

THAMES VALLEY

**VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION**

PARTNERSHIP

# Annual Report

## 2024 – 2025

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April 2025



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# Foreword

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

It is with great pride that I present the 2024–2025 Annual Report for the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership. It reflects on another excellent year of delivery and development. 31 March also marks the end of our previous three-year programme. As such, I think it is also helpful to take stock of how the successful delivery of the programme has put in place some solid foundations for what must now follow from April and beyond.

As in all previous years, through careful management of what has been a complicated VPP programme, we have secured and safely administered Home Office central funding, utilised match-funding and ‘in-kind’ staffing with efficiency and effectiveness. We have fully utilised the funding available for the benefit of the Thames Valley.

Through this effective programme management, we have delivered upon our three core functions, which provide the structure for what follows in this report:

- Strategic leadership and coordination of a complex partnership
- Testing of new interventions
- Evaluating what works

I want to acknowledge all our local partners for their continued engagement and their commitment to making our communities safer. This includes those which are subject to the Serious Violence Duty, but also to the range of voluntary and community sector organisations who have worked alongside, particularly those delivering interventions we commissioned.

Through the partnership, we’ve seen excellent local leadership in response to the new responsibilities of the Duty and a willingness to continue to evolve with the development of new place-based Prevention Partnerships.



**Jules Bottazzi**

Head of the Thames Valley  
Violence Prevention  
Partnership

As we look back over the entire three-year programme, through the interventions we have engaged thousands of young people. Many have benefited from a reachable moment at a point of vulnerability, been offered support, provided routes into other services and positive opportunities. And these interventions were always intended to be tested. We put in place a unique approach with our Project Research Life Cycle. This embedded the ability to respond to existing research, as well as designing with the means to robustly evaluate the impact of these interventions, running multiple randomised control trials over the past year.

As we close down the commissioning of these interventions, we have been able to complete our evaluations of them. We have published our “What Works” series, presenting high quality impact evidence and encourage you all to review these publications and the online webinar recordings.

We’ve been able to work with our local partnership to share that learning and to use it to inform the way we work in the months and years to come.

Through all our interventions and research, we have seen the value of contextual, problem-orientated, person-centred approaches to providing primary diversion. And, we have seen particularly high impact from our Focused Deterrence trial in Milton Keynes, for those young people already engaged in higher risk behaviour and knife offending. This learning is already being built into our grant application and partnership planning for the year ahead.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues in the central VPP team, many of whom – and myself included – are now moving on to new opportunities. I am confident that together we have helped to make the Thames Valley a safer place for our young people, now and for the future.



**Jules Bottazzi**

Head of the Thames Valley  
Violence Prevention Partnership



**Jules Bottazzi**

Head of the Thames Valley  
Violence Prevention  
Partnership

## Concluding our programme:

### Final year in our three-year programme

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In April 2022, the Home Office Serious Violence Unit issued the Violence Reduction Units with multi-year grants and the direction to develop a three-year programme.

Here in the Thames Valley, we responded to the grant criteria and to our own local priorities and have structured the past three years of delivery around the following priorities:

- ▶ **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 and meet the legal requirements of the Serious Violence Duty.
- ▶ **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.

## Our resourcing for 2024–2025

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This past year the VPP drew upon a number of sources of resourcing:

**£1.51m**

Home Office core VRU grant

**£251,000**

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

**£30,000**

Home Office Serious Violence Duty Burden Grant (non-labour) to Thames Valley Police to support ongoing data sharing developments

**£100,000**

Home Office uplift to Thames Valley Police to support ongoing data sharing developments

**£20,000**

match-funding by StreetGames UK to support our VPP Sports & Violence Impact Manager post

**£10,000**

match-funding secured by Reading FC Community Trust to support their provision of Custody Coaches intervention



# Investing the VPP core grant for 2024–2025

## VPP programme team

Supporting leadership and coordination,  
communications and engagement

**£390,000**

## Evaluating what works

**£140,000**

## Sustainable training

**£60,000**

## Data sharing

**£75,000\***

Supporting *Thames Valley Together*

## Total grant

**£1.51m**

## Our pilot interventions

**£832,500**

Hospital Navigators  
School Navigators  
Custody Coaches  
Focused Deterrence  
Sports and Inclusion  
Op Paramount  
Stay True to You  
MASH  
SEND  
Ignite Mentoring

**56%**

invested in pilot  
interventions

**16%**

of total intervention  
spend invested in  
evaluations

\*The Home Office made an additional £100,000 uplift to support TVT development. See page 41.

# Our core programme for 2024–2025

For the year ahead our programme of activity is divided across five key strands:

## Leadership and coordination

Our Partnership Model  
and Programme  
Management Office

## Our pilot interventions and activities

The VRU grant-funded interventions  
The wider activities  
within our networks



## Data sharing approaches

Continue to support the  
development of *Thames Valley  
Together* as our single shared  
solution to data sharing

## Sustainable training

Supporting our partnership  
with training  
Developing a strategic approach  
to meeting training needs

## Evaluation and an evidence base for what works

Developing and implementing our Research Life Cycle  
Evaluation of our interventions  
Sustainability and social value



# Our Partnership Model

Our Partnership Model established a tiered approach to coordination across the diverse partnership landscape that makes up the Thames Valley.

Our priority was to ensure that violence prevention was a priority and that where possible, we would embed it within existing structures and strategies, particularly at the local place-based level.

We engaged Chief Executives and strategic leaders through the Police & Crime Commissioner, while continuing to work with senior level partnership representatives at our own VPP Strategy Board. Then, utilised local structures predominantly built around existing Community Safety Partnerships to operationalise activity.

## Thames Valley Senior Leaders Summit

## VPP Strategy Board

## CSP Managers Network

## Local CSPs and partnership structures

## VPP Programme Management Office

Led by the PCC, held twice per year. Convenes Chief Executive and senior leaders from across the partnership to focus on priorities and whole-system change.

Senior representatives from the VPP's core membership. Provides quarterly governance meeting for the VPP's programme, oversight of local partnership compliance with the Duty and responding to emerging evidence.

A more tactical-level group working with the Community Safety Partnership managers on delivery of Local Serious Violence Plans and coordination of activity.

# Role of the VPP Programme Management Office

With a complex programme, our VPP Programme Management Office provided a small central team of staff through which we supported the leadership, coordination and governance process.

The team administered our grants via central commissioning and contract management of individual interventions and projects.

And we retained our own in-house evaluation team, able to bring their expertise to the designing, delivery and monitoring of multiple randomised control trials and other research.

- ▶ **Administration** of Home Office VRU & SV Duty Grant(s)
- ▶ **Programme and project management** of VPP programme of work
- ▶ **Ensures informed decision making** via Research Project Lifecycle
- ▶ **Provides an evidence base** of ‘what works’
- ▶ **Home Office liaison** and reporting
- ▶ **Supports strategic leadership and coordination** through delivery of the VPP Partnership Model
- ▶ **Coordinates partner responses** to meet the SV Duty
- ▶ **Reports into the VPP Strategy Board;** allowing it to make informed decisions
- ▶ **Ensures alignment** with wider OPCC activity, governance and decision making processes

# Key projects and activities

During 2024–2025, through the work of our central programme team we delivered a number of projects and activities which contributed to our broader aims of providing leadership and coordination.

Activity:	Summary:
<b>VPP Partnership Model delivery</b>	Provided leadership, convened our partners and delivered accountable governance with oversight of the Serious Violence Duty. We were also able to share emerging evaluation findings and explore the evidence base for change. We used our Partnership Model to focus upon sustainability.
<b>VPP Programme Management Office</b>	The Programme Management Office oversaw all aspects of delivery of the programme including grant and contract management, reporting, administration, etc.
<b>Leadership</b>	We took a leadership role nationally and were consistently seen within the wider VRU network as innovative and high-performing. We were the national leads for data sharing, co-chaired the Learning & Evaluation Network, and more locally we supported local leaders in providing strategic direction.
<b>Communications</b>	Through our communications we engaged and informed our stakeholders. Our channels supported the delivery of the Partnership Model and promoted the evidence base through the What Works series. Our communications function also drove the delivery of our counter narrative approach, “Stay True to You”.
<b>Family Drug &amp; Alcohol Courts</b>	We continued to work with the judiciary, local partners (particularly in Berkshire) and with the Centre for Justice Innovation to develop a new FDAC to support vulnerable families.
<b>Employability and Skills project</b>	We worked closely with colleagues in Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and HM Prisons & Probation Service to develop a new project to support access to training and employment for those leaving the secure estate.
<b>Social value models</b>	Over the past year we have continued to explore new social value models which can support the cultural and financial sustainability of our programme. This includes our partnership with Pluggin, which aims to drive investment from the private sector.

# Responding to the Serious Violence Duty

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## Serious Violence Definition

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We have continued to work to a shared definition of Serious Violence which was agreed by our nine partnership areas in May 2023.

This definition has been utilised in the approach taken toward local Strategic Needs Assessments and strategy development.

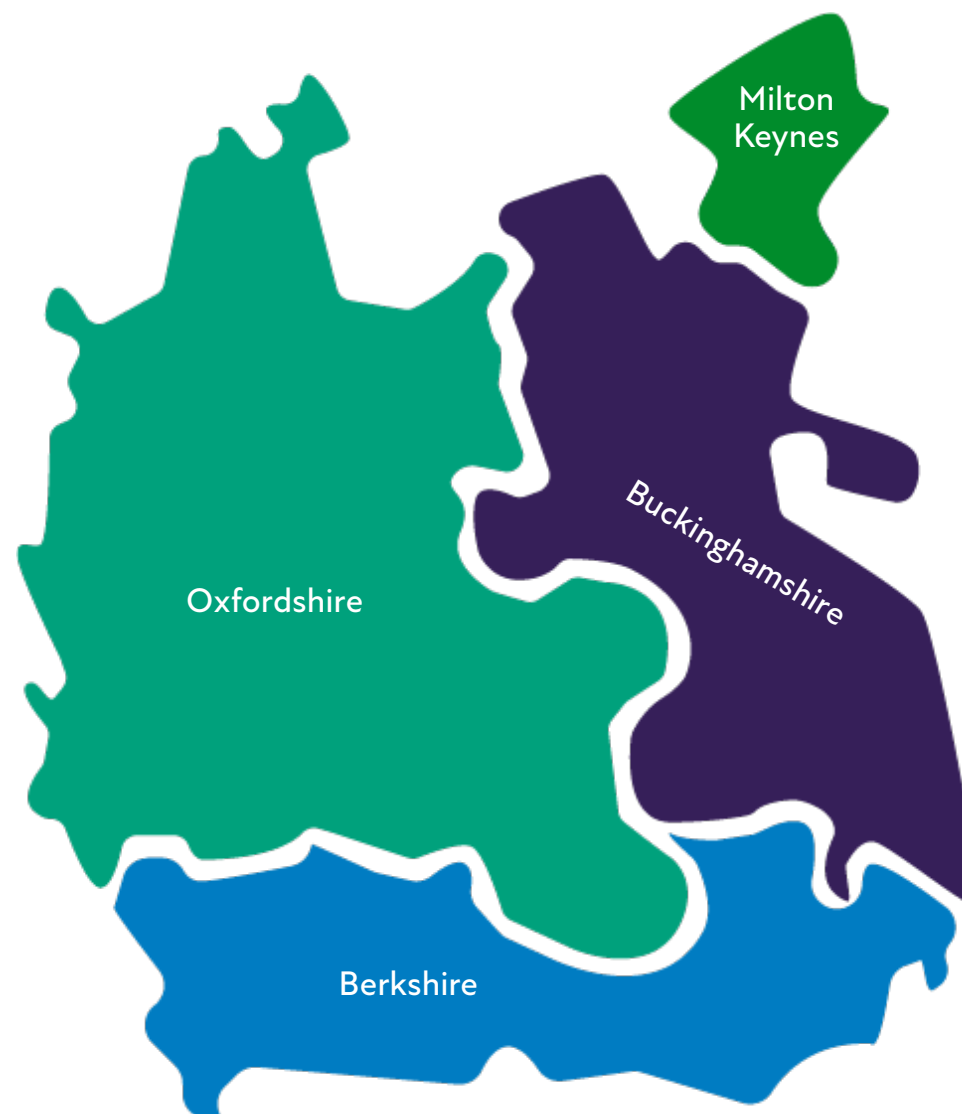
**“Serious Violence includes specific types of recorded crime, such as homicide, grievous bodily harm, incidents that involve a knife, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing.”**

## Strategic Needs Assessments and local strategies in place

Our nine place-based partnerships continued to maintain a local Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment, with support from OPCC data analysts in some instances.

These SNAs were used to inform the published local response strategies and action plans, which over the course of the past year have been managed through local partnership structures.

Oversight of these SNAs and the local strategies was delivered through the VPP Strategy Board.



# Delivering on our central programme





# Testing interventions

We were committed to using the grant to deliver maximum impact and to support the capacity of our local partnerships.

▶ **£832,500**

Nearly  
**60%**  
of total grant  
invested into testing  
-interventions  
this year

As this was the final year of a three-year programme, a number of our interventions had been funded over multiple years. This allowed their delivery model to develop, allowed us to design and run robust evaluations, and also helped to build the case for longer term sustainability in some cases. In some cases, delivery was funded from the previous year's grant.

## A key role for the voluntary and community sector:




Almost all of our interventions work with delivery partners from the local voluntary and community sector (VCS) and we have directly contracted with 10 individual VCS/third-sector organisations and in some instances there are additional organisations working within a consortium (i.e. Slough Sports Consortium).









**FD**



# Testing interventions

Intervention	Summary	Location
 <b>Hospital Navigators</b>	Our longest running intervention, working with five VCS organisations to recruit, train and coordinate volunteers who provide mentor support in A&E departments. They support those admitted in “risky circumstances” with signposting to other support services and an offer of ongoing mentoring.	Five A&E departments covering all areas of Thames Valley
 <b>School Navigators</b>	First piloted in two areas in 2022, the delivery model was refined and re-launched in September 2023. Working with youth workers from VCS organisation SOFEA. The Schools Navigators work to prevent additional exclusion or a reduction in frequency. They offer up to six weekly mentoring sessions for young people referred by the school at the point of their first suspension.	Four schools in Milton Keynes, expanding to 11
 <b>Custody Coaches</b>	Working with trained youth workers from Reading FC Community Trust and MK Dons Sports & Education Trust. Custody Coaches support suitable detainees identified by Thames Valley Police. They offer immediate support to address harmful behaviours and life circumstances, providing an enduring mentoring role if required.	Two custody suites covering Berkshire and Milton Keynes
<b>FD</b> <b>Focused Deterrence</b>	First launched in February 2023, this Milton Keynes partnership project targets those under 25 who habitually carry a knife, or who have carried a knife and also committed violent or sexual offences. Primarily implemented by the Milton Keynes Council’s Contextual Safeguarding Team, working with Thames Valley Police. It is support offer-first, led by social care, with procedurally-just police support, rather than being a police-led, threat-first model.	Milton Keynes

Intervention	Summary	Location
 <b>Sports and Inclusion</b>	<p>Six local “Sports Plus” initiatives were funded in priority areas across the Thames Valley. Each scheme works with a local provider to engage more vulnerable cohorts of young people, while also offering additional services such as mentoring or education and training opportunities.</p>	<p>Six local projects with two in Oxford then one each in High Wycombe, Milton Keynes, Slough and Reading</p>
<b>Sports and Violence Impact Manager</b>	<p>A jointly-funded role hosted by StreetGames UK, the post led the oversight of the funded local sports intervention projects. Also, added leadership capacity to work alongside local partners, supported local funding bids and service development and secured funding via national grants.</p>	<p>Offers support to all partnerships across the Thames Valley.</p>
 <b>Operation Paramount</b>	<p>Now seen as a national innovation, we have continued to support the partnership between Thames Valley Police and the charity Children Heard &amp; Seen. Operation Paramount is a data-sharing process which is speeding up the offer of support to families affected by a parent being imprisoned.</p>	<p>Whole Thames Valley</p>
 <b>Stay True to You</b>	<p>Our new shared counter-narrative / behavioural change campaign has continued to grow over the past year. Built on research with young people and professionals, it seeks to empower them to make their own positive choices while also identifying the trusted adults there to help.</p>	<p>Whole Thames Valley</p>
 <b>MASH</b>	<p>A scoping exercise with the Thames Valley Police Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), exploring their processes and procedures and undertaking a “Value Stream Mapping” exercise. This will inform the next stages of the intervention development.</p>	<p>Whole Thames Valley</p>

Intervention		Summary	Location
	<b>SEND</b>	Working with The Orion Academy, one of a group of specialist schools for those pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, we co-produced a summer holiday project which was delivered over four weeks in July 2024.	Oxfordshire
	<b>Ignite Mentoring</b>	Working with the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Starting Point Mentoring, we designed a new mentoring programme for young people who are currently NEET and need support to re-engage with education, employment and training.	Berkshire

# At a glance – all VPP intervention delivery

Total individuals engaged  
so far in 2024–2025







▶ 5878

Total individuals engaged  
since projects began

▶ 8005

Total trained so far in 2024–2025

▶ 4795

Intervention		Delivery 2024–25	Since project began
	Hospital Navigators	750	2024
	Custody Coaches	195	378
	Schools Navigators	418	622
FD	Focused Deterrence	45	90
	Sports & Inclusion	425	495
	Operation Paramount	95	179
	Stay True to You	3950	4100

Note: Count is of individuals engaged. Sports and FD programmes retain individuals over time. Paramount is count of referrals made to Children Heard & Seen. Total trained includes STTU and other VPP training.

## At a glance – VPP intervention delivery in local areas



Note: Total interventions since all projects began includes count of interventions that we no longer deliver, such as Custody Navigators which ended in March 2023. Does not include training numbers.

# VPP intervention updates

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The following pages provide updates on those interventions funded by the VPP from the Home Office grant.







## Intervention update Hospital Navigators

Our longest running intervention, with five schemes running in five hospital sites.

We continued to work with five voluntary sector organisations to deliver the schemes in the following hospitals:

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

By hospital site	Delivery 2024–2025	Delivery since project began
Milton Keynes	45	284
Buckinghamshire	68	522
Oxfordshire	173	255
Berkshire – Reading	78	237
Berkshire – Slough	343	655

In June we published an evaluation undertaken by Oxford Brookes University of the scheme. It showed:

▶ **70%** of those referred to a Hospital Navigator positively engaged

▶ **1/4** benefited from signposting to other services

▶ **3/4** engaged in some longer term support

▶ **77%** did not re-attend A&E

▶ The scheme was shown to benefit those with mental health challenges and who had abused substances. It helped busy A&E departments and was popular with staff for the added support it provided.

With the VPP no longer providing funding, we led positive discussions with local Public Health and NHS colleagues who will now explore future sustainability.



# Intervention update

## Custody Coaches

Custody Coaches are trained youth workers who work with those aged 18–30 who have been arrested and detained in police custody. The Coaches offer support to address harmful behaviours and life circumstances, providing an enduring mentoring role. Coaches from Reading FC Community Trust worked in two suites covering Berkshire, while coaches from MK Dons covered Milton Keynes.

▶ 378

individuals have now benefited from a Custody Coach engagement since the project began

Since the conclusion of the nine-month randomised control trial in September, a six month follow-up period is being observed until the end of March, at which point an analysis of the impact can be undertaken, with a full "What Works" evaluation report being published in April.

Custody Coaches will no longer be funded by the VPP and we thank everyone at both Reading FC Community Trust and MK Dons Sports & Education Trust for their support in delivering the scheme.

By custody suite	Delivery 2024–2025	Delivery since project began
Milton Keynes	22	62
Berkshire – Loddon Valley	89	172
Berkshire – Maidenhead	84	144



## Intervention update Schools Navigators

The Schools Navigator intervention ran across the last academic year September – July in four schools in Milton Keynes. For the academic year commencing September 2024, the scheme has expanded to operate in 11 schools.

We commissioned SOFEA, a local organisation working to support young people and provide alternative education. Their youth workers offer in-school mentoring sessions working with pupils at risk of suspension, with the aim of reducing the frequency or risk of additional exclusion by providing support.



A "What Works" evaluation report was published and a partnership webinar held in early December to share the evidence. The report and a recording of the webinar is available via the [VPP website](#).

**17.5%** lower suspension rate in suspended pupils in the terms following the term in which they were eligible for mentoring in the treatment schools compared to the control schools

**11.5%** lower overall suspension rate in treatment schools (including the treatment term) than in control schools

From the start of the new academic year in September, constraints on the delivery of the model due to the randomised control trial design were removed. The scheme was recommissioned, still working with SOFEA, but expanding across 11 schools to give increased benefit to more young people.

There have been very positive and ongoing discussions with school leaders in Milton Keynes on how to sustain the provision through local budgets when the VPP funding ends in March.

**▶ 418** pupils have now benefited from the Schools Navigators this financial year

# FD

## Intervention update Focused Deterrence

First launching in February 2023, this Milton Keynes partnership project targets those under 25 who habitually carry a weapon/knife and have also committed violent or sexual offences. Primarily implemented by the Milton Keynes Council's Contextual Safeguarding Team, working with Thames Valley Police.

The full "What Works" evaluation report was published in November and a webinar held to discuss the findings. The report and a recording of the webinar are available on the [VPP website](#).

The intervention is no longer being delivered, but the VPP will explore if future grant funding can be secured to extend the initiative.

### Overall experimental findings – all age groups

**54%** reduction in crime harm as a suspect

**39.8%** reduction in knife offending as a suspect

**28.2%** reduction in violent crime as a suspect

**28.5%** reduction in violence and sexual crime as a suspect

**21.4%** reduction in other non-police initiated crimes as a suspect

**36%** reduction in violent crime as a victim

### Sub-group analysis – only those in the 11–17 age group

**70%** reduction in crime harm as a suspect

**59%** reduction in knife offending as a suspect

#### Key to findings

► **Statistically significant** – less than 5% likelihood the finding was due to chance

► **Not statistically significant** – more than 5% likelihood the finding was due to chance, but collectively they show positive results



## Intervention update

# Sports & Inclusion interventions in partnership with StreetGames UK

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 have continued to host a VPP Sports & Violence Impact Manager, part-funded by the VPP and by StreetGames UK.



**Chelsea Piggott**

Sports & Violence  
Impact Manager

The value of Chelsea's post – and our broader strategic partnership with StreetGames UK – has been proved again across the past year.

Chelsea has brought her own passion and drive to the post, providing much-needed additional capacity to support local sports providers as they upskill their workforce and widen their offer for more vulnerable young people.

The role – and the influence and credibility it brings through the national StreetGames UK organisation – has also helped our local system partners. A focus was given to supporting the development of place-based partnerships, taking a more strategic approach to using "Sport Plus" as a preventative intervention. This has included securing additional grant funding from local and national sources and supporting a number of local initiatives to grow.

Through StreetGames UK, we continue to work with the Youth Endowment Fund to secure investment into the Thames Valley as a participating local area in part of a wider multi-site trial.

We are also contributing to the national evaluation of sports interventions.

We will be looking to continue to support the post in 2025/2026 if grant funding can be secured as it is welcome additional capacity to our local partnerships.



## Intervention update

# Sports & Inclusion interventions in partnership with StreetGames UK

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



Six local interventions were funded by the VPP through to 31 March 2025. Alongside this, StreetGames UK assisted in securing funding for a new sports intervention in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.

The varied programmes continually attracted new participants and helped to provide them with positive activities but also support with mentoring, education and routes to qualifications and further training and employment.

While the VPP will not be directly funding the continuation of these individual schemes beyond March 2025, we will work with local partnerships to identify future grant opportunities for diversion and prevention schemes which may utilise the Sports Plus approaches.

Provider	Total Participants
Reading FC Community Trust	83
Street Games – Milton Keynes City Council	176
Street Games – Slough Borough Council	53
The Project PT – Oxford (over both provisions)	78
Wycombe Wanderers Sport & Education Trust	44
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>495</b>



## Intervention update

# Operation Paramount

A partnership between Thames Valley Police and the charity Children Heard & Seen, Operation Paramount is the name of a brand new data-sharing process which is speeding up the offer of support to families affected by a parent being imprisoned, with the VPP also funding a dedicated support worker for the charity.

Families are provided an holistic offer including parenting support, financial advice, navigating the prison system and overcoming stigma and trauma for child and parent. They become part of a wider social network of other families, and receive support in building trust in authorities and policing. Through this, the whole family – but particularly children and young people – receive protective support to prevent risk of offending or wider vulnerability and improve outcomes.

The past year has seen Operation Paramount become a significant success both locally in the Thames Valley, and in informing national approaches and influencing future policy and legislation.

Locally, Thames Valley Police has now fully rolled out the process across the whole force area, with officers/staff undertaking visits. The TVP data team has also developed new automated processes to safely recognise those families through new processes.

2024–2025	Number of young people supported
Oxfordshire	33
Buckinghamshire	29
Milton Keynes	12
Reading	15
West Berkshire	2
Bracknell	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>

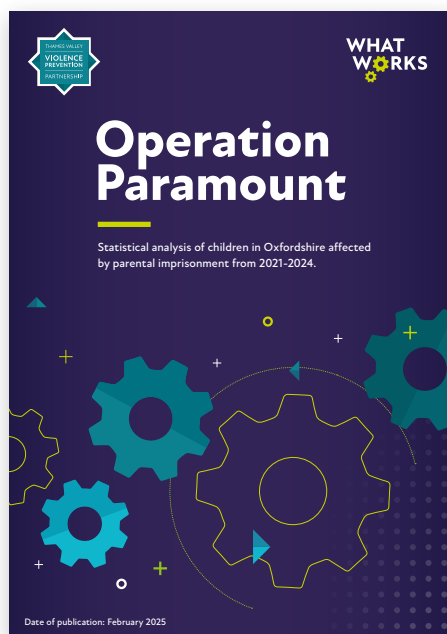




## Intervention update

# Operation Paramount

We have undertaken two pieces of research and evaluation as part of Operation Paramount this past year which are adding to the evidence-base that this small yet significant cohort of children face particular additional risks as a result of parental imprisonment.



In February, we published a What Works research paper which presented the findings following our longitudinal analysis of data provided by Oxfordshire County Council on a cohort of 225 children recognised as having a parent in prison.

Our analysis explored metrics such as eligibility for free school meals, attendance rates at school, SEN needs and engagement with social services. There were clear additional impacts on outcomes as a result, underlining the importance of working with this cohort and providing support.

We are concluding an additional evaluation report of the wider Operation Paramount process, the support mechanism provided by Children Heard & Seen and the benefits felt by families. This will be published in April.

Further to our local work, Sergeant Russ Massie of Thames Valley Police, who has led the development of Operation Paramount from the beginning and with great passion, has contributed to wider national policy debate, even influencing future legislation which aims to improve the recognition of these families and the support offered. The Operation Paramount data process has been recognised as a national innovation with other force areas seeking to embed it.

MASH

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 undertook a process mapping exercise to identify key processes and risk assessment procedures, and barriers to their effectiveness and ways that improvements could be made.

The results have been passed to Thames Valley Police and local partners for further action in 2025–2026.

SEND

Intervention update

## Orion Academy SEND Summer School

This year, in response to local partners identifying the need for support in SEND provision and the potential for additional risk and vulnerability in this cohort, we sought to test an intervention which others could learn from.

Working with Oxfordshire County Council, we partnered with The Orion Academy, a specialist school for young people with SEND needs.



The school had identified that their pupils were more vulnerable to issues such as child exploitation. In response, the VPP provided dedicated training inputs for staff and also for parents/carers.

There was also the opportunity to test whether additional support and diversionary activities could contribute to improved school attendance, better behaviours and also to wider confidence and social skills.

The VPP funded the design and delivery of a programme of summer activities for a cohort of pupils who were continuing into the next year group, or who were due to move to the school in September. The aim was to deliver a programme of activities to build skills, while also helping to maintain their link to their school, teachers and peers and to provide a smoother transition in September.

An evaluation of the initiative was undertaken by The Orion School and showed the positive benefits that pupils and teachers have taken.



## Intervention update **Ignite Mentoring**

In partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Brighter Futures for Children services & Starting Point Mentoring for young people, we have now designed and collaboratively committed to a pilot initiative to provide mentoring to support young people with their engagement in education, training and employment aspirations.

In December, we published a “What Works” paper presenting a review of existing evidence in relation to mentoring schemes which support those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to engage with positive activities.

The findings have been used to design this new mentoring scheme, which has been branded Ignite Mentoring.

Eight volunteer officers and staff from the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service have been trained by Starting Point Mentoring. They will be matched with eight young people referred by Brighter Futures for Children.

As the delivery year 2024–2025 closes, the intervention will now continue to move into delivery without additional funding from the VPP.

Mentors have been vetted and a process is underway to match them with young people referred into the scheme.

An evaluation will be undertaken to complement the previously published “What Works” paper.



## Intervention update

# Stay True to You campaign and training

In May, the VPP launched the “Stay True to You” research and resources, providing a new approach for all partners to support the counter-narrative and to improve positive engagement with young people.

The approach takes a deliberately positive approach, aiming to reach young people through the trusted adults around them – supporting youth workers, sports coaches, volunteers, teachers and parents to build positive relationships. It aims to build young people’s confidence in their own abilities to make positive choices for themselves.



The website [StayTrueToYou.co.uk](https://StayTrueToYou.co.uk) continues to provide a hub for resources, hosting the original research insights, practitioner toolkit and workshop guide, posters and training dates.

By developing and providing a single set of resources across our whole area and accessible to all local partners and organisations, we achieved a degree of consistency and efficiency in approach.

We have passed the resources to our local partners and many are building them into their own prevention plans.

Our partnership with The Ben Kinsella Trust allowed us to deliver successful training and awareness sessions to practitioners and parents. This has then evolved into a more sustainable online training offering for the years ahead.

Locally, through schools engagement and community groups we have reached thousands of young people with the Stay True to You messaging.

 **Nearly 4,000 young people have attended a school assembly exploring knife crime and the STTU principles this last year.**

## Programme activities update

# Joint working with the Department for Work and Pensions

This year we created a strategic partnership with the Department for Work & Pensions and HM Prisons & Probation Service. Together, we wanted to further our joint working on how employability and skills could support prison leavers, giving them protective factors that would help to prevent reoffending and future violence.



**Sarah Harvey**

DWP Buckinghamshire, seconded to the VPP

As a full-time secondee provided by the Department for Work & Pensions, Sarah (known as SJ) has brought incredible drive and enthusiasm, identifying where she can most make a difference and work to bring partners along.

In a short period of time, SJ has achieved a huge amount.

Her focus has been on delivering enhanced employability opportunities in local prisons, by securing DWP funding for training initiatives such as rail track safety courses and interview preparation.

SJ has identified a number of major employers who wish to offer interviews, training and onward employment on release. This scheme has seen a high level of engagement and success rates.

In addition to supporting prison-leavers, SJ has recognised the need for professional development and has worked to implement new training for DWP and Probation staff, and helped to raise the understanding of each other's roles and how they can work together for the benefit of those being released from prison.

So successful has the project been that the DWP will be funding the secondment to continue into the following year.



**Department  
for Work &  
Pensions**

# Evaluating what works





## Evaluating what works

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A core function of the VPP is how we support research into effective approaches to tackle the root causes of violence.

Through research and evaluation we can identify what works, or does not, and create an evidence base. We also build our understanding of value for public money and return on investment. By doing this, we help improve processes and drive adoption and longer-term sustainability beyond the VPP grant funding.

Our expert in-house Research & Evaluation team gave us excellent capacity and capability.

Over the past year we have continued to use our Research Project Life Cycle as a framework to help structure the design and implementation of our interventions to allow for their evaluation.

We have been able to complete and publish evaluations and research papers, including academic journal publications.

In addition to publishing a qualitative evaluation of the Hospital Navigators programme (in partnership with Oxford Brookes University), our team has concluded randomised control trial evaluations of Focused Deterrence, Schools Navigators and Custody Coaches. We also delivered an RCT of Thames Valley Police's hotspot policing model.

We have undertaken two research projects which undertook specialist rapid evidence reviews.

We have also undertaken the first multi-agency data analysis of a cohort of young people affected by parental imprisonment, and a broader qualitative evaluation of Operation Paramount.

We have published a number of these evaluation projects under our "What Works" series and held webinars to share the evidence.



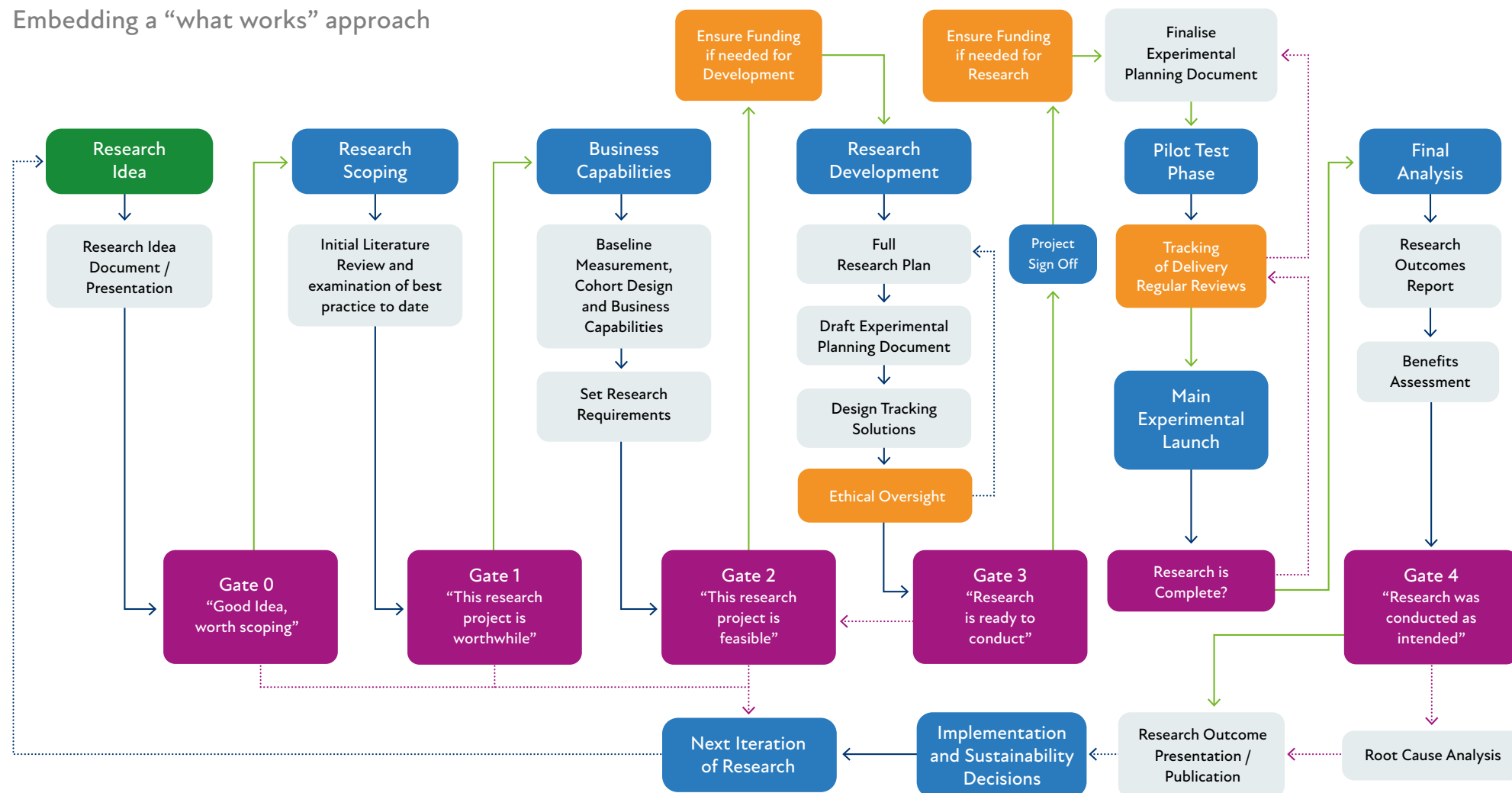
Over 2024–2025, the VPP invested

► **£140,000**

to undertake evaluation  
of interventions








# The VPP Research Life Cycle

Embedding a “what works” approach



Reference: Adapted from Olphin, T.P.A., (2023). *Research Project Lifecycle: A Structured Approach to Conducting Research in the Public Sector*, Reading, UK: Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit. © Crown Copyright 2023

# Evaluating what works

Intervention	Evaluation summary
 <b>Hospital Navigators</b>	<p>An evaluation of the post-implementation phase of the scheme was completed by Oxford Brookes University and published in June 2024. It includes a document review, case description review and interviews with stakeholders.</p>
 <b>Schools Navigators</b>	<p>Following the conclusion of a randomised control trial, a comprehensive evaluation report was published in October 2024, the first in our “What Works” series. It showed impact in reducing exclusions and improvements in pupil self-reported wellbeing scores.</p>
 <b>Custody Coaches</b>	<p>A comprehensive randomised control trial concluded and an evaluation report has been finalised for publication as part of our “What Works” series.</p>
<b>FD</b> <b>Focused Deterrence</b>	<p>A randomised control trial was undertaken and a comprehensive evaluation report was published in October 2024 as part of the “What Works” series. The intervention was shown to have significant impact on reducing knife offending and lowering crime harm scores and has demonstrated how the person-centred, support-first approaches can have significant benefits.</p>
 <b>Sports and Inclusion</b>	<p>Our partnership with StreetGames UK has allowed our local schemes and approaches to contribute to the broader national evaluation.</p>
 <b>Op Paramount</b>	<p>A data analysis of children from Oxfordshire affected by parental imprisonment was completed and published in February as part of the “What Works” series. It evidences the negative impact upon the outcomes of young people with a parent in prison.</p>
 <b>SEND schools</b>	<p>The Orion Academy school where the summer school programme was run have undertaken a light-touch evaluation of the initiative which has not been published but will be shared with partners.</p>
 <b>Ignite Mentoring</b>	<p>The project is moving into the delivery stages in coming months. A model for evaluation has been designed.</p>

# WHAT WORKS



## Data sharing: *Thames Valley Together*

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All our work is underpinned by data-led and evidence-based approaches, ensuring we have the best understanding of where serious violence is taking place in our communities, the risk factors and what protective measures we can put in place.

Over the past year, the Violence Prevention Partnership has continued to work with Thames Valley Police – and provide funding – to support the *Thames Valley Together* programme.

As an innovative approach to multi-agency data-sharing, *Thames Valley Together* could yield significant benefits to partners in their approach to tackling the root causes of serious violence and the effective targeting of activity.

Over the past year, the programme has been through significant change.

It's key deliverables are creating a new mechanism for sharing aggregated police-system data with local partnerships through a new module called Together Core. This has enabled Thames Valley Police to meet its Serious Violence Duty responsibilities in making available datasets to local partners. Through local analysts, they are then able to utilise this data for local strategic needs assessments and to inform wider work.

The *Thames Valley Together* team has focused its efforts on completing some new products – the first is the Focused Deterrence Dashboard, which will assist in the identification and management of individuals who are of risk and who may be suitable for local Focused Deterrence intervention programmes. This tool will become particularly useful for local TVP Harm Reduction Units and local partnerships as they identify and manage cohorts of those most of risk, under future funded Focused Deterrence models of intervention.

In addition, the team has created new data sharing mechanisms which support the Operation Paramount process, helping to recognise those families in the Thames Valley who have been affected by parental imprisonment, working closely with our partner the HM Prisons and Probation Service.

**THAMES VALLEY  
TOGETHER**

# Sustainable Training

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It was a commitment that through the VPP's central programme team capacity and particular skill-sets, we would develop a programme of sustainable training which could support local partners.

This has proved a popular contribution from a wide range of organisations, including public sector and voluntary organisations.

Through a combination of delivering face-to-face and online training sessions, our small in-house team has delivered a training input to nearly 950 practitioners from across a wide breadth of local partnerships. This included large-scale organisational training such as with the Department for Work and Pensions which put some 320 members of staff through one of our Child Exploitation Awareness courses.

Having identified particular gaps with our health colleagues, we partnered with the local Integrated Care Boards to deliver programmes to GPs, A&E staff and nursing teams, with a focus on spotting the signs of exploitation, professional curiosity with regard vulnerable children and the risk factors to violence and harm.

We have had a strong partnership with Oxfordshire Youth, one of our largest VCS organisations supporting young people in the Thames Valley. Through their "Girls & Gangs" project, we have delivered exploitation awareness training to staff, to the wider public and supported sessions with young people too.

We have created new partnerships with a breadth of local organisations, from VCS and community groups to local schools.

We have established connections to all our county-level Safeguarding Partnerships and have contributed training support. In particular, we helped to redesign and deliver Child Exploitation training for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

As the year draws to a close, we have concluded the commissioning and production of three new training videos which will provide a cost-efficient and engaging tool to raise awareness of issues including child exploitation, online harm and the need for professional curiosity. These will be published and promoted early in the new financial year, while we also look to identify new topics.

Feedback received has been consistently excellent and it is clear that our small team can have a significant impact on our communities and partners through the sustainable training offering.

## Contact us

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A teal starburst graphic with eight points, centered on the page. Inside the starburst is a white rectangular box containing the text.

THAMES VALLEY

**VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION**

PARTNERSHIP