

Newsletter

Issue 4 July 2024

Welcome

Welcome to the fourth issue of the **Violence Reduction Alliance** (VRA) newsletter! This issue covers what the VRA has delivered across their five priority areas, other violence and vulnerability prevention work happening across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, news, training & events.

If you would like to receive future issues of the newsletter please email

SSVRA@staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk.

If you have information you would like to share in future issues please email SSVRA@staffordsh ire-pfcc.gov.uk.

From July 2024 future
issues of the
newsletter will be
publicly available via
the VRA website

A Message from VRA Executive Board Member, Chief Constable Chris Noble





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What's Going On

Primary Prevention

Our ultimate aim is to prevent violence before it occurs. Gathering data to identify new trends is core to prevention and changing outcomes in the longer term. Also critical is support for the development of a range of programmes which help children, families and communities to be the best they can be.

Free Local Guide for Parents and Carers on Knife Harm

The VRA has worked in partnership with **The Ben Kinsella Trust** to develop a local guide for parents and carers on knife harm. According to national data, 99% of young people do not carry a knife; however, it is important that we are doing everything we can to prevent young people from harm. In 2023, the VRA consulted with parents and carers on their views around community safety and help and support available to them on keeping their child safe. The final report highlighted:

- 46% of respondents ranked 'knife crime/carrying an offensive weapon' as their top concern
- 70% did not feel they had the correct tools/knowledge to start a conversation with their child about knife crime/carrying an offensive weapon
- 67% stated that education/training on these topics would help them to feel more confident in starting a conversation with their child





To support parents and carers, the local guide includes facts to help parents and carers to feel more confident when talking to their child about knife harm, as well as practical help, guidance and where they can find local and national support. Download the guide here.

PSHE Service Year 2 Impact Report

The Pan-Staffordshire PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Education Service has published its End of Year Two Impact Report which shares the services key achievements during its second year of being established. Some of the key highlights include:

- Launch of the PSHE Education Service website
- 18 PSHE Professional Packs written to support education staff to have more confidence in the topics supported by the PSHE curriculum
- 4 Best Practice Guides published to help with the consistency and quality of development and delivery of PSHE education
- Local resources created, to support PSHE education, around Puberty, Hate Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, Safer Sleep and Staffordshire Youth Union Elections

You can now access all of the above resources, and more, via the **PSHE Education**Service website. Read the full Impact Report here or a two page overview here.

Partners Unite to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls

During Staffordshire Police's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Week of Action, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) worked with Staffordshire Police to raise awareness of personal safety and to help tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG).

East Staffordshire

East Staffordshire's CSP worked with the Local Policing Team (LPT) to organise a number of events across the area including, a Safer Nights operation on the Saturday evening between 9pm and 3am in Burton Town Centre, which was also supported by St John Ambulance. Partners handed out free personal safety items including bottle top covers, spiking reduction glass covers, personal attack alarms and gave advice around spiking, the Hollie Guard app, personal safety and domestic abuse.

Lichfield

Lichfield CSP and the LPT ran a Safer Nights operation which included talks with young people around personal safety, the Hollie Guard app and offering reassurance. During the night-time economy, partners also organised a stall on Bird Street to support



party-goers between 8pm and 10pm on the Saturday evening. Partners spoke with members of the public about personal safety and gave out free anti-spiking and personal safety devices. Over the week-long operation partners provided:

- 125 women and girls personal attack alarms
- 50 anti-spiking bottle stoppers
- Over 60 anti-spiking scrunchies





Knife Amnesty Bins Continue to Reduce Knives on Streets

Additional knife amnesty bins have been installed across Stoke-on-Trent, Tamworth and Lichfield. The bins allow anyone to surrender a knife or sharp pointed weapon anonymously. From 24th September 2024, new laws will ban zombie-style knives and machetes meaning it will be illegal to possess, sell, manufacture or transport these style of knives. You can find your nearest amnesty bin here.

New laws will also give police new powers to seize and destroy knives found on private premises if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the blade will be used in a serious crime. Previously, police could not seize knives found during a search in a property, even if they had suspicions of criminal use.

Neurodiverse Pathway Consultation

With the help of children and young people, Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) aim to develop the health and care support for Neurodiverse children and young people; such as, children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, care experiences or Neurodiverse needs without a diagnosis.

MPFT is looking to redesign the services in which children and young people with Neurodiverse needs access. They want to hear from Neurodiverse children and young people about the experiences they have found helpful and those they would like to see developed.



We would appreciate your support in sharing the questionnaire via the QR code. Please note, there is an open deadline for this questionnaire.



Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services Annual Report

Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) is committed to support the development of the local sector, youth engagement and hosting the PSHE Education Service for Staffordshire. SCVYS has published it's annual report for 2023-24. Key highlights include:

- Their 2023 Census had a 95% response rate, highlighting 41,167 children and young people accessed positive activity or support within SCVYS member organisations during the period.
- £6,659,260 of funding was secured by the local Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) voluntary sector, helped in many cases by SCVYS promotion of and signposting to available funds.
- 4,514 Staffordshire young people (aged 11-18) took part in the Make Your Mark ballot, representing a 193% increase compared to 2022.
- Staffordshire Youth Union was established, comprising 21 young people who are passionate about amplifying the voice of local children and young people with decision makers.
- 83% of their members rated SCVYS support at 8 out of 10 or higher.

Read the full report here.

Secondary Prevention

By developing prevention mechanisms that specifically target those at risk of either committing violence or being the victim of violence, we will reduce both the number of future violent incidences and make a sustainable positive change.



Multi-Agency Support for Victims of Exploitation

The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) priority in combatting serious violence is to provide meaningful alternatives to serious violence and youth exploitation through employment, training, and/or education. The DWP Community Engagement Adviser in North Staffordshire, provides one-to-one tailored support to help young people into employment and training.

Alex is a pseudonym to protect the young person's identity

Alex had been exploited at an early age into drug supply, county lines and serious violence. Staffordshire Police's Violence Reduction Team asked DWP to support Alex to escape that environment and find employment. The Community Engagement Adviser helped Alex to understand the world of employment, discussed job opportunities, advised him where to find and how to apply for jobs, produced a CV and practised interview techniques. Alex is now in full-time employment, enjoys the job, is no longer involved in serious violence and has a bright, safer future ahead of him.

Virtual Reality Delivery Continues Across the City and County

Last year the VRA utilised funding received through the Serious Violence Duty to purchase two well recognised and established Virtual Reality (VR) resources produced by Round Midnight. Virtual_Decisions is an innovative and exciting VR in Education programme helping to support thousands of young people who are at risk of criminal exploitation and violence. Virtual_Decisions films enable participants to experience multiple dilemmas and illustrate the impacts of their choices through the use of highend VR headsets. Following the VR experience, expert facilitators then run creative arts workshops that explore the issues raised in more depth. Following feedback from schools, SCVYS worked with the PSHE Education Service to re-write and reduce the purchased material, making the package more manageable and appealing to schools.

The Virtual_Decisions Knives and Gangs programmes have been delivered via a pilot approach by Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) and co-ordinated via the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service. SCVYS has delivered 32 sessions in 13 settings including, primary and secondary schools, pupil referral units, youth clubs, to a group of young adults with additional needs, and as part of a youth work training course to voluntary sector youth workers. In order to maximise relevance and impact, the VR programmes have been delivered taking a targeted approach to ensure those at risk of becoming involved in violence have access to the VR; learnings from the pilot will then inform future delivery. Find out more about Virtual_Decisions here.





Tertiary Prevention

By providing effective support for victims and interventions for those who have previously committed serious violence, we will reduce re-victimisation and reoffending. We will capitalise on 'teachable moments' in order to change behaviour.

Reducing Violence and Weapons in Prisons

Knife crime and weapon use can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Utilising funding through the Serious Violence Duty, the VRA has worked with Staffordshire Police and the Secure Estate to respond to and prevent violence and knife/weapon crime in prisons. This has been done using a public health approach consisting of prevention, education, safeguarding and enforcement activity. The initiative aims to educate and support referred individuals while tackling violence and weapon related crime in order to protect communities from harm, both while prisoners serve their sentence and upon release.

The initiative includes a range of educational material, guest speakers and a weapon amnesty. Guest speakers comprising of, a perpetrator of violence, a survivor of violence, and family members of a victim of knife crime have enabled prisoners to reflect on their own offending behaviours, their beliefs and also think about their victim's and families' point of view. The guest speakers have been well received with the majority of prisoners and staff giving positive feedback and a number of weapons being handed in via the weapons amnesty following their talks. Below are quotes from prisoners following a talk from Natalie Queiroz, a survivor of knife crime:

"It definitely had an impact on my thought process around knives/violence and their impact of the wider society. I would think twice about violence moving forward as the impact is far reaching."

"It had a big impact for me personally as I suffer with PTSD from when I was stabbed. I would think twice about using violence in the future as her story was quite moving."



The initiative was first implemented in HMP Werrington throughout April and May 2023 which immediately saw a significant reduction in violence and weapons being found within the prison over the following few months. Along with the prisons Weapon Strategy, the prison experienced a 39% reduction in staff assaults and 50% reduction in group/violent disorder type incidents following the initiative. So far, the initiative has been delivered in 3 out of 8 prisons in Staffordshire and will continue to be rolled out across Staffordshire.

Catch22 Continue to Deliver Child Criminal Exploitation Service

Catch22 work with children and young people who are at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). They deliver bespoke support and interventions to children and young people to build resilience and aspiration empowering them to take control of their lives and supporting them and their families to stay safe. Catch22 will continue to offer:

Direct work - One of Catch22's experienced case workers will work 1-1 with children referred to the service to support young people to find solutions and build awareness around issues related to CCE, gangs and County Lines. Families will also be included in this type of intervention where applicable and will support parents and siblings.

Bespoke work - Catch22 understand that where children are at risk, they may already have several professionals involved in their life. Bespoke work involves Catch22 upskilling another professional with whom the child has an existing and meaningful relationship and support them whilst they deliver the intervention to the young person.

Parent, children and professionals training/workshops - Targeted workshops are delivered in school or professional settings through group work and training sessions. Catch22 will work closely with the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education service to ensure collaboration on a wider landscape related to CCE prevention education (PSHE) and the interventions delivered in local education establishments. Find out more, including how to make a referral here.

Navigator Programme - The Navigator Programme aims to identify and support children at the most 'reachable moment' following arrest on suspicion of a crime or as victim of a violent offence. Catch22 work closely with partners at Royal Stoke and Norther Custody Area to identify under 18s who have been affected by violence and/or exploited. The VRA is currently in the process of re-commissioning the Navigator Programme which will continue to be delivered by Catch22 until the end of March 2025.



Changing Futures Stoke-on-Trent

The Changing Futures programme is a £64 million joint initiative by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUH) and The National Lottery Community Fund. The fund is for local organisations to work in partnership to better support those who experience multiple disadvantages by providing essential support and treatment for vulnerable adults facing a combination of homelessness, substance misuse, poor mental health, domestic abuse, or contact with the criminal justice system. Many of the vulnerable adults supported through the programme also experience physical ill-health, disability, entrenched disadvantage and trauma. They often also experience difficulties in getting the coordinated support from local services that they need, which can lead to further problems such as increased reoffending and greater risk of rough sleeping and ill-health. The Changing Futures programme is for people experiencing issues with at least three of the following:

- Homelessness
- Offending
- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Violence
- Substance Misuse

OR

 Have fallen into multiple disadvantage recently and appear disengaged or "stuck" in the current system, with service interventions proving unsuccessful.

If you would like to make an introduction to Changing Futures on behalf of somebody else you can download the Changing Futures introduction form **here**. Once complete, please send the form to **changingfutures.sp@stoke.gov.uk**.

Support for Men on Probation

Ingeus UK delivers services to help people improve their employment, skills, health and wellbeing. Ingeus has over 25 years of experience providing probation and rehabilitation interventions as part of a locally integrated and holistic service to meet the diverse needs of probation services users in the community, in prisons and after release. Ingeus offer Personal Wellbeing and Finance, Benefits & Debt services across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as part of the Ministry of Justice's Commissioned Rehabilitative Services. Part of the probation system, they are commissioned and deliver at a local and regional level to provide flexible, responsive services to help break the cycle of reoffending. These services can offer the following support for service users:



Personal Wellbeing Service

- Emotional Wellbeing provides service users will the practical skills and knowledge to proactively manage their wellbeing and to cope better with life's challenges.
- Lifestyle & Associates educates service users about the impact of their choices and associations, giving them the tools to make positive changes.
- Family & Significant Others enables service users to mend, maintain and create positive relationships with those closest.
- Social Inclusion motivates, inspires and enables service users to establish a positive place in the community and to adopt pro-social activities and networks. Includes a mentor scheme with in-reach to prisons.

Find out more here.

Finance, Benefits & Debt Services

- Case Workers provide practical help, support and referral to interventions supplied by our FCA accredited supply chain partners.
- Community Support Workers give mentoring and wrap-around support, many of whom have lived experience.
- Supply Chain staff provide the specialist support and access to FCA accredited interventions.
- Team Leaders coordinate our service and seek further local help and support where required.

Find out more here.

Enforcement and Criminal Justice

While prevention is our focus, we remain committed to swift, visible justice for those committing serious violence.

Top Results Following Knife Crime Intensification Week

Although crimes rates across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are well below national and regional averages, it's important that we keep improving our position across all priority areas. Partners work together to tackle knife crime throughout the entire year, but during specific weeks throughout the year, police forces and partners intensify operations and education around a specific topic.



From 13th to 19th May, partners achieved top results during their intensification week to tackle knife crime. Over the seven day period, Staffordshire Police carried out 9 weapon sweeps. 12 stop and searches, set up knife arches in public spaces and encourages people to safely dispose of blades anonymously in knife banks located across the City and County. As a result, the Police made 7 arrests and 120 blades were surrendered. In line with the intensification week, Staffordshire Police lead the partnership campaign #DitchTheBlade and worked with partners to education around knife crime. Thank you to all partners who supported the campaign!



Police Investigate Stores Following Illegal Knife Sales

Last month, Staffordshire Police launched an investigation after two shops illegally sold kitchen knives to a child. The 14-year-old volunteer was working with Trading Standards and completed four test purchases in the City; unfortunately, two of the stores did not pass the test.

Staffordshire Police work with Trading Standards to educate and share best practice with retailers around illegal knife sales. All businesses that sell kitchen knives, have a personal responsibility to ensure they are complying with the law. Staffordshire Police and Trading Standards Teams, on behalf of the VRA, have produced a Responsible Retailer Pack which contains best practice advice, a summary of relevant legislation and promotional material. Businesses can play a major part in helping to protect the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Retailers
guide to
storing,
displaying
and selling
knives.
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

The VRA is inviting all retailers across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to download and sign the agreement to show they are ready to take proactive steps to help prevent illegal sales of knives. Download the agreement **here**.



Attitudinal Change

By challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster serious violence, we can help prevent it from happening. If we are to reduce serious violence, it will take all community members and professionals to change mind-sets and believe that it is preventable.

You Said, We Will

Between February and June 2023, the VRA consulted with children & young people and parents & carers on their perceptions around violence. The findings from the engagement exercises have helped to inform the development of the **Violence Reduction Strategy**, identify support required locally and help to shape future awareness campaigns. The VRA has worked with a local illustrator, the Staffordshire Youth Union (SYU) and Stoke-on-Trent's Youth Council to produce the illustration below to show how the findings from the engagement exercise have helped shape the Strategy. We want children and young people to know that their views are listened to and have had an influence on shaping the Strategy. A massive thank you to Chloe Breeze and members of the SYU and Stoke-on-Trent Youth Council for their contributions to this piece of work!





VRA Communications and Engagement Promise

Since being in post the VRA Communications and Engagement Officer has been learning about how the Alliance works and what's required for successful partnership communications and engagement. With this, the VRA Communications and Engagement Framework has been developed, along with a Communications and Engagement Promise. The Promise sets out best practice principles when creating communications content and engaging with communities around violence. The Promise has been developed following research into trauma informed practice, what works well and what doesn't work. We are asking all partners to adopt these principles when creating communications and engagement content. To request a copy of the VRA Communications Engagement Framework Promise and and email SSVRA@staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk.





Ask for Angela Campaign Partner Pack

As part of the VRA's commitment to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG), we promoted the Ask for Angela initiative ahead of the Euros 2024.

The Ask for Angela initiative aims to ensure that anyone feeling vulnerable or unsafe is able to get discreet support. This could be on a night out, on a date or meeting friends. The initiative works by training staff in vulnerability management and what to do when someone 'Asks for Angela'. When a trained member of staff hears the codephrase they will understand the person needs support and will be able to respond in an appropriate, discreet way.



A campaign partner pack with a suite of resources can be downloaded via the VRA website **here**. We would appreciate your support in sharing the resources to help expand the reach of the campaign.

VRA Anti-Violence Campaign

The VRA is co-producing an anti-violence campaign with children and young people living across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Dizzy Heights, a local youth organisation, has recently undertaken engagement sessions with young people, who have been involved in violence, to better understand the reasons why they became involved in violence and what would have prevented them from doing so. Following review of the feedback, the VRA Communications and Engagement Officer will work with communications and frontline colleagues to write a specification based on the young people's views. Once developed, the partnership campaign will be promoted across the City and County to help prevent and reduce young people being affected by violence.

Co-Production Resources for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Co-production involves both users and providers throughout every step of both design and delivery. In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent a number of resources have been developed to support partners to co-produce effectively. On behalf of Staffordshire's Children's and Family Services, Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) co-produced a whole-system Co-Production Promise for Staffordshire, supported by an introductory video, a practitioner toolkit and the capability to make pledges of support. Similarly, Stoke-on-Trent City Council has developed a SEND



Co-Production Charter and will soon be launching a practitioner toolkit. These locally developed tools are available to support the workforce to better co-produce the design and delivery of services, thereby improving the experience for those receiving the support.

The Ben Kinsella Trust Podcast - Knife Crime: Real Stories, Real People

The Ben Kinsella Trust has released the first episode of their first podcast: Knife Crime: Real Stories. Real People featuring powerful interviews with victims, families, and experts. Each episode will offer a raw look at guests heart breaking stories and a real insight into their personal experience being effected by knife crime. The podcast aims to prevent future tragedies and encourage listeners to join the fight for safer communities. Listen to the first episode featuring Brooke Kinsella MBE who is the founder of The Ben Kinsella Trust and sister to Ben Kinsella who tragically lost his life to knife crime in 2008 here.



Meet Our Partners

Staffordshire Police Violence Reduction Team

Staffordshire Police's Violence Reduction Team (VRT) supported the previous local Serious Violence Strategy and continue to support the refreshed Violence Reduction Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The VRT lead the Enforcement and Criminal Justice priority area of the Strategy by working with partners to disrupt violence and ultimately, stop it before it begins.

The VRT comprises of a Chief Inspector, Manager, Sergeant and field officers who work closely with partners to support young people involved in violence, and/or at risk of exploitation, away from a life of crime. Once a young person is identified, the field officers will work over days, weeks and even months to build a rapport with the young person to better understand what is going on in their life. The VRT will then support the young person and work closely with partners such as, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Youth Offending Services (YOS) and Catch22 to divert the young person and safeguard them from potential risks.

The VRT previously operated in Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle, the Moorlands and Cannock policing areas; however, is currently in the process of expanding their team to cover the rest of Staffordshire.







Updated Guidance on Information Sharing for Safeguarding Services

The Government has updated its guidance on information sharing for people who provide safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers. This includes:

- Individuals who are directly involved in safeguarding children, including frontline practitioners, managers and senior leaders
- Individuals and organisations that work with children, parents, carers and families, in sectors such as social care, education, health, justice and voluntary

The guidance may also be helpful for practitioners working with vulnerable adults and adults who could pose a risk to children. The document outlines the importance of sharing information about children, young people and their families in order to safeguard children. It should be read alongside the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. Read the full guidance here.

The Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children

Action for Children launched the Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children in November 2023 with the aim to learn from what's working well to protect children from exploitation and determine what more can be done. Key lessons include: the absence of a clear and consistent definition of the criminal exploitation of children is a barrier to protecting and supporting them; existing legislation and criminal processes are not fit for purpose and are leading to vulnerable children being failed; too many exploited children are treated as criminals rather than victims and do not receive a child protection response. The Review made three key recommendations, centred around a single, cohesive legal code designed to tackle the criminal exploitation of children, coordinated policy and practice at a local and national level, and investments, research and whole-system learning. Read the full review here.

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAIs)

JTAIs are unannounced joint inspections carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). JTAIs aim to identify aspects of effective multi-agency responses that are making a real difference to the safety and well-being of children and aspects that need to improve. All local areas may be subject to a JTAI and will receive of letter of findings following the assessment. Read Leeds and Lancashire's letter, along with the official guidance below.

Leeds

Lancashire

JTAI Guidance



Training & Events

Exploitation Webinar

When: 5th August, 10:00am -

12:00pm

Where: Online

Organised by: West Midlands

Violence Reduction Partnership

Cost: free

Online Safety for Women & Girls

When: 5th August, 19:00pm -

20:00pm

Where: Online

Organised by: Police - South East

Cyber

Cost: free

Public Health Approach to

Violence Prevention

When: 6th August, 10:00am -

12:00pm

Where: Online

Organised by: West Midlands

Violence Reduction Partnership

Cost: free

Safeguarding Care Experienced

Young People from Exploitation

When: 29th August, 13:00pm -

15:00pm

Where: Online

Organised by: The Children's

Society

Cost: free

#LookCloser: Financial

Exploitation

When: 16th September, 10:00am

- 12:00pm

Where: Online

Organised by: The Children's

Society

Cost: free

Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Conference

2024

When: 13th November, 10:00am -

16:00pm

Where: Stafford Showground, ST18

0BD

Organised by: PSHE Education Service

Pan-Staffordshire

Cost: £35

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