


PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version Dec 2024

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Chris Noble
Title of inspection	Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children
Published Date	20/11/2025
Inspectorate	 <p>HMICFRS Making communities safer</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>This report sets out our findings from 6 joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) carried out between September 2023 and May 2024. JTAs are carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation). Our inspections focused on 3 themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic responses to serious youth violence • work with children, both individuals and groups, affected by serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation • intervention in specific places to improve safety for children and communities
Grade	
Recommendations	Significant areas of good practice to inform future practice.
Areas for improvement	

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's initial response

I welcome the 'Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children' inspection report and will reflect on the content, to continue to enhance our local approach to violence reduction; through the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Violence Reduction Alliance (VRA).

Serious Violence is acknowledged as a local priority and I have continued to outline my commitment to prevention and the protection of our most vulnerable members of the community, and develop impactful partnerships, in my Police and Crime Plan 2024-2028. In support of this priority, in 2021, following the launch of our first multi-agency Serious Violence Strategy, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Violence Reduction Alliance (VRA) was established to provide a local resourced multi-disciplinary approach to serious violence. Staffordshire PFCC host and fund the Commissioning and Partnerships Manager role for Serious Violence, a VRA Analyst, a VRA Communications and Engagement Lead, and supporting commissioned activity. Although PCCs are not a specified authority, I have outlined my ongoing commitment by undertaking an important convening role, carrying out several functions relating to the Serious Violence Duty.

In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the VRA is predicated on public health approach to violence reduction. As such, there is a focus on Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention, Enforcement and Criminal Justice and Attitudinal Change. In addition, we recognise the cross-cutting nature of a broader set of vulnerabilities associated with drug use/supply, neuro-divergence, exploitation and other crime types, for example.

The VRA partnership has developed and matured since the launch of the local Serious Violence Strategy in 2020. In addition to the specified authorities, as defined by the Serious Violence Duty, the VRA benefits from the engagement of a broader range of partners that have outlined their commitment to violence reduction.

Underpinned by a Violence Reduction Strategic Needs Assessment (data and consultation) the current Violence Reduction Strategy implementation is managed by a partnership Violence Reduction Executive Board, which I chair and a Delivery Group which meets every 6-8 weeks to deliver the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty; where activity is supported by my core budget and Serious Violence Duty new burden funding.

To support our violence and vulnerability reduction work, and address some of the issues highlighted in the findings from the six Joint Targeted Area Inspection's (JTAI's), the VRA has:

1. Produced a multi-agency Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment incorporating partnership data, and supported by the results of a local consultation and engagement exercise with children and parents/carers.
2. Outlined a partnership commitment to the development of a Vulnerability Dashboard, to assist identification of vulnerable communities to direct resource and safeguard appropriately.
3. Established a Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) Service with the national charity, Catch 22. The service comprises a prevention-led education programme, an early intervention team to offer

individuals and families case work support to stop issues escalating and a pilot A&E and Custody Navigator Service.

4. Funded a Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education Service to co-ordinate and quality assure PSHE delivery in educational establishments, including delivery of Virtual Reality related Knives and Gangs programmes.
5. Commissioned a Violence Reduction Navigator and Tailored Support Service (including capacity to support 18 to 25-year olds at risk of being affected by violence). This service will operate from 1 April 2025, for a minimum of three to five years.
6. Ring-fenced a Staffordshire Police Violence Reduction Team (VRT) resource to support the advancement of the Serious Violence Strategy, VRA and prevention approach to serious violence. The resource has recently been expanded to cover the whole of Staffordshire, and has been aligned with exploitation prevention and investigation activity.
7. Established a Wellbeing Service to support and provide mental health interventions to the cohort of individuals being supported by the Police VRT.
8. Jointly funded the VRA Communications and Engagement Lead who has been in post since October 2022, and has established a network of communication opportunities with partners, campaigns with the community, engagement, consultation and co-production activity and has developed and launched the VRA website, where we host the Violence Reduction Strategy.
9. Worked with the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in both upper tier local authority areas, and the Local Authorities to develop a suite of resources to raise awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma and how they can impact on serious violence.
10. Created a joint post between the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and VRA to embed shared priorities, and identify opportunities to join up commissioning and services.
11. Developed a range of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) initiatives to support the reduction of public place VAWG.
12. Worked with both Youth Offending Service's to develop an offensive weapon prevention and diversion scheme.
13. Undertaken four operations with the Secure Estate to safeguard, educate and prevent violence and weapon use.

Overall, this inspection provides a helpful insight into the findings of the six JTAI's, highlights similarities identified locally and I support the findings. My Office is working with partners to undertake a Serious Violence JTAI self-evaluation, which, supported by this inspection report will help our VRA and other partnerships to develop our local approach further.

In support of the inspection, I anticipate key areas of focus, challenge and opportunity for the VRA going forward to include:

- Our work locally has identified children of younger ages carrying weapons. We take an early intervention and prevention approach, however recognise more resource and capacity needs to be invested in the early years.
- We have worked with partners to ensure that youth violence is seen as a risk and an indicator to other vulnerabilities including exploitation, and this is being reflected in re-developed risk and screening tools locally. We will continue to develop the workforce to raise awareness.

- Special Educational Needs, Learning Disabilities and Neuro-divergence are all key indicators of risk of poor outcomes when we have reviewed our data. We recognise that more needs to be done by partners in this risk area, along with aiming to reduce school exclusions.
- We continue to encourage partner engagement in the Serious Violence Duty, which can be challenging with competing demands from other partnerships.
- We have found undertaking evaluations a challenge, predominantly due to the short-term nature of many initiatives, linked to short term funding. We will aim to develop this over the longer-term.
- The implementation of Prevention Partnerships provides potential challenge and opportunity. We will seek to ensure these are developed alongside our current work, opposed to starting again.
- The capacity and thresholds of services continue to be a challenge, particularly when attempting to address early intervention. Pathways to services for children, families, and professionals can be confusing and prevention services would benefit from being more holistic (for example those identified at risk of offending can be referred to Youth Justice Prevention programmes, however often are being criminally exploited – these children are victims and as such should not be seen as an ‘offender’). We will continue to identify opportunities to improve and coordinate pathways.
- Our VRA has also identified significant gaps in the services available for the 18 to 25-year age group. Many are still developing through adolescence, may have missed out on support as children (under-18) and have limited support available as soon as they are viewed as an adult. We will identify opportunities to improve our understanding of the needs of this age-group.

Chief Constable’s response

The force welcomes all HMICFRS published report and their recommendations; this includes reports produced in partnerships with other inspectorates (such as HMI probation, HMCPSI, etc.) and associates such as Ofsted and Care Quality Commission.

Although this report does not list any regular recommendations, the force is keen to understand what the findings mean for children and for the force’s way of working with children, both individuals and groups, affected by serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation, and also looking at intervention in specific places to improve safety for children and communities.

All practices, promising and innovative, published in HMICFRS reports are automatically transferred onto a force practice database. This database is available to all business area leads and subject matter experts who are encouraged to benchmark and seek any potential improvements against their own working practices.

The database is continuously updated and tabled at the bi-monthly Inspection and Audit Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable.

The force supports a multi-agency public health approach to reduce serious youth violence. Staffordshire Police has committed to a non-funded Violence Reduction Alliance (VRA) to deliver the requirements of the serious violence duty. A lot of work has been done in this area and can be evidenced through a number of strategic boards. Scrutiny and performance for the VRA is provided through the Violence Reduction Delivery Group (chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable) which again is a pan-Staffordshire governance group which has a robust action plan and a series of deliverables with nominated leads. Performance is reported into the quarterly VRA and actions can be escalated into Safeguarding Boards or Community Safety partnerships. Staffordshire has a dedicated team of PC's who work on violence reduction across the county, managing a cohort of the highest risk individuals up to the age of 25. They work closely in partnership with the local authority, OPCC and social care to consider contextual safeguarding, promoting media campaigns to tackle violence against women and girls, knife crime and promoting safe spaces. In addition to this VRA have commissioned a number of services to work alongside them to improve outcomes, such as embedded mental health workers and a navigator service, whereby those involved in violence are targeted at "teachable moments".

The Violence Reduction Team (VRT) is part of the wider Public Protection Unit and works in an integrated multi-agency approach focussed on reducing serious violence and youth violence. As violence has been intrinsically linked to exploitation our VRT and exploitation teams are collocated to provide a streamlined and efficient response, working together closely to manage victim liaison and promote prosecution where appropriate. Over the last 12 months, Staffordshire police has invested officers into the exploitation teams to improve both victim support, prevention and pursue tactics working closely alongside regional organised crime to dismantle organised crime groups.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

With partners, I have continued to support Serious Violence as a strategic priority across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, with resource, capacity, time and by utilising my convening role under the Serious Violence Duty. We established our VRA in 2021 and have developed an ambitious Strategy and supporting plan to prevent and reduce violence, and its associated harms. This inspection outlines many of the challenges we have identified locally, provides us with a level of reassurance with regards to the developments we have made across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, and also provides us with suggestions on areas for development.

I am proud to acknowledge the work of the VRA, however recognise both from feedback locally, and the findings of inspection there is more to do. I look forward to working with partners to continue our journey to improve outcomes for children, families and our local communities.