

Report to Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

14th September 2020

Serious Violence

Report by Executive Director for Place Service and Acting Director of Communities

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

The ability of partners to respond to serious violence efficiently and effectively is identified as essential to meet existing and future challenges for the Safer West Sussex Partnership in relation to identifying harm, risk and vulnerability across West Sussex.

This report sets out the work of the partners working to tackle serious violence in West Sussex.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to the current partnership approach to serious violence in West Sussex in order to obtain a more coherent and detailed picture of the threats, harms, risks and vulnerability that impact our communities and residents.

In particular, that the Committee:

- (1) Considers the effectiveness of the current partnership approach to tackling serious violence.
- (2) Considers whether adequate resources have been provided to undertake the work, and whether this represents good value.
- (3) Considers how best to share public messages.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

National overview

- 1.1 On 9 April 2018, the Government published its Serious Violence Strategy setting out an ambitious programme of work to respond to increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide.
- 1.2 Its approach is not solely focused on law enforcement, important as that is, but depends on partnerships across a number of sectors such as education, health, social services, housing, youth services, and victim services. In particular it focuses on needing the support of communities thinking about what they can themselves do to help prevent violent crime happening in the first place and how they can support measures to get young people and young adults involved in positive activities. Its overarching message is that tackling serious violence is not a law enforcement issue alone. It requires a multiple strand approach involving a range of partners across different sectors.
- 1.3 The Government is concerned about increases in homicides, gun crime and knife crime, since 2014. Nationally, these offences account for around 1% of all recorded crime, but the impact of serious violent crime on society is significant. There is a huge cost to individuals, families and communities through loss of life, and the trauma caused through both the physical and psychological injuries suffered.
- 1.4 The Serious Violence Strategy reports on a historical perspective and that overall violent crime has also seen very substantial reductions since its peak in the mid-1990s as recorded by the Crime Survey for England and Wales, regarded as the most reliable independent survey of crime. Violence with injury in the year ending September 2017 was 40% lower than in the year ending June 2010 and 76% lower than its peak in 1995. However, some types of violent crime recorded by the police have shown increases since late 2014. Some of this increase can be attributed to improvements in how police forces record crime, but some of the increases are thought to be genuine, including a rise in offences involving knives and firearms.
- 1.5 Nationally, a sizeable proportion of robbery offences (21%) involve the use, or the threat of use, of a knife. On the other hand, knife robberies account for 40% of all offences involving a knife or sharp instrument.

Youth Violence Commission

- 1.6 The Youth Violence Commission final report was published in July 2020. The independent, cross-party commission was established to identify the root causes of and solutions to serious youth violence across the UK. It reports in its findings that the causes of serious violence between young people can be linked to a number of significant factors that increase the likelihood of a young person committing or being subject to serious violence.
- 1.7 The Commission found that those who committed serious acts of violence had often been subjected to, or witnessed, domestic violence as children. Many young people had parents who were unable to give them the care and

attention they needed due to having to work multiple low -paid jobs or though addictions. The negative effect of exclusions from school and the lack of youth services and the impact of short-term funding provision were also significant factors impacting on the risks of violence crime for young people. Other factors included the reduction in police numbers and increasing rates of child poverty and inequality.

1.8 The Commission supports a public health approach to be adopted by Violence Reduction Units (VRU's) and recognises that long-term prevention strategies with substantial investment is necessary. The final report of the cross-party Commission makes several calls upon government including

- VRU's must receive enhanced funding immediately, accompanied by funding projections for a minimum of ten years
- Central Government should provide significant and immediate increased funding to enable schools to put in place the enhanced support necessary to avoid off-rolling and pursue an aspiration of zero exclusions. Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil
- Central Government should provide Local Authorities with statutory funding and a clear statutory duty for providing youth services, the levels of which should be determined by the number of young people living in each Local Authority area.

West Sussex Picture

1.9 The current priorities for the Safer West Sussex Partnership are;

- Child Exploitation
- Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Modern Slavery
- Preventing Radicalisation and Violent Extremism
- Serious and Organised Crime
- Serious violence

1.10 The issue of serious violence cuts across a number of these priorities, in particular child exploitation, drugs and alcohol and domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Knife Crime & Serious Violence

1.11 Knife related crime has recorded the largest increase since 2017 and is responsible for the majority of serious violence in Sussex, see data below. Increased awareness from Sussex Police Operation Safety and guidance within the Sussex Force in the recording of knife crime will have contributed to some of this increase . However, it is unlikely that that improvements in recording practices alone are responsible for the increase.

- 1.12 The Serious Violence Crime Profile for Sussex, produced in March 2020, presents strong evidence supporting the approach to target our activity and resources towards community-based approaches.
- 1.13 Between 2017 and 2019, the highest number of Serious Violent Crime offences specific to West Sussex, occurred within the District and Borough areas of Adur and Worthing, Arun and Crawley.
- 1.14 The picture in Sussex is consistent with the national trend across England and Wales, with a continual rise in knife offences over the last three years.
- 1.15 Due to the hidden nature of knife-carrying and the under-reporting of violent incidents to the police we are unlikely to know the full extent or problem of knife crime/serious violence locally. Academic literature cites strong evidence linking deprivation and vulnerability with knife crime and serious youth violence.
- 1.16 Further data supporting this targeted approach is in relation to “neighbourhood level” deprivation: Areas within three wards in Arun and one ward in Crawley fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England. These wards are Courtwick with Toddington, Marine, and Bersted in Arun and Broadfield South in Crawley.
- 1.17 Data contained within the Serious Violence Crime profile has shaped an intelligence-led approach to West Sussex VRU priorities to tackle serious violence.

Violence Reduction Units (VRU’s)

- 1.18 The Government’s Serious Violence Strategy places an emphasis on early intervention and prevention and aims to tackle the root causes of violence and prevent all individuals from getting involved in crime in the first place.
- 1.19 In March 2019 the government announced a £100m fund to tackle serious violence. Sussex Police and the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) bid to become fund beneficiaries.
- 1.20 On 12 August 2019 the government announced that 18 Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) areas would be awarded £35 million to set up specialist teams to tackle violent crime in their areas, Sussex Police Force and Sussex PCC was named as one of the 18 areas chosen for this purpose.
- 1.21 The VRU aims would be to bring together different organisations, including the police, local government, health, community leaders and other key partners to tackle violent crime by understanding its root causes. The VRU’s are responsible for identifying what is driving violent crime in the area and coming up with a co-ordinated response and with delivering both short- and long-term strategies to tackle violent crime, involving police, healthcare workers, community leaders and others.
- 1.22 In 2019-20 the Sussex PCC was awarded £880k with West Sussex allocated £294k to support targeted work and interventions. In 2020-21 the award to West Sussex was £176k for direct interventions and an additional £30k to support the local coordination of the VRU activities. Some funds in 2020-21

have been allocated to the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership infrastructure to support programme infrastructure costs.

- 1.23 This was in addition to surge funding of £1.3m in 2019/20 to support increased operational capacity within the Police Force. Sussex Police named this response Operation Safety with key objectives to maximise effectiveness in investigations where serious violence and/or knife enabled crime has taken place and to target knife crime and serious violence through intelligence-led operational activity.

Structure and Governance

- 1.24 The overarching pan-Sussex Serious Violence Reduction Steering Group (SVRSG), which comprises the core VRU team has responsibility for strategic coordination of VRU activity across Sussex including all financial and reporting requirements, executive engagement, project management, analysis and development of data sharing agreements and communications and engagement. The team also leads on the collation and sharing of good practice locally and nationally.
- 1.25 Within the Sussex Police Force area there are three locality VRU's (one in each area of Sussex: East Sussex, West Sussex, Brighton & Hove), which are responsible for the operational delivery of VRU activity within their area.
- 1.26 The SVRSG provides the forum for locality VRU's to share information and good practice, hold each other to account and ensure that delivery of activity on serious violence is consistent with the aims and principles set out by the Home Office.

West Sussex VRU

- 1.27 The West Sussex Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) core function is to offer leadership and, working with all relevant agencies operating locally, strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence. It reports to the Safer West Sussex Partnership Executive Board and via the SVRSG to the PCC as Chair of the Sussex Criminal Justice Board.
- 1.28 The current membership of the West Sussex VRU consists of statutory agency representatives and relevant partners from the voluntary and community sector responsible for delivery of serious violence reduction activity or connected community safety business areas including; National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, all District and Borough Councils, Sussex Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Youth Justice Service, WSCC Education, WSCC MASH, WSCC Community Safety, WSCC Public Health, WSCC Communications and a range of colleagues from the Executive Directorate for Children, Young People and Learning.

Definition of Serious Violence

- 1.29 The government Serious Violence Strategy published in 2018 is framed on four key themes: tackling county lines and misuse of drugs, early intervention and prevention, supporting communities and partnerships, and an effective law enforcement and criminal justice response. The strategy did not specifically define serious violence but referred to the rising incidence,

nationally, of violent crime such as homicide, domestic violence, knife and firearms crime. The strategy also does not address specifically sexual abuse, modern slavery or violence against women and girls. They may all involve forms of serious violence but there are already specific strategies addressing those important issues, and so they are not included within the scope of this new strategy

- 1.30 The government Serious Violence Strategy (April 2018) can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>
- 1.31 The West Sussex Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Steering Group (DSAV), pan-Sussex Serious Violence Reduction Steering Group (SVRSG) and West Sussex VRU are closely strategically aligned and collaborate across all areas of work in support of reduction of all types of violence.
- 1.32 The strategy does not define serious violence categorically but called on each VRU area to define serious violence, based upon its local circumstances. The definition of serious violence in Sussex has been adopted in response to the evidence within the Sussex Violent Crime Profile analysis produced by Sussex Police and reflects a Pan Sussex approach to reducing the local trends in serious violence.
- 1.33 The agreed definition of serious violence for VRU's in Sussex is violence that:
- occurs in a public place, or has a victim, suspect or offender under the age of 25, and
 - either causes or is intended to cause serious injury (GBH/wounding criminal definition), or involves the use of one or more of the following:
 - a firearm
 - knife or other bladed/pointed weapon, whether made, adapted or intended as a weapon
 - other offensive weapon (whether made, adapted or intended), including acid or corrosive substance.

West Sussex VRU funding and approach 2019-20

- 1.34 The VRU funding in 2019-20 focused on three key projects/approaches:
- 1) West Sussex-wide - Funding was awarded to a series of training programmes, outreach projects and direct interventions with the aim of preventative and outreach workers being skilled up to work with potentially 'at risk' children before existing service entry thresholds are met
 - 2) Worthing & Adur - Schools Project focussed on targeting the 15 highest risk schools and colleges to educate young people about the short and long-term debilitating effects of stabbing injuries and countering the negative effect of Social Media.
 - 3) Crawley - To identify and engage young people at risk of knife, gang and exploitation activity using engagement with high-tech music. One-to-one mentoring; group work in schools and community settings; street-based outreach

- 1.35 Evidence gathered through evaluation has indicated that for some young people single interventions or dual interventions have provided the momentum to find their own purpose to achieve and channel successful outcomes. Building on themes of physical exercise, gaining self-esteem through a structured programme of interventions, education and mentoring has proved to be successful. Some providers are investing back by supporting those young people who have been motivated to attend and succeed, to continue onwards with their efforts by offering them a peer mentor independent of WSCC's commissioned services.
- 1.36 The VRU have worked in partnership with commissioned providers who have an offer beyond that of the commissioned service, and who offer social value within their structure, provides potential to yield more sustainable outcomes for participants and extend the peer mentor model beyond the commissioned service.
- 1.37 Interventions which provide emotional regulation, mentorship, have been successful in helping young people, not only to channel their energy into a constructed activity, but also assisted them to learn clear boundaries, gain confidence and see how to engage in more positive activity and reduce exposure to risks. Offering physical activity interventions which offer an element of peer-led construct alongside support through the Youth Justice Service (YJS) in relation to education, career and training planning appears, anecdotally, to be a successful combination of interventions.
- 1.38 Funding in 2019/20 was able to support 300 young people receiving different interventions to reduce the risk of violence and/or exploitation they are exposed to. Examples of these include
- 1) Targeted St Giles Trust Project workshops were delivered over six days to West Sussex Alternative Provision Colleges (WSAPC) to all secondary WSAPC pupils and staff. The work was designed for those potentially at risk and some pupils entrenched in gang related activities/exploitation.
 - 2) Approximately 200 young people attending Alternative Provision Colleges participated in the sessions which gave students a chance to understand and reflect upon the threats they are exposed to and how they could be supported to reduce their risk and involvement in gangs, carrying knives and other threats
 - 3) Kendra Houseman 'Out of The Shadows' were commissioned to deliver an innovative offer for young women and the professional workforce that support them. The training consisted of workshops, from a lived experience perspective to raise awareness of risks regarding county lines, serious violence, sexual exploitation. 3 workshops took place in February with 17 young women attending alongside professional supporters. A further 2 workshops took place in February with 30 professionals attending for professionals and direct interventions/training to support a risk managed approach.
 - 4) Young women who participated stated in their evaluation feedback that as a result of the intervention they now recognised models of exploitation and could potentially reduce exposure to peer on peer and other forms of exploitation. They were able to recognise actions of potential exploiters, for

example, that acceptance of 'gifts' in the form of drugs/alcohol/lifts increased their risk of exploitation. The training helped in identifying and potentially reducing risks in sexually violent/exploitative situations.

- 5) Other direct interventions providing structured support and case management were provided through a range of suppliers. The scope of these enabled young people to participate in, and be supported, through physical activity such as boxing, outdoor physical activity and exercise. Additional specialist therapeutic assessments and trauma informed therapy and interventions to nine young people were also funded allowing greater access to specialist therapy.

West Sussex VRU funding and approach 2020-21

- 1.39 In March 20-21 the Serious Violent Crime Profile was published and this evidence informed the Pan-Sussex and West Sussex specific VRU bid to the Home Office for 20-21 funding. The profile enabled an intelligence led approach to the refreshed delivery plan of the West Sussex VRU.
- 1.40 £30k of the funding has been awarded to the provision of targeted interventions to young people either with known risk factors and/or those young people with known risk factors and that are involved in the criminal justice system. This funding has been allocated to the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and will be focussed on providing interventions which have proven successful during the funding period 19/20. Examples of these will be spot-purchasing individual interventions from Audio Active mentoring programme, Angling 4 Education and Lodge Hill Challenge U, all of which were evaluated to be successful interventions in supporting young people in 2019-20.
- 1.41 A sum of (£20k) is being diverted to further develop the peer mentoring scheme delivered through St. Giles Trust which has supported a cohort to complete Stage 1 of their Learning to Advise programme. Further investing in the current cohort and extending further to another 5-10 potential mentors will enable us to embed a community model of peer mentorship in the three localities we are focussing our violence reduction plan towards. This will result in a total of 15 qualified peer mentors.
- 1.42 The peer mentors will be deployed into a mentoring role with 17-24-year olds involved with, or at risk of becoming involved with, violent crime. We will also explore support for the youth / adult offender transition and the peer support the mentors could provide during this stage.
- 1.43 Embedding a mentor-led programme in communities where intelligence indicates a higher risk in the Serious Violent Crime profile, resources will be distributed through each of the locality community partnerships, identifying key individuals at risk of violence, offenders perpetrating violence, and prevent reoffending. This model will seek to develop accessible resource to reach young people between services, accessing youth offending services and into adulthood, with a view to capitalise on potentially teachable moments.
- 1.44 Thirdly, (£126k) funding is being channelled to the four West Sussex Districts and Boroughs identified within the Serious Violent Crime Profile as having the most significant challenges of serious violence amongst young

people in West Sussex. The funding is enabling a community-led approach to be developed to target key hotspot areas within localised areas in each of the districts. These are Crawley Borough Council, Adur and Worthing Councils and Arun District Council. Interventions and the public health approach are being underpinned by a community engagement and resilience approach, alongside targeted interventions to support high risk individuals, families and networks.

- 1.45 Through the VRU it will be ensured there is collaborative working across the key Districts, and across the County, where these projects are tested, and learning shared and disseminated.
- 1.46 As well as allocating the funds to the above areas of work the VRU has identified three strategic key priorities over the next 18 months. These priorities were identified through the vulnerability factors identified in the problem profile:
- 1) Working together to support children and young people to remain safe in school and to reduce exclusions in all schools including special schools and APC's.
 - 2) Developing engagement opportunities and platforms with young people, with communities disproportionality effected by violence and exploitation, and with the wider community so feedback is listened to, to help shape responses
 - 3) Working together to reduce the risk of serious violence among young BAME victims and perpetrators, by understanding the causes, indicators and influences. The VRU and the Youth Justice Board will work in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop a focussed operational plan to reduce the disproportional representation of young black and minority ethnic young people exposed to serious violence and exploitation.
- 1.47 West Sussex County Council is actively engaged in all aspects of the VRU including through participation of its Children's Service functions, the Youth Justice Service, Education services, Specialist Adolescent Services and strategic alignment of associated governance and Board reporting arrangements and priorities.
- 1.48 The Home Office has provided grant funding within its grant allocations to VRU's to support the coordination of the VRU funded activity and priorities, and each upper tier authority within Sussex, including West Sussex, has budget allocated for this purpose. With this allocation of grant funding, West Sussex has appointed a Violence Reduction Unit Lead, positioned within the Community Safety and Wellbeing team, to fulfil this activity.
- 1.49 Collaboration across WSCC Safeguarding in Education and Schools and Community Safety and Wellbeing to co-design the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum for West Sussex has resulted in content and accompanying resources to address serious violence/knife crime and the impact of social media.

Impact of COVID

- 1.50 Nationally the media has reported on incidents of disorder in London and other larger cities. Concerns have been heightened regarding hidden violence

as domestic abuse & sexual violence support services have seen dramatic rises in people accessing them. As lockdown has eased there have been concerns about the impact on young people and the economic pressures arising from the pandemic.

- 1.51 Hot spots of anti-social behaviour and serious violence emerged in several areas, resulting in Sussex Police using Public Place Dispersal Orders to manage and control the risk of serious violence. In June 2020 West Sussex VRU bid to the Home Office was successful in gaining funding for one off micro-charity funding totalling £24k to fund two schemes to support COVID-19 related risk to young people, resulting in detached youth work in Lancing, one of the hotspot areas, and a diversionary empowerment project with young people at risk of serious violence and exploitation in Crawley, seeking to reduce the risk of serious violence and exploitation.
- 1.52 The West Sussex VRU is developing a robust operational plan for 2020-22 and will establish three sub-groups reporting into the VRU, each of which will be tailored to the delivery of the three priorities. These will drive the operational work, identify key challenges, escalate barriers and risk and report on progress to the VRU.
- 1.53 Alongside this the National Probation Service has developed a violence and exploitation team who will work with 18-24 year olds most at risk of violence and exploitation.

2. Proposal

2.2 Not applicable

3. Resources

3.1 The West Sussex Violence Reduction Unit provides a mechanism that enables partners to access resourcing and expertise.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

4.1 The current partnership approach to Serious Violence, understanding the scale, scope and impact of violence and consider whether the partnership response and multi-agency activity is currently effective in addressing the threat, risk and harm posed to individuals and communities in West Sussex.

5. Consultation

5.1 This is an information item, consultation was not required.

6. Risk Implications and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
N/A	There are no risk management implications

7. Other Options Considered

7.1 This is a scrutiny paper and an information item, therefore not relevant.

8. Equality Duty

8.1 No impact.

9. Social Value

9.1 No implications.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 brought in powers for Scrutiny to investigate the work being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). This was a power to look at the work of the partnership as a whole rather than a power to scrutinise individual partners.

10.2 The Act requires Local Authorities to designate a committee as a crime and disorder committee with responsibility for the 'responsible authorities' (CSP Partners). The Environmental and Communities Scrutiny Committee is the designated Committee to carry out this review annually.

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 The proposal has no implications under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Emily King

Acting Director of Communities

Contact: Jim Bartlett, Acting Head - Community Safety & Wellbeing.

jim.bartlett@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None