

Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)



Addressing the causes of violence in Kent and Medway through a public health approach

Autumn 2020 newsletter

Sharing the amazing work our team is involved in to help reduce violence and keep our communities safe

Who we are

The Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was created in September 2019 with money awarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent from the Home Office.

Two VRU directors, one from Kent Police and one from Kent County Council (KCC), are seconded to lead the unit along with **five area coordinators**

who have vast experience in family management, youth justice, education, early help and youth work.

The team also includes **three analysts** from Kent Police who provide regular reports and analysis to help understand what violence looks like in the county, and help identify areas that require further support. The analysts have access to information from Kent Police, KCC,

Medway Council, National Probation Service, Public Health England, and the NHS and can provide reports which are drawn from a variety of different sources.

The team also has a **project officer** responsible for commissioning services and evaluating the impact of the VRU's work and of any services delivered.

An **administrative officer** will also be joining the team soon.

The Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit: Our aims and partners

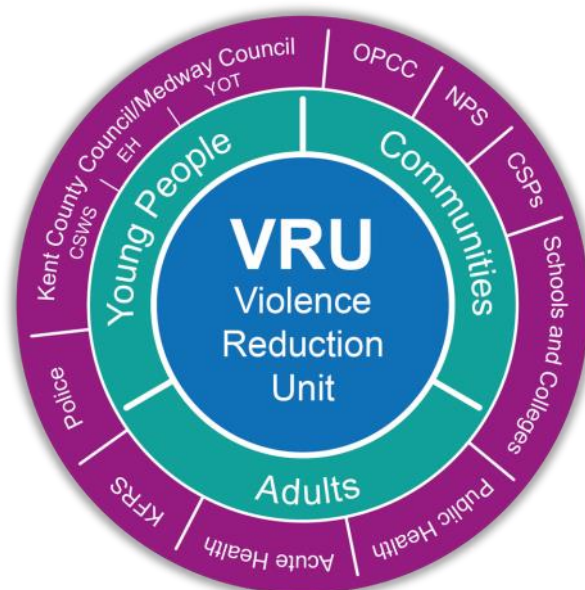
What does the VRU do?

Using a public health approach to violence, we address the causes of violence and aim to support those involved and impacted by violence.

We are tackling violence in Kent and Medway by:

- **Offering support and identifying opportunities to change and improve lives**
- **Working with people to ensure their voices are heard and that they have the opportunity to build positive relationships with others**
- **Responding quickly and with a multi-agency approach to deliver the best support network**
- **Enforcing when necessary**
- **Influencing cultural change to help make communities safer for everyone**

Our Partners



Who and what do we fund?

2019/20

Funding in 2019/20 supported 23 local projects with more than 600 people receiving a service.

We provided extra support to help members of society change their lifestyle utilising a number of agencies. We offered services that focused on sport, practical skills, emotional and wellbeing support. We also funded equipment such as rapid deployment CCTV for Community Safety Units (CSUs), plus emergency trauma packs for communities and Buddi tags for Integrated Offender Management.

2020/21

This year we have funded services to :

- Offer diversionary activities to communities through our Vulnerable Children's Charities fund
- Develop approaches to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Work with schools to enhance pupils' self-esteem, and bring schools and parents together
- Support those in prisons and police custody

Serious Violence Reviews

Our analysts scan all daily crime report incidents of serious violence which involve anyone aged 25 and under. These reports are then shared with the relevant VRU co-ordinators to review.

The aim is to ensure there is a swift, multi-agency response to help prevent violence re-occurring.

Referrals are made to discuss these incidents within an existing multi-agency framework consisting of a District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting or a Complex Adolescent Risk Management meeting. Where an individual is not already being discussed at a multi-agency meeting, co-ordinators bring professionals together to discuss the concerns and help to facilitate a support network for the young person.

Our reviews work across districts and continue to help align the multi-agency approach to help reduce violence.

Recent example

A recent review in Swale incorporated agencies from Medway, Swale and Canterbury due to the complexity of the incident. The work resulted in a decline in serious violence in the district.

Your VRU is funding, or supporting the PCC to fund...

North Kent:

Box It Out
SATEDA
Sheppey Matters

Olympia Boxing
Brogdale CIC
Sanctuary Housing ACE Awareness
Medway Youth Justice
Sittingbourne Street Games

East Kent:

Changing Minds
Young Lives Foundation
Canterbury CSU Protect Your Child

Countywide:

StreetSoccer
Youth Resilience
Forward Trust prisons project
Refocus

West Kent:

Switch Café
Tonbridge CSP ACE Awareness
Kenward Trust
My Place

St Giles' Trust Police Custody service
Integrated Offender Management
Youth Justice 1st Aid

South Kent:

The Shed
Dover BeeChange ACE Awareness
The SMART project
Target Engagement
Primal Roots
Ashford ACE awareness

VRU funds 500 life-saving ETPs for distribution across Kent



We purchased more than 500 emergency trauma packs (ETPs) which have been distributed across public spaces throughout the county.

Each red bag contains simple items to help preserve the life of someone who has been injured

until the emergency services arrive at the scene.

The packs have been sent to Community Safety Partnerships for distribution to businesses and other locations; and [videos have been produced explaining how the products work.](#)

Partners working together to raise awareness of knife crime

The VRU is funding the Community Safety Units throughout Kent to deliver a Knife Awareness Campaign.

Allocation is based on data provided regarding the number of knife incidents within specific area.

The campaign is around:

- Highlighting the risk of carrying a knife
- Partnership work/community engagement
- Focussing on prevention of knife hotspots
- Considering known areas of risk around both county lines and young criminal group activity

Activities across the county have included knife



awareness workshops, knife sweeps, first aid training for young people, and consultation with young people about changes they would like to see.

Trauma-informed approach underpins VRU aims

A key part of the prevention approach in Kent is a goal to develop a workforce informed by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's). We have

funded ACE Ambassador schemes in Ashford, Swale, Dover and Tonbridge along with a separate scheme with Sanctuary Housing working across districts.

We also work with Kent's Public

Health team to develop an ACE-informed workforce across the county. This multi-agency collaboration has created the [SPACE Matters site](#), where information on ACEs can be found.

How to contact the VRU: We are happy to answer any questions



VRU, Kent Police Headquarters, Sutton Road, Maidstone, ME15 9BZ



01622 677055



Programme.Delivery@kent.police.uk

kent-pcc.gov.uk/vru



[@KentVRU](https://twitter.com/KentVRU)



of the team, their roles, and the areas where they work are on the next page...



#LOOKCLOSER
DON'T WAIT.
REPORT IT.

Look for the signs and remember young people who have been or who are being exploited:

- **Don't always look vulnerable**
- **Don't always act like victims**
- **May not understand that they are being exploited**
- **Could be feeling scared about what might happen to them next**
- **Need to feel safe and heard**
- **Be provided with a safe space to talk**
- **May have a distrust of police/adults in authority**

childrenssociety.org.uk/look-closer

The Kent & Medway VRU supports the Children's Society's **Look Closer** campaign



Case study: Making a difference

A 16-year-old boy who was well known to agencies because of concerns around knife crime, drug running and robbery, went missing for a period of time to London.

On his return he disclosed that he had been to trap houses and he had been arrested for possession of class A drugs. While away, he had been criminally exploited by more sophisticated offenders. He was willing to talk because he was confused about what had happened. He and his family sought support from their local VRU coordinator.

The VRU coordinator arranged a multi-agency meeting and agreed for a

Buddi tag to be fitted to the boy make him 'too hot to handle'. To the boy's relief, his exploiters did not ask him to join them again because the group did not want him being tracked to potential trap houses.

The young man thanked the VRU for the support and the safety network placed around him.

As part of this support package, a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was completed by Children's Social Work Services, professionals supported him to return to education and the We Are With You substance misuse service continues to work with him on a weekly basis.

How to contact the Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit

Chief Inspector Ben Loose	VRU Director	Benjamin.Loose@kent.police.uk
Mark Powell	VRU Director	mark.powell@kent.gov.uk
Rose Field	VRU Coordinator for Sevenoaks, Dartford, Gravesham	rose-marie.field@kent.gov.uk
Caley Walden	VRU Coordinator for Ashford, Folkestone, Dover	caley.walden@kent.police.uk
Emma Price	VRU Coordinator for Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells	Emma.Price@kent.gov.uk
Sharon McCauley	VRU Coordinator for Medway, Swale	sharon.mccauley@medway.gov.uk
Sarah Rothwell	VRU Coordinator for Thanet, Canterbury	sarah.rothwell@kent.gov.uk
Claire Read	VRU Lead Analyst	Claire.Read@kent.police.uk
Beckee Wickham	VRU Analyst	Beckee.Wickham@kent.police.uk
Lauren Barrett	Programme Officer	Lauren.Barrett@kent.police.uk