



CURV: EAG, Strategic Delivery Group

Wednesday 11 October 2023

Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) Annual Report

FOREWORD

‘Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence – or CURV – is one of the newest Violence Reduction Units in the country, joining the other 18 more established VRUs in the mission to prevent and reduce serious violence in public spaces, especially amongst the under 25s. CURV has achieved a great deal in its first year but recognises that the journey of reducing serious violence is a collaborative one that will take time. For this reason, the priority has been twin tracked in delivery and establishing strong and sustainable partnerships through a robust and mutually agreed governance structure, while simultaneously getting on with the job of making Cleveland a place where people can live, work and study free from the fear or consequences of serious violence’.

John Holden MBE

Head of CURV

INTRODUCTION

After a long campaign led by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, the region was finally awarded £3.5m to set up its first violence reduction unit out to March 2025. CURV - or Cleveland’s Unit for the Reduction of Violence - was established in the summer of 2022, and commenced with the recruitment of a small but strong core team to lead the partnership.

In its first year, CURV invested £628,475.32 in 24 separate programmes to tackle violence and serious crime. More than 25,000 people were engaged by these programmes - of whom 90% were under 25. At the same time, CURV undertook and published its Strategic Needs Assessment that provided the much-needed analysis to pursue an ‘evidence-based approach’ to future interventions, as well as published its Response Strategy that sets out the vision, strategic priorities, ways of working and operating framework agreed by the core members, partners, and stakeholders. It also formalised the terms of reference in a Partnership Agreement that set out the roles and responsibilities of the partners. It ended the year by being subject to an external audit of its performance against the newly established Serious Violence Duty and received a positive assessment in its Joint Readiness Assessment.

PRIORITIES

- **PROGRAMMES.** In its first year, CURV funded over 20 interventions and training packages, delivering activities and support to over 22,000 people across the region.

Prevention and early intervention commissioned services. Throughout the year, School Liaison Team and Early intervention officers continued to work with schools across the Cleveland area, in addition to which CURV commissioned a range of activities up to March 2023, including:

- Barnardo's bystanders project. This initiative worked with various schools within Cleveland ensuring that YP were aware of positive choices.
- Chris Cave Foundation - Point 7 anti-knife crime programme. This bespoke knife reduction programme was delivered within schools and colleges and reached over 2,700 young people.
- Community Ventures – 'sheroes' Project. This initiative works with young people, especially young females.
- Corner House Youth Project. This intervention delivered targeted outreach work with over 300 young people in identified hot spot areas.
- Anti Knife Programmes. Three13 and Message Trust delivered anti knife programmes to over 13 schools and academies across Cleveland reaching over 7,000 young people and worked alongside a rehabilitation programme with those already involved within the Criminal Justice Sector.
- Neuro Linguistic Programming. Sixty young people were supported with this programme.

Sports based interventions. Recognising the value of sports-based interventions as a platform that can provide diversionary activities or as a hook to enable the delivery of other support, CURV invested in a range of pilot initiatives, including:

- Billingham Boxing Academy. This funded initiative worked with over 100 young people in using the sport of boxing as a platform to provide support, mentoring and assistance into onward training, education and employment.
- Hartlepool Huskies. This basketball initiative worked with over 19 schools, delivering basketball tournaments as a way of reaching 1500 Young People and adults, to provide diversionary activity and impart knife reduction messages.
- Lord Taverners – Cricket. This initiative provided diversionary activities through drop-in cricket sessions that reached over 80 young people.
- Teesside Lions – Basketball. This initiative delivered a multitude of activities including diversionary Community Sessions, knife reduction initiatives and a Tour Programme reaching over 7,000 young people.

Social Skills Training

- Daisy Chain Project. This initiative worked with young people, adults and families affected by autism and associated neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Elevate. This programme saw social skills and decision-making training delivered across 15 schools reaching over 400 students.

Trauma Informed

- Arch. This initiative worked with over 75 young people, providing education on reducing sexual violence and support mechanisms.
- My sisters place. This programme delivered Trauma Informed training for over 120 Police officers.
- Safer Communities. - working with over 30 yp and their families working to deliver trauma informed support.
- Barnardo's Trauma informed Reach Music project. This delivered 18 group sessions in three identified schools.

Focussed Deterrence. Project Connect was the only Focussed Deterrence programme funded by CURV in the first year and worked on community interaction as the first phase in an identified hotspot area. The initiative worked with over 70 community members and partners.

Night Time Economy. Recognising the importance of reducing serious violence in public spaces, CURV worked closely with Cleveland's Borough Councils in match-funding local initiatives around Night-Time Economy hotspots, including the provision of training for door supervisors, the enhancement of the 'Ask Angela' campaign, and the delivery of anti-spiking kits and knife wands. In addition, CURV worked with more than 120 premises as part of the night-time economy violence prevention strategy and supported the Women's Street-Watch scheme that engaged with over 2,000 Night-Time Economy clients at key times.

Crime Prevention. Cleveland's Out of Court Disposal scheme DIVERT continues to support individuals through different pathways. There have been over 200 referrals received through the pathways. There is evidence these pathways are working with a reduction in re-offending.

● **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION:**

CURV's focus in its first year has been to build the foundations that deliver a multi-agency approach to data sharing that supports the goal of establishing a 'common truth' around the subject of serious violence in Cleveland. Completion of the SNA represented the first step in this process; taking a snapshot and defining the 'starting point' in understanding the local nature, scale and drivers of serious violence. The report continues to inform decision making, priority setting and identification of knowledge gaps which provide a barrier to:

- Understanding local serious violence
- Taking positive action
- Evaluating interventions
- Testing existing systems to identify the individuals and locations most closely linked to current and future risk and harm.

A Night-Time Economy problem profile has been developed in recognition of related violence to both demand on services (Police, Health, Local Authority and

voluntary sector resources) as well as curtailing the development of economic prosperity of the local area.

This product will form a key part of establishing a Cleveland wide, multi-agency definition of this distinct aspect of our serious violence problem and will also support future planning to improve safety in these defined areas through a coordinated and evidence-based approach.

A community sports audit has also commenced to support the expansion and development of sports-based community support and interventions, mapping current provision against indicators of vulnerability. The distribution of reported serious violence offending will enable more targeted development of future opportunities.

A Research and Evaluation Steering Group has formed to maximise the collective capability of Cleveland's analytical resources. The group will work to minimise duplication of effort, share findings and shape future research and evaluation goals to maximise the value and impact of collective research, analysis and evaluation.

CURV ended the year hosting a Serious Violence Data Sharing event, with the aim of delivering against the serious violence duty to achieve a consensus and commitment from all partners and stakeholders around setting up a framework on partnership data sharing for routine and bespoke research and evaluation needs.

- **Community Engagement:**

With sustainability and value for money at the heart of decision making, it was agreed from the outset that CURV's communications and engagement activity would be undertaken by the core OPCC Communications and Engagement team. To manage this additional workload, it was further agreed that an additional Communications and Media Officer would join the team, with a new role of Engagement Officer created to realign responsibilities for community engagement for both the OPCC and CURV.

The communications and engagement priorities for CURV during its first year of delivery were:

- **Establish a CURV brand and raise awareness of the partnership among stakeholders.** A corporate logo for CURV was agreed by partners that set the 'CURV' name against an outline of the map of the Cleveland Police force area. The pink and purple colours were chosen as a diversion from the OPCC's authoritative blue and symbolises a more aspirational and positive narrative.
- **Develop an anti-violence campaign to support intervention delivery.**
 - Communications and media activity during 2022/23 focused on Cleveland securing funding for a VRU, the subsequent investment of £628,475.32 in to anti-violence projects and the resulting impact. This was met with significant local media interest resulting in the PCC and members of staff being interviewed on the topic numerous times.

- There was also a significant investment in a multimedia campaign to divert young people away from violent behaviour, by warning them about the long-term impacts of committing a violent crime. This involved radio adverts from a ‘lived experience’ voice, expressing their regret of ruining their future by committing a violent act – plus graphic imagery on the area’s buses and phone kiosks.
- **Graphic design and publication of the CURV Response Strategy.** In the latter part of 2022/23 – with the SNA completed – CURV commissioned a local digital agency to design bespoke illustrations for the newly-developed CURV Response Strategy. These hand-drawn illustrations helped bring the document to life, whilst breaking down some of the more complex ideas within the strategy.
- **Development of the CURV website.** Partners agreed that it would be most cost-effective and sustainable for CURV’s web presence to be integrated into the OPCC’s existing website. This would be a more affordable option and would allow the OPCC team to maintain it along with the rest of the site. The initial development of the site took place during early 2023, with an expected launch date set for autumn 2023.
- **Consult with communities about their experiences of violence to support the SNA.** CURV’s commissioned service provider, Crest Advisory engaged with a variety of stakeholders to help inform the SNA, including young people, victims of crime and perpetrators of violent incidents. Over 800 young people were surveyed about what they considered to be the drivers, scope, and impact of violent crime in their communities. The voice of affected communities flows throughout the SNA and the CURV Response Strategy – work we hope to build on in 2023/24.

- **GOVERNANCE:**

CURV’s core function is to provide leadership and strategic coordination of Cleveland’s collective response to serious violence. CURV’s aim is to build and strengthen partnerships, and work more collaboratively with all partners and stakeholders to deliver against agreed objectives. The strategy outlines the four-steps Public Health Approach that will be adopted by CURV, being: Defining the problem, Identifying the causes of serious violence, Test and evaluate evidence-based, and continuous learning. The Strategy also outlined the framework and ways of working that will shape the activity of CURV and its partners in reducing serious violence around a set of agreed core principles, which were agreed as:

- **An inclusive approach.** We will strive to include and empower young people and affected communities to ensure that policies, protocols, and processes are responsive to the needs of those being served.
- **A whole-systems approach.** Partners agreed to implement whole system ways of working, promoting joint working and problem-solving between all partner agencies, including affected communities.

- **A sustainable approach.** CURV's partners will work to strengthen existing structures and services and, where possible, harnessing the assets of existing local partnerships that are already embedded throughout Cleveland's communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of successful interventions.
- **A trauma Informed approach.** CURV's partners agreed to work towards delivering a trauma-informed approach across service provision in order to help build trust among staff, service users and the wider community through the transparency of organisations' policies and procedures where staff explain what they are doing and why, and doing what they say they will do rather than over promising.

In order to deliver this, a fledgling governance structure was established to provide executive oversight to a strategic delivery group consisting of specified and relevant authorities as well as other partners and stakeholders. In line with the principle of delivering a sustainable approach, established meetings from across the partnership were identified as being part of the governance process and the process by which the voices of young people and communities could influence the decision-making process were formed, but it was recognised internally as well as within the first audit by the Home Office that this was an area requiring more attention.

NEXT STEPS

CURV has worked hard in its first year to establish itself as a meaningful partner with the mission to reduce serious violence so that the vision of Cleveland being a place where individuals, families and communities can live, learn and work free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence can be a reality.

CURV will continue to drive forward with developing the information sharing protocols so that partners can truly collaborate through a common understanding of the problem.

CURV will seek to ensure that it actively involves young people and affected communities in the decision making that shapes what programmes are commissioned or funded to help reduce serious violence and that when designed, they reach those who are most at risk of becoming involved in such crime. Work is already underway to strengthen this.

The flagship programmes of A&E and Custody Navigators, both initiated at the start of CURV's existence will begin to deliver in offering support to those who find themselves in either setting as a result of serious violence offences, and further programmes will be commissioned that will see activity run out to 2025.

CURV keeps an eye on the future beyond 2025, so this year will see the development of greater planning around sustaining the work of CURV and partners in reducing serious violence beyond the short and medium term.