

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE:	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	14 TH JANUARY 2021	REPORT NO:	CFO/003/21
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	GM BEN RYDER	REPORT AUTHOR:	COMMUNITY SAFETY COORDINATOR MICHAEL BURATTI
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JANINE SALEH (STRATEGIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MANAGER)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	MERSEYSIDE VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP		

APPENDICES:

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an overview and update on, the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the information contained within this report and the accompanying presentation.

Introduction and Background

3. In April 2018, the Government published its Serious Violence Strategy, in response to increases nationally in knife crime, gun crime and homicide. The following year, as part of that strategy, it allocated funding to establish 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across the country. The VRUs remit is to bring together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key partners, to ensure a multi-agency response to the identification of local drivers of serious violence.
4. It is acknowledged that serious violence is only perpetrated by a small minority and that those individuals cause considerable harm. Serious Violence has risen in Merseyside in the past 3 years and knife crime is still rising. As in many other UK cities, knife crime has become a regular feature in the local press. Whilst we do not have the same level of violence as in London, Merseyside individuals, families and communities have had to cope with the aftermath of drug disputes, robberies and power struggles that end in violence.

5. In Merseyside, a co-located team was established in September 2019, working to allocate resources, in the short term, with a view to set foundations for embedding a public health approach in the longer term. The Violence Reduction Unit on Merseyside was named the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP).
6. MFRS have contributed significantly to the reduction of serious violence through our Community Safety Strategy and the secondment of one whole-time post to the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership.
7. The MVRP is the only VRP in the UK to have FRS staff in its central team and arson within its problem profile and definition of serious violence. This is a significant development in the reduction of deliberate fire setting on Merseyside and has been recognised and supported by the Home Office as good practice.
8. The synergies between MFRS's approach to youth engagement delivery being trauma informed and MVRP's investment in ACE training and the adoption of a Public Health Approach to serious violence has resulted in an impactful expansion of MFRS's existing provision, such as Beacon and the role out of innovative programmes such as Healing Together.
9. The relationship with the VRP has enabled MFRS to evidence how its Youth Engagement activities directly contribute to place-based priorities such as reduction in serious youth violence, improvement in school attendance and reductions in deliberate fire setting.

Equality and Diversity Implications

10. Victims of knife crime in Merseyside are most commonly males aged 16-25 years old, whilst gun crime victims in Merseyside are most commonly males aged 18-25 years old. Based on data which had ethnicity recorded against it (84%), no ethnic group is statistically significantly over represented as victims of this violent crime in Merseyside.
11. Offenders of serious violence in Merseyside are most commonly aged 16-25 years old and white males. Midyear population estimates for Merseyside tell us that 12% of our population are aged between 16 and 24 years, 15% are aged between 25 and 35 years of age and, in total, 70% of the population of Merseyside are aged 25 and over. This is referred to later in the profile.
12. Most ethnic groups are proportionally representative of population. However, the proportion of Black offenders for Personal robbery is 10% and Knife Crime was 6%. This is not reflective of Merseyside's population. Additionally, for Homicide crimes, for known offenders whose ethnicity was recorded, 71% were White British, but 19% were Black and 6% were Mixed race. This is not reflective of the population of Merseyside, but there are relatively low numbers here. A recent Citysafe survey suggests that the top issues that people were concerned about

were gun and knife crime and Trauma and Injury Intelligence Group (TIIG) Data suggests that up to 50% of this crime category is potentially under-reported.

Staff Implications

13. MFRS have 1 whole-time Grade 13 post (job share basis).
14. Utilising funding provided by the VRP, the MFRS Youth Engagement Team were able to fund two Programme Support workers for the Prince's Trust for a period of five months.

Legal Implications

15. The Fire Services Act 2004 created a statutory duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to continue to promote fire safety, placing the prevention of fires at the heart of their activity. Other guidance also states "Fire and Rescue Authorities must work with communities to identify and protect them from risk and to prevent incidents from occurring". This approach to arson reduction will allow us to focus our attention on the most vulnerable people at risk of arson and improve the quality of life within local communities.
16. This work of the VRP supports and further enhances the positive contribution we can make to a number of key pieces of legislation, including:
 - a. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - b. The Care Act 2014
 - c. Serious Crime Act 2015
 - d. The Police & Crime Act 2009
 - e. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - f. Working together to safeguard children 2018.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

17. MFRS have received £68,000 of funding from the MVRP to prevent deliberate fire setting, serious youth violence and upscale youth engagement initiatives.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

18. The disruption caused by Covid-19 has required a number of changes to our ways of working. The Service has invested significant resources to make our estate COVID secure and our staff and visitors safe. This has included risk assessments for delivery of prevention activities and investment in ICT to enable a blended approach, including online/virtual delivery and agile working, for our staff to be efficient and effective in the delivery of the role.

19. The investment that MFRS and the MVRP are putting into prevention, early help and youth engagement activities, to reduce serious violence, is undoubtedly contributing to making our communities safer and stronger.
20. The fact that arson is captured within Merseyside’s definition of serious violence and the VRP’s problem profile is key to reducing arson and deliberate fire setting, which, in turn, makes our firefighters safer and more effective in their role, in order to prevent and respond to fires and other risks.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MVRP **M**erseyside **V**iolence **R**eduction **P**artnership

VRU **V**iolence **R**eduction **U**nit