



Somerset

# Violence Reduction Partnership

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*Annual Report*  
*2024-25*



# Foreword

Welcome to our report on our activities and achievements in the year 2024-2025. Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) is a subgroup of the Safer Somerset Partnership (SSP) and exists to work with partners to deliver statutory duties regarding serious violence. Somerset VRP has been operating as a subgroup of the SSP since May 2024 due to recognition that the work required needs understanding and development beyond the capacity of SSP meetings alone. Violence is preventable, if we can make use of evidence we can tackle the root causes that make individuals and groups vulnerable to being victims or offenders. Reducing violence is so important as it can impact on everyone; those directly involved, their friends and families and the wider community. It can impact on physical and emotion health and have lifelong impacts for generations. Somerset remains a safe place to live, however, as our Needs Assessment shows, rates of violence in our County are increasing and now is the time to focus on how we can most effectively work together to understand and prevent violence.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shelagh Meldrum'.

Shelagh Meldrum, Chief Nursing Officer,  
NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board

## Contents

### About the VRP:

VRP purpose	....	page 2
VRP structure	....	page 3
VRP function	....	page 4

### Partnership working:

Serious Youth Violence	....	page 5
Safer Somerset Priorities	....	page 6
Police Early Intervention Team	....	page 7
Town centre youth safety	....	page 8

### Commissioned projects:

Behaviour change programs	....	page 9
Online media research	....	page 10
YEF high impact Interventions	....	page 11
Case studies: A&E navigators	....	page 12
Case study: Sport mentors	....	page 13
Case study: Teachable moments	....	page 14

Looking ahead 2025-26	....	page 15
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Contact us	....	page 16
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## Who we are

Somerset VRP is the coming together of professionals from agencies such as police, the local authority, health, probation, fire and rescue and the voluntary sector.

## What we do

Reduce the risk of harm from violence and exploitation in the community, by considering the evidence base, working in partnership with a range of agencies across Somerset and assisting existing processes designed to safeguard individuals and families.

## Why we do it

Serious violence has a devastating impact on victims and their families, instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. Incidents of serious violence have increased in England and Wales since 2014

The Serious Violence Duty places a duty on a range of specified authorities as set out in Chapter 1, Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. It is to ensure relevant services work together to share information, target interventions and collaboratively prevent and reduce serious violence within local communities.

## Our vision

***“Our collective vision is to eliminate serious violence, protect the vulnerable and create safer communities, through the opportunities provided by the evolving Violence Reduction Partnership”***

**VIOLENCE is  
PREVENTABLE**

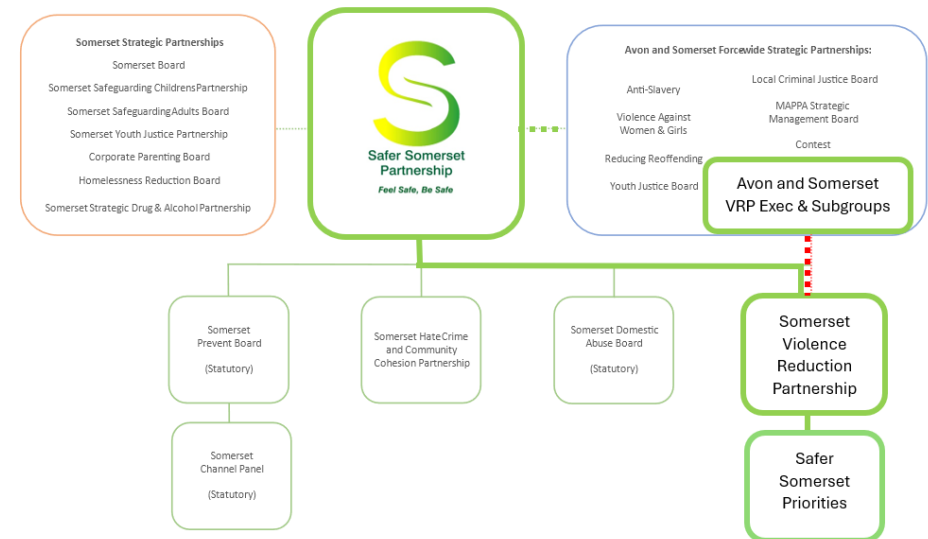
# VRP structure

Community Safety Partnerships have accountability for ensuring that a strategy is in place to prevent and reduce serious violence. In February 2024, specified authorities in Avon and Somerset agreed the mandatory needs assessment and strategy would be pan Avon and Somerset and overseen by a regional executive Avon and Somerset VRP board, coordinated by a team at the OPCC.

They also agreed that each local authority in the area will coordinate their own partnership group to produce a local needs assessment and strategy to inform the overarching Avon and Somerset strategy.

In Somerset, the local partnership group is called Somerset VRP and is part of the Safer Somerset Partnership, managed by Somerset Council from within the Community Safety Team. The VRP functions are supported by a strategic lead, manager, project officer and comms provision from within the council. The work of the VRP is also supported by the Avon and Somerset Police Early Intervention Team who provide extra resource to identify and engage young people at risk.

This year the VRP have funded North Somerset Council to provide additional data analysis and Avon and Somerset Police to support the running of Safer Somerset Priorities, the VRP's tactical function for responding to serious violence.



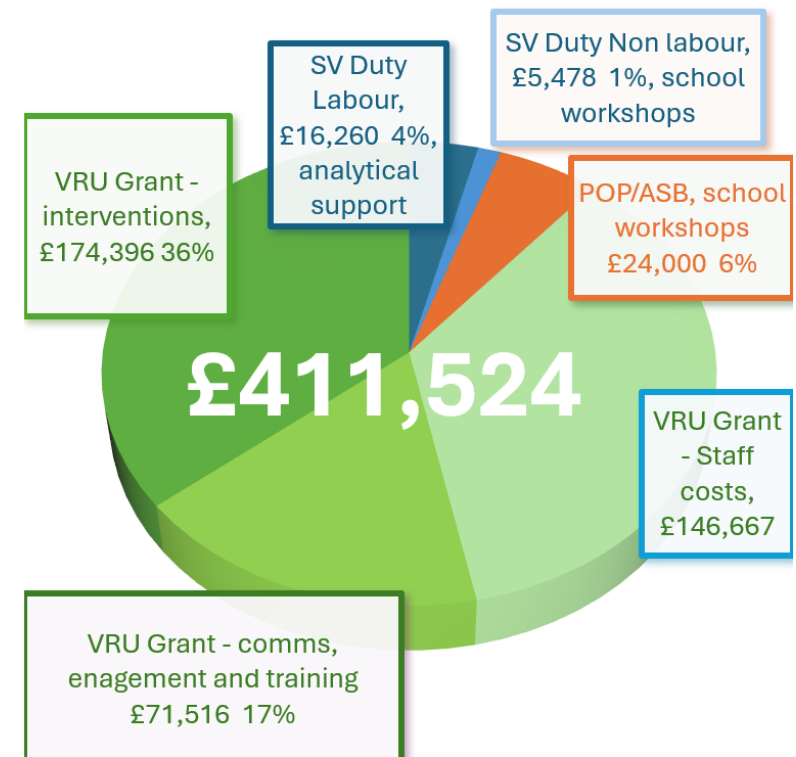
Safer Somerset Partnership and Somerset VRP structure and governance Oct 2024

The functions of Somerset VRP are to

- ensure the requirements set out in the Serious Violence Duty are met, including a strategy and needs assessment
- provide strategic direction to the SSP on serious violence
- provide oversight and governance to Safer Somerset Priorities
- work as a collaborative board reporting to the Drug and Alcohol Partnership
- ensure the prevention of both Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is represented in VRP planning and response
- ensure a plan is in place and maintained to tackle anti-social behaviour

The VRP also coordinate grants that come through the OPCC from the Home Office in relation to violence reduction and the serious violence duty. The operational work of the VRP is bolstered by the police Early Intervention Team to help keep a priority focus on early intervention of young people at risk of violence.

2024-25 VRP income & expenditure



# Serious Youth Violence

In May, the VRP supported the Somerset JTAI inspection on serious youth violence. An action plan for improvement was coordinated by Somerset Council in response to the findings from the inspection. The VRP have supported this plan by:

## Developing a governance structure for serious youth violence

A new governance structure for serious youth violence has been agreed for Somerset. This includes providing the SSP with a 6monthly report to provide quality assurance in regard to this work.

## Sharing of tactical information and response

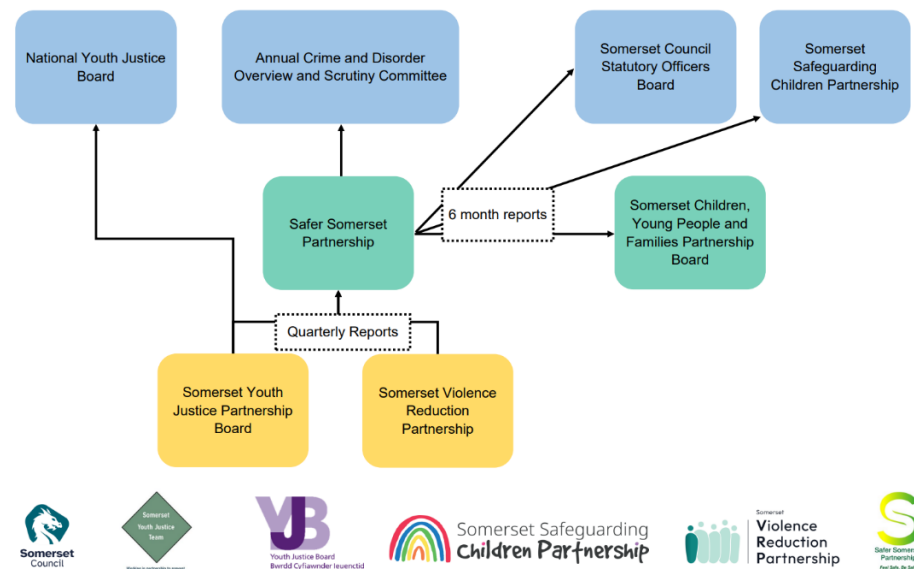
The VRP have revised the multi-agency operational police led Priorities meeting to become Safer Somerset Priorities, where partners can refer concerns regarding violence and exploitation in the community, including serious youth violence.

## Joint working on comms and training

The VRP have worked in partnership with Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership to provide a Serious Youth Violence Conference; Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation E-Learning, a forum week regarding exploitation and new webpages that are an information hub about serious youth violence:

[www.somersetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/serious-youth-violence](http://www.somersetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/serious-youth-violence)

Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation Governance Structure





## FAQs

### What is Safer Somerset Priorities?

It is a partnership meeting that sits under the VRP and acts as an escalation route for multi-agency concerns about serious violence. When concerns are brought to the meeting partners agree on a response that will reduce the risk of harm.

### What type of concerns are talked about?

12-15 cases a week are discussed. They are concerns about individuals, groups or locations at risk of serious violence, that have not been addressed through existing multi-agency operational channels.

### Is it duplicating other meetings?

Ideally not, however it does not replace safeguarding processes, so this can happen. Agencies referring into Priorities are asked to check where discussion has already taken place around each case.

### Should I attend?

Most statutory agencies are legally obliged to work in partnership to respond to serious violence. Service leads in Somerset have agreed this is the forum for escalating serious violence concerns. The meetings also receive support from non-statutory agencies. If you would like to know about Safer Somerset Priorities please contact [matthew.reed@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:matthew.reed@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

We have a duty to work together to  
respond to serious violence

**VAWG** **Modern Slavery**  
**EXPLOITATION**  
sex offences  
ASB public spaces  
**Knife crime**  
**VIOLENCE**

# Police Early Intervention Team

This year in Somerset the Police Early Intervention Team (EIT) has included 2 Sgts, 4 PCSOs and 2 PCs.

Their role has been to identify children at risk of violence and ensure the correct information is shared with partners about any concerns, and for each child to have an offer of support or intervention. They also engage with partners, schools and communities to promote the prevention of violence and expand opportunities for community groups to provide a sense of belonging for young people.

For more information contact the EIT Inspector:

[michael.payne2@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:michael.payne2@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

In the last year Somerset EIT have:

- conducted 182 school engagements
- led on 2 town centre problem solving plans to reduce youth violence (page 8)
- reviewed 204 young people at risk of violence, and arranged interventions or support for 114 of them
- attend out of court panels and LCN meetings
- delivered 18 community pop ups & 2 partnership engagement events
- supported 3 police operations aimed at reducing violence or exploitation
- provided comms and training on knife crime for PRUs, school safeguarding leads and transport providers.



***Above: Young people referred for positive activities at Blake Boxing club.***



***Left: EIT building relationships at the local PRU***

***Below: EIT & Childrens Services promoting Child Exploitation Day at a local college.***





# Town centre youth safety

This year, police EIT Sgt Charmaine Dyne, led 2 multi-agency problem solving plans to improve feelings of safety and reduce incidents of violence effecting young people in the top effected locations in Somerset, Cornhill through to High Street, Bridgwater and East Street, Taunton.

Since onset there has been a 52% reduction in youth violence in the Taunton hotspot and the risk of harm remained more static in the Bridgwater hotspot. For more details, please contact [charmaine.dyne@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:charmaine.dyne@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

## Overview

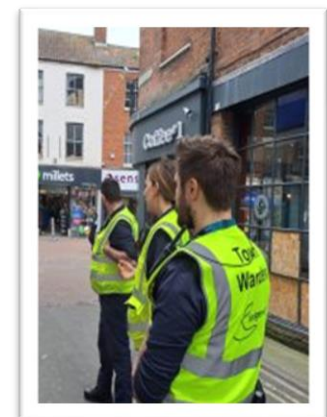
5 years of data analysis of the locations told us that people change, but locations do not and 1 in 5 offenders of violence are already known to police for previous incidents at the location. In addition, over 1300 young people & local business were surveyed to inform the plan.

The plan included:

- Youth hubs in key locations at key times
- Police and town warden presence at key times
- Advice for local business on how to respond to concerns
- Information leaflets for parents sent with all police ASB letters
- Active bystander programs in local schools & countywide
- Bystander training for NTE professionals



**Above: Young Somerset and neighbourhood policing at the new youth hub in Taunton McDonalds. Below left: our new information leaflet for parents and carers about town centre safety. Below right; Somerset Council town wardens on extra patrols in Bridgwater at key times.**



# Behaviour change programs

**Somerset VRP** have provided behaviour change programs through education to over 8000 pupils.

**Rethinking masculinity:** Beyond Equality believe young men and boys need space to explore who they are and the influence that they want to have on their communities. They create open and interactive discussions so they can have an active part in preventing inequality and violence.

**Active bystanding & town centre safety:** Collaborate Digital have provided a powerful and innovative way of listening to and involving young members of the community. They take pod casts created by pupils to spread the word to the public by delivering an online public vote.

**Belonging:** Unique Voice use dance and drama to provide primary school children with a sense of belonging. They focus on Year 5s to 6s by staging a creative intervention before the transition to secondary school. They help build resilience and understanding as children are developing social identities and values.

**Rights respecting schools:** Unicef aim to determine the impact of this human rights-based approach to support schools in Somerset to improve pupil well-being and engagement, tackle exclusion and attendance rates, and support children and young people feeling safe and seeking protection from violence, abuse, and neglect.



In response to concerns shared by local councillors, Somerset VRP commissioned local research through PR company Daffodil PR, into the impact of local online media and fear of violence.

The research analysed online news and community groups. They found content containing exaggerated threats, racial prejudice discussion, mis-information and sensationalism in media language and imagery, however the visibility and interaction with community policing pages was positive.

As a result of these findings a toolkit has been produced aimed at administrators of online groups, to help manage and respond to concerns on their pages.

The toolkit gives advice about:

- Encouraging and reporting crimes
- Managing content proactively
- Using education, campaigns and resources
- Having clear communication channels with local police and support groups
- Moderating and engaging with discussion
- Promoting positive engagement

For a copy of the toolkit and full report email:

[communitysafetyteam@somerset.vo.uk](mailto:communitysafetyteam@somerset.vo.uk)



**Above: 2 extracts from the research taken from local online media and group chat.**

Somerset VRP commissioned 3 interventions during 2024-25, which are rated as high impact by [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#).

This year 142 individuals received interventions at an average cost of £1035 per intervention. The interventions were:

## **A&E navigators**

Substance Misuse Workers have been located within Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil General Hospital A&E departments during the key times to engage with anyone presenting with a risk from violence or substance misuse, with a focus on U25's, who can also be referred at anytime to the project.

## **Sports mentors**

Young people at risk from ASB or violence are provided with a mentor from Somerset Sports and Activities Partnership (SASP). They focus on wellbeing and inclusion as well as sport and activities, building confidence with the young person and helping them to join community activities where they can find a sense of belonging.

## **Teachable moments (schools)**

Young people who are not in school are at higher risk of harm from violence and exploitation. Somerset Council Family Intervention Service (FIS) provide short term early intervention to young people who receive suspensions from school for violence or related risk factors, known as a "teachable moment". The interventions focus on social skills and relationships and aim to keep children in school.

## **Monitoring and outcomes**

### **A&E Navigators**

*A recent evaluation shows admit interventions are low in volume, however case studies show a positive impact on vulnerable young people and families.*

### **Sports Mentors**

*Each child referred to SASP evaluates their progress by monitoring their wellbeing. The young person rates their feelings and coping skills before, during and after the intervention. See page 13 for an example case study.*

### **Teachable moments (schools)**

*Improved school attendance was a primary positive outcome for this program with 70% of children having improved attendance.*

*For more information about intervention evaluations please contact [clare.stuart@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:clare.stuart@somerset.gov.uk)*



# Case studies: A&E navigators

Case studies from Turning Point, commissioned provider of the A&E navigator program (locally called the “Admit” project)

Male, 15, Yeovil

Attended YDH, intoxicated from Ketamine and alcohol, under a section 136. The Admit worker knew him and was able to ascertain what was happening and connect with him. The worker effectively liaised with EDT and a CAWN was made in relation to an adult this child intended to live with.

Female, 15

Bought in to A&E with a stab wound to the chest, caused by stepdad. She said she was not traumatised, she was used to stuff like this happening. She now engages as a hidden harm client and both the Mum and Stepdad are engaging with SDAS Family Safeguarding service.

Female, 14

Presented at YDH A&E, after getting drunk with a friend and also suffers from social anxiety and disclosed suicidal idealisations. She spoke to the Admit worker about her mum drinking and physically attacking her, scratching, hitting and pushing her. She is now engaging with an Admit worker on a weekly basis in school & also has a FIS worker to support the family. .



*Photo of an A&E Navigator from Admit, holding an awareness raising event at YDH*



# Case study: sports mentors



## JUMP START

### CASE STUDY

**NAME:** LJ  
**AGE:** 14  
**121 MENTOR**  
**FAVOURITE JUMP START ACTIVITY:**  
**GYM**



#### LJ'S JUMP START STORY

LJ was nominated at the end of the summer following numerous missing episodes and concerns around his vulnerability in the community. LJ has quite a chaotic home life and no male role model. He very quickly engaged with me after our initial meet. I gained his respect and built rapport and very early on he felt comfortable enough with me to come along to our away day not knowing any of the other young people (Kilve court). We did multiple activities together such as the high ropes and abseil tower.

Since then he identified the gym as a primary interest. We have therefore been going to the gym ever since. I have been trying my best to ensure that he is safe enough for a membership of his own. One concern that I had is how he was taking creatine at his age, we had a talk on this and he tells me that he now only consumes protein. My concern was that he was seeing potentially dangerous posts on TikTok and believing the messages with little to no knowledge or understanding of potential harm. He has now been learning about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices.

**AARON IS BANGING AND HAS BEEN A GREAT SUPPORT FOR LJ  
LJ'S MUM**

#### HOW ITS GOING

Another thing that we have had to be focussing on is his 'gym etiquette'. Fortunately, I have developed a relationship where we are comfortable for me to tell it as it is. He has reciprocated my honesty and tells me about his concerns.

LJ hadn't been going to school as he believed that they unfairly report the family. And for a while i was the only professional that LJ would engage with and because of the trust in our relationship i was able to raise concerns from the other professionals with LJ and get his perspective and reasoning.

LJ has now agreed to meet with his FIS worker and I will continue to support this moving forward.

I have had honest conversations with LJ about school and he has agreed to give school another go which is a real positive for the new year.

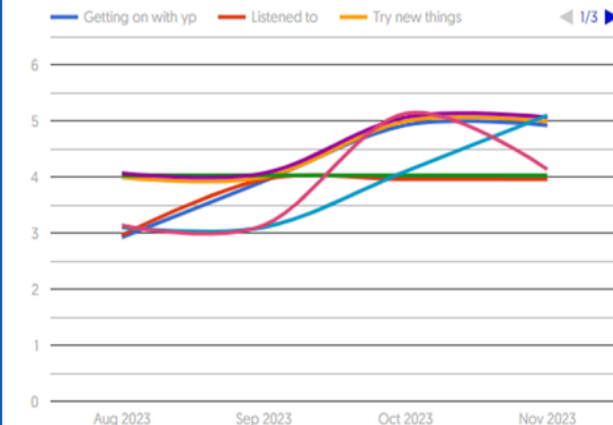
LJ has encouraged some of his other friends that the VRP have tried to engage with to give the mentor support a go from SASP as he has really enjoyed it.

The next step is to arrange the gym membership for him now he has shown commitment to this.

#### Wellbeing Snapshots



View Progress





## Case study: teachable moments

Case study of pupil experiencing repeat suspensions from secondary school:

Girl A was referred to our service from a secondary school where concerns had been escalating for her around behaviour in the community, at school and at home. She was known to truant and disengage with school, she was involved in risky decisions in the community with peers.

Girl A had a profile of behaviours known to be attributed to developmental trauma. Mum was consistent with her engagement with school however the relationship of Parent to School was at breaking point.

Teachable moments began and Girl A welcomed her weekly sessions that included relationships and social skills, as well as preventative work around risks outside the home. On one occasion she even asked the school for an extension to her session as there were things worrying her. School considered this a positive sign of an improved relationship between school, professionals and Girl A, as they had previously known a closed and dysregulated YP.

Prevention through education and support took place and all professionals, family and most importantly Girl A, can see the progress and visible change, including behaviour and relationships at school and home.

### Feedback from children:

***"I feel safer and it was good to talk"***

***"I haven't been excluded since teachable moments started"***

***"I think TM is good, my behaviour has changed"***

***"I quit smoking weed for the last 3 weeks"***

***"I like that its someone I can talk to without worrying"***

***"I have social worker, FIS and YJT working with me, it feels like we talk about the same things. I want to carry on meeting with teachable moments"***

***"you deserve a pay rise for doing this with us"***

***"I really enjoyed my sessions with you"***

***"I really enjoyed it; I am going to miss you"***

The VRP structure and income will remain similar to last year. In the funded proposal for 2025-26, Somerset VRP have requested to continue to fund the 3 ongoing YEF High Impact Evaluations, although monitoring and evaluation will need to become more robust.

The 2025-26 funding proposal also looks at developing a universal offer of knife crime education to communities across the county and to expand the existing “town centre youth hub” model to the East of the county.

New guidance is expected from the Home Office as part of the Younger Futures Program. It will set out how local areas should deliver Prevention Partnerships, which aim to further bolster early intervention work with young people. This is likely to come at the same time as the PCSO's who work on the police EIT team are moved back to neighbourhood policing (July).

The VRP will continue to collaborate with partners to provide a tactical response to serious violence through Safer Somerset Priorities meetings, with an expectation that those meetings will also support problem solving in hotspot locations for serious violence.

This year Safer Somerset Partnership will have completed an all-age exploitation need assessment, and the VRP will also be looking to support any recommendations arising from the findings of this work.

For more information about our strategy for 2025-26 please email [communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk)



*In 2025-26 we will prioritise preventing and reducing harm from the following serious violent crimes:*

***knife crime***

***street based violence (focus U25s)***

***sexual violence***

*With an additional focus when these crime types are linked to exploitation and/or occur in high harm locations*

## Contact us

For more information about Somerset VRP please visit

[www.somerset.gov.uk/vru](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/vru)

or email

[communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk)

For any further information about Avon and Somerset VRP please visit

[www.asvrp.co.uk](http://www.asvrp.co.uk)

or email

[vrphub@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:vrphub@avonandsomerset.police.uk)



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