

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit - update
Date: 6 December 2022

Introduction:

1. Kent and Medway is one of 20 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. In 2022/23 the Kent and Medway VRU received a core grant of £2,042m to deliver the programme, and has confirmed funding of £1.5m for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
3. This year, 55% has been invested in interventions with young people and 45% spent on programme costs. The minimum required spend on interventions is 20%.

Aim and purpose of the Kent and Medway VRU:

4. 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.
5. 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.

Performance Indicators:

6. The performance indicators for VRUs set by the Home Office and the data to be used to evaluate the impact are:
 - A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25.
 - A reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.
 - A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25.
7. The medium-term objectives are set locally and focus on increasing agency collaboration to prevent serious youth violence:
 - effective data sharing and multi-agency analysis of harm;
 - 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.
8. The focus for 2022/23 is weapon related harm, County Line risks and identifying and tackling Young Street Groups. The VRU collaborates with Kent Police to deliver the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy.

Interventions:

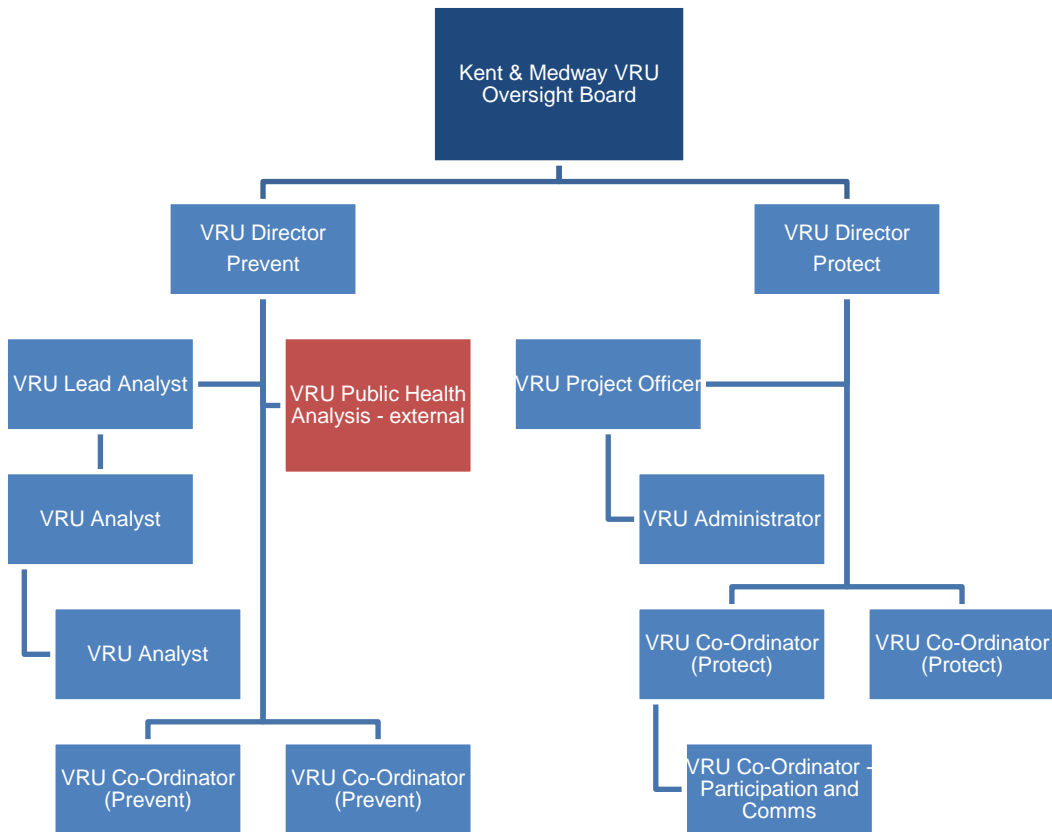
9. The VRU are required to spend 40% of the intervention budget on services which have been identified by the Youth Endowment Fund as having a strong impact on serious violence. The interventions funded in Kent are:

- Accident and Emergency Reachable Moments – the project offers support for young people admitted due to serious violence. The projects are in Medway Maritime and the William Harvey A & E departments; attached at Appendix A is a case study.
- Focused Deterrence – this is a multi-agency response to Young Street Groups and Gangs. It combines enhanced enforcement, persistent offers of support and a specialist service to work with communities affected by harm.
- Social Skills – seven Pupil Referral Units are supported by a clinical psychologist to teach social skills to young people that will improve how they respond to stress and increase resilience.
- Community Sport – twelve Community Safety Partnerships have been funded to commission community sports provision to be delivered in serious violence hotspots. The projects increase the number of responsible adults in places of concern and offer alternatives to young people at risk of involvement in violence.
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – therapists offer counselling to young people who have experienced trauma and are identified as being at risk of exploitation.

10. The VRU also jointly fund a 1:1 support service for young people at risk of criminal exploitation. The funding is shared with the Office of the PCC.

Structure of the Kent and Medway VRU:

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



12. The VRU is governed by an Oversight Board which is chaired by the PCC or his deputy.

13. 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).

14. The Board meets quarterly to:

- ensure active involvement in the strategic plan;
- maintain an overview of partnership activity to prevent serious violence;
- hold the VRU Directors to account for delivery of the overarching aim;

- identify and consider future risks;
- drive sustainability of VRU activity.

15. The VRU Police Director reports through the Crime Command, and the KCC Director through Children's Services.

Kent and Medway VRU – partnership working:

16. 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.

17. 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

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

- Catch 22 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. Between April – September 2022 a total of 1,941 young people had been supported through interventions funded by the VRU.
- The Nurture program has been funded by KCC to be delivered across all schools.
- Young people at risk of criminal exploitation are routinely identified and supported through a multi-agency approach which has strengthened the links between the police and services offering support.
- Kent schools are signing the 'knife pledge' to commit to being knife-free. The pledge is supported by workshops delivered by the VRU, police officers and fearless (part of Crimestoppers).

19. [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:

20. Planning for financial year 2023/24 is under way to consider the impact of a reduction of 25% in the VRU core grant and how partners can support services which demonstrate a strong impact on serious violence.

21. The Strategic Needs Assessment is being refreshed to guide the VRU's response strategy.

22. 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. The final guidance on the implementation of the Duty has not yet been published.

Recommendation:

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

Case Study – collaborative preventative working.

In the Summer of 2022, a young man aged 15 was admitted into the Medway Maritime Accident and Emergency department as he had taken an overdose of prescription drugs in an attempt to take his own life. As well as being treated by medical professionals he was seen by the VRU Reachable Moments (RM) worker based in the A & E department. The RM worker is a trained youth worker employed by Medway Council's Youth Service through funding provided by the VRU.

The RM worker was able to engage with the young man and establish that earlier in the day he had been arrested by Kent Police for possession of drugs with intent to supply. The location was very close to his home address. They had arrested him, took him back home for interview, seized drugs with a value of approximately £500. Once the interview concluded the officers left the home address and told his mother they would be in touch.

Whilst at home he had become increasingly agitated and anxious, but had not accepted any help or support from family members. Later in the day he disclosed that he was scared as he had a drugs debt which he was unable to pay off and, because of this, he had taken a number of prescription drugs as the only solution he could see. It was also a concern due to another young person dealing on his home patch.

The RM worker was able to remain with the young man and support him whilst he received medical treatment. They were also able to establish that there had been no referrals made into any support services nor any support currently being offered to him. The RM worker was able to talk through the options available to the young man and his family, and then made referrals to get support for his emotional health and support for the family. The RM worker was able to maintain their support once the young man left hospital and to keep in touch until such time as alternative support was in place.

The RM worker was part of the multi-agency meeting that took place to deliver the necessary community support the young man required.