



Title: Update of the work of the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit

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The paper outlines the work of the Violence Reduction Unit and the findings from the Strategic Needs Assessment of January 2022. The Board are asked to note to contents of the report and agree to the recommendations.

1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was initially established in September 2019 with grant funding from the Home Office. The funding was provided to the Police and Crime Commissioner to establish a multi-agency VRU to promote a public health approach to tackling serious violence in the County.
- 1.2 The VRU has a focus on tackling violence linked to Gangs and County Lines, weapons, violence with injury and robbery.
- 1.3 The VRU has two Directors on secondment from Kent Police and Kent County Council. There are five area based coordinators drawn from Kent Police, Kent County Council and Medway Council, three analysts from Kent Police who receive data from Kent Police, Kent County Council, Medway Council, the National Probation Service and Public Health. There is one project officer and one administrative assistant.
- 1.4 The VRU has received outline confirmation from the Home Office that there will be three year grant funding for the period April 2022 – March 2025. The funding will increase from the current core grant of £1,160,000 to £2,000,000 in the first year and £1,500,000 per annum for the remaining two years.

2. Finding of the Strategic Needs Assessment.

- 2.1 The VRU are required to complete an annual assessment of public place serious violence in the County. The work used data up to 30th September 2021 and the main findings are:
 - All crimes of violence against the person increased by 3% in the year October 2022 – September 2021 when compared with the previous year.
 - Robbery decreased by 29% in this period.
 - Violence where injury was caused decreased by 7% in this period.
 - Sexual offences increased by 4% in this period.





- 2.2 Serious violence is unevenly spread across the County. Districts in North and East Kent generally experienced higher levels of serious violence than those in South and West Kent, although Maidstone had the fourth highest levels of serious violence. There are peaks in violence between 3 – 4 pm, 6 – 8 pm and during Night Time Economy hours of 11 pm – midnight.
- 2.3 The main types of serious violence that were recorded are: violence with injury; robbery; knives and weapons; violence linked to drug supply.
- 2.4 The number of County Lines operating in the County and supplying Class A drugs reduced from 64 – 40 in the last 12 months. The VRU identified 12 Young Street Groups in the time period. These are groups of young people and young adults who identify as a group, are involved in anti-social behaviour and violence, and are the precursors to more organised gangs. The mapping of these groups is new and cannot be compared with previous years.

3. Success Factors

- 3.1 There is a challenge to identify the critical factors which lie behind reductions in public place serious violence due to the restrictions placed on society due to Covid 19. The closure of the night time economy, limitations on public association and reductions in travel have all limited the opportunity for people to meet in public. The changes in behaviour amongst the public have impacted on the ability to evaluate specific interventions to test the efficacy of the specific intervention.
- 3.2 The VRU is tasked with using analysis to coordinate and promote a multi-agency preventative approach to serious violence. Feedback from partners has identified the following factors as supporting reductions in serious violence:
 - Improvements in the sharing of intelligence and analysis across organisations which has supported multi-agency discussions, planning and support to individuals of concern.
 - Young people and young adults at risk of criminal exploitation or who are involved in 'Young Street Groups' are now routinely identified and discussed at multi-agency meetings which include representatives from children's and adults' services which supports a more cohesive approach to tackling networks of individuals.
 - Organisations have adopted a place-based approach to violence prevention that sits alongside support to individuals. The identification of hotspots, and the response from services, has helped to create safer spaces and reduce opportunities for harm to occur.
 - Increases in the resources and support available to young people

4. Serious Violence priorities 2022 – 2023

- 4.1 The Serious Violence Duty places a requirement on Community Safety Partnerships to use a strategic needs assessment to design and implement a Serious Violence strategy that is informed by a Public Health approach to violence prevention. The VRU is tasked





with achieving similar aims and objectives. A single, consistent set of priorities across CSPs and the VRU supports the best use of resources.

- 4.2 The VRU will have a focus on five main types of serious violence which are based on the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessment. These are:

- Violence with injury
- Robbery
- Knives and weapons
- Violence linked to drug supply
- Sexual violence

- 4.3 The approach to tackle and prevent violence from occurring or recurring which the VRU aims to deliver jointly with Community Safety Partnerships is one that includes support for individuals involved in serious violence either as a perpetrator or a victim, and a preventative approach that focusses on both individuals or places where risks of violence are identified.
- 4.4 Funding to deliver diversionary activities in places affected by violence will be aligned and coordinated with Kent Police who will receive 'Grip' funding to Police presence in hotspot areas of serious violence.
- 4.5 The VRU proposes to work with Community Safety Partnerships to ensure that the voices of young people, parents and communities are heard and reflected in the design and delivery of services. Funding from the VRU will allow the recruitment of Participation Workers to work with young people and a Community Conferencing specialist service to work with communities affected by violence.
- 4.6 Further work will be commissioned to extend the Bystander Approach across the education sector, youth services and professionals. The Bystander Approach has been used to good effect in Scotland to promote the understanding that any individual can be an active bystander and take action to prevent harm from occurring.
- 4.7 The VRU will work with the 13 Community Safety Partnerships across Kent and Medway, and the Kent Community Safety Partnership sub-group on Serious Violence and Organised Crime to ensure that the work to tackle serious violence is coordinated.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The meeting is asked to note the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessment and to agree the priority areas and responses to serious violence.

