



Meeting	SPA Policing Performance Committee
Date	18 September 2024
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Scottish Violence Reduction Unit Annual Report
Presented By	Jimmy Paul, Head of Violence Reduction Unit, Police Scotland
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to bring members up to date on the progress of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit’s (SVRU) work in the last year, and to provide a summary of plans for the year ahead.

SPA members are asked to consider the content of this paper and provide any comments or observations regarding the work of the SVRU.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The SVRU was created in 2005 to take steps to reduce violence across Scotland; taking a preventative approach to do so and treating violence as a public health issue for the first time in Scotland's history.
- 1.2 Over the last 19 years, by working in close partnership with those in health, education, social care, the third sector, academia and more, the SVRU has played a key role to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence and homicides across Scotland.
- 1.3 The SVRU is funded from a separate Scottish Government grant letter to that of Police Scotland, with its own business plan and set of objectives, but is hosted by Police Scotland.
- 1.4 The SVRU is funded at £1.1m per year and is one of several organisations working to deliver the Violence Prevention Framework in Scotland; a plan which coordinates action across a number of partners (including YouthLink and Medics Against Violence) working collectively to deliver a reduction in violence across Scotland.
- 1.5 In the year 2023/24, the SVRU delivered notable successes including delivering training to professionals all over Scotland, completing research and evaluations to build our 'what works' resources, delivering projects with partners such as the Navigator initiative, incepting new projects (like Violence Anonymous and the Care Navigator work) and creating new projects in areas which are well known for violence.
- 1.6 In September 2023, a new Head of the SVRU was appointed and outlined his vision for the unit, consisting of five focus areas: children and young people, repeat victims of violence, thought leadership, place-based approaches and lived experience at the heart of the SVRU's work.
- 1.7 Previously, a group oversaw the work of the SVRU in the form of a Governance Board, alongside academic colleagues and other relevant partner organisations. In May 2024, it was agreed that this group would split into two; an Operational Governance Group (looking at progress against the business plan, as well as risk and finance considerations) and a Strategic Governance Group (looking at the longer-term vision for the SVRU).

- 1.8 A business plan was written and signed off by the Scottish Government and the SPA in August 2024 agreeing with the above five priorities and clear deliverables.
- 1.9 The SVRU was founded in 2005 when Scotland was seen as the 'murder capital of the developed world'. The traditional approach of dealing with our violence (i.e. policing the issue) did not work, and it was agreed that a new approach was needed which involved other agencies: education, social care, early years, families, medics and more.
- 1.10 The SVRU committed to take a public health approach to address these issues and joined the World Health Organisation's Violence Prevention Alliance – the first police organisation to do so – and shared a message that change is possible, and we all have a role to play.
- 1.11 This new approach embraced violence reduction activity across primary prevention (investing in the early years and strengthening families), secondary prevention (supporting those at risk of becoming involved in violence) and tertiary prevention (supporting offenders to ensure they do not commit more violence in the future).
- 1.12 Throughout the last 19 years, the SVRU has built a "growing chorus" of belief and action on violence reduction across Scotland. As a result, violence and homicide has reduced significantly (60% reduction in homicide across Glasgow and 52% across Scotland) – and the greatest reduction taking place in the younger age group (under 35s).
- 1.13 The SVRU works to deliver the Violence Prevention Framework, a framework which coordinates action across a number of partners to continue to reduce violence across Scotland. For the year 2024-25, the grant letter was for a flat cash budget from the previous year at £1.1m.

2. PLANS FOR YEAR AHEAD

- 2.1 The SVRU and YouthLink social media campaign (the first of its kind in the world) will be launched in Aug 2024 and supported by lesson plans and materials from teachers and parents.

- 2.2 Take a 'whole school approach' and use the public health approach to learning, to reduce violence in schools by working in two or three different parts of Scotland – we have initiated work in two Lothian Schools and a Fife school for the year ahead.
- 2.3 Expand the delivery of the 'Think Equal' programme within the initial local authority test site, and in two other local authorities, ensuring that the psycho-social early years learning package is available for more of our youngest children to benefit from.
- 2.4 Improving the training and knowledge of campus officers to help improve the quality of interventions and support for young people in schools. The Campus Officer Community of Practice will continue to be convened with tailored learning opportunities, including exploring a 'train the trainer' for the social media project.
- 2.5 Deliver two stop and search animations co-produced by children and young people, to build awareness and relationships between Police Scotland and young people.
- 2.6 Expanding place-based projects to areas of need: we will set up new place-based projects, one in the Lothians and another in the Tayside area, looking to bring partners together to address the root causes of violence in those specific communities.
- 2.7 Reduce violence in the night-time economy by continuing to support bystander training, partnering with charities who support New Scot communities and build our Resources Page on our website to incorporate the latest evidence of what works.
- 2.8 We will work with partners to test new diversionary activities looking to leverage sport in known hotspot areas, ensuring that the people who would benefit most from these activities have access to them.
- 2.9 We will provide support to communities who have been affected by serious acts of violence, ensuring the likelihood of retribution is reduced and that we promote community healing. We are currently working in two areas affected by homicides.
- 2.10 We will continue to fund the Community Navigators in the west of Scotland, with a new focus on the alcohol, drug and children & young people courts.

- 2.11 We will work with charities who engage with those who are repeat victims of violence to map 'cold spots' of activity and develop new approaches to support these people.
- 2.12 We will continue to support the roll out of Violence Anonymous in other parts of Scotland – this is the first in-person community focused on violence reduction in the world.
- 2.13 Having partnered with them to secure external funding, we will continue to partner with a local authority in the west of Scotland as their Care Navigators support at-risk care experienced young people with navigating the many challenges that this group face.
- 2.15 The SVRU will establish a lived experience advisory board to guide the future direction and activity of the SVRU. By putting those who are most affected by the issues and ensuring that they are properly recognised, supported and paid for their time, effort and expertise.
- 2.16 Over 24/25 the SVRU will convene agencies and services from across the violence prevention arena. This will result in a clear shared agenda, opportunities to share learning and build a pathway to address violence by true collaboration.
- 2.17 Data - By working with the Edinburgh Futures Institute, partners in Public Health Scotland and Police Scotland, the SVRU are able to shape how the data is collected and disseminated across Scotland to improve both the surveillance of violence (and its drivers) and the understanding of effectiveness of interventions to ensure that prevention activity is more effective.
- 2.18 The SVRU will deliver on the business plan, with the key points outlined above. Police Scotland colleagues have suggested that they would like to consider a move of our offices into another location in this financial year, so SVRU colleagues continue to engage in this with union and JNCC involvement. This will have an impact on the ability to deliver on the SVRU business plan and as of August 2024, a counter proposal has been lodged.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report. The SVRU continues to provide quarterly reports to Scottish Government on its key activity and financial drawdown.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

If there is an office move, this results in the majority of staff having to move towards using cars to commute (rather than using public transport). This will have an impact on Police Scotland / SPA's commitment to environmental sustainability as per Outcome 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of the report.