

Public Service Reform Board

Date	5 March 2020
Report title	The West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit
Portfolio Leads	Public Service Reform & Social Economy - Councillor Yvonne Davies Wellbeing – Councillor Izzi Seccombe WM Police and Crime Commissioner – David Jamieson (accountable body)
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Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Public Service Reform Board is recommended to:

1. Note the progress to date of a regional approach to violence, vulnerability and exploitation, and the establishment of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (WM-VRU) and plans for the forthcoming application.
2. Consider the synergies between the WM-VRU and the WMCA PSR Board.
3. To agree to regular updates from the WM-VRU, including specifically on areas where the PSR Board can better support and help embed its work within the WMCA.

1. Introduction:

This paper updates the PSR Board on the establishment and progress of the regional, collaborative approach to prevent and reduce place based violence, vulnerability and exploitation prevention and reduction in the West Midlands following its inception in September 2019.

2. Background:

Violence, vulnerability or exploitation was identified by each of the Combined Authority constituent members and observer members as a priority in January 2019. This, alongside the Government's spring statement which confirmed additional funding led to the establishment of the Violence Reduction Unit which launched on 2nd October 2019.

The backdrop to the establishment of the WM-VRU is one of a notable increase in violence within several of the UK's urban areas, and within the West Midlands in particular. In our region, gun crime has increased by 33%, and instances of knife crime have increased by 85% since 2012. Domestic violence has increased 14% since 2018 and violent crime against the person is up 32% in the last year.

The risk factors underpinning this are complex, with most lying outside of the reach of the criminal justice system. They range from local patterns of criminal activity to the impact of poverty, economic marginalisation, health, social care and changes to the funding regime for preventative services for young people. Whilst many of these challenges remain systemic and ongoing (and indeed continue to pose severe demand challenges for public services), Government has recognised that more focus and resource needs to be put into prevention – announcing £100m in the Spring Statement to tackle 'serious youth violence', including the establishment of a number of Violence Reduction Units which utilise the 'public health approach'.

The link between violence and public health is fundamental. Preventing violence and exploitation and reducing vulnerabilities is an essential part of addressing health inequalities. There is strong evidence that addressing the social determinants of health such as housing, education, and access to healthcare will result in better health outcomes; further enhanced by taking a life course approach by considering interventions from birth to old age. By adopting a public health approach and tackling these wider determinants in a co-ordinated, collaborative and strategic way the VRU aims to reduce violence, vulnerability and exploitation. From conception onwards, there are multiple relevant points in an individual's life that can present an opportunity for appropriate interventions.

The WM-VRU embeds the public health approach. This means it will describe the importance of understanding health, social care and economic needs, identification of risk and protective factors to support individual and population level interventions, and support the development of a 'whole system' approach to tackle complex problems using evidence based interventions.

The Public Health Approach to Violence



3. Progress:

This public health approach aligns strongly with activities that were already happening in the West Midlands – meaning that, unlike some other areas, we did not have to start a WM-VRU from scratch and others are learning from us. Our ‘blueprints’ include:

- Established in 2015, our Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) has worked across the seven local authorities of the West Midlands Police region. Our VPA has not operated as a VRU coordinating the efforts of the whole system. It has, however, as a WHO-accredited ‘coalition of the willing’, advocated for violence as a public health issue, and has demonstrated a public health approach in its use of multiagency data and intelligence, its dissemination of the evidence about Adverse Childhood Experiences and the risk and protective factors for violence, the relevance of ‘trauma-aware’ services, and by piloting, evaluating and scaling up a number evidence-informed interventions. The VPA provides us with solid principles on which we are making a step change to build our VRU and enhance our delivery of preventive services.
- Preventing Violence against Vulnerable People (PVVP) was established in 2014. It was a partnership between the seven Local Authorities and West Midlands Police. PVVP undertook an independent evaluation in Autumn 2018 which recognised the successes the programme had achieved: notably in child sexual exploitation and modern slavery and recommended moving into a broader framing of preventing criminal exploitation, violence and vulnerability.
- The Gangs and Violence Commission is a PCC supported, community led, evidenced based collaboration launched in 2016 to respond to the serious

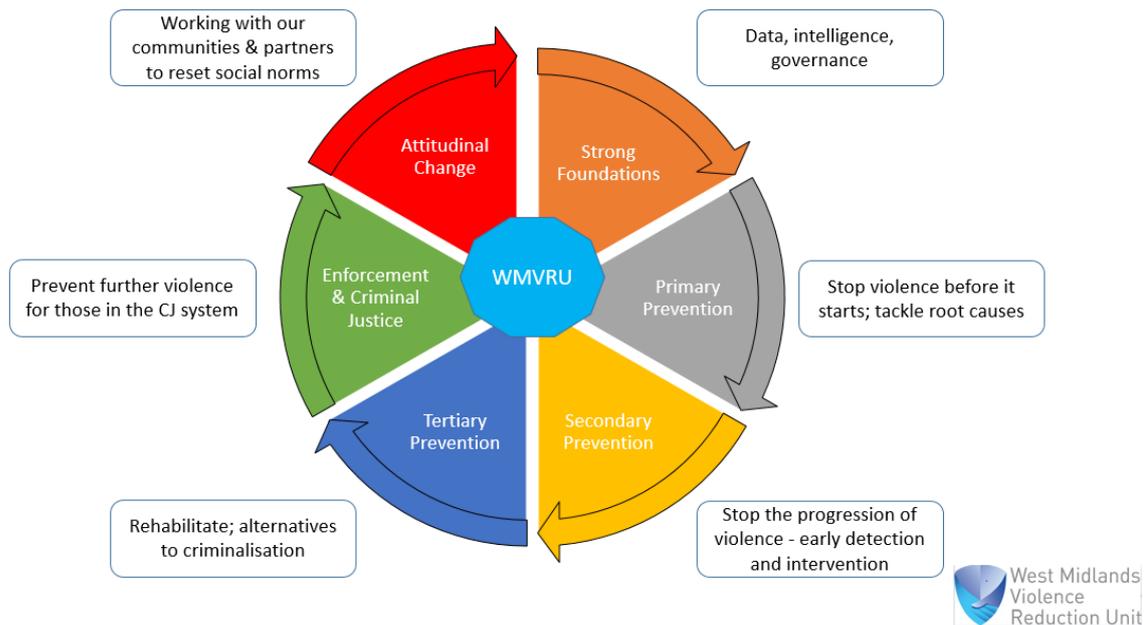
increase in the numbers of people hurt and killed by firearms, knives and other forms of violence. It responded to the families, friends and communities, and wider concerns about organised crime and serious violence in Birmingham. The commission produced a research report with 24 recommendations which have a community-led response at the heart of its development and delivery.

- The ALTAR project, a substantial programme of work – developed by the WMCA and PCC in partnership since 2017 – evidencing patterns of vulnerability in the region and the potential for different approaches to youth justice reform through the lens of Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and the role of Resilience.
- Many activities that are already embedded within local health, criminal justice and community safety partnerships – giving us a chance to amplify and evidence what we think works, and better support the efforts of local authorities, communities and partnerships that can make a difference at a neighbourhood level.

The draft strategy and WM-VRU amalgamates best practice and learning from the VPA, Gangs and Violence Commission and the PVVP and represents a single, new, focused and strengthened partnership approach to a shared agenda. There is existing spend contained with the VPA, Gangs and Violence Commission and PVVP which are now programmed in alignment with the VRU funding in 2019/20.

The WM-VRU thus brings several programmes of work together and gives the region the possibility to amplify and grow them. On 12th August 2019, the PCC received confirmation that the West Midlands would receive £3.37 million (for FY 19/20) to establish its VRU. This has been the trigger for substantial, rapid work to establish our Unit, bring together a number of secondments to begin its work, and begin to scale and evidence the activities (outlined below) that sit within its workplan.

The 19/20 delivery plan focuses on six strands of the strategy;



The Home Office Performance Measures for VRU's and associated 'Surge' funding to police force areas (Project Guardian in the West Midlands) are;

- (1) *Reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25;*
- (2) *Reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25, based on police recorded crime data;*
- (3) *Reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.*

The WM-VRU has a total budget of **£4,034,000** for this financial year. This includes **£3.37** million from the Home Office, a **£524,000** grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner which was formerly the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) budget and a **£140,000** contribution from local authorities and West Midlands Police which represents the legacy work of the Preventing Violence Against Vulnerable People (PVVP) programme.

The Home Office funding awarded in August 2019, comprised of scaling up existing activity from the VPA, fulfilling recommendations from the Gangs and Violence Commission and some experimental approaches. A more detailed breakdown of 2019/20 projects is provided in Annex A.

Funding has to be spent in the current financial year for delivery with realisable benefits in year. The funding can only be spent on activity within the West Midlands Police Force (met) area. Whilst we have endeavoured to provide interventions in areas with the greatest profile risks and need there is geographical disparity across the areas as a result of the fast pace required to establish new projects. This has meant a compromise between securing long-term strategic goals and working tactically to get projects established and funding spent within a limited period of time.

The VRU guiding principles are:

- Violence is unacceptable. We are determined to see an end to the misery caused by violence for individuals, for families, for communities and for society.
- We are taking a stand together because violence is not inevitable, it is preventable. Everyone has a part to play and can make a difference
- We will build violence prevention partnerships with young people and communities at their heart and galvanising the public, private and VCSE sectors.
- By working together, taking a public health approach to prevent violence we will work hard to understand what's really causing the problem. By working together to tackle the causes of violence we can stop violence before it starts, intervene early to stop it escalating, and stop violence blighting lives.

The 19/20 programme includes a number of identified projects and broader conceptual project briefs. The latter then became the tenders which were subsequently advertised on the OPCC website and/or shared with providers engaged with the OPCC. The process was overseen by the VRU executive group who met weekly from July 2019 and was chaired by Dawn Baxendale (BCC CEX and now Clive Heaphy), and attended by Henry Kippin (for the CA, now Julie Nugent / Claire Dhami), Jonathan Jardine (OPCC, now Alethea Fuller), Sue Ibbotson (PHE), Phil Johns (Birmingham and Solihull CCG) and ACC Sarah Boycott (now Vanessa Jardine -WMP). The executive group continues to meet bi weekly to support the implementation of the WM-VRU.

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented an update on the WM-VRU to the WMCA on 17th January 2020. The approach received support from Board Members who welcomed the update and agreed to receive further updates from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The inaugural WM-VRU Board met on 27th January 2020 with a wide range of stakeholders in attendance. This event was co-chaired by ACC Vanessa Jardine (WMP) and Dr Sue Ibbotson (PHE). The Board agreed the broad principles of the approach, reviewed the draft strategy, discussed the key facets of a whole system approach and understood an approach to community consensus building around this agenda.

4. Next steps

The Home Office have confirmed funding for 2020/21 at the same level as 19/20 (£3.37 Million) which will be subject to an application process, details of which are expected not before 28th February. A draft strategic needs assessment, which details the 'problem' of violence, vulnerability and exploitation; and a mapping and gapping exercise which outlines what the current place based response to violence, vulnerability and exploitation is are expected to inform the application. A stakeholder consultation event is planned in March (date to be confirmed), supported by a partnership led through BVSC.

Our further approach to funding will be to follow a public health pipeline. We will identify key themes, proposals currently include;

- Inclusive education, training and employment
- Sport and culture
- Health
- Criminal Justice

The WM-VRU will act as a conduit to work with communities and existing services to understand need and use intelligence and evidence to trial new approaches to reducing violence, vulnerability and exploitation. We will pump prime initiatives, learn what works and what doesn't and scale up the interventions across the region and embed them within existing structures and funding streams.



5. Financial Implications

The WM-VRU is funded via a grant from the Home Office to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Additional resources from the VPA and PVVP are managed through existing budgets in 19/20, there is no commitment for this funding to continue into 20/21.

4. Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications. The Police and Crime Commissioner has agreed to reflect the partnership approach to the WM-VRU through providing regular updates to the WMCA Board, PSR Board and Wellbeing Board as appropriate.

5. Equalities Implications

The activity of the WM-VRU will focus on particular protected groups to prevent and reduce violence where appropriate. This may include interventions targeted at, for example, women and girls, BAME young men and looked after children.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

Violence imposes large costs on communities through lower property values, higher insurance premiums and reduced investment alongside the costs to taxpayers in responding to violence through emergency services, criminal justice, rehabilitation and support pathways.

By reducing violence, the WM-VRU will better enable the West Midlands economy to provide opportunity, strength and support to vulnerable people and a more inclusive and economically viable West Midlands.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

The WM-VRU will cover all areas of the West Midlands. There will be targeted areas based on evidence of demand and need which the WM-VRU will target interventions on, these have not yet been identified.

8. Other Implications

9. Schedule of Background Papers

Report to PSR Board September 2019

Report to Combined Authority Board January 2020

Draft Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation strategy

Annex A breakdown of WM-VRU spend 19/20