

£35.5m to support young people at risk of involvement in serious violence

Violence Reduction Units bring together organisations across local communities to tackle violent crime and address its underlying causes. These units also help fund vital local projects that do positive preventative work with children and young people.

This £35.5 million, which covers 2021/22, is the third year of funding for 18 Violence Reduction Units operating across England and Wales in areas worst affected by serious violence. This takes the total invested in Violence Reduction Units to more than £105 million and further delivers on the government's pledge to crack down on violent crime.

In their first year of activity, initiatives funded by the scheme supported more than 100,000 young people, more than 51,000 of whom were identified as being at high-risk of being involved in criminal and violent activity. They also helped bring police, education leaders, health workers and local government together to share information about the causes of violence and agree a coordinated plan of action to tackle it. This is crucial to preventing crime at a local level. Today's funding means that they can continue this vital work.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Violence Reduction Units play a vital role in preventing young people from being dragged into the horrors of serious violence, and this funding will enable them to continue this crucial work.

I will continue to back our police with the resources and powers they need to cut crime and make your community safer.

Work funded by Violence Reduction Units has included prevention work in schools, communities, prisons, hospitals, Pupil Referral Units and police custody suites.

The Home Office, in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council, is hosting a virtual Four Nations conference this week, which will be attended by Minister for Crime and Policing Kit Malthouse. The Minister will hear about the significant work taking place to support young people and discuss the importance of tackling serious violence.

Policing Minister Kit Malthouse said:

Violence Reduction Units are providing life-changing support to young people.

The Four Nations conference brings together expert minds to develop ideas and solutions which will make a real difference in tackling serious violence.

Ultimately these are solutions that will ensure young people are able to lead positive lives and achieve their potential.

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Lead for Serious Violence and PCC for West Yorkshire, Mark Burns-Williamson OBE, said:

Police and Crime Commissioners are pleased that Ministers and the Home Office have recognised the value and ongoing work of our VRUs by committing to another year of funding. Today's announcement means we will continue to invest in projects which support young people in particular, diverting them away from violence, harm and exploitation.

Robust police enforcement is important in bringing violent offenders to justice and protecting communities. But when partners come together, recognising what can be achieved by adopting a wider public-health approach, we can also address some of the longer-term underlying issues and prevent violence in the first place with effective early intervention measures.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Violence & Vulnerability, Assistant Chief Constable Jackie Sebire, said:

Less than 2 years ago, Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) were launched to tackle the root causes of serious violence as policing saw an increase in this type of criminality.

In that time, these specialist units, which work in partnership with other agencies, have already made a significant change in how we approach serious violence and vulnerability, allowing targeted and evidenced-based interventions.

We welcome the commitment from government in tackling serious violence and this funding will allow the units to continue to support young people and keep communities safe.

In addition to the funding announced today, more than £2 million is being made available via a winter contingency fund package. This money is being delivered through VRUs to local charities and social enterprises that support vulnerable young people at risk of involvement in violence through the lockdown period.

The money forms part of a wider government drive to tackle crime and make communities safer, which includes bringing in 20,000 additional police officers over the next 3 years, 6,620 of which have already been recruited. Since 2019, the government has also invested £106.5 million to boost police operational capacity in the 18 police forces worst affected by serious violence. This is separate to the funding for VRUs.

The £35.5 million VRU funding announced today for 21/22 is broken down as follows*.

VRU allocation for 21/22

London: £7,000,000

West Midlands: £3,370,000

Greater Manchester: £3,370,000

Merseyside: £3,370,000

West Yorkshire: £3,370,000

South Yorkshire: £1,600,000

Northumbria: £1,600,000

Thames Valley: £1,160,000

Lancashire: £1,160,000

Essex: £1,160,000

Avon and Somerset: £1,160,000

Kent: £1,160,000

Nottinghamshire: £880,000

Leicestershire: £880,000

Bedfordshire: £880,000

Sussex: £880,000

Hampshire: £880,000

South Wales: £880,000

Total: £34,760,000**

*The £35.5 million VRU funding announced today for 21/22 is subject to receiving proposals from VRUs on their use of the funding and to these plans being agreed by the Home Office.

** the remaining funding from the £35.5 million will be spent on evaluation and sharing learning.