

THAMES VALLEY

**VIOLENCE
PREVENTION**

PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report

2023 – 2024

May 2024



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Foreword

by Jules Bottazzi, Head of the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership

I'm very pleased to present to partners our Annual Report for the delivery year 2023–2024.

I look back to July, when I first joined what was then the VRU, and how the time has flown.

It's been hugely rewarding to come in to a partnership with such a complex programme, to be able to maintain the pace and impact of our work, yet also to refocus our priorities and of course to drive our rebrand (more on that shortly).

It has been a privilege to be able to play a role in convening our partnership. It feels that it has continued to strengthen at all levels and I continue to make new connections and meet new, inspiring colleagues. I thank those who are so engaged, particularly those attending our Strategy Board where we work across the whole Thames Valley.

We have responded well to the Serious Violence Duty and its provisions. Across all areas, there is a needs assessment in place, informing a strategic, whole-system approach, as described in the nine published Serious Violence strategies. The VPP will continue to provide support in the delivery against these plans over the coming months.

And it is working. Knife crime and serious violence continues to fall across the Thames Valley.

At the centre of the VPP is our core programme team, overseeing the delivery of our Home Office-funded programme. The last year has seen that become more focused, maintaining a small number of interventions so that we can properly test them over time. Quality, rather than quantity, of local delivery and evaluation comes first.

I'm pleased we were able to make a significant increase in the amount of the grant being used to deliver intervention activity. 56% of the total grant is funding activity on the ground, and our central team costs reduced accordingly.

I must also acknowledge what has been achieved through our work with the voluntary and community sector, who play a central role in delivering all our intervention programmes.



Jules Bottazzi

Head of the Thames Valley
Violence Prevention
Partnership

Our collaboration with Thames Valley Police and the ongoing development of *Thames Valley Together* as a common data-sharing solution continues, with real successes over the last year in moving toward “live” status. This will provide a step-change in the way we work, however complex and challenging.

We have seen real progress in implementing high quality evaluations and the evidence base is now starting to flow. It will help inform our collective decisions and the cultural and financial sustainability of these approaches.

Sustainability is a thread that I want to hold onto. I have seen the value of our new priority: sustainable training. The trauma-informed training, supporting Oxfordshire child exploitation and girls and gangs training, received excellent reviews. We can all learn from each other’s expertise. It’s clear that there is a demand and we’re now shaping to respond with a strategic, long-term offer.

Finally, I want to reflect on the rebrand – becoming the Violence Prevention Partnership, which signals our collaborative approach. As we finalise our corporate products, I look beyond that to the long-term sustainability of the work we’re engaged in. We will only succeed as a partnership, working together and across our system boundaries.

That change in name is significant as it embeds the way we plan to work for the long term, which is what we must do to continue to make the Thames Valley safer.

I thank everyone for their part in an excellent year, and look forward to the next.



Jules Bottazzi

Head of the Thames Valley
Violence Prevention Partnership



Jules Bottazzi

Head of the Thames Valley
Violence Prevention
Partnership

Continuing to build our delivery

Year two of a three-year programme

For the first time, in April 2022 the Home Office Serious Violence Unit issued the Violence Reduction Units with multi-year indicative grants, providing more certainty of funding beyond the immediate year ahead.

The direction was that VRUs were to develop a longer-term programme of work over the remaining three years of the budget cycle, from 1 April 2022 through to 31 March 2025.

Establishing a three-year programme which commenced on 1 April 2022 gave us the opportunity to:

- ▶ **Embed the Thames Valley Operating Model structure** to lead and coordinate the multi-agency partnership. Through this, support all partners to play an active role in their local systems.
- ▶ **Establish and invest into pilot interventions** which best reflected local needs. These would represent the greatest potential for longer-term impact and adoption by local partners for a sustained future beyond central funding.
- ▶ **Undertake longer-term evaluations of our pilot interventions,** giving a better evidence base as to the processes required to run the intervention effectively and indications as to the outcomes. Thereby, build an evidence base on cost effectiveness and impact.

While annual applications against the grant are still required, we now have a clear and consistent approach to our programme for the years ahead.

Our resourcing for 2023–2024

This year the VRU drew upon a number of sources of resourcing which we either directly managed, or in some way coordinated.

£1.53m

Home Office core VRU grant requiring 15% match funding

£845,000

match funding provided by Thames Valley Police through in-kind resourcing of seconded officers.

£900,000

Home Office Grip programme grant to Thames Valley Police and Hotspot Policing uplift, coordinated by officers in the VRU

£263,020

Home Office Serious Violence Duty Burden Grant (labour) – supporting the capacity and capability of local partnerships.

£60,336

Home Office Serious Violence Duty Burden Grant (non-labour) – supporting a shared counter narrative.

£37,500

Home Office uplift to support Thames Valley Together data sharing programme.

£30,000

StreetGames UK contribution to part-fund the VRU Sports & Violence Impact Manager post.

£29,000

Stephen Lloyd Award winner - match-funding for Op Paramount

Investing the VRU core grant for 2023–2024

Our core function

£621,000

Including investment into
“Stay True to You”

Evaluating what works

£129,000

Data sharing

£75,000

Our pilot interventions

£705,000

Schools Navigators	£153,000
Hospital Navigators	£110,000
Custody Coaches	£95,000
Custody Navigators	£40,000
Schools Navigators	£213,000
Focused Deterrence	£24,000
Sports & Inclusion	£75,000
Operation Paramount	£93,000
MASH	£35,000

Obtaining value across delivery years:

In some instances, delivery was funded by the 2023–2024 grant. In others, the investment made will now deliver benefit into next year, requiring less of the 2024–2025 grant.

46%

of grant invested into
interventions

18%

of intervention spend
invested into
evaluation

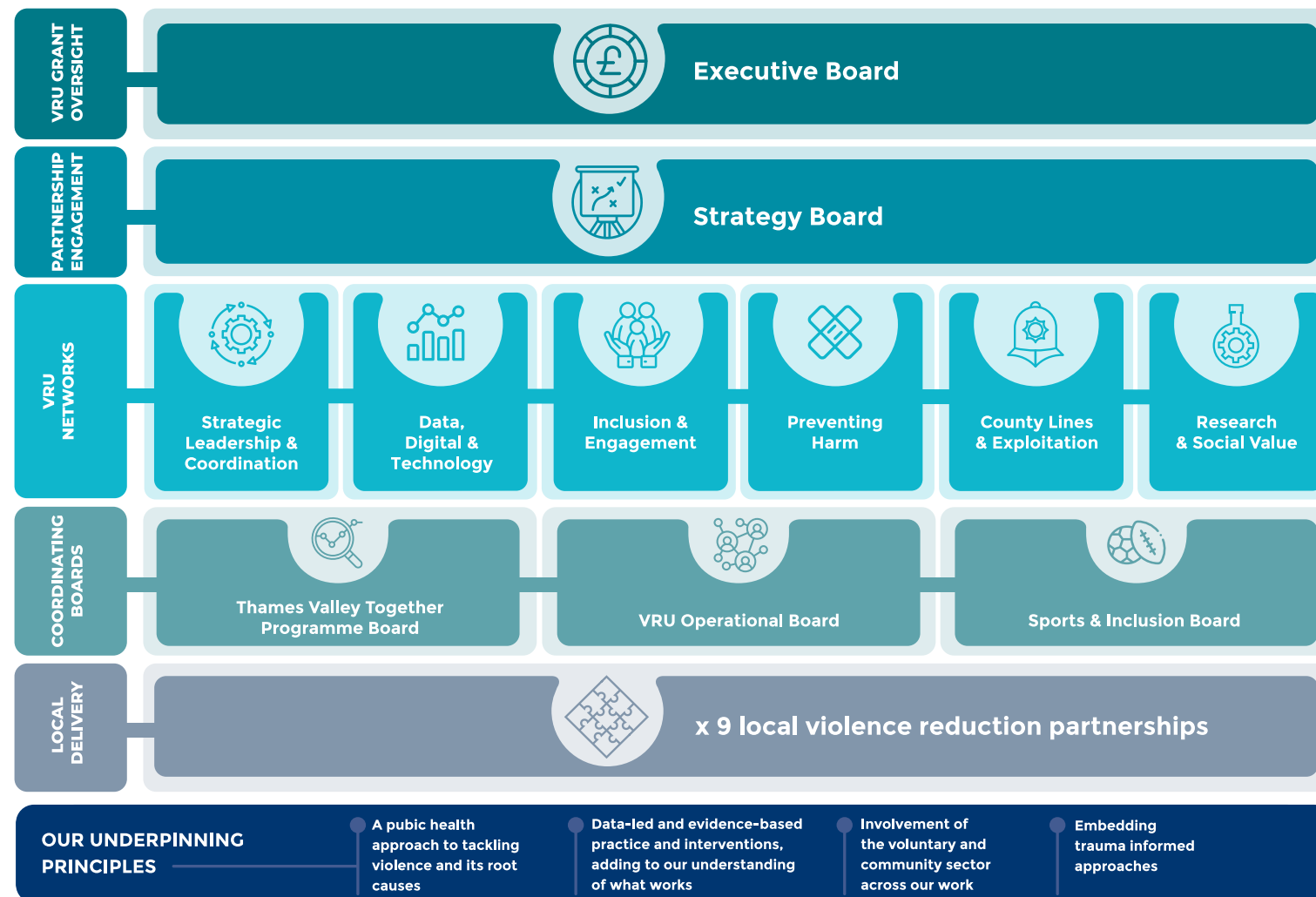


Our core function of leadership and coordination

For the majority of the year, we maintained our Partnership Model which provided a structured approach to bringing our partnership together and coordinating the delivery of our central programme.

This model, in particular Strategy Board and the more tactical Operational Board, continued to prepare our core members for the incoming Serious Violence Duty.

In September, with a change of leadership and movement of the programme team into the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, we began to streamline both the programme structure and the network of governance/partnership meetings.



Consulting on our rebranding to become the Violence Prevention Partnership



New leadership and consultation on a new partnership model and core function

In July 2023, Superintendent Stan Gilmour who had led the VRU since 2019 retired from the force, requiring a new leader be found.

This presented the opportunity for a new structure to the central programme team, one more integrated with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, allowing a greater alignment to its wider programmes and a clearer distinction between the work of the VRU and that of the police.



The post of Head of Violence Reduction was recruited to within the PCC's Senior Management Team. As a permanent position, it provides that commitment to the role and function for the future – particularly with regard the new Serious Violence Duty and the oversight role that falls to the PCC.

Jules Bottazzi joined the VRU and a period of programme review and audit commenced. The audit examined opportunities to evolve both the central programme structure and Partnership Model to ensure a sustainable approach to governance was in place ahead of the Duty.

In November 2023 we commenced a consultation which asked partners to comment on:

- Changing the name from Violence Reduction Unit
- Reviewing our vision, core purpose and underpinning principles
- Evolving the Partnership Model to maintain a strategic governance function for the Duty, with decision making capability for organisations and local partnerships.

Rebranding to the Violence Prevention Partnership

Following a valuable consultation process, yielding a strong response from our core membership but also our wider partnership base, in January 2024 the Strategy Board members were presented with options to approve.



It was agreed that from the 1 April 2024, we would change the name to the **Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership** and that we would incorporate all feedback to implement a revised vision statement, core purpose and underpinning principles.

We also committed that for the remainder of the year we would maintain our Strategy Board and the more tactical, supporting group that was Operational Board. However, this would become led by our partners, not the programme team, enabling more of a peer-network working together to support each other in their response to the Duty, share best practice and ideas across local partnerships.

With the shared importance placed on developing the *Thames Valley Together* data sharing system, there was a collective commitment to continuing with its dedicated programme board.

Other networks in the model have now been streamlined into our shared business-as-usual operations. For example, the Sports & Inclusion Board was closed down and instead StreetGames began working with local partnerships to set up more localised Sports Boards or to fit into existing structures.

Across our core membership, we agreed that completing this process by the end of the 2023–2024 delivery year would put our new Violence Prevention Partnership on a solid and sustainable footing for the year that followed, and beyond, enabling us to continue to lead and coordinate the response to serious violence in the Thames Valley.

Responding to the Serious Violence Duty



Serious Violence Definition

Across the Spring of 2023, the Police & Crime Commissioner convened all partners through a series of events designed to agree our collective response to the incoming Serious Violence Duty.

This included participating in the Crest Advisory readiness assessment process which provided valuable advice and support for many of our partners. That all our nine local partnerships were able to progress without major challenges was testament to our coordinated efforts to support partners to “get upstream” of the incoming Duty.

Following that process, as a partnership we examined our previous definition of Serious Violence. Jointly, we agreed a new approach which widened the definition away from a focus only on young people and public space knife crime violence.

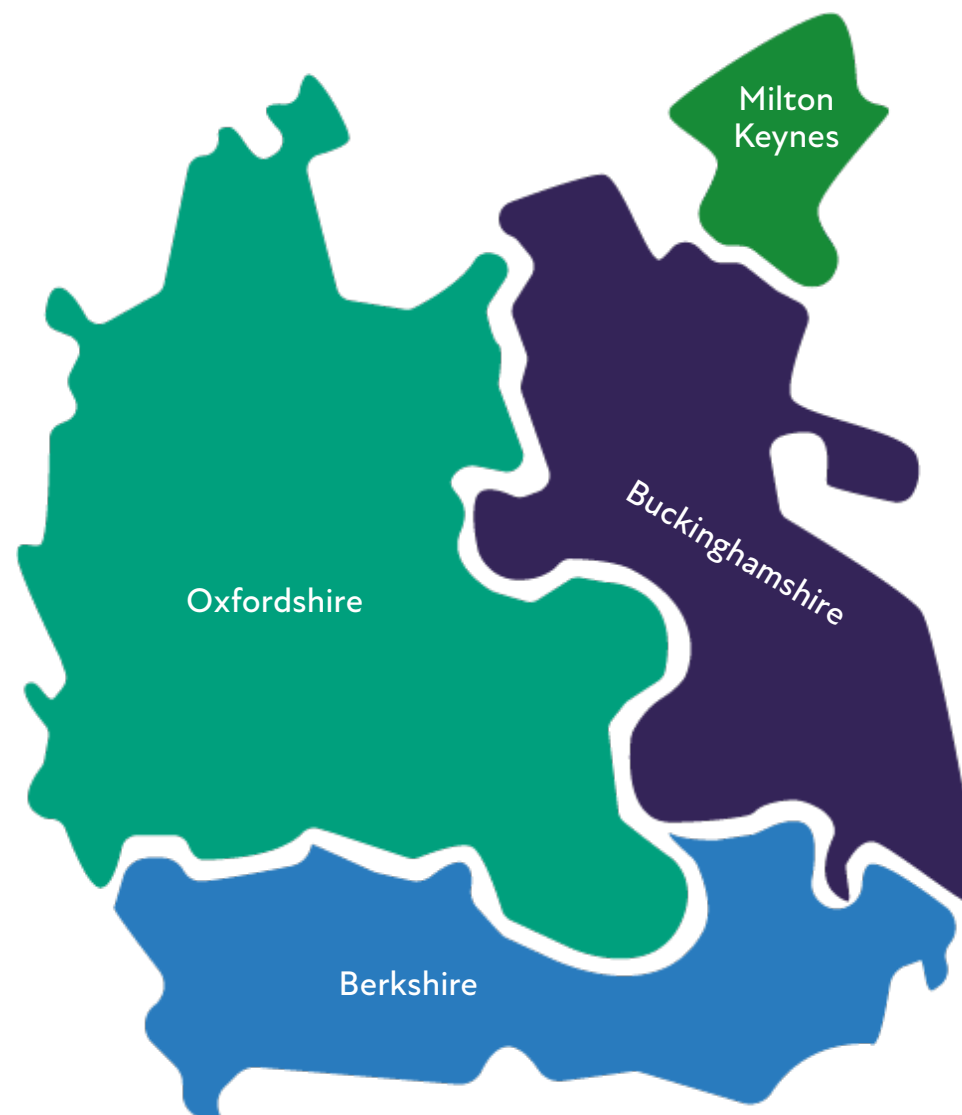
“Serious Violence includes specific types of recorded crime, such as homicide, grievous bodily harm, incidents that involve a knife, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing.”

Strategic Needs Assessments developed and in place

A key provision of the Serious Violence Duty legislation for local partnerships is to have undertaken a strategic needs assessment process to understand how violence is affecting their communities and to help them develop a violence prevention strategy.

Across our nine local serious violence partnerships, we worked to support their development of Strategic Needs Assessments. There was flexibility in approach with some areas commissioning their own product using local analysts. For some, analysts in the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner supported.

By November 2023, all nine SNAs had been received and were being used to inform the development of Local Plans.



Meeting the Serious Violence Duty: Local Response Strategies published

The Serious Violence Duty requires the establishment of arrangements to convene the whole-system partners, those with a responsibility under the new legislation (Duty holders).

Having developed their needs assessments, local partnerships were to develop and implement a shared local strategy. These must respond to identified need and aim to reduce and prevent serious violence in the area through a coordinated, whole-system, public health approach.

Local partners had already established their own governance models – generally at the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) level, although Oxfordshire has a county-wide strategic group sitting above their four district CSPs. All of these partnerships are represented on the VRU Strategy Board.

By January 2024, nine local Response Strategies (also known as Local Plans) had been developed, approved through local governance and had been published, in line with the Serious Violence Duty.

These plans now provide the strategic direction that guide the local response to serious violence for the year ahead, based upon a clear understanding of need. They draw the partners together and bind them to work across their organisational boundaries in a whole-system approach to tackling the root causes of violence.

A key requirement of the Serious Violence Duty is for partnerships to share data across organisations for the purpose of preventing serious violence. See [page 30](#) to learn more about *Thames Valley Together*.

The new governance model of what is now the Violence Prevention Partnership will provide the oversight of compliance with the Duty, through the delivery and ongoing development of these needs assessments and plans.

Delivering on our central programme



Interventions & wider programme activities

Intervention	Summary	Area
Hospital Navigators	Trained volunteers offering support in five A&E sites	All Thames Valley
Custody Coaches	Youth workers work with those in police custody, offering ongoing mentoring and support	Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Berkshire (not Buckinghamshire)
Custody Navigator Volunteers	Volunteers work with those in police custody to offer short-term support & signposting	Oxfordshire (Abingdon) and Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury)
Schools Navigators	Youth workers in schools provide 1-2-1 mentoring and social skills support to children at risk of exclusion	Milton Keynes
Focused Deterrence	Support-first, social care-led model of diversion, supported by police enforcement	Milton Keynes
Sports & Inclusion	“Sports Plus” activities, providing positive sports and inclusion activities accompanied by mentoring and education	Six projects in Oxford, Milton Keynes, Reading, Slough and High Wycombe
Operation Paramount	Partnership between Thames Valley Police and charity Children Heard & Seen, improving support for families following parental imprisonment	Rolling out to all of Thames Valley
‘Stay True to You’ behaviour change resources	Research and development of new behavioural change approaches and resources for practitioners, parents, young people	All Thames Valley
Family Drug & Alcohol Court	Working to establish an FDAC in Berkshire	Berkshire
Sustainable Training	Supporting partners with training needs	All Thames Valley
Thames Valley Together	A partnership programme working to develop a multi-agency data-sharing platform and analytical products	All Thames Valley






At a glance – all VRU intervention delivery

1866

Total individuals
engaged so far in
2023/2024

2899

Total individuals
engaged since
projects began

Intervention	Delivery 2023/2024	Since projects began
 Hospital Navigators	749	1237
 Custody combined	631	932
 School Navigators	115	319
FD Focused Deterrence	65	65
 Sports and Inclusion	251	251
 Op Paramount	55	95

Note: Count is of individuals engaged. Custody is both Coaches & Volunteers counts combined. Sports and FD programmes retain individuals over time. Paramount is count of referrals made to Children Heard & Seen.

At a glance – VPP intervention delivery in local areas



Intervention updates





Intervention update Hospital Navigators

Our longest running VPP intervention, covering the whole Thames Valley through the five A&E departments.

We work with five voluntary sector providers to deliver the schemes in their local hospitals, including:

- YMCA MK (Milton Keynes)
- 7Roadlight (Aylesbury)
- Oxfordshire Youth (Oxford)
- Starting Point (Reading)
- Together As One (Slough)

By hospital site	Delivery 23/24	Delivery since project began
Milton Keynes	163	239
Buckinghamshire	220	454
Oxfordshire	21	73
Berkshire – Reading	75	159
Berkshire – Slough	270	312

The Hospital Navigators intervention continues across the four established hospital sites in Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Reading and Slough.

Oxfordshire Youth, having recently taken on the service at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, will be soon be operational.

Oxford Brookes University has completed its evaluation of the intervention and the report will be published on 20 June at a partnership event.

Discussion continues with key partners on the longer-term sustaining of the individual schemes, including a positive meeting with representatives of the BOB ICB and public health colleagues.



Intervention update

Custody Coaches

During the past year the scheme continues to deliver youth worker outreach to those detained in police custody suites in Reading, Maidenhead and Milton Keynes – serving a wide catchment area.

The age range has been widened to include 18 – 30-year-olds to expand delivery. And despite the uncertainties of who will need support and when, the two football club community trusts which deliver the scheme (Reading FC and MK Dons), have been able to flex their availability to meet need, including new later hours in Reading/Maidenhead.

Not only does this increase the support offer to more people it will increase the power of a randomised controlled trial evaluation which commenced this year, overseen by the VPP.

Engagement with the support offer stands at around 25% and while it is a voluntary initiative, the project team has been working with custody suite staff to help them better explain it to detainees in the first instance, to try to increase that engagement level. Ultimately custody staff are the salespeople we need to up-skill.

Unfortunately delivery in Oxford as planned could not be achieved and despite best efforts to find an alternative provider, due to challenges with vetting processes and securing staff, no provider was found and the focus will remain on existing provision.

By custody suite	Delivery 23/24	Delivery since project began
Milton Keynes	40	40
Berkshire – Loddon Valley	64	83
Berkshire – Maidenhead	55	83

See the case study on [page 39](#)



Intervention update

Custody Navigator Volunteers

The Custody Navigator Volunteers intervention was implemented early in the year as we sought to develop another support offer for those detained in custody. Similar to Hospital Navigators, it relies upon volunteers, independent of the police or other authorities, to increase engagement with the offer of support.

Custody Volunteer Navigators offer a conversation, exploring what is happening in that person’s life that may be contributing to offending behaviours. Housing, employment, debt, substance misuse are common. But also issues such as bereavement and family breakdown. The navigators seek to signpost to an appropriate service for further help once released from custody.

Thames Valley Police hosted the VPP-funded coordinator post, who as a recently retired police officer was well placed to understanding police systems, custody processes and procedures. His role was to work with TVP Volunteering team to attract and train volunteers, then to support them in delivering shifts in custody.

The number of volunteers fluctuated and there was naturally an uncertainty to the numbers of young people in custody at a time when a volunteer was on shift. While it was seen to deliver a cost-effective service which added value, it has proved very difficult to build a reliable evaluation.

Thames Valley Police’s Criminal Justice / custody function will continue to retain the Coordinator and will be developing a similar scheme in Abingdon and Aylesbury custody suites, but the VPP will no longer fund the scheme.

By custody suite	Delivery 23/24	Delivery since project began
Oxfordshire – Abingdon	423	677
Buckinghamshire – Aylesbury	49	49



Intervention update Schools Navigators

This year saw the Schools Navigator programme develop while continuing to support young people at risk of exclusion in school.

Running across the academic year (September–June), the scheme was first delivered in 2022–2023 in both Reading and Milton Keynes through two providers. However, from September with the withdrawal of one of these, it gave the opportunity for a re-design of the intervention. We also consulted with the wider MK Together partnership on which schools they felt had greatest need.

We continue to work with SOFEA Milton Keynes, a youth employability and alternative education provider. Their team of trained youth workers have skills in engaging young people and supporting their education.

Taking a data-led approach, four schools were identified where support through structured in-school mentoring by a youth worker could be offered to those at risk of exclusion, at their first point of suspension.

Data from Milton Keynes shows that 70% of children suspended go on to be suspended again, with clear links between exclusion and wider vulnerabilities and poor outcomes.

Mentors have seen a significant need in schools for those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). While the Navigators can support those with milder conditions, there were a number of young people who were not suitable for the scheme.

There remain challenges in school staff capacity to be able to ensure students engage and attend with the mentoring sessions, to make best use of the Navigator's time in the schools.

2022/2023:	Number of young people engaged:
Reading (Starting Point)	100
Milton Keynes (SOFEA)	104
Total	204

2023/2024:	Number of young people engaged:
St Paul's Catholic School	36
Leon Academy	25
Watling Academy	30
Radcliff School	24
Total	115

See the case study on [page 38](#)

FD

Intervention update Focused Deterrence

As more young people gradually complete the 12 months of support, the benefit of that sustained contact and trusted, consistent relationship is further evident. It allows for structured work on risk factors but also engagement with more positive opportunities.

The coordination by a single person of all activities keeps the young person informed and engaged, able to ask questions and give feedback on what is and isn't working for them. Also, as a point of contact for other professionals.

The support offer evolves with new services and resources for specific issues, such as healthy relationship training, or advocacy support for criminal justice processes. This is also allowing a flexible and tailored package for the individual.

Multi-agency relationships continue to strengthen – in particular with Thames Valley Police, Children's Services and the Youth Offending Team. There is clear coordination on any enforcement activity by the force, sharing information across partners and allowing for swift partner follow-up to any procedural activity or offending.

As part of the improved multi-agency working, the team are also working with those professionals who support young people on the cohort to reassure them that their inclusion on the initiative will not lead to higher risks of criminalisation.

As more complete time in the programme, and the follow-up period for the evaluation passes, we anticipate interim results shortly which we expect to show positive impact.

▶ **65**

have received
support

▶ **30**

aged 11-17

▶ **25**

aged 18-24

▶ **20**

have now completed
12 months



Intervention update

Sports & Inclusion interventions

The Thames Valley Sports & Inclusion intervention programme has two components; the first is to support system change and embed sport as a prevention and diversion measure. We host a VPP Sports & Violence Impact Manager post, part-funded by the VPP and by StreetGames UK.



Chelsea Piggott

Sports & Violence
Impact Manager

The Thames Valley Strategic Sports Plan provides the framework for continued engagement with local sports providers and local authority-led partners. Strong progress has been made in championing the role of sports interventions for those with vulnerabilities, for inclusion in local violence reduction plans.

The regional Sports Board was closed down in preference of a more local approach, with efforts now underway to set up Sport & Inclusion Partnerships at the county level, or to contribute to other existing structures.

The completion in the Autumn of the second annual audit to update the StreetGames Community Sports Dashboard saw 81 organisations contribute data, with 314 weekly sessions being offered. The mapping exercise provides local partnerships a view of what provision exists and where there are gaps and opportunities. The findings and recommendations were presented to partners at the Annual Conference held in Reading in early April.

Chelsea continues to support local partnerships in developing securing funding from alternative sources, with success in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead which secured funding from the PCC Community Fund for a new sports offer for those at risk of entering the criminal justice system.



Intervention update

Sports & Inclusion interventions in partnership with StreetGames

The second component to the intervention is VPP funding provided to StreetGames for the commissioning of local “Sports Plus” programmes. These provide positive activities alongside support such as mentoring, education sessions, help with accessing employment etc.



Six local projects have been funded - some commenced in 2022 - 2023 delivery year and have continued, while two new projects were added this year. Each provides an enduring engagement for those referred and to date 251 young people have benefited.

We have seen particular learning from two of the projects (MK and Slough) which use a place-based consortium approach: A local authority led model with a single route of referral, tailored support based on multiple local providers offering different activities.

The Project PT (project 1) – Oxford	10
The Project PT (project 2) – Oxford	25
High Wycombe	29
Reading FC – covering mainly Reading	76
Slough	15
Milton Keynes	96
Total:	251

Ages

40% 10-14

20% 15-17

32% 18-25

8% not known

77%

male

23%

female

55%

identify
white British

Referral route

31% self-referral

15% education

11% youth justice

11% family

4% Early Help Hubs

28% other



Intervention update

Operation Paramount

Op Paramount uses data from HM Prisons & Probation Service to recognise families affected by parental imprisonment, with Thames Valley Police then making an offer of a referral to our partner support charity, Children Heard and Seen.

This second year has seen expansion, now covering all Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire then across Berkshire next year as police capacity to deliver the family visits increases.

With the imminent automation of data through *Thames Valley Together* we are excited that even more children will be recognised with the addition of partner data.

It has also been widely recognised as a national innovation and multiple police forces now seek to develop similar approaches.

National estimates suggest 65% of boys with a parent in prison go on to offend. Since Paramount began, only one referred child has committed a minor offence, and this prior to the support commencing.

We are able to begin a natural experiment as to the longer term impacts, but still look to develop a more robust evaluation model next year.

Operation Paramount has led to the following numbers of referrals of individual children for support made by police. Families may also have declined the police offer but then gone on to contact Children Heard & Seen at a later date, which is not recorded.

2022/2023	
Oxfordshire	16
Milton Keynes	10
Slough	2 (area not yet live but circumstances allowed support to be offered)
Buckinghamshire	12
Total	29
2023/2024	
Oxfordshire	53
Buckinghamshire	5
Milton Keynes	12
West Berkshire	4
Total	55

See the case study on [page 40](#)



Intervention update

Process mapping Thames Valley Police Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

This year saw the start of a research phase into the potential for a new intervention focused on first point of contact safeguarding processes.



The earliest contacts with vulnerable families are often made through safeguarding “front door” processes. This year, we began to explore whether there was an opportunity to target support to those that need it at an earlier point than perhaps our current systems have the capacity or sophistication to achieve.

Guided by our Project Research Life Cycle approach, we wanted to undertake closer analysis of the way that risks are identified and information shared across the system partners. Through this we hope to identify any opportunities for a new intervention. We had held intervention funds back for this purpose at the start of the delivery year.

Working with Thames Valley Police, which delivers a force-wide approach to a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), we sought agreement from the Home Office that we could first recruit a “Value Stream Mapping” role to undertake a detailed process and procedure review within the MASH. This would be our research phase that would then inform the direction of any subsequent intervention design.

This was approved by the Home Office late in the year. Recruitment has begun and we will be delivering upon this phase in the 2024-2025.

Intervention update

Employability project for those leaving the secure estate

We believe that training and access to stable employment is a strong protective factor against being drawn into crime and violence. This is particularly important for those young people leaving the secure estate and who need direction and purpose to help prevent reoffending.

We have explored with our core partners - local Department for Work & Pensions and the HM Prisons & Probation Service - how we can support increased connectivity between them, with an improved service offer for those who are soon to leave the secure estate.

We have part-funded a secondment from DWP who has recently joined our central programme team and who will now proceed to develop the project across the next delivery year, funded by the 2023–2024 grant.

We anticipate a focus on the Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire areas and this also provides an opportunity to contribute to our Focused Deterrence intervention, improving employability support for those on its cohort.



Department for
Work & Pensions



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Wider programme activities updates

This section provides updates on some of the wider activities being delivered by the VPP's programme team, working with local partners.



Programme activities update

‘Stay True to You’ Behavioural change product development

We undertook research with young people to inform an exciting behavioural change approach and campaign which all partners across the Thames Valley can use to effectively engage with young people, promote safety and positive behaviours.

Stay True to You is in part a campaign, aiming to deliver positive messages to young people via social media and through a new standalone website providing advice and signposting.

The research with young people also told us how important practitioners, parents, teachers and other trusted adults in the community are in helping reach and engage young people. As a result, these are our priority audiences and resources were finalised for a launch in May coinciding with both Operation Sceptre (the week of police action against knife crime) and the Knife Crime Awareness Week that followed.

The new website (staytruetoyou.co.uk) provides all the resources and messages for young people, parents and practitioners.

We are excited to be partnering with the Ben Kinsella Trust who will be designing and delivering a training programme as part of the ‘Stay True to You’ approach for front-line practitioners, teachers and parents.



Programme activities update

Thames Valley Together multi-agency data-sharing

We continue to support the development of the *Thames Valley Together* multi-agency data-sharing platform. Hosted by Thames Valley Police's ICT infrastructure, we are working with the wider partnership in what is seen as a nationally significant innovation that will assist multi-agency data sharing and compliance with the Serious Violence Duty.

The year has seen continued progress in the implementation of our joint data sharing solution, supporting all local partners in their responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty and supporting the better targeting of activity, efficiencies and improved outcomes.

The partnership TVT Programme Board has continued to convene all partners to keep them involved.

Progress has been made over the last year in developing:

- ▶ **A TVT-powered Strategic Needs Assessment** to bring together key datasets into one place, allowing a more frequently updated SNA to be available for decision making.
- ▶ **VPP Performance Pack:** A slim-line SNA to help all VPP partners understand our progress towards our objectives around a reduction in serious violence and knife crime.
- ▶ **Focused Deterrence Dashboard:** A dashboard that will help areas implement a Focused Deterrence approach, similar to what is currently being delivered in Milton Keynes

At the end of the year, one partner (Thames Valley Police) had live data in the production environment, actively being used. Five local authorities had data in a development/test environment and were able to use it to test the building of analytical products.

**THAMES VALLEY
TOGETHER**

Programme activities update

Thames Valley Together multi-agency data-sharing

Supporting partnerships with the TVT Innovation Grant

To support local partnerships, TVT offered “Innovation Grants” funding secondments into the TVT programme team to work on their own data sets in the test environment and to develop their own products. Buckinghamshire County Council, as one of the local partnerships which has made the most progress with its engagement into the TVT programme, was supported through this.

Completion of the ICO Regulatory Sandbox

A huge achievement was completing the Information Commissioner’s Office Regulatory Sandbox exercise. This exacting process was completed in November 2023 following nearly two years of engagement with the ICO. It provides a level of additional scrutiny and regulatory oversight to innovative projects which have data protection considerations. The TVT team had requested the process in order to give our partners full confidence and to test our own robust governance.

The ICO gave positive feedback, suggesting TVT is a useful model for other areas interested in a similar approach, which has contributed to our ongoing sharing and engagement with other areas as TVT is increasingly looked upon as a national innovation for wider adoption.

Programme activities update

Pluggin – driving social value funding

Pluggin is a company providing a service to drive social value contributions or sponsorship from private sector business into local voluntary sector projects.

Large public sector bodies which partner with Pluggin are able to use their procurement processes to invite their private business suppliers to sponsor specific local projects as a contribution to social value and impact.

As all public sector organisations must consider social value within their procurement, the Pluggin system is an easy way to meet this, while also helping direct sponsorship toward activity which directly meets the organisation's own aims.

As a result of Thames Valley Police connecting its procurement process into the Pluggin framework, one of its suppliers has recently donated £1,000 of funding to the Safe! Project which delivers victim support services to young people across the Thames Valley. This is an example of how social impact can support important local services.

Four of the VPP intervention projects are also highlighted to Thames Valley Police suppliers via Pluggin and it is hoped that this could attract new funding which will contribute to the sustainability of the Hospital Navigators, Custody Coaches, Schools Navigators and Sports programmes.

Local partners are encouraged to consider their own approaches to social value, partnering with Pluggin in a similar way to Thames Valley Police opens up the opportunity for greater sponsorship for local projects which seek to prevent violence.

The VPP will continue to explore options to develop social value as part of our wider work to secure the cultural and financial sustainability of our work.



Programme activities update

Sustainable training

Since November 2023, a new focus was placed upon our support to the development and delivery of sustainable training solutions for our local partnerships.

We shifted team resources and expertise to create a new training-focused team, with particular skills and knowledge associated with child criminal and sexual exploitation.

The team has been involved in developing and delivering new training packages and approaches, working with local partners.

We have placed particular focus on the benefit being sustainable, through train-the-trainer approaches which will maximise the longer-term impact for local systems.



Programme activities update

Sustainable training

Trauma Informed Practice training provision

We continued to benefit from our commission of Barnado's in the delivery of Trauma Informed Practice training, with an extension to the previous contract through year-end 2024.

A total of 941 people received training, of which 139 completed the most advanced Level 2 training.

Operation Makesafe

Between October and January, our training team delivered a train-the-trainer approach for 270 neighbourhood police officers/ PSCOs on Operation Makesafe, an child exploitation awareness initiative. Officers/staff were trained to take their knowledge back to those in the local community – particularly those working in the hospitality industry.

Child Exploitation training review – Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

The team received “Trainer of the Term” award for their work supporting a review of existing training on child exploitation and the delivery of sessions which covered multi-agency working, intelligence sharing, disruption tactics and use of civil orders.

Oxfordshire Youth: Exploitation and Gang Associated Harms Training

We supported the development and delivery of training for professionals in relation to exploitation and gang harms on young people, with 50 professionals trained by year-end and further courses fully booked.

Developing a Training Strategy

Having identified a clear demand for training across the system, we have placed a new priority upon developing a strategic training offer and began scoping late in the year, ready for implementation in 2024–2025.

Case studies of delivery



Schools Navigators “Like a weight lifted from my shoulders.”

Zara (name changed), 15, was referred by her teacher to the Schools Navigators after she got into a fight which led to her suspension from school. The incident had led to police involvement.

Zara had recently moved to the UK and she described her experience as one of culture-shock – suddenly exposed to new people, and those who were involved in alcohol and drugs which were all new to her. She wanted to fit in and outside of school had made friends with some who were hanging out with drug dealers, being given vapes for free. Her family were critical of her and she was spending less time at home as a result.

Family tensions were high – especially since the suspension from school – and on being given an opportunity to speak to a mentor in a safe space, without any judgment, just exploring what was going on in her life, Zara told her mentor:

“It’s been like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders, being able to talk openly about all this, what’s been going on and how it makes me feel.”

“I feel safe and heard about my ups and downs and it’s motivated me. Given me a new perspective on life and how my actions now have an impact on the future. I know I can control my emotions and to just sit down and think about myself – what I want to improve for me.”

Zara left her sessions with a clear agreed plan on the three things she wanted to focus on: Better relationships at home, better more positive friendships and quitting vaping and occasional cannabis use.



Arshna Ram

Therapeutic Team Lead,
SOFEA MK

Custody Coach turns a life around

Bianca (name changed) is now 21 but she came into contact with Keith Greene of Reading Football Club Community Trust when he visited her in custody after her arrest for a drunken incident and assault.



Keith Greene

Reading FC
Community Trust

Keith is one of the team of Custody Coaches who work to provide support to those detained in Loddon Valley Custody (Reading/Wokingham) and Maidenhead Custody suite.

At the time, she engaged well and Keith helped her in addressing some of the more chaotic issues in her life – work, stable accommodation, a lack of positive routine – coupled with heavy drinking. For Bianca, employment was the most important thing.

“I helped her out with her CV and we made lots of job applications together, trying to keep her spirits up despite not hearing back. With a handful of positive interviews we were confident she’d find something. And she cut down her drinking and was feeling healthy again.”

“We lost touch – only for me to bump into her on the till at my supermarket! She was doing great, normally a driver for the company but filling in that day – she’d been there six months.”

“She told me if I hadn’t met her that day in custody, she’d never have turned her life around. It was the first time she’d held down a full-time job.”

Keith and Bianca are back in touch and meeting again to talk about her life and keep up the support.

Operation Paramount

In May, Operation Paramount won the prestigious Stephen Lloyd Award. The award included £29,000 match-funding contribution toward a dedicated Children and Families Project Coordinator for the charity Children Heard and Seen, who will work with those identified through Paramount.



Sommer

Funded support worker

“I’ve been working to support children referred to the charity through Operation Paramount. I provide a tailored support offer, depending on the needs of the child and family. It typically involves one-to-one sessions exploring their feelings around the imprisonment, art and craft sessions with peer groups and social events and residentials.

“We use these to help them explore their feelings. Often this involves anger, stigma, shame and it really helps them to know there are others feeling the same.

“There’s clearly a sense of relief when families first engage, usually after they’ve been directly referred via Operation Paramount. It’s such a traumatic time, we’re here to try to mitigate the effects, without any judgement.

“As the weeks go by, the confidence in these families increases and they leave sessions with a smile, having many new friends and know there is someone in their corner, helping them.”

Sports & Inclusion The Project PT

Sophie Long, 23, began work with The Project PT in 2022. As the Lead Social Project Coordinator, Sophie oversees a range of social impact projects delivered by The Project PT which supports vulnerable young people. Two of these project have been funded under the Sports & Inclusion programme and are delivered in Oxford city.



Sophie Long
The Project PT

Sophie's background of a Criminology degree and previous work with Victim Support plus her passion for sport and exercise is a perfect fit for her role delivering projects that support young people at risk.

Practically, she delivers boxing, weight lifting and skateboarding sessions to young people who have been referred due to risk of child criminal exploitation. But alongside, Sophie delivers mentoring and life skills.

“Many of the young people we support have faced broken relationships, abuse or exploitation from adults and face real challenges engaging positively in the community. Many have neurodiversity and need particular support.

“Our programmes build their self-worth, develop their confidence to try new things, improve relationships and support personal growth.

“When young people attend our sessions they look to me as a coach, but also as a role model and mentor to lift them to be better in all aspects of life

“We create the environment where a young person can feel heard, respected and safe and has a support network that they may not have experienced before.”

Where we're coming from...

Listening to young people's perspectives

Throughout the year we have worked with partners (particularly schools, colleges and youth groups) to create opportunities where we could engage with young people and learn from them, in particular to help us shape the “Stay True to You” behavioural change programme. Young people demonstrated an enthusiasm for the opportunity to share their views on what causes and can prevent violence and to help inform the way we engage with them.

In addition to a series of focus groups, class discussions and workshops delivered by the VRU, our local partners also created opportunities for the young people in their communities to share their views and to shape their work.

Students at Milton Keynes College, Bletchley Campus, participated in a vibrant discussion on the causes and preventors of violence, showing a sophisticated understanding of the importance of their own social skills and the role of trusted adults.

Reading Borough Council published its Community Safety Strategy and invited the “Young Voices” group to critique it and to work on an interpretation for young people. When it was completed, a follow-up group was invited to consider how the Strategy could be applied for young people. They were animated and challenging in their feedback to local partners and wanted to stay involved for the year ahead.

Buckinghamshire Council hosted another “Youth Summit” exploring opportunities and issues of importance selected by their Youth Council.



Contact us



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More detailed information
and updates on all our work
can be found on our website.

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