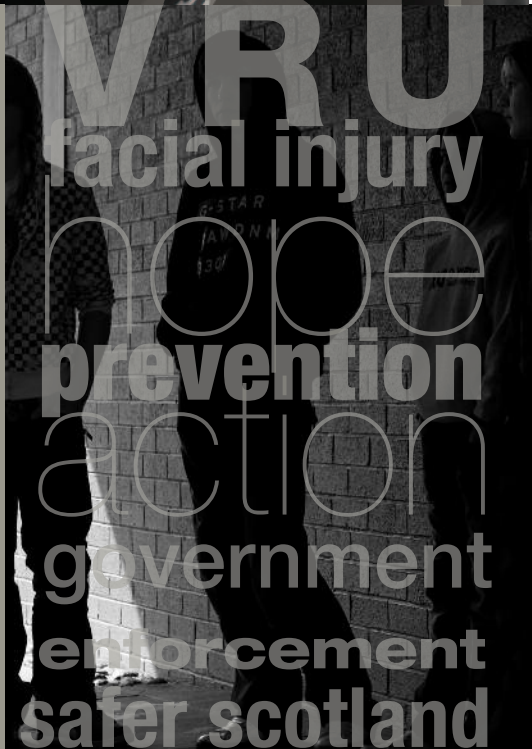



VRU

outline of past work and future projects

VIOLENCE
reduction unit
violence is preventable not inevitable



Contents



Introduction	2
CIRV	4
National Anti-Violence Campaign	6
Phoenix Database	9
Gang Mapping	10
Knives and other weapons	12
Life Licences	14
Innovative Policing	16
Injury Surveillance	18
Websites	20
Medics Against Violence	22
Addressing Violent Behaviour	24
Parental Support	26
Influence	29
David's Story	30
Community Safety	32
Legislative and Process Change	34
Media and Communications	37
Awareness Raising	38
The future: an assets based approach	39
VRU and the future	40

Introduction

Purpose of the document

- To create a record of VRU activity and influence
- To highlight our use of the public health model and the primary, secondary and tertiary elements as a framework for examining practice and engaging other partners.
- To outline projects undertaken by the VRU, the unit's wider influence and the impact of both.

In 2004 Strathclyde Police produced a report which revealed that whilst significant effort had been expended in tackling violent crime and detection rates were high, levels of violence continued unabated. The activity of the police alone had merely kept the lid on the problem.

The force decided that to achieve sustainable reductions, they needed to look at the issue differently. In 2005 they established the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to develop strategies and operations to address the problem of violence in Strathclyde.

In April 2006 the VRU became a national unit, jointly funded by the Scottish Government and Strathclyde Police. It has received cross party support.

VRU approach

Adopting the public health approach described in the World Health Organisation's World Report On Violence and Health (2002), the unit developed simple aims:

- **reduce violent crime and behaviour by working with agencies in the fields of health, education, social work, etc**
- **achieve long-term societal and attitudinal change**
- **focus on enforcement to contain and manage those who carry weapons or are engaged in violent behaviour.**

We aim to reduce violence through:

Enforcement

We recognise that while prevention measures are key in delivering violence reduction, intelligence led practices in enforcement and addressing the behaviour of violent perpetrators are crucial in achieving reductions short term.

Attitudinal Change

We work to challenge and change what is perceived as normal by both professionals and communities in relation to violence in our society.

Primary Prevention

We support the development of policies and programmes focusing on supporting parents and children during early years. Whilst this is an advocacy role, it is central to the strategy of reducing violence in the long term.

Secondary Prevention

We aim to develop and scale up to national level a range of prevention programmes to divert those at risk of developing violent behaviour or becoming a victim. Our goal is to reduce the number of young people affected by violence in the long term.

Tertiary Prevention

We work to identify and develop services and interventions for perpetrators and victims of violence. These can be delivered in a range of settings and circumstances to ensure maximum use of the “teachable moment” in an individual’s life, with the aim of reducing violent behaviour, reoffending and victimisation.

The VRU works closely with Scottish Police Forces, the Scottish Government, the NHS, local government and a range of other partners at local, national and international level to deliver the sustainable change required to reduce violence in Scotland.

CIRV:

Why did we do it?

Intelligence analysis showed that significant violence and wider harm was caused predominantly by young males, many of whom also affiliated themselves to street gangs. These individuals committed violent acts on their own, in pairs and in groups. They were persistent in their behaviour and traditional policing had limited effect on sustainable reductions.

What did we do?

Set up in 2008, the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) aims to reduce violence in the east end of Glasgow, where there are some 55 established street gangs with around 700 members.

Supported by Scottish Government, CIRV is based on the highly successful Boston Ceasefire model and tailored to fit the local context. Combining hard edged enforcement with an intensive engagement process, CIRV uses the gang itself to motivate individuals to change their behaviour. Over half of known gang members have actively engaged with CIRV in the first year of the project alone, with each participant pledging to cease their violent behaviour.

CIRV's multi-agency case management process has referred clients to a range of programmes and services delivered by a network of partners, including a mentoring support service for those struggling to change their behaviour. Extensive enforcement activities have been undertaken to deal with those who persist in violent behaviour.

What are the results

CIRV's first year saw a reduction of 49.2% in violent offending by individuals who had engaged with the initiative.

The CIRV approach is having a positive impact on violence and the lives of both individuals and the communities where they live. Independent research has concluded members are eager to reintegrate into society and most joined the initiative hoping to find a job and gain some stability in their lives.

This reduction provides a significant return on the investment in terms of reducing resources required to deal with the aftermath of violence. The core CIRV project is currently funded by the Scottish Government, however, this funding was more than matched by existing services.

The future

Intelligence Gathering and Analysis
Gang Engagement and Self Referral
Case Management
Mentoring
Programmes and Services

ENFORCEMENT

Glasgow's CIRV process of gang identification, engagement, case management and enforcement is highlighted above.

Targeted enforcement runs along side all of the elements as a constant part of the CIRV process.

In 2011 CIRV will be mainstreamed within Strathclyde Police, removing dependency on additional funds to implement the service. A key component of delivery of specialist services is the establishment of the CIRV Academy, which will create a consortium of service providers who seek independent funding to deliver services on CIRV's behalf.

Meanwhile, CIRV's success in reducing violence in the areas it currently operates in (the east and north of the city) means we must police those areas in different ways. One way is by encouraging the community to, in effect, "police" itself by creating a sense of community pride. We aim to do this through the development of a participatory budget scheme which will give small grants to local projects with a strong community buy in, thus increasing residents' sense of ownership and pride in their area and detracting from its gang associations.

National Anti-Violence Campaign

The campaign coordinates violence reduction operational activity among all of Scotland's police forces and focuses on two specific phases:

- **Weapons, alcohol and public space violence**
- **Domestic abuse**

These themes were identified through consultation with all forces and discussion at the Tactical Violence Reduction Group (TVRG), ensuring support from the Scottish Police Service. Past campaigns have looked at alcohol, knives, attitudinal change / education programmes and diversionary activities. In 2006 we produced a catalogue of police led youth diversionary projects in Scotland.

Key elements

- **Coordinated delivery of anti-violence campaigns**
- **A central repository of best practice, ensuring details on effective initiatives, programmes and tactics are shared**
- **Coordinated campaign materials and specialised operational equipment**
- **Brings together diverse partners to work with the police on violence prevention**

The future

The VRU will coordinate a more integrated campaign, with police working in tandem with other partners to maximise skills and resources to improve Scotland's response to achieving sustainable reductions in violence.

We are developing a range of performance indicators which will reflect the National Data Collection Plan and more accurately measure the inputs of the police service in Scotland in reducing violence in all its forms. This will encompass productivity and both qualitative and quantitative measures. There will be greater focus on domestic abuse, with the introduction of innovative interventions and self help gateways.

Case Study

Weapons and Public Space Campaign 2010

During June and July 2010, all Scottish forces, including British Transport Police, took part in the weapons and public space anti-violence campaign.

A range of policing tactics were employed, ranging from the deployment of ferroguard poles to proactive targeting of known violent individuals.

During this period of activity forces:

- Carried out over 67,000 stop searches
- Conducted nearly 12,000 visits to licensed premises
- Executed 762 warrants
- Seized 447 knives
- Charged 478 individuals with possession of a knife

In addition to increased enforcement during this phase, forces engaged in various other activities designed to divert, prevent and protect. These included conducting seminars with licensees on making more informed decisions when selling alcohol, offering personal safety classes to the elderly, addressing uncooperative offenders and promoting safer drinking and personal safety / anti-violence at various road shows and events.

National Data Collection Plan

Intelligence gathering and data dissemination is vital in identifying local issues as well as providing a complete national picture. However, there have been many difficulties experienced both at local level within the individual forces and centrally within the VRU. As a result, the National Data Collection Plan (NDCP) for violence in Scotland came into effect on 1 April 2010. Driven by ACPOS, the aim of the NDCP is to collect an enhanced data set on violence including methods, motives, offenders and victims across Scotland. Collecting data in such unprecedented detail gives greater understanding of the scope of violence and its geographic nuances, not only improving strategic responses and policy setting, but also acting as an invaluable aid to operational delivery and the targeting of valuable resources.

The future

At a local level, the data can be used to inform decision making regarding violence and the nature /scale of the problem, while at national level it gives a more accurate representation of violence issues in 21st century Scotland.

The VRU will produce quarterly updates following each sweep of the data and an annual national report on violence.

In conjunction with the Scottish Police Performance Framework (SPPF) team, the VRU are using the information yielded by NDCP to create more outcome focused performance indicators for forces to use. The information available will enable forces to develop more focused targets that will have tangible, measurable performance indicators.

Phoenix Homicide Database

Why was it needed? Historically, the Scottish Government published yearly stats about homicides in Scotland. The data was extremely high level, with little actionable information with which to drive prevention and improve detection. To rectify this, the VRU, in conjunction with Strathclyde Police, developed the Phoenix database.

What did we do?

Phoenix collates vital information to help us learn from homicides, suicides, fatal fires, drugs deaths and missing person cases. The database is the first of its kind in the world in terms of both its breadth and depth of information. Currently focused on enhanced information on homicides in Strathclyde, the database will be launched nationwide in 2011.

The introduction of Phoenix has created a major shift in how Strathclyde Police learns from homicide investigation. Through a process of introspection, examination and post-investigation action, instant feedback on how an investigation was conducted is now available.

As well as being a learning tool, Phoenix will give investigators the ability to link cases, perform complex analysis on behaviour and provide detailed management level information on everything from the number of homicides related to organised crime to how much the police spend in Glasgow investigating murder.

In 2010 Phoenix was awarded the Sally Pearson Memorial Award, an annual award for best practice with any system that assists homicide investigation. The award cheque has been donated to the Moira Fund, a grant making charity established in memory of Moira Jones who was murdered in Glasgow's Queen's Park in May 2008.

The future

Once launched nationwide, Phoenix will become the definitive source of information, intelligence and best practice on homicide and homicide investigation.

It will be expanded to other areas including drugs deaths and suicides, which will enable partnership agencies to share information and develop strategies to tackle these issues head on.

Gang Mapping

Territoriality is a historic problem in areas of Glasgow. In 2008, in preparation for future gang prevention work, the VRU undertook a research exercise to identify the scale and the nature of gangs and their territories in the east end of Glasgow.

What did we do?

To accurately reflect the gang territories, a three stage consultation model was implemented:

Stage 1: Produced detailed gang territory maps by consulting with community police officers, community groups and gang members to generate maps based on their experiences. The maps and the techniques used to generate these maps won an award from the Association of Geographic Information for innovation in the public sector.

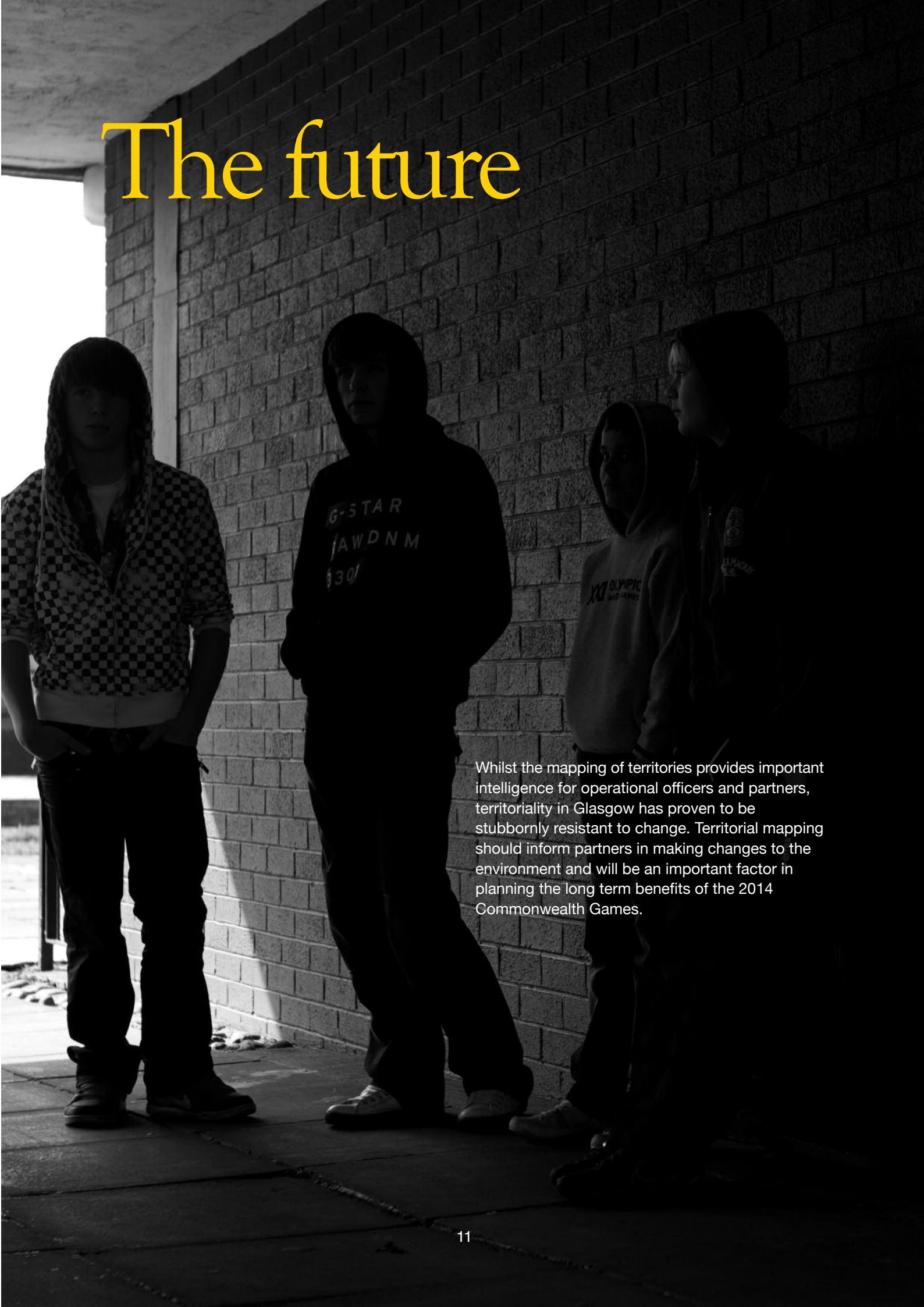
Stage 2: Examined the intelligence held on police systems to identify gang members, their gangs and networks.

Stage 3: Consolidated the intelligence from non-police sources to accurately identify current/active gang members.

Outcome

The accurate information on gangs, gang members and their territories allowed CIRV to target the **right people**, at the **right time** in the **right place**.

The future

A black and white photograph of four young men standing in a line against a brick wall. They are wearing hoodies and casual clothing. The man on the far left has a checkered hoodie. The man next to him has a hoodie with 'G-STAR RAW DENIM' and '330' printed on it. The man next to that has a hoodie with 'XXI OLYMPIC' printed on it. The man on the far right has a hoodie with a crest on it. The scene is dimly lit, with strong shadows.

Whilst the mapping of territories provides important intelligence for operational officers and partners, territoriality in Glasgow has proven to be stubbornly resistant to change. Territorial mapping should inform partners in making changes to the environment and will be an important factor in planning the long term benefits of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Knives and other Weapons

Stop Search

Why was it needed?

Stop search is one of the foundations of policing: it is high profile and central to engendering public confidence. It can be difficult tactic to execute in a busy public place where weapons are often concealed. Intelligence from hospitals indicated that knives were often discovered when removing patients' underwear.

What did we do?

Examination of stop search strategies and tactics used by individuals to conceal knives led the VRU to develop a training DVD and guidance notes for officers on how to conduct a search. We also developed a card which enables officers to "engage, stop and search". After carrying out the stop search, officers gave cards to individuals signposting diversionary activities in the local area.

More recently, the VRU produced a practice note on ferroguard poles, airport-style metal detectors which can be used in stop searches.

What is the result?

In support of this, successive governments, through the VRU, have invested in metal detecting technology, including hand held metal detectors and ferroguard poles. Approximately 1 million stop searches have been undertaken since 2005.

Swift Visible Justice

Why did we do it?

A core role of the VRU has been looking at the submission of cases to the Procurators' Fiscal. In 2007 there was a high number of case in which no proceedings were taken: this is something we continually monitor, as swift visible justice in relation to violence is key to our strategy. Analysis of the crime report forms filled in by officers highlighted gaps in the evidence presented about knife possession cases, which pointed to a training issue for officers in terms of understanding the legislation.

What did we do?

To combat this, we developed short training inputs around the legislation with the Scottish Police College, publishing easy to remember guidance for officer notebooks. As a result the level of cases which did not proceed has dropped significantly, ensuring that those that are charged with weapons carrying go to court.

The future

As the Scottish Police Service has recruited significant numbers of new officers this process must continue to ensure that they have the necessary skills to "get it right first time".

Intelligence led warnings to knife carriers

What was the problem? Whilst stop search is often the means by which knife carriers are identified, there is only a 2-3 per cent positive search rate in relation to weapons.

The VRU undertook analysis on the intelligence database and identified that there were up to 250 high graded reports of weapons carriers every month.

Develop new tactics

- **There was no current criminal history or supporting intelligence on the offender**

A letter was sent to the address of the suspect outlining the penalties for knife carrying and current police activity in their area

- **There were current crimes of violence in the offender's history and current intelligence**

A police officer visited the address of the suspect and delivered the 'warning' in person whilst gathering intelligence

Where next?

With the ongoing budget reductions, the need to police smarter and use alternative methods to enforce and prevent crime will become more pressing. This puts the emphasis on the suspect, creating confidence in communities where officers pro-actively visit the houses of violent offenders.

Life Licences

In Scotland there are currently over 600 individuals who have been released into the community on life licence. They represent some of the most high risk, dangerous individuals in Scotland.

In 2007, the VRU examined the process of identification and intelligence gathering on these individuals and identified a number of institutional risks that, if not addressed, could cause a failure of the system.

Risks

- Intelligence on individuals released on life licence was not routinely available on the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID)
- Old intelligence on individuals held in prisons was weeded from the system if there were no new entries
- The Life Licence Flags on the Criminal History System (then Scottish Criminal Records Office) were not prominent and easily missed
- There was no consistent method of processing the release intelligence / information within forces
- Paper based records within the Scottish Government were incomplete and out of date, not reflecting the individual's current circumstances

Action

- The VRU created a database from the electronic and paper based records held within the Scottish Government
- Processes were amended and a standard operating procedure was created detailing how to handle the information
- A new marker was created on SID to improve the prominence of the information
- New weeding procedures were implemented regarding those serving medium to long sentences to ensure there was no fall off of information

Community Intelligence

Bail conditions of offenders brought before the court were not informed by intelligence about the offender's home address. This often meant that violent suspects were bailed to locations which were already blighted by high violence levels.

What did we do?

The VRU introduced community intelligence statements to courts in 2006. These were designed to give the judiciary context in relation to locations into which offenders may be released on bail. The statements outlined the scale and nature of violence which was occurring in the offender's home location. These statements are used at the discretion of the judiciary in agreeing to or rejecting bail conditions.

The future

Over the past few years there has been an increasing trend towards murder and serious violence indoors. The common attributes are:

- The majority of incidents occurred in private at their home or the home of someone else
- The majority involved a knife
- The majority involved alcohol
- The majority were as a result of a quarrel or fight and there was no or little preplanning

Furthermore, many of the victims and the accused are known to criminal justice and have in some cases quite extensive histories of violence [for offending].

In 75 per cent of cases, the accused had a violent history (either individually or as the majority in the case of group assailants) and 45 per cent of the victims had a history of violence. In total, in 80 per cent of the homicides either the victim and/or the offender had a violent past.

Action

Preventing violence behind closed doors is challenging and hard to police by traditional methods. To respond to this we require innovative practice.

We are currently considering:

- The use of sobriety testing as part of bail, probation or licence conditions should be progressed. This could form part of police offender management, particularly for intimate partner violence
- Using licensing visits to off sales in hot spot areas to emphasise the importance of not selling to those already intoxicated
- A legislative and process change a number of years ago led to noisy parties being dealt with by council noise abatement officers. However, this may also be the key intervention point to stop a drama becoming a crisis and may be better attended by police officers, who need to intervene early, with the aim of preventing escalation of violence indoors

Innovative Policing

Operation Vine

Why did we do it? Targeting individuals who carry weapons requires a range of tactics, including stop search. However, intelligence led approaches are crucial to reducing the potential harm these individuals present. Working with our partners we identified common routes where buses and train seats were routinely slashed with knives – many thousands of seats are replaced by operators on a yearly basis.

Developing new tactics

Through this analysis we developed a highly effective, innovative policing operation which proactively targeted potential violence before it reached the city centre.

Results

In partnership with travel companies, Strathclyde Police and British Transport Police targeted buses and trains, stopping and searching individuals before they got to the city centre, resulting in a reduction of around 30 – 40% in violence.

Weapons Amnesty

What did we do? What were the results? In 2006 the VRU led the largest weapons amnesty in Scotland, deploying over 200 weapons bins and coordinating the operation. Whilst amnesties provide positive opportunities to engage with the public and many knives are deposited in the bins, evaluation of both cost and outcome of the amnesty demonstrated that they were of limited value and caution needed to be exercised when considering them in the future.

Active CCTV

What did we do? CCTV is a passive instrument and does little to prevent violence. In conjunction with the defence contractors Qinetiq, the VRU examined the possibility of creating an active CCTV system. After consultation and research, a laser was mounted on a CCTV camera in Glasgow to test the concept and by using the skills of the CCTV operators (who had been trained in body language identification) a series of trials were undertaken.

Results

Trial results were disappointing: Glasgow had just introduced high powered white street lighting, and for health and safety reasons the laser could not be powered up to a sufficient level to compensate. Engagement is necessary to move the laser to an area where city centre lighting is not an issue.

Exclusion Zone

What did we do? In consultation with the Glasgow Procurator Fiscal's office, the VRU established a city centre exclusion zone that could be applied to those found to be in possession of a knife in Glasgow city centre.

Results

The initiative was designed to stop potentially dangerous individuals entering the city centre during peak times for violence. As a result of setting up the zone, several individuals were successfully prosecuted for breach of bail, including a high profile businessman with connections to organised crime. It remains a tactic which Procurators Fiscal are able to recommend to Sheriffs.

The Future

Innovative, effective policing is a key component of tackling violence in Scotland. The VRU will continue to support forces and deliver best practice which is designed to tackle the problem of violence whenever and however it manifests itself.

Injury Surveillance

What was the problem? Research shows that only 30 per cent of those attending A&E with a violence related injury report the matter to the police. This means police resources are being allocated on only a fraction of the necessary information and victims are being denied access to relevant services.

What did we do?

This situation can be improved by setting up injury surveillance schemes in A&E departments. Medics collect anonymous data on assaults – location, time, but not names – each time a victim attends hospital. This data is then shared with police and local partners to target problem hotspots and improve provision of services for victims.

Current Situation

Injury Surveillance is currently operational in Lothian, Fife Lanarkshire and will soon be underway in the Central Scotland area. It is an additional activity for hospitals and many of the computer systems are not set up to gather this level of information. Feedback is critical as it enables hospital staff to see the information they gather being used tactically to prevent crime.

The future

On completion of the pilot within Lanarkshire, the VRU will produce a template business case and best practice guides on establishing injury surveillance across Scotland and how best to use the information in both prevention and enforcement activities. As part of this review, the VRU will consider all the models used across Scotland to ensure that the most effective model is used.

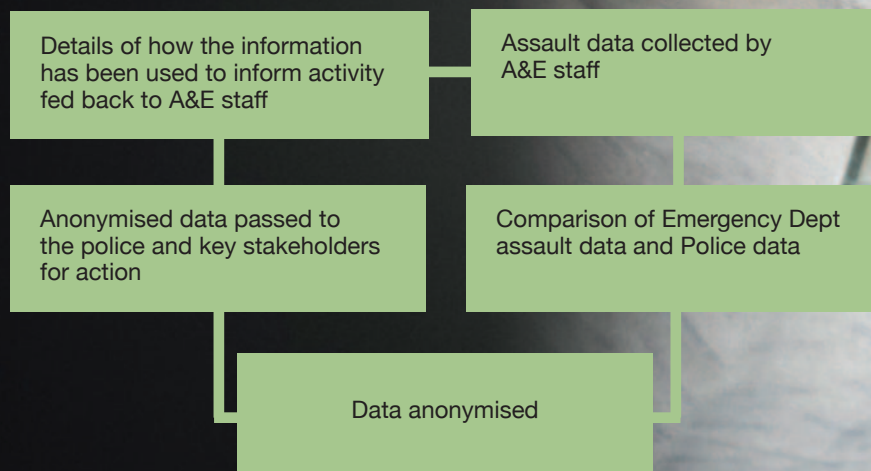
Case Study

NHS Lanarkshire Injury Surveillance Pilot

In an effort to overcome the issues of underreporting the VRU, in conjunction with Lanarkshire Health Board, has commenced an Injury Surveillance pilot, with assault data being collected by A&Es in three hospitals in the area.

Early indications from the pilot show that 49 per cent of violence related injuries were not reported to the police and 66 per cent involved alcohol. The data collected included information about where the assault took place, who carried it out and what weapon was used.

Analysis of weapon type suggest that nearly half the assaults that are presented do not involve a weapon and that only 11 per cent presented to the Lanarkshire pilot involved a knife, which, although considerably less than anticipated, may indicate a higher proportion of accurate police recording for knife related assault. For Lanarkshire, bottles and glass assaults are much more prominent but less likely to be recorded.



Websites: Online Engagement

Why was it needed? Tackling domestic abuse is a core part of the work of the VRU, both in encouraging reporting and tackling offenders. Providing easy to access, up to date information for victims and family members is key, yet a recent scoping exercise of police websites in Scotland highlighted a need to reconsider the information provided to the public in terms of domestic abuse.

Domestic Violence

What have we done?

Working with the Scottish Government and other partners, the VRU developed a national domestic abuse website. Designed with the safety of the user in mind, the site provides information not only for victims but also for perpetrators, young people, family / friends and professionals working in the field. Information on the site is provided in a range of languages to reflect the diverse population of Scotland.

Medics Against Violence

The VRU has undertaken the hosting, re-design and maintenance of the website of award winning charity Medics Against Violence.

The VRU will help to improve the usability and sustainability of the site as MAV seek to expand their work beyond the west of Scotland.

No Knives Better Lives

The VRU hosts the No Knives Better Lives website on behalf of the Scottish Government.

The VRU provides IT support for the upkeep of this site and the content is managed by the Scottish Government

VRU Website



The VRU website was re-launched in 2010 to provide an information gateway for professionals and public alike.

The website is rich with information and materials on all violence related issues. It has been well received by users and since the re-launch web traffic has increased significantly.

The website is complemented by the unit's use of social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter.



Medics Against Violence (MAV)

What was the problem? Violence is a massive drain on healthcare resources, yet many violence related injuries are preventable. Having worked with the VRU on previous violence intervention projects such as COVAID, a group of maxillofacial surgeons established Medics Against Violence (MAV), a charity that aims to raise awareness of the impact of violence related injuries and prevent people from becoming victims - and future patients.

What did we do?

MAV's first venture was an educational programme. Almost 200 medics have given up their free time to deliver the charity's powerful anti-knife message to school pupils and prison inmates, including those at Polmont Young Offenders' Institute. To date, almost 5,000 young people have received an input from MAV.

MAV's schools project has been recognised by the Scottish Policing Awards and also by the Glasgow Evening Times Community Champions Awards.

The future

MAV is currently in the process of expanding its activities across Scotland in order to reach more youngsters. Going forward, MAV will train dentists to support and encourage victims of domestic abuse to report to relevant agencies.

Colleagues in London and Jamaica have also expressed an interest in replicating the MAV model in their areas.

Domestic Violence

MAV & VRU

What was the problem? An increase in the reporting of domestic violence incidents is crucial in preventing future victimisation and addressing perpetrators. Dentists are frequently the first health professional a victim of domestic abuse sees when seeking care for violence related injuries. They often develop long lasting relationships with their patients that may encourage the disclosure of sensitive information, such as violence in a relationship. They are therefore perfectly placed to encourage reporting.

What did we do?

To take advantage of the “golden moment” this relationship may provide when it comes to domestic abuse, the VRU and MAV have developed a domestic abuse initiative for dentists, based upon an American model known as AVDR, a simple method which limits the dentist’s tasks to four areas:

Asking the patients about abuse

Validating messages acknowledging that violence is wrong and confirming the patient’s worth

Documenting signs, symptoms and disclosures in writing and with photographs, x rays or computer images/instant photographs

Referring victims to domestic abuse specialists in the community.

When dentists routinely ask about domestic abuse they are fulfilling a major part of the intervention, regardless of what the patient discloses.

The enquiry alone sends the message that abuse/violence is wrong and is a health care issue. Adopting this approach standardises the dentist’s intervention behaviours and leaves the ‘follow-up’ in the hands of domestic abuse advocates.

The intervention training will form a core part of the CPD for dental staff and will cost nothing to deliver. Having an intervention which sits alongside existing services in this manner is key to addressing violence reduction in a period of reduced budgets.

The future

MAV’s domestic abuse initiative is being trialled in Ayrshire, an area with a high incidence of domestic abuse in both urban and rural settings. Training will also be given to all dentists across the Forth Valley area at the beginning of 2011. Other health boards have already expressed an interest in adopting the programme for their staff.

Addressing Violent Behaviour

What was required? Although violence is a major issue for Scotland, early scoping work undertaken by the VRU showed that despite the prevalence of short term and community sentences there were few, if any, interventions available to address violence behaviour within short prison sentences.

What did we do?

Working with partners from health, the VRU helped implement a COVAID - Control of Violence for Angry, Impulsive Drinkers-programme in two maxillofacial departments. This is the first time this particular intervention had been used in Scotland, and it can be amended to intervene in a hospital clinic setting or in longer sessions within a prison.

The future

The development and testing of this intervention in a variety of settings will provide opportunities for agencies to intervene at a teachable moment in a offender's career where they may be motivated to make a change to their behaviour. The variety of intervention allows inputs to be given regardless of the length of sentence or within a treatment setting.

As part of our undertaking to examine the feasibility of dedicated violence / weapons courts and community payback, we are exploring the opportunities available to sheriffs to mandate such treatment programmes for violence.

Violence Intervention Programme Polmont Young Offenders Institute:

Polmont Young Offenders Institute holds young men convicted of violent offences from all over the country. The Institute offered a number of programmes tackling drugs and alcohol abuse but did not offer any form of violence intervention programme.

What did we do?

After discussions with the Institute in 2007, a cognitive behaviour therapy programme was introduced to help address the specific problems of the young men within their care. The VRU support this programme and regularly attend the 'graduation' ceremonies to offer support for those who wish to turn their lives around.

COVAID within a Prison Setting

What was required? Anger management courses in prison have traditionally been very long (over 200 hours) and therefore only those serving very long sentences for violence could get access to them. Addiewell Prison approached the VRU looking for assistance in setting up a programme that would allow them to address inmates' problems in a much shorter time.

What did we do?

After reviewing successful interventions within prison settings the VRU suggested that Addiewell prison should consider a COVAID delivery model. Unlike other traditional cognitive therapy models, COVAID addresses the core problems of alcohol and violence and can be delivered in 20 hours of group work.

Single Session COVAID

What was required? Capitalising on the “teachable moment” - the moment a person may be motivated to change their behaviour - is critical in delivering a prevention message.

In 2006 there were 18,473 presentations for facial injuries to A&E departments, 4036 of which were directly related to alcohol and, for the most part, violence.

As a result of this, the Glasgow Dental School tested brief motivational interviewing for alcohol and found some success with those who had a high AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test - heavy and problematic drinkers). However, the intervention showed little success among those not in this category.

What did we do?

In partnership with the VRU and Strathclyde Police, the Glasgow Dental School agreed to test out a brief intervention targeting alcohol and violence directly (Single Session COVAID).

The random control trial is complete and the last stage of follow up interviews are ongoing. Early indications show the intervention has had a significant effect on both violence and alcohol consumption.

Parental Support

Parenting is not easy – children don't come with a manual. In 2008, to help support parents and enable them to reduce the threat of violence in their children's lives, we produced a leaflet in conjunction with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) offering tips and advice. The leaflet was distributed to schools across the county so every child could take one home for their parents. Thousands more were sent to healthcare centres and libraries.

What was the result?

The leaflets proved so popular that to date three reprints have been undertaken. Health visitors and nurseries use them as part of their engagement with parents.

ParentLine Scotland / Children 1st attitudinal change campaign

Following the SCCYP parenting leaflet, the VRU organised an attitudinal change poster campaign with ParentLine Scotland / Children 1st, encouraging parents and carers to think about how they spoke to their children and how that might influence the child's behaviour not just in the short term, but in the long term.

Three versions of the "What you teach a child about violence you teach a child for life" posters were produced in order to target parents of children of all ages, as well as the practitioners who work with them. Highly effective in their message, feedback showed they had encouraged parents to think about their behaviour and the impact it could have on their child.

ParentLine Scotland gangs helpline

What was the problem?

Media coverage of issues such as knives, violence and gangs in recent years has created a sense of alarm and helplessness among parents. While the vast majority of these concerns will be unfounded, this does not decrease the anxiety of parents.

What did we do?

To help those parents who need advice and reassurance, the VRU set up a dedicated helpline service with ParentLine Scotland, producing a training course to help call handlers deal with such issues. To raise awareness of the helpline, we produced posters and advice leaflets for parents. While it is still too early to judge the impact of this campaign, the first call relating to concerns about gangs was received within 24 hours of the campaign launch in June 2010.

Youth Support based projects

Although much has been said in recent years about young people and violent, risk taking behaviour, the vast majority of Scottish youngsters will grow up to lead good lives and be a credit to their community. Sadly, there will always be some who will get involved in such behaviour, who will teeter between making good choices and bad choices. For these young people in particular, youth support projects that help and encourage them to make the right choices in life are vital.

Mentoring

What was the problem?

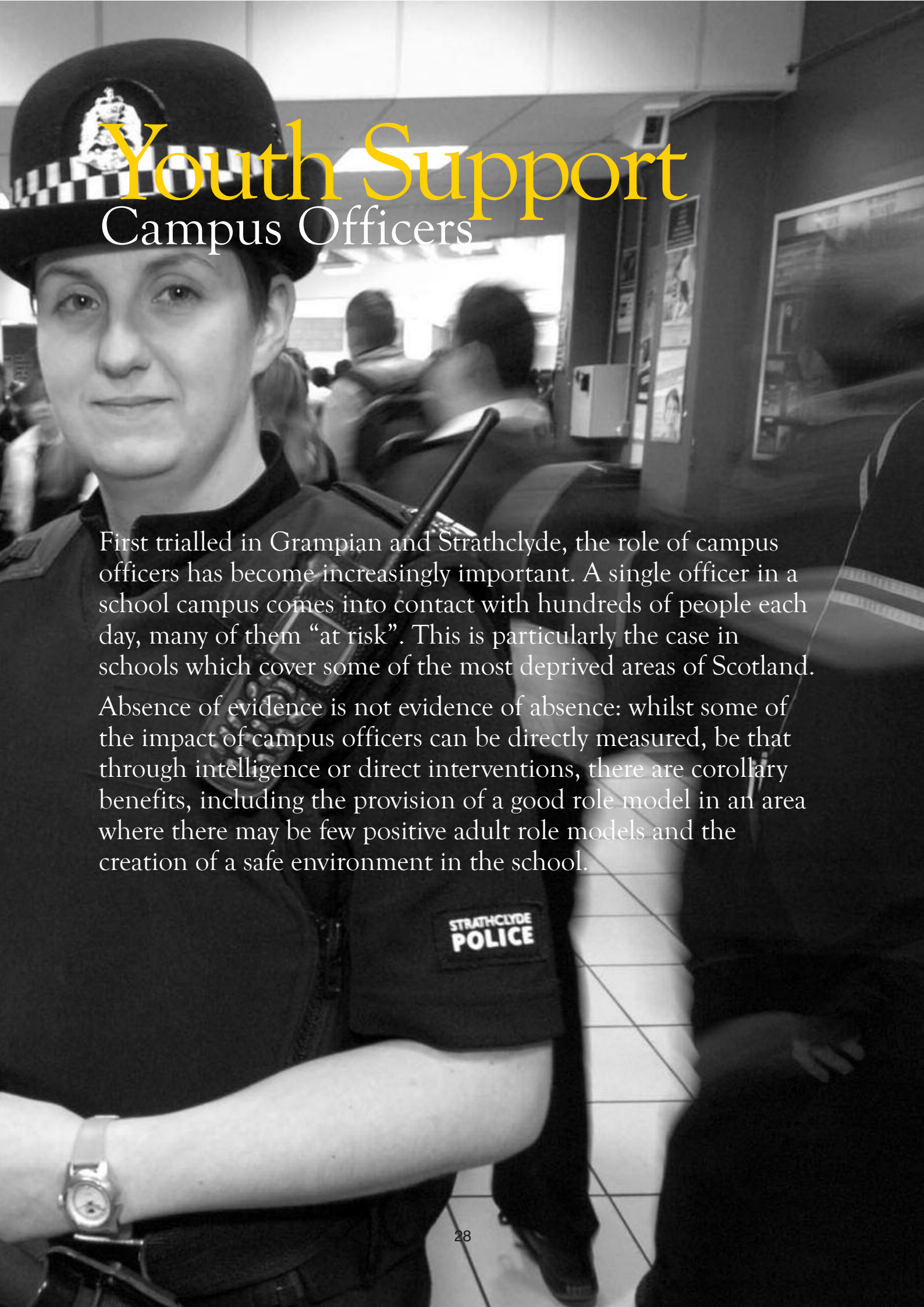
Many of Scotland's most at risk young people lack a positive role model in their lives, someone who, although seemingly ordinary, can provide inspiration, guidances and most of all an ear to listen. Research at both national and international level has shown that mentoring can reduce reoffending and prevent offending in those at risk.

What have we done?

To support these young people and help them make good choices, the VRU, YMCA (Scotland) and the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) are running three pilot projects in Bellshill, Perth and Kirkcaldy.

Each project provides mentors for young people identified through local early intervention groups. The aim is to stop these young people becoming involved with the Social Work Department.

Around 20 volunteer mentors have been recruited in each area and are managed by a local coordinator. Each mentor has received thorough training and will be allocated a young person referred to the project by the local group. The mentor not only works with the young person but seeks to provide support for the young person's family. An evaluation will be carried out at the end of the project.



Youth Support

Campus Officers

First trialled in Grampian and Strathclyde, the role of campus officers has become increasingly important. A single officer in a school campus comes into contact with hundreds of people each day, many of them “at risk”. This is particularly the case in schools which cover some of the most deprived areas of Scotland. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence: whilst some of the impact of campus officers can be directly measured, be that through intelligence or direct interventions, there are corollary benefits, including the provision of a good role model in an area where there may be few positive adult role models and the creation of a safe environment in the school.

Influence

David's Story, the impact of the VRU's influence and the future: an asset based approach to reducing risk

Through our work, we have helped changed attitudes towards violence among policymakers, politicians, the media, charities, communities and a whole host of others. While it is difficult to measure the impact this has had, we have undoubtedly seen a change in attitudes, with more and more people becoming convinced that violence need not be an inevitable part of life in modern Scotland. In this section we will look at how the VRU has influenced and continues to influence opinion and also at specific examples of the impact of that influence on a Scottish, UK and international basis.

Setting the direction

In 2007, the VRU produced its 10 year strategic plan on how violence reduction/prevention principles were to be adopted and embedded into services and agencies. The plan addressed the critical areas of enforcement, prevention and attitudinal change.

Since the VRU was established, addressing violence has become a key priority for all Scottish police forces and features among the strategic priorities for many councils and community safety partnerships.

In 2007, the Health Secretary declared that violence was a public health problem which led to violence being included in the Chief Medical Officer's annual strategic assessment.

Sharing Best Practice

The VRU has delivered an extensive programme of conferences and workshops covering topics such as weapons, domestic violence, alcohol fuelled violence analysis, injury surveillance, education, early years' interventions, gangs' interventions and community courts.

Thousands of people have attended the conferences from a diverse range of agencies including police, education, health, community safety, voluntary sector and councils. These have been delivered at low cost and with the ultimate aim of disseminating best practice to practitioners.

In conjunction with the Scottish Government, the VRU has been able to bring international experts to workshops in Scotland to share best practice and help improve service delivery.

David's Story



Nothing is more powerful than a simple, human story when it comes to engaging stakeholders.

In 2008, the VRU created 'David's Story', a presentation charting how a young boy came to be a murderer - and how his fate might have been changed. Bringing to life all the complex interagency issues involved when dealing with problem individuals, 'David's Story' resonates with agencies all over the world and demonstrates the potential consequences of failure to deliver adequate coordinated support.

Partnership Engagement

The VRU understand that sustainable change will only be delivered by productive partnership working. We have engaged both directly and indirectly with a wide range of partners at all levels, including directors and strategic change managers, as well as those responsible for delivery. We act as expert advisors in our field and participate in a myriad of multi-agency working groups including the Children's Parliament, the and Poverty Truth Commission, Faith in the Community, Equally Well, various Community Safety Partnerships, ACPOS, Criminal Justice Social Work Development, Alcohol Evidence Group etc. Through our contributions to these groups and others we have been able to establish violence reduction and violence prevention principles as core to decision making.

Through such partnership engagement we have seen successes in the delivery of CIRV, Injury Surveillance, the Inverclyde Joint Action Group, NiteZone and the Edinburgh Violence Reduction Partnership. The VRU has also built an alliance of members who have signed our violence reduction pledge.

In 2009, the VRU won the public sector special award from the Centre for Social Justice for the innovative partnership approach adopted in the delivery of CIRV.

Partnership Engagement in action

Community Safety Partnerships

The VRU engages directly with Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and is supporting local authorities in Inverclyde, Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire and Fife to develop and implement local violence reduction action plans. Multi-agency partnerships have already been set up in Edinburgh (Edinburgh Violence Reduction Partnership) and Inverclyde (Inverclyde Joint Action Group) to address area-specific issues and best practice from all CSPs is being shared nationwide as a result of VRU involvement.

Inverclyde Joint Action Group (JAG)

Created in February 2010, the JAG comprises public services with a direct link to families and communities where violence is considered prevalent.

Action so far:

Scoping of existing service provision
Partnership Delivery Conference
Consultation of service users

Outcomes and the future:

To produce and agree an action plan to deliver council wide mainstream services aligned to violence prevention principles.

EVRP (Edinburgh Violence Reduction Partnership)

A five year, multi-agency violence reduction strategy launched by the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership (ECSP), the EVRP brings together partners including the City of Edinburgh Council, Lothian & Borders Police, NHS Lothian, COPFS, Violence Against Women Partnership, Edinburgh Women's Aid, EWRASAC, Shakti, Scot-PEP and the VRU.

The programme asks for long-term commitment from partners to develop and implement policies that will change attitudes towards violence and the development of a recognised path to permanent and sustainable violence reduction.

- outcomes of VRU influence

Strathclyde Police Anti-Violence Directorate (AVD)

Following the VRU's designation as a national unit, Strathclyde police set up their own tactical policing unit designed to meet the force priority of reducing violence. Since its inception, the AVD have run a number of high profile campaigns and supported the VRU's national campaigns. They have also helped to pioneer tactics looking at social networking sites and the identification of high risk places and offenders.

Nitezone

Glasgow City Council's award winning Nitezone initiative was set up to tackle the problem of city centre violence during peak recreational hours of Friday and Saturday nights. From the start of the initiative the VRU has been heavily involved, championing ideas such as reducing waiting times for taxis / buses and increasing personal safety.

Nitezone is a partnership of Glasgow Community Safety Services, Glasgow Council, Strathclyde Police, First Group Ltd and Glasgow Taxis Ltd.

Early Years interventions

The VRU have always championed the merits of early intervention and offering support to young families to break the cycle of violence. This message has added significantly to the public health debate in Scotland and while the VRU does not claim to be solely responsible for encouraging the growth in this area, we are a significant voice in the debate.

In recent years we have seen early years interventions grow significantly in Scotland, with the introduction of the 'Nurse Family Partnership' in Edinburgh, 'Triple P' in Glasgow and the Early Years Intervention Framework, championed by the Scottish Government.

Establishment of the VRT

To help the VRU and provide a link to elected officials and policy makers, the Violence Reduction Team (VRT) was established within the Scottish Government's Community Safety Department. The VRT continues to support the VRU and vice versa and they also champion the **No Knives, Better Lives campaign.**

Legislative and Process Change

Since 2005, when the VRU was established, Scotland has come a long way in how the criminal justice system tackles violent offenders. The VRU has a reputation for leading significant development in influencing knife /weapons legislation and policies in Scotland, working with partners such as the Crown Office to achieve significant change.

In May 2006 the Lord Advocate announced tough new guidelines to combat knife crime, guidelines which the VRU had been lobbying for after providing evidence to the Crown Office to support the guidelines change.

The guidelines introduced two fundamental changes:

- **Anyone caught carrying a knife would be kept in custody until presented at court and bail could only be issued following their court appearance.**
- **The maximum sentence for knife carrying was increased from two to four years.**

This combination of deterrence and punishment have resulted in marked changes in the way that knife and other weapons carriers are dealt with by the Judiciary.

Police changed their processes in 2007. Now everyone caught carrying a knife is arrested, taken to a police station, fingerprinted, photographed and has their DNA taken.

Sentencing

In 2005 the average sentence for knife carrying was 118 days.

Scottish Government statistics released in 2011 indicate that the average sentence is now 274 days – more than double the sentence in 2005.

To measure the progress and impact of the policy changes and work on violence and weapons carrying, the VRU examined all criminal offences presented to court in Strathclyde.

We developed an accurate recording of knife crime offences by utilising ‘markers’ to track cases as they were processed through the criminal justice system, enabling the monitoring and the use of court disposals in relation to all crimes of violence involving a knife.

Analysis of the ‘markers’ indicated:

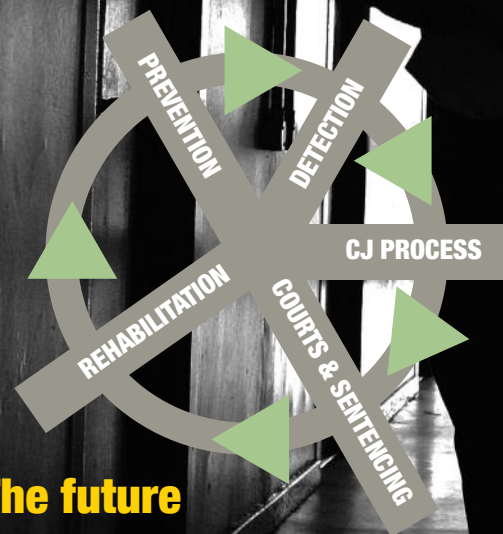
- **35% increase in the number of guilty verdicts for violence with a knife from 2007 – 2008**
- **38% increase in the number of custodial sentences issued**
- **37% increase in the number of individuals sentenced to four or more years.**

To note

The impact of this change has been long lasting and significant. The 2010 report by the Scottish Government on prison population states that reasons for the increased prison population include:

- Revised Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) policy on knife crime with a presumption of prosecution in solemn courts and opposition to bail for repeat offenders (June 2006)
- Revised COPFS case marking guidelines with a presumption in favour of action and an outcome focused approach to increase likelihood of conviction. Where court action is appropriate, this will take place in the lowest appropriate forum (March 2008).
- Convictions for handling an offensive weapons are down by 19 per cent despite a record number of stop searches being carried out by police across the country.

Whilst we still face significant challenges from knives and violence, this reduction in knife crime signals a sustained downward trend in knife carrying. This is the result of an unrelenting focus by the police, Crown Office and other partners on intelligence, enforcement and prevention over the last five years.



The future

The VRU are in early stage discussions regarding the possibility of establishing specialised violence or weapons courts in areas across Scotland. This is part of our ongoing work to process map and improve the criminal justice process and outcomes in relation to knife carrying.

Evidence from specialised courts in the US and UK indicate a range of positive outcomes, including shorter times to trials, increased sentencing, and availability greater variety of alternative and effective disposals. Additionally, it is a clear demonstration to community and offenders alike of the justice system's commitment to tackling this toxic problem.

Evidence to Parliamentary bodies (Scottish and UK national)

The VRU has presented written and oral evidence on violence, weapons, alcohol, early years and preventative spending to committees including the Justice Committee, Petitions Committee, the Finance Committee and the Home Office Select Affairs Committee, leading to changes in policy.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Inputs from the VRU now feature as part of continuous professional development in a number of disciplines including health, policing and analysis.

One of the most critical inputs is our CPD for judges. With judicial independence critical to the Scottish legal system, it is important judges are aware of all the issues and ramifications of dealing with violence in Scotland.

Other critical inputs include those to the Policing Strategic Command course, which trains future leaders for police forces across the UK.

Media and Communications

The use of media and communications has been critical to the VRU in spreading the message of prevention to both the public and practitioners. One of the key ways in which we have done this is through the language we use to speak about violence, specifically adopting the vocabulary of healthcare and disease to convey the severity of the problem in Scotland. Through this method we have successfully raised awareness of the violence issue and the need to adopt a long-term public health approach to tackling violence.

Working with the media, the VRU has been able pursue the prevention and attitudinal change agendas, helping to alter the language used in reporting violence in Scotland and thus influencing attitudes among a wide range of stakeholders.

In order to influence behaviour change among communities where violence is deeply ingrained, we have used limited resources to develop innovative messages to raise awareness, offer advice and give support on violence issues via a range of communication methods such as posters, radio adverts, blue tooth messaging, social media, cinema advertising and our website.

Awareness raising campaigns

Alcohol related violence in private dwellings

What is the problem?

As part of ongoing analysis to inform deployment of officers, a trend was identified of more violent incidents occurring inside houses. This is difficult to influence through policing: offences on the street are often picked up by CCTV and medical help is quickly summoned; these factors are absent in incidents indoors and can often lead to more serious situations. Significant quantities of alcohol were common to the incidents as were fights among acquaintances

What was our response?

As a response, hotspots were identified and nearby off licences targeted with carrier bags bearing advice in the event of arguments indoors. Additionally, whilst noise problems had previously been referred to council noise abatement officers, police officers began attending in an attempt to intervene early in house parties before the drama became a crisis.

The increase in people drinking at home or in other private dwellings was a result of factors including the smoking ban, the prevalence of cheaper alcohol and loss leaders in retail outlets and a trend towards people consuming significant amounts of alcohol indoors before attending licensed premises. The current climate suggests no change in the presence of many of these factors.

No Knives, Better Lives

In June 2009 the Scottish Government, with the aid of the VRU, launched the 'No Knives, Better Lives' initiative in Inverclyde. This intensive campaign was designed to make young people more informed of the dangers and consequences of carrying a knife.

The campaign utilised multiple delivery formats including cinema advertising, local newspapers / radio and posters. Early indications are that there has been a reduction in knife carrying in Inverclyde, with 23 per cent less knife carrying offences at a time when the number of stop-searches has doubled. The campaign helps to act as a focal point encouraging true partnership working in tandem with hard hitting police enforcement.

This innovative, hard hitting campaign has been expanded across the country to include Glasgow, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire and Clackmannanshire.

The future:

an assets based approach to influencing attitudinal change in the community

Whilst our approach has been hugely successful in demonstrating the need for a 'shared agenda', we have always maintained that it must lead to a change in service which in turn will lead to a positive change in the communities we serve. Therefore we need to concentrate less on the deficit model – all that is missing in a community - and adopt a more asset based approach – what positive things are already in a community. For example:

- The practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents
- The passions and interests of local residents that give them energy for change
- The networks and connections - known as social capital - in a community, including friendships and neighbourliness
- The effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations
- The resources of public, private and third sector organisations that are available to support a community
- The physical and economic resources of a place that enhance well-being

We considered many of these aspects in the work undertaken through CIRV, with the aim of promoting long term change and enabling the community to take back ownership of their environment. Widening the scope of these ideas, we are in the early stages of putting them into practice via pilots in the Ayrshire area. If successful, the initiative will be rolled out to other areas.

The pilots will work through:

- Mapping the resources, skills and talents of individuals, associations and organisations
- Developing links between the different parts of the community and its agencies

- Revitalising community relationships and mutual support
- Training local community members to research the views, knowledge and experience of their neighbourhood
- Promoting the confidence and capacity to engage with official agencies

At the core of this approach is building social capital and connecting communities, strengthening and building links between individuals, links that bind and connect people within and between communities. Evidence shows that this can lead to a more resilient community and act as a buffer against risks of poor health through social support which is critical to physical and mental well-being. The extent of people's participation in their communities and the control they exert over their own lives and outcomes, has the potential to contribute to their psychosocial well-being and other health outcomes.

The long term benefits from adopting an asset based approach are numerous. The 'Beacon Project' which took place in a deprived community in Falmouth, Cornwall demonstrated significant outcomes: childhood asthma attacks halved, breast feeding increased by 30%, postnatal depression rates dropped by 70% , child accident rates fell 50%, child protection registration went down by 42%, fear of crime reduced by 78%, educational attainment in boys (key stage 1) improved 100%, the overall crime rate reduced by 50% and unemployment went down by 71%.

However, the answer, the real work and the desire to change has to come from the community itself – to impose change is ineffective and likely to be resisted; to stimulate a community to want and desire change by encouraging it to build on and develop its "assets" may take longer but will, ultimately, be more profitable.

VRU the Future

The VRU continue to focus on the delivery of a safer, fairer Scotland by working closely with partners and helping them be bold and innovative in their approach to tackling violence. We will focus on best practice (from throughout the world) and share this knowledge giving support, leadership and direction.

VRU Review

To meet the challenge of tackling violence in the long-term, the VRU is currently examining a revised organisational structure that incorporates strong elements of accountability in terms of Governance and Performance by introducing a Strategic Advisory Group. It will remain distinctly police-led by maintaining the lead on violence reduction strategies within the structured framework of **Delivery, Knowledge, Support and Leadership (or Direction)**.

In interviews with Violence Reduction Alliance members including Chief Constables Steve House and Pat Shearer, the author Carol Craig, Scott Pattison from the Crown Office and Professor

Peter Donnelly of The University St Andrews, strong support has been expressed for the Strategic Advisory Group and an Academic Sub-Group. In addition, the Chief Medical Officer of Scotland, Dr Harry Burns, has committed to creating the first ever national joint VRU and Public Health Office in the NHS to progress the violence reduction agenda.

As the VRU has grown it has become a highly recognisable and respected unit. As it continues to evolve, future project test-sites are being considered. An example is the proposed Violence/ Weapons Court Pilot, which has already received positive comment from key partners including the Scottish Government and the Crown Office.



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