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Hello and welcome to our first newsletter!

Within Avon and Somerset, Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) exist as a central hub within the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the spokes, being the five local authorities.

The key function that spokes deliver is to assess the levels of vulnerability and risk of young people in their respective areas and respond by determining and delivering appropriate support. The hub devolves Home Office funding to spokes to commission and deliver various interventions and approaches to support.

In this first newsletter, we are sharing on how funds are allocated to support specific intervention types and some first insights on the referrals to support young people most in need.

Charlotte and the VRU Hub team

Typical questions we ask of our data

The spokes assess their activities on a quarterly basis. We have just completed one of these cycles and the sort of questions we ask of this data include:

1. What types of interventions are we introducing, where and to what extent?
2. How many young people (of 24 years of age and under) are we connecting with, both from broad scale interventions and supporting individuals?
3. What can we share about the young people we are supporting?

These questions can help us check whether we are focussing our efforts in the right areas and in appropriate proportions.

In providing these insights, we are also gauging how accurate and complete the data is, to help us continue to improve.

These approaches complement our wider understanding of the issue of violence in our area. For example, we also provide the Strategic Needs Assessment which uses various approaches to understand the scale of the problem of serious violence in our area. This is available on our website, and we are currently updating its content.

Example approaches

There are different ways to support young people. The following describe typical approaches, from engaging with large catchments to assisting individuals.

Widescale engagement through schools and community outreach

Providing appropriate awareness to young people of modern concerns can empower them to

make positive choices. Topics include healthy relationships, bullying, anti-social behaviour, cyber safety, knife crime, drugs and county lines.

Universal education can be enabled for school children, and for their parents and carers. For example, in North Somerset, St Giles Trust have reached 775 secondary school aged children in the first quarter to raise awareness of county lines and more sessions are planned in quarter three.

Detached social workers are also funded to go out in particular geographical areas to engage with young people in the local community and build purposeful interactions with them.

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Teachable Moments

Targeted interventions are provided at the point at which a child or young person is at risk of exclusion or a managed move. The concept is to intervene at a “teachable moment”, the specific time when services might be more able to engage the child to help them change their behaviours or circumstances.

Teachable moments account for 90% of individual VRU support provided to young people (see last page)

Following agreement with the relevant school/academy and parents, one to one or groupwork sessions are provided. Specific topics can include knife crime, drugs education, harm reduction, emotional and mental health.

Mentoring, Sport opportunities

Mentoring is where a young person is put in contact with a mentor and encouraged to meet them regularly. The support of this positive role model can help the child develop social skills, form constructive relationships with others or develop positive behaviours and aspirations. Mentors are often adults, but they can also be older peers and can have lived in experience.

Boxing groups within Somerset and Bristol provide opportunities for young people to engage in a safer environment and in doing so have access to mentoring support

Mentoring can take place alongside other activities such as music or sports. For example, Boxing groups within Somerset and Bristol provide opportunities for young people to engage in a safer environment and in doing so have access to mentoring support.

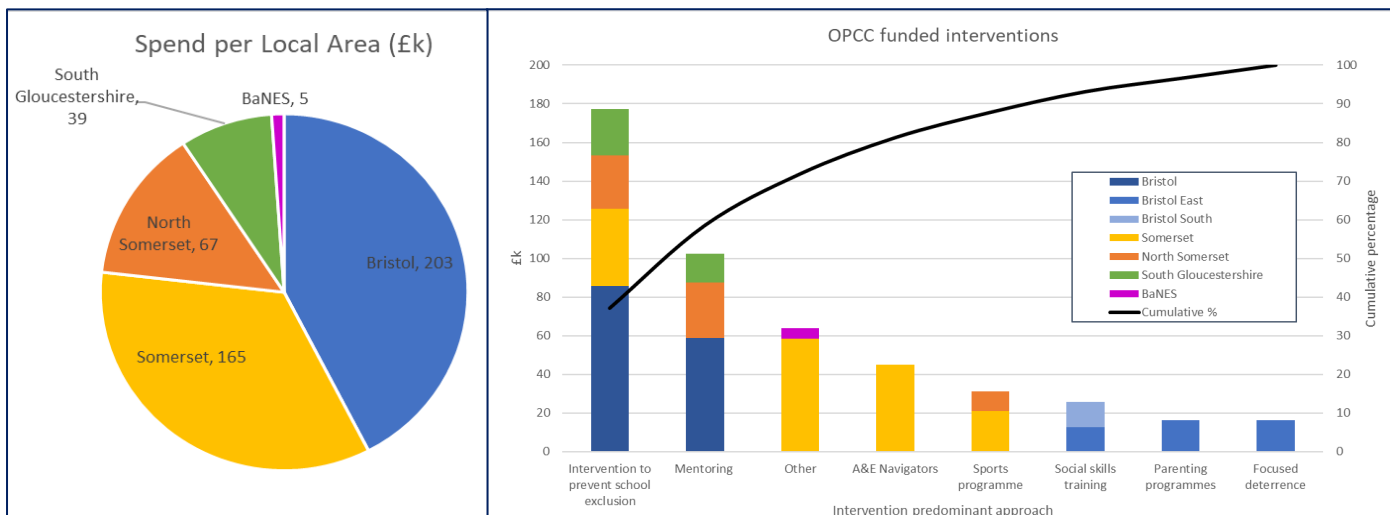
It can also be specific to address issues such as bullying or toxic masculinity. Safeguarding is taken seriously, and young people involved in or identified as being at risk, for example from exploitation, are referred to appropriate services or support.

OPCC commissioned interventions

How is funding divided?

For this financial year, VRU commissioned interventions currently total £480k. The pie chart shows how this is divided across the local authorities, with the largest two budgets being allocated to Bristol and Somerset with 42% and 34% respectively. It is worth noting that full spend on interventions across the area has not been reached in all cases, as such we anticipate further spend in coming quarters.

There are different types of intervention we can provide. The bar chart on the right shows how these funds are split out by type of intervention as well as local authority. With Bristol managing a large budget, the three shades of blue split out the funds for specific regions.



The biggest spends are on Intervention to prevent school exclusion (37%) and Mentoring (21%). The 13% “Other” consists of activities to engage with young people in schools and community groups and in doing so encourage prevention and early intervention.

The line shows the cumulative percentage. So roughly, 2/3 of the spend is allocated to the first two columns, 3/4 to the first three, 4/5 to the first four.

How many interventions are being funded?

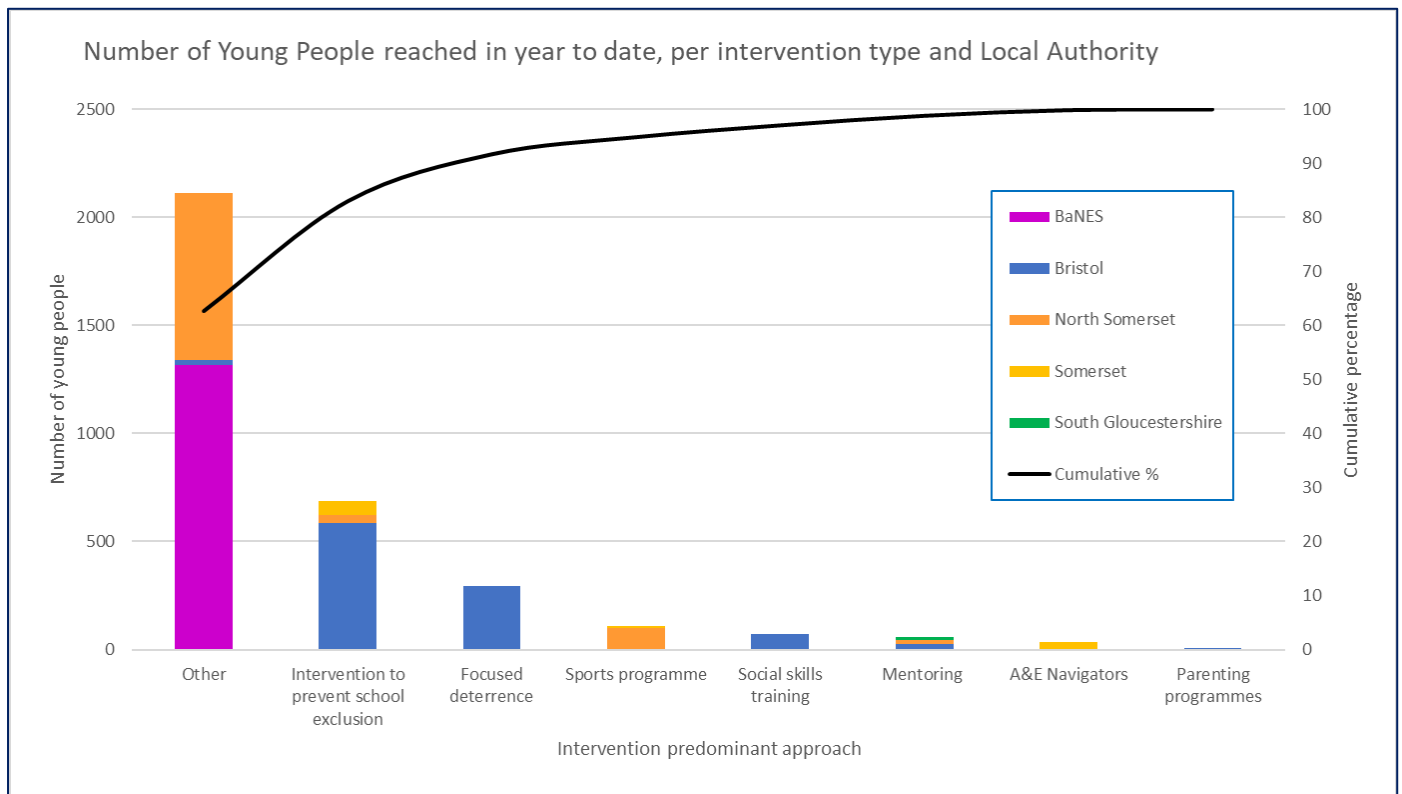
Forty-one interventions are currently funded. It is useful for the spokes to be aware of who else is implementing similar approaches to enable joint learning. Here is a summary of the number of interventions being funded for each local authority.

	BaNES	Bristol generic				North Somerset	Somerset	South Gloucestershire	Total
		Generic	East	Central	South				
Mentoring	1	5				2		1	9
Intervention to prevent school exclusion	1	3				1	2	1	8
Other	1		1	1		2	3		8
Focused deterrence			1	2	1				4
Social skills training			1	1	2				4
Sports programme						1	2		3
A&E Navigators	1						1		2
Parenting programmes			1	1					2
Anti-bullying programmes							1		1
Total	4	8	4	5	3	6	9	2	41

How many young people have we reached through these interventions?

Since April 2022, records show that these interventions have engaged with 3376 young people. The actual number benefitting will be greater, both because we also support some adults and because of the subsequent effects on their friends, family and communities.

This graph shows numbers of young people we have engaged per intervention approach in this time. The two thirds set as “other” are activities to engage with young people in specific geographical areas. These include going to schools, youth groups and setting up specific detached youth work.

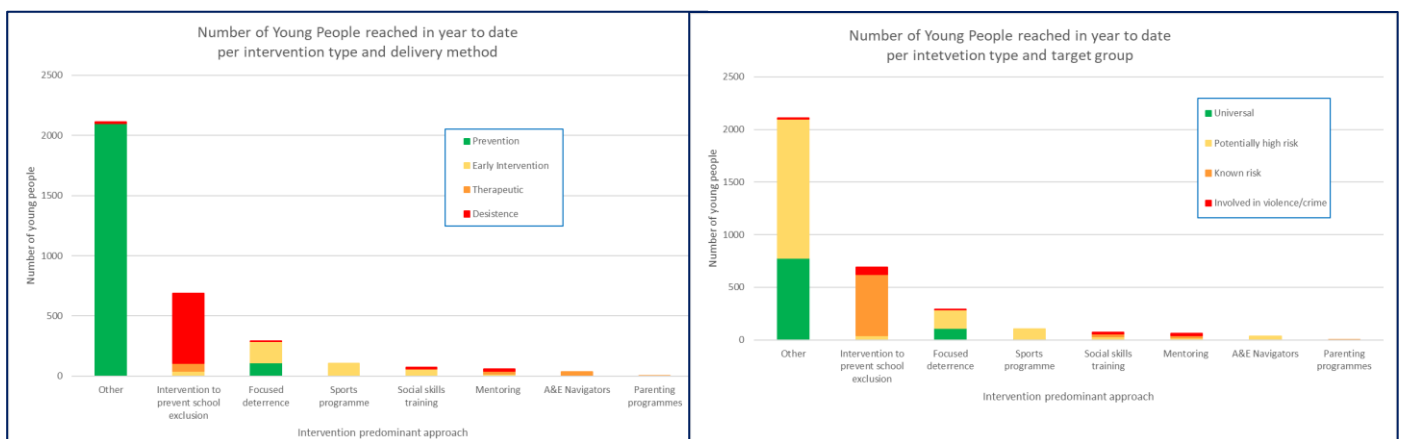


Do intervention approaches reflect individuals’ levels of support need?

The same data is shown again in these two graphs, using the same colours to measure different things to help visualise the link between level of support offerings and level of need.

The left-hand graph is shaded based on the level of support provided. Green activities raise awareness, the middle two levels are diversionary activities to encourage healthier life choices, and the red activities are more involved support designed to help individuals cease offending.

The right-hand graph shows our understanding of need, from the green “Universal” group through to the red, who are individuals currently involved in the criminal justice system.

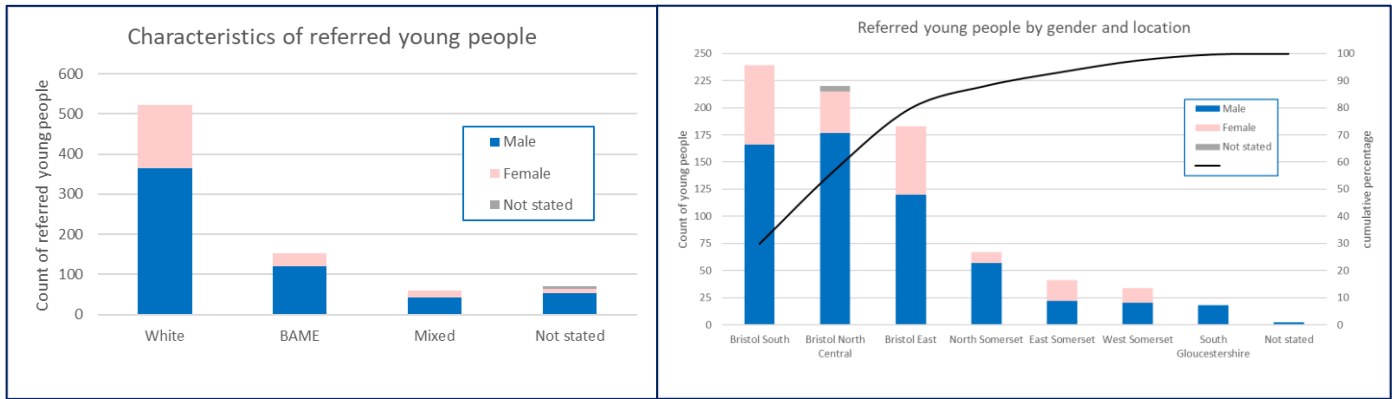


VRU support to individuals

How can we describe the young people who are referred to VRUs?

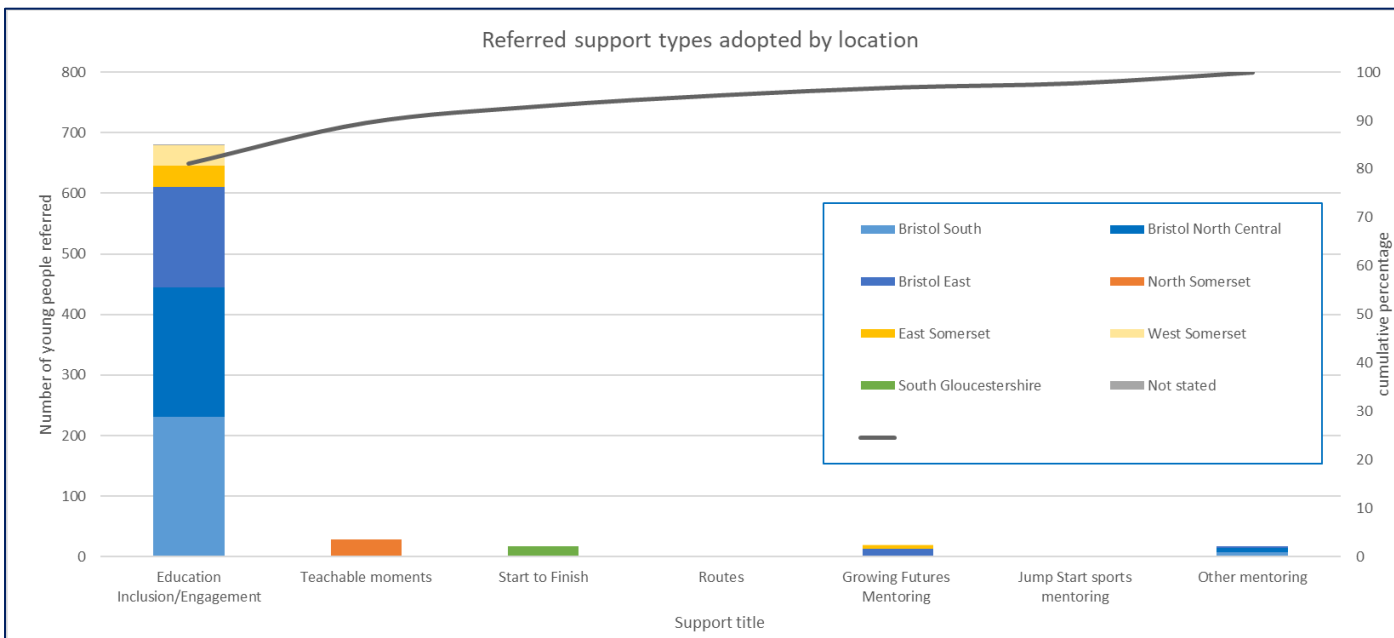
Some young people are identified for additional support from VRUs. Our records began in January 2021. Since then the VRUs have provided individual support to 804 young people.

The first graph gives the split based on gender and ethnicity. Overall, 65% are white, 72% male and nearly half, 45%, are white males. The second graph gives the same data again, showing the split by location. 80% of referrals are within Bristol, with most of the rest in Somerset.



Example – Teachable Moments and Education

Teachable moments were mentioned earlier as an example approach. Education Inclusion or Engagement programmes are specific cases where the teachable moment approach is applied at the point where a young person faces possible exclusion from school. 90% of young people provided individual support through VRUs do so from Teachable moments, 80% of which are to encourage education inclusion.



Moving forward

The A&S VRU Hub new newsletter will be created quarterly, providing joined up updates and future news. If you would like to provide any feedback and/or ideas, please do email our VRU Communications Manager via Emily.Widdowson@avonandsomerset.police.uk