



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

September 2022

Report: Serious Youth Violence

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Reducing Violence

Title: Serious Youth Violence

Presented by: ACC Ward

Purpose of paper

1. This is a Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and West Midlands Police (WMP) joint paper. The purpose of this report is to provide the Strategic Police and Crime Board with an update on:
 - *The performance of WMP in relation to serious youth violence, including their participation and role in the VRP*
 - *Delivery of GRIP and Guardian*
 - *The implementation of key areas of the Police and Crime Plan related to tackling serious youth violence including:*
 - *Partnership work to prevent and reduce the impact of Summer violence peaks*
 - *Progress in developing NPU/local level violence reduction plans*
 - *Delivery of the trauma informed policing programme*
 - *The joint response to preventing criminal exploitation (county lines)*
 - *VRP interactions with the criminal justice and policing systems*
 - *Preparations for the Offence Weapons Homicide Review Pilot*
 - *Readiness for the Serious Violence Duty*

Background

2. Serious youth violence (the focus nationally is worded under 25 Violence with Injury) is a wide ranging challenge which affects individuals, families and communities. It comes in multiple forms, takes place within different contexts and situations and cuts across culture, race and socio-economic status.
3. The UK Government and West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner have both set Youth Violence as a priority. A number of police forces (including WMP) have received Home Office Serious Youth Violence Funding to specifically target under 25 violence with injury and knife crime. These funds support the work of the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and 'GRIP' which provides additional and enhanced policing activity in violence hotspots.
4. The WM VRP is one of 20 across the country, established in 2019 to build capacity in local places and systems and to tackle the root causes of violence. Leading and facilitating multi-agency, multi-sector partnership working, the VRP is made up of a

range of specialists who work regionally and locally to facilitate and encourage the development of system wide responses to violence; as well as directly delivering and commissioning a range of services/interventions.

5. The Home Office monitor three primary metrics under this fund:
 - Reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25.
 - Reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25.
 - Reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.

6. The Government's focus on under 25 violence with injury includes a wide range of offending. These include school linked offences; robbery; serious and organised crime; urban street gangs; night-time economy; county lines exploitation; violence against women and girls; and firearms enabled crime. This is a multi-dimensional and complex problem. The drivers of youth violence have been subject to a number of studies including Crest Review of Violence and Vulnerability (February 2021) and the Youth Violence Commission Final Report (July 2020), which identified factors driving violence are:
 - Trauma and normalised behaviours
 - Exclusion from education and lack of skills
 - Lack of youth services and investment in early years
 - Poor local infrastructure
 - Unsafe/crowded/unaffordable housing
 - Lack of employment opportunities/well paid employment
 - Poor/absent parenting and neglect

Criminal exploitation will target those subjected to these circumstances. In considering these factors, it presents an acute challenge to the West Midlands region.

7. The WMP region is complex in terms of diversity and vulnerability:

A Young Region - In the 2021 census, 34% of the population of the West Midlands were under 25, which is higher than the average for England and Wales (29%).

A Diverse Region

30% of the West Midlands identified as non-white ethnicity in the 2011 Census, but this figure is likely to be higher in 2022, although 2021 Census results have not been fully released at the time of writing. The breakdown of non-white ethnicity in the West Midlands is as follows - Asian (19%), Black (6%) and Mixed / Other (5%).

Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) revealed that a quarter of the population of the West Midlands (26%) live in areas of significant deprivation – the top 10% most deprived in areas in England.

Similarly, Department of Education statistics indicate that 32% of children in the West Midlands are eligible for free school meals - a higher proportion than in

Merseyside (29%), Greater Manchester (28%) and West Yorkshire (25%) – three of the most similar police force areas.

Low educational attainment

Latest statistics for educational attainment (2019) show that almost a third (32%) of children in the West Midlands did not achieve a good level of educational development in Early Years Foundation Stage profiles. Again, this is higher than the average for England at 29%.

Homelessness

In 2021, more than 15,000 households had a homelessness assessment. Birmingham was third highest in England for homelessness assessments, behind Leeds and Manchester. Coventry was 17th and Wolverhampton 20th.

These factors present acute challenges for West Midlands Police:

- Deprivation – 1st out of 39 police forces (deprivation is defined differently in Wales)
- Unemployment – 2nd out of 42
- Low educational attainment – 1st out of 42 police forces
- Homelessness – 1st out of 42 police forces
- Proportion of young people – 1st out of 42 police forces

8. Performance, Rates and trends of violence in the West Midlands

Police recorded data on violent crime should be treated with a degree of caution, due to changes in our crime recording, and our drive for greater crime data integrity.

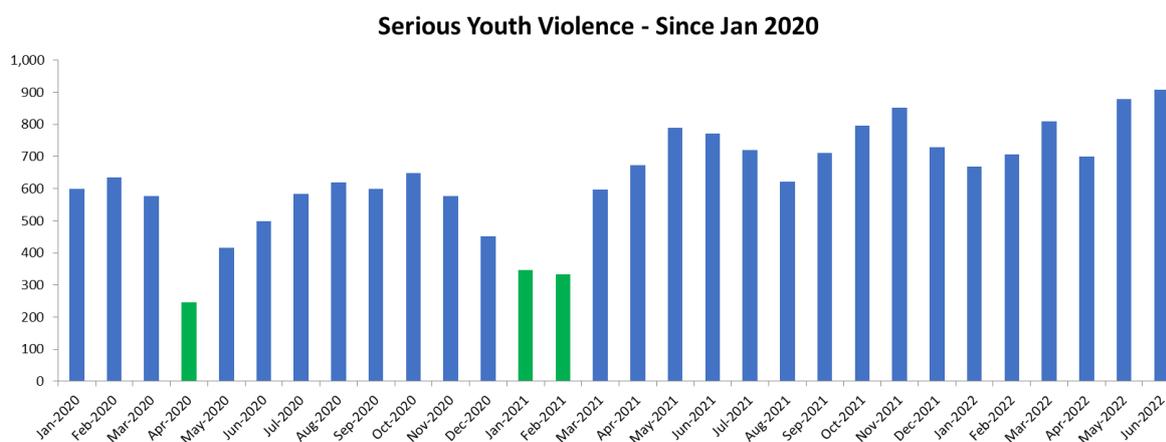
Having said that, it's probably fair to say that rates of serious youth violence have increased in recent years and the following chart shows the numbers of offences of serious violence which have risen, month on month between January 2020 and 2022.

The green bars show lower numbers which coincided with periods of national lockdown in 2020 and 2021. Following the relaxation of lockdown restrictions and subsequent re-opening up of the hospitality sector, children returning to educational establishments and society returning to normality, we can see numbers of police-recorded serious violence involving people under 25 rising to levels that are now higher than those seen prior to the pandemic.

Serious Youth Violence covers a very broad base of offending from dog bite offences through to attempted murder. The bulk of recorded offences in the serious youth violence category is made up of lower level assaults, where the victim suffers injuries such as bruising and minor cuts. 55% of Serious Youth Violence offences are recorded as Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm (ABH – Section 47 Offences against the person act 1861).

It is noteworthy that November 2021 saw an increase in reports of poisoning (also referred to as spiking) driven by a preventative awareness campaign that saw high levels of reporting and therefore recording. In Birmingham City Centre for Nov 2021 over 80% of recorded Serious Youth Violence was related to drink spiking. These offences were recorded as the victim believed they had been

subject to this crime, however subsequent investigation would suggest the level of these offences was far lower.



Under 25 Violence with Injury (YTD)

	Robbery	Violence with Injury	VWI Knife Used	Attempt Murder	Homicide
% Change 2022/23 vs 2021/22	4.5%	8.6%	-2.6%	3.3%	0%
Count Change 2022/23 vs 2021/22	1361 vs 1303	3873 vs 3567	186 vs 191	31 vs 30	2 vs 2

The Force has been focussed on reducing knife enabled serious violence especially among those victims aged under 25. Although these offences are smaller in volume in terms of recording they represent the greatest risk of harm, and cause the greatest concern to our communities.

The table below shows the reductions we are seeing in knife enabled violence where a knife is used to cause the injury or where a knife is used to commit a Robbery.

Under 25 Violence with Injury Knife Crime (YTD)

	Robbery	VWI Knife Used	Attempt Murder	Homicide
% Change 2022/23 vs 2021/22	-10.4%	-2.6%	-45.5%	0%
Count Change 2022/23 vs 2021/22	464 vs 518	186 vs 191	6 vs 11	2 vs 2

Serious Youth Violence Outcomes

Following sustained focus on investigations and Out of Court Disposals we have seen a rise in Serious Youth Violence Outcomes. Investment from Grip funding is expected to further enhance this.

Year	Outcome Rate
2022/23	11.25%
2021/22	5.19%
2020/21	9.93%

WMP have maintained a focus on knife related violence with reductions seen. This is again to continue through the coming performance year and Grip Funding plans.

There are concerns regarding cost of living crisis and social – economic factors that may exacerbate youth violence. Investment in intelligence and analytical support will support early indications of risk and patterns.

9. The impact of the increasing crisis in the cost of living

The cost of living crisis has been increasingly affecting more and more people and households since inflation started rising in late 2021 exacerbated by higher energy prices following the war in Ukraine and leading to a real-terms sharp fall in disposable income for many in the West Midlands, pushing the poorest communities into further poverty. While the Government has announced some measures to respond to high energy prices, poorer households – on average – are experiencing higher inflation than better off households as reported by the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

- 10. The VRP Strategic Needs Assessment highlights the strong correlations between areas with high rates of violent crime and the ones with most deprivation, and with more communities facing increased deprivation due to greater cost of living, it is likely that this could see increases in incidences of violence.
- 11. National charities such as Refocus have reported that they have seen a direct link between the increase in cost of living and county lines gangs' recruitment noting that young people *"are more willing to consider earning money illegally because they can't get money and so the kind of people they [the gangs] can target, there's more"*.
- 12. It is critical to address these causes and drivers of violence, appreciating that a requirement for a policing response is often a symptom of overlapping social economic factors that policing alone cannot solve.

Crime Data Integrity (CDI)

- 13. The majority of offending is at the less severe scale with section 47 assaults and harassment linked offences. A review of Crime Data Integrity (CDI) has seen crime recording practices improve and the number of crimes recorded increase. In early 2021 WMP adopted CONNECT – new crime recording software.
- 14. This saw an increase in offences recorded - for instance, where a caller reports seeing a male with a knife but the male is never located and no knife is recovered, a knife crime is recorded. This was subject to a review with the Home Office and Force Crime Registrar as there was variance in how forces approached this. As a result we feel we are over recording knife possession offences by around 20% compared to other forces. We have recently changed our crime recording standards for this crime type to be in line with other forces.
- 15. CONNECT software improves recording when knives were involved with 'knife used' rising by almost 800 offences against 19/20 baselines (assessed as partly driven by this recording software).

16. It is a challenge to quantify the exact impact of CDI and new software, but informed analytical assessments believe this has led to approximate increases of 4% in all recorded crime.

WMP Violence Strategy

17. WMP is committed to strong enforcement against violent crime however, enforcement on its own is not the sole answer. Violence is a multi-faceted challenge and requires not simply a statutory response but also the full commitment of the wider community. We have to try to prevent it happening in the first place as well as to mitigate its effects for those on the receiving end of negative impacts. This requires early intervention using available evidence, insight and data to ensure we have the best possible impact on reducing violent crime and its consequences. Activities associated with these principles cannot be undertaken in isolation. Collaboration with partner agencies is essential to deliver necessary actions – a whole system approach.
18. A new WMP Serious Youth Violence Strategy has been drafted and is out for consultation/review.

Violence as a Tactical Priority

19. Under 25 Violence is a tactical priority for West Midlands Police and is reviewed monthly at the Force Tactical Delivery Board (FTDB) where decisions are made on where to invest the Guardian Taskforce and other force resources.

GRIP Funding

20. GRIP comprises £3.2m per annum for three years. WMP are required to demonstrate 20% match funding in year one, 30% in year two and 40% in the final year. This fund is delivered under Project Guardian

Project Guardian

21. The aim of Project Guardian is to suppress and reduce Serious Youth Violence (*U25 violence with injury with a focus on knife enabled criminality*). WMP have appointed a Superintendent to lead Project Guardian. It is recognised that SYV spans a number of portfolio areas including Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VAIWG), Night-time Economy (NTE), Serious and Organised Crime (SOCEX), Acquisitive Crime and County Lines. Supported by analytical investment and a Higher Analyst the Superintendent is focused on delivering the following key areas:
 - Analytical investment to understand the problem and evaluate activity
 - Visible patrol activity in hotspots – Targeted Guardian Patrols
 - Problem-oriented policing to address the root causes of violence – coordinated under Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) Serious Youth Violence (SYV) Reduction Plans
 - Co-ordination with VRP & NPU Commanders to drive a Public Health Approach to SYV through Local Authority CSP structures
 - Grip of offenders and those at risk of being involved in SYV
 - Grip & Tracking of investigations, intelligence and intervention where knives used to cause injury – CAPTIVA GUARDIAN
 - Investigations investment to improve outcomes

Analytical Investment

22. Guardian are in the process of recruiting an additional 4 analysts and 1 higher analyst. This will provide the ability to enhance local understanding of violence patterns, causes and impact of intervention tactics. The VRP and WMP analytical

teams have been working more closely together to overlay intervention/prevention/diversion and policing information. This has recently manifested in a more informed joint approach around the Step Together school chaperone routes. The analytical team are horizon scanning to identify future threats and deliver bespoke police and partner products accordingly.

23. WMP have also invested funding into a Data Scientist within the Data Analytics Lab. This role has developed predictive knife crime technology (with a high degree of accuracy) to enable us to task ahead over 4 week tactical periods to where we believe violence will occur.

Captiva Guardian

24. Captiva Guardian is planned for launch in Autumn 2022 (once analytical capability onboarded) and will deliver a governance structure that prioritises investigation of the most serious youth violence offences involving knives, understanding the threat, scrutiny of investigations, intel and interventions - seeking support from wider resources as required. This forum will be led by a Detective Superintendent, deputised by the SYV Superintendent.

The objective is to:

- Prevent the use of knives to cause serious harm to young people across the West Midlands
- Reduce serious youth violence (knife Used) across the WMP Force area
- Understand the local threat from knife crime
- Effectively identify persons vulnerable to future knife criminality
- Identify effective interventions and pathways for those involved in knife crime
- Target the supply of knives to young people
- Increase the recovery of knives
- Maximise Criminal Justice outcomes
- Reassure communities that WMP are managing threat from knife crime
- Effectively Manage those individuals and groups involved in knife crime

Hotspot Policing

25. WMP have refreshed and refined Serious Youth Violence hotspots with the support of data scientists and overlaid with Organised Crime Group (OCG) activity and predictive knife crime data. There are 57 hotspots identified below that have been geofenced and a randomised deployment method will be conducted to target and evaluate policing activity. There are 57 areas that equate to 1.4% of WMP geography this covers 19% of SYV and 18.4% harm.
26. WMP are enhancing analytical capacity to include:
- Higher Analyst drawing Serious Youth Violence (SYV) themes and opportunities from across violence portfolios.
 - Enhanced regional analytical support to include tracking our Targeted Guardian Patrols.
 - Dashboard development (feedback).
 - Data scientist to support Randomised patrol methodology
 - Specialist knife crime analyst to support a CAPTIVA Knife crime meeting – tracking knife assaults, intelligence and interventions
27. WMP have invested in a dedicated Specialist Serious Youth Violence Taskforce who are Behavioural Detection Trained. This is a ring-fenced resource focused on suppressing SYV and deployed according to predictive threat data.

28. Neighbourhood Policing Units are provided with funds to specifically focus visible patrol activity within defined hotspots – *Targeted Guardian Patrols*. (80% funds for hotspots, 20% discretionary). These plans involve an evidenced based approach of injecting visible policing into key areas over short assigned time periods that analysts track through geofencing data. This forms part of a Home Office return but also is subject to evaluation to determine the impact of police activity.
29. Community Engagement measures based on WMP Rimish (Community Engagement) principles to enhance legitimacy will be implemented across the force in hotspot areas.

Community Engagement

30. Every hotspot must have a community engagement plan which aims to create an environment where policing activity, suppression and stop search within SYV hotspots is understood and supported by the local community. The approach taken by WMP includes:
- Identifying key stakeholders around hotspot locations (residents associations, faith leaders, schools, community groups, etc)
 - Presenting the violence challenge and consulting/engaging on community objectives – what would they like the police to do, what type of communication, how to scrutinise?
 - Alignment with VRP messaging regarding local provision
 - Ensuring scrutiny and transparency
 - Active Citizens and community mobilisation (ie. knife sweeps, youth support, positive use of open spaces – ‘reclaim the park’) - Community Problem Solving
 - Providing regular updates
 - Reviews, surveys and evaluation

Problem Orientated Policing in Hotspots

31. Enabling a problem-solving approach to Serious Youth Violence requires more than visible policing. WMP have identified repeat and recurring violence hotspots that affect the community and produce heavy demands on police resources. A critical element of this is understanding our offenders, identifying them early and ensuring we have an upstream offer that is intervention and prevention focused. This will be supported by targeted investment of investigations, support and out of court disposals in hotspot areas, this approach seeks to identify the youngest and most vulnerable offending cohorts

Governance

32. The ACC local Policing chairs the SYV Board that feeds into Performance Panel and conducts follow up quarterly performance review visits. The SYV board is in the process of transferring to the new ACC Lead. The Home Office also require quarterly reports.
33. The VRP is overseen and accountable to the West Midlands VRP Strategic Board, Chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Role of West Midlands Police, working with the VRP and Local Violence Reduction Partnerships

34. WMP invest 3 full time staff into the VRP – A Chief Inspector and 2 Inspectors. They not only hold areas of responsibility within the VRP but are tasked with ensuring WMP and VRP activity is closely linked and mutually supported. WMP and the VRP

analytical teams have begun working more closely and being co-located for part of each working week. Joint products are now co-commissioned created to enhance the blend of policing and diversionary/intervention focus.

35. WMP staff lead on VRP Programmes of work including Criminal Justice Improvement Plan and Night Time Economy support.
36. WMP play a key role in local Community Safety Partnerships and Local Violence Reduction Partnerships/Boards to encourage and drive systems change and a public health approach to serious youth violence.
37. WMP works closely with the VRP in the follow up to incidents of serious violence – including joint presence at Consequence Management Meetings and coordination on Offensive Weapon Homicide Review lessons.

Partnership work to prevent and reduce the impact of Summer violence peaks

38. The summer periods have seen spikes in violence over the last 3 years in Birmingham. There is a combination of factors which may have led to these spikes. The tragic murders of young people since 2019 have increased young people's sense of not feeling safe in the region.
39. To mitigate the risk of further spikes this summer, the VRP has:
 - Briefed local violence prevention and reduction partnerships on the risks associated with the summer period and the data from the previous three years.
 - Developed and supported local planning for the summer using data on youth violence and funded projects across the region contributing to mitigating risk this summer at least one project in each area.
 - Facilitated two planning meetings for Birmingham exploring collaboration and identifying and connecting provision, which will provide a template for the development of a toolkit.
 - Developed a detached youth work program alongside Birmingham City Council to offer support on significant routes impacted by the Commonwealth Games (including pre and post games support).
 - Developed an interactive map for Birmingham linking street based youth workers, HAF and CWG events and activity with voluntary sector provision.
 - Worked alongside Birmingham City Council Youth Service to operate detached youth work in key areas of the city across the summer.
 - Extended the existing Step Together route provision in Birmingham and Coventry to ensure consistent presence from youth workers in those areas when the holidays begin.
 - Presented to the Midlands Parks Forum to explore the opportunities to address issues related to violence in parks across the region, connecting the parks to VRP Navigators and offering a single point of contact for queries, support, etc. VRU resources and interventions have been communicated and parks are aware of how to access support.
 - Provided support to local violence prevention partnerships to utilise Streetgames in order to address gaps in activity provision in their areas and to increase the provision of sustainable doorstep sports.

- Worked in partnership with the SAFE Taskforce to develop a plan for summer provision for students in Birmingham who will face increased risk as a result of not being in school.

Progress in developing NPU/local level violence reduction plans

40. A Serious Youth Violence Reduction Plan is in place on every Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU), owned by the NPU Commander and led by the NPU Superintendent.
41. The VRP are working closely with each of the 7 local authority areas, through their local Violence Reduction Board. This year the initial focus has been on commissioning activity for the Summer to address the risks of violence spikes across the holiday period (Jul/Aug) and Navigators have supported each area to commission activity that can take place over the summer to mitigate that risk. From September onwards, VRP universal preventative activity across the region will be strengthened by the inclusion of new training and intervention within the standard VRP offer (including Round Midnight and Info Real) which will be delivered at volume by the new Facilitators that are currently being recruited. Planning around targeted secondary and tertiary preventative provision is underway with each of the 7 local partnerships and will focus on commissioning effective local activity and intervention that meets local needs.
42. Members of the delivery team continue to be meaningfully co-located in local partnerships to ensure a physical interface for the VRP at a local level and to support strategic objectives. Delivery team work plans are being developed and will be provided to local partnerships this year to sit behind local violence prevention plans, with the ambition of working towards a combined local plan for next year and moving forward.

Trauma informed policing programme

43. The table below sets out the numbers of individuals trained between October 2021 and June 2022:

Policing Strand	Total trained
Custody	239
Frontline	287
Investigators	89
New Recruits	309
Senior Leaders	220
Cadets	79
NVPC Trained	18
Total	1223

44. A further 250 Force Response Officers will be trained between October and November 2022, after agreeing a percentage of officers can receive this as part of their mandatory training dates. Next financial year there is an ambition to continue bespoke training for frontline, investigators and new recruits and to try to establish a

working group for senior staff to oversee work to embed the approach across the Police service.

45. The training was based upon conducting walkthrough exercises of the physical environment in custody and going on two ride-along exercises with response staff. Shift observations were also conducted together with discussions with academics, interviews with children through Birmingham YOS and training inputs were co-designed with current and former Police staff to ensure it was bespoke for each Policing context.
46. The TI Policing Project has worked collaboratively to help WMP design and commission an artist to install murals of scenes of nature; to install toughlite clocks; and distraction items into custody for children. There has been a dip sample conducted on the Police system where there are records relating to the use of distraction items in custody. These findings show that in many cases the use of distraction items has prevented children from self-harming and restored calm to children who were emotionally dysregulated by the experience of custody. Distraction items have also been purchased for use by frontline staff for regulating emotions. The first meeting has taken place of the champions group for trauma awareness in custody and there are plans being discussed to run similar groups within the frontline setting.
47. Conversations have started re. embedding the training programmes for New Recruits into the core curriculum for new entrants to Policing within the West Midlands and potentially Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia. There are dates being arranged through the Autumn to continue to deliver trauma awareness training to New Recruit cohorts until March 2023.
48. Additional dates have been agreed to train Police staff in 'frontline' areas and more New Recruits. Discussions have started over a train the trainer programme for the WMP L&D dept to make things sustainable longer term. Process started re. arranging shadowing opportunities to make the Investigators training more bespoke, will then seek to arrange dates to train investigators in PPU and also do further consultancy work around physical environments and processes through the establishment of a Programme Delivery Group.
49. The development of a champions groups is being explored to embed the learning following Police training and create an umbrella group that representatives of the champions groups will report into. In addition, a senior staff working group will be established to embed the culture of trauma-informed practice across the organisation. The champions initiatives will report into this group and this group can give the senior direction for initiatives suggested by the champions groups to happen so there is backing from senior decision-makers.

Joint response to preventing criminal exploitation (county lines)

50. The VRP Exploitation Team work with local policing, gangs' teams, the Regional Organised Crime Unit, National County Lines Coordination Centre, NCA, local authority exploitation leads and the criminal justice system to improve early identification of exploitation and to build meaningful partnership prevention and disruption techniques.
51. Examples of this include taking a partnership 'silver' role during county lines intensification week(s) and acting as tactical advisors for West Midlands Police in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking operations. The exploitation leads ensure there is a multi-agency response which incorporates: Health with GPs; Pharmacies;

WMAS; and sexual health practices. They work with Local Authorities including children and adult services and housing. A significant amount of work also takes place with the voluntary sector including Barnardo's, Children's Society, West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network and other charities such as Medaille Trust and Red Cross.

52. The aim of the VRP Exploitation Leads within the tactical advisor role is to co-ordinate all the P's in the Police's 4 P plan. The Police will cover the Pursue element of the plan and the other P's (Protect, Prevent and Prepare) are co-ordinated by the exploitation leads ensuring that there is a holistic, joined up response which takes into consideration safeguarding. This typically looks at preventing re-trafficking and exploitation through awareness raising and multi-agency communication together with preparing of services and Local Authorities to be able to respond to individuals identified as victims/survivors and the protection of victims/survivors from further exploitation.
53. The Exploitation leads have responsibility for sourcing and setting up response centres ready to support individuals found through police operational activity and ensures that there are facilities, support services and information ready in those spaces so that the critical moment for the victims to access support is not missed.
54. The exploitation team is also involved in a learning review of one of these operations to support best practice going forward. The team have also been called on to deliver an input to WMP around the importance of reception centres and how to utilise partners to ensure a holistic approach to any victims/survivors.
55. The VRP plays a key role by bringing together a range of individual agency data together collected from the Police, Local Authority Children's Services, Education, commissioned services and Health to work towards strengthening our regional understanding of risk, threat and harm. [Criminal Exploitation and Missing Dashboard \(arcgis.com\) This dashboard is supporting each of the L. A's and WMP to create their problem profiles in response to their serious violence duty strategies.](#) Together, the partnership is testing hypothesis to explore the context behind the data, particularly in relation to the absence of girls and young women & to define typologies of exploitation.
56. The exploitation team lead on regional communication campaigns to raise awareness of exploitation and wider vulnerabilities and through intensification periods have seen over 100,000 internet/social media users accessing the campaigns. These campaigns are supplemented by a regional training programme, delivered to over 1,200 individuals to date.
57. The team facilitate two regional strategic forums: Strategic Exploitation Interface Forum which brings together the seven Directors of Children's Services with senior representatives from police, health and education to regularly understanding shared safeguarding challenges and to identify opportunities to improving how they work together to safeguarding young people; and the Criminal Exploitation and Missing Board which brings together a wide range of professionals from across the statutory and voluntary sector to share best practice and to respond to system wide challenges and risks.
58. The VRP also support a whole systems approach to tackling exploitation and supporting professionals to work better together through creating, supporting and embedding toolkits, best practice guidance and policies such as: West Midlands Regional Strategic Framework; West Midlands Regional Victim Support Directory;

and West Midlands Regional Financial Support Resource for Victims of Exploitation, Strategic Exploitation Framework, Forced Concealment Protocol, Effective Placement Planning Best Practice Guidance and the Exploitation and Abuse Competency Framework.

59. The VRP are supporting work to establish effective implementation of Police SOCEX uplift through local exploitation hubs and working with them to develop local pathways and protocols to ensure that vulnerable adults who are being exploited receive an appropriate level of service and support.
60. Two reachable moments services have been piloted during 2022/23 including:
Missing Young People - placement of youth worker to support missing return home interviews and placement of youth worker in custody
The St Giles Trust Missing return service is now fully embedded into Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Walsall exploitation and missing teams and each worker has been allocated their cases loads (10 C/YP in Birmingham, 5 C/YP in Walsall and 5 C/YP in Wolverhampton). Positive feedback continues to be gained from all three areas regarding the impact the lived experience workers bring to each of the LA exploitation hubs through consultation and operational working practices. Moving forward we aim to bring the learning from this pilot into the CEM Board to understand how the current return home process can be developed and improved across the region to meet the needs of the C/YP at risk/entrenched in exploitation who go missing.
61. An additional reachable moments service based in custody has been commissioned and will be delivered by St Giles Trust from 1st October 2022. This service will include two full time case workers in Perry Barry custody super block and two full time case workers in Oldbury custody support block. The workers will offer timely and tailored support to YP affected by criminal activities, gangs and related issues such as carrying weapons, violence, county lines and wider exploitation at point of arrest. The service will use a trauma-informed approach to provide support in a number of areas (eg. housing, finances, substance misuse, mental health, training, employment, family matters). Initial contact is made in custody suites, followed by meetings in the community to provide tailored support.
62. The Home Office have now completed a re-tendering process to award a new three-year contract for the County Lines Victim Support Service and Rescue and Response Service. This has resulted in a new provider being commissioned. The VRP is working closely with the current provider (St Giles Trust), the incoming provider (Catch22) and the Home Office to ensure stability and a safe transition for our most vulnerable young people.

VRP interactions with the criminal justice and policing systems

63. ***Response to significant incidents***
A consistent, collaborative approach from public bodies and other key stakeholders is key when it comes to responding to critical incidents, including those involving serious youth violence. The Police led Consequence Management Meeting (CMM) is a pivotal responsive forum that enables a collective response to a serious incident, with the aim of preventing further linked and wider incidents and to deploy intervention tactics, through the partnership, to safeguard and support those involved. VRP are invited to all CMMs and we are currently in the process on consulting with local NPUs to develop a clear and consistent criteria on when CMMs will be called to respond to youth violence and in addition, considering extending

invites to partners. This already happens in some NPUs but is not consistent across the force area.

64. **Support for parents and families: - Op Paramount (Birmingham East - Erdington & Sutton)** - The VRP have recently commissioned a pilot project to provide 1-1 support for children and families impacted by parental imprisonment. Children and families of those incarcerated are often described as being victims of a 'hidden sentence'. There is no systematic identification of families and children of prisoners, which make estimations of their number difficult. The lack of coordinated efforts in identifying this group and their hidden nature also means that they are not only socially isolated and disadvantaged, but their needs are not known and so they may lack the right help, they may be at risk of unsuitable care arrangements, and can face a host of negative effects in their lives that, research indicates, extends far into the future in a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage or crime. This is despite the fact parental imprisonment presents a distinct opportunity for early intervention.
65. The project will provide support for children identified through the pilot project who have a parent in prison and the person caring for them by introducing a worker to deliver support with a focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational offending, raising aspirations and improving emotional wellbeing. Sessions will provide an opportunity to talk about fears relating to having a parent in prison and help children to understand the process of imprisonment by covering each stage of the custodial sentence. It will also provide group support and group work for children with a parent in prison. These group sessions combat feelings of shame by showing children they are not alone. The project will link in with other local community organisations (e.g., theatres art centres, local businesses) to run activities with children living in the area identified to reduce isolation and help them to build social bonds with other children with a parent in prison. This holistic package of support gives children with a parent in prison the skills to manage complex emotions, communicate effectively and regulate challenging behaviours.
66. **Parent Pathfinder - Kitchen Table Talks** - In early 2020, Sandwell Youth Offending Service conducted consultations with parents and young people engaging with the YOS and feedback was that parents would appreciate an approach which gives them a safe space to talk about their experiences and connect them with peers who understand their journey more than professionals. In September 2020, the opportunity arose through the Youth Justice Board pathfinder fund for the Violence Reduction Partnership in collaboration with the seven Youth Offending Services (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton) to coordinate a bid to commission an innovative two year project to pilot a peer support programme amongst parents of children who are in the youth justice system.
67. Kitchen Table Talks was commissioned which is a culturally competent, psychologically informed, peer to peer outreach, engagement, and support programme to support and work closely with the parents of young people involved with the Youth Justice System to act a bridge between the parents and the YOTs. The service is designed to support parents of those most at risk of reoffending, by helping them to understand the youth justice system, being a sounding board and relaying information back to the YOT to help the service better understand and support the parents.
68. Over the course of the two years, the project Kitchen Table Talks has been embedded as part of the Youth Offending Service offer for parents and carers who have a young person known to the youth justice system. Between the launch of KTT

in 2020 – 22, the service has supported 198 parents and carers across the West Midlands. The project has undergone evaluation and the summary report can be found below:



WM SYV pathfinder
evaluation SUMMARY

69. The VRP recognise the gap in the provision when it comes to support for parents impacted by serious youth violence or have a child involved in the youth justice service and have re-commissioned the service in 2022-23 to provide an opportunity for the service to implement the academic recommendations that have been identified through the evaluation findings. An ambition for the service in 2022-23 is to explore having the service available at key touch points of the CJS such as courts and police custody.
70. **Reachable Moments Services** - Teachable moment services in hospitals provide specialist caseworkers based in hospital Emergency Departments. These train staff in understanding the issues around violence and exploitation, and in identifying signs of young people potentially affected by violence/exploitation. Staff can then make a referral to the onsite workers who will work alongside the young person, offer a listening ear and the opportunity for support, and seek to provide whatever is needed to reduce their risk and establish a safe and productive lifestyle. The 'teachable moment' concept is that whatever more serious incident has led to them to hospital, the time in hospital can be a moment to reflect and can pose a window of opportunity to accept support if timely and relevant support is offered.
71. The VRP funds St Giles Trust to deliver services in University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire, Wolverhampton New Cross Hospital and Dudley Russell's Hall Hospital. St Giles employs people with lived experience and is well received by young people. In Birmingham, the VRP has been the funder of the Redthread service in the Birmingham Children's Hospital and a contributing funder to Redthread services in the Queen Elizabeth and Heartlands hospitals (a variety of other funders contribute to the main Birmingham service).
72. The VRP has been working with Sandwell based multi-agency partners seeking to develop and fund a service in Sandwell General and City Hospital Birmingham. Sandwell partners successfully secured enough funding in late 2021/22 to launch a new service in July 2022, which the VRP will continue to support.
73. In 2021/22, the VRP was successful in being awarded funding through a 'teachable moment' themed funding stream opened mid-year for VRUs, from this the VRU launched the new service in Dudley hospital and a gender specific, community teachable moments service for girls affected by exploitation in Wolverhampton and Coventry, called Expect Respect (geography reflecting where the hospital services were). Both services are receiving even higher than anticipated levels of demand; the girls service reached capacity after 3 months of opening. The intention was that the service would have a base within sexual health clinics in an effort to identify girls accessing those services who are also being victimised. This was not possible due to clinics still not having returned to pre-pandemic methods of face to face, but this is something the service is pushing to establish this year, in an effort to locate new teachable or reachable moments.
74. Since launching late September 2021, Expect Respect provided in depth support to 53 girls in Wolverhampton, and 18 in Coventry. By February, a waiting list had to be established as the service was at capacity. The VRP will continue conversations with

wider partners about attracting further funding to meet the need, and for replicating such work in other areas.

75. The VRP continues to work with stakeholders in the health system(s) to secure match funding for teachable moments in emergency health settings.

76. Continue to support culturally competent resettlement and rehabilitation services

A focus for the VRP's Criminal Justice work stream has been on diversionary interventions to provide support for those impacted by violence. In particular, there has been a focus on support through resettlement and desistance projects with the aim to prevent people from getting involved in activities that lead to violent crime in the first instance and reduce offending and re-offending.

77. The VRU commission four providers to deliver resettlement services across Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton. They provide targeted support to young people most at risk or those already known to criminal justice agencies. These services include:

- **Phoenix United CIC deliver 'Choices' resettlement** service which is a targeted resettlement and support service for young people (aged up to 18) across Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall. The project engages those young people most at risk, who are already known to criminal justice agencies. This cohort may be incarcerated at the point of engagement although the service will continue to take large numbers of referrals of young people who are in the community. The service is underpinned by intensive 1-to-1 mentoring approach which includes an emphasis on educational (re)engagement and/or employability support as a foundation for positive development. The model also uses sport, leisure and recreational diversionary activities where beneficial. Family involvement frequently forms a part of the engagement model (including Family Cohesion Plans and a Family Support Group), with a growing focus on anti-poverty measures (such as food parcels, hygiene essentials, access to material resource banks) an increasing feature of relationship building.
- **Bringing Hope's 'Inside Out' Resettlement service** aims to engage and support young people and their families across Birmingham, who are involved or at risk of involvement in activities, lifestyle choices and behaviours, that causes harm to themselves, others or local communities. This would include young people involved in criminality, serious violence, use of weapons and negative group affiliations. 'Inside Out' supports predominately young adults between 18-30 and a small case-load of 16-18 year old high-risk young people referred in by Birmingham EmpowerU Hub.
- **Catch22's Wolverhampton Violence Reduction Resettlement service** targets both male and females' offenders aged 18-30 years who are in prison and are gang involved, at risk of gang involvement, have been affected by gangs and/or have been sentenced for violent offences. The service aims to increase self-awareness and self-worth in young adults, allowing them to have confidence to make positive changes to their lives and steer them away from gangs and violent behaviours and into pro-social lifestyles. Caseworkers do this by offering a specialist wraparound holistic service, maximising outcomes for prison leavers being resettled into the Wolverhampton area.
- **St Giles Trust's Desist and Transform** delivers a comprehensive intervention offer supporting those young people aged 10-25 known to agencies and involved in violence and criminality. Desist and Transform offers a single community outreach service supporting YPs impacted, at risk or involved in the criminal justice service

across Coventry. The service has a twofold approach – early intervention/prevention divisionary mentoring support for CCE & CSE and resettlement support for high risk prisoners being released from custody.

Working closely with the Police, National Probation Service, HMP Prison Service, Youth Offending, the Horizon Exploitation Hub, Schools and social workers, St Giles have created a single referral pathway into the service from all of the key partners involved.

78. **The way in which the VRP is working with prison and probation services to reduce risks linked to serious violence** - In 2021-22 the VRP began some cross-cutting work in relation to CJ and exploitation including work to reduce criminal exploitation inside prisons and the secure estate by supporting the development of multi-agency approaches and encouraging resettlement in ways that limit repeat involvement in criminal exploitation and county lines. The aforementioned resettlement services commissioned by the VRP are working alongside probation in prison and in the community through established referral pathways to refer into the services.
79. The VRP Exploitation Team have developed relationships with key stakeholders across the CJS to improve multi-agency approaches to safeguarding, tackling and preventing exploitation with respect to prisons across the West Midlands. The VRP have established working relationships with all 7 Local Authority Youth Offending Teams, Regional Prison Group Leads for Drugs Strategy, Safety and Reducing Reoffending , ROCU Prison Intelligence Unit, various WM Prisons and secure settings to enhance partnership activity within CJ in relation to tackling exploitation linked to serious violence.
80. The Prison Group Directorate Office lead for Drugs Strategy set up a steering group to focus on the Exploitation and Vulnerabilities work strand across the West Midlands prisons. The aim of the group is to address elements of Exploitation and Vulnerability in Prisons along with key partners (PGD leads, Probation, Psychology, WMP/ROCU, VRP and other third sector partners) on how we come together as a whole system to address some of the key themes and gaps identified across the WM Prisons. Various working groups have been derived from this steering group to progress work in relation to exploitation and vulnerability. In March 2022, the recent County Lines intensification week saw the coordination of various awareness raising activities in seven of the prison establishments across the region. This activity was derived from the partnership working group looking at enhancing County Lines Intensification Weeks in prisons and staff & prisoner awareness raising around county lines, exploitation and related vulnerabilities.
81. The regional leads in the Prison Group Directors Office have agreed to commission a county lines stock-take in 3 prisons in the West Midlands between July and August 2022. This will include a self-assessment questionnaire being conducted by the team at HMP Hewell, HMYOI Swinfen Hall, HM YOI Brinsford. Following this a 6-month work plan will be developed to support those establishments. A further exercise consisting of a deep- dive into individuals deeply entrenched in criminal exploitation will be explored to better understand the experiences and needs of those individuals. This will create opportunities to collaborate on creating prison specific criminal exploitation and county lines awareness content for the West Midlands to raise awareness and improve the local practice to reduce the threat, risk, harm of exploitation. The VRP CJ lead will support the tasks and actions related to this commission.

82. **WMP & VRP preparations for the Offensive Weapons Homicide Review Pilot**
The Home Office pilot is due to commence late 2022, potentially January 2023 across the 3 pilot areas of the West Midlands, South Wales and London. The West Midlands region has selected Birmingham and Coventry as the pilot sites and all relevant statutory partners and agencies have been liaised with by WMP in order to begin this process.
83. On 20th June 2022 West Midlands held their first table top exercise using a recent case to work with partners to understand barriers and issues the OWHR process may surface. This was an extremely productive event attended by multiple partners including Children's Services, Community Safety Partnership and the Home Office whilst welcoming observers from London Met Police and South Wales Police. Initial learning, issues and barriers have been identified along with a record of decision making in order to assist the design and processes moving forward.
84. Further table top exercises will take place throughout the year in order to put the region in the best possible starting point pre-pilot where many issues will have been identified and resolved. Observers from South Wales and London will continue to be in attendance as will HO colleagues as we capture learning and share nationally. WMP Homicide Review Team and WM VRP are leading the preparation of OWHR with the second exercise to take place following the CWG in late August.
85. **WMP and VRP – Set out readiness for the Serious Violence Duty (SVD)**
The VRP Strategic Board have regularly discussed the implications of the SVD and received updates on local partnership readiness from the violence reduction leads. We are currently working to increase awareness of the requirements of the Duty and as part of this will be hosting workshops during September, October and November. A response has been co-ordinated to the consultation on the draft Statutory Guidance which closed on 21st July.
86. The VRP continue to work with local violence reduction partnerships across the seven local authority areas in terms of providing briefings on the implications of the SVD and offering support around the development of local plans and problem profiles. The regional violence reduction leads meeting, facilitated through the VRP also enables the sharing of good practice and progress in responding to the Duty.
87. The force has an identified point of contact for implementation of the Serious Violence Duty Working with NPU Commanders, relevant departmental heads and colleagues in the VRP, readiness for Duty responsibilities within the force will be overseen through the Strategic Serious Youth Violence Board.
88. In its current form, the force is well placed for the Duty becoming law and will be seeking to influence the inclusion of social determinant health performance measures within each local authority area plan, supporting the VRPs aims around a public health approach.

Next Steps

The board is asked to note the update on activity to reduce serious youth violence and acknowledge the progress in delivering a range of universal and targeted interventions and activities to support both preventing and reducing serious youth violence.

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