



# WEST MIDLANDS VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

*A partnership approach to reducing violence*



@WestMidsVRU



[westmidlands-vru.org](http://westmidlands-vru.org)

# Definition of Violence

**“The intentional use of physical power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”**

*World Health Organisation 2002*

# Background

March 2019: Home Secretary announces £100 million **National Serious Violence Fund** to tackle serious violence

£63.4 million is allocated to **police Surge activity**, including increased police patrols, in 18 areas across the country worst affected by serious violence

£1.6 million is allocated to **improving data** to support planning and operations around serious violence

£35 million is invested in **establishing 18 VRUs** aimed at building capacity to tackle the **root causes of violence**

The West Midlands VRU received **£3.37 million in 20/21**. 51% of this budget was spent on commissioned interventions, with the remainder split across core staffing and infrastructure costs such as evaluation and other operational costs

Knife crime has doubled since 2012 in the West Midlands

Gun crime has risen by more than 1/3 since 2012

# What is the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit?

The Violence Reduction Unit is a partnership that aims to reduce violent crime across the West Midlands region. It benefits from the expertise of partners in public health, health, criminal justice, sports, education, policing, and academia working together to reduce violence.

## Main strands of work

1

Empowering communities and professionals to work together

2

Embedding good practice through guidance, advice and toolkits

3

Encouraging the use of evidence to inform decisions

4

Supporting leaders to connect around a shared long-term ambition

5

Commissioning interventions to prevent violence



# Home Office Performance Measures

**Reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25**

**Reduction in knife-enabled serious violence, especially among those victims aged under 25, based on police recorded crime data**

**Reduction in all non-domestic homicides, especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.**

## A Public Health Approach

The VRU adopts a public health approach to violence

It means focusing on understanding the root causes of the problem and on testing, evaluating, and upscaling interventions

Taking a public health approach means moving away from constantly reacting to violent incidents, and towards preventing them before they occur

Developing stronger data and analysis, and working in partnership with communities and other organisations is core to implementing the public health approach

## Violence is a public health issue

**Violence is preventable:** the root causes can be identified and altered early

**It is unequally distributed:** Violence affects certain population groups more than others leading to health inequalities

It has **similar risk factors** to physical and mental health issues

**Violence is closely linked to trauma:** by becoming more **trauma-informed** we can better respond to and **prevent violence**

# VRU Governance Structure

Quarterly: chaired by the OPCC, to develop and deliver a regional strategy for violence reduction, and in doing so to oversee the work of the VRU as a delivery engine for that strategy

**NHS Tackling Serious Violence Forum**

**VRU Education Steering Group**

**Strategic Sports Violence Reduction Partnership**

**Faith Alliance**

**Multi-agency Tackling Exploitation Boards**  
 Domestic Abuse    Modern Slavery  
 Social Abuse and Missing    Criminal Exploitation

**Facilitated by VRU Internal Governance**  
 External yet linked

**West Midlands Violence Reduction Strategic Board**

**Engagement and Communication**

**Evaluation**

**Trauma Informed Practice**

**Analysis and Insight**

Sub-groups (membership beyond the VRU core network as appropriate)

**VRU Programme Board**  
 (Membership beyond VRU core team as standard)

Quarterly : 1 x Full Day Review and support progress of delivery activity across the breadth of the VRU's work plans; opportunities to engage

Quarterly : 1 x Full Day Review and support progress of VRU commissioned interventions and sustainability planning

**VRU SMT**

**Resettlement Steering Group**

**Reachable moments steering group**

**Task & Finish Groups as relevant**

**County Lines Steering Group**

**WMP Force Tasking Processes**

**WM Local Criminal Justice Board**

**Youth Offending Service Boards**

**VRU Youth panel: Young people from VRU pilot areas and programmes**

**WM Heads of Community Safety**

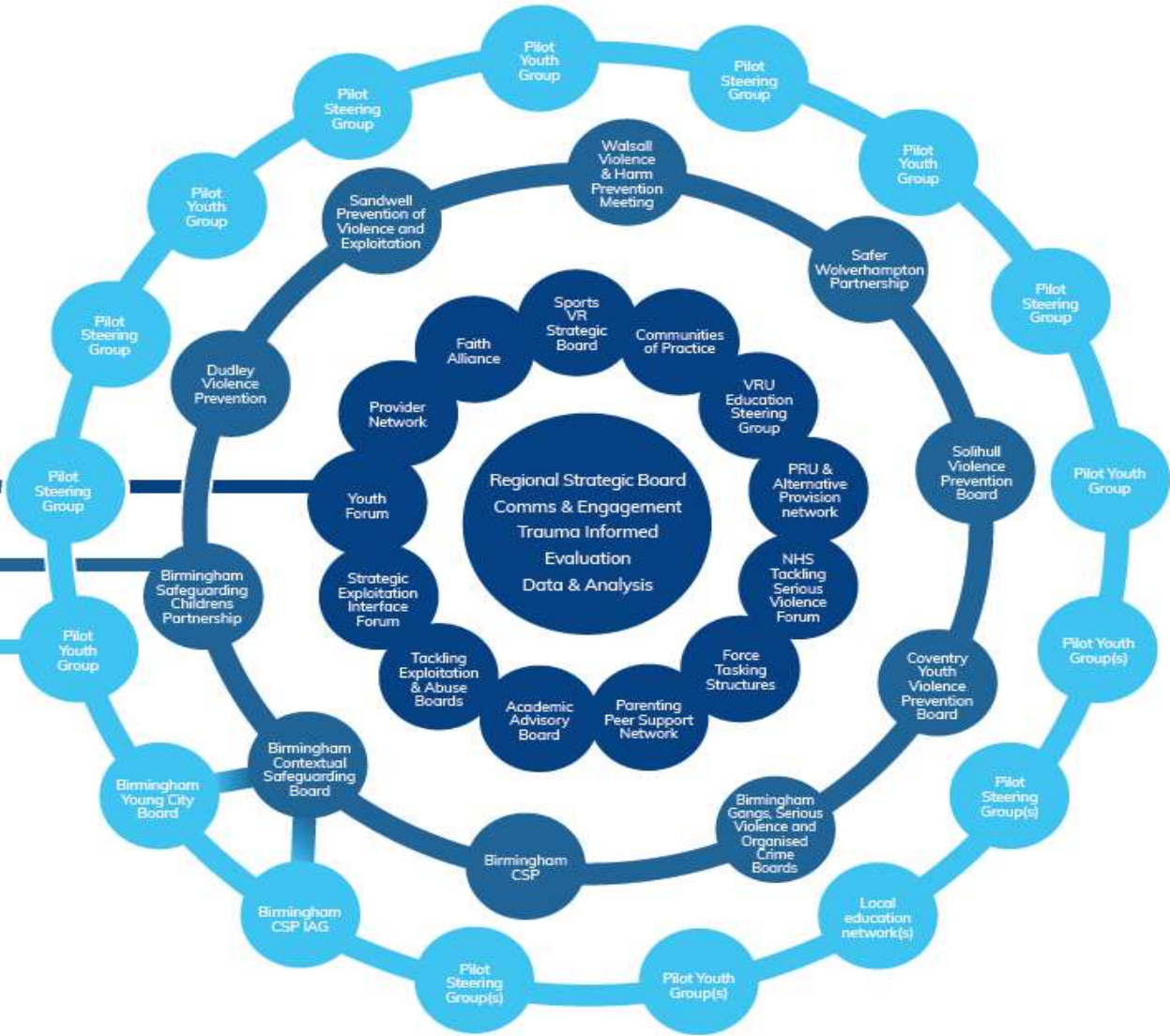
**Local Community Safety Partnerships / Violence & Exploitation Boards**

**Steering groups in each place-based pilot**

**Youth Panels in pilots**

# NETWORK OF NETWORKS

-  THEMATIC FORUMS
-  LOCALITY FORUMS
-  COMMUNITY FORUMS





# Risk factors

Genetic or biological  
 Perinatal Trauma  
 Early Malnutrition  
 Behavioural and Learning Difficulties  
 Alcohol and Substance Misuse  
 Traumatic Brain Injury  
 Gender

Low family income  
 Poor parenting and inconsistent discipline  
 Family size  
 Abuse (emotional, physical sexual)  
 Emotional or physical neglect  
 Household alcohol or substance misuse  
 Household mental illness  
 Family violence  
 Family breakdown  
 Household offending behaviour

Unsafe or violent communities  
 Low social integration and poor social mobility  
 Lack of possibilities for recreation  
 Insufficient infrastructure for the satisfaction of needs and interests of young people

Socio-economically deprived communities  
 High unemployment  
 Homelessness or poor housing  
 Culture of violence, norms and values which accept, normalise or glorify violence  
 Discrimination  
 Difficulties in accessing services



**Individual**



**Relationships**



**Community**



**Society**

Healthy problem solving and emotional regulation skills  
 School readiness  
 Good communication skills  
 Healthy social relationships

Stable home environments  
 Nurturing and responsive relationships  
 Strong and consistent parenting  
 Frequent shared activities with parents  
 Financial security and economic opportunities

Sense of belonging and connectedness  
 Safe community environment  
 Community cohesion  
 Opportunities for sports and hobbies

Good housing  
 High standards of living  
 Opportunities for valued social roles

# Protective factors

# Our Work

The VRU brings together a number of specialists to carry out projects, commission interventions and to help different systems to work together more effectively to help prevent violence. We have a number of key focus areas:



Criminal Justice



Sports



Education



Health



Trauma Informed



Exploitation



Faith

## Our Work | Delivery Team

A young boy with glasses and a girl are in a classroom. The boy is looking towards the girl, who is partially visible on the right. The background shows a wall with a clock and various educational posters.

Local connectivity is the centre of gravity for the VRU. Our **Delivery Team** is structured to provide support to each Local Authority area. It also offers a hyper-local response to the communities most at risk of violence.

We use a **Strategic Needs Assessment** to guide this work. It helps ensure that we are looking not just at reported violence, but also the prevalence of a range of other risk factors, such as school exclusions and deprivation.

We have also produced an **interactive platform** that helps you explore this kind of information for any postcode across the region. Both can be accessed on our website.

# Our Work | Delivery Model

## Targeted

- Intensive support to local places experiencing high levels of violence
- Establishing local violence reduction networks
- Supporting community co-production
- Coordinated primary, secondary and tertiary interventions

## Response

### Response:

- Immediate support to communities in the aftermath of serious violence
- Access to individual and community level interventions

## Targeted

## Universal

- Empowering all communities to play a part in violence reduction and prevention
- Developing strong counter-narratives to violence
- Training, guidance and resources to ensure violence prevention expertise is sustained

## Universal

# Our Commissioned Projects

## Resettlement

A targeted re-settlement and support service for young people (aged up to 18) and younger adults (18-30)

## Teachable Moments Hospital based service

A secondary public health intervention

## Domestic Abuse Support Services

Providing specialist DA support via a Independent Domestic Violence Advocate within an acute hospital setting.

## Trauma Informed Practice

This intervention aims to change the way in which local authorities deliver their services in line with trauma informed approaches

## Desist and Transform

A comprehensive intervention offer supporting those known to agencies and involved in violence and criminality to desist

## Mentors in Violence Prevention

A peer-support programme that seeks to empower young people to act as peer-mentors to prevent violence



# Community engagement

- Stakeholder network
- Parent sessions
- ASK THE PEOPLE, TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE
- Community centres/faith groups/PACT meetings (partners and communities together)/Warm spaces
- Community events

# Step together

[New scheme to keep young people safe on the route to school - West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner \(westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk)

# Projects I manage

#NoCap Referral – The Switchboard

Progress project

Boys Certified

Digital lending library



## Other projects:

- St Giles Trust – Expect Respect – Females under 18 at risk of exploitation – using lived experience females.
- St Giles Trust in New Cross Hospital A&E Department.
- Catch 22 – providing a rescue and response service and county lines support service 1-1.
- Step together- in 3 locations (Heath town, Blakenhall and City Centre).
- 5 knife bins, the most recent in the city centre following the rise of city centre youth violence.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour input within 10 schools across wolverhampton which is funded by VRP. (Local authority has since purchased this separately to help talk HSB in schools).

# Barriers and issues regularly faced

- Partners
- Funding
- Time
- Communication
- High turn over
- Understanding the risk

# Training

- ACES
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Anti-Racist training
- Precious lives
- Mentors in Violence Prevention
- Exploitation (CCE and CSE)

# CIRV

- [Community Initiative to Reduce Violence \(CIRV\) | Northamptonshire Police \(northants.police.uk\)](https://www.northants.police.uk)

## The Exploitation Hub

- The Exploitation hub in Wolverhampton has been developed since February 2021. It is a multi-agency space, with a range of Wolverhampton based professionals whom come together each morning to make decisions and support our young people in the city. The hub is one which professional's i.e. social worker, teachers can refer into when there are exploitation concerns around a child. The child is then marked as medium, high or low risk (partnership decision). The VRP are a valued member of this space and we offer a referral pathway for children. This is for boys and girls who are exploited, they can then be referred by panel/chair/referrer into either **Boys Certified** or **#NoCap**. The hub has seen an influx in females, to match the influx #NoCap will be a vital safe place for our young girls and women.

## Rise in PEX

- Wolverhampton is now the third highest in the country for permanent exclusions currently. The inclusion support and alternative provision panel (ISAPP) is one which the Wolverhampton Navigator sits on – when available. The **Boys Certified** and **#NoCap** is also a new referral a pathway for that panel too. The panel discusses young people at risk of exclusion/managed moves etc and offers alternative support which does not involve an alternative provision or pupil referral unit.

## Other work in Wolverhampton being carried out:

- Engaging and working really closely with the PRU/APs in the city and selected schools (Khalsa, Heath Park, Moreton, Aldersley, Coppice and Colton Hills) all of which are in hotspot locations, and have had a good relationship with the VRP.
- Continue to support partners with interview panels, proposal decisions, training, intensification weeks, bid writing etc.
- Working with providers, young people, local authority, media and the data team to evidence Progress Project.
- The Navigator is based in Wolverhampton on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Police Station and out in community.
- The Stakeholder network is well developed and is a space where partners can access vital information.
- Working with WMP and LA to embed and prepare for CIRV.
- Involved with Knife bin implementation
- Supporting CSP with project management

## Contact us

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**Our annual report:**  
[bit.ly/vruannualreport](http://bit.ly/vruannualreport)

**Our Strategic Needs Assessment:**  
[bit.ly/vru-sna](http://bit.ly/vru-sna)

**Web-based version:**  
[wmvru-sna.org](http://wmvru-sna.org)