

Thames
Valley
Violence
Reduction
Unit



TACKLING VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Annual Report

Delivery year 2021/2022

Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

31 March 2021

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1. Foreword

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I look back with great pride for all that my team and our partners have achieved during this time.

Most importantly, serious violence continues to fall across the Thames Valley, for the third year running. At the time of writing, year-to-date serious violence is down 11%.

We have stronger partnership support than ever before, increased community and voluntary sector involvement, interventions that are delivering tangible results for young people and a growing body of evidence that our approach yields results and is best value.

It is in the context of a large geography, diverse communities with varied needs and a complex partnership landscape that we have established a robust Thames Valley VRU Operating Model and through this, the ability to discharge the core function of the VRU.

Our purpose is to support and coordinate the local response to serious violence, embedding public health approaches to tackling the root causes of violence.

We have continued to deliver upon that task, with huge credit to our partners and increasingly, the voluntary sector, communities and young people we involve in our work.

We have continued to use our core budget to invest in activities which build capacity in our partnerships and communities, where we know that the activity is sustainable, scalable and where it builds upon an evidence base for what works.

Alongside this, we have worked to administer the separate Grip funding, working with Thames Valley Police to deliver targeted and effective policing activity achieving excellent reductions in knife crime and wider serious violence.

All of this has been underpinned by our truly innovative approach to data and the huge potential of our *Thames Valley Together* programme, which has firmly established our role as the lead VRU for data. This programme has informed our Strategic Needs Assessments, supported robust evaluations of our work and facilitated cutting-edge research by others.

As we now approach the incoming Serious Violence Duty legislation later this year and the responsibilities it places upon us, I am confident that we have built a model which supports our partners to be ready.

When the VRUs were first established in 2019, Kit Malthouse MP, the Policing Minister, said:

“To beat knife crime we must do two things: first we need assertive, high profile police enforcement and second, we need a coordinated approach to the long term solutions to violence in society, especially amongst the young.”

This report sets out how our core programme of activity has continued to deliver upon that mission over this past year, while also establishing strong foundations for the years ahead.



Superintendent Stan Gilmour - Director of the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit



2. Executive Summary:

This annual report provides a comprehensive summary of the work over the past year of the VRU and a growing number of engaged and supportive partners and stakeholders

The VRU has built a robust VRU Operating Model which has responded to the complexities of the local partnership landscape. It demonstrates throughout a commitment to driving a whole-system approach to the way that public health approaches are delivered in tackling the root causes of serious violence.

That Operating Model is enabling the VRU to deliver upon its core function which is to coordinate the local response to serious violence, both within Thames valley Police and across the local partnership landscape.

The VRU has established a role and processes through which it will support the capacity building at the local level and will secure longer-term financial sustainability for its activities, beyond the reliance on central government funding.

That sustainability is true also of its culture, which it is embedding throughout its activities and with the many partners and communities with whom it is working.

There are growing mechanisms through which the communities are involved in the work of the VRU and at the local level and recent youth consultation events prove the value of giving young people a voice, listening and acting upon the issues that directly affect them.

It has been a year of significant delivery, much of which has been achieved in addition to that provided funding provided through central grant. Innovative interventions include:

- A growing and inter-linked Navigator network providing support to those most vulnerable
- Comprehensive provision of drug diversion programmes for children and adults, together with a range of targeted safeguarding mechanisms for those at risk of exploitation by County Drugs Lines
- Through the Compass Youth Partnership, the VRU has created an innovative provider-partnership from the voluntary sector, supporting vulnerable young people in multiple settings to give them skills for their future.

As the national lead VRU for data, this is an area where we have made some notable progress. The *Thames Valley Together* programme has created an innovative approach which is already yielding results in our shared efforts to tackle serious violence. But it will have far wider application and benefits in time.

The VRU has positioned Thames Valley Police at the centre of its work, which has recorded significant reductions in serious violence for what is the third year running. At a strategic level, the force is well positioned to develop robust local policing plans which tackle serious violence and which will drive down its homicide rate.

Through its coordination and discharge of the Grip funding and a Randomised Control Trial of hotspot policing methodologies, it has shown innovation, leadership and has delivered continued strong results. This enforcement activity complements the longer-term earlier intervention and prevention work which the VRU continues to deliver into the year ahead.

While local evaluation results have not yet been secured, there is every indication that the VRU and its local partners are increasingly ready to meet their responsibilities of the incoming Serious Violence Duty. Through this, they will reduce serious violence and homicide and keep the communities across the Thames Valley safe.

Section 3. The Thames Valley and its populations we serve

Our Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) covers the entire Thames Valley area bounded by the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

The Thames Valley area is covered by Thames Valley Police, which in turn is overseen by the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.

Bordered by nine other forces, Thames Valley is within the South East Region and has strong co-operative arrangements, particularly with Hampshire.

Over the past year, the VRU has built its Operating Model around a core of nine local violence reduction partnerships which span the whole of the Thames Valley. These are either existing Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) or dedicated violence reduction sub-groups or task forces, all of which serve to bring partners together at the local level, with VRU support.



The Thames Valley contains:

- 12 Local Policing Areas (to merge to 11 in 2022)
- 3 NHS Integrated Care Systems with multiple health and care providers
- 13 Local Authorities (with further district authorities beneath in Oxfordshire)
- 14 Community Safety Partnerships
- 9 Youth Offending Teams
- Estimated over 3,000 primary and secondary schools

With an area of 2,200 square miles, the Thames Valley has a population of 2.3 million. It has a changing landscape which can impact on the number and types of crimes experienced by our communities.

The Thames Valley includes urban centres such as Milton Keynes in the north, Reading, Oxford, Aylesbury and those areas which border London such as Slough. But also, large rural areas across the three counties. The Thames Valley contains some of the wealthiest areas in the country, yet also some pockets of the most deprived and challenged wards. This all creates different challenges, varying needs and risk factors.

Milton Keynes is among one of the five fastest growing cities in the UK. It saw an increase in its population of 17.5% (38,100 people) between 2003 and 2013. It also has a younger age profile than England as a whole, with 22.6% of Milton Keynes population under 16 years old. The highest age cohort for the whole of Thames Valley is aged between 30 and 44 (22%). Published ONS projections indicate that the age 16 to 18 cohort will increase by 22% between 2019 and 2028.

The English indices of deprivation (2015) published by the Department for Communities & Local Government show that 6% of output areas in Milton Keynes fall into the most deprived 10% of output areas in the country, with 2% also falling in Oxford and Reading.

Although there are some areas of deprivation, Thames Valley is generally affluent. Around 2.4 million people mainly live in the urban centres which include the city of Oxford and the towns of Milton Keynes, Reading, Aylesbury, Maidenhead and Slough.

The resident population is ethnically diverse, with 15 percent from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and is increased by university students and the large numbers who visit, socialise in, commute into, or travel through the area each year.

This diversity is most strongly reflected in Slough, where 45.7% of the population are white and 39.7% of the population are Asian or Asian British. Slough also has the highest percentage of Black (8.6%) or other ethnic groups (2.6%). 13.6% of the population in Reading is described as Asian or Asian British and 4% from diverse ethnic group.

That diversity in the geography and population is matched by the complexity of our partnership landscape, with the police force the only consistent boundary. It spans multiple partner organisations, overlapping boundaries and structures and varied levels of resourcing.

4. The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

In April 2018, the Government [published its Serious Violence Strategy](#), setting out its response serious violence and the increase in knife crime, gun crime and homicide.

In August 2019, [funding was announced](#) to establish 18 Violence Reduction Units in the areas most affected by serious violence, which included the Thames Valley.

Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (TV VRU) was established in 2019 following the [provision of funding from the Home Office](#). This followed the publication in April 2018 of the Serious Violence Strategy.

At the time, the Home Office announced:

“Violence Reduction Units will bring together different organisations, including the police, local government, health, community leaders and other key partners to tackle violent crime by understanding its root causes. The new units will be responsible for identifying what is driving violent crime in the area and coming up with a co-ordinated response.”

Prior to this, whilst a number of different local multi-agency structures existed (many of which covered serious violence as one of their priorities e.g. Community Safety Partnerships) there was no consistent Thames Valley wide approach or infrastructure in place focussed on strategic partnerships.

The establishment of the VRU has provided the opportunity to harness the support and expertise of these existing local multi-agency groups and build on this to create shared strategic objectives for tackling serious violence across the Thames Valley.

Our vision: The Vision of the Thames Valley VRU is to reduce serious violence in our communities, especially where it affects young people in public places.

We will enable the Vision by improving community safety and wellbeing through a change in the behaviours associated with violence. We will make this culturally and financially sustainable by focusing on whole systems.

Our core function: To provide leadership and strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence, embedding public health approaches.

The Thames Valley VRU has agreed through its core membership that all our work will be underpinned by the following principles:

- **We will embed a public health approach to tackling serious violence and its root causes**
- **We will take, and facilitate with others, the use of data-led and evidence-based practice and interventions, ensuring we deliver high impact activity that yields results**
- **We will embed trauma informed approaches in all our work and facilitate others to do the same**

Our core membership (VRU Strategy Board 11 January) has reaffirmed their commitment to a whole-system approach to tackling serious violence and through this, to work collectively to deliver upon the vision, function and principles described above. This they commit to for the long term, sustaining this within the culture of our shared work to tackle violence.

We have maintained a structure within our core programme which is based around the five key themes described in the Serious Violence Strategy, with the following workstreams:

- Data & Targeting
- County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
- Early Intervention & Prevention
- Communities & Partnership
- Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice

Later in this report we will explore in depth how each of these workstreams has been resourced over the past year, their areas of priority, their key areas of delivery and achievements.

5. The Serious Violence Duty

Following consultation in 2019, the intention to legislate for a new Serious Violence Duty was announced in the Queen's Speech in December 2019.

The Duty is one of many provisions included within the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC Bill), introduced on 9 March 2021.

In line with the Serious Violence Strategy, the intention behind this provision is to encourage a public health approach to tackling serious violence.

The specified authorities must establish a local problem profile/ strategic needs assessment and develop and publish a local strategy which will outline the collective action they intend to take to address the serious violence and its root causes in their communities.

As we work to coordinate the work of our local partners, it is part of our core function to support them to be ready to meet the requirements of the new duty.

6. The Thames Valley VRU definition of serious violence

In previous years, the VRU closely followed the Home Office definition as outlined in the Serious Violence Strategy (2018).

For 2021/2022, it was agreed that the VRU should amend this to closer align with the performance measures put in place by Thames Valley Police. These measures were established to underpin the reporting of success against the Force's Strategic Priority to achieve reductions in serious violence, including knife crime but excluding possession offences.

This definition has allowed the VRU to maintain a close focus on serious violence and to ensure a consistency in approach by our leading partner.

In 2021/22, the Violence Reduction Unit adjusted its definition of Serious Violence 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 continued to track possession of offensive weapons and knives (across all age groups) as a key measure of operational activity and risk, however no longer formed part of the core definition of Serious Violence.

We also closely follow those offences which often have clear links to violence and its root causes, for example drugs or domestic abuse/violence against women and girls.

Later in this report we will examine our approaches to developing the Strategic Needs Assessment and how we have been developing our wider Data Strategy, data sharing models and supporting our partners.

7. Our approach to tackling serious violence and building capacity

We have identified several building blocks to support our work in providing leadership and coordination using a public health approach.

These were initially guided by the World Health Organization's advice on preventing serious violence and have since been drawn from other authoritative sources e.g. Public Health England (now Office for Health Improvement and Disparities).

These are:

- 1. The Public Health Approach**
- 2. CLEAR Leadership**
- 3. Trauma Informed**
- 4. Contextual Safeguarding**
- 5. Sequential Intercept**

We continue to embed these approaches into the way we operate as we will explore in the following sections but also with reference elsewhere in our work described within this report.

7.1 Our approach: Delivering a Public Health Approach

A public health approach to violence is articulated well by Public Health England:

“Violence is a public health issue. Living without fear of violence is a fundamental requirement for health and wellbeing. Violence is a major cause of ill health and poor wellbeing and is strongly related to inequalities, with the poorest fifth of our society suffering rates of hospital admissions for violence 5 times higher than those of the most affluent fifth. It impacts on individuals and communities and is a drain on health services, the criminal justice system and the wider economy.”¹

The World Health Organization has provided a useful schematic for understanding the public health approach to violence prevention which we have applied to our work within the VRU:

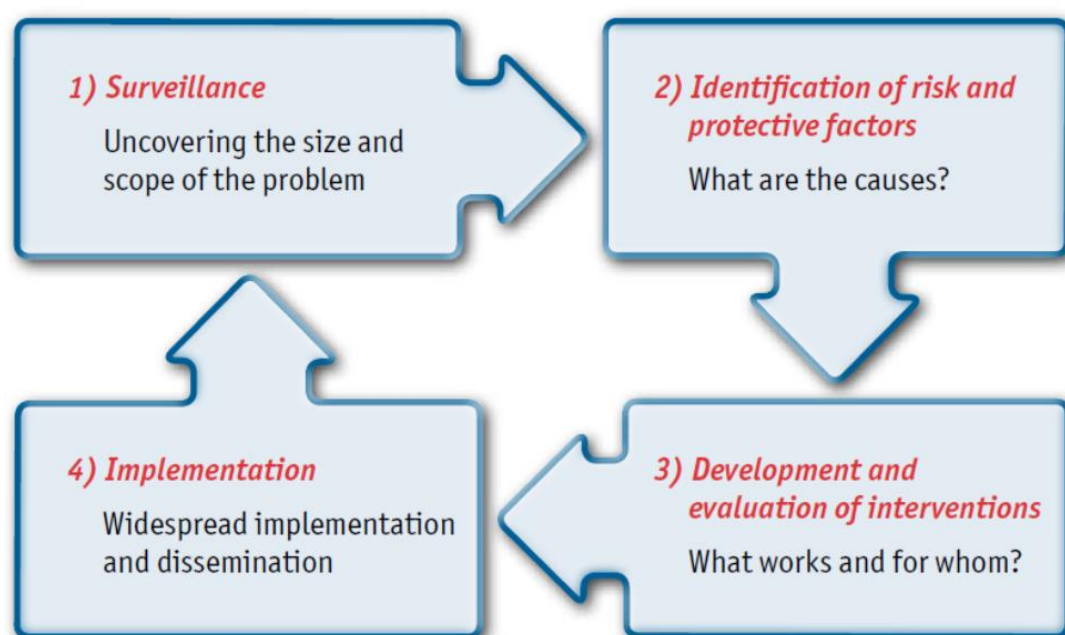


Figure 1 WHO Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention

As covered in greater detail further in this report, we achieve **surveillance** through the innovation that is the *Thames Valley Together* real-time data programme, which provides powerful analytical tools using the range of police data and increasingly, that of wider partners such as local authorities, HM Prisons & Probation Service, education and health.

We undertake the **identification of risk and protective factors** and measures of socio-economic and behavioural factors help us to identify risk groups. We then target those groups with resources to build protective skills and resources around them for early intervention and prevention.

¹ Public Health England. A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention: A resource for local system leaders in England. London; 2019.

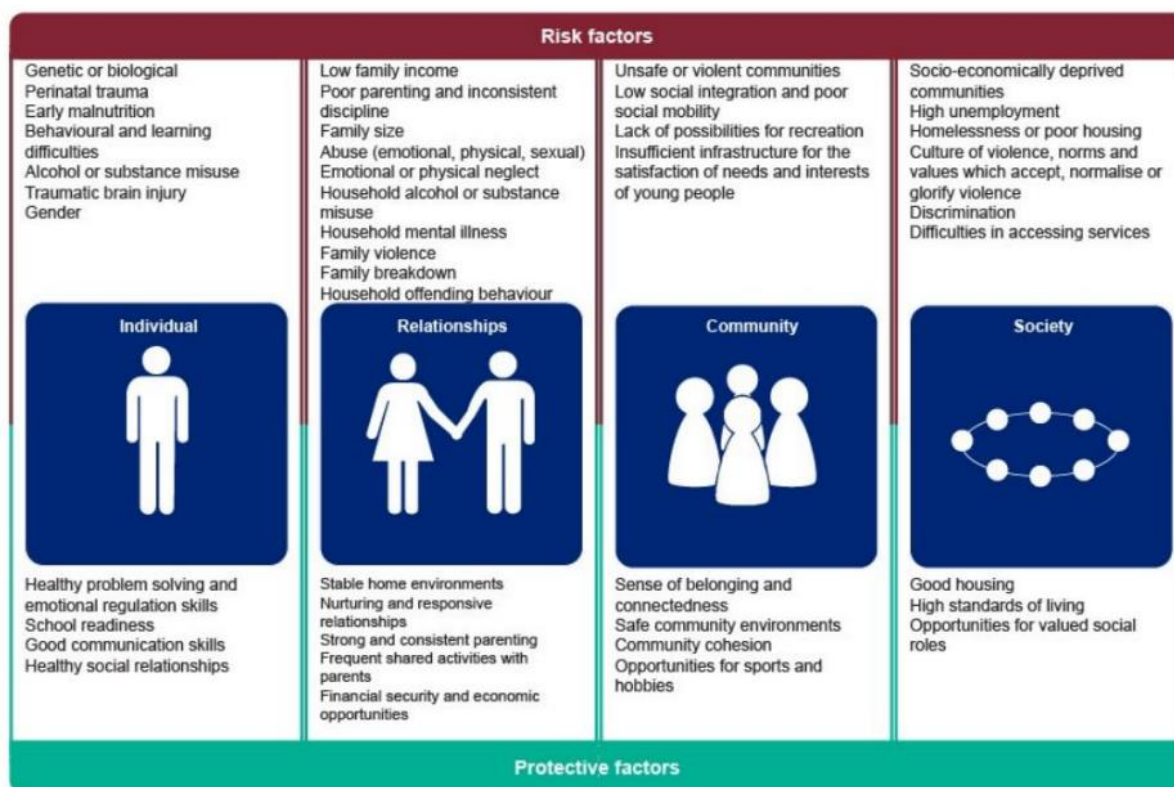


Figure 2 PHE Preventing serious violence: a multi-agency approach – Risk and Protective Factors

We continue to **develop and evaluate interventions**. Interventions have been gleaned from the “what works” literature and across the violence reduction network, our partners and communities. These have been, or are being, tested and evaluated for consideration to be rolled out.

A key resource is the work of the Youth Endowment Fund and their Toolkit approach to building a compendium of intervention activity together with assessments of the level of impact (both positive and negative) and the robustness of the supporting evidence base is being used to inform the development of interventions by the VRU and as we work with our partners.

Our interventions are closely informed by our surveillance of data, but also through our data work we have built a better understanding of the unit costs of serious violence and are also developing new tools which we hope will provide the means of identifying the unit costs of intervention activity and the money they go on to save. This will further support a shift in focus towards universal and primary interventions, to prevent the more costly and harder to achieve secondary and tertiary.

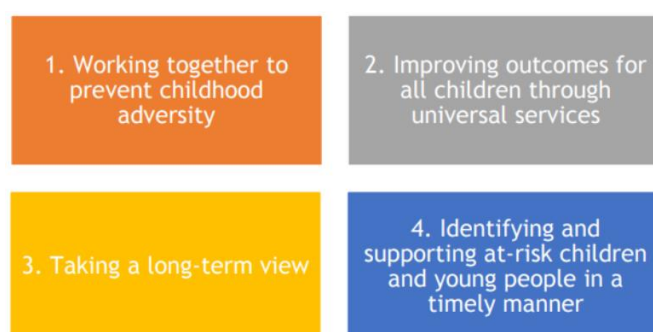


Figure 3 Big Lottery Fund: Preventing serious youth violence – what works?

Our method of **implementation** is based on the PHE 5 C's model (Fig.4) and is a place- based approach that follows a set of core actions:

- Define the population group and the system's boundaries
- Identify the right partners and services
- Develop a shared vision and objectives
- Develop an appropriate governance structure
- Identify the right leaders and develop a new form of leadership
- Agree how conflicts will be resolved
- Develop a sustainable financing model
- Create a dedicated team
- Develop systems within systems
- Develop a single set of measures



Figure 4 PHE Preventing serious violence: a multi-agency approach – 5C's

The 5C's provide a series of principles that remind us how to behave when supporting implementation of whole systems approaches.

7.2 Our approach: CLEAR Leadership

We promote a whole systems leadership style across all sectors that we work with in order to enhance sustainable development against serious violence. We have based our approach on the Harvard CLEAR Leadership model (Fig 5):

“Most systems-change initiatives do not follow a clearly laid out and defined pathway – they tend to evolve over time. There are several reasons for this. Complex issues emerge and develop over long timeframes; systems-change initiatives must adapt to this gradual evolution as well as to unforeseen events and disruptions. The members of multi-stakeholder coalitions also change over time. Many systems-change efforts call for innovation and experimentation, thus tactics and outcomes are not pre-determined.”

The CLEAR Leadership Framework gives us a strong platform to use as we bring system leaders together.



Figure 5 Harvard - The CLEAR Framework for Leading Systems

7.3 Our approach: Trauma Informed

Our VRU core membership has committed to embedding trauma informed approaches.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been shown to increase the probability of poor criminal justice, health, education and social outcomes that can endure into adulthood and across generations. The behaviours that are often seen in those affected as being delinquent can lead to people being pushed down a pipeline from school exclusion to prison.

Taking a trauma Informed approach can prevent re-traumatisation and lead to more effective support and better outcomes for all.

Key assumptions of a Trauma Informed approach

A trauma-informed approach represents a new way of working across services.

“A program, organisation, or system that is trauma-informed realises the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation.”

The term ‘trauma’ can be off-putting for those that see this as a clinical term that sits outside their scope of practice. The term is used to identify the stress that is a common and expected outcome from constant exposure to dangerous and threatening experiences. A Trauma Informed approach simply seeks to ensure that needs are identified and support is brought in where it is needed.

A lack of a Trauma Informed approach can see people labelled and excluded, thereby suffering (and causing) more harm.

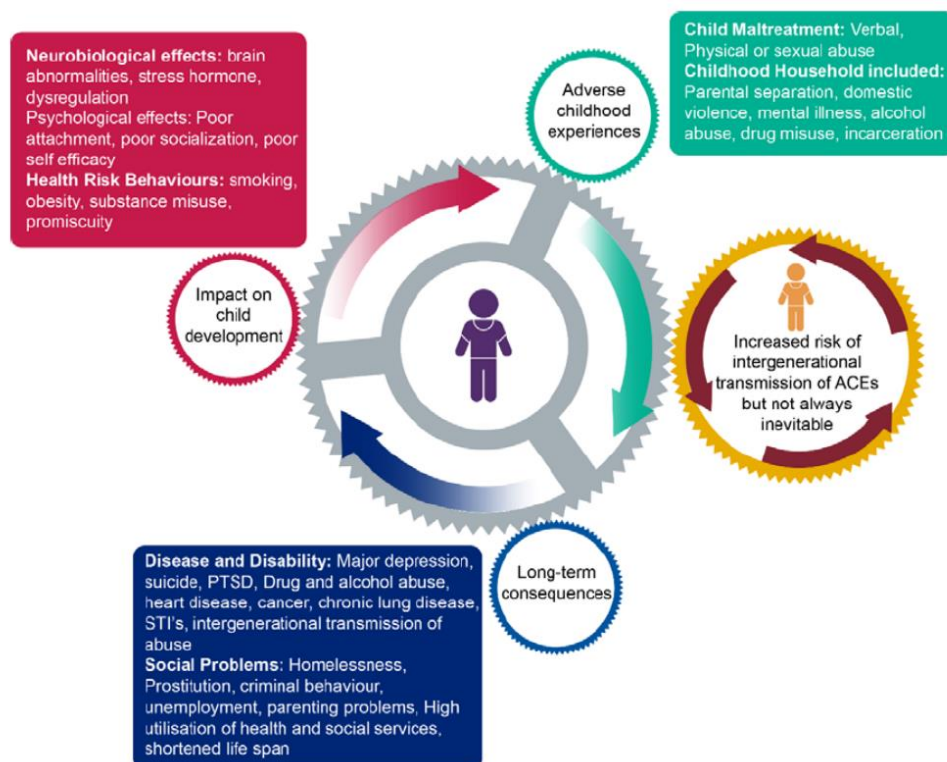


Figure 6 PHE CAPRICORN - Neurobiological, psychological and increased health harming behaviours are drivers of ACEs in children and consequences of ACEs in adults

As we describe later in this document, within our core programme of work over the past year and growing into next, we have established two new Special Interest Groups (SIGs), one for Trauma Informed Practice and the other for Neuro-diversity& Disability. These are a means of bringing together the widest partner representation and specialists to share information and best practice and to further the understanding and adoption of these approaches.

7.4 Our approach: Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understand, and respond to, the serious harms that can befall children and young people beyond their families. We seek to implement the Contextual Safeguarding approach to ensure a more holistic approach to keeping children and young people safe whilst in the community.

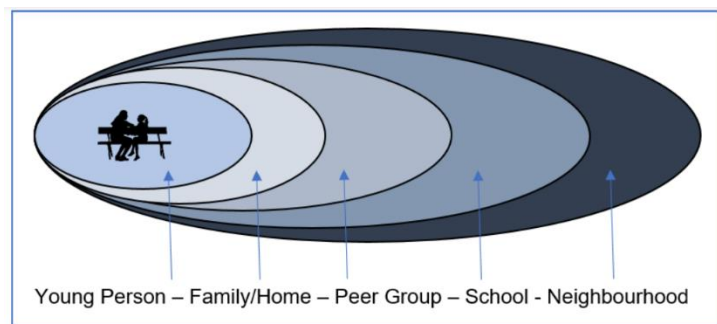


Figure 7 Contextual Safeguarding

7.5 Our approach: A Sequential Intercept Model

The Sequential Intercept Model, or SIM, was developed as a whole systems framework in the USA to tackle the connections between criminal justice and health concerns.

Recognising the high prevalence of justice-involved people with ill health, disability/difference, and substance use issues. The 'intercepts' correspond to key criminal justice processing points with 'Intercept Zero' added in 2017 in recognition of the police's dual role as law enforcement and public health guardians.

The SIM is a useful strategic planning tool to allow the identification of service gaps and to help identify opportunities and develop joint outcomes for collaborative working.

The approaches above, taken together, form the immediate background to the ways that the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit is tackling serious violence, exploitation, and harm.

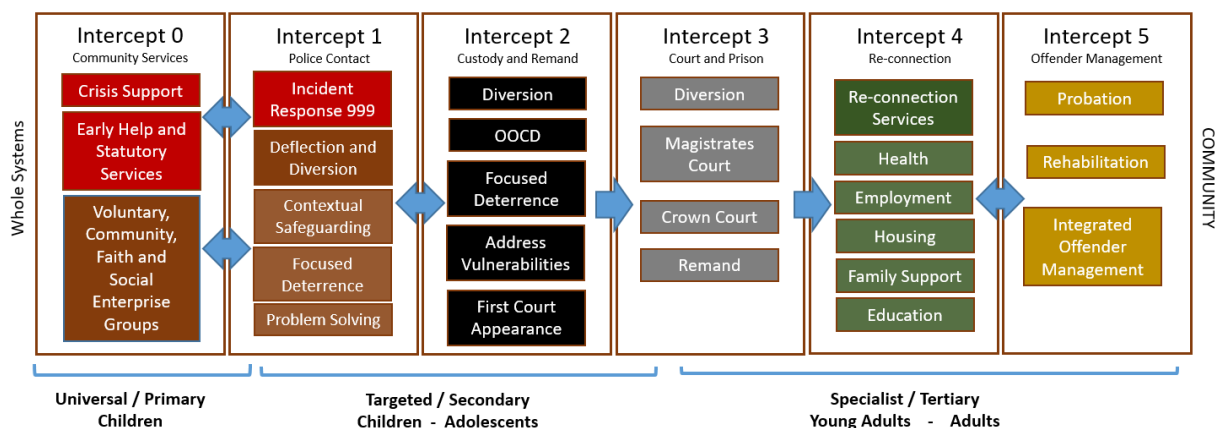


Figure 8: TV VRU Sequential Intercept Model

8. VRU infrastructure development over the past year

This section of the report explores the development of our VRU core programme and infrastructure. This begins with reviewing the core team staffing and functions and our processes.

It then goes on to explore our wider VRU Operating Model, governance structures and the way by which we involve and collaborate with both our VRU core member partners, and beyond into wider partnerships and stakeholders including those from our communities and young people.

8.1 The VRU core programme team

Our core programme team has retained dedicated accommodation, with an office located in Didcot Fire Station while being able to utilise the wider estate and facilities of Thames Valley Police and to some degree those of our local partners.

The VRU has maintained a broadly consistent central programme team of around 20 core staff, led by the VRU Director. Staff are retained on a blend of secondments, fixed-term contracts via Thames Valley Police as host organisation and through temporary off-payroll arrangements.

This staff includes those seconded from a local authority, a former headteacher who leads the Education strand, our project management resources, communications lead and then a significant in-kind contribution by Thames Valley Police of seconded police officer staffing. Each brings specialist knowledge and expertise. This includes experts in drugs and diversion, in child-centred policing and trauma informed approaches, in Violence Against Women and Girls, in community engagement, in exploitation, public health and more.

The support by Thames Valley Police with in-kind staffing has been invaluable in allowing the VRU to remain lean in its staffing costs, allowing us to prioritise the use of our VRU core grant for effective intervention activity.

While COVID measures created challenges and did have impact at times on our core team's capacity, we have not seen a significant impact to the core programme team.

The agile working methods and ICT support allowed us to work remotely and continue to function as a coherent team. We will retain a hybrid style of working, which brings benefits and efficiencies particularly when working with such a broad partnership base across such a large geography.

Where we did see an impact from COVID was in some of our intervention activities, particularly when working with schools and in custody where direct interaction and delivery of group programmes was understandably disrupted. This is discussed further in the individual workstream updates below.

8.2 The VRU's communications capability

We have continued to strengthen our established VRU brand and to build the wider understanding as to what a VRU is, our core function, our structures and governance, our priorities and areas of work.

As we enter year four of VRU establishment, the ability to engage, to inform, to collaborate and to activate our partners and communities remains a priority for the VRU.

We have sought to improve our partnership and stakeholder engagement, particularly through the implementation of a clearer and more structured Operating Model.

This year saw the first full year of a dedicated VRU communications lead and the implementation of a communications strategy with access to resource/budget from within our core grant.

This has enabled improved internal communications across the VRU itself, with Thames Valley Police (the role is in part embedded within the force), and increasingly with our partners and communities.

Through our website, briefings, regular attendance at partnership meetings and by offering a responsive route for partners into the VRU, we are continually building an understanding of the VRU and support for our shared objectives.

Externally, we have had success working through the media and our social media in raising our profile, establishing ourselves as a partnership unit and have championed the necessary shift towards public health approaches to tackling serious violence.

We always aim to involve partners along the way, using their examples of best practice in all our communications work as we seek to bring to life what we do.

Over the course of the year, the relationships with local partners has led to greater visibility of their violence reduction delivery and opportunities for proactive communications work. This has extended beyond those interventions funded by the VRU, but increasingly able to demonstrate how local partners are delivering upon the serious violence agenda within their own planned activity.

Particular areas of success have been the continued development of the VRU website as a “front door” to our approaches and work and a strong and growing engagement particularly with professional networks via our Twitter account.

Communications activity provides advice and support across our workstreams, generating significant media interest in VRU activity, our funded intervention projects and those of our local partners, in Grip funded operational activity and in support of wider campaigns with aligned objectives. This has included supporting Thames Valley Police’s True Costs drugs campaign and VAWG agenda, partner campaigns such as Crimestoppers, The Children’s Society’s #LookCloser exploitation campaign and more.

8.3 The VRU’s programme and project management capability

The VRU retains a dedicated project manager, seconded from Thames Valley Police’s Business Change department. The project manager sits across the workstreams and supports in the development and maintenance of the programme and project plans. Ensuring that they are in line with the Grant Agreement and that they are realistic and achievable within the prescribed timescales, funding and resources. The plans sit centrally and are accessible by all so that interdependencies can be recognised.

The VRU also draws on Thames Valley Police’s Service Improvement, Business Change, Finance and Human Resources departments. These provide advice and expertise on specialist areas such as procurement, information governance and finance.

The VRU is supported by a dedicated accountant and there is good management and oversight of the core VRU fund and other associated Home Office funding.

Procurement processes have been appropriately managed with strict adherence to rules and regulations. We have built new consistent commissioning frameworks for any new funded activity which will ensure a consistency in approach and a commitment to core principles, including project governance, financial and performance reporting, data, contract management, communicating success and robust evaluation.

By developing a consistent and complete procurement process, we ensure that as we commission intervention activity ourselves or support our partner agencies to do so, we ensure that all appropriate safeguarding practices and policies are in place. While the VRU is not a legal entity, we are able to use our processes to ensure the providers we work with have the right protections in place for the vulnerable people we often work with.

Via Thames Valley Police, the VRU core programme team benefit from ICT equipment and support, and where appropriate the necessary systems and access to data/information. Over the past year some small additional equipment and more specialist software licences have been purchased to facilitate our work.

The retention of a dedicated VRU administrator role is an important resource to support across the core programme team and our functions.

8.4 Investing in our partnership infrastructure capacity and capability

Last year, we identified the need for additional support to our local partnerships in order to increase their capacity and capability. This was with a focus on their readiness for the incoming Duty, particularly with regard the development of local Strategic Needs Assessments and data maturity, and the development of a robust serious violence local plan.

With the complexity of local partnerships, we also felt that additional resource could assist at the very local level to help bring together statutory partners, but also to link to local voluntary sector organisations, community groups in their widest sense and to increase the levels of community/youth involvement.

We funded each of our nine place-based, whole-system partnerships to establish a Violence Reduction Coordinator (or similar such role), setting a broad role description which gave some flexibility while ensuring we delivered the additional capacity in the right area.

All nine have been recruited, despite some delays and challenges, and the feedback has been positive. Predominantly, these roles sit within local authority Community Safety Partnership structures, with one hosted within the Youth Offending Service.

An important factor of their role will be their access to the *Thames Valley Together* datasets where appropriate for their role and organisation. While processes are not yet complete, the Violence Reduction Coordinators will be able to utilise data and information which they can use to inform their local Strategic Needs Assessments, to inform local commissioning choices and to drive their own surveillance and performance monitoring as necessary.

The VRU has also created Tactical Advisor roles within our Communities & Partnerships workstream team; three officers each aligned to three of our nine local partnerships, providing a dedicated go-to resource to help build capacity and partnership working.

We have established KnowledgeHub forum for our Operational Board members which has created a more collaborative space to allow the professional network to build outside of the meetings and a repository for sharing of plans, SNAs, to ask questions and to support each other's work in a peer capacity.

While not a direct form of intervention, capacity building within our local place-based systems and their infrastructure has been an important consideration for the VRU this year in order to support readiness and impact.

8.5 The VRU Operating Model – our partnership and governance infrastructure

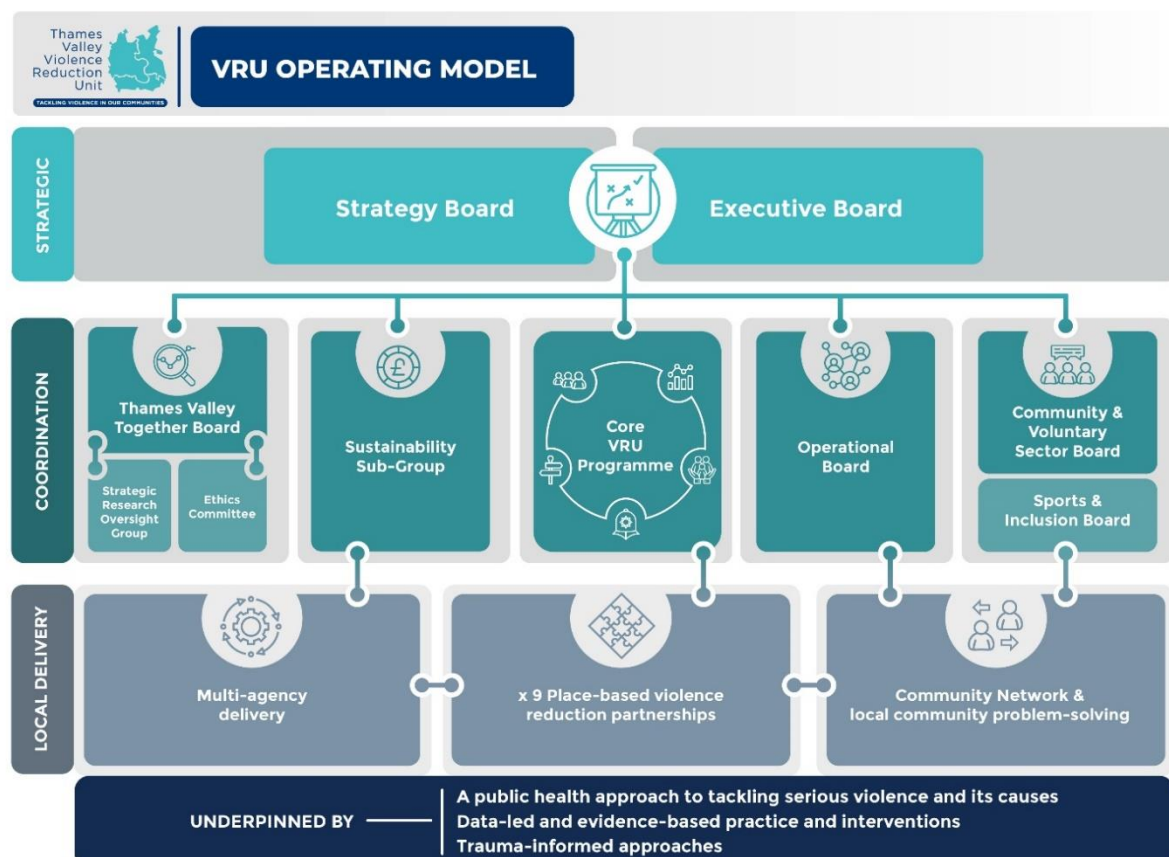
Over the past year, the VRU has made significant developments in our core infrastructure, in particular our VRU Operating Model.

Depicted in the graphic below, our operating model has created a tiered structure working at the strategic level for high-level partnership collaboration and decision-making, then the more tactical coordination with a particular focus on readiness for the Serious Violence Duty and robust local plans, which are then delivered through active local multi-agency activity.

Through this structure, we have improved partnership engagement and have a clearer and more robust governance structure, enabling wide involvement, appropriate representation and active decision-making.

The Operating Model has put in place new representational forums, established information flows and collaborative, solutions-driven networks across the many partners and into communities too.

These structures are increasingly playing an important role in supporting the delivery of our core programme and also the wider support and direction we can provide to local partners.



8.6 VRU Executive Board

VRU Executive Board provides the highest level of scrutiny on behalf of the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). It is also given an ongoing commitment by Thames Valley Police's Chief Constable Management Team senior officers, with delegated leadership to the Deputy Chief Constable and the Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing.

As the PCC is the Senior Responsible Officer for the VRU programme, this meeting provides the means of regular monitoring of the key metrics under our surveillance of serious violence and associated crime, which are consistent with the Force's own Strategic Priorities as described in the force Strategic Plan.

The VRU Executive Board also allows oversight of the delivery of the VRU's core programme of activity in line with our Response Plan and also our financial management, with the PCC holding decision-making responsibilities as required, where not delegated to the VRU Director and the core members of the wider VRU membership.

It has met every six weeks over the past year and continues to be an effective forum for ensuring full visibility of the programme and the close coordination of activity with Thames Valley Police, which in turn has assisted in securing their ongoing support to the VRU.

8.7 VRU Strategy Board

Meeting quarterly, the VRU Strategy Board brings together the core members of the VRU, working at the most senior level. It is our VRU Core Membership and embodies our whole-system working, with CLEAR leadership methodology.

Early in the year we moved to streamline, the board driven by the sheer number of partners we have been engaging with and the complexity of the many overlapping partnership structures across the region. We recognised the need to work with a balanced membership on the Strategy Board.

We must work with a manageable number of representatives who represent the entire geography, who bring the required levels of expertise, yet who also have the ability to reach back into their broader professional networks right across the region. This is particularly so in areas such as youth offending, health and education.

The implementation of the new VRU Strategy Board, at the upper-tier of our Operating Model, now includes the following representation:

- All nine of our local serious violence reduction partnerships, but wider attendance from some of the constituent district authority community safety leads. These bring a range of roles and specialisms, including local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services and Directors of Healthy Communities
- The Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley
- The Assistant Chief Constable – Local Policing, together with other senior and specialist officers/staff of Thames Valley Police
- The Youth Justice Board Regional Manager
- A Youth Offending Service Manager, who represents the network of all nine YOS services across the Thames Valley
- HM Prisons & Probation
- NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) representation, with a growing link into NHS England/Improvement, Office for Health Improvement & Disparity and the three Integrated Care Systems (ICS) .

- An education representative of both secondary, further education and alternative provision
- The CEO of a leading county-wide voluntary sector youth-focused organisation
- The Chair of the VRU Community & Voluntary Sector Board
- A representation of the community & Chair of the Thames Valley Police Independent Advisory Group (IAG) on Stop & Search

We have focused on the membership remaining at a senior level with decision-making authority on behalf of their organisation, or with the ability to consult their network to provide an informed and representative contribution/decision.

The Strategy Board membership has been able to collectively discuss areas of local priority and strategic need and have been kept informed and involved on the processes and priorities for central grant funding.

We have maintained an understanding of our core function and that our role is not as a commissioner of short-term delivery at the local level. Rather, our intervention programme spending using core grant funding, plus any additional activity we deliver through our own staff or partnership projects, must always be in the context of driving innovation, building on what works and creating activity which has the potential to be sustainable and scalable for the future.

We have used the Strategy Board to invite our broader partners to consider and share their areas of priority. Strategy Board members have held discussions to consider the state of readiness ahead of the Duty and the robustness and sufficiency of local understanding of violence and its root causes.

We continue to lead through the Strategy Board discussions on how each local violence reduction partnership is preparing their own local violence reduction plan and the necessary actions within it. This will likely take greater priority as we approach the implementation of the Duty later this year.

8.8 VRU Operational Board – tactical delivery

Providing a more frequent forum for the more tactical managers of our place-based violence reduction partnerships, the VRU Operational Board brings together Community Safety Managers, the new VRU-funded Violence Reduction Coordinators and VRU core programme team.

The VRU Operational Board is where we take a direct focus on how we support and coordinate the development of local serious violence plans, update and discuss with partners the VRU programme activity and seek to widen its delivery where possible, discuss barriers and share the good practice across our local partners.

We actively involve the partners in discussions around how we can improve local understanding of serious violence (including progressing their access to the full data sets we hold), seek to drive their consideration of public health approaches within their delivery plans and understand any opportunities to work to address any gaps.

8.9 Our wider Operating Model structures embedded within our workstream structure

In addition to the VRU Executive and Strategy Boards described above, as we drop down through the tiers of our Operating Model, as shown on the graphic above, there are a

number of subsequent boards and networks. These are led by our core programme team within the five workstreams structure.

For example, the Data & Targeting workstream team lead the delivery of the *Thames Valley Together* Programme Board, the Data Ethics Committee and the Strategic Research Oversight Group. And the Communities & Partnerships workstream team lead the delivery of the Operational Board, the Community & Voluntary Sector Problem Solving Board and the virtual Community Network.

All of these additional boards and networks have a valuable role to play in our developing infrastructure, governance and the means by which we involve and collaborate with partners and communities.

8.9.1 Developing solutions networks and Special Interest Groups

We also continue to maintain and develop new collaborative solutions networks and Special Interest Groups which involve many partners and wider representatives, which facilitates good engagement, information sharing, help shares best practice and drive delivery.

We are in the process of developing a VRU/NHS Network, which will involve representatives from across the complex NHS landscape within the Thames Valley; NHS England/Improvement, CCGs, clinicians including Emergency Medicine Consultants, Health Education England and the still-developing Integrated Care Systems.

We have begun to establish three VRU Special Interest Groups:

- The Violence Involving those Who Identify as Woman And Girls, or the **VIIWAG Special Interest Group** has been running for six months and has continued to grow participation from a wide range of practitioners, experts and researchers. Led by the VRU, it is a way of creating informed debate, information sharing and facilitating connections between partners. It has taken a broader definition, acknowledging the need to look to examine women as perpetrators of violence, while also acknowledging wider gender identity matters within this field.
- **Trauma Informed Practice Special Interest Group:** A growing area for the VRU to lead, the group is being launched shortly on the back of significant work undertaken over the course of the year to better understand the level of trauma informed practices and how we can best support our varied partners and communities to be more trauma informed.
- **Neuro-diversity & Disability Special Interest Group:** This group is being formed in recognition of the volume and unique challenges presented by neuro-diversity and disability and how research is increasingly demonstrating the links with violence and vulnerabilities.

9. Cultural sustainability of the VRU

At all levels throughout the VRU Operating Model we have embedded a whole-systems approach, one which promotes maximum cross-boundary partnership working and also the importance of involving the communities we serve and giving them a voice and influence in this work.

Our partners and increasingly our communities recognise and support the long-term nature of implementing public health approaches, recognising that these are not necessarily going to yield immediate quick-fixes.

It has been part of our core programme team role to educate our partners and communities on this, shifting mind-sets to better recognise the importance of an approach which invests in increased early intervention and prevention, rather than secondary and tertiary activity.

In Thames Valley Police, where understandably there remains the need for overt enforcement, we have led the development of problem-solving orientated policing networks, influenced the Force's strategic and tactical approaches to knife crime, serious violence, homicide, public protection and criminal justice – always seeking to shift the focus to problem-solving approaches, avoiding the risk of re-traumatising, and seeking to put in place education, early intervention, diversion and prevention activity.

It is through all our work that we build awareness and understanding of our underlying principles and approaches, which in turn go on to secure a long-term corporate memory. Whether that is through our robust project management, the communications work, the cycle of seconded staff building their skills to return to alternative roles, our networks across partners and professionals, our facilitation of research and promotion of our evaluations – this all contributes to a sharing and building of knowledge, which is ultimately a growing shared corporate memory.

We will also use a robust data and evidence-led approach to building a sustainable culture. By providing a growing evidence-base as to the effectiveness of earlier intervention and prevention, of the public health approach, we will secure understanding and support. We will do this by continuing to undertake evaluations of our interventions, to support research and by creating our own data analytical tools, such as our Cohort Evaluation Tool and also work on the Unit Costs of Violence. Such tools help to further make the case for public health approaches, demonstrating their impact on crime reduction, individual life outcomes and the socio-economic costs/benefits.

Finally, through our use of our core grant and the investment we place into activity and interventions, we have taken a clear position that we will not fund short term delivery, but want to support innovations which have sustainability and scalability and which build a longer-term capacity.

By using these approaches we are able to continually prove the outcomes and impacts of our Theory of Change and more specifically the interventions and approaches that we collectively put in place. This secures our cultural sustainability.

10. Financial sustainability of the VRU

Last year, the VRU established the Sustainability, Business and Social Impact Sub-Group (Sustainability Sub-Group). As shown in our Operating Model diagram, this reports to our Strategic Board and the Executive Board. We invested core grant into securing the support of a specialist social impact partner, SmartSocial, to assist in its delivery and activities.

It's membership includes public sector partners, voluntary sector/non-profits and leading local business representation. This group has been influential in the development of the VRU's Sustainability Plan which will be submitted as part of our core grant application for 2022/2023 process.

It was established to deliver upon four strands of work, commencing in 2021/2022:

10.1 Develop future options for VRU work and structure in 2022/23: Considering a more independent role for the VRU, less reliant upon central funding. This has considered models which build on the leadership of Thames Valley Police while maintaining the strong links into the nine local violence reduction partnerships. It is exploring whether in time the

VRU becomes its own non-profit body, able to maximise both commercial and public funds, bids and grants from social investment.

10.2 Developing future funding streams: The group has been tracking funding options and bidding for new grants and partnership opportunities.

Central to this has been utilising existing high-quality evaluation data and examples such as those demonstrated by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). But increasingly, we have been able to reach into the VRU's growing data and evidence base. Through this accurate and locally tailored data it is possible to build comprehensive bids which demonstrate a level of understanding of key metrics and areas for impact.

This extends beyond funding opportunities for core VRU programme activity but offers our local partners expertise in bid-writing and developing data-led business cases, not only assisting in securing resource but also helping to upskill our partners, building capacity in our local systems which in turn will translate into the longer term sustainability of these approaches.

Already in 2021/22 this approach helped the VRU secure a Sport England grant to support sports activities for young people which creates a significant match-funding opportunity, while we have assisted a local charity to gain Lottery funds to develop its domestic violence initiative.

Although not directly supported by the Sustainability Sub-Group, the VRU's Data & Targeting workstream has secured over £90,000 from the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Science, Technology and Research (STAR) fund to support research into social networks in violence.

Also, the VRU was successful in securing multi-year Youth Endowment Fund evaluation funding for our implementation of the A&E Hospital Navigator programme, which will also sustain the delivery of that programme beyond 2021/2022.

As we end the year, the Sustainability Sub-Group has gone on to develop four new bids/proposals for 2022/23 including:

- Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) for a focused deterrence model
- Nuffield Foundation for a problem-solving court
- Education Endowment Fund to prevent schools' exclusion
- A prevention service relating to Violence against Women & Girls.

10.3 Developing a business network and building "Career Capital": Over the past year, the group has focused on how to develop 'Career Capital'. We take the view (using available evidence from University of Reading) that being in work has a positive contribution to preventing violence.

Working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and large employing companies in the Thames Valley, we have sought to coordinate ways into work using a mutual social impact model where employers get great employees (supported by Thames Valley voluntary sector) and those who were previously unemployed, gain work and income – which addresses a major risk factor as identified in our SNA.

Over the past year we partnered with social enterprise employer Ethos to take six young people on Kickstarter contracts, all of whom had been identified through the DIVERT

custody intervention project. They have commenced a six-month supported programme of work, which will give them employability skills.

10.4 Developing social impact activity and products funded via 5-year sustainable social impact funding: Social impact products use social investment to address a problem. A social investor puts funds in to start a new way of working, in our case to prevent violence, which delivers positive social and economic gain.

The Sub-Group has begun to seek social impact investors to support the Career Capital project described above, as the government's Kickstart funding has now ceased.

Having secured nearly £800,000 of "Teachable Moments" grant funding in 2021/22, we established the Compass Youth Project in Oxfordshire, which is an innovative multi-provider partnership of voluntary sector/social enterprise projects.

While delivering upon immediate outcomes, the establishment of this form of partnership has built the foundation for a more sustainable programme, one which can use the initial funding to prove its value and impact while it then works to secure new funding.

The Sub-Group has also begun to approach social impact investors to support the longer-term sustainability of the Compass Youth Partnership.

11. VRU Data & Targeting

A dedicated workstream within our central programme structure, Data & Targeting is a golden thread which runs throughout our VRU programme and across our wider partnerships. Of all our activity, it is this area of work, which is truly unique.

It continues to make a significant contribution to the overarching infrastructure and capabilities of the VRU and that of our constituent partners. As such, we discuss it at this point in this report, while we will examine the other workstreams in the delivery focused section which follows.

Our work on data over the past year has as mentioned above supported our cultural and financial sustainability and underpins our whole-systems working and the public health approach. It ensures we understand serious violence and its drivers, the risk and protective factors and use data for public good. And it is increasingly enabling high-quality evaluation of the impact of chosen interventions.

The Thames Valley VRU has established itself as the national lead VRU for data, due to the significant progress made over the past year with its *Thames Valley Together* programme which spans a range of activity, culminating in the development of the VRU's Data Strategy.

The workstream has secured and retained expertise, built professional networks, relationships with world-leading researchers and a growing recognition that is building something that has huge potential in tackling serious violence, with significant application across policing and wider partnership working.

Notable developments over the past year include:

- The **VRU Strategic Needs Assessment**
- The **Serious Violence Dashboard**
- The wider *Thames Valley Together* programme
- Establishment of the **Data Ethics Committee**
- Establishment of the **Strategic Research Oversight Group**
- Supporting **high-quality evaluations of our interventions**

11.1 Developing the VRU Strategic Needs Assessment

The VRU's [2021/22 Strategic Needs Assessment](#) was published on our website last year, made available to our partners and to the communities we serve. It directly informs all our work to tackle serious violence.

It was developed around our adopted definition of serious violence and was entirely informed by the public health approach.

It seeks to understand:

- Where (and when) is violence occurring?
- Who is involved in violence?
- What are the actions to prevent violence?

It goes on to describe the “[Crime Triangle](#)”, a form of problem-solving model that by taking out one side, the problem can be resolved. Using this as a structure, the SNA was developed.



As we discuss the VRU workstreams in the sections below, this report will highlight how we used the SNA to inform our interventions and response activity.

SNA key findings: There were a number of key findings of the VRU SNA which were identified as particular areas for focus including the following (see the SNA for a full summary and also wider identified risk factors).

1. The SNA highlights our priority geographic areas – the urban centres in Milton Keynes, Reading, Slough, Oxford. Also clear links to poverty and deprivation. While not new or unsurprising, the SNA provides weight to our focus on these locations and our partnerships there.
2. Maintaining a focus on a broader age of those involved in violence is necessary, with more people aged between 25 and 40 involved than the under-25 age group in 2020. And also, our limited understanding as to the reasons for this – potentially greater prevalence of drug use or homelessness.
3. We need to improve our understanding on ethnicity of those involved in violence, with the 2021 Census data an opportunity to do this.
4. There is a victim / offender overlap, with those who have been a victim of violence also going on to commit an offence
5. The SNA also highlighted a number of clear risk factors – from exposure to domestic violence, risk markers for drugs and/or mental health.
6. Perhaps most significant relationship identified was the significant relationship between time in custody, with over 50% of suspects and 32% of victims had exposure to police custody.
7. The SNA also presents information of note regarding drug use and drug harm/deaths.

8. The potential exposure to domestic violence to create adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and wider trauma
9. While drug use is a risk factor, there was limited evidence of significant connections to a County Drug Line or wider organised crime
10. Analysis of educational data demonstrated the increase in exclusions from school and also the disparities across geographies in the use of exclusion.
11. The financial cost of serious violence – but also the need for more detailed understanding of unit costs/benefits when delivering early intervention and prevention
12. The ongoing lack of provision of the Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV) data sets from our NHS partners across the Thames Valley, with just one Trust able to provide in any degree

While not included in the 2021/22 SNA, work has commenced this past year to develop cost estimates for the services and interventions provided at various stages. This builds upon the existing estimates which are described in the SNA but at a more accurate level, aiming to provide a further evidence base for early intervention, cost/benefits work and wider application. This is an exciting area to explore for next year.

11.2 The Serious Violence Dashboard

As part of our data work, we have successfully delivered a tertiary/secondary prevention product in the *Serious Violence Dashboard*, providing visualised police data at the individual person and incident level, over time and location which allows us to display 'hotspots' and 'hot people' for violent crime but also identify those who are *at risk* of violence.

The *Serious Violence Dashboard* has become a vital tool for Thames Valley Police in assisting the development of highly-responsive serious violence reduction activity. This has provided analytical power and visual ease-of-access to the data to inform

It is used frequently by Thames Valley Police at the local and force-wide level to identify trends and hotspots and to inform activity, from planning operations targeting specific individuals and areas or management of serious violence investigation caseloads and clear-up.

It is a key tool used by the Operation Rasure team (see Criminal Justice & Law Enforcement workstream below) as they support local areas to plan focused problem-orientated policing operations in response to violence hotspots, fully funded by the Home Office Grip fund for additional policing activity.

11.3 Thames Valley Together programme

Thames Valley Together, or *TVT*, builds on the Serious Violence Dashboard approach by creating a system and architecture which allows us to bring together data from police systems but also from across multiple public sector organisations, into a single environment.

It allows individual and event level data from multiple sources to be cross-referenced and overlaid, enabling a rich-picture view and the use of new analytical tools. It can provide a life cycle view of an individual, taking data from multiple agency systems. It can also inform at the aggregated population level.

This can enable a whole-system and public health approach by:

- Allowing analysis of data from participating sources to identify patterns, manage population level risks and harms,
- Develop innovative intervention delivery techniques, improve outcomes such as our communities health and reducing violence,
- It will allow us to accelerate decision-making, evaluate interventions across the partnership and understand the true cost benefits of our actions
- High quality data supports both our cultural and financial sustainability

This '*epidemiological approach*' allows us to identify risk and protective factors in our communities and drive more primary and secondary prevention strategies. It can allow support for those who '*are at risk*' to be provided earlier. It aims to keep communities informed about issues in their area and engaged in reducing violence via problem solving.

Thames Valley Together is a cloud-based solution (Microsoft Azure suite) leveraging the power of advanced modern technologies in order to identify risk and protective factors for violence in our communities. This will drive primary and secondary prevention.

This programme has seen the creation of a VRU data platform in a secure and accredited environment which is scalable to any level, where various datasets from local authorities, police and other partners can be ingested, stored and queried for several activities including; Strategic Needs Assessments, population health measures, risk stratification, evidence-base interventions and evaluations, and cross-system cost-benefit analysis. The data will be more accurate than what is currently used by the partnership, allowing one single version of the truth.

Various views on the data will be possible for VRU partners depending on their role. We take our responsibilities in protecting the data seriously and access will be based on specific roles. It will mean previous emails of spreadsheets and tables between partners will be phased out. As will manual data extraction and manipulation, all of which creates considerable cost and risk with data errors. It will save taxpayers money and ensure we can track the access and use of data more closely improving assurance and security.

To date, the VRU has established formalised Information Sharing Agreements with six of the nine place-based serious violence reduction partnerships, principally with the appropriate local authority. In the main this allows both information from relevant adult and children's services systems.

The remaining three are awaiting further validation from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) with whom the VRU has been liaising and it is fully anticipated this will be received in coming months.

In addition the following partners are either signed-up to provide data from one or more of their systems, or the programme team is actively working to secure:

- HM Prisons – with further work ongoing with Probation
- South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
- Education data – discussions ongoing through local authorities and Department for Education, although the time-lag is significant

Finally, the technology and infrastructure build behind *Thames Valley Together* is consistent with the National Enablers Programme. The Thames Valley VRU is now working closely with

the Home Office, College of Policing and NPCC to discuss the potential scaling of the system and its approaches to data on a national basis.

This is testimony to the innovation that the VRU has led and it is without doubt one of the finest achievements of the Violence Reduction Unit over this past year.

11.4 The Thames Valley Together Programme board

Thames Valley Together programme delivery progress is overseen and managed through our partnership TVT Programme Board, as detailed on our Operating Model diagram. This has allowed the full involvement from our partners, with the right technical and information governance representation. This board has given them direct decision-making and an influence on the progress of the project, putting in place the opportunity to scrutinise and often to challenge, requiring the VRU core programme team to respond with reassurance and evidence. It has proved another effective mechanism to involve VRU partners directly in our work.

The Programme Board is able to develop new use-cases for the data which is collated within the *TVT* architecture, for example how certain data sets could be utilised to create not only new analysis to aid decision-making, but also the potential to develop new processes around vulnerability and risk management which can directly inform actions to be taken by partners.

Over time, the Programme Board will evolve into a more senior group, less focused on the technical delivery of the programme and more able to consider the data and analysis available and to consider new use-cases and potential ways of working or processes.

11.5 The establishment of the Data Ethics Committee

While the *Thames Valley Together* Programme Board oversees the programme delivery and also develops new data use cases, the VRU has been the first to develop a Data Ethics Committee. This draws upon the significant contribution of the University of Oxford, other leading academic partners and experts in law and data ethics, but also important members of the community.

The Data Ethics Committee has been formed to provide a mechanism through which proposed data use cases can be discussed, scrutinised openly, challenged and tested before any live application.

Through this process we can provide assurances to stakeholders and the public. These processes are designed to bring different people together with different experience, and expertise and representing different stakeholders to conduct a thorough ethical analysis and to provide practical and independent advice.

It allows expert and informed discussion, but also encourages the views of those from the community for whom the data use-case may be of relevance, a co-owned approach.

The Data Ethics Committee is not a decision-making body, but it will provide its feedback and recommendations on any proposed data use cases back to the Programme Board and where necessary to the VRU Strategy Board for the ultimate decision making authority as necessary.

It demonstrates a high quality commitment to respecting data ethics, information governance alongside the benefits and potentially the legal duty to act. It allows the consideration of the welfare of the individual, and the welfare of the wider population.

11.6 Establishment of the Strategic Research Oversight Group

The Strategic Research Oversight Group was formed in 2021 as a means of bringing together leading academics and researchers with an interest and specialism relevant to the VRU's areas of work.

It has created a network across academia and has prompted the VRU to seek to develop a more comprehensive Research Strategy, one which can inform and direct academic research to the areas of priority and where there are gaps, further building knowledge and evidence.

In addition, the VRU is seeking to establish academic fellowships, allowing managed access to the very significant datasets within the *Thames Valley Together* programme and to the expertise of our partnerships. Last year, we created a partnership with the University of Sheffield and three research opportunities have been created.

Also last year, we continued to work with University of Sheffield on their academic study on the impact of knife imagery on young people and on their perceptions of crime. Despite a hiatus due to COVID restrictions, the research has commenced and will soon be complete.

11.7 Delivery of the randomised control trial of hotspot policing methodology

A core requirement of the Grip funding in 2021/22 was the delivery of a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) to further develop initial testing by Essex Police of hotspot policing methodologies to combat serious violence.

The Data & Targeting team was able to utilise the significant ICT and data architecture which sits behind their wider *Thames Valley Together* programme to develop a technical solution which allowed for a robust experiment, but which has also increased our wider capabilities.

Through an analysis of violence data, combined with new mapping technologies, it was possible to create highly accurate mapping showing hotspots for violence, where there was a steady trend over time, identifying precise locations.

44 hotspot areas were created across the force area, behind each sat comprehensive analysis of the crime trends, key individuals and wider briefing.

The system was designed to create the ability to turn hotspots on and off, created appropriate control locations and allowed a highly-controlled environment for the trial to run in, allowing for the most robust data.

For the first time, Airwave radio data provided an officer's location and was utilised to pinpoint an officer within a hotspot trial area, validating their presence for the experiment.

The team designed a mobile app which was used to control the officers conducting the trial, notifying them of which hotspots required patrols, providing a measurement mechanism for the time spent and a paperless recording system for their interactions and activity.

Overall, the RCT has received recognition for the high quality of its application and the robustness of the approach and data, most recently by the visiting Professor Larry Sherman of University of Cambridge and who leads the national evaluation team.

While results from the trial have not yet been processed (due May 2022), already the mobile app and the technology behind it has demonstrated the enormous potential and benefit of the system, with application far beyond this trial. This further adds to the capabilities and infrastructure of the VRU and our partners.

12. Data-led evaluation and building on the evidence base of what works

As required, our core grant application for 2021/22 detailed that we would fund the commissioning of local evaluation activity.

In 2021 the VRU recruited our first retained Evaluation Lead, Dr Tim Lowe, bringing expertise in conducting evaluations but also with a particular skill set around ethics, complementary to the work associated with the *Thames Valley Together* Programme detailed above.

The delivery of the four intervention programmes, which we identified for evaluation are discussed in greater detail in the appropriate workstream sections below. They included:

- The RAW Navigator intervention project
- DIVERT Custody Navigator intervention project
- Hospital Navigator intervention project
- Adult Drug Diversion intervention project

All four reports are still under development and will need to pass through the participating partners for scrutiny prior to publication which we aim for by the end of Q1 2022.

A notable challenge is that with the grant budget awarded so late into the delivery year, the recruitment of our evaluation lead came late to the organisation which itself limits capacity.

These four reports will each vary in scope and methodology for a number of reasons.

- With the RAW Navigator programme, there has been a more limited level of provision to individual level data sets.
- For DIVERT, the length of time which the project has been established created challenges to applying an evaluation methodology retrospectively.
- In the case of the Hospital Navigator programme, a separate comprehensive multi-site evaluation will be undertaken by the Behavioural Insights Team, funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and as such, with capacity limited this year, a lighter-touch process evaluation will be undertaken.
- The Adult Drug Diversion programme was not formally commissioned to a single provider until November 2021 and so this provides a more limited data set.

In all of the evaluations, the delivery partners have been closely involved, which has included a wide range of roles and participating agencies. This has included staff delivering the intervention, those who have directly participated, wider partners for example schools and hospital staff.

In addition to undertaking the commissioned local evaluation reports, the Data & Targeting workstream has been developing a new Cohort Evaluation Tool, which will provide automated methods of matching a “cohort” of individuals (particularly those who have passed through an intervention) with their police records and providing some analyses of their records before, during and after an intervention. When complete this will provide a valuable additional tool for assessing the impact of intervention activity or particular risk factors. It will also be used alongside the unit cost of interventions tool described above.

12.1 Promising practice ??????????????????

13. VRU delivery through the VRU core programme workstreams:

The VRU's Operating Model is the mechanism through which we secure whole-system working and a partnership commitment to delivering public health approaches to tackling violence.

It is then through the work of the VRU core programme workstreams, together with our partners, that we deliver upon the identified needs and priorities within our Strategic Needs Assessment and meet our delivery plan objectives.

The VRU delivery over 2021/22 was far greater than just our core grant funded, set-piece interventions. We have used our core programme team capacity and skills and worked with our partners and communities. We have developed wider professional networks, secured additional external resources in order to progress a wide range of additional activity.

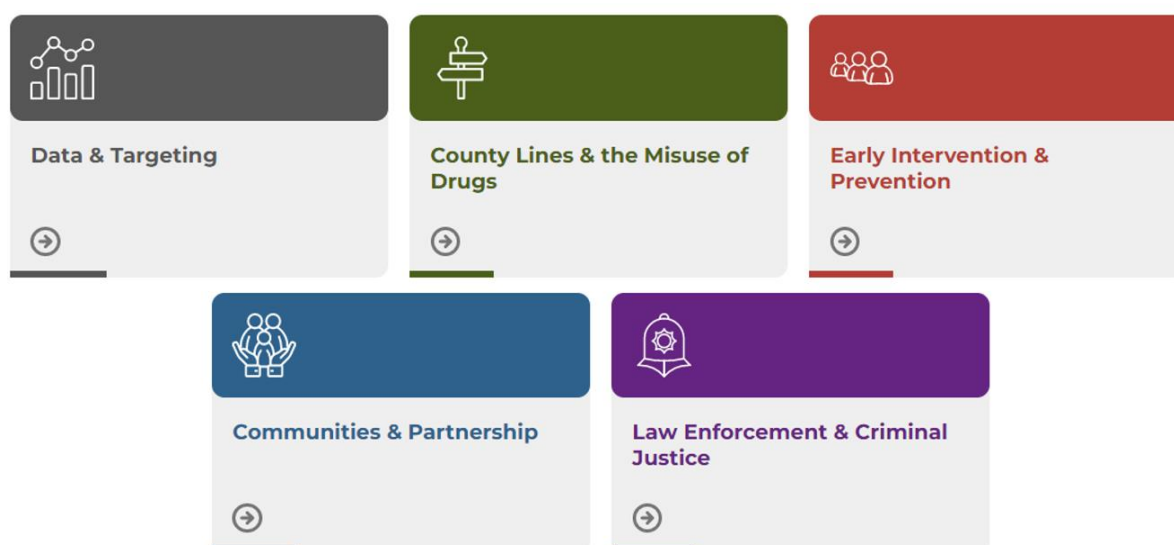
There have been a number of successful activities and interventions which have gone on to be adopted into business-as-usual by our partners, particularly Thames Valley Police, further supporting the longer-term cultural and financial sustainability of VRU activities and approaches.

A short narrative description of each workstream's areas of priority follows, together with presentation of notable case studies of those interventions which have yielded positive impacts.

While working with our communities and involving young people in our work is a commitment we make right across the VRU's programme of work, we have driven this through our Communities & Partnership workstream. This area of our work is explored in greater detail below.

A full summary of key VRU activities and interventions, with a short description, reference to our Sequential Intercept Model (primary, secondary, tertiary) and the SNA evidence base, together with brief highlight of successes and challenges is then contained in Appendix 1.

We have committed to continually publishing information on all our work whether centrally funded or not via our website, including how we have measured the impact or evaluated the processes where possible.



14. County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs

The illegal drug market and the harm and risk factors created by substance misuse are key drivers to serious violence in our communities. The evolving threat of the County Drug Lines model of operation is driving new levels of exploitation and trauma, particularly in children and vulnerable people.

Over the past year, the workstream has taken a focus on developing new safeguarding processes within the police to put protective actions in place around young people. It has delivered one of the first comprehensive diversion schemes to help those with drug misuse issues to access education and health support.

A key role over the past year has been the coordination of partners across policing and local authority Public Health to respond to the health harms caused by substance misuse and to help break the cycle of drug use and crime.

Led by police officers, the workstream works closely with Thames Valley Police to support its efforts to take coordinated action against the networks of serious organised crime that are driving the drugs trade and associated violence.

Our advocacy and expert contributions to research are helping champion more progressive approaches to substance misuse, in line with public health approaches.

15. Early Intervention and Prevention

The public health approach to tackling serious violence is built upon identifying its root causes, identifying those most at risk, the causation factors within their background and environment. Then, the ability able to respond by implementing preventative interventions and diversions at the earliest point.

The Early Intervention & Prevention workstream is driving a shift in focus toward earlier interventions which provide education, support, build social skills and aid decision-making, and help to build resilience and change behaviours.

The VRU is supporting initiatives where there are opportunities for innovation, scalability and wider application and where there are opportunities for longer-term sustainability beyond short-term centralised funding.

This has included providing increased interventions which are universal and open to all, such as increased educational inputs at schools. Also, developing more targeted interventions for those identified as being either at risk (such as to exploitation) and of risk (those who may be on the verge of, or already have committed violence offences).

Through the “Teachable Moments” grant secured this delivery year, we have funded the development of an innovative multi-provider, voluntary sector-led early intervention programme, the Compass Youth Partnership, which is a featured case study below.

Through a range of individual initiatives we have created what we term Navigator roles operating in a number of different settings; In hospitals, in custody and working in youth projects. Also, we see a role for our funded Violence Reduction Coordinators in local place-based partnerships to also act as a form of community navigator, seeking to join up local provision and services. These all have value, but increasingly we seek to join them up to create a strong network of inter-connected support and route for interventions.

Where possible, we have also used the opportunities presented to us through the range of early intervention activity to provide the young people with opportunities to discuss the

challenges they face, to discuss solutions and to feed this back into our work and that of our partners.

15.1 Trauma informed approaches

It is within our Early Intervention & Prevention workstream that we have continued to progress our work on adverse childhood experiences, trauma informed awareness and putting trauma informed approaches into practice. And closely linked, the prevalence of neuro-diversity and neuro-disability, the risk factors this creates and the opportunities for violence prevention.

We continue to work at a national and local level across professional networks. For example, we have been advisors to the NHS on the Health Education England-led Trauma Informed Practice framework they are developing for the health service.

Over the past year, we have secured a commitment from Thames Valley Police to ensure that trauma informed approaches are embedded within the force, a key action within the VRU-produced Homicide Prevention Strategy.

A comprehensive audit of Thames Valley Police's level of trauma informed practice has been undertaken and we have worked closely with the Police Foundation on their research into the levels of trauma informed practice in the police service due for publication imminently. These will inform our work for the coming year.

16. Communities & Partnerships

Tackling serious violence is not only the responsibility of the police. It requires the involvement of the widest range of partners across different sectors, working together effectively through their local structures which is the whole-system approach.

But also, at the heart of our work are the communities we serve across the Thames Valley. We work to ensure that our communities are engaged and involved and can play an active role in supporting efforts to improve safety.

The workstream seeks to build capacity within local communities, community groups and the wider voluntary sector to bring additional capability to tackle violence and apply problem-solving approaches.

The Communities & Partnerships workstream has built and delivers much of the VRU's operating model, through which partners are engaged, provided with strategic oversight and tactical coordination to support local delivery.

Community representation is achieved across VRU boards and structures, to support their involvement and influence over the programme of work. In particular, a focus on young people and giving them a voice.

16.1 The Community & Voluntary Sector Board and virtual Community Network:

The establishment of the Community & Voluntary Sector Problem Solving Board (Community Board) has provided a focus of developing our work in partnership with our communities and the third-sector.

Chaired by one of our local partners, Starting Point Mentoring, the membership involves a wide range of community and faith organisations and those who represent the protected characteristics. It seeks to represent the diversity of our communities.

As well as providing an advisory board function for the VRU and our partners, it is charged with developing a work programme to maximise the resource offered by the many local community groups, voluntary sector and faith-based organisations and providers of local services.

The Board has been established to set direction and coordinate, linking the VRU's work and that of the nine place-based partnerships with the many local organisations who share a role in local problem-solving, community cohesion and violence prevention work.

Through this work programme, the VRU seeks to strengthen the links with local people and key sections of communities, not least young people and those from diverse backgrounds, so that they

Complementing the Board is a larger, virtual VRU Community Network, utilising a web-based KnowledgeHub forum technology it create an efficient means of building a community of practice. The membership is growing and it has created another valued channel into communities in all geographies and includes harder-to-reach groups through their community leaders.

The Chair of the Community Board sits on the VRU Strategy Board and has a direct input to that decision-making forum. We seek to consult the Board and Network as we develop our work and to involve them in our programme.

16.2 Building youth engagement and youth voice

All of our nine place-based partnerships are formed around local authority-led structures made up of public sector, voluntary and frequently community representation. These organisations have a public duty to represent their entire communities, young and old.

Many of them have established structures through which they involve young people in their work, whether that is through their wider community engagement and consultation activities, through specific targeted engagements for young people and through mechanism such as Youth Councils. The VRU continues to encourage our partners to utilise their existing routes and to create new channels by which they can ensure young people can be involved as they develop their local Needs Assessments and violence reduction plans.

The VRU is building upon this, working with schools and through our range of projects to give young people a voice at all points. Also, we are identifying VRU Young Ambassadors who can share their experiences, the challenges they face and who can contribute and critique our work. We have used our communications channels to share these with our partners and the public, which helps to raise understanding.

The Compass Youth Project funded by the VRU has established the Young Directors programme, who will be supported to become an advisory panel of young people with lived experience.

Our Hope Hack event on 4 March was a significant success, led by young people and for young people it has set the bar for how we want to continually involve young people in our work and give them access to and influence on our decision-making process.

Looking into the coming year, we are building new mechanisms to strengthen this area of our work.

17. Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice

The Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream is led by police officers and its work is focused on coordinating the effective and robust policing response to serious violence and knife crime.

The Law Enforcement strand is the means by which the VRU coordinates the use of Home Office “Grip” funding to deliver additional policing activity across the force area to target serious violence. This includes running weeks of intensive action to tackle knife crime, county drug lines, exploitation and supporting similar national enforcement initiatives. The strand also delivers Operation Rasure, supporting local policing operations which tackle local problem areas and known offenders.

The Criminal Justice strand of the workstream supports the development of effective processes and disposals. This has included Out of Court Disposal routes into programmes of education and support, developing focussed deterrence programmes and initiatives such as mentors in custody suites, including the Divert programme and our emerging Custody Navigator initiative.

17.1 Supporting Serious Violence Prevention and Homicide Prevention

The VRU holds a dual role; on one hand we are coordinating the local partnership response to serious violence and on the other we support the operational response by Thames Valley Police and its 12 (soon to become 11) Local Policing Areas (LPAs).

We do this through our senior police officer secondees, including our Director, Superintendent Stan Gilmour, who over the past year have led the development of, or involved in:

- The development of the TVP Homicide Prevention Strategy
- Facilitated a review and made recommendations to the force for a new Exploitation Strategy
- Supported the development of the force’s Drug Strategy
- Created new joint boards to coordinate activity including the VRU/Criminal Justice Board and the VRU/Public Protection Board
- Have a leading role on the Force Knife Crime Gold and Silver Group
- Attend the Local Policing Executive Group convening all Local Policing Areas
- Support individual LPAs and directorates with their work to tackle violence
- Developed a force consequence management framework for significant violent crime

As we are supporting our nine place-based partnerships to ready themselves to meet the responsibilities of the incoming Serious Violence Duty, we are also working to support those 12 Local Policing Area Commanders and their teams. They too must create an operational violence reduction plan and play their part in the development of the local partnership plan.

We have produced a new refined toolkit with guidance shaped around a “Seven Essential Actions to Reduce Homicide, Serious Violence and Knife Crime” model and we will be supporting each of the LPAs to use this as they complete their plans.

As we move into 2022/23, we have been charged by the Deputy Chief Constable to take a more directive role in ensuring that Thames Valley Police and its Local Policing Areas are ready for the duty and continue to bare down upon serious violence, knife crime and homicide.

17.2 Operation Rasure – coordinating the delivery of Grip

Last year the VRU administered over £800,000 of additional Home Office Grip funding into additional policing activity, technology and capabilities to tackle serious violence.

Operation Rasure is the force name for this activity, led by officers within the VRU's Law Enforcement workstream.

Experts in problem-solving approaches and the use of data and intelligence-led policing, they have built the Rasure Network, a collaborative network of officers and staff across the force using MS Teams and regular learning events to support them in the planning and delivery of targeted policing activity to tackle violence in their local communities.

The team works closely with the Data & Targeting workstream and utilises the analytical tools they have created such as the Serious Violence Dashboard and the Rasure Mobile App.

Through the Rasure Network the team has trained officers to use these analytical tools to develop their own targeted plans, responsive to emerging trends, implementing problem-solving methodologies which target the “hot places” and “hot people”.

The VRU has promoted a full range of tactical options to be considered and provided routes into specialist capabilities and additional resources to tackle violence. It has added Grip-funded resourcing to intensification weeks such as Operation Secure (CDL), Operation Aident (exploitation) and Operation Sceptre (knife crime).

The results speak for themselves, with knife crime down 11%, nearly 700 weapons seized, thousands of individual drug seizures and 242 arrests from around 55 operations over the past year.



18. Barriers and lessons learned for government

As every year, the finance processes and timescales undermine the effectiveness of the VRUs and our work. Once again, guidance on application priorities is issued with just weeks to develop an application preventing any opportunity for meaningful consultation and any detailed co-production with our partners.

We will once again not receive grant letters until into the new financial year, delaying our ability to commence delivery of much activity until the second quarter.

Year-on-year funding creates a constant challenge with staffing – recruitment and retention and security of tenure for our experienced members. We benefit from Thames Valley Police's ongoing support but this will not continue at these levels. Current process does not facilitate easy secondments from our partners which would create a more rounded core programme team.

Last year's split of the Core Grant and additional intervention grant (we secured Teachable Moments funding) created yet another application round.

The levels of engagement and ability to leverage it from our partners in:

- Local authority Public Health – due to the lack of resource and competing priorities they face
- NHS – due in part to the sheer scale and complexity and the competing priorities they face.

The complexity of our education partnership landscape and ability to find appropriate representation at the strategic level (although this is being resolved).

Our capacity and resource to communicate the array of work ongoing at the VRU and also local partnership level.

The ability to drive the importance of communicating the success of violence reduction activity across those wider partners beyond policing – due to competing priorities and resourcing challenges, particularly in local authorities.

Competing data systems and approaches – notably continued promotion of the InterAct system, which will not achieve what the *Thames Valley Together* programme will, but is low cost and deemed a less complex solution, despite its inadequacies.

Ongoing challenges with local authority/partner data technical capacity which has slowed the sharing of data, despite a willingness to do so.

Ongoing concerns around data governance and Information Sharing Agreements preventing some of our local partners from committing to the *Thames Valley Together* sharing system.

Ongoing failure by our NHS partners to provide required datasets, notably ISTV

19. Progress against locally defined success measures and Theory of Change

20. Conclusion

Despite the challenges of COVID for the VRU, our partners and our communities, the VRU has continued to establish itself.

It has delivered a significant programme of work over the past year and it is continually refining its focus upon a core function, in readiness for the incoming Serious Violence Duty and in order to maintain the significant reductions in violence.

The Operating Model will continue to embed, partnerships strengthen and communities will become increasingly involved.

The innovations and good practice we have delivered will be further developed and embedded, and we will find new areas to develop for the coming year.

Our thanks are due to every committed member of the VRU team – including those who returned to substantive roles. But also, to our partners, who continue to serve their local populations with great efficiency and pride.

We also recognise that the continued funding by the Home Office and the Minister's commitment to the long-term nature of this endeavour, is what allows us all to continue this important work.

It has been a busy year, next year will be busier still.

A summary of workstream delivery:

County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs workstream activities and interventions

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL1
Area of activity/diversion:	Advocacy for and supporting research in drug harm prevention and progressive approaches
Description:	The VRU and partners including Thames Valley Police is seen as an area which champions and implements progressive approaches to drug harm prevention and the need for greater on education, treatment and diversion.
Target group / link to SNA:	Advocacy is a universal action, covering all age-groups and levels of vulnerability. Whether promoting greater education and harm prevention provision for the young through schools, local events such as Reading Festival, through to championing opportunities for older, problematic drug users such as the need for safe injection rooms, extending provision of Naloxone or advocating greater availability of treatment programmes. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	Over the past year, the VRU's expertise saw contributions made to international and national policy, including Dame Carol Black's Review of Drugs, the government's 10-year drugs strategy "From Harm to Hope" and the Force's own drugs strategy. We contributed to a wide range of international and national conferences, training events and through our communications work.
Challenges:	Overcoming the ongoing stigma of addictions and drug users to secure the political support, organisational will and resourcing to do more and go further to support those with drug addictions and to break the cycle of crime.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL2
Area of activity/diversion:	Crest Advisory research into the use of Out of Court Disposals and diversion
Description:	In 2021, the VRU supported Crest Advisory on their long-running study on the pressures faced by the criminal justice system and the potential for greater use of Out of Court Disposals and diversion. The Thames Valley Child and Adult Drug Diversion schemes, together with wider Thames Valley Police OOCd mechanisms provided the deep-dive subject matter. This also included the VRU-funded Prince's Trust diversion route for minor offences used by Thames Valley Police's Criminal Justice Unit.
Target group / link to SNA:	The activity focused on the use of OOCds for minor drugs offences amongst the young and adults. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	The report was published in January 2022 and has furthered the evidence base and argument for the value of OOCds, also highlighting areas of best practice and also areas for improvement.
Challenges:	The report has highlighted the lack of awareness of diversion routes and OOCd options, together with some inconsistencies in application across the Thames Valley. The report highlighted the need to improve the referral

	mechanism into the Prince's Trust diversion scheme, which while funded by the VRU is implemented and managed by Thames Valley Police's Criminal Justice Unit.
VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL3
Area of activity/diversion:	Supporting the development of the Thames Valley Police Drug Strategy and wider understanding of drug markets
Description:	The VRU's specialist officers supported the development of TVP's new drug strategy, providing expertise and advocacy for progressive approaches. Also used our professional networks to convene partners from across Public Health, support groups and treatment programmes, to shape the policies and approaches.
Target group / link to SNA:	Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	Thames Valley Police's drugs strategy was adopted by Chief Constable's Management Team in March 2022 and contains a significant step forward with progressive approaches, a recognition for the need to drive harm prevention and provide education and diversion to treatment and to prevent early criminalisation where possible. The government's national drug strategy may provide routes to new funding to support local activity, for enforcement and education/treatment/diversion.
Challenges:	The VRU will continue to advocate for progressive approaches but must overcome the challenges of stigma, political reticence and resourcing challenges across our partners. As we enter a cost of living crisis, increasing poverty may drive further substance misuse and the wide violence it can fuel.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL4
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Yardbird (commencing October 2020 running into delivery year 2021/22, with evaluation later in 2022)
Description:	A partnership across the VRU, Thames Valley Police, HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) saw a pilot initiative developed to speed up the way the criminal justice system responds to Possession With Intent to Supply drugs cases. Through this expedited service, the time it takes to provide the evidential proof of offence is reduced, enabling a charge to be swiftly put to the courts for offender conviction.
Target group / link to SNA:	Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	During a pilot year which commenced in October 2020 and ran into delivery year 2021/22, 25 cases were submitted through Operation Yardbird, with six guilty pleas and two sentences to date, one for two years and eight months and the other three years and four months. Liverpool John Moores University has been appointed to undertake an evaluation of the scheme and its impact, with its report and recommendations to be finalised in 2022. The VRU's funding has led to a successful initial trial and pending the evaluation, the force will consider continuing the approach through funding from its own budgets in future years.
Challenges:	Operation Yardbird was a pilot initiative and will need partner resourcing to continue, pending evaluation.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL5
Area of activity/diversion:	Continued expansion of the Child Drug Diversion Programme – rolled out force-wide October 2020 into into delivery year 2021/22
Description:	From 2018, the Thames Valley was one of the first force areas to pilot a diversion scheme for young people found in possession of small amounts of illegal drugs, not with intent to supply. This pilot was further developed by the VRU and has since gone on to be rolled-out force-wide in October 2020. Over the past year, the VRU has continued to work with Thames Valley Police, the Youth Offending Teams and those locally-commissioned substance misuse services to embed the scheme.
Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a secondary and tertiary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence.
Success:	This initial trial was reviewed and showed promising results over the two years of pilot operation. It was found that 84% of those referred for education and treatment would otherwise have received a more traditional criminal justice sanction that would not have addressed the reasons for their drug use, had they not been referred by the scheme. The initiative is now fully rolled-out and embedded in local delivery.
Challenges:	Undertaking a local evaluation of the scheme has been challenging due to the wide variation in the provision across multiple youth offending services and their locally-commissioned providers of the schemes.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL6
Area of activity/diversion:	Continued expansion of the Adult Drug Diversion Programme – rolled out force-wide November 2021
Description:	Building on the earlier pilot of the Child Drug Diversion Programme, the Adult Drug Diversion Programme was also piloted in 2018 in West Berkshire and then Windsor & Maidenhead. The VRU has continued to lead the development of the programme, working closely with Thames Valley Police, local authorities and providers of drug and alcohol misuse services. In November 2021, the VRU provided £75,000 to commission the substance misuse charity Druglink to provide a single diversion programme across the whole force area, to receive an estimated 5,000 referrals per year from the police.
Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a primary/secondary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence.

Success:	From November, it was the first time both children and adults committing low level drugs offences across the whole region could be referred into education and harm-reduction programmes as the first choice disposal option, where appropriate.
Challenges:	Securing the ongoing funding from within Thames Valley Police's core budgets for the programme to embed as business-as-usual.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL7
Area of activity/diversion:	Schools Drug Diversion Programme pilot
Description:	The VRU has developed an early concept of how a drug diversion scheme can be implemented within the school environment, providing a route for schools to refer a young person into an education and diversion pathway as part of their own disciplinary process. Starting with a small number of schools in the West Berkshire area, the VRU has worked with Thames Valley Police and West Berkshire Council to create a process by which pupils suspected of using drugs (often cannabis) could be referred into the same drug diversion programme as offered to children found in possession by the police, operated by the local drug and alcohol service.
Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a primary/secondary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence. Exclusion from education is a risk factor in violence.
Success:	Early feedback from participating schools and by the police and Youth Offending Team in the local area is that the initiative has helped to reduce the numbers of young people excluded from school for drugs offences.
Challenges:	While the initiative will continue to operate in West Berkshire, there remains a number of process issues together with the current capacity of local policing resources to make a prompt attendance which have precluded the initiative being rolled-out to any other areas.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL8
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Supreme
Description:	Established by the VRU in 2020 and running into delivery year 2021/2022, Operation Supreme focused on safeguarding of those children and vulnerable adults involved in investigations associated with drugs supply offences. At its core was applying trauma informed approaches with those arrested or involved in investigations and who are often exploited by county drugs line gangs. The VRU has been undertaking learning and criticality reviews, identifying when children and young people are arrested on Possession With Intent to Supply drugs offences or where flagged as involved in county drugs line activity. Reviews check that all safeguarding steps and opportunities for diversion and appropriate support have been taken.
Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a primary/secondary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely

	linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	The value of such reviews, ensuring lessons are learned and practice improves, has now been adopted by the force.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL9
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Compass – from November 2020 to November 2021
Description:	Operation Compass was a joint intelligence sharing operation led by the VRU, in partnership with Thames Valley Police and British Transport Police. It responds to the trend for CDL gangs to use the rail network, with exploited young people carrying drugs and cash by train around the country. Reviews were undertaken by the VRU of young people who were known to the police, either as reported missing persons, through their arrest or where there was intelligence of them using the rail network. Every month, British Transport Police was provided with that list of individuals in order to proactively seek them on trains and in stations, working with rail operators. This activity is further strengthened by the VRU and local partner's support for the national #LookCloser campaign, led by the Children's Society. It promotes public awareness of vulnerable young people using the rail network and encouraged public reporting of concerns
Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a primary/secondary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	In the first year of operation, from November 2020 to November 2021, the VRU identified 34 individuals with links to the Thames Valley, providing another opportunity both to safeguard them, and to disrupt the CDL activity. Through this cross-border and multi-agency working, additional intelligence on the way organised crime gangs are using the rail network as part of their mode and assisted in how policing agencies can respond. The successful approach piloted by the VRU has now been adopted as business-as-usual by Thames Valley Police.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL10
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Secure - annual operation
Description:	Operation Secure is the operational name used for the national CDL intensification weeks, run twice per year across the whole country. The VRU works closely with the Serious East Organised Crime Unit (SEROCU) to provide support, undertaking reviews of all vulnerable adults and young people aged 18 and under identified through these weeks of action. Operation Secure reviews were conducted to look for underlying root causes, the common factors and where lessons can be learned to inform ongoing preventative strategies, diversion work and to involve our local partners too.

Target group / link to SNA:	The programme is a primary/secondary intervention provision. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor.
Success:	Primarily, the information on these individuals identified led proactive safeguarding activity at the time. Also, the VRU has used this, alongside other learning associated with the safeguarding of those exploited by country drugs lines such as Operation Supreme and Operation Compass, to improve training and awareness across the force area to improve practice.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL11
Area of activity/diversion:	Universal Grant
Description:	In 2021, funding was made available via Public Health England's Universal Grant to local authorities, as the commissioners of drug and alcohol misuse services, to improve drug harm reduction work. The VRU worked closely with the larger authorities within the Thames Valley to support their funding applications and to deliver impactful projects. The intent was to develop proposals which would help to address the increasing numbers of drug harm incidents and poisoning deaths and provide increased support for drug-users to help them address their addictions.
Target group / link to SNA:	Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence. Exclusion from education is a risk factor in violence. The SNA also highlighted that drug poisoning deaths are at the highest level on record.
Success:	Universal Grant funding was secured by local authority partners to enable them to install and maintain clean needle machines in six of the Thames Valley Police custody suites, including: Loddon Valley, Banbury, Abingdon, Maidenhead, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. Funding was also secured to increase the availability of Naloxone anti-overdose kits.
Challenges:	The logistical and clinical governance challenges in implementing the equipment.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL12
Area of activity/diversion:	Naloxone voluntary carry pilot
Description:	In December 2021, Thames Valley Police approved a pilot of the voluntary carry of Naloxone by officers in key roles. The supply of Naloxone and the training of officers in its use will be provided by the local authority drug services, funded through the Universal Grant. The VRU is leading the development of the pilot. Not only is Naloxone a life-saver, it can create the opportunity for a "reachable moment" with a drug-user.
Target group / link to SNA:	The pilot is taking place in Milton Keynes, Reading and Oxford – the top three geographies for violence. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health

	challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence. Exclusion from education is a risk factor in violence. The SNA also highlighted that drug poisoning deaths are at the highest level on record.
Success:	The pilot is under development with officers working in high-risk environments (city centre, homelessness liaison) trained and supplied with the life-saving drug.
Challenges:	The operational pressures upon officers in the other two pilot areas (Reading and Milton Keynes) has prevented their training at this time.

VRU workstream:	County Lines & the Misuse of Drugs
Reference number	CDL13
Area of activity/diversion:	Trauma informed training
Description:	Through the range of VRU-led safeguarding review work described above, it became clear that as county drug line gangs continually evolve their models of operation, there was a growing training need for Thames Valley Police officers and staff in response. The VRU developed a range of new training and development resources and led training delivery. Content focused on the county drugs line models and roles, methods of exploitation and also considered the wider risk factors and motivation for young people becoming involved. It led to the establishment by the VRU of a CDL Champions Network across the force area, embedding informed champions in key roles and teams to assist with delivering trauma-informed, safeguarding-led action when dealing with young people.
Target group / link to SNA:	While not directly an intervention, the training supports officers for when they are required to deliver a primary/secondary intervention. Our SNA highlighted the prevalence of drug warnings amongst offenders and victims of violence and also warnings for mental health challenges, which can often be closely linked to drug use. Substance use is a known risk factor in violence. Gang membership and exploitation – often linked to drug supply – is a known risk factor. Provision of early intervention and diversion avoids early criminalisation for young people, a risk factor in violence. Exclusion from education is a risk factor in violence.
Success:	The VRU provided training to over 400 frontline officers and staff through face-to-face and 20 virtual workshops. The Champions Network has gone on to become an information sharing forum and a place for peer-to-peer learning, with members able to adapt to meet changes in tactics and to embed good practice. A series of 'Snap Guides' training resources have been created, focusing on certain safeguarding actions to consider for vulnerable adults and children. This training will be embedded into core training being delivered to all new officers entering service from 2022.

A summary of workstream delivery:

Early Intervention & Prevention workstream activities and interventions

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP1
Area of activity/diversion:	Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme
Description:	The VRU commissioned the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme in 2019/20 to deliver a form of bystander intervention training to young people in schools, modelled on a “train-the-trainer” approach. Due to COVID challenges it was heavily disrupted and rolled into the last delivery year. It was progressed only to a very limited degree. Feedback from education professionals has also indicated that despite COVID challenges, the programme may be too resource-intensive. The VRU has commissioned a limited evaluation to better understand local response to the programme to inform development of new programmes for 2022/23.
Target group / link to SNA:	A universal offer, it provides the social skills, decision-making and educational outcomes to assist young people.
Success:	There is a clear opportunity for a programme of work in schools, potentially a more comprehensive bystander initiative which has a greater degree of delivery support which will increase the levels of participation and delivery.
Challenges:	As above.

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP2
Area of activity/diversion:	PC Ben storybook and resources for primary schools
Description:	The VRU funded the development of the PC Ben story book, videos and supporting materials including stickers and colouring packs. Distributed to every primary school across the Thames Valley for their library. A Neighbourhood Policing

	Team officer or PCSO offers to visit the school to read the story with children, introducing them to the themes of kindness, respect and diverse communities and also the role of the police. It creates an opportunity to build understanding and trust in the police while beginning that early social skills development.
Target group / link to SNA:	A universal offer, it provides the social skills, decision-making and educational outcomes to assist young people.
Success:	The PC Ben storybook has been a huge success, with schools across the region welcoming their local officers in to deliver the content and to build an ongoing relationship with the young people. Part of its success has been the VRU's approach to providing an easy to use and engaging resource, together with a simple toolkit which any officer/PCSO can follow to enable them to deliver the package.
Challenges:	At times, the availability of resource to visit schools. However, the lack of specialty training and the toolkit approach does manage this.

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP3
Area of activity/diversion:	PSHE Association accredited lesson materials on drugs and violence
Description:	The VRU funded the development of two new packages for delivery by secondary schools in their PSHE lesson time, using trauma informed approaches, the two separate packages focus upon the dangers and consequences of drugs, and the dangers and consequences of weapons and violence, together with the social skills required to manage confrontations and disagreements. Each package has three sessions allowing a comprehensive coverage of the issues with the second lesson delivered by a TVP Schools Officer, which adds legitimacy to the education and also creates an opportunity to build trust with the police.
Target group / link to SNA:	A universal offer, it provides the social skills, decision-making and educational outcomes to assist young people.
Success:	These packages were the first to be formally accredited by the PSHE Association and have been made available nationally. They have been distributed to the 3,000 schools across the Thames Valley and are a core component of the wider "Schools Offer" that is made by the VRU and Thames Valley Police.
Challenges:	We work to continue to raise awareness of the materials and the importance of the subject matter to ensure schools build it into their curriculum. There is a resourcing challenge in some areas where a TVP Schools Officer may not be in place or have the capacity at all times to support a school session.

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP4

Area of activity/diversion:	Training, support and coordination of the Thames Valley Police Schools Officers
Description:	Thames Valley Police committed to maintaining a dedicated Schools Officer function across the 12 Local Policing Areas, recognising their important role in providing a route for engagement, early intervention, diversion and to support with preventing exclusions, collection of intelligence and building relationships with educational partners and young people. The VRU's team lead on Child Centred Policing for the Force and use their skills to train and develop Schools Officers, including in Restorative Justice practices and trauma informed approaches. We have assisted their wider training and coordinated their activity.
Target group / link to SNA:	Schools Officers assist in delivering a range of universal and at times primary interventions and also assist in identifying those young people who may have wider risk factors and vulnerabilities.
Success:	Schools Officers are a key resource and have assisted in delivery of a range of structured activities using VRU provided materials and training, continue to liaise closely with schools to support their disciplinary processes working where possible to prevent exclusion and to signpost to further support or opportunities outside of mainstream education such as some of the VRU's wider intervention projects (e.g. RAW Navigator or the Compass Youth Project)
Challenges:	Thames Valley Police has significant resourcing issues and maintenance of dedicated Schools Officers in all areas remains a challenge.

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP5
Area of activity/diversion:	Hospital Navigators
Description:	The VRU Hospital Navigators programme is now in five hospital Trusts. These include the top four violence geographies of Milton Keynes, Reading, Slough, Oxford together with Aylesbury. Delivered through local voluntary sector partners these programmes recruit volunteers from the community to deliver a "reachable/teachable moment" and to provide immediate support and signposting to services, together with longer-term mentoring. It is hoped that the longer term delivery of these initiatives can be sustainably built into local NHS and partnership commissioning models for the future.
Target group / link to SNA:	This is a primary intervention offered at the point of admission to hospital. The YEF Toolkit identifies the high impact of Hospital Navigator programmes. Many of those with whom the Navigators support are presenting with challenges directly linked to being a victim of violence, domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health and wider "risky behaviours" – all of which are referenced in our SNA as risk factors.
Success:	Across the region the Hospital Navigators programme are increasingly becoming embedded, with Milton Keynes winning a national Shrievalty Award in March 2022 recognising their contribution. The Royal Berkshire Hospital initiative, supported by Starting Point, continually demonstrates the best practice, directly routing young people into further support services and their own mentoring programmes. These programmes are providing opportunities for our communities to directly play their part in supporting young people and make their communities safer. The NHS Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group lead has played pivotal role in galvanising and coordinating NHS colleagues and has built strong engagement.

Challenges:	The pace of adoption and delivery has been challenged by the operational pressures in some of the NHS Trusts. There is also added complexity of working with five different provider partners. Due to the varied rates of readiness across the Trusts, the delivery of the YEF-funded multi-site evaluation has been delayed, but is on track to progress now.
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VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP6
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Paramount – supporting families with a parent in prison (see detailed case study)
Description:	The VRU is piloting a new process to identify children of a parent who is sent to prison, targeting support for the whole family by the charity Children Heard & Seen. The project speeds up the identification of those families who may need additional support, helping to tackle risk factors of young people being drawn into future crime or experiencing other problems. For the first time, data from the Prisons Service database, channelled through the VRU's data-sharing system, is being used not only to track a prisoner's movement through prison – but also to direct support to those vulnerable family members left behind at the point of their imprisonment.
Target group / link to SNA:	A universal offer of support to young people of all ages where they are affected by parental imprisonment. There is a clear risk factor of future offending linked to having a parent in prison, particularly for boys.
Success:	The initiative has developed a strong partnership with a national charity and has demonstrated the value of the <i>Thames Valley Together</i> approach to using multi-agency data to identify risks and vulnerabilities and to target support. The pilot has expanded across all of Oxfordshire and it is hoped that it will become a force-wide initiative. Six other forces nationally have worked with the VRU to begin their own frameworks and how to implement a similar scheme and support locally.
Challenges:	The capacity of Children Heard & Seen to delivery support is funding-dependent which must be secured. The roll-out across the force is also dependent upon the training and availability of local officers to deliver the visits.
VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP7
Area of activity/diversion:	Operation Divan – a Focussed Deterrence deflection model
Description:	Operation Divan is a trial in Milton Keynes of a focused deterrence and deflection model, driven by a simple process of information and intelligence sharing between schools and Thames Valley Police. Where there is no evidence, but a concern, that a young person may have committed or be at risk of committing an offence (i.e. refuses to have their bag searched at school or someone believes they may have carried a weapon), an intelligence report can be made to the police. While no offence, it triggers a deflection opportunity led by the Problem Solving Team to facilitate an early intervention. Usually this is a meeting with the young person, school and parents, but can include a YOT as appropriate, allowing a discussion about the potential issue and driving factors, the risks and consequences and the offer of further support. Through this information sharing process it is possible to create opportunities to intervene and deflect. It also assists schools in preventing exclusion and addresses the risk of early criminalisation.
Target group / link to SNA:	MK is our highest violence area. This is a primary intervention, addressing those risk factors as identified in the SNA.
Success:	The process continues to work well with partnership between schools, the local Intelligence Desk, Problem Solving Team, Schools Officers and Youth Offending Service. While the numbers of young people who have been subject to an

	Operation Divan intervention is low and the length of time elapsed is limited, the continued tracking of them is indicating a positive impact and this will inform the development of a wider focused deterrence model.
Challenges:	As above – the involvement of multiple agencies and the requirement for a very prompt response can be challenged due to resourcing pressures. Also the relatively low numbers and short timeframe for measuring impact over time.

VRU workstream:	Early Intervention & Prevention
Reference number	EIP7
Area of activity/diversion:	Compass Youth Partnership – Teachable Moments Grant (see detailed case study)
Description:	Compass brings together three social enterprise/voluntary providers of youth support into a single project which delivers comprehensive support for those at risk and open to a teachable moment intervention. Oxfordshire Youth deliver a social skills “Building Resilience” programme in schools and have identified 20 young people with lived experience who will be supported to form an advisory panel. SOFEA and RAW Workshop each provide similar models of alternative education, skills and training, mentoring, wellbeing and employment through their respective operations – food distribution and wood work. They will collaborate, delivering support to hundreds of vulnerable young people across Oxfordshire.
Target group / link to SNA:	A primary/secondary intervention, it addresses risk factors such as exclusion and poor social skills, builds employability.
Success:	The project builds local capacity and will create a model for sustainable social impact funding for the longer term.
Challenges:	Coordination across a multi-provider project and encouraging a more collaborative approach between organisations which operate in the same space.

A summary of workstream delivery:

Communities & Partnerships workstream activities and interventions

VRU workstream:	Communities & Partnerships
Reference number	CP1
Area of activity/diversion:	Establishment of the VRU Sports & Inclusion Board and commission of StreetGames mapping of provision
Description:	The VRU has established the Sports & Inclusion Board to work with our local Get Active organisations and local sports clubs. In February 2021, StreetGames UK commenced a Thames Valley-wide audit of provision of sports and inclusive activities with a focus on those providing programmes for the disadvantaged and at risk of violence. This audit is underway and the findings will be used to identify current provision and build our Service Directory of providers. It will help us to understand the gaps and opportunities for further working with partners and communities, including professional clubs,

	local organisations and community groups. StreetGames audit will support an evidence-base to the Sports & Inclusion Board's work for the coming year.
Target group / link to SNA:	The YEF Toolkit has highlighted the high impact of sports and inclusive activity programmes as a preventative and diversionary activity. Sports provision can be a universal offer but also used at all stages of our Sequential Intercept Model and to engage those demonstrating a wide range of risk factors as described in the SNA.
Success:	The VRU Sports & Inclusion Board is now established with attendance from core partners, setting the infrastructure for the year ahead. StreetGames UK has a well-established model and methodology and strong links in to the national sporting authorities which will secure engagement with the audit. Their mapping processes will provide further data and information we can act upon and will support stronger partnerships and community involvement.
Challenges:	The sheer scale of the provision and reaching all providers, together with the need to distinguish between all providers of sport versus those with provision for the more vulnerable groups.

VRU workstream:	Communities & Partnerships
Reference number	CP2
Area of activity/diversion:	New Leaf Mentoring
Description:	Funding was provided in previous delivery years but was not fully utilised due to COVID disruption but was able to run through into the 2021/22 delivery year. New Leaf Mentoring was a local mentoring organisation which secures community volunteers to work to offer mentoring support to those being released from prison or secure training centres and also to work with other vulnerable young people.
Target group / link to SNA:	Offering support at the primary through to tertiary level, it provided mentoring support to address all the identified risk factors within the SNA.
Success:	The programme was successfully concluded in year and through the VRU's Sustainability Sub-Group some support was provided to New Leaf who went on to secure Lottery funding for their services.
Challenges:	COVID created some disruption due to the reliance upon face-to-face and volunteer-led services.

VRU workstream:	Communities & Partnerships
Reference number	CP3
Area of activity/diversion:	Redeeming Our Communities – community engagement and empowerment in problem-solving
Description:	The VRU commissioned Redeeming Our Communities in 2019/20 to deliver three proactive and involving community engagement and problem-solving events. Due to COVID challenges there was a delay to delivery and while the first was delivered in Milton Keynes in 2020, two further events have been held in Reading and Slough within this delivery year. Built around a community conversation, they seek to first identify the challenges in a local community, identify potential

	solutions, engage the range of local public authorities but also communities and individuals to co-produce solutions and action plans.
Target group / link to SNA:	Universal offer to all communities to help support safer communities and those within them of all ages and vulnerabilities.
Success:	The Milton Keynes event held in 2020 has created a lasting legacy of community involvement in improving the local area. The action group established continues to play an active role beyond the initial period of ROC involvement and support. In April, a similar event was held in Reading and this too produced a positive engagement. The value of the activity was also recognised by the local authority who went on to self-fund another round in a different location – demonstrating how VRU funding had helped prove the value of an approach. The final ROC Conversation event was held in Chalvey in Slough in the last week of March 2021 and will follow the same model of community engagement, activation and partnership problem-solving.
Challenges:	Maintaining a community-led response to their local issues requires a strong engagement by local partners and a commitment to act upon the issues and provide resources.

VRU workstream:	Communities & Partnerships
Reference number	CP4
Area of activity/diversion:	Hope Hack youth voice consultation (see detailed case study)
Description:	On 4 March the VRU hosted the launch of the 2022 national series of Hope Hack youth voice consultation events in partnership with the Hope Collective. Last year, the Hope Collective presented their first report to the Prime Minister and Department for Levelling Up. Challenged to do more and go further, the VRU hosted the first of a series of 22 events, seeking to explore the challenges facing young people today and giving them a voice, tackling the question: How can we make a fairer and safer society. The output from the day will be used to inform the VRU's work, our local partners and will be included in the Hope Collective's new report which will be presented next year.
Target group / link to SNA:	Youth voice and engagement is a universal offer, seeking to activate all young people with a concern for how to make a safer society and to address the risk factors they face.
Success:	Over 70 young people from across the Thames Valley attended. Feedback was 100% positive from young people, adult observers and facilitators who remarked it had been the most inspiring and best organised event yet.
Challenges:	There remains the challenge of managing young people's expectations while still inspiring them and crucially how to turn their identified issues and solution suggestions into action. How to generate a You Said, We Did, feedback loop.

VRU workstream:	Communities & Partnerships
Reference number	CP5
Area of activity/diversion:	Establishing a Family Drug and Alcohol Court – Oxfordshire and Berkshire

Description:	The VRU has secured the support of local judiciary to work with local partners in Oxfordshire and Berkshire to establish Family Drug & Alcohol Courts, with the support of the Centre for Justice Innovation. These would allow a trauma informed, problem solving approach to supporting those families with the most complex challenges. We have begun to explore how a courts operating in Oxfordshire, Reading and Slough could be funded through local authority Supporting Families programme budgets. We have also submitted a bid for funding to the Nuffield Foundation.
Target group / link to SNA:	FDACs are providing an intervention at the secondary and tertiary points, supporting those most challenged families who may be subject to the range of risk factors identified in the SNA, from substance misuse, domestic abuse, poverty, lack of social skills, neuro-diversity and disability and past trauma. We seek to establish the courts in Reading, Slough and Oxford which are three of our highest violence geographies. Our highest, Milton Keynes, already benefits from one of the few established FDACs in the country.
Success:	The VRU has successfully worked to engage and secure the support of leading members of the judiciary and will now use all levers to secure engagement and demonstrate a business case by our local partners.
Challenges:	With no additional resource and local authority Supporting Families budgets already committed, it may prove challenging to establish if no external grant funds can be secured. It is hoped that the developing work by the VRU's data programme to demonstrate a unit cost benefit of such intervention and support would add to the business case.

A summary of workstream delivery:

Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream activities and interventions

VRU workstream:	Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream
Reference number	LECJ1
Area of activity/diversion:	Divert custody intervention
Description:	Divert is an established programme utilising trained youth workers to use a “reachable moment” with a young person (over 18) in custody. Custody Intervention Coaches are employed through local football clubs.
Target group / link to SNA:	The SNA shows that young people who are both offenders and victims of violence have a high incidence of time spent in police custody and the opportunity for a primary/secondary intervention. The reasons for their detention are likely to be linked to many of the identified risk factors in the SNA. Divert is operating in three of our four highest violence geographies.
Success:	The Divert model uses intervention coaches who are not identified as being police but are aligned to the local football club, able to use a youth worker model to break down barriers to engagement and to offer support and signposting both in custody and then over time on release. Many have created long-lasting supporting relationships with young people, helping them to navigate away from the influences and risk factors which led to their offending behaviours.
Challenges:	Over the past year our model has been focused on a particular approach using the custody intervention coaches as the sole resource, coordinated through a retained provider partner, New Era Foundation. We can see an opportunity to explore a new model, funding the football community trusts to be our local delivery partner, retaining and utilising the experience of the custody coaches, yet increasing their capacity and looking to create a model more akin to the Hospital Navigator programme.

VRU workstream:	Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream
Reference number	LECJ2
Area of activity/diversion:	Custody Navigator programme
Description:	We have worked closely with Thames Valley Police to develop an innovative Custody Navigator programme, modelled on that in hospitals. We have funded a Custody Navigator Coordinator post who will work in the custody suite at Abingdon Police Station, the custody unit for the Oxfordshire area. The coordinator will build a cohort of community volunteers trained to work in custody to liaise with detainees, to provide them advice and support and to signpost them to services on release. They will be closely linked in to the range of services available, from sports provision, education opportunities, specialist support and also into the range of VRU funded initiatives such as the Compass Youth Project. This will create capacity from within our community volunteers and will build linkages between the range of services available.
Target group / link to SNA:	The SNA shows that young people who are both offenders and victims of violence have a high incidence of time spent in police custody and the opportunity for a primary/secondary intervention. The reasons for their detention are likely to be linked to many of the identified risk factors in the SNA.
Success:	A coordinator post has been filled with an experienced ex-police officer and volunteer recruitment and training is underway for the first cohort of volunteers. Support from TVP Criminal Justice department has been secured with a view to the initiative being taken on as business-as-usual if successful.
Challenges:	Custody remains a complex space and there will need to be careful management of the roles and responsibilities of those operating within it.

VRU workstream:	Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream
Reference number	LECJ3
Area of activity/diversion:	Prince's Trust Out of Court Disposal
Description:	The VRU commissioned on behalf of Thames Valley Police's Criminal Justice Unit a referral route into The Prince's Trust, providing the opportunity for focused mentoring sessions and then support to access the full range of Prince's Trust social skills, activities and employability and mentoring opportunities. The provision is used by the CJ Unit as part of an Out of Court Disposal for those aged 18 – 30 and whose offence is deemed appropriate for such a disposal.
Target group / link to SNA:	OOCs are a primary/secondary intervention. They create a route to avoiding early criminalisation and a means of diversion/early intervention for those who may be vulnerable to the full range of risk factors. Social skills are a YEF high impact intervention. It was an offer open to the whole Thames Valley including all our high violence geographies. The range of services and support offered meet a wide range of potential needs.
Success:	The unit cost of each referral if fully utilised represents good value for money, with the support packages on offer being of significantly higher value. For example, a young person was referred to an initial building self-esteem programme, but was then transitioned into a further adult programme which was based around employment provision. Another has been able to access a 12-month mentoring package, together with support in purchasing clothes for an interview. The Prince's Trust has a wide range of different provision which could be flexed according to need and once a referral is made, it is the Prince's Trust staff who manage that individual accordingly. There is a strong data collection agreement and so it will be possible to track individuals if they do engage with and progress through multiple Trust activities.
Challenges:	The level of awareness of the provision and therefore the numbers of referrals made has been very limited and this has required significant effort to remedy in order to meet the intended number of young people accessing the service to ensure best value. That limited referral rate then undermines the ability to evaluate and demonstrate success, or secure longer-term continuous funding.

VRU workstream:	Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice workstream
Reference number	LECJ4
Area of activity/diversion:	Thames Valley Police Problem Solving Network
Description:	The VRU led the development of an internal Problem Solving Policing Network within Thames Valley Police, championing techniques to assess and devise management and solutions to community-level problems, including crime, drugs and violence. The network shares good practice and has created another professional network / solutions network.
Target group / link to SNA:	Officers are trained to use problem-solving methodologies to tackle the range of issues and risk factors identified.
Success:	The Problem Solving Network was adopted into TVP business as usual and continues to grow, hosting regular learning events, increasing its membership and empowering officers and staff in TVP to work with their communities to solve problems including violence.