VRU secured a core grant from the Home Office of 3.37M p/a.
29. The VRU multi-disciplinary team funded by the core grant are well placed to help draw more investment into the region.
30. The VRU was selected to deliver the UK's national pilot (through the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund Targeted Funding) of Step Together, generating a £1.2M investment into detached youth work over the current academic year.
31. The West Midlands was the only one of the 18 VRUs to secure funding across each of the three additional Home Office funding rounds that were released in the summer to deliver specific projects in-year.
32. This brought £1.2M to the region to deliver Heal Hub, intensive cognitive behaviour therapy for more than 200 young people; £0.59M to the VRU & WMP to develop a more trauma informed police service, with pilots within West Midlands Police but impact nationally, and £0.46M to the partnership to open new reachable moments interventions in Dudley Hospital; extend similar provision in health settings in Wolverhampton and in Coventry; to increase the support for young people caught up in county lines activity.
33. The partnership is in the second year of delivery of parenting peer support programme Kitchen Table Talks, following a £0.2M p/a grant from the Youth Justice Board, and in 21/22 WMP partnered with the VRU to deliver a £0.2M uplift in partnership resources to prevent exploitation through county lines.
34. Home Office VRU core funding is intended to:
 - Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activity
 - Provide a system-change capacity (the VRU team)
 - Invest in a public health approach, including building consensus across local partners and the community in identifying what is needed to bring about change.
 - Deliver a small pool of commissioned interventions and test these, with a view to these being upscaled by local/national investment in the future.
35. Core VRU funding is intended to be additional to, rather than to replace, statutory partners investment in tackling serious violence affecting young people locally.

36. While the VRU can be reasonably confident about the continuation of a core grant, more than half of the funding it has received this year is not set to continue, as shown in figure 1.

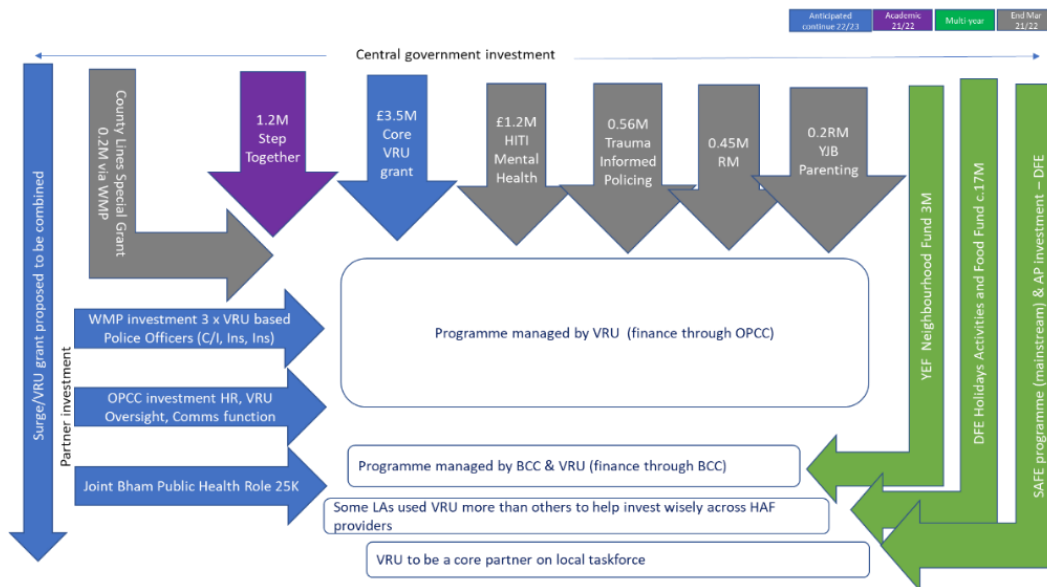


Figure 1

37. Whilst VRU funding is uncertain, the VRU has helped core members to secure several sources of future funding:

- additional grants of c.£12M to support activity in violence reduction through schools and alternative provision over the next 3 years. These three grants will be held by local education partners.
- Holidays, Activities and Food funding, which sees investments in the region of over £25M per year for the next 3 years, held by local authority partners
- £3M YEF funding over the next 3-5 years to extend the VRUs place based working in Lozells, Birmingham, through partnership with Birmingham City Council.

Local contributions to VRU budget and resources

38. To date it has been challenging to identify local investment that is ringfenced within organisational budgets for violence reduction by any of the VRU core partners. During 21/22, no local monies were contributed to the VRU budget by any of the partners, but some activities were delivered together or were funded in parallel.

39. As the host agency, the OPCC has contributed in-kind costs such as providing the VRU press office, finance, HR and payments functions.

40. The VRU is an accredited training centre for public health consultants, which means PH registrars are placed in the unit for a year at zero cost, providing certain training criteria are met. This was very successful in 20/21 but the current pandemic context means that there are no trainees available.

41. West Midlands Police are the only partner to date to place resources within the VRU without claiming back all of the salary costs. The force has committed to 3 police officers being embedded within the VRU, and has also seconded a PCSO at cost.

42. In the past staff have been seconded at cost from a wider range of partner organisations but for a range of reasons secondments have become more difficult to secure.
43. Almost all of the VRU staff are now employed by the OPCC on fixed term contracts. The unit is therefore currently more multi-disciplinary than multi-agency in its employment structure.

The challenge of the short term funding cycle and the funding criteria

44. The core VRU funding and governance arrangements are linked to the Home Office funding cycle. Funding became available mid-year in 19/20 to establish a VRU; in 20/21 and 21/22 one year funding arrangements were in place.
45. During previous one year funding cycles, the allocation of potential funds was announced in December, with further details about the application process and funding conditions following in the Spring. Funding applications typically opened in February and closed in April, with decisions announced in May/June and the grant secured by July.
46. This cycle pulls against long term commitments to communities, organisations and staff. Despite best efforts, the unit loses some momentum and capacity during Q4 and struggles to rebuild this until close of Quarter 2. The school year is an incredibly important rhythm for preventative work taking place both inside and outside of school settings.
47. Figure 2 overlays these factors, highlighting the challenges for active delivery that will persist until this cycle is broken. In reviewing this, its useful to remember that most interveions with young people are not instantaneous, but involve sustained contact over a period of many months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Funding Security	Red	Red	Red	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Orange	Orange
School Year	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Green	Exam	Exam	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Green
VRU Resource level	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange

Figure 2

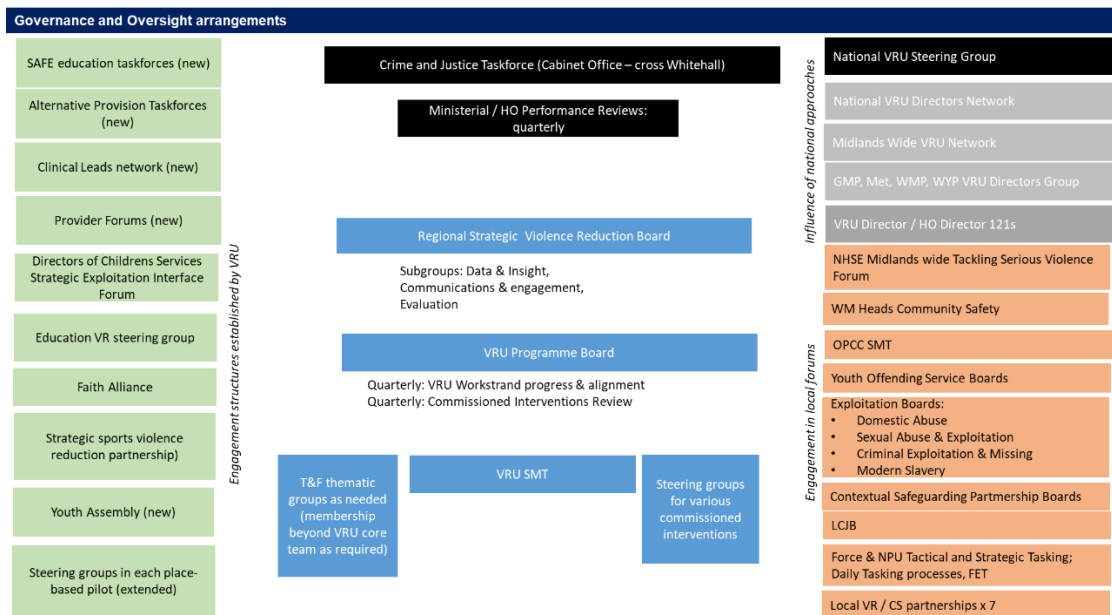
48. The majority of the VRU budget is allocated as a part of the grant application process and delivery partners are required to be selected at that stage. The Home Office also set anchor points (e.g. this year no less than 20% of the VRU grant should be spent on interventions; 10% of the intervention spend should be on evaluation; and certain requirements are in place for the system change capacity).
49. The case for investing in many of the current commissioned interventions was set out in the Gangs and Violence Commission Report. In its first two years, the VRU inherited and scaled early investments made by the Violence Prevention Alliance, and added to this suite of interventions as partners identified gaps that could not be funded from elsewhere.
50. The need for evaluation activity to run for a protracted period of time has been a driver for stability in the selection of commissioned interventions in 20/21 and 21/22, particularly given the pandemic context.
51. There is potential for a multi-year settlement to be agreed for the VRU, with the most likely arrangement being a three year settlement which sees central government investment step down significantly during years 2 and 3.

52. Details of conditions linked to future VRU funding are not yet clear, but the following are anticipated:
- increased requirements related to working with the Youth Endowment Fund to further develop & test the evidence base within their toolkit of 'what works'
 - increased focus on tertiary prevention (for those already entrenched in violence);
 - increased focus on data and analysis capabilities to support more effective case management of those at risk of involvement in serious violence
 - national expectations regarding the role of the VRU Director
 - more mandated partners.
53. It is likely that existing criteria around the submission of a strategic needs assessment, a response strategy, annual report and very regular monitoring will continue.

Governance arrangements and multi-agency leadership

54. The involvement of a wide range of core partners in VRU decision making, both tactical and operational, necessitates a number of different boards and forums. It remains work in progress to ensure that this generates multi-agency working rather than a multi-agency meeting, and that all partners see their role as one of leadership and of collaborative delivery.
55. The VRU's most senior board is the regional violence reduction strategic board - a partnership forum which brings together the core VRU members on a quarterly basis. This board is chaired by the Police & Crime Commissioner. The key objectives of this board are to support the partnership to:
- Develop and deliver our regional response to violence reduction
 - Provide strategic oversight of the VRU grant
 - Integrate the effort of core organisations and the VRU
56. The Terms of Reference for this group during 21/22 are attached at Annex 1. The group agrees the strategic needs assessment; the response strategy; grant application; and the annual report; and other key decisions that emerge.
57. During 21/22 the regional strategic board has also supported the development and consultation of the police and crime plan; reviewed the changes to WMP Project Guardian strategy and approach; and supported partners in the development of the regional and local response to the Serious Violence Duty.
58. Progress towards the VRU response strategy is monitored on a quarterly basis by the VRU Programme Board. This is attended by operational leads across the VRU partnership, including a widespread attendance from OPCC policy team. The board is chaired by the VRU Director.
59. This board meets in two parts each quarter, with a focus on commissioned interventions and the thematic delivery plans and workstreams. The purpose of this board is to:
- Provide assurance that the operational delivery of the VRU activity is in line with the grant conditions

- Provide leadership and strategic direction, whilst holding project leads to account to ensure their outcomes are aligned to the anticipated benefits and are on track to deliver within agreed timescales
 - Identify opportunities for synergy within the VRU workstreams, overseeing their delivery during 21/22 and identifying mainstreaming/exit/continuation options
60. The VRU governance structure also includes a number of other forums. The VRU partnership operates as a network of networks (see annexe 1 p22), which extends the reach and influence of a wider range of partners into the VRU's day to day operation. We estimate that around a thousand people are now part of the many networks, forums, steering groups.
61. A significant addition during 21/22 has been the strengthening / development of local authority level violence reduction boards or forums, which bring together different parts of a local authority (public health, children/adult services, community safety) with key statutory and voluntary/community sector partners.
62. These boards are the place where local partners should develop and own the local strategies that will reduce violence in their communities. The boards will have a significant role to play in enabling local partners to deliver against the Serious Violence Duty. The VRU is directly engaged with each of these, supporting local partners and delivering some actions on behalf of these boards.
63. Another significant development during 21/22 has been the strengthening of the VRU Faith Alliance. The Faith Alliance exists to help equip, enable and empower communities of all faiths across the West Midlands to further engage with, understand and prevent serious violence affecting young people.
64. The Alliance has grown to 150+ active members representing faith-based organisations across the region. The VRU has devoted 1.5 FTE coordination and support resources to support the Alliance to grow and to help deliver on its priorities for the year: Training, Education, Communications, Pastoral Care, Youth Spaces, and developing a faith based toolkit. The Faith Alliance is considered leading practice nationally in terms of VRU engagement with, listening to and mobilisation of the faith sector.
65. The strategic exploitation interface forum has also been a key forum this year. The VRU convenes senior leaders from the three key statutory functions with shared safeguarding responsibilities (all of the regions Directors of Childrens Services, NHSE leads, and WMP at an executive level) in order to take practical steps to create conditions where it is less likely that children and young people fall between gaps in different services.
66. With the appointment of a new clinical lead, the VRU is now able to take steps to establish a network of A&E practitioners across the regions hospitals.
67. The unit has also recently developed a provider network, to support the development of stronger collaborations across the provider ecosystem, in anticipation of more complex funding requirements in the future.



Multi-agency and system-wide leadership of the VRU

68. All core partners are invited to play an active role in the VRU's activity through the regional board, programme board, thematic and local boards and forums. The extent to which this invitation has been taken up varies across the partnership, largely due to internal capacity to engage, transformation activity or competing pressures for some partners.
69. The VRU's regional boards sub-groups are all chaired, or co-chaired by partners. The data & analysis subgroup is co-chaired by WMP; the evaluation subgroup is chaired by DHSC; the comms and engagement sub-group is chaired by BCC; and the trauma informed subgroup was chaired by WMCA (until its recent amalgamation into another forum).
70. The VRU Director and VRU SMT facilitate regular 121s with core partners at executive and senior management levels . These are regularly taken up by WMP, by some but not all local authorities, and by DHSC. This offers an opportunity to shape VRU thinking and delivery and plan together for bilateral activity.
71. The VRU Director is a part of the OPCC SMT and is managed by the OPCC Deputy Chief Executive. All of the VRU staff bar the police officers are employed by the OPCC.
72. Health partners have found it particularly challenging to engage consistently with the VRU at a strategic level, with just one of the regions CCGs active within the core membership. ICS's are not yet in a position to participate; and there has been no response to invitations to engage at a strategic level from the ambulance service.
73. To try to mitigate this, the VRU has engaged with ICS transformation leads, is active within and takes items to the NHSE midlands-wide serious violence forum (where all CCGs are represented); and has just appointed a clinical lead, who will be working to strengthen both strategic and practitioner engagement. WMAS joined the VRU data subgroup this month.

The VRUs integration with WMP

74. WMP has taken a number of steps to integrate the VRU into both operational and strategic decision making spaces, whilst also recognising that it is important that the identity of the VRU is not identical with the police, or policing.
75. The VRU is regularly involved with force executive team and has a place at almost all force or ROCU meetings and operational decision making forums related to the prevention and response to violence/exploitation and to the delivery of local policing. The VRU Director, Force Executive Lead, and the Force violence leads work closely together, as does the VRU Director and the ROCU Prevent lead.
76. VRU team are represented at force daily and NPU tasking forums. VRU delivery team staff and senior managers are co-located with relevant WMP colleagues and the VRU delivery team has a police station base in all NPUs (as well as also working out of other partners settings). The VRU exploitation team act as a tactical prevention adviser to ROCU and force operations.
77. WMP's violence strategy, performance forums, staff development days and promotion processes reference and involve the VRU and the public health approach to violence reduction and there is an ambition to promote the VRU more actively at a tactical level across the force.
78. There are numerous examples of joint campaigns of activity, for example, the VRU's background support to develop the Forces Operation RIMUSH principles of community engagement. The VRU Director chairs the regions Criminal Exploitation & Missing Board and the VRU has provided a silver lead and significant coordination capacity to bring dozens of partners around the table to support county lines intensification periods and operation Aidant, and to transform a potentially pursue-led activity to have a strong prevention arm.
79. During 21/22 WMP has worked with the VRU to adapt its response to significant incidents of serious violence. More partners are now involved in the formation of a response at an earlier stage and at a lower threshold than before. The unit is also working with WMP to help equip Lead Responsible Officers to play a stronger partnership role.
80. The VRU now attends multiple consequence management meetings (CMMs) each week. The unit can provide support and intervention following violent incidents, or patterns of violent incidents, across the region in order to:
- Prevent the onward transmission of violence;
 - Offer preventative interventions to support partnerships to manage incidents or emerging trends in localities;
 - Support engagement with affected communities
 - Address trauma experienced by individuals, and communities, when violence occurs;
 - To address the root causes of violence by providing effective early intervention when risk factors correlated to violence occur.

Trauma-aware policing programme

81. The VRU and WMP have secured an additional grant of £591,000 to develop function specific trauma informed training and practice support for the police service, and to run a pilot for this within WMP.

82. The project sees trauma informed trainers working closely with practitioners from the specific function and also with people who have experienced police actions, either as a suspect, witness, victim or reporting party. The trainers observe policing activity, research the evidence base, and seek to apply principles of trauma informed practice to the context that the police are working within.
83. This is most advanced in relation to police custody settings, where a bespoke package has been developed and already been rolled out to over 160 staff. All custody staff are on track to take part in the training by the end of the financial year, with a target of 300 people required by the Home Office. This is now being extended to custody visitors, to healthcare professionals within custody and to appropriate adults.
84. Building on feedback from young people who have been through custody in WMP, and drawing on national research, the VRU has supported WMP to make practical changes to the custody environment, adapting some processes and providing distraction packs, tough clocks and murals.
85. The other cohorts (and target reach) within WMP are:
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| initial recruits | 80% of 2847 = 2277 staff |
| custody | 60% of 300 = 180 staff |
| investigators | 5% of 3300 = 165 staff |
| frontline | 5% of 5700 = 285 staff |
| senior leaders | 80% of 500 = 400 staff |
| WMP cadet leaders | 80% of 131 = 104 staff/volunteers |
86. This pilot has attracted national attention and we are seeking extension funding to continue to reach more staff within WMP over the coming year. We are building with sustainability in mind and a lot of the development costs are absorbed in this first year, but a continued commitment to:
- having a trauma informed training capacity
 - the routine abstraction of staff
- are required in order to develop a trauma informed police service, in line with the police and crime plan commitments.
87. The OPCC have supported the VRU to extend the contract of the trauma informed trainers to July, in line with other VRU staff, to reduce risks of attrition during Q4.
88. The project also includes a number of other workstreams, being delivered by the VRU outside of WMP:
- **National curriculum:** Work nationally to embed trauma informed resources within the College of Policing curriculum, accessible to all forces & other law enforcement agencies. This builds sustainability into the approach, supports the development of a trauma informed police service & strengthens our response to transitory vulnerability e.g. county lines.
 - Incorporate trauma informed training and support for leaders across the **national volunteer police cadet schemes**. We are on track to reach a target of 80% of 2847 volunteer leaders = 2277 people, who support over 14,000 cadets nationally.
 - **Pilot a trauma informed and anti-racist OPCC** (within WMP) and extract learning, promoting this nationally via APCC. The target is to reach 95% of 75 = 71 staff.

The VRU Response Strategy

89. As part of its funding application, the VRU is required to develop and submit an annual response strategy, setting out the way it will work with partners to deliver activities that respond to the needs and recommendations set out in the [Strategic Needs Assessment](#).

90. The SNA is due for re-publication in the Spring. In addition to the traditional document, the VRU has built a interactive online SNA which anyone can use to help understand the data about risk factors in their area. This is intended to support all partners commissioning decisions, and also to support organisations to build stronger tender applications [WestMids VRU \(wmvru-sna.org\)](#)

Within the West Midlands, this response strategy is split into two parts:

- A. **Commissioned interventions** (describing the interventions that have been commissioned through VRU grant)
- B. **Delivery Workstreams** (describing the work that the VRU team will deliver with and in support of partners, split thematically (e.g. sports, education, exploitation, criminal justice, localities based work). In 21/22 the VRU has 12 active workstreams.

91. The response strategy for 21/22 was:

A) To commission the following interventions:

92. **Reachable Moments** programmes with Red Thread and St Giles Trust:

- continuing investment in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry A&E departments and Birmingham Women & Childrens Hospital;
- beginning a new A&E based youth work programme in Dudley;
- beginning new reachable moments programmes based in exploitation hubs, sexual health and mental health services in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry.

93. **Domestic Abuse primary prevention:**

- Continue part-year funding of a IDVA service at Birmingham Womens and Childrens Hospital,
- deliver a programme of DA preventative work in upskilling schools in support of Operation Encompass;
- deliver a working with trauma in early years programme to support the development of protective behaviours.

94. **Upscale mental health support:**

- by providing cognitive behaviour therapy to over 200 young people through the Heal Hub intervention run by Aspire4U;

95. **Resettlement programmes:**

- continue to work with Catch 22, Phoenix United, Bringing Hope, to deliver tertiary prevention programmes that offer support to young adults and children leaving prison and the secure estate across Birmingham and Wolverhampton;

96. **Desist and Transform:**

- continue to work with St Giles Trust to deliver a programme of community based tertiary support for young adults in Coventry who have come to police attention or are leaving the secure estate;

97. **Kitchen Table Talks:**

- continue to work with First Class Legacy to deliver a programme of peer support amongst parents of young people who are involved in the criminal justice system

98. Missing Return Home Support:

- Trial a programme with St Giles Trust and local authorities in Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Walsall to use peer support workers in the early stages of return home interviews for those young people who have gone missing, in an effort to provide earlier intervention into exploitation through county lines

99. Rescue and Response:

- Extend support for an existing Home Office funded programme to provide peer support workers to collect young people from the west midlands who are arrested elsewhere in the country for county lines activity, and support them to exit plan and find a route out of exploitative situations.

100. Step Together:

- Launch a national pilot providing youth workers on the route to and from secondary schools, in at least 18 locations around the region, working with numerous smaller or local providers to do so.

101. Safe Spaces:

- Provide secondary prevention activity through the establishment of safe spaces in the night time economy in Wolverhampton and Coventry, and extend existing provision within Birmingham

102. Youth Assembly:

- Work with Aspire4U and local partners to develop a youth assembly to influence the work of VRU partners related to serious violence.

103. Trauma informed Programme:

- Work with Barnado's to develop and test tailored trauma informed training for a range of workforces, with a focus on functions across West Midlands Police and the wider police service

104. Place-based working.

- Investments that are agreed with local violence reduction boards, which focus on filling identified gaps in their area.. The areas chose to use their delivery budget to commission:
 - **Birmingham:** The Lighthouse Consortium and implementation of the project plan for the Transformation For Change Project has been underway since August. Additional capacity for sports and positive activities began in August, with the mentoring and detached youth work commencing in September as schools returned.
 - **Coventry:** Continued early years protective behaviours program; continued SOS+ program delivered in schools in Hillfields and Wood End by St Giles; schools focused projects; incident response and counter-narrative projects in Hillfields and Wood End.
 - **Dudley:** Here 4 YOUth will deliver a pilot program of the impulse control which is a program we funded to develop last year; continuation of family support and helpline; and specialist SEND mentoring delivered in education settings across the borough is being implemented.
 - **Sandwell:** An accredited mentoring framework is being built with local providers offered the opportunity to attend a training course as well as engage with a train the trainer programme. Detached youth work and intensive support to Sandwell College also funded alongside capacity for specialist mentoring and family support, including primary work.
 - **Solihull:** Support to newly established youth centres funded by the VRU last year continues and capacity for positive activities for young people increased.

Mentoring in schools has also been offered through a consistent referral pathway.

- **Walsall:** Continued therapeutic support for young people at risk of exclusion in Blue Coat School; intensive NEET project at Walsall College; a specialist violence prevention role in the exploitation hub; intensive mentoring capacity increased; and additional sports and positive activities coordinated by Streetgames.
- **Wolverhampton:** intensive mentoring program for schools in targeted areas of the city; schools projects; and sports and positive activities program.

105. Workforce development, training and delivery offer.

This includes locally tailored delivery of training across the partnership to:

- understand childhood adversity;
- trauma informed practice;
- trauma informed organisations;
- a public health approach to violence reduction;
- Mentors in Violence Prevention (in primary, secondary, college settings, and in development for faith-based, sports-based, and university settings);
- exploitation awareness training (general awareness of exploitation, particularly criminal exploitation, but also this year the development of sector specific inputs around:
 - understanding financial exploitation
 - safeguarding Roma children and young people
 - awareness for foster carers and parents
 - awareness for those caring for and supporting Vietnamese children and young people
 - understanding exploitation community of practice for sports and activity providers

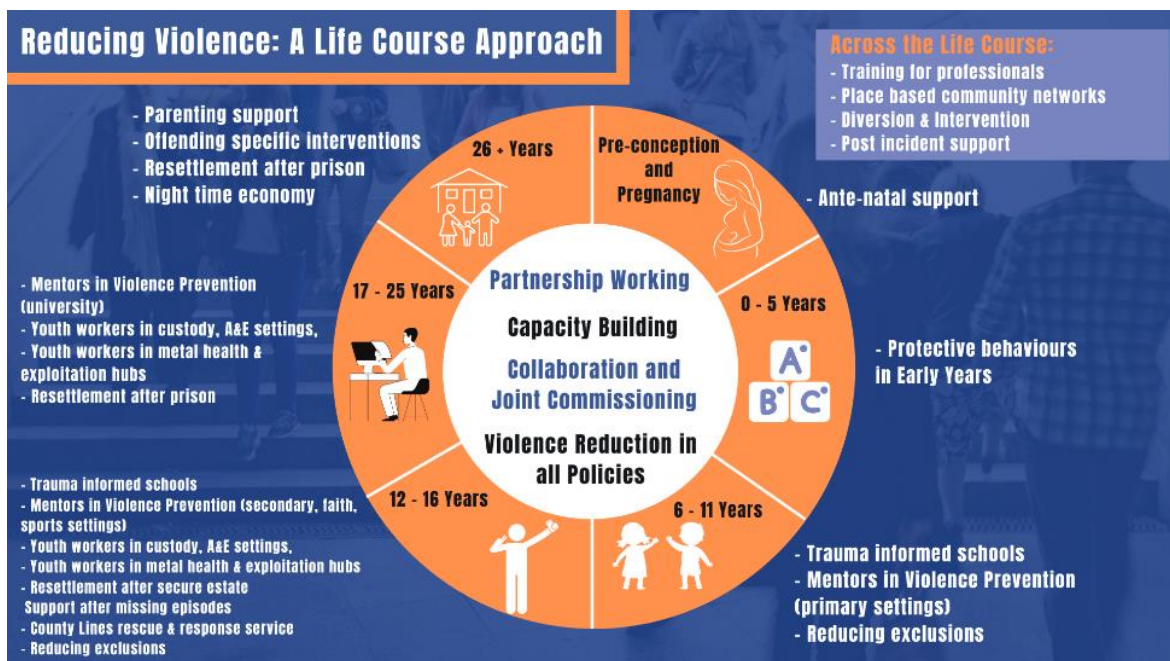


Figure 3

Reach and impact

106. The VRU providers report data quarterly in arrears describing the reach and impact of interventions, and are evaluated annually on outcomes for young people involved in the interventions.

107. Q2 reporting showed we had reached and were working with over 3000 at-risk people in the first half of the year. This is likely to step up significantly in Q3 as many interventions that were being either upscaled or launched began to deliver at the new levels over that period

Reach in terms of numbers of people supported by VRU interventions during Q1 and Q2 2020/21 (note, Q1 was a slimmed down delivery due to grant instability).

Intervention	Reach (24 and under) in Q1&2	Reach (25 and over) in Q1&2
Desist and Transform	75	0
Resettlement Birmingham YP	51	0
Resettlement Wolverhampton YA	13	16
Resettlement Birmingham YA	9	2
Teachable Moments in Hospitals - Coventry and Wolverhampton	231	5
Teachable Moments in Hospitals – Birmingham	141	0
DA Fund/IBWCH IDVA	0	26
Combined Delivery Budget	2,414	148
Totals	2934	197

Table 1

B) The Response Strategy also involves the delivery of a number of systems change workstreams:

108. The majority of these are on track to deliver against expectations set for 21/22, although some adjustments to in-year ambition have had to be made in the Health Systems & Inequalities, criminal justice systems and MVP workstreams due to significant staff abstractions.

109. The partnership is working to mitigate the main areas where there are significant risks to delivery, which are in communications and engagement. This is in part due to the challenging pandemic context, but also reflects the need for increased capacity and platforms to share local information about the VRUs work.

110. A full report into the progress against all workstreams is due for publication at the close of the financial year, but they have been colour-coded here in terms of progress to date against expectations in year (rather than completion of the objective as a whole, as some will take many years to “complete”)

111. Trauma Informed Practice

- To continue to develop trauma-informed workforces across VRU partners
- To ensure a sustainable commitment to trauma-informed practice at an organisational and local level

- To support regional strategic work to make the West Midlands a Trauma-Informed region
 - To develop trauma awareness amongst senior officers of WMP and ensure smooth delivery of other activity
 - To develop trauma awareness amongst new recruits and National Volunteer Police Cadet leaders.
 - To begin work to establish trauma-awareness amongst investigators and 'frontline' officers
 - To support West Midlands Police in efforts to make custody suites more Trauma-Informed
112. **Sport as a violence reduction intervention**
- To embed strategic and operational partnerships which influence policy, practice and systems change.
 - To develop and commission programmes of evidence-based activity which promotes the development of pro-social identities in young people identified as being vulnerable and/or at risk.
 - To mature, extend and further connect with a diverse network of community sport providers who are appropriately skilled, competent and connected to the Violence Reduction agenda.
 - To develop evidence-based practices which influence the future design, delivery and collaboration of programmes to prevent and reduce violence affecting young people. This should be achieved by both extending the evidence base, the sector's insight and disseminating current practices.
 - Embed Sport as a cross-cutting intervention across VRU and OPCC delivery.
 - Ensure the work of the VRU is connected to large scale events and regional opportunities across the region.
113. **Faith Alliance**
- Strategy - Establish key relationships across the region to strengthen and sustain the strategic work of the Faith Alliance
 - Training and development - Equip local faith leaders with bespoke culturally competent, trauma-informed training to build their capacity to support vulnerable people
 - Communications - Unlock the potential of faith communities as messengers of information and best practice on priority areas of domestic abuse, exploitation and violence
 - Youth Spaces - Map and expand a network of youth spaces available to young people in local faith venues
 - Education - Work with schools to help young people learn how to treat others with dignity and respect, pursue what is right and good, and to promote non-violence
 - Pastoral Care - Support leaders, pastoral support staff and chaplains as they provide pastoral care to communities in the wake of trauma and violence
114. **Health Systems, Evaluation & Inequality**
- Develop strategic & regional engagement with the wider health sector across the West Midlands
 - To work in partnership with the NHS, Public Health and Police colleagues to improve the efficacy of the regional injury surveillance system .
 - To develop an internal mechanism by which high-quality, robust evaluation of VRU activities is completed efficiently and effectively
 - To develop a robust and systematic plan to address inequalities faced by the VRU and wider partnership in relation to violence reduction

- To ensure continued public health support provision into the VRU and out to partner agencies
115. **Tackling Exploitation (objectives shown here for Criminal Exploitation)**
- Facilitate a stronger multi-agency approach to the prevention of exploitation and abuse across the region
 - Focus and support the region to take preventative action towards Criminal Exploitation
 - Raise awareness of vulnerability, risk and protective factors linked to county lines, criminal exploitation and missing
 - Encourage agencies to work together to strengthen our understanding of the scale and nature of criminal exploitation across the region
 - Develop stronger protocols outlining pathways and processes for young people located out of area engaged in county lines
 - Review use of regional assessment/screening tools
 - Reduce the impact of ill-advised housing placements driving or exacerbating exploitation
116. **Domestic Abuse Prevention**
- To support the development of consistent preventative approaches to domestic abuse, and evidence-based working, across the West Midlands
 - Support education partners in domestic abuse prevention work and in their response to child victims
 - Facilitate the review and redevelopment of the regional domestic abuse standards
 - Connect the DA Board robustly to existing VRU activity, and identify opportunities for effective partnerships, including developing effective pathways with health across the system
117. **Criminal Justice System**
- Deliver YJB pathfinder
 - Engage with NPU's - offender managers (OM), Young Persons Officer(YPO), Schools Link Officer(SLOs) etc, Local Authorities (Youth Offending Team, Troubled Families, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Corporate Parenting Board), probation, courts and secure settings to improve rates of recidivism and contextual safeguarding
 - Understand where and how other sectors connect with the Criminal Justice System
 - Establish a relationship with secure estate
 - To develop the understanding of Speech Language Communication Needs (SLCN), Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) amongst key agencies
 - Raise awareness of the impact of trauma on those detained to influence an improvement to the custody environment
 - To make communication-accessible resources so young people are able to understand and use information effectively
 - Deliver Resettlement Projects
 - Deliver Desist and transform
118. **Communications & Engagement**
- To raise the profile of the VRU across the partnership, professional networks, and within local communities, including those from minority groups, lower income backgrounds, and those with additional needs.
 - To develop robust and effective internal communication methods
 - To improve the VRU's approach to youth engagement

- To set up a communications sub-group of the Strategic Members Board
 - To continue to support the VRU team with communications activity across the Unit and provide ad hoc communications support
119. **Insight & Analysis**
- Ensure sufficient resource for data analysis in VRU
 - Set and develop VRU data and analysis strategy
 - Work in partnerships
 - Provide good analysis (to support agencies in WM around violence reduction and understanding of risk)
 - Commitment to continuous improvement
120. **Locality Based Working**
- To embed the VRU offer effectively in localities across the region.
 - To further integrate the Community Navigator team across the region, ensuring the VRU has a robust physical interface in each LA.
 - To “turn on” more violence prevention and reduction networks across the region, convening more stakeholders, communities and young people to their role in violence prevention and reduction.
 - To establish authentic community and youth engagement in order to assist the development of meaningful coproduction.
 - To support local violence prevention forums across the region to develop and operationalise their strategies.
 - To streamline local opportunities and discussions around investment in young people and preventing violence.
121. **Education and Mentors in Violence Prevention** response strategy objectives are described in more detail in para 87-102 below.

The relationship between the VRU response strategy and the police and crime plan

122. The VRU 21/22 response strategy was set at the start of the year and therefore predates the election of the PCC and subsequent development of the Police and Crime Plan 2021. The PCC’s manifesto advocated a public health approach, which has meant that there is a natural alignment of ambition.
123. The VRU partnership was heavily involved in the consultation and the development of the P&CP. The unit identified some areas where adjustments within the existing response strategy could be made to ensure alignment with the emerging P&CP.
124. At the time of writing, there is a strong synergy between the objectives within the VRUs 21/22 response strategy and the P&CP partnership commitments regarding reducing violence. The P&CP partnership commitments are also comfortably aligned to the anticipated prevention of serious violence duty.
125. The VRU will play due regard to the P&CP alongside other partners strategic commitments, the evidence base about need and the VRU funding conditions when considering the partnerships future response strategy.
126. The VRU’s delivery against the Police & Crime Plan commitments in 22/23 and 23/24 will depend upon:
- The response that the updated strategic needs assessment indicates is necessary;

- The level of funding, and any conditions of that funding;
- Whether partners agree to support a VRU response strategy that aligns with the P&CP, and the extent to which the local long term SV strategies align with the plan.

Of these, at the time of submission the funding level and conditions presents the most uncertainty.

127. The VRU core funding alone contributes to but does not reach the funding level required to deliver the P&C Plan partnership commitments in full. Investment from partners and other sources will also be necessary to achieve.

Area of focus: Steps to Prepare for the Prevention of Serious Violence Duty

128. The VRU has been working with local partnerships to support their readiness for the Serious Violence Duty, providing practical support to local Community Safety Partnership leads in the development of their local violence prevention boards and ensuring that there is a general awareness of the forthcoming duty across the region.

129. A regional group which brings together the seven violence reduction leads is also being established which will support the sharing of learning and good practice as the duty takes effect.

130. The revised VRU SNA will provide some valuable data which will inform local partnership's serious violence needs assessments. The unit is also working closely with Birmingham CSP to strengthen their local needs assessment.

131. The unit has begun to develop engagement strategies with sectors named in the duty as holding specific responsibilities. Local area readiness has been subject to discussion at both the July and October VRU Strategic Board meetings.

132. On 22nd July 2021, WMP and the VRU hosted a Public Health Workshop which gave agencies the opportunity to consider progress on their individual organisation and partnership response. The Duty places a far stronger emphasis on partner relationships to deliver Public Health driven steps to address causal factors of violence and this opportunity provided valuable time to support both regional and local conversations on progress, gaps and challenges.

133. The violence reduction strategic board has subsequently supported the police and crime commissioner in his oversight role by providing a forum to review the current position within each local authority area at both the July and October VRU Strategic Board meetings. A further written snapshot of sectors readiness is due to be submitted to January's board.

134. The VRU Director has worked closely with other VRU Directors and the Home Office to shape thinking and understanding about the extension of the Serious Violence Duty to domestic abuse and other elements of violence against women and girls. Whilst an amendment has been passed and the Duty has been extended to include this, it is not yet known what this will look like or what the expectations will be. Further guidance is anticipated to be released for consultation late in January.

Area of focus: Working with the education system to reduce violence

VRU Education Response Strategy:

- Continue to develop partnerships with schools, police and LAs to ensure robust working relationships.
- Continue to develop a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of exclusions, managed moves and alternative provision across the region; identify drivers, obstacles, costs and political issues in relation to decision making within establishments and within localities.
- Ensure a combined and consistent delivery approach across the delivery team, developing synergy between EIA & Navigators
- Support the development of Trauma informed schools
- Work closely with Alternative Provision and PRUs to strengthen systems at a local and national level, in order to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for children and young people
- Bring about change at a systems level within the education system
- Support the Home Office in delivering a national pilot for a safe routes to/from school scheme involving trained chaperones.

Mentors in Violence Prevention Response Strategy:

- Ensure all MVP models are ready for roll out inline with demand
- To establish Mentors in Violence Prevention regionally and extend the provision into additional settings.
- Cascade WM MVP English curriculum model with national VRU Network and wider partners.

135. Schools are understandably often seen as a key delivery environment for violence prevention activity, but it can be difficult for other systems, such as the police or the third sector, to integrate effectively with the complex education system. Too often, initiatives (such as assembly inputs) are instigated without the wraparound help that the school community needs to manage the issues that surface.

136. The VRU includes a team of education intervention advisers. The EIAs have joined the VRU from a range of education settings, with experience working with children and young people from early years to college age students.

137. EIAs are here to help the VRU and its partners to work with and within schools, helping design and deliver interventions that fit into the curriculum, the choreography of the school year, and the school environment – and which are therefore much more sustainable.

138. The VRU's strategic needs assessment process identifies particular secondary schools that it is a priority for us to work with, because they are supporting a school community who have higher levels of factors that are linked to risks of violence – this could include existing levels of violence in the schools catchment area, but also indicators of poverty and deprivation. EIAs have proactively sought to build relationships with these schools, and their feeder primary schools, but there is also a universal VRU offer that is open to all schools and education settings.

139. The universal offer focusses on supporting the school as a system. It includes support to understand childhood adversity, to understand trauma in early years settings, to develop a trauma informed school, to understand exploitation and to establish the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme (MVP).

140. The VRU has led the country in establishing a Primary, Secondary, College and now university Mentors in Violence Prevention models which are being rolled out across the region.
141. The EIAs are embedded in the local authority inclusion teams, WMP and the VRU, and are able to signpost schools towards support for young people which may come from a wide range of sources.
142. EIAs work closely with schools liaison officers and partnership officers that cover their area. They are co-located with community navigators at police stations in their area and support local officers to deliver specific initiatives. The VRU is due to be delivering a range of training to schools officers as part of the force uplift.
143. The VRU also sits on inclusion panels wherever it is invited to do so, and can advocate support for young people at risk of exclusion. EIAs look at root causes of exclusion and seek to find ways to address these on an individual and a system level. An example of this is an EIA working with partners in Solihull to open up access to a drugs referral pathway for those at risk of exclusion; other examples are of providing peer mentoring or family level support.
144. EIAs can support schools to explore issues they are concerned about, brokering stronger relationships with partner agencies, and unlocking extra support such as mentoring ahead of a situation developing or other thresholds being met.
145. By listening to those working within schools, the unit has identified potential blindspots in the way that other systems interact with schools. This led to the development of the operation encompass briefing for schools to help equip the schools to support children who have witnessed domestic violence when a notification is made. We have also explored together ways that police could communicate more proactively with schools when they are aware of other events which may affect a young persons sense of safety and wellbeing and will have an impact on their performance and behaviour in school.
146. The VRU has supported partners to better understand the complexity that educators are often faced with, and provided practical support to individual schools to navigate their way through the aftermath of significant incidents. This has fostered closer working relationships between the force and schools.
147. The VRU convenes educators in a range of forums. There is a online community for those supporting the MVP programme. The VRU education team are overseen by the education steering group, involving representatives from all LA education teams and other education stakeholders who act as critical friends.
148. The VRU also hosts an alternative provision & PRU strategic group to share good practice across the region. We have also facilitated geographic networks of schools to come together around specific risks or issues.
149. The VRU was selected to run the UKs national pilot for the Step Together Programme. This has enabled youth workers from local community groups to be present on key routes to and from school in order to diffuse situations and deter harm. This programme has also encouraged networks of schools to work together in a local area. It connects community members, businesses, local police and school leaders with a shared objective to ensure children and young people reach school safely, and in a good frame of mind to learn, and to transition home safely at the end

of the day. Step Together schools have become part of the local VRU stakeholder network.

150. As of 13/12, there are 18 live Step Together routes:
- Birmingham: 3 in Lozells, 2 in Erdington, 1 in Sutton, 1 in Sparkbrook
 - Dudley: 1 in St James, 1 in Kates Hill
 - Sandwell: 1 in Cape Hill, 1 in Oldbury
 - Solihull: 1 in Chelmsley Wood, 1 in Tudor Grange
 - Walsall: 1 around Palfrey/Joseph Leckie, 1 in Town Centre
 - Wolverhampton: 1 in Blakenhall, 1 in Heath Town, 1 in Town Centre
- A further route is in development in Coventry (Wood End).
151. The VRU also has a speech, language and communication therapist working with the partnership. They are supporting the unit to highlight the disproportionality within the CJS of young people who have SLC difficulties, and to identify opportunities to prevent root causes of this. They are also supporting partners to make existing processes more accessible e.g. accessing some healthcare support or processes in police custody.
152. The VRU has also been supporting systems change activity, and working with the University of Wolverhampton to strengthen the training offer available for existing and new educators. Earlier this year we co-hosted a national online conference for headteachers on the importance of character and virtue in education which enabled us to share the latest violence reduction research.
153. The VRU has also hosted partners to deliver a series of webinars for education professionals on topics such as contextual safeguarding, understanding trauma, awareness of exploitation.
154. At a strategic level, the VRU has led the national education portfolio for VRUs this year, working across the Department for Education to help broker a £40 million investment in violence reduction activity within schools across the country. Over £9M of this will come to the West Midlands, and the VRU is integral to the newly forming education-led SAFE taskforce in Birmingham.

Evaluation and Outcomes

155. The VRU's current response strategy is subject to several different and ongoing evaluations which will assess outcomes to date in the first two full years of the operation of the programme. These are:
1. A national evaluation of all VRUs and the VRU Programme commissioned by the Home Office
 2. A local evaluation required by the Home Office. This will focus on VRU implementation, and the resettlement, reachable moments, MVP and place based working interventions
 3. An evaluation of place-based working commissioned by YEF as part of the neighbourhood round
 4. A national evaluation of trauma informed working commissioned by the Home Office as part of the additional grant round
 5. A local evaluation of trauma informed working (process implementation) required by the Home Office as part of the additional grant round

6. A local evaluation of the High Intensity Therapeutic Intervention – Heal Hub (process implementation & impact) required by the Home Office as part of the additional grant round
7. A local evaluation of the reachable moment expansion required by the Home Office as part of the additional grant round
8. Two national evaluations of Step Together programme, commissioned by the Home Office and by the Youth Endowment Foundation (Process and Impact).

156. None of these evaluations have yet reported as delivery in all cases is currently ongoing, but reports are expected during Q1 22/23 which should offer more insight into VRU outcomes to date.

157. Interim evaluation reports for the VRUs set up phase are published here: <https://westmidlands-vru.org/evidence-evaluation/>.

158. The Home Office monitoring of the VRU network compares year to date levels of U25 NHS admissions for injury with a sharp object, robbery and homicide with the pre-funding year. An extract from the most recent snapshot is below, which shows trends are moving in the right direction across the majority of the network:

U25 NHS admissions for injury with a sharp object				Robbery				Homicide			
Force (funded forces)	Pre-funding year (to March19)	Year to Jun21	% change	Force (funded forces)	Pre-funding year (to March19)	Year to July21	% change	Force (funded forces)	Pre-funding year (to March19)	Year to July21	Volume change
Avon and Somerset	40	35	-13%	Avon & Somerset	1494	1452	-3%	Avon & Somerset	16	11	-5
Bedfordshire	35	35	0%	Bedfordshire	833	535	-36%	Bedfordshire	6	10	4
Essex	40	45	13%	Essex	1801	1305	-28%	Essex	15	21	6
Greater Manchester	115	120	4%	Greater Manchester	7605	4768	-37%	Greater Manchester	60	54	-6
Hampshire	30	20	-33%	Hampshire	1375	1209	-12%	Hampshire	8	13	5
Kent	30	30	0%	Kent	1988	1190	-40%	Kent	19	9	-10
Lancashire	50	40	-20%	Lancashire	1146	963	-16%	Lancashire	25	18	-7
Leicestershire	45	30	-33%	Leicestershire	1078	736	-32%	Leicestershire	10	12	2
Merseyside	90	70	-22%	Merseyside	1479	1127	-24%	Merseyside	21	19	-2
Metropolitan Police	585	480	-18%	Metropolitan Police	34365	23408	-32%	Metropolitan Police	116	122	6
Northumbria	40	35	-13%	Northumbria	848	674	-21%	Northumbria	15	8	-7
Nottinghamshire	35	40	14%	Nottinghamshire	1249	792	-37%	Nottinghamshire	9	8	-1
South Wales	25	20	-20%	South Wales	529	501	-5%	South Wales	12	10	-2
South Yorkshire	65	50	-23%	South Yorkshire	1722	1438	-16%	South Yorkshire	22	16	-6
Sussex	30	15	-50%	Sussex	1193	870	-27%	Sussex	17	10	-7
Thames Valley	45	40	-11%	Thames Valley	1581	996	-37%	Thames Valley	16	18	2
West Midlands	235	150	-36%	West Midlands	8739	7292	-17%	West Midlands	51	51	0
West Yorkshire	100	90	-10%	West Yorkshire	3919	2317	-41%	West Yorkshire	38	26	-12

Note: data affected by Covid-19 due to geographical differences, so any comparisons should be treated with caution.
Homicide: low volumes mean data varies widely over time so treat with caution
NHS: all data are suppressed, so percentages may not reflect the changes in raw data for individual forces

159. It should be recognised that almost all of the socio-economic drivers of violence are currently increasing, as outlined in the WMP submission.

Financial Implications

160. Information about the VRU budget is set out in paragraphs 28-53 but summarised here below are the strands which are held by the OPCC on behalf of the partnership:

Likely to continue:

- VRU Core Grant £3.37M

Due to end in 20/21:

- VRU additional grant – trauma informed policing £0.59M
- VRU additional grant – high intensity therapeutic interventions £1.17M
- VRU additional grant – reachable moments expansion activity £0.46M
- YEF targeted projects / HO additional grants – Step Together £1.2M
- Home Office Special Grant – County Lines £0.2M
- Youth Justice Board Pathfinder Grant – Parenting Peer Support £0.2M

161. A key financial implication for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to consider is the dependency upon the Home Office funding to deliver many of the violence reduction partnership commitments within the police and crime plan.

162. With additional grants coming to an end, and no clear additional grants yet set out for 22/23 onwards, partners and the public will likely notice a decrease in available services as we reach the year end and move into next year. Whilst it is probable that additional grants will become available in the future, it is challenging if not impossible to deliver a solid and sustained service whilst dependent upon a patchwork of funding grants that appear in-year.

163. It seems likely that all partners, including the OPCC and WMP, may need to make local contributions towards violence reduction funding as the central government grant steps down over the next 2 years.

164. There is a further financial implication to consider, in terms of the feasibility of underwriting extensions to the VRUs commissioned services. These will need to begin to reduce service delivery at the end of December. Services will begin to trigger closure plans, reducing the number of staff, turning away referrals from January. Funding is unlikely to be confirmed through the Home Office until after these services have had to reduce to a skeleton level and in some cases to close completely.

165. Local bridging arrangements are required if services for young people are not to close, only for some to then to reopen (slowly) during Q1. The potential impact for young people of reduced services between January and June is significant. The potential impact of precarious employment on our incredibly valued youth workers and lived experience mentors is particularly concerning.

166. Bridging costs for extending a comparable suite of commissioned interventions, stripped down where feasible, are approximately £180,000/month.

167. The earlier that even month-by-month extension can be actioned, the less interruption to service delivery will occur. The financial risk linked to bridging decreases once the VRU allocation has been announced.

Legal Implications

168. The extension of the Serious Violence Duty may present a number of implications for the VRU partnership, dependent upon the guidance that is issued and the wording of the agreed amendments. More information about this is likely to become available in late January/February, in line with VRU funding application periods.

Equality Implications

169. The main aim of the VRU is to address the root causes of violence and prevent it from happening in the first place. Violence is disproportionately experienced by different communities and individuals and the [VRU Strategic Needs Assessment](#) provides valuable insight which enables us to focus our resources on the people and places who are most affected.

170. The VRU delivery plans are developed in partnership with other agencies and local communities which ensure that they respond to the specific issues in local places and include tailored interventions to meet identified needs. The VRU prioritises supporting young people with a range of programmes aimed at reducing risks, supporting them in staying safe and putting in place long-term arrangements to provide positive opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential.

171. The VRU commissions a range of interventions and will ensure that providers have robust equality policies in place and report quarterly on delivery and impact. This will include a breakdown on beneficiaries in order for us to ensure that the resources are reaching those who need it most.

172. The development of 22/23 delivery plans will include more formal equality impact assessments, whilst recognising that interventions will need to be targeted at specific groups who are at most risk of or experiencing violence. We will work with the OPCC and WMP to develop a consistent approach to equality impact assessments. We recognise the opportunity to improve and are keen to get this right.

Next Steps

173. The board is asked to note the content of this report, to confirm the OPCCs continued commitment to the partnership, and to explore bridging arrangements for commissioned interventions and locally generated funding opportunities to support the VRU to deliver on the partnership components of the police and crime plan.

Author(s): Clare Gollop
Job Title: VRU Director

Annex 1 – Regional Strategic Board terms of reference
Regional Strategic Violence Reduction Board

Key Objectives

1. Developing and delivering our regional response to violence reduction

- Use the opportunity that VRU funding provides to develop and implement a multi-year regional violence reduction strategy
- Develop a system-wide response to preventing violence that is integrated into each organisation's mainstream business activity
- Facilitate the development and approval of exit strategies and the mainstreaming of interventions to sustain activity after the end of the funding period
- Develop a sustainable route forward for a multi-agency capacity to continue this work once central funding has been withdrawn

2. Strategic oversight of the VRU grant

- Provide reassurance to stakeholders that the VRU's activity is compliant with the grant conditions
- Escalate any high level risks and / or issues that could affect the programme's ability to comply with any of the grant conditions that cannot be mitigated at the programme board
- Approve significant changes in scope in relation to the key deliverables within the VRU's work-plan

3. Integrate the effort of core organisations & the VRU

- Identify interdependencies between the VRU's activity and the activity of partner organisation to inform future planning of the VRU programme.
- Facilitate ad hoc requests from senior stakeholders for briefings on specific elements linked to the programme.

Responsibilities of core members:

- Provide strategic direction to the VRU Director
- Provide practical support for the development and adoption of the regional violence reduction strategy
- Identify opportunities for your organisation to work more effectively within the whole system approach
- Share organisational plans, activity and intent in relation to violence reduction activity
- Secure local commitment to working in a multi-agency way once VRU funding is withdrawn and identify opportunities to mainstream VRU interventions
- Maintain strategic scrutiny and assurance that the operational delivery of the VRU is in line with the grant conditions and monitor performance by reference to quarterly highlight reports
- Challenge and approve the annual VRU budget and suite of interventions
- Annual review of the VRU's Strategic Needs Assessment, Response Strategy, Annual Report

Annex 1 – Regional Strategic Board terms of reference
Regional Strategic Violence Reduction Board

Membership

Core members (these are defined by HO within the grant)

- Chief Constable or senior decision making rep.
- PCC or senior decision making rep.
- All relevant local authorities (represented by e.g. Chief Exec, DPH; DCS; Head of CS)
- All of the relevant CCGs
- VRU Director
- PHE (transitioning to DHSC / UKHSA)
- YOT representative
- Local education representative (Chair of Education Steering Group & PRU network)
- Representative of communities and young people
- Representative of the voluntary sector

Associate members (not defined by HO but recognised as key partners locally)

- WMCA
- CPS
- Chairs/co-chairs of VRU forums: Faith Alliance, Provider Network, Exploitation Boards (CEM, others as relevant), Academic advisory Board, Sports Board,
- Probation Service
- NHSE

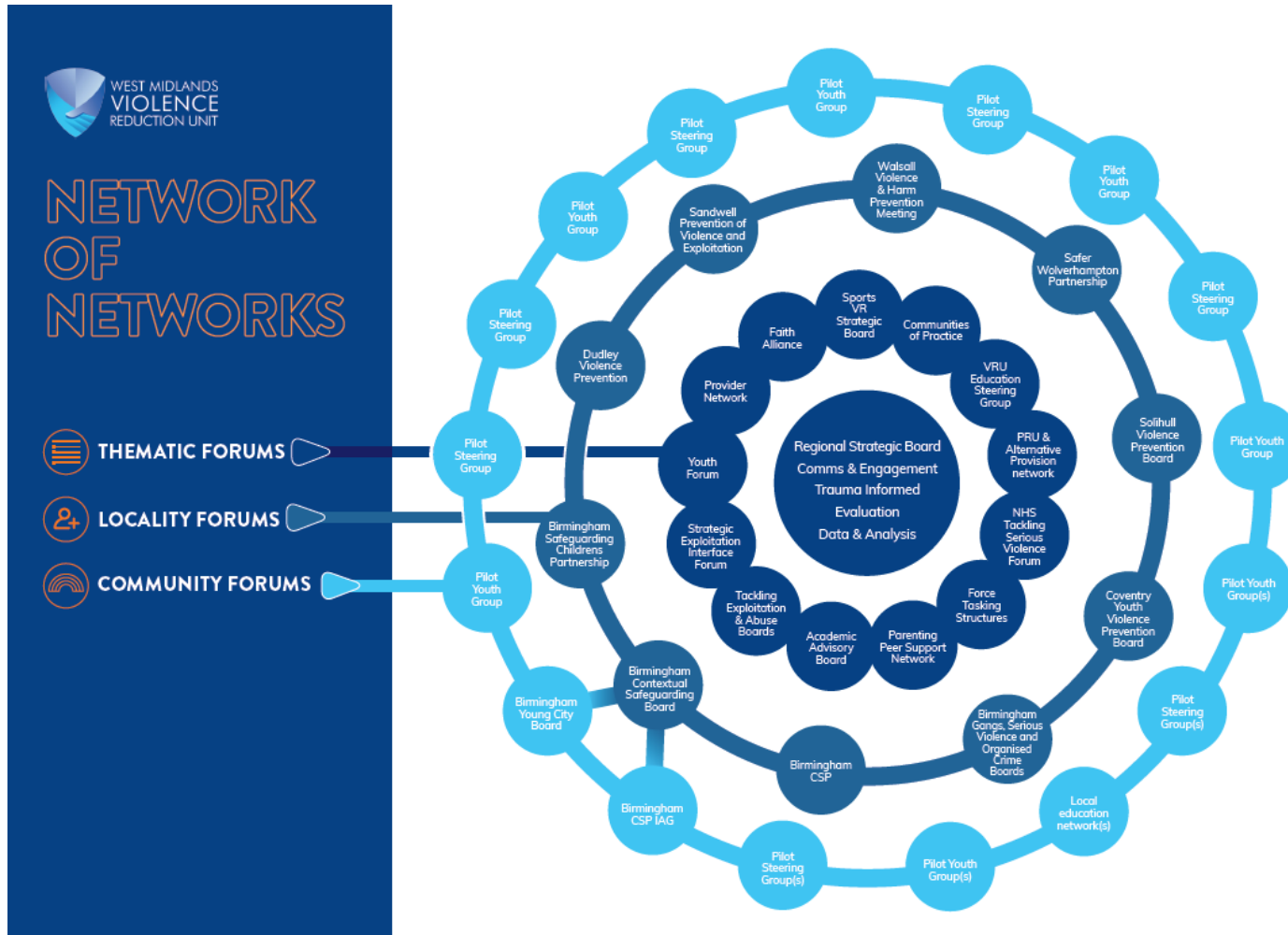
Requirements

- The meeting will be chaired by the PCC and in their absence the Chief Constable (or their respective representatives)
- Core Members will appoint specific representatives to attend in the event they are unable to attend.
- All members must bring the authority to represent their organisation (not department) at the required level and to approve decision papers.
- All decisions must be agreed by the PCC, the Chief Constable (or their representatives) and the majority of the remaining members of the board who are at the meeting.
- The PCC acts as the recipient of the Home Office grant on behalf of the core VRU members and other partners and as such must ensure that the grant conditions are complied with.
- Participants are encouraged to bring challenges, risks, and opportunities pertinent to violence reduction partnership activity to the table.
- The meeting will be held on a quarterly basis and will be administered by the VRU team. Papers will be distributed 5 working days in advance. Papers for inclusion in the pack are required two days prior to that.
- Standing Agenda items will include: VRU highlight report; reports from sub-group chairs; exit strategy.

Annex 1 – Regional Strategic Board terms of reference

Regional Strategic Violence Reduction Board

The Strategic Board draws together representatives of a constellation of other networks, forums and consultation groups that all inform and influence the VRUs work



Annex 1 – Regional Strategic Board terms of reference
Regional Strategic Violence Reduction Board

Subgroups 21/22

In addition to these forums, board members identified four sub-groups to engage around thematic issues over the coming year.

Trauma Informed

Purpose: To support partner organisations to develop trauma informed workforces, to promote trauma informed communities; to develop standards and kite mark, and to integrate the VRU's work with that of the ambition for a trauma informed region
Chair: Claire Dhami, WMCA
Supported by: Hayley Walton & Rachel De Kam
Frequency: Monthly
Membership: TI practitioners and leads from across VRU partner organisations & interested stakeholders

Evaluation

Purpose: To steer the VRU's local evaluation activity and contribution to the developing the evidence base across the key areas of place-based working, systems change and directly commissioned interventions
Chair: Lola Abudu, PHE.
Supported by: VRU PH team
Frequency: Monthly alternating focus between Place-based; systems change; and directly commissioned & other.
Membership: PHE (DHSC from October), Local Authorities, Academic Advisory Board, VRU evaluation team, and interested partners.

Data & Analysis

Purpose: To develop stronger and broader data about the risks of and experience of violence and to improve the way that information is exchanged between organisations
Chair: Gareth Morris, WMP
Supported by Jason Davies & Emma Pearce
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership: Analysts, performance leads and data owners, information governance support from across VRU membership

Engagement & Communication

Purpose: To improve the way we engage with and listen to key groups; to support co-production alongside communities across VRU activity; to develop and to deliver joint communications activity; to develop the VRU youth voice and provider forums.
Chair: Waqar Ahmed, BCC
Supported by: Shazelle Punjabi & Nikki Penniston
Frequency: Monthly
Membership: Communications and engagement leads from across the partnership, including from provider's networks and community stakeholders.

Annex 1 – Regional Strategic Board terms of reference
Regional Strategic Violence Reduction Board

Progress towards a regional, ten year strategy

Pandemic restrictions have caused us to review the approach to the development of a regional multi-year strategy. In year 1 we have focused on: developing the evidence base (through the SNA & online SNA) that all agencies can lean on; developing sector-wide strategies inside two core sectors – policing and NHSE; developing an overarching Theory of Change and on strengthening some of the local authority level partnership strategies. This positions us well to draw these together and to consult on a ten year regional violence reduction strategy, ahead of the multi-year spending review, and more locally, in synergy with the setting of priorities for new PCC and Mayoral terms.

