

# VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNITS (VRUs) IN FOCUS

A multi-agency and public health approach to support young people and divert them away from serious violent crime



## GREATER MANCHESTER VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

IN GREATER MANCHESTER, THE LAUNCH OF THE SERIOUS VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN IN JUNE 2020, MARKED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE FOR THE CITY-REGION'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT (VRU). THE VRU PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DELIVERY OF THE ACTION PLAN, WHICH HAS FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE FOREFRONT.



DEPUTY MAYOR: BARONESS BEV HUGHES  
VRU LEAD: DAN DIAMOND

This drives forward Greater Manchester's community-led, place-based, public health approach to preventing violence across the city-region.

**Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire, Bev Hughes**, said: "In Greater Manchester, we are committed unequivocally to strong enforcement against violent crime.

"Enforcement alone is not enough. We have to prevent violence happening in the first place as well as mitigate its effects on those caught up in its wake. That means intervening early using all the available evidence, insight and data to ensure we have the best possible impact on reducing violent crime and its consequences."

The VRU brings together Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the National Probation Service, health and education professionals, youth justice, local authorities, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. It is led by **Dan Diamond**, seconded from the probation service to bring a wealth of experience in dealing with the drivers and subsequent consequences of violent crime.

**Mr Diamond** said: "Greater Manchester has a history of strong partnerships, working across sectors to innovatively tackle complex issues. The VRU is no different and boasts a membership who each bring unique insight to tackling serious violence. We also work closely with academics, health professionals and community leaders.



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"The VRU has also been bolstered by the appointments of **Dr Rachel Jenner**, a consultant in emergency medicine at **Royal Manchester Children's Hospital**, and community coordinator **Michael Phipps**, who has 18 years' experience in youth and community work."

The VRU is delivering a combination of early intervention, education and prevention, alongside police enforcement action. The VRU's approach will use different interventions throughout a person's life to help reduce the propensity for violence. It is also working to embed a **trauma-informed approach** across the workforce, particularly in those services working with vulnerable children and young people. This will ensure frontline workers can spot the signs of trauma, provide trauma-informed support and signpost people and families to appropriate services. An example is the pioneering work in Oldham involving contextual approaches to safeguarding in secondary schools.

More than **£4.5m** has been devolved to **Greater Manchester's 10 Community Safety Partnerships** to develop local plans and initiatives, and a **£500,000 community-led pilot** is being rolled out in six Greater Manchester districts to allow residents and VSCE organisations to develop their own approaches and solutions.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, work to tackle serious violence and safeguard children and young people has not stopped.

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Developing a virtual reality programme to highlight the impact of violent crime. Young people in Wigan helped develop the storyboard and filming which was due to take place over the summer.
- Detached youth work and mentoring schemes have continued across Greater Manchester. Outreach sessions are being delivered virtually and one to one support is being given to more vulnerable children and young people.
- Gym equipment provided to young people to support their mental health and wellbeing during lockdown.
- GW Theatre Company has developed an online Home Learning Resource aimed at protecting nine to eleven-year-old children from abuse and exploitation.

The work of the VRU and partners is already having a positive impact. Data suggests a decrease of 16% for all age knife-related hospital admissions between April 2018 and March 2020, and whilst the data is still being verified, we also believe there has been an encouraging reduction in overall knife-crime.

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