

Meeting: Kent Community Safety Partnership

Date: 18th March 2020

By: Detective Chief Inspector Ben Loose & Mark Powell (KCC)

Information Update Report: Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit

Introduction

This paper is included to brief the Community Safety Partnership on the status of the Kent Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and provide an oversight of the unit's strategic ambitions and planned activity for the current and anticipated grant periods. A decision is sought as to the future alignment of the VRU.

Essential Background

In Summer 2019, the Kent OPCC was one of 18 police areas granted a share of the £35m Serious Violence Fund. Kent were allocated £1.16m to create a VRU.

Violence Reduction Units were originally established in Glasgow and Cardiff and have taken a long term, "public health" approach to reducing violence. The public health approach is an all systems model which:

- Brings together agencies & communities to tackle violence by understanding root causes,
- Identifies drivers of serious violence and implanting a co-ordinated response to tackle them,
- Uses evidence- based practice and OSARA problem solving to achieve its objectives.

The Home Office defined the following critical success factors for all VRUs:

- Reduction in A&E admissions due to knife related assaults (victim under 25)
- Reduction in reported knife related assaults (victim under 25)
- Reduction in knife related murder rate (victim under 25, excluding domestic homicides)

The bidding window is currently open for 2020/21 with the opportunity to bid for a grant of £1.16m.

Progress to date

The Strategic Board, chaired by the PCC with membership including Kent Police, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Kent Fire & Rescue, NHS and Probation,

was established in October 2019. The Board has oversight of the strategic objectives and holds the VRU Managers to account.

VRU Managers, DCI Ben Loose and Mark Powell, KCC Youth Justice Manager took up post in November 2019, setting out the Kent VRUs strategy and ambitions based on a 5P approach.

5 VRU Co-Ordinators and 4 VRU Analysts from across the partnership are in post since January 2020.

The scope of the initial programme was reviewed to ensure that activities were deliverable within the funding period and that intervention opportunities were maximised. The following activities have been delivered in the initial period:

- i) **Commissioned services:** 18 existing services across Kent and Medway which provide support / intervention / diversion for young people involved in violence have been granted additional funding to improve scope and reach.
- ii) **Community engagement:** Hackathon event bringing together professionals and young people to problem solve serious youth violence. Yr 8 /9 schools' preventative event.
- iii) **Professional development:** public health conference for professionals around trauma informed practice and ACEs
- iv) **Preventative measures:** CSP funding for knife detection equipment, rapid deployment CCTV and trauma packs, along with a trauma pack education event.
- v) **Media:** delivery of social & traditional media campaign via Fearless and Crimestoppers.

The VRU leads chair a multi-agency tactical group to ensure co-ordination of activity and information sharing between violence reduction initiatives in Kent and Medway (Margate / Medway Task Forces, Gangs / County Lines enforcement, Probation, Youth Offending and other centrally funded projects).

Barriers to successful implementation

The initial short-term funding window meant long-term elements were removed from the programme, for example, a multi-agency case management system could not be procured in the timeframe however options are being considered for 2020/21.

Timescales and costs

The programme is within budget and timescale for 2019/2020.

Next Steps

The VRU Problem Profile & draft Response has been presented to the Strategic Board and approved.

For 2020/2021 areas of focus will be expanded to include “Primary, Secondary and Tertiary” interventions designed to challenge the risk posed by those involved with gangs and county lines and serious violence as well as interventions to support those susceptible to these risks in the long term.

The scope of the VRU analytic product will be reviewed to establish how we understand and quantify some of the unknown risks (such as county line related violence).

The VRU data-set is being developed to include crucial public health data that will enable us to better understand the context of and possible preventative measures for serious violence in Kent.

The VRU will work closely with Kent and Medway Authorities, National Probation Service and the 13 Community Safety Partnerships to develop local approaches to both understanding and tackling public-place violence.

A communications and media strategy will be developed to take advantage of traditional and social media to communicate key messages to target audiences in conjunction with Thanet, Medway and Maidstone Task Forces.

Membership and structure of the VRU will be reviewed to ensure that efficient and effective activity that supports and enhances delivery of violence reduction initiatives across Kent and Medway and is supported by a clear performance framework that supports partners’ strategic ambitions.

Decision Required

The Kent & Medway VRU has worked with the Public Health Observatory to identify the approaches which, based on research, are most likely to deliver positive outcomes for those involved in serious violence. These are:

- Desistance Theory
- Learning from NACRO’s ‘Beyond Youth Custody’ research project
- World Health Organisation’s work on violence prevention

The presentation to the Community Safety Partnership will provide more information on the approaches which are identified within the research.

The VRU has agreed with the Kent Youth Justice Board that these approaches will be used to inform any work carried out by Youth Justice within Kent. Initiatives which do not reflect the learning from the research will not be supported by the County Youth Justice Board.

Recommendation

The Community Safety Partnership is asked to support the approaches identified by the VRU and to include these within any initiatives around violence prevention.