



Safer Schools pack

Helping to make your
school and students safer

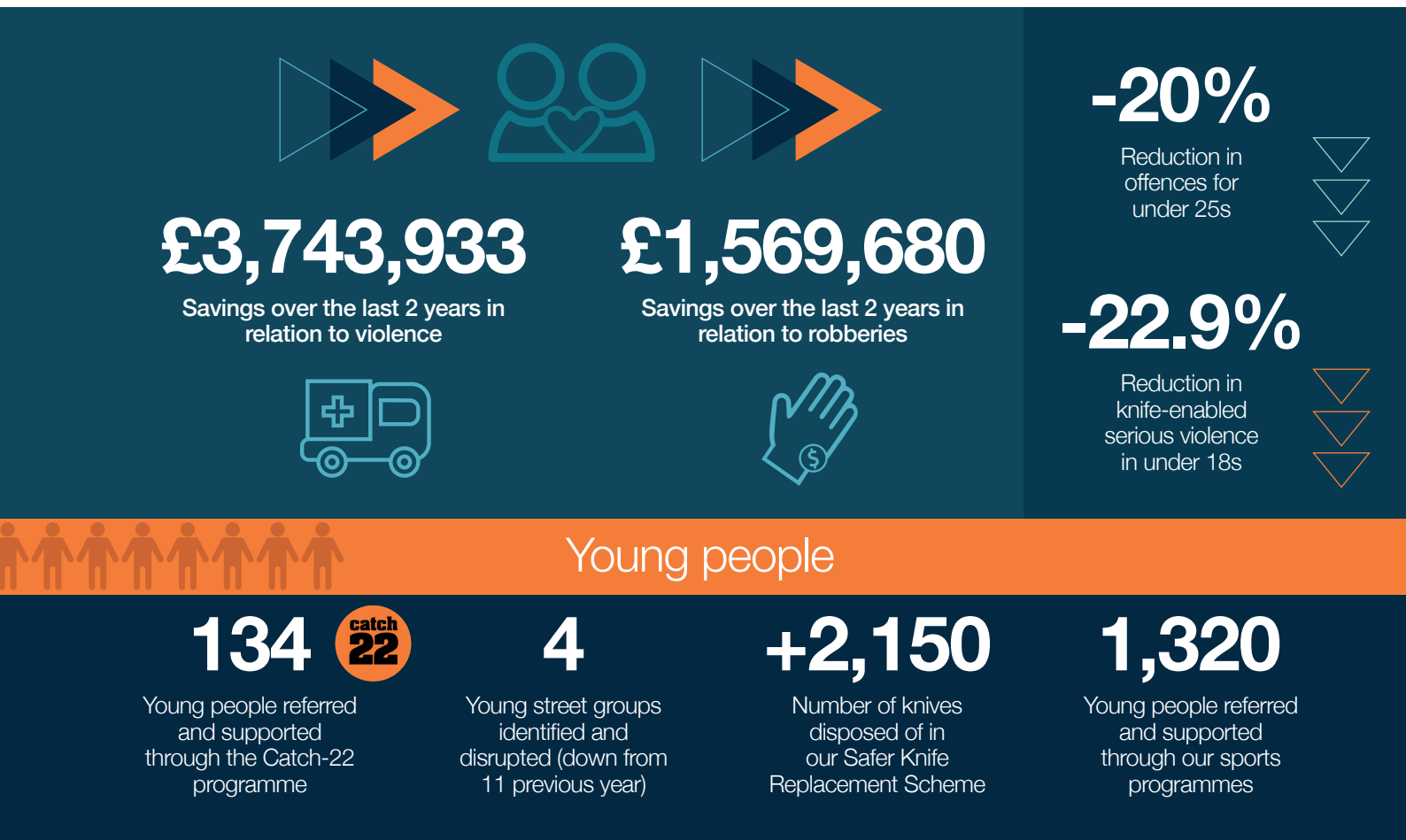
This information pack has been produced by Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and outlines how we can support you, your staff and your students to help make your school and wider community safer.

kentandmedwayvru.co.uk

Who we are

Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) works to reduce violence and improve the lives of young people. Through a public health approach, we partner with services, communities and families to help address the root causes of serious violence and build safer communities.

Here is a snapshot of what we have achieved over the past 12 months:



We believe violence is preventable, not inevitable. By addressing the root causes of violence and intervening early there will be safer communities, fewer victims, and better outcomes for us all.

We devise, test and scale impactful ways to work with young people focusing on those at greater risk, diverting them away from violence and supporting those who may already be involved to get out.

Our work ranges from engaging young people in positive activities, such as sports programmes, to providing education and training for families, schools and communities. We also provide specialist intervention to support young people who are at risk of, or have been involved in, violence, gangs or exploitation.





Ultimately, our focus is on protecting and improving the lives of children and young people across the county, helping them to stay safe and reach their full potential. Crucial to this is supporting teachers and staff in schools and colleges.

By working more closely with your school, we can all make an even greater impact on the young people we are all supporting.

How the VRU can support your school

Our VRU offers a range of preventative services and programmes designed to help schools reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors for children and young people.

This booklet outlines our evidence-based support and campaigns.



Pol-Ed is free
for all schools in
Kent and Medway

The Pol-Ed programme



Pol-Ed

Pol-Ed supports schools in delivering expertly planned lessons designed to develop a deep awareness of risks, citizenship and the law. Pol-Ed addresses areas such as sexual violence and harassment, child-on-child abuse, and the perception that young people have of the police.



By September 2026, Pol-Ed will cater for 100% of all PSHE!

All of the Pol-Ed content focuses on the Ofsted lines of enquiry and is linked to Department for Education statutory guidance and PSHE Association Programme of Study to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our children and young people. Our resources come with online slides, worksheets and other resources to support your teaching.

Pol-Ed resources are split into four topic areas. They cover age-appropriate interactions with people and situations a child may encounter both in and out of school.

The key resource areas are:



During the past year, Pol-Ed in Kent and Medway has:

- Delivered more than 4,300 classroom lessons and 300 assemblies
- Seen nearly 130,000 children and young people receive input
- Had more than 2,600 teachers register on the platform
- Had an average of 35 schools per week actively using Pol-Ed resources.



Research carried out for Pol-Ed in 2023 found that programme outcomes for teachers were:

- Increased confidence in delivering material (particularly on complex or sensitive issues)
- 'Quality assurance' of police involvement in materials
- Greater student retention of information
- Positive feedback.

Outcomes for students were:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of risk
- Greater awareness of issues in communities and how to keep safe
- More knowledge of the role of police in society and more positive perceptions.



[Find out how to sign up online.](#)

Sports Connect



Sports Connect works towards reducing offending and raising employment aspirations and opportunities of young people through sport.

The programme is delivered both in schools and communities. It involves supportive coaching, key engagement and messaging, and ongoing support with coaching and qualifications. The programme delivers bespoke sessions based on the needs of the area and the young people attending.

In the past year, we had 1,320 referrals (942 for under-18, 21 for aged 19-24, and 15 for over-25, the remaining participants not confirming their age).

School programmes have focused on leadership, communication and personal wellbeing, alongside the completion of a multi-sports qualification. Engagement levels are consistently high with participants contributing positively and demonstrating creativity and enthusiasm. Some young people who have been involved in the schools-based programmes have gone onto community sessions, supporting the transition from school engagement into wider community participation.

In Canterbury, Sports Connect took part in a Back-to-School initiative to help support young people transitioning back into secondary education after the summer holidays. This helped address instances of anti-social behaviour in and around the city centre during after-school hours. The initiative has been well received by both young people and partner organisations.



[Find the sessions in your local area online.](#)





Being an active bystander

Our active bystander campaign – Clock it, Check it, Change it – teaches young people how to safely intervene and speak out against bullying, knife crime and toxic behaviour.

The campaign has been developed by young people for young people to highlight the importance of being an active bystander to help prevent harm from happening and what they can do to help someone who may be in trouble or in distress.

Our campaigning work includes videos, posters, lesson plans and a fact sheet. It is all based on themes that young people in Kent and Medway felt were important to them: bullying, knife crime and inappropriate language or behaviour in a relationship.

Although we highlight three particular themes, the active bystander approach is transferrable to a number of circumstances and situations in various settings that an individual or group of young people may perceive as not right. The active bystander is someone who recognises poor behaviours or attitudes and can take action to prevent further incidents.

The campaign aims to enhance messaging and inputs for young people, parents and practitioners on personal safety and risk management.



[Find out how your school can get involved on our website.](#)



SAFER KNIFE REPLACEMENT SCHEME

The Safer Knife Replacement Scheme allows schools, other institutions and members of the community to swap pointed kitchen knives for round-ended ones.

Recent figures show that, so far, 1,250 knives have been exchanged for a safer alternative.

The scheme is a simple idea and makes homes, schools and communities safer, and lowers the risk of harm, whether by accident or on purpose.

Researchers at De Montfort University have previously tested both round-ended and pointed

knives and the clothing damage associated with them. In their research, pointed knives cut through every fabric tested while round-ended knives did not cut through any fabric.

In 2026, schools have already begun making the switch, supported by our Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) cost code order form that makes adoption even cheaper. A social enterprise school meals service in East Kent recently joined, replacing pointed knives with round-ended ones across 26 cooking kitchens and 15 serving kitchens in schools.



Let's start by asking: what's the point of a pointed knife?
Find out how your school can make a change on our website.

Social Skills

Research shows that the mastery of social and emotional skills supports the achievement of positive life outcomes, such as good health and social wellbeing, educational attainment and employment and the avoidance of behavioural and social difficulties.



Social and emotional skills help young people to:

- Identify, manage and communicate their thoughts, feelings and their behaviour; reaching out for help and support where necessary;
- build, manage and navigate healthy relationships;
- resolve conflict;
- be self-aware and aware of the feelings of others;
- be considerate of the feelings of others;
- handle and overcome difficulties;
- make good decisions;
- build resilience, self-esteem and confidence;
- feel able to positively influence the world around them.

The Social Skills training programme focuses on improving the social and emotional skills of children and young people by improving the confidence and intervention skills of the staff working with them. The project initially offered support in the Alternative Provisions across Kent and Medway but is now widening its scope to offer support to colleagues from Early Help, Police, Youth Justice and Youth Substance Use services.

Support is provided by a Clinical Psychologist and offers a mix of training, consultation, staff supervision and resource development, with a focus on how to sustain knowledge and practice moving forward.

Provisions have used the project to review and develop intake processes to assess areas of strength and development in regards social and emotional skills and to target interventions based on this. Training and workshops focus on different topics in regards social and emotional skills and on how to tailor interventions to the needs of individual young people or groups of young people.

Resources to support individual and group social and emotional skills interventions have been developed jointly with provisions and an online curriculum of training workshops will be available for the academic year 2026-27.



Prevention of exploitation

The VRU, and partner organisations working with the VRU, are experts in advice, guidance and support for helping prevent the exploitation of children and young people, whether this is online or getting involved in violent activity in the community. Exploitation can cover a range of harms including physical injuries, trauma, sexual violence, debt bondage, neglect, sleep deprivation and poor attendance and/or attainment at school and college.

The VRU can support schools with access to toolkits and resources on a number of issues, including:

- Keeping children safe in education
- Safeguarding children at risk of exploitation
- Child-on-child sexual abuse
- Understanding county lines and violence
- The criminal exploitation of children and young people through trafficking.

Research shows that 82% of teachers have not received recent training on serious violence. In response, a tool we work with is the Education Practice Insight Creator (EPIC). Produced by the Youth Endowment Fund, EPIC helps education leaders reflect on their current approach to preventing violence and improving it using best available evidence.



[Access exploitation resources for your school](#)



[Further information on EPIC](#)



Catch-22

**catch
22**

The Catch-22 programme provides one-to-one support to young people up to the age of 25 at risk of child criminal exploitation and county line exploitation in areas where there are the highest identified risks.

Catch-22 provides both preventative and protective interventions for those at risk of, and those involved in, serious youth violence. Focusing on each young person's individual needs, bespoke programmes are created, with work starting with close relatives and immediate support networks.

Areas covered by the Kent Catch 22 team include Ashford, Canterbury, Maidstone, Medway, Swale, Thanet and West Kent.

They support, on average, 80 to 90 young people at any time. The average age at referral is 15 years old and 90% received are male.



[Find out how to make a referral and more.](#)



A preventative approach

Our focus is on prevention rather than enforcement. We aim to work alongside schools to identify concerns early, build protective environments and provide young people with the skills, knowledge and support they need to make positive choices.

By investing in early intervention, we can help reduce the likelihood of children and young people becoming involved in violence, criminal exploitation, anti-social behaviour or other harmful experiences. This approach not only improves safety but also supports attendance, wellbeing, educational attainment and future life chances.

Working in partnership

The most effective responses to violence and vulnerability happen when agencies work together. We are committed to supporting schools through collaboration, sharing expertise and connecting education settings with wider local services.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how our VRU can support your school and tailor our offer to meet the needs of your pupils and community. Together, we can help create safer schools, stronger communities and brighter futures for all children and young people.





Getting in touch

Please contact us via email vru.programme.delivery@kent.police.uk to see how we can help you make your school safer.



Visit our website: kentandmedwayvru.co.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read our information pack.

We look forward to hearing from you and discussing how we can support your school through any of the programmes highlighted in this pack.



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service



Kent
Police



Kent
Police & Crime
Commissioner



Serving You



Public Health
England



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Probation Service



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