

## National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)

### Background

Policing has seen prolonged significant increases in demand associated with protecting vulnerable persons. It is one of policing's highest threat, harm and risk areas. Nationally, however, responses have traditionally been fragmented with significant focus on single threat strands. At a local level demand and budgetary pressures have meant this area of policing is no longer the preserve of the specialist. The associated evidence base both in terms of understanding how the threat strands intertwine and what works with regards to policing intervention has struggled to keep up.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has sought to address this challenge through the Violence and Public Protection (VPP) portfolio led by Chief Constable Simon Bailey (QPM). A National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP) was created to consolidate relevant actions featuring across multiple single strand threat areas plans. Funding was also secured from the Home Office to establish a national policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP). The VKPP has been delivering a wide range of work since 2018 and is currently undergoing significant growth.

### Strategic Aims of the VKPP

- Work in collaboration with forces, relevant NPCC leads, NCA, College, HMICFRS and range of external partners to gather a more detailed understanding of current practice and the interventions deployed to address vulnerability and the serious violence threat.
- Generate a shared understanding of where most significant gaps in practice and knowledge are nationally and identify/promote emerging practice being developed.

### VKPP workstreams

Across the programme there are several projects and activities taking place that contribute to the overall evidence base for vulnerability and violent crime. Many of these projects focus on direct engagement with forces and partners in order to obtain an understanding of current practice, identification of gaps and exploration of opportunities for sharing knowledge and learning.

### NVAP:

The National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP) is aimed at supporting police forces to deliver seven identified key themes that have specific actions:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Protecting, supporting, safeguarding and managing risk
- Information, intelligence, data collection and management information
- Effective investigation and outcomes
- Leadership
- Learning and development
- Communication

The NVAP also draws on the College of Policing's identification of perennial issues affecting police responses to vulnerability. The first iteration of the plan was circulated to all forces within England and Wales and they were asked to respond by the end of April 2019. The information received was reviewed and assessed in order to develop a picture of the current availability of response to vulnerability, and each force's planned activity, their potential for improvement in activity, and ability to share knowledge or skills. This was a national benchmarking assessment carried out by the VKPP which revealed areas with abundant promising practice, in addition to areas that were shown as national gaps.

A second iteration of the NVAP was shared with forces in August 2020 following a redesign aimed at streamlining the plan and the completion of an equality impact assessment. The updated NVAP draws on feedback from forces, chief

officers, the College of Policing, Home Office and HMICFRS and national vulnerability leads. Further plans are being developed to carry out another benchmarking exercise with forces in England and Wales.

The NVAP will also be used as a template for national actions plans in thematic areas across the Violence and Public Protection national portfolio.

### **Vulnerability and Violent Crime Call for Practice:**

To ensure the VKPP captures the full range of practice in use across policing, in January 2020 an ask went to forces to share examples of interventions or approaches to tackling vulnerability and/or serious violence. The previous call for practice activity between September and December 2018 identified over 130 practice examples, most of which are now being shared in the 'Initiatives' section of the Knowledge Hub's Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme group.

In 2020, the VKPP received over 140 submissions from forces with practice examples addressing a broad range of vulnerabilities including domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation and child criminal exploitation. The VKPP team assessed each submission and a wide-ranging selection of both evidence-based and non-evaluated 'promising' practice can be found on the Initiatives Library on the Knowledge Hub group here:

<https://knowledgehub.group/group/vulnerability-and-violent-crime-programme/group-home>

If you have an example of an evidence-based or promising intervention you would like to be added to the online Initiatives library, you can submit your intervention via the link above.

### **Safeguarding Case Review Briefings**

The VKPP will continue to deliver a series of quarterly briefings that draw together police-specific learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs), Child and Adult Practice Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs), with three briefings published so far. The safeguarding reviews were chosen for inclusion where there was police involvement prior to the incident that triggered the review, ensuring particular relevance to police practice.

To complement the impact of the briefings the VKPP has carried out a meta-analysis of over 100 practice reviews aiming to identify learning relating to police practice featured in the reviews, explanation of missed opportunities or practice that does not meet expected standards and the most common gaps in practice.

The VKPP has also published a spotlight briefing on learning from two serious case reviews regarding the death of two black boys affected by child criminal exploitation. Further briefings are planned for publication in regard of structural inequalities and out of area placements. Spotlight briefings aim to draw learning from practice and academia on critical issues within the vulnerability sphere and present them in an accessible format.

Briefings can be found here: <https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Pages/Vulnerability.aspx>

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnerships/Local Safeguarding Partnerships**

Since the change in legislation following the Wood Review, policing has an increased key role in local safeguarding partnerships, as 'key partner'. The VKPP National Co-ordinator for these reforms has led the national policing response, liaising across all safeguarding partnerships and policing leads in England, collating best and promising practice, leading cross-partnership comms and influencing key national forums progressing safeguarding partnerships and its wider application held within the DfE and elsewhere.

The monthly newsletters to all safeguarding leads are available on the Knowledge Hub. Within these, the reader can find updates pertaining to local areas, guidance and signposting to relevant published material. The VKPP National Co-ordinator carries out regular fact-finding calls to the policing leads within local safeguarding partnerships in England. However, if you would like to find out more please contact the VKPP or explore the content on the Knowledge Hub webpage: <https://knowledgehub.group/group/vulnerability-and-violent-crime-programme/group-home>

## **Data:**

The VKPP has identified significant activity in the vulnerability sphere in regard to the sharing, analysis and use of data from both a range of police systems, as well as from partner agencies. This is still an under-developed area of practice, often driven by motivated individuals, rather than supported by systems and embedded on an evidence base.

Beginning in Autumn 2020 the VKPP will be drawing together learning from these projects to deliver national briefings regarding innovative local practice involving multi agency data sharing and analysis.

VKPP will also work in collaboration with stakeholders to explore opportunities to utilise data collected/gathered within force management statements and improve understanding of nature of threat and related responses. The VKPP aims to produce a paper formalising issues and opportunities for data at a national policing level.

## **NVAP Action Peer review:**

The VKPP have developed a supportive offer which is intended to deliver a fully funded peer review capability specific to the NVAP actions. The VKPP will support and lead a peer review, using a dedicated team who will bring additional value in terms of knowledge, tools and academic insight into the evidence and practice that underpins the NVAP actions. The VKPP will lead in producing a report back to force following the review.

The identified actions the peer reviews will focus on are:

### 2.6.2 Officer Norms

Action detail: Recognise that officer norms will change from exposure to aspects of criminality/vulnerability and that these need to be re-set so that thresholds of acceptability are maintained.

### 2.4.1 Voice of the Victim

Action detail: Develop clear processes to ensure that 'the voice of vulnerable victims and witnesses' is heard.

### 2.1.1 Recognition and Response

Action detail: Ensure that recognising and responding to vulnerability is everyone's business, especially at first point of contact.

### 2.2.1 Appropriate Action

Action detail: In response to identified risk, ensure staff understand and utilise appropriate referral pathways and are empowered to challenge or escalate decisions.

Following discussions with stakeholders, the VKPP are recruiting the Senior Practice Advisor posts in Autumn 2020 with the aspiration of conducting two reviews with forces by Spring 2021

## **Practice Community:**

To complement the existing work of the VKPP and national vulnerability work, we are launching a practice community in Autumn 2020 to share knowledge, ideas and challenges, as well as create a safe space to discuss topics identified by forces.

We plan to support an active community of stakeholders who VKPP, police and the Home Office can put issues to, with an internal/external support function. Once operational we also aim to co-ordinate private sector liaison with policing business in line with contextual safeguarding work within the vulnerability space.

The VKPP will also draw on its extensive network of voluntary sector organisations to add value to the community, with further plans to broaden the scope of the community to include other policing departments and resources critical to addressing vulnerability.

Involvement in the community will have tangible benefits for force leads whilst not overburdening demands on time and are exploring how best to deliver the community by adopting a co-delivery approach with force leads.

## **Domestic Homicide Project:**

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in the UK in late March 2020 led to concerns about a rise in domestic abuse (both intimate partner and family abuse). To better understand domestic homicide deaths during Covid-19, the VKPP, supported by the Home Office and the NPCC leads for Domestic Abuse, Violence and Public Protection and Homicide, decided to examine each and every death to learn any lessons for police quickly.

The VKPP ran a 6-week pilot study during June and July 2020 to test the feasibility of collecting data from forces on deaths related to domestic abuse in quick-time, track numbers of cases and allow analysis and learning about the circumstances of the death. Following the pilot, Home Office funding has been granted to develop this work into a full project, to run from August 2020 to March 2021.

The main objectives of the project are to:

1. Establish the existing evidence base on domestic homicide deaths.
2. Refine and embed a process whereby police forces routinely report deaths related to domestic abuse to a central unit (currently the project team).
3. Establish a system of regular reporting to policing leaders, government (and other stakeholders as appropriate) on the number of domestic homicide deaths and key characteristics of those cases.
4. Analyse and report on key themes and patterns from across all the deaths, drawing recommendations and lessons for policy and policing practice.
5. Develop an encompassing definition of Domestic Homicide which scrutinises the full range of relevant domestic homicide deaths including suicides and unexplained deaths
6. Scope options and make recommendations for putting the national repository on a permanent footing,
7. Collate promising practice about preventing domestic homicide deaths from policing and third sector DA partners.