

# Violence Reduction Networks

## Terms of reference

A Violence Reduction Network (VRN) is a multi-agency forum and action group committed to reducing violence in our local community. Activities are focussed on early intervention and prevention and ensuring our children have the support and provision required to mitigate the impact of trauma and other causes of violence. VRNs concentrate on increasing activity in the area currently falling below the traditional statutory provisions (for example Child Protection and Early Help). The primary aim is to establish a series of trauma informed schools within the network to act as the corner stone for further problem solving activity in the area. The network will share good practice, identify common problems and design local solutions.

The membership of the network should be comprised primarily of practitioners and individuals working directly with children and their families in the community. As mentioned above the active participation from schools is critical but membership should also include other individuals and organisations who can actively contribute to improving our community response. The group would also greatly benefit from individuals who have a strategic oversight in relevant organisations and from individuals who have particular experience, knowledge and expertise in Early Intervention / Prevention / trauma etc. The group should also be committed to engaging organisations and individuals already working in this area to ensure services and support are coordinated and complement each other wherever possible.

## Guiding principles

Members of the Network understand and are committed to the following:

**Early Intervention;** to provide support, advice and intervention as early as possible once concerns are identified.

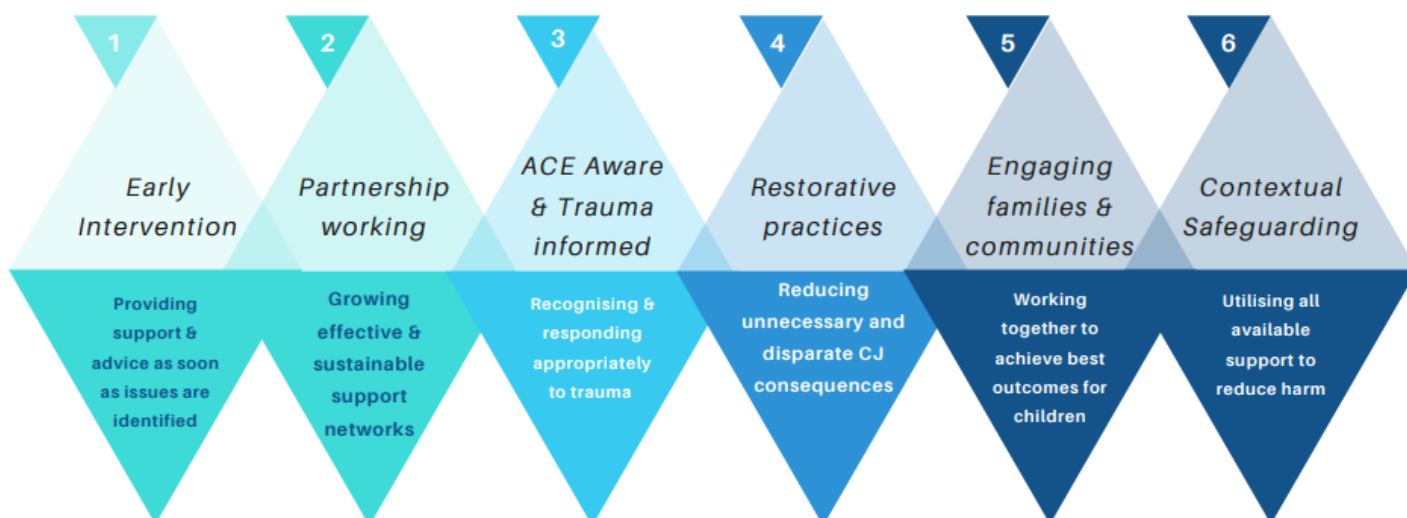
**Building and sustaining partnership working** across organisations to grow effective networks of support and 'leverage' greater support due to the size/scale of the Network.

**Trauma-informed and ACE aware** in their approach to supporting their communities.

**Using principles of restorative practice** to reduce unnecessary progression to the CJ system.

**Engaging with whole families and communities** even where only individual issues are apparent

**Using contextual safeguarding principles** to support their community as widely as possible.



## Operational recommendations:

The Network meets 6 times per year as a minimum (ideally every 4-6 weeks).

The Network has a Chair and Deputy Chair to ensure meetings can go ahead when one is unavailable.

Network meetings have a standing agenda aimed at:

- Improving the network's understanding and implementation of key principles
- Sharing experience, good practice and resources across the Network
- Identifying problems (informed by the voice of the community)
- Sharing contextual safeguarding information and establishing solutions to issues
- Using and developing a general service directory of local support organisations

Individual cases can be discussed where new ideas are sought and when they form part of a trend or a problem. However, care must be given to ensure that the identities of the persons involved are not disclosed. The network should not be used as a referral process for Child Protection concerns.

## Case Study – Oxford VRN

In Autumn 2020 a VRN was established in Oxford, chaired by a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) from a large mainstream secondary school and Deputy Chaired by a safeguarding practitioner from the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Having established and shared the ToR, they began meeting monthly, initially supported by Thames Valley VRU staff alongside local police colleagues.

Initial meetings were attended by a mixture of schools and local support services for children and families including alternative provisions (APs) and charities. Each meeting comprised of expert speakers introducing and explaining a different aspect of trauma and its effects on children and ways to recognise it to reduce exclusion and prevent disparity and inequality in criminal justice referrals.

The Oxford VRN have to date received targeted inputs on the following subjects:

- The effect of childhood trauma and adversity on behavioural presentation in schools.
- Thames Valley Police's drug diversion scheme.
- When to call the police (NPCC guidance) and when to appropriately deal with issues internally.
- Supporting victims of sexual assault and taking first disclosures.
- Supporting students with their substance use and starting difficult conversations.

The VRN has also supported whole school staff with free workshops on substance use and sexual assaults.

As the Oxford VRN has progressed it has grown to over 20 local schools being represented from across Oxfordshire and it is fully sustainable without additional Thames Valley VRU or TVP support. The chair is in active conversation with a nominated chair with a view to establishing a VRN in Reading, Berkshire and she has been nominated for a Violence Reduction Champion Award from the Director of the Thames Valley VRU.

For further information on Thames Valley VRNs please contact our tactical lead for Child Centred Policing, [Russ Massie](mailto:Russ.Massie) or visit [www.tvvru.co.uk](http://www.tvvru.co.uk)