

Improving Data Value for Public Health Approaches to Serious Violence Prevention and the Serious Violence Duty

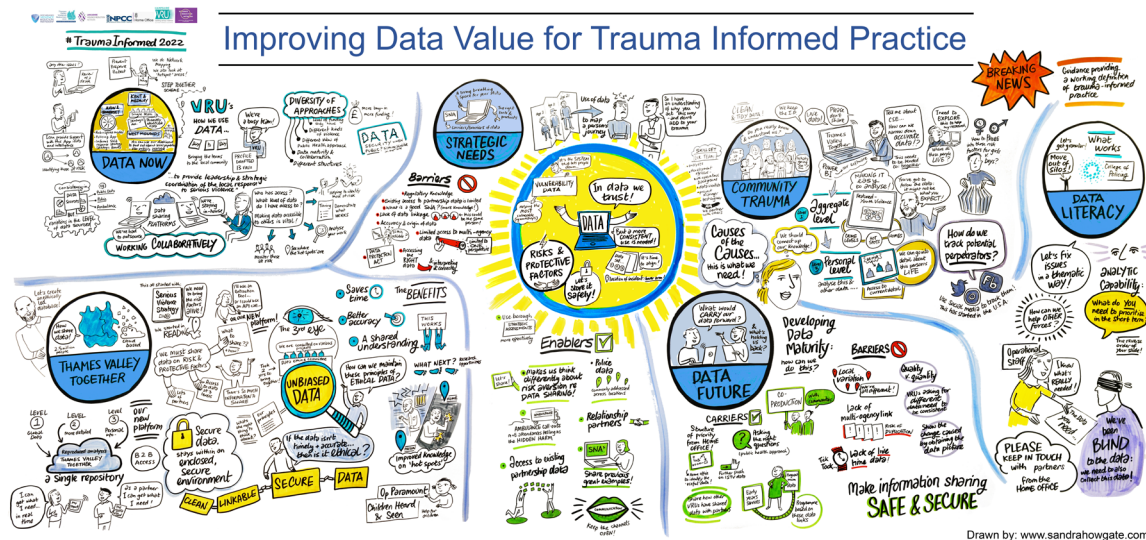


Figure 1 Birmingham Data Workshop

In early November last year, I hosted an all-day workshop in Birmingham to discuss how the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) national network¹ could improve data value for trauma informed practice - as a key enabler for public health approaches to prevent serious violence [figure 1]. The Core Function of VRUs is to provide leadership across systems and strategic coordination of local efforts to tackle serious violence. We are system-changers. A recent report from the *House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts* referenced the gaps at the top of the prevention pyramid:

“However, we agree with the current Children’s Commissioner that collaboration is not taking place at the strategic level that is needed to provide the proper support for vulnerable children and young people”.²

¹ There are 20 Home Office funded Violence Reduction Units in England and Wales and another in Scotland (funded by the Scottish Government). These Units are in regular contact through their own national network, to share with and learn from each other.

² <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/34008/documents/187189/default/> page 5 [Accessed 23 Feb 23]

Recent legislative change, by way of a new legal duty – the Serious Violence Duty [the Duty], has now commenced via the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

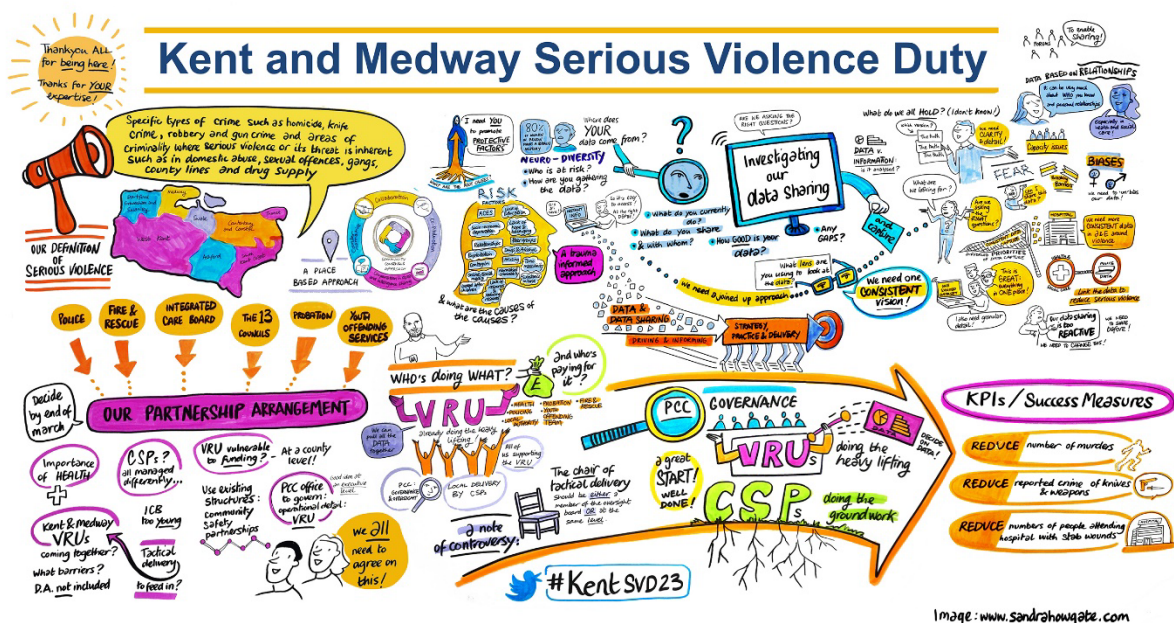
The Duty³ has been in planning for some time and came into effect in January 2023, it now drives partnership activity to:

- a. Work together to consult on and produce a Strategic Needs Assessment that focusses on risk and protective factors for serious violence, including those cohorts who are particularly vulnerable.
- b. Work together to consult on and produce a Response Strategy detailing how partners will collaborate to reduce risk and improve protection for vulnerable communities and specific at-risk cohorts.
- c. Regularly review these knowledge products to ensure benefits are being realised.
- d. The Duty also amends the responsibilities of Community Safety Partnerships to ensure that they too focus on serious violence prevention activity within their local plans.

I led a workshop in Kent in January 2023 to agree the building blocks that will ensure the delivery the Duty in the region that highlights a typical approach [figure 2].

Figure 2 Kent and Medway Serious Violence duty Workshop

³ Statutory Guidance available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-duty> [Accessed 23 Feb 23]



So what does all that mean and how can a public health approach help knit things together? Well, five main points emerged throughout our discussions that should help to explain our thinking:

- e. **Building partnerships:** Public health approaches to violence prevention typically involve building partnerships across government and with organisations and groups that have a stake in reducing violence in the community. This may include law enforcement, healthcare providers, schools, community groups, and others.
- f. **Data collection and analysis:** Public health approaches rely on sophisticated data collection and analysis to understand the patterns and causes of violence in a community and those people most of/at risk. These data can be used to develop evidence-based strategies to mitigate risk factors, promote protective factors, and prevent violence whilst tracking the effectiveness of prevention efforts over time.
- g. **Community engagement:** Public health approaches to violence prevention involve engaging with the community to understand their concerns and perspectives on violence. Community members should also be involved in developing and implementing trauma informed and culturally sensitive prevention strategies with a robust counter-narrative.

- h. **Early intervention:** Public health approaches to violence prevention often focus on early intervention to tackle risk factors, identifying individuals who may be at risk of being drawn into violence and providing them with trauma informed support and resources to reduce the impact of risk factors for violence whilst helping the whole system to come together and provide protection.
- i. **Multi-sectoral approach:** Public health approaches to violence prevention involve working across sectors to address the root causes of violence and help build capacity for protective factors. This may include addressing social determinants of health, such as poverty, racism, and housing instability that contribute to violence in the community.
- Overall, public health approaches for violence prevention requires joined-up local partnerships and cross government collaborations, data-driven decision-making, and a focus on prevention and early intervention to create safe and healthy communities and works best as part of a national programme. The UK police Science and Technology [S&T] Strategy⁴ outlines an approach to Engage, Evolve, and Embed an end-to-end science

EVOLVE BUILD

Evolving S&T to a deployable product or service needs investment of time

Accounts of innovation often use the term 'valley of death' to describe the challenge of moving from innovation to deployable solution. The scale of controlled and 'in-service' testing required to give sufficient assurance takes time and effort, but it is essential for our workforce and the public to have confidence in the S&T we deploy.

Supporting New Innovations

Policing has always been forward leaning in testing new solutions. We will build on this appetite with strategic investments that support partnerships and reduce the cost of testing on volunteering forces. Where valuable, we will provide opportunities for 'next-desk' working and controlled access to our systems.

We acknowledge our role as early adopters and customers, helping a start-up iterate their idea, tailor it to the market, and seek end-user feedback. What we cannot contribute in funding we often redress by helping industry see the value proposition first hand. We will engage with private equity investors and investment funds (e.g., [NSSIF](#), [UKI2S](#)) and give a clear, early market signal, some assurance of repeat demand, and clarity over procurement routes and funding mechanisms. We will actively find new ways to support the testing and development of early-stage technologies within the policing context.

Supporting Dual-Use

Policing can profit from innovations developed in other markets, and, equally,

innovation born in policing can reach viability when the advantage to other industries is recognised. We will be clear about the level of our needs and work closely with the CSA network and innovation partners to identify opportunities to unlock progress from dual-use propositions.

UK Policing S&T as an Export

The UK Police Service is often asked by overseas partners to share its best practice and ways of working. We will promote S&T as one such 'export,' supporting countries wishing to develop their scientific delivery and supporting growth of the international security market. We will actively seek to partner with countries, co-developing and sharing resource wherever possible.

A COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOUR

Tackling serious violence is not only the responsibility of the police. It requires the involvement of the widest range of partners across different sectors, working together effectively through their local structures.

The [Violence Reduction Unit at Thames Valley Police](#) enjoys such a partnership, with local social care, children's services, prison's and probation, schooling, community safety, and the health service. They deliver a connected service.

Central to their work is a multi-agency data-sharing and analytic platform. This brings together data from each of the partners so that risk and causation factors, and the protective measures that are in place, can be considered

The result is an evidence-based, public health approach to violence reduction, which ensures people receive the right care and that the system can take a strategic approach to addressing needs.

Figure 3 Police S&T Strategy [page 17] - Build

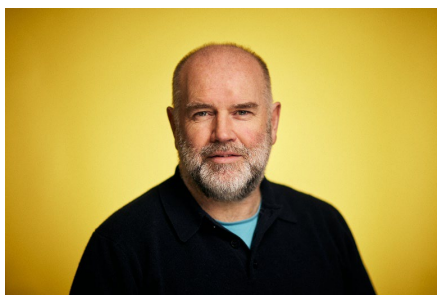
⁴ Available at <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/office-of-the-chief-scientific-advisor/2022-npcc-science-and-technology-strategy.pdf> [Accessed 2 March 2023]

system, with a promise to “work jointly with end users, academia and industry”, which provides a whole systems framework to conjure the type of collaborated data required to meet the Duty, support Public Health Approaches, Build S&T solutions [figure 3], deliver Trauma Informed Practice, and improve data value.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Have a Plan - all of this requires a Data Strategy, it will not happen unless you carefully, intentionally, and mindfully plan for it. Your strategy should contain defensive tactics [how you will provide for the security of your data] and offensive tactics [how you will mobilise your data]. I say this because most strategies I see only contain data protection priorities, and it is the **missed use** of data that produces the most vulnerability, not the **misuse of data**. Your strategy needs to be carefully aligned with your partners and contain how you will deal with the data ethics challenge [take a look at this blog from our Data Ethics Lead for a glimpse at our work⁵].
2. Invest in People - It became clear to me that the most important factor was always the relationships you build along the way, these are what sustain a difficult journey and move from **what** needs to be done to **how** you can achieve it.

Good luck and please get in touch if you think I can help.



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⁵ Available at: <https://www.ethox.ox.ac.uk/blog/shaping-data-ethics-a-young-people2019s-deliberative-forum>
[Accessed 2 March 2023]