



Meeting:	Nottinghamshire County Council Policy Committee
Date:	11 th November 2020
Report Title:	Update on the work of the Violence Reduction Unit
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Background

1. In April 2018, the Government published its Serious Violence Strategy setting out a programme of work to respond to increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide across England and Wales. The strategy placed an emphasis on early intervention and prevention, aiming to tackle the root causes of violence and prevent young people from getting involved in violent crime in the first place.
2. In March 2019, the Chancellor announced a £100m Serious Violence Fund for use in the 2019/20 financial year. £35m from the Fund was assigned to establish, or build on existing, Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across 18 areas of the UK, including Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire.
3. In June 2019 the Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner received £880,000 funding allocation to establish a VRU with a further £880,000 being allocated for this financial year.
4. The VRU brings together specialists from public health, clinical commissioning, police, local authorities and community organisations with a shared goal to reduce serious violent crime and the underlying causes countywide. The focus of the VRU is on a whole system, public health approach to violence reduction, providing strategic leadership, coordination and interventions.
5. The VRU is governed by a two tier approach with the core members convening a governing Board; the VRU Strategic Board. The role of the VRU Strategic Board is to provide strategic direction, oversee delivery of the mandatory products, including the Strategic Needs Assessment and the resulting VRU Strategy and Response Plan. The VRU Strategic Board provides check and challenge to the VRU and receives regular updates on performance and

on evaluations of the individual projects and initiatives to ensure the robust delivery of outcomes.

6. The VRU Strategic Board is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner, who heads up the governance, and membership includes the Chief Constable and a Major Trauma Surgeon from the Nottingham University Hospitals. Nottinghamshire County Council is represented by the Nottinghamshire County Council Corporate Director, Children and Families and the Director of Public Health.
7. Recognising that partnership working shouldn't just take place at a strategic level but should extend to joint working, communication and practice sharing between senior managers, practitioner experts and the community, a Violence Reduction Stakeholder Reference Group has been convened that reports into the Strategic Board.
8. It is acknowledged that the core requirements of the VRU will add significant value to, and be dependent on, existing multi-agency arrangements, including the Safer Nottinghamshire Board.

Scope

9. Having worked with local stakeholders during 2019/20 to identify the scope of the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire VRU a commitment has been made to focus on:
 - Weapon enabled violent offences that take place in public spaces and domestic addresses.
 - Assaults, from actual bodily harm up to homicide.
 - Weapon enabled robbery.
 - County lines, as it relates to violence and / or gang conflict.
 - Serious night time economy violence such as grievous bodily harm (GBH) offences rather than 'general disorder'.
 - Serious sexual violence, specifically rape offences, and
 - Knife possession offences.

Key Deliverables During 2019/20 – 2020/21

10. During 2019/20 and the first half of 2020/21 the key deliverables for the VRU were:
 - The establishment of a dedicated **Violence Reduction Unit** that leads and coordinates the design and implementation of system wide violence reduction interventions.
 - The delivery of a comprehensive countywide **Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA)** that identifies the drivers of serious violence in the local area and identifies those cohorts of people most affected.

- The development of a **Serious Violence Reduction Response Strategy** that communicates the direction of the VRU to key stakeholders, defining the problem, setting out the approach to tackle it and identifying how success will be governed and measured. The strategy sets out **how** and **why** the action being taken by the VRU will enhance and complement existing local arrangements to achieve the collective goal of reducing serious violence.
- This is accompanied by a **Response Plan** which provides a mechanism to track and manage **what** specific interventions will be undertaken, **when, where** and by **who**.
- A **Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan** to provide a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the voice of the community are at the heart of influencing VRU activity.
- A plan for **evaluation and review** which enables the Violence Reduction Strategic Board to get an overview of outcomes and impact.

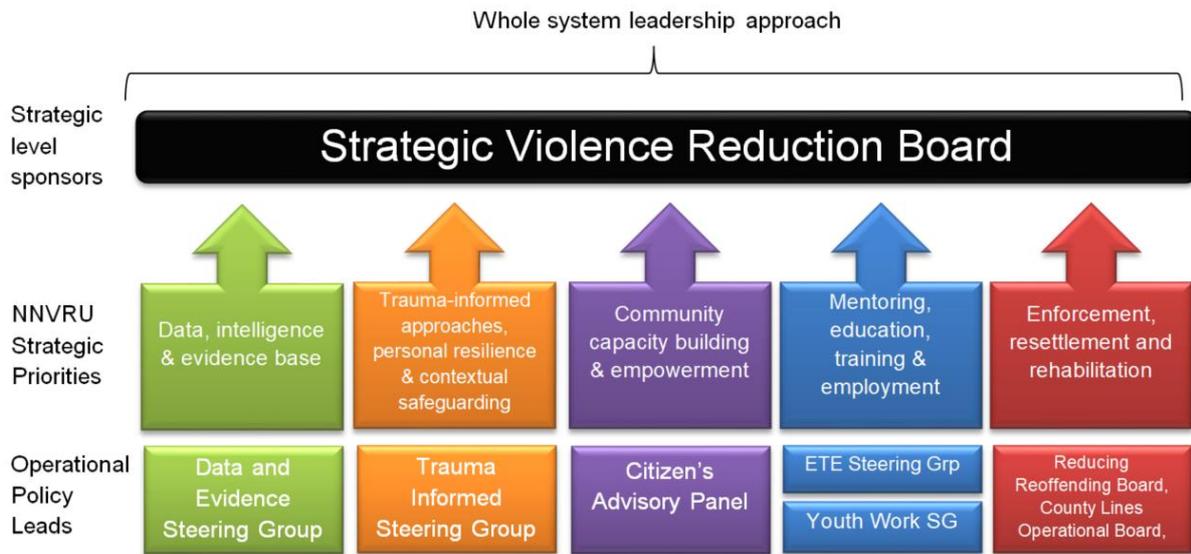
Strategic Needs Assessment, Response Strategy and Strategic Priorities

11. The Strategic Needs Assessment comprised key findings across the evidence and data included in the comprehensive assessment of serious violence in Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City. These key findings directly informed the identification of a number of strategic priorities. These strategic priorities were developed to ensure coherent and effective governance and delivery of the Response Strategy.

12. The key findings of the Strategic Needs Assessment include the following:

- There are important contextual factors for serious violence, in particular the deprivation and inequality experienced by some communities; contextual safeguarding is an essential part of understanding and reducing harm for young people.
- Males are over-represented as perpetrators and victims of serious violence.
- There are particular patterns of violence in relation to the night time economy.
- There is substantial variation in the risk factors and observed violence across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, and place-based approaches are indispensable in addressing these.
- The evidence base emphasises the importance of early years and childhood, the value of early intervention with young people, and addressing the underlying issues that contributed to offending behaviour.

13. Reflecting these key findings the Serious Violence Response Strategy 2020/21 includes activity focussed on the following strategic priorities:



- **Data, intelligence and evidence base:** Recognising that using robust data and evidence base is a key tenet of the public health approach, we have prioritised evaluation of interventions to understand what works to reduce violence locally and will increase our understanding through literature review and commissioned research.

In order to ensure a robust data architecture across the VRU area, we will continue to work with partners to improve data sharing and quality, for example the triangulation of injury surveillance data, and establish a violence reduction focused analytical steering group.

- **Trauma-informed approaches, personal resilience and contextual safeguarding:** We are committed to understanding the evidence around trauma informed approaches with a view to informing policy review and training as part of a system wide change across the VRU Nottinghamshire.

We will continue to work with safeguarding partners to conduct a contextual safeguarding pilot, to inform an effective system wide response that recognises the importance of contextual factors in serious violence rather than solely individual ones.

- **Community capacity building and empowerment:** We will continue to collaborate with communities to tackle serious violence, ensuring meaningful co-production and consensus. Activity in this work stream is directed towards building sustainability and empowering communities to problem solve, this includes community and youth capacity building.

Key activities include the appointment of Community Ambassadors, the commissioning of a Community Assets Assessment and the development and implementation of an Incubation Hub to increase capability and empower the third sector.

- **Youth work, mentoring, education, training and employment (ETE):** Recognising the emerging evidence as to the effectiveness of mentoring for young people, we are working with the National Youth Agency to establish an accessible youth work pathway and youth work accreditation across the County both in the statutory and third sectors. This will also include continuous professional development for those who are already accredited youth workers in areas such as the impact of social media on young people.
- **Enforcement, rehabilitation and resettlement:** We will continue to work in collaboration with Nottinghamshire Police, who receive Surge Funding to augment targeted prevention and enforcement activity. We will work in partnership with the prison and National Probation Service to commission a prisoner resettlement programme to support young men and women leaving prison to resettle back into the community and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Other funding streams

14. The VRU activities closely interrelate to the activities that were delivered through two other grant funds that were awarded to Nottinghamshire. These being the £1.5 million allocated to Nottinghamshire Police for “surge activity” during 2019/20 and 2020/21, and the £690K Early Intervention Youth Fund, awarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner, which was allocated for tackling the root causes of serious violence amongst children and young people.
15. £170k of this Early Intervention Youth Fund was allocated to Nottinghamshire County Council to support detached and assertive outreach for young people at risk, transition into employment work and personalised budget planning.

Other key activity

16. **Interventions** commissioned by the VRU to tackle serious violence include:
 - Universally focused primary preventions which seek to prevent problems occurring in the future, including ensuring accessibility to parenting interventions and school based interventions, such as Mentors in Violence Prevention.
 - Secondary prevention activity to provide interventions for those already displaying risk factors, including the custody intervention project ‘U Turn’, which is being delivered in Mansfield and the City, and targeted youth outreach.
 - Tertiary prevention activity which seeks to prevent reoccurrence of offending including prison intervention work and a custody resettlement programme.
 - Trauma Informed one to one interventions to support young people impacted by weapon enabled domestic violence; working with those aged 5-18yrs who are growing up in a home with domestic violence to manage current trauma and reduce impact of adverse childhood experiences which may lead them to become a victim or perpetrator of serious violence later in life.

- Contribution to a coordinated systemic approach led by the Children’s Society, in collaboration with voluntary and statutory partners, to embed new and effective ways of working, applying systems change process and leadership to build better outcomes for young people facing poverty and disadvantage. Also includes one-to-one interventions with high-risk young people with multiple complex needs across the City and County.
- Funding for the continuation of the Redthread Youth Violence Intervention Programme at the Queen’s Medical Centre and expansion to the King’s Mill Hospital in the County as a result of a scoping exercise conducted in 2019/20 which identified a need due to high levels of assaults.
- Joint work with the Safer Nottinghamshire Board that invested in medical kits that will make equipment and training available in communities across the County to enable people to undertake initial first aid in bleed situations whilst waiting for the Emergency Services to arrive.
- Coproduced campaign aimed at elevating the voice of young people growing up in Nottinghamshire. Objectives are to ‘deglamorise’ youth violence and sign post children, young people, parents and carers to guidance, advice and interventions.

17. **Research and evaluation** undertaken or commissioned by the VRU to increase evidence base around serious violence includes:

- Investing in opportunities to engage with those at risk to better understand their needs and drivers in order to shape targeted support and communications, including engagement with girls and young women to understand their experiences of serious violence and exploitation.
- Research in partnership with academic institutions including an academic assessment of international perpetrator focussed domestic violence interventions.
- Commissioning of research by the St Gile’s Trust to assess the impact of social media on serious violence.

Key achievements

14. Some of the key achievements for the VRU to date include:

- Assessed as having best practice around community engagement in the national evaluation commissioned by the Home Office and conducted by IpSOS MoRI.
- The VRU have been asked to lead a national Domestic Violence network by the Home Office to share evidence, best practice and learning.

- Over 578 young people (10-25yrs) were directly supported through primary, secondary and tertiary interventions from Oct 2019 – March 2020.
- Education based interventions evidenced improved behaviour, less incidents of violence reported, more positive attitudes, willingness to engage, improved resilience and improved literacy levels.
- Prison intervention programme has evidenced improved resilience, reduced propensity for violence, increased compassion, increased feelings of confidence and wellbeing.
- The Inspire and Achieve Foundation have worked with 24 offenders aged 16-26 through intensive mentoring, technical help with registering for benefits, attending appointments with Probation/GP's, or finding positive activities. Of the cohort of 24, 100% of these have not re-offended within the 9 months' timeframe of this project.
- The HashtagNG campaign, launched in August 2020 across a number of social media platforms. The campaign was entirely co-produced with young people to address themes including county lines, bullying, sexual exploitation and knife crime. As of 6th October it had reached 81,890 young people on Facebook and Instagram, website traffic is now averaging at 353 visits per day.

Performance

16. In July 2020 it was reported that knife crime in Nottinghamshire has fallen sharply – bucking national trends which has seen the number of similar offences in England and Wales rise to a new record high, according to the Office for National Statistics.
17. The Nottinghamshire Police area saw a 13 percent reduction in the number of knife offences in the year end to March 2020. This contrasts with the national and regional picture, where knife crime increased by six percent in England and Wales and by 11 percent in the East Midlands.
18. The reduction evidences the impact of the sustained and tactical proactive engagement with local communities in order to prevent knife crime, coupled with investment into the Nottinghamshire Police's Knife Crime Team and Robbery Team, who focus on tackling weapon-enabled violence. Also, the work in secondary schools across Nottinghamshire to drive home the prevention message over the last three academic years – prior to schools closing due to Coronavirus – which includes bespoke education on knife crime.
19. The 13 percent reduction in the number of offences before the Coronavirus social distancing measures came into place is evidence of the impact being seen from the investment in the VRU and the Surge funding. This has been done with partners in the city and county Youth Justice Services, among others, that have adopted a tailored approach to each individual to ensure they get access to the right kind of support.
20. This provides a level of confidence that the approach being taken is the right one to continue with going forward.

Impact of the Pandemic

21. The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting government imposed restrictions may continue to influence delivery of VRU commissioned interventions throughout the funding period, therefore impeding the delivery of intended benefits to young people. However the VRU will continue to monitor delivery of interventions and will adapt delivery methods where possible to ensure the safety of staff and participants.

Further information:

For further information on the VRU and its activity, please visit: <https://www.nottsvru.co.uk/>