

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

### Working in Partnership to Prevent and Reduce Serious Youth Violence

**Presented by:** Sara Roach, Director, West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership and  
ACC Paul Drover, Lead for Local Policing, West Midlands Police

#### Cover Report

#### 1. Police and Crime Plan

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of work taking place across the West Midlands Police Force area to reduce serious youth violence and provides an update on the work of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and West Midlands Police (WMP). This work contributes to the delivery of the priority: 'Preventing and Tackling Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime' contained in the Police and Crime Plan 2025-29.
- 1.2 The West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) was established in 2019, through Home Office funding, to provide the infrastructure for multi-agency working and to co-ordinate a long-lasting public health approach to serious youth violence. The aim of the Partnership is to achieve significant systems change, with a focus on early intervention and prevention. In addition to the ongoing work delivered and commissioned through the VRP, during 2025/26 there will be a specific focus on piloting Prevention Panels as part of the Government's ambition to cut knife crime by half over the next ten years.
- 1.3 West Midlands Police (WMP) [Serious Youth Violence Strategy](#) 2022-2025 focused on the drivers of serious youth violence (SYV) and provided a long-term commitment for WMP to work with and influence partnerships to tackle the contextual and environmental issues that make children vulnerable to exploitation and associated threats relating to serious youth violence. This strategy has recently been refreshed and has become the [WMP Children and Young Person's Strategy](#), taking a broader focus on the issues impacting younger members of our community. The strategy has three pillars (Your Trust, Your Future & Your Voice) with six priorities and will be governed via the new Children and Young Person Harm Reduction Strategic Board, chaired by Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing. Reducing Serious Youth Violence and delivery of the WMP Trauma Informed Policing Strategy remain key components of the terms of reference for the board.

#### **1.4 Guardian Taskforce and Impact of Targeted Guardian Patrols and Problem Orientated Policing Methodology (WMP)**

- 1.4.1 Project Guardian is WMP response to Serious Youth Violence (SYV), partially funded through the Home Office Hot Spot Response programme, which was further refreshed for the current financial year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. A dedicated intelligence function continues to inform SYV and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) hotspots, known as Targeted Guardian Patrol areas (TGPs). TGPs are identified using 2 years' worth of data. There are currently 84 hotspots across the Force area, which represent the locations where Serious Violence, Knife Crime and ASB is most persistent and consistently high.
- 1.4.2 Project Guardian remains supported by the Guardian Taskforce (GTF), which is a dedicated resource of 1 Inspector, 5 Sergeants and 36 Police Officers to tackle SYV and Knife Crime in the hotspots, deploying a variety of tactics. Given the success of this team, plans are in place to grow this team further by 1 sergeant and 9 constables to give wider coverage. The taskforce is also funded as part of Home Office GRIP funding for the specific purpose of reducing serious violence and knife crime.
- 1.4.3 For the performance year 2024/2025, the taskforce deployed 923 times; providing over 35,000 hours of visible patrols in violence hotspots; conducted 3,659 stop and searches; made 666 arrests; and seized 491 weapons.
- 1.4.4 TGPs are subject to enhanced patrols by local policing officers and the default patrol locations for the GTF. All TGP patrols are GPS tracked, officers check-in and out of the patrol ensuring the patrol is compliant using their mobility device. Officers also use this technology to update Arrest, Stop and Search, Intelligence and Referrals.
- 1.4.5 Local officers also develop, where relevant, problem-solving activity to identify the causes of crime in the area. There are currently 26 TGPs with Problem Orientated Plans in place. Officers are working collaboratively in these areas to target the causational factors attributed to longer term violence issues, using victim, offender, location methodology and a variety of police and multi-agency tactics, commissioned services and expenditure.

#### **1.5 Serious Youth Violence Trends Across the Region (WMP)**

- 1.5.1 Across the region SYV has seen a consistent reduction in offences recorded over the last 12 months. On a rolling 12-month period (1<sup>st</sup> June 24 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 25), WMP shows a 12.7% reduction relating to all SYV offences (917 less victims). The positive outcome rate for this period was 13.4% with the majority of reports resolved by either a charge (45%) or community resolution (42%). The last 6 months (1<sup>st</sup> Dec 24 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 25) shows a 11.6% reduction (394 less victims).
- 1.5.2 Where a knife has been used in a SYV offence on a rolling 12-month period (1<sup>st</sup> June 24 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 25), WMP shows an 18% reduction (70 less victims). The positive outcome rate for this period was 19.4% with all reports resolved by way of charge or summons. The last 6 months (1<sup>st</sup> Dec 24 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 25) WMP shows a 5.5% reduction (9 less victims).
- 1.5.5 The Guardian Intelligence team have identified a pattern of offending in or near to educational premises. There is currently a specific piece of analytical work being

completed in relation to this. Sandwell & Dudley particularly have offences driven by their respective colleges.

- 1.5.6 Within Cities and Town Centres, there are daytime offences regularly committed at/near transport hubs and fast food premises (particularly McDonalds), with peak times being between 15:00 – 17:00 and victim ages between 13-17 years old. This again coincides with educational premises finish times.
- 1.5.7 Night time economy driven violence is as expected featuring mainly around city and town centres, linked to licensed premises with alcohol as the key driver. These victims tend to be 18 or over.
- 1.5.8 All of the above analysis is shared with Local Policing Areas via the Serious Youth Violence Operational Board and where outside of the long-term Targeted Guardian Patrol Areas, specific patrols are considered. The Guardian Taskforce are also deployed against these locations via the Force Tasking Process.

## **1.6 Progress on the Delivery of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Strategy 2023/26**

- 1.6.1 The [West Midlands Violence Reduction Strategy](#) 2023-26 sets out a regional vision for reducing and preventing violence affecting children and young people. Significant progress has been made delivering against the strategy.
- 1.6.2 A range of projects are commissioned that contribute to violence prevention across the life course, from early years, leading into primary and secondary schools and onto adulthood. During 2024/25, 40,920 individuals engaged with interventions funded by the VRP, and 14,045 professionals attended training delivered by or commissioned by the VRP, strengthening the role they play locally in violence prevention **(Appendix 1 shows the overall reach of the VRP during 2024/25).**
- 1.6.3 The VRP provide a budget to local violence reduction partnerships to support the delivery of their violence prevention plans. Each local partnership has received an uplift of £35,000 to their local area budget to mitigate spikes in violence over the Summer and other school holiday periods. Working closely with Project Guardian, Summer risk assessments will be provided to each local area to support their planning.
- 1.6.4 The VRP website has recently been updated and now includes a resource hub which acts as a regional repository for data, evaluation, training and support in relation to violence prevention. The My Tomorrow campaign and Change Makers programme are attracting high levels of mainstream and social media interest which is leading to more young people understanding their role, **Appendix 2 shows some examples of coverage during April-June 2025.**
- 1.6.5 The [West Midlands Strategic Needs Assessment](#) has recently been refreshed, alongside seven local area assessments to support each local authority area to review and refresh their priorities in their violence prevention plan. The West Midlands Information Sharing Agreement has also been produced and is in the sign-off process. This will strengthen collaboration and information sharing and enhance our understanding of violence across the region.
- 1.6.6 The VRP continues to play an instrumental role in delivering co-ordinated responses to serious incidents of violence including deploying detached youth

workers in a variety of locations in the immediate aftermath of violence or in response to increased community tensions; mobilising teachable moments support in custody and hospitals; ensuring therapeutic and other interventions are available; and offering support to schools which may have been affected. To support with a consistent partnership response to incidents, VRP are in the process of finalising an Incident Response Good Practice Guide which supports organisations to prepare for/mitigate a significant incident; manage an incident in a trauma informed way; and use recovery-focused approaches.

- 1.6.7 The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence Initiative (CIRV) has had some really positive results across Coventry and Wolverhampton. CIRV was a pilot with a planned conclusion to allow for evaluation, with funding ending in August 2025. Early learning will be incorporated into Integrated Offender Management teams where applicable and we await the recommendations from the national evaluation. Although the funding ceases, some of the underspend has been provided to ensure young people engaged who need some continued support can receive it up until December. Exit strategies have been developed to ensure that there is support available for young people who may have previously benefitted from CIRV.

## **1.7 Youth and Community Engagement**

- 1.7.1 The My Tomorrow campaign launched at a youth-led event in May 2025 with 220 young people and 130 professionals in attendance. During the following months, bespoke local My Tomorrow campaign plans were developed, and area specific projects were initiated, including Coventry “A Conversation With” which gives young people regular opportunities to meet with system leaders and challenge approaches to violence reduction; and My Tomorrow sessions for schools which took place at the Sandwell Knife Angel. Thousands of young people have so far engaged with the campaign and it is hoped that this will continue to increase. The media coverage has promoted the counter-narrative which it is hoped positively impacts community reassurance and feelings of safety in the community, ultimately reducing weapons carrying behaviour.
- 1.7.2 It was always intended that the campaign would be strengthened by a growing “movement” of young people in the region engaged with the “Change Makers” programme. The programme is led by 30 young people, who deliver the training, run “Change Makers” events and influence other young people to understand the role they can play in violence prevention and reduction. The Young Leaders are supported by Positive Youth Foundation and paid for the work they deliver.
- 1.7.3 The West Midlands Faith Alliance will focus this year on:
- Enhancing prevention through workforce development and capacity building.
  - Increasing safe spaces for children and young people.
  - Strengthening community responses to incidents of violence.

The VRP will host a national conference on Faith and Violence Prevention alongside five other VRU’s in October, and led by the WM Executive Team which now comprises of four well respected Faith and Community Leaders from across the region. The Executive Team have also led on the development of a Faith and Violence Prevention webinar to attract more community members to become involved.

We have seen the Faith Alliance mobilise in response to incidents of serious violence, earlier this year in Hall Green the Faith Alliance were able to be alongside Faith Leaders to support the community, dealing with issues like media intrusion amongst others.

## **2. Achievements and Challenges**

### **2.1 *Progress in Delivering against the Serious Violence Duty and Improvements in local and regional partnership working***

- 2.1.1 As highlighted above, the annual [West Midlands Strategic Needs Assessment](#) has recently been refreshed and local needs assessments produced by the VRP Data Team to support local SNA and violence reduction plan reviews. There are five dedicated violence reduction partnership boards operating within the region, with one commissioning sub-group in place. Where there is not a dedicated violence reduction partnership board in operation, there are governance arrangements that provide appropriate oversight of the local violence reduction plan and a place for the VRP to “dock in” to local arrangements to provide resources, share learning and offer support. The VRP attend all partnership meetings, supporting delivery of the local violence reduction plan and bringing additional resources into the area wherever possible.
- 2.1.2 Specified and required authorities are engaging well across the region, and previous challenges, such as the lack of role specificity for some authorities have been addressed, for example, producing a briefing on the specific role and responsibility of the Fire Service in local violence reduction partnerships.

## **3. Actions Undertaken**

- 3.1 Operating in a challenging financial landscape with a whole series of regional funding due to end in March 2025 - Continuation of key funding relating to serious youth violence including the VRP, Turnaround, SAFE and AP Taskforces, and HAF was not fully confirmed until after the start of the new financial year, however we now know that all of these programmes will continue until at least the end of March 2026, albeit with some experiencing a reduced level of funding. The VRP are working with local partnerships to mitigate the impact of reduced funding by attracting additional external investment into local partnerships, and exploring co-commissioning and match funding opportunities to maximise resources.
- 3.2 Alongside robust workforce development, building capacity within the system to tackle the root causes of violence, VRP are developing/commissioning resources like the Education Toolkit, Incident Response Partnership Best Practice Guide and Trauma Informed Learning and Development Framework which will ensure long-term sustainability of key elements of the whole system approach to reducing and preventing violence. In addition, the VRP Director and the Police and Crime Commissioner take every opportunity to lobby through national and regional meetings around longer term, sustained funding for violence prevention work.
- 3.3 Recruitment and retention of staff due to post March 2026 financial position being uncertain - Due to uncertainty around funding, there has been a significant reduction in the size of the VRP Team. In response to this, we are constantly adapting the role and function of the team to ensure we continue deliver the strategy and support

future sustainability as well as to ensure that the local areas receive the support that they need

## **4. Future Work**

### **4.1 Modernising Neighbourhood Policing**

Following the announcement by Government of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee supported by £200m of funding the PCC and West Midlands Police successfully secured £12.2m which will allow the recruitment of an additional 150 neighbourhood officers in the West Midlands over the next 12 months. These resources will support the delivery of the National Safer Streets Strategy and the 5 Pillars specifically relating to Neighbourhood Policing.

In support, a modernisation programme has commenced following 6 months of work, which went live on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025. This has ensured that there is now a named dedicated and ring-fenced neighbourhood officer in every ward across the force, a new neighbourhood performance framework is also in place, and all neighbourhood officers will be undertaking accredited neighbourhood training for the first time – focussing on their key roles of problem solving, engagement and targeted activity.

This is just the start of this the modernisation approach and moving forward further work will include the introduction of a new ASB risk assessment tool providing early identification of vulnerable victims and a renewed focus on the use of WM Now, WMP's community engagement tool to ensure that all local concerns are not only heard but addressed. This activity focussed on Neighbourhood Policing will ensure the force delivers on its ambition to work in partnership and make communities safer.

### **4.2 Keeping Town Centres Safe This Summer**

WMP has worked with community safety partners to ensure a collective response to the Government's Safer Streets mission and Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee over the summer, aligning with the Home Office commitment to reduce crime and improve safety in town centres and high streets across the West Midlands.

From 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025, a number of joint activities have been planned which are designed to restore and strengthen local policing, focusing on increased visibility and effectiveness in tackling crime and disorder in town centres and high streets in order to deter crime, provide reassurance to the public and make town centres safer. Using ASB powers and making full use of fixed penalty notices to tackle offenders will be a key feature. Issues such as retail crime, street-based nuisance and as well as increased patrols at key transport hubs will be a focus.

A hot spot policing approach has been adopted with police and other partners focussing on areas with high crime rates by increasing uniformed patrols to tackle issues that affect community safety. Each Local Policing Area (LPA) identified a police lead and joint plans have been submitted for each Town Centre and High Street to ensure a bespoke approach to the issues in each hotspot area.

### **4.3 Education Primary Prevention Framework**

Education plays a critical role in preventing and reducing violence. Nationally, there is a strong evidence base for violence prevention projects in education settings, and regional learning from specialist taskforces demonstrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved when effective and accessible support is available in education to children and young people who may be more likely to be impacted by violence.

Using the learning from the VRP's delivery of prevention programmes in schools since 2020, alongside the evidence from other regional and national education programmes, this year the VRP will pilot a prevention project targeted at Key Stage 2 and 3 (years 5 and 6 in Primary School and years 7, 8 and 9 in Secondary School). The pilot aims to establish an evidence base for long-term prevention planning in education, and strengthen future sustainability of this work. The pilot will initially focus on one cluster (secondary school and feeder primary schools) per local authority area, with the potential to increase the reach of the pilot depending on future VRP (or alternative) funding. The pilot will provide tailored support to education settings and thousands of children and young people, making key interventions available that may ultimately prevent them from ever becoming involved in violence.

#### **4.4 Prevention panels**

The Home Office have pledged to reduce VAWG and Knife Crime by 50% over the next 10 years and a key part of their strategy to achieve this is the introduction of Prevention Panels. As part of this, the VRP is being asked to identify one upper-tier local authority area within their geographical region to establish and pilot a Prevention Panel. One Panel is the minimum expectation: but there is flexibility to establish more than one local authority area in the pilot year and where funding allows. VRP is working with regional Directors of Children's Services to identify which areas the panel(s) will can be established. Currently, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell have all indicated their interest to pilot a panel, and the Home Office have confirmed that as well as the police referral pathway panel, the West Midlands can also pilot a pathfinder in education, meaning that we may be able to work with all three areas in this financial year.

#### **4.5 The My Tomorrow Campaign and Change Makers**

The My Tomorrow Campaign will continue with the aim of reaching more people across the region through media coverage and local events. During the Summer the VRP will work closely with the Fire Service to promote the campaign through their programme of community events, as well as through HAF programmes and summer spike mitigation projects. More Change Makers pilots will launch across the region, with an increasing number of young people engaged and leading on violence reduction in their communities.

#### **4.6 Building capacity across the community and voluntary sector.**

To enhance the support VRP offer to the community and voluntary sector in 2025/2026, we will offer monthly workshops offering a range of training and support based on the experience we have gained of mentoring and offering support to CIC's over the last five years. This support aims to further strengthen the invaluable role the community and voluntary sector play in violence prevention and reduction.

Workshops will alternate between in-person (held on evenings and weekends to ensure accessibility) sessions and virtual sessions (again to ensure accessibility). The in-person workshops will include one to one time with organisations at the end of each planned input, in order to discuss their individual needs and offer support that is bespoke to their

organisation. The proposed schedule will include topics like funding, case management and performance reporting, responding to local Strategic Needs Assessments and what the data is telling us about violence in the West Midlands, support for Charity Trustees, and responding to neurodiversity and delivering low level cognitive behavioural interventions.

The current VRP regional stakeholder network will be invited to the sessions, as well as CIC's that the PCC, WMP or VRP are introduced to/ become aware of. The monthly sessions will be supported by a range of resources to enhance sustainability.

## **5. *Financial Implications***

5.1 The majority of direct work with young people in the region which is aimed at reducing risks and vulnerability around SYV and exploitation is funded by different government grants which are due to come to an end in March 2025. As described above in this report, the PCC and the VRP Strategic Board are doing all that they can through national, regional and local representation to raise awareness of the risks and potential consequences of the different funding streams coming to an end. The VRP team are working on several proposals with local partnerships to strengthen and sustain investment in violence prevention and reduction activity, for example, a National Lottery Community Fund award that has brought £500,000 into a consortium of providers in Walsall who are all delivering interventions aimed at young people experiencing violence and/or exploitation.

5.2 The VRP currently receive £4,341,877 core grant from the Home Office and £254,603 to support implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. The Police receive £ £3,702,563 GRIP funding (including ASB hotspot funding) to support their Operation Guardian work.

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## Appendix 1 – VRP Infographic 2024/25



## Appendix 2

Articles and coverage April – June

### **Wolverhampton My Tomorrow showcase event**

#### ONLINE

[Ex-gang members share experience at Wolverhampton youth event - BBC News](#)

[Hundreds of Wolverhampton children hear knife crime message - BBC News](#)

[Pooja Kanda to speak at Molineux event around youth violence | Express & Star \(expressandstar.com\)](#)

[Express and Star - 'Do more with your life' - Bereaved mother's hard-hitting message to Wolverhampton pupils at Molineux knife crime conference | Express & Star \(expressandstar.com\)](#)

[Express and Star's video which features PCC's speech near the start - Ex gang members and criminals now inspiring youngsters at Molineux event in Wolverhampton. - video Dailymotion](#)

#### RADIO

Hits Radio - [Bereaved Wolverhampton mother calls on parents to learn the reality of knife crime \(hellorayo.co.uk\)](#)

Hits Radio – Bulletins afternoon and morning

#### TV

Midlands Today package saved separately in this folder - [pcc.sp.wmpad.local/VRU/My Tomorrow/My Tomorrow - Media coverage/Midlands Today - Wolverhampton Showcase 090425.mp4](#)

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

video - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1HKf27yqnB/>

Other socials

WV Facebook – [\(4\) Facebook](#) (more socials to come)

[West Midlands VRP \(@westmidlandsvrp\) • Instagram photos and videos \(12\) Facebook](#)

### **VRP Funded youth hub and in-school counsellors**

#### ONLINE

[Mum launches self-defence classes for kids after son robbed at knifepoint - Birmingham Live \(birminghammail.co.uk\)](#)

[New Handsworth youth club aims to keep children away from crime | News - Hits Radio \(Birmingham\) \(hellorayo.co.uk\)](#)

#### RADIO

Hits Radio news bulletins

#### TV

Midlands Today Handsworth Youth hub package saved separately in this folder - [pcc.sp.wmpad.local/VRU/My Tomorrow/My Tomorrow - Media coverage/Midlands Today - Birmingham Says No 180525.mp4](#)

Social media video - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AWFq6c1Kb/>

### **My Tomorrow boxing fundraiser**

#### TV

Midlands Today Pat Benson – saved separately in this folder - [pcc.sp.wmpad.local/VRU/My Tomorrow/My Tomorrow - Media coverage/Midlands Today Pat Benson 150525.mp4](#)

#### SOCIALS

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AUFbzCZCr/>

[\(2\) West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership on X: "A brilliant night @unibirmingham helping to raise vital funds for @patbensonboxing young offender projects - with support from the #MyTomorrow campaign. The whole event was organised by a young person too!](#)

 @UoBBoxingClub @UBSport @AstonUniversity #Birmingham #youthvoice  
<https://t.co/MFNH73Bh2x> / X

### **Safe Spaces – Coventry**

#### ONLINE

[Safe spaces in Coventry tackling youth violence in the region | News - Greatest Hits Radio \(Coventry & Warwickshire\) \(hellorayo.co.uk\)](#)

### **Faith Alliance Roadshow launch**

#### RADIO

BBC Radio WM's Sunday faith show, 7.10am - [Donna Alos on BBC Radio WM - 18/05/2025 - BBC Sounds](#)

BBC RADIO WM – multiple bulletins on Monday which also featured the PCC.

### **Coventry Change Makers Event**

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

[\(2\) West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership on X: "Coventry's Change Makers led inspirational discussions with senior leaders @coventrycc Council House - sharing their ideas for a brighter future for young people with those who can make a difference @positiveyouthUK @B\\_Ullathorne #MyTomorrow #ChildFriendlyCov https://t.co/FFen19SrW6" / X](#)  
<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/14EavK7CAFc/>