

Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

Strategic Needs Assessment

2021/22



Introduction

This Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) provides a living baseline assessment of serious violence in the Thames Valley, with a focus on how violence particularly affects young people in public places. It is maintained for use by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and associated partners. Principally, findings from this SNA will be used to inform the Thames Valley VRU Response Plan.

This SNA therefore has three aims:

1. To provide a strategic assessment of need relating to serious violence in the Thames Valley, particularly where it affects young people in public places, this will inform the Thames Valley Response Plan to reduce serious violence.
2. To provide a baseline assessment of the wide causes of serious violence across the Thames Valley, for the evaluation of the VRU;
3. To provide a framework and template for future multi-agency needs assessments undertaken by the Thames Valley VRU, and inform emerging local plans.

Background

An ever-expanding collection of UK and international research has already identified the burden that interpersonal violence continues to place on the health of individuals, families, communities and neighbourhoods across the life course. In addition to individual factors, violence affects wider society and thereby places significant emphasis on public services including health, criminal justice, social services and other sectors such as education to fund late interventions to deal with the problems.

The underlying principles of a public health approach are that it is:

- focused on a defined population, often with a health risk in common
- with and for communities
- not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- focused on generating long term as well as short term solutions
- based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities
- rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem

This Strategic Needs Assessment provides an assessment of the wide causes of serious violence in the Thames Valley. Serious violence, especially where it affects young people, is characterised by the involvement of young and vulnerable members of our communities in violence, use of weapons (e.g. knives and guns), with links to exploitation and involvement in drug markets. To explore this, data has been drawn from a range of different sources to provide a comprehensive picture of serious violence across the Thames Valley.

By taking a public health approach within local place-based systems, the Violence Reduction Unit and our constituent partners seek to deliver earlier interventions, tailored to local need, which are informed by the sharing of information and delivered through strong multi-agency working arrangements. Through this activity, we aim to tackle serious violence earlier by addressing its root-causes, keeping communities safe and healthy and delivering efficiencies for partners.



Superintendent Stan Gilmour

Director of the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit



Foreword - DCI Lewis Prescott-Mayling

I am very proud to have worked in the Data and Targeting work stream of the VRU and to deliver this report as we progress our journey to implementing a public health approach to reducing violence in the Thames Valley

We have now created powerful data visualisation tools through the Serious Violence Dashboard. We can now rapidly identify "hot spots" for serious violence for Operation Rasure patrol activity and problem solving. We are able to make better use of police data to identify at risk individuals and those who may pose the threat for prioritisation. We are able to rapidly visualise where these "hot people" commit crime, if they are under investigation for other offences and if a Risk Management Plan is in place. In a public health approach, this would be a secondary or tertiary level intervention. But this is just the first step in our journey.

We will soon have similar data visualisation of aggregate data from emergency department and South Central Ambulance Service. We are making strides to improve the data visualisation around stop and search, to ensure we are focusing our activity in the right places and the right time. By doing so we will improve our legitimacy and keep our communities safe.

However, we have much more to do to understand the health of our communities to enable primary prevention and prevent violence. Thames Valley Together will do just this. This innovative data project shows how committed we are as a partnership to working together to prevent violence. It will allow us, as a partnership, to deliver services with and for our communities that reduce violence, improve health, reduce crime and associated costs.

It offers the opportunity pull together shared outcomes and cross-departmental strategies to drive down inequalities and create a more equitable Thames Valley. The overwhelming evidence that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, neglect and witnessing domestic abuse are risk factors for mental illness, poor academic outcomes, contact with the justice system and both violence perpetration and victimisation and even premature mortality (Anda and Brown, 2010), means our approach in understand the prevalence of these factors is crucial.

There are several recommendations throughout this Strategic Needs Assessment and some gaps too. We will be working on these over the coming months but we are confident that Thames Valley Together can answer many of these gaps and keep our VRU at the forefront of data and analysis.

DCI Lewis Prescott-Mayling

Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit



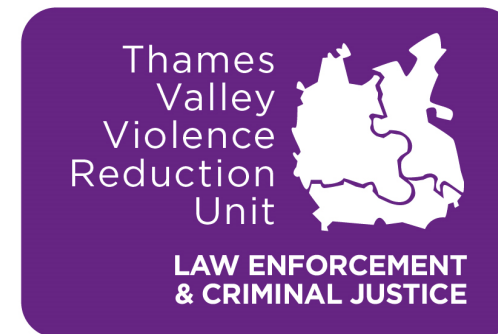
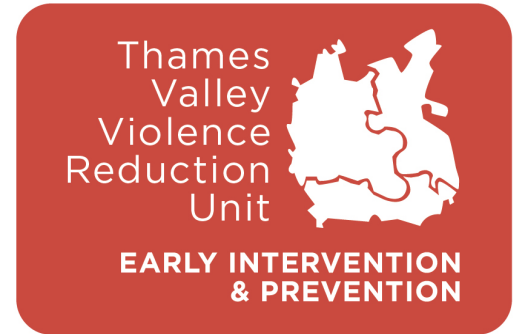
Background

VRUs have been established because of the growing evidence that violence is a key *public health* challenge (Marmot Review, Serious Violence Strategy, Local Government Association). In 2019, as result of Home Office funding, the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was established.

In 2020 the Thames Valley VRU delivered a number of programmes and developed a strong strategic governance and local delivery framework. We have established a strategic governance board and five work streams of:

1. Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice,
2. County Lines & Drugs Misuse,
3. Communities & Partnerships,
4. Early Intervention & Prevention and,
5. Data & Targeting,

This report will cover these themes, it will cover gaps which needs to be filled in our assessment before concluding with future steps over the coming months to address our communities need.





What is "Serious Violence"?

As part of the Home Office funding for Violence Reduction Units, each area received some autonomy with creating a definition of Serious Violence that addressed local issues whilst maintaining some focus on the key metrics that the Home Office wished to see reductions in:

The definition of Serious Violence adopted by the Violence Reduction Unit during 2020/21 was:

- Possession of a weapon or bladed article, where the suspect was aged under 25 at the time of the offence
- Any Violence Against the Person, Robbery, Sexual Offence, Burglary or Public Order offence where the offence was recorded as involving a bladed article or a firearm
- Any offence of Violence Against the Person of Grievous Bodily Harm level and above (the TVP force definition of Most Serious Violence)
- Any offence of Possession with intent to supply drugs or concerned in the supply of drugs, where the suspect was aged under 25 at the time of the offence

As a core part of the VRU's focus in 2020/21, "Knife Crime" was also closely followed. There is no such offence as "Knife Crime", instead, a combination of classifiers and crime types are reviewed to identify offences that meet the Home Office Annual Data Requirement (ADR) 160. This includes offences where the victim may have believed, or been led to believe, that there was an imminent use of a knife or blade, even if a knife or blade was not seen at the time of the offence. Statistics on Knife Crime are reported annually and available through data.police.uk.

In 2021/22, the Violence Reduction Unit will adjust its definition of Serious Violence based on feedback over the last year, and to ensure more close alignment of the priorities of the VRU and Thames Valley Police.

The definition will be amended to:

- Any Violence Against the Person, Robbery, Sexual Offence, Burglary or Public Order offence where the offence was recorded as involving a bladed article or a firearm
- Any offence of Violence Against the Person of Grievous Bodily Harm level and above (the TVP force definition of Most Serious Violence)

The VRU will continue tracking possession of offensive weapons and knives (across all age groups) as a key measure of operational activity and risk, however this will no longer form part of the core definition of Serious Violence. PWITS/Concern in the Supply of Drugs will no longer be tracked by the VRU and will form part of Thames Valley Police's core response to tackling exploitation and harm from drugs.

Unless specified otherwise, "Serious Violence" in this report is based upon the VRU definition of Serious Violence during 2020/21, as listed opposite.



What is a "Public Health Approach"?

VRUs have been established because of the growing evidence that violence is a key public health challenge (Marmot Review, Serious Violence Strategy, Local Government Association).

The Government's 2018 Serious Violence Strategy indicates a step change in how to approach violence to put prevention and early intervention front and centre. By using an established public health approach to address the key risk and protective factors, violence can be prevented.

Prevention can be categorised into three components:

Primary prevention - preventing underlying drivers and risk factors from forming, for example, preventing the misuse of drugs and alcohol, or adverse childhood experiences

Secondary prevention - aims to identify the issues early and intervene to prevent the escalation, for example, equipping young people with coping skills through therapy and a supportive environment to allow them to go on to live a productive and fulfilling life despite being subject to adverse childhood experiences, misusing drugs or alcohol, or having a history of offending.

Tertiary Prevention - after a violent act has occurred preventing further damage to a community through response, treatment and rehabilitation, reconstruction and resolution.

In this year's Strategic Needs Assessment, we will aim to summarise the latest data and evidence under each of these three components of our "public health response". We will begin by reviewing what we know about those already impacted by Serious Violence. After this, we will identify what we know about those at risk of violence and harm, with links to the work the Violence Reduction Unit have been doing in this area over the last two years. Finally, we will look at what we know about risk and vulnerability more generally within our communities, and where we may need to work together as a system to improve outcomes that will lead to reductions in violence in the future.

Serious Violence - *what is happening right now across the Thames Valley?*

Imagine this: you are a trauma doctor working the midnight shift in an emergency department. A young man, unconscious, lies before you on a trolley. He has been stabbed in the thigh and is bleeding profusely. Without assistance, this young man will die within minutes. He may be jobless, homeless, lacking a decent education. The young man may have been involved in some sort of altercation and may be dangerous. Perhaps precautionary measures are in order. Before he wakes up, do you put him in restraints? Of course not. Instead, you take the only sensible and humane course of action available at the time.

First you stop the bleeding, because unless you stop the bleeding, nothing else matters...

The above quote, adapted for a UK context from Thomas Abt's "Bleeding Out", is an emotive one. We know too many people become harmed through serious violence across the Thames Valley, and this is by no means an issue restricted to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes.

Over the last two years we have worked hard to prevent violence occurring from and even before birth. We need to, in places, change structures and issues that have existed for years and are unlikely to be fixed for many more. But to effect this change, our communities need space and security - not frequent exposure to violence.

In 2021/22, we must intensify our efforts to work with those already exposed to and at the greatest risk of further violence, and those who have already entered the criminal justice system. We have work to do to better understand the precise risk factors around involvement in serious violence, building on work such as Brennan's study of weapon-carrying (2018). For the moment, as will be explored in this chapter, one of our best flags for future involvements in serious violence seems to be a person's history of spending time in police custody. This provides opportunities around interventions, but also questions about the role of policing and how we can most proportionately use our powers to reduce the risks of violence in a group who may come to trust the police less - an important risk factor in weapon carrying.

To help us understand the current picture of serious violence across the Thames Valley, and to aid those tasked with designing interventions and coordinating commissioning, after a short summary about serious violence and knife crime in the last year, we will present a number of pieces of analysis structured on the Crime Triangle. We will first review what we know about where serious violence happens, and our plans to improve our understanding throughout 2021/22. Next, we will look at what we know about those who have been involved in serious violence in 2020. Finally, we will describe what we may now need to do to tackle the violence occurring right now, and how we can take our findings upstream to prevent violence happening in the future.



Source: ASU Centre for Problem-Oriented Policing

Much like the fire triangle we learnt about at school - a crime can be prevented by tackling any one of the three sides of the crime triangle. We **must** do everything in our power to put in place strategies to deter offenders, protect victims, and change spaces, all of which will help us reduce serious violence now and far into the future.



What has happened in the last year?

Offences and The Cost of Crime

There were 3,142 serious violence (SV) offences in Thames Valley in 2020/21, which meet the VRU definition of Serious Violence. This compares to 3,907 in 2019/20.

Measuring reductions in Serious Violence can be problematic; our Serious Violence definition includes a number of offences which are likely to be police generated (usually a result of a stop and search or intelligence led patrols). To better understand the potential impact of the work we have been involved in, we remove Drugs Offences, Possession of Weapons Offences and Public Order, and then again assess the changes in volumes of Serious Violence that affect a victim.

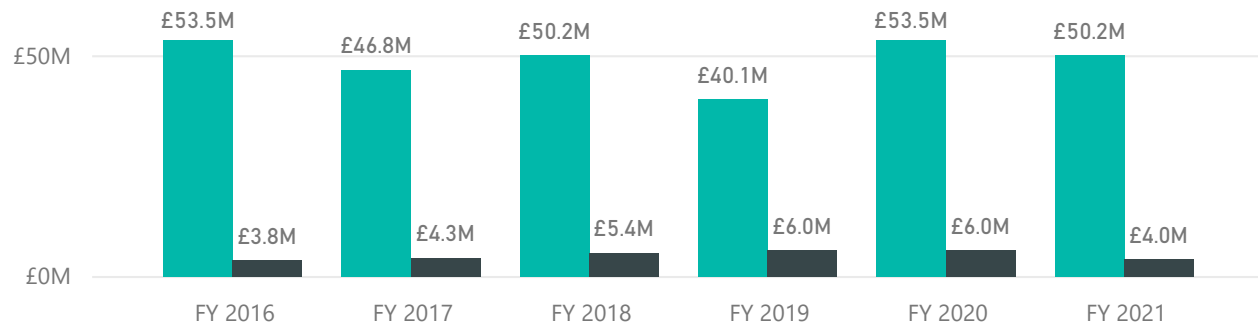
There were 2,086 Serious Violence against Victim (SVV) offences in 2020/21, compared to 2,661 in 2019/20. This represents a **22% decrease** in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

In 2018 the Home Office updated their "Economic and Social Costs of Crime" estimates, which provided economic and social costs to a number of crime types. Using these estimates, we are able to give some idea of the costs of Serious Violence in the Thames Valley.

In the 2020/21 financial year, serious violence is estimated to have costed **£54,171,271**, a 9% decrease on costs in the 2019/20 financial year. £50 million of these costs are associated with the homicides experienced in the Thames Valley, with these removed, Serious Violence cost £3,985,786, a **reduction of over £2 million pounds from 2019/20**.

Cost of Serious Violence

Offence Type ● Homicide ● Non-homicide



Murder and Most Serious Violence

There were 15 homicides in the Thames Valley in 2020/21, 3 homicides in 2020 relate to the terrorist attack in Forbery Gardens, Reading.

Knife Crime

Thames Valley Police has established a knife crime gold group chaired by ACC Bunt. ACC Bunt also chairs the VRU Strategic Board.

Data goes through an extensive manual auditing process to ensure that it meets the Home Office's requirements, and for that reason, data is only available up until the end of February 2021.

Between April 2020 and February 2021, 1,311 Knife Crimes were recorded in the Thames Valley, compared to 1,471 between April 2019 and February 2020. This represents an **11% decrease** in Knife Crime during 2020/21. There was a **2% reduction** in the percentage of Knife Crime that was Domestic Violence related, from 25% in 2019/20 to 23% in 2020/21.

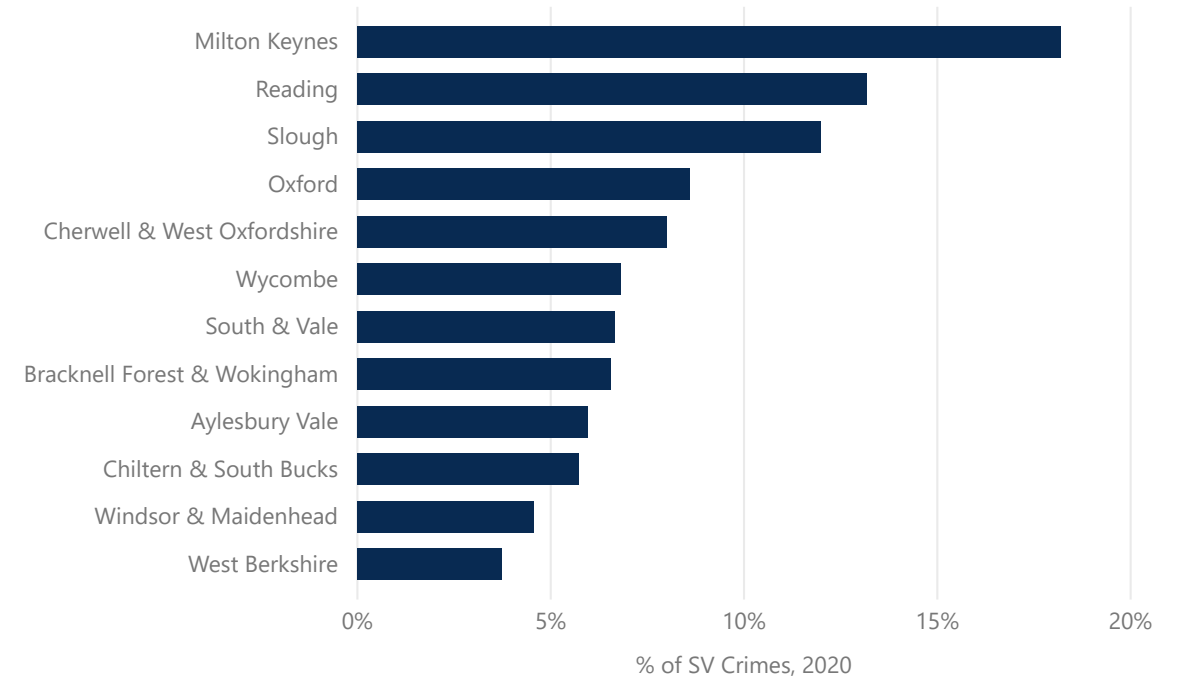
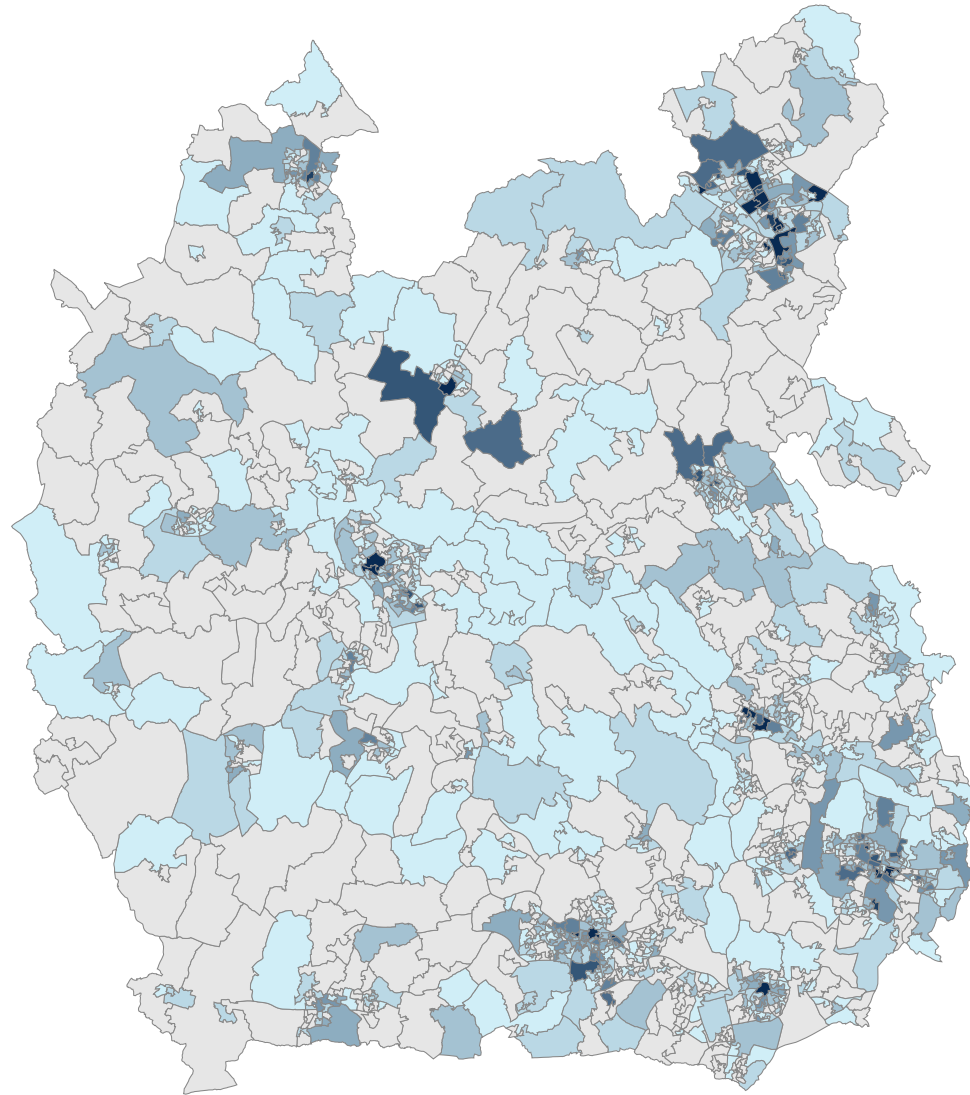
COVID-19 was seen to have a significant impact on Knife Crime volumes across the Thames Valley. As the first lockdown came into place, April 2020 saw the lowest volume of Knife Crime recorded since November 2016. May 2020 then saw the highest levels of Knife Crime ever recorded in the Thames Valley - with 162 offences recorded in a single month.

Data:

Thames Valley Police NICHE Crime Recording System. Obtained 04/04/2021.



Where is serious violence happening across the Thames Valley?



Unsurprisingly, serious violence in the Thames Valley occurs most frequently in some of the most populated parts of the force area. Analysis of serious violence* between 2015 and 2020 found that crimes were heavily concentrated - Over 30% of all of the Serious Violence in this time period occurred in an area less than 0.2% of the total force area. Crime is even more concentrated when viewed at a street network level, with 10% of our serious violence occurring on less than 30km of roads.

The new Serious Violence Dashboard provides users across the Thames Valley with up to date information on serious violence hotspots, and is used every day by nearly 100 officers and staff to help drive local problem solving. We are continuing our efforts to improve our understanding of where our serious violence hotspots are, and how we can reduce the risk of violence. This includes work with [South Central Ambulance Service](#) and [Ordnance Survey](#), which will see us start 2021/22 with some of the best analyses of risk at a spatial level available to date.

Figure One: Map showing serious violence offences for all crimes where a valid UK postcode was available from TVP's address gazeteer. Darker blue signifies higher levels of serious violence.

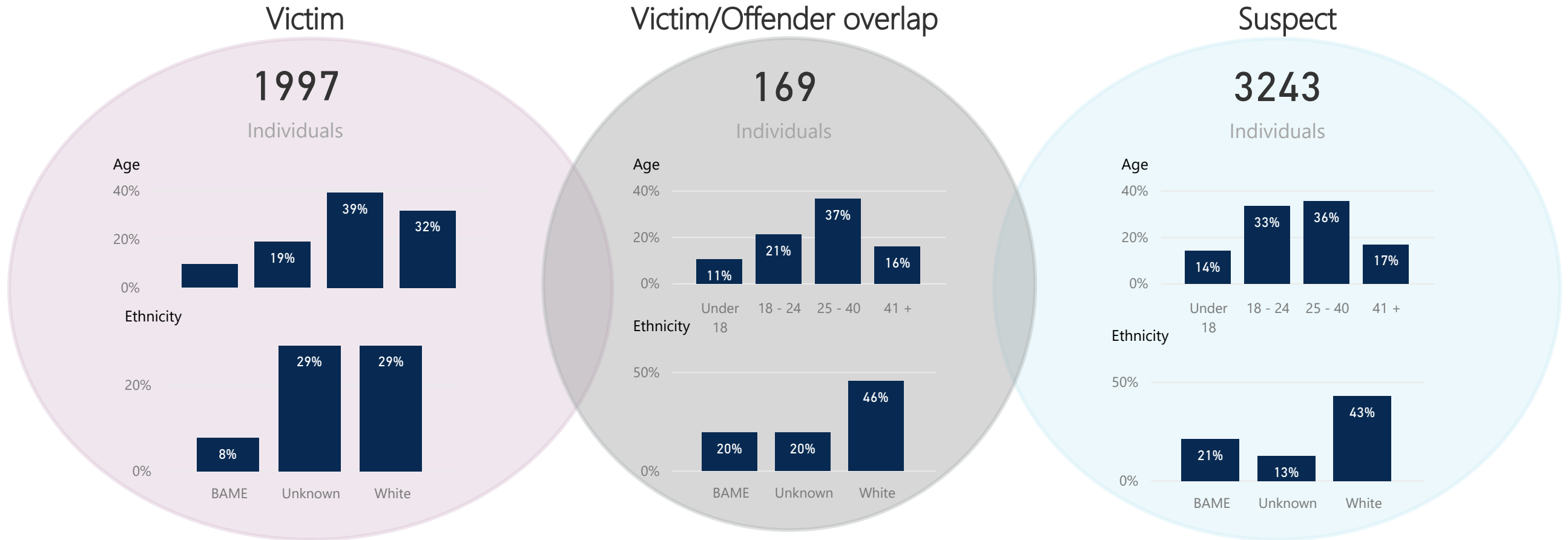
Data: Thames Valley Police NICHE Crime Recording System, obtained Jan 2021. Data covers 01/01/2015-31/12/2020.



What do we know about those involved in serious violence?

Summary data suggests that the focus on the under-25 age group may miss a significant number of those involved in serious violence either as suspects or victims. In 2020, more individuals came to harm through serious violence aged between 25-40, than aged under 25. There are a number of potential reasons why this age group feature so frequently, including risks around problematic drug use and homelessness, which need to be better understood.

Data around ethnicity is incomplete, particularly for individuals who have never passed through police custody, and work is ongoing to improve the availability of data on this important area. Data from the 2011 census suggests that around 16% of the population of the Thames Valley is from a BAME background, however, the poor data quality around ethnicity and the fact that the census is now over 10 years old means making a proper assessment around proportionality is challenging. We will await with interest the results of the 2021 census.



Data: All individuals who were a victim or suspect in one or more serious violence offences between 01/01/2020 and 31/12/2020. Data sourced from TVP NICHE Crime Recording system and correct as of 16/02/2021. Information presented is as recorded on NICHE and no manual quality assurance has taken place.

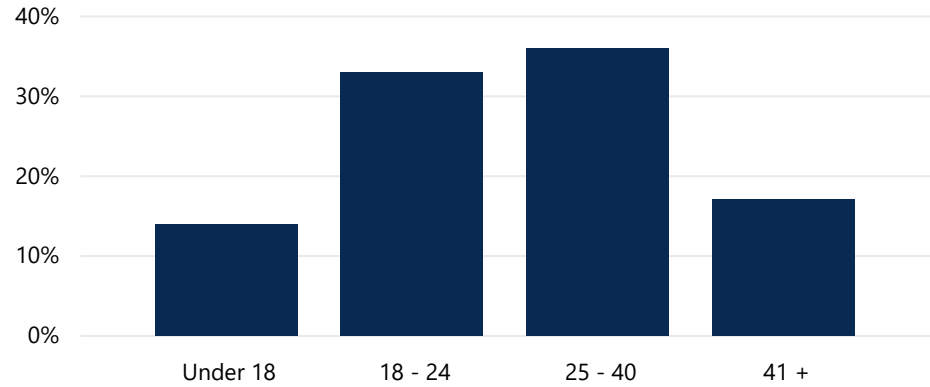


What do we know about those who are **suspects** in a Serious Violence Offence?

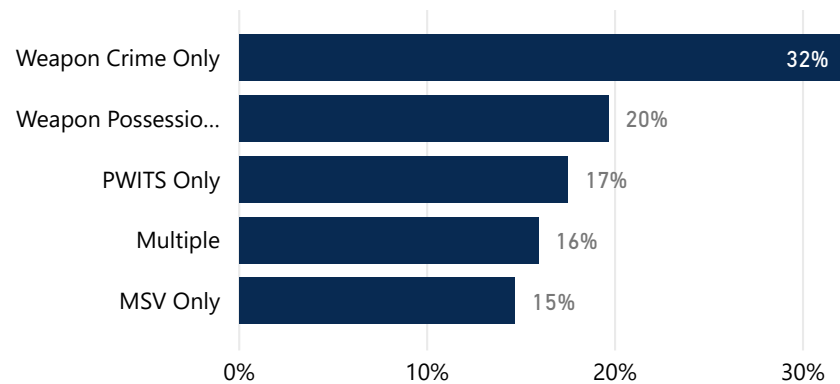
3412
Individuals

On this page, a summary about what we knew about those involved as **suspects** in serious violence between 01/01/2020 - 31/12/2020 is shown. The prevalence of each risk factor/historical event is shown, so if a prevalence of 20% is shown, it means 20% of the figure shown in white next to this text had that risk factor/history at the time of their latest SV offence in 2020.

Ages



Suspect Status in 2020

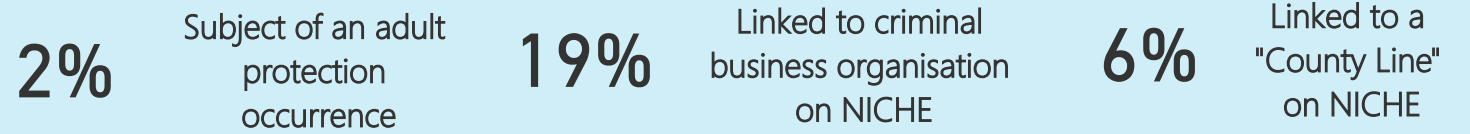


LPA

All

Prevalence in the two years before their latest SV offence in 2020...

Operational Info



Occurrence History



Warnings



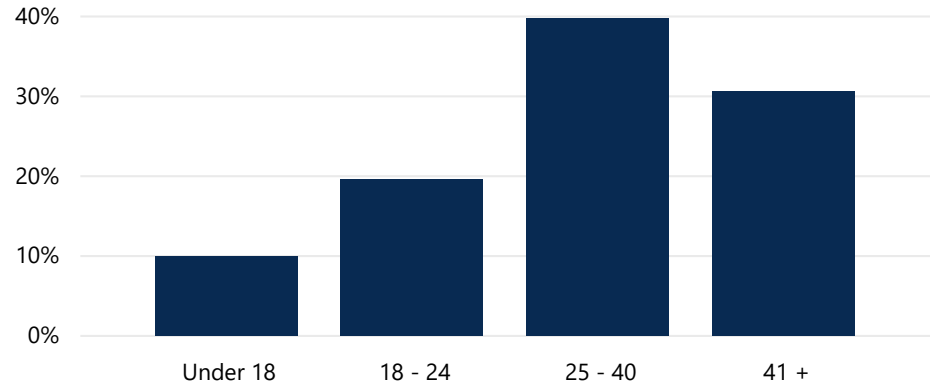


What do we know about those who are **victims** in a Serious Violence Offence?

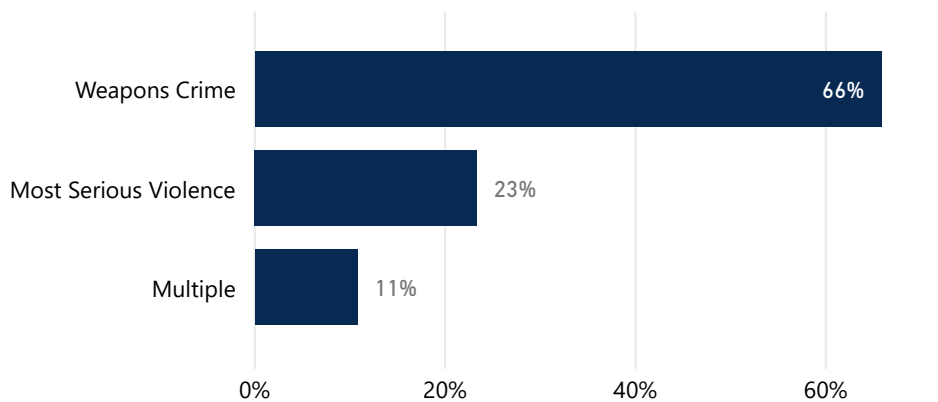
2166
Individuals

On this page, a summary about what we knew about those involved as **victims** in serious violence between 01/01/2020 - 31/12/2020 is shown. The prevalence of each risk factor/historical event is shown, so if a prevalence of 20% is shown, it means 20% of the figure shown in white next to this text had that risk factor/history at the time of their latest SV offence in 2020.

Ages



Aggrieved Status in 2020

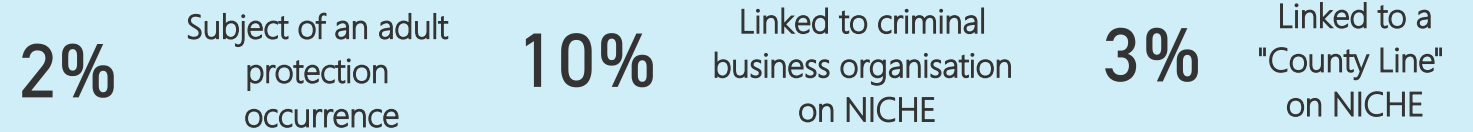


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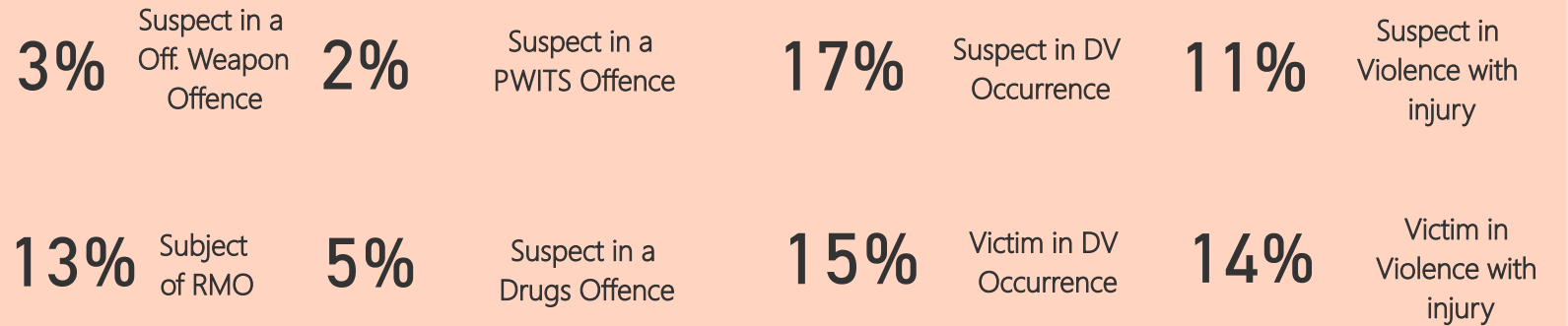
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Prevalence in the two years before their latest SV offence in 2020...

Operational Info



Occurrence History



Warnings





Injuries and Trauma - One

NHS Data for the Thames Valley

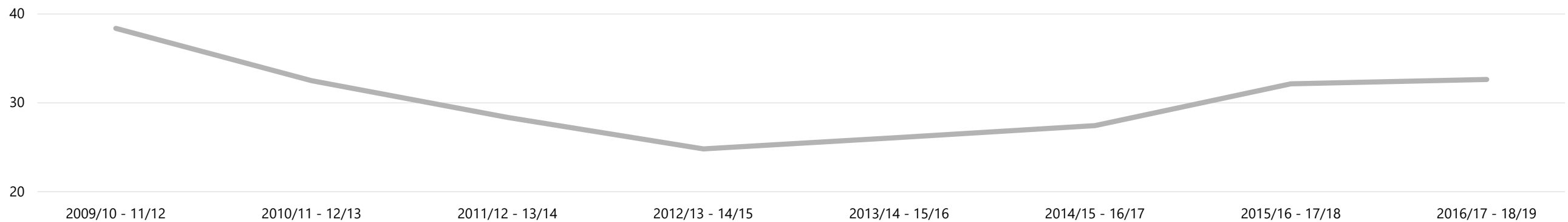
Across the Thames Valley, admissions to hospital for violence has been increasing since 2012/13, in line with increases in recorded violent crime.

On the next page, data on the rates of hospital admission following violence is presented. Slough experiences significantly higher levels of admission per 100,000 persons than the rest of the Thames Valley. Slough and Milton Keynes have both seen increases in the rate of admissions between 2013/14 and 2018/19. Both Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have seen sustained reductions in the rate of admissions, with Oxfordshire seeing 41 fewer admissions per 100,000 in 2018/19 than in 2009/10.

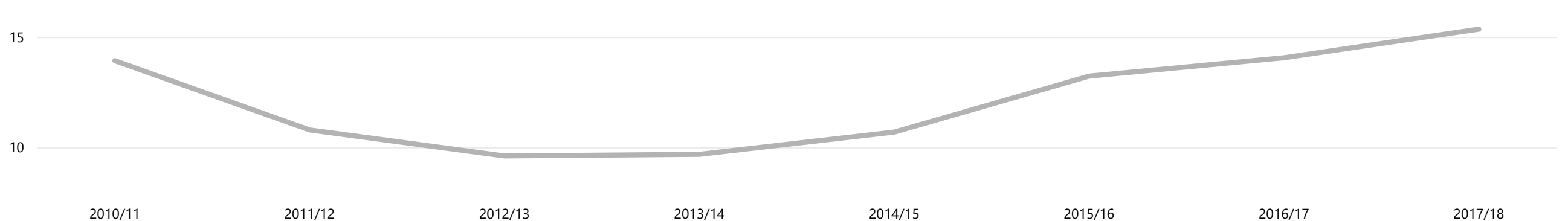
Data: Fingertips (Public Health England). 2021.

Area Name

Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) - rate per 100,000 people



Violent crime - violence offences per 1,000 people

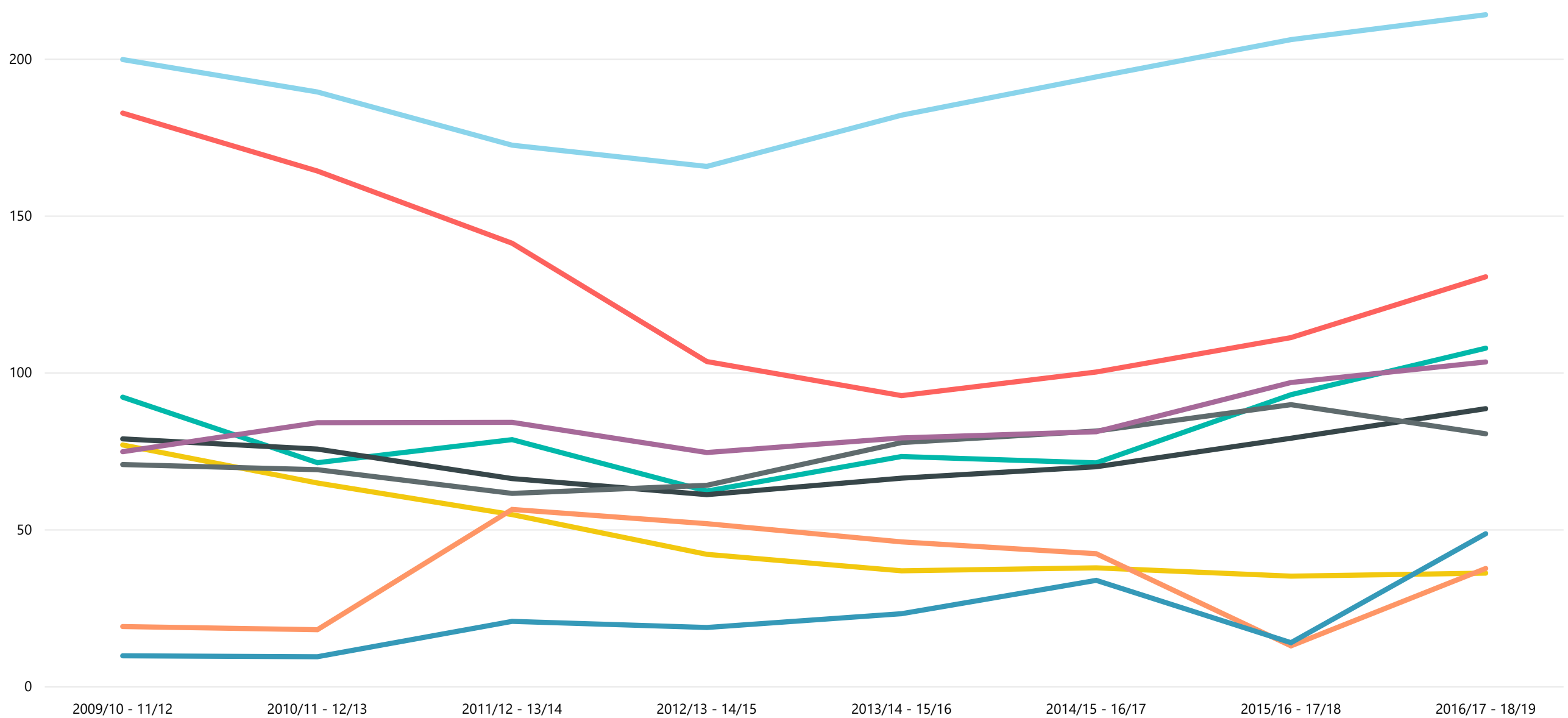




Injuries and Trauma - Two

Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) - rate per 100,000 people

Area Name ● Bracknell Forest ● Buckinghamshire ● Milton Keynes ● Oxfordshire ● Reading ● Slough ● West Berkshire ● Windsor and Maidenhead ● Wokingham



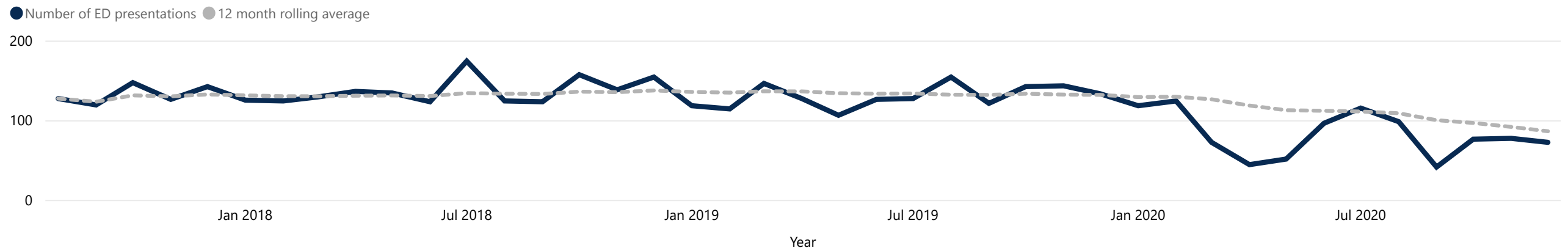


Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV)

The Information Sharing for Tackling Violence (ISTV) standard was created in 2017 based on the successful Cardiff Model of data sharing. This sees anonymised data collected in the Emergency Department, and sent to community safety partners to aid their understanding of violence and guide local problem solving plans. Despite significant efforts, only one area of the Thames Valley currently benefit from this data flow, with data distributed monthly from Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust (John Radcliffe and Horton Hospitals), and more recently from Oxford Health NHS Trust, who run a number of minor injury and walk in settings across Oxfordshire.

Analysis of OUH ISTV data shows that levels of presentations at the Emergency Department for an injury sustained through violence were relatively stable between 2017 and 2019. The effects of COVID-19 are immediately apparent for data from 2020, with a reduction of the 12 month rolling average from 133 attendances per month in Dec 2019 to 87 attendances per month in December 2020. Interestingly, whilst Thames Valley Police saw records levels of knife crime recorded in May 2020, this was one of the quietest months on record for presentations to the emergency department. More work with the Thames Valley Trauma Network would help us understand the changing nature of violence across the Thames Valley.

ED Presentations in Oxfordshire for Violence, 2017-2020



Data: Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust. 2020.

Similar work carried out in 2019 showed that whilst there had been an increase in both rates of violence with injury and assaults resulting in hospital treatment, the rate of violence with injury crime recording had increased significantly more than the rate of ED attendance, potentially suggesting the impact made by more rigorous crime recording on police data. This is a useful example of how the ISTV data can help us better understand the nature of violence in the Thames Valley.

Along with anonymised data, OUH have been working with Thames Valley Police to share safeguarding information more frequently to help identify individuals who may need additional support and who are at risk of violence or exploitation.

Recommendations

- Continue to progress conversations with NHS Trusts not providing ISTV data across the Thames Valley
- Work with SCAS to develop a similar standard for Ambulance Data
- Work with the OPCC to provide this data on a new partnership data platform



What's happening right now: Summary and Recommendations

Suspects/Victims in Serious Violence

Over the previous two tables you have seen analysis of Niche data for every person involved in serious violence in the Thames Valley during 2020. This is an important first step towards planned work to identify risk factors for serious violence that may help us better intervene earlier, as will be explored over the next two chapters.

In many ways the findings of the prevalence factors for suspects and victims are troubling. Relatively few individuals involved in serious violence were known to be linked to a "County Line", or even to a criminal organisation on Niche*, and even levels of previous offending or victimisation by those found to be either a suspect or victim were relatively low. In fact, the best "flag" we seem to have observed was the fact that over 50% of suspects and 30% of victims have previously passed through police custody. Some more analysis is needed on the relationship between Domestic Violence and serious violence - it is unclear to what extent those who commit domestic violence go on to commit non-domestic serious violence, or whether the "domestic" element is in fact the significant element.

No work is presented in this SNA focussing on what we believe to be one of the most important factors around serious violence - social networks. We use social network analysis to help us understand relationships between those involved in some of the most serious offending across the Thames Valley, but much of this work is done manually through reviews of intelligence and the hard work of a very small number of talented analysts. If we want to step in earlier and protect those at risk of violence, we must be able to leverage advances in technology to help us create and understand networks and the transmissions of risk more quickly.

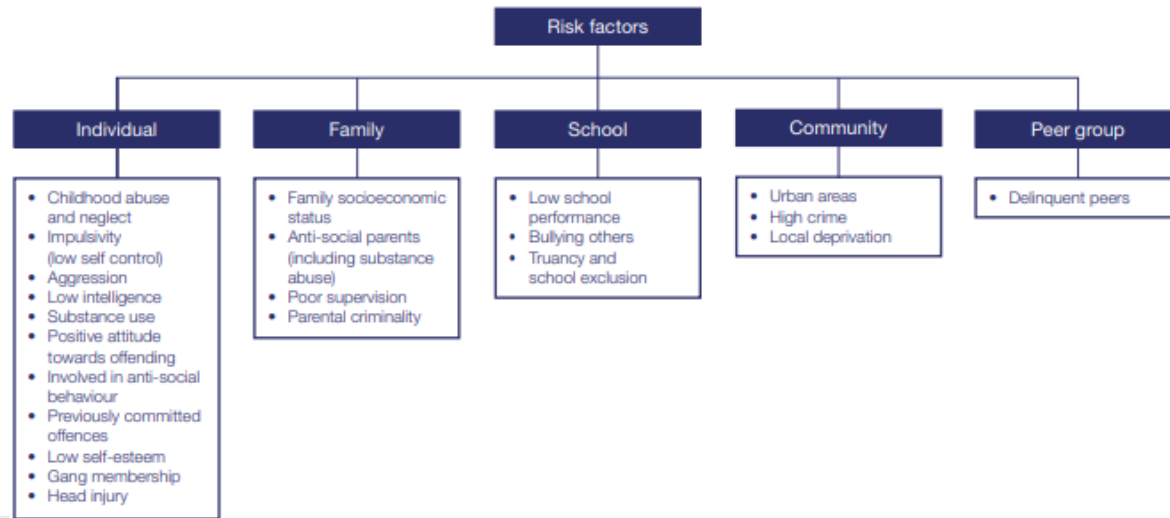
Work piloted during 2020 saw semi-automated social network analysis carried out following serious events, which sought to quickly identify individuals who were likely to be closely linked to those involved in an offence. This was then used by safeguarding and problem solving officers to provide additional support and safety planning to these individuals - around 50% of which were not recorded as associates on our crime recording systems.

Recommendations

- Work to develop our Custody Intervention programmes, and consider a broader target audience so as to maximise the numbers of individuals who may benefit from the opportunity to be supported by a coach or navigator
- Consider the role of targeted interruption
- Develop social network analysis in force, particularly advances in technology which may support some automation of processes to increase the use of these tools
- Investigate the relationship between domestic violence and serious violence

Looking wider - *where are there risks to consider?*

The Government's 2018 [Serious Violence Strategy](#), provided a useful summary of known risk factors for Serious Violence:



Further work by [Iain Brennan \(2019\)](#), developed an enhanced understanding of risk factors behind weapon carrying, using a survey methodology to demonstrate that whilst defensive factors (victimisation and concerns around personal safety) are important in understanding weapon carrying, they do not outweigh wider community level risk factors such as violence, neighbourhood disorder and lack of trust in the police.

The extent to which these risk factors can be studied and analysed varies greatly, and whilst attempts are made to highlight what we know about some of these risk factors in the coming pages, further work would be of benefit to better understand what we can do to reduce the numbers of people who experience or perpetrate violence for the first time in years to come.

One thing is abundantly clear; to have the impact we want to have on Serious Violence we cannot tackle any of these risk factors in isolation. Effective violence reduction will require us as a partnership to work on those "wicked" issues in our communities which are entwined through many of our issues and the challenges we face in delivering public services. Many of these risk factors cannot be "fixed" through our actions alone and will require changes in society that we have a role in leading, but cannot deliver alone.

In 2021/22 we will continue to improve our understanding of the issues affecting our communities and the prevalence of them. We will also work to understand those interventions and ideas that have the potential to make a positive impact, and identify opportunities to support these.

Achieving this means more than just collecting data - it will require us to work with communities to listen and understand the challenges they face and the potential they have to work with us over the next year.

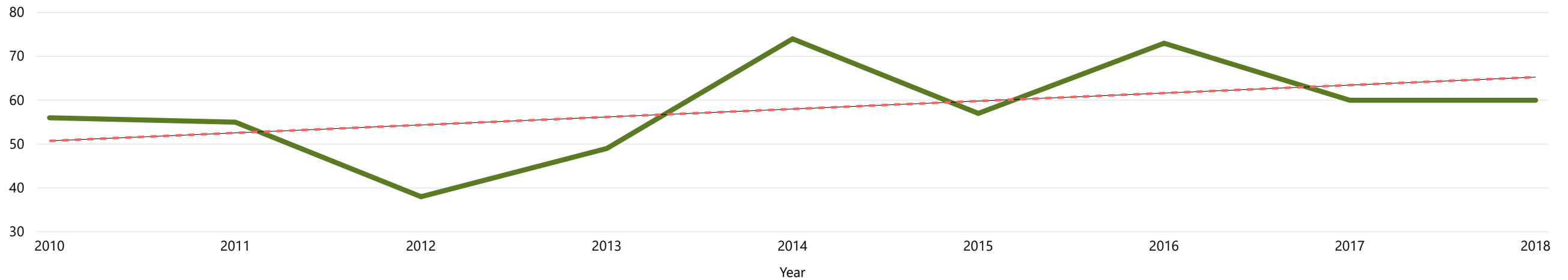




Drug misuse

In 2020/21, the VRU continued a prominent focus on drug usage and the illicit distribution of controlled drugs as one of its key aims and workstreams. For some years, the number of people losing their lives through drug usage in the Thames Valley has been increasing.

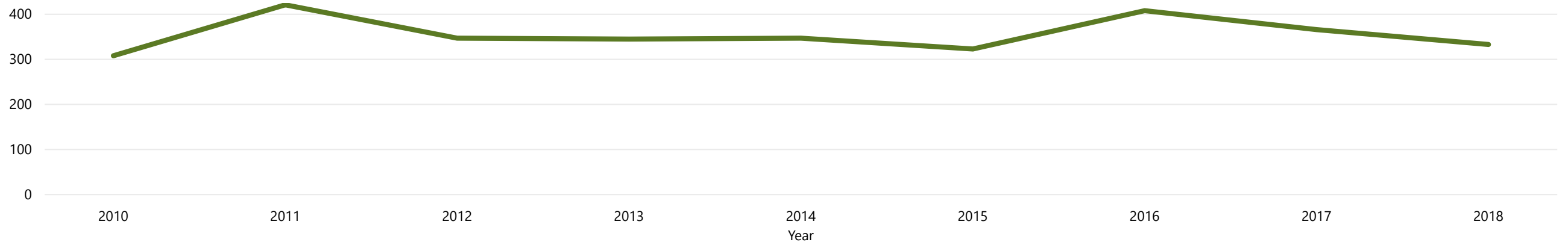
Deaths from drug misuse, 2010-2018



Data: Office for National Statistics, 2020.

During the same time period, the numbers of individuals successfully completing drug treatment for opiate usage has remained relatively stable.

Successful completion of drug treatment, Opiate Users, 2010-2018

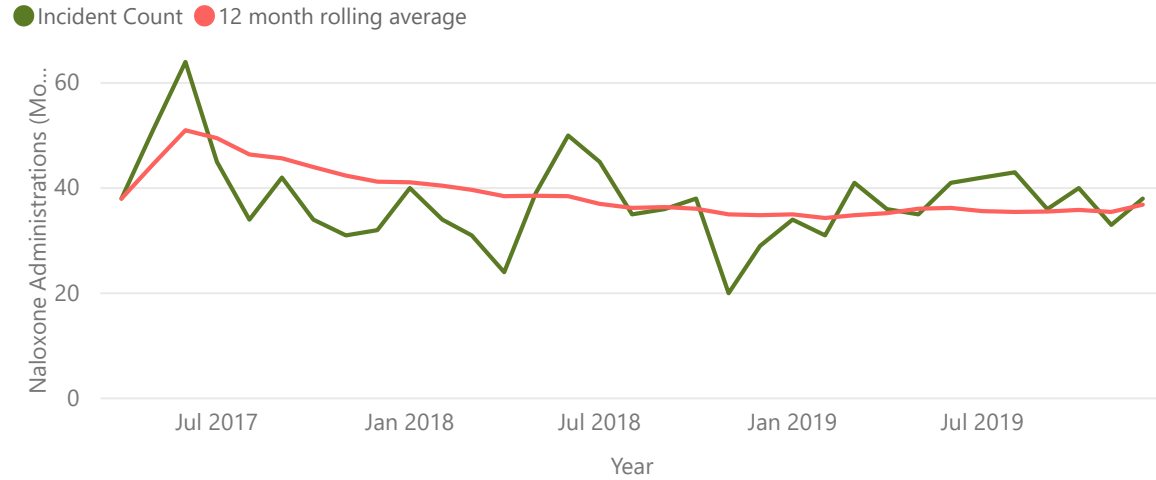


Data: PHE Fingertips, 2020.



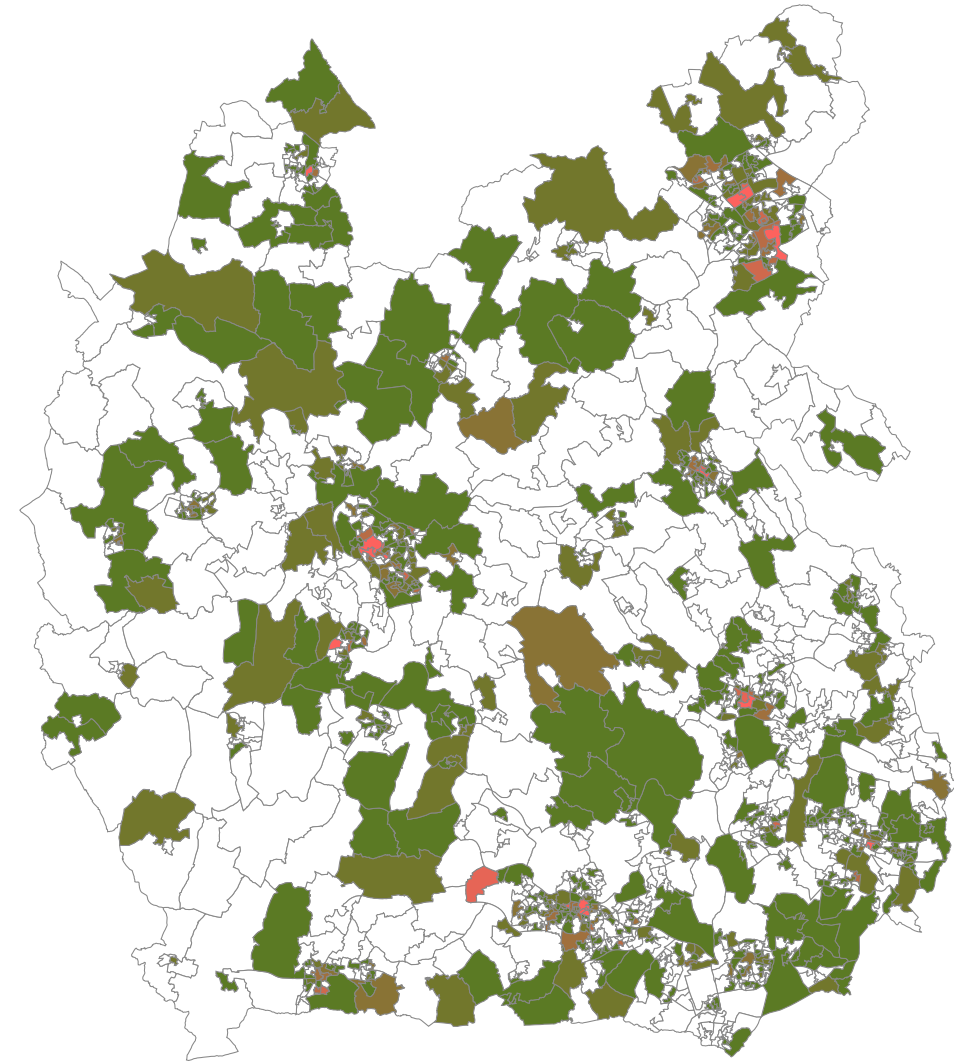
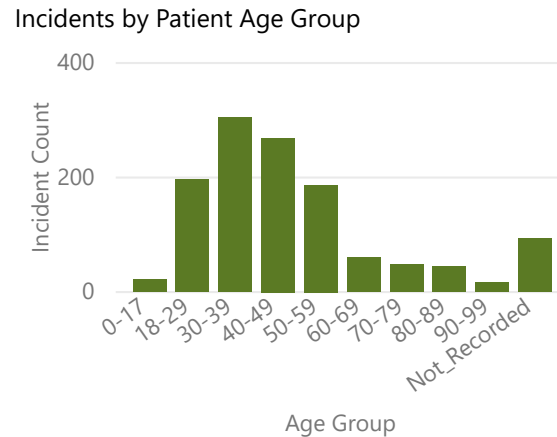
Drug support - Naloxone Administration

Naloxone is an emergency drug used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, such as against overdoses of Heroin or Opium. Tracking usage of Naloxone across the Thames Valley may help us understand communities that are particularly affected by drug misuse and where further analytical work to identify specific hotspots or risk factors would be useful. Data is collected by South Central Ambulance Service as part of their clinical records and provided to the Violence Reduction Unit as part of efforts to reduce the harms from drug misuse in the Thames Valley.



Local Policing Area	Incident Count
Milton Keynes	229
Oxford	173
Reading	150
Cherwell & West Oxfordshire	114
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse	100
Bracknell and Wokingham	84
Aylesbury Vale	82
West Berkshire	79
Wycombe	77
Slough	62
Windsor and Maidenhead	52
Chiltern & South Bucks	40
Total	1242

1242
Number of incidents





Where are "vulnerable localities" in the Thames Valley?

The Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI), was developed to help those working in community safety a methodology for identifying areas that may need prioritisation for attention in future years. The VLI uses six variables combined into a single composite measure of vulnerability, with variables including:

- Counts of burglary dwelling
- Counts of criminal damage to a dwelling
- Income deprivation score
- Employment deprivation score
- Count of 15-24 year olds
- Educational attainment

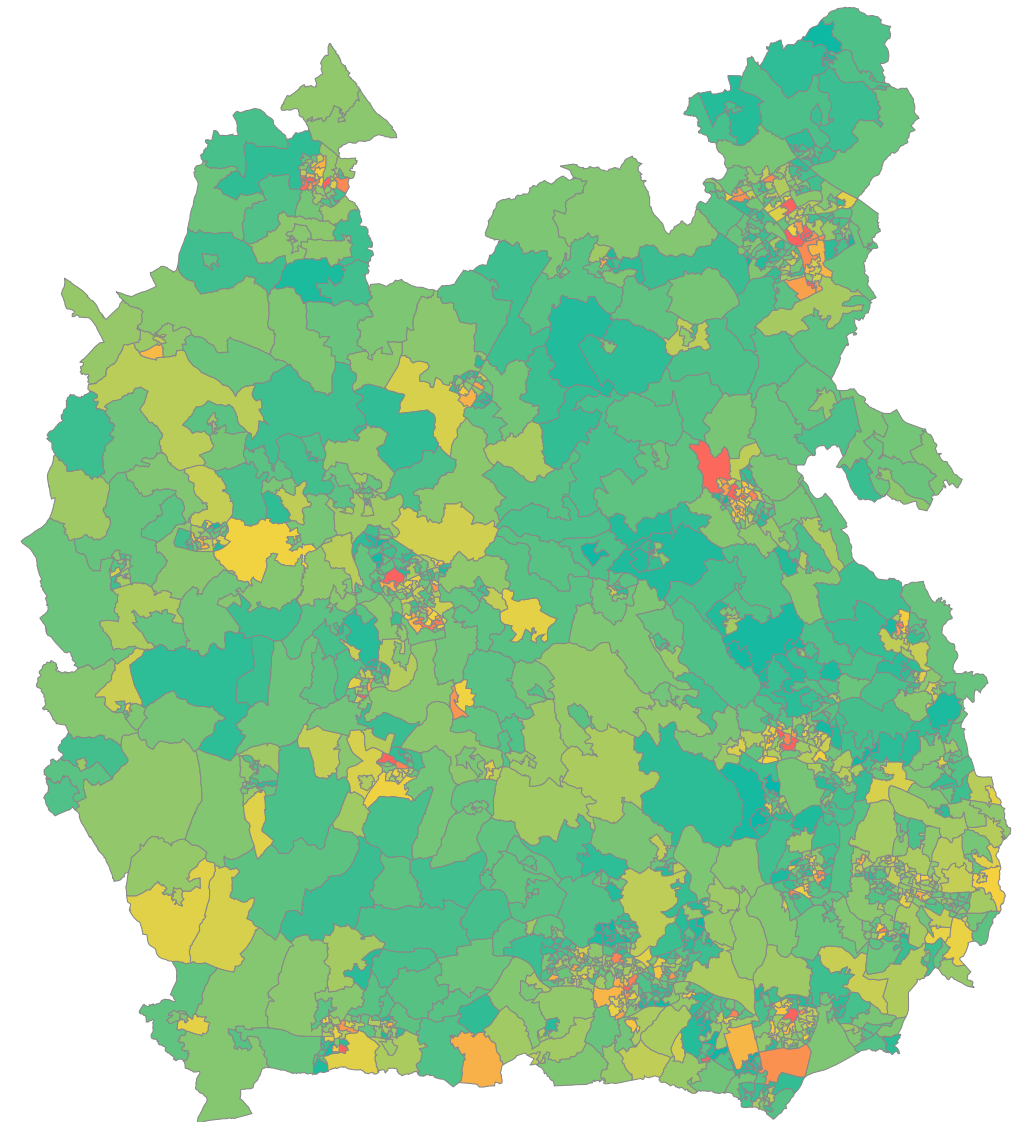
Areas with a VLI of 200 or higher are areas deemed to be worthy of further work and focus. A table of areas which meet this benchmark are provided below.

It is recommended that community safety partners review any areas with a high or emerging VLI in their areas and consider further analytical work to determine any issues that may need addressing that may relate to serious violence.

LSOA Name	Population	LPA	VLI Index
Wycombe 015D	1721	Wycombe	257.98
Milton Keynes 014E	1393	Milton_Keynes	257.76
Milton Keynes 023D	1613	Milton_Keynes	256.61
Oxford 008A	8300	Oxford	234.04
Cherwell 004A	1696	Cherwell_and_WestOxon	233.89
Milton Keynes 023B	1594	Milton_Keynes	225.48
Milton Keynes 032A	1643	Milton_Keynes	224.50
Reading 017B	1274	Reading	213.10
Bracknell Forest 007D	1467	Bracknell_and_Wokingham	211.35
Cherwell 005F	1595	Cherwell_and_WestOxon	209.27
Wycombe 013C	2181	Wycombe	209.21

Local Policing Area

All



Map of vulnerable localities index scores by LSOA. LSOAs with relatively higher scores for the Thames Valley are shown in red, LSOAs with relatively lower scores are shown in green. Hover over an LSOA to see a categorisation of whether the LSOA has a "high" VLI (over 200), "emerging" (over 150), or "low".

Data: Analysis by Thames Valley Police using NICHE Crime data and open source records from the Office for National Statistics. 2020



School Exclusions

A [Ministry of Justice report released in 2018](#) added to concerns practitioners operating across the Thames Valley had around the links between school exclusions and serious violence.

The MOJ research found that students who had been convicted of knife offences aged 10-18, a higher proportion had been persistently absent and/or excluded from school than peers who had not been convicted of a knife crime.

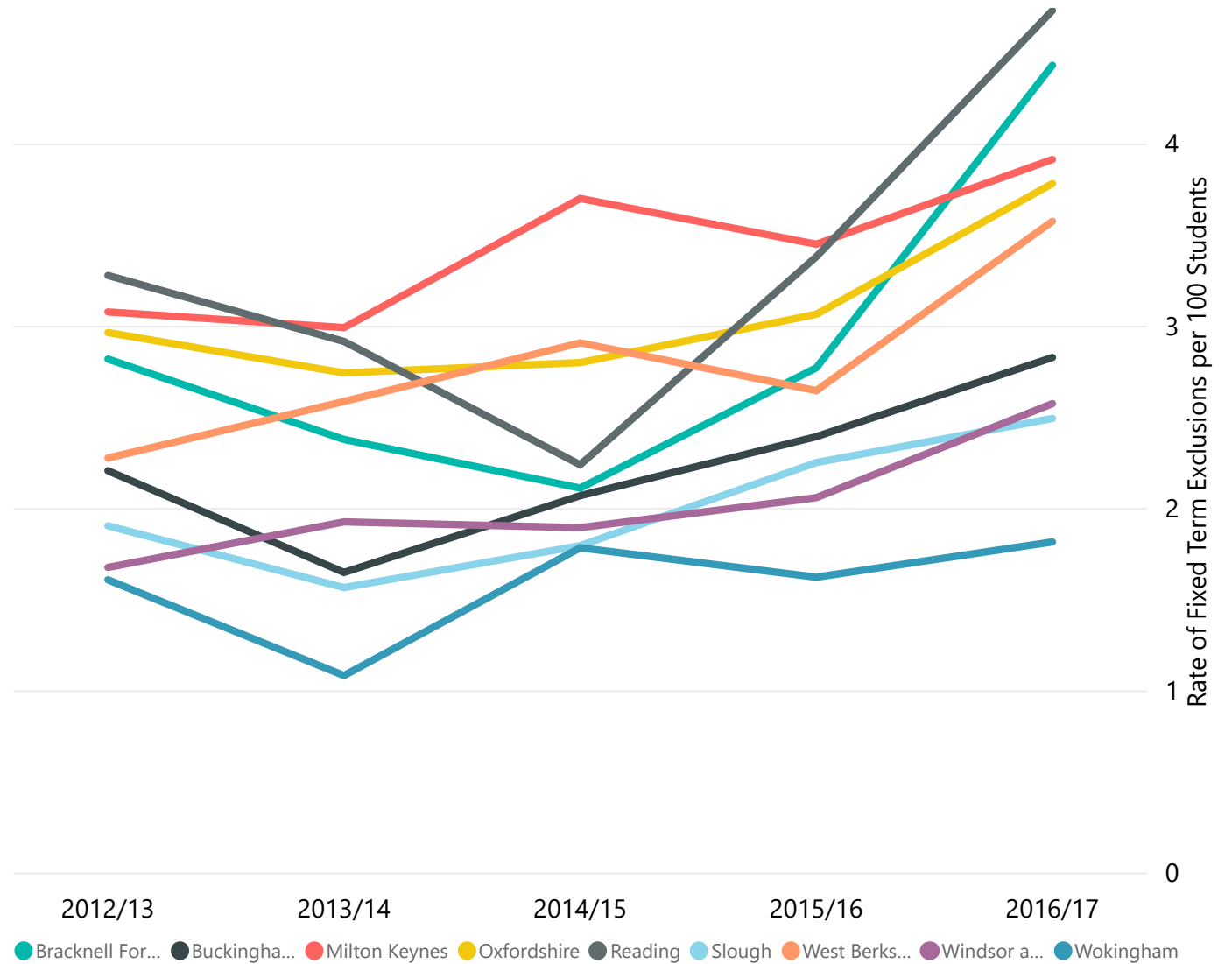
School exclusions increased across the Thames Valley between 2012 and 2017 for both exclusions from Primary and Secondary Schools. The use of fixed term exclusion across the Thames Valley is not equal, with dramatic increases in Reading which now has a rate of fixed term exclusion over twice that of Wokingham.

Whilst exclusion figures for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 are likely to have decreased due to the impact of COVID-19, more work is needed to understand the drivers behind exclusion. Coordinated sharing of data would enable us to better understand the relationship between school exclusion and serious violence.

Further data on school exclusions is available [here](#), and further work is planned for 2021/22 to provide some more detailed analysis on school exclusions for the Thames Valley.

Indicator Name

All



Data: Fingertips (Public Health England). 2020



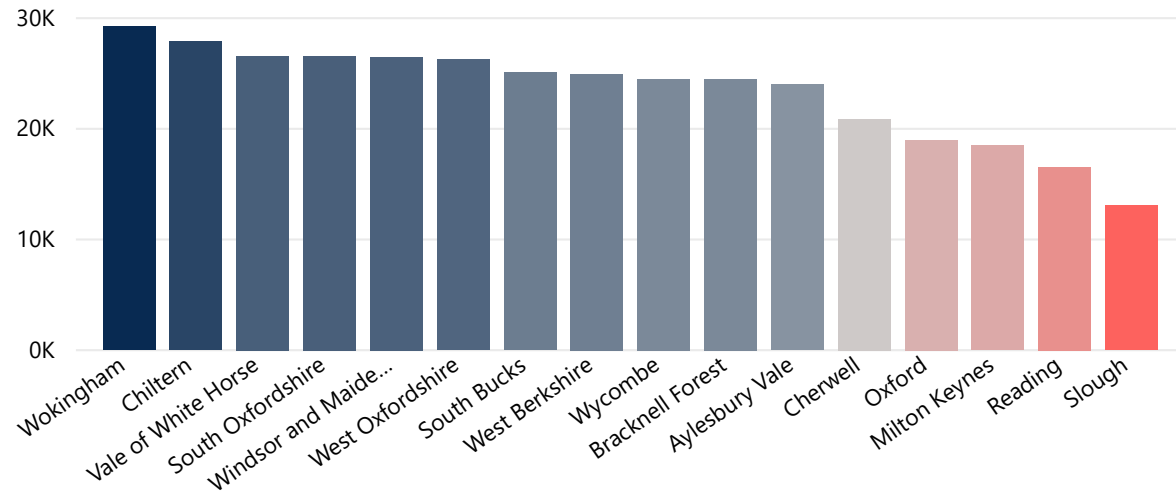
Where are communities facing deprivation in the Thames Valley?

The Thames Valley region is one with both areas of extreme affluence and focussed areas of deprivation. Analysis by the Greater London Authority found deprivation to be a significant factor in modelling which sought to explain the differences in Serious Violence across London.

Slough remains the most relatively deprived area within the Thames Valley, followed by Reading and Milton Keynes, coincidentally the three areas with the highest levels of serious violence in 2020/21.

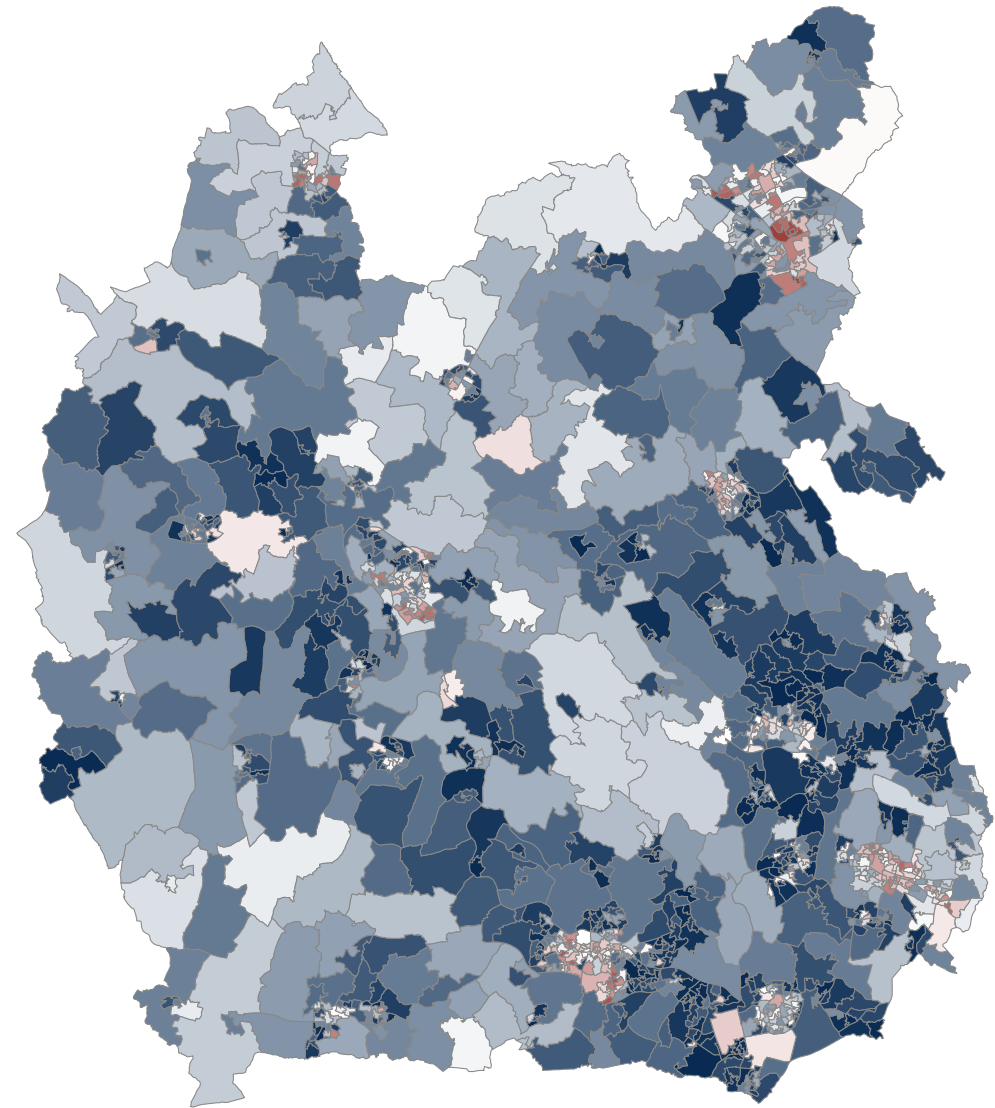
Further work should be completed in each of the local authority areas to assess and consider how to work with Thames Valley's more deprived communities to improve outcomes for all.

Average of deprivation score in LSOAs by Local Authority



Relatively less deprived

Relatively more deprived



Map of deprivation scores by LSOA. The more relatively deprived LSOAs are coloured red, with the least relatively deprived LSOAs coloured dark blue.

Data: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2019.



Where has COVID-19 affected employment most in the Thames Valley?

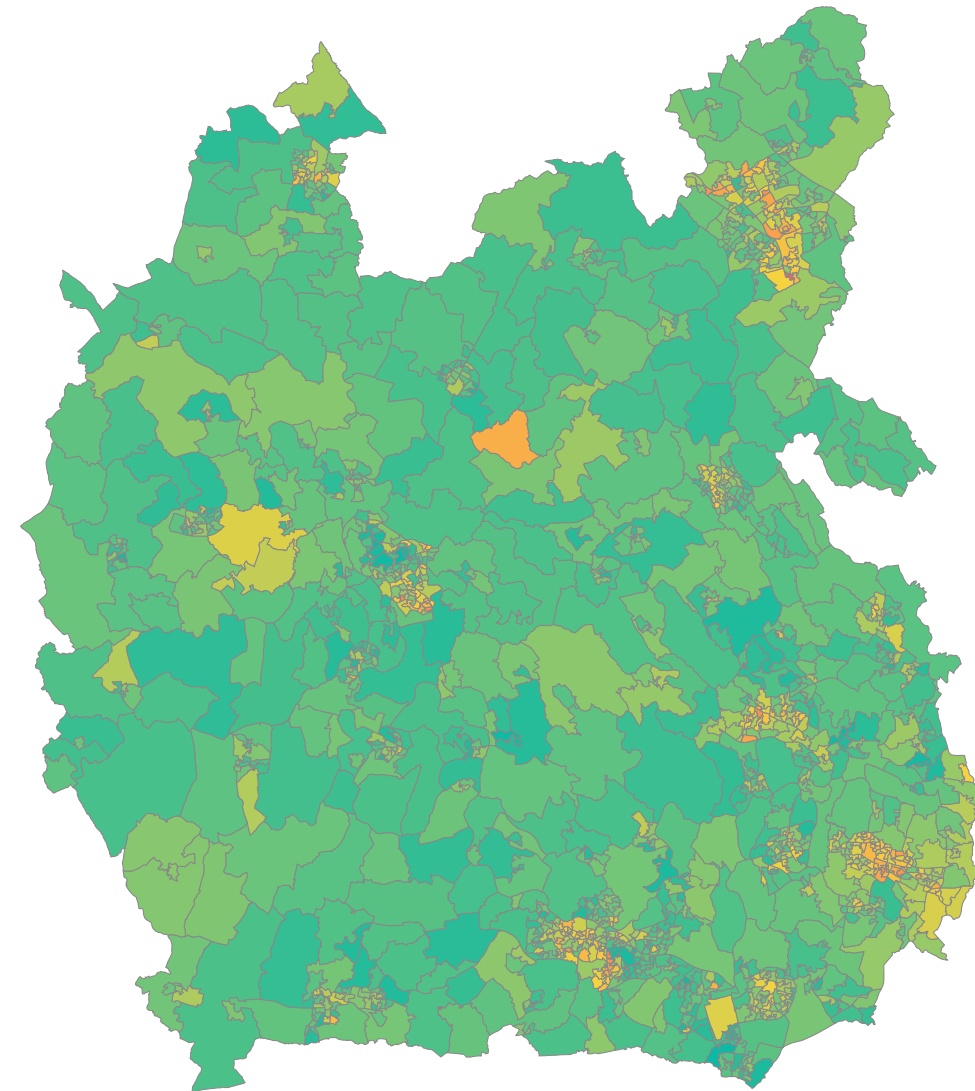
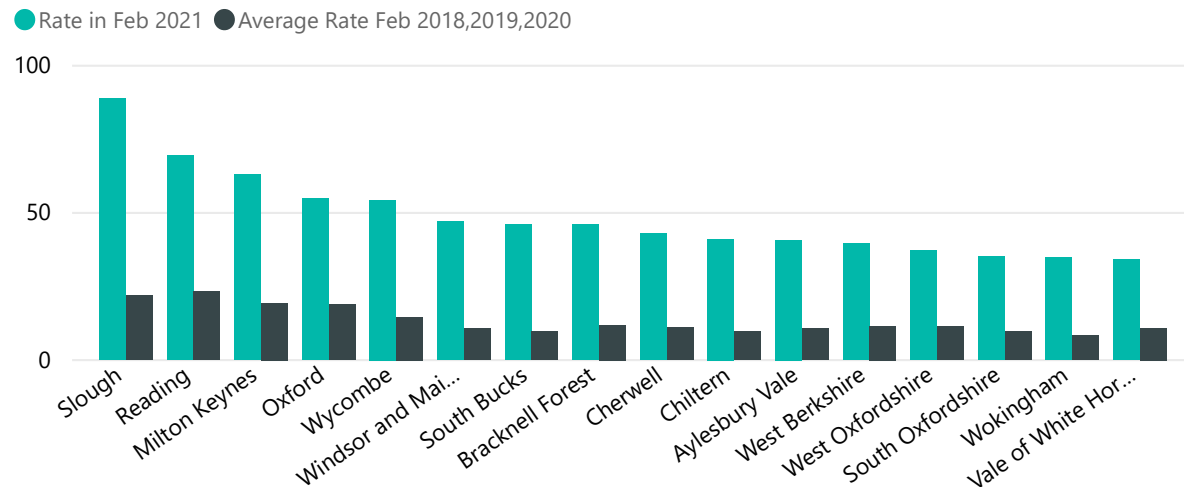
COVID-19 has had a significant impact upon all of us, and it is likely that we will continue to feel these impacts for years to come. One of the most challenging impacts for many has been the impact on employment and personal finances.

The latest release of claimant counts of unemployment-related benefits in February 2021 (the latest month for which data is currently available) shows increases in claimant count across all local authorities in the Thames Valley, compared to the average in February 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Slough seems to have been affected particularly badly with increases in claims for unemployment-related benefits, with the average rate of claimants across LSOAs increasing fourfold and with an average rate of 89 in 1,000 persons aged 16-64 claiming unemployment support.

Local violence reduction partnerships should consider how COVID-19 may change local employment situations, and look at opportunities to support employment, particularly for those with other risk factors or who are already known to police and the criminal justice system.

Average claimant count per 1,000 persons aged 16-65 by Local Authority



Map of rate of claimants per 1,000 persons aged 16-65 by LSOA. Areas with higher rates of claimants are shown in red, with areas with lower rates of claimants shown in green. Note that this does not include people on the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, which is now due to finish at the end of September 2021.

Data: NOMIS, 2021.

2020/21 - Thames Valley VRU's activity



We've delivered a new **Serious Violence Dashboard** to over 150 users across the force, which has helped put up to date operational information into the hands of those who need it most to plan and respond to Serious Violence across the Thames Valley.



Our new **Data Ethics Board** has begun to give us advice on guidance on how best to use new technology arriving in the force, and will continue to review use cases and ensure that we understand the implications of data and analysis we are undertaking.



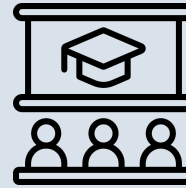
The **Violence Reduction Unit Website** launched in November 2020 and has so far seen over 2000 visits. The site contains resources and guidance around the work we are doing and links to partners and interventions we are funding. It will also host a new blog launching soon.



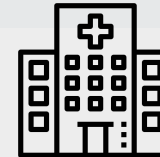
DIVERT, our custody intervention scheme, has now launched across the Thames Valley in collaboration with four local football clubs: Reading, Oxford United, Wycombe Wanderers and MK Dons. We have seen positive results and look forward to sharing more in the new year.



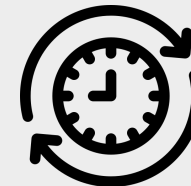
We've delivered training alongside **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)** to help develop role models within our schools. Following a successful pilot, our "PC Ben" book and supporting materials is being rolled out to all primary schools in the Thames Valley.



Working with the PSHE Association, we've designed and are delivering **new lesson plans and resources** to schools around Serious Violence and Drugs. Our schools officers have worked to support colleagues across the force build better relationships with schools.



Our **Hospital Navigator scheme** nears commencement in five hospitals in the Thames Valley. The program will see local service providers deliver advice and guidance to those accessing emergency care. We are working with the NHS to collect additional data to support this activity going forward.



The Princes Trust '**Creating Futures Project**' is now underway in the Thames Valley - responding to direct referrals of young people who are about to be referred to the CPS. The project supports young people to improve their wellbeing, education, training and employment prospects.



Closing Words

Serious Violence is by no means solely a police matter.

Although, the police hold a vitally important role in protecting communities and reducing serious violence, if we really want to prevent it, we need to work together as a system to tackle the underlying causes of serious violence. By partnering with a variety of leaders and agencies, from schools to local authorities to community leaders we can use the whole system affect change at various points on the pathway to serious violence.

Understanding the problem through evidence and data; identifying risk factors; developing and evaluating interventions to target people before serious violence has occurred (primary prevention), those with risk factors early before escalation towards serious violence (secondary prevention), and to minimise harm after serious violence occurs is something made possible by the VRU and working together in partnership with the whole system. This is what it means to take a 'public health approach'.

The VRU could be strengthened by a more multidisciplinary core team to reflect the range of partners involved in the VRU. With a greater diversity within core team members relationships with wider systems would be made easier. In addition, it could introduce a wider range of opinions and insights, leading to more robust decisions and encouraging more creative thinking.

We recognise that the Thames Valley VRU has taken a public health approach and with a focus on tackling the root causes of serious violence by focusing on primary and secondary prevention. By investing in early interventions, many more health outcomes, other than just reduction of violence, will benefit from this focussed attention.

Public Health England South East would like to specifically praise the underpinning commitment to use trauma informed approaches and welcome the VRU's proposed role to be a systems leader in this area.

Thames Valley VRU has made great strides in moving the VRU forward and for the coming months and years we look forward to working with VRU and seeing its progress in improving the public's health.

Helena Fahie

Specialty Registrar in Public Health

Health and Wellbeing Team

Public Health England South East