

# Sussex Violence Reduction Unit Response Strategy

## March 2020

### Contents

<a href="#">Executive Summary</a> .....	2
<a href="#">In 2020/21 the Partnership plans to deliver:</a> .....	3
1. <a href="#">A public health approach to reducing serious violence in Sussex</a> .....	4
2. <a href="#">Our locality</a> .....	6
3. <a href="#">Current Position and what we know about serious violence in Sussex</a> .....	8
4. <a href="#">Activity already undertaken in Sussex</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Examples of current interventions in Sussex</a> .....	10
5. <a href="#">Key Emerging issues for Sussex and our approach to serious violence</a> .....	12
6. <a href="#">Our principles</a> .....	13
7. <a href="#">Our focus</a> .....	13
8. <a href="#">Our priority</a> .....	14
9. <a href="#">Our approach</a> .....	14
10. <a href="#">Commissioning and Delivering Services</a> .....	15
11. <a href="#">VRU Governance</a> .....	16
12. <a href="#">Outcomes Based Framework</a> .....	16
13. <a href="#">Next Steps</a> .....	17

## Executive Summary

The Sussex Violence Reduction Unit Response Strategy has been developed as part of the required mandatory elements of the VRU grant funding for 19/20.

The Response Strategy builds upon the 2019/20 application, and crucially draws together key work strands that answer some fundamental questions posed by the Home Office VRU Guidance document, namely:

- Can partner agencies; articulate what is different as a result of creating the VRU and demonstrate how this is linked to the strategic needs assessment /problem profile?
- Can partner agencies; outline a vision for the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)?
- How will partner agencies measure the performance of the VRU on a regular basis and crucially, how will the VRU use this performance information to shape local activity across Sussex?

There are three locality VRUs (one in each area of Sussex: East Sussex, West Sussex, Brighton & Hove), which are responsible for the operational delivery of VRU activity within their area. The overarching pan-Sussex VRU, which comprises the core VRU team has responsibility for strategic coordination and management of VRU activity across Sussex including all financial and reporting requirements, executive engagement, project management, analysis and development of data sharing agreements and communications and engagement. The team also leads on the collation and sharing of good practice locally and nationally.

The Sussex Violence Reduction Steering Group (SVRSG), provides the forum for locality VRUs to share information and good practice, hold each other to account and ensure that delivery of activity on serious violence is consistent with the aims and principles set out by the Home Office.

The Steering Group has been engaged in the process undertaken to compile this Response Strategy.

Produced using police and partnership data the Problem Profile has been drafted based on the Sussex VRU definition of serious violence. The focus for the Sussex VRU is violence that;

- **occurs in a public place, or has a victim, suspect or offender under the age of 25, and**
- **either causes or is intended to cause serious injury (GBH/wounding criminal definition), or involves the use of one or more of the following:**
  - **a firearm**
  - **knife or other bladed/pointed weapon, whether made, adapted or intended as a weapon**
  - **other offensive weapon (whether made, adapted or intended), including acid or corrosive substance.**

Using the key findings from the Problem Profile and an understanding of the complexity of the partnership landscape across Sussex this strategy sets out an ambition to develop a multi-agency performance framework based on outcomes. The aim is to embed public value in the work of all locality VRUs and across their partnerships.

Sharing this approach across the three VRU's and supporting this shift in culture across partner agencies will take dedicated time and resource to make a real and sustained difference to how each locality VRU addresses serious violence. This supports the partnership's ambition and aligns to Public Health England advice on addressing serious violence.

The current Government has indicated that serious violence remains a priority and has allocated a further £35m to the 18 existing Violence Reduction Units across England and Wales in 20/21. There is however no indication that funding will continue beyond the current funding period. It is essential therefore that VRU partners work together to build a sustainable approach to tackling serious violence, and this includes investing in longer-term resources and funding.

The development of an outcomes based performance framework which will support this work is considered to be a clear priority for the Sussex VRU and will offer an opportunity to think differently about performance and establish a greater understanding of the process of turning inputs into outcomes across this important agenda.

This strategy has been drafted with regard to the national context, which includes items of relevance including the Serious Violence Strategy and the Serious Violence Bill.

The Serious Violence Bill will place a new duty on schools, police, councils and health authorities to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. The Bill will also amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships, which include local police, fire and probation services, as well as local authorities and wider public services.

We will consider the impact of the Serious Violence Bill as part of our planning for the outcomes based framework.

**In 2020/21 the Partnership plans to deliver:**

- An outcomes framework based on clear accountability that will help the Partnership deliver clear outcomes in relation to addressing serious violence across Sussex.
- Agree a Transition Plan in April/May 2020 that seeks to develop greater collaboration across agencies linked to an outcome's development framework. This will include dedicated resource to support the partnership in developing this important component.
- Accurately account for Resource Management and Value for Money linked to clear outcomes. This will also measure public safety and how local residents across Sussex feel about violent crime.

- Develop further links across third sector organisations around meaningful Community Engagement. This will include working with local chamber of commerce in determining how local SME's can support the partnership in providing opportunities for young people to be engaged where possible.
- Each VRU, will seek to reduce the long term demand for services by developing new delivery models that intervene early and encourage individuals and communities to do more for themselves.
- A concerted shift away from reactive spending towards early action that can result in better outcomes and greater value for money.
- Financial benefits – Deploying a whole system, cross sector, coordinated approach to serious violence that can significantly reduce demand on a range of public services, which aims to result in a financial benefit.
- Be clear and challenging and set out to understand the overall net financial savings that can be delivered by any new and revised delivery model for serious violence across Sussex. A net fiscal benefit (to be determined this year) over five years (i.e. the difference between the costs of delivery and the benefits this creates).
- Perception of Public safety – how can the partnership manage this interface to ensure residents feel safe?

Connecting the budget directly to strategic priorities will be a key theme for this Response Strategy. This entails viewing costs not merely as an in-year expense but also as a multi-year investment in differentiating capabilities designed to help the partnership execute this strategy.

## **1. A public health approach to reducing serious violence in Sussex**

A public health (PH) approach to tackling violence means looking at violence not as isolated incidents or solely a police enforcement problem. Instead, this approach looks at violence as a preventable consequence of a range of factors, such as adverse early-life experiences or harmful social or community experiences and influences. The partnership will adopt a PH approach in that it follows good practice and positive outcomes from the existing VRUs in Cardiff and Glasgow, and advice set out in the recent public health document below.

- [A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention](#)

### **What factors will we consider across Sussex in the context of a public health approach?**

Systems will evolve that local partners can adopt across Sussex to work together to prevent violence. Crucially these systems and principles will follow Public Health England's 5Cs; and the five component parts, which are:

- collaboration
- co-production
- co-operation in data and intelligence sharing
- counter-narrative development
- community consensus, which is central to the approach

We will adopt an approach that includes the following:

**Focus on a defined population, often with a health risk in common** - Connectors could be where offenders live, common experiences, a health condition, or demographic characteristics, like age.

**With and for communities** - Focus on improving outcomes for communities by listening to them and jointly designing interventions with them. A holistic approach to service redesign.

**Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries** - People often do not neatly sit within a service user grouping. Developing partnerships with and between organisations means that we can look across the system for solutions and not be too narrow in our approach. This will be a key feature of developing the Outcomes Based Performance Framework in early Q1, to ensure accountability across all partners as we seek to reduce serious violence across Sussex.

**Focus on generating long-term as well as short-term solutions** - Acting on the root causes and determinants of serious violence as well as addressing the immediate impact of the problem. Identifying actions to be taken now and putting solutions in place for the future.

**Whole systems approach to tackling serious violence across Sussex.** This means adopting a multi-agency approach across organisational boundaries – pooling of budgets and working together. This theme will be developed further within the transition plan the partnership is aiming to deliver in Q1 of 2020. The partnership does accept this approach will need support of all relevant partner organisations to better understand specific core activity and process involved, to gain a broader understanding of interventions.

**Use data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population including any inequalities in levels of risk** - Analysis of the differences between the group of people the partnership will look to engage with and their peers gets to their real story and the challenges they might be facing. It will indicate some underlying causes and risk factors.

**Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem** - Learning from the experience of others and evaluating new approaches. This is important so interventions can be replicated if they work or revised if they do not.

**Diversity and Equalities** All agencies involved in developing this Response Strategy recognise that equality, diversity and human rights are central to providing excellent public services. A fairer society benefits everyone, and all partner organisations have a major role to play in promoting equality and human rights and tackling discrimination.

This Response Strategy will ensure all partners follow closely good practice around all areas of Diversity and Equality. This will be an important feature of all partnership meetings, ensuring all partners take full responsibility for all aspects of work in relation to Diversity and Equality.

The Response Strategy for Sussex combines a holistic approach to serious violence across a range of public agencies. We remain ambitious but determined to build upon existing good work and develop an approach that makes a difference across all localities in Sussex.

## **2. Our locality**

Sussex covers a population of 1.68 million, and a coastline that spans 137 miles from Chichester Harbour to Camber Sands. This coastline is home to the main five conurbations within the county, with the police force area covering the rural and urban counties of East Sussex and West Sussex and includes Brighton & Hove.

Sussex's population is dominated by the Brighton/Worthing/Littlehampton conurbation which with a population of over 460,000 is home to almost 1 in 3 of Sussex residents.

The largest towns and cities in Sussex are **Brighton and Hove, Crawley, Worthing, Eastbourne, Hastings, Horsham and Bexhill.**

Sussex has the second busiest airport (Gatwick) in the UK and is home to the South Downs National park which covers an area of 628 square miles. The county has a diverse population hosting 3 universities, a number of busy seaside tourist destinations including the busy and diverse City of Brighton and Hove which is recorded as attracting 7.5 million day visitors and 4.9 million overnight visitors.

The Local Authority structure across Sussex is two-tier in East and West Sussex, with Brighton and Hove a separate unitary. East and West Sussex are composed of a number of districts and boroughs:

### **West Sussex**

- Adur
- Arun
- Chichester,
- Crawley
- Horsham
- Mid Sussex
- Worthing

### **East Sussex**

- Eastbourne
- Hastings,
- Lewes
- Rother
- Wealden

This district and borough councils are an important component of the Sussex VRU approach to addressing serious violence as they facilitate the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). We expect to work more closely with CSPs in designing our outcomes-based framework.

### **Sussex VRU Core team**

The core VRU staff team includes a VRU Manager and a Project Coordinator, with a dedicated Partnership Analyst. These elements were agreed by the SVRSG and are considered vital to delivering the Sussex-wide approach to serious violence. The core function of the VRU team is to offer leadership and, working with all relevant agencies operating locally, strategic coordination of the local response to this issue.

The VRU Manager is managed by the Superintendent, Criminal Exploitation (Sussex Police), which ensures a joined up approach to VRU and Surge activity.

Based on the Sussex definition of serious violence there is a particular focus on incidents linked to drug use/supply, criminal rivalries and debt or territory enforcement, and gang involvement (using the term 'gang' in a broad sense rather than a narrow technical definition).

Reducing incidents of this type will be the focus of each locality VRU, and all locality VRUs will look more broadly at linked or precursor incidents in order to intervene at an early stage and achieve clear outcomes. In particular they will look at those who habitually or repeatedly carry weapons in public.

This will require early intervention and investment and a deep understanding of the root causes of this behaviour, as well as a shared approach to serious violence and in delivering sustainable results in line with advice from Public Health England.

In parallel to developing an Outcomes Based Framework that combines and supports collective ownership, this investment in early intervention will require insightful intelligence gained through the delivery of interventions commissioned by each locality VRU.

The proposals cited in this Response Strategy will help inform and build a VRU to fully support the four Police and Crime Plan Policing Objectives for 2018/22 to:

- Strengthen local policing.
- Work with local communities and partners to keep Sussex safe.
- Protect our vulnerable and help victims cope and recover from crime and abuse.
- Improve access to justice for victims and witnesses.

This Response Strategy crucially does recognise this is not just a Police response; it will always remain a partnership approach to sustaining a model of delivery that is determined to make a difference in the area of serious violence.

### **3. Current Position and what we know about serious violence in Sussex**

We have undertaken a detailed problem profile identifying the drivers of serious violence across Sussex, identifying cohorts of victims and offenders.

#### **Knife Crime and Knife Possession**

Knife related crime has recorded the largest increase since 2017 and is responsible for the **majority of serious violence**. The picture in Sussex is consistent with the national trend across England and Wales, with a continual rise in knife offences over the last three years.

Knife crime in Sussex and Surrey has shown no links to 'gangs' as defined by the Home Office. However, there is a link between knife crime and local peer groups/groups of local youths. Work to identify our habitual knife carriers has identified a trend for groups of young males, typically aged between 14-18 years old, who are involved in anti-social behaviour and low-level drug dealing (such as cannabis). These groups often form due to a lack of confidence, lack of social status, bullying and find themselves a more credible force when they join together.

#### **Knife possession**

Between January 2017 and December 2019, there were a total of 2,255 recorded incidents of knife possession in Sussex, with the number of incidents increasing by +28.4%.

Brighton Central had the highest number of offences (18.0 offences per 10,000 population). In East Sussex, knife possession per 10,000 population was higher than average in Hastings (8.2) and Eastbourne (5.6). In West Sussex, the numbers of knife possession offences were above average in Crawley (6.8), and slightly above average in Arun (4.9) and Adur & Worthing (4.5).

During the three-year period covered by the Problem Profile, there were a total of 807 offenders recorded. The highest age group was the 18 to 24-year-olds, which accounted for 28% of all offenders. The average age was 29 years old.

Previous analysis on knife crime has highlighted a link between repeat offenders of knife possession and mental health vulnerabilities. Approximately 25% of all offenders for possession offences have a warning marker linked to mental health vulnerabilities. This breakdown by gender is 41% of females and 23% of males.

All the top repeat offenders for knife possession over the last 12 months have been found to be in possession of blades or sharp instruments to commit self-harm rather than to facilitate criminality.

**We will work with our partners to understand the offending behaviour of this older, complex cohort in 20/21 with a view to designing or commissioning interventions that reduce impact on services and increase the potential for desistance.**



## Hospital Attendances

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data indicates that there are around 3,500 attendances at Sussex NHS urgent treatment sites each year as a result of an assault and over 600 admissions to Sussex hospitals each year as the result of an assault. 1 in 4 of admissions for assault by sharp object include a diagnosis relating to drug use

The rate of admission as the result of an assault by sharp object is 8 times higher for persons from the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas.

## 4. Activity already undertaken in Sussex

Across Sussex there is a comprehensive programme of diversionary activity aimed at a series of age groups involved in or at risk of being involved in serious violence.

In order to enable the most appropriate and effective allocation of resources each locality VRU is responsible for commissioning its own interventions based on its funding allocation. Currently this is facilitated through the county councils, or in Brighton via the city council, which ensures that there are robust commissioning arrangements in place across the county.

This development of a commissioning framework will be a key workstream in 2020/21 along with clear links to the Outcomes Based Framework.

Funded interventions in Sussex fit within the broad categories listed below, which are included in a number of good practice guidance documents:

- Tertiary - (deals with offending after it has happened. focus is on intervention in the lives of known offenders in an attempt to prevent them re-offending)
- Secondary - (seeks to change people, typically those at high risk of embarking on a criminal career)
- Primary - (Stopping the problem before it happens)

**The table below (1A) is an example** of how the partnership allocate resource to address series violent crime across Sussex.

**TABLE 1A**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Crime Types</b>	<b>Cohorts</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>
Tertiary	County Lines Serious Violence Knife Crime	15 – 24s Over 25s	Increased support Better agency information sharing and problem solving Better profiling and swifter enforcement	Gangs and County Lines Team National Probation Service Youth Justice Local Sussex teams

Secondary	Schools based violence Place based violence and ASB Organised groups of young people	10 – 17s Night Time Economy	Increased and consistent schools' activity Detached youth work Improved family support Changing places to create safety Strengths-based approach to help people do well	Community Safety Units Adolescent Services Community Safety Partnerships Youth Justice
Primary	ASB hotspots School based violence Gateway offending	8-17	Restorative approaches ACE awareness Activities that help people, families and communities build strengths in their lives Creating meaningful relationships	Schools and colleges Children's Services Early Help

## Examples of current interventions in Sussex

### West Sussex - Targeted outreach activity delivered across West Sussex to meet the specific cohort needs including:

- Pupils excluded from mainstream school and now attending Alternative Provision Colleges, Further Education College or on role with the Virtual School
- Young women identified as at risk of serious violence due to their exposure to exploitation
- Young men with adverse childhood experiences where a role model/mentor is assessed as being a positive factor to prevent further engagement in criminality
- Individuals identified via the Op Signal Gold Group.

### Engagement supporting children, families and communities:

- Bespoke therapy offers for individuals traumatised by the effects of serious violence
- Life story work/Voice development to create packages/products to be used in prevention activity
- Parenting programmes
- Professionals training to skill up a wider workforce, support transition to adulthood and increase capacity for locally based outreach

The project has 13 strands of delivery with the following anticipated outcomes:

- Enhancing school achievement & future employment
- Improved behaviour in school (including self-regulatory and prosocial behaviour)
- Communication between parents, teachers and professionals
- Reduced rates of school exclusion and drop-out
- Young people's success in finding a job or vocational skill
- Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour
- Supporting mental health & wellbeing by providing children with coping strategies in response to trauma
- Preventing teen suicide and self-harming behaviour
- Improving children's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy

### **East Sussex - Targeted input to young people referred by the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Group (MACE) with high risk to exploitation.**

This project based in East Sussex has focussed on behaviour change and aims to enable adults to improve protective parenting, perform basic tasks and promote regular routines. The Multi Agency Child Exploitation service (MACE) targets those families across East Sussex whose children are at high risk of exploitation or being exploited. They work intensively with parents/carers to ensure protective oversight of their children and all receive additional interventions assisting them to understand;

- The Signs & Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, County Lines and Cuckooing and what this means for their children.
- Online Safety, Social Media activity and monitoring, access to the o2/NSPCC safety champions and access to Tracker's for their children's phones and internet activity.
- Knife Crime awareness and Safety Planning.

The Key workers hold small caseloads of up to 6 cases to ensure that an intensive and consistent service delivery is maintained with high level contacts with the young person and their parents/carers throughout the intervention. The project is now working with 24 families across East Sussex.

### **Brighton & Hove - Detached City-wide youth work.**

Delivered through the Trust for Developing Communities the Brighton Streets Project covers the geographical area within Brighton and Hove city focusing on vulnerable locations and hot spots via the PTTCG/VRU meeting. The project uses Pan-Sussex developed contextual safeguarding principles to enhance the detached youth work offer due to it being rooted in the acknowledgement that the context in which a child or young person is will increase or decrease the risks and vulnerabilities posed to and from them, such as social media/online, community, school or peer group.

In year one of VRU funding the Brighton Streets project provided on average 20 x three hour detached (street-based) youth work sessions each month across the city. From October 2019-February 2020 the Brighton streets project had close to 500 interventions from people

(aged 11-19 years), focusing on building trusted relationships with them in order to safeguard them from risk of violence and criminal exploitation.

#### **Wider context:**

In November 2018 the Sussex Police Crime Commissioner secured £890,616 from the Early Intervention Youth Fund - this fund was available to look at and test early intervention projects aimed at tackling serious violence. As a result, **the Sussex Early Intervention Youth Programme – REBOOT** was developed and designed.

REBOOT provides early intervention for young **people aged 12-17yrs at risk of engaging in serious violence**. The programme brings together multiple partners and offers a personalised, strengths-based, one-to-one support package for young people, who have been identified as being at risk. The service is embedded across Sussex receiving referrals from Education, statutory partners, third sector organisations and health.

## **5. Key Emerging issues for Sussex and our approach to serious violence**

The partnership remains determined to pursue an approach to serious violence based on the principles of intervention and application of data to maximise resource. The Problem Profile has clearly helped to identify key strands and communities where intervention is necessary. All agencies involved across the partnership however do know:

#### **Some people are at greater risk:**

- People who have experienced trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation and need additional support to keep them safe.

#### **Strong, active communities provide effective alternatives to violence**

- Safe communities are ones where a positive and supportive environment exists, and where residents of all ages have access to opportunities to do well in their lives.

A Public Health Approach is a shared approach

- What works is identifying where violence occurs and why and collaborating to change the reasons why it happens. It needs everyone to help understand why it happens and to find the solutions.

This Response Strategy will evolve and change to reflect local intelligence. Alignment of partner agencies and dedicated resource, ensuring a holistic approach to crime intervention will be a key theme for 2020/21 across Sussex.

## 6. Our principles

We will be informed and guided by:

- A public health approach in line with Public Health England guidance
- In particular, the locality VRUs will be evidence led - target issues and areas based on analysis, choose responses based on 'what works' then evaluate.
- Will emphasise a bottom-up approach.
- Will seek to mainstream VRU work as much as possible, whilst ensuring that delivery of work on serious violence is given a specific focus.
- The Response Strategy will evolve and change to reflect local circumstances but will essentially be community informed; based on local intelligence and will draw together partner agencies to ensure optimum public value all within a performance framework based on outcomes.
- The partnership, through each locality VRU will engage with communities across Sussex informing them of the response to and success in delivering a reduction in serious violence. The VRU Communications plan will guide this development through regular interface across our communities.

## 7. Our focus

Each locality VRU across Sussex will use the Problem Profile as the basis for activity to tackle serious violence, with a focus on people and places.

### People

- Help people develop a balanced, consistent and trusting relationship with at least one professional or worker
- Demonstrate our confidence in people's ability to change, do well and succeed
- Help people access the services that they need
- Help people to learn how to solve problems
- Support people to understand how to make apologies, mend harm and improve relationships.

### Places

- Listen to communities to understand what is important
- Encourage communities to find solutions
- Help communities access the services that they need to make their places safer
- Encourage communities to look to the future rather than dwell on the past.

Place based activity and resource will to an extent determine the levels of intervention. These are:

### Levels of Intervention

- Safety Net or Tertiary interventions
- Risk led interventions to target those actively involved in violence

### Targeted or Secondary interventions

- Where violence is emerging – either individuals involved in violence or places where it is happening.

### **At risk population – Primary Interventions**

- Data led identification of places where violence happens. The problem profile indicates specific locations of risk across Sussex.

### **General Population**

- Involve people to understand what happens, and what needs to change to make people and places safer.

## **8. Our priority**

Each locality VRU will prioritise work to ensure that there remains a focus on what is important to the people of Sussex.

The Sussex VRU will work in partnership to:

- Develop a shared framework of skills and approaches across our VRU Partners.
- Develop a multi-agency data-set so that we understand the ‘who, what where and when’ of violence in Sussex.
- Use this information to inform practise that will reduce violence in the future.
- Support communities to find and develop ideas that create safer places.
- Listen to those who are involved in or affected by violence.
- Align and co-ordinate violence related services to maximise their impact.
- Develop skills and knowledge within the core team and wider partners that is able to understand what is happening, why it is happening and provide evidence based solutions to stop it happening.
- Communicate and engage effectively to understand better what we think we know, and get to know what we don’t.

## **9. Our approach**

Each locality VRU will identify specific areas of threat and vulnerability highlighted through ongoing assessments of patterns and trends in serious violence, building a rich picture through multi-agency data. This will inform partnership interventions to reduce the impact of serious violence on individuals and in their wider communities.

The VRU communications plan will also help to reduce demand and duplication of effort through the effective coordination of seasonal and thematic campaigns that provide reassurance and build trust in the response to serious violence. This collaborative approach aims to reduce demand on public services including Accident and Emergency departments as well as in the wider Community Safety and Policing arenas.

To co-ordinate the multi-agency activities and interventions taken by all organisations the Sussex Violence Reduction Steering Group will ensure that evaluation is a core function and that best practice and lessons learnt are captured and shared across the VRUs and wider partner organisations.

## 10. Commissioning and Delivering Services

All partners within the VRU will collaborate to ensure any work commissioned or delivered to tackle violence or make communities safer shows an agreed partnership approach. This will include:

- Commissioning functions linked to developing a clear outcomes based framework.
- Services will be discussed or planned across VRU partners before being commissioned or delivered.
- Collaboration and planning will maximise opportunities for people to build strengths.
- Value for Money (VFM) and return of Public investment will be a key component of the Sussex VRU.

The partnership and each locality VRU acknowledges that commissioning of services in the future will be directed by alignment to the Outcomes based Framework for all partners.

There are **four key challenges** that could help design and implement early action more effectively.

- **Better understanding of what works.** Generating robust evidence is particularly challenging for early action because most programmes are long term and outcomes are difficult to attribute to specific interventions. A methodology to compare the costs and benefits of different interventions is crucial.
- **Overcoming short-term bias.** Focus and attention have been on short-term results. The Cabinet Office, through its work on the social investment market and ‘what works’, cites leadership in encouraging longer-term planning. Sustainability of the VRU’s remains pivotal.
- **Improving coordination and accountability.** Early action attempts to tackle multifaceted social problems. Therefore, partners must coordinate interventions in the right sequence to maximise success for each VRU. Aligning goals, working together, careful targeting and sharing data all help achieve this. **Locally breaking down traditional service boundaries and pooling budgets where evidence suggests most impact can be made against serious violence.**
- **Increasing capacity to deliver.** The complex nature of early action interventions requires a combination of skills and capabilities, among them strong project management, good partnership working and a highly skilled delivery workforce.

## 11. VRU Governance

A tiered approach is adopted in Sussex as follows:

- **The Partnership – known as the Sussex Violence Reduction Steering Group (SVRSG)** – Coordinates pan-Sussex activity to oversee the delivery of the VRUs, sharing best practice and preventing duplication of effort. Administration of the funding also takes place through this group. The Sussex VRU Manager coordinates activity across the county to ensure the strategic aims and objectives of the VRU is met.

- **Locality VRUs in Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex.** Operational delivery is through the locality VRUs in East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove. These groups have their own memberships, terms of reference and action plans but are aligned to and members of the SVRSG.

This VRU model in Sussex acknowledges the existing strong partnership structures at both strategic and operational levels and does not seek to replicate these or introduce further layers of complexity. The use of existing structures reduces duplication, increases the ability to coordinate with linked areas of work (e.g. County Lines), and gives the ability to utilise wider partnership tasking and governance arrangements to draw in additional support and resource to address VRU priority areas.

## 12. Outcomes Based Framework

Across the partnership there is considerable work being done to identify, define and test the most important outcomes that will help address serious violence across Sussex. There is also growing consensus amongst partners on the importance of strengthening the evidence base that underpins the value of early interventions. Nationally, Public Health England has supported the criminal justice system to take a more outcomes focused approach to improve impact measurement across the wider sector involved in addressing and reducing serious violence.

Acknowledging this requirement to understand and measure 'what works' in addressing the drivers of serious violence, it is the intention of the Sussex VRU to develop an outcomes based framework. This is equally relevant to providers and commissioners engaged in work to tackle serious violence, recognising that being able to tell a stronger, evidence based story about the value and impact of interventions is a key feature of both public safety and value for money.

Some key issues as a partnership still to be fully developed include:

- Determining clear evidence based outcomes that will add to information about existing good practice, creating a stronger evidence base for the wider approach to reducing serious violence across Sussex.
- initiatives are more likely to be effective if their design is informed by evidence of what works, and when the activities are connected to outcomes for key groups cited in the problem profile.
- for providers, when budgets are restrictive, demonstrating how your initiative brings about the changes (reductions in serious violence) commissioners care most about can help to build a stronger case for investment;
- similarly, for commissioners, the ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of an intervention is key to considering whether investment is likely to be effective; and
- for commissioners, being clear on the intermediate and longer-term outcomes of an intervention allows the partnership to align these with priority longer-term outcomes for those involved in serious violence



Supporting a positive change aimed at reducing violent crime will involve a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic and short, intermediate and long-term outcomes, and they should be:

- clear and concise – making use of standardised language;
- meaningful and measurable for all partners;
- distinct from input and outputs;
- achievable during the length of the intervention or attributable as a result of the initiative (if measured at a later stage); and
- easy to understand by staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The partnership aims to develop a transition plan in early Q1 (April/May 2020) and that will address emerging issues resulting from the Response Strategy; together with a defined outcomes based framework by June 2020 to test through with key partners.

### **13. Next Steps**

We will set out a clear transition plan during April 2020 through until July 2020.

This approach will enable each locality VRU across Sussex to develop a framework based on clear outcomes aligned to the Problem Profile. This mature approach will enable resource to be directed at the most appropriate need.

The partnership acknowledges that the potential proposition is for an integrated, coordinated, whole system response across Sussex, which involves:

- Equipping those at risk of serious violence with the right information to support them to make informed choices about their lives;
- Empowering frontline workers to better identify, manage and reduce risk; Multi-agency risk assessment at locality level with intelligence led problem solving.
- Collaboration across cross-cutting agendas such as County Lines and Child Exploitation.

VRU's importantly, will seek to reduce the long-term demand for services by developing new delivery models that intervene early and encourage individuals and communities to do more for themselves. A concerted shift away from reactive spending towards early action can result in better outcomes and greater value for money.