

Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment



Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Unit

Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment

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Introduction

This report has been compiled with contributions and assistance from partners within Police, Local Authorities and the local Violence Reduction Units, demonstrating the collaborative multi-agency approach that has been central to the VRU model in Avon and Somerset.

This report should be read in conjunction with the spoke VRUs' problem profiles and response strategies (refreshed for 2020/21) which detailed the local plans to address serious violence in their communities.

Sensitive information

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the operational data, there are two versions of this report. One for internal use only, marked OFFICIAL SENSITIVE (Intelligence) which is for recipients' information only and will be limited to colleagues within the Police, OPPC and VRUs. This will contain intelligence that is useful for local planning but may hinder Police operations should the information become public. Decisions on what is considered sensitive information have been made in consultation to the Force's Freedom of Information Officer and with reference to advice received from the NPCC Central Referral Unit.

The second retracted version will be submitted to the Home Office to meet the reporting requirements of the VRU grant.

Impact of Covid-19

The unprecedented global pandemic and subsequent restrictions, have had a significant impact on serious violence in 2020. The data contained in this report is all to be read in the context of the national and local lockdowns. We will plan for emergence from current lockdown during the spring of 2021 so that we can respond to any corresponding trends.

The local context

Population

	Population	% of Avon & Somerset Population	Households
BANES	193,282	11.2%	77,141
Bristol	463,377	27.0%	193,502
North Somerset	215,052	12.5%	94,669
Somerset	562,225	32.7%	241,844
South Gloucestershire	285,093	16.6%	116,005
Total	1,719,029	100.0%	723,161

Age

The proportion of children across all LA areas is broadly similar but the age profile varies quite significantly across different age groups of adults. Over half the population of Bristol is under 35. Whereas over half the population of North Somerset and Somerset are 45 and over and in both these areas almost a quarter are 65 and over. These differences are also evident in the median ages which range from 32 in Bristol to 47 in Somerset.

Ethnicity

Based on the 2011 census the A&S population is has 89.1% white British, 4.1% white other and 6.7% non-white. This varies greatly across the Local Authorities with Bristol being the most diverse and

above the national average. Looking on a hyper-local level (LSOA) demonstrates the diversity further: in Bristol one LSOA has 98.6% white population whereas another has only a 19.6% white population.

Religion

The predominant categories are either Christian or no religion. As in other respects Bristol has the most diversity with 7.7% of the population having a religion other than Christianity; this is as few as 1.4% in Somerset.

Physical Geography

Across the whole of Avon and Somerset 22.8% of the population live in rural areas however this varies greatly by Local authority ranging from Bristol, which is wholly urban, to Somerset which has almost half the population in rural areas.

The geographical size, and population density, of Somerset is also considerably different to the other areas.

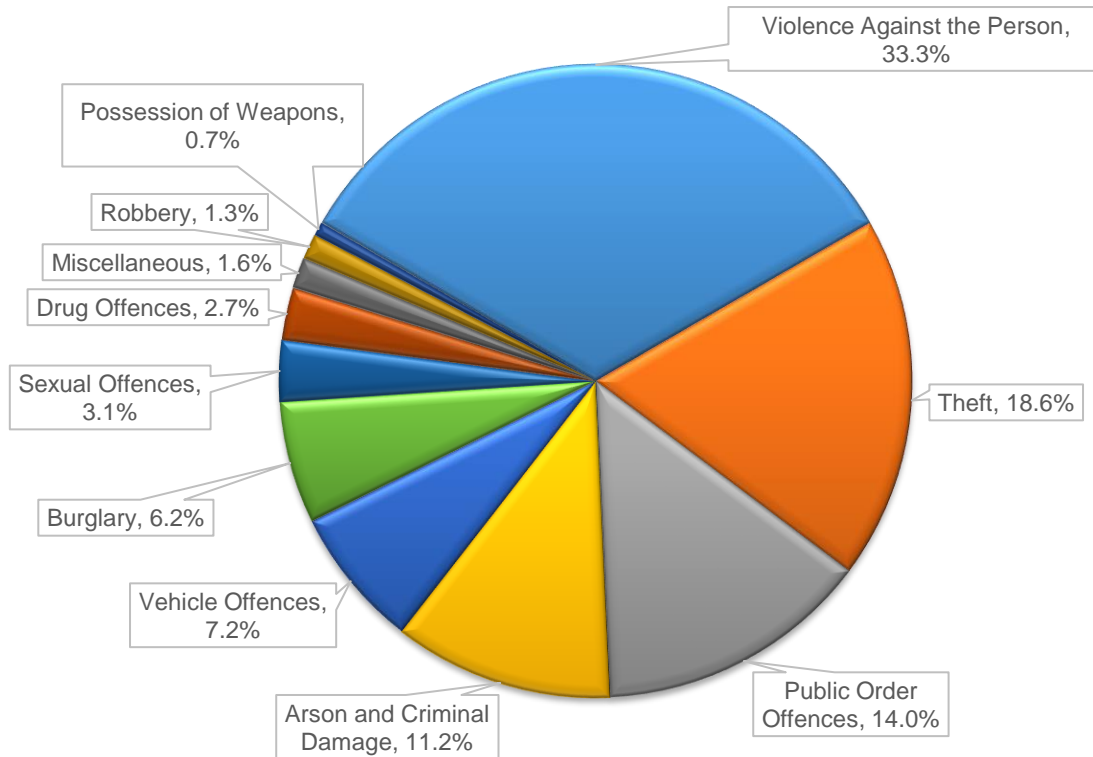
Crime rate

Crime rates are vastly different across the force area with the highest, Bristol, having almost double the rate of the lowest, South Gloucestershire.

Crime Rate (per 1000 people)	Annual rate (1 Apr 18 – 31 Mar 20)	Half year rate Apr-Sept 18	Half year rate Apr-Sept 19	Half year rate Apr-Sept 20
BANES	63.1	31.5	31.8	28.1
Bristol	114.2	59.4	58.7	52.1
North Somerset	73.0	37.2	38.3	33.0
Somerset	69.0	35.7	36.1	32.0
South Gloucestershire	59.0	29.5	30.0	27.0

Crime types

The below chart shows the proportion of recorded crimes across Avon and Somerset; this is broadly similar across all local authority areas.



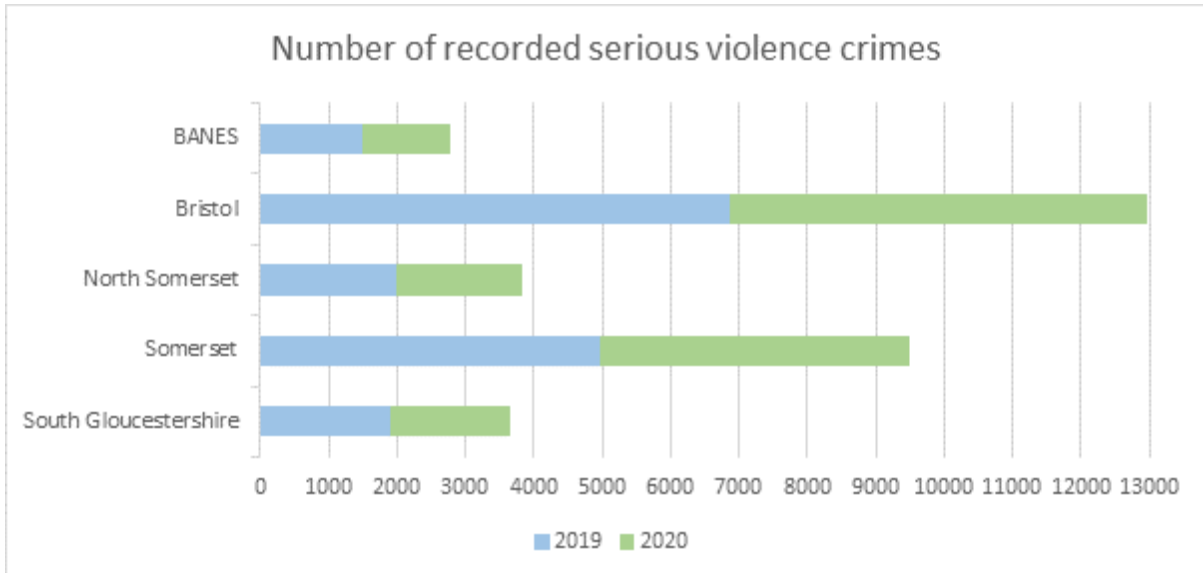
Serious Violence offences accounted for 12.7% of all recorded crime over the last three years. Serious violence, like all crime, saw a small increase from 2018 to 2019 but then a decrease to 2020. This decrease is largely attributable to COVID-19 restrictions as these levels were relatively stable prior to March 2020. There were on average 17,661 serious violence offences in each 2018 and 2019 and 15,767 in 2020. An interesting comparison is to assaults which did not involve injury (i.e. 'non-serious' violence); this crime type actually grew slightly in 2020 making it markedly different to serious violence.

In terms of the different crime types for every 10 serious violence offences seven are violence against the person, two are sexual offences and one is robbery.

The rates of serious violence also vary considerably across the five local authority areas as the below table shows. However it should be noted this is broadly in line with variations in all crime levels (as seen above) i.e. these local authority variations are seen in crime as a whole and are not specific to serious violence.

2 year totals	Annual SV offences per 1,000 people
BANES	7.2
Bristol	14.0
North Somerset	8.9

Somerset	8.4
South Gloucestershire	6.4
Avon & Somerset	9.8



Definition of Serious Violence

In Avon and Somerset, Serious Violence was initially defined as the principal offence categories “**violence against the person**” (VAP), **sexual offences** and “**robbery**” where the degree of harm or potential harm was such to deem it serious.

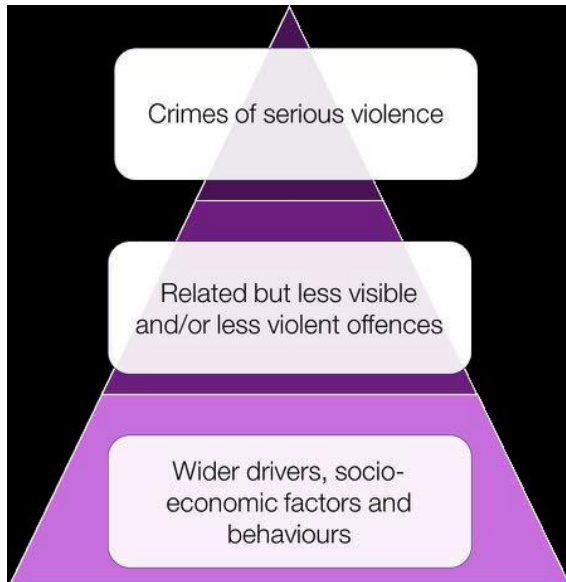
For example, “Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm” is classed as serious violence, whilst “Common Assault” is not; and all VAP offences where a knife was present are categorised as serious because of the potential harm resulting from the presence of a knife. We include domestic violence in our definition of violence and all serious incidents of domestic violence in our definition of serious violence. All occurrences of serious sexual assault or rape are categorised as serious violence. We exclude certain high harm offences, such as child neglect, from our definition of serious violence because we believe the underlying factors that drive them are different and will require different responses.

This definition has evolved through subsequent needs assessment and delivery, with local VRUs focussing on different elements of this definition in order to meet the unique need of their locality.

It is now felt that focusing VRU delivery by crime type alone can be limiting and a broader consideration of risk and vulnerability, including contextual safeguarding is required, this also enables a foundation for collaboration, it avoids duplication and enables a the VRU delivery to flex and adapt to current needs.

We acknowledge that some people have been both perpetrators and victims / survivors of serious violence.

Because there is no single definition nor measure of 'serious violence', a range of different measures and proxy indicators have been used in this report to portray as full a picture as possible about the size and shape of violent crime in Avon and Somerset. This is important because serious violent crime is only the tip of the iceberg where the most visible and prominent manifestation of the problem are seen. Focusing on these alone misses the wider offending context, much of which is hidden, as illustrated in the diagram below.



Drivers of Serious Violence

Childhood vulnerability

Over 213,000 children in England aged 11 to 17 are vulnerable to serious violence due to deprivation and neighbourhood crime. The number of children is unevenly spread across England with nearly 40% living in ten local authority areas¹.

In Avon and Somerset there are 2600 young people between 11-17 identified via the VRU App as having a vulnerability score. Ideal for identifying opportunities for early intervention, the App uses a process that identifies some risk through social proximity. This means the numbers are high because of our rigour at noticing potential risk, rather than how many current individuals known to the police.

There is growing evidence that Covid-19 and lockdown measures will exacerbate the risks of vulnerability due to the mental health impact, isolation, joblessness, financial difficulties of young people and those around them. Fractured education provision will also compound vulnerabilities.

¹ Crest Advisory Violence and Vulnerability Report February 2021

Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The domains are: Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment.

In the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) these are where the 10 most deprived areas in Avon and Somerset ranked out of 32,844 in England, where 1 was the most deprived and 32,844 the least. Of the areas ranked most deprived in Avon and Somerset, 19 are in Bristol, 7 are in North Somerset and 5 are in Somerset.

Local Authority	Area	Index of Multiple Deprivation Rank
Bristol	Hareclive, Hartcliffe & Withywood	91
North Somerset	Weston Bournville, Weston-super-Mare	156
Bristol	Bishport Avenue, Hartcliffe & Withywood	182
Bristol	Bishport Ave East, Hartcliffe & Withywood	226
Bristol	Fulford road North, Hartcliffe & Withywood	334
North Somerset	Weston Bournville, Weston-super-Mare	353
Bristol	Whitchurch Lane, Hartcliffe & Withywood	359
Bristol	Inns Court, Filwood	379
Bristol	Ilminster Ace West, Knowle	416
Bristol 045C E01014581	Filwood Broadway, Filwood	477

Drugs market

The following figures show the number of seizures of drugs in Avon and Somerset in 2020 (incomplete figures as full report due in February 2021). They do however illustrate the most commonly seized substances: cannabis, cocaine, heroin and crack cocaine. Treatment services report that during the pandemic there has been a shift from people using opiates to using illicit benzodiazepines (benzos).

Drug	Total Seizures
Cannabis	CFT (2,241)
	Herbal (158)
	Plants (253)
	Others (225)
	2,877

Cocaine	306	
Heroin	201	
Crack Cocaine	150	
Benzodiazepine	60	Diazepam type prescription medication
Ketamine	56	
SCRA	47	Synthetic Cannabinoids (SPICE)
Amphetamine	40	
MDMA (Crystal)	35	
MDMA (Ecstasy)	25	²

The drug purity data charts are all produced in-force from data gathered from forensic drug reports. The purpose of these charts is to provide treatment agencies & Healthcare with information to assist in their understanding of the quality of the drugs, this assists them in their planning of their treatment programs.

Cocaine, heroin and crack cocaine are prone to varying purities. Throughout 2020 cocaine has remained fairly stable in its purity. Prior to lockdown we saw cocaine purities in the region of 80% with a common range of 70 – 90%. There was an initial period where purity dropped, but this picked up fairly quickly. We are also seeing some seizures on occasions with a lower purity. Current average purity of cocaine based on the last six months is 67%.

Up until the start of the EU wide lockdown in March 2020, heroin purity in the UK has been steady at around the 50% mark. At this point there has been a significant downwards trend ever since. The current purity level of heroin based on the last six months is now down to an average of 22%.

The average purity of crack cocaine has also dropped down to 49% from 80% pre lockdown. There is still high quality crack being sold, but the purities vary from 10% to 100%. Variants in purity risk overdose and death.

Drug prices in general remain stable, for example a deal of heroin will always cost £10. However, if demand increases due to a reduction in purity or prices were to increase, users will need to find additional cash which in turn may see an increase in local criminality. Nationally, on average 1 in 4 prisoners are detained because of offending relating to their drugs use, not involvement in supply. The crimes are mostly acquisitive and result in short sentences, placing a burden on the prison system.³

In the last 12 months to February 2021, there were 5341 crimes with a drugs tag in Avon and Somerset, a 3.7% increase on the year before. Tags are used on the internal police system to indicate particular risks or trends. Whilst there are procedures in place to instruct on the use of tags, this is

² Avon and Somerset Constabulary figures

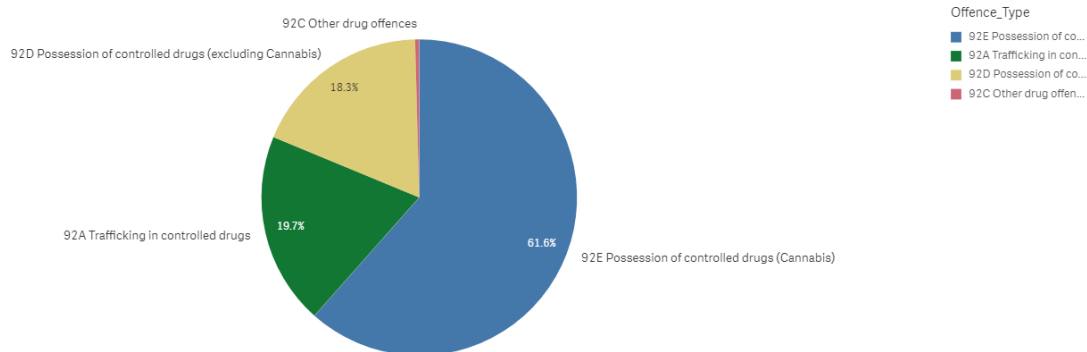
³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/897786/2SummaryPhaseOne+foreword200219.pdf

left down to the discretion of the officer inputting the information into our crime recording system. Therefore there are likely to be the inconsistencies inherent in any large scale recording system.

In the 12 months there were 3684 drugs offences recorded, a 2.5% increase on the year before.

Offence Group Breakdown



Drugs appear to a major driver of national increases in serious violence in recent years. An unprecedented number of young people are being drawn into the drugs trade.

County Lines

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons⁴.

There has been a reduction of County Lines identified within the force area. The decrease is likely to be due to multiple factors including pro-active policing operations and Covid-19 impacting the lines’ ability to operate in their conventional ways during lockdown restrictions.

Decreases in specific areas likely attributable to the pro-active work undertaken by the Op Avalon police team.

Local juveniles are being favoured by county lines gangs over young people from the exporting area. It is highly likely this is due to the impact of Covid-19 as lockdowns mean lone children from out of area will be conspicuous without a legitimate reason to be in Avon and Somerset if stopped by the police.

The level of serious violence has dropped but there is still the prevalence of weapons being used by county lines. The Majority of weapons used are knives and this is likely to be due to their accessibility.

Child Criminal Exploitation remains a key characteristic of County Lines criminality and is carefully monitored.

⁴ HMG Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018

Child Criminal Exploitation

While there is no *statutory* definition of child criminal exploitation although the Government has recently updated their guidance⁵ with regards to what it can be defined as:

“Child criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”⁶

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.⁷

A total of 404 children and young people (304 male, 100 female) have been identified who live within the Force who have been subjected to CCE between the period 01/12/19 to 30/11/20. Just over half of the CCE cohort (51%) reside in Bristol and are concentrated in beats which are commensurate with the city’s class A drug markets and areas identified as those with high levels of multiple deprivation; problematic drug users; OCGs; troubled families & Impact nominals.

Just under a third of the cohort (31%) have current addresses distributed across Somerset and North Somerset in areas which play host to significant rural class A drugs markets and where there are County Lines currently operating. 7.2% (29) reside in South Gloucestershire, 4% (16) reside in BaNES 6.2% (25) live outside of the Force area.

Over two thirds of the CCE cohort (69%) have intelligence reports suggesting they are engaging in regular missing episodes

46.8% of the male cohort (189/404) and 11.4% of the female cohort (36/404) had links to weapons intelligence.⁸

Recommendations from the Police’s CCE report include to conduct missing persons debriefs, liaise with schools, colleges and children’s homes schools and also ensure neighbourhood policing, Op Remedy and Patrol officers’ understanding of CCE. VRUs can play an important part in supporting this work.

Recommendation link with Missing Person Coordinators to ensure mutual understanding of each other’s’ work
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Recommendation Build upon current offer of professionals training to Police colleagues on issues pertaining to vulnerability to CCE and trauma informed policing.
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⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

⁸ Avon and Somerset Intelligence report on CCE, January 2021

Drug use

A driving factor in the County lines and local drugs market is local demand.

Interventions to disrupt the drug market as well as effective and accessible treatment options are key in addressing the issue.

Public Health colleagues report the impact Covid-19 has had on commissioned treatment services. The service has continued to provide face to face appointments for individuals who require medication reviews and for those who are particularly vulnerable. However, since the beginning of the pandemic the majority of interventions/appointments have been delivered remotely, either online or via the phone.

The majority of individuals on opiate substitution treatment have had their dispensing regimes changed to weekly, unsupervised pickups, as opposed to daily or several times a week pick-ups under supervision. This change was required to reduce the risk of people not getting their medication and to reduce the amount of time individuals had to spend in the pharmacy. Needle exchange services have continued to be delivered as has the provision of naloxone.

Alcohol and NTE

The timing of incidents of serious violence increase over weekends into the night and early hours of the morning suggest the night time economy remains an influencing factor in the incidents of serious violence. Successive lockdowns and stringent restrictions on trading when open have had a significant effect on licenced premises.

Alcohol remains a contributing factor in incidents of domestic violence.

Recommendation: work with partners to pre-empt spike in serious violence incidents at re-emergence of ENTE as lockdown eases in Spring 2021.

Criminal Justice System and processes

There are promising and innovative programmes on offer to young people at the point of initial involvement with the criminal justice system. However, these are often operating in isolation and only cover part of the force of the area. The aim should be for all young people to have access to these opportunities, regardless of where they live.

Recommendation: Link together and where possible, consolidate separate CJS diversion and Out of Court Disposal programmes.

There are anecdotal reports from Youth Offending Services that delays in charging and delays in cases reaching courts are doing little to discourage offending. Young people feel detached from the consequences of their actions. Covid-19 related lockdowns have only exacerbated pre-existing issues regarding these delays. While data is being collated on backlogs in the CJS, it does not currently distinguish young people's offending.

Some VRUs seek to address this gap through choices and consequences type programmes and utilising their Police resource to visit individuals to explain the impact of their actions.

Recommendation: explore data on delays in charging decisions and cases reaching resolution for young people linked to incidents of serious violence.

Recommendation: link with A&S Criminal Justice Board to ensure the Board is aware of the work and scope of the VRU/s and vice versa.

The Lammy Review's Youth Justice sub group is examining disproportionality in the Out of Court and through Court processes asking:

- Is there any disparity relating to offence type for BAME young people and whether they are supported through court or out of court processes?
- How do BAME young people's outcomes differ to their white counterparts for out of court and through court processes?

Recommendation: incorporate Lammy Review sub group findings and recommendations into VRU processes and support partners to do the same.

Availability of weapons

While only indicating the numbers of incidents resulting in a charge, the following figures are of possession of weapons offences in Avon and Somerset in the 12 months up to February 2021: 899 offences, a 6.3% reduction on the 12 months previous. These offences occurred across the force area, with all local authority areas represented.

Government led surrender and compensation scheme

Under the Offensive Weapons Act, it is unlawful to possess certain offensive weapons. This includes, but is not limited to, rapid firing rifles and specific types of knives such as flick knives and zombie knives.

As part of the Government's commitment to reduce serious violence, keep dangerous weapons off the streets and out of the hands of criminals, they have launched the Offensive Weapons Act surrender and compensation scheme.

This scheme will run for three months from 10 December 2020 to 9 March 2021 and will allow owners to hand in their weapons to the police and claim compensation.

Recommendation: Compare active areas in Offensive Weapons Act surrender and compensation scheme with VRU activity.

Key risk factors

Victims and offenders are not distinct groups. Large numbers of violent offenders are also victims of violence, often at the same time. Many have chronic histories of violence growing up which are likely to have left a traumatic legacy and make them more susceptible to violence, either as victims or perpetrators.⁹

Individual's ACEs and vulnerability

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect and parental drug or alcohol use: those experiencing four or more ACEs are almost seven times more likely to be a perpetrator of violence as an adult, and almost eight times more likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime, than those with no ACEs.¹⁰

The term Toxic trio has been used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and addiction which have been identified as common features of families where harm to adults and children have occurred.

Domestic Abuse

Being a victim or witness to domestic abuse counts as an Adverse Childhood Experience is also a type of serious violence in itself. Incidents of Domestic violence are covered in the later section *Prevailing Crime Types*.

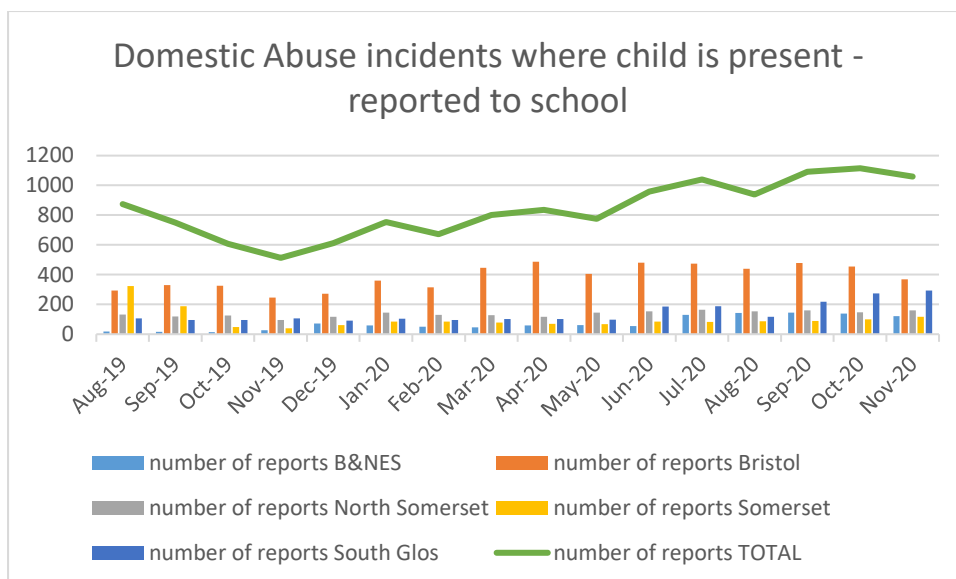
Operation Encompass is a National initiative, an information sharing arrangement between Police and schools that aims to inform the setting's Designated Safeguarding Lead when a child has experience Domestic Abuse, as a direct victim or as a witness. While Avon and Somerset are working to a slightly different arrangement, there is an information sharing process with schools and health partners that align with the principles of Op Encompass.

The figures below show the numbers of incidents of Domestic abuse that have been linked to a child and reported to their school. Schools can then ensure they put in place support to mitigate the lasting impact of this experience.

Recommendation: explore support and resources available to schools to ensure this support is ongoing and acknowledges sequential nature of domestic abuse.

⁹ Crest Advisory Violence and Vulnerability report February 2021

¹⁰ Bellis et al, [National household survey of adverse childhood experiences and their relationship with resilience to health-harming behaviors in England](#), BMC Medicine (12), May 2014



Mental health

Lockdown restrictions and isolation have compounded the existing mental health crisis affecting young people with an increase in demand facing services with reduced capacity.

Community based and non-crisis mental health support services were operating a reduced service or unavailable during lockdown as agencies devised contingency plans and alternative means of delivery. Young Minds found that 31% of young people receiving support pre-COVID were no longer able to access it.¹¹

Recommendation: Strategic VRU to continue to lobby on the matter of youth mental health locally and to central government.

Recommendation: Invite representatives from mental health services to join the VRU.

Family circumstances

Looked after children are at more risk of serious violence and criminalisation. We must recognise that the vast majority of looked-after children enter care due to abuse and neglect. Trauma and abuse and additional vulnerabilities such as neuro-divergence or communication difficulties have an impact on emotional and behavioural development. This can result in behaviour perceived as challenging and responses to such behaviours should not contribute to unnecessary police involvement or criminalisation.¹²

The David Lammy MP¹³ and Charlie Taylor¹⁴ reviews highlighted the need to be aware of and respond to the additional vulnerabilities of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic looked-after children who find themselves over-represented in both the care and youth justice systems.

¹¹ <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/4119/youngminds-survey-with-young-people-returning-to-school-coronavirus-report-autumn-report.pdf>

¹²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765082/The_national_protocol_on_reducing_unnecessary_criminalisation_of_looked-after_children_and_care_.pdf

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>

Nationally, social care referrals fell by almost a fifth in the first lockdown, meaning fewer children at risk were being identified, assessed and offered support¹⁵.

Contextual safeguarding concerns

Traditional social work training courses and methods focus on familial risk. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.¹⁶ These contextual safeguarding concerns can include risk of exploitation, peer pressure and gang influence.

Recommendation: Peer and social network analysis should be used to identify groups of concern and associated individuals. Local Authority data from all areas should be included and Contextual Safeguarding Leads should in turn be directed by its findings.

School engagement and exclusion

Against the backdrop of disrupted delivery due to the pandemic, schools engagement and reducing the number of exclusions must remain a focus of the VRUs in tackling serious violence.

The Timpson Review of schools exclusions (2019)¹⁷ reported that exclusion is a marker for being at higher risk of becoming a victim of perpetrator of crime. We acknowledge this is just one indicator and risk factors and circumstances leading to exclusion and criminality or involvement in serious violence may overlap. The findings of the review resonate with the local picture in Avon and Somerset.

Research on multiple moves in Bristol

A recent piece of work looking a group of 50 children and young people known to the Bristol VRU, Safer Options, identified that 27 of the 50 had special educational needs and a significant pattern of 'multiple moves' of schools: 43 young people have 3 or more moves. The broad pattern emerging of multiple educational moves coincide with an increased risk to CCE and CSE. There is a correlation of frequent school moves, non-attendance and on-roll at Alternate Learning Provision (ALP) with young people involved in high levels of Anti-social Behaviour. There is also within the families and communities represented, a negative understanding and appreciation of education.¹⁸

¹⁵ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2021-week-2>

¹⁶ <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk>

¹⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf

¹⁸ CCE / CSE and SYV South Bristol. Additional Vulnerabilities (education), FiF / Safer Options February 2021

Reasons for exclusions

Exclusions are not just a feature of secondary schools but primary schools too with pupils as young as 6 years old being given fixed term exclusions. As such, delivery of early interventions should include early years and primary and not just secondary.

Reasons for exclusions include physical assault against other children and assault against an adult, persistent disruptive behaviour features highly and across all areas. Although in relatively small numbers but 'use or threat of use of an offensive weapon' is also cited as a reason for both fixed term and permanent exclusions in some of the local authority areas.

Youth Justice sub-group of Lammy Review Board

Building upon the findings of the Lammy Review (2017)¹⁹ and the Cabinet Office Race Disparity Audit (2017)²⁰, the Youth Justice sub-group of Avon and Somerset's Lammy Review Board are using exclusions data to research the school-to prison pipeline, asking:

- Are BAME young people more likely to be excluded?
- Are BAME young people who have been excluded more likely to enter the criminal justice system?

Recommendation: Build upon current work on age appropriate universal interventions for early years settings or sibling groups.

Recommendation VRU and Police continue to work together to reach all schools to ensure offer of support and Universal early interventions presented in the Avon and Somerset Schools' charter are understood.
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Recommendation: Link with Avon and Somerset's Lammy review sub group for Youth Justice and consider scope for embedding recommendations into VRU work
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Recommendation: Ensure Special Educational Needs (SEN) practitioners are aware of the work of the VRU and vice versa.
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The impact of Covid-19

Covid and Lockdown measures have exacerbated existing issues and increased risk of vulnerabilities, particularly around education. School closures have meant that vulnerable young people lost a key protective factor. Those who were disengaged from their registered education provider have faced further isolation and barriers to accessing their education. A learning gap was identified during the first lockdown, with already marginalised children having less support and dedicating less time to school work at home. Local organisations working directly with families and young people report a pattern 'digital poverty' where lack of suitable equipment and internet access have further hindered certain children's ability to keep pace with their peers.

Despite spaces offered to vulnerable children, figures show that approximately 41% of pupils with a Social Worker were in school during Lockdown #3 (21/1/21) compared to 75% when schools were open to all pupils (16/12/21).

Despite remaining open during lockdown #3, early year settings are not being fully utilised. It is estimated 542,000 children are currently attending early years childcare settings on Thursday 7 January – about 37% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time. Due to many children attending EY settings on a part-time basis, it is not expected that all children would be

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit>

in attendance on the day of the data collection (weekly on a Thursday). On a typical day in the Spring term it is expected that attendance would be 1,052,000, due to different and part-time patterns of childcare during the week. It is estimated that the 542,000 children currently attending early years settings is approximately 52% of the usual daily level.²¹

Conversely, while some risk factors have increased during lockdowns, these periods have coincided with reductions in reported incidents of serious violence. Nationally, there was a reported spike in serious violence in August 2020 when we emerged from the first lockdown and schools, licensed premises re-opened and gatherings were permitted. This could be due to an increase of incidents as restrictions eased but also an increase in reporting once opportunities became available.

Employment

Financial pressures caused by unemployment or insecure income may cause additional tensions. This stress makes people's behaviour more volatile and increases the risk of violence and abuse within the home. Abusive or unsafe adults who usually were out to work are now at home during the day. Children in these households facing unemployment or financial insecurity are more likely to seek a source of income from outside the home, as such are at more risk of exploitation. Beyond the immediate impact of reduced legitimate work, lack of opportunities will have a lasting effect on prospects and aspirations of children and young people in the most deprived communities.

The Strategic VRU Governance Board heard from local youth charity, Grassroot Communities:

'Unemployment has always been a massive problem in the communities in South Bristol where Grassroot Communities work but the pandemic has reduced opportunities further and added to financial worries of whole families.'²²

Young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) were most at risk of being made jobless in the first lockdown: under 25s were more likely to be furloughed or made redundant. Comparing the quarter October to December 2020 with the pre-pandemic quarter January – March 2020, nationally unemployment for young people has increased by 66,000, a 13% increase. The increase for men was 45,000 a 15% increase and 12,000 a 10% increase for women.

As of 31st December 785,000 jobs held by those age 24 or under were on furlough, which was 19% of eligible jobs. Almost two million jobs held by young people and almost half of eligible jobs were furloughed at some point between March and the end of July.²³

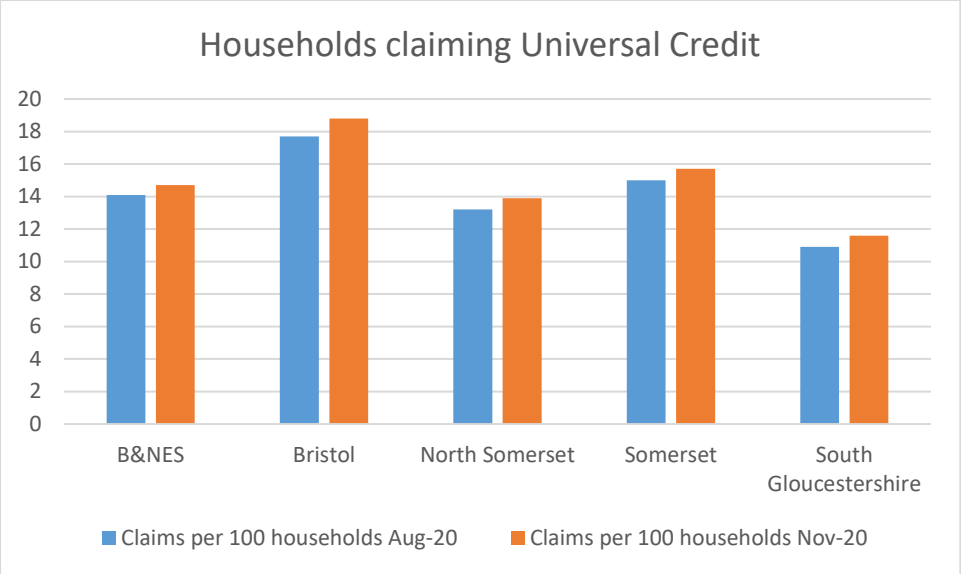
The number of households claiming Universal Credit in Avon and Somerset has increased in the last year. In Bath and North East Somerset, households claiming Universal Credit in November 2020 raised to 11,352; in Bristol the number in November was 36,362; in North Somerset 13,117, 37,941 across all of Somerset and 13,498 in South Gloucestershire. These figures shown per 100 households in the local population gives context to the situation in November 2020: B&NES 14.7 per 100 households; Bristol 18.8 per 100; North Somerset 13.9 per 100 households; Somerset 15.7 per 100 and South Gloucestershire has 11.6 claims per 100 households²⁴. The growth of these figures are shown in the graph below.

²¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2021-week-2>

²² ASSVRSGG Board meeting 09.02.21

²³ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05871/SN05871.pdf>

²⁴ <https://dwp-stats.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=8560a06de0f2430ab71505772163e8b4>



Recommendation:
Recognise employability as a protective factor against exploitation and serious violence.
Work with community organisations to promote genuine and lasting training and employment opportunities for young people.

Peak times of incidents of serious violence

DoW and ToD	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
Monday	68	40	25	31	17	14	15	15	34	30	45	52	48	72	63	99	79	80	96	73	104	75	54	69	1298
Tuesday	48	22	34	29	18	9	21	21	34	36	50	65	73	57	76	85	77	88	82	89	73	69	70	57	1283
Wednesday	71	62	57	34	16	24	17	18	30	39	44	56	70	56	67	82	114	66	77	75	85	70	69	65	1364
Thursday	78	49	31	19	22	8	16	25	34	30	48	55	63	49	67	73	86	95	80	68	73	72	61	65	1267
Friday	65	38	40	18	12	13	26	24	25	45	56	59	73	61	82	87	78	80	92	84	87	93	125	149	1512
Saturday	132	110	93	58	50	20	16	16	27	37	38	82	67	64	73	75	75	87	102	117	104	128	173	158	1902
Sunday	150	128	128	69	49	24	27	26	30	35	55	75	67	64	76	71	74	88	102	77	84	93	94	58	1744
	612	449	408	258	184	112	138	145	214	252	336	444	461	423	504	572	583	584	631	583	610	600	646	621	
DoW and ToD %	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
Monday	0.66	0.39	0.24	0.30	0.16	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.33	0.29	0.43	0.50	0.46	0.69	0.61	0.95	0.76	0.77	0.93	0.70	1.00	0.72	0.52	0.67	12.52
Tuesday	0.46	0.21	0.33	0.28	0.17	0.09	0.20	0.20	0.33	0.35	0.48	0.63	0.70	0.55	0.73	0.82	0.74	0.85	0.79	0.86	0.70	0.67	0.68	0.55	12.37
Wednesday	0.68	0.60	0.55	0.33	0.15	0.23	0.16	0.17	0.29	0.38	0.42	0.54	0.68	0.54	0.65	0.79	1.10	0.64	0.74	0.72	0.82	0.68	0.67	0.63	13.15
Thursday	0.75	0.47	0.30	0.18	0.21	0.08	0.15	0.24	0.33	0.29	0.46	0.53	0.61	0.47	0.65	0.70	0.83	0.92	0.77	0.66	0.70	0.69	0.59	0.63	12.22
Friday	0.63	0.37	0.39	0.17	0.12	0.13	0.25	0.23	0.24	0.43	0.54	0.57	0.70	0.59	0.79	0.84	0.75	0.77	0.89	0.81	0.84	0.90	1.21	1.44	14.58
Saturday	1.27	1.06	0.90	0.56	0.48	0.19	0.15	0.15	0.26	0.36	0.37	0.79	0.65	0.62	0.70	0.72	0.72	0.84	0.98	1.13	1.00	1.23	1.67	1.52	18.34
Sunday	1.45	1.23	1.23	0.67	0.47	0.23	0.26	0.25	0.29	0.34	0.53	0.72	0.65	0.62	0.73	0.68	0.71	0.85	0.98	0.74	0.81	0.90	0.91	0.56	16.82
	5.90	4.33	3.93	2.49	1.77	1.08	1.33	1.40	2.06	2.43	3.24	4.28	4.45	4.08	4.86	5.52	5.62	5.63	6.08	5.62	5.88	5.79	6.23	5.99	

There is a high concentration of incidents from 22:00 to 01:00 on a Friday night, earlier on a Saturday night with a start of 18:00 through to 02:00 on a Sunday morning. This would suggest that NTE and alcohol consumption at the weekend is a influencing factor in the incidents of serious violence.

At a local level, this will enable police activity and VRU activity to be more targeted.

Geographical hotspots

Hotspot data will inform tasking decisions and identify areas for VRU to focus their attention on, such as the hyperlocal community response and detached youth work.

Although there were relatively low levels of serious violence, 2020 in **B&NES** saw clusters of incidents in the city centre, out through Saltford and in Kenysham. To the south of the city centre, Twerton features and out towards Peasedown st John, Paulton and Midsomer Norton and Radstock.

Bristol East

There are concentrated levels of incidents noted either side of the M32 motorway at junction3, in the St Pauls, and Easton areas and out towards Barton Hill and Lawrence Hill and up into Redfield and the Hillfields area of Fishponds. There are also hotspots identified just outside the city centre in the Stokes croft area.

Bristol North and central

The main hotspots are in the city centre which may be attributable to the night time economy. Outside the city centre, Lawrence Weston, Henbury and Southmead also feature as does Lockleaze on the other side of the A38.

Bristol South

Areas of focus in South Bristol are Bedminster, Knowle West and out towards Hartcliffe and Bishopsworth and out towards Stockwood.

North Somerset

The main concentration of serious violence crime in North Somerset is Weston-Super-Mare town centre and on the Bournville estate. There are then smaller, more isolated hotspots in Worle.

Somerset

As a rural county, Somerset does not have widespread issues related to the provision of NTE activity, however Yeovil in particular is a county hotspot for NTE related violence as well as being lined to County Lines. There are also concentrations of incidents in West Somerset around Burnham on Sea and Bridgwater and down the M5 to Taunton.

South Gloucestershire

Although reporting relatively lower numbers, there are small hotspots around Kingswood and Staple Hill. The Patchway and Cribbs Causeway beat area has a high proportion of South Gloucestershire's Violence, Serious Violence, Public Order, Robbery and Drugs offences when compared against its population. This is likely because of the number of people the retail parks attract. These micro-hotspots are given particular attention in South Gloucestershire's problem profile

Recommendation: compare Police geographical hotspot mapping with data from Health partners, including ambulance data.
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Prevailing serious crime types

Incidents of serious violence

2020 has seen a clear reduction in the incidents of serious violent offences.

Offence	year		
	2018	2019	2020
Serious Violence Offences (VAP, robbery & sexual offences)	17,499	17,822	15,767
Knife Enabled Serious Violent Crime	507	518	457

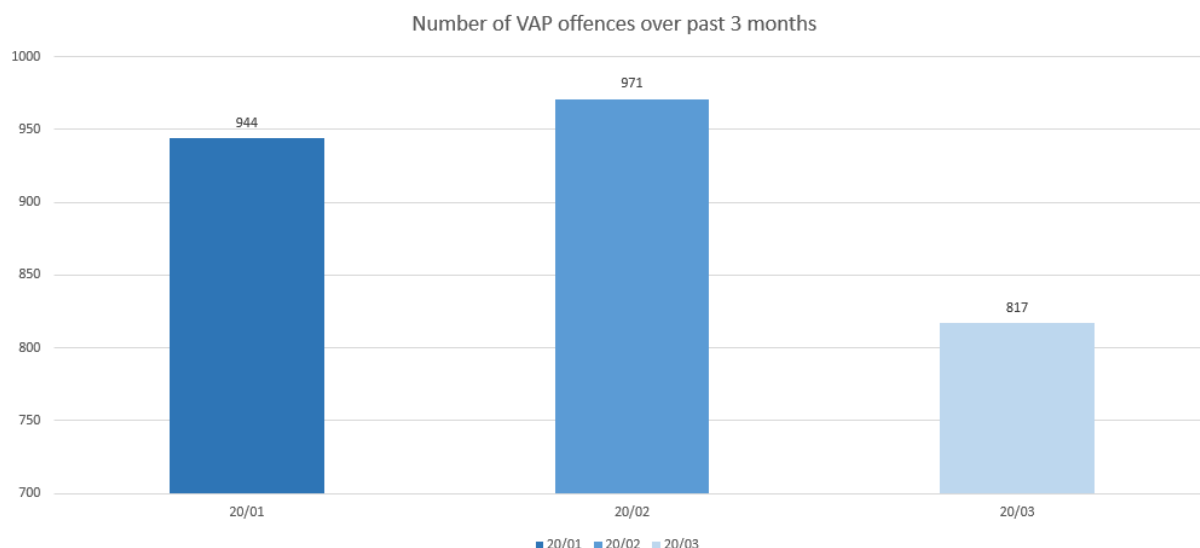
Reference to the crime figures show there was reduction of 11.5% in serious violence offences between 2019 and 2020.

Knife enabled serious violent crime has reduced by 11.8% and although relatively low numbers, murder that was not domestic in nature has reduced by 55.6%.

While this could be attributed to the success of the VRU/s, the pandemic and associated lockdown measures are also clearly significant contributing factors.

Serious violence against the person

Since the introduction of the Prime Minister's steps to 'Contain and Delay' from the 9th March 2020, the number of Violence Against the Person (VAP) incidents has declined. Clear drops are seen after the PM advised to avoid pubs, restaurants and theatres (n=16 17/03/2020). This drop is seen again after the 18th March 2020 when it was advised to close the schools (n=13, 19/03/2020).



In line with this, the number of SVAP incidents appear to be dropping off since the introduction of COVID-19 Isolation advice and legislations around Self-Isolating and similar is seen with the number of knife-related incidents.

Incidents involving Knives

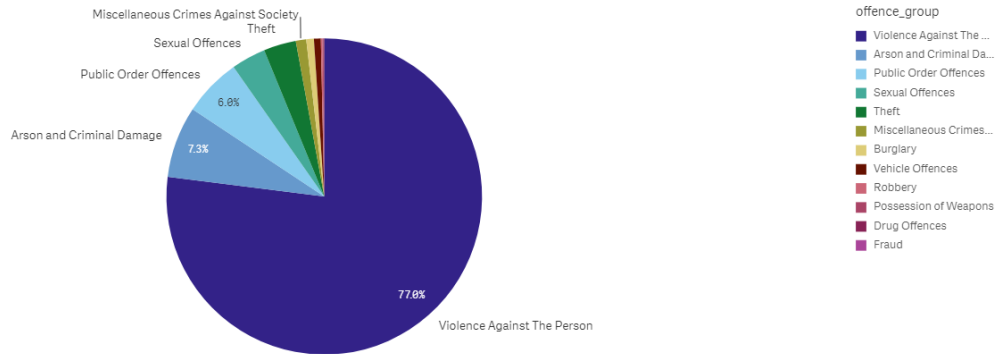
Incidents involving knives are prevalent across all 5 of our local authority areas. There has been an overall reduction with lowest figures coinciding with the first national lockdown in March and into April and May 2020. Numbers have started to climb back up with another drop around the time of the second national lockdown in November 2020.

	08/19	09/19	10/19	11/19	12/19	01/20	02/20	03/20	04/20	05/20	06/20	07/20	08/20	09/20	10/20	11/20	Total
Somerset West	62	46	51	38	39	44	48	43	41	38	52	58	52	40	45	35	732
Bristol North and Central	50	48	52	54	47	52	48	50	35	28	44	51	59	44	57	55	774
Somerset East	35	37	38	39	35	34	29	26	23	22	32	42	34	32	32	34	524
North Somerset	56	33	53	45	38	46	41	36	30	32	51	53	37	55	31	31	662
South Glos	37	27	41	38	38	34	39	30	26	34	23	25	44	41	28	34	539
Bristol South	36	42	38	50	31	35	35	31	33	32	40	37	50	45	50	41	626
Bristol East	64	49	44	41	35	48	34	46	35	57	49	51	60	41	38	38	729
BaNES	23	22	31	16	24	30	26	16	8	26	21	27	29	25	24	17	365
Avon and Somerset	363	304	348	321	287	323	300	278	231	269	312	344	365	323	305	285	4951

Domestic abuse

While other crime types saw a decrease in 2020, reports of incidents of domestic abuse saw a peak in July of around +17% on the year before. This dropped away and we have seen a more stable 6.7% year on year increase in the twelve months up to February 2021. 21,884 crimes have a domestic abuse tag attached and the crime types are shown in the diagram below.

Offence Group Breakdown



Support services however report an increase in referrals (35% increase reported by NextLink in Autumn of 2020) and increased complexity of cases. We anticipate an increase in reporting and further requests for help when lockdown restrictions begin to be lifted and victims have more opportunities to speak out.

Amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill are currently being discussed within the legislature. It aims to make provision for and in connection with the establishment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner; to prohibit cross-examination in person in family proceedings in certain circumstances; to make provision about certain violent or sexual offences, and offences involving other abusive behaviour, and offences committed outside the United Kingdom.

Recommendation: Keep the DA Bill in view to anticipate how this will relate to VRU work

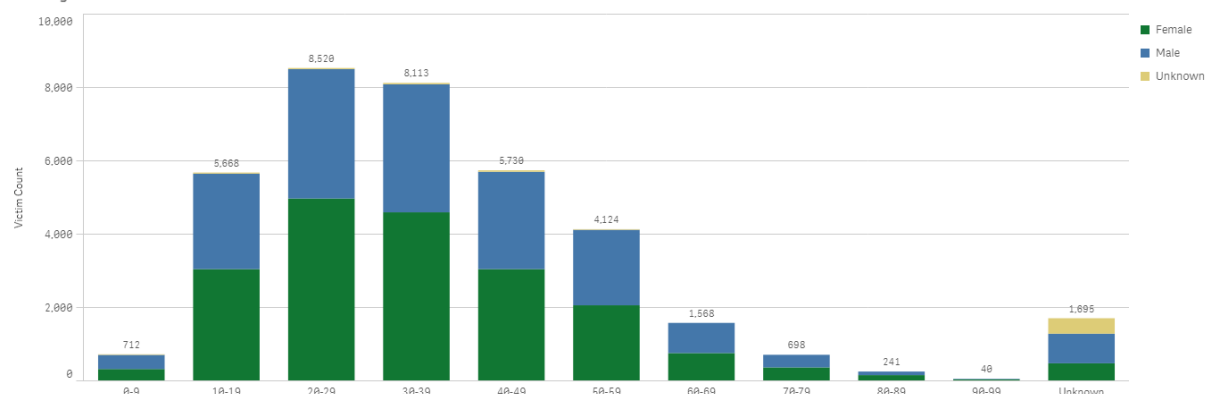
Recommendation: work in partnership to use data as evidence base to plan collaborative response to trends and patterns, including continued close links with Surge Lead.

Profile of those at risk

Key at risk groups

There were 37,142 recorded victims of serious violence (robbery, violence against the person and sexual offences) in 2020.

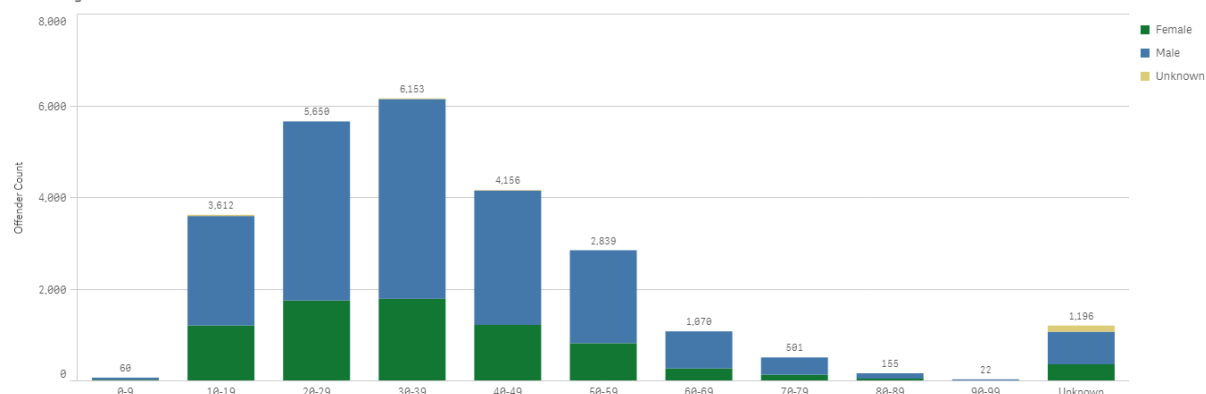
Victim Age and Gender



Profile of violent cohort

25,462 individuals charged with a serious violent crime: robbery, violence against the person and sexual offences.

Offender Age and Gender



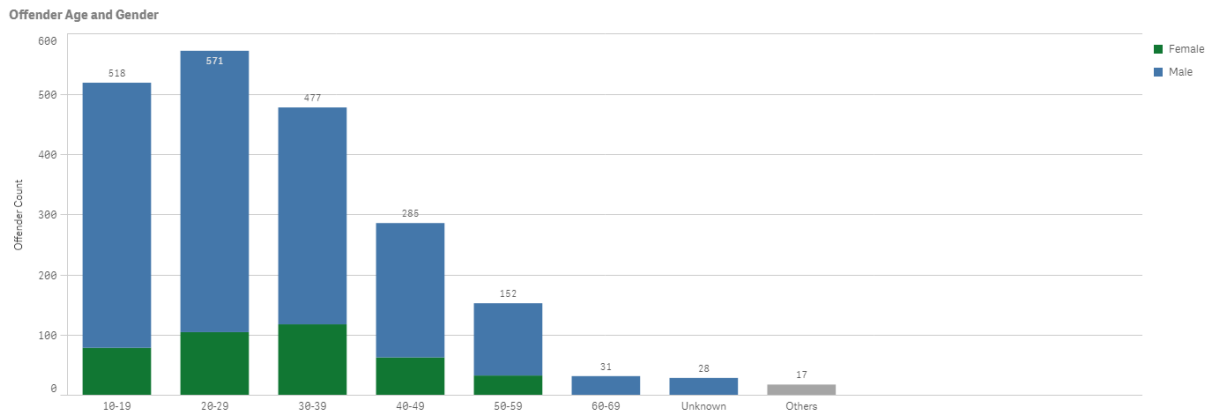
2111 individuals were charged with a knife crime in 2020, 518 of these were under the age of 19.

Vulnerability as a barrier to reporting

As with all crimes, efforts must be made to ensure the reporting serious violent crime and receiving appropriate support is a clear and accessible option. A joint investigation by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the College of Policing (CoP) and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) found that victims of crime with insecure or uncertain immigration status are fearful that, if they report crimes to the police, their information will be

shared with the Home Office²⁵. The investigations’ recommendations including that the police should establish safe reporting pathways for all migrant victims and witnesses to crime.

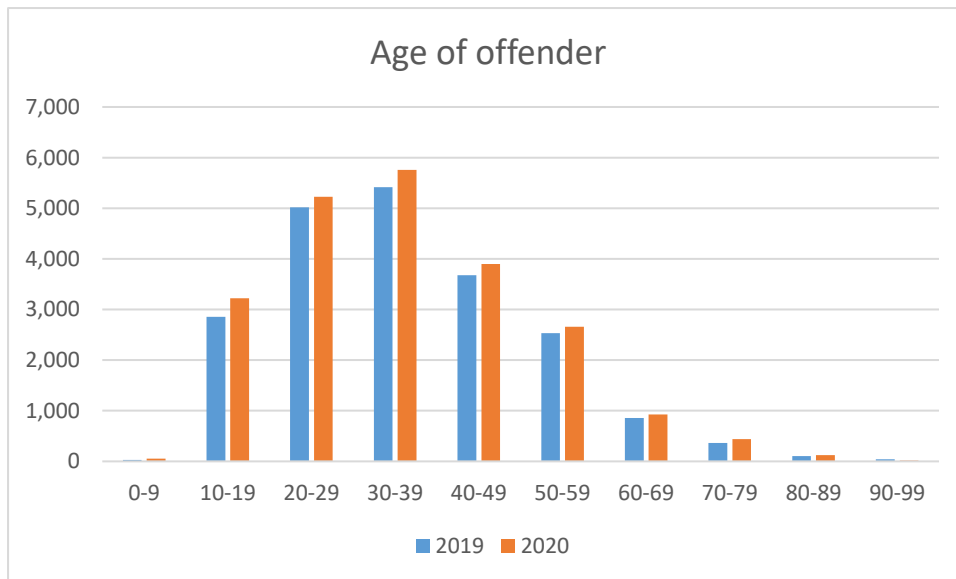
Recommendation: Ensure findings of Super complaint relating to vulnerable migrant victims of crime are incorporated into work of the VRU/s.



Age of offender in Violence Against the person

There was a 6.3% increase in offenders recorded between 2019 and 2020 from 21,998 to 23,377. Of those the majority of offenders remain between 20-29 and 30-39 age range.

The number of young offenders has increased 12.7% in the 10-19 age range (n2856 – n 3220). Although a relatively small number, the 0-9 cohort (n29 – n53) has also seen an increase of 82.8%.



Recommendation – audit case records of incidents attributed to under 10s to check what support is offered and identify any gaps.

²⁵

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944892/Press_Release_LSBS_Super_complaint_.pdf

Profile of offender of Knife crime

[Offender Age Groups]	Offender Gender	2019	2020
10-19	Female	52	77
10-19	Male	413	440
20-29	Female	96	103
20-29	Male	456	468
30-39	Female	86	119
30-39	Male	351	361
40-49	Female	41	62
40-49	Male	217	223
50-59	Female	22	32
50-59	Male	137	120
60-69	female	12	0
60-69	Male	38	31
70-79	Male	29	0

There has been an increase of 5.2% in number of incidents recorded with a knife present.

While there has been a notable reduction of incidents involving people over 50, incidents involving people under 50 have increased.

There has been an increase in young females involved, including a 48.1% increase in the 10-19 age group and 38% increase in the 30-39 age group.

Recommendation ensure approaches and services are inclusive of gender

Use of data

The VRU App informs an integral part of the work of the VRUs.

It is a prioritisation tool that has been developed utilising Police data as the start point to understanding threat harm risk in individuals and groups of individuals who offend together.

Through 3 different programmes – SPSS, R and Qlik Sense – a visual App has been created to be able to view, as a starting point, those most at risk and those with emerging risk. iBase/i2 are subsequently used by Intelligence Analyst professionals in order to elevate the output of the App into a product of dissemination and tasking quality.

The initial data used is Police crime and intelligence data, which provides a list of offenders and offender relationships. 3 points of corroboration are used to substantiate relationships between people, which starts to show offending linked groups of people.

A universal harm score is applied to the offences associated to such individuals – this is a locally defined score based on the [Cambridge Harm index](#). A victim risk score is also calculated, which is important when considering exploitation in all forms. The App allows you to visually see this risk and offending plotted in various formats

Within the 11 – 17 years age group, there are 8,500 all-time strategic identified individuals, 2,600 have risk scores calculated.

Locally our VRU structure is set up in a way that Police will utilise the App at local meetings with VRU partners, so to initiate cohort identification.

The strength of these Apps lay in partners' continued collaboration and information sharing.

It is also important to note that Somerset and Bristol have established arrangements, this will need to be reviewed and extended and replicated to cover the whole force area.

This currently relies on Police resource being embedded in the VRU team and process to access the data. The information sharing should also be reciprocal so that partners can benefit from this arrangement. There are other data sharing platforms available such as the Community Safety App which omits sensitive information, particularly pertaining to current live investigations, to allow partners greater freedom of access.

Recommendation: Information sharing agreements to be designed to cover all partner data to feed into the VRU by means of VRU app.
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Recommendation: Prioritise achieving equality of access to provision of service across all 5 VRU areas

Interventions and Strategies

Commissioning Landscape

There is a complex commissioning landscape around young people and serious violence with multiple funding streams being managed by different VRU partners including but not limited to the Youth Endowment Fund, Surge, Local Authorities, and other grant giving Trusts and organisations.

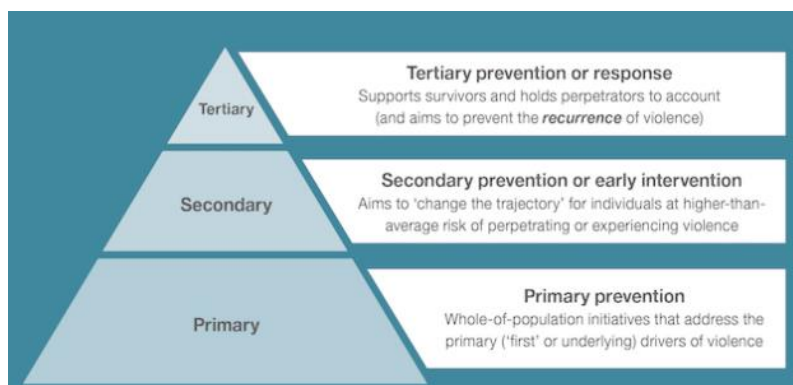
A good example of where this has been coordinated to achieve a joined up approach is the Constabulary, Home office funded Serious Organised Crime Coordinator and North Somerset's VRU co-commissioning of St Giles Trust to deliver peer mentoring for individuals at risk or involved in gang activity.

There is however, a risk that efforts a duplicated or some areas may be overserved while needs elsewhere remain unmet.

As the profile and experience of those at risk of involvement in serious violence is so varies, it is important that we have a varied offer of interventions.

Recommendation: Establish a commissioning forum; a panel to plan and consider bids to maximise value for money and effectiveness.
--

Recommendation: incorporate a mapping exercise for interventions in the planning process for the year ahead to identify and address any gaps.
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Schools

Schools are a key delivery partner in delivering the primary or early prevention type of activity. Interventions can reach a high number of young people and can be tailored to suit the recipient group. It is essential that support is offered to schools staff as well as pupils during and around these interventions so that resulting disclosures can be dealt with appropriately.

Universal programmes delivered in Avon and Somerset have included theatre groups raising awareness about the dangers of carrying weapons and healthy relationship workshops.

Police, schools and VRUs

In order to assist with safeguarding and achieving the best possible outcomes for children, young people and the wider school community, the Police have designed a **schools charter**. It has been created in consultation with education partners and aims to strengthen relationships and improve engagement. It lays out minimum expectations in the form of Universal and focussed offers.

Avon and Somerset Police – Schools Charter
<p>Universal offer to every school a School Link Officer (SLO) from within their Local Neighbourhood Team. (The role of the SLO is for engagement and not for direct reporting of crime or safeguarding referrals.) Planned engagement with SLO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - once every half term secondary/alternative education establishments/PRUs/colleges (i.e. 6 engagements per academic year), - once a term Primary School (i.e. 3 engagements per academic year). <p>Support from Central Coordinating Team Variety of engagement opportunities including PSHE lesson support and delivery, event attendance, bike marking, youth beat surgery, restorative approaches etc. Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation training by Op Topaz (specialist Police team)</p>
<p>Focussed offer to identified schools, in addition to the SLO Involvement of VRU PCSOs around Serious Violence. Mini Police - targeted at areas of Policing Demand. Black Police Association – for schools with large BAME population.</p>

Recommendation: ensure that all schools across Avon and Somerset are aware and engaged with the Force's School's Charter

Community engagement

There are examples of great innovation occurring locally to ensure the voice of the Community is heard and local people are involved in the co-production of local interventions. Successful community involvement will ensure that resulting interventions are needed and appropriate locally and offers some sustainability in building community resilience that does not rely solely on the VRUs.

We have had to think creatively in how to reach local people during lockdowns when public meetings are not permitted and also people and resources are concentrated on responding to the pandemic. It is important that this area of work continues to be given priority.

An important section of the Community and integral to this work is the voice of young people directly affected by and at risk of serious violence. Young people are not a homogenous group and it is vital we seek to engage with those who are seldom heard as well as utilising established groups and methods.

Recommendation: continue to develop Community engagement as a link between local VRUs and the strategic board and across all areas of work

Recommendation: find meaningful opportunities to involve young people affected by serious violence in the work of the VRU/s

Hyperlocal intensive community response

Identified hotspots have been targeted for a coordinated response that involves partners to engage residents and businesses to address local issues. This involves looking at the physicality of an area as well as the contextual safeguarding risks. While resource heavy, the potential for lasting impact is significant.

Teachable moments

The 'teachable moment' approach assumes that at a moment of intense crisis, when the young person is nursing a serious injury in the daunting environment of a busy hospital, can be a catalyst for pursuing positive change. This can also be applied to a young person's first experience of custody. It requires clear referral pathway and availability of a specialist youth worker to engage with the young person at this specific time. The numbers seen in hospitals across Avon and Somerset would not justify a specific serious violence worker in each setting but current pilots include one in Somerset with a broader scope of engaging young people with a drug, alcohol or violence related injury.

Detached youth work

Multi-agency detached youth work has been the success borne of necessity during lockdowns. While schools and other youth provision have been closed, VRU staff, police and youth services have ventured out into the community to meet young people where they are. This has enabled professionals to impart important safety information around Covid-19 but also build relationships when young people were having limited interactions with services. Detached youth work may also be the route to engaging young people who would not attend structure youth provisions, even when open so should not be considered an alternative utilised only during periods of lockdown.

Sport as a diversion

Avon and Somerset Police have launched a **Crime Prevention Through Sport fund** in partnership with Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP) and The West of England Sport Trust (Wesport).

The Crime Prevention Through Sport Fund aims to support projects that use sport and physical activity to reduce violence, crime and anti-social behaviour. This fund is for projects that focus on using activity as a tool to engage and support young people up to the age of 25. Applications that use sport in its widest sense including traditional, informal sports and activities will be considered and encouraged to apply.

Local VRUs have also funded sports programmes to meet the needs of their communities and as a means of engaging young people.

Types of Interventions commissioned through VRU/s

	Early years Support	Universal schools offer	Specific programme in schools	Sport as a diversion	Detached youth work	Hyperlocal community response	Professionals training
B&NES		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bristol		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
North Somerset		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Somerset		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
South Gloucestershire		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Targeted Mentors	Targeted group work	Bespoke Education support	Targeted YP Mental health support	Targeted domestic abuse support	Teachable moments	Work with siblings
B&NES		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Bristol	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
North Somerset	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Somerset		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
South Gloucestershire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						

Strategic Response Strategy

The following are thematic areas of focus for the Strategic VRU Governance Board. They are themes that require a force-wide resolution or are strategic systems change / infrastructure issues.

Each VRU 'spoke' will have their own local action plans to work towards.

CCE / Vulnerability	Link with Missing Person Coordinators to ensure mutual understanding of each other's' work
CCE / Vulnerability	Build upon current offer of professionals training to Police colleagues on issues pertaining to vulnerability to CCE and trauma informed policing.
Link with Surge funded activity	Work with partners to pre-empt spike in serious violence incidents at re-emergence of ENTE as lockdown eases in Spring 2021.
Link with Surge funded activity	Work in partnership to use data as evidence base to plan collaborative response to trends and patterns, including continued close links with Surge Lead.
CJS	Explore data on delays in charging decisions and cases reaching resolution for young people linked to incidents of serious violence.
CJS	Link with A&S Criminal Justice Board to ensure the Board is aware of the work and scope of the VRU/s and vice versa.
CJS	Incorporate Lammy Review sub group findings and recommendations into VRU processes and support partners to do the same.
CJS	Link together and where possible, consolidate separate CJS diversion and Out of Court Disposal programmes.
Domestic Abuse	Explore support and resources available to schools to ensure this support is ongoing and acknowledges sequential nature of domestic abuse.
Domestic Abuse	Keep the DA Bill in view to anticipate how this will relate to VRU work
Health	Continue to develop links with Health partners in terms of data sharing, compare Police geographical hotspot mapping with data from Health partners, including ambulance data.
Health	Ensure Health partners are aware of the work of the VRU/s
Health	Strategic VRU to continue to lobby on the matter of youth mental health locally and to central government.
Health	Invite representatives from mental health services to join the VRU.
Information sharing	Compare active areas in Offensive Weapons Act surrender and compensation scheme with VRU activity.
Information sharing	Ensure findings of Super complaint relating to vulnerable migrant victims of crime are incorporated into work of the VRU/s.
Information sharing	Peer and social network analysis should be used to identify groups of concern and associated individuals. Local Authority data from all areas should be included and Contextual Safeguarding Leads should in turn be directed by its findings.
Information sharing	Information sharing agreements to be designed to cover all partner data to feed into the VRU by means of VRU app.
Education	Build upon current work on age appropriate universal interventions for early years settings or sibling groups.
Education	VRU and Police continue to work together to reach all schools to ensure offer of support and Universal early interventions presented in the Avon and Somerset Schools' charter are understood.

Redacted version for Home Office and external partners

Education	Link with Avon and Somerset's Lammy review sub group for Youth Justice and consider scope for embedding recommendations into VRU work
Education	Ensure Special Educational Needs (SEN) practitioners are aware of the work of the VRU and vice versa.
Education	Ensure that all schools across Avon and Somerset are aware and engaged with the Force's School's Charter
Employability	Recognise employability as a protective factor against exploitation and serious violence. Work with community organisations to promote genuine and lasting training and employment opportunities for young people.
Interventions	Audit case records of incidents attributed to under 10s to check what support is offered and identify any gaps.
Interventions	ensure approaches and services are inclusive of gender
Interventions	Prioritise achieving equality of access to provision of service across all 5 VRU areas
Interventions	Establish a commissioning forum; a panel to plan and consider bids to maximise value for money and effectiveness.
Interventions	Incorporate a mapping exercise for interventions in the planning process for the year ahead to identify and address any gaps.
Interventions	Utilise the findings of National and Local Evaluation to shape future provision of interventions.
Community / Youth Engagement	continue to develop Community engagement as a link between local VRUs and the strategic board and across all areas of work
Community / Youth Engagement	Continue to find meaningful opportunities to involve young people affected by serious violence in the work of the VRU/s