

Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton

Violence Reduction Unit

Annual Report

April 2023

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Executive Summary

Early intervention and prevention is at the heart of the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton & the Isle of Wight (HIPS) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) which is focused on stopping young people from committing serious violence, developing resilience, supporting positive alternatives and offering timely and effective interventions. Throughout the past year the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) has worked with partners to redesign the VRU which has resulted in the VRU moving from a 'hub and spoke' model to a centralised model from January 2023.

Despite the challenges of implementing a new delivery model during the second half of this financial year the VRU has seen the following successes:

- ❖ **Systems Leadership** – The VRU has reviewed the partnership arrangements for managing serious violence and is embedded within strategic and tactical groups to influence the focus on serious violence across the HIPS area. These strategic conversations have supported an agreed vision and mission, whilst the commissioned services will continue to support the delivery of interventions that meet the needs of communities most impacted by violence.
- ❖ **Serious Violence Definition** – A common definition of serious violence has been agreed by partners across the HIPS area to enable a better understanding of what is taking place in our communities and to aid consistent monitoring of impact.
- ❖ **Commissioning & Interventions** – In line with the new delivery model the VRU has moved to four HIPS-wide centrally commissioned trauma-informed interventions; Choices – Year 6 & 7 Schools Programmes, A&E Navigators, Trauma-Informed Practitioners and Reset – Custody Intervention Scheme. Furthermore, Liverpool John Moores University have been commissioned to evaluate these interventions.

Whilst the VRU is making progress, the priority areas of work for the forthcoming year are:

- ❖ **Data Sharing** - There are still gaps in what is shared between partners, how this is shared and how this enhances our understanding of the level and impact of serious violence across the HIPS area.
- ❖ **Community Engagement** – The legacy of Covid-19 hindered the ability to engage communities in a meaningful way and the VRU is now developing a consistent approach to ensuring the voice of the community is heard when designing and delivering services.
- ❖ **Systems Leadership** – Whilst there has been progress in this area, HIPS is a large, complex operating environment and the VRU needs to ensure regular engagement and communication with partners to support common understanding and commitment.

Introduction

Foreword from Donna Jones, Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire & the Isle of Wight

I am pleased to report on the work that the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) have achieved over the past twelve months. It has been a period of significant change for the VRU with not only a change from a 'hub and spoke' model to a central Director led VRU but also legislative changes bringing the Serious Violence Duty into force. As a Police and Crime Commissioner I welcome this legislation as it puts the experience and learning from what the national VRU programme (£64m this financial year) has achieved onto a statutory footing. Specified and Responsible Authorities under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 will come together to share data to build a comprehensive understanding of what is driving violence and then tackle it together. Serious violence is not something for the police to solve alone, there is a strong evidence base that informs partners how to identify people and communities at risk and to work to make them safer.



This report gives an overview of the co-ordinating work and the interventions that the VRU Grant of £1.4m has funded in the last twelve months for our communities. As we move forward the VRU Grant will reduce, but the clear expectation to maintain interventions that successfully stop young people getting involved in crime and violence must remain. I will chair the Strategic Violence Prevention Board in my convening role as a Commissioner and ensure that collaboration and co-production become embedded in partnership culture and practice.

The life path that leads to a young person deciding to carry a knife and then inflict serious harm on another person will be littered with tragedy, trauma and harm. However, that same path will bring them into contact with public servants such as teachers, social workers, health workers and police officers so there are multiple opportunities for a whole system response to preventing and identifying that developing risk. The VRU will save lives and reduce serious violence by bringing those partners together and developing interventions that work.

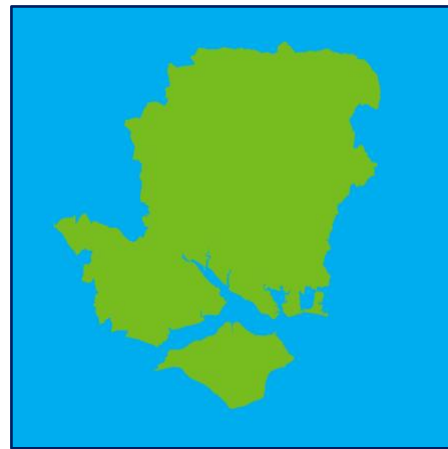


Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Background

The Annual Report provides a detailed explanation of the structure of the VRU, the successes so far and barriers to the implementation of a Public Health approach to serious violence. This report is a mandatory document for the Home Office and must be produced annually.

Our *Vision* is for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton to be a place where people can live their lives free from violence and the fear of violence. Our *Mission* is to prevent violence by building a collaborative, courageous and sustainable partnership which will drive the change required to successfully address the causes and consequences of violence.



Hampshire & the Isle of Wight

Across the two counties there is a population in excess of two million people, with the three largest urban areas being Portsmouth, Southampton and Basingstoke. Both counties have large rural areas with the majority of residents living in towns, villages, and rural areas. There are two major ports, two national parks, two airports as well as major road, rail and ferry networks.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has one county council (Hampshire County Council) and three unitary authorities; Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight. It also has eleven district councils; Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Hart, Havant, New Forest, Rushmoor, Test Valley and Winchester.

In 2018 the Government released the *Serious Violence Strategy* which defines serious violence as ‘specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing.’ In 2019, the Government published *A Whole System Multi-Agency Approach to Serious Violence Prevention*; to support implementation of the approach in local areas in accordance with the World Health Organisation (WHO) principles. It has also seen the introduction of a statutory duty on public sector agencies to both prevent and tackle serious violence. It supported the continuation of VRUs, in addition to securing the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) over the next ten years and promotes the focus towards treating violence using a public health approach.

The HIPS VRU has fully embraced a public health approach to tackling violence with a clear focus that plans and uses an evidence-based approach to implement a strategic response which aims to:

- ❖ Reduce hospital admissions for knife related serious violence especially amongst those aged under 25 years
- ❖ Reduce knife enabled serious violence especially amongst those aged under 25 years
- ❖ Reduce non-domestic homicides especially amongst those aged under 25 involving a knife.

Infrastructural Developments

Serious Violence Definition

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC Act 2022) sets out specific crimes of concern but does not define Serious Violence. This approach allows for local definitions to integrate geographical differences including the prevalence of violence in a specific area, the impact on the community and evidence-based Strategic Need Assessments. The HIPS VRU definition has recently been reviewed due to different definitions being used across the HIPS area making any meaningful analysis difficult. A single Serious Violence definition for the Partnership ensures clarity and aids collaboration in analysis and communication. The new definition focuses on crimes of particular concern as follows: 'Most Serious Violence', robbery, possession of weapon, violent disorder, riot and any violence with injury where a bladed implement was used¹.

When formulating the new definition, consideration was given to the crime categories included in the previous VRU definition, in particular the 'narrow definition', the police definition of Serious Violence, partners common understanding of Serious Violence, recent analysis and community surveys. This was discussed in a focus group and was consulted on with strategic partners.

It has been agreed that a specific focus on Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) will not be included at this time due to there being robust strategic focus and governance on these violent crime types across the HIPS area, including the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VAWG Task Group², Portsmouth Domestic Abuse Strategy³ and Southampton Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategy⁴. Furthermore, this is in line with the primary VRU focus being on violence involving under 25s in public places. The Strategic Violence Reduction Partnership (SVRP) will review the definition in a year following production of the first Serious Violence Duty SNA to ensure that it adequately captures the spectrum of violence locally.

Serious Violence Definition:

- ❖ The Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton Violence Reduction Unit aims to reduce violence across the two counties with a focus on crimes of particular concern including 'Most Serious Violence', robbery, possession of weapon, violent disorder, riot and any violence with injury where a bladed instrument was used.

¹ Crime codes included in the definition:

- ❖ MSV –Existing Definition (1a and 1b where it is GBH and above incl. death by dangerous driving)
- ❖ Robbery (3a and 3b)
- ❖ Possession of Weapon Offences (7)
- ❖ Public Order (Violent Disorder [65] and Riot [64/1] only)
- ❖ Any Violence with Injury (1b) not included under MSV where a bladed implement was used

² The Hampshire and Isle of Wight VAWG Task Group & VAWG consultation: [Annual Report - 2022 \(hampshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [Domestic-Abuse-Strategy-2020-to-2023-4.pdf \(saferportsmouth.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2028](#)

Model

The HIPS VRU is now a centrally located team hosted within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and across all local authority areas across the HIPS geography. The core VRU team consists of seven members of staff. The team now consists of the VRU Director, four place-based VRU Managers, a VRU Analyst and a Data & Evaluation Officer. This centralised approach provides a larger co-located resource which will enable a collaborative partnership approach to violence reduction. The aim is for the VRU Managers to connect local partners into this co-ordinated HIPS-wide approach, leading to a more sustainable solution than the previous structure was able to offer. In addition, the Violent Crime Taskforce (VCT) are a team of eleven PCs, an Inspector and a Sergeant who are focused on working in partnership to tackle the geographic violence hotspots in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as well as focusing on those individuals at risk from or of committing violence. The VCT are working closely with High Harm Teams but are connected to the VRU and therefore to the national VRU network. The VCT Inspector and Sergeant are co-located within the VRU to develop understanding and collaboration.

Governance

A key development in strategic coordination of partners in response to violence is the establishment of the Strategic Violence Reduction Partnership Board (SVRP)⁵. This represents a change within the 22/23 financial year, with the board replacing the 'Core Group' meeting for the first time in February 2023. The SVRP has expanded membership to include specified and responsible authorities under the PCSC Act. The SVRP brings senior leaders together to foster accountability and understanding around the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) and a partnership public health approach. CSP representatives retain a strong voice on the SVRP in recognition of their vital role in meeting their statutory responsibilities and delivering an effective local whole system response.

The SVRP has responsibility for overseeing operational activity of the VRU and expenditure of the VRU and SVD Grants. Where possible board approval will be sought on key decisions and reports to The Home Office will also be shared with partners. Chaired and convened by PCC Donna Jones, the Board is an opportunity to develop collaborative and co-produced solutions. The PCC will lead Specified Authorities in developing a sustainable approach to tackling violence at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. The board has already agreed the serious violence definition⁶ and defined the population or 'footprint' that will be used to comply with the SVD. Sub groups will be developed around Data and Analysis, Community Voice and Operational (whole system) response. These groups will be facilitated and led by VRU Managers and bring practitioners together to work in partnership developing sustainable groups reporting to the SVRP. The Operational Sub Group is co-chaired by the VRU Director and the Police lead for Serious Violence and has met several times to develop data products that identify and track key risks (geographic and people) to ensure that police are sharing information and risks are being managed in partnership.

⁵ SVRP, Terms of Reference 02/23

⁶ HIPS VRU SNA, 2023



Data Sharing

A key priority for the VRU in the next two years is data and analysis, to ‘develop a consistent method for partners to share data related to serious violence and ensure this informs partnership interventions and evaluations’. The VRU maintains an understanding of the HIPS area through data relating to crime, education, social care and public health. Data is accessed through a range of sources within the public domain and outside, including local authorities and Hampshire Constabulary. This is primarily anonymised level one or two data.

The VRU analyst is situated within both the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary. This allows for access to police data which has enabled a more consistent understanding of violence across the HIPS area and made data access more rapid and accessible to the VRU. The VRU Managers have access to PowerBi which holds Constabulary data including personal data. In order to increase the number of sources sharing data with the VRU, one VRU Manager has been appointed to oversee the data sharing work stream, working with the VRU Analyst and Evaluation & Data Officer. A RAG document has been drafted to capture what data access is currently in place and what is in the process of being established. This will highlight gaps and be regularly reviewed in order to set actions and monitor progress towards filling these gaps.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (IOW) Constabulary have agreed to adopt the Thames Valley Together (TVT) methodology of data sharing. The Hampshire and IOW Together (H&IOWT) Implementation Board has been established to move the project forward. TVT have developed data products in PowerBi that identify cohorts of young people at risk of serious violence and exploitation. The VRU have already worked with innovators from the police to make this product available to Hampshire and IOW Constabulary.

A&E data is currently shared with Portsmouth and Southampton Local Authority areas and feeds into local VRU Problem Profiles. The data shared does not include hotspot mapping, which would be valuable for VRU purposes. Sharing of health data across HIPS continues to present a challenge. However, significant progress has been made towards finalising Data Processing and Information Sharing Agreements and building relationships with hospital Information Governance (IG) Teams. The VRU appreciates the resource required to maintain strong partnership, buy in and training with local hospitals, as well as to monitor and sustain high quality data. The VRU will continue to work with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to identify pathways to move this work forwards.

Data Analysis

Data was previously analysed locally but the restructured VRU model includes a dedicated VRU analyst which provides capacity for regular review of key data. This will be communicated in monthly Tactical Violence Reduction Partnership (TVRP) meetings with written products provided for reference. This data will be used to monitor key success measures according to the Outcomes Framework which will be grounded within the VRU Theory of Change (ToC). Both products will be reviewed and developed within the VRU Data and Analysis Working Group following the change in structure and interventions.

The TVRP meetings are considering an effective system to ensure that there is robust management of 'people of concern' at a local level and through the most appropriate partners. This will require data analysis by VRU and Constabulary analysts to identify the individuals who pose the highest risk and data sharing between partners to accurately verify what management is in place and where gaps exist. This will enable the most suitable support to help to divert this cohort from crime and reduce involvement in violence.

Strategic Needs Assessment

One important use of currently accessible data is the VRU Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). This captures recent and longer term trends in crime and risk factors to identify local need and key cohorts. This feeds into the VRU Response Strategy which defines future VRP activity. This year the VRU has produced a HIPS-wide SNA in addition to the four locally focussed SNAs. The HIPS and local SNAs have been shared with the SVRP and will be published and publically accessible on the VRU website. The HIPS SNA uses more consistent data sources across localities and provides a concise summary. Key data includes police data around violence and bladed weapon enabled offences, including geographical and temporal breakdowns, data regarding violence suspects and victims and, community voice. The SNA also includes a backwards and forwards looking perspective on VRU activity.

Cultural sustainability

The mission of the VRP is 'to prevent violence by building a collaborative, courageous and sustainable partnership which will drive the change required to successfully address the causes and consequences of violence'. A VRU priority for the upcoming two years is systems leadership to drive whole system change. The new VRU model allows for a greater focus on systems leadership. The role of the VRU managers supports this as they review partnership forums which focus on serious violence. As part of this review, Community Safety partners have participated in a survey to capture local awareness, attendance and understanding of forums and meetings⁷. VRU Managers are utilising this evidence to understand strengths and gaps, highlight best practice and to support partners to strengthen the opportunities for discussion of these issues by ensuring that violence related topics are explored in the most appropriate forums and that they drive action and outcomes.

⁷ SVD CSP Survey Analysis, March 2023

The VRU is embedding the public health approach to achieve whole system change⁸:

- ❖ *Being focused on a defined population* – Strategically considering the HIPS area but place-based VRU Managers working at CSP level.
- ❖ *Designed with and for communities* – The community engagement strategy will aim to embed the new questions that have been developed into existing surveys where possible, enabling local authorities and partners to continue to capture the community voice around violence in a sustainable way. In addition, the survey questions and community engagement Toolkit will be hosted on the VRU website accessible to wider partners. This will enable on-going and standardised community engagement to maintain community input to violence reduction strategies.
- ❖ *Operating on a multi-agency basis* – The SVRP & TVRP consists of key partners in the Serious Violence Duty and the foundation of the VRU approach is addressing a range of risk factors through co-ordination of all relevant agencies.
- ❖ *Focused on generating long and short-term solutions* – The VRU focuses on long term solutions by addressing the root causes of violence, embedding systems level change to establish a long term focus on violence reduction and establishing cultural change towards a trauma informed approach within policing.
- ❖ *Based on data and intelligence* – The VRU have produced an SNA for each local authority annually on which the Response Strategy is based and which is shared with local partners. This means that the picture of local violence is accessible to key agencies and the response to violence is based on data and intelligence. This year an overarching HIPS SNA has been produced and in the coming year a HIPS wide SNA will be produced to serve the Serious Violence Duty, incorporating data from more partners. This will be co-produced and refreshed annually which will embed sustainable violence prevention into the priorities of more partners and strengthen multiagency working towards wider systems change.
- ❖ *Rooted in evidence and effectiveness* – The VRU has delivered a number of interventions classified as high impact by the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit⁹. This gives confidence that VRU activity is having a positive impact on young people. This year John Moores University have been commissioned to evaluate three large VRU interventions which will give an insight into the impact of these style of projects in the Hampshire context. The recommendations will highlight effective aspects of delivery and enable the providers to enhance impact where possible. This will also offer strong evidence of effective interventions for the partnership when commissioning violence reduction projects beyond the evaluation period, ensuring that decisions are rooted in evidence.

⁸ Public Health England, 2019. [A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-whole-system-multi-agency-approach-to-serious-violence-prevention)

⁹ [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#)

Financial sustainability

The change of VRU model during the financial year represented a considerable challenge for the VRU. Under the previous hub and spoke model 43 separate interventions had been commissioned with a variety of separate providers with many experiencing issues relating to recruitment and retention meaning that underspends were reported. Slippage in expected timelines around Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Constabulary adopting the Thames Valley Together model meant that £100,000 needed to be repurposed. Furthermore, two of the four individuals who were coordinating VRU activity in VRU spokes moved on meaning there was less control over intervention activity.

The totality of this operating environment led to a sub-optimal and inefficient landscape in terms of being able to make timely considered decisions about grant spend. In total 42.5% of the grant was spent in the fourth quarter. An underspend of £6,300 was recorded on the intervention element of the grant which emerged after financial deadlines had passed and meant information previously supplied to the VRU was incorrect.

The change to a centralised VRU and intervention model now means there are a lower number of longer term interventions being managed and tracked which will allow for closer financial management, service delivery oversight and robust evaluation. The model will require far less administration and allows the VRU staff to focus on leading lasting system and cultural change. The VRU sits within the OPCC Commissioning team which maximises access to expertise, matched funding and broader grant opportunities.

The VRU has worked with partners to match fund specific interventions around the County with the purpose of building resource and creating an effective intervention which was responsive to identified needs within a community. Particular interventions of interest with elements of match funding are the A & E Navigators where there was a significant amount of match funding from Health colleagues. This was to enable a resource in all A & E departments that was sufficient to cover the vast geography of the HIPS wide area. It enabled the project to run for three years and for it to be effectively evaluated by our evaluation partners. There have also been other smaller match funded projects and the total amount of match funding received for 22/2023 was £234,692. Moving forwards the PCC is committed to exploring innovative solutions to offer effective interventions to the most risky cohorts of young people in Hampshire and IOW.

Whilst the VRU is relatively newly formed in its current format there is already a clear focus on sustainability. The model of partnership subgroups, the SVRP and working with CSPs, is a sustainable partnership solution to delivering the duty with the PCC convening and chairing.

Delivery

Intervention Delivery

Over the past year the VRU has reached 7,592 young people, trained 193 professionals and funded the delivery of 43 interventions incorporating a range of delivery models; Prevention (3), Early Intervention (21), Therapeutic (14) and Desistance (5)¹⁰ reaching cohorts involved in violence or with risk factors that evidence demonstrates are linked to involvement.

- ❖ Prevention – These interventions have targeted all young people in school years 6 and 7 which presents a vulnerable period of transition, those in school inclusions units at risk of exclusion and multiagency professionals who work with individuals vulnerable to, or from, trauma. Activities involved school workshops and training for professionals.
- ❖ Early intervention – Cohorts reached include young people from deprived communities, those presenting at A&E due to their risk factors, residing in supported living and those that their school identify as requiring support. Activities include group work, 1-1 mentoring, positive activities such as football & cookery, and specialist workers within support teams and targeted outreach.
- ❖ Therapeutic – Interventions have reached young people involved in exploitation including county lines, those committing adolescent to parent violence and those at risk of school exclusion. Delivery has comprised 1-1 therapy, small groups for parents, therapy-based substance misuse support and activities building self-esteem and teaching practical skills.
- ❖ Desistance – Interventions have reached young people involved in most serious violence or identified as being at high risk of child criminal or sexual exploitation, most serious violence, knife crime and poor school attendance. Desistance activities included lived experience mentoring, medical training, and awareness raising of the risk of knife crime and teaching skills to avoid risky behaviour.

This approach has incorporated interventions across delivery models, with a focus on young people identified as having risk factors or early involvement in criminality or exploitation. A large number of small, locally based interventions aimed to reach young people across the HIPs area. The high number of interventions has made it challenging to monitor the impact of each intervention using robust tools and frameworks. Similarly, it has not been possible to evaluate each intervention and the smaller interventions cannot provide a large enough sample size for a robust evaluation to inform the local or national evidence base.

¹⁰ Home Office Definitions:

- ❖ Prevention: Awareness raising or education based programmes
- ❖ Early Intervention: Diversionary youth outreach activities and programmes
- ❖ Therapeutic: Tailored interventions and programmes
- ❖ Desistance: Programmes which aim to cease offending or reoffending.

For the forthcoming year, the VRU has commissioned four key interventions, three of which are assessed as YEF 'high impact' providing confidence they are able to reduce violence and risk factors. These will deliver across the HIPS area, so will continue to achieve a wide reach. Directing more funding and focus towards a smaller number of interventions aims to increase the efficiency of the VRU and allow for closer monitoring of their impact. The three larger interventions should provide large enough sample sizes for robust evaluations of each project by an external evaluator. This will allow for ongoing improvements as recommended by the evaluator to ensure high quality delivery and the evaluations will contribute to the evidence base of impact. There is a balance between the newly commissioned delivery models and therefore the interventions will likely achieve success measures at different rates. The projects which are working with individuals already engaged in violence may have a more rapid impact on reducing violence whilst other interventions may address risk factors in the short term and violence in the longer term:

- ❖ Choices: Year 6 & 7 Schools Programme (Prevention) – A social skills programme which aims to build pupils' knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving skills to empower them to make healthy decisions. It will specifically examine the risks and impact of knife crime, the dangers of exploitation and violence to support pupils to find their own solutions, enabling them to build positive, healthy relationships and respond appropriately to potentially risky situations.
- ❖ A & E Navigators (Early intervention & Therapeutic) – Aims to reach children and young people at a 'teachable/ reachable moment'; these moments may act as a catalyst for self-reflection, making young people more receptive to help and pursuing positive change. Specially trained youth workers support young people and NHS staff across Emergency Departments. After triage, medical staff refer young people who they feel could benefit from a youth worker.
- ❖ Trauma Informed Practitioners (TIPS) (Early Intervention, Therapeutic, Desistance) – An expansion of a successful pilot which was the first of its kind in the UK¹¹. TIPS patrol with Response & Patrol Policing Teams to support trauma informed policing in situations which may be traumatic for officers, offenders and victims who may already have past traumas. TIPS will provide expert advice on scene, as well as observe and consider incidents through a trauma informed lens, providing feedback based on reflective practice. This will support officers to realise the impact of trauma, recognise the signs, respond to trauma appropriately and prevent re-traumatisation.
- ❖ RESET: Custody Intervention Scheme (Desistance) – A custody navigator style intervention, seizing a teachable / reachable moment and offered voluntarily to 18 to 25 year olds. The aim is to divert young people from future offending and from entering the Criminal Justice System. RESET involves a strength-based needs assessment with ongoing trauma informed support in the community relevant to the young person's individual circumstances.

¹¹ [Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme: Evaluation of the trusted adult workers role and Rock Pool train the trainer educational approach \(college.police.uk\)](https://college.police.uk)

Case study

A & E Navigators: Youth workers engaging with young people in A & E

A young person presented in A & E having tried to take their own life, feeling that this was a way to take control and responding to the desire to be admitted to hospital. They did not wish to stay at their social care placement and didn't feel heard when voicing their concerns. Risk factors for this young person included a history of sexual abuse, self-harm, removal from school and self-destructive and risky behaviour. A youth worker supported the young person over five weeks from their admission to discharge before a new care placement could be arranged. The young person engaged well and asked for support with specific subjects such as healthy relationships, sexual health and managing emotions.

Measurable outcome: Young people seen in A & E started with an average score of 8 on the mental health pain scale. This was reduced to an average of 5 after an intervention with a youth worker.

Quote from parent: "The change in them since working with you has been amazing. She seems more able to regulate their emotions and communicate when they are struggling and just seems more hopeful about the future." Quote from professional: "Thank you for taking the time to see this young person. It really makes a positive impact when they have a strong collaborative support network able to help them with their presenting factors."

Engagement

A focus over the next two years is communications and engagement, to 'ensure the VRU is building relationships with our communities to better understand what works when tackling serious violence and to embed the voice of the community in our response plans'. The VRU has conducted a review of the community engagement approach under the previous model. Alongside examples of excellent engagement to capture the voice of the community there are gaps in the cohorts and locations reached.¹²

The VRU has worked collaboratively with Greater Manchester VRU, Portsmouth University and HIPS partners to develop a consistent set of questions that can be used by partners and collated by the VRU with the survey hosted on the VRU website. The new community engagement strategy has a focus on the most relevant cohort and a more balanced approach to geography. The more consistent approach to the questions asked in each engagement, extensive survey promotion and tracking of reach will allow the VRU to track sentiment and compare demographic groups and communities. This will influence the response strategy and inform the partnership response. As part of public and partnership engagement, the VRU are working with a commissioned company to refine the design and format of a VRU website. This will contain information regarding the VRP and VRU: who we are, what we do, how we link with others and the current activity. There will be information for each geographical area with external links relevant to each. This geographical focus will allow the website to be sustainable in the future. The website will contain the existing VRU logo and branding and will be hosted on the PCC website.

¹² VRU Community Engagement Review, March 2023

Case Study

Engagement: Basingsafe

During February half term the VRU supported the delivery of a Youth Engagement event in Basingstoke town centre called 'Basingsafe', delivered in partnership with the Police, Hampshire County Council Children's Services, the Youth Offending Team and wider organisations such as Festival Place Shopping Centre and local sports & arts service providers. The event targeted young people at risk of exploitation and within the criminal justice system. This was in response to Police objectives to prevent 11 - 18 year olds from becoming recruited into a local street gang and concerns from Festival Place about ASB within the shopping centre causing disruption to customers and tenants. As such, the event was open to all 11 - 18 year olds, with a group of the most at risk young people invited. The event saw representatives from local organisations, charities and local authorities offering pro-social activities including indoor sports provided by a local business and free food from a local fast food retailer. It was well attended by young people, including young people from the local travelling community and hard to reach young people. There was positive engagement including acceptance of free Jui Jitsiu lessons and applications to join police cadets. The majority of young people spoke highly of the event and feedback about specific positives included: "There was a lot of different things to do and everyone was nice and helpful", "Knowing other people struggling with the same things", "Finding out people are trying to make Basingstoke Safe." Following the event the place-based VRU Manger has produced a Youth Engagement Event Toolkit so that similar events can be delivered in the HIPS area.

Challenges and Risks

Whilst the VRU is confident the change of model was the right decision to ensure delivery of the key objectives, HIPS is a large, complex operating environment and the VRU has needed to move at speed which has meant engagement and communication with partners to support common understanding and commitment has been challenging and not as coherent or timely as hoped. Despite this, the VRU is seeing early success stories with the new delivery model and the introduction of place-based VRU Mangers who are able to influence systems at an operational level.

Impacts and Performance

Local Evaluations

The VRU has begun evaluating three interventions. Research and evaluations of different styles of interventions inform the national evidence base which demonstrates which interventions have had a positive impact on levels of violence and risk factors. This knowledge enables VRUs and partners to commission projects which are most likely to achieve their aims. Whilst evaluations may have found interventions to be promising or effective, it is important to continue to build upon this knowledge to further understand ‘what works’ and under what circumstances.



This is relevant to Choices. There is positive research surrounding the impact of social skills interventions¹³ which is high level, applying to a broad range of contexts, so understanding the delivery and impact of this intervention in schools with young people in years 6 and 7 is important. A & E Navigator’s interventions are believed to have a high impact on violence reduction however there is little existing research, therefore further evaluation is required. Innovative interventions, such as TIPS, must be evaluated to establish whether they are impactful and what aspects of delivery are effective. This is a particularly informative area to research as it aims at system-level change towards trauma informed practice and is a high priority nationally. As recommended by the Home Office, the VRU Evaluation Strategy is based in the principles of the YEF¹⁴, EIF¹⁵ and Maryland Scale¹⁶.

All the VRU evaluations will begin with a process evaluation (or feasibility study) and, where possible, progress to impact evaluation. The process evaluations aim to understand the way that the intervention is delivered and what its outputs are, focussing on factors such as participant recruitment and reach, differences in delivery between locations and key successes and obstacles. This will enable improvements to delivery and an understanding of what activities are producing the outputs. TIPS and Choices have been designed and mobilised this year, giving an opportunity for an in-depth process evaluation incorporating the set-up phase. The impact evaluations aim to demonstrate whether the interventions are achieving their planned, and any unintended, impacts, the mechanisms by which these are achieved and the cohorts impacted. These evaluations will demonstrate whether an intervention can reach its goals and which aspects are and are not effective.

¹³ [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#)

¹⁴ [Resources for evaluators - Youth Endowment Fund](#)

¹⁵ [EIF Evaluation Hub](#)

¹⁶ [The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale \(SMS\) - What Works Growth](#)

Through a competitive tender process the VRU commissioned Liverpool John Moores University to undertake the evaluations. The University has extensive experience of violence reduction topics and evaluation, including of similar interventions. The evaluators have attended intervention steering groups, hosted workshops with providers and conducted desk reviews to gain a deep understanding of the projects. They have produced Theories of Change and evaluation designs and are considering the most appropriate data measurement tools. Due to delayed engagement with one provider the design of the A&E Navigators intervention remains in progress.

Evaluation designs incorporate a range of methodologies:

TIPS:

- ❖ Stakeholder interviews to capture experiences of receiving and delivering the intervention at different time points
- ❖ Participant surveys to enable a comparison of knowledge and attitudes pre and post training
- ❖ Analysis of secondary data collected outside of the evaluation
- ❖ Control group comparison may be possible to compare knowledge and attitudes of those receiving and not receiving the intervention.

Choices:

- ❖ Stakeholder interviews to capture experiences of receiving and delivering the intervention at different time points
- ❖ Routine monitoring data to capture reach and impact
- ❖ Staff survey pre and post training to capture perceptions of the intervention and its impact
- ❖ Student survey pre and post intervention to measure individual-level changes in knowledge
- ❖ Student focus groups to explore perceptions of the intervention and its impacts
- ❖ Potential for exploring school-level change
- ❖ Analysis of secondary data collected outside of the evaluation.

An interim report containing emerging findings will be produced towards the end of 2023, allowing providers to alter delivery if required and the VRU to share findings with the Home Office. The results will be considered in the next SNA and response strategy, however the evaluation strategy aims to deliver the longest term assessment possible to capture change over time and assess whether impacts are lasting. Therefore robust findings to inform delivery are not expected until the evaluation is completed in March 2025. These final findings will enable the providers to improve delivery and increase effectiveness. Local commissioners will be able to base future commissioning decisions in the evidence, funding interventions shown to reduce violence most effectively in the HIPS context. The results and learning from the evaluations will be published on the VRU website and shared with national VRUs directly via the Basecamp forum and knowledge sharing meetings. The report will be shared with the College of Policing and YEF to make available to violence reduction agencies and, if appropriate, to feed into the YEF Toolkit to contribute to the growing assessment of violence reduction interventions.

Success Measures & Theory of Change

The VRU's progress has been tracked through quarterly returns to monitor success in intervention delivery and within the annual SNAs to monitor levels of violence and risk factors.

Key Serious Violence indicators:

- ❖ Serious Violence – 9.1% increase from 2021 to 2022
- ❖ Serious Violence (including knife enabled and homicide) offences where the victim was recorded as aged under 25 years across the HIPS area – 1348 offences in 2022 compared to 1310 offences in 2021 – an increase of 3% (+38 offences)
- ❖ Non-domestic Serious Violence (including homicides) involving a bladed-instrument where the victim was recorded as under 25 years across the HIPS area – 6.2% decrease in offences (-26 offences)¹⁷
- ❖ Inpatient finished admission episodes with the cause 'assault by sharp object' for ages 0-24 across the HIPS area – Consistently 20 from 19/20 to 21/22¹⁸

Over the next year quarterly returns will continue to be completed to track intervention success and in addition the VRU level ToC will be reviewed to capture the changes made through this year. Key success measures (indicators for violence and risk factors) will be identified from the ToC outputs and outcomes and be included in an outcomes framework. Using the newly increased analytical capacity, the success measures in the framework will be regularly reviewed and trends will be captured. This will maintain an ongoing awareness of the picture of Serious Violence. This knowledge will feed into the next SNA which will be completed before January 2024 and will incorporate data from specified authorities under the Serious Violence Duty.

The VRU's overarching aims captured in the outcomes and outputs in the ToC remain the same, however some inputs and activities have altered due to changes discussed in this report. These include the staffing structure, funding amount, activities in response to the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, a greater focus on system-level change for sustainability and a different balance of focus on primary, secondary and tertiary activity. The ToC will be reviewed regularly to capture changes to delivery and to maintain focus by identifying any gaps in delivery.

Community voice and perceptions of community safety are key to understanding the public's and key cohorts' experiences of safety, crime and living in their local area and can act as a success measure. This year these perceptions have been captured through the VRU community engagement review. To strengthen the approach, an engagement strategy has been formed with a focus on consistency in engagement to enable robust tracking and comparison.

¹⁷ HIPS VRU SNA, 2023

¹⁸ Figures are suppressed and rounded to nearest 5. Hospital Episode Statistics NHS Digital, via Home Office

Lessons Learned

In terms of learning, the Hampshire and IOW VRU is unique as there has been a structural change to delivery after three years of a five year funding programme. It is clear that other force areas like Avon and Somerset and Sussex are delivering successfully with a hub and spoke model and there may be an opportunity to identify what works or does not work in VRU delivery by considering the Hampshire and IOW VRU model change.

The experience of the Hampshire and IOW 'Hub and Spoke' model was that the 'Spokes' had little or no central grip or direction over delivery. The VRU Central Core group was a 'reporting up' forum and centrally based staff spent a lot of time administering and evaluating the returns from multiple interventions with little control over outputs. There was not a consistent focus on ministerial priorities so there has been little progress at force area level on data sharing or systems leadership. This presents a challenge moving forward as some areas have rightly developed local solutions to systems and data that will be barriers to broader data solutions and a whole system response. As a result of these factors partners are not as prepared for the Serious Violence Duty as some other VRU funded areas.

The challenge of recruiting a central VRU, building a new delivery structure, managing the legacy of the previous model and transforming the governance to meet the Serious Violence Duty has been considerable. Home Office deadlines and support offers have meant the VRU has not been able to engage and explain to partners the direction and challenges to achieve genuine consensus and understanding. Some key practitioner stakeholders did not support the model change and there remains a risk that where this happened support and 'buy in' for the central VRU is impaired.

The central model is more sustainable, scalable and aligned with the PCC's growing convening role but the partnership arrangements are not yet mature or highly functioning due to the recent restructure. The need for Specified Authorities to have a voice at strategic level which then reaches into the CSP response is essential. This has to be internally communicated within organisations so that CSP members understand their organisation's strategy in relation to tackling serious violence. The partnership landscape is complex, across Hampshire and IOW, there are 14 CSPs with vastly different financial, social and political outlooks. At present there remains a risk that Local Authority Crime and Disorder Committees decide they will meet the serious violence duty at local government area which would work against the VRU support offer and require a revisit of the partnership approach to meeting the Serious Violence Duty.

There are conflicting drivers and views from partners in relation to some areas including the definition of serious violence. These varied partnership drivers, combined with some partners not necessarily reflecting the strategic intent of their organisation at a CSP level, means that the 'convening' role does not avoid a position of disagreement and stalemate. It also means that partnerships cannot be fully engaged and reach consensus quickly so the Home Office deadlines can work directly against ensuring engagement and understanding of all partners. If the intention of the Home Office is for increased collaboration at a strategic level, convened by a PCC, which supports local delivery in CSPs, then more clarification, guidance and detail about the reporting relationships and where decision-making sits between force level strategic forums and CSPs would be useful.

Conclusion

The change of delivery model and commitment to VRU-wide, multi-year funded interventions will provide the co-ordination and certainty which will enable partners and commissioned services to plan their delivery and to allow the interventions to have a positive impact on communities impacted by serious violence.

Over the next two years there is a commitment to exploring increased sustainability and embedding the public-health approach to tackling serious violence in strategic and operational delivery. However, it is acknowledged that this will be challenging as this approach needs strong strategic support and takes time and commitment to achieve long-term system change.

The next step is the development of a Response Strategy as the VRU continues to refine and deliver its approach to reducing serious violence as well as identifying future innovative opportunities to reducing serious violence. Regardless, the high level objectives of the HIPS Response Strategy will remain the same:

- ❖ Reduce hospital admissions for knife related serious violence especially amongst those aged under 25 years
- ❖ Reduce knife enabled serious violence especially amongst those aged under 25 years
- ❖ Reduce non-domestic homicides especially amongst those aged under 25 involving a knife.

To support successful delivery of the Response Strategy and high level objectives, the HIPS VRU will be focusing on working in partnership, developing a VRU performance framework in line with the ToC, developing and formalising data sharing and embedding the voice of the community in the Response Strategy and subsequent interventions.

Hampshire

