

VIOLENCE reduction unit

www.actiononviolence.org.uk

*Violence is preventable,
not inevitable.*

**All the latest news from the
Violence Reduction Unit**

Spring 2011

The VRU seven years on: a message from John and Karyn

It has been seven years since the former Chief Constable of Strathclyde, Sir Willie Rae, set us the task of looking at murder in Glasgow and how we could reduce it. Looking back now, it is amazing just how far Scotland has come: who could have believed then that we could have a significant reduction in gang violence in the East End of Glasgow, an injury surveillance scheme in three A&Es or that medics would be teaching Scotland's youngsters about the dangers of carrying a knife? We are certain that it could not have been done without the help of many, many people who listened, discussed, collaborated and gone out of their way to do things that may have seemed impossible at one time.

To clarify and help shape the VRU's vision for future work, we wrote down all the things we have done over the last few years, and have put them all into a report: the *VRU outline of past work and future projects**. However, this is not the whole story: we have often said that it will take a generation, maybe two or three generations, before we truly see the impact of the work you'll read about in the book. We need your commitment to violence reduction to be ongoing, we need to work in ever closer collaboration if we are begin to further the work we have already done together, and we need to get even more people, from health, from education, from justice and, most importantly, from communities, on board if we are to meet all the challenges that lie ahead. It won't be easy, but it will be worthwhile if we want a country we can all be proud to live in.

John Carnochan
Karyn McCluskey
The Violence Reduction Unit

*available at <http://tinyurl.com/5sekpp5> or in the resources area our website

VRU achievements

- Working with the Crown Office and the Procurators Fiscal, lobbied to change the law so if an individual is caught for the second time with a knife, bail is opposed.
- Mapped gang territories, providing important intelligence for operational officers and partners
- Reduced gang violence by 49.2 per cent activity among those gang members who engaged with our CIRV gangs initiative
- Supported health colleagues in setting up Medics Against Violence (MAV)
- Created the Life Licence database to help track violent individuals released into community on life licence
- Introduced community intelligence statements to courts to help give judiciary context in relation to locations into which offenders may be released on bail

- Worked with partners in transport to create Operation Vine, targeting weapons carriers on the routes they use to travel into town.
- Launched an injury surveillance pilot in three A&Es in order to monitor unreported violence and use the intelligence to better target policing and partner resources
- Implemented COVAID (Control of Violent, Angry, Impulsive Drinking) sessions in two maxillofacial departments and within a prison setting in a bid to reduce prospect of future violent incidents
- Sent attitudinal change / parenting leaflets to the parents of every Primary One child in Scotland in a bid to reduce violence
- Set up Gangs Helpline service for parents with ParentLine Scotland
- With the YMCA and Association of Directors of Social Work, run three pilot mentoring programmes for youngsters at risk of violence and offending
- Coordinated campus officer training programmes

Scottish stereotypes under scrutiny at conference

The “typical Scottish male” and his role in violence - and violence prevention was - the focus of this year’s VRU Domestic Abuse conference.

Keynote speaker Ewan Gillon, Professor of Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University and Clinical Director of First Psychology Scotland, whose presentation was entitled “The Trouble with Men”, looked at how traditional male stereotypes had been constructed and how this affects male behaviour, particularly with regards to violence.

‘Hard man’

Professor Gillon, who has lectured widely on the issue of masculinity and violence, believes there is a need to challenge harmful traditional male stereotypes in order to help men cope better with their changing role in modern society. He said:

“The traditional Scottish ‘hard man’ image, with its ingrained links to alcohol and violence, needs to be challenged as part of the ongoing

campaign against domestic abuse. We need to tackle the unacceptable behaviour encouraged by traditional male stereotypes and address the spiral of destructiveness that this can produce.”

Bystander

Also speaking at the event was Dr Christine Goodall, founder of the charity Medics Against Violence (MAV). Dr Goodall discussed MAV’s latest venture, an initiative to train dentists to encourage victims of domestic abuse to report.

The conference, which was held at the Scottish Police College in Fife, marked the end of the domestic abuse phase of the 2010/11 Anti-Violence Campaign.

Plans are already underway for the 2011/12 domestic abuse phase, which will focus on a “bystander” approach.

Chief Inspector Graham Goulden, who leads the Anti-Violence Campaign on behalf of the VRU, said:

“While it is encouraging to

see more people reporting domestic abuse, if we really want to make a difference, we need to look at our attitudes towards relationships and what we see as acceptable.

“Enough”

“Parents need to speak with their children. Friends need to speak with friends, work colleagues need to speak with work colleagues and team mates need to speak with team mates. No one should stand by as they see others being abused in a relationship, be that physically, verbally or psychologically. We need to question and challenge this behaviour.”

“Domestic abuse is everyone’s problem, and while the police and domestic abuse organisations can tackle offenders and raise awareness, people across Scotland need to stand up and say ‘enough’.”

Missed the conference? We’ll be posting clips on our website soon.

Domestic abuse: Scotland's 'badge of shame'

Figures recorded during the domestic abuse phase of this year's VRU Anti-Violence Campaign were branded a "badge of shame" by campaign co-ordinator Chief Inspector Graham Goulden.

Police forces across Scotland recorded 9812 incidents of domestic abuse between 1 December and 31 January – around 158 incidents every day.

Ch Insp Goulden said the rise was worrying, but the fact so many victims had come forward to report abuse was encouraging and demonstrated that victims were no longer prepared to stay silent behind closed doors.

"We know that Christmas is a peak period for domestic abuse, but these figures are a disgrace, and a badge of shame for Scotland.

"However, we should draw confidence from the fact these stats are based on reported crime – increasing numbers of people are coming forward to report, they are less tolerant of domestic abuse and have increased confidence that help is available and they now know they don't have to put up with this intolerable behaviour. That is due in part to the fantastic work carried by police forces across the country and groups like Scottish Women's Aid, White Ribbon Scotland and a whole host of others.

"In addition, the advent of the Section 38 offence has made it much easier to deal with incidents within private dwellings – there is no hiding place for domestic abusers."

4783 incidents of abuse were recorded in December with a further 5029 recorded in January – a total of 9812. The figures were up 1870 on the same period last year (December '09 – January '10), when 7942 incidents were recorded, 4071 in December 2009 and 3871 in January 2010.

VRU on Facebook and Twitter

You can now keep up to date with all the latest VRU activity via Twitter and Facebook. Our feeds and posts will provide information not just about what we're up to, but also share any new and relevant research and news items we think are of interest.



Got something to tell us?

We're always interested in finding out what alliance members are up to – and sharing information, best practice and research is key to building strong violence prevention partnerships. If your organisation has some good practice or an event you'd like us to publicise in our newsletter or online, please contact us info@actiononviolence.com. The newsletter will be published four times a year, in spring, summer, autumn and winter.



The campaign was promoted through December via a special online "advent calendar" that revealed a shocking stat or fact about the scale of domestic abuse in Scotland every day up to December 25. In addition, forces were provided with a special awareness raising "toolkit", featuring posters and a Bluetooth message. As well as enforcement activity, forces also:

- Used analysis to identify prolific domestic abuse offenders
- Participated in White Ribbon Scotland's 16 Days of Action
- Worked with pub watch schemes to raise awareness of domestic abuse via licenced premises
- Delivered inputs on domestic abuse in schools, universities and local authorities.

In addition, officers across Scotland are being given extra training in investigation of domestic abuse incidents in order to reduce the number of cases where no proceedings take place due to lack of evidence

Violence a big concern for parents, helpline reveals

Parents calling a special helpline service set up by the VRU and ParentLine Scotland are still worried about violence, statistics show.

Fifteen per cent of those who called ParentLine Scotland between June 2010 and January 2011 expressed concerns about violence. 350 calls were received about violent behaviour and of these nearly 200 were from parents concerned about their child's aggressive behaviour.

In some instances parents revealed their children had displayed aggressive behaviour towards them. One told a ParentLine Scotland call-taker:

"It's not the first time he has hit me, I don't know where to turn. I don't want to involve the police as he is my son and I love him."

Knife

60 callers mentioned that another significant concern was the impact on children who are, or have in the past, witnessed domestic abuse. Parents were worried that the violence their children witnessed in the home was related to their aggressive behaviour.

Violence in the community was also an issue for parents. Another 60 parents called to talk to call-takers about the safety of their children in the community. One caller said:

"This morning, I found a knife in his bag. When I confronted him about it, he said that a gang was 'after him' and he needed it for protection. I am really concerned for his safety."

Another caller said:

"My daughter was assaulted last week and she hasn't left the house since. She's worried that it will happen again."

"Ever present concern"

The findings follow the first eight months of a joint initiative, launched by the VRU and ParentLine Scotland last year to offer support to parents worried their child may be involved in violent behaviour and gang activity.



Alison Todd, Director of Policy and Practice Development for CHILDREN 1ST, the charity that runs ParentLine Scotland said: "What is clear from the calls and emails we receive at ParentLine Scotland is that violence is an ever-present concern for parents. Children and young people are witnesses to and are victims of violence, both in their homes and communities, so it is not surprising that they are displaying aggressive behaviour themselves. It is important that children receive the help and support they need to overcome the negative impact of violence.

"Parents worried about violent behaviour should call or email ParentLine Scotland (0800 028 2233) and email service (parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk)."

Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, head of the Violence Reduction Unit, said:

"The vast majority of our young people in Scotland will be fine – they'll never get involved in violence, they'll never carry a knife and they won't be aggressive towards others. But that doesn't stop parents worrying. That's why the service ParentLine Scotland provides is so important: it can offer parents who are worried reassurance, guidance and a sympathetic ear."

Download leaflets and posters for the campaign from our website -

www.actiononviolence.org.uk/posters-and-leaflets