



**VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
NETWORK**

**LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE
& RUTLAND**

**Annual Report
2022-2023**

#PreventionThroughConnection

@VR_Network

www.violencereductionnetwork.co.uk

Introduction

This annual report is designed to highlight the progress that the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) has made over the course of the past year. In particular, it showcases some of the key achievements of the VRN central team and of the wider Network of communities, groups and organisations in delivering on the priorities set out in the Response Strategy.

About the Violence Reduction Network

Established in 2019 and funded by the Home Office, the VRN is an alliance of groups, organisations, and communities determined to prevent and reduce serious violence locally. Up until 2022-23, the VRN has focuses on public place serious violence (↗) and in particular violence affecting young people. However, we recognise the multiple forms of violence affecting children, young people and communities, the links between different types of violence and the benefits of investing in strategies which go beyond preventing one type of violence.

Members of the Network believe that violence is preventable and we share a **vision** for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to be a place where all people can lead their lives free from violence and the fear of violence. Our **mission** is to achieve 'prevention through connection' by building an inclusive, collaborative and courageous network which will drive the short- and long-term change required to successfully tackle the causes and consequences of violence.



The breadth of our Network, which includes different communities, groups, organisations and sectors, reflects our belief that everyone has a role to play in preventing violence. Our formal governance is through the Strategic Partnership Board which includes representation from a range of different organisations.

- Community leaders
- District council representation
- East Midlands Ambulance Service
- Educational representation
- HMP Leicester
- Integrated Care Board
- Leicester City Council (Public Health, Children’s Services, Neighbourhoods)
- Leicestershire County Council (Public Health, Children & Families Services)
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Trust
- Leicestershire Partnership Trust
- Leicestershire Police
- The Probation Service
- Active Together
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Rutland County Council (People Service)
- Turning Point (Substance Misuse Provider)
- University Hospital Leicester
- Voluntary Action Leicester(shire)

The VRN’s Strategic Director works on behalf of this partnership and also leads the VRN’s central multi-disciplinary team (↗). This team remains pivotal to the progress made by the Network as it provides the capacity, focus and expertise to realise the VRN’s mission and ambition.

Our Approach

The VRN is Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's first partnership which takes a public health approach to tackling serious violence. This means that we recognise that violence, like other health and social issues, has root causes, it can be treated and it can be prevented. Our work is underpinned by our core principles:

- 1 Empower everyone, including young people and communities, to play a role in preventing violence.** We seek to widen involvement, particularly amongst those most affected by violence, so that responses are more relevant, responsive and effective. We will also promote leadership amongst young people, communities and at all levels of organisations to build capacity and the reach of our work.
- 2 Secure maximum impact through maintaining a population focus.** When allocating resources and targeting prevention activity we will ensure this reaches the populations most at risk and impacts positively on reducing inequalities.
- 3 Ensure our work is evidence-informed.** We will use data and gather knowledge from a range of sources to improve our understanding of the nature and causes of violence locally and shape our response. We will seek to share this knowledge across and beyond the Network so to promote a shared understanding and improve effectiveness.
- 4 Adopt a life-course approach.** We recognise that prevention holds the greatest potential if we invest in healthy child and adolescence development, actively support transitions to adulthood and promote resilience in individuals, families and communities. We seek to prevent violence at the earliest opportunity and with a particular emphasis on early year's development and relational, contextual and trauma-informed approaches.
- 5 Promote and support whole-system thinking and action.** We will continuously seek to lead and collaborate across the whole system, promoting joint working and problem-solving between agencies and within communities where challenges or barriers arise.
- 6 Add value and create sustainable solutions.** We will seek to strengthen existing structures and services wherever possible including investing in capacity and asset-building. We will invest additional resource only where there are identified gaps and with a view to making the case for mainstream investment.
- 7 Aim to continuously learn and improve.** We will assess the effectiveness and impact of our work including seeking stakeholder feedback, evaluating interventions and sharing learning across the local and national violence reduction and prevention network.

The VRN produces an annual Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) (↗) which underpins our Response Strategy (↗). The Response Strategy sets out the LLR-wide strategic response to public place serious violence affecting young people and communities over and above the many routine services and interventions already being delivered.



2022-2023 SNAPSHOT

We designed, delivered and evaluated 7 interventions aimed at preventing violence

We provided support to 3275 children and young people who were at-risk of or involved in violence

We funded 12 grassroots community groups to increase the involvement of young people in the VRN partnership

We reached 842 young people through our youth involvement work

We delivered Trauma Informed Training to 1466 Early Help professionals and Youth Workers

We empowered 40+ community members through the Community Leadership Programme

We reached over 2.3 million parents, carers and young people through our Live Safe social media campaigns

We trained 6 new 'Train the Trainers' and rolled out the 'Mentors in Violence Prevention' programme to a further 13 schools

We shared learning from our programmes and evaluations with 1000's of practitioners and community members

We held 4 Hope Hacks events involving over 250+ young people from across the Midlands

In 2022 the VRN participated in a Joint Readiness Assessment to understand the readiness of Leicestershire to implement the Serious Violence Duty and the maturity of the local partnership.

They found Leicestershire was ‘Mature, demonstrating best practice’ across the following key areas:



Response Strategy: In preparing the strategy, Leicestershire considers strategies published by other areas, and engages with partners and community. The Leicestershire-wide strategy is complemented by responses to serious violence included in CSP strategies.

Cooperation on Information and Data Sharing: Leicestershire has created an interactive data dashboard to facilitate regular sharing and visualisation of data which all partners use. Data quality is not only understood but improved, and is used to support long- and short-term assessment of impact and demand.

Coproduction: Leicestershire’s approach to serious violence are regularly co-designed with appropriate partners. Partners regularly consult with children and young people and service users through dedicated co-production events and feedback-gathering channels.

Counter Narrative: Leicestershire understands and commits to a public health approach. Leicestershire has a targeted mission statement; identifies risk and protective factors; and evidences counter-narrative operationalisation.

Community Consensus: Community engagement is embedded in the partnership’s ways of working. The community is able to see key documentation linked to the strategy. Leadership within the partnership values the input of the community and are motivated to put resources towards leveraging the community.

Change and Impact: Leicestershire has developed a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework to evaluate work, supported by data sharing. Evaluation of impact and best practice examples feed into continuous improvement of approach.

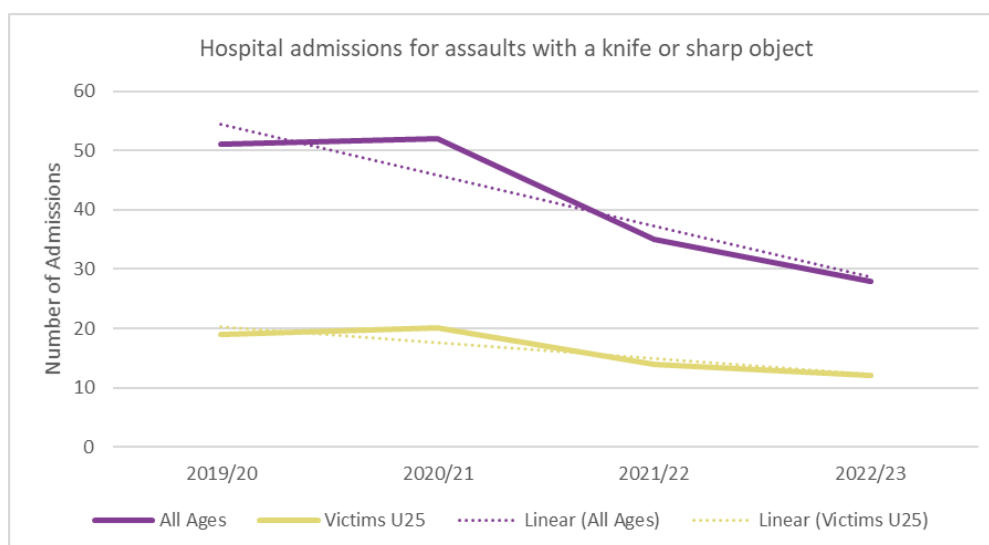
Impact on Serious Violence

There are several indications from performance data that the Violence Reduction Network is having a positive impact on public place serious violence including in relation to our priority focus of under 25 year olds. There are, of course, caveats to all data and caution should be exercised during interpretation.

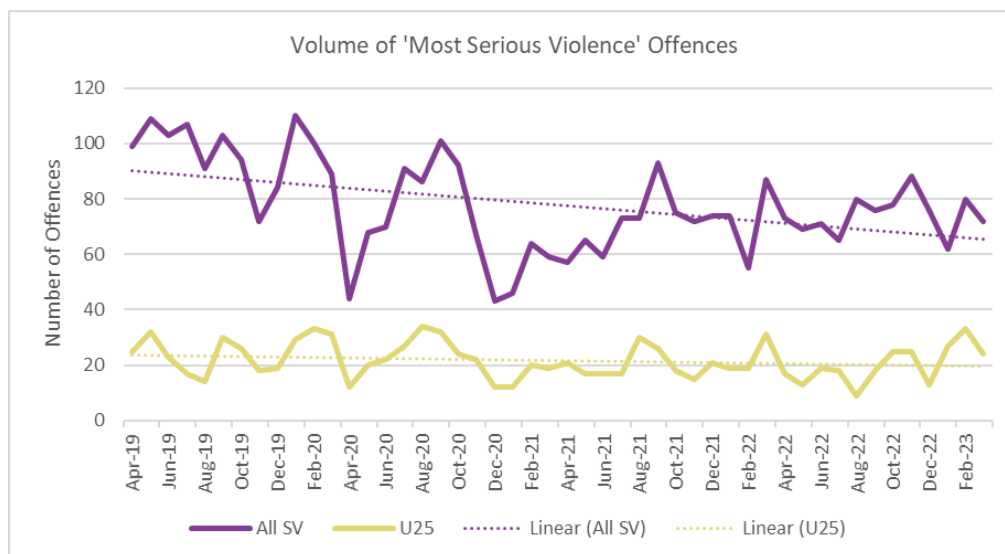
In relation to the Home Office’s ‘success measures’, compared to the 2019/20, the year in which the VRN was established, there have been reductions across all three measures when analysing the data for both all ages and under 25s (with the exception of non-domestic homicides involving all ages which remained constant). Of note is that under 25s report a greater percentage decrease compared to all ages when focusing on the police-related measures.

Data Source	Home Office Success Measure	Age Group	% change comparing 2022/23 to 2019/20
Police	A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25	All ages	-1.6%
		Victim U25	-10.2%
	A reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives	All ages	0.0%
		Victim U25, involving knives	-50.0%
Health	A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25	All ages	-45.1%
		Victim U25	-36.8%

The most significant decrease has been observed with the rate of hospital admissions over the last four financial years, as highlighted by the chart below.



There is also evidence of a reduction in volumes of ‘most serious violence’. The chart below demonstrates a notable reduction in the number of reported Murder, Attempt Murder, GBH with Intent and Robbery (Personal and Business) since the VRN was established and presents respective decreases of 23.3% and 18.9% for all ages and under 25s when comparing 2022/23 with 2019/20.



In 2019/20, data suggested that under 25s in LLR were committing serious violence at a rate over double that of over 25s. Looking at the rates for the latest financial year, the difference in rate has decreased by over 10%, highlighting that the VRN’s priority focus group has seen a reduction in rate relative to the rest of the local population.

We have continued to make progress across the strategic priorities outlined in our Response Strategy. The following sections demonstrate the key areas of progress and achievements within each of these workstreams.

Leadership and Cultural Change

Our Leadership & Cultural Change theme aims to secure system change through investing in the leadership and cultural change necessary to prevent violence in the long-term.

Key successes over the past year include:

- Training a further six school leaders as Train the Trainers to expand, strengthen and sustain the delivery of the Mentors in Violence programme.
- Establishing the Implementation Group to ensure the partnership mobilises and delivers the expectations outlined in the new Serious Violence Duty.
- Producing a Readiness Assessment for our partners who are specified authorities as set out in the Serious Violence Duty and Community Safety Partnerships who are now required to have an explicit priority related to the prevention of serious violence.
- Delivering a series of Briefings on the Serious Violence Duty to our Strategic Partnership Board, the Implementation Group and different organisations, sectors and Community Safety Partnerships.

- Continuing to design and deliver trauma-informed training (7) across the Early Help workforce (see below for further information).
- Developing the content and design of the 'LiveSafe' (7) website for young people, parents and professionals on further elements of adolescence safety including substance misuse, healthy relationships and the 'Make A Stand Against Violence' campaign. LiveSafe equips young people, parents and professionals with the knowledge and tools to keep young people safe and ensure that there is 24/7 access to information and support.

CASE STUDY: EVIDENCE INFORMED CAMPAIGNS

Our work is contributing to a cultural shift in local campaign work with the adoption of public health principles. Over the past year we have seen the re-design of the LiveSafe (7) website to incorporate and reflect the changing needs and diversity of young people in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Co-produced and designed with expertise from across the partnership and local young people, the LiveSafe website now features new content on Substance Use and Healthy Relationships and can be translated into the ten most frequent languages spoken in LLR.

We have also redeveloped the active bystander campaign designed with and for young people: 'Make a Stand Against Violence' (7). Through these campaigns, young people, parents and carers can access a broad range of support, advice and information on preventing violence and staying safe.

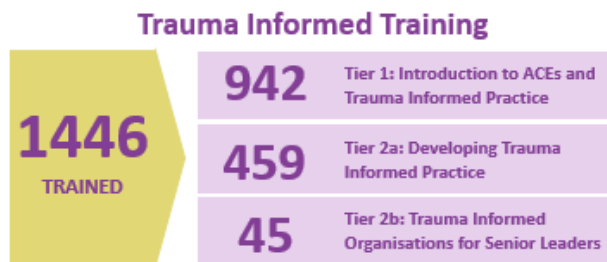
In terms of reach, our latest social media campaigns directing young people, parents and carers to the LiveSafe website achieved over two and half million impressions on social media and over 28,000+ genuine clicks on advertising.



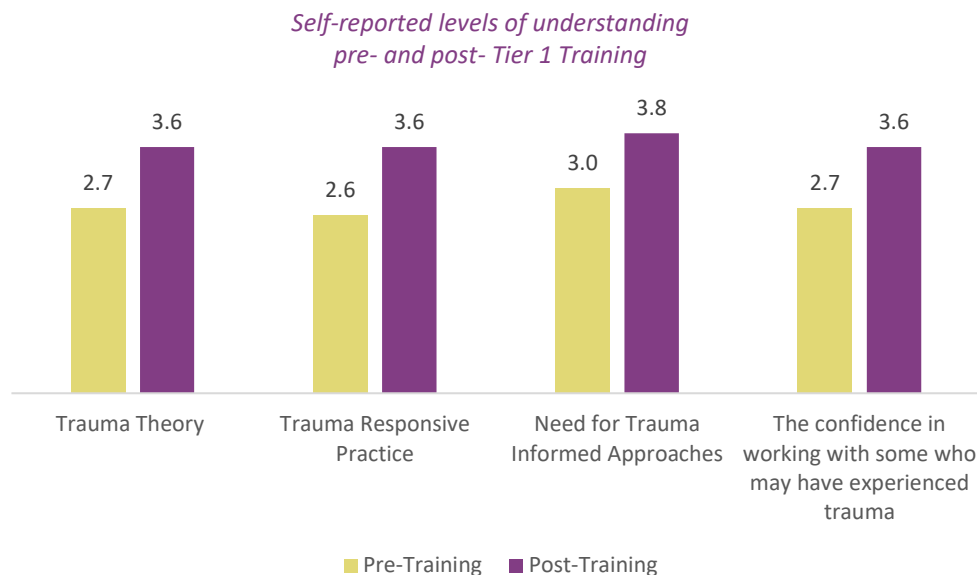
Trauma-Informed Training

The VRN have continued to deliver trauma-informed training (↗) across the Early Help workforce.

Since the project started, more than 1,400 Early Help professionals and youth workers have received trauma-informed training.



Evidence from post-training evaluation suggests that these sessions have led to improvements in professionals' understanding and confidence in their ability across many areas as illustrated below:



Trauma Informed Partnership

The VRN has further expanded the Trauma Informed Partnership (↗) across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. During the last 12 months we have hosted a Trauma Informed Partnership co-production event to develop and help contribute to the forthcoming Strategic Needs Assessment. We have also undertaken a complete redesign and redevelopment of the Trauma Informed Partnership pages on the VRN website. New Partnership pages house a library of resources for parents and carers, organisations and professionals, links to available training, and access to 'Train the Trainers' and 'Champions' materials.



Data, Evidence and Evaluation

Our Data, Evidence & Evaluation theme aims to maximise our impact on serious violence through making the best use of multi-agency data, insights and evidence.

Key successes over the past year include:

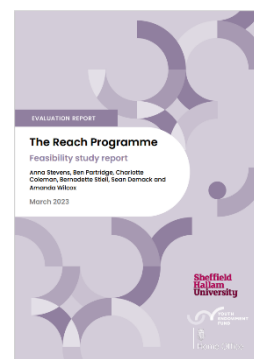
- Further developing the Serious Violence Dashboard for the police enabling them to better identify and respond to high-harm individuals (e.g. repeat offenders), victims and at-risk young people.
- Establishing a consistent monitoring framework across all VRN-supported interventions. We collect evidence on the demographic and geographic profile of referrals and participants, their presenting risk factors, type of support provided, length of time on the programme and the outcomes achieved quarterly.
- Developing an intervention monitoring dashboard to visualise and monitor data on a quarterly basis. The dashboard provides a breakdown per intervention based on the data collected (i.e. participant profiles, referral sources, outcomes etc) to enable the VRN to monitor the reach and outcomes of the intervention as well as support the partnership to adapt and improve delivery.
- Publishing a Serious Violence Partnership Dashboard which incorporates multi-agency data including crime, health, education, social care and drug and alcohol data, along with community insights. This means that responsible authorities – as determined by the Serious Violence Duty – and Community Safety Partnerships can access tailored datasets to inform their local prevention strategies.
- Commissioning and supporting the delivery of three process and impact evaluations of VRN interventions with the findings leading to improvements in the delivery of support for at-risk and violence involved young people. The following provides a summary of the key findings from two of these evaluations:

“The dashboard has enabled us at a local level to have access to serious violence data that we can use to effectively respond both operationally and strategically to serious violence. The dashboard is really user friendly, and alongside training provided by the VRN has enabled us to be able to easily manipulate the data for our needs. Locally we have used this data to inform our first local serious violence strategic needs assessment. The support provided by the VRN in guiding us through the production of our first Strategic Needs Assessment has been key to us producing a robust assessment”.

**Rachel Burgess,
Blaby and Hinkley and Bosworth CSP**

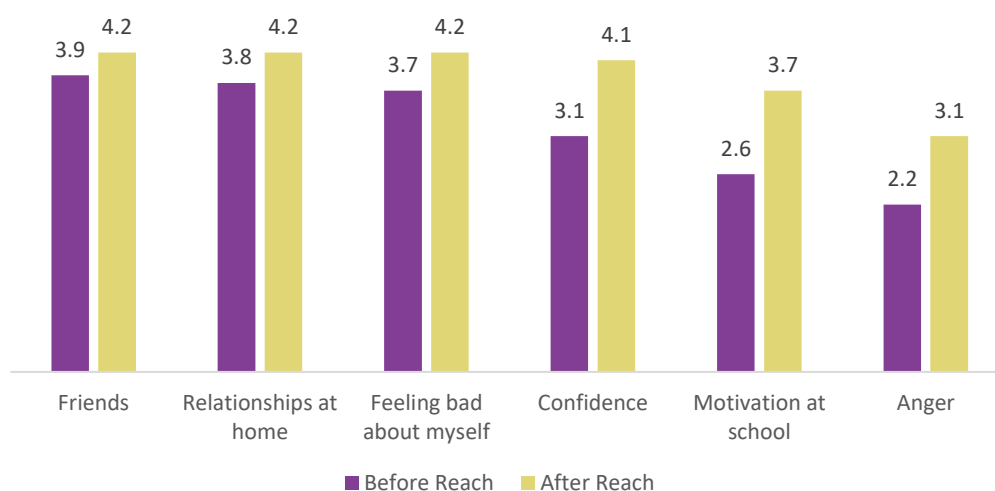
The Reach Programme

The Reach Programme (↗), funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (↗), is aimed at young people between the ages of 11–16 who live in Leicester and are at risk of exclusion from school. The programme uses trained youth workers to deliver mentoring sessions to young people over a six-month period. Sessions focus on relationship building, social skills, confidence, wellbeing and resilience, in addition to providing recreational activities.



The independent evaluation found:

- 85% of young people recruited to Reach successfully completed the programme.
- The ability to be flexible in the delivery of the programme proved crucial to its success.
- The programme provided support in a timely way, which was not always possible with other interventions.
- Finding common ground and related experiences; the ability of the YW to empathise with the YP; creating feelings of safety, security and trust in the YP; being an ally/friend; and being non-judgemental all contribute to the success of building a trusting relationship between the young person and youth worker.
- YWs provided a crucial role in supporting YP and parents to build more positive relationships.
- Through the evaluator's observation activities, high-quality delivery was observed.



The Violence Intervention Project

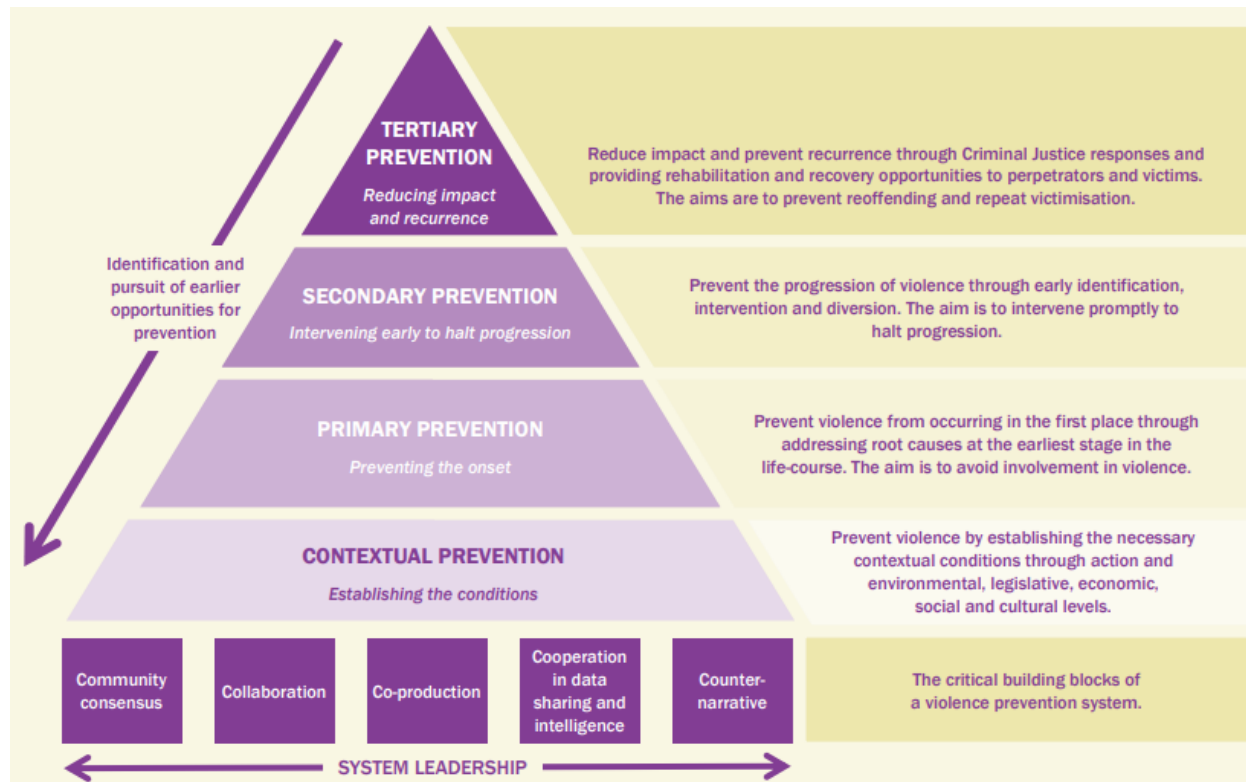
The Violence Intervention Project (VIP) is a service provided within custody and an accident and emergency department for young people aged 11-25 years old who have experienced serious violence. The model is based upon the reachable moment approach which seeks to engage young people at key times in their contact with services. Young people on VIP are offered community support from trained VIP staff after release from custody or A&E. The support worker will continue to support the young person to access other services, act as an advocate, and offer continued emotional support.

The independent evaluation found:

- 1068 young people were contacted through the VIP service between January 2022 and March 2023.
- Young people and their families describe a supportive and flexible approach by VIP workers which has had positive impacts on their wellbeing and motivation to engage with employment and educational opportunities.
- Young people self-reported improvements in their wellbeing across 5 categories; emotional regulation, behaviour management, self-esteem, confidence, resilience, and their ability to manage anger.

Prevention

Through drawing on the public health approach, guidance from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparity (OHID) and our core principles, we have developed and adopted a framework which has been used to develop our Response Strategy and continuously guides implementation and delivery.



In terms of how the Framework translates into prevention activity, **contextual prevention** has the potential to achieve the most far-reaching impact due to its focus on ensuring civic-level policy and strategy and on creating the conditions and environments that are most likely to prevent violence. The **primary, secondary and tertiary levels of prevention** focus on different populations starting with a universal ‘for all’ focus and becoming more targeted and specialist as the risks and development of violence increases.

Over the past year, the Violence Reduction Network has undertaken a range of activity which spans the different prevention levels:

Primary Prevention

- Commissioning a research agency to conduct a rapid evidence review of what the evidence-base is effective in respect of parenting programmes. The study also included in-depth interviews and focus groups with local practitioners to collect perceptions and experiences of delivering high-quality support to families across LLR.
- Publishing ‘A Handbook for Secondary Schools’ (↗) that provides information to support the development of a

“MVP continues to go from strength to strength and is now an integral part of our PSHCE programme. As the programme progresses and more students are exposed to what MVP is, the more volunteers we have to be Mentors. We continue to find that the MVP programme adds incredible value to all involved.”

Tracy Atkinson, Redmoor Academy & MVP Trainer

whole school approach to violence prevention.

- Continuing to support the implementation of Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) (7) in secondary schools with plans to roll this out to primary schools across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. MVP trains students to act as Mentors and equips them with the confidence, knowledge, and skills to identify and speak out against bullying, abusive behaviour
- Welcoming the third cohort of community leaders onto the Community Leadership Programme (7) which provides high quality input and support to develop leadership styles, knowledge and tools to enable community leaders to strengthen their work and impact locally.

Secondary Prevention

- Collaborating with the OPCC to partner with 12 community groups to provide evidence-informed diversion activity to at-risk young people in hotspot areas (7). This includes the delivery of activity related to pro-social activities such as sports, music and art.
- Continuing to co-invest in the Early Intervention Service (7) for young people between the ages of 10 and 17 who are either subject to a community resolution order or have been identified as being at risk of offending. The service provided evidence-informed support to nearly 200 young people in Leicester. Findings from the impact evaluation commissioned by the VRN were used to secure sustainable funding for this intervention.
- Extending the training provision, regularity, and reach of the VRN Provider Network which is an ever-growing local community of practice for practitioners and managers working to prevent serious violence affecting young people.
- Partnering with Leicester City in the Community (7) and Leicestershire Cares (7) to further expand support for young people in relation to Sports and Physical Activity (7) and Employment, Training and Education (7).
- Being awarded £75,000 in collaboration with the Violence and Complex Crime Unit to commission research to assess the impact that hotspot policing has on community perceptions of violence and of Leicestershire Police. This involved in-depth interviews with over 100 community members and business owners, and more than 1500 surveys with local residents in areas with and without hotspot policing operations.
- Working with the Violence and Complex Crime Unit in Leicestershire Police to commission an independent evaluation of Police School Liaison Officers.

“The VRN Provider Network training has exposed me to different perspectives and knowledge that I can use in my skill set when working with young people across Leicester. As a youth worker it is important that I stay aware of relevant information that is affecting my young people. The VRN training has had current topics that help me to support my young people”.

Youth Worker

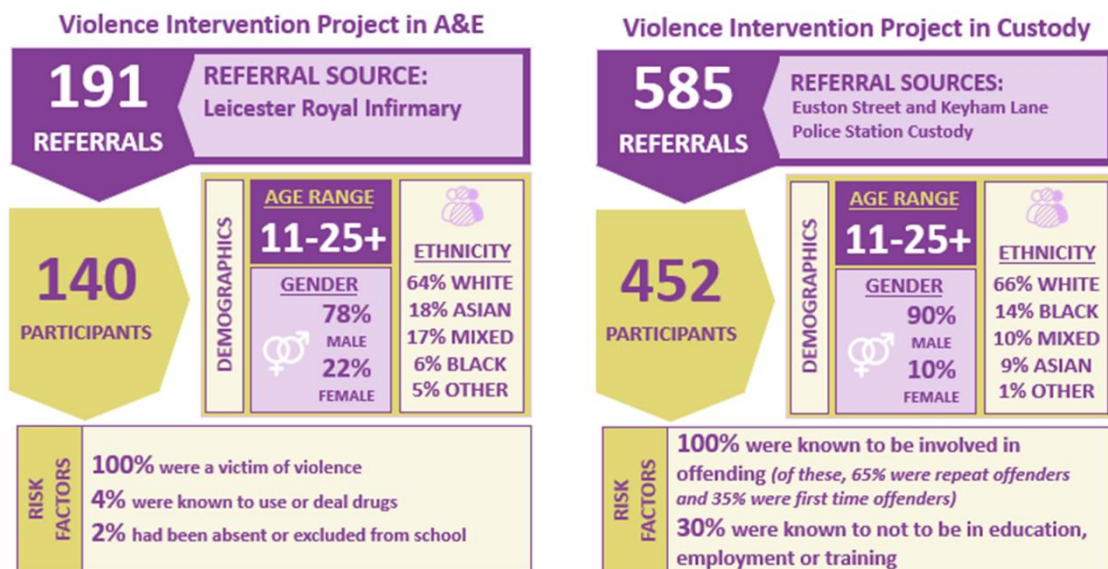
The Community Leadership Programme was more than just a way to learn new skills; it was also a way to connect, hone your skills, meet like-minded individuals, and join a powerful community that shares a common vision—to amplify the voices of our diverse community and create change.

**ZamZam Yusuf,
Participant and Director of
‘Unlimited Possibilities’**

- Commissioning a research agency to conduct a rapid evidence review of how we can effectively support young people who are neurodiverse in the criminal justice system. The study also included a survey of and in-depth interviews with local practitioners to gain good practice examples being delivered locally.

Tertiary Prevention

- Further developing the Violence Intervention Project (VIP) (7) which provides timely and tailored support to young people attending the Accident & Emergency department. Commonly referred to as a 'reachable moment', VIP support workers engage with young people and offer support to assist recovery and address pressing issues such as safety and emotional well-being.
- Working with our health partners and the police to develop an Injury Surveillance System which is accessible to relevant operational groups – such as the Night-Time Economy Group – to inform responses which prevent and reduce serious violence.
- Coordinating a successful partnership application to the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund for £1.4 million to design, develop and evaluate a local model of focused deterrence (7). The Phoenix Programme seeks to reduce harm by working with those who are linked to networks of criminality such as Urban Street Gangs and Organised Crime Groups. It is delivered by a multi-agency, community-focused team with support from a wide-range of groups and organisations. The team offers tailored and tangible support carefully balanced with deterrence through swift, certain and well-coordinated disruption and enforcement activity if concerns persist.
- Continuing to invest in the Violence Intervention Project in custody which provides a window of opportunity to intervene with young people involved in serious violence and associated offences.



Our Next Steps

Following the enactment of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 – which came into force in January 2023 – the year ahead will see the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) providing support to and coordinating the partnership’s response to the Serious Violence Legal Duty.

A notable change which will influence delivery over the next 12 months is the evolution of our local definition of serious violence. The Strategic Partnership Board has agreed to revise the local definition of serious violence to:

“Violence resulting in significant physical injury and other serious harm, including sexual violence. Violence may be committed with or without weapons, and may take place in domestic or public places.”

In terms of next steps, the VRN Team will lead on the production of the local partnership’s Strategic Needs Assessment – a core requirement of the Serious Violence Legal Duty – in line with this new definition. The VRN Team will also lead on the production of a revised Response Strategy, ensuring that the findings of the Strategic Needs Assessment are shared and used to inform priority-setting. The Team will also organise co-production sessions and events with relevant authorities, other partners and communities to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the design and where appropriate, the delivery of the strategy.

The Serious Violence Duty requires specified authorities to plan and collaborate to prevent and tackle serious violence in their local area. This means working together and using existing partnerships where possible, to share information and take effective coordinated action with their local communities.