



**VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
UNIT**

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR
GREATER MANCHESTER'S COMMUNITIES

Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit

Annual Report Summary

2020/2021

Introduction

The Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has launched its annual report for 2020 to 2021. This summary report provides an overview of the development of the VRU in putting in place the resources and interventions required to help prevent and reduce the impact of serious violence in our city-region at a regional, local, and place-based level.

Established in October 2019, the Greater Manchester VRU brings together Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the National Probation Service, health and education professionals, youth justice and local authorities to address the underlying causes of violent crime and work together with communities to prevent it.

The full annual report was submitted to the Home Office in January 2021.

Greater Manchester Overview

Almost 4,500 personal robberies reported in 2020

Areas of great ethnic and cultural diversity - 16% of our population are Black, Asian or minority ethnic, this increases to 28% of the under 30 population

Home to more than 2.8m people - growth of more than 170,000 in last decade

Large student population - Five universities with over 100,000 students

In 2020, GMP recorded more than 270,000 crimes - Of which, almost 100,000 were violent

High proportion of young people - 40% of our population is under 30

Made up of two cities and eight metropolitan boroughs - All with different challenges and opportunities

Areas of significant affluence and deprivation - Almost ¼ of local areas are within the most deprived areas in England

Significantly more serious crime rates than almost all other forces - Including higher rates of rape and serious violence

In 2020, more than 10,500 victims of violent crime have been referred to commissioned support services

Serious Violence Action Plan

In July 2020, the VRU launched its Serious Violence Action Plan, which sets out seven priorities for the unit and the framework through which serious violence will be addressed.

These priorities are:

1. Support an improved criminal justice response to all forms of serious violence.
2. Support community and voluntary organisations to deliver activities and interventions in areas of highest need.
3. Ensure that families and communities that are affected by serious violence are effectively supported through our place-based early help offer.
4. Ensure victims of violent crime receive appropriate and timely support.
5. Create a dedicated Violence Reduction Unit for Greater Manchester.
6. Work with Community Safety Partnerships and Local Safeguarding Boards to implement a place-based approach to tackling these issues.
7. Collaborate with schools, colleges and alternative provision to prevent violence.

The delivery of these priorities is overseen by the Greater Manchester Serious Violence Governance Board, which meets quarterly and is chaired by Bev Hughes, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire.

Reporting to the board are five thematic delivery groups that provide leadership and partnership coordination in relation to the priorities. Each delivery group has terms of reference, a set of agreed objectives, a designated budget, and a live delivery plan.

The action plan, its priorities and commitments were developed following extensive community engagement across all 10 districts of Greater Manchester in 2019.

Researchers spoke to people in the street, on public transport, in pubs, at community centres, and in sports clubs, to gauge what concerns they had about violence in their

community, their experiences of violent crime and what they wanted a newly formed VRU to do in response.

The researchers also worked in schools, colleges, pupil referral units, youth justice teams and youth clubs to capture the voices of children and young people, as well as professionals working with them. In total, the team engaged with over 600 residents and over 300 schools and colleges. The VRU continues to work with schools and colleges despite them operating at a reduced capacity during lockdown.

Community-led Pilot

A community-led violence reduction pilot is one of the VRU's flagship projects and is in line with the ambitions of the Greater Manchester Strategy and Public Service Reform programme to involve communities at a place level to identify priorities, problem solve and direct investment and interventions accordingly.

Analysis undertaken by the Big Data Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) enabled the VRU to identify six sites across Greater Manchester where the pilot is to be implemented.

In February 2021 there were community-led pilots live in Bolton, Manchester, Salford, and Oldham.

During the pilots, the VRU is working with residents to decide how local investment should be spent to address issues of violence. Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, including grassroots groups, are forming local alliances to ensure holistic provision targeted at individuals, families, schools and communities of highest need.

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Partnerships

The development of the VRU infrastructure is based on a change in approach which involves greater co-operation between the police, local authorities, statutory partners, and the community. It follows on from, and sits alongside, two other key models which together provide a holistic, innovative strategy for violence reduction.

These are: Programme Challenger – a partnership approach to tackling serious organised crime based on the four P's of Prepare, Prevent, Pursue and Protect; and the Greater Manchester Integrated Health and Justice Strategy, which recognises the importance of the interplay between health inequalities, criminality, and vulnerability. Any strategy to reduce violence needs to adopt public health principles and involve key stakeholders from health, including primary care, health commissioning, mental health, and acute settings.

In December 2020 the VRU held the first in a series of VRU learning forums. These are currently virtual events that bring together partners and stakeholders for discussion and feedback about a range of projects and topics.

The VRU has strong links with the 10 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and devolves almost half of its annual budget to encourage and empower a local partnership response to issues of violence in our communities.

In 2019/20, this devolved budget was £300,000 per CSP (£400,000 in Manchester due to its size, demand and complexity) and in 2020/21 it was £150,000 per CSP (£200,000 in Manchester). The Deputy Mayor requested that funding is prioritised to:

1. Work with education settings to keep pupils safe and reduce the likelihood of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
2. Targeted prevention and desistance programmes for under 25s.
3. Mentoring, coaching or other forms of targeted interventions with children and young people at risk of involvement in violence or knife carrying.
4. Positive youth activities, including outreach work, in communities most affected by violent crime.
5. Action to identify and prosecute irresponsible retailers who sell knives and other weapons to children and young people.

Staffing and Opportunities

From its initiation, the VRU has had the benefit of a full-time public health registrar, a position which has played an essential role in many aspects of the programme.

Moving forwards there will be an opportunity for a fixed term placement for third-year medical students/ junior doctors to oversee specific projects within the VRU which will provide parties with reciprocal benefits. This will be under the supervision of the VRU clinical lead, who was appointed in July 2020 to bring together medical and healthcare professionals and services to assess how the health sector and its data can support early interventions to tackling serious violence.

Last year the VRU also appointed a community lead to drive forward the community-led pilot and collate intelligence from communities and VSCE organisations to inform decision-making.

Strategic Needs Assessment

In November 2020, an updated Strategic Needs Assessment was published following initial publication in April that year.

The new version details not only the impact COVID-19 has had on the various crime related metrics analysed but also the impact on how that data is collected.

The assessment focuses on overall violence trends; violence types; perceptions of violence and safety; risk and protective factors; evidence for preventing violence, crime, and related harms.

A new addition to the assessment is the production of a Violence Reduction Dashboard developed by GMCA, which for the first time, brings together data on police recorded crime, ambulance call-outs due to assault, A&E attendances due to assault, location of violent crimes, location of calls to ambulance services, and details about assault victims attending A&E. This allows for up-to-date assessments of violence in local areas, particularly with the use of an interactive map.

Campaigns

Crucial to the work of the VRU is the importance to reach people, in particular young people, and as such, the VRU is in contract with two large media organisations which provide the programme with a range of creative options.

The challenge of the 2020 pandemic and restrictions has significantly impacted on this work. However, the use of online surveys and workshops has helped to keep the projects moving.

Hitch Marketing were commissioned to co-design a crime reduction campaign, which has consisted of online focus groups with young people around their experiences of violence, alongside two public surveys. Results are currently being collated and some of the co-creation sessions involving young people in designing interventions are in progress. It is anticipated that the campaign will be launched in Spring 2021.

The VRU has also been working with one of its providers to establish a dedicated independent website. The VRU also produces a bi-weekly bulletin for leaders, partners, and other stakeholders to provide a snapshot of current work.

Data and Evaluation

Greater Manchester is committed to using data and evaluation to inform decision-making. This means that we are willing to test and pilot solutions to understand what works and what doesn't. This approach is at the heart of the Greater Manchester VRU and to support it, a robust evaluation and monitoring plan is in place.

The evaluation plan incorporates data from various sources to enable a greater understanding of the impact of the VRU and consists of four key elements:

- Supporting two national evaluations of VRUs by the Home Office
- An underpinning Logic Model and Outcomes Framework
- Evaluation led by the VRU centrally
- Evaluation of projects commissioned on a district basis

Following an issue with GMP reported knife crime data identified in 2018, MMU developed a 'knife crime algorithm' to analyse police text data for mentions of knives or sharp objects. This provided a much more accurate picture of knife crime in the city-region and a valuable evidence base for the VRU. Due to technical difficulties this work has not been able to be refreshed since July 2019, but work is in progress to examine the period to August 2020 and this will inform future work and evaluation projects.

Navigator Pilot

The VRU is commissioning a 'Navigator' hospital intervention service at Royal Bolton Hospital, Salford Royal Hospital, Manchester Royal Infirmary and Royal Manchester Children's Hospital. The service is aimed at vulnerable 10 to 25 year-olds who attend or are admitted to A&E departments with injuries as a result of violence. The Navigator service will work alongside A&E teams to proactively identify vulnerable young people and help them access support to prevent further violence.

More than 15,500 crimes were committed in Greater Manchester where under 18s were named as suspects.

Prosecution, Intervention, Education and Diversion (PIED)

PIED pilots have been taking place in Tameside and Bury to improve the identification of and response to young people repeatedly involved with police and create single referral pathways into youth justice/early help or a commissioned services prevention model.

It follows data that revealed in a year, more than 15,500 crimes were committed in Greater Manchester where under 18s were named as suspects. More than 60% of the crimes were closed as being not in the public interest or where the victim did not support a prosecution and therefore there was little or no intervention because these children were invisible to services.

It is hoped the PIED pilots will lead to services creating a trusted adult relationship with the young people to address trauma, improve aspirations and prevent reoffending. An evaluation will be completed by MMU to inform roll out of the intervention to other areas of Greater Manchester and help to understand the type of young people who are likely, or not, to engage with the current diversion offer.

Police Interventions

As part of the serious violence funding received in Greater Manchester, a significant proportion is used for targeted police interventions such as stop and search,

weapons sweeps and Operation Sycamore – GMP’s response to serious violent crime and in particular knife crime.

Conclusion

The VRU’s strong focus on evidence and data supported by a robust multi-agency alliance has allowed it to utilise a network of professionals that work at the very heart of the response to violence to deliver a cohesive programme for the local and national violence reduction agenda.

For further information about the work of the VRU and its partners please visit the [Greater Manchester violence reduction unit website.](#)