



Welcome to the first newsletter of Nottinghamshire's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). The unit brings together specialists from across the public, community and voluntary sectors to tackle the underlying causes of knife crime and violence and develop positive solutions to protect young people from harm.

Nottinghamshire is already bucking the national trend, with an eight per cent drop in knife crime compared to a national increase of seven per cent in the year to September 2019. There is still a long way to go but this is no doubt a positive reinforcement that our efforts thus far are making an impact.

The unit has been provisionally allocated a further £880,000 for 2020-21 from the Home Office which will secure our work for at least another 12 months. We remain absolutely committed to driving down knife crime and serious violence wherever it presents and look forward to sharing further successes in the future.

Paddy Tipping

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner & Chair of the VRU

The funding to establish Nottinghamshire's Violence Reduction Unit provides a fantastic opportunity to make a real and lasting difference to reducing serious violence across the city and the county. Our approach centres on listening to, and working with, community and other service providers who work with children, families and young people.



Meet the team

The VRU launched in September 2019. The team includes:

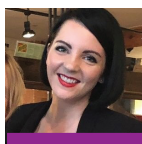
Dave Wakelin, Director of the VRU

Natalie Baker Swift, Programme Manager Violence Reduction and Early Intervention

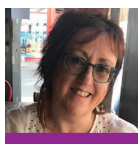
Helene Denness, Consultant in Public Health

Helen Johnston, Public Health Registrar

Andrew Towning, Project Support Officer



Natalie Baker Swift



Helene Denness

Rachel Miller, Young Person's Strategy and Improvement Specialist

Jacqueline Lockhart, Community Engagement Specialist

Geoff Oxendale, Insight Specialist

Eka Famodile, Senior Public Health Analyst

Supt Ted Antill, Knife Crime Lead

Shelley Nicholls, Young Person's Strategy and Improvement Specialist

Together, we are focusing on solutions which make a difference to whole populations, communities and groups – not only individuals. We are investing in evidence-based interventions that are proven to deliver results and reduce serious violence.

It will take time to build the resilience, but we have made a great start, and there is much more positive action to come.

Dave Wakelin

Director of the VRU



Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)

The VRU is advancing a new pilot based on the success of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme which has successfully rolled out across 100 schools in Scotland.

Developed in the 1990s by Dr Jackson Katz, the MVP scheme utilises the power of the "role model" and bystander approach to prevent all forms of bullying and gender-based violence. Supported by teachers and community partners, the programme empowers young people to take an active role in promoting a positive school atmosphere where violence is not tolerated. Mentors are trained to challenge the abusive and bullying behaviour of their peers in a safe way which prevents situations from escalating.

Throughout the pandemic, the VRU has trained 10 of the 12 schools taking part in the pilot. Training has been adapted to take place online using live video meetings and comprehensive personal training resources and the initial feedback has been positive

The team anticipate rolling the project out further next year.

MVP is Scotland's largest anti-violence schools programme and has delivered significant success. Schools are reporting less violence, fewer expulsions and increased feelings of safety. An evaluation on the Nottinghamshire pilot will take place in March 2021.

Custody Intervention Programme

A new prevention programme is underway at custody facilities in Mansfield and Bridewell to support young people aged from 18 to 25 to turn their backs on violence.



The Custody Intervention Programme, which is delivered by the Inspire and Achieve Foundation, sees specially-trained youth workers deployed in each of the two custody suites in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to coach and mentor young detainees from the initial engagement in the police station through to their return to the community.

So far, the scheme has supported 30 young people through the programme, 40% of which have been considered at highest risk of offending through their involvement in gang violence. At the end of March, 83% of referrals we continuing to engage with the team and 20% had already started or enrolled on training programmes or found employment which is a significant indicator the scheme is working.

Prison Mentorship Success

One of the first projects to be funded by the VRU is already making a significant difference to the rehabilitation of violent offenders.



The VRU invested funding worth more than £40,000 to Beyond Recovery CIC's 'FreeMinds FreePeople' project, which delivers mentorship services to men aged between 18-25 who are currently serving or have recently been released from HMP Nottingham. Many of the participants have shown positive changes in attitude and behaviour, including significantly decreased feelings of expression of anger and depression, with one former gang member, who met his friend's killer during the programme, describing it as "a miracle". Upon completion, participants also have the chance of becoming 'mentors' to other young men.



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