

17 June 2021

Dear

Violence Reduction Units and modern slavery

Congratulations on recently being re-elected as Police and Crime Commissioner. As you will be aware, in October 2020 I [wrote to](#) PCCs from the force areas with a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in order to better understand their VRU's strategic priorities and where this might overlap with the work of my office. I received responses from 16 of the 18 PCCs with VRUs including copies of their Response Strategies and Strategic Needs Assessments. Overall, I was encouraged to see the breadth of work being undertaken by the VRUs and the efforts to work across organisations to embed a public health approach at a local level.

One of the areas where there was the most substantial overlap between the priorities of the VRU's and those set out in my Strategic Plan was in relation to responses to child criminal exploitation (CCE) and county lines. As highlighted by the National Safeguarding Practice Panel Review on safeguarding children at risk of CCE¹ and the Serious Case Reviews for Jaden Moodie² and Jacob³, practitioners can face significant challenges in supporting children who are subject to extra-familial harm. Similar themes were also identified in my review of the Section 45 statutory defence that I published last year⁴.

The responses from VRUs highlighted a range of interventions to respond to CCE including: pilots to test contextual safeguarding approaches; research to establish the effect of social media on violence and exploitation; awareness raising activity in schools; the use of mentors; navigator roles in custody suites and A&E; training for professionals on trauma informed approaches and use of a social network analysis tool to understand wider risk across peer groups.

These are all examples of promising practice. It is essential however that any learning from such interventions is used to help improve understanding of what works nationally. This is particularly important as we move closer to the end of the funding commitment from the Home Office for the VRUs and towards the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty. I have raised my concerns

¹ The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2020), '[It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation](#)'

² Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board (2020), 'Serious Case Review: Child C – A 14 year old boy': https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/WFSCB%20-%20SCR%20Child%20C%20May%20final_.pdf

³ Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (2021), '“Untouchable Worlds”: Protecting children who are criminally exploited and harmed': <https://www.oscb.org.uk/oscb-publishes-a-child-safeguarding-practice-review-concerning-jacob/>

⁴ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (2020), 'The Modern Slavery Act 2015 Statutory Defence: A call for evidence': <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1478/the-modern-slavery-act-2015-statutory-defence-call-for-evidence.pdf>

regarding the response for children who are criminally exploited with senior officials from the Department for Education and we are currently exploring opportunities to bring together sector stakeholders to discuss strengthening the safeguarding system for children at risk of extra-familial harm.

Finally, you may be interested to know that my office recently published some [research](#) in collaboration with the University of Sheffield and Public Health England on refining a public health approach to modern slavery. This includes a co-produced interactive framework, as well as resources for anti-slavery partnerships to assist them in reflecting on their own activity at a local level to identify where there may be gaps in their response. I hope that this resource is useful for your office and for your local partners.

Thank you once again for taking the time to respond to my letter and for providing further information about the activity of the VRU in your force area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sanjiv Kumar". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner