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Wales Violence Prevention Unit Evaluation

A Whole Systems Case Study: Swansea

Case study report

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Wales Violence Prevention Unit – Year 3 Evaluation (2021/22)

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About this report

South Wales is one of the 20 areas allocated funding by the UK Government to establish a Violence Reduction Unit. Supported by additional commitments from Welsh partners, in 2019 the Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) was established. To inform the continued development of the Wales VPU, the Public Health Institute, LJMU, were commissioned as an evaluation partner. This report forms one of a suite of outputs from this evaluation work programme, and presents an evaluation of the whole system approach and case study approach for Swansea. The in-depth case studies report sits alongside an accompanying whole systems report. The suite of evaluation reports are available on the VPU website: <https://www.violencepreventionwales.co.uk/> and include:

- Year 1 – The development of the Wales VPU evaluation framework and whole systems report
- Year 2 – Evaluation of selected work programmes
- Year 3 – Swansea whole systems case study evaluation
- Year 4 – Cardiff whole systems case study evaluation

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- All study participants who took part in interviews and focus groups
- Colleagues from Public Health Wales for advising on study development and colleagues from PHI for supporting study implementation and report production, including Alice Booth-Rosamond, Jade Craven and Dave Seddon.

Terminology

Use of the term 'serious violence'

The Wales VPU encourages partnerships to refrain from using the term 'serious' when defining violence. Through a public health lens, it is important to understand that interventions (especially those in early childhood) can prevent violence in the long term, and improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. They also have wider positive implications for the economy and society. As such, we will refer to 'violence' throughout this report unless directly quoting or referencing a source which uses the term 'serious violence'.

Use of the term 'youth violence'

The children, young people and professionals who contributed to the Wales Without Violence Framework, co-produced by the Wales VPU and Peer Action Collective Cymru were clear that the term 'youth violence' was a term that has become outdated. It was felt that the term can contribute to labelling and stereotyping of children and young people as a group. As such, throughout this report we will refer to 'violence among children and young people' unless directly quoting or referencing a source which uses the term 'youth violence'.

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Evaluation overview

Introduction

In 2019, the Home Office funded the establishment of Violence Reduction Units across 18 police forces in England and Wales, subsequently increasing to 20 police forces in 2022. The Units were set up to reduce levels of violence using a 'public health' approach to violence prevention. The Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) was set up with the ambition to prevent all forms of violence. South Wales Police, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners Office and Public Health Wales are part of the multiagency team. The VPU operating model takes a four-pronged approach (Aware, Advocate, Assist and Adopt) and ensures a public health approach is embedded across the wider system to allow for sustainable violence prevention activity that further works to ensure that a public health approach is translated into operational practice to influence sustainable system-level change.

In Swansea, which is a violence hotspot in Wales, the VPU and partners are delivering a range of interventions and multiagency arrangements to reduce and prevent violence, and to take a holistic child-centred approach to children and young people involved/at risk of involvement in violence. The VPU has funded a host of interventions at a primary, secondary and tertiary level, which includes interventions that target the root causes of violence and offer support at what is considered a 'teachable moment'. These interventions sit within a system that has established a range of approaches to target violence, and include:

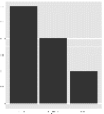
Sector	Intervention/programme/approach	Nature	Age
Local Authority	Contextual Safeguarding and CMET panel	Targeted approach	≥18
	Early Intervention and Prevention Coordinator	Early interventions	11-25
Criminal Justice	Teachable Moments Police Custody intervention	Tertiary intervention	10-18
	GRIP programme/ Operation Sceptre	Desistence	All ages
	Wales Police Schools' Programme (WPSP)	Universal prevention	4-18
Health	NHS Violence Prevention Team	Early intervention	All ages
Community	St Giles Trust	Targeted, secondary intervention	11-18
	Fearless, Crimestoppers	Universal primary intervention	11-16 professionals
	Braver Choices, Media Academy Cymru	Therapeutic intervention	10-17

Evaluation methods

The Wales VPU commissioned the Public Health Institute (PHI), Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) to carry out an independent evaluation of the VPU whole systems approach to violence prevention, focusing on Swansea. The evaluation explores how the interventions and approaches across Swansea operate to identify individuals at risk of/involved in violence, and the measures implemented to mitigate risk and prevent further involvement in violence and crime. Evaluation activities included:



A rapid literature review to provide context to the research and aid the interpretation of research findings and development of recommendations.



Key programme evidence, policies and operational documentation was collated, reviewed and where possible, analysed to explore the development, implementation, delivery and impact of the VPU interventions.



Interviews with key stakeholders (n=23) involved in the implementation and delivery of the VPU funded interventions across Swansea. A stakeholder workshop (n=20) was undertaken to collaboratively develop recommendations.



Interviews with service users (n=5) engaging with the VPU funded interventions across Swansea to explore the needs of individuals, barriers to accessing support, journey experiences and impact of support. Case studies were developed for (n=7) interventions.

Key findings

The VPU was described as bringing services and colleagues together to develop networks and build relationships to work in partnership. There was a clear, shared vision amongst partners for using coordinated public health approach to violence prevention.

“All children and young people in Wales are given the time and opportunities to lead meaningful lives... giving them skills. We believe that education is the cornerstone for any young person being able to move positively through life” (Stakeholder)

The VPU membership was seen to include a good range of partners. Partners reported having good awareness of the function of the VPU, describing it as more than a funding element. This meant that their services were endorsed which provided support and credibility for future further roll out of interventions. Relationships and communication between the VPU and intervention

“VPU are very dynamic in terms of risks and in terms of operating environment changing, and in terms of flexing what the service could be depending on the needs, they’re very forward thinking in that way” (Stakeholder)

providers was described as positive, with the VPU having a flexible approach to understanding the needs and support services. Recommendations were made for ensuring feedback from the VPU was fed down and directed to frontline staff to ensure they understand how their work fit into the wider violence prevention agenda, and to celebrate their work. Partners also agreed that the VPU could support in mobilising school engagement with interventions.

The multiagency working and buy in from partners was seen as key to this united approach. Examples were provided for co-location and development of referral pathways which had promoted joint working, awareness of services and awareness of barriers faced by young people and individuals with complex needs. Partners reported having good awareness of the VPU funded violence prevention activities, as well as wider support services across Swansea. However, findings did suggest that there can still be a wider lack of understanding of what services are provided, and the partnership would benefit from stronger input from education and mental health providers.

“The only way we will ever deal properly with any sort of crime is by a joined-up approach and that is everybody working together” (Stakeholder)

The role of the Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team (CMET) was seen as key to effective multiagency working across Swansea, providing an opportunity to bring key operational and strategic partners together to share information and make joint decisions for an immediate and coordinated response. The CMET team were seen as pivotal in supporting collaborative working, engaging in the voluntary sector and breaking down barriers to prevent the criminalisation of young people.

Barriers to delivery for intervention providers included recruitment delays which impacted on the implementation of interventions, the short-term nature of funding which created job insecurity for staff, and working with limited resources and capacity in an environment with increasing and complex needs of young people and increasing demands on the support system. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was seen to have increased these complexities and service demand, with gaps in mental health provision, both for early intervention and at crisis point. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of understanding the level of work and resources required to effectively support communities. Examples were also provided for communication and information sharing barriers, and the commitment required to reduce duplication, silo working and to promote the awareness and benefits of interventions.

"It's challenging. You're trying to promote this new collaborative work and then people, organisations and individuals do fall into wanting to go back into silos and it's really hard to make that sort of culture change"
(Stakeholder)

Findings highlighted the importance of utilising a trauma informed approach across the violence prevention activities. Partners described risk factors for young people, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), neurodiversity, and poor mental health. They also highlighted that many young people were disengaged from school, highlighting the critical role of education in building protective factors and recognising risk factors. Barriers for families engaging with services were reported due to being overwhelmed by being involved with multiple organisations and previous negative experiences of support which had resulted in mistrust and lack of parental engagement. This highlights the necessity of services working together to provide accessible, wraparound, whole family support. Having experienced and skilled staff was seen as key to this, ensuring that they could look beyond the presenting behaviour/incident to build trust, advocate for the young people and make every contact count.

"People maybe not understanding the impact of the trauma that can be experienced from things like, you know, being involved in in a gang or experiencing somebody being stabbed, hurt. I think people underestimate trauma and how it can impact on your mental health"
(Stakeholder)

Evaluation findings provide evidence for the individual outcomes for young people engaging in the VPU funded violence prevention activities and support. This includes creating awareness of support available and how to access it, breaking down barriers and reducing stigma, to enable access to support, and the building of safe and trusted relationships to enable engagement with services.

"Keep me from danger and taught me what's right and what's wrong" (YP)

Feedback from service providers and the young people who participated in the evaluation included young people having increased knowledge and awareness of risks, making informed choices, developing alternative coping strategies and improved health and wellbeing, including increased resilience and improved self-esteem and confidence. Engaging with intervention activities also provided a structure and routine, and opportunity for young people to develop skills to help them

"I talk to MAC, but I talk to other people as well now, I talk to my friends and my family" (YP)

move forward with their lives. There were also reports of wider impacts in terms of the young peoples improved relationships with friends and family and reduced incidents of violence. For example, one young person reported that they felt safer following engagement with knife crime prevention activities. Indeed, stakeholders hoped that support from the interventions would lead to further reduced incidences of violence, with young people feeling part of and safer in their communities.

The evaluation findings also provide evidence of the impact of the VRU funded activities across the wider system. The funding from the VPU increased capacity within services meaning they had a wider reach to engage with more professionals and young people. Examples were provided for improvements in professional knowledge and understanding, which included increased trauma informed practice. Findings also indicate improved partnership working and pathways further increased reach with the development and awareness of accessible pathways to support (including more appropriate use of pathways). There were also reports of improved information sharing and reporting which meant that resources and responses could be better targeted.

"I think we need reporting mechanisms looking at our impact and performance and coming up with success measures and outcomes. I don't think we're measuring the impact as robustly as we could" (Stakeholder)

Barriers were highlighted in terms of ensuring data is captured effectively and partners recognise the importance in collecting data, including data quality, to evidence impact and support sustainability of interventions. There was a recognised need for additional support, potentially from the VPU to support a centralised system to bring all information and intelligence together. The Home Office performance indicator reports for VRU funded activities were limited in reflecting the true nature of the interventions, and could be further adapted and tailored for the VPU-funded interventions.

The evaluation findings indicate that the model of commissioning and delivery contributes to the wider overarching aims of reducing violence among children and young people, and creates safer communities across Wales. Whilst the service providers existed before working with the VPU, evaluation findings demonstrate that without the VPU funding and support to establish and maintain pathways of support, these outcomes across the system would not have been achieved. Considering sustainability of the service offer, partners highlighted that without continued and long-term funding, providers would not have the same reach to support young people and their families. This was flagged as a concern given the rising complexities experienced by communities and the increased demand on the system. Evaluation findings highlight that effective partnership working supports a sustainable approach for violence prevention across Swansea. Examples of best practice from the Swansea case study provide important learning for other areas across Wales. It was also agreed that the model provides the opportunity to work closely with the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Local Authority Contextual Safeguarding and the Community Safety Partnership, to further develop and align strategies to increase community cohesion and safety. This was seen as particularly important in relation to the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty.

Recommendations for partnership working across the system

- The VPU could work with the Universal Prevention providers to ensure an improved buy-in from education and schools across Swansea. This may need government support to mobilise engagement.
- Good practice examples highlight partnership working between statutory and voluntary services within the VPU-funded activities. This should be expanded wider across the voluntary

sector to better engage communities. Learning from the Contextual Safeguarding team could be used here.

- The Swansea interventions provide good examples of partnership working to build capacity across the system in terms of trauma informed working. This could be linked in to wider ACE and trauma informed approach training across the workforce.
- The interventions all include input at a strategic and operational level which is important for effective delivery, with frontline operational work informing strategic decisions. The VPU should consider how they can engage more informally with frontline staff for a two-way feedback process.
- Findings highlight a gap in delivery for mental health support provision (at both early intervention and crisis point) and representation at a partnership level. If not already, mental health colleagues from the wider health and social care system should be invited to the CMET panel and the VPU could explore building a mental health support pathway into a future VPU-funded intervention.
- Key partners and the VPU could work together to develop a youth friendly communications strategy. Stakeholders suggested the focus could move away from knife carrying and focus on using shared language and good news stories.
- Where possible longer-term funding would allow for less disruption to service delivery for the workforce and service users. It also allows for a longer-term evaluation to truly understand the impact of interventions. Violence prevention services should work alongside the VPU to develop a business case and sustainable model beyond VPU funding.
- Partnership buy-in is key for collaborative working. Interventions involving different organisations need to include all key partners involved from the beginning to inform the planning and implementation. This will contribute to shared ownership and responsibility. The multiagency membership of the VPU can mobilise services to share responsibilities.
- The CMET panel membership includes key stakeholders involved in VPU and wider violence prevention activity across Swansea. This should continue to run, with regular review of membership to ensure all partners and sectors are involved. If not already, public health should be invited, and the VPU could work with colleagues from education to identify the best-placed colleagues to attend these meetings.
- Intelligence used for CMET could be officially recorded to produce more formalised outputs including intelligence-led recommendations to inform direction of resources across the system. Additional resource and capacity would be required to support this. The VPU could work alongside Swansea Council to explore the feasibility of this.
- The work carried out by the contextual safeguarding team is unique and supports a trauma informed approach to safeguarding. Swansea could use learning to showcase this work as best practice and learning for other areas across Wales.

Recommendations for evidencing impact across the system

- In year one of VPU delivery, the VPU and LJMU developed an evaluation toolkit to support the VPU and VPU-funded providers to better evidence the impact of the violence prevention activities across Wales. The toolkit could be used more widely to support consistent evaluation. The VPU partners could work together to further develop a standardised

outcomes framework for the Swansea VPU violence prevention model. It is recommended that a core part of this framework is consistent across services to evidence the whole system impact. However, this framework should also allow for autonomy for adaptations for different interventions. This should include softer outcomes and tailored goals based on the individual needs and goals for clients.

- Data mapping and quality assurance exercises may be useful for individual interventions. This would help ensure the appropriate data is collected to reflect the delivery and impact of that delivery.
- Outcomes data for A&E attendances and crime reports, as well as other data should be presented with narrative to demonstrate short-term impacts and avoid misinterpretation.
- Intervention data could be explored alongside broader data sets included within the Wales Violence Prevention Portal to track potential impact across the wider system (for example TIGG data). Training for professionals around data intelligence may be helpful for colleagues to understand the broader picture and how outcomes data can influence action.
- Anonymised case studies should continue to be developed across interventions in standard template for use within evaluation (both internally and externally) to evidence impact of services. Consent from service users should be gained before use within the public domain.
- The evaluation highlights a best practice data exercise undertaken by Swansea Council. This data collation exercise could be expanded and incorporated routinely to bring together data across the system. Additional resources and capacity would be needed to support this. The VPU and Swansea Council could work collaboratively to ensure the most appropriate intelligence is gathered from across the wider system.
- The majority of interventions are subject to local and national evaluation. It would be useful for evaluation partners to come together to form an evaluation advisory group to (where allowed) share findings and align recruitment methods to ensure services and service users are not 'over researched' or too much is asked of them.
- Feedback from young people highlights the importance of the inclusion of service user voice within design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of interventions. Service providers and evaluators should continue to keep service user voice at the heart of intervention design and delivery, and where possible incorporating co-production. This should be a key focus for final year evaluations of VPU-funded activities to better understand the legacy of the VPU and in developing a sustainability plan.

VPU-funded intervention case studies

Case study 1: CMET and Contextual Safeguarding Team

The Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (CMET) team consists of social workers and youth workers that work with children and young people who reach the threshold for safeguarding due to exploitation and extra familial harm (EFH). The team works to respond to the individual needs of the young people. The CMET Panel is a multiagency group, meeting on a fortnightly basis, which considers the contexts, themes, and trends for exploitation (rather than individual cases). Partners include South Wales Police, Community Safety, Youth Justice Services, and third sector organisations. The panel also provides, or facilitates, access to specialist support services in relation to vulnerabilities such as substance misuse, mental health, homelessness, and violence. It also focuses on identified hotspot locations across Swansea and peer groups and provides targeted outreach activities.

Contextual safeguarding is a practice that requires child protection professionals to acknowledge the relationship of contexts to individuals and then take active steps to change those contexts. This approach considers the role and risks of extra familial harm in the safeguarding of children and young people. Swansea is one of five pilot sites across England and Wales (the only one in Wales) working with the University of Bedfordshire to embed a contextual safeguarding system within its Children's Services.

Implementation

The CMET panel runs independently from the VPU, however, it was felt that the funding from the VPU enhances and supports the work of CMET and contextual safeguarding within Swansea. The VPU-funded interventions including St Giles, MAC, Fearless, Teachable Moments and the Violence Prevention Team (see other case studies) are represented at the CMET panel and operate within this framework.

During 2021/22, a youth worker who forms part of the Swansea Council Contextual Safeguarding Team was funded by the VPU. The team (collaborating with Evolve Youth Service) includes two senior social workers and five youth workers (these additional roles are funded by the local authority) to provide a detached and outreach youth work presence, alongside access to specialist support services provided by Swansea YMCA Llamau (a leading homelessness charity) and Barod (a substance misuse support service), across identified hotspot areas in Swansea. It is targeted at young people aged 11-25 years. The VPU have also funded the Swansea Early Intervention and Prevention Coordinator. The aim of this approach is to:

- Provide a flexible agile team to work during the day, evening, night, weekdays and weekends, working with young people to provide street-based preventative and early intervention work where young people are at risk of involvement with violence, criminal exploitation, carrying weapons, county lines and gang involvement.
- Build relationships, providing information, assistance and gathering information on the needs and experiences of the young people in their locality, informing the development of a responsive service to be co-designed with partners and young people.
- Work with partners to provide a series of additional services such as employability support, counselling, and housing support as required, with opportunities to signpost and refer young people to services delivered by Barod, Llamau, and YMCA Swansea.

Delivery

When a referral comes into the Youth Work Team, an initial assessment is completed and where there is any exploitation or contextual safeguarding concerns raised, the young person's case will be referred to the CMET team, who will then refer the child to a social worker for the child protection process to be undertaken. This includes exploring what may be happening with a young person outside of their home life, for example, relationships with peers and friendship groups as well as their school and any possible gang presence or gang membership. The role of CMET was felt to develop a 'non criminalisation of adolescents' framework, instead looking at supportive pathways and the important role of early intervention, support, and help.

The needs of the young people who may be supported by the Youth Work Team or looked at within the CMET context included: mental health, undiagnosed Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and online exploitation, Looked after Children (LAC) and parental substance misuse. It was also felt that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on violence. Quarterly reporting to the VPU highlights the complex nature of cases being discussed at CMET. CMET has a number of young people subject to Protocol (a series of multiagency strategy meetings that are held on a six-week basis to discuss the risks, strengths and safety associated with the type of harm), whom the Local Authority has responsibility for. The average number of days that young people are subject to protocol is 97-126 days.

One stakeholder spoke about a recent independent inquiry into sexual abuse of children in England and Wales¹. They stated that they were currently looking at the recommendations and findings to explore gaps to support disabled children, who are deemed to be at a greater risk of sexual harm and grooming. Early intervention was seen to be key, with stakeholders highlighting that it is not just those with visible issues or seen to be the most vulnerable/at risk where support should be provided. It was also felt that the focus should not necessarily be about disruption of activities, but how to engage and educate young people. For example, connecting with young people across places and spaces. Where intelligence is gleaned about a particular location, the Youth Work Team and other professionals will go out to the location to raise awareness across the whole community about exploitation. This may also involve looking at the environment (e.g. looking at lighting, cutting back bushes) and training businesses on becoming safe space aware (telling them who to report concerns to and what to do if they see something happening). Quarterly reporting shows that CMET delivered training to professionals from a range of organisations including a school health and wellbeing team, multiagency professionals, social services, and city rangers.

It was highlighted that CMET was about 'mobilising people' and 'having the right people out there working alongside each other that can engage with young people'. Allowing children and young people to feedback what is important to them was considered to be vital in developing contextual safeguarding in Swansea, as was young people knowing they can access safe spaces and where to seek support. This involves professionals building relationships with young people and encouraging them to take a harm reduction approach. QR codes are also placed around hotspot areas, which young people can scan to anonymously report anything they see using the Fearless (Crimestoppers) website and access a range of support on the spot.

"We've done a number of pieces of really good positive disruption work. We had one around the sea front where there was a whole issue around young people going there and being exploited by other people. [We] did a lot of different work around that using QR

¹ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications>

codes, using Media Academy [Cymru], St Giles, police, community safety, everybody out and about. All there with this one focus” (Stakeholder)

“We’re trying to think creatively as well about how we get that support and safety to young people in the places they spend time” (Stakeholder)

Partnerships

The links between the VPU and CMET were considered to be strong, with good strategic and operational links that reflect the level of work and collaboration involved. CMET were felt to have regular contact with the VPU team, who attend panel meetings to gain insight into what is happening in Swansea, as well as looking at what may benefit the area. It was felt that colleagues from the VPU are aware of how practises have developed in ‘real time’ and are able to raise awareness of where issues are as they have a cross perspective. The VPU were also seen as a binding force for bringing organisations together.

“They’ve attended our CMET panel and they talk to us quite frequently and they come to us and ask us what we feel is going to be a benefit in our area. So they listen to us about what we are seeing and what’s what, what’s going on” (Stakeholder)

For CMET, it was felt that there was very much a multiagency approach. They identified police as a key partner and highlighted the roles of education, health, third sector organisations (e.g., St. Giles in a targeted role), and other criminal justice areas including probation and Youth Justice Services. They also noted the involvement from other key areas within the local authority, including trading standards, planning and regeneration, and licensing departments. The partners were all recognised as providing operational responses to identifying issues, how best to engage with young people, and how to react to challenges and barriers experienced. An example was given by one of the stakeholders of a stabbing in Swansea. This event was seen to impact greatly on the local community. An extraordinary CMET panel was arranged to bring all the partners together to look at how this may be approached from a system level to quickly mobilise support for the community.

“It had a massive impact on the community. So we were able to have an extraordinary CMET bringing all of our partners together. We mobilised our youth workers along with our emotional health and well-being workers from the Early Help Hubs into the schools that were affected, providing support instantly. We were worried about repercussions. Media Academy [Cymru] joined us...So they were able to have those conversations about trauma, how to handle things, safety planning in the community. We opened the youth clubs later for safety because young people didn’t feel safe in the community. We brought in a counselling service so that young people could come in and speak to a counsellor” (Stakeholder)

“We’re working with wider organisations that have got more targeted kind of roles... bringing all of those different things together to look and provide an operational response... We are identifying various issues that are occurring and arising or likely to occur and then thinking about what are we going to do. We’ve reflected on ones where we may have missed and thinking about well, why did that not go according to plan?” (Stakeholder)

Locally it was felt that there was a good picture across organisations of what is going on and it was felt that this was driven by CMET on the community safety boards. One stakeholder spoke about the importance of a multiagency approach to communication and language. They gave an example of how messages about young people carrying knives can lead to more young people carrying knives for protection, rather than deter them, highlighting how this can potentially cause unintended negative

consequences. They highlighted how the Braver Choices programme at MAC worked with young people and colleagues to try to debunk some of these messages and promote the right language in communications strategies.

“Making sure that we’re not creating false messages...Media Academy [Cymru], I think have been really good at helping us thinking through what comms we’re doing, how we’re communicating with and how we’re targeting young people. I think that’s a really positive move forward for us, having them sort of being brought in” (Stakeholder)

“But if we need specific services, so for example, if we go in and we see that there's a massive issue around knife crime, we'll call in Media Academy [Cymru] because they were experts in that field. So we'll go in and we'll build the relationships and do the coordination of everything in the school environment or in the area. But then we'll also call in the partners that the VPU are funding” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders also spoke about police sitting within the Swansea Integrated Safeguarding Hub and how this co-location and cross working allowed for a true collaborative approach, especially for sharing intelligence. The Youth Work Team were seen to have supported the police with regards to NRM (national referral mechanisms). Relationships with local policing teams had also improved since the CMET panel was established. It was felt that developing these relationships and involving more professionals in strategic and operational conversations has helped to improve a more trauma informed approach to violence prevention in Swansea. This included a cultural change in the approach of professionals who were beginning to explore *why* a child is carrying a knife or *what* led them to being exploited.

“So more recently, when the police were going to a property and they spoke to the Youth Service Team beforehand, knowing that there was a child there... they were able to focus on their policing element of their operation, whilst a social worker was able to go in and support the child. Previous to now we would be called once they've entered the property and they've done what they needed to do” (Stakeholder)

“When there's joint visits maybe from a licensing perspective into premises that might be selling alcohol or illegal substances that you know there's intelligence. When they've done a joint approach with the licensing team and police and trading standards, we've also gone in as well which doesn't normally get done. So we are making huge progress and we were safeguarding the children that are present...So massive, massive improvements to what it would have been two years ago” (Stakeholder)

One stakeholder spoke about the possibility of the relationship between the VPU and CMET developing further, to encourage data sharing between the VPU and the CMET panel. It was felt to be important to focus resources where needed, but that it is not possible to do this alone and that collaborative working was important in identifying child exploitation networks more effectively. A need was identified for a centralised place to bring all information and intelligence together to look at where resources need to be targeted, how to get the most out of people’s roles, and importantly, to acknowledge any gaps. Other potential work was identified around detached youth work, where professionals are not directly linked to the youth centre.

“Thinking about how we’re gathering the data and what we’re doing about using it and pulling all of that together because one of the things that’s lacking is a centralised place to bring that together” (Stakeholder)

Barriers

There were a number of barriers identified with regards to contextual safeguarding in Swansea, which focussed around partnership working and operational oversight, as well as gaps in current provision. It was felt that CMET is good at 'coordinating and directing' contextual safeguarding work, but that this does not translate into the 'day to day' and greater operational oversight is needed. One stakeholder acknowledged that the system is built around the public health approach, however, colleagues from public health could be better linked into the contextual safeguarding activities in Swansea.

"Public health ... have the expertise to manage and deal with some of these things for us. To help us inform then where our work fits, they seem to be a bit of a missing piece of the jigsaw" (Stakeholder)

It was felt that there were barriers with mental health support, such as long waiting lists, lack of resources, and lack of 'buy in'. It was also highlighted that there are gaps in early prevention and awareness raising activities that were previously being filled by third sector organisations who no longer have that specific brief/portfolio. One stakeholder acknowledged that there is currently a gap in providing early prevention and awareness raising, which was considered to be very important; as are community liaison and forging links with communities. Provision of care for young adults over the age of 18 was seen to be a gap. Concerns were raised for young people over the age of 18 who are groomed and coerced as it was felt that these young adults are often viewed as fully responsible adults who have made wrong choices, despite the impact of grooming on an individual's ability to choose and make decision. It was also felt that for under 18's, the use of labelling and language around sexual abuse needed to be explored.

"I do have an issue around where somebody can be one day after 18th birthday and be groomed. They turn 18 and all of a sudden they're an adult just making poor choices. Actually, the overall impact on grooming that can have on your mental capacity to make informed choices" (Stakeholder)

Gaps in early prevention also focused around not just removing risk through, for example, disruption activities undertaken by serious and organised crime boards. It was felt that identifying children and young people who had been exploited and moving them does not always remove the risk. It was considered to be important to acknowledge the many ripple effects of these 'sophisticated' networks of criminal gangs that exploit children and young people and that more work needs to be done with the adults who run these networks to remove the risk (rather than targeting the children and young people who are involved).

"Further ripple effects of their networks (targeted for disruption). So what we find is that police investigations go on for very long periods of time, especially when it's an intel gathering exercise. During that period of time, there's a snowball effect. Where actually more and more young people get drawn into, especially the most sophisticated networks we see, then an increase of violence and risk of either, whether it be sexual or physical violence or both" (Stakeholder)

Impact

A number of outcomes derived from the CMET and contextual safeguarding team were identified by the stakeholders on an individual, community and system level. It was seen to be important to enable children and young people to 'be children and young people', for example, in terms of their relationship development and dynamics and that this could be done through increased education that would enable them to do this in a safe and informed way. Feedback provided to services demonstrated

that the young people have trust in their youth workers. Through this engagement and provision of spaces and places children and young people can access, it was felt that there has been an increase in the visibility of children and young people and increased feelings of safety (across children and young people and the wider community).

“We had a hut at Christmas time in the Town Centre. Young people identified our youth workers as people that they trust and felt that they always offered a safe space which is lovely. Individual work with young people with exploitation have put our youth workers on their safety plan as people who are safe, which just demonstrates how you know how much it works really” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders felt that the work has increased the ability to effectively identify criminal networks. The work around contextual safeguarding was seen to have brought communities together so that there is an increased awareness of how to identify those who are or may be at risk, but also increased awareness of how to support these individuals in a safe way. In the longer term, it was hoped that within communities there would be a culture shift around what is acceptable/unacceptable behaviour, but that this can take time as this is held by communities and cultures across generations. From a wider system strategic and operational viewpoint, it was felt that services/organisations/professionals are better informed locally and have a greater understanding of the needs of their communities and this in turn has a direct impact on planning and the need to support and invest in this area.

One young person provided feedback for the evaluation via their youth worker. They believed that the support they had received via the contextual safeguarding youth worker had improved their knowledge around substance use and had helped them to make better decisions outside of school which had resulted in them no longer ‘getting into trouble’. They saw this as useful in future to prevent them from falling into trouble. They had good communication with their youth worker and felt comfortable to ask questions, give feedback and felt listened to, which they saw as important for services to know that they are helping. They thought more support could be provided online.

“Keeps me out of trouble, helps me learn new things that I didn’t know, for example within substance misuse session, aerosol’s can kill you straight away” (YP)

“Making better decisions outside of school. Yes, it is important. Because when I am older, I may fall into trouble” (YP)

Quarterly VPU reporting showed that the traditional outcomes for progress of a child at risk does not always fit with contextual work and as such, CMET have developed a method of recording the outcomes based on contexts and have begun to utilise Microsoft forms to analyse the impact as well as other factors. A number of tools and resources are used to measure outcomes, such as young people questionnaires, scaling questions during multiagency meeting and professional feedback, which is stored on their WCCIS recording system.

Case studies provided by CMET and contextual safeguarding team

Working in a community setting where there was an incident of violence resulting in a young person receiving a knife wound injury that required critical care, a rapid response to a serious incident of violence among young people was used to identify an immediate response to the concerns on a safeguarding level. Following on, a contextual approach was taken to support the wider community to prevent further harm. It was identified that the young people that reside in the area would benefit from support to reduce the likelihood of future concerns. It was identified that the local school would be the best place for this work to take place and so a multiagency carousel event was organised within the school which targeted year 9 pupils and pupils within their internal project that work with the most vulnerable pupils. The headmaster from the school stated:

"I just wanted to give thanks and some feedback regarding the carousel event that has taken place at Penyrheol over the last two days. AW has organised 2 superb days for our pupils. The sessions that were covered were just what our pupils needed and all staff coming in have been great. I have never heard such positive feedback from our pupils. Genuinely. It has been excellent".

Measuring outcomes

When exploring the way in which outcomes are currently measured, individual case level data is created for each young person that engages with the Youth Work Team. This details targets that are set at the beginning of engagement, as well as measuring feelings of trust and safety, all of which are reviewed at discharge.

"We're going down the route of treating each case as an individual and setting the targets for the case at the beginning and measuring them at the end rather than there being like a set agenda of things that we want to achieve for every case because every case that comes through is really different" (Stakeholder)

CMET is not an intelligence gathering service. They hold data and intelligence regarding places of concern, gathering and analysing information about these places and determining where to focus safeguarding. This involves looking at hotspot areas and trends such as school group's clusters, and demographics protocols. This information is important in understanding connected networks. It was highlighted that any data that is collected needs to be meaningful (and within legal GDPR parameters) and that data triangulation/data linking (where possible) is important, as is consistency around the way in which data is collected and language that is used. Within the CMET, colleagues from the Police now show data that they would not have done previously and the VPU are seen to be supporting local operational delivery rather than leading it. All of these changes in processes were seen to inform prevention activities / inform practice.

"Informed practice, we are now gathering things that are helping us on an operational point of view but also then helping me think what are the gaps? Are we capturing young people from diverse backgrounds? And if we're not, is that because there are no risks there or is it that we're not doing anything about it? It's enabling us to then have those meaningful conversations and challenge around that. It's also meaning that the police colleagues are coming around the table with data that they've always captured but probably not shared with all the right people, the problem is quite a lot of police data is held by police and nobody else" (Stakeholder)

One of the stakeholders commented that sometimes what may actually be a positive outcome may be seen to be a negative outcome. An example given was around increased police and ambulance call outs. It was also felt to be difficult to extract data from their systems, it was hoped that the VPU could fund an analyst post to look at how to best utilise the data.

"...It's really hard to pull that data from our systems. I don't think there is a system set up to work contextually, although we do. We have tried to kind of make our system fit. So when we set up a contextual case, we will link all of the young people that we have linked to that area as associated people. So that when you open up their case, you can see that they're linked and we can end date that. So if they no longer spend time in the space or they're relationship with the space is improved, then we can end data. But that all takes a lot of time as well. It's work in progress. Looking at how we can make that data work for us as well" (Stakeholder)

One of the stakeholders spoke about having worked with Bedfordshire University over the past three years to fully embed a contextual approach into their safeguarding practices. It was hoped that this

established relationship would remain, with discussions currently focussing upon evidencing their work and measuring outcomes related to contextual safeguarding.

Sustainability

When exploring future delivery and sustainability, it was highlighted that currently in Swansea whilst prevention work is 'good', stronger efforts need to be made to disrupt organised crime. It was also highlighted that there is no specific prevention support for CSE. It was felt that without the funding from the VPU, there would be increased harm and risk to young people.

"In Swansea now, there's no prevention support for CSE. And what we're seeing is a rise in the young people now being on CSE protocol. So if the funding that the VPU were providing now in regards to you know those services focusing on criminal exploitation and youth violence disappear then we're going to see a rise in young people being harmed as a result of you know getting involved in exploitation and knife crime" (Stakeholder)

One of the stakeholders spoke about wanting to do more work with parents in the future around giving them advice on how to keep their child(ren) safe when they are out, for example, having an additional phone charger, and taking water (since they will most likely be drinking alcohol). To this point, it was felt that engagement with parents has been mixed. When looking at service provision for under 18s, it was felt that the local authority should have a lead in this along with public health.

Short-term funding for organisations was seen to be an issue when working towards longer-term outcomes around societal change. One stakeholder also highlighted the challenges with recruitment for projects funded through short term funding. It was felt that a discussion was needed about moving away from shorter term funding to 'proper' investment over a three to five year period, to evidence impact in a more meaningful way. This longer timescale was seen to be good for managing cycles and allowing interventions to be set up, tested, evaluated, and then rolled out.

Case study 2: Criminal Justice - Teachable Moments – Custody Suite intervention

The Teachable Moments Custody Suite Service initiative aims to intervene and prevent young people from becoming further involved in violence by treating the point a young person comes into custody as a 'teachable moment'. The initiative is delivered force-wide across South Wales. The intervention was implemented in Swansea in January 2022 and has been funded by the VPU for three years. The model employs caseworkers from Media Academy Cymru (MAC) to deliver motivational interviews to children and young people (aged 10-17) in police custody, who accept the voluntary offer. They work with young people on a voluntary basis for up to three months. This involves a needs assessment and exploration of life goals through a motivational interview. Follow up support is offered, where the young person is provided with opportunities and pro-social activities, as well as signposting to other services, to promote and enhance their strengths and make progress towards their goals. The intervention supports a variety of issues, including careers, housing, and interventions within the community from MAC via referral.

Implementation

To develop the intervention and inform implementation, a member of the VPU worked nationally across the VRUs to determine best practices. Once developed, the custody teams and senior management team were briefed to ensure the effective introduction of the intervention. Despite this, a significant lack of understanding remained among the Custody Sergeants (see barriers). To help Custody Sergeants understand the intervention and the benefits of MAC's involvement, a briefing sheet and FAQ page was introduced. This approach facilitated the intervention becoming more embedded within the custody suite, resulting in it being offered on a more frequent basis. MAC custody suite workers also attended initial meetings with Swansea Youth Justice Services to clarify their role within the custody setting. This facilitated the development of a positive relationship between the MAC Youth Worker and the YOT team, to ensure that all children and young people are in the position of being supported and/or signposted to other services. As Custody Sergeants within the police are constantly moving and the team is ever-changing, these established relationships have assisted the sharing of information internally among teams to ensure the service is embedded within the custody suite.

"We have got a good relationship with custody services in South Wales Police. So you know anything that we have, new information, we run it with them and then they drive it amongst all the teams then internally" (Stakeholder)

Teachable Moments have several meetings with the VPU, including weekly meetings to discuss ongoing projects, a monthly associate meeting where they can hear from other agencies, and in-person meetings to discuss plans for development. Teachable Moments have good multiagency relationships with Swansea YOT, children's services, and MAC. Meetings between St Giles, MAC and Teachable Moments have been organised to help understand what each organisation does and to ensure that their services don't overlap, or conversely, to ensure that they are not leaving any cohorts out. The team sit as part of Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (CMET), which has been beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of the young people that are coming through custody.

"[MAC Youth Worker] sits on the CMET, so for information sharing and getting a wider picture of that young person, and their needs, has been really beneficial" (Stakeholder)

Delivery

A quick and simple method was developed by the MAC Youth Worker for Custody Sergeants to contact them; when a young person enters custody, the Custody Sergeant phones the MAC Youth Worker to let them know there is a young person in custody who agreed to take part in the intervention. Initially,

the MAC Youth Worker was not being told about young people entering custody. This was linked to Custody Sergeants not having clear information on the intervention. However, this issue is felt to have subsided since the development of a simple system to facilitate the communication between Custody Officers and the MAC Youth Worker. It was acknowledged that custody is a fast-paced environment, therefore the process needs to be straightforward.

“There was a couple of teething issues in relation to not being told when there was a child in custody and so a couple of minor tweaks had to be made” (Stakeholder)

“We've made it as simple as possible. I know custody can be really intense sometimes when you've got a lot of things going on and then you know it's a simple phone call to say you're in Swansea. You ring the Swansea number which will divert straight to the Swansea youth worker” (Stakeholder)

Following this, the MAC Youth Worker introduces themselves to the young person and ensures that they are comfortable. Initially, MAC Youth Workers had to wait until the police had interviewed the young person before they could conduct the motivational interview, however, developments have since been made to allow the motivational interview to be conducted first. Despite facing difficulties in obtaining permission to conduct interviews before the police interview, seeking this permission was felt to be necessary. Interviewing the children/young people before the police interview is useful as it ensures the immediate opportunity for the motivational interview at the custody suite, which acknowledges the barriers of trying to engage a young person in the interview after they have left custody. After the interview, an action plan is developed to assess whether the young person is suited to working with a MAC Youth Worker.

“So initially they will go down and introduce themselves and make sure that the young person's comfortable. It could be do you want a drink? Do you want a blanket? It could be simple things like this, then do the motivational interview with them and an action plan and distance star chart from that. We look at where they are, what would they like and goal setting. That will be sent off then to the appropriate Youth Justice Services. Then we support and guide them in the community” (Stakeholder)

It is stressed to the young people that the interview with the MAC Youth Worker is not to discuss the crime, and to prevent the young person from going into detail about the offence. If the MAC Youth Worker feels that the young person is about to make a disclosure, they will intervene and remind them that they are not there to discuss the crime. Any disclosures made would require the MAC Youth Worker to immediately inform a Custody Sergeant as per the procedure. It was recognised that for some young people, this could be difficult. As the service is voluntary, the young people are free to decline the support. In these instances, the MAC Youth Worker will explain the service and give them their contact details, so should the young person change their mind, they have got the details to get in touch.

“The MAC Youth Worker makes it very clear to them that they're not anything to do with the Police and that they don't want to know the reasons as to why they're there as in the offence. I think because it's made very clear at the start of the interview that they're not to speak about the offence that seems to be an understanding on everyone's part” (Stakeholder)

“It's all voluntary basis as well so there's no pressure on the young person or their appropriate adult to take up the service, it's purely there to kind of help them long term really and understand you know, where things are going slightly wrong. In order to help prevent them coming back into the suite, or in the criminal justice system” (Stakeholder)

Teachable Moments has been described as a flexible initiative. Initially, interviews were to take place in a police interview room, however, the young people acknowledged that they would feel more comfortable in a cell due to it being a less formal environment. As such the intervention has adapted to meet the needs of the young people by conducting interviews in the cells. In cases where the young person has been released from custody following the Police interview, the MAC Youth Worker can also conduct interviews with young people in an office outside of police detention. A follow-up call or visit two days later can be arranged if the young person requests it. MAC having an established wider service with links to other services means that a host of interventions are available to the young person in the community.

“The child just wants to get out of custody if I'm honest and you know you can't keep them there unnecessarily. You have to release them if they're going to be charged, bailed or no further action, you have to release them. You can't keep them. So then the MAC Youth Worker will discuss with the child and the appropriate adult if it's convenient outside”
(Stakeholder)

Barriers

Despite efforts being taken to brief the custody staff about the intervention, it was acknowledged that Custody Sergeants were not fully aware of what MAC offer, how the intervention would work in the custody suite, and the difference between Teachable Moments and other interventions including YOT. As such, the intervention has not been offered as well as was hoped. It is important to note that this was an issue flagged across all locations implementing the custody suite intervention, and not a Swansea only issue. It was thought that Custody Sergeants need to buy in and feel part of the process to see the value of the intervention. One stakeholder highlighted that the custody suite staff and young people would benefit from an understanding of how the intervention differs and what it delivers beyond other services, especially for those already open to services such as YOT and social care. More recently, the offer has been monitored daily to gain a better understanding and true reflection on the numbers of offers for the motivational interview and the number of young people taking up the offer.

“I'm not sure of what they were told originally because they couldn't tell the difference between YOT and Media Academy Cymru” (Stakeholder)

“My guess would be that these young people already entering the custody arena are already open to you know, youth offending and social services, so I don't know what additional support we are giving them that will encourage them to change their offending behaviour when their life outside is still essentially the same” (Stakeholder)

The police have a shared drive on Niche (the police records management system), containing the details of any young person that has come in and been told about the service. The sharing of this data between the police and the MAC Youth Workers was identified as a barrier, as the police have been sending data and figures from past cases, meaning any current or future cases may be missed by the MAC Youth Workers. It was felt to be more beneficial to hear about any cases that are booked in for the future, so that the MAC Youth Worker can capture them when they are coming in, rather than at the end. Since legal permission has been given to conduct the motivational interview before the police interview, barriers have been identified by MAC Youth Workers as they are no longer allowed to access any information about the young person or the incident that they have been involved in.

“We do have a system in place at the moment. So any young people that come in that have been asked if they want to have our service. We get to know about that. I want to know who's coming in next week. If there's booked appointments. Because if a young person's

*come in and the Police don't tell us for 1-2 weeks, we've missed our opportunity”
(Stakeholder)*

“MAC have said they need the custody record, and my point is they don't need to know anything about that young person other than the warning markers for safety. The whole point of it is you're not asking them about the offence and that's the assurance we've had to give to the legal firms if the motivational interview happens pre PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)” (Stakeholder)

Issues with reporting were also flagged as a significant issue. Staff in custody collect data from the custody record to see how many appointments/chats have been offered and how many are taken up in order to increase participation from custody suite staff. However, these numbers do not match the returns from MAC, which will include additional data about what happened after the initial motivational interview and the support provided in the community, which the custody suite are not aware of. There has been some confusion with how data is recorded if a chat takes place with a young person and is signposted to another service, but the motivational interview is not taken up. It was acknowledged that although, technically, some intervention has taken place in these instances, the motivational interview has not, and as such, questions were raised about whether this is recorded as engaging with the intervention. Furthermore, it was queried whether follow-up interventions would be classed as a community intervention, which would then sit as part of MAC's data, rather than the Teachable Moments data. It was agreed that clarity on how data is recorded would be beneficial. One stakeholder thought it would be beneficial to explore the two processes of capturing the data, and that it would be beneficial for custody suite staff to hear feedback about the outcome of the referral into Teachable Moments.

“Speaking with that young person, having a good conversation with them, offering them the motivational interview and they've declined. Or they declined the motivational interview, but they agreed to a follow up visit. So what is that classed as? Will they be putting that down as a motivational interview or will they be putting that down as declined? Well, it's neither, is it?” (Stakeholder)

“When looking at figures at the end of the week, there's been a few of them where the MAC worker has said yes, I've spoken to so and so but there's nothing on the detention log. So custody suite data doesn't prove that it did take place, but their data doesn't prove that it didn't” (Stakeholder)

This may also be attributed to the need for a custody sergeant to endorse a case for it to be counted within the custody suite data. If MAC engages with a young person who has not been endorsed by a custody sergeant, it will not be counted in their data. When MAC had access to the Niche computer system, they were able to record this information and no information was lost.

Custody is a busy and stressful environment, as such, the aim is to move young people through quickly, so they don't spend any extra time in custody than needed. This is made difficult when MAC Youth Workers are not available to engage with the young people because of community work, even during their shift times. Further difficulties arise when the MAC Youth Worker is not informed of a child/young person entering custody; it was felt that there is still a long way to go in terms of receiving information when a child/young person enters custody in the evenings or at weekends. Additionally, it was acknowledged that engaging with the young person before they left custody can be difficult, particularly due to the shift patterns of the MAC Youth Workers. For example, if a young person comes into custody, by the time they have finished with the police, the MAC Youth Worker may have finished their shift, thus the intervention cannot be completed. Further, it was recognised that custody workers

are not routinely informing MAC Youth Workers when a child/young person is due to be released, which does not allow for the intervention (the motivational interview and action plan) to be completed.

“So we've got the Flextel telephone system now. So the instructions to custody staff is to call the same number. During office hours, somebody will make every attempt to see that young person but it's not always possible. The aim of the custody Sergeant is to turn our child or young person around in and out as quickly as possible because it's not the right place for them. So you know we're still not getting 100% of MAC workers getting to that person whilst they're in custody, even during their shift time” (Stakeholder)

“Because it all depends on the length of time that young person's in custody. The average time the young person is in custody is 13 hours. So, at the moment workers are working roughly nine until five. It means that you can start an intervention, but you won't get to complete it” (Stakeholder)

It was acknowledged that contacting children and young people after they have left custody hinders engagement with the intervention and presents further barriers. It was suggested that when the young people are in custody, they may feel inclined to engage with the intervention due to boredom in the cell and wanting to speak to someone. Once the young person has left custody, they may not have the same desire to engage with the programme. Additionally, it might not be possible to contact the young person if the MAC Youth Worker does not have the contact details. Stakeholders also recognised that it is difficult to capture voluntary attendance figures as Custody Sergeants can book a young person in remotely (i.e., a child from Swansea could be booked in for a voluntary interview, but the Sergeant could be based in Cardiff). It was highlighted that some Sergeants forget to book young people in, resulting in them not being introduced to the intervention and preventing them from accessing the service.

Impact

The MAC Youth Worker uses a pre- and post-measure called the distance star measurement tool to measure a variety of outcomes, including changes to family circumstances, finances, substance misuse, education, training and employment, health and self-care. The main successes of the intervention were seen to be helping to alleviate anxieties and worries, encouraging young people to engage in statutory services, working on anger issues, breaking down barriers, and getting young people back into education, training, and employment. It was felt that the opportunity to establish a connection with the MAC Youth Worker allows the young person to be linked in with other people and agencies who can help in the long term. The Quarterly Reporting for Teachable Moments explained that Swansea YOT had described Teachable Moments as a ‘missing link’ from custody settings.

“Helping a young person to engage in statutory services. We've had one young person being engaged and working on anger issues and understanding” (Stakeholder)

“For one young person, he wanted to know more about what the police do. So we're you know going through the roles, that the police aren't just there as enemies or someone to fight against, that they are there to help and breaking down barriers for young people, helping them back into education, training, employment” (Stakeholder)

“There was one young person who was booked in and he took up the intervention and now he's enrolled in college. The MAC workers put them in touch with someone who can help them and guide them to set up a college course. Whereas I think, you know, without that, I don't think that child probably would have even thought of going to college” (Stakeholder)

“I feel more prepared and now know what to expect when I attend my YJS Bureau appointment next week” (YP – Quarterly Report)

“Thank you for helping us to recognise the positives during this difficult time” (YP – Quarterly Report)

“I feel like a weight has been lifted by the support you have given me in custody” (YP – Quarterly Report)

The intervention was seen to have the biggest impact on young people entering custody for the first time, rather than those who are more entrenched in the criminal justice system and may have more distrust of others, experiences of ACEs, or trauma, which may serve as a barrier to engagement.

“There’s young people that obviously we’re seeing on a weekly basis coming into custody as well. So you know it works well when you’ve got a new young person coming in who was maybe their first time in custody and you can make a bigger impact on that young person. Of course, it’s all about prevention and diverting them away from the criminal justice system” (Stakeholder)

Parents and carers were also seen as beneficiaries of the programme. It was acknowledged that parents and carers find it difficult when their child comes into custody, thus, the MAC Youth Worker provides support and guidance in these circumstances.

“For parents and carers as well, if you’ve got a young person coming into custody, you know it’s a very frightening experience for that child and for the parents as well. We had a young person that was on bail. He was 17, never been in trouble before, he had Autism, was a very vulnerable young person. So for him, it was really difficult and his mum was really upset by the whole thing. But there was the support we could give her, and the reassurance really helped and supported her as well” (Stakeholder)

Case studies provided by Teachable Moments/MAC

Female, aged 17, arrested for theft and handling. Currently living in supported accommodation. Met with MAC for a motivational interview within an interview room at the Swansea custody suite, following police interview. The young person was regretful over the incident and annoyed with herself, these feelings and emotions were explored. The young person and MAC worked together to look at how she could reduce the chances of this happening again. The young person works in fast food retail and would like to go to college to study social care. She had dropped out because she could not sleep at night and then could not get up in the morning for college. She was also smoking cannabis and wanted to stop. The young person outlined her goals of finding a new house, enrolling in college, improving sleep and to stop smoking. She agreed to be contacted a week later to work with MAC. Youth Justice Services and supported accommodation workers were informed of the contact and joint support was agreed. The young person was also allocated a CMET social worker via a police referral. Following this, the young person reported that they were grateful for the support during and following time at the custody suite. The young person continued to work towards set goals with Youth Justice Services support.

Male, aged 17, not in education, employment, or training (NEET), resides out of the area and arrested in Swansea for possession with intent to supply class A drugs. Not open to support services. Had a discussion with MAC, but declined motivational interview, and reported he would seek support once home. Colleagues discussed the need for safeguarding support in his area of residence. A Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) was completed. Contact was made with the out of area children’s services, child criminal exploitation team, and Youth Justice Services, and a Trafficking referral was

made to out of area Barnardo's service. The MAC Youth Worker also notified the VPU funded caseworker at St Giles for advice and to link the person in with this support local to his area of residence. A strategy meeting was held with appropriate services and the young person was transported back home by Swansea children's services, for the local area children services to action a section 47. The custody sergeant thanked MAC for their support and reported that the young person was thankful. The young person appeared before Swansea Magistrates Court and pleaded guilty. NRM process was discussed. Young person was released on bail with conditions.

Sustainability and recommendations

It was highlighted that it would be beneficial for custody staff to see case studies from the intervention, to allow them to see the impact that the service is having on young people and develop the delivery of the intervention.

"I don't just mean case studies of success stories. I want case studies of stuff where it didn't work or where we could have done something better and maybe we need to look at alternatives, you know? So I would like to see that" (Stakeholder)

It was suggested that on-call workers may be useful to ensure that young people who come into custody out of hours can be seen by a MAC Youth Worker. They are currently looking at trends to determine when people are coming in and when an on-call staff member would be most beneficial. However, identifying trends has been difficult thus far. It was felt that other areas of Wales (not already engaged in the intervention) would benefit from the Teachable Moments intervention. It was recommended that this should be addressed going forward by looking at trends and statistics and learning to identify which areas are most in need of funding and responding to this need accordingly.

"We've only got so much funding and we couldn't possibly help everyone. But I think there are discussions in place to try and help other areas" (Stakeholder)

Additional support in putting systems in place was recommended for future programmes. It was felt that having this support would have facilitated early data collection by having systems in place to capture all young people coming through custody from the offset of the intervention, rather than developing these systems after the intervention has been implemented.

"Had we known what we needed before we went live. In hindsight you know you would get all this into place...So when we hit the ground running, we're able to capture all young people coming through. It doesn't matter what time of day rather than have to be so far down the line and we're still waiting for these processes to be in place" (Stakeholder)

Involving Custody Sergeants in the implementation of the intervention was felt to be crucial for future interventions. A new VPU funded intervention focusing on neurodiversity was discussed by one stakeholder. They thought that getting people on board from the start of the intervention, rather than just telling them what they are doing (as was felt to be the case with Teachable Moments) has been key to the successful uptake of this new intervention. Recent talks with Custody Sergeants have been focused on the change in policing and how they will be doing more, but in order for it to work effectively, it was highlighted that Custody Sergeants need to feel part of the changes.

"It is including people from the outset to say, I'm not just giving you a load of work, I'm asking you to participate in how to deliver. It's coming, it's going to be part of your work. But I'm really interested in how we can deliver it to the best of our ability and to make it work" (Stakeholder)

Case study 3: Wales Police Schools' Programme

Wales Police Schools' Programme (WPSP²), a collaborative partnership between the Welsh Government and four Welsh Police Forces, is a school-based programme with an education and prevention focus that aims to:

- Safeguard all children and young people living in Wales by educating them with current up to date information about the dangers associated with issues such as substance use and misuse, domestic abuse, bullying, anti-social behaviour, internet safety, weapons, mobile phone usage, car crime and community cohesion.
- Educate children and young people about the laws that control substances (and consequences), and harms of substance use on health, families, and wider communities.
- Promote the principles of positive citizenship through the medium of education.
- Achieve a reduction in the levels of crime and disorder within our young communities.

The programme is delivered uniformly to children aged 5 to 16 years old³ in schools (including pupil referral units (PRUs) and specialist provision schools) across Wales by School Police Officers (SPOs), who are considered a school department. SPOs work closely with pastoral leads in schools to support their Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum and deliver lessons on the themes of substance misuse, personal safety, safeguarding, behaviour and community to a best practice educational standard that is welcomed by schools. In their professional capacity as police officers, they also provide supportive policing to schools, for example, dealing with incidents using the School Crime Beat policy and offering restorative resolutions including restorative conferencing when required.

“So you've got the safety strand, then we've got a drug and substance strand and a social behaviour strand. These strands then sit in three areas, critical core, targeted and supplementary” (Stakeholder)

“If there are any incidents in the school, then we deal with them because it's easier for us to deal with it as continuity because the children know us and it's not so scary for them. As police officers, we try and use a common sense approach, because we don't want to criminalise children, but unfortunately, there are certain offences that sometimes our hands are tied” (Stakeholder)

Implementation

The School Liaison Service is not funded by the VPU but is funded in part by the Welsh Government and the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) office. The service does, however, work closely with the VPU and it was felt that the service's involvement with the VPU in terms of collaborative working may increase in the future and that this close working was necessary for achieving key system outcomes. It was felt that there needs to be a systematic approach to tackling violence and that this includes consistent messaging and approaches so that everyone is 'on the same page' and looking to the work of other services/organisations for evidence of best practice upon which the delivery of the services and associated interventions should be based.

“We are working closely with the VPU because we need an every prong attack so to speak. We need to be working in a collaborative way where we have a systematic approach,

² <https://schoolbeat.cymru/en/about/> and <https://schoolbeat.cymru/uploads/media/2022-23-Lesson-Matrix-SchoolBeat.pdf>

³ Engagement in the programme may also include sixth form if they are in the school and there are aspects that are relevant to them, thus providing a form of targeted and supplementary support.

because if we're doing different things and using different approaches and so forth, we're not going to have the kind of outcomes we're looking for" (Stakeholder)

Delivery

There are five SPOs who work specifically in Swansea in all schools including PRUs and specialist provision schools. All sessions are delivered in the school setting. It was felt that sessions are interactive and that this is important in order to engage the children and young people. The programme works by delivering a matrix of lessons around three key areas: safety, drug and substance use and social behaviour (hate crime, bullying). Examples were given around SPOs showing videos (and different scenarios) around specific topics such as peer pressure, knife crime, violence against women and girls, exploitation, and sexting. The following lessons/activities will focus around these themes. The lessons also focus on resilience and providing details of services/organisations the children and young people can contact for information or to be able to speak to a trusted adult.

"It's very interactive. The aim is to get them discussing these very sensitive topics in the main and through the discussions, start to look at attitudes. Start to look at their knowledge and understanding. Build their skills because some of these things are practical as well. If peer pressure is at the heart of something, how do we resist that? What does that look like? So we will look at strategies for resisting peer pressure and always with our lessons is a focus on resilience" (Stakeholder)

It was felt that there is both a proactive (preventative) and reactive approach. The SPOs deliver the programme to increase awareness and understanding of these key themes and topics, and also have the autonomy to deliver aspects specific to the children and young people they are engaging with, such as bringing in other agencies and colleagues who have other areas of experience.

One of the stakeholders spoke about an engagement pilot that was delivered pre-covid for those who are home schooling where they engaged with 40 home schooled children. It was felt that these are the hardest to reach, invisible children who can be considerably more vulnerable to harms. It is hoped that this branch of the programme will re-start at some point and that it will be rolled out across the force, currently, the focus is upon recovery following the pandemic.

"We worked with home educated children and had a day out. They had a wonderful day, and it was very positive because these are the hardest to reach of all. They're the invisible children. Potentially vulnerable" (Stakeholder)

When exploring the needs of the young people, it was felt that knife crime was not necessarily an issue in the area, and girl-on-girl violence as well as the role of social media in fuelling the instigation of violence were areas for concern. It was felt that there has been a definite shift in this behaviour post-covid. There is also concern around whether this is going to develop to include the use of weapons. Social media was seen to play a significant part in 'feeding' and 'planning' this violence; as well as people filming and posting these incidents. It was felt that this was very much on the Police horizon and the Schools Liaison Service had developed a 'rapid emergent resource' to help to address this. The presentation-based resource was supported via the VPU and looks to discuss aspects such as online harmful behaviours that spill out into violent behaviour. There is a bystander element and a focus upon managing emotions.

Lack of parental support and the need for parental discipline in terms of identifying boundaries and what is acceptable/unacceptable behaviour, was also identified as a need for some children and young people.

“I think another issue we have is as well...for example, a fight breaks out in school, the culture today is that everybody gets their mobile phones out and films it [and then it's] reposted on social media, and that's not what we want” (Stakeholder)

“Online harmful behaviours that spill out into physical violence. So we talk about the bystander element because obviously there's a lot that could be happening and changing at that stage which may result in there being no violence at all. Then, of course, you know managing those emotions which can explode, you know that the processes then and strategies to be able to manage it” (Stakeholder)

Partnerships

The School Liaison Service and SPOs were seen to routinely engage with other services/organisations such as substance use services, social services, early years and mental health. It was agreed that developing these relationships would be beneficial for these partners to have more of a presence. It was suggested that this could be improved through having a central/shared or co-located space where different partners could come together. SPOs are managed by Community Safety Partnership line managers. This has better connected them to local community safety goals and aims for violence prevention. A development activity was recommended to bridge the gap between communities and schools as this was seen to be ‘really missing’ at the current time. It was felt that establishing these professional relationships would be beneficial as the SPOs would be more aware to what is happening in the young peoples’ lives to target their approach with specific young people.

“I would prefer to have a building or an office where all these agencies, including us, are working together in the same office in the same room, which is coordinated. I think that would be gold model standard” (Stakeholder)

“We are not privy. So for example, if there was a domestic violence incident and [a] police call out that happened on the weekend, [if] we could be made aware, then if we're in the school the following day, then we know that that child has seen some violence” (Stakeholder)

Barriers

One of the stakeholders spoke about a recent workshop and wondered about the lack of representation from black, and minority ethnic groups (BME). They said that Welsh schools are ethnically diverse and that the school’s officers have an established rapport with the young people that could be tapped into to access BME populations. It was felt that there is a barrier in the relationship between the police and the communities. One stakeholder spoke about youth clubs and similar environments, potentially providing settings in which these relationships could be developed. It was felt that breaks in engagement with the SPOs can impact upon the relationships that have been developing with the officers during term time. It was highlighted that there was a noticeable difference in attitudes and behaviours towards the SPOs after lockdown.

“I think what's really missing is the link between communities and schools. That would have been youth clubs and stuff like that, we don't really see them anymore” (Stakeholder)

“We're at a bit of a loss then when it comes to school holidays, because we fall back on to neighbourhood teams, which is okay, because out on patrol, and we see some of these kids out and about. But I think really, WPSP should be used more in South Wales... to target the right group of children...” (Stakeholder)

“Their behaviour, they didn't want to listen, language, aggravated violence, social media, sexual violence, sexual touching, those calls and the incidences we had to deal with went

through the roof [post lockdown]. It started to slow down a little over the last four to five months. But it'll be interesting to see now what it's going to be like when we go back after the summer. They don't have that interaction with us" (Stakeholder)

Impact

Key to the success of the schools' programme was the positive change in the thinking and attitudes for young people. This included increased knowledge and awareness of the key themes and topics covered in the school's programme. This then has positive impacts upon their behaviour so that they make better choices and keep themselves and others safe, therefore reducing harm and reducing levels of crime, and in the longer-term preventing harm. The programme provides children and young people with new skill sets that help to increase their resilience and increase their ability to resist peer pressure. Building positive relationships was seen to be an important part of the SPOs role; developing trust and confidence between the children and young people and the Police. It was felt that through the programme children and young people can have improved relationships with their family (better home life and home environment). In terms of wider impacts, the use of restorative practice has been set up by one of the SPOs that sits outside of their set responsibilities. It was felt that this activity impacts upon communities with young people being seen to take responsibility for their actions and giving something back to the local community, such as being involved in beach clean ups.

"One incident where a girl had physically assaulted another girl in school. After working with us there was an opportunity for another explosion to happen. But instead she did the opposite and walked away, you know, and her mother wrote an e-mail to us to thank us for the work the school's officer had done with her because it had helped her turn a corner in managing her own emotions" (Stakeholder)

"I suppose the key is that you change their thinking, which follows with behaviour, so that they make better choices. Essentially choices, which keep them safe... and obviously in respect to the law, keeps them out of trouble with breaking laws in the future. We're looking to help young people avoid being in situations that they don't need to be in and reducing harm and wherever possible, preventing harm altogether" (Stakeholder)

"The relationships we cultivate are just phenomenal" (Stakeholder)

When exploring how the impacts of the programme are measured, it was discussed that for some aspects of the programme, questionnaires are used to look at changes in perceptions and attitudes across the duration of lessons around specific themes and topics. Output data is also collected in the form of the number of sessions delivered, how many children are in attendance (including truancy patrols), incidents dealt with and how many restorative justice practices have been facilitated. Feedback is also collected via a young person's forum. It was also considered difficult to quantify and measure the work that occurs with a young person outside of their sessions to look at their behaviour and consequences.

"How can you quantify sitting with a pupil explaining to them where they've gone wrong, what they've done, and the consequences, and then taking that on board and then never doing that or getting in trouble again? You can't quantify that" (Stakeholder)

Sustainability and recommendations for future delivery

The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is seen to consider this service an essential part of the prevention work that the Police are carrying out in Wales and something that other parts of the country should aspire to. It was felt that there is a big drive on violence prevention (especially in light of the rise in violent crime and online crime) and that this provides a 'supportive element' of

focus to the programme and that it is imperative that programmes such as this and the VPU are sustainable.

It was felt to be important to create a movement of change and shape culture and it was thought that this could possibly be done through the use of champions and that the young people 'buy into it'. Future activities included looking at bystander training as a useful tool to prevent violence and discussions were currently in place with the VPU to look at what is evidence based and whether it might be possible to deliver. It was felt that evidence is lacking in young people aged 13/14 to 16, which is considered to be a critical age group for young people to be formulating their thinking, beliefs and attitudes. It was discussed that SPOs could possibly take part in bystander training that they are then able to cascade to groups in their secondary schools, to those with good influence in peer groups and working on the premise of positive impacts of peer-based education. It was felt that this would work well as there is mutual respect between officers and children.

"It's like creating a movement, isn't it? It's not an easy thing to do when you're trying to shape and change culture...There has to be the champions and there has to be the followers and there has to be those initial followers who then become champions and then they in turn create followers and that sort of starts a movement. Then in the momentum of it. And I think you know, yes, it should be in the curriculum. Yes, all these things have got to be in the widest context of school life. But I think it's got to be something that young people themselves buy into, otherwise it's just another thing that's being done to them"
(Stakeholder)

It was felt that it may be beneficial for the VPU to have more input into the design of the programme, specifically around violence prevention. As previously highlighted, it was felt that partnership working could be improved through the development of more of a hub approach where different professionals could come together. It was felt that establishing these relationships would be beneficial to be privy to what has happened. One stakeholder commented that collaborative working and working in a joined-up approach was essential in driving down violence.

"It would be more beneficial if they [VPU] were to get together with our coordinators to produce material for us to deliver, and maybe put like, because, like, our lessons are delivered for audio learners, kinaesthetic learners and visual learners. It would be beneficial for us to put a presentation together, hitting all those points, but getting a good video in there for violence prevention" (Stakeholder)

Furthermore, it was felt that it would be beneficial to hold classes with parents to help them to understand their child's behaviour and to educate them on understanding the importance of knowing where their child is and what they are up to. However, it was recognised that '*Unfortunately, the ones that you actually want to talk to, they don't turn up anyway*'. It was felt that there was further exploration needed around the continuity of support provided during school holidays, with the school's programme only running through term time.

"I think we should be running parent classes. Personally, and I do try because we do parents events, because they need to understand where we come from as the law and policing" (Stakeholder)

"I think we could easily identify the children that need to be stimulated or are vulnerable and, keep an eye on them during school holidays. We could run schemes and some summer schools along with the schools, or the local authority" (Stakeholder)

Case study 4: St Giles Trust

St Giles Trust works across Wales to help people overcome barriers and get the support they need to move forward with their lives. St Giles helps individuals make similar changes through enabling people in local communities to become empowered and gain the skills they need to transform their lives. They work across a wide area encompassing both the inner city and rural communities, and support young people who are at risk or involved in violence and exploitation e.g., county lines, criminal activity, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, exploitation. Their services are delivered in close collaboration with local partners such as police, local authority, Youth Justice Services, third sector services (e.g. substances and domestic violence) and mental health, addressing local needs distinct to each community.

“St Giles supports vulnerable people who are at risk, actually targets young people that are at risk or involved in serious youth violence and exploitation, and that could be county lines. It could be criminal activity, child sexual exploitation, and anything within that exploitation bracket” (Stakeholder)

St Giles offer a targeted secondary intervention for young people aged 11-18 years, to prevent involvement in violence, although their help has been extended to 25 years if they have special needs and vulnerabilities. St Giles are seen to provide help during this transition to adulthood and are currently working on getting young people referred into St Giles once they turn 18 to bridge this gap. The young people that are referred into the service are those involved in violence, such as weapon use or assaults, or those that are being exploited (e.g. organised crime, county lines or localised drug dealing activity). All of which go along with the risk of violence or harm. The clients frequently present with issues surrounding both drugs and violence, both of which are often interrelated.

“I think drugs and serious youth violence go hand in hand, but it is drug dealing going on and you usually find that violence is with it as well as an enforcement tool, but also for controlled territory control. Controlled drugs and even to the point of purchases of drugs using violence towards young people to get their drugs and you know it is a lot of violence. It's quite a violent world” (Stakeholder)

Implementation and delivery

In Swansea, St Giles have a VPU funded caseworker (since March 2020) who works with people involved with county lines, criminal and sexual exploitation and violence. The St Giles caseworker can generally manage a case load of 15 young people, but they tend to take on 10-12 in order to deliver ‘good quality support’. Between April 2021 and March 2022, St Giles received 75 referrals, this included referrals from social care, Youth Justice Services, and parents. They engaged with 38 young people and made 31 onward referrals to other organisations.

St Giles accepts self-referrals, parental referrals and referrals from other services. For a service, a referral form is completed that is sent to a designated inbox where it is then triaged and assessed to make sure that it fits the specific criteria for support. It is then given to a dedicated case worker working in the specific area. Where a young person is referred by a parent, a family worker will also work alongside the family so that there is wraparound support. This also involves being aware of any other services of which the young person may be engaged with, so that they are able to assist in assessing any risks for that young person.

Once a referral is received, an initial assessment is carried out with the young person. This is usually undertaken via a three-way contact session with the caseworker, young person, and the referrer. If

the young person meets the criteria, a caseworker will then go on to work with the individual on a one-to-one basis, and goals will be agreed. The interaction is informal to build trust and rapport in order to allow the young person a chance to open up. This was expected to be a slow process that had the possibility to take weeks or even months to achieve. This is why caseworkers having a person/client-centred approach was seen as important. The frequency of the sessions is dependent on the client's needs with some having sessions once a week, others every other week. The length of the session also varies depending on the client.

“In respects of one-to-ones...we'll take them out on a contact session. You know, it's a very...informal way of working with them. They find it really difficult to have formal engagement with a typical professional” (Stakeholder)

The nature of interventions delivered vary and are personalised according to the identified needs of the client. Interventions can be activity based (e.g., support to attend appointments), and focussed one-to-one work, which encourages young people to consider their choices and consequences of their actions, this can support them to make more positive changes.

“I do have CSE coming to us, child sexual exploitation and criminal activity on all kinds of levels. You know burglary, violence, firearms, weapons and things like that, that kind of you know, that comes into that bracket, however, these individuals come with other issues in their lives. So mental health you know domestic violence, substance misuse which is massive” (Stakeholder)

The needs of the young people engaging with St Giles include support around positive relationships and friendships, identifying positive roles or activities, peer pressure, poor mental health, substance misuse (either themselves or within the family home), domestic abuse (within the home), support around regulating feeling and emotions including anger, difficulties with learning and educational attainment. It was reported that young people are unable to identify risks and consequences and have a lack of understanding about the activities they are undertaking or involved with. Stakeholders spoke about seeing a significant amount of young people who were involved in county lines (including child sexual exploitation) and violence. Many of the young people are also involved with statutory services such as Youth Justice Services or social services. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the service had seen a spike in girls and young women becoming involved in county lines and other types of violence. These individuals are seen to come through the CSE route, so are likely being sexually as well as criminally exploited.

“I think during the Covid-19 pandemic as well, we've seen a rise in girls and young women becoming involved with county lines and more serious youth violence. What you often see with the young women as well, is they usually come through [the] CSE route, so they're being criminally sexually exploited. But there's also the criminal exploitation there as well” (Stakeholder)

During the pandemic, there were noticeable changes in the patterns of gang behaviour and the transportation of drugs, with young girls being used more often to avert suspicion. It was felt that a flexible approach to delivery is needed when engaging with the young people in that they understand that perpetrators who exploit young people are usually one step ahead, and as such, they adjust to meet the demands of their clients to account for this. For example, the inclusion of more female case workers was employed to take into account the number of girls and young women becoming involved in crime. Specifically in Swansea, it was felt that there have been pockets of incidences which have impacted the young people engaging with the service. One example given was the Mayhill riots, where

a variety of young people were involved, including perpetrators, but also bystanders and victims witnessing the event. After this event a number of young people came to the service.

The caseworker works alongside a family worker if there are family issues to be addressed. Stakeholders believed that taking a client-led approach was important to allow the service user to have some control over the support that they receive. Caseworkers were also said to take time to build rapport with their clients before gently introducing advice and support. Stakeholders stated that St Giles works with the young people (and their families) for as long as is needed and that generally the support tends to come to a natural conclusion allowing them to step away on the young person's terms. It was felt that having case workers who are trauma-informed trained helps in building rapport with the young people and allows them to open up to caseworkers and be more willing to be signposted to other relevant services should they need it. Once their engagement with St Giles has finished, the young person is still initially able to access the service again if needed, however, if a long time has passed, a new referral will be needed. However, in cases where there has been a specific situation after discharge, an update will be provided before pushing the case forward, as long as the capacity is there to enable that.

“A lot of young people come to a natural conclusion anyway. So when you do a lot of work with them and you get them into that place of safety and stability you can then step away from them in a controlled way” (Stakeholder)

Partnerships

St Giles works with statutory partners such as Youth Justice Services, the police, local authority, and social services as well as with wider partners such as drug and alcohol agencies. They are also advised/informed by the CMET panel, which also includes those organisations involved in the safeguarding of children and young people and felt that this is a good way of finding out about key areas of concern or specific young people with identified vulnerabilities. It is felt that St Giles are developing new relationships whilst continuing to build upon established professional relationships (such as that with the youth workers at MAC, who refer into the service). Stakeholders also spoke about attending meetings to promote the service, facilitate these partnerships and encourage a multiagency approach.

“We're all on CMET panel. So all the organisations involved in the safeguarding. With this, we get a good idea of what is going on in the area. We can look at [issues/report] and talk to them as a group and then say which intervention is going to be the best way for young person” (Stakeholder)

“We've been building professional relationships up, attending meetings, you know introducing our service to see how we can all better work together. I believe a lot of agencies now think we can all work together. I think it's a multi-prong approach not just one single organisation doing it” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders felt that there is a good range of partners presently working alongside each other within the VPU and that through opening a new office in Swansea, St Giles have a greater presence in the area. It was felt that within the VPU, all of the different services and organisations are coming together rather than working separately and this was seen to be a major benefit to the VPU. It was not felt that there are any partners who are missing or excluded from the VPU at the present time, but that partnerships always have the potential to expand and develop. Stakeholders felt that St Giles has a good relationship with the VPU, as they have received positive feedback regarding their work with young people. It was reported that the lines of communication between the two organisations are

always open, therefore enabling the ongoing discussion of work and the ability to flag any issues or concerns.

*“I think that the good thing about partnerships is you can always grow a partnership. There's never a limit on where that partnership [goes], you can always grow it”
(Stakeholder)*

“So I think that there's a good range (of services), you've got a lot of the bases covered and we can all work alongside each other quite easily” (Stakeholder)

Barriers

In terms of barriers, it was observed that communication with partners was sometimes difficult, particularly with local authority and the police. This was due to them being unable to give significant intelligence out to partners, so it was felt in these instances that communication could be a barrier. Whilst not necessarily a major barrier, it was felt that the current relationships could be better built upon, and that St Giles had a part to play in supporting partnership working. When looking at the caseworker role that is directly funded by the VPU in Swansea, it was felt that that the short-term nature of the funding and the processes by which the funding is renewed could be explored. Stakeholders felt that the ‘last minute’ nature of funding renewals every 12 months impacts not only the young people (as it disrupts the developing relationships of trust and is considered particularly damaging for those with attachment issues), but further upon retention of staff in the future.

“You can get a bit of an attachment with a young person to a professional and when they start opening up after weeks then. They rely on the consistency and the reliability...then it can kind of damage that relationship with a young person” (Stakeholder)

When looking specifically at the impact of funding upon relationships between the caseworker and the young person and other services, one stakeholder spoke of the frustration of having to close client’s sessions when coming to the end of the funding, being unaware of whether the service was going to be recommissioned. It was felt that violence prevention in Swansea can be overwhelming to the young people, with there being too much input from various services and that this could be streamlined. It was explained that young people can get tired of repeating their story to a number of different professionals. It was felt that developing relationships with young people is very important as if this does not go well, it can impact upon other services that then need to engage with them.

*“When we were coming to the end of the 12-month contract, having to close clients. Having to update professionals we don't know if the post is going to be funded anymore”
(Stakeholder)*

“Sometimes I feel like there's too much input. I feel like that when we're talking about a young person, it's just not practical to have too many professionals in that young person's life” (Stakeholder)

Impact

The impact of the VPU was seen to be positive due to their effective work and how it can ‘mould’ to situations also experienced by other areas and then using the funding provided to specifically target those areas. For example, it provides an opportunity to share intelligence and information relating to a number of different issues associated with violence and criminal behaviour including county lines. Young people and their families were reported to have experienced a number of outcomes as a result of engaging with the St Giles service intervention. St Giles were seen to provide young people an environment in which they felt safe to speak about their experiences and be heard. Outcomes included increased feelings of safety for young people, an increased awareness of behaviour and

behavioural change as well as building safer environments for communities. There were also reports of improved or increased attendance at school, achievements of qualifications and improved chances of employment. It further provided some older young people the opportunity to rent/own their own property.

“The outcome we get is removing a child or young person safely out of the life they were living, may it [be] carrying (knives), being involved with county lines. I think that is the overall aim but along the way, there are multiple soft outcomes, we need to [get to] the point of getting them back into school” (Stakeholder)

“Keeps me from danger and taught me what’s right and what’s wrong” (YP)

“So for in the short term and if you've got a child that's going missing, not attending school, maybe there's issues in the community. In the short term you start to reduce that... it's stabilising them... you look at softer outcomes then the overall big outcomes. We also observe small victories” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders reported clients improving relationships with family, clients building relationships of trust with professionals, improved communication between professionals and services and an increased sense of community. This in turn led to wider outcomes such as improved wellbeing, an increased sense of stability and reduced drug use. St Giles reported that this also led to reduced violence.

“There are some really positive outcomes. I wouldn't say it all the time because young people can be really difficult to engage. But one of the main outcomes for me is that they become more reliable, and then for a young person to show up to a contact session, that visit is huge and I think it's really underestimated with professionals sometimes” (Stakeholder)

Measuring outcomes

St Giles complete quarterly returns for the VPU and monthly reports as and when required. This includes providing details around engagement activities with young people and other services, and information about what is working well or not so well. They also attend meetings with the VPU, which often involves multiple statutory and voluntary bodies. When looking at outcomes measurement, this was done through internal progress reports and monthly progress reports – on a monthly basis a narrative is provided from the caseworker that records journeys of all cases within that month. Also, a monthly performance report is completed by the case worker that captures numerical information. The VPU quarterly reporting also includes information on the client such as their name, age, family information, housing status, financial situation, health status and a list of possible risks to the client (e.g. county lines, exploitation and exposure to gang culture). A narrative is then written up in the monthly report based upon client responses. This report focusses on; the monthly proportion of clients supported by St Giles, client progress, where new referrals have come from, the key issues, needs and challenges faced by clients within the month, the key support delivered by St Giles and any changes or different techniques trialled by the St Giles team. It was commented that outcomes are measured based on the issues raised by the client and that everything is documented so that case studies can be developed. All information is stored on a database called ‘Inform’, which can be used to store case notes, record meetings, update outcomes and produce reports.

St Giles also complete a Health and Wellbeing assessment tool with the young people following their initial assessment with them. The client’s wellbeing is measured through several categories of wellbeing. These include self-esteem, confidence, physical health, alcohol or other substance use/misuse, communication, problem solving/dealing with problems, positive relationships, attitude

(positive or negative), responsibility, problematic behaviour and social capital. The intention is for scores to improve (reduce) following engagement with St Giles.

Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, it was felt that the service will continue to be in demand, due to violence still being a prominent issue. It was also believed that with the cost-of-living crisis, the climate is generally expected to get worse. The partnerships developed as part of the VPU as well as the VPU itself were seen to be crucial to the sustainability of the support provided in this area. Funding from government was also considered as important to the development and sustainability of the VPU. Concerns were expressed around other societal issues, which may demand funding, thus impacting the VPU services.

Case study 5: Fearless, Crimestoppers

Fearless is the youth brand of the national charity, Crimestoppers. The programme helps to empower children and young people to make positive, informed, decisions about reporting crime⁴. The primary aim of the service is to educate young people about crime issues that may affect them and encourage them to report crimes they have witnessed. It is aimed at children and young people aged 11-18, however, they occasionally work with people up to the age of 25.

“[Fearless] get information from members of the public and pass it on to the relevant organisation so that they can investigate it. That service is guaranteed anonymous. We provide a platform where anybody could pass on information that they know about crimes and that’s just about any crime and we will pass it on to the relevant organisation”
(Stakeholder)

There are three senior youth workers who work across Wales to deliver educational workshops in any setting where young people congregate (including schools, youth clubs, and community events). The group-based workshops take an upstream approach to crime, discussing and educating young people on topics such as exploitation, hate crime, knife crime and county lines. Their website, Fearless.org, features an ‘A-Z of crime’ to educate in a non-judgmental way and is a platform that young people can use to pass on information anonymously and safely about any crime they have witnessed.

“We work with, schools, colleges, anywhere [where] young people are so if they’re in a youth club, in a skate park and we work lots with looked after children, so children foster homes, ...literally anywhere there’s a young person, we are there” (Stakeholder)

Implementation

Two Fearless workers have been funded on an annual basis by the VPU since 2019. The funding is used to employ youth workers for four days per week, thus facilitating the delivery of the service. All the direct intervention work is carried out through this funding, however, anything additional, such as social media campaigning, must be subsidised by additional funding. Being involved with the VPU was seen to increase linkage with other organisations, allowing knowledge and information to be shared, thus improving delivery through best practice. Fearless attend VPU meetings when they can, however, any sessions booked with schools take priority.

“[VPU] that’s where all your linkage comes in and collective thinking and learning and sharing” (Stakeholder)

Partnership working

Fearless work with a range of partners to develop the delivery of their service and provide wraparound support to young people. Some identified partners include Barod Substance Misuse Charity, Swansea Women’s Aid, Kooth Mental Health Service, Victim Support, and NSPCC. Media Academy Cymru (MAC) was recognised as a service which complements the work undertaken by Fearless. Fearless signpost young people who may be carrying or at risk of carrying a knife to MAC to receive additional support. Recently, Fearless have established a partnership with British Transport Police to go into train stations and talk to young people about various dangers and risks that they may see on trains e.g., county lines. Whilst links between services were highlighted, stakeholders felt that collaboration between other violence prevention intervention programmes was felt to be lacking. Despite this, it was acknowledged

⁴ <https://www.fearless.org/campaigns/be-fearless-in-south-wales>

that there are partnership events, such as the safety community partnership event, where these organisations will come together.

“There's a safety community partnership event which is happening this Friday which is in a local park. So there'll be lots of organisations which are all part of this sort of stuff. You know, safer streets. There'll be other groups which do things to help other people when they've got problems, so that will go from violence prevention, that will go right the way through to the welfare, housing, drug prevention and all that sort of stuff” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders spoke about it feeling necessary to not be seen to engage with School Beats (police officers who work in schools). It was highlighted that any possible perceived link between Fearless and the police may impact the development of trusting relationships between the youth workers and children, due to possible fear of reprisals from contacting the police due to factors such as cultural and family issues. It was considered important for young people to feel confident in what they want to anonymously report to Fearless.

“We would actively, and they know this so it's not being rude, we would actually actively avoid them [police officers] in secondary schools because then we lose credibility as a charity if we turn up with a PC” (Stakeholder)

Delivery

Fearless is delivered in various settings including schools, colleges, youth clubs, skate parks, foster homes, and any other location in which young people gather in Swansea. The purpose of these sessions is to debunk myths and inform young people about the impact of their actions. Specific workshops are delivered around county lines, hate crimes, and knife crime. The material that is delivered is determined by the service/organisation that contacts them to come in. All sessions are group-based, however, in some circumstances, sessions may be delivered in smaller groups, for example, with young people on the periphery of exclusion.

“We've been doing lots at the moment with young people on the edge of exclusion, doing lots of smaller groups. I'm working lots with colleges in more deprived areas, so these children that don't fit standard education” (Stakeholder)

Fearless is seen to offer a unique intervention, which is associated with having limited restrictions due to being a charitable organisation. Stakeholders discussed how they have delivered sessions in their knife crime workshop which responds to misinformed videos on TikTok that show ‘safe places’ to stab people. As part of the session, they filled a bag with red water and asked the young people to stab it with a pen to see what happened when it was removed as a way of teaching young people that there is no safe place to stab someone. Taking this hard-hitting approach was seen to allow young people to understand the impact of their actions and provide the knowledge to make informed decisions in the future. The stakeholder explained that in VPU areas, they do not use any knife imagery, as studies have shown this may increase the chances of young people carrying knives due to fear.

“So at the moment there's this really alarming trend on TikTok where, it just blows my mind, they're showing safe places to stab someone... for anybody to see. So [we] carry out activities to show that there is no safe place to kind of debunk this” (Stakeholder)

The number of sessions engaging with the young people is subject to the wants and needs of the organisation that the service is being delivered to. One stakeholder explained that often they will go into a school to work with a specific group. Once the school has a better understanding of the work that Fearless do, they will then be asked to return to speak to larger groups.

“So I’ll... usually have a targeted group of youngsters and then after that, then once the school tend to see what I do... I’ll come back and I’ll engage with the whole school in some form or another” (Stakeholder)

“Some schools will just have you in for one session and that will be it. Other schools will engage a lot more. You know there are a couple of schools which I would go back to every year as a new year group comes in and I’ll speak to them about various different subjects” (Stakeholder)

Fearless also deliver targeted sessions to parents and carers to educate them on various topics, including county lines, education on ‘clean skins’ (those who have never been in trouble), looking at being an active bystander, education on warning signs that their child might be being exploited, and encouraging parents to be curious and ask questions about what their child is involved with.

“In targeted areas, targeted schools in Swansea, we’ve offered after school sessions for parents to come along and understand what county lines is. How your child is vulnerable, and the violence linked to county lines and the weapons. There’s a big misconception with violence and drugs that it is ‘naughty children’ that organised crime gangs target, and not well-behaved children, children not known to social services, children not misbehaving in school. What they call ‘clean skins’. So, we talk the parents about keeping your children safe and the signs to spot” (Stakeholder)

Barriers

The short-term, annual renewal of funding has meant that Fearless have lost several youth workers due to the lack of stability. It may take several months to hire a new youth worker, which uses time and funding that could be used to engage with young people. It was recognised that good youth workers are hard to find, and it takes time for the youth workers to build contacts and networks. Fearless would benefit from longer-term funding to ensure stability among workers. Additionally, longer funding streams would provide continuity and allow for longer-term plans to be established with the services they deliver to.

“Funding is annually, which is a little bit problematic because I know we’ve lost workers. Because it’s coming to the end of that funding year and there’s no information about is there more funding so they’re not in a position where they can hang around and wait, so they are now moving on and going somewhere else... We are pushing for can we get funding for three years; it gives stability, and it also gives us an opportunity to work through a programme with schools in the longer term for repeated visits for different needs” (Stakeholder)

Work and communication with other violence prevention interventions in Swansea were thought to be lacking. It was felt that building relationships with other violence prevention programmes was hindered due to the perception that organisations fear services will replicate the work they are carrying out. Another aspect of this was not having the time to develop relationships with partners. Despite being part of Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (CMET) panel, youth workers are often too busy to attend meetings.

Young people’s reluctance to engage was also cited as another barrier. Some young people are not interested in the support and services that are offered, this was partly attributed to ‘snitching culture’ and the difficulty associated with breaking this barrier. The lack of responses from schools was also discussed.

"I have approached loads of schools, loads of different times and there's just nothing at all. There's never a response" (Stakeholder)

Impact

The impact of the work carried out as part of Fearless was seen to make a difference. Data from quarterly reports show that between April 2021 and March 2022, Fearless reached 8,688 young people across South Wales and delivered 30 training sessions to professionals. It was felt to be 'the norm' for schools in South Wales to have someone in to talk about violence, which was seen as a significant benefit. The successes of the programme were primarily identified as increasing awareness and knowledge of knife crime, hate crime, and county lines. Consequently, a reduction in violence levels, A&E admissions, and police callouts were anticipated. Despite this, it was recognised that one of Fearless' outcomes would be an increase in reports, as people are aware of who they can report to, thus increasing intelligence and the number of charges/offences observed in the short term.

"I enjoyed this session on the dangers of drug crime and also the dangers of County Lines and the exploitation, I've gained further knowledge of these dangers and I've also gained knowledge about Fearless" (YP – Quarterly Report)

"Thank you for your lovely class, [I] learnt a lot about what the meaning of hate crime is and how it can affect people's lives" (YP - Quarterly Report)

"We had an anonymous report [near Swansea], of a guy carrying a knife whilst dealing drugs outside the school. So that report came to us and obviously we sent it to the police and that person was arrested and they did get a custodial sentence" (Stakeholder)

The difficulty in measuring prevention activity was acknowledged. After engaging with children and young people, they seek to measure changes in attitude and knowledge. Impact is measured using a five-question pre and post form, which asks young people to answer questions by circling a number on a Likert scale from 1-10 and providing qualitative feedback to gather information on understanding and quotes about what they have learnt. Each quarter they will sample a percentage of the forms. Quarterly reports completed for the VPU, indicate that the majority of young people changed their answers after receiving the workshop, which demonstrates that the Fearless workshops are informative and educational, and illustrates that young people's knowledge and awareness regarding the issues increased as a result of the fearless workshop.

"It's straightforward about 'how did you find the session?', 'do you understand about Fearless now and that you can report things anonymously?' We try and get quotes from them at the bottom of it. It says 'please write something you're going to take away from today's session', so hopefully they will highlight something that they've learned that they didn't know previously" (Stakeholder)

Recommendations and sustainability

It was suggested that Fearless would benefit from the VPU assisting with engagement with schools, which was described as 'abysmal', particularly since the Covid-19 lockdown. It was felt that the VPU have a wide reach and access to additional staff who can push engagement.

"Assisting in pushing in particular areas to encourage engagement. Going back 2019, I had some engagement, that was going quite well. Covid-19 hit, and that pretty much killed it off... But across the whole of the Swansea area it is really poor for engagement. We could

do with some assistance from the VPU to say look, think about your education leads, who are they, can they push them as well?" (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders also highlighted that access to a localised Welsh evidence base would be beneficial to have access to data that is not in the public domain, for example, case studies, which could be used to develop up-to-date, informative, material for use in sessions. In the past, when trying to access this type of data, requests have not materialised. It was recommended that learning from Swansea should be used and applied in other areas of Wales. Offering Fearless in other areas was suggested.

Loss of emotional resilience in young people was discussed, and as such a need for a wider piece of work that focusses upon supporting these young people was suggested. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, it was felt that young people seem to have forgotten how to interact and be able to deal with people, meaning issues in schools have escalated to violence quickly, with physical altercations in schools increasing and usually placid students having violent outbursts. To ensure sustainability, it was identified that partnerships will require continuous effort and development to keep up with evolving crime techniques. For example, changes in crime techniques have been observed since the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We've had an increase since Covid-19. Young people have forgotten how to interact with each other. A head teacher said to one of the youth workers that some young people have always disliked other young people. That's just life. Before Covid-19, they knew how to avoid each other in the school, you know, playground at lunch break. Then through the pandemic, they forgot how to deal with people they don't like in the real world. It's escalated to violence is the best way of describing it and young people that wouldn't have been violent previously are now having these violent outbursts which is resulting in physical fights...So yeah, there definitely needs to be work done about emotional resilience" (Stakeholder)

"It will always need development as crime types change as the criminals modify their techniques... we need to so it's always a catch-up game. So yeah, it will always need improvement always" (Stakeholder)

Sustainability of the VPU and the associated services and interventions is reliant upon funding. It was commented that support from parliament and government for community engagement, specifically for the involvement of third-party organisations such as Fearless is required. It was felt that the VPU funding is key to service delivery and that Fearless is not sustainable without VPU funding.

Case study 6: Braver Choices, Media Academy Cymru

Media Academy Cymru (MAC) is a non-profit organisation working with children and young people aged 6 – 25 years of age across South Wales. Within Swansea, MAC has several services. Braver Choices is a VPU funded service focussing on young people's use of weapons. They work with children and young people who engage in risky behaviours such as carrying weapons. They deliver evidence-based programmes around weapons, violence, and sexual exploitation to enable children and young people to make informed decisions, develop coping strategies and understand the implications of their actions.

“It could be that they're associated with a group that's involved in weapons, so it's about intervention as well as prevention work. We look at how we can help them strengthen what they've already got and how we can reduce harmful behaviours and their lives and how we can help them make better decisions for themselves” (Stakeholder)

The programme is delivered in community settings from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week depending on the needs of the child and their family⁵. They engage with the children and young people through one-to-one mentoring and supporting the Youth Justice Service prevention team to deliver sessions in schools, where knife crime has been identified and support requested. The children and young people can be referred in by anyone, including themselves as a self-referral, however, most referrals are seen to come from children services. A MAC case worker also delivers a condensed version of their workshops in the community to help young people understand the consequences of having weapons and buying illegal weapons online.

Implementation

Braver Choices has been funded by the VPU since 2021. The first caseworker for MAC started in March 2021, since then, the VPU have also secured Home Office funding to place youth workers into hospital A&E departments to deliver more intensive one-to-one case management to people who have been a victim of a violent (including weapons) assault (see case study 7).

Stakeholders acknowledged that establishing a new service requires networking and explaining to partners what the service offers. MAC endeavoured to work with these partners to educate organisations on their role. It was felt that the Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (CMET) panel has also facilitated this, as all organisations are sitting under one team, thus enabling an interconnected approach, joint decisions and sharing of information in a timely manner. The Braver Choices team additionally attend several meetings with partner agencies. These include attendance at the Swansea Choices Project meetings, the Swansea Mental Health Forum, the Risky Behaviour Panel, Swansea YMCA, and Child in Need Case Strategy meetings. Furthermore, as of 2021, several staff were attending bi-weekly meetings with the CMET panel addressing children at risk of involvement in crime, including knife crime and child exploitation (such as county lines). Additionally, the VPU and the Chief Executive of MAC both sit on the Strategic CMET, meaning services are quite well known by potential statutory referrers. The key stakeholders referring into Braver Choices are partners from these meetings, so engaging with these bodies is imperative for continued support and ensuring shared understanding.

The relationship with the VPU is seen to be positive in terms of communication and collaboration. The VPU are flexible in their approach, and it was acknowledged that they gave MAC the opportunity to outline their needs before working with them, which facilitated the development of clear and defined

⁵ [Braver Choices | Violence Prevention Unit \(violencepreventionwales.co.uk\)](https://www.violencepreventionwales.co.uk)

support. It was felt that this adaptable nature has continued whilst working with the VPU, with the VPU described as being perceptive to the emerging and developing needs of the community.

Delivery

Between April 2021 and March 2022, Braver Choices engaged with 107 young people. Referrals were received from residential units, CMET, Swansea Council, children's services, Early Help Hub, BAYS 16+ team, Barod, comprehensive schools and via the MAC youth worker at the Teachable Moments custody suite intervention (see case study 2). A small number of onward referrals were made to Platform Change of Mind Project, counselling, YMCA and Career Wales.

When a referral comes in, the MAC caseworker will check with the referrer to get a baseline understanding of the young person before they meet, including what service/s may already be involved. They will then meet with the young person and their family to ensure the family knows who they are and minimise any confusion over what MAC provides. Sessions can be delivered to parents and families to help them understand the work that they do, either as a one-to-one or family session depending on the family relationships. It was acknowledged that the young people appreciate that their family are involved.

"I always try to meet the young person with the family first so they all know who I am. Because sometimes you do have some families that have every service going and they do not know who is who and they get confused" (Stakeholder)

"Once we have our initial meet and greet, we then start our assessment where we would look at what is going on for them as a young person, what is going on at home? What is going on in the community? What is going on with their peer groups? How's their education going? So we try to look at all the circles around the young person, what they tell us is up to them, which is great because we work on voluntary participation" (Stakeholder)

After the initial assessment, MAC work with the young person in order to develop a plan to meet their needs. MAC works on voluntary participation, so the young person is able to choose how much or how little they are involved. Young person involvement is at the forefront of their individual plan, so the young person has the opportunity to check the developed plan, are involved in the process and have a voice, which encourages feelings of validity and empowerment. MAC are flexible and the case will be continuously reviewed and adapted, should the needs of the young person change. An example is provided below for prioritising the wellbeing of the young person.

A young person who was interviewed as part of this case study spoke about being apprehensive when first referred to the Braver Choices Programme by Youth Justice Services. They had been concerned that the support would solely focus around an incident they had been involved with which had led to their involvement with services, but the support had actually involved much more. They were able to discuss the incident in relation to what they were learning on the programme and take learning from it to move forward in the future.

"My YOS [Youth Offending Service] worker referred me. I wasn't too sure at first because I thought it would just be talking about the whole incident all over again and I don't want to go through it, but that wasn't actually the case when I got into it, it wasn't the main thing" (YP)

"I thought it would be all formal and stuff, but it's more chilled, it doesn't feel weird, yes I feel more comfortable talking" (YP)

During the sessions with the young people, Braver Choice will focus on a range of topics related to weapons. Including the law, emotional consequences, the implications and consequences of pulling a knife out on the streets (even in self-defence) and how that action can impact the young person, their family and how the community as a whole can be impacted. They will also seek to discuss and identify triggers, to help the young person to deal with their emotions going forward.

It was acknowledged that MAC often work with young people who have been in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), who have attended schools on a reduced timetable, as well as young people in local authority care. Most service users are at risk of becoming involved with weapons, rather than having already been involved with weapons. These service users are MACs target audience due to their focus on prevention. It was acknowledged that criminal exploitation and involvement with gangs is always a concern, as it is uncommon to have a weapons referral where there is no exploitation behind it.

“I don't want referrals coming through that you know they've been caught three times with a weapon on them, that's what we don't want. We want to be able to get in before things escalate and if things have escalated, no problem, we'll try our best. We'll do what we can” (Stakeholder)

Building relationships and establishing trust with the young people is at the forefront of the service's engagement with the young people. A case manager described that in instances where the young person is finding it difficult to engage, they will liaise with any services that the young person had engaged well with and set up a meeting with the three of them. For example, if a young person identified school as being a safe place, MAC would look to meet the young person at school to allow them to feel more comfortable. Being honest and transparent with the young people was seen to facilitate a trusting relationship.

“I had a young person who was in an alternative college in Swansea who wasn't engaging well with services, who was happy to meet me but was quite unsure. So they had a good relationship with the safeguarding officer for the college, so I linked in with her. We arranged the meet up with the three of us and it worked out perfectly because they had that trust with that worker” (Stakeholder)

“I put all my cards on the table and I'm not going to sugar coat anything. This is what we do. This is what you can expect from me. You know, what are your expectations? You know, what do you want? What you feel you should get out of me?” (Stakeholder)

As part of the programme, caseworkers will incorporate case studies as young people appear to be more receptive to real life stories, rather than being spoken to by a caseworker as it puts things into perspective and allows the young person to understand the consequences of using or carrying weapons from a real-life story. If a young person enters MAC for a programme other than Braver Choices, and there is an element of weapons identified, caseworkers can deliver packages together to incorporate elements of Braver Choices. MAC also deliver programmes in education settings as part of the CMET with Swansea Council. For example, they have been engaging with every secondary school in Swansea to deliver a programme on extra familial harm. Although it is outside of their remit, MAC have also been going out into the community to support other organisations in helping young people involved in extra familial harm.

Partnership working

As a result of the VPU funding, MAC have a wider, more strategic, reach; enabling them to engage with more schools and have the opportunity to work with strategic partners to prevent violence.

Having the VPU endorse their work gives it credibility, which facilitates that work to be replicated in other areas of Wales. The VPU was considered as more than just a funding element, they were viewed as crucial to negotiating and encouraging partners to take responsibility; the VPU were considered 'the glue'. MAC work with partners on a community and strategic level. They sit as part of CMET, which was felt to facilitate partnership working. Stakeholders explained that this partnership is beneficial in efficiently responding to cases of violence. An incident which occurred in February was described where MAC came together with CMET partners to effectively and efficiently respond to a stabbing.

"A 15-year-old boy was stabbed. So straight away, within the next day we had an emergency CMET meeting, and we were looking at how every agencies in Swansea were going to respond to this immediately. So we were out on the weekend then working in the area doing outreach and offering support in the local youth club where we had counsellors there ready for young people to speak to us. Work is ongoing, even after a major event like that happening straight away, the aftermath can take a while because it takes a while for people to take in what's happened, you know, could take a year. It could take a couple of days, it's about what support is in place for those young people after an incident like that"
(Stakeholder)

MAC endeavours to work within a multiagency approach where other known services are attached to young people referred to MAC services. Where there is children's services attachment, MAC's intervention may form part of a wider coordinated safety planning. MAC frequently work with schools to get children back into education or to stay in school. They also work with community partners such as youth centres to engage with the community, break barriers and bring about sustainable change. They have established partnerships with state partners such as CAMHS, Local Authorities, Youth Justice Services, and the police. Wider partners include local authority departments such as housing and recreation, for example, repairing harm in areas of the communities where children/young people may have damaged or vandalised. Strategically, the partners are the VPU, Welsh government and wider UK government. It was recognised that MAC are very established at engaging with partners from ethnic minority communities. Partnerships were generally felt to be working well. Services were felt to welcome support for families as it is often difficult for statutory services to keep up with demand. However, it was recognised that they are often hindered by lack of data sharing and organisations being reluctant to acknowledge the issue and engage.

"Multi agency or partnership working is the only way to get everything that family might need" (Stakeholder)

"Some feel that they've got services in place and they don't need support. But the evidence and the A&E attendance figures might say different to that.... So some partners are great, information sharing and all that is more problematic" (Stakeholder)

Barriers

Several factors were identified as barriers to the implementation of the MAC Braver Choices programme. Duplication was raised as a concern; it was felt that other services, such as St Giles, may be delivering similar outputs. To overcome this, the organisations have developed their partnerships to ensure the young people are getting the right support from the right person.

"...Does any of our work duplicate, so I know we are trying to build up connection with [St Giles] to see if there's something that we have that fits their criteria more. You know, how can we work together to make sure that that young person's getting the right support with the right person" (Stakeholder)

Despite working with and receiving referrals from the Youth Justice Services, it was felt that in some instances, other teams and organisations, such as the Youth Justice Services, do not consider themselves in need of the support from MAC, due to the perception that they already have workers who can do the work. MAC are dedicated to developing a partnership with the Youth Justice Services to overcome this barrier. Further, being a voluntary organisation was felt to hinder the development of partnerships and referrals from statutory organisations. It was felt that individuals will automatically lean on local authority to provide support and may doubt the level of support coming from a voluntary organisation. Where partnerships are developed, it was felt that the sharing of information is problematic between partners due to being hindered by information sharing protocols and legislations. A lack of mental health services was identified as a barrier to implementation. MAC have recently applied for funding to have their own counsellor in Swansea for any of their cases to access immediate mental health support.

“...Mental health services, there's not enough for crisis. So, we've just applied for funding to have our own counselling in Swansea for any cases that can access immediate mental health support” (Stakeholder)

Impact

MAC stakeholders described a range of changes that occur within the children and young people and the community following engagement. Stakeholders identified the primary beneficiaries of their work as the children and young people and their families. Examples focussed on increased feelings of safety and harm reduction through raising awareness and behaviour change. Individuals and communities felt supported and safer in their local environments. There was an increased understanding of the root causes of violence and as result of more understanding and there is more of a push to find ways of improving options and choices for children and young people that deter them from becoming involved in violence. Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding around knife crime and the impact of carrying knives was highlighted, with the hope that it will change perceptions and behaviour (e.g., changes in peer networks, improved attendance at school).

“They understand that they're not safer carrying knives, and they also understand the law and possible implications which they didn't know before... We hope we've given them the counter narratives to make better or different choices” (Stakeholder)

The young person participating in the evaluation described how they found it helpful speaking with the workers from MAC and explained that the workers spoke to them in a relaxed way and explained everything clearly to them. The young person felt that they could have an open and honest conversation and acknowledged that the relationship they had built with their worker and how they communicated with one another had made a difference in how they had engaged with the service. The programme also provided structure for the young person, with them explaining that they knew that they had that designated time with the MAC workers at the same time each week. This also provided reassurance that they could talk through any worries they had experienced during the week.

“I feel like I can actually talk about how I feel, don't need to go into detail about everything, I can just say how I feel, as it is, and I actually learn about the things that are going on around me, I've found out about stuff that I didn't know was going on around me” (YP)

“I think also because I know that they are always going to be here on a Thursday at the same time, which helps as well. I like the routine, it gives me something to do and also I know that if I am worried about something that day or even another day beforehand, that I can talk to them about it” (YP)

The clear communication in a safe and non-judgmental space and trusted relationship between the worker and young person meant that the young person felt comfortable to speak up and felt heard during the sessions. They explained that they were asked for their opinion, and how MAC listened and that they now felt that their opinion and feedback was taken on board. They stressed the importance of having services available for young people where they are made to feel comfortable and can express how they feel and know that they will be listened to.

“I actually feel like I want to listen” (YP)

“Yes really clearly and even if I don’t understand something they will actually make it so much clearer and go into more detail about it so I actually know about it” (YP)

“They take my opinion into account, always. There are places where I might have a say but I didn’t really feel like I was getting heard but now I am actually getting listened to” (YP)

“No (nothing could be done different), I just feel like I am always being heard like all the time, and every session I always end up with a new frame of mind and I am always able to see or think about what I have learned that day” (YP)

Because the young person felt comfortable to speak during the sessions with MAC, they noted that this had improved their communication skills, both inside the Braver Choices sessions and outside of the programme. They reported that communication had improved with their family and friends and that they now felt more comfortable opening up, speaking about how they were feeling and asking for help when needed. This was seen as an important change for them, explaining that in the past they would have not spoken about their worries or feelings, which resulted in situations escalating out of their control. The increased confidence and improved communication skills meant that the young person had gone on to make new friends and had developed a more positive friendship group.

“It has helped me speak to not just them, but the people around me as well. I am able to ask for help easier. Usually I would just do everything on my own and without the advice and help. It actually it got to the point where I felt it was out of my control. But now I ask for help the second that I feel like I can’t do it on my own” (YP)

“Important because if I didn’t have somewhere to speak about how I felt I’d probably just be keeping everything to myself and it wouldn’t be good” (YP)

“I talk to new people better as well, I am able to communicate, make new friends. Like the other week I made a new friendship group and everything and that’s because now I am able to speak more freely about how I feel” (YP)

The young person also reported having increased confidence in their decision-making skills through the information they had learnt from Braver Choices. They felt they had the skills to recognise a negative situation or when a situation was becoming out of control, and then the confidence to remove themselves from the situation. They agreed that the support had stopped them getting into situations that they had previously been involved in which had led to their referral for support. They explained that this increased knowledge, confidence and communicating about how they feel had made them feel a ‘lot better’ and they had seen a big difference in the 5-6 weeks that they had been engaged with MAC. The young person was happy with the support they had engaged with and were pleased with the outcomes from the programme to date and were looking forward to the rest of their Braver Choices sessions. They had no recommendations for improvements to the programme or service and highlighted the importance of it being available for other young people.

“I am more able to actually connect with people better now, I am able to talk to people better. Also I am actually able to see when something bad is going to happen, it’s easier for

me to say to someone that I am going home, or I don't like this I am going to remove myself from the situation. It's easier for me to recognise risks in situations. (Before) I either wouldn't have been able to see the bad situations, or I'd probably see it but wouldn't be able to speak up and end up just walking into it" (YP)

"I feel way more confident now in myself and doing the right thing now" (YP)

Stakeholders recognised the secondary beneficiaries of their work as the statutory services, with awareness raising and longer-term outcomes relating to reduced demand on services. Future hopes for wider longer-term outcomes included looking at reducing demand upon police and A&E.

"To understand some of the root causes, bring the evidence of why these things are happening and then hopefully add those into the strategy to develop longer term solutions. It's around those outputs for communities and children that all of the steps in the short and medium [term] hopefully are going to mean that the long term has got better options and better choices available for children and communities" (Stakeholder)

"...So reduce police time, reduce hospital time, and reduce local authority involvement, which then means that the resources can be used in a better way. And the third sort of contemporary circle is around safer communities" (Stakeholder)

Case study provided by MAC

"One girl came into us as she had been carrying a weapon for her boyfriend. So there were concerns about her association and exploitation. She drastically went downhill. She was not looking after herself, and she always did her hair, she always did her makeup, it happened so quickly, within a week. No motivation, nothing. We were trying to understand what was going on, what's happened. She said that 'Oh well, you know, my partner's involved in this and that and I witnessed something'. She wouldn't tell me exactly what her partner had done so I couldn't report that to the Police, but I submitted it as an Intel form. Her social worker was worried too. She was just absolutely petrified, scared to go out. She wouldn't talk to us, her mum, anyone. We looked at what we could do to support her. The waiting list for counselling at CAMHS are drastic, but I was able to get her in Exchange counselling within the month.

Every week was just focused on her wellbeing, you know, how are things going? How you feeling this week? You know, do you just want to go out for a little walk. Shall we just go and get a cuppa? I didn't talk about weapons or exploitation. We took a bit of time back to focus on her and her wellbeing. I think she just needed somebody that whenever she wants to tell me, she could... You know, even though we are doing weapons intervention prevention, that's not always necessarily the case, which needed to be put on hold. That was not [the] priority at the minute. The priority was focusing on this young person's wellbeing" (Stakeholder)

Measuring impact

In terms of measuring outcomes, MAC receive feedback from the children and young people they work with. For example, each session with a young person begins with a restorative check-in, which involves encouraging the young person to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and considerations from the previous week. Once the session ends, the MAC worker checks in again and takes feedback from both the young person's perspective and their own interpretation of the session. This feedback is used to both understand the young person's perspective and also to help develop and improve the service delivery. For example, one young person asked if MAC could incorporate first aid into their work. As such, they established a partnership with St Johns Ambulance and incorporated the applied pressure

campaign into their workshops, which educates the young people on how to apply pressure to a wound.

“Something extra we always ask as part of our feedback is, what do you want? What do you want from us? What can we do for you? That always works well” (Stakeholder)

Furthermore, another form of reflection used to evidence outcomes is Life Mapping. Life Mapping is a technique used in qualitative methods that provides a visual map depicting an individual’s life from a specific period of time up until present day. The focus of the events mapped is often on a specific topic or issue affecting the individual of focus⁶. The Braver Choices team utilise this tool to provide a timeline of behaviours and events to paint a clear picture of the life experiences of the young person and to generate a safety plan personalised to meet the specific needs of the young person and prevent the key risks they are most susceptible to.

In addition, quarterly reporting delivered to the VPU showed that the Braver Choices team started to incorporate the #NotTheOne campaign into their programme. #NotTheOne is an early prevention strategy focused on reducing knife crime. The campaign’s website consists of resources such as educational videos, infographics and quizzes aimed towards educating young boys between 11-16⁷. The educators pack can be accessed for distribution by families, youth clubs or schools. Braver Choices incorporate the educator’s packs of resources within their workshops with young people. Difficulties evidencing outcomes were described by a case manager. It was felt that the time and effort that goes into building and developing relationships with young people is often missed.

“But I feel like in reports that you know the difficulties aren't shown enough” (Stakeholder)

For children who are difficult to engage with, it is particularly difficult to evidence this disengagement and the effort to build trust. It is also difficult to evidence the consideration that goes into establishing these relationships as building relationships with young people requires caseworkers to consider their approach to ensure they are not engaging in similar elements of grooming, such as bribing the children/young people with gifts to take part in a session. Further, reduction in weapon carrying is hard to measure because often young people will deny every having carried a weapon, despite information sharing at safeguarding meetings saying otherwise.

Sustainability and recommendations

Whilst strategically, relationships with the VPU were strong, it was felt that a direct link and stronger relationships between the VPU and caseworkers would be beneficial. This could help facilitate the receiving and discussion of feedback to ensure MAC are meeting expectations. It must be noted that strategic managers work with the VPU to ensure project delivery and structures are in place for case workers to receive feedback from their manager, however a stronger relation between the VPU and case workers was still felt to be beneficial. The introduction of a localised Welsh evidence base identifying the interventions that the VPU is funding was also suggested as a recommendation for the VPU.

“In the medium-term, they're able to give often up to one year funding and hopefully 1/2/3 years funding on actually medium-term solution” (Stakeholder)

⁶ Garratt, E., Flaherty, J., Barron, A. (2021). ‘Life Mapping’ in Barron, A., Browne, A.L., Ehgartner, U., Hall, S.M., Pottinger, L. and Ritson, J. (eds.) *Methods for Change: Impactful social science methodologies for 21st century problems*. Manchester: Aspect and The University of Manchester.

⁷ <https://www.south-wales.police.uk/police-forces/south-wales-police/areas/campaigns/campaigns/nottheone/> and <https://www.nottheone.co.uk/>

It was acknowledged that this information was available through research and evaluation, and how it could be made more accessible for local communities. It was felt that the funding timescales need to be revisited and that in order to begin to evidence outcomes and the impact of their service, funding needed to be given on a longer-term basis.

“I'd love to be able to speak to them and check are they happy with what I'm doing. Am I doing everything to their expectations? Sometimes you know you just want to ask a question like what I'm doing. Is it OK?” (Stakeholder)

Case study 7: NHS Violence Prevention Team

The NHS violence prevention team⁸ (VPT) is a dedicated team working within Morriston Hospital Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) to identify and respond to patients with violence-related injuries. The team engage with these patients whilst they are in hospital and at home, if they have been discharged prior to the team meeting with them. The team deliver advice, support, guidance, and referral to appropriate support services. The aim of this is to promote movement away from lifestyles encased in violence by encouraging engagement with services. The VPT work with children and young people aged 10 to 25 years who have experienced violence with injury. On occasion, they work with adults beyond this age.

Implementation

The service went live in April 2022, with the VPU funding two full-time positions until April 2024. To facilitate the implementation of the service, staff at the A&E were trained and made aware of the intervention, relationships were built and barriers were broken down to ensure staff looked beyond just the injury or presenting complaint. Raising awareness of the VPT has been an integral part of the implementation in the hospital (initially, there was some confusion around the role of the VPT - many hospital staff thought that the service was to protect them from being assaulted by patients) and as such, the team have attended hospital team meetings, attended handovers between shifts, the VPT is discussed within training and referral pathways, and the team endeavour to spend time with staff within the department and support them in their practice.

“Basically, it's really to get our faces seen so that people start to know who we are. It gives us a chance to introduce ourselves, which is very helpful. Whilst on the Board Round, if there is a patient who has been assaulted or there's been any sort of weapons injury, we can then highlight that this patient can be referred to the team to be seen, although we would take this as a referral whilst on the round” (Stakeholder)

Expectations from the VPU include ad hoc meetings (which are to become regular planned meetings), the completion of monthly and quarterly reports from a data set that is held by the VPT, which includes number of referrals, age groups, the type of referrals (and referral source), and outcomes. Communication with the VPU was described as good, and the relationship between the VPT and the VPU was felt to be ‘forthcoming’. It was discussed that the VPU are quick to respond to requests and calls for support; they have been able to organise meetings within a short timeframe in order to support the VPT.

“So it's really a phone call or an e-mail and they're there. They're really helpful. Whenever I've asked for a meeting, they've organised it within a few days and we've had a few face-to-face meetings as well which has been good” (Stakeholder)

Partnership working

The VPT work with a range of organisations such as the police, education, public protection units, children and adult services, the Health Board's Corporate Safeguarding team, and local authorities; the majority of whom sit within their geographical footprint. They also work with agencies out of area if required. Partners were felt to work well together to share ideas and knowledge and develop best practices. The team in Swansea work closely in collaboration with the VPT in Cardiff, which is a major trauma centre for significant trauma and medical emergencies, whilst Morriston is the Specialist Burns and Plastics Centre for Wales. Patients who are in attendance at each other's areas are alerted

⁸ <https://www.violencepreventionwales.co.uk/what-we-do/interventions/nhs-violence-prevention-team>

between teams if referred to the service and then informed when repatriation is being planned, in order to ensure services appropriate to areas are offered to patients. The team have also worked closely with Cardiff to learn from their VPT model which was originally established, tested, and evaluated by the VPU. Swansea successfully submitted a bid to VPU, to establish the second VPT in Wales, due to Swansea being the next highest area with violence-related injury in Wales. The VPT have developed their model with support from Cardiff VPT and adapted it to suit the needs of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot hospitals.

The VPT work closely with Media Academy Cymru (MAC) to provide victim support and link with other services. The relationship between the VPT and MAC was felt to be positive; they meet monthly to share what is working well and any changes that need to be made. Following referral, the youth worker at MAC meets with the young person and they decide together what support is needed and 'which programmes are best for them'.

"If we have someone in hospital, the MAC worker will come in to see them here if they are available. This works well because I find if you catch the young person at that vulnerable stage, they're more likely to engage with you... We meet up every month with MAC, to see how things are going, and to get feedback on cases, which is good because it allows the VPT to understand what is working for the young person" (Stakeholder)

The VPT have the opportunity to collaborate with other violence prevention interventions at the CMET (Contextual Safeguarding) panel in Swansea and contextual safeguarding strategy meetings in Neath Port Talbot. This allows the VPT to have an overview of any issues that may be overlapping Local Authorities and highlight these to each area, ensuring appropriate staff members are invited to relevant meetings. The opportunity to have these discussions with different partners allows agencies to work together in line with the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, for information sharing between partners, and putting plans in place for specific areas to target specific issues. If a safeguarding issue is identified, the VPT will make a safeguarding referral to the appropriate local authority, in line with the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

"Regular CMET and strategy meetings are held and attended by VPT. Everybody works really well together [and] engage well with each other. For CMET, we give reports in every month of our numbers of referrals, any themes and locations. This information is also shared by other services attending. CMET are then building a picture-from lots of services about issues in the Swansea area." (Stakeholder)

The quarterly reports provided to the VPU also show that the team have been working with schools; a presentation was given to head teachers about the VPT and was welcomed as a service to support children, young people and their families. Following this, a meeting was arranged with the Head Teacher to provide an update on the service. Additionally, Media Academy Cymru and the VPT delivered a school workshop for knives and weapons.

Delivery

Initially, the VPT struggled with referrals and began by manually working through admissions to find patients who fit the criteria for referral. More recently, referrals are being made, however, there continues to be a need to check admissions on the electronic system and the IT Custom report, developed specifically for the Team with parameters set as requested. The VPT have developed a referral flow chart for A&E staff to use if they query whether a patient should be assisted by the team and how to refer to them. When a member of the violence prevention team is on-site, a referral can be made by a phone call to a member of the team, who will be able to see the patient immediately. If they are not available, the referral pathway should be followed and would be actioned on the next

working day. Upon receiving a referral, the VPT would see/contact the patient, undertake an assessment, and recommend the best options for the patient; referrals will be made if the patient agrees. Those patients who have been referred, but have since been discharged are then contacted by phone within 72 hours. The team have liaised with staff to ensure referral systems are easy for staff to use and have provided alternative systems for referring, such as using stickers to inform the team of a patient. Quarterly reporting to the VPU showed that this has proved successful as it saved the referrer time and therefore led to an increase not only in the number of referrals made by staff to the team, but also cases being received quicker.

“...So if staff in A&E wanted to query, is this for the violent prevention team, they can follow the referral pathway for the VPN (Violence Prevention Nurse in the VPT). If it is during working hours, they can call the VPN. Otherwise, it would be a case of using the system in place for that area of the department” (Stakeholder)

Initially the team used the electronic Welsh PAS (patient administration system) to identify any patients who have been discharged without being referred to the VPT over the previous 24 hours. Assessing triage notes from the system allowed the VPT to identify patients at the earliest opportunity. The IT custom report is checked on a daily basis and any highlighted cases that could be related to injury from violence are checked in order to try not to miss any young people who have attended.

“The other thing that we're doing at the moment because people aren't used to us being around, is using-a system called Welsh PAS. I can go on there and have a look at who's been in for the last 48 hours and make a note of people who've been in and been discharged while we've been away... This is because we didn't want to miss patients whilst waiting for referrals to come in, we wanted to be able to start supporting people” (Stakeholder)

At the point of first contact, the VPT will introduce themselves and inform the patient about the service they provide. The patient will decide whether they wish to engage and if so, they will discuss their situation. From this, appropriate actions and/or referrals are agreed upon. If the young person declines, no further action is taken unless safeguarding issues are identified. In these instances, the team follow the All Wales Safeguarding procedures to ensure the patient's safety. In all cases, patient details are recorded on the database due to the potential that they may come through A&E again. If the patients are under 18, the VPT will speak with their parents first to gain consent prior to speaking with them.

“It's just a quick phone call just to say, who we are, what service we provide, and if the patient wishes to engage...obviously if they don't, then that's fine, but the patient is still recorded on the database because there is a potential that the patient may return and gives [us] another opportunity to engage with them” (Stakeholder)

The needs of the patients vary. It was recognised that the VPT primarily refer to victim support, however, there is now an increased number of referrals to MAC. There has been an increase in contextual safeguarding which has also been highlighted at appropriate multidisciplinary meetings, specific for these circumstances. Although the VPT are expected to engage with the patient on the day they present at A&E or up to 72hours following discharge, the team suggested that some patients prefer to stay with the VPT for longer than the set period of time before being referred to the appropriate organisations, as they require more time to think about what decision is best for them.

“By attending contextual safeguarding meetings, we are able to have an overview of the issues relating to violence resulting in injury across the two local authorities” (Stakeholder)

Quarterly reporting to the VPU, also showed that the VPT team have also met with the hospital Major Trauma Rehabilitation Co-ordination Team, to explain the role of the VPT. This has led to patients who were transferred out of area due to major trauma, being referred to the team upon returning to Morrision Hospital for ongoing treatment, which the VPT have recognised as proving to be successful with patients able to benefit from the service upon their return.

The initial paperwork for the VPT that was developed for the team was acknowledged as a good starting point for data collection, but more recently, the paperwork has been refined to fill any gaps identified in the information collected. The service has been able to quickly adapt their forms by adding necessary fields and removing those that are not required. The same goes for referral pathways, which have been changed specifically for the different departments e.g. Children's Emergency Unit.

"I think one of the good things is that we've been able to change the paperwork...as we're going along, because you suddenly realise, I need to know that information and we didn't have anywhere to record it specifically. So it's...quite fluid" (Stakeholder)

Barriers

Staff recruitment was reported as an issue with delivering the service due to a number of staff changes and, at times, only one member of staff being in post. This is no longer an issue, as there are now two Violence Prevention Nurses in place and a Violence Prevention Lead for the Team for the remainder of the project. Although the capacity of the team was low during the first year, it was agreed that it had not affected the impact of the VPT intervention. Once back to full staffing levels, there was an opportunity to provide additional training for internal and external colleagues to promote the use of the service. This was also seen as an opportunity to attend and link in with local events, which may see an increased rate of reports of violent incidents.

The most significant barrier the team have faced is visibility among hospital staff. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a considerable amount of sickness among hospital staff, meaning departments had to rely on agency nurses. This use of agency staff has continued to date as staff have left and as a result, it has been difficult for the VPT to get to know all staff because they are constantly changing. In addition, there was a general lack of understanding about what the VPT provide. It was discussed that this was further exacerbated by having a temporary office that is out of the way, meaning hospital staff are less likely to find a member of the team if they need help. The office situation continues to be a difficulty for the team.

"It's about constantly going into the department and reminding staff that not everybody is referring, maybe because they are agency staff and are unaware of the VPT. Some people are good at referring, some people aren't, but it's about engaging with them. It does depend on who's on and who knows about the service" (Stakeholder)

"We haven't been able to allocate an office for them [VPT] as there aren't any available in A&E. We've managed to find a place for them which unfortunately isn't suitable. Just simple little things like that have made implementation more difficult because we want them to be visible to everybody" (Stakeholder)

In instances where staff did know about the team, it was felt that the A&E staff were often too busy to complete the referral process, or they did not think beyond what was presented to them. For example, they will not think about what has happened for the presented issue to have occurred, and whether the patient may have experienced violence. Concerns were raised around duplication of services. It was recognised that there is a safeguarding nurse for children who may be doing referrals with the same people as the VPT. Although both roles are separate and distinct in their remit, it was

felt to be important to ensure that their roles are separate, and nothing was to change with staff in relation to following the Safeguarding processes in place. It has been stressed to A&E staff that the VPT and Safeguarding roles work alongside each other, and they understand the differences between services.

“A member of staff was asked to do a referral yesterday and they were obviously too busy and didn’t do it, so it didn’t come in and it’s just one of those things where we’re going to have to keep pushing, they don’t see it as a priority at the minute” (Stakeholder)

The VPU quarterly report for VPT highlights that accommodation has continued to be an issue for the VPT, in terms of where they are based and where they can see patients confidentially. This situation has been raised to a high level, however it was recognised that there are several issues that are hindering this and are not easily overcome at present. Another initial barrier that was identified was around the working hours of the VPT violence prevention nurse who worked 8am to 4pm. It was felt there may be missed opportunities to engage with young people who attended A&E outside of these hours as well as being able to contact parents for consent who may be unavailable due to their own working hours. This has since changed and with the full capacity of staff in place, a 12-hour day is covered from 8am – 8pm. The VPT have expanded to cover the Neath Port Talbot Minor Injuries Unit for two shifts per week. This has also resulted in more referrals as the staff in the department are now fully aware of the service and make regular referrals. During the time of limited staffing issues as raised above, it was also felt that possible referrals were potentially being missed on the wards, however, there is now signs of this improving as the service is being promoted more within the hospital.

“It goes back to shift working. If you work eight till four, you can often miss young people as they tend to come in after school finishes and you don’t see them face-to-face. If you’ve got parents that are working, it’s really hard to get in touch with them to get consent to speak to the younger person, so that makes it a bit harder. After five o’clock, it’s quite often a bit easier to get hold of people” (Stakeholder)

The VPT recognise that it is important to engage with people at that ‘vulnerable’ moment within A&E, however, this is not always possible. Difficulties engaging with patients once they have left the hospital were identified. It was felt that once a patient has gone home, the circumstances of what has happened do not seem as important, as they have been treated and are moving on, therefore they are less likely to seek support. Additionally, some young people might be reluctant to engage over the phone.

“Once they’ve gone home and they’re thinking about it, it’s like, no, no, it’s done. It’s finished with, it’s passed, or if it’s crime related, one of the assailants may have got in touch with them and they may have been threatened not to say anything. So, although it sounds awful, you need to catch them at that more vulnerable moment” (Stakeholder)

When contacting patients retrospectively, it can be difficult to identify cases as data taken in reception may not be accurate. One stakeholder discussed that when a patient presents at A&E, they may tell the receptionist that they have had an accident, but when they go into triage, they may disclose that they’ve been in a fight or been assaulted. This was suggested to be attributed to a lack of confidentiality in the reception queue. This is a barrier for the VPT as when looking at data intelligence to identify appropriate patients, if the data is not accurately recorded as an assault, some patients will be missed. The VPT need to check any patients attending with injuries that could be a result of an assault, hence the need for systems to search for appropriate patients to contact, as described above.

“If patients book in with a limb injury and actually it’s an assault, the assault information will not be recorded on the digital intelligence because it has gone in on a different code.

It's gone in as a limb injury. So, when we're pulling the data, it won't look as if there's been that many assaults on the electronic system" (Stakeholder)

"People don't always come in and say they've been assaulted. So, it's picking out 'patients such as somebody with a head injury or a wrist injury'... it's just learning to pick them out. Then when looking into the triage summary of the patient, it says they've been assaulted. So, it's picking up those sorts of different things and we just- I need to find a way around the system that makes it easier for us to do that" (Stakeholder)

The VPT have trialled different working hours to meet the demand of young people attending A&E. The service was initially available in person between 8am and 4pm and anyone attending outside of these hours, who was identified as having a violence-related injury, was contacted by the VPT by telephone following their visit A&E. The VPT acknowledged that in-person conversations result in better engagement with the VPT and highlighted the importance of utilising that 'teachable moment' while a young person is at the hospital and may be more likely to engage with support. The team have reviewed attendances at A&E to assess when more young people are presenting and have therefore trialled having the onsite service available after school hours, later into the evening, and other busy times, such as bank holidays and weekends. It was felt to be important that Swansea trialled working unsociable hours on weekends and bank holidays due to the high number of people who visit A&E during these times, after having consumed alcohol while socialising, which increases the likelihood of assaults happening. The VPT also noted that they are more likely to be able to engage with parents for consent to work with their children outside of school and work hours when parents have more availability. Whilst the service was running with one member of staff, the core hours remained as 8am-4pm; however, once the team was fully established the hours changed to covering a 12-hour period from 8am - 8pm, on a rota system for the VPT to have a presence and engage with groups they may have previously been missing. The VPT did acknowledge that they expected the summer months to see an increase in attendances when young people were not in school, however, attendance at A&E had not increased as they thought it would. They also noted that they had expected numbers to be high at Halloween. Undertaking a regular audit of times and days of attendance and reviewing trends will help meet the needs of the service.

"Once they leave A&E, they don't tend to take up the service as much. Whereas if they go and see them when they are still in hospital, they've got a really high rate. I think it's over 80% of people that want to engage with them" (Stakeholder)

Since young people have gone back to school, following the pandemic, the service has seen an increased demand for school-based assaults, with an increase in children and young people attending following significant assaults in school. This information has been shared at CMET meetings and there is currently a multiagency approach being taken to these issues. It was felt that having the VPT available to deal with violence occurring in schools is beneficial, due to reports from parents that schools have advised them not to report incidents to the police. Instead, the school will deal with the situation. The VPT informs parents that it is their decision whether or not to report incidents to the police. Schools cannot prevent parents from doing so and in cases where assaults have not been reported, the VPT will report it to the police. Having schools wanting to manage these incidences themselves was highlighted as a barrier, which has been reported to CMET. It was noted that linking with MAC and CMET to work with schools to train them on the importance of reporting incidents would be valuable.

"I was ringing the schools because... I was asking parents if it had been reported to the police? No. Okay. Why not? School have told us not to, they'll deal with it. No, that's a really nasty assault, you do need to report it to the police. I think we know most schools

say that they've got no bullying going on whereas actually they have, and this is more than a bit of verbal bullying. This is nasty assaults, with young people taking videos and sharing it on social media" (Stakeholder)

Impact

The VPT collect a range of data, including referral data, number of interventions delivered, number of total unique children and young people reached, age groups, gender, and ethnic group. They have also been collecting data on what has worked well and not so well. They are hoping to collect data on the softer outcomes, to demonstrate the effort that goes into building confidence with the people they work with; for example, in order for them to be referred to MAC for additional support.

Information provided by the VPT, shows that between May and September 2022, a total of 90 referrals were made by the VPT. This included 53 referrals for young people aged between 10-25 years. A large proportion of referrals were made by the VPT to Victim Support and MAC. In the first year of delivery (May-September 2022), the VPT successfully engaged with 46% of young people (32% declined and no response for 22%).

Stakeholders felt that the service improves outcomes for young people by linking them in with relevant services and organisations who can support their needs. The service has also had a significant impact on families. Specifically, the service has spent a lot of time with mothers who are often unsettled over what has happened to their child. There have also been several referrals for domestic abuse consequent to this.

"I read a couple of the case studies and I know that had they not been there, things would be very different for those children, those families as well" (Stakeholder)

"...Because they've [the mothers] been quite traumatised over what's happened with their children and then talking to them. I know they've picked up on a lot of domestic abuse and they've made lots of referrals for domestic abuse and they're getting to see the wider picture within the family dynamics as well, not just what's happening to their child when they leave the house" (Stakeholder)

In terms of sustainability, the VPT believed that this would need to be explored further once the intervention has been running for a longer period, to explore impact and understand how the service can be sustained longer term. The VPT (including MAC) provided a number of anonymised case studies and scenarios to demonstrate the journey of support and impacts for young people and adults⁹:

VPT Scenario 1

A 16-year-old young person out with friends, sustained an unprovoked assault by two male adults (who had been drinking). The males were initially being verbally aggressive, a pint glass was thrown at the face of the young person, and he was then punched by another male. The young person's friends were also being chased by other males, but received no injuries. The assailants were reported to the young person's parent by the manager of the venue, the manager had not called the Police to have them moved on. The young person was hoping to go to college, however, now wants to leave the area due to assault and fear of repercussions. Following the assault, the young person stopped contacting his friends and was afraid to go out in case the perpetrators had not been caught. The incident was reported to the police. Dad reported to be very concerned about his son's mental health. Dad and young person spoke with VPT and referrals were made to Victim Support and MAC.

⁹ Please note that specific details about the incidents, including injuries have been removed for anonymity.

VPT Scenario 2

A 14-year-old male young person was assaulted by an unknown young person in a park. Witnesses filmed the assault, which was then shared on social media. The young person attended A&E with his parent. A member of the public reported the incident to the Police. On discussion with the VPT, Mum reported that previous to the assault, she is now aware that her son had also been receiving threatening text messages. The VPT referred the young person to MAC and Victim Support. Mum was also referred to Victim Support.

VPT Scenario 3

A 16-year-old female was assaulted at a local train station, by a 14-year-old female. The young person reported to have lost consciousness and when she came around, her shoes had been removed and thrown on the train track. The incident was reported to have been recorded by another young person who was with the assailant. Following the incident, the young person reported that she was threatened via messages and social media. She did not want to go out anymore. This incident was reported to the Police, the young person did not press charges due to concerns of repercussions. The young person agreed for the VPT to refer her to MAC.

VPT Scenario 4

A 14-year-old female was severely assaulted by another pupil in school. This was recorded by another pupil and shared on social media. Following a second assault, the young person has not been back to school as she is too scared and also reported that she is scared to go out on her own where she lives, due to some of the girls being in the same area. This incident was reported to the Police by young person's mother. The young person agreed for the VPT to refer her to MAC.

MAC Case study 1

Male was referred MAC after a visit to A&E following an assault while out with friends. MAC met with the young person to introduce themselves and offer support. The young person stated that support is not needed at this present time, and he just wanted someone to talk to about the incident. He described the incident and how it made him feel. He was anxious, but he is feeling much better and more confident in leaving the house. He is aware that there are safe places he can go to if he gets into a similar situation again. He is also looking forward to attending college and aspires to one day start and run his own company. The offer for any future support has been offered and the young person will be more than happy to accept this offer should he feel the need to.

MAC Case study 2

Female was referred to MAC following an assault. Before the incident she had been being bullied by a group of girls at school. She reported that she would drink alcohol due to peer pressure for a period of time which became a problem and had taken drugs from a local dealer under the guise of "spreading the word". The young person was at risk of child criminal exploitation and had risks to her health. Due to these risks, she was having relationship problems with her mum. She wanted things to go back to the way they were before. Since working with MAC, the young person has moved schools and the bullying has stopped completely. A safety plan was put together to ensure she would have the knowledge and essential information on what to do if she found herself in similar situations again. Her relationship with mum has improved greatly and she has remained sober. She is doing much better since the work started and feels she can now make better and safer decisions in the future.

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