

**Leicestershire & Rutland
Safer Communities
Strategy Board**

2023/24 – 2024/25 Update

**#PreventionThroughConnection
@VR_Network
www.violencereductionnetwork.co.uk**

Introduction

The VRN recently celebrated its 5th anniversary and it has been both an eventful and positive year. The most important achievements remain the impact that our work has on the day-to-day lives of young people, families and communities and we are starting to see this translate into performance data. Whilst this is encouraging, we know there is so much more to do to ensure all our children, young people and adults are safe from violence.

The VRN team is just one small part of our growing network of groups, organisations and communities. We have always maintained that everyone has a role to play in preventing violence and collaboration across the whole system is essential. In pursuit of this, we have continued to grow both in size and ambition over the last year. The new Serious Violence Duty which came into force in 2023 has acted as a catalyst for our work as it places a statutory duty on many of our core members to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence in our area. The VRN team was proud to support Police, Local Authorities, Health, Probation, Youth Justice and Fire and Rescue to meet the mandatory requirements set out for year one whilst also ensuring the wider partnership, including communities, were fully involved. We were also pleased to receive the highest rating, 'Mature, Demonstrating Best Practice', in a readiness assessment undertaken by Crest Advisory on behalf of the Home Office.

Our work to implement the new Duty resulted in an extension to our local definition of serious violence to include sexual violence and serious violence within the context of domestic settings. We will, however, continue to work to prevent public place serious violence and prioritise children and young people given they continue to be disproportionately affected. A new Strategic Needs Assessment and a five-year Preventing Serious Violence Strategy were also produced. Our new Strategy outlines seven evidence-based priorities and a wide-range of planned activity to ensure we continue to build on our progress.

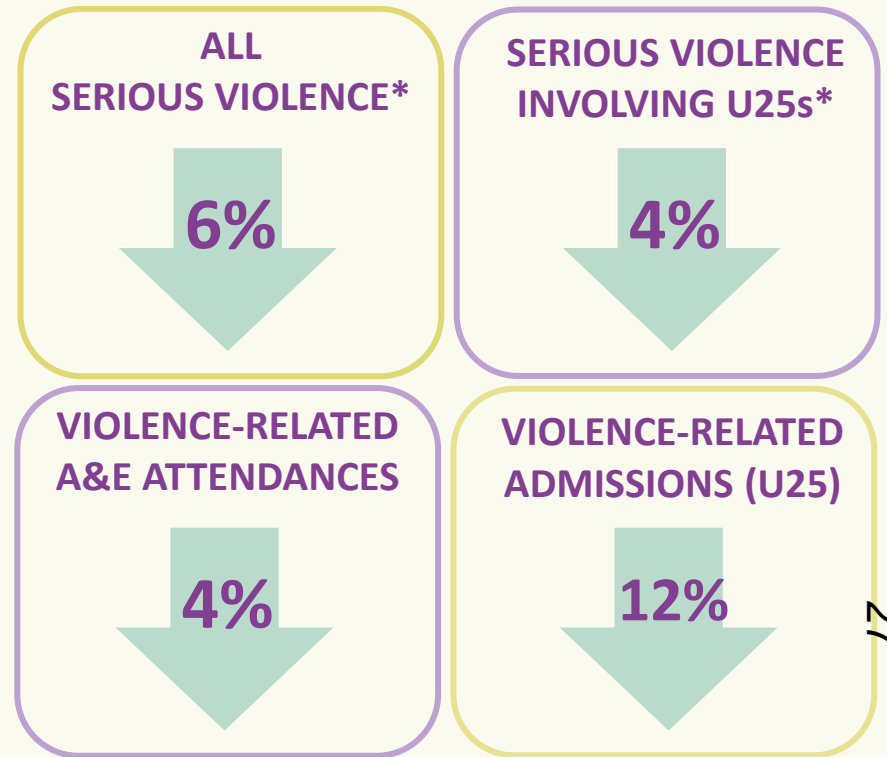


Impact on Serious Violence

There are several indications from performance data that the VRN is having a positive impact on serious violence including in relation to our priority focus of under 25 year olds. There are, of course, caveats to all data and caution should be exercised during interpretation. We are also acutely aware that progress can be fragile and a relentless focus on prevention is essential to have a sustained, longer-term impact.

In relation to the Home Office's success measures, compared to the 2019/20, the year in which the VRN was established, there have been reductions across all three measures when analysing the data for under 25s, our priority groups. Serious violence also reduced for all ages with the exception of homicides which increased by a small volume.

2023/24 VS 2022/23



**based on the 2022/23 serious violence definition*

Data Source	Home Office Success Measure	Age Group	% change comparing 2023/24 to 2019/20
Police	A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25	All ages	-6.3%
		Victim U25	-13.2%
	A reduction in homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives	All ages	+30.0%
		Victim U25, involving knives	-100.0%
Health	A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25	All ages	-25.5%
		Victim U25	-31.6%

Serious Violence Duty

Over the last year, the VRN partnership has been focused on meeting the requirements of the new Serious Violence Duty. This came into force on 31 January 2023 as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

Duty holders had 12 months to meet the initial requirements which included confirming the local partnership model and geographical area for discharging the duty, agreeing a local definition for serious violence, producing a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and co-producing a Strategy outlining how the partnership intends to prevent and tackle serious violence. These requirements are all similar to the core purpose and annual requirements of the VRN and so the partnership was already in a place of strength.

This was independently confirmed by Crest Advisory who undertook a readiness assessment for our area on behalf of the Home Office. They concluded that our state of readiness was **'Mature, Demonstrating Best Practice'** – the highest rating. We therefore used the Duty as an opportunity to formalise and strengthen the work of the VRN partnership, extending both our reach and impact across the communities of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Duty holders agreed that the existing Strategic Partnership Board, which spans the whole of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, would provide the local partnership model with the VRN team and partnership providing the leadership required to mobilise for the new duty and meet all the requirements. A temporary Implementation Group was set up and chaired by the VRN Director to drive this forward.

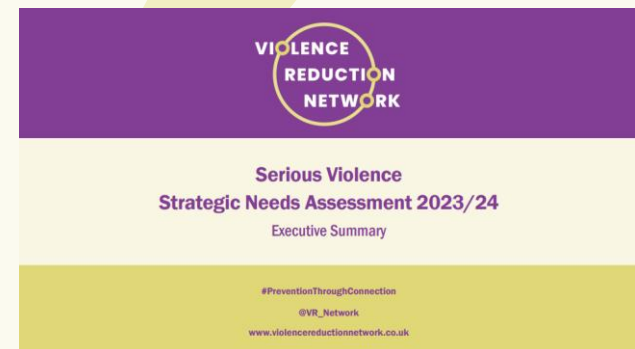
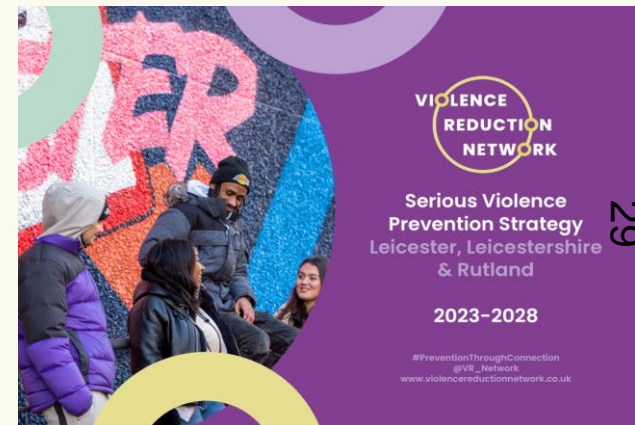
An early task was agreeing a definition of serious violence. It was agreed the existing VRN definition should be expanded to include sexual violence and serious violence occurring within a domestic setting. It was also agreed that the VRN should maintain a priority focus on public place serious violence affecting under 25s to ensure progress in this area continued.

Whilst only some organisations are subject to the Duty, the VRN took a collaborative approach ensuring as many partners were involved as possible. Throughout the year the VRN team provided briefings for partners to raise awareness of the Duty, supported organisations to assess and improve their own compliance through a self-assessment framework and held a series of co-design workshops including with partners defined as 'relevant authorities' (education and prisons).

Serious Violence Duty

The partnership successfully met all the requirements of the duty before the prescribed deadline of 31 January 2024. This included a new Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and a five-year Preventing Serious Violence Strategy. The Strategy included 7 evidence-based priorities which together will drive system-wide prevention activity by the partnership. The VRN will continue to co-ordinate delivery of the strategy through drawing up and implementing an annual plan. Both the SNA and Strategy are due to be updated and published in Q4 2024-25.

1. **Priority 1:** Providing collaborative and courageous leadership.
2. **Priority 2:** Using data, evidence and evaluation to improve our response.
3. **Priority 3:** Supporting families to provide nurturing and safe environments.
4. **Priority 4:** Building protective and cohesive communities.
5. **Priority 5:** Creating safe and inclusive education settings.
6. **Priority 6:** Connecting young people to purposeful activities and trusted adults.
7. **Priority 7:** Providing opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery.



Our Partnership

Communities and Young People

Communities have been a key partner since the start of the VRN, and the approach to partnering with communities has continuously strengthened. There have been significant levels of collaboration with communities which has generated invaluable learning in relation to the approach and methods which are most effective.

Key activity in the last year includes:

- The co-production, development and implementation of a Community Partnership Framework
- Investing in a fourth-cohort of the Community Leadership Programme
- Development, growth, and collaboration with the Community Leaders Network
- Holding our annual Community Partnership Event which included the commencement of the co-design of our new community anti-violence campaign and participation in a number of workshops
- Embedding 5 community navigators into the Phoenix Programme delivery team (see page 7)
- Establishment of the Community Oversight Group (COG) to provide support, advise and scrutiny to all aspects of the VRN's work – we welcomed our second cohort this year
- Held our second Hope Hack in LLR with over 120 young people in attendance
- Collaboration with the OPCC to launch a new Community Fund focusing on Diversion from ASB and Crime, which reached over 1600 young people

- Exploring the extension of our Network with the Faith Sector
- Piloted a 'Fire Skills' programme with Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service
- Investing in a Youth Development Co-Ordinator

Sports

In 2023-24, we formed a new collaboration with StreetGames and local charity, Active Together and invested in a Sports and Violence Co-Ordinator to lead the implementation of a co-produced sport strategy to develop the sport sector locally, with significant progress being made in the last year.

Trauma-Informed

In November 2023, the VRN held a trauma-informed conference which was attended by over 130 people representing all parts of the VRN partnership.

This year, the VRN have supported partners to develop their internal policies, processes and practices after undertaking an evidence-based self-assessment and developed professional networks such as the Community of Practice and Trauma-Informed Schools Network.



Interventions & Specialist Services

- In Summer 2023, we launched The Phoenix Programme (see in focus section).
- The Reach Programme was successful in passing the efficacy stage of the evaluation and received YEF funding to continue delivery until June 2025. It engaged with 133 children in 2023-24.
- The Violence Intervention Project, delivered by Turning Point, has continued to provide targeted support to young people affected by violence in Police custody and the Emergency Department at the hospital and engaged with almost 400 young people in 2023-24.
- Our Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) bystander programme has continued to grow including a further 10 secondary schools launching MVP this year as well as extending the programme into primary schools. A new MVP guide is being finalised ready to onboard new schools in January 2025.
- Our ETE and sports specialist services delivered by Leicestershire Cares and Leicester City in the Community continue to provide specialist support and achieve positive outcomes with the young people they engage with.
- Re-launch of our 'Provider Network' to share best practice amongst our delivery partners, and provide learning and development opportunities across our interventions and community partners.



In Focus: The Phoenix Programme

The programme is delivered by a multi-agency, community focused team which includes Police, Probation and Youth Justice but also a team of Community Navigators some of which have lived experience of violence. The team work collaboratively with participants building trusting relationships and offering swift access to tailored and tangible services such as mentoring, mental health services, housing advice, employment and training opportunities and other provision to address underlying causes and enables them to build a violence-free future.

The consequences of continued involvement in violence are clearly communicated from the start, with the team being proactive, creative and persistent in their engagement. If the participant refuses to engage or disengages, swift enforcement action is activated to reaffirm the consequences and ensure communities are protected from further harm.

**HOPE. OPPORTUNITY.
CONNECTION.**

**MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES
SAFER FOR EVERYONE.**

Campaigns

LIVE SAFE



LiveSafe ([Z](#)) is our website that provides young people and parents and carers with information, guidance and useful resources in relation to keeping safe. This year we expanded the website to consist of six topics including new pages around Substance Use and Healthy Relationships. The new content was co-produced with subject matter experts across the VRN partnership within the newly created Live Safe sub-groups.

Key developments from the last year include:

- LiveSafe is now available in 10 different languages
- LiveSafe has a wide range of new branded assets using images of young people within local communities, including flyers, business cards and posters that have been shared with partners
- Each page now includes 'hot topics' which is updated quarterly to reflect any new issues affecting young people to ensure LiveSafe provides relevant and relatable information.
- The LiveSafe Professionals Page has been developed and will be published by Q4 2024-25.
- The development of knife crime workshops for parents and carers which will be delivered from Q4 2024-25 onwards.



The You're right, That's Wrong campaign was further developed with the addition of a new toolkit and assets to extend the campaign into the County areas.

The campaign aims to provide men aged between 18-34 with skills, knowledge and confidence to be active bystanders against misogyny and public place harassment towards women. A focused digital phase of the campaign promoted the messages with the latest video content featuring the Hinckley Leicester Road football team and use of kinetic graphics. They ran on Meta, Snapchat and YouTube.

Community Anti-Violence Campaign

Linked to the Serious Violence Duty, the VRN have led on the co-production of a community campaign which highlights the VRN's mission and core messaging that 'Violence is Preventable' and we all need to play a part to successfully reduce and prevent it. The campaign brief has been co-produced with a number of community groups and partners and the application process for a design agency is currently open. The campaign will be launched in March 2025.

Data, Evidence & Evaluation

The VRN are committed to continuous learning and improvement and understanding the impact of our work. This year, we have commissioned a number of studies, briefings and evaluations to ensure we are achieving this:

Research commissioned / undertaken by the VRN this year includes:

- A review of domestic-abuse perpetrator programmes in LLR
- A review of pre-court diversion in LLR
- Effective Support for Neurodivergent Young People in the Criminal Justice System
- Parenting Programmes
- Evaluation of the Community Leadership Programme
- Evaluation of the Violence Intervention Project (currently in progress)
- Deep-dives into Stalking and Robbery in LLR

In July 2023, the VRN, in partnership with the University of Leicester and the Home Office, hosted the first national 'Serious Violence: Research and Evaluation Conference' in Leicester. We welcomed over 150 policy-makers, practitioners and academics from across the UK to share learning on effective approaches to understanding the local problem of serious violence, delivering evidence-informed responses and evaluating effectiveness.

The VRN also continues to successfully run Randomised Control Trials in two of our interventions: The Phoenix Programme and The Reach Programme. These evaluations are being led by the University of Hull (Phoenix) and Sheffield Hallam University (Reach), both in partnership with the Youth Endowment Fund.

The Reach Programme have successfully continued into an efficacy study following the publication of the feasibility study and the interim evaluation of Phoenix has recently been published.



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