



**NORTHUMBRIA
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

**violence
reduction
unit**

Improving lives to prevent crime

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit



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INTRODUCTION & LOCAL CONTEXT

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit and its strategic partners continue to successfully work together to implement and deliver against the milestones identified within the Response Strategy. The vision is that Northumbria is a place where individuals, families and communities thrive, making the most of the opportunities to live, learn and work free from the fear of violence, and this annual report shares this vision and highlights the work being done together to create a cultural change.

The Response Strategy and associated delivery plans are underpinned by a number of core values. These are the foundations that will support our strategic and operational activity:

- **Focusing on Prevention** – preventing violence
- **Tackling Inequalities** – challenging and taking action to address root causes
- **Building on Community Assets** – recognising individual and community strengths
- **Working Collaboratively** – everyone playing their part and sharing responsibility
- **Being led by Intelligence** – using data and intelligence to shape responses.

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit, including all specified authorities has adopted the World Health Organisations (WHO) definition of serious violence.

The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (WHO, 2002)

A key part of the Government's programme to adopt a multi-agency approach to prevent and reduce serious violence, is the Serious Violence Duty. This has been introduced as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC), alongside Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVRO's) and Homicide Reviews.

The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, there is a requirement for all specified authorities to prepare a Serious Violence Needs Assessment that identifies the key hotspot areas as well as the specific types of violence that are most prevalent, this document will discharge this element in the future. There is also a need for authorities to develop a Serious Violence Strategy which will bring together all elements of activity and will be monitored throughout the year.

The following authorities are subject to the duty:

- Police
- Local authorities
- Fire and Rescue
- Health authorities
- Probation

As part of our continued work in meeting the needs of the Serious Violence Duty for all specified authorities we have established a new Serious Violence Delivery Group, which will monitor performance of interventions and report to the Strategic Board. This Group will shape the future delivery plan to ensure key priorities of the Response Strategy continue to be delivered locally.

To facilitate this multi-agency practice data and intelligence will be used, including any identified inequalities. All of which will be rooted in evidence of effectiveness. The 5C's are as follows:

- Collaboration
- Co-production
- Co-operation including data intelligence sharing
- Counter narrative development
- Community consensus approach

The milestones of the Response Strategy have been developed following the strategic needs assessment to highlight next steps. All of which will be aligned to the principles above to determine priorities, and the key stakeholders required to effectively take this forward.

The year 5 response strategy will continue to support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan (2022-2025) which has been developed by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, and sets out three identified priorities, [Fighting Crime](#), [Preventing Crime](#) and [Improving Lives](#).

Nature of violent crime in Northumbria

Northumbria has a population of 1.5 million people and covers an area of more than 2,000 square miles in the North East of England, from the Scottish border to the north down to County Durham to the south and from the Pennines to the west and across to the North East coast. It includes a wide range of communities including rural areas, towns and two major cities, Sunderland and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, all with very different community, social and policing needs. While the area has seen some high-profile economic successes, bringing prosperity in some parts, there are still many communities with very significant levels of deprivation.

Northumbria Police covers this geographical area, including the counties of Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Within the two counties there are six Local Authority administrative areas:

- Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
- Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
- North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Northumberland County Council
- South Tyneside Council Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sunderland City Council



Serious violent crime increased by **15% (3,029 offences)** in the 12-months to 31st December 2022 when compared to levels in 2021, with increases seen across all local authority areas. There were a total of **22,899** offences, with a third of offences (**6,907**) domestic related. However, levels slowed by **7.7%** in the final quarter of 2022 compared to Q3, suggestive that the interventions and activities of the VRU and partners are having an impact in the targeted areas.

Although no particular pattern of offending or offender profile links to drug and/or alcohol use and the Night Time Economy are evident, with **4 of the top 5** harm hotspots in Newcastle City Centre.

In Northumbria, offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has a rate of **70** offences per 100,000 population in 2022. This is below the national rate of **84** offences, and regional rate of **82** offences. However there was a rise in knife enabled offences of **12%** (**108** offences) in 2022 with **973** offences.

You are more likely to be a victim of a Knife Enabled offence if you're aged over 25 years, with two-thirds of all offences in 2022. There was a **15%** increase in offences perpetrated against a victim under 25 years.

And possession offences increased by **14%** (**157** offences), potentially attributed to an increase in stop & searches. Possession offences including knives, other offensive weapons, and firearms all increased.

The increases in 2022 were also seen with hospital admissions. During 2022 there was a **25%** increase in admissions due to an assault (all ages), with **960** admissions. With admissions of under 25s also increasing by **62** admissions (30%). Whilst admissions involving a sharp object reduced by **9.2%** with **138** admissions (all ages), with admissions of under 25s for an assault with a sharp object falling by **24%** (**11** admissions).

During 2022 levels of homicides increased by **3** offences (**16%**), with a total of **22** homicides. There was more than one homicide in 7 of the 12 months in 2022, with **16** offences being non-domestic. Homicides fell in 2 of the 6 local authority areas (Sunderland and Newcastle), whilst the other 4 areas saw a small increase.

In terms of overall Domestic Abuse, incidents (HRNs) have also increased during 2022 by **3.3%** (**1,266** incidents), with **39,418** incidents. These incidents resulted in **25,681** crimes, which was an increase of **2%** from **25,163** in the previous 12-month period.

The above figures show that there is still a great deal of work to do. Tackling serious violence will not happen overnight, this is a long term process that requires commitment from all partners across Northumbria.

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT

Model, Governance and Accountability

The Northumbria VRU is a centrally located team working within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and across all six local authority areas within Northumbria. The core VRU team was established in September 2019 and currently consists of 12 staff; this has been added to with further posts. The team consists of the Director of the VRU, a Public Health Specialist, a training, development and research lead, 3 Project Coordinators, a Domestic Abuse Specialist, a Domestic Abuse Project Coordinator, a Communications and Engagement Officer, a Partnership Analyst, an impact and intervention analyst, a Support Officer, and the Education Team. The staff within the team has a wealth of partnership experience between them including public health; local authority; teaching; social worker; police; 3rd Sector.

The VRU is governed by the Violence Reduction Board which is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and includes representatives from all specified authorities. The Violence Reduction Board provides strategic direction of the local response to serious violence in line with our strategic priorities, and oversees all serious violence activity and ensures the effective implementation of this strategy and associated delivery plan. Key to our approach is collaboration with all six Community Safety Partnerships as well as relevant agencies operating locally.



And as highlighted, the Serious Violence Delivery Group has been established to provide oversight and governance in delivering the aims and objectives of the [Serious Violence Delivery Plan](#). This Group will support the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty for specified authorities and will monitor performance of interventions and report to the Strategic Board. This Group will shape the future delivery plan to ensure that the key priorities of the Response Strategy continue to be delivered locally. The Group ensures that links are in place with other current work programmes with partners ensuring violence reduction approaches cut across wider areas of work such as substance misuse, mental health, and links to deprivation. We will continue to build partnerships and continue to work collaboratively as we strive to achieve our vision.

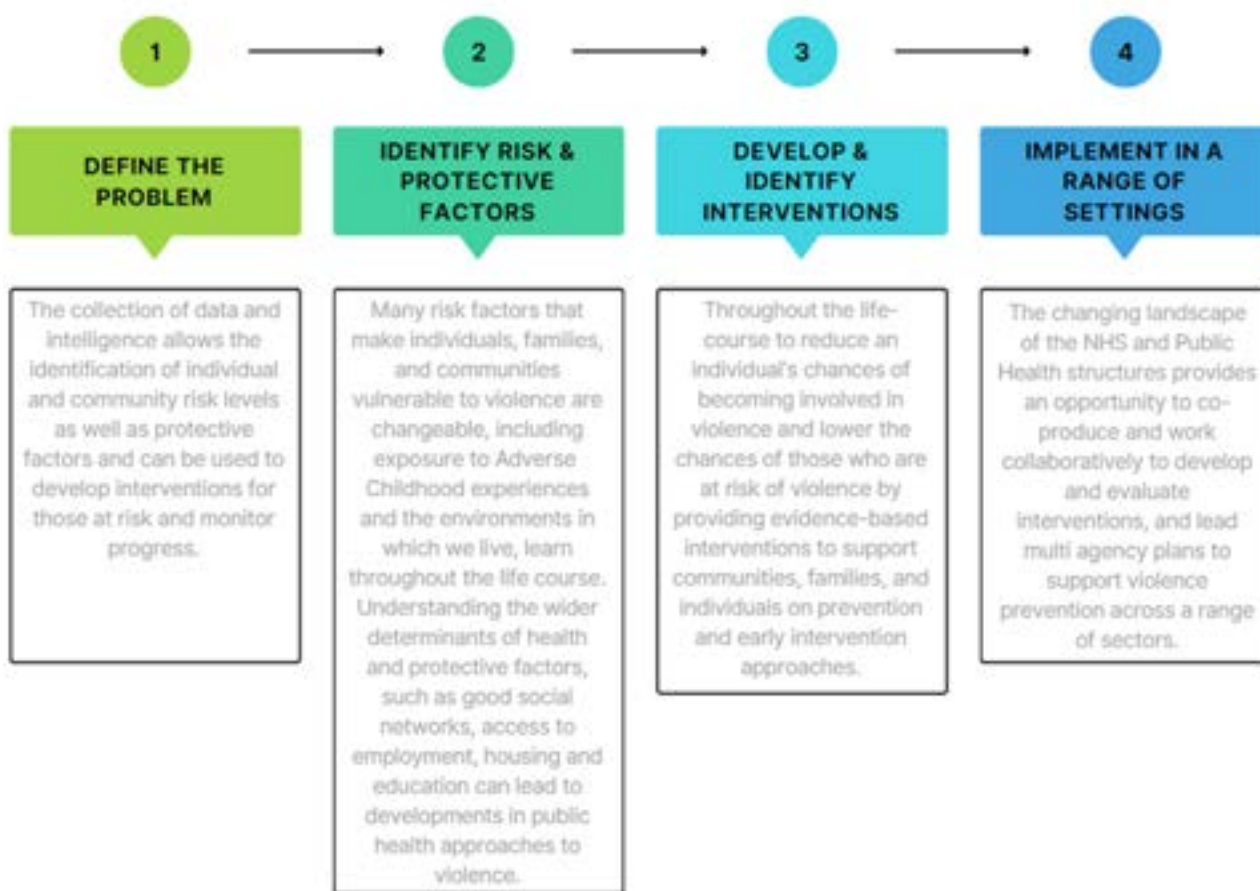
The VRU hold quarterly meetings with the Strategic Board and Delivery Group where the progress and performance are monitored. It also allows for emerging issues to be identified and discussed following the production of a Response Strategy Performance Report which is prepared for each meeting.

Our Public Health Approach

Our approach focusses on responding to the risk and protective factors associated with serious violence. There is growing evidence that violence is preventable and by having a greater understanding of the risk factors that may make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to violence, and to use the protective factors that exist to the strengthen the strategies used to prevent it.

We continue to deliver our public health approach which consists of 4 key functions:

A Public Health Approach



Development of the Strategic Needs Assessment

Our Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) continues to provide an evidence based public health assessment of serious violence across Northumbria. The aim of the SNA is to increase understanding of the types, distribution and extent of serious violence within the local area to support the VRU and partners to identify the most vulnerable communities in across Northumbria, and to help deliver coordinated, impactful interventions. It includes identifying needs and assets relevant to health, social care and public health across the full life course, covering children, young people and adults; and involves an analysis of the social determinants of health.

The VRU has recently developed its Strategic Needs Assessment into serious violence and vulnerability across Northumbria, providing an understanding of the reality of violence across the Northumbria Police Force Area and the underlying risk factors of violence.

The process of developing the most recent SNA was supported by strategic partners, and this year the VRU will refine this process further alongside the specified authorities, as highlighted within the Serious Violence Duty. One of the key requirements of the duty is for all specified authorities to prepare a Serious Violence Needs Assessment.

To supplement the annual Strategic Needs Assessment, we will continue to work with the Public Health Institute at Liverpool John Moores University to develop Information Sharing Protocols between data providers to include within the data dashboard which has been developed. This will be accessible to key stakeholders.

DELIVERY, IMPACT & PERFORMANCE

Delivery of the Response Strategy (RS) / Interventions

Throughout Year 4 the VRU funded interventions continued to show impact and successes within our communities, delivering support and mentorship to those vulnerable individuals within Northumbria.

340

Knife crime awareness sessions have been delivered to...

9,135

young people in school and community settings.

29,126

individuals have received violence reduction themed learning from our Education Team, or have taken part in our training sessions.

71%

of those who complied with one of the out of court disposal pathways have not re-offended since accessing the interventions.

Our Student Champions have supported...

100

students, from school years 7-11, for a number of referral reasons, including carrying weapons in school, anger/violence in school, ASB, and violence in the community.

56

young people on our YOLO intervention who's risk of committing serious and violent offending was reduced.

UP TO 16.9%

reduction in ASB thanks to targeted activity taking place through our Seasonal Violence Fund.

THE LOCAL YOUTH FUND

In **Round 3**, we supported **20** young people's projects which directly benefited 1,980 individuals.

In **Round 4**, we have supported **16** knife crime-related projects, directly benefitting **559** individuals.

Several projects have been commissioned to take into consideration opportunities to maximize primary prevention across all six local authority areas. This includes a review of the VRU Education Team to enhance educational resources across the region to increase public awareness and consequences of serious violence.

There were some notable impacts during year 4 from the commissioned projects, including the Seasonal Violence Fund, the Student Support Champions, and the Youth Fund. And as these projects continue in year 5 impact will continue to be monitored.

SEASONAL VIOLENCE FUND

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit have been working with CSPs to develop projects with a fund aimed at reducing serious violence within communities across Northumbria. The fund is committed to identifying individuals causing significant harm in communities and diverting them from crime, with the VRU teaming up with partners such as Northumbria Police, local councils and youth organisations, in a bid to tackle serious violence together.

During the winter projects included a focus on key events over the festive period, increased police patrols, more youth workers and diversionary activities for young people, with early figures showing the impact of this work with crime down 14% in December. In Sunderland City Centre, crime dropped by 37% compared to the previous year, due to the increase in police presence, neighbourhood wardens and more youth and health provision.

This follows the success seen during the summer where levels of violence dropped by 12.2% across the region as a result.

STUDENT SUPPORT CHAMPION

The Violence Reduction Units Education Team continues to evolve and build a varied range of resources and opportunities for young people. This commitment now includes the Student Support Champions who are working with individuals and small groups to help young people reflect upon issues they may face in the community.

The Student Support Champions are being trialled in 8 secondary schools in Newcastle supporting students, from school years 7 – 11, following referrals from the schools. Some of the reasons for referrals is carrying weapons in school, anger/violence in school, ASB, violence in the community, and each student is support through numerous sessions. There has been some positive feedback and comments from the schools and from the students involved;

- 'One young person has spoken to his friend about how useful he is finding our 1:1 sessions which has resulted in his friend asking to see me for help with his anger and violent behaviours.'
- 'A young person is being supported in reporting multiple assaults. He has reported a better rapport with the police and is more accepting of confiding in them.'
- 'One young person opened up about his mental health which started off with a conversation around gangs and threatening behaviour. The SSC is liaising with the school with the aim to put in a CYPS referral and supporting him in the meantime with his mood.'

YOUTH FUND

The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit has continued to award funds to projects developed by young people with the aim of preventing crime and improving their local areas. The Youth Fund is all about giving young people the chance to have their voices heard. With that in mind, young people across the region bid for a range of activities that they felt would make a difference to their local areas and improve their feelings of safety.

As young people continue to shape this fund, a youth panel were responsible for reviewing the applications and providing their recommendations for funding. This has resulted in nearly 600 young people now set to get their projects underway.

The latest round of projects were aimed at tackling knife crime, with a focus on increasing awareness of the dangers and consequences of knife crime. Some of the successful projects included wearing white at community sessions to spark conversation amongst young people, hearing from specialists in information sessions, and sports activities such as a 'knives down' football league, with important messages around staying safe. They successful projects were supported by a number of local organisations.

There are a number of case studies at the end of the report to further highlight some of the good work and impact in our region during year 4, highlighting successful interventions in the identified harm hotspot areas, following support from the VRU. They highlight areas of encouragement and promising progress with some of the interventions under the themes of Fighting Crime, Preventing Crime, and Improving Lives.

Community and Youth Engagement

The OPCC and VRU continue to engage with our communities and stakeholders to better understand the landscape of violence across the Northumbria force area. This engagement has developed our understanding of the issues affecting our communities and how the VRU and partners can help.

In the latest Safer Communities survey, a sample of 3340 Northumbria residents, found that factors influencing feelings of safety included the prevalence of ASB, visible drug and alcohol use, nuisance neighbours and negative past experiences. Factors that negatively impacted perceptions of safety included visible alcohol or drug use, ASB, their previous experience of crime and the perceived increase in the number of fights and assaults in city centres.

In March 2023 a survey with Neighbourhood Policing Teams gained an insight into violence and what they are seeing within our communities. The main identified themes below are consistent with views from other partners and stakeholders during meetings and engagements;

- Youth ASB – linked to serious violence
- Threats from Youths
- Young people using violence (hitting, punching and kicking)
- Assaults with weapons - youths
- Gangs/USG
- Assaults with a knife – youths

The VRU Education Team, in partnership with Children North East, engaged with children and young people (aged 11- to 25-years) from Ashington, Newcastle and Sunderland to co-produce 'Staying Safe in Public Spaces and Public Transport' learning for Key Stage 3 and 4 students. These three 'expert panels' told us that the time of day, street lighting, who they were travelling with, and other passengers using substances informed decisions on staying safe.

Our area-based consultations with adults (e.g., Low Fell, Deckham, Saltwell, Washington) did not identify serious violence as a key issue for them, suggesting that improved situational crime prevention, such as street lighting, and an increase in police patrols and CCTV would address their concerns on:

- ASB, including intimidating groups of young people
- Visible drug dealing and taking
- Litter, graffiti and dog fouling in public spaces
- Dangerous driving – speeding, motorcycle ASB

In year 5 the engagement with our young people and communities will continue, through an engagement plan which has been developed to bring together insights from beneficiaries, partners and local communities to identify needs and assets within local communities through this involvement, beneficiaries, partners and the local community will have the ability to influence and co-produce local services and interventions and have an understanding of what other factors have influenced service provision in their area. This provides an opportunity for greater partnership with local stakeholders and the community, through which local assets and resources can be offered and used as a way to work together to address local needs and tackle violent crime.

EVALUATION & FORWARD PLANNING

Local Evaluation

We continue to evaluate the VRUs progress against its aims and objectives of reducing serious violence in Northumbria. Testing and refining the approach with the aim of developing an understanding of what works and in what context, with the emphasis on impact than process.

In year 3 ERS continued the evaluation work they undertook in year 2, further exploring some of the specific themes highlighted in the previous evaluation and some of the interventions commissioned. The evaluation found that the VRU continues to demonstrate established and improving practice across Northumbria, as evidenced by the level of collaboration and co-production with key strategic partners.

This year the VRU is working with the Rocket Science Lab to refine some of this work further, with a priority on understanding what is working for the young people and what impact the VRU is making through the evaluation of three specific interventions (YOLO, Focussed Deterrence, and the Hospital Navigator). There are ambitions to both contribute to the evidence base of what works as well as challenge what constitutes evidence through demonstrating impact for individuals, families, and the wider community.

Theory of Change

We continue to embed Theory of Change (ToC) into our core practice. Theories of Change have improved our operating model as we reflect on what we do, how to best measure success, and consider what works and how. This will enable us to better engage with partners and beneficiaries in co-producing new and refining existing interventions.

We have also supported our delivery partners in scoping opportunities to develop or refine their offer (as part of VRU-funded activities and for application for other funding). For instance, we facilitated a ToC (Junction 42/ recruitment junction) to strengthen collaboration between VCS and other services (e.g., HM Prisons and Probation, DWP, Housing) to improve the experience for prison leavers. Two focus groups, one for female and one for male prison leavers, identified that the preparation and 'leaving prison' experience was very transactional, with individuals not always seeing the significance of encounters-in-isolation with services. Highlighting the challenges of multi-agency working, the discussion to develop a more person-centred, transformational experience for prison leavers in Northumbria has begun.

Our Theory of Change sets out the activities, anticipated outputs and outcomes and intended impact we will deliver throughout the year. In delivering our Theory of Change we will work collaboratively with partners, stakeholders and intended beneficiaries facilitating a range of activities that includes:

- Strategic Management via the Northumbria Violence Reduction Strategic Board.
- Engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders, communities and beneficiaries.
- Governance arrangements that support and enable our Insight work, Impact Assessment, Co-Production and the delivery of our violence reduction interventions.
- Evaluation and impact assessment that demonstrates the effectiveness of our work and overall contribution to reducing serious violence and the contribution to the Northumbria Police and Crime Plan.

The short and long term success measures that are linked to our Theory of Change will enable us to track the progress of our activities and impact during the year. These measures will be monitored quarterly and will measure the reduction in;

- Knife enabled serious violence
- Hospital admissions for knife related serious violence
- Homicides
- Anti-social behaviour in intervention areas
- First time entrants into the criminal justice system
- Repeat offending within harm hotspot/intervention areas

Tracking these measures ensures our focus on reducing serious violence is maintained across all VRU activity. In turn the ongoing monitoring of our measures of success through the implementation of our Theory of Change will help identify any gaps or barriers in our processes which will then inform the activity of the Serious Violence Strategic Board, our engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders and intended beneficiaries and the development of any new approaches required.

THEORY OF CHANGE & MEASURING IMPACT



Forward Planning - Year 5 Response Strategy

The Northumbria VRU Response strategy delivers by prioritising action, leadership and system change in five priority areas listed below and set the plan of action for work programmes for 2023-2024. Each priority has been designed to address the findings identified through strategic needs assessment process and developed in collaboration with partners of the Serious Violence Delivery Group. These priorities may change and develop over the period of the strategy in accordance with identified and any changes in emerging trends and local need.

Priority 1: Create Stronger Systems to address serious violence.

Priority 2: Data, Evidence and Evaluation

Priority 3: Prevention and Early Intervention

Priority 4: Criminal Justice and Enforcement

Priority 5: Communication, Engagement and Reassurance

The Serious Violence Delivery Plan builds on what we know in relation to each of the identified priorities and provides a response with key actions to tackling serious violence. We will continue to use a Public Health Approach and work closely with local partners and communities to understand these impacts and address the risks that we know contribute to violence.

During Year 5 the following interventions will be adopted within Northumbria.

FIGHTING CRIME	PREVENTING CRIME	IMPROVING LIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASPS (Community Alternative to Short Prison Sentences) • Out of Court Disposals • Focused Deterrence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIVERT - Custody Diversion Scheme • YOLO - Sports Diversion Mentoring Programme • VRU Education Team • Student Support Champions • Education Transition Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Support Service • Local Youth Fund • Domestic Abuse - Findaway Programme • Workforce development response in relation to DA perpetrators • Multi-agency response to high-risk DA perpetrators

FIGHTING CRIME

Our **Community Alternative to Short Prison Sentences intervention**, in partnership with the Probation Service, aims to work with individuals entrenched in offending and sentenced to 6 months or less in custody. In order to break the cycle of their offending, staff work intensively with them to identify and address the root causes of their behaviour, through practical and mentoring support.

Focused Deterrence offers tailored intensive support, targeted interventions and swift enforcement for individuals causing the most serious violence in our communities. Sunderland City Centre became the first area to benefit from this new intervention. The SAIL (Sunderland Altogether Improving Lives) Team brings together dedicated violence reduction staff, officers from Northumbria Police, Sunderland City Council ASB officers, neighbourhood wardens and key specialists, to deter individuals from crime and provide some much needed respite for the city.

Our **Out of Court Disposal pathways** provide a response to crime that police can use locally without having to take the matter to court. It provides an opportunity to work with first time low-level offenders to divert them away from the Criminal Justice Service, by addressing the underlying causes of their behaviour. Our pathways include V-Aware (victim’s awareness), Employment Pathway and the Women’s Pathway.

PREVENTING CRIME

In order to reach young people at the earliest opportunity, our **dedicated education team** deliver informative, interactive and impactful sessions, covering a range of violence reduction topics, in schools and community settings. Education is such a powerful tool as it equips young people with the knowledge to make positive life choices. Through participation in our sessions, they receive an understanding of the risks, impact and consequences of violent crime and the support services available to them.

Eight secondary schools in Newcastle became the first to benefit from having **Student Support Champions** available to offer support on local youth violence issues. This included working with young people to build trusted relationships and encourage them to seek support. The champions work closely with schools, police, local authorities and community services to improve school

attendance, behaviour, reduce suspensions and exclusions, strengthen community links and prevent serious youth violence.

In partnership with the regions two football foundations, Newcastle and Sunderland, our **YOLO programme** provides mentoring support for young people aged 10 to 16 years identified as being at risk of knife crime. Upon entry to the programme, young people are allocated mentors to work with them on a one-one-one basis to establish positive relationships and ensure full support is in place, as they take part in sessions that will address their identified needs.

By working with Youth Justice Teams across the region, our **Divert programme** aims to deliver a 'teachable moment' to young people to divert them away from further offending. It provides an early opportunity to understand what is going on in their life and what may be concerning them. Initially working with under 18's, the team acknowledge the young person's concerns and to support them onto a relevant intervention or prevention programme to address their needs.

We know that moving from primary to secondary school is a difficult time for young people, particularly for those who are facing a number of different challenges within the home or in their immediate community. The **Education Transition Worker** will support young people who require additional support, and increase the chances of them integrating to a secondary environment as well as provide additional support to address identified needs at the earliest opportunity. The aim is to create a positive experience and relationship for both young people and their families and schools.

IMPROVING LIVES

The bystander approach tackles the root causes of domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) requires a primary prevention and long-term approach. There is an identified need for a preventative approach to engage men and boys (as a key part of the solution) around issues connected to masculinity, gendered social norms, misogyny and sexism. Primary prevention work in this field will also not only impact on men's violence towards women and girls, but towards other men and boys. Active bystander interventions can help equip people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to challenge harmful social norms and call-out sexism and misogyny wherever it is seen. It will help give men and boys the chance to develop identities and behaviours that are healthier for themselves and others - to generate a shift in norms and attitudes not just in themselves but importantly in their peers.

The **community support service** seeks to engage with vulnerable individuals in communities. Typically, the focus is on those individuals who are not accessing or being offered support. The result of which being the risk of increasing vulnerability to exploitation and serious violence either as a victim or perpetrator. The primary focus will be individuals aged 10-17 years old with the potential for wider family support should the need be identified. This whole family approach recognises the need to address familial influences, norms and behaviours that may impact on a young person's ability to change their behaviours if they are not addressed. This will include offering bespoke interventions within the community adopting a social prescribing approach delivered by staff with lived experience.

The completion of a pilot of the Drive model in 2021-22 in Northumbria, alongside the well-established Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) perpetrator panels has identified the need for longer term stabilisation, support and behaviour change **work with high risk, high harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse**. A localised model is required for Northumbria that builds on

the work of the MATAC and also takes the learning from the Drive pilot. Currently, there is some behaviour change work commissioned by the local authorities for standard / medium risk perpetrators. However, this leaves a gap around the high-risk high harm cohort. An options appraisal will identify the best localised model to address this gap.

Findaway empowers communities to identify and better respond to domestic abuse, by equipping them with the skills they need to help people they care about. It supports families, friends and community members who are worried about a loved one but who currently don't have the knowledge, tools and resources to keep themselves and their loved ones safe from further harm.

Workforce development is key to early responses to domestic abuse perpetration and should be viewed as a secondary prevention intervention in its own right. In a national survey of multiagency professionals by SafeLives (2018), 89% stated that they felt they should be working more with perpetrators of domestic abuse. In the same survey 89% of respondents also stated that they lacked the confidence to do so. There is an identified need to focus on earlier identification of those perpetrators not known to the criminal justice system by equipping staff with the confidence and tools to have conversations with perpetrators about their behaviour; to hold them to account; and to help them get to a stage where if a referral to a behaviour change is appropriate, then they are more likely to engage. Given the increased likely demand for interventions with perpetrators, there is also a need to enhance the training and skills of those already delivering support to perpetrators.

Our **Local Youth Fund** empowers young people to bid for projects and activities that they believe will reduce serious violence and vulnerability in their local areas. In the latest round, young people were encouraged to develop projects themed around preventing knife crime. This resulted in them coming up with ideas including wearing white at community sessions as a conversation starters and holding sports activities such as a 'knives down' football league. This unique fund also provides an opportunity to engage and better understand young people's experiences of vulnerability and violence to help shape our interventions.

CONCLUSION

The Northumbria VRU is now entering Year 5 of our Response Strategy and we continue to refine and deliver our approach as well as identify new opportunities to reduce serious violence. The high level objectives of our strategy remain the same:

- **Reduce knife enabled serious violence**
- **Reduce hospital admissions for knife related serious violence**
- **Reduce homicides**

Through the Serious Violence Reduction Board there have been a number of high level recommendations agreed that will focus the work of the Violence Reduction Unit and to provide further insight for our Partners throughout the year 2023/24.

These recommendations form the basis for the Serious Violence Delivery Plan which will build on what we know in relation to the evidence and research to provide a response to tackling serious violence across the Northumbria Police Force Area. We will continue with our Public Health Approach and work closely with local partners and communities to understand these impacts and address the risks that we know contribute to violence.

In order to achieve this we need to continue to embed a local approach that best meets the needs of our communities and addresses the wider contributory factors that lead to individuals becoming involved in serious violence. The VRU approach for year 5 will continue to be implemented under the following themes:

- **Fighting Crime**
- **Preventing Crime**
- **Improving Lives**

The Serious Violence Duty will see the VRU coordinate the local arrangements via the current VRU Board governance structure and the Serious Violence Delivery Group. This Group will have operational representation from all specified authorities to oversee performance, the development and implementation of the Serious Violence Delivery Plan.

Our access to partnership data, systems and the sharing of information continues to improve through the work with the public health institute at Liverpool John Moores University, allowing us to provide further insight whilst maintaining a public health approach.

There is a commitment from the VRU and its partners to build on the current foundations with opportunities to add value and make a positive difference to the lives of individuals and families across the whole region.

CASE STUDIES

Fighting Crime

OOCD - Women's Pathway

WP had been in an abusive relationship for a few years and after a night out an argument ensued with her ex-partner. He then returned to the home and started a fire in her daughter's bedroom. Thankfully her daughter was not in the house, and neither was WP.

Following the loss of her home and her daughter going to live with her grandmother, WP's mental health deteriorated, and she tried to commit suicide. She had been out drinking and went to the Tyne Bridge as stated she felt this was her only option. The police were called and as they have tried to stop her from climbing over the railings, she has kicked the officer. She was subsequently arrested for Common Assault on an Emergency Worker.

During her assessment WP told me that she had just been given a new property after being homeless and sofa surfing for the last 10 months due to the fire in her previous home. During the assessment the beneficiary stated that she still struggled with her mental health although she felt better now that she had somewhere stable to live and her daughter could return to live with her. I ensured she had the numbers for the crisis team and also The Samaritans should she have any further thoughts of harm. She assured me that she did not and was due to start counselling following a referral from her GP.

As she lost everything in the house fire and is only working part time, she was struggling financially. We spoke about her benefits and entitlements and encouraged her to claim PIP due to her mental health issues and gave her the number to start the claim process, we are due to meet to complete the forms when she receives them from the DWP. We also looked at what grants might be available for her to help with furnishing the home. We found two charities, applications were put in and she has received £800 towards carpets and also a cooker. She is looking forward to settling into her new home with her daughter back living with her. Onward support to ensure the correct benefit entitlement is being offered.

OOCD - 18-24 Pathway

CC was referred to this pathway, and during his assessment he explained what happened on the day he got in to trouble. He had been out to watch the match and had been drinking, there was an altercation with another individual and they ended up having words, the other person swung at him first so reacted by hitting back, I asked him if he reacted the way he did because he had been drinking he replied not really as he probably would of done the same with or without alcohol if someone swung at him.

We spoke about him controlling his temper and if this is something he needs or would like support with which he replied no we also spoke about the consequences of what can happen and the effects it can have on all involved.

CC then opened up and admitted he needs help and support to stop using cannabis as it is causing day to day life to be a struggle. He is smoking cannabis every day and can't leave the

house unless he has made a joint, he is feeling paranoid, he's not sleeping as he think people or the police is going to come through his door. CC said he is not eating properly and gets agitated and angry he is having nightmares about getting stabbed and waking up in pain, he has also admitted when he drinks he takes cocaine. I spoke about getting support from other agencies which he was happy do so but asked if I could do it for him. I have referred him to the Northumberland recovery partnership and also asked him to make an appointment at his doctors to discuss how he's feeling with anxiety.

CC was on benefits and we spoke about him looking for work or doing a course. He was very appreciative for the support, stating it means a lot having someone there to help him.

Preventing Crime

YOLO (Newcastle United Foundation)

NU1 was referred to YOLO due to being linked to anti-social behaviour in his local community, an admission to carrying weapons within the community, in addition to a number of adverse childhood experiences. He was at primary school and at serious risk of exploitation by older peers, and was on a Child Protection Plan.

The YOLO Mentor completed a range of interventions with NU1 in order to help him understand the consequences of his behaviour, how it could impact on his life and worked to build his confidence and self-esteem. NU1 also attended a number of different activities with NUF with other young people on YOLO in order to build his confidence, he also undertook activities which developed new skills and kept him active and busy during school holidays.

The mentor began to focus on a range of reading and writing based activities with NU1 in order to develop his academic learning and prepare him for secondary school, this included baking cakes where he had to follow a recipe by reading it in order to complete the task.

NU1 has transitioned to secondary school and there have been no issues with his behaviour, and he has not come to the attention of the police since being on the programme. He is no longer having any social care involvement and is not on a Child Protection plan any longer.

He was extremely shy when he began YOLO but has grown in confidence and is now able to speak to adults confidently. He has learnt to read and write, and his risk of exploitation has reduced considerably. NU1 now has a much brighter future.

YOLO (Newcastle United Foundation)

SA was referred into the YOLO programme by his social worker as a result of worker seeing the successful outcomes we had generated with another young person she worked with & thought the service would also be of benefit to SA.

SA is a looked after child under a long term care order, he was referred to the programme due to intelligence suggesting he was carrying a knife, committing anti-social behaviour in his local community and was attending a PRU due to permanent exclusion from mainstream education.

SA engaged with his mentor straight away and they built an excellent relationship. SA undertook a lot of work around making better choices, understanding peer influence and other core interventions such as; knife crime & understanding substance use.

They have also taken part in a lot of activities with NUF, of which his behaviour has always been positive and he has been an excellent role model for younger participants on the programme. He has also completed a First Aid Qualification, a Wellbeing Course and taken part in other things such as the World Peace School Sports Day football tournament.

SA always talks about how his trusted person is his mentor & how they have had such a positive impact on his life, SA has talked about the fact he would still be carrying a knife or weapon if it wasn't for the intervention work the mentor has undertaken with him.

SA's school attendance is now also 100% & school do talk positively about SA & the positive influence he has on other pupils. He removes himself from issues that occur within school & doesn't allow himself to be influenced by others.

SA would have continued to commit anti-social behaviour & potentially been involved in higher levels of criminality including knife crime if it wasn't for the intervention from the YOLO programme.

SA is now closed to YOLO, but remains open to a different programme offered by NUF, so that support can still be implemented for him. We hope to use SA as a peer mentor for other young people on the YOLO programme in the future.

Teachable Moments (Custody Diversion)

SP was arrested for drunk disorderly, resisting arrest and also assaulting a Police officer. The school SP attends had threats to exclude them for truancy and disruptive behaviour. SP thought that alcohol was fun and did not see the dangers of her being under age and drunk & disorderly.

When intervention with SP begun, they were being labelled by others as "disruptive" and "violent". There was lack of understanding from school as to the reason why this behaviour was being portrayed. School also claimed SP was "being difficult" and "disruptive" and "was on the course to being expelled from school".

Due to the comments made and all that had happened, advocating SP's feelings to the school was challenging as it seemed a forgone conclusion by the school that SP's behaviour was irreversible. Over a period of time we visited the family home multiple times with SP and family present.

After a few visits, SP became more confident and felt comfortable talking to me by herself which we had an honest conversation about heartache. SP had less contact with a friend who moved out of the area, with a boyfriend she broke up with and her Dad after he had a son with his new partner.

It was clear SP was carrying a lot of hurt and after talking about it coming to realisation that it has been making her angry resulting in her lashing out at other people, even those she's not angry at. We talked about acknowledging the hurt and knowing we are all deserving of love and compassion from the ones who are our loved ones. We successfully managed to advocate for SP with the school and liaise with her Head of Year to get SP support for her lessons she found challenging. Also school had programmes that encouraged students to talk to older students in the school when they are feeling overwhelmed. We also talked to school about enrolling SP in resilience building programmes the school was running.

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After SP consent, SP's Mum has now made an appointment at the doctors so SP could look in to some counselling to help her deal better with her emotions.

We liaised with YDAP to pass on the information of why SP disclosed she drank. "I only drink to block out the pain". Going forward this service will be going into school to support SP.

Teachable Moments (Custody Diversion)

EY had come into custody for criminal damage at the home address – put a hole in the wall due to a violent outburst. Before their arrest, EY was having frequent violent outbursts at home and had been put on a placement at another PRU due to his behaviour at their previous PRU.

EY has been diagnosed with ADHD and Autism, and not medicated. Their first few hours in custody was a challenging time for both EY and custody staff. EY was very agitated which resulted in them tearing their shirt off, using the stuff in their cell i.e. mattress to make noise and throw within the cell. The custody staff had to remove all items out of the cell, including torn shirt.

I approached the cell and introduced myself to EY. They were sitting on the raised bed so I knelt on the floor to chat with them. At first, it was difficult to engage with EY as they believed I was a form of authority. However, I sat and chatted with EY until I gained their trust. Once the rapport had been built, EY then started to disclose things to me. Resulting in, three serious safeguarding concerns being raised. These were within the family home, a family member, and in his community. It was apparent EY was at risk of harm in the family home and in the community.

By raising these concerns the local authority became involved with the family. School made aware of the concerns, and EY was allocated a TM worker. As a result, the family are receiving support and underwent an assessment by social services. EY was moved back to the school he was at prior as he wished. The school are closely monitoring his friendships within school.

The TM worker has provided EY with a voice and they have built a trusting relationship (the TM worker is the only individual they will talk to out of the services involved), they have arranged for EY to go to RAF cadets 3 times per week which will reduce the amount of time EY is on the streets. EY feels they can trust the TM worker and is able to talk freely with them which aids the TM worker to keep EY safe and reduce any offending.

YOLO (Foundation of Light)

LP joined the YOLO Programme in August 2022 and was interested in the Programme as it will benefit his behaviour and hopefully help him understand why his behaviours.

From the start he showed a real passion for Karate and wanting to learn the sport. I agreed to help him get started in the sport, but it would require some good behaviour, improved attendance and better listening skills for a month of sessions before this could happen. Over the first month of sessions, LP never missed a session, and he engaged well showing positive changes and understanding of interventions we discussed.

After starting Karate LP his behaviour has improved in school and at home. LP is very invested into his Karate sessions and is looking forward to continuing his Journey through Karate and this will be LP's exit pathway following YOLO.

Another positive for LP's family is that his older brother is interested in attending kicks which is another of the Foundations progression pathways and will use this to escape the chaos of the family home to pursue something he is interested in.

Improving Lives

Local Youth Fund

YF1 is a 16 year old female who lives with her Dad and two younger siblings, having been removed from her Mother's care due to traumatic, violent incidents. YF1 has had three permanent school exclusions and was completely disengaged from education and training. She was drinking heavily, taking drugs and believed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation. YF1 was also on the verge of having a criminal record and family, social workers and Youth Offending were struggling to engage her in any support services.

YF1 started sporadically accessing services but had no wish to change her behaviour. In November 2021, she initially engaged with New Beginnings North through another organisation and since engaging directly with them in January 2022, she has had 100% attendance and fully participates in all of the programme activities.

New Beginnings North identified that YF1 has a real talent as a make-up artist and when the VRU's Local Youth Fund opened, they supported her in an application for funding to re-engage with education and training of which she was successful.

YF1 is doing well in her training and has already been offered full-time employment. With the funding she has been able to transform her life and now has aspirations for the future in having her own beauty business.

Community Hub (North Tyneside)

YP was on the verge of being excluded from school and also because of their behaviours it was making the living situation at home extremely challenging and the family member who was their carer was reaching the point where they felt they could no longer cope with YP. YP had developed behavioural difficulties as a result of abuse and violence that they had been witnessing growing up. YP was getting involved in stealing and fighting and there was a worry that this would escalate due to the people they hung around with.

After we engaged with YP our team member identified that they would benefit with exercise and anger management techniques as this would provide them with an outlet and whilst the sessions were being undertaken our team member would use the time to engage with YP and this led to them building a foundation of trust. It became apparent that what was needed was to start to get YP away from the crowds they were hanging out with and also to improve behaviour at school to prevent being excluded and also as a result improving things at home.

Our team member listened and engaged with YP whilst they exercised, they gave advice on empathy and advised YP on the value of making sure they understood the other person's point of view.

YP approached their teacher and their problem was taken seriously and solutions were found quickly which surprised YP but also made them happy and gave them a new found confidence. We amended their diet and sleep patterns and YP found that this had an impact on how their mood was at school and it improved their behaviour and attention span. The school has now agreed to give YP another chance and has allowed YP back into mainstream classes again and this has had a positive impact on YP as they no longer feel excluded from things and have a more positive relationship with teaching staff. Home life has also improved, and YP has also stopped hanging around with people who have a negative influence on them and isn't getting into trouble with the police.

Community Hub (North Tyneside)

AP has been diagnosed with ADHD and diabetes and this has been having a negative impact on their schooling and also as a result of this their social life has also been affected. AP had regular destructive episodes that resulted in them being sent home from school and when at home they would cause damage to the home such as holes in walls and doors being taken off hinges – clearly this was having a detrimental effect on their home life and was causing financial difficulties with all the repairs.

It was important to get AP to understand the medical implications and enable them to manage their diabetes as this had been identified as a major contributor to their outbursts. It was also discovered that AP would like to also engage into physical activity to help them alleviate pent up stress so that it would not be taken out at school or at home with their parents or siblings. Progress was gradual to begin with and started out with walking the dog and engaging in conversation but making sure AP knew and believed that we were listening to them. As the trust in each other grew we were then able to encourage AP to complete their own physical activity without anyone else present which they did at home and at the gym – eventually this led to them organising sessions with a friend.

We also encouraged AP to attend medical appointments and learn how to manage their diabetes and helped them to be more comfortable that they were the same as everyone else and that just because they had diabetes it did not mean that they were different or not capable of achieving. This was something that AP had never had before and this has given them a new found belief and confidence in themselves.

AP has shown a massive improvement in their attitude and application at school to the point where they are no longer getting into trouble and are engaging much more positively with their fellow students and teachers - they have also recently received an award for most improved student at the school. As well as school life improving AP is no longer causing damage in their home and this side of their life has also improved as they have improved relations with their parents and siblings.

Youth Navigator

YS was referred as part of an exit strategy from Gateshead Youth Justice where we monitor cases on the OOC panel. The YOT worker for YS had raised concerns around the relationship between YS and their mum and also that YS did not have any current plan to be involved in education/training/employment.

The main issue was around the housing situation for YS. They were currently residing with their aunt, uncle and 2 cousins rather than with their mother, step father and brother. YS had indicated that they had previously been involved with horses and that is something that they would like to pursue this as a potential career path.

In an attempt to solve the housing issues, we have been working alongside the AFOS housing team as their uncle used to be in the military, and put the family in contact with the service. Our team member also managed to contact several stables enquiring about gaining volunteering experience which has resulted with one of them offering YS an opportunity. After talking through options with our worker YS decided that they initially wanted to try and build the relationship up with her mother by themselves first. To assist with this we have offered constant emotional support and have provided details of places where they could meet up to enjoy time together – although there is still growth required in this area it is looking increasingly likely that YS will end up living back with their mother which would be a great achievement.

YS has always been very capable and independent. She has managed to secure a job shortly after beginning the placement which they achieved by themselves through displaying their initiative and work ethic. YS has also now been accepted onto an equestrian course. YS has gained enough confidence to have been able to attend appointments and leisure activities on their own which has been a big boost in their confidence. Gaining employment has also allowed them to experience the workplace – which they very much enjoy and they are already beginning to make new friends. Getting the family in contact with the AFOS has also allowed them to think about alternative housing that will suit the family more and will ease tensions and provide a more stable living environment.



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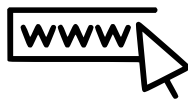
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