

From: Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit
Date: 8 December 2021



Introduction:

1. Kent and Medway is one of 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) formed in 2019 under the Home Office Serious Violence Projects programme to drive a whole system, preventative approach to tackling the causes of serious youth violence (public place violence involving young people up to the age of 25).
2. Now in its third year, the Kent and Medway VRU receives a core grant of £1.16m per annum to deliver the programme, with 50% invested in interventions with young people, and 50% spent on programme costs.

Aim and purpose of the Kent and Medway VRU:

3. The overarching aim of the VRU is to provide leadership and strategic coordination of all relevant agencies, to support a 'whole systems' approach to tackling serious violence locally.
4. The VRU supports a multi-agency, long-term approach to preventing and tackling serious violence, which is:
 - focused on a defined population;
 - with and for communities;
 - not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries;
 - focused on generating long-term as well as short-term solutions;
 - based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities;
 - rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem.
5. The VRU's strategic objectives are aligned to the National Objectives of the Serious Violence Unit. By year 5 (2023/24), it aims to achieve:
 - A reduction in hospital admissions resulting from assaults that take place in public, where a knife is used, and the victim is under 25.
 - A reduction in reported assaults that take place in public, where a knife is used, and the victim is under 25.
 - A reduction in reported homicides that take place in public, where a knife is used, and the victim is under 25.
6. The medium-term objectives are focused on increasing agency collaboration to prevent serious youth violence:
 - creating a shared problem-solving approach to violence reduction;
 - creating a collaborative approach to commissioning and delivering violence prevention services;
 - seeking community led solutions to preventing serious violence.
7. The focus for 2021/22 is weapon related harm, County Line risks and identifying and tackling Young Street Groups.

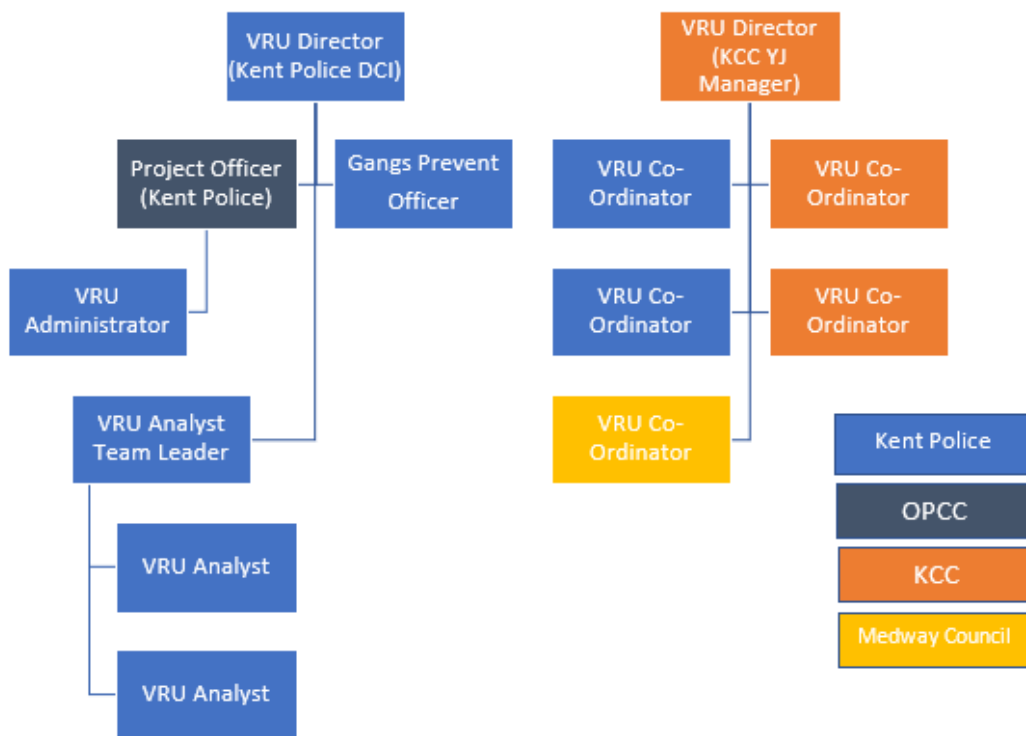
Overview of the Kent and Medway VRU funding:

8. The VRU is funded through a core grant from the Home Office Serious Violence Unit (£1.16m). The grant is made on an annual basis, and is subject to the following cycle:
 - Production of Strategic Needs Assessment (Problem Profile).
 - Production of Response Strategy (Strategic and Tactical Plan).
 - Production of Annual Narrative Report.
 - Production of Academic Evaluation of Impact (University of Kent and Public Health).
9. The VRU currently invests 50% of the core grant on interventions, which compares favourably to a minimum intervention spend of 20%.

10. This financial year, the VRU successfully bid for additional funding (£740,000) to deliver:
- a High Intensity Intervention Project for young people involved in serious violence; and
 - a Reachable Moments project for young people admitted to A&E following traumatic injury.
11. The VRU also match funds several projects with partners including the Office of the PCC (St Giles Trust), Kent County Council (Buddi Tag Scheme) and private providers (Sports Diversion) to ensure best value for money and sustainability of services.
12. Alternative funding streams have also been secured to sustain VRU initiated services. For example, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group has provided funding for the 'Step Back' Prison leavers project delivered by The Forward Trust.

Structure of the Kent and Medway VRU:

13. The VRU consists of 1 police officer and 12 staff on secondment from Kent Police, the Office of the PCC, Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council.



Governance & oversight of the Kent & Medway VRU:

14. The VRU is governed by an Oversight Board which is chaired by the Commissioner or his deputy.
15. It includes representation from Kent Police, KCC, Medway Council, NHS England, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health, Her Majesty’s Prisons, National Probation Service and the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).
16. The Board meets quarterly to:
- ensure active involvement in the strategic plan;
 - maintain an overview of partner activity to prevent serious violence;
 - hold the VRU Directors to account for delivery of the overarching aim;
 - identify and consider future risks; and
 - drive sustainability of VRU activity.
17. The VRU Police Director reports through the Crime Command, and the KCC Director through Children’s Services.

Kent & Medway VRU - partnership working:

18. The VRU Analysts use a combination of Police, Health, Public Health and Local Authority data to develop a profile of public place violence, producing quarterly Strategic and monthly Tactical Assessments. They also produce a monthly proactive 'Prevent, Protect, Prepare document' to support the early identification of contextual risks around young people and places.

19. Key operational partners include:

- Kent Police – Gangs and County Lines Team, Partnerships and Child Centred Policing, Local Policing.
- Local Authorities – Youth Services, Youth Justice, Care Leavers, Community Safety, Public Health
- HM Prisons and Probation Service
- University of Kent – academic evaluator
- Third Sector – community provision

20. The VRU commissions county-wide and locally designed services to deliver its prevention and intervention approach. For example, this financial year:

- St Giles Trust has delivered over 100 interventions with young people involved in gangs and County Lines. The project is co-funded with the Office of the PCC.
- Nurture UK has developed an intervention programme in the nine schools most affected by serious violence. The programme has now been adopted by KCC.
- The Forward Trust has delivered 30 interventions with gang affiliated young men leaving prison to reduce the risk of reoffending. The project is now sustained by NHS funding.
- 19 community-based preventative programmes were co-designed with the CSPs, Community Safety Units and Taskforces in those districts most affected by County Lines and weapon related violence.

21. Last year around 1,500 young people engaged in VRU funded preventative projects. Outcomes reported from participants included improved wellbeing and resilience known to reduce risk-taking behaviours, for example:

"I'm very keen to meet Francis and know how he got out; I don't want to go back there to that. At this point in time I don't want or need drugs no more but as I'm faced with being released NFA [no fixed abode] and on £75p/w benefits, when I was earning 4k a week on county lines I don't know how to do it."

Forward Trust 'Step Back' participant at HMP Rochester

22. [Further information](#) on the work of the Kent and Medway VRU can be found on the Office of the PCC website.

Future plans and challenges:

23. Planning for financial year 2022/23 is under way, but the current annual funding arrangements make sustainability and long-term planning difficult.

24. Whilst the Directors await confirmation of the future funding structure, the Strategic Needs Assessment is being refreshed to guide the VRU's response strategy.

25. In response to the Serious Violence Duty (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021), the VRU will act as the co-ordinating body across Kent and Medway.

26. Currently all staff are seconded to the VRU and negotiations are under way to secure the team for next financial year.

Recommendation:

27. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report.