
CATCH 22 WOLVERHAMPTON VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM

PRELIMINARY REPORT

2020

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	2
Strategic Highlights	2
Impact Highlights	2
Operating Highlights	2
Looking Ahead	2
INTRODUCTION	3
One-To-one support programme	4
Referrals	4
The Young People	5
Pathways to impact	7
Impact on Referred Youth	7
Impact on Community	8
Impact on Partners and Similar Service Providers	9
Impact on Local Law Enforcement & Legal System	9
Impact on NHS	9
RECOMMENDATIONS	10
Impact & Community Relationships	10
Operations	10
Service Delivery	11
Conclusions	11

OVERVIEW

Strategic Highlights

Catch 22 Wolverhampton Violence Reduction Team has situated itself as an agency trusted to assist with youth violence in the area. Initial reports indicate that local partners, city council, and educational institutions value the supports and programming offered by the Violence Reduction Team.

Impact Highlights

The impact on the local community appears positive and they have been publicly praised in the local media. There are opportunities to further the impact by increasing retention rates in the One-to-One programme.

Operating Highlights

The staff are a cohesive group that have found a rhythm that works for them. There are ways to streamline processes and improve the flow and storage of data and information.

Looking Ahead

This is a preliminary report. A complete evaluation of the processes and impact is planned for 2020. Once completed, and full report will be made available.

“Team synergy has an extraordinary impact on business results” - Patrick Lencioni

INTRODUCTION

Wolverhampton Violence Reduction Team

The Catch 22 Wolverhampton Violence Reduction Team (WVRT) has been operating since 2011. The purpose of the WVRT is to reduce the impact of youth crime and gang related behaviour on young people, their families, and the surrounding community. The WVRT strives to perform this service through evidence-based best practices.

This report is a small part of a larger evaluation being conducted on the WVRT. The aim of the evaluation is to provide evidence of best practices and make recommendations for further improvements. This is also in line with initiatives undertaken with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's office to ensure they are funding programmes that operate on the basis of research and therapeutic intervention.

The initial purpose of this preliminary report was to give insight to any impact the WVRT may have in reducing local youth violence and gang activity. We sought to quantify the work of the WVRT in relation to costs to local law enforcement (West Midlands Police) and health organisations (NHS). However, extensive research has revealed that the police agencies and NHS do not keep records for specific costs for investigating and dealing with incidents involving severe youth and gang violence. This makes it difficult to quantify the work of WVRT in terms of savings or economic costs to the police and NHS. Therefore, this report will focus on some aspects of operations for the WVRT one-to-one support service, as well as impressions of impact thus far.

Impact can also be assessed in terms of youth recidivism, youth success stories, community perception, and contribution to the regional initiatives around knife crime and gang involvement. This report will touch on those items; however, the final report will provide a more complete understanding of the WVRT's impact and reach in the local community and the region.

“My Catch22 support worker came to my school to speak to the teachers about some of the problems I was having. Thanks to him I then managed to get the support I needed to stay in school and do well. He also recognised that the reason I was kicking off was because I worried about my mom being ill. He was the only one that listened to me, without judging me” - WVRT Service User

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Working directly with at-risk and fully entrenched youth is an integral part of the WVRT operations. This programme allows the support workers to directly and positively influence the lives and decisions of the young people who need it most.

Referrals

Since 2014, the WVRT have recorded 324 referrals to the One-to-One support programme. The most notable increase occurred over the last three years (2017 - 2019), with 294 young people being referred during this period. In 2019, WVRT obtained 113 referrals for one-to-one support, which is a testament to their growing positive reputation in Wolverhampton (see Figure 1). It was also noted that many agencies will call on the WVRT to deal with youth that other agencies refuse to handle. This also speaks to the value of the WVRT to more challenging young people and their communities.

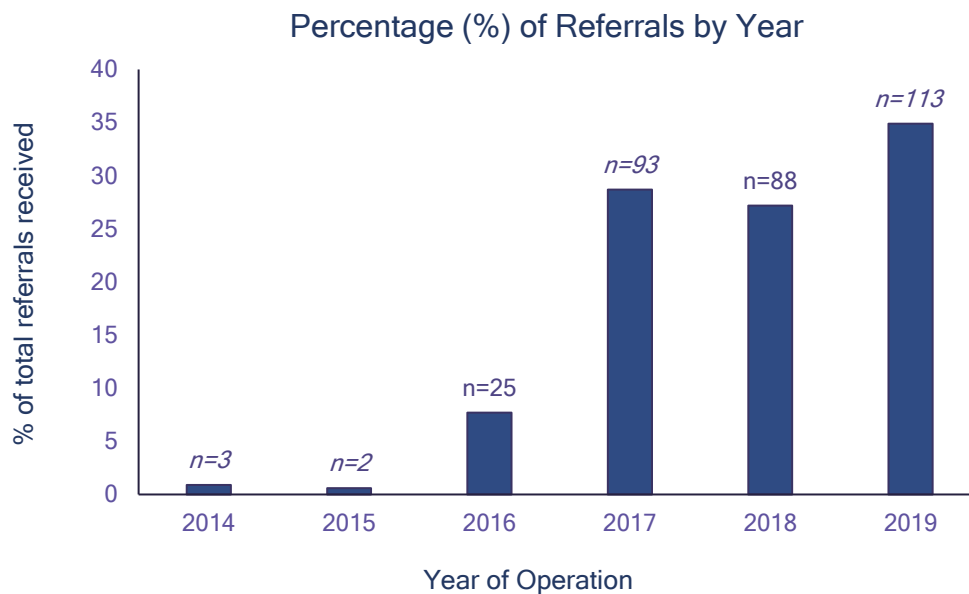


Figure 1. Number of referrals represented by percentage received each year. Actual number of referrals received is recorded at the top of each bar ($n=x$).

The WVRT receives referrals from 25 agencies in Wolverhampton that can be categorised into eight types of organisations: law enforcement, educational, social services, employment agencies, community/ family supports, other non-government agencies, and family. Over the last four years, most referrals came from law enforcement (30%) and community/ family support agencies (e.g., Strengthening Families; 22.5%). These are closely followed by referrals from educational institutions (20%) and social services (18%).

It should be noted that the number of referrals originating from the legal system has dropped significantly since 2017 and the number of referrals from educational sources has steadily increased (Table 1). There are several factors that may have contributed to the decreasing trend with law enforcement referrals (e.g., evidence of positive impact, shifting focus of law enforcement, competing resources) and the increase in educational referrals (e.g., positive reputation with schools, shifting needs of young people). These trends will be investigated more in-depth with the final evaluation.

Table 1

Organisations that have referred clients to WVRT and percentage (%) of those referrals by year.

ORGANISATION	2016 (N=25)	2017 (N=93)	2018 (N=88)	2019 (N=113)
WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE	20	33	14	3
PROBATION SERVICES	4	-	-	-
YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM (YOT)	48	14	9	9
EDUCATIONAL/ SCHOOL	4	17	15	27
SOCIAL SERVICES	16	15	14	24
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES	-	11	31	24
PARENT/ CARER/ FAMILY	4	2	2	3
LAC TRANSITION TEAM	-	1	3	-
SELF-REFERRAL	-	-	1	-
OTHER *	4	6	11	11

* Note: Organisations included with 'Other' contributed only one or two referrals at one time point only.

The Young People

Overall Referral Demographics

The primary reason for referrals was to provide intervention for youth at-risk of gang involvement (68.8%) or who were already fully entrenched in gang activity (18.8%). The most common secondary reason for referring to the WVRT indicated the young person was being threatened by a gang or gang member (19.8%).

The population of youths between 11 and 18 years old in Wolverhampton is approximately 24,349 people (Official National Statistics, 2018) with 7% of that population reported as Black/African ethnicity and 5% reported as mixed heritage. The young people referred to the WVRT are mainly Male (90.7%) of Black/African decent (20.7%) or mixed heritage (19.4%). Those reported as having multiple ethnicities were mostly of Black/African and White mixed heritage (84%). However, the actual number of youths who identify as Black or mixed race could be much higher. There were multiple referrals with ethnicity marked as 'Unknown' by the referring organisation (34.3%).

The young people are referred from a variety of agencies and come with diverse and often complex needs. Most referrals are reported as enrolled in school (69.4%) with a significantly smaller number not in education, employment, or training (12%). Some of the young people referred have disabilities (11%), most of which are related to mental health (45.7%) and special education needs (15.5%). Again, the number of youths with special needs may be higher as many referrals are received with this information listed by the referring organisation as disability unknown or unstated (54.7%) and special education unknown or not stated (27.3%).

There is no significant difference between the number of young people referred who had experience in with the criminal legal system (34.3%) and those who have not (32.7%). A much smaller number have experience with or have been referred from the Care System (10.5%). However, these numbers could be different as 22% of the referring organisations indicated unknown experience for these demographic items.

Photo by [Tim Marshall](#)

PATHWAYS TO IMPACT

Assessing impact is important for services such as the WVRT because it can be used as a measure of effectiveness and of the therapeutic or anti-therapeutic outcomes. This is especially important for organisations that rely on funding from external sources. The main objective of this preliminary report was to assess the effect and influence the WVRT has on the young people it serves, their families, and the local community. Impact can also be assessed by evaluating the direct or indirect influence of the WVRT on other local agencies and authorities.

Impact on Referred Youth

Open Cases

As of December 31st, 2019, there were 74 open referrals spread across three WVRT Youth Support Workers. There are 72 young males and 2 young females currently using the services of the WVRT between the ages of 6 and 18 ($M_{age} = 13.73$, $SD = 2.66$). Of these youth 27% were identified as Black/African heritage; however, the majority (47.3%) were listed as unknown ethnicity by the referring organisation.

Most of the young people with open cases are enrolled in school (73%). A smaller number were identified as not enrolled in education, training, or employment (16%). At referral, 20% of these cases were identified as having a disability, with the majority reported as having issues with mental health. This number is most likely higher as the youth support workers have reported suspecting serious mental health concerns once they start working with the young person. Most of these mental health concerns originate in adverse childhood experiences in the home; however, some are a result of traumatic violent events the youth has experienced or witnessed. Unfortunately, the lack of local mental health resources leaves many of these young people undiagnosed and untreated.

The complexity of the young person's needs is also evidenced by the length of time their case remains open and active. The young people spend an average of 8.5 months in the One-to-One Support programme; however, sometimes a young person requires a longer tenure and more support. For example, one young person spent over six years in the programme (case now closed), and a currently active case has been open for almost three years. It is possible that these young people remained open for so long due to time spent incarcerated and were not actively engaged with the WVRT for the entire time. The reasons for lengthy tenure will be investigated further in the larger evaluation.

Closed Cases

Between 2014 and 2019 there were 250 closed cases. There are a variety of reasons young people stop working with the WVRT (see Figure 2); however, only one is an indicator of success. Files coded with 'ready to move on' as a closure reason indicates the young person has received all the needed support from the WVRT and are no longer at risk (24.8%). Whilst this number may seem low, there are factors completely outside of the control of the WVRT that can force a case to close. For example, the young person may have moved out of the serviced area (14%) or parents withdrew consent (10%). It is possible that these young people could have successfully moved on had they not been relocated or withdrawn.

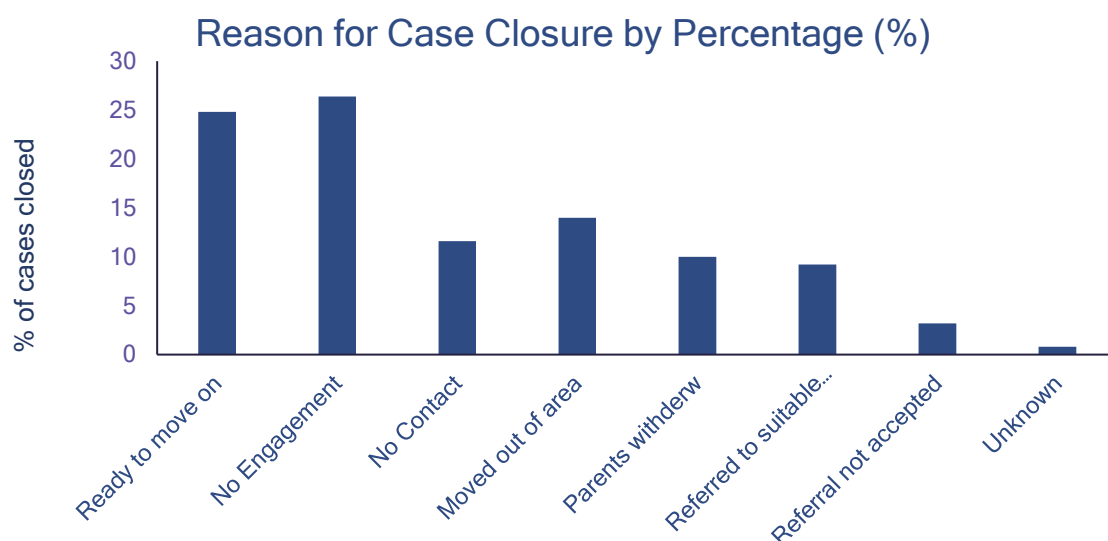


Figure 2. Percentage of case closures and the reason between 2014 and December 31st, 2019.

Young people spent approximately 8 months on average in the programme. Most cases were open between one month and 18 months. There is a positive relationship between the amount of time spent in the programme and the reason the young person's case was closed. Individuals who spent less than 2 months in the programme were more likely to have 'non-engagement' or 'no-contact' listed as closure reasons. However, individuals who spent a year or more in the programme were most likely to have been 'ready to move on'.

Impact on Community

The impact the WVRT has had on the local community has not been assessed for this preliminary report and will be included in the larger evaluation.

Impact on Partners and Similar Service Providers

There is preliminary evidence of positive and trusting relationships between the WVRT and local service providers. For example, local social services and educational institutions have increased the number of referrals to the WVRT. Moreover, Catch 22 (WVRT) was specifically mentioned by the Wolverhampton City Council in a recent newspaper article as doing good work and delivering good programmes around youth violent crime (Express & Star, Jan 23, 2020). There is also a good working relationship between the WVRT and St. Giles Trust. The full impact of the WVRT on local partners and service providers will be investigated more in-depth during the larger evaluation.

Impact on Local Law Enforcement & Legal System

Out of the 324 referrals received between 2014 and 2019, 15.4% ($n = 50$) are known to have reoffended while participating in the One-to-One support programme. Most of these offences occurred by young people referred between 2014 - 2017, with numbers drastically reducing in 2018 and 2019. Of those who offended, 64% were reported as having previous experience with the criminal legal system and the majority had their cases closed due to non-engagement (28%), or they moved out of the area (24%). There are eight young people who have reoffended who have open cases with the programme. It is currently unclear whether those cases are active or if these young people are currently incarcerated.

When the young people who are known to not have reoffended are considered, 83% had previous experience with the criminal legal system. Although the number of young people in this category is small (2% of total referrals), it does give some positive indication of impact in the programme. Although it was unknown whether a large proportion of the young people had reoffended or not during their tenure in the programme (82.7%), it can be assumed that a large proportion of these young people have not reoffended. If these two groups are considered together, it can be assumed that most of the young people receiving one-to-one support do not continue to conflict with the law. Moreover, most of the young people do not seem to become in conflict with law enforcement while engaged with the WVRT. More information may be available during the larger evaluation when the case files are examined.

Impact on NHS

Determining the economic impact of the WVRT on local hospitals and health services is not possible due to how these services record data around injuries from youth violence. One way to determine impact on this item will be to ascertain whether the young people have instigated or been involved in violent altercations whilst engaged in the program. This analysis will be included in the larger evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Impact & Community Relationships

Overall, Catch 22 WVRT provides a needed service in the local area. Since starting the evaluation in late September 2019, it has become apparent that WVRT has strengthened existing partnerships and continues to seek and develop new ones. There is also emerging evidence that the local community and authorities have developed a trusting relationship with the WVRT, however, the full extent of those relationships and the impact still needs to be fully evaluated. Currently, there are no recommendations for impact or community relationships.

Operations

The WVRT is a cohesive group that work well together in a small office space. Not all aspects of operations have been evaluated; however, the referral process and administration of that process was reviewed for this portion of the evaluation. There are two key areas for improvement on this item:

1. *Exploring solutions to missing information on the referral sheets.* It appears that a lot of the demographic and special needs information is missing from the referring organisations despite repeated requests for complete forms from the Site Manager. When the information on the referral forms is reviewed over time, it becomes apparent that less and less information is being included. This could be problematic because the missing information is important to understand the types of young people being referred to the programme and could help with needs assessment. Moreover, more information included on the referral forms can assist the acceptance process and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to the WVRT. Ensuring only suitable cases are referred to the WVRT could also prevent any transferring of the young person between multiple agencies, which could have negative effects on the young person. **Recommendation** - Review the current referral form for potential improvements and explore ways to stress the importance of complete forms to referring agencies and partners.

2. *Improvements/ optimization of administration software and data entry.* Currently referral and intake information is recorded in an Excel database. Whilst this is not the optimal software for this task, it has all the functionality needed to capture and store the information. Excel has several built-in capabilities that could optimize the intake process and potentially link to other Excel-based programs to generate reports and facilitate finding information quickly. A solution for this item could also eliminate bulk updates to young persons' files by requiring data to be entered once and updated on all systems (e.g., case closure dates). The feasibility of this recommendation remains to be evaluated as the case notes

procedure has not yet been fully examined. **Recommendation** - specific suggestions deferred to full evaluation.

Service Delivery

There are currently no recommendations for Service Delivery as the programmes have not yet been evaluated for evidence-based practice. However, the One-to-One programme has a curiously low completion rate (25%) compared to the other reasons young people leave the programme. Whilst may not be due to any fault in the programme structure or staff delivery, it is worth exploring why some young people no longer engage or elude contact with the support workers. Understanding the reasons behind programme withdrawal may help to improve retention rates, thus furthering the positive reach and impact of the WVRT.

Conclusions

The findings in this preliminary report indicate that the Catch 22 WVRT has contributed some positive impact in the local community. The reach and full scope of that impact is yet to be determined; however, there are no initial concerns around the service being provided to at-risk and fully gang entrenched youth in Wolverhampton.

There are some minor recommendations at this time for improving the referral, intake, and some administrative processes. These suggestions were made mainly to streamline processes and optimize the time and efforts of staff around data entry and information retrieval. Currently the systems and processes appear disjointed and slightly cumbersome, but easily rectified.

The next steps in the evaluation include a full system review of the WVRT operations and processes, as well as a complete evaluation of impact and reach. That portion of the evaluation will commence once all permissions have been obtained (i.e., DBS checks for evaluation personnel and ethical approval from the affiliated University of Wolverhampton).

