

West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

Highlight Report – Quarter 1 (April - June 2025)

Overview:

The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) continues to commission a range of interventions across the Criminal Justice, Health and Education landscape, as well as providing direct support to local areas to develop their responses and approaches to reducing violence affecting young people.

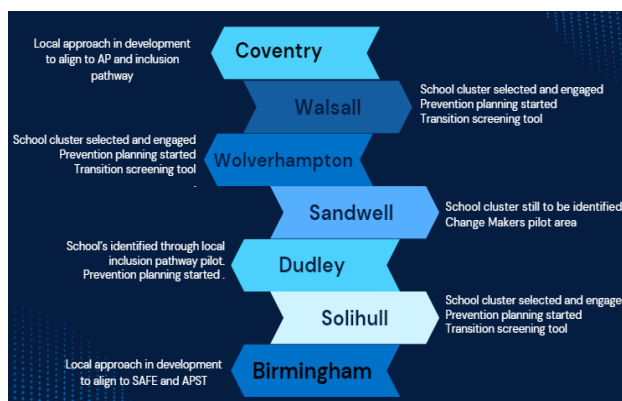
Across the region we continue to see reductions in incidents of serious youth violence, including a 14% reduction at the end of quarter one, compared with the same time last year. All seven Local Authority areas achieved a reduction, specifically where a knife has been used.

The VRP are co-ordinating local implementation of the Home Office pilot prevention panel which is being established in Sandwell and have also been successful in securing funding for two pathfinder prevention panels, which will be located in Walsall and Wolverhampton. We are working closely with the three local authorities to ensure their panels can go live in October.

Education, My Tomorrow and Change Makers:

The Education Team are working across the region to provide training, support and advice in education settings. Our primary prevention offer reached over 817 children.

The Education Team have established the Education Prevention Pilot and are starting to develop a provider framework which will support delivery of the pilot. Expressions of interest for the framework has resulted in over 80 applications. The ambition is to have a framework that commissioners across the region are confident to use which in turn, will ensure high quality, evidence-based provision is available for our children.



Workforce Development

475 professionals have engaged with the VRP webinars which focuses on Introduction to childhood adversity and Trauma Informed Practice; Trauma Informed Practice in Early Years; Ending Male Violence Against Women and Girls; Introduction to Exploitation; Serious Violence Duty; Public Health Approach; Trauma Informed Practice; and Early Years. Programmes and Interventions were delivered either through train the trainer programmes or directly delivered to young people.

My Tomorrow

My Tomorrow, the region's counter narrative campaign, continues to gain significant traction across the region resulting in positive media coverage. Young leaders have been taking part in workshops to develop Change Maker sessions that they will be delivering directly to young people in faith spaces, youth and community settings.

My Tomorrow has had excellent media coverage, which has enhanced the number of people engaging with the campaign:

- [Birmingham Says No to Knife Crime – Youth Club Launch](#)
- [Youth spaces in Coventry](#)
- [Coventry Change Makers and Senior Council Leaders](#)
- [Youth Boxing Event](#)
- [Dudley Boxing Tournament to champion young people with SEND](#)

Change Makers

Change Makers – our flagship upstander programme, alongside the My Tomorrow campaign – continues to pick up pace. Led by the VRP Education Team, using a ‘train the trainer model’, Change Makers offers an initial 6 sessions which can be delivered in schools, youth and community settings, and explores the upstander approach, which seeks to empower and equip young people with skills and confidence to use their voice for positive change and stand up to violence. 39 sessions have been delivered in schools, with over 320 professionals being trained to deliver the programme. You can see the programme in action [here](#).

Change Makers is being piloted in Sandwell primary schools with Phoenix Psychology, where we will be capturing children’s pre and post-feedback. Additional Change Maker sessions are currently in development and will be progressed with Young Leaders over the Autumn term ready for use in January 2026.

In Coventry, a Crown Court Judge met with a group of children and young people (for the second time) at Coventry Academy where they provided their views of how young people can be better supported in the criminal justice system. The Judge provided excellent feedback from these sessions and has been able to take this information back to his organisation. Coventry Academy are working with us to coordinate a series of My Tomorrow Conversations, that places senior leaders in front of young people so their voices can be heard.

These are just a few examples of how children, young people, partners, professionals and communities have got behind and embraced My Tomorrow, using the concept as a platform to give children and young people access to opportunities to make their voices heard. This is at the heart of My Tomorrow, and we are so grateful to the commitment that has been shown to grow the movement, building a counter-narrative around the vibrancy, positivity, creativity and potential of our children and young people.

Data & Evaluation

The Data and Evaluation team have experienced some staffing changes which has provided an opportunity to review our focus and set clear priorities. The key areas of focus for the remainder of the year include:

- Creating a Strategic Performance Framework to support us in understanding impact of our regional strategy
- Refreshing our Strategic Needs Assessment and working with local community safety partnerships and PILT to align our products and timescales
- Understanding opportunities to align our work more closely with the Police intelligence/data functions
- Finalising the regional Data Sharing Protocol, to support delivery of the Serious Violence Duty

Best Practice

Young people learn how to stand up for and support their more vulnerable peers

15 July @ 2 mins read [Youth Justice](#) [Education](#)

Children are trained to challenge bad behaviour in school, support peers who have been victims of bullying and talk to perpetrators to recognise the impact it has.



Change Makers is teaching young people how to be an ‘upstander’, so they can look out for their younger peers

Name Change Makers' Upstander programme

Provider West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership

- Monitoring our Interventions
- Finalising the VRP Evaluation Plan
- Supporting regional and local requests for data and information
- Supporting Prevention Panels
- Working with the Home Office on their new initiative around hyper local targeting to reduce knife crime

We have commissioned an independent consultant to lead on our evaluation work – Tori Olphin. Tori brings a wealth of expertise in data science, analytics, and evaluation. Her role will be pivotal in designing, monitoring, and evaluating commissioned services, as well as in building capacity across the team and wider partnership, through knowledge sharing and support.

Local Placed Based Working

VRP funding has continued to support the delivery of local violence prevention and reduction plans across the region, as well as providing resources to help local partners to respond to incidents of serious violence when they occur. VRP Navigators continue to support local areas to deliver their violence prevention and reduction plans. Highlights from quarter 1 include:

Birmingham

- Rhymes Over Crimes delivered impactful assemblies raising awareness of the risks of knife crime and exploitation in schools located in areas impacted by high levels of violence. Over 1,000 students in North Birmingham participated.
- ‘Birmingham Says No’ continued their weekly after-school youth hub in Handsworth Park. The Youth Hub reached over 80 young people and received significant media attention, with coverage from Midlands Today, Hits Radio, Global Radio, and [Birmingham Live](#).
- Birmingham City Football Club (BCFC) Kicks Programme delivered football activities and mentoring to engage young people at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour and youth violence. The programme now operates in 9 schools across East Birmingham, reaching approximately 200 students.
- Circle of Friends, delivered by The Children’s Society, is an early intervention programme working with 10–14-year-olds. It aims to build skills in conflict resolution, peer pressure management, and informed decision-making. Delivered in small groups by a trusted adult, the programme fosters a shared identity and encourages pro-social behaviour. Since April 2025, 8 fixed groups have been established, with 11 new groups recently added—representing 32 new referrals.
- Phoenix Psychology have co-located a Clinical Psychologist in the Birmingham Children’s Trust EMPOWERU Serious Youth Violence Hub who provides:
 - Service Development and Evaluation
 - Clinical Supervision
 - Complex Case Formulations and Intervention Planning
 - Risk Assessments and Management Planning
 - Training
 - Specialist Neurodiversity Assessments

Coventry

- VRP funded interventions reached 3600 children and young people in Coventry.
- Worked with local partners planning for the Summer - an outreach model will increase the number of youth workers across the City. The approach this year has been improved, using the learning from previous years.
- Supported West Midlands Police to establish and coordinate the Coventry Partnership Tactical Board to support violence reduction which sits under Coventry’s Strategic Violence Board.
- The VRP Navigator is co-lead for the ‘Be Safe’ strand of Child Friendly Coventry and has led on co-ordinating a partnership event in June to showcase the work taking place across Coventry.

- Effectively managed the Step Together programme across the City Centre and Hillfields routes. Regular meetings have taken place with relevant schools, Sky Blues in the Community (the provider), Coventry City Council and the Police to ensure the programme continues to meet local needs in terms of keeping children safe during their route home from school. Sustainability conversations will continue in quarter 2.
- VRP, Police and the Youth Justice Service coordinated a 'Child Friendly Custody' piece of work. Working with 2 young people identified by the Youth Justice Service, they visited Willenhall Police Station to identify how the custody process and environment could be better improved from a trauma informed and child appropriate perspective.

Solihull

- 2947 young people aged 24 and under were reached through VRP funded interventions across Solihull.
- There has been a [significant reduction in SYV in Solihull \(approx. 30%\)](#).
- VRP funding has supported the renovation of the [Youth Bus](#).
- Sessions delivered by Solihull Youth Justice Service at Kingshurst Allotments have positively impacted young people on a Referral Order. The intervention at the allotments has been beneficial for mental health, confidence and creativity.
- The local partnership will hold a meeting in July to review their violence SNA and violence prevention plan.



[Solihull Observer – June 2025](#)

Dudley

- The local stakeholder network continues to be well attended, and a space where best practice and resources can be shared.
- CSKN and Cranstoun Here 4 YOUth continue to deliver mentoring interventions, including lived experience focused interventions to those at high risk of violence/exploitation. **22** young people benefited from intensive interventions.
- Phase Trust, continue to deliver harmful sexual behaviour programmes and mentoring. During County Lines Intensification week, they also delivered training on working with women and girls who have been criminally exploited.
- The local partnership has agreed to re-establish the local Violence Prevention Group with a relaunch workshop planned in July to refresh their violence SNA and violence prevention plan.

Wolverhampton

- Wolverhampton will pilot a Prevention Panel from October 2025 within education, as a pathfinder funded by the Home Office as part of the national Youth Futures programme. This will provide more opportunities to intervene early with children and young people and maintain their education. Wolverhampton submitted their delivery plan to the Home Office at the end of June, and will hold their first steering groups over the Summer.
- Detached outreach team (EYES) has reached over 1,900 young people under 24, and 550 aged 25 and over.
- Following the local My Tomorrow launch, a task and finish group has been set up which will look at increasing engagement with the My Tomorrow campaign.
- Wolverhampton hosted a mobile weapon surrender van on 2nd July as part of a national Home Office scheme.
- Two new weapon surrender bins were installed, one in Merry Hill and the other in Bilston, funded by the Home Office.
- Exploitation awareness training was delivered for staff working in the night time economy as part of Exploitation Awareness Week. As part of this week, social media content and engagement sessions with parents/carers, young people and professionals took place to raise awareness.
- To support sustainability, Safer Wolverhampton Partnership have commissioned three voluntary organisations with the HAF Summer provision funding to accompany safer streets (safer towns).

Sandwell

- Sandwell will pilot a Prevention Panel from October 2025 funded by the Home Office as part of the national Young Futures programme, this will provide opportunities to provide more young people with early intervention across the borough. Sandwell submitted their delivery plan to the Home Office at the end of June, and planned to hold their first steering groups in July.
- The Change Makers Young Ambassadors are contributing to events and attending youth service activities across the Summer to engage more children and young people in the My Tomorrow campaign.
- The VRP in partnership with Ambitious Lives, WMP, Horizons, St John's Ambulance, The Right Path, Youth Justice, Youth services & Sandwell Community School to provide a new diversionary project. The project is currently running for 5 weeks, to conclude when schools break up for Summer.
- VRP funded services have reached 1156 children and young people. These services include sport interventions, detached youth work, mentoring, and diversionary activities.

Walsall

- Walsall will pilot a Prevention Panel from October 2025 within education, as a pathfinder funded by the Home Office as part of the national Youth Futures programme. This will provide more opportunities to intervene early with children and young people and maintain their education. Walsall submitted their delivery plan to the Home Office at the end of June, and will hold their first steering groups over the Summer.
- Walsall continue to deliver the CARE programme, which engages children and young people and provides key interventions.
- The VRP Navigator has been working on connecting with stakeholders and to increase numbers engaged in the under 25 stakeholder network.
- We have promoted the VRP universal training offer and have been in discussions with two schools who would like a tailored training plan developed to access training for professionals and interventions for young people.
- Opportunities are being explored to promote My Tomorrow. The new youth hub was launched at the end of June in the Saddlers Centre where My tomorrow was promoted.
- Walsall faith spaces are being mapped and early discussions have taken place re. the Faith Alliance. These places of worship have been connected with the young leaders who will deliver a session during the Summer.

Health

St Giles provides lived experience navigators across the Black Country Emergency Departments, ensuring coverage across the five sites via a rota system. Feedback from the newest site in Walsall has been positive, with hospital colleagues remaining enthusiastic about the service. Delivery also takes place in University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire.

Redthread provide navigators in Queen Elizabeth and Heartlands Hospitals. Despite staff absences contributing to a dip in the numbers of children and young people engaged, work with hospital staff has remained positive, with increases in the number of female referrals. As a result of this, plans are in place for the Redthread team to deliver violence against women and girls (VAWG) training. To further support this work, Redthread are also looking to secure additional funding to employ a VAWG focused worker.

A&E Navigators provided critical interventions to 247 young people who had experienced violence and/or violence related injuries and trained 139 hospital staff to provide violence reduction interventions.

The VRP Health Delivery Manager has delivered the "Introduction to trauma informed practice in healthcare settings", which introduces the basics of understanding adversity & trauma, its impacts on health, and begins to explore working in a more trauma informed way in healthcare settings. The webinar has reached over 80 healthcare professionals.

The VRP Clinical lead has supported health colleagues in compliance with the Serious Violence Duty. The VRP has now taken on chairing the regional SVD strategic & operational groups for health partners and have secured senior nominations from the Chief Executive of each hospital Trust.

Senior Clinical Psychologists from Phoenix Psychology have continued to work within the VRP developing toolkits, resources and support for local violence reduction boards to streamline pathways and connect young people effectively to mental health support and intervention. Looking ahead throughout 2025/2026, Phoenix Psychology will support clinical case formulations and reflective supervision to key violence prevention teams across the region, including specialist dedicated violence and exploitation hubs.

Barnardo's are supporting Trauma Informed Practice plans across Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton. Quarter 1 has been used to agree priorities and the work in each area. The final TI Coalition workshops have been delivered and the closing report of the Coalition has been published. [The resources produced](#) continue to be well used across partners. A new Trauma Informed online training course has been developed which will be launched in Quarter 2.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):

The Introduction to EMVAWG webinar continues to have a good sign-up rate, with over 180 professionals 'attending' this training.

The webinar is regularly reviewed and refreshed to ensure that it reflects emerging government policy, best practice and regional developments. In addition, the Change Maker Programme also includes a specific module on healthy relationships and boundaries.

The VRP VAWG Navigator has developed robust guidance relating to Ending Male Violence Against Women and Girls (EMVAWG), for inclusion in the VRP Education Toolkit.

Sport:

The VRP have been working with StreetGames to understand how we can continue to embed the regional sports strategy across the West Midlands.

During quarter 2, the Sports Partnership networks will be re-established and partners will be offered access to the data in the regional map. The VRP will support StreetGames' direct engagement, capacity building and delivery across the region.

The VRP will continue to support professionals across the Sports sector with workforce development opportunities.

Criminal Justice and Exploitation:

The VRP Criminal Justice work includes a variety of commissioned projects and interventions that are both community and custody based, in spaces when children and young people can be at their most vulnerable. These programmes provide extensive support to children and young people on the cusp of or engaged with the criminal justice system. Delivery of the Youth Endowment Funded programme, Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) will, as planned, end in August 2025.

Since its inception, CIRV has made a real difference to the lives of many young people, providing vital intervention, guidance, and opportunities to help some of our most vulnerable young people towards a more positive future. This success has been a testament to the dedication and collaboration of all our partners, and we are incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. As we approach the conclusion of the project, we are working with partners to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of support for those currently engaged. Alongside this, we will look to embed and replicate key elements of CIRV within existing services to maintain the progress made. Key highlights from the programme include:

- 102 people have successfully left the programme with their needs met, which is a larger increase than previous quarters. Both CIRV teams are working with local partners to ensure onward referrals are made, and exit plans are put in place both on a system and individual level to mitigate the impacts of the project ending.

- To date, we have received 2156 referrals across both sites. Of this, 1531 were at some point suitable for CIRV. 601 were in control groups, and 872 were in treatment or case worked cohorts.
- The CIRV Conference was well attended and provided an opportunity for partners to take learning from the CIRV process. This includes the role of each partner in supporting young people, sequencing of support, and the voice of young people's experience of working with CIRV.

In addition to the above, the VRP Criminal Justice work includes a variety of commissioned projects and interventions that are both community and custody based, in spaces when children and young people can be at their most vulnerable. The interventions target young people across the region who may be on the periphery or entrenched in exploitation and/or the criminal justice system.

So far in this financial year, criminal justice related/based interventions have reached:

- Over **436** children and young people under 24
- Over **31** young people over 25
- Over **42** professionals, trained on a variety of topics, including (but not limited to) the impacts of parental imprisonment

Exploitation

- The VRP supported the National County Lines Operation which saw the force shut down 241 County Lines. 113 arrests were made across the region, a 31% increase compared to last year. 42 adults and 71 children were also safeguarded from exploitation with officers putting in extra referrals to support services. We also visited 17 suspected 'cuckooed' / home invaded properties.
- The County lines training programme coordinated by the VRP reached almost 500 attendees from across the region in June 2025.
- Expect Respect is a female specific exploitation service in Wolverhampton. 35 new cases referred in from April 2025, 19 cases remain open and total of 45 beneficiaries were supported this period.
- The Exploitation screening tool language pilot is ongoing. Feedback on the pilot will be held in October with facilitation from Phoenix Psychology. In April 2025, partners suggested piloting a change in risk categorisation language on the screening tools for 6 months until October 2025, the proposed language is:
 - Entrenched (High)
 - Targeted (Medium)
 - Vulnerable (Low)

Faith and Community Engagement

The VRP and the Faith Alliance are working closely with partners to implement preventative strategies, including enhanced youth engagement. The VRP Faith Alliance has played a key role in responding to incidents with a coordinated, community-led approach

The My Tomorrow Faith Roadshow was a success at the [annual Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan in May 2025](#). This initiative delivers leadership training to young people in places of worship, fostering unity and interfaith understanding. It provides platforms for young people to share their ideas and aspirations for a better future.

The My Tomorrow campaign, Change Makers young leaders programme, Faith Alliance and new Community Engagement strategy all increase the involvement of communities with the VRP, placing them centrally and in leadership roles in decision making and co-production. The Change Makers programme is growing across the Faith sector and there will be a faith specific young leaders' group, that will seek to embed youth leadership on Change Makers in faith settings across the region.

We have launched a Violence Prevention Webinar for Faith communities. This introductory training module was developed to provide the Faith community with a basic overview of the public health approach to violence.

In October, in partnership with five other VRU's, WM VRP will host a national Faith Conference to share best practice and encourage other VRU areas to take the same approach.

Working in Partnership with West Midlands Police (WMP)

The Violence Reduction Partnership and West Midlands Police continue to work closely together to strengthen our individual and collective responses to preventing violence. Police serious youth violence data is regularly shared within the wider strategic partnership to ensure a collective understanding of patterns and trends and to support a multi-agency response. The recently refreshed Targeted Guardian Patrol areas have been shared in partnership spaces including Summer mitigation planning meetings.

The VRP have a key role in police consequence management meetings which take place in the immediate aftermath of incidents of serious violence. We ensure that the wider impact of the incident is responded to in an attempt to prevent the onward transmission of violence and response to the trauma in the community. Examples of incidents where support has been offered include a violent disorder involving several young people in a public place, a firearm discharge and a serious assault involving the use of a knife. Resources have been invested to prevent further victimisation and support those in need. As part of these packages of support, detached youth workers have been funded and deployed into relevant areas and schools have been engaged with and offered long term violence prevention planning support.

The VRP are working with the police to provide a bespoke package of support to those identified as habitual knife carriers. Where consent is obtained, up to £2,000 per person is being provided for support which includes mentoring and diversionary activity.

Work across the police continues on their journey to become a trauma informed organisation. During quarter one priorities have been agreed which include the continued roll-out of training to departments including the Public Protection Unit, Operations and Family Liaison Officers. To ensure this work is sustainable, Barnardo's will also be delivering train-the-trainer modules with a focus on staff within centralised and local training departments and Force Contact. An extensive programme of work is underway with the Operations Department regarding the execution of warrants. This has included focus groups, working with partners such as Children Heard and Seen, the development of a practical resource for families (including young children) who have been impacted by the execution of a warrant and training for officers involved in this process. Software available on tablets used by children in custody is being enhanced. This includes the development of videos explaining the custody process, videos from partner agencies and enhancing the availability of features which will ground and educate children.

The Youth Improvement Board has now been re-named to the Regional Youth Justice Partnership Board and the Criminal Justice dashboard which includes data from West Midlands Police and the seven Youth Justice Services within the region has been used to promote activity relating to the provision of PACE beds. Utilising this forum and the Strategic Safeguarding Board, a specific task and finish group has been developed to focus solely on the provision of PACE beds for children.

For further information on each of the themes contained in this briefing, please contact

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