

# POLICE EFFECTIVENESS IN A CHANGING WORLD **SLOUGH SITE REPORT**

John Chapman, Andy Higgins and Gavin Hales  
December 2017

THE  
POLICE  
FOUNDATION

The UK's policing think tank

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## About the Police Foundation

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# Summary

## Background

The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project set out to investigate how local police services might respond more effectively to the challenges presented by global socio-economic and technological change, at time when they are themselves in the process of significant organisational transformation. Working over a five year period, in two English towns – Slough and Luton – that had experienced the local impacts of global change acutely, the Police Foundation research team collaborated with the local police and their community safety partners to identify persistent crime problems, improve the way in which these were understood, develop and implement appropriate interventions, and assess both the outcomes of these and the challenges of doing so. In the process it was hoped that valuable lessons might be learned about the enablers and dependencies of effective policing, under current conditions and in the context of change. This report documents the findings of the project from its Slough site <sup>1</sup>.

## *Police effectiveness in a changing world*

The issue of police effectiveness has never been more pressing. Austere times call for greater attention to delivering value for money and the logic of cutting costs by reducing demand has intensified the appeal of impactful 'up-stream' intervention. However, public sector spending cuts are not the only source of change that present challenges for local police services in the second decade of the 21st century. While recorded crime is falling, the police workload is becoming more complex; the internet has created new forms of crime and transformed old ones,

growing international mobility, migration and increasingly globalised markets have created new criminal opportunities, the harms from which inevitably play out in local neighbourhoods and become the business of the local police and their partner services. In addition, the populations in some neighbourhoods have become more transient, heterogeneous, and less well connected to one another – and therefore, potentially, less visible, more isolated, more difficult to engage and less capable of dealing with problems collaboratively as a community. Recent years have also seen a marked shift in the forms of crime considered most important for the police to tackle, with concerns for managing 'threat, harm and risk' increasingly coming to the fore, while new forms of governance have overhauled the way in which the police are held to account for the outcomes they achieve, the methods they employ and prioritisation decisions they make.

Such shifts in mission and context inevitably complicate the debate about what it means for the police to be effective, however cutting crime remains central to the police's formal and day-to-day remit, and therefore the body of evidence about 'what works' in crime reduction can be used to characterise the mode of working best suited to delivering results. In synthesis research tells us that an effective police function *intervenes creatively, purposefully and proactively, with others, based on an understanding of the conditions that make specific types of crime more likely to occur in particular places*. This mode of working, which can be termed 'informed proactivity', fits well with problem-oriented approaches such as SARA <sup>2</sup> which have been shown to work (at least 'modestly' well) and have been used to structure the action research approach followed in this study.

<sup>1</sup> Findings from Luton are contained in a separate report.

<sup>2</sup> Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment.



## A problem-oriented approach

### Scanning

The scanning process in Slough (detailed in Chapter 2) commenced in January 2012 with a programme of scoping and fieldwork to identify issues that might be amenable to improvement, were of sufficient concern to local stakeholders, and explored issues that characterised the '*changing world*' challenges for contemporary policing. It was also recognised that issues should be practical and feasible to address within the time frame of the project.

The fieldwork included a mix of quantitative and qualitative investigation, which also served to familiarise the research team with Slough, the crime and other concerns of those living there, and the challenges faced by the police and others in working to address them.

The findings of this work programme suggested three potential ways in which the project in Slough might be focused: on types of crime, specific geographic areas, or on certain population groups. Consultation with key stakeholders underlined considerable support for taking an area-based approach, with a specific focus on two wards (referred to here under their pseudonyms of Broadham and Puckford). These wards were widely recognised as being existing priority neighbourhoods for the local police and their partners, with both experiencing relatively high levels of crime and deprivation.

It was acknowledged that an area-based approach centred on priority wards would need to be married with a focus on local priority issues. Of five separate crime types 'in-scope' during the problem prioritisation

process, violence against the person emerged as the strongest contender, being ranked highly in a local crime harm/impact matrix for Slough, and identified as an important issue by citizens in local surveys. Significantly, violence was seen as an issue of particular relevance to Broadham and Puckford, and was a concern that resonated strongly with local partners. The project therefore presented an opportunity to formulate a more holistic understanding of, and response to, violent crime and its drivers.

### Analysis

With the focus of the project defined, the analysis phase (discussed in Chapter 3) set out to establish a more in-depth understanding of violence (including domestic violence) in Broadham and Puckford.

In late 2012/early 2013 a series of scoping meetings and interviews with local practitioners and senior officers in Slough were conducted to explore current perceptions of the issues surrounding violence in the two intervention wards. Guided by this feedback, as well as by a review of the evidence on effective crime reduction practice<sup>3</sup>, a series of research questions were formulated to provide a framework for the research and analysis phase. Addressing these questions required a mixed-methods approach, utilising quantitative approaches to examine patterns and trends in crime and associated data, and qualitative approaches to explore understandings and perceptions of offender and victim behaviours. Analysis was supplemented by on-going liaison and engagement with local stakeholders, as well as observation of meetings involving the police and their partners. A number of distinct issues identified through analysis were seen to typify violence in Broadham and

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<sup>3</sup> Kam, 2013.

Puckford, which it was felt merited further discussion and consideration by stakeholders. These included recurrent people and addresses, as well the prevalence of non-domestic violence occurring in dwellings. The impact of 'stress points' as triggers for domestic violence was also highlighted, as too was concern that conventional, criminal justice responses to domestic violence were not appropriate or effective in every case. Other issues were more geographically specific, including the pronounced involvement of women and girls in violence in Broadham. Significantly, no obvious causes or drivers of violence were identified that would fit with a traditional problem-oriented policing approach, and this ultimately led to a case-based approach being adopted.

Analysis to action (Chapter 4) examines the process followed by the Police Foundation team in working with local practitioners to transition from desk-based analytical insight to a practical, localised response – a crucial 'hinge' in the SARA approach. Briefings on each of the issues identified were considered at a meeting with local key leads and stakeholders in January 2014 in order to assess the appetite for, and feasibility of, progressing work in these areas. Three issues were deemed suitable for exploration and follow-up by practitioners, given their alignment with Thames Valley Police's and Safer Slough Partnership's priorities, and their potential to provide a new approach to reducing violence within Slough: recurring people and addresses, non-domestic violence in dwellings, and adapting and developing responses to domestic violence.

Following reflection on the discussions and ideas raised and consideration of the available evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches, their viability,

and the extent to which they met the parameters of the Police Effectiveness project, a working model was formulated. This sought to bring together a programme of ward level, multi-agency, problem solving activity and intervention, incorporating a case-based approach focused on individuals and addresses recurrently involved in violence. The process was afforded the name VMAP (Violence Multi-Agency Panel). The value of the programme was perceived to be two-fold: forming an innovative response to violence prevention (policing activity up to that point having rarely addressed recurrence in a systematic way), while also generating 'cross-cutting' benefits as a consequence of the additional focus brought to non-domestic violence in dwellings and domestic violence cases. It was clear that local practitioners were already widely acquainted with the concept of multi-agency case management on which VMAP was founded, rooted as it is in a plethora of existing initiatives (including MARAC and MAPPA schemes)<sup>4</sup>, although VMAP was perceived as further extending this rubric through incorporating a focus on both offenders and victims, and by including a problem-solving focus generally lacking in other approaches.

To drive things forward, attention turned towards designing the VMAP model (including the methodology for deriving recurrent violence cases) and structuring its working arrangements. There were also efforts to identify and equip suitable VMAP participants, including the provision of training on problem solving and data sharing processes. The production of an action plan in May 2014 served to map-out a schedule for these and other preparatory tasks prior to the 'go-live' date of VMAP in early August 2014.

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<sup>4</sup> MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (for high risk domestic violence victims); MAPPA – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (for serious violent and sexual offenders).

## *Response*

VMAP was coordinated through a series of 26 consecutive fortnightly case management meetings over the course of a pilot year, led by Slough police and attended by an average of 14 professionals from various local partner organisations and services, including local authorities, domestic violence charities, treatment agencies and mental health services. Across the year, 298 individual subjects were identified for consideration by the VMAP initiative. Each VMAP meeting would involve explorations into the circumstances and possible drivers of offending and victimisation for both new and (where applicable) existing cases, with the resulting intervention/s tailored to meet individual subject's needs.

Overall, the response phase (documented in Chapter 5) was largely characterised by implementation success. Some initial teething problems quickly gave way to successive phases which saw the VMAP process mature and then stabilise. The initiative experienced a high degree of 'buy-in' from participants, many of whom felt that VMAP was a good use of their time (at least initially). It also served as a catalyst for partnership collaboration, with attendees highlighting the important role the VMAP process played in improving case coordination and helping practitioners better understand the needs of their clients and the capabilities of partner agencies. VMAP was further shown to be a valuable enabler of neighbourhood policing, moving the police response to violence from a reactive and often incident-by-incident approach, to a more considered and person-centred tack.

However, the latter stages of the pilot year were characterised by emerging doubt among some practitioners as to whether the resourcing commitment

for VMAP was viable and also whether the process was actually proving effective. The task of undertaking meaningful problem solving with a sizable caseload, many of whom were individuals with complex long-term needs and/or who would not engage with services, proved to be highly challenging. Some participants felt that VMAP didn't go far enough with clients in terms of problem solving and intervention activity, and there was also increasing frustration with the repeated attention given to seemingly intractable cases and the inability of VMAP to find solutions to needs issues being identified. Analysis of the working mechanics of VMAP highlighted a general scarcity of substantive problem-solving, with activity often focused on provision of simple case updates and auxiliary research tasks. It was also acknowledged that a failure in the design and planning stages to recognise the merit of involving victims and offenders as direct participants in problem-solving explorations gave rise to a more 'detached' mode of working, which in-turn made it difficult for VMAP to consistently move beyond superficial explorations of 'causation and cure' during case management meetings. It also proved problematic to get some facets of the VMAP model to function consistently and successfully during the intervention year.

## *(Impact) Assessment*

Against this backdrop the impact assessment (detailed in Chapter 6) found very little in the way of demonstrable programme effect for VMAP. The core outcome metric for VMAP looked to establish whether the initiative had been successful in preventing individuals already considered by the process coming back to notice again during the remainder of the pilot year. A robust assessment of these 'subsequent occurrences' from police data, which compared

outcomes in the VMAP intervention wards with the untreated areas in the rest of Slough, highlighted that there was no obvious impact – the rate of those coming back to notice in the VMAP areas was well above the level required to establish a statistically significant reduction. In addition, no effect on the type or seriousness of subsequent violent incidents was found.

The ‘subsequent occurrence’ analysis was repeated for subsets of the VMAP caseload and their untreated equivalents across Slough, to pinpoint any indications that VMAP might have been more effective for particular sub-groups (including different age ranges, and individuals with low and high violence recurrence levels). Again this showed no statistically significant impact, although there were very tentative signs of progress made with certain groups, who largely reflected a more entrenched and problematic non-domestic violence offender cohort.

Prompted primarily by practitioners’ concerns that outcome measures based on involvement in recorded violent crime might be too ambitious, analysis was also conducted on a set of police incident data which recorded individuals’ involvements in both crime and non-crime incidents. This aimed to test the hypothesis that (although no impact on violent crime could be identified) VMAP activity had led to a reduction in the level of wider demand on police created by referred cases. However, again findings showed no demonstrable impact.

## Project postscript

As Chapter 7 outlines, despite no evidence of impact, many practitioners in Slough remained resolute in their support for the VMAP process. During the early stages of the project there were individuals who reported that

they instinctively felt VMAP was the ‘right thing to do’. Some practitioners sensed that the success of the VMAP pilot was likely to be reflected in ‘softer’ process benefits, and that achieving reductions in violence would be possible with an extended project time frame. Others perceived that the impact of VMAP was unlikely to be felt so early on, and that its value would only begin to materialise well into the future.

The perceived longer-term benefits to be accrued through VMAP are likely to be a key rationale behind calls by local stakeholders to extend the lifetime of the initiative. A survey conducted towards the final phases of the pilot year highlighted overwhelming support from local practitioners to retain the VMAP process.

Reflecting on the initial findings from the process evaluation, Police Foundation staff advocated a number of potential modifications to the VMAP process going forward, with the aim of helping to address some of the apparent functional and programmatic shortcomings highlighted. A modified version of the VMAP model devised by Thames Valley Police was implemented in October 2015.

## Conclusions and discussion

In spite of all the stakeholder consultation, robust programme design, thorough planning and preparation, general implementation success and positive practice developments, evaluation showed that VMAP was unable to achieve any meaningful reduction in the rate at which the caseload were subsequently involved in violence (or the demands they placed on police). Chapter 8 reflects on some of the factors likely to have contributed to this failure.

Programme design shortcomings, in combination with the challenges inherent in problem solving, were

identified as key considerations serving to hamper the effectiveness of VMAP. With the benefit of hindsight, including a better understanding of the characteristics of the VMAP caseload, it was perhaps always unrealistic that transformational change could be achieved with individuals, given the limited and finite resources that VMAP was able to draw on. The VMAP caseload displayed an array of complex needs (including alcohol, drugs, and mental health issues), often in the context of chaotic and unstable lifestyles, and destructive relationships where co-dependency was a prevailing theme. Few individuals within the VMAP caseload were positively engaged through the process, despite the best efforts of practitioners. Collectively, this suggests that genuine problem solving in complex cases – rather than in more traditional situational crime prevention contexts – may in fact not be a realistic goal, particularly for stretched public services working in a challenging climate of austerity and change. More broadly, it seems that VMAP was unable to generate sufficient purposeful activity – simply, not enough happened to change the lives of the victims and offenders that came to attention.

The limitations of professional orthodoxies – that is, the routine, habitual way of doing things that are both familiar and believed to be effective – is another key consideration. Multi-agency working is widely viewed as the best approach to dealing with complex crime and public safety issues, particularly at the case level, and many case management processes similar to VMAP have proliferated nationally. However, the findings here raise questions about the effectiveness of such approaches. What professionals liked about VMAP – better information sharing, improved case knowledge, improved collaboration between colleagues – are seemingly not, at least in isolation,

sufficient to bring about material and enduring outcomes. One observation from VMAP meetings is that they often seemed to default to a risk management rather than problem solving posture, with attendees appearing satisfied to know that an agency at the table had a given case ‘in-scope’, without advancing the discussion to achieving demonstrable, transformational change in individuals – the ultimate ambition for VMAP. Participants also appeared to like VMAP because it provided (perhaps subconsciously) reputational cover and diffusion of responsibility for agencies dealing with risk.

Despite the failure to demonstrate impact through VMAP, it was possible to identify a number of factors that were enablers of police effectiveness. Chief among these was neighbourhood policing, which clearly stood out as a key facilitator of police capability in VMAP, both as the key interface with local residents and communities, and the primary source of knowledge and insight into local crime and related issues. Partnership working is another factor; VMAP was seen to benefit from, build on, and contribute to, a prevailing spirit of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration at both senior and practitioner levels in Slough.

In conclusion, the report pinpoints lessons for the development and application of Evidence-Based Policing identified by the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project in Slough. The importance of attending to the ‘analysis to action’ phase within SARA, translating analytical insight into deliverable activity, is highlighted. Similarly, the importance of conducting rigorous evaluation, marrying a detailed understanding of how an initiative is operationalised to the experiences of practitioners involved and a clearly defined appraisal of impact, is also stressed.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

In 2010 the Police Foundation secured funding to conduct a major, long-term, action research project to explore the challenges of effective policing in two English towns – Slough and Luton<sup>5</sup> – that were experiencing the local impacts of global patterns of change particularly acutely. Between 2011 and 2015 the Police Foundation research team worked closely with the police and their community safety partners in each site, to identify persistent crime problems, improve the way in which these were understood, develop and implement appropriate interventions, and assess both the outcomes of these and the challenges of doing so. This report documents the process, experiences and findings of the project in its Slough site. Along with a companion report covering Luton, it forms the evidence-base for a set of forthcoming papers addressing some of the key issues facing British policing in 2016 and beyond.

## 1.2 Crime and policing in a changing world

As its title suggests, the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project was developed in recognition of the challenges presented for the police by long-term socio-economic and technological change, and the impacts of these on crime and demands for security (Manning, 2011; Brodeur, 2010; Reiner 2010). In 2011, at the outset of the project, crime in England and Wales had fallen to half of the peak level seen in the mid-1990s and was confounding expectations by continuing to fall as the UK economy underwent a period of recession and stagnation (Flatley et al., 2010). Not all forms of volume crime were in decline, however. Internet-related crime and

thefts of small, expensive, 'CRAVED'<sup>6</sup> electronic goods had bucked the trend, challenging many of the theories put forward to account for the broader phenomenon of international crime reduction (Farrell et al., 2010). Alongside new cyber-threats to businesses and institutions, the nature of 'traditional' forms of crimes such as fraud, sexual offending, and harassment were being transformed by the increasingly online and interconnected nature of all aspects of business and social life (McGuire and Dowling, 2013). Meanwhile, transnational migration, geo-political instability and the globalisation of markets for goods and services were creating new criminal opportunities for the illicit trafficking and smuggling of people, firearms, drugs, natural resources and counterfeit goods (UNODC, 2010). These are not only concerns for governments and specialist, international law enforcement agencies; in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, the harms resulting from new criminal threats are diffused throughout local communities and therefore become every-day business for those who police them.

At the same time, new patterns of mobility and migration, growing inequality and the fragmentation of families and communities have had a polarising effect. While many places have thrived, other areas have been left behind by skills gaps, widening income inequality and reduced social mobility (Dorling, 2010), leaving those who live there increasingly vulnerable and insecure. Often, these places have long been the focus of police attention, however population churn and heterogeneity mean that local populations may be less able to come together to deal with problems themselves (Sampson et al., 1997; Foster, 1995), while the form of police attention they do receive may leave them feeling over-policed but under-protected,

<sup>5</sup> Slough has a population of 140,000; it is located around 20 miles from the centre of London and abuts its western edge. It is a unitary local authority area and sits within the territory of Thames Valley Police. Luton is a town of 211,000 inhabitants located 30 miles north of central London in the county of Bedfordshire. It is also a unitary local authority area and falls within Bedfordshire Police Force area.

<sup>6</sup> Clarke (1999) suggests that Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable and Disposable (CRAVED) items are attractive targets for theft.

### The Changing World – England and Wales in 2011<sup>7</sup>

- Population growing faster than at any time since the 1960s – seven per cent increase in ten years – more than half from net migration.
- 13 per cent of residents born outside of the UK – half arrived in the last ten years.
- 12 per cent of households (with two or more people) had members from different ethnic groups.
- A quarter of the population claimed no religious affiliation – a 10 percentage point increase in 10 years.
- 15 per cent of households rented from a private landlord – up six percentage points since 2001.
- More people had degree level qualifications than no qualifications.
- The number of people employed full-time was falling, while part-time working and self-employment were becoming more common<sup>8</sup>.
- Growing disparity in financial security between the richest and poorest<sup>9</sup>.
- 64 per cent of adults used the internet every day (or almost every day) – up from 35 per cent in 2006 (ONS, 2015).
- Leisure habits changing – fewer visits to pubs, restaurants and (in particular) night-clubs while spending on home leisure and gym membership remained strong<sup>10</sup>.

undermining police legitimacy and creating barriers to the co-production of security (Miller, 2005; Phillips, 2003; Loader, 1996). Places that have fared better also generate expectations and demand for the police, as well as difficult questions about the value of and justification for 'reassurance policing' (Fleming and Grabosky, 2009; Fielding and Innes, 2006).

The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project set out to understand how local police services might operate more effectively in this rapidly changing landscape.

## 1.3 Slough and Luton – changing places

(Please note: the content of this section is based on information sources accessed during the earlier stages of the project).

Slough and Luton were selected as ideal sites in which to investigate these themes and we are grateful to the senior leaders of Thames Valley and Bedfordshire Police, and practitioners from a number of agencies in both towns, for allowing access and facilitating our research. In many ways these towns symbolise the local impacts of globalisation, increased mobility and migration, and the fragmentation of communities; both towns have benefited from rapid socio-economic change but are also experiencing some of its effects less positively.

Although they are towns rather than cities, both Slough and Luton are globally connected through proximity to national transport infrastructure, international airports and London. Both towns have experienced growth in employment from high-tech and service industries – with Slough benefiting from its links to the M4 technology corridor, while Luton retains

<sup>7</sup> ONS (2011) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>8</sup> Between March to May 2008 and March to May 2011 the number of full time employees in the UK fell by 3.6 per cent while the number of part-time employees increased by 4.5 per cent and self-employment increased by 4.5 per cent (ONS, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> The median wealth of the top 20 per cent income group increased by 64 per cent between 2005 and 2012/13 while that of the bottom 20 per cent fell by 57 per cent (Broughton et al., 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Zolfo Cooper, 2011).

a stronger manufacturing base (Safer Slough Partnership, 2011; Luton Borough Council (no date)). Both have also seen significant inward migration over a prolonged period reflected in established Asian minority populations, combined with recent settlement by those from EU accession states in Eastern Europe and from African countries. As a result they are among the most ethnically diverse towns in Britain.<sup>11</sup>

Along with high birth rates, migration has also resulted in strong working-age population profiles, in both towns however there is also a significant skills gap between their resident populations and the available employment opportunities. As a result both Luton and Slough have relatively high unemployment for their respective regions and significant inequality between urban residents and the suburban and commuter populations living in their surrounding areas. Slough abuts contrasting London boroughs, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and the affluent 'stockbroker belt' of South Buckinghamshire, while Luton is surrounded by a less wealthy but still prosperous rural hinterland. Luton has substantially higher levels of deprivation than its unitary authority counterparts in Bedfordshire, and according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, became relatively more deprived in the period between 2004 and 2010, being ranked 69th most deprived (out of 326 local authorities) nationally.<sup>12</sup> In comparison, deprivation in Slough is less acute, but the town does have pockets of significant disadvantage and the proportion of children living in poverty in the town is higher than the national average (English Public Health Observatories, 2012) and rose by 20 per cent between 2007 and 2010 (Safer Slough Partnership, 2012).

At the start of 2011 both Slough and Luton experienced relatively high and persistent levels of

crime and disorder, with patterns approximating those in outer London boroughs, with increases recorded in some volume crime categories.<sup>13</sup> In both places organised crime and terrorism were issues of concern and local stakeholders have repeatedly asserted that their towns have 'London borough problems' but without the equivalent levels of funding. These characteristics made Slough and Luton ideal locations for exploring ways in which different (and in many ways contrasting) police forces, working with others, can best respond to diverse and changing demands and expectations.

## 1.4 The changing world of policing

In 2011, as the project got underway, the programme for a period of significant reform to British policing was beginning to take shape, which would provide another dimension to exploring effective policing in the context of change. Following the election of the Conservative-led coalition government in 2010, police forces in both project sites and across the country were getting to grips with the ramifications of a sustained period of public sector austerity, a shift in the role of the Home Office and a broad programme of workforce, governance and scrutiny reforms (Home Office, 2010a).<sup>14</sup> The prospect of fewer resources and new forms of accountability – notably in the shape of elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) from 2012 – brought new dimensions to questions of effectiveness and bound these more tightly, and in different ways, to others about efficiency and legitimacy.

Looking back from 2016, it is clear that the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project was undertaken during a period of significant

<sup>11</sup> According to 2011 Census findings, Slough is the most ethnically diverse town in Britain outside of London, and (along with Luton and Leicester) is one of only three non-London local authority areas where 'White British' residents comprise less than half the local populace (Simpson, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> In 2007 Luton was ranked as the 87th most deprived local authority in the Index of Multiple Deprivation and in 2004 as the 101st.

<sup>13</sup> Overall the two towns were seen to have comparable crime patterns and similar socio-demographic compositions, reflected in the fact that they were in the same Home Office 'Most Similar Family' Grouping.

<sup>14</sup> Notably under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.



organisational change for the police. Whereas the previous Labour government had opted for centralised police performance management under the rubric of New Public Management, the 2010-15 Coalition and subsequent Conservative Governments – and in particular the Home Secretary under both regimes, Theresa May – have taken a radically different approach. In line with the localism motif, centrally-mandated numerical targets, Public Service Agreements and Key Performance Indicators were all scrapped, while the police were given an apparently straight-forward yet contentious mission, which was *'nothing more, and nothing less, than to cut crime'* (Home Office, 2010b). In 2012, responsibility for setting priorities was notionally delegated to a force/local level, reflected in the introduction of elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), who replaced Police Authorities and took control of a number of funding streams previously managed by community safety partnerships. At the same time, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) was given a larger budget and more ambitious remit under its first non-police HM Chief Inspector, Sir Tom Winsor, while the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) also saw a significant uplift in resources.

The withdrawal of central performance targets followed significant reductions in traditional 'volume' crimes (including burglary and vehicle crime) and heralded a general decline in their perceived importance, while lower volume but high harm forms of crime took on increasing prominence. The child sexual exploitation scandals and associated public service (including police) failings uncovered in Rotherham, Rochdale and other areas, exposed the

way that property crime had been prioritised at the cost of less visible but more significant harms perpetrated against vulnerable groups (GMP, 2014). Similarly, the emergence of large volumes of historical sexual abuse allegations, most infamously concerning TV and radio personality Jimmy Savile, further highlighted the way that victims had been failed by public institutions and triggered a surge in reporting of both recent and older sexual offences. In general, however, the period saw a reduction in the public salience of crime and law and order issues as matters of national political significance (Ipsos MORI, 2016). Set against the reduction in the volume of crime, a change in the nature of police demand was identified during the period, towards more resource intensive activities, including investigating serious sexual offences and responding to those in mental health crisis (College of Policing, 2015).

More generally, the period saw a growing recognition of the way that crude quantitative performance regimes had skewed police activity and generated perverse incentives and behaviours, including in respect of crime recording.<sup>15</sup> Within policing, the language began to shift away from 'performance' and 'targets' towards a focus on 'threat, harm and risk'. The College of Policing, announced as the professional body for policing in late 2011, published a Code of Ethics for the police service in 2014 (College of Policing, 2014).

Arguably the most significant change during the life of the project has been the introduction of public sector austerity, following a decade of police force budget increases (Crawford et al., 2015). Between 2010/11 and 2015/16, police services in England and Wales experienced a 25 per cent real terms cut in central

<sup>15</sup> Concerns about crime data integrity were raised by the PCC for Kent in early 2013, resulting in an HMIC inspection of the force and ultimately all forces in England and Wales. The Police Recorded Crime statistics lost their 'National Statistics' quality designation in January 2014 (UK Statistics Authority, 2014).

## Key events in policing during the timeframe of the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project

### 2011

- Riots and widespread disorder in London spreading to other towns and cities (August).
- Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 gains Royal Assent, paving way for introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (September).

### 2012

- London Olympics (July/early August).
- MP Andrew Mitchell involved in altercation with police officers outside 10 Downing Street leading to 'Plebgate' affair (September).
- Operation Yewtree launched to investigate allegations of sexual abuse by Jimmy Savile and others (October).
- First non-police HM Chief Inspector, Sir Tom Winsor appointed (October).
- First elections for Police and Crime Commissioners held (November).
- Leveson Inquiry concludes and makes criticisms of Metropolitan Police investigation of phone hacking (November).

### 2013

- College of Policing officially launched (February).
- Police Scotland formed (April).
- Fusilier Lee Rigby murdered in Woolwich, South London (May).
- National Crime Agency becomes operational (October).

### 2014

- Police recorded crime figures lose National Statistics designation (January).
- Police Code of Ethics launched (July).
- Professor Alexis Jay publishes the findings of an inquiry into service failings over the handling of child sexual exploitation cases in Rotherham (November).

### 2015

- National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) established and replaces the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (April).
- Conservatives win majority at general election (May).
- Inquiry into undercover policing announced by Home Secretary (July).
- 130 people killed and several hundred injured in terrorist attacks in Paris (November).
- Police funding substantially protected in Comprehensive Spending Review (November).

government funding.<sup>16</sup> Driven in part by these challenges, a mixed economy of force collaboration, strategic alliances and private sector outsourcing has

emerged (see for example, Flannery and Graham, 2014). More broadly, police forces froze recruitment, made redundancies, slashed overtime budgets and

<sup>16</sup> This resulted in an overall real terms cut of 18 per cent to police budgets. However, those cuts have fallen more heavily on forces where low council tax precepts meant that the police force was disproportionately reliant on central government grants (National Audit Office, 2015).

reorganised their workforces, while a politically-driven narrative of 'protecting the frontline' skewed cuts towards police staff. In many force areas the distinction between response and neighbourhood policing roles has become increasingly blurred as the workforce has been remodelled.

Community safety and other public service police partners also suffered significant cuts during the period; most notably Local Authorities saw spending per person fall by 23 per cent in real terms. With community safety budgets largely transferred from local authorities to PCCs, community safety partnerships seem to have diminished in importance, although the legislative apparatus of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 remains in place.

As the project drew to a close, the November 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review heralded a period of notionally protected police budgets, subject to council tax precepts being raised every year by the maximum amount permitted (Hales, 2015).

## 1.5 Police effectiveness

A project of this title requires some early consideration of what exactly it means for the police to be *effective* and of related debates about police role and purpose. These are contested issues that have traditionally divided opinion – and research activity – into two camps. On one side, driven by persistent managerialist concerns, effectiveness has often been formulated in terms of 'crime-fighting' based either on measurable 'outputs' (arrests, response times, 'clear-ups' etc.) or (supposed) 'outcomes', crime counts and rates, which, at least in theory, allow for a more imaginative set of activities to be considered as

appropriate police-work. With crime reduction as the assumed police goal, a growing body of '*what works?*' research is accumulating, documenting the impact of various activities, tactics and initiatives on crime (summaries and syntheses of which include Sherman et al., 1998; Weisburd and Eck, 2004; Lum et al., 2010; Kam, 2013).<sup>17</sup> In contrast, others have emphasised the messiness of the police workload and the vast range of issues and social problems (in addition to crime), with which the police are called on to deal (Bittner, 1974; Goldstein, 1979; Reiner, 2010). Within this framework – which has influenced innovations such as community policing and the public confidence agenda – effectiveness relates to the extent to which the police use their powers to deal with this workload in ways that are *legitimate* in the eyes of the communities served.

At its inception, the project hoped to explore whether changing social conditions and accountability structures might provide fertile ground on which to bring these competing ideas together, particularly with reference to a growing body of evidence suggesting that meeting community expectations of legitimate policing can increase compliance with the law (Tyler, 2004), including in areas of concentrated disadvantage and diversity (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998; Hough et al., 2010).

As was perhaps inevitable, for an action research project requiring close cooperation and considerable input from those doing difficult jobs in 'the real world', it was necessary, throughout the life of the project, to make pragmatic decisions about focus and direction – which brought new issues to the fore – while some areas of initial interest dwindled in relevance. The selection of violence<sup>18</sup>, for example – an existing

<sup>17</sup> See also the College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction toolkit <http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>18</sup> In Slough; in Luton the project focused on burglary.

priority for both Slough police and the local community safety partnership – brought some ‘changing world’ themes to the fore, including the impact that the burgeoning private rented housing sector (in particular, the proliferation of HMO<sup>19</sup> accommodation) (Higgins and Jarman, 2015) and rapidly diversifying communities may have on violence occurrence. However, addressing these longer-term social issues was seen to be beyond the scope of the project. The eventual focus of the project in Slough looked to explore the behavioural drivers and contextual determinants of recurrent violence more generally, while the mechanism for doing so (a multi-agency case management approach) conformed to a widely accepted orthodoxy of working. The impacts of organisational change also evolved somewhat differently than perhaps anticipated; PCCs were elected and served most of a full term during the project lifespan, yet the new accountability structure had little visible impact on the day-to-day business of local policing or police/community relations. Conversely, the effects of austerity and the local decisions made in response to it (particularly local authority re-structuring and resource rationalisation) were an ever-present influence during and on the project’s intervention phase.

To keep the project relevant to local gatekeepers, an operationally conventional definition of *police effectiveness*, emphasising crime-reduction, became the pragmatic reality – although important learning about the relationship between policing styles, public engagement and effective crime reduction did emerge. The formulation of *effectiveness* developed during the project starts with the current orthodoxy – in which an effective police function is defined as ‘one

*that keeps people safe and reduces crime*’ (HMIC, 2016) – but also draws on the evidence-base on how this is best achieved.

Weisburd and Eck’s 2004 synthesis of research findings pertaining to the question ‘*What Can Police Do to Reduce Crime, Disorder and Fear?*’ concludes that there is little evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of ‘standard model’ policing activities (general patrol, rapid response, reactive investigation, etc.). They argue that more promise can be found in innovations that extended from the traditional activity set along two axes; the *diversity of the approach*<sup>20</sup> (as opposed to a narrow reliance on law enforcement) and the *degree of focus* (for example on hotspots). Most promising of all were initiatives that *combined* diverse approaches and were highly focused (for example problem-oriented Policing interventions). More recently Lum, Koper and Telep (2010) have developed a three dimensional framework for mapping research outputs. This indicates that evidence of effectiveness is greatest in relation to policing interventions that are *proactive*, *place-based* and *specific*.

The image that crystallises from these syntheses of the police ***intervening creatively, purposefully, and proactively (with others), based on an understanding of the conditions that make specific types of crime more likely (and jeopardise safety) in particular places***, is central to the concept of effectiveness developed during the project and is consistent with the problem-oriented policing approach that was used to structure both the action-research activity and this report.

<sup>19</sup> (Houses in Multiple Occupation). An HMO is a single dwelling shared between two or more households, who are not all members of the same family.

<sup>20</sup> Although a greater diversity of approaches alone – for example in the form of Community Policing initiatives – has produced stronger evidence of an impact on fear of crime than on crime itself.

## 1.6 A problem-oriented approach

Problem-oriented policing developed from a critique of conventional police activities first made by Herman Goldstein more than thirty years ago. Goldstein questioned the assumption that better policing simply meant doing more of 'what the police do' – or doing it more quickly (Goldstein, 1979, Weisburd et al., 2008). He challenged the prevailing view of police work as a series of discrete incident responses and the corollary assumption that 'crime prevention' amounted to deterring offenders by increasing their odds of getting caught, including by (more or less randomly) patrolling the streets. Within this framework, improvement efforts inevitably focused on 'the means' – responding more quickly, arresting more offenders, getting more officers on the street – while the 'ends', crime and its impact on the community, remained largely unaltered.

The corrective was to be a new model, refocused on 'problems' rather than incidents. It was suggested that by collecting information from a range of new and conventional sources, employing new analytic techniques and enlisting the support of other agencies and individuals to develop and deliver solutions, the police could 'get upstream' of the endless succession of incidents that occupied their shifts, tackle their causes rather than the symptoms and become 'outcome' rather than 'output' focused. This new Problem-Orientated approach was field-tested by Eck and Spelman (1987) and codified into a four stage problem-solving process of Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (or SARA). Aspirations for this new way of working were ambitious; not only would it change the way the police responded to

crime, it could transform them into *'the front line in a comprehensive human services system'*.

### **The 'SARA' Problem solving model**<sup>21</sup>

- **Scanning:** Identify and prioritise the problems.
- **Analysis:** Gather information to identify underlying causes and narrow the scope of the problem.
- **Response:** Design and deliver activities to address the identified causes.
- **Assessment:** Measure if the response is having the anticipated effect – and refine the response if required.

Problem-oriented policing has had considerable influence; it has catalysed numerous crime reduction initiatives in the US, UK and elsewhere and there is good evidence of its (at least 'modest') effectiveness as an approach (Weisburd et al., 2008). It is right that it is widely recognised as 'best-practice'. However, as police forces in England and Wales have begun to remodel in response to austerity, concerns have been raised that proactivity, analysis, innovation and problem-oriented practices are under threat, at precisely the time that conventional understandings of crime and its drivers are in danger of becoming obsolete and concerns for (cost) effectiveness have become particularly pressing.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.7 Exploring police effectiveness in a changing world – key questions

With these foundations, the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project set out to find innovative and

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from College of Policing (no date).

<sup>22</sup> In 2014 HMIC noted that 'Current practice on using a problem-solving approach demonstrates a missed opportunity for effective neighbourhood preventative policing by the majority of forces' (HMIC, 2014a).

sustainable solutions to persistent crime problems in Slough and Luton. Of at least equal importance, however, was the opportunity to learn lessons from the process of doing so about the prospects for, routes to and dependencies of police effectiveness, in the context of external and internal change. This included addressing a number of key questions:

- Can a problem-oriented (SARA) approach deliver effective and sustainable crime reduction at a time when:
  - Crime is changing and new understanding of its drivers and determinants is required;
  - Populations of towns and cities are changing and diversifying – along with their vulnerabilities, expectations, efficacy and resilience; and
  - Police (and partner) resources, capabilities, structures, preoccupations and modes of working are changing?
- What are the limitations and dependencies of a problem-oriented (SARA) approach and how might conditions for its use be optimised?
- Which aspects of 'the changing world' (both internal and external) are most relevant to delivering effective policing at the local level and what are the implications of this for practice?
- Can an external agent, bringing different research and analysis techniques, a fresh theoretical perspective and freedom from organisational constraints and distractions, effectively catalyse improvement in local police practice and aid effectiveness?
- And finally, what can be learned about the broader challenges facing policing at the current time, and how can the demands of the changing context in which the police operate can best be met?

We return to these questions in the final discussion (**Chapter 8**) having set out the learning and findings from each of the project's (SARA) phases:

**Chapter 2** deals with the process of **scanning** for the most appropriate problems and locations on which to focus, balancing research interests with the 'real-world' priorities of local stakeholders.

**Chapter 3** details the findings of a detailed programme of research and **analysis** carried out to better understand the selected crime problem, in its local context and with reference to aspects of the changing world.

**Chapter 4** deals with the process of moving from **analysis to action** by designing a problem-oriented, evidence-oriented, and pragmatically-oriented response, and preparing to deliver this. (This is a development on the SARA model as originally defined).

**Chapter 5** covers the **response** phase documenting the achievements made and implementation challenges encountered, and – drawing on a process evaluation – placing these within the context of service delivery in Slough during the period.

**Chapter 6** presents the findings of the impact **assessment** in which recorded crime data indicators were analysed to identify whether the activities undertaken had been effective.

**Chapter 7** presents a postscript to project activity undertaken in Slough.

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## 2. Scanning: identifying local problems

### 2.1 The role of scanning in SARA

'Scanning' is nominally the preliminary step in the SARA process. It is generally seen as being closely related to the 'analysis' phase – mainly because an inspection of the data obtained for scanning naturally segues into more in-depth analytical scrutiny (Knutsson, 2010) – and as a result the terms are often used conjointly (ie 'scanning **and** analysis'). However, scanning does serve a distinct purpose in being the means to initially identify those recurring community safety issues that are a cause for concern among the public, the police and their partners, and are therefore 'in-scope'. Scanning also obliges stakeholders to gauge the relative 'seriousness' of problems, and in doing so, becomes a mechanism for problem prioritisation, ensuring that the analysis and responses that follow are focused on the issues that matter most. In this regard scanning shares some overlap with 'formal' prioritisation processes such as strategic assessments and setting control strategies, although the form and generality of the strategic priorities identified through these may not always be the best starting point for a problem-oriented approach, without further refinement (Scott, 2000; Clarke, 1998).

### 2.2 Problem typology and identification

More than at any other stage of the project, the process followed during this initial phase necessarily deviated from a standard SARA procedure. To stand any chance of success, the focus of the project needed to align with the 'real world' concerns of the police and their partners, and as such crime and harm reduction were prominent project goals. Nevertheless, as a situated action research project, with learning as

well as impact objectives, additional scanning criteria needed to be applied. Between January and June 2012 the project team undertook a programme of scoping and fieldwork to identify local issues that:

- Were of sufficient significance to be addressed through a long-term project of this type.
- Might be amenable to improvement, primarily through changes that could be implemented locally (ie by the police and their partners at community safety partnership level, with support at force level).
- Were of sufficient concern to the police and their partners locally to enable the project team to gain support and cooperation in working to address them.
- Had potential to enable the project to contribute to current thinking about what is effective in crime reduction
- Allowed exploration of issues that characterise the challenges for contemporary policing resulting from prevailing global economic, social and demographic changes, such as migration and population mobility, rapid communication and global markets.

Significantly, it was also felt that issues should be practical and feasible to address within the project time frame and given available resources.

The fieldwork included a mix of quantitative and qualitative investigation, which also served to familiarise the team with Slough, the crime and other concerns of those living there and the challenges faced by the police and others in working to address them. This activity included:

1. Analysis of recorded crime data (including national comparative data accessed from iQuanta<sup>23</sup> and

<sup>23</sup> iQuanta is a web-based data platform that allows police forces, community safety partnerships and HMIC to access provisional police performance data prior to official publication. It also allows comparisons to be made against those areas judged by the Home Office to be most similar.

local police), exploring Slough-wide and ward-level crime prevalence and trends, and characteristics of victims and offenders.

2. Introductory interviews with representatives of the police and their community safety partners
3. Observation of a number of local police and community safety partnership management and strategic meetings.
4. A review of existing survey findings on public perceptions of crime and disorder in Slough.
5. Face-to-face interviews with representatives of local community organisations. The project team also attended police-community engagement meetings and community governance meetings.
6. A small number of focus groups with 'seldom-heard' groups, identified by police and partner agency officers and existing research evidence of emerging communities in the town. These groups were young people and members of Somali, English Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Romanian Roma communities.

## 2.3 Developing options

In synthesis, the findings of this work programme suggested three potential ways in which the project might be focused; on types of crime, specific geographic areas within Slough, or on specific population groups. These are discussed in more detail below. No pre-judgement was made at this stage as to the number of these issues to be taken forward or on the ways in which they might be combined. Figure 2.3.1 summarises the options that emerged from the scanning activities<sup>24</sup> which were presented to local stakeholders and the project's National Advisory Group<sup>25</sup> in and after June 2012.

### *Crime types*

Crime types were highlighted through a Harm/Impact Matrix that was developed to summarise the findings from the recorded crime data analysis. This provided a way of assessing the relative impact of offences on the community and on police and partner agency resources. It was strongly weighted by long and short term crime prevalence and trends.

Consideration of crime issues that had been highlighted through interviews, observational work and focus groups also helped identify concerns that echoed or provided additional nuance to those that emerged from the data. To support this further, police and partner priorities and existing surveys of community concerns were also scrutinised. This information was brought together to initially identify five crime types of most concern: serious sexual offences, violence, domestic abuse, burglary and identity theft.<sup>26</sup>

### *Geographic areas*

An alternative approach considered for the project was a focus on areas within Slough that experienced a higher rate of victimisation across a number of offence types.

This initial analysis focused on ward areas, identifying three wards with the highest recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population between 2007 and 2011), which were also highlighted in stakeholder interviews. These were Rillstead, Puckford and Broadham.

Consideration was given to including Slough town centre as a possible focus, but because Slough does not have a significant centralised night-time economy, the bulk of offences reported in the town centre were theft or handling offences, which were assessed as

<sup>24</sup> Wherever possible a systematic and transparent approach to identifying the options was employed, based on the scanning work undertaken. However, some of the choices made inevitably relied on the project team's judgement as to which issues would be best suited to being addressed through a project of this type.

<sup>25</sup> The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project benefited from the guidance of a panel of expert advisors drawn from policing and academia (the

National Advisory Group). The group met on five occasions during the course of the project (including in July 2012) and provided invaluable feedback, insight and support. A full list of advisory group members is included under Appendix 2.2.

<sup>26</sup> Although personal robbery was highly ranked in the Slough crime harm/impact matrix, and featured as a priority for Safer Slough Partnership in 2012/13, it was not included in the short-list of crime type options principally because rates of robbery were below the community safety partnership 'Most Similar Group' average.

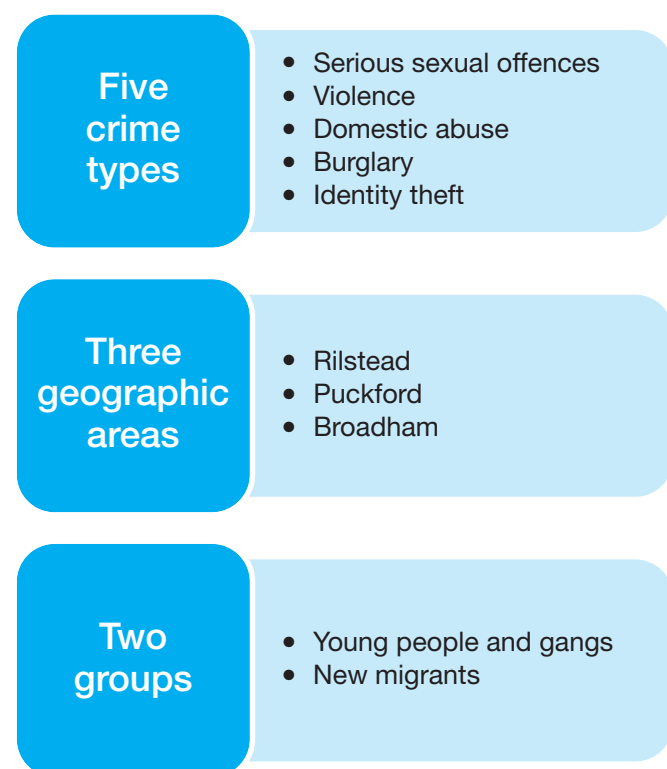


mainly low harm. The town centre area also did not arise as a location of particular concern to the police or community safety partnership, compared to those wards with a higher prevalence of more serious offences.

## Groups

Another potential approach for the project was seen to be a focus on groups of people in Slough who were experiencing a higher rate of victimisation across a number of offence types, or who were involved in committing a range of offences. Two groups were identified as sources of concern – young people involved in gangs and new migrant communities vulnerable to victimisation.

**Figure 2.3.1: Problem options identified through scanning activity**



## 2.4 Favoured options: violence in two wards

Consultation with the key stakeholders – including the National Advisory Group for the Police Effectiveness project, and meetings with the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police and Slough community safety partnership membership – emphasised the considerable support for taking an area-based approach, with a specific focus on the wards of Broadham and Puckford being strongly favoured. Problem solving methodologies such as SARA are generally seen to be best tailored to neighbourhood or micro-location level problems, and initiatives targeted at these smaller scale geographies tend to show better evidence of success.<sup>27</sup>

### Why the focus on Broadham and Puckford?

Broadham and Puckford were seen to satisfy the majority of criteria set-out in the options prioritisation process. Both wards were also widely recognised as current priority neighbourhoods, being the focus of considerable existing attention and activity by the police and their partners in Slough.

Both wards were initially highlighted as being among those with the highest rates of recorded crime in Slough, with Puckford in particular experiencing high levels across a range of offence types. Additionally, Puckford was characterised as having a significant antisocial behaviour problem; according to the 2010 Slough Attitude Survey, 92 per cent of residents reported experiencing antisocial behaviour in the previous 12 months – an increase from 85 per cent in the previous survey in 2007 – and a figure significantly

<sup>27</sup> See the results of the Evidence-Based Policing Matrix developed by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy – <http://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/the-matrix/> [website accessed 8 January 2015].

higher than the Slough average of 61 per cent. Concerns predominantly related to rubbish/litter, 'teenagers hanging around', 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places', 'people using or dealing drugs', and rough sleepers. Residents from local forums also raised concerns about drug-related antisocial behaviour, street drinking and prostitution, while young people participating in focus groups expressed fears about going to Puckford.

Local officers described Broadham as an area that was stigmatised, and younger participants of the focus group highlighted it as an area they would avoid due to gangs. Officers suggested that the area had a reputation for intimidation, and to an extent, local organised crime families. The area tended to be perceived as a closed community.

Broadham and Puckford were both characterised by high levels of deprivation. Puckford was the most deprived ward in Slough, with the worst rates of child poverty, poor health indicators and the highest concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). It was also one of three areas in Slough receiving regeneration investment. Puckford is also very ethnically diverse and with the most affordable housing rents in Slough (a reflection, in part, of the prevalence of HMO accommodation in the area) also serves as a gateway area for new migrant groups. Local officers expressed concern about the exploitation of new migrants in Puckford, and there were also indications of offending being linked to global markets (including people and drug trafficking) – issues that were seen to have strong relevance with the project's policing in a 'changing world' focus.

Broadham ranked as the second most deprived ward in Slough, with comparable rates of child poverty to

Puckford, and like Puckford, was the focus of existing regeneration investment. The area comprised a large post-war local authority housing estate with a long-established white working class community. A census of school pupils in early 2010 found Broadham had the highest proportion of 'White British' pupils in Slough. While on average 50 per cent of Slough's pupils had a home language other than English, in Broadham they accounted for only 27 per cent. The contrast of the largely homogenous ethnic composition of Broadham to other more ethnically diverse areas in Slough (such as Puckford) was seen as offering an interesting dimension to the Police Effectiveness project, given that Broadham has, to an extent, been 'left behind' in the context of Slough's shifting demographic landscape.

### *Problem selection*

It was acknowledged that an area-based approach centred on priority wards would need to be married with a focus on local priority issue(s). Within a SARA process, neighbourhoods in themselves are rarely 'problems'; rather they are locations that can *contain* multiple problems. Tackling an entire area as a lone problem risks generating layers of activity, which in-turn could hamper the ability to determine the effectiveness of specific responses (Clarke and Eck, 2003) and more so, also risks stigmatisation.

Of the five crime types 'in-scope' during the problem prioritisation process, violence emerged as the strongest contender. Violence Against the Person ranked highly in the crime harm/impact matrix for Slough. The 'harm' component of the matrix in particular highlighted the cumulative impact of the high volume of less serious violent offences and non-injury

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assaults reported in Slough. Addressing violent crime was also identified as an 'essential priority' by 80 per cent of Slough residents participating in Thames Valley Police Authority public consultation surveys and focus groups in 2009 and 2010, and as a key priority in Slough-wide public consultation meetings. National data sources for 2007/08 – 2009/10 also showed that Slough experienced the second highest rate of admissions to hospital for violence in the South East region of England.

Analysis of comparator crime data showed that there had been a clear divergence in trajectory from the community safety partnership Most Similar Group average for police recorded violent offences overall in Slough since 2005. Rates of most serious violence offences saw a small rise between 2005 and 2011 while violence with injury rose substantially between 2008 and 2010. However, the trajectories of these more serious offences overall across this period followed a declining trend. The divergence in trajectory from the group average was therefore seen to be driven largely by a rise in reporting of less serious offences (violence without injury), particularly between 2008 and 2010.

Although the rate for violence without injury had shown to have dropped to a rate closer to the CSP Most Similar Group average from late 2010, it was perceived that – as suggested by the overall trend line – this was likely to be a fragile recovery. Within this offence category, the prevalence of common assault and harassment offences in Slough was markedly higher than group average figures.<sup>28</sup>

Importantly, violence was seen as an issue of particular relevance to both Broadham and Puckford. Puckford experienced persistently higher rates of

reported serious and less serious violent crime than other wards in Slough. Rates of violence in Broadham were above average levels for Slough, and the area also saw marked increases in violent and sexual offending over the period 2007-2011. Broadham had been further identified by the police and Slough Borough Council officers as a focus for gang-related youth violence, and an area with comparatively high levels of domestic violence.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the strong bearing provided by statistical evidence, a focus on violence also resonated strongly with local partners. While reducing violent crime was an on-going priority for both Thames Valley Police and the Safer Slough Partnership, intervention activity in the town largely prioritised gang involvement, alongside service provision for high risk victims of domestic abuse. The project therefore represented an opportunity to formulate a more holistic approach to violent crime and its drivers. The potential to expand partnership awareness and understanding of violence more generally was also recognised. For instance, despite their prevalence, less serious violence offences had not been the focus of specific partnership attention in Slough to that point, but were seen as potentially contributing to continued community concerns about violence. Focussing on violence also presented the opportunity to foster partnership bonds, including engagement with the local Primary Care Trust.

<sup>28</sup> Respectively, 42 per cent higher during 2005-11 and 93 per cent higher during 2009-11.

<sup>29</sup> Evidence Based Solutions, 2010.

## 3. Analysis: understanding violence in Broadham and Puckford

### 3.1 Introduction – scoping and methods

With the focus of the project defined, the analysis phase set out to establish a more in-depth understanding of violence (including domestic violence) in Broadham and Puckford.

Analysis is vital in helping to define and understand the precise nature and scope of identified problems. It is a core component of the overall SARA process, helping to provide deeper understanding of issues, and serving to identify the key focuses for subsequent intervention planning and practice development. Analysis activities represent the 'steering mechanism' of problem solving, which is founded on the principle that patterns and trends can reflect problem causation (Bynum, 2001).

Guidance on conducting crime analysis within a SARA process, stresses the importance of setting and investigating research questions to ensure focused and relevant analytical outputs (Clarke and Eck, 2003). In late 2012/early 2013 a series of scoping meetings and interviews with local practitioners and senior officers in Slough were conducted to explore current perceptions of the issues surrounding violence in Broadham and Puckford. Guided by this feedback, as well as by a review of the evidence on effective crime reduction practice (Kam, 2013), a series of research questions were formulated to provide a framework for the research and analysis phase. These are briefly summarised below, with the full set of core research questions and sub-questions set-out under Appendix 3.1.

#### ***Analysis phase – core research questions***

- How do long-term rates and trends of recorded violence relate to other socio-economic patterns and trends at the very local (LSOA<sup>30</sup>) level?
- Where and when do violent offences in Broadham and Puckford occur?
- What are the characteristics of violent offenders who live or offend in the two wards?
- What factors are associated with offending behaviour among those convicted of violence in the two wards?
- What are the characteristics of victims of violence in Broadham and Puckford?
- What factors are associated with being a victim of violence among those living in the two wards?

Addressing these questions required a mixed-methods approach, utilising quantitative approaches to examine patterns and trends in crime and associated data, and qualitative approaches to explore understandings and perceptions of behaviours. The methods used are summarised below.

#### ***Data analysis***

A range of quantitative techniques were used to interrogate police recorded crime data extracted from Thames Valley Police's CEDAR crime recording system (covering the four-year period April 2009 to March 2013), in conjunction with other local partner

<sup>30</sup> Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a geography designed to report small area statistics, including Census data, in England and Wales. Typically LSOAs consist of an average of around 1,500 residents and 650 households. See: <https://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/nessgeography/superoutputareasexplained/output-areas-explained.htm> [accessed 23 December 2015].

datasets.<sup>31</sup> The methods and data sources utilised are briefly summarised below:

- Correlation analysis and thematic mapping were used to explore the relationship between Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level violence rates and a range of socio-economic variables sourced from the 2011 Census. These are discussed in more detail within Section 3.2 of this report.
- Hotspot mapping was undertaken at the ward level, utilising Kernel Density Estimation (KDE) and Gi\* techniques, to identify the spatial and temporal distribution of violent crime.
- Similar techniques were also used to map and analyse the locations of incidents of antisocial behaviour (from Slough Borough Council's FLARE database), ambulance deployments to Puckford and Broadham (from South Central Ambulance Service), and A&E admissions for assaults involving those living in Broadham and Puckford (from Wexham Park Hospital).
- To specifically explore the relationship between type of housing tenure and offender/victim addresses with locations of violence, address lists of licenced and other HMOs and council owned rented properties (sourced from Slough Borough Council) were matched for 2009/10 and 2012/13. For each ward the proportion of victim addressees, offender addresses and (dwelling) venues that were HMOs and council properties was calculated. For victim and offender addresses this was calculated both for all victims / offenders and for those residents within the ward. The difference between these proportions and those that would be expected by chance, given the prevalence of these tenure types within the wards, was tested for statistical significance.

### *Data on offenders and victims*

- To explore in more detail the demographic and offending profile of the cohort of violent offenders from Broadham and Puckford over the four year period, analysis covered full (Police National Computer – PNC<sup>32</sup>) offence histories; drug testing data from police custody records; and needs and risk assessment data from OASys<sup>33</sup> provided by the Probation Service.
- The profile of violence victims was explored with a particular emphasis on identifying indicators of disproportionate victimisation, by comparing police recorded victim characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) with ward level population datasets sourced from the 2011 Census and ONS (Office for National Statistics) figures.
- Repeat and multiple repeat victims and offenders were examined using a combination of automated and manual Excel techniques for matching and cleaning CEDAR<sup>34</sup> free text data fields for surname, first name and date of birth. Using manual techniques helped to ensure that any 'hidden repeats' that might not routinely come to light were identified.
- The relationship between the victim and the offender for domestic violence was explored using a series of detailed datasets from police recorded CEDAR data, domestic violence case records and DASH<sup>35</sup> forms covering a two year period between April 2011 and March 2013.

### *Offender interviews*

Qualitative research interviews were conducted with a total of 24 offenders from Broadham and Puckford convicted of a violent offence within the previous four years. Offenders were either in police custody in

<sup>31</sup> All data were obtained and handled according to the terms of a Data Sharing Agreement put in place for the project.

<sup>32</sup> Police National Computer (PNC) is a database which contains information about people who have been convicted, cautioned or arrested.

<sup>33</sup> Offender Assessment System (OASys).

<sup>34</sup> CEDAR was the crime recording database formerly used by Thames Valley Police. It has since been superseded by the NICHE Records Management System.

<sup>35</sup> Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) is a risk identification, assessment and management tool used by police services and their partner agencies.

HMPs Bronzefield, Burlingdon, Wormwood Scrubs or Portsmouth, or under supervision with Slough Probation at the time of interview (May to July 2013) for violence or another offence. It should be noted that the sample was skewed toward more serious offenders. All interviews with offenders lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and took place at Slough Probation office either face-to-face or via a video-link to the prison. The interviewer asked about current and previous violent offences, drivers and motivations for committing violence and whether the victim was known to them. Interviewees were also asked whether they had been a victim of violence or other crime, and about their broader attitudes to victimisation.

### *Victim interviews*

Different approaches were used to identify and engage with victims of non-domestic and domestic violence.

#### *Non-domestic violence victims*

A total of 13 interviews were conducted with victims of non-domestic violence offences occurring in either Broadham or Puckford in the two years between April 2011 and March 2013. All interviews with victims lasted between 45 to 90 minutes and were evenly split between face to face and telephone interviews carried out at neutral locations in Broadham and Puckford. Interviews with victims were primarily concerned with exploring their experiences of victimisation, including repeat victimisation. The interviewees were drawn from a larger victim dataset deemed to be broadly representative of the socio-demographic profile of the wards.

#### *Domestic violence victims*

Records of victims of domestic violence occurring in either Broadham or Puckford were accessed from

three sources: the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit (DAIU) at Thames Valley Police; Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid; and Slough Domestic Abuse Services (SDAS). In total nine medium to high risk victims of domestic abuse were interviewed: five from Puckford and four from Broadham. These were complemented by a review of case notes of a further 18 domestic violence victims across the two wards.

### *Interviews and meetings with police and their partners*

Building on interviews conducted during an earlier phase of the project, the project team continued to regularly engage on a formal and informal basis with police officers and their partners to discuss on-going and emerging issues and current practice. The project team also observed tactical and managerial meetings and training sessions involving the police and their partners, including Slough police area management meetings, Safer Slough Partnership meetings, North and South Sector police tasking meetings, and a MARAC<sup>36</sup>.

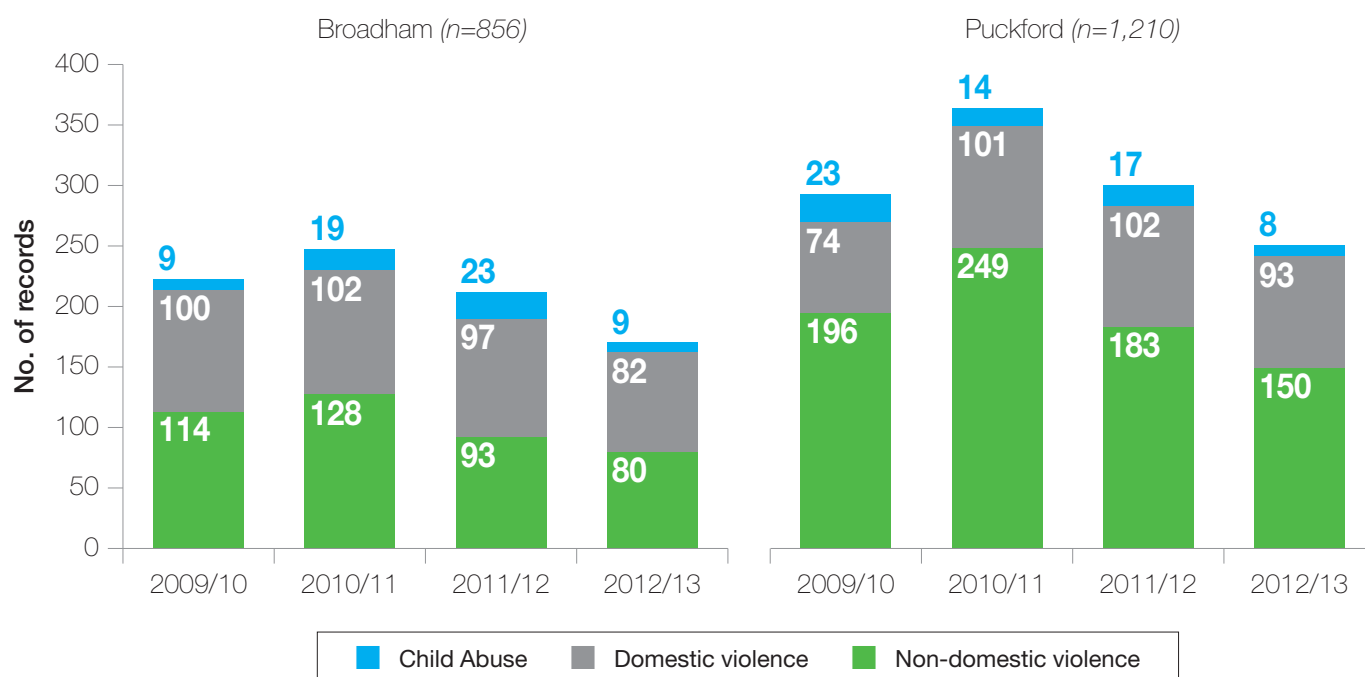
### *Engagement with residents and shopkeepers*

Informal conversations during walkabouts within the key hotspot areas were held with residents and shopkeepers in Broadham and Puckford. In Puckford, six interviewees were asked about their perceptions of violent crime in the ward, the changing nature of the community and alcohol and drug misuse. In Broadham, four interviews covered issues such as youth violence and antisocial behaviour in the ward, attitudes and perceptions of the police and their response to crime, and alcohol and drug misuse.

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<sup>36</sup> Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference/s (MARACs) is part of a coordinated response to high risk victims of domestic abuse.



**Figure 3.2.1: Number of ‘aggrieved records’ for violent crime by year and type**

The project team also attended six local community forums and meetings in Broadham and Puckford to better understand responses to violence by the community and stakeholders.

## 3.2 Violence in Broadham and Puckford

To fully understand the nature of violence in each area – where and when it tends to occur and who tends to be involved, whether as an offender or as a victim – it was necessary to distinguish between non-domestic<sup>37</sup> and domestic violence. Domestic violence is much less likely to come to the attention of the police and their partners, given its relatively ‘hidden’ nature and the fact that it tends to be significantly under-reported<sup>38</sup>, and differs substantially from non-domestic violence in terms of its characteristics and how it can be addressed.

Between 2009/10 and 2012/13, 1,210 violent incidents<sup>39</sup> were recorded by the police in Puckford. As figure 3.2.1 indicates, just under one-third (370 incidents in total over the four-year period) in the ward were categorised as domestic violence and nearly two-thirds (778 incidents) as non-domestic violence. A further five per cent were flagged as child abuse. The scenario in Broadham was somewhat different, with domestic violence making up a noticeably higher proportion (approximately 45 per cent, 381) of the 856 violence incidents recorded over the same period.

In both wards, further analysis showed that around two-fifths of offences were classified as ‘violence with injury’ and the remaining three-fifths as ‘violence without injury’ (which includes less serious assaults and non-assault offences categorised as violence, such as harassment and threats to kill). As had generally been the case across England and Wales,

<sup>37</sup> All violence that is recorded by the police but not flagged as domestic abuse.

<sup>38</sup> Under-reporting is acknowledged to be particularly acute for intimate violence offences (ONS, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> ‘Aggrieved records’ are used as a proxy for incidents/offences..

police recorded violence in Broadham and Puckford fell during the period of study.<sup>40</sup> However, this downward trend was not evident to the same extent in local ambulance deployment and Accident and Emergency (A&E) admissions data, suggesting that police recording may not tell the whole story in relation to prevalence.

#### *Recurring people and addresses*

A strong theme emerging from the analysis was the prevalence of individuals within Broadham and Puckford who were shown routinely to be involved in violence. In 2012/13, more than one in five violent offences in both wards (encompassing both non-domestic and domestic offences) involved a victim who had also been a victim (within the ward) during the previous three years. In both Broadham and Puckford, the more times a person had reported violent victimisation, the more likely they were to report again – a finding consistent with academic literature on domestic violence (see Farrell and Pease, 1993). Victimisation was therefore shown to be a strong indication of risk; more instances of victimisation signify increased risk of experiencing further incidents.

Individuals came to notice in different roles and for different forms of violence, blurring regimented victim/offender distinctions. In Broadham for instance:

- 14 per cent of non-domestic violence **offenders** were also **victims** of non-domestic violence (in the ward, during the four year period examined).
- 10 per cent of **domestic violence** victims were also the victim of **non-domestic violence**.
- Seven per cent of **domestic violence offenders** were also **non-domestic violence victims**.

Recurrent addresses were also evident, often linked to recurrent individuals, in which a disproportionate amount of violence occurred. In Broadham, just seven addresses accounted for 10 per cent of police recorded domestic violence, while 19 addresses accounted for 20 per cent. In Puckford, 10 per cent of police recorded domestic violence took place in just nine dwellings, with 20 per cent occurring in 24 dwellings.

As with individuals involved in violence, there was strong overlap in the types of violence occurring in household settings. More than 50 dwellings in Broadham and more than 60 in Puckford were the venue for both non-domestic and domestic violence over the four year study period. In addition, 47 per cent of the addresses in Puckford where offences flagged as child abuse occurred, and 39 per cent of the addresses in Broadham, saw other forms of violence during this time.

#### *Correlates of violence*

The relationship between inequality, including poverty, and violence has been well documented<sup>41</sup> (see, for example, Pridemore, 2011; Hsieh and Pugh, 1993; Kelly, 2000), although the association has been shown to be stronger at the macro level (when comparing whole societies, for example) than for small area analyses (Webster and Kingston, 2014).

To examine the extent to which issues such as deprivation and other socio-demographic factors were associated with violence in Broadham and Puckford – wards which both contained a disproportionate number of multiply deprived households – correlation calculations were undertaken.<sup>42</sup> This drew on police recorded data on violence (both non-domestic and domestic) between 2009 and 2012 and

<sup>40</sup> Since the analysis was conducted, police recorded violence has risen in many police force areas. However, the Office for National Statistics has stated that “There is good evidence to suggest that the rise in recorded violence reflects changes in police practice, rather than levels of crime” (ONS, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Seen predominantly in relation to homicide and assaults.

<sup>42</sup> Regression analysis was used to investigate the possible relationship between both non-domestic violence and domestic violence and these socio-demographic variables. It should be noted however that statistical correlations, even strong ones, are not the same as causal explanations. The assistance of Sid Beauchant, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, with undertaking this work is gratefully acknowledged.



socio-demographic data from the 2011 Census. It examined violence in relation to variables such as social grade, unemployment, deprivation, population growth, population density (overcrowding/Houses in Multiple Occupation) and demographic change (ethnicity). The degree to which domestic violence was positively correlated with a range of demographic indicators was also examined, again using 2011 Census data. This analysis was able to cover a slightly longer time period (2006-2012). Geographical units at a LSOA level were used as these allow for a finer granularity of analysis than using ward data.

Analysis showed that for both Broadham and Puckford, non-domestic violence was modestly correlated with multiple deprivation, social grades D and E<sup>43</sup>, unemployment and housing tenure (social housing). In other words, LSOAs in these wards with higher rates of these socio-demographic indicators were more likely to experience higher rates of non-domestic violence.

In relation to domestic violence, the correlations were similar but also stronger, with the strongest predictor being social grade. The analysis showed that there was a stronger association between domestic abuse and multiple deprivation, social grades D and E, unemployment and housing tenure in both Broadham and Puckford than for non-domestic violence. Domestic violence was also modestly correlated with overcrowding but not length of stay in the UK. A slightly lower correlation between ethnicity and domestic abuse suggests that socio-demographic variables are better able to predict domestic abuse than ethnicity.

Findings from the analysis showed that as the socio-demographic composition of both Broadham and Puckford had changed over time, the number of

LSOAs with high rates of domestic violence had spread across both areas, particularly in Puckford where it had become ubiquitous. This suggested that both areas had become more, rather than less deprived overall, with higher numbers of low-income households experiencing unemployment, poor housing, etc.

The mechanisms through which deprivation and violence interlink are likely to be complex and nuanced. However, offender interviews provide some graphic illustrations of the way violence often accompanies significant hardship, disadvantage and stress.

*"My partner has never worked – well, my ex-partner has never worked – she's been living on benefits for quite some time, and when I lost my job she became really volatile, she was very argumentative because she didn't like that we had to cut back, we couldn't afford the stuff we used to have...and she started to cause the rows. Told me it was my fault even though she didn't have a job either and we ended up with nothing and then the rows started and one day she started grabbing me so I started grabbing her...and then it got physical and we ended up fighting."*

*"I've always lived in the Broadham, born and bred...I married young and it wasn't long before he started hitting me. We had three children but the relationship broke down so I was a single mum with young kids...didn't have any money and was on benefits and that's where most of the problems stemmed from...so I started borrowing money but I couldn't keep up with the payments...Just got in a bad way...owed council tax, got no savings, my mum doesn't have any money, so what was I supposed to do? So I started borrowing money, but then the bailiffs*

<sup>43</sup> Social grades were originally developed by the National Readership Survey (NRS), but have also been approximated to Census data. Grade D = 'Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers'. Grade E = 'State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only'.

*came so I had to go and steal, shoplift and all that to survive, whatever it took...I had to get stuff so I could sell it to pay them off...one of the times I ended up hitting the security guard cause he tried to stop me, I was just so desperate."*

*"I've been in one abusive relationship after another...no one who is nice will be with me because I've got a criminal record, so I always end up with the ones who beat me up...don't get to socialise with those who are decent...got myself into a huge amount of debt, got six kids now...so I had no choice, I needed money for food and clothes for them and to pay the rent and bills...they wanted £60 for the rent by the next week but I didn't know how I can get it...my benefits won't cover everything. I did a burglary and then I robbed someone for money so I'm on probation now...things just spiralled out of control."*

### 3.3 Non-domestic violence

#### *Where non-domestic violence occurred*

There is extensive evidence showing that violent crime is unevenly distributed geographically (Davidson and Locke, 2002; Eck et al., 2005; Paynich and Hill, 2010), and advanced mapping techniques can be used to identify 'hotspots' of particularly high (and statistically significant) concentrations of violence. Using these techniques, a number of small hotspots for non-domestic violence within both Broadham and Puckford were detected.<sup>44</sup> However, these accounted for a relatively small proportion of overall violence (which was shown to be well diffused throughout each area), meaning that a hotspots focus was unlikely in this case to unlock the problem.

In order to gain a better understanding of the nature of violence in these areas, violent incidents were divided into those that took place in public settings and those occurring in dwellings. The prevailing consensus among local practitioners was that non-domestic violence occurred in visible, public locations, yet surprisingly, analysis showed that it was not just 'domestic' violence that happened behind closed doors; 43 per cent of police recorded non-domestic violence in Broadham<sup>45</sup> and 42 per cent in Puckford<sup>46</sup> took place in dwellings in the four fiscal years between 2009 and 2013.

This strongly challenged typically held assumptions about non-domestic violence as a 'public place' phenomenon, generally linked to alcohol and the night-time economy, street drinking, or groups and gangs of young people. In fact, only about a quarter (198 out of 778) of non-domestic violence incidents over the study time frame occurred in the street (or similar locations) in Puckford, with the proportion for Broadham slightly higher at 30 per cent.

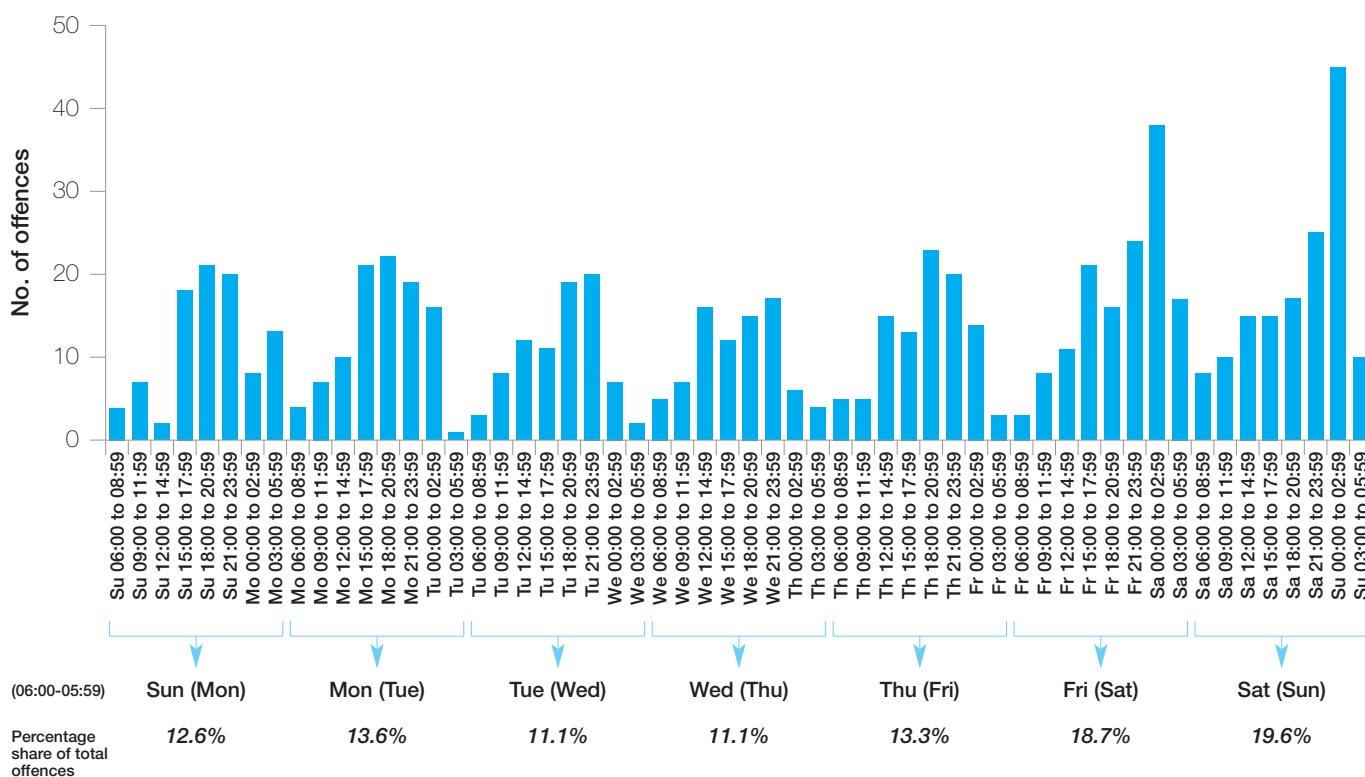
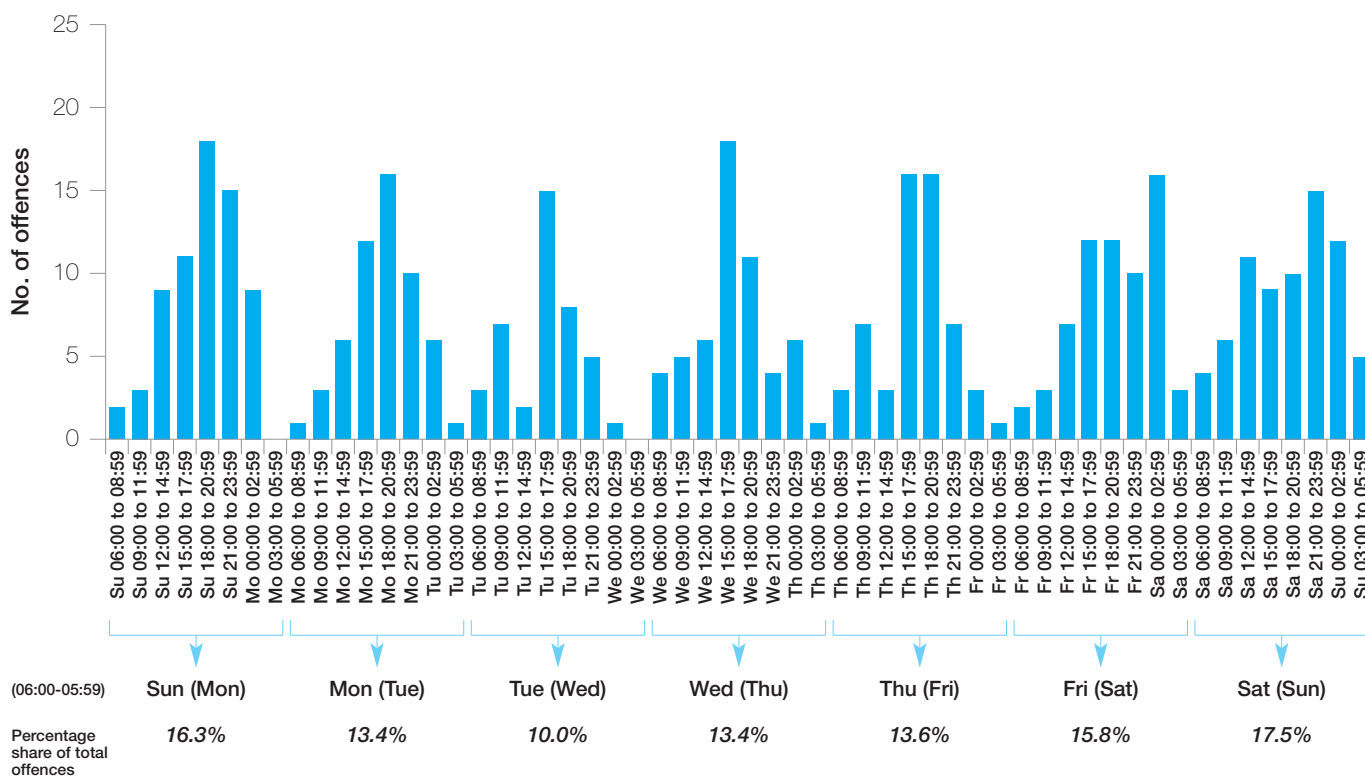
#### *When non-domestic violence took place*

The temporal patterns of non-domestic violence in Broadham and Puckford were shown to differ. In Puckford, there were clear peaks in police recorded non-domestic violence offences on Friday and Saturday nights between midnight and 3am (see figure 3.3.1), with the Friday peak also echoed in ambulance deployment and A&E admissions data, suggesting links to alcohol consumption and the influence of the night-time economy. In Broadham, in addition to (less pronounced) peaks during the weekend, there were peaks on Sunday evenings and in the late afternoons and early evenings on weekdays (figure 3.3.2). This

<sup>44</sup> To preserve the anonymity of the wards and hotspot locations, no maps are included.

<sup>45</sup> Equating to 180 incidents in total.

<sup>46</sup> Equating to 329 incidents in total.

**Figure 3.3.1: Temporal profile of police recorded non-domestic violence offences in Puckford****Figure 3.3.2: Temporal profile of police recorded non-domestic violence offences in Broadham**

corroborated other evidence which found that Broadham experienced incidents of violence involving young people during the after-school period.

### *Who was involved in non-domestic violence*

The majority of perpetrators of violent offences in Puckford were shown to be young men. White British offenders were heavily over represented, as were UK-born offenders (61 per cent of perpetrators of non-domestic violence in Puckford were born in the UK, compared to 45 per cent of the population). A majority of victims were also male (70 per cent), the most common age for victims being between 20 and 29, with the ethnic profile of victims similar to that of offenders. Although the heterogeneity of Puckford suggests that there is little sense of cohesiveness between the different communities residing in the ward, and that tensions related to different social and cultural norms did occasionally escalate into violence, it was not found that violence in Puckford reflected endemic inter-racial conflict.

For non-domestic violence in dwellings, nearly a quarter of perpetrators were women, along with nearly a third of victims. A quarter of non-domestic violence in a dwelling involved a male perpetrator and a female victim, demonstrating the vulnerability of women in non-public settings to forms of violence other than that formally categorised as domestic violence. Just under half of perpetrators of non-domestic violence were known to the victim; this figure rose to 79 per cent for offences taking place in a dwelling.

Analysis of offenders' criminal records showed that while three-quarters of those convicted of non-domestic violence in Puckford had committed a

previous offence and a third had previously committed a violent offence, on average violent offences constituted only 12 per cent of their previous offending. Most could therefore be said to be 'generalist' and relatively infrequent offenders rather than specifically violent or prolific individuals, despite tending to have fairly serious offending histories. Interviews with perpetrators illustrated the important role of alcohol as a driver of violent incidents. A perceived lack of respect, 'culture clashes' and childhood experiences of violence or abuse were also mentioned. In describing their stories, victims' experiences were very similar.

Although there were similarities in the offending history of perpetrators of violence in Broadham and Puckford (with most offenders seen as 'generalist', rather than specifically violent or prolific individuals), age, gender and ethnicity profiles were different. Most offenders in Broadham were White British (as were most victims), half were born in Broadham, and the majority of incidents (65 per cent) took place between people of White British ethnicity. This suggested something more 'insular' about the prevailing violence dynamic in Broadham. In addition, Broadham saw a much higher proportion of younger people involved in violence, while women also featured much more prominently as both offenders and victims than in Puckford.

## 3.4 Domestic violence

### *Where domestic violence occurred*

As previously detailed (in Section 3.2), analyses showed a disproportionate number of domestic violence offences were attributable to just a small number of homes in both Broadham and Puckford. The notion that crime is highly concentrated at a small

number of specific locations – a finding applicable to a number of different crime types – is well observed in literature (see, for instance, Braga, 2012). However, in Broadham, of the 67 addresses where more than one incident had been reported, half had more than one victim of domestic violence at the address – a finding which reinforces the strong motif of recurrence and the distinct ecology of violence in the ward. The significant crossover between addresses where domestic and non-domestic violence took place in both Broadham and Puckford has already been highlighted.

### *Who was involved in domestic violence*

Analysis of police data showed that most domestic violence offenders in Broadham and Puckford were young men aged under 30, perpetrating against female victims (usually their partner). Domestic violence offenders tended to have less extensive criminal records than perpetrators of non-domestic violence, but like them also tended to be generalists. Despite the contrasting ethnic composition of the two wards, the characteristics of the victims of domestic violence in Broadham and Puckford were similar; a significant minority of victims were victimised more than once and 'White British' repeat victims were over-represented.

#### *The impact of domestic violence stress-point 'triggers'*

Interviews with victims of domestic violence suggested that incidents tended to coincide with stressful life events that changed the nature of the relationship, such as pregnancy<sup>47</sup> or unemployment. Abuse would escalate, or verbal disputes would become physically violent.

*"It started when I was pregnant with my first. I was a week away from giving birth and he broke my*

*nose and because I was a week away from giving birth, I was scared and didn't tell police, because I didn't know what labour was going to be like, and thought that I needed him."*

*"A lot of it starts is when you are pregnant, when DV gets to the actual breaking point, it's when you're more vulnerable. That's when it gets worse...cos you're stuck with them. That's when he knew he could really put me down...'look how fat you are...look at your stretch marks'. And you actually listen to it. That's why I didn't ring the police, because I thought I actually needed him."*

Some victims described how pregnancy appeared to bring out certain characteristics in the perpetrators' behaviour, such as jealousy or attention seeking, with attempts to prevent their partners from leaving the house or attend to the child.

*"I had a low placenta with my pregnancy and he kicked me in the back and I thought the baby was going to die...then when our daughter was only a baby he used to take her off me while I was trying to feed her and would dump her in the cot and lock the bedroom door and even though she was screaming he didn't let me go and see her. He said she needed to learn that she couldn't have all the attention."*

Offenders in Slough further recounted incidents of abuse and violence coinciding with certain occasions or specific celebrations, such as birthdays or Valentine's Day. Incidents often involved heightened emotions, particularly anger and lack of self-control, and were often exacerbated by substance (particularly alcohol) misuse.

*"We were at my auntie's house for her 50th birthday and we had a night out there and we got*

<sup>47</sup> Research has challenged the notion that pregnancy increases the risk of domestic violence, highlighting that in some cases it can actually lead to violence cessation (Jasinski, 2001). However, other studies have drawn a link; one study found that in approximately 37 per cent of domestic violence cases, the violence

started during pregnancy (Bacchus et al., 2004). Evidence further suggests that the risk of domestic violence during pregnancy is enhanced for women who have experienced prior physical abuse (Bacchus et al., 2004).

*really drunk and we ended up arguing and pushing each other and then it all got a bit physical and I ended by pushing her and she fell down the stairs."*

*"It happened on Monday, Feb 14th, 2011...*

*Valentine's Day. The relationship between me and my wife had been on and off for a while and we were constantly having arguments. I had seen her in the day, and we had an argument ... I came back in the evening ... She was at home with her sister...and I attacked her."*

Feelings of jealousy, distrust and betrayal were also cited as reasons for arguments to start or for fraught situations to escalate into confrontation and physical violence:

*"Basically my ex-girlfriend accused me of getting off with some older women which I hadn't and there was alcohol involved and it escalated from that really...she got jealous and we had a big argument...I pushed her on the sofa because she tried to say my little baby wasn't mine...the brawl came out onto the street and she tried to run me over...asking me if I had been cheating on her...it was all jealousy, no truth in it."*

Both denial and defiance were strong motifs emanating from offenders interviewed. Most denied that they had a problem or that a criminal offence had been committed and tended to blame the victim (usually their partner) for 'telling lies' or 'setting them up'. They also showed little remorse, often attempting to justify their behaviour on the basis that they were also the victims of domestic abuse, simply retaliating to abuse from their partner.

Victims spoke about how their own experiences of witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse by their

parents or wider family members during childhood had shaped or influenced their choice of partner and how this had made them more 'vulnerable' to being victimised:

*"I suffered domestic violence as a child. I used to see it going on and sometimes my dad would do it to me...now it's my partner doing it to me."*

*"I was abused by my father when I was younger. He would physically hit me and use a belt and he abused my mother which I used to witness...so when my husband did it to me, I had seen it all before, the controlling behaviour, being physically abused and I thought 'what is it about me?'"*

Offenders recalled how incidents of verbal or physical violence had taken place in front of their children, although there appeared to be little awareness of the implications this exposure might have in terms of later tolerance of abuse and the inter-generational transmission of violence.

### *Responses to domestic violence*

Analysis showed that just over 30 per cent of recorded incidents of domestic abuse in Broadham and Puckford resulted in a police charge. In addition, approximately 40 per cent of perpetrators had previously been dealt with by the criminal justice system for a violent offence. This evidence suggested that there were grounds to question the effectiveness of conviction as a method of future prevention.

In interviews, several domestic violence victims indicated that they wanted the immediate incident to stop and somebody to tell/talk to, but not necessarily a prosecution. Some victims also said that they thought the police had been 'pushy' in trying to persuade them to make a statement. Most victims



wanted a wider range of choices about who they could report incidents to, and more control over what the outcome might be. Some explained how they would be more willing to report incidents if they had a greater say over what happens as a consequence, both to them and to their children. This further raised questions as to whether criminal justice responses to domestic violence were necessarily the most appropriate or effective in every case.

Practitioners in Slough suggested that, where the relationship is on-going, putting offenders through the criminal justice process may make them more violent towards victims. If (alleged) offenders are bailed the victim may be at risk, but if they are remanded they may be released soon after conviction due to time served; observers have noted that short spells behind bars can antagonise perpetrators and lead to an escalation of violence (Van Wormer and Roberts, 2009). Making offenders pay compensation may also be a 'reason' for resentment and lead to further violence or have financial implications for the victim and family. Concerns over the appropriateness of criminal justice sanctions reflected a general appetite among practitioners for exploring alternative methods to tackle domestic violence.

### 3.5 Other emerging issues

#### *Violence in dwellings and the role of housing*

Further examination of violence occurring in dwellings in Broadham and Puckford showed that while some offences occurred in 'semi-public' places, such as hostels or children's homes, the vast majority took place within private residences, normally a victim's home addresses, many of which were repeat locations.<sup>48</sup> There was a marked difference in the

housing tenure profile for non-domestic violence between the two wards, however. In Broadham, just over half (52 per cent) of non-domestic violent offences took place in council rented properties, which was significantly greater than the 31 per cent of dwellings that fell into this tenure type.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, non-domestic violence taking place in dwellings in Puckford was shown to disproportionately occur in HMOs, to a substantial and statistically significant degree.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, regardless of offence location, 13 per cent of non-domestic violence victims and 19 per cent of non-domestic violence offenders resident in Puckford gave addresses that were HMOs. This was considerably higher than the eight per cent of the population estimated to live in these properties, suggesting disproportionate vulnerability and tendency towards violence. Interestingly, non-domestic violence offences did not disproportionately occur in, or involve the residents of Puckford's council-rented properties (which constituted 8 per cent of dwellings and housed seven per cent of the population). Previous research commissioned by Slough Borough Council further showed a strong association between antisocial behaviour and HMO locations.<sup>51</sup>

While the violence-HMO link is perhaps unsurprising, given their mutual relationship with deprivation, it is reasonable to suggest that living in shared, often low-quality, accommodation gives rise to a multitude of associated pressures and anxieties (Higgins and Jarman, 2015). Factors such as the high density of rooms in HMOs, overcrowding, poor conditions, and the fact that occupants reside in such close proximity to one another, are likely to be key stressors. The sharing of communal spaces (such as kitchens and bathrooms) by often unconnected individuals is only

<sup>48</sup> Many of the dwellings where non-domestic violence occurred (30 per cent in Puckford, 17 per cent in Broadham) saw more than one incident, and a high proportion also saw domestic violence (or child abuse) incidents (33 per cent Puckford, 40 per cent Broadham).

<sup>49</sup> Statistically significant at 95 per cent confidence level.

<sup>50</sup> Housing data from Slough Borough Council identified 164 HMOs within Puckford. 2011 Census records showed that there were a total of 4,401 dwellings in Puckford, meaning that although HMOs represented 4 per cent of all dwellings, 18 per cent of all non-domestic violence within private residences were attributable to these properties. Overall, 60 incidents occurred within the 164 HMOs identified.

<sup>51</sup> Findings highlighted that areas within a 50m radius of an HMO had approximately three times more antisocial behaviour (rowdy, nuisance and inconsiderate

likely to increase the opportunity for unavoidable interaction (and confrontation) between co-occupants (Bowden and Barnes, 2015).

During interviews, offenders living in HMOs in Puckford mentioned the cramped and unpleasant conditions they resided in (often with strangers) as well as the frequent harrising by landlords who were unscrupulous and often threatened to evict them.

*"I came over from Pakistan by myself at 13, I had to look after myself, no family. I was put with a Pakistani family till I was 16 and they were nice and I was doing well...then when I was 16... Slough Borough Council made me move into a one room in a shared flat...was on housing benefits...the trouble started when I moved there because people were drinking every night....I was fine when I was living with a Pakistani family...but since I've been in this place, we get into trouble all the time, fighting and that."*

*"When I came out of probation I got put in a shared house with some guys I didn't know...it was disgusting... drugs and drink bottles everywhere and the landlord shafted us left, right and centre... he'd threaten us with eviction nearly every day and send round his henchmen."*

Interviews with victims showed how disputes could arise from clashes of social and cultural norms and how excessive alcohol consumption or low level antisocial behaviour such as fly-tipping and noise nuisance could easily escalate into violence. Inter-family disputes of one kind or another were often the precursors for violent behaviour and victims revealed how the absence of effective regulation and control of landlords and their tenants could underpin such behaviour.

The (lack of) regulation of private landlords was also an issue expressed by several residents and shopkeepers in Puckford. Most felt strongly that landlords needed to be more accountable with regard to the tenancy and upkeep of properties. They felt that most were able to rent houses to tenants without any real controls and should be made more responsible. Particular landlords were mentioned as renting out their properties and then 'wiping their hands of any responsibility' for antisocial behaviour, litter and related issues in public areas.

From interviews conducted with offenders in Puckford, two dwellings within the ward were on several occasions highlighted as recurrent locations for violence<sup>52</sup>, seemingly because they were places where people could congregate and deal drugs 'out of sight' of authorities.

*"All the drug dealing, violence and prostitution happens behind the [deleted], in those [deleted]... People go there because there is one way in and one way out so people can like strategically organise themselves so they can see who is going in and who is going out and you know how to escape if you do need to get out yourself."*

*"A lot, a lot happens in the flats in [deleted]... There's a lot of people that fight there...Not every day but if people really want to fight with each other they will go there because it's a quiet area and it's away from the centre of Puckford. Basically it's all, like, blocks of flats where lots of Black people live and it all ends up in fights either with Asians or white people normally over drugs."*

The relative 'invisibility' of non-domestic violence within dwellings clearly posed significant implications for how the police and other agencies addressed

behaviour) incidents than outside of that boundary (although it was acknowledged that both may be symptomatic of a deprived/declining area). Source: Evidence Based Solutions (2010).

<sup>52</sup> These locations also closely matched problem areas highlighted by practitioners, and as well as those identified through the hotspot mapping processes. Specific references to these areas in the above quotations have been deleted to preserve their anonymity.



violence in areas such as Puckford. Evidence highlighted that in order to effectively reduce violence, authorities needed not just to tackle incidents occurring in public places, where significant resources are traditionally focused, but also consider how non-domestic violence taking place within people's homes could be addressed.

### *The social context of violence in Broadham*

While exhibiting a link with social housing, violence in Broadham was not necessarily seen as a product of housing in the same way HMO accommodation was shown to be linked to violence occurrence in Puckford. In Broadham, a different notion of 'intimacy' prevailed; both police data and interviews conducted suggested that the majority of victims and perpetrators in Broadham knew each other. Within Broadham a strong offending and victimisation dynamic based on 'familiarity' was evident, involving extended family members (other than partners or offspring), friends, acquaintances and neighbours. Interviews also demonstrated that offending and victimisation were closely linked; more than one in five violent offenders in Broadham had also been a victim of violence.

These findings suggested that violence in Broadham was (at least in some quarters) normative. Interviews with perpetrators and victims supported this view, highlighting that violence was seen as a way of life for some residents of Broadham.

*"I see a lot of fighting and swearing on the Broadham, kids and their mothers, kids with their dads, husband and wife, girlfriend and boyfriend, I see that all the time. That's why I don't let my kids go out without me...you see couples fighting, you*

*see some men to men, women to women fighting and all that...it's all part of living here."*

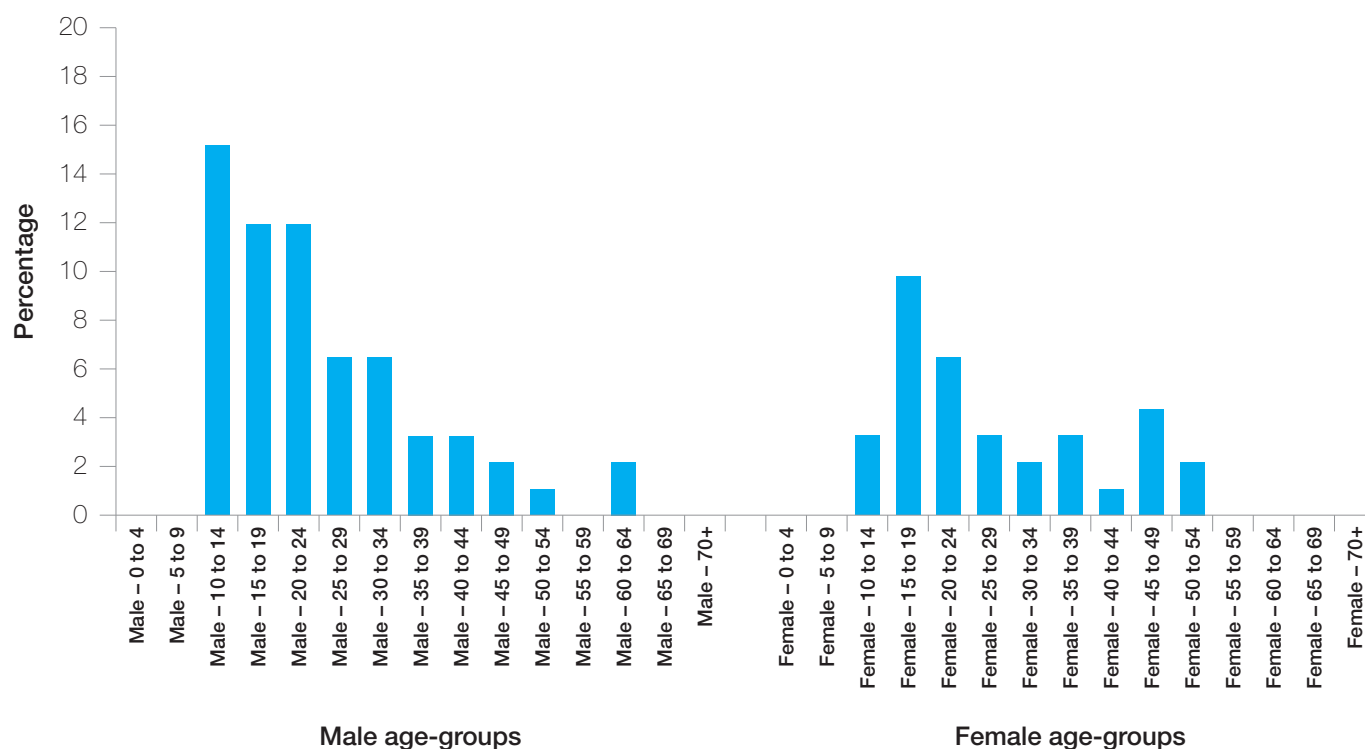
*"Broadham is kind of chaos, you live around chaos and it sort of becomes your life...do you know what I mean? You're never without hearing a row next door, or a row in the street... my mum's a curtain twitcher and is always looking out the window because something is going on...you sort of get caught up in that and it becomes part of your life."*

#### *The role of women and girls in violence in Broadham*

An important finding was the significant involvement of females as both violent offenders and victims in Broadham. More than a third of charged (non-domestic) violence offenders in Broadham were female, compared to 18 per cent in Puckford.<sup>53</sup> Women and girls also made up 46 per cent of the 360 victims of non-domestic violence recorded in Broadham during the study period (compared with 30 per cent of the victim total in Puckford). Strikingly, more than half of non-domestic violence committed by females occurred inside a dwelling. In over half of such cases (60 per cent) the victim was female and in nearly a third of cases both offender and victim were female. This compares to figures showing that a much lower proportion of violence committed by and against men occurred inside homes in Broadham. Taking domestic and non-domestic violence together, women and girls constituted a sizable majority of the victims (58 per cent) in Broadham – a figure generally at odds with victimisation evidence at the national level.<sup>54</sup> It is evident that the inter-generational transfer of a normative violence culture that is seen to characterise Broadham is one in which women seemingly play a significant role.

<sup>53</sup> For added context: in 2011/12 across England and Wales, 17 per cent of arrests for Violence Against the Person involved women (Home Office, 2013a). For the 12 months ending June 2013, 10 per cent of those convicted and 29 per cent of those cautioned for violence were women (Home Office, 2013b).

<sup>54</sup> Although not a direct comparison, findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2011/12 indicated that nationally, overall more men than women are victims of violence (ONS, 2013).

**Figure 3.5.1: All non-domestic offenders by gender and age group in Broadham***Young people and violence in Broadham*

Along with displaying a strong female dimension, the research showed that violence in Broadham was also characterised by the involvement of young people. As figure 3.5.1 outlines, 40 per cent of Broadham's charged non-domestic violence offenders during the four year study period were shown to be less than 20 years old, with 59 per cent under 25. Most glaringly, young males aged 10-14 constituted the largest age category.

Half of all non-domestic violence incidents in Broadham involved *either* an offender or victim under 20 with almost a third of offences involving *both* a victim and an offender under 20. Temporal analysis outlined previously also suggested that Broadham experienced incidents of violence involving young people during the

after-school period. Additional analysis showed that a third of all convicted non-domestic violence offenders in Broadham first received a criminal conviction at a very young age (under 15), with two-thirds convicted before the age of 20, reinforcing that involvement of young people in crime at an early age is comparatively commonplace in the ward.

Growing up as a male in Broadham was seen to be intricately bound-up with notions of masculinity defined through physical prowess, and it was suggested that young men used violence as a way of attaining status among their peers and proving themselves.

*"Pretty much everyone's always just trying to be the man, if you know what I mean, like? So everyone's trying to get up to the top in their area,*

*if you know what I mean?" There's no groups or anything like gangs...there are groups that hang about together, like I've got my group of mates, but I wouldn't say it's a gang and we don't call ourselves anything or it's nothing like that. But if someone, well, from Broadham, say, come and hurt someone in the Woodmead group then the Woodmead group will go and do something to the Broadham group."*

Interviewees also described how violence among young people could result from long-standing grudges or betrayals, or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Qualitative evidence showed that disagreements, arguments, raised voices and general levels of antisocial behaviour were a prevailing feature of everyday life in Broadham. Despite generations of families growing up in the same area, it was suggested that there were few pro-social role models for young people. For many, unemployment, deprivation and problematic alcohol consumption constituted the backdrop to their violent behaviour.

It is particularly striking that two out of every five of the perpetrators of youth violence lived at an address where a domestic violence offence had occurred in the previous four years.<sup>55</sup> This suggests a link between exposure to violence (either observing and/or experiencing) in the home as a child or young person, and subsequently engaging in violence – an association that is well founded in literature (Farrington, 2011; Nofziger and Kurtz, 2005; Ehrensaft et al., 2003). Findings suggest that early life experiences are likely to have a normalising influence on future violence occurrence. In this context, children and young people in Broadham could be seen as

products of a process of conditioning to a prevailing violence sub-culture, and a key reason influencing the perpetuation of an inter-generational cycle of violence.

### *Alcohol as a driver of violence*

The links between alcohol and violence have been widely asserted in research literature but are also a source of contention. Epidemiological studies frequently point to the presence of alcohol for both offenders and victims involved in violence, although evidence also highlights the contributory role of other proximate factors (including socio-economic and mental health problems) (Roizen, 1997). It is therefore apparent that the use or misuse of alcohol is not necessarily the primary driver; rather that it can be symptomatic of and entwined with wider life issues that may also engender violence. However, research does show a consistent association between alcohol and violence, suggesting that alcohol as a causal entity (rather than merely a coincidental factor) cannot be dismissed (Lipsey et al., 1997). There are also indirect links related to victim behaviour, for example, with the frequency of visits to licensed premises (such as pubs and clubs) shown to be associated with increased risk of violent victimisation (Kershaw et al., 2008).

While only a modest proportion of police recorded violence-related incidents in Puckford were shown to be flagged as 'alcohol-related' (non-domestic violence 15 per cent, domestic violence 13 per cent), these figures are likely to be significant underestimates given the challenges around accurately reporting and recording alcohol-fuelled crime<sup>56</sup>, and when taking into account wider evidence of prevalence levels.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, evidence generated from the analysis in Slough pointed to a strong temporal link between alcohol and violence. In Puckford, the clear peaks in

<sup>55</sup> Research also showed that a third of the victims of non-domestic violence under the age of 20 had also witnessed domestic violence in their homes.

<sup>56</sup> A previous study conducted on behalf of The Portman Group outlined that the majority of police licensing officers felt that police records underestimated the true level of alcohol-related crime and disorder, with many alcohol-related incidents going unreported and unrecorded (SIRC, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> According to the 2011/12 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), victims believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol in close to half (47

police recorded non-domestic violence offences on Friday and Saturday nights, echoed in part by ambulance deployment and A&E admissions data, were strongly suggestive of the influence of peak drinking times. Data on A&E presentations for assault-related complaints among Broadham residents also showed similar late-night weekend period peaks, highlighting that the role of alcohol and the night-time economy might have been greater in Broadham than indicated by police data alone.<sup>58</sup>

Alcohol litter data collected by Slough Borough Council's environment teams in the five year period between 2008-2012 also showed that Puckford had the highest recorded number of alcohol litter items in Slough. The type of alcohol litter found indicated there were some key public place locations for outdoor drinking.

Street drinking is a particularly visible activity which had been highlighted as a priority issue by the local Neighbourhood Action Group in Puckford. Different communities use alcohol in different ways, and in ethnically and culturally diverse neighbourhoods such as Puckford, contrasting attitudes to alcohol consumption are often evident which can be a source of conflict. Some interviewees felt that a substantial proportion of violence in Puckford starts as antisocial behaviour, often fuelled by alcohol, particularly among street drinkers – typified by the following statement:

*"I came outside of my house and three Polish men (one of them lives next door to me) were sitting on my garden wall drinking and swearing at people as they walked past...one even fell over into the garden because he was so drunk...I'd been watching them for a good hour or so out of the window and I wanted them to move because this*

*is my private property and they were throwing all the cans into the garden, no respect for anything....So I came out and said I wanted them to move away and if they didn't I would phone the police, and they just laughed and told me to f-off...so I went over and tried to push them away but one of them turned around and punched me in the shoulder."*

Interviews also yielded a range of insights into offender psychology, with non-domestic violence offenders in Broadham and Puckford highlighting that alcohol usage was a primary influence on their behaviour. Some had been drinking alcohol at the time of the offence while others recalled previous violent incidents where alcohol had been involved. The role of alcohol in reducing inhibitions and self-control, particularly among young people, was a recurring motif.

*"I've been in about nine fights and it's usually me that gets beaten. It's because I'm out of my face and I'm not really a fighter at heart. I hate fighting, but when I drink it makes me become invincible."*

*"I've been in about three fights and it's all because of alcohol...mostly vodka ...like a lot of teenagers nowadays don't know our limits. It doesn't matter which drink you drink, but when you do drink, we do it till we like lose our heads. We don't know what we are doing, that's how everyone drinks nowadays...if you don't control your drink then it takes you to a different place."*

Domestic violence perpetrators noted that alcohol was a trigger for disputes or violence to occur or escalate.

*"My previous relationship was very violent... a lot of it was, like, domestic. A lot of it was hitting each*

per cent) of all violent incidents (ONS, 2013). However, research in Scotland has shown that alcohol was a factor in 76 per cent of assaults and 72 per cent of domestic abuse incidents in the Lothian and Borders region (Hope et al., 2013).

<sup>58</sup> It should be borne in mind that A&E data will include non-domestic as well as domestic incidents and is based on the home address of the patient and not the

location of the assault. majority of police licensing officers felt that police records underestimated the true level of alcohol-related crime and disorder, with many alcohol-related incidents going unreported and unrecorded (SIRC, 2002).

*other because of the drink. We used to drink a lot and things would start and get out of control. We were both bad drinkers and it happened...god it probably happened about ten times."*

For one interviewee, alcohol dependency was seen as the trigger for a number of arguments between his former and current girlfriend which he said often "made him go mental".

*"I came home about midday and had been drinking and fell asleep and when I woke up I argued with my girlfriend because she had hid the cigarettes from me because she doesn't like me smoking in the house...but I was annoyed because I couldn't find them and I wanted to smoke. She told me she had put them in the bathroom but I didn't look for them...she started to call me names and I stood up and I lost my temper and first grabbed her arms and then by the neck. I said I wanted her to get away from me and at that point she called police. It was all because I was under the influence of alcohol."*

### *Under-reporting and access to help and support*

The Crime Survey for England and Wales indicated that nationally, in 2011/12, there were 45 incidents of violence per 1,000 population against victims aged 16 and over, compared with 14 crimes per 1,000 population recorded by the police. Notwithstanding the methodological issues in comparing these two datasets, this suggests that a sizeable proportion (approximately two-thirds) of violence is either not brought to the attention of police or recorded by them, although it is likely that a greater proportion of more serious violent offences do get reported and recorded.

Different datasets for agencies in Slough emphasised different trends in violence within Broadham and Puckford, which were seen as potentially indicative of (growing) under-reporting. For instance, ambulance deployments to assaults were shown to be reducing more slowly than police recorded violence with injury offences in Puckford, and in 2012/13, there were more ambulance calls to assaults than recorded Violence with Injury offences. The consistency of the volume of A&E admissions within Puckford over several years also did not (as with ambulance data) support the decline in violence with injury indicated by police data. Throughout England the gap between violence-related A&E attendances and police recorded violence is shown to be greater in more deprived areas (Upton, et al., 2012).

In both Broadham and Puckford, and for both non-domestic and domestic violence (and particularly for repeat domestic violence), the ethnic profile of victims and offenders in police-recorded offences was disproportionately 'White British' (when compared to the ethnic composition of the populations in these wards). It is not possible from existing evidence to determine whether this was the product of trends in incidence, or whether it reflected relative under-reporting within some communities. Evidence from an earlier British Crime Survey showed that once other factors had been accounted for, ethnicity does not affect the risk of being a victim of violence (Janson, 2006). However, literature in the UK and US has highlighted the often significant under-reporting of domestic violence in BAME<sup>59</sup> communities (Thiara and Gill, 2012; Shankar et al., 2013).

In interviews, victims and offenders in Slough (linked to both domestic and non-domestic offences) spoke

<sup>59</sup> Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.



of other violent incidents they had been involved in and which had not been brought to the attention of police. Reasons given for non-reporting by victims had strong overlap with the findings of a victim survey conducted by HMIC (2014b), and included fear of further violence or reprisals, previous (negative) experiences of reporting to the police (including feeling pressured to give statements), and fear of involving social services (where there were children). Other reasons given by victims interviewed in Slough included forgiveness and second chances and not being 'ready' to report.

### 3.6 Summary and next steps

The comprehensive analysis of the nature and scope of violence in the chosen intervention wards in Slough helped identify a number of emerging 'changing world' themes. Violence in Puckford, for example was, in part, seen to be rooted in community discord and clashes of social and cultural norms – apparent by-products of a heterogeneous, fragmented neighbourhood, where population churn was a familiar occurrence. A link between violence and housing was also established, with the increasing proliferation of poor quality and cramped HMO accommodation (often the only affordable option for new migrants looking to settle in Slough) acting as 'tinderboxes' of stress and conflict.

However, we also arrived at a situation where no obvious 'single' violence problem could be easily demarcated. Violence in Broadham and Puckford was shown to be disparate and geographically diffuse; discrete, well-formed problems, with clear and obvious drivers amenable to a problem-oriented policing intervention were largely absent. Inevitably, this placed us in the murkier realm of more 'macro',

nebulous issues whose causation, in many cases, appeared to be much more strongly linked to underlying socio-economic and cultural conditions, and where – from a normative problem oriented policing perspective – it is much harder to effect meaningful change. Eight such threads were identified which were seen to merit further discussion and consideration by stakeholders going forward:

- There were individuals within Puckford and Broadham involved in violence time and again, and addresses, often linked to these individuals, in which a disproportionate amount of crime occurred.
  - Particular stress points in people's lives (for example pregnancy) appeared to be 'triggers' for domestic violence.
  - There were concerns that the conventional, criminal justice responses to domestic violence currently available were not appropriate or effective in every case.
  - A high proportion of violence was shown to occur within dwellings and, in Puckford, disproportionately within HMOs.
  - In Broadham, an unexpectedly large proportion of perpetrators and victims of non-domestic violent crime were women and girls.
  - Violent crime committed against and by young people was shown to be a significant problem in Broadham.
  - Alcohol was seen to be a driver of domestic and non-domestic violence, particularly in Puckford.
  - The nature and extent of domestic and non-domestic violence in Broadham and Puckford (as elsewhere) was not fully captured in police or partner datasets.
-

## 4. Analysis to Action: developing problem oriented responses

### 4.1 Introduction

Having reported and presented analysis findings back to local practitioners and stakeholders in November 2013, attention turned to developing a practical response to violence reduction in Broadham and Puckford that built on these new insights. Although the SARA acronym might imply otherwise, problem-oriented responses do not follow automatically – or indeed, simply – from analyses. Rather (reflecting the experience here) they are the product of an active and involved design process in which new local insights can be blended with the broader evidence-base and pragmatic considerations of what are the most feasible and workable response options. Just as importantly, once designed, problem-oriented responses do not *just happen* – robust implementation requires thorough preparation and planning, consultation, and sufficient resourcing. This section focuses on this crucial ‘hinge’ in the SARA process. It describes the process followed by the Police Foundation team in working with local practitioners to transition from desk-based analytical insights to a practical, localised response.

### 4.2 Prioritising response options

As we have seen, the evidence base emerging from the detailed problem analysis for Broadham and Puckford identified eight facets of the violence ‘problem’ for potential focus. Selecting the most promising of these to progress required an additional layer of consultation and decision making. Having produced and circulated a series of eight supporting ‘problem summaries’ – which detailed particular findings, summarised wider supporting evidence, and raised a number of discussion points – the Police

Foundation convened a meeting with local key leads<sup>60</sup> and stakeholders in January 2014 to assess the appetite for, and feasibility of, progressing work in these areas (whether individually or in combination).

The resulting discussions and decisions provided insights into the types of issues and interventions that appealed to practitioners and were most likely to generate ‘buy-in’ and be readily implementable. An important factor in determining this proved to be the proximity to existing areas of activity and responsibility. Approaches that were already covered by existing strategies, where work was on-going, or which strayed into the remit of an existing service or agency, met with comparatively little enthusiasm. Conversely, areas where service gaps were recognisable and which were dependent on practitioner collaboration to build an effective response were more warmly received. For example, focussing activity on violence involving either young people or women and girls (in Broadham) or alcohol misuse (in Puckford) – areas where practitioners felt that ‘good work’ was already being done – received little support. However, approaches addressing recurrent violence, or non-domestic violence in dwellings – where a response would represent a new strand of activity to which several agencies and services could contribute – were seen to be worthy of further development. The timely ‘local fit’ of projects was also an important factor; a review of Neighbourhood Policing being undertaken by Thames Valley Police, and a growing recognition of the need to enhance problem solving activity across the force, catalysed interest in approaches that focused on creative case solutions at the neighbourhood level.

Discussions with stakeholders helped identify three issues deemed suitable for exploration and follow-up

<sup>60</sup> Key leads were senior representatives from local partner agencies, who provided strategic advocacy for the project and were an important mechanism for regular consultation involving Police Foundation staff.



by practitioners, given their alignment with Thames Valley Police's and Safer Slough Partnership's priorities, and their potential to provide an alternative approach to reducing violence within Slough. These were:

- Recurring people and addresses: there were individuals within Broadham and Puckford who were involved in violence time and again and addresses, often linked to these individuals, in which a disproportionate amount of violence occurred.
- Non-domestic violence in dwellings: a high proportion of non-domestic violence was shown to occur within dwellings (in Puckford, disproportionately within Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)) and, between people who knew each other.
- Adapting and developing responses to domestic violence: developing opportunities for targeted prevention and addressing concerns that conventional, criminal justice responses to domestic violence currently available were not appropriate or effective in every case.

To ensure that stakeholder views, experiences and knowledge of the local service delivery landscape continued to be taken on board, a workshop was held with 40 strategic and frontline practitioners in March 2014 to consider this shortlist of favoured options and generate ideas for possible activities to address each issue. A summary of key points from each of the workshop group discussions is set out in Appendix 4.2.

### *Chosen approach*

Following reflection on the discussions and ideas raised, and consideration of the available evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches, their viability,

and the extent to which they met the parameters of the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project, a working model was proposed (and duly agreed by local key leads), which focused primarily on providing a better response to recurrent violence. This would bring together a programme of ward level, multi-agency, problem solving activity and intervention, incorporating a case-based approach focused on individuals and addresses recurrently involved in violence. The value of the programme was two-fold – forming an innovative response to violence prevention (policing activity up to that point having rarely addressed recurrence in a systematic way), while also generating 'cross-cutting' benefits as a consequence of the additional focus brought to non-domestic violence in dwellings and domestic violence cases.

## 4.3 Programme rationale

The proposed programme was founded on four key concepts:

### *Tailored crime prevention*

First, that the role of the front-line neighbourhood police officer should have crime prevention at its core. While police officers and community safety partners described good examples of problem solving and violence prevention activity in Slough, particularly where high risk of harm was identified, they also acknowledged a lack of preventative thinking in the 'standard' response to a violent incident.

### *Partnership collaboration at the local level*

Second, that violence prevention can best (or perhaps only) be achieved in partnership with other local agencies and that this is particularly the case at the

neighbourhood level. Workshop participants clearly expressed the view that it was not more schemes, initiatives or provision that was required but better coordination of existing services.

### *A case-based approach*

Third, it was seen to be most appropriate to address recurrent violence through a case-based approach. Analysis identified that opportunities to address violence situationally (in public space hotspots, for example) – the orthodox policing response – were limited. It was also acknowledged that while there was a normative and ‘cultural’ dimension to the violence problem in Slough, such issues were relatively abstract and would require a long-term focus that was realistically beyond the scope of the project. It was perceived that opportunities did exist, however, to engage in preventative activity with individual cases (and particular addresses).

### *A focus on recurrence*

Finally, it was felt that there were opportunities to direct this preventative activity at individuals most at risk of being involved in violent crime (as victims, perpetrators or both), and at addresses where violence was most likely to occur, by focusing on recurrence. The principle that those who have been victims of crime are at a greater risk of being re-victimised is a well-established predictor applicable to a range of crime types, including domestic and other forms of violence (Farrell and Pease, 1993). It is also well evidenced that recurrence is likely to happen relatively soon after the initial event (Lloyd et al., 1994; Robinson, 1998), and that victims and offenders often crossover and overlap (Entorf, 2013). These issues were strongly apparent in the crime data analysed for

Broadham and Puckford, despite a narrow dataset based on Violence Against the Person offences and a focus restricted to two wards. For example, more than one in five violent crime victims in 2012/13 in both wards had previously been a victim during the previous three years, with nearly half of these repeats occurring within five months of the initial offence and about 20 per cent occurring within the first month.

## 4.4 Innovation through evolution, not revolution

There was recognition that a multi-agency case-based approach to violence prevention was not new; it was already rooted within a range of existing initiatives seen as ‘best practice’ (including MAPPA, MARAC and MASH<sup>61</sup>) and had emerged as the predominant model of risk management and harm prevention within community safety structures nationally (although the evidence base for the concept, while not without positives, was acknowledged as being slim, particularly with regard to outcomes<sup>62</sup>). The MARAC approach had also been adapted further and applied to addressing complex and high risk non-domestic cases involving vulnerability, disability and repeat victimisation (such as in the Community MARAC model employed in Ealing and other North West London boroughs)<sup>63</sup>, and protecting young people at risk of harm (Lewisham Young Victims MARAC)<sup>64</sup>. Many community safety partnerships had also developed ASBRACs (Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conferences) to support vulnerable antisocial behaviour victims, while a multi-agency case-based approach was also being used to manage priority antisocial behaviour in Slough<sup>65</sup> (which may have, in some cases, also involved low-level violence). Therefore, using a case-based approach at the ward

<sup>61</sup> MASH – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

<sup>62</sup> See Steel et al., (2011). See also Home Office (2011) and Peck (2011).

<sup>63</sup> For further information, see Mind/Victim Support (2013).

<sup>64</sup> For further information, see Ofsted (2013).

<sup>65</sup> Through monthly Antisocial Behaviour Case Review (ASBCR) meetings.

level to address cases where there was a risk of violence occurring (and reoccurring) – which would otherwise have not been considered by prevailing partnership arrangements (because they fell between the 'high harm' and antisocial behaviour criteria of existing structures) – was seen to represent an innovative application of best practice and an appropriate way of catalysing and coordinating localised multi-agency preventative activity. The inclusion of a problem-solving focus, and a robust methodology for identifying appropriate cases, was seen as pushing the boundary yet further, offering an analytical dimension generally lacking in other multi-agency case management processes.

## 4.5 Core components of the proposed model

### *A problem solving approach*

The main principle of the proposed model was that selected cases (either people or addresses) that had been involved in violence would be routinely and empirically identified and put forward for local multi-agency, preventative problem solving activity to reduce the risk of violence reoccurring. The prevailing ethos was one of long-term problem-resolution and the ensuing benefits to be accrued; that by identifying and trying to solve the problems most likely to lead to recurrent violence in each individual case, it was hoped that victimisation, harm, and the service-demand associated with violence could be reduced in the future.

In earlier multi-agency workshops, practitioners provided a range of examples of case-specific activities that they felt had been successful. These

included working with an at-risk individual to think through their behaviour in certain situations, engaging offenders through sport, providing education and advice, and efforts to re-house problematic individuals. The proposed model therefore set out to provide an appropriate arrangement for initiating and coordinating this type of activity and directing it towards relevant cases.

A number of components to delivering this approach were required, which are discussed in-turn below:

- Identifying a suitable caseload.
- Developing a working process.
- Identifying and equipping VMAP personnel.

### *Identifying a suitable caseload*

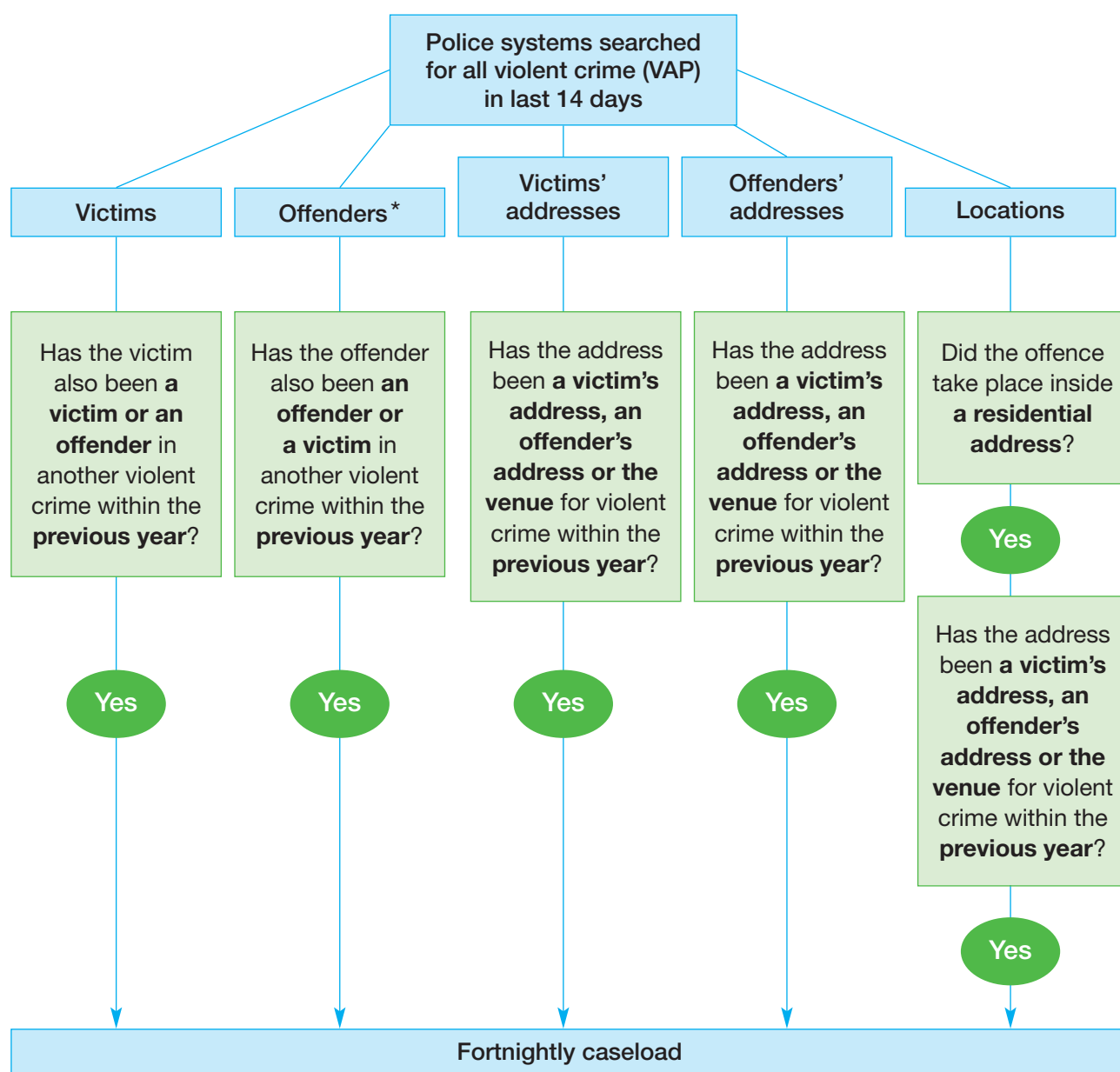
Deploying a focused, multi-agency, preventative, problem solving approach in response to every incident of violence was seen as neither possible nor practical, given existing capacity and considerations relating to efficient resource usage. Identifying a priority, targeted, caseload was therefore seen as the logical way forward.

In light of the evidence base in relation to recurrence and risk, this approach would be oriented around identifying individuals and addresses that had already been involved in more than one incident of violence<sup>66</sup> and taking action to prevent the occurrence of further incidents. The caseload selection methodology comprised:

- Individuals that had recently come to notice as victims or perpetrators of violence in the intervention wards *and* who had also come to notice as victims or perpetrators of violence during the previous 12 months anywhere in Slough.

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<sup>66</sup> Police recorded Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences.

**Figure 4.5.1: Case selection methodology (carried out every 14 days)**

ESTIMATED CASELOAD PER FORTNIGHT **	Violent offences	Recurrent people	Recurrent addresses (not linked to recurrent people)	APPLICABLE CASES
Broadham & Holmston	11	6	3	9
Puckford & Norley	14	8	3	11

\* Offenders include all 'Alleged offenders'(those charged or cautioned) and non-eliminated suspects

\*\* Based on analysis of data from December 2013 to April 2014

- Addresses in the intervention wards where violence had recently occurred, or where recent victims or offenders lived, *and* that had also come to notice as venues for violence or where residents were also victims or offenders during the previous 12 months.

The case selection methodology is summarised in figure 4.5.1 opposite, in which Broadham and Puckford have been paired with other neighbouring wards to ensure sufficient scale for the evaluation.<sup>67</sup>

This approach would identify cases where there was a probable heightened risk of further recurrence, and where a review of more than one previous incident might deliver insights into underlying issues and contributory factors that could be addressed through problem solving. It would cut across typical distinctions and typologies and provide a mechanism for addressing:

- Both non-domestic and domestic violence.<sup>68</sup>
- Those under the age of 18 as well as adults.
- Victims and offenders (and those who have been both).

### *Developing a working process*

In addition to identifying a suitable caseload, the programme of preventative, problem solving activity required formally structured working arrangements.

It was felt that a process was needed whereby individuals and addresses meeting the selected criteria could be systematically and routinely identified to ensure that assessment and activity to address recurrence commenced as quickly as possible. Various time frames were initially considered, including daily and weekly caseload generation, with cases being brought to a monthly meeting for discussion. However,

derivation of cases on a fortnightly basis, in conjunction with a bi-weekly meeting of multi-agency practitioners, was seen to offer the best balance of timeliness of intervention, scale and practicability. The process was afforded its own name and branding: the Violence Multi Agency Panel (VMAP). The VMAP meeting would examine identified cases that came to notice during the previous fortnight (as well as any on-going cases from previous meeting cycles), scrutinise the steps already being taken to prevent further violence, and agree any additional preventative activity deemed necessary. The focus of the meeting would be on ensuring that appropriate measures were being taken by the relevant agency (or agencies) to reduce the risk of further violence. Crucially, it was anticipated that VMAP would act as a 'task and finish group', holding partners to account for delivery and providing the local interface with (non-ward based) engagement work – for example where an existing MARAC, probation or Troubled Families case was identified.

The VMAP case list would be circulated approximately one week in advance of the fortnightly meetings, to enable attendees to undertake the necessary case research and come primed with knowledge of on-going or previous agency involvement with caseload subjects.<sup>69</sup> A mechanism to 'close' cases would also need to be developed so that they could be removed from the caseload (for example, when it was judged that all appropriate preventative action had been taken, or if no further violence had taken place over an identified period).

### *Record keeping and paperwork*

Detailed and accurate record keeping of actions generated and activity delivered as part of the VMAP process was seen as essential, both to provide an audit trail and to facilitate effective accountability,

<sup>67</sup> Prior to the implementation of the initiative, a data sampling exercise showed that expanding the geographical coverage of the initiative from the two original intervention wards of Broadham and Puckford to further include the wards of Holmston and Norley would ensure that there was a sufficiently sized caseload for evaluation purposes, and provide the project with a reasonable possibility of demonstrating impact, given historic trends and variation.

<sup>68</sup> In addressing recurrence, this approach was deliberately intended to cut across the divide between non-domestic and domestic violence to ensure that an appropriate approach was designed for those individuals involved in both.

<sup>69</sup> This was reliant on the necessary information sharing provisions being in place to enable agencies to fully disclose relevant information.

coordination and project evaluation. Administrative support was boosted by the decision by the chief constable of Thames Valley Police to fund a dedicated (part-time) VMAP Coordinator post. The importance of appropriate case management tools to support record keeping processes was also acknowledged, with the acquisition of a case management (IT) system highlighted as a key deliverable.

#### *Additional Police Foundation fieldwork*

To aid familiarisation with multi-agency case management approaches, Police Foundation staff attended a local MARAC in Slough. This afforded practical insight into the working dynamics of such approaches, including the responsibilities assumed by participants and the role of the MARAC coordinator. Separate consultation with a MARAC chair helped illuminate what elements of the process appeared to work best, and also served to highlight aspects of multi-agency case management meetings that could be developed further.

### *Identifying and equipping VMAP personnel*

It was accepted that prevailing resource constraints would not permit the creation of dedicated teams to undertake the work of the VMAP process; it would need to be delivered by officers from a range of agencies and incorporated within existing workloads. It was further recognised, however, that this should not prevent the creation of a distinctive multi-agency, locally-focused 'team ethos' among individuals who had joint and principal responsibility for the delivery of locality-focused violence reduction activity.

Two 'virtual' practitioner teams were formed – one with responsibility for the adjacent intervention wards in the

North Slough policing sector (Broadham and Holmston) and the other for the two wards in the South sector (Puckford and Norley). It was initially envisaged that teams should primarily comprise staff from agencies who had a relevant sub-LPA/borough geographical remit (ideally at the ward level, or alternatively at cluster or sector level) and who engaged in activity that could form part of a case-level problem solving approach. This was seen to encompass:

- Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Specialist Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
- Thames Valley Police Schools Officers.
- Antisocial Behaviour Coordinators.
- Community Safety Project Officers (Slough Borough Council).
- Neighbourhood Enforcement Team Leaders (Slough Borough Council).
- Community Wardens (Slough Borough Council).
- Neighbourhood Housing Managers (Slough Borough Council).

It was envisaged that these individuals would attend the bi-weekly VMAP meetings to problem-solve cases and take joint responsibility for the delivery of activity deemed necessary to prevent recurrent violence.

It was also seen as beneficial for specific post-holders from agencies that did not have an appropriate neighbourhood-level geographical structure to be attached to teams as a designated single point of contact (and attend bi-weekly VMAP meetings where necessary). Practitioners from the following agencies and services were earmarked:

- Thames Valley Probation Service<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The Ministry of Justice's Transforming Rehabilitation agenda, announced in 2013, saw the dissolution of 35 Probation Trusts in England and Wales. From 1 June 2014, Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (TVCRC) assumed responsibility for delivering probation services for all sentenced offenders in Thames Valley, except those who came under MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and/or presented high risk of serious harm.



- Public Health.
- Slough Youth Offending Team.
- Slough Youth Services.
- Slough Adult Social Care Team.
- Slough Children's Social Care Team.
- Slough Drug and Alcohol Action Team.
- Slough CAMHS/ Community Mental Health Team.
- Slough Troubled Families Programme.
- Specialist units within Thames Valley Police, eg Berkshire East Domestic Abuse Investigations Unit and the Berkshire Protecting Vulnerable People Unit.

As will be seen in a later section of this report, an average of 14 participants attended the 26 VMAP meetings held during the pilot year, drawn from a number of core services.

#### *Practitioner Training*

Consideration was given to how best equip VMAP practitioners with the knowledge and skills to share information appropriately and work together as problem solvers. Exchanging agency specific knowledge about systems and processes (for example) within teams was seen as useful; however problem solving training, along with formal guidance on the legislative landscape and information sharing activity was also seen as important.

Training together was seen as a potentially productive way of breaking down agency barriers, team building and helping cultivate a collective 'working together' culture. The Police Foundation duly commissioned two training sessions, provided by an external expert tutor, focused on the application of problem solving to

case-level violent crime reduction. The sessions also examined existing legislation to address issues associated with violent crime (eg powers to deal with offenders), and how data on individuals involved in violent crime could be lawfully and appropriately shared between partner agencies.

It was acknowledged that governance arrangements for the sharing of information between Thames Valley Police, Slough Borough Council and other relevant community safety partners might need to be reviewed, and that the expectations of any such provisions should be clearly communicated to VMAP practitioners. The development of a VMAP Service Level Agreement (SLA), outlining the aims of the initiative, its core operating principles, and the responsibilities of agencies and individuals involved (including with regard to information sharing and handling) was an important aid to this. The Police Foundation led the process of bringing the SLA to fruition.

## 4.6 Implementation planning

From May 2014 onwards, an action and implementation plan was compiled to finalise development of the VMAP model.

This involved Police Foundation staff working with small multi-agency working groups to fine-tune the VMAP mechanism, help progress remaining deliverables, and agree a schedule for project implementation. Up to this point, the view of police leaders in Slough had been that the VMAP process could be simply subsumed within the existing local police sector tasking meeting, and therefore commence immediately. Although this had since been refuted by chief officers – VMAP was seen as

necessitating discrete working arrangements – the implementation plan served to temper the prevailing ‘can-do’ mentality and allow for a more considered preparation timetable.

The plan stipulated the need for regular briefing of stakeholders involved in the VMAP process as well as the identification of project champions and single points of contact within agencies; this was to ensure continuity of partner engagement prior to launch and to help facilitate changes to existing staff practice. The plan also specified the development of an analytical data feed of recurrent individuals and addresses (using police data) to derive the fortnightly VMAP caseload, together with the provision of needs assessment guidance to support problem solving of cases during VMAP meetings.

It was agreed that the VMAP model would be initially run over a 12-month pilot period to allow enough time for the project to become embedded, and provide a sufficiently robust time frame for evaluation. Following slight delays in the planning schedule – generated in part by problems in accessing the necessary case data – 7 August 2014 was specified as the inaugural VMAP meeting date (and thus project launch).

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## 5. Response: implementing locally tailored solutions

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the implementation phase ('pilot-year') of the Slough Violence Multi-Agency Panel (VMAP) initiative, which ran from 7 August 2014 to 6 August 2015. It commences with a chronological summary of delivery efforts over this period (Section 5.3) which builds a narrative of early promise set against initial teething problems, intervening periods of programmatic refinement and subsequent maturation, followed by a final phase marked by stabilisation, but also some emerging signs of practitioner disenchantment.

Section 5.4 looks at the VMAP model in action, analysing the characteristics of the VMAP caseload (including needs prevalence), and the case management and intervention activity undertaken by VMAP practitioners.

The main body of this chapter (Section 5.5) sets out to explore both the strengths and limitations of the VMAP initiative within a broad series of emerging themes. In doing so, it draws on the findings of a process evaluation conducted by the Police Foundation project team throughout the implementation year. This section highlights the extent to which the effectiveness of VMAP – an initiative that displayed many positive attributes and benefited from considerable engagement and local advocacy – was hampered by the significant challenge of doing effective problem solving with a complex caseload, as well as by certain operational issues.

As part of a concluding narrative for this part of the report, Section 5.6 highlights some apparent design and programmatic weaknesses within VMAP, and reflects on what could have been done differently.

No criticism of local services or specific individuals is implied when highlighting the challenges faced – that is not the purpose of this research project, and nor is it warranted. The VMAP initiative came with very little extra resourcing, and required a level of engagement from participants that was supplementary to their existing workloads and commitments. To be able to implement and sustain the project in this context, particularly given the prevailing backdrop of austerity, funding uncertainty, organisational change, and personnel churn, was admirable. Instead, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a balanced appraisal of the implementation journey, and in doing so, identify particular dependencies and issues that served to undermine effective practice.

### 5.2 Process evaluation – overview and methodology

An assessment of 'process' (what has been done and how) was one of the two dimensions explored in the evaluation of the VMAP initiative. 'Impact' assessment is covered separately in the following chapter (6) of this report, although the two are seen as complementary components in any robust appraisal of crime reduction activity (Ekblom, 2007; Ellis and Hogard, 2007).

Process evaluations help stakeholders document the process of a programme or project's implementation. While outcome evaluations help assess the effectiveness of actions taken in inducing change (ie by assessing impact), process evaluations provide the important contextual insight into how any change was likely generated. Such understanding is vital if others are to emulate or at least learn from the work undertaken (Ellis and Hogard, 2007).

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The VMAP process evaluation documented programme developments over the course of the 12-month implementation (pilot) period of the initiative, including capturing the experiences and learning of those involved. This was achieved through participant observation, analysis of VMAP subject records, and obtaining the views of practitioners.

## *Research mechanisms*

### *Participant observation*

Delivery of the VMAP process was supported throughout the implementation year by a Police Foundation Project Development Officer, aided by the Foundation's Senior Analyst, who adopted dual roles as embedded, reflective researchers. The Police Foundation's role in hands-on project management was perhaps more involved than had been initially envisaged, particularly when it came to attempts to progress subsidiary elements of the project (such as a case management IT system for VMAP). However, adopting this position enabled the Foundation to gain greater insight into multi-agency practice locally, and to examine the enablers and dependencies of effective delivery. Police Foundation staff attending the vast majority of VMAP meetings in an observational capacity served as the main mechanism through which to monitor project progress and observe the working dynamics of the VMAP process first-hand. Initial reflections were provided to the local VMAP support team<sup>71</sup> during regular post-VMAP meeting review sessions, supplemented by practice reflections and emerging themes captured in notes routinely shared with support team members. In addition, a number of informal planning meetings were held with local VMAP management (mainly the chair and co-chair). Project officer's field-diary entries recorded throughout the pilot year also provided an invaluable

resource for chronicling the implementation process and operation of VMAP.

### *Analysis of VMAP subject records*

Records and case notes for all 298 VMAP subjects generated for consideration by VMAP during the 12-month pilot year were reviewed. A coding framework was developed by Police Foundation staff to categorise information about individuals – including subjects' needs and their engagement with VMAP practitioners – as well as actions taken by agencies and decisions made regarding case closure. This information was analysed in order to generate a demographic profile of the VMAP caseload, as well as to facilitate greater insight into the working dynamics of the VMAP process and to gauge the extent and effectiveness of intervention activity undertaken by practitioners.

### *Practitioner feedback*

Feedback from participants involved in the VMAP process was captured in two ways. Semi-structured 'in-depth' research interviews were conducted with VMAP practitioners in three separate waves over the course of the 12-month pilot year (October 2014, March 2015 and July 2015), building to a set of 17 interviews in total. Interviewees were selected to represent a range of organisations and positions, although there was a focus on those who had attended a number of meetings to ensure provision of more nuanced and thoughtful reflections.<sup>72</sup> These were supplemented by interviews with project key leads in September 2015 to capture strategic reflections on the VMAP initiative and views on project continuity and legacy.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to an initial content analysis to highlight key themes,

<sup>71</sup> Comprising the VMAP chair, co-chair, VMAP Coordinator and police analyst assigned to VMAP.

<sup>72</sup> The potential for selection bias is acknowledged.

similarities and differences in respondent's views and experiences. It should be noted that this exercise captured views at particular points in time over a continually evolving process.

The results from the semi-structured interviews were supplemented by three separate on-line questionnaires conducted concurrent to the interview process. The questionnaires aimed to capture practitioners' views and experiences of the VMAP project and on topics related to partnership working in general, and as such, were sent to everyone who had participated in a VMAP meeting at that time. Some questions were retained across all three iterations of the questionnaire to facilitate longitudinal assessment, while others were framed to reflect specific phases within the project over the course of the implementation year.

## 5.3 The VMAP implementation year – chronology and emerging issues

### *'Getting going' (Aug-Oct 2014)*

From inception, VMAP benefited from strong practitioner buy-in, as reflected in solid attendance figures (see Section 5.4) and interview and survey feedback. In the first survey conducted in October 2014, 80 per cent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the rationale for VMAP. VMAP was also shown to be further strengthening practitioner collaboration and inter-agency relationships in Slough, building on an already solid foundation of partnership working. And while time consuming the commitment was generally seen to be valuable. As one interviewee reflected:

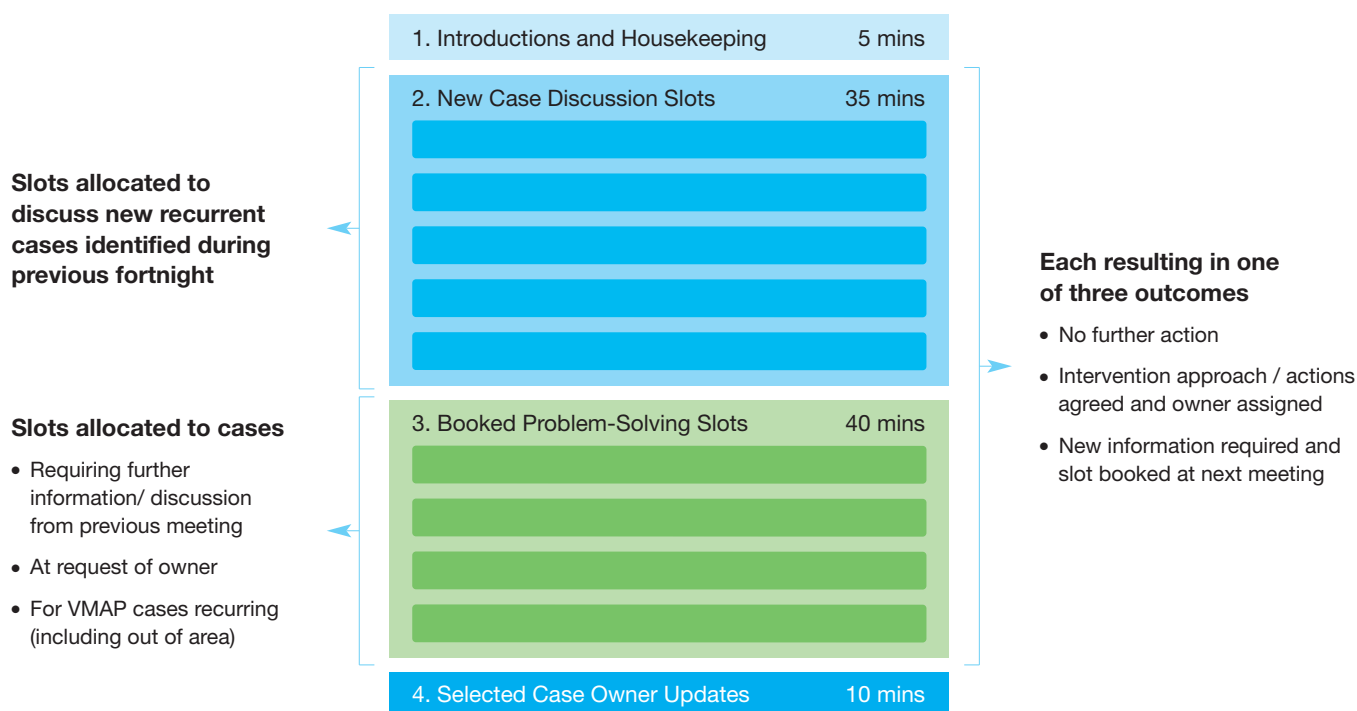
*"of course it's a good use of my time because I need to do the research...because it means that actually I know the people I'm serving...I should take the time to find out their issues...because otherwise we're going to repeat generation after generation."*

There was also a widespread feeling among practitioners that VMAP would be of benefit to individual cases, and through interviews, most practitioners expressed a clear sense that it is 'what we should be doing'. It is evident that VMAP sat well with the prevailing service ethos and sense of duty to improve lives and 'make a difference', as expressed by the following interviewee:

*"Take the evaluation out of it...I think personally it's worth it because I see the difference it could make to Slough as a whole...it's about making the community feel safe"*

Perhaps inevitably, some initial teething frustrations with the VMAP process were highlighted. Intermittent attendance by some services and agencies was noted. The lack of continuity in representation was also a frustration to some, and 'eleventh hour' deputisation by those who clearly lacked case knowledge, were ill-prepared, and who lacked familiarity with the role and purpose of VMAP, was also felt to be of limited use.

Several respondents highlighted frustrations that actions were not always completed by VMAP attendees and that the desired updates were sometimes missing. Particularly in early iterations, it was felt that VMAP meetings had only been partially successful in getting sufficient information 'in the room' first time to facilitate effective case discussions.

**Figure 5.3.1: New VMAP meeting agenda structure (presented October 2014)****New VMAP Meeting Agenda Structure – Guide**

Managing 'case-flow' was also seen as problematic, with actions and open cases beginning to multiply and proliferate, and the process for closing cases somewhat unclear. Certain respondents highlighted that this had led to some confusing and muddled meetings, unnecessary recovering of old ground (in relation to reviewing actions taken) and as a result, had restricted the time for meaningful discussions around new cases. The case paperwork used at meetings was also initially perceived as somewhat 'clunky' and lacking in user-friendliness.

Respondents reflected that, overall, the above combination of problems had hampered VMAP's ability to consistently deliver the kind of in-depth problem-solving initially envisaged. While they realised that the process was continually evolving (with some improvements in progress), there were also reminders that for some individuals, patience was finite:

*"the agenda is just growing bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, and my fear is that that's going*

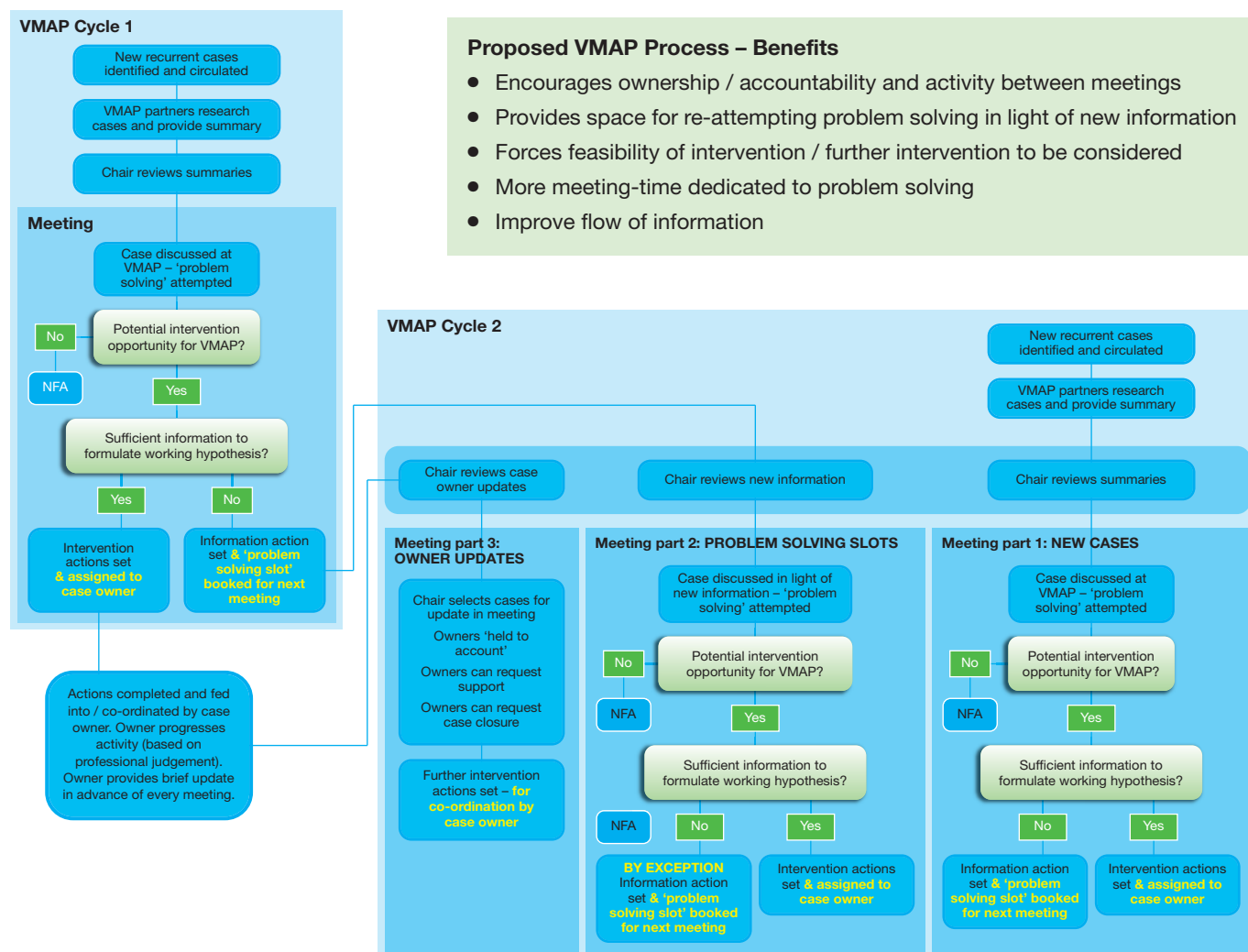
*to make the meetings so impractical that you'll get drop-off, you'll have people that start going, actually, I'm not going because it's too much."*

### *Refinements to VMAP model (late 2014)*

In response to practitioner feedback, and following observations made by Police Foundation staff during preliminary VMAP meetings, some refinements to the VMAP model were discussed and agreed with the VMAP chair and co-chair in late 2014. The primary aim was to help resolve the systematic limitations identified in the model, and enhance overall practice and the effectiveness of VMAP going forward.

Modifications were intended to bring more of a structure to VMAP meetings, through the introduction of a series of timed discussion slots for new cases at the beginning of each VMAP meeting, augmented by the inclusion of dedicated problem solving slots for selected cases (see figure 5.3.1). This segment aimed



**Figure 5.3.2: Initial revisions to the VMAP model (presented October 2014)**

to provide the scope for attempting (or re-attempting) problem solving based on the provision of new information on cases by partners. It was envisaged that this would help shift the dynamic of meetings towards more focused problem solving activity.

The revised VMAP model also encouraged ownership of cases as a core part of future working arrangements. A dedicated time-slot for case owner updates was incorporated within the new meeting structure (see figure 5.3.1). It was envisaged that an increased focus on case ownership would raise expectations that intervention activity should be undertaken and coordinated in a timely fashion between meetings, while further enhancing

accountability for such efforts. Improved information flows and dialogue between partners resulting from dedicated ownership and management of cases was also an anticipated outcome.

The revised model further facilitated a more robust appraisal of the feasibility of intervention or further intervention within cases under consideration or being managed. At every stage detailed in the framework, decision-making processes were to be guided by a defined set of possible outcomes from case discussions – either cases should be progressed through the cycle to case ownership or dedicated problem solving, or it should be determined that they require 'No Further Action' (see figure 5.3.2).

**Figure 5.3.3: Survey respondents views on VMAP change and development (March 2015)**

*We'd like your views on how VMAP has changed and developed during the time you've been involved. To what extent do you think the following aspects have improved, got worse or stayed the same during the course of VMAP so far?*

	<div>Greatly improved</div> <div>Improved</div> <div>Stayed the same</div> <div>Got worse</div> <div>Got a lot worse</div> <div>Don't know</div>					
VMAP paperwork and documentation	<b>6</b>	4	2	0	0	0
The quality of the information brought to meetings by participants	<b>5</b>	4	3	0	0	0
The flow of the meeting and use of the time available	4	<b>6</b>	2	0	0	0
Participants feeding back information and updates on cases	3	<b>7</b>	2	0	0	0
The size and manageability of the list of open cases	3	<b>5</b>	2	1	0	1
Decision making around individual cases	2	<b>8</b>	1	1	0	0
The quality of problem-solving discussions in meetings	2	<b>8</b>	2	0	0	0
Agency representation and attendance	2	<b>7</b>	2	1	0	0
Participants completing the actions set	2	<b>5</b>	4	0	0	1
The quality and quantity of case-work taking place between meetings	1	<b>6</b>	3	0	0	2

Number of respondents.

Most frequent response in **bold**.

These refinements were complemented by other changes, including the introduction of a 'triage' process (to review, and where appropriate, rationalise the caseload in advance of VMAP meetings) and improvements to the format and content of case paperwork (including a system of case status colour coding for VMAP records).

Reflecting practitioner concerns about the demands of the existing VMAP cycle – in particular the lack of available time for case preparation between meetings – the scheduling of meetings was also adjusted. This involved transitioning to a 'realigned' fortnightly meeting cycle in January 2015, which facilitated more time for researching cases and submitting case updates.

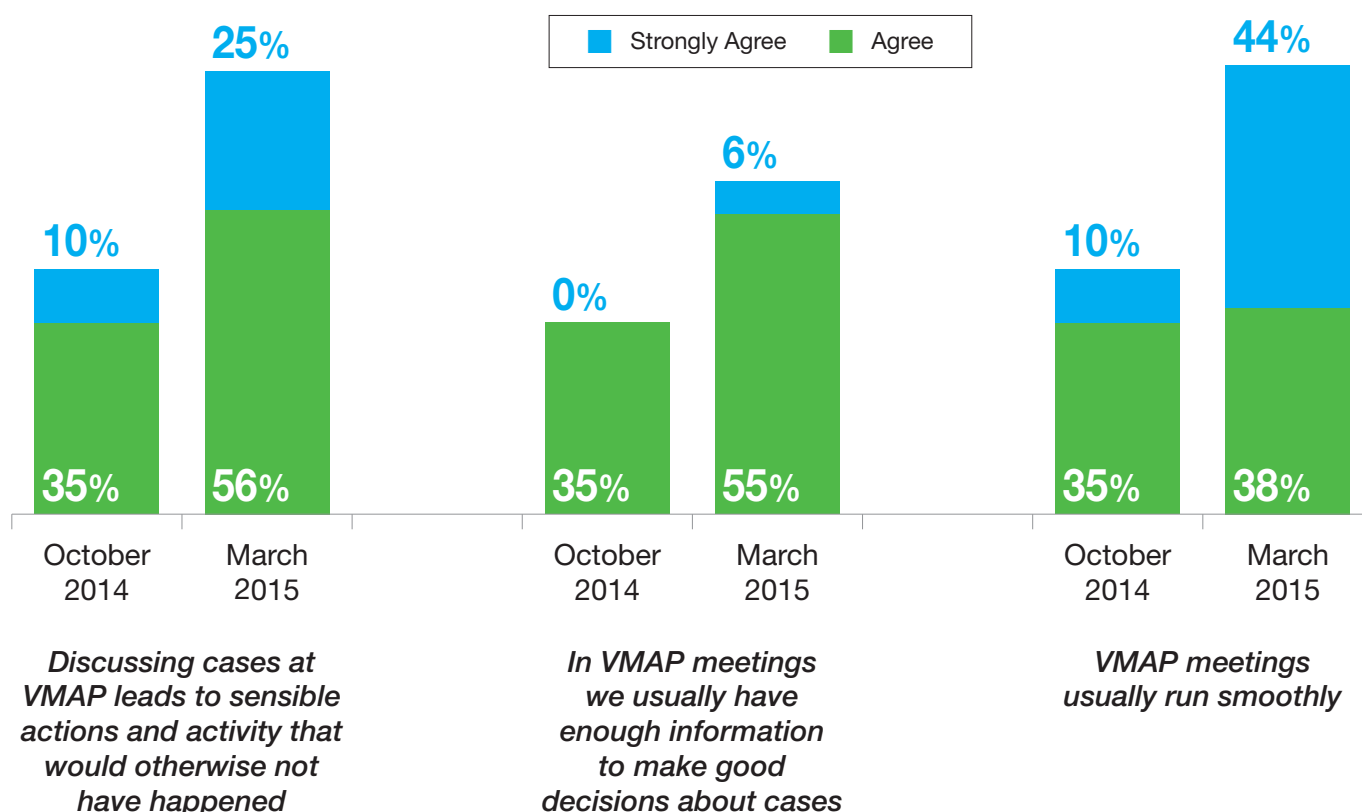
### *'Finding its feet' (Nov 2014-Feb 2015)*

The middle phase of the project saw VMAP developing and maturing as a process, entering into a 'bedding-in' phase.

Survey respondents were asked whether they thought various aspects of the VMAP process had improved, stayed the same or got worse during the course of their involvement. Unsurprisingly, some respondents, particularly those with less regular attendance, were unable to provide the necessary insight. However, among the twelve who did respond to these questions, there was clearly a majority view that VMAP had improved and developed. In particular, respondents felt the paperwork and the quality of information brought to meetings had significantly improved (see figure 5.3.3).

In terms of securing regular and stable attendance from a broad set of appropriate contributors – a key area of improvement highlighted in the first wave of interviews – some representation issues remained. However, as one respondent stated, attendance at VMAP meetings was generally felt to be healthy.

*"I was really surprised at how many agencies that you managed to get round a table every two*

**Figure 5.3.4: Survey respondents views on VMAP working arrangements (October 2014 and March 2015) (per cent)**

*weeks...so I was pleasantly surprised when the room was jammed."*

It was also noted that a regular core group of contributors had emerged and developed in confidence as a working group.

*"People appear to be getting more confident during the meetings – it can take a couple of meetings to feel confident."*

*"I think a lot of people were very nervous at the beginning, very not sure what they were supposed to be saying and they probably didn't share what they could have shared. I think people are doing that a lot more."*

Respondents also appeared to confirm that many of the previous issues identified with the flow and administration of meetings had been largely alleviated by the re-structuring of VMAP.

*"If you'd asked me a few months ago, I would have said, 'work in progress', but now, I think they are going really well, and I think there's more clarity in why we're there and what it is that we're trying to achieve...because now you have the triage, you have the problem-solving, you have exceptional cases coming back, so (there is more) structure to it."*

Practitioner perceptions regarding the quality of VMAP case discussions and outcomes, the use of information to aid decision making, and the smooth operation of VMAP meetings were also noticeably more positive (see figure 5.3.4).

Overall it was evident that participants were increasingly committed to and supportive of VMAP as a mechanism for effective partnership working, foreseeing long-term benefits.

*"I think it's a fantastic tool that can be used to be of great benefit in the long run."*

### *'Settling down' (March to July 2015)*

The latter third of the VMAP pilot year was marked by stability, both in terms of commitment from attendees and also attendance levels (analysis of which is included in Section 5.4). Results from practitioner surveys suggest that the benefits of continued engagement in VMAP remained very clear for participants.

However, growing questions over some facets of the VMAP process had also become increasingly apparent, with survey results suggesting a creeping sense of doubt emerging among some practitioners about resource intensiveness.

Questions about the depth of problem solving capabilities of the VMAP process were also raised, with some suggesting that the current approach failed to adequately delve into the complex issues affecting some individual's lives.

*"[VMAP] needs to be deeper and engage the individual. Problem solving isn't just about signposting...it doesn't just stop there, it's a lot deeper than that...it's about having that kind of quality communication with the individual."*

This notion is further supported by the following quote, which highlights practitioner frustration with case recurrence and the inability of VMAP to find resolutions to problems:

*"That's the thing that probably galls a lot of people. We're sitting here, we're giving up our valuable time, and we're having a ten minute conversation about someone that's going round and round and round the system, and we, kind of, know that they will continue to do that."*

A gradual 'dissolving' of the meeting structure was also a feature of VMAP observed during the latter months of the initiative. This led to the distinction between problem solving and open case discussions becoming increasingly blurred.

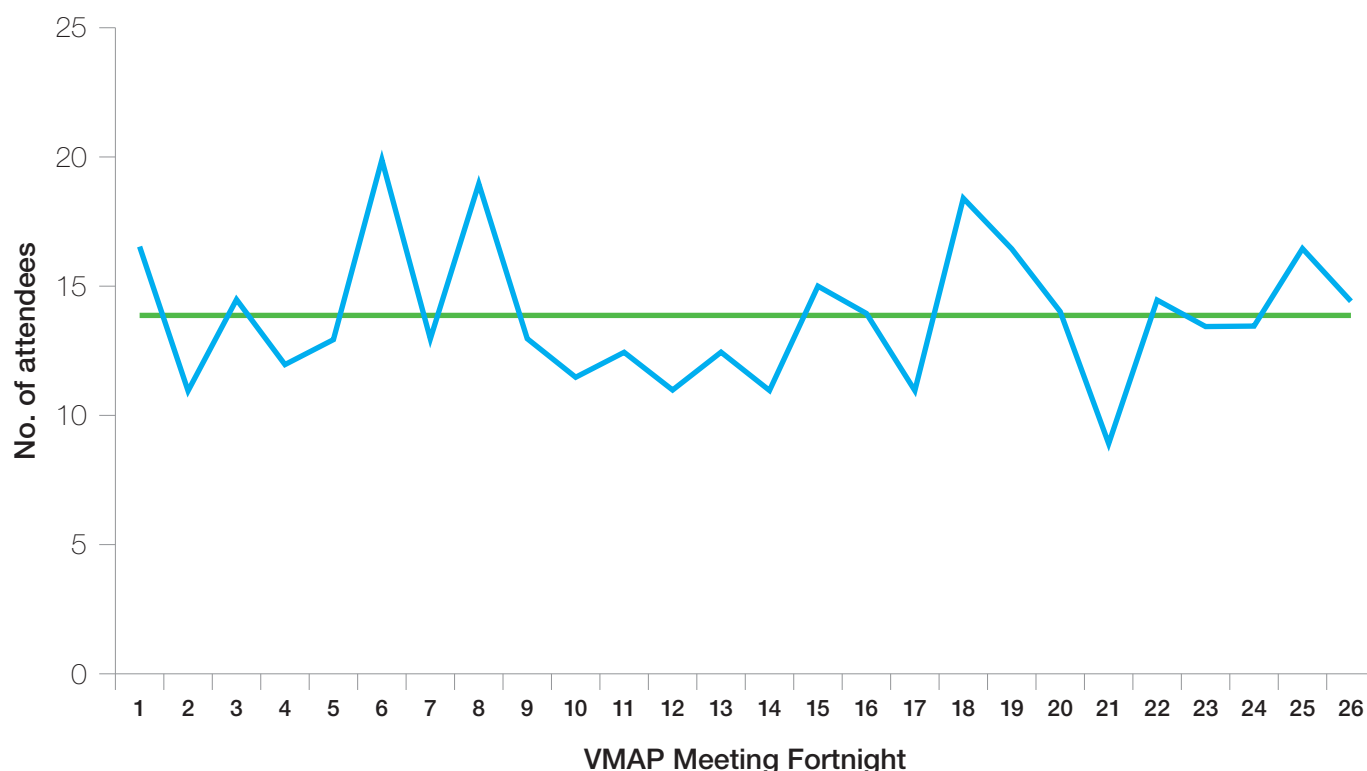
Many of these issues were potentially suggestive of what could be termed 'programme fatigue' – when a cyclical initiative begins to drift and lose focus, particularly the closer it gets to a definable end-point (in this case the culmination of the 12-month pilot period). The increasing desire by some local practitioners to make changes to the VMAP process may have also been a contributory factor, although ultimately there was agreement to retain the existing model for the duration of the pilot year.

## 5.4 The VMAP model in action

### *Attendance and representation at VMAP meetings*

VMAP saw a mean average of 14 attendees per meeting, a turnout trend which remained stable over the course of the pilot year (see figure 5.4.1).

In total, however, 97 different practitioners attended VMAP meetings, over half of whom attended only once. In part, this is due to the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit (DAIU) sending 14 different representatives to VMAP meetings – a result of service pressures and regular clashes with the scheduling of local MARAC meetings. The volume of single attendances was also a strong indication of personnel churn in several agencies and a degree of 'self-selection', with a number of attendees evidently deciding that the VMAP process was not for them. However, high levels of attendee turnover were balanced by a 'core group' of

**Figure 5.4.1: Number of VMAP meeting attendees during the pilot year (with linear trend line)**

practitioners, 13 of whom attended at least half of all meetings during the pilot year.

Attendance data highlights that VMAP saw strong and consistent engagement from police neighbourhood officers, young people's services, local authority housing teams and domestic abuse charities, all of whom were key constituents of the VMAP 'core group'. There were also those services whose attendance, while sporadic for the first half of the project, showed latter improvement (often following liaison by VMAP management) – the Domestic Abuse Investigations Unit, treatment services, and mental health professionals.

The second half of VMAP also saw the engagement of staff from local homelessness charities (P3 and Slough Homeless Our Concern – SHOC), filling both a recognised gap in knowledge among existing VMAP personnel, but also seizing an opportunity through VMAP to gain a greater understanding of their clients wider needs.

### *Who were the VMAP cases?*

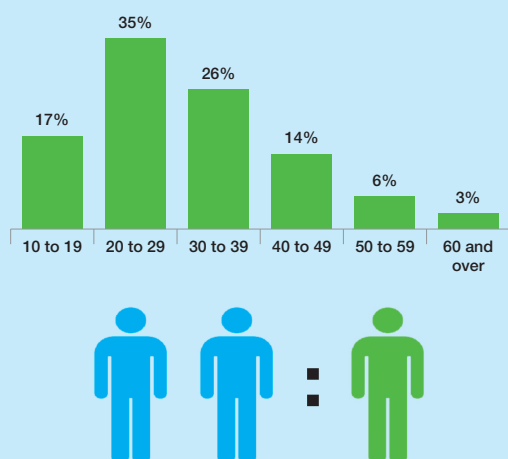
298 individuals were considered by the VMAP process. Below are some of the key characteristics of the VMAP cohort.

#### **Distribution**

	VMAP Triggers	Average per fortnight	Unique People
North	123	4.7	101
South	257	9.9	197
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>298</b>

- **Average of just under 15 cases fortnightly**
- **Two-thirds of cases attributable to South sector**
- **Average caseload in South double that for North**

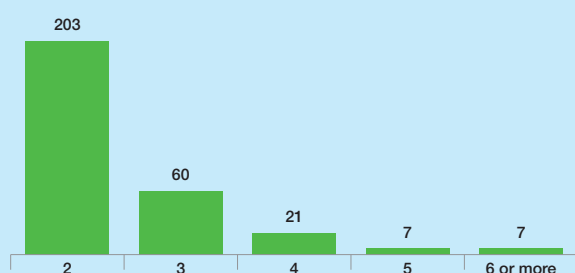
## Demography



- Strong orientation towards younger age groups
- 78 per cent aged 39 or less

- Ratio of two males to one female in the caseload

## Recurrence



- 68 per cent coming to notice\* twice
- 20 per cent coming to notice\* 3 times
- Most prolific recurrent cases a comparatively small proportion of caseload (less than 5 per cent coming to notice\* 5 or more times)

\* 'Coming to notice' refers to when individuals were included in the fortnightly caseloads generated for VMAP meetings

## Roles

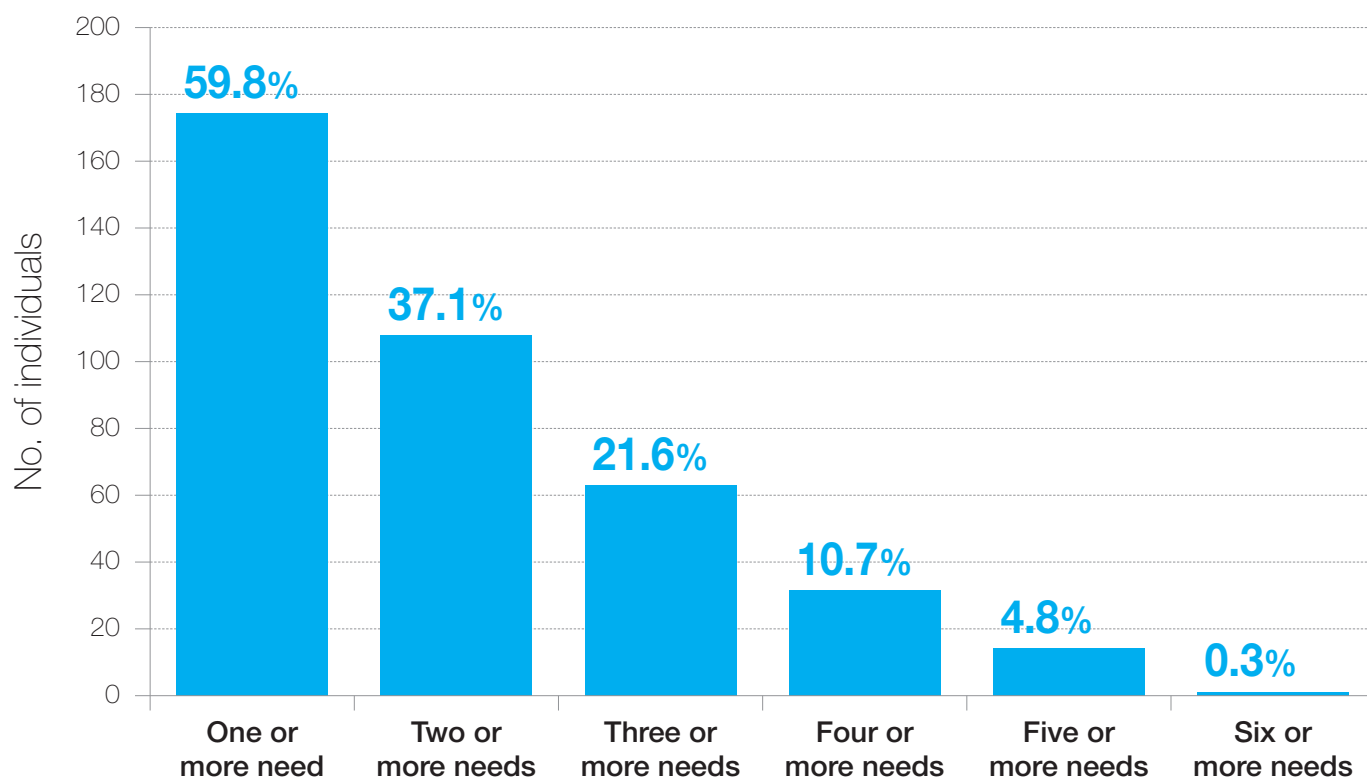
%	Domestic violence	Non-Domestic violence	Total
Suspect / offender	22.1	35.9	58.0
Victim	19.5	22.5	42.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.6</b>	<b>58.4</b>	

%	DV victim	Non-DV victim	DV offender	Non-DV offender
DV victim		28.6	33.0	25.3
Non-DV victim	25.0		21.2	46.2
DV offender	26.3	19.3		45.6
Non-DV offender	13.0	28.7	31.1	

Figures show the percentage of those in column category during last year that had also been in row category

- 58 per cent of caseload suspects/offenders
- Suspect/offender cohort included more non-domestic violence perpetrators
- Significant overlap in roles
- One-third of DV victims also presented as DV offenders
- One-third of non-DV offenders were also shown to be DV perpetrators
- Blurs any notion of regimented victim/offender typologies



**Figure 5.4.2: Needs prevalence within the VMAP cohort**

### Needs

From the outset of the VMAP process, exploring and assessing the contextual factors surrounding offending behaviour and victimisation provided the foundation for problem solving. This routinely highlighted the myriad (and often untreated) needs and dependencies present in the lives of VMAP cases, including mental health problems, substance misuse, and housing issues, and served to provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by practitioners when dealing with such individuals.

Analysis of information presented for all 291 valid VMAP cases<sup>73</sup> found that mental health issues were mentioned in approximately one-third of case records (totalling 96 individuals in total).<sup>74</sup> These were noticeably more predominant within the alleged offender/suspect cohort than among victims (by a ratio of nearly 2:1). Depression was by far the most common illness, being recorded in more than half of all cases where mental health issues were cited. 20

individual VMAP cases displayed at least three different mental health needs or problems.

Drug misuse or drug issues were mentioned for approximately one-third (91) of all VMAP cases, and again, were more prevalent in the alleged offender/suspect cohort. Cannabis was the substance most commonly recorded.

Alcohol issues were cited in approximately one-quarter of VMAP cases (74 individuals in total). These were found to be slightly more prevalent among alleged offenders/suspects.

Housing and related needs were highlighted for more than 20 per cent of VMAP cases (63 individuals in total). These were shown to be slightly more prevalent within the victim cohort.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, multiple needs<sup>75</sup> proved to be widespread within the VMAP caseload. 37 per cent of VMAP cases (108 individuals) experienced two or more identifiable needs, with more than one-fifth experiencing three or more (see figure 5.4.2 above).

<sup>73</sup> Seven cases contained insufficient supporting information and so were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that these were not necessarily indicative of formal clinical diagnoses.

<sup>75</sup> Defined as two or more separate needs, encompassing mental health, alcohol issues, drug misuse, housing issues, homelessness, learning disability, physical disability, or 'other' key need.

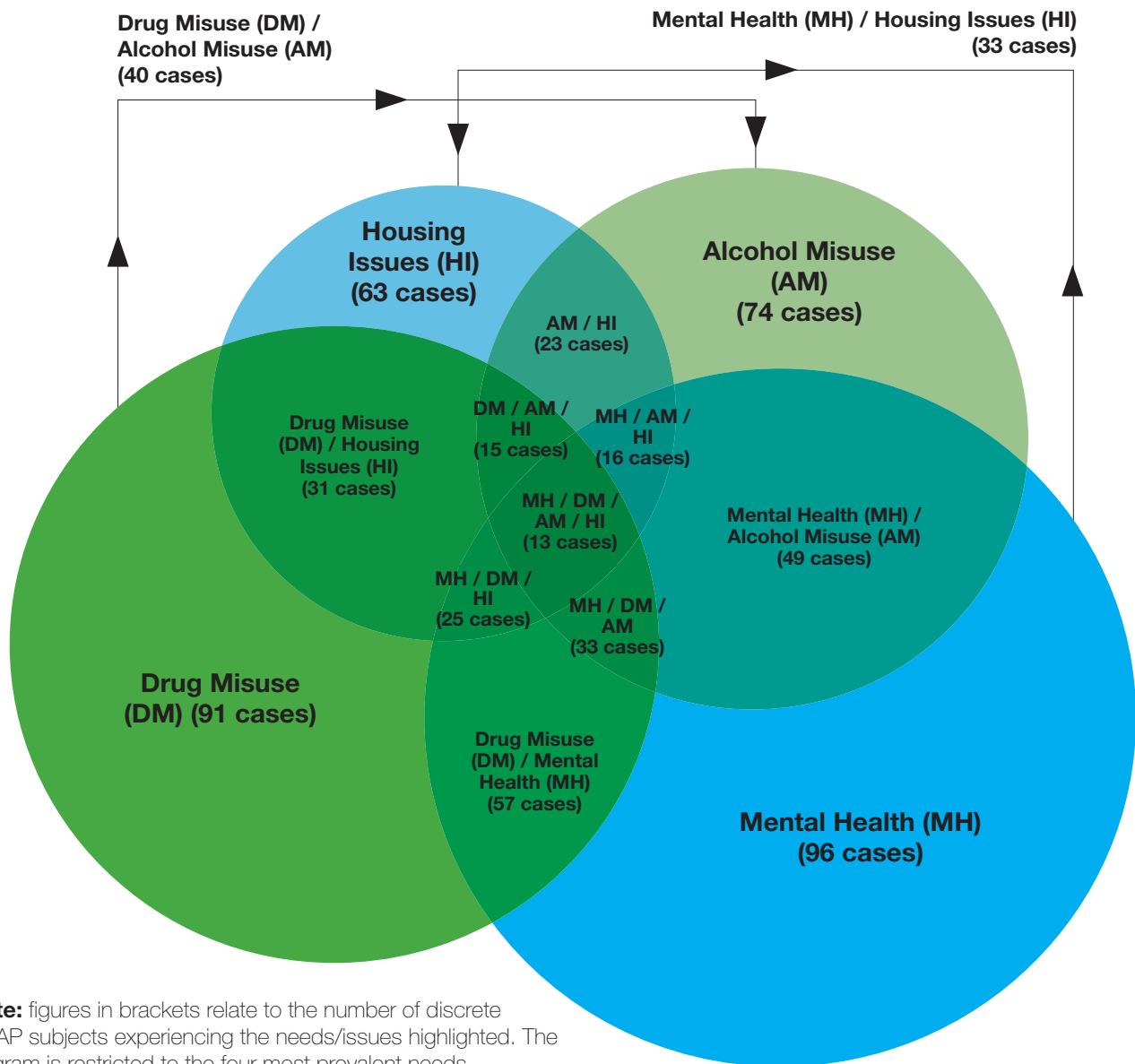
**Figure 5.4.3: Multiple needs within the VMAP cohort**

Figure 5.4.3 above gives a further flavour as to how the most prevalent needs and issues (mental health, substance misuse and housing problems) coalesced within the lives of VMAP subjects.<sup>76</sup>

### *Case management, tasking and delivery*

The Police Foundation undertook further analysis of VMAP caseload records with a view to illuminating the

VMAP 'black box' and gaining greater insight into the casework system during the pilot year. It explored what happened to cases following their initial consideration at VMAP meetings, including the type of actions set, the allocation of cases to practitioners, resulting outcomes and the justifications given for case closure.

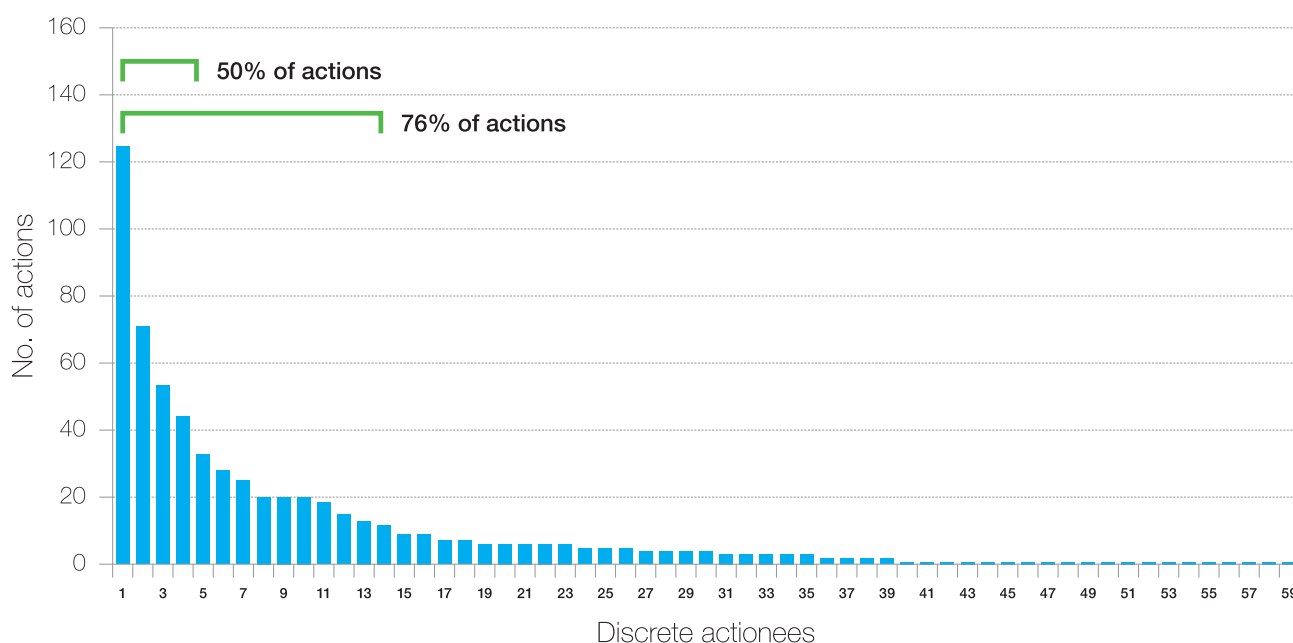
#### *Actions undertaken*

All recorded actions undertaken by practitioners – those assigned by the VMAP chair or 'self-tasked'

<sup>76</sup> To read this diagram: for example, 91 cases had a drug misuse need, of which 31 also had a housing need, of which 15 also had an alcohol need, of which 13 also had a MH need.

**Figure 5.4.4: Recorded actions undertaken at VMAP by agency/service**

Action type	No.	% of total
Update on ongoing developments	252	38.4%
Further research on cases	154	23.4%
Attempt to engage with subject	97	14.8%
Administrative task	51	7.8%
Case discussion outside VMAP	42	6.4%
Attempt to engage with linked party	22	3.3%
Onward agency referral	22	3.3%
Action related to associate of subject	9	1.4%
Flagging of subject on agency systems	8	1.2%
<b>Total actions undertaken</b>	<b>657</b>	

**Figure 5.4.5: Actions ascribed during VMAP meetings**

during VMAP meetings – were reviewed and categorised. Approaching two-thirds (62 per cent) of all 657 actions set could be regarded as ‘information’ actions<sup>77</sup>, with a substantial proportion of these simple case updates (see figure 5.4.4 above). This is indicative of VMAP often assuming a case monitoring role, rather than actions being representative of substantive problem solving activity.

Less than 15 per cent of actions involved clear attempts by practitioners to engage with VMAP subjects, while only just over six per cent related to facilitating discrete case discussions outside of VMAP (highlighting the extent to which this aspect of the VMAP process was largely under-utilised). A fraction of actions (22 in total) led to onward referrals of cases to other agencies.

<sup>77</sup> Those actions that required partners to source further intelligence, provide additional context regarding cases, or confirm certain case details.

**Figure 5.4.6: Recorded actions undertaken at VMAP by agency/service**

Actionee/owning agency	No.	% of total
Thames Valley Police	262	39.9%
Slough Borough Council core services	164	25.0%
Mental health services (NHS)	31	4.7%
TVCRC*/Probation	16	2.4%
Youth Offending Team	6	0.9%
<b>Public sector agencies sub-total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>72.9%</b>
Domestic Abuse support services	79	12.0%
Drug/alcohol treatment services	39	5.9%
Homelessness charities	31	4.7%
<b>Charities / commissioned services sub-total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
Universally assigned actions (all participants)	21	3.2%
Unknown/unassigned	8	1.2%

\*Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company

#### Action owners

As figure 5.4.5 illustrates, approximately half (327) of all actions set during the VMAP pilot were attributed to just five individual VMAP practitioners, most of whom were regular attendees and established contributors from the VMAP 'core group'. In total 14 practitioners accepted over three quarters (499) of all actions set.

Thames Valley Police personnel absorbed 40 per cent of all actions at VMAP (262 in total) – by far the largest share of any participating agency (see figure 5.4.6 above). Close to half this total were attributable to the South Neighbourhood Inspector, an ever-present VMAP attendee and initiator of the majority of case discussions during the South section of VMAP meetings. Slough Borough Council services assumed a quarter (164) of all actions set, 43 per cent of which were attributable to one service/individual (Young People's Services representative). The comparatively low volume of actions attributable to mental health and drug/alcohol treatment

services (highlighted in figure 5.4.6) is perhaps surprising, given the high prevalence of mental health and substance misuse issues in the VMAP cohort.

#### Action completion rate

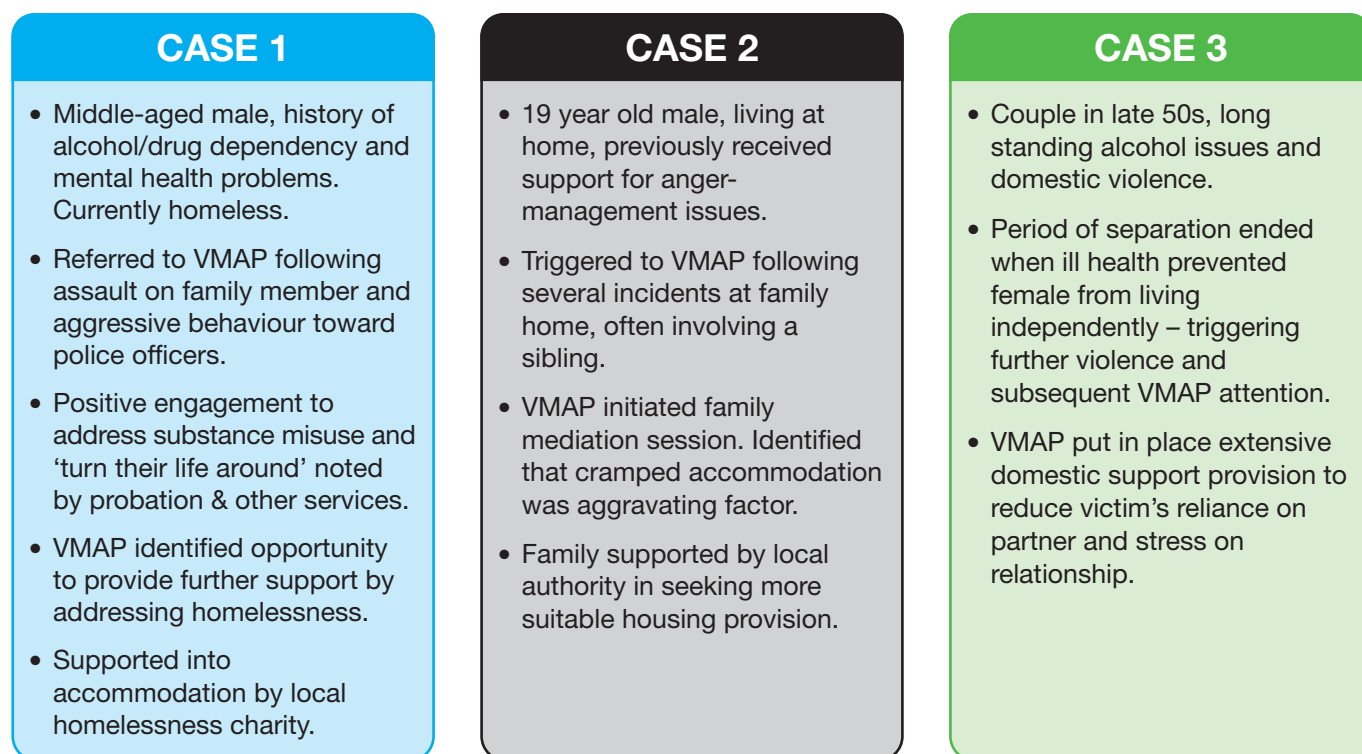
Approaching two-thirds of actions set (424 in total) had been completed<sup>78</sup> by the end of the VMAP pilot. Only two services completed the vast majority of their actions, although seven services/agencies completed 75 per cent or more. At the other end of the spectrum, two key services failed to complete around two-thirds of their actions.

#### Actions – results/outcomes

Approximately one-third of actions (214 in total) undertaken by practitioners resulted in awaiting clarification on outcomes or no further action being taken. Negative outcomes<sup>79</sup> were recorded in approximately 13 per cent of actions (85 in total); overall less than 10 per cent of all actions undertaken were deemed to involve positive engagement from

<sup>78</sup> The possibility of inaccuracy of records should be acknowledged (ie, some actions may have been completed but not reported back or recorded as complete).

<sup>79</sup> Where activity undertaken failed to have the desired effect or could not be delivered as anticipated, including (most often) situations where services were unable to successfully engage with VMAP individuals.

**Figure 5.4.7: VMAP case studies**

VMAP subjects. No individual service/unit saw a high proportion of actions ascribed to them that resulted in positive engagement.

Approaching half (44 per cent, 17 in total) of the actions apportioned to one commissioned service were shown to have resulted in negative outcomes.

These findings tend to paint a fairly negative picture of VMAP's ability to engender favourable outcomes with subjects, although this is perhaps unsurprising given the context suggested in figure 5.4.4 previously (that comparatively little substantive or material intervention action was generated through VMAP). However, that is not to say that the process failed to demonstrate some success stories. The case studies illustrated below in figure 5.4.7 above are good examples of where VMAP was able to achieve positive or at least promising outcomes. They also provide a good cross-section of the type of cases considered by VMAP, further illuminating the array of needs and difficulties faced by

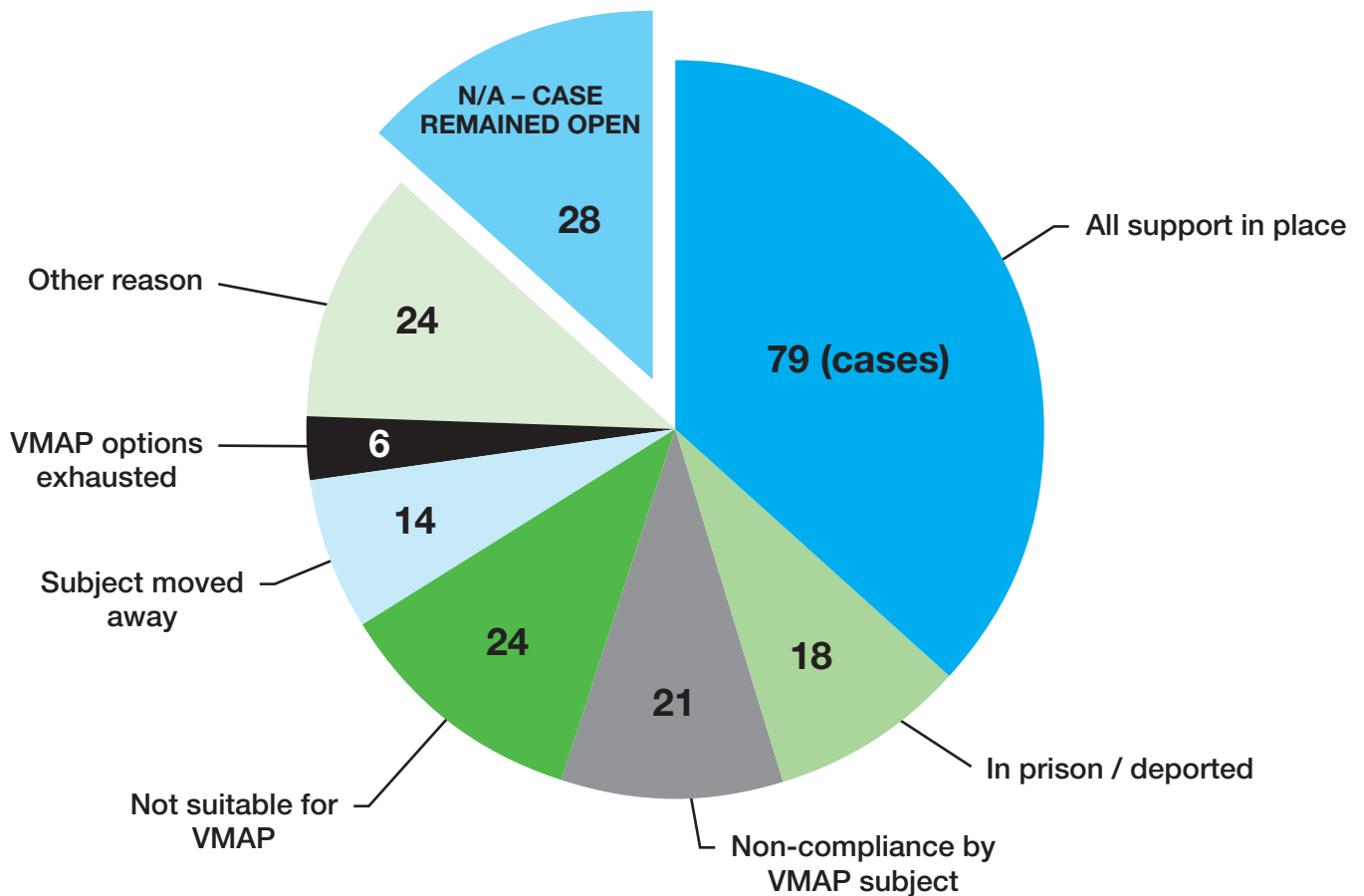
individuals, their complex relationship dynamics and domestic circumstances, and the range of agencies involved in providing support and intervention.

#### *Actions – recipients*

At least one action was set for just under half (134) of the total number of individuals/subjects in the VMAP caseload. Approximately one-quarter of actions set (162) related to just 12 VMAP subjects, and half (330 actions) to 32 subjects. This is strongly indicative of the high level of VMAP resourcing absorbed by a relatively small proportion of the caseload, many of whom will reflect the most challenging and intractable cases.

#### *Case closure*

Just over one-quarter of the 298 individuals cases identified for VMAP (77 cases in total) were closed at initial triage (and therefore never discussed at VMAP meetings). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a majority of these closures were due to individuals being deemed unsuitable for VMAP.

**Figure 5.4.8 Reason for closure of VMAP cases**<sup>80</sup>

Of the residual 214 cases, most (87 per cent) were subsequently closed – either at a future triage or full VMAP meeting. 79 cases were closed to VMAP due to all support being in place (see figure 5.4.8 above). 21 other cases were closed due to non-compliance by the subject; some individuals were simply unwilling or unable to accept the help and support being offered by VMAP professionals. Overall, however, it should be noted that there was a general reticence by VMAP management to abandon even especially difficult and demanding cases, and that the prevailing ethos was one of perseverance (even if this did mean that for some cases problem exploration became somewhat repetitive). Figure 5.4.8 highlights that only a minority of cases were closed due to VMAP pathways and intervention options having been exhausted.

Just under 10 per cent of all cases (28 in total) remained open to VMAP at the end of the pilot year.

## 5.5 Delivering VMAP – key themes

### *Working together*

#### *VMAP as a catalyst for partnership collaboration*

It is clear that a fast changing world is a familiar and tangible feature of professional life for Slough practitioners. Diversity and transience provide the context for service provision and regularly manifest as new policing priorities and emerging community safety challenges. External change is also often accompanied by, and indeed has an influence on, internal reorganisation and service realignment by agencies, adding another dimension to the prevailing sense of flux.

<sup>80</sup> Those cases not closed at initial triage.

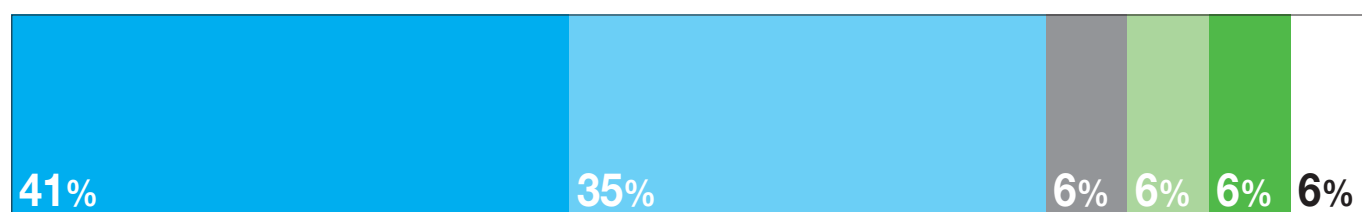


**Figure 5.5.1 Survey respondents' views on whether they were more likely to communicate with partnership colleagues as a result of being involved in VMAP (October 2014, March 2015 and July 2015)**

### July 2015



### March 2015



### October 2014



I am more likely to get in touch with colleagues in other agencies as a result of working together through VMAP

Several VMAP practitioners noted the acute challenges of partnership working in the current climate of public sector austerity, suggesting that budgetary pressures can make agencies hesitant to step beyond 'core-business' boundaries, and that staffing changes and turnover can disrupt working relationships. It was also emphasised that there were a number of agencies who were 'notoriously' difficult to engage. However, there was strong appreciation from both VMAP practitioners and managers that in these challenging conditions, crime and other social problems can best (or perhaps only) be dealt with in partnership and by finding long-term and enduring solutions.

*"...I think in austerity, partnership is probably of far greater importance because rather than one organisation trying to solve everything on their own and throwing everything at it, each organisation do their little bit, that will hopefully make a more efficient reduction in the first place."*

Practitioners acknowledged that VMAP benefited from, and further built on, an ethos of inter-agency working in Slough. Even in its preliminary stages, respondents felt that VMAP had made a positive contribution to developing working relationships.

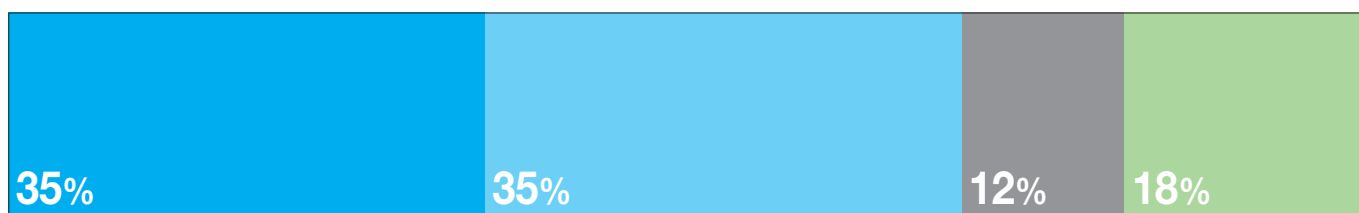
*"Everyone is more aware of what everybody does [as a result of VMAP] and what they can do and what they can offer."*

**Figure 5.5.2: Survey respondents' views on whether VMAP had given them a better understanding of what other partners do (October 2014, March 2015 and July 2015)**

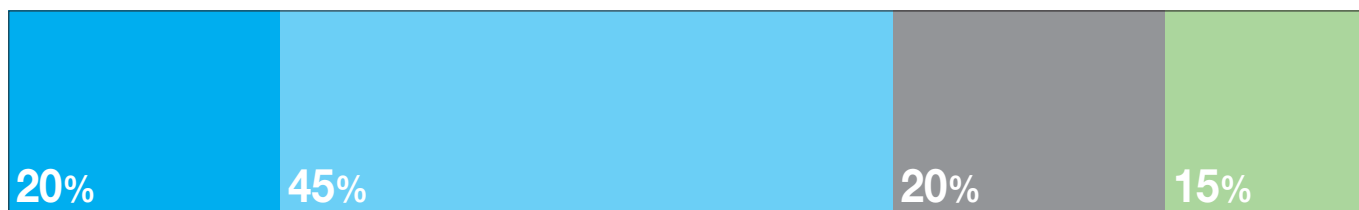
### July 2015



### March 2015



### October 2014



VMAP has given me a better understanding of what other agencies, teams and organisations do

As the initiative progressed, VMAP was seen to further enhance multi-agency interaction. Between each of the three practitioner surveys, there was a continued increase in the proportion of respondents agreeing that they were more likely to communicate with colleagues from other agencies or services as a result of being involved in VMAP (figure 5.5.1).

The change in the proportion of those 'strongly agreeing' between the preliminary survey in October and second wave in March was especially pronounced.

The robust multi-agency interaction and networking opportunities engendered by VMAP were also clearly conveyed in the following statements.

*"Networking; everyone has got to really know each other...and that really helps as well for the support we are giving as a whole."*

*"The sort of contacts that we have, I don't think we would have otherwise."*

*"I always big up VMAP...if you come to VMAP you'll have these people basically on the doorstep, you can ask them anything about anything...you build that relationship with them through VMAP... they're not only there to deal with VMAP cases, because they can help you with other cases as well."*

*"...it's [VMAP] has done nothing but strengthen our links with key partners."*

Survey respondents also increasingly felt that VMAP had provided them with an enhanced understanding of what other partners do (figure 5.5.2).

Further, VMAP fostered engagement from a broad range of organisations that didn't necessarily sit on other partnership forums, a development that was clearly appreciated by some individuals:

*"Getting everyone together in Slough is a brilliant idea, because it doesn't happen anywhere else in Slough. We don't have that opportunity anywhere else."*

VMAP was also valued for the way in which it both expedited and personalised case referral processes that could otherwise feel anonymous, uncertain and onerous.

*"I think it feels like it makes things a lot easier because the people that are there represent particular services and then it feels as they're... as almost as personally obliged to take those cases back and allocate them or talk about them to particular people, so it's rather than sending a blind referral into a service you got a person that's responsible for that."*

*"My view is, it's stuff that was probably going on anyway, but because everyone is around the table, it can speed up. So it was going to happen anyway, we've had that interaction, but it would take another meeting to speak to such and such, then another meeting to speak to Housing, another meeting to speak to Youth Services, whereas everyone is around the table."*

It was further evident that VMAP was increasingly being perceived by practitioners as the type of thing

'that they should be doing' and that the enduring benefits to be gained from working in a more preventative way were tangible.

*"I think it was a brilliant concept, and I thought... I hope it grows and develops further from this embryo stage to progress further, and gets bigger and bigger. I think... I think it is a good thing."*

*"Surely we look at all the money that is being saved, if we are being preventative, isn't it? You know, we're trying to prevent all the police call-outs, and getting to serious case reviews, and all of that, which we're not wanting. It will save a fortune, so it is much better to be preventative."*

#### *Violence as everyone's business*

Violence as a focus of the VMAP initiative was seen as relevant and important, a shared objective that different agencies – not just the police – could see as 'their business' and one which had not necessarily received holistic or preventative attention in the past (outside of statutory / familiar processes such as MAPPA or MARAC). VMAP was also seen to offer a more rounded perspective on violence issues, addressing (unlike either MAPPA or MARAC) both victims and offenders.

*"I think the people round the table feel they are really contributing to a holistic process that's going to make a difference to that victim and suspect..."*

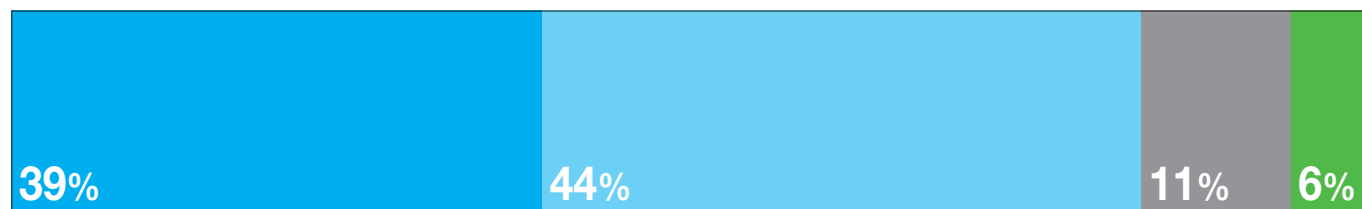
#### *'Oiling the cogs' of partnership working: making the machine work better*

##### *Identifying individuals in need of service support*

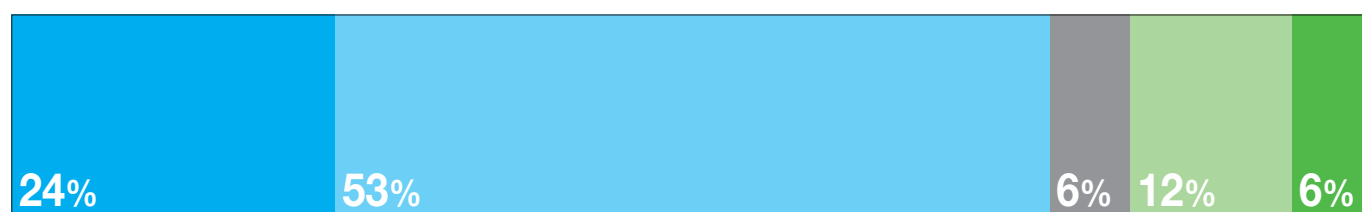
Over the course of the pilot year, an increasing proportion of survey respondents agreed that VMAP

**Figure 5.5.3: Survey respondents' views on whether VMAP had alerted them to cases or issues that were relevant to them (October 2014, March 2015, July 2015)**

### July 2015



### March 2015



### October 2014



VMAP has alerted me to cases or issues that are relevant to my work

was a useful mechanism to identify new and appropriate cases (that were not necessarily being picked up by conventional referral channels) for their agency caseloads (figure 5.5.3).

While this suggests that there may be lessons to be learned about the general effectiveness of referral pathways in Slough outside of the VMAP process, the initiative clearly served as an useful enabler to some core services, particularly those supporting vulnerable victims and working with children and young people (who are more often the dependents of VMAP subjects, rather than directly involved in violence themselves). While this may not always have resulted from directed problem-solving activity, it was clearly

valued by attendees and, plausibly, could contribute to broader violence and harm reduction aims.

*"From the two, three [meetings] a month, we have been picking up between five and six cases, and out of these...four have engaged with support so I think that is a huge success rate."*

*"So, in a family who's suffering domestic violence, [that has come to the attention of VMAP, we can] pick up a 13 year old, look up on the database and nobody has actually referred them. So you can go and ring them and say 'it's come to our notice that this issue has happened within your home and we'll just look at how best we can support you.'"*

*Coordinated action and improved working knowledge*

As feedback from interviewees attested, VMAP helped improve case coordination, allowing practitioners to identify which other agencies were working with an individual.

*"I would come back and share that information with my staff ...I'll say right these are the other agencies who are familiar with [the case] if you don't already know, you need to get in contact with them and have a professionals meeting."*

It was also suggested that VMAP helped reduce duplication of effort by agencies, enabling more streamlined, unified and consistent engagement with service users.

*"They maybe have two, three other organisations working with them, that we weren't aware of ... so it's duplication. And it could be that a support work ... [has] built up a relationship with the client, she's visiting them, but actually, she doesn't know the police have been called out quite a number of times."*

*"They are not happy to tell their story to everyone, time and time again, but if it can be approached as one – that is what a lot of our clients will say – that we don't want to keep telling everyone what's happening. So, we should be coming together."*

Through information received from other attendees in regard to individuals they were dealing with, VMAP also enabled practitioners to get a more complete picture of their client's lives, which helped change their understanding and the approach taken regarding client engagement.

*"I very much doubt that [individual] would share willingly that, 'yes, I've been doing a lot of weed*

*and I got depression, multiple personalities and firearms but I'm good to look after a three year old on my own'."*

*"I've got a lot back from a meeting the other day about one of [my colleague's cases] so: 'did you know your client was Tasered?' And she was like: 'Oh, God, no, she didn't tell me that'. So... she could then go in and speak to the client and go: 'Is there anything else you want to let me know? Was there an incident...?' And then she'll go, 'Yes, yes, that did happen'. So that helps, because, obviously, we know they don't tell us everything."*

*'Enabling' neighbourhood policing*

VMAP was shown to be a valuable enabler of neighbourhood policing, facilitating improved ways of working.

At its best VMAP helped move the police response to violence from a reactive, and linear incident-by-incident approach, to a more thoughtful, informed and person-centred tack – a notion neatly articulated by one officer:

*"Well, it [violent crime] has been addressed in the past by reacting to what's gone on and I'll go to it one day, she will go to it the next, he will go to it the next, and there's absolutely no continuity in how to deal with that particular person."*

*"We're talking about how we deal with that person, and how all of us around that table can work to deal with that person and get that person into a situation or a scenario where they are happy. People that are committing crime are generally crying out for help in some way, not everyone, but in some way. That's where that works, that never happened before."*

VMAP also helped get information retained in police systems out and to the front line, as one officer outlined early on in the initiative:

*"I don't think we'd [previously] have got all the research which is what underpins everything. I certainly wouldn't have had anybody to be able to put it into some sort of format and, you know, to look at [and identify] ... actually, this is the issue. So there's been a lot of benefits to it."*

Neighbourhood officers also felt that VMAP improved their effectiveness by highlighting individuals requiring attention, directing their engagement activities, and obtaining 'softer' contextual information from partners that could improve the quality of interactions.

*"[The VMAP process] wants me to get to know that other one [the case I don't personally know about], like I know the other ones. Why are they here [on the list]? There's a reason they're here, I want to find out about that person, I want to see if I can get to know them."*

*"Then over the space of about two weeks I will make sure I visit that area at least once to try and knock on the door and speak to...not mention anything about the assault, just to say how's everything going on and stuff."*

*"[Other VMAP practitioners will] give me the personalities of the people we're talking about because, they'll know a little bit about them that I don't know, and I think that's really important as well. So that young lad...assaulted somebody, one of the youth workers in here was telling me what he's like and what he enjoys and stuff. If I go and visit him I know that, don't I?"*

Information also clearly flowed the other way too, something that was appreciated and seen as beneficial by police partners.

*"The [neighbourhood] police officers, they've got so much information, because they know the clients, because they're having that contact all the time, and they're really good to link in to, as well. So, they've been invaluable."*

*"What I find quite useful, is information that we're given from the neighbourhood police officers, on that day to day basis how that person's behaving in the community, because that service user's not necessarily going to give us that information and that's something we can challenge that individual."*

## Information sharing and management

*The importance of information sharing in underpinning multi-agency collaboration*

The exchange of relevant and timely information about individuals and residential addresses in order to identify, understand and address cases of recurring and persistent violence was seen as crucial to achieving VMAP's core aim of reducing recurrent violence. It was envisioned that the initiative could help expand and coordinate the provision of multi-agency information sharing to meet this purpose.

To assist the information exchange process, practitioners received external training on relevant data sharing powers (as well as problem solving theory) prior to VMAP implementation. Governance was further aided by the development of a Service Level Agreement (SLA), which helped précis arrangements and expectations for the sharing, processing and management of data within the VMAP process. The



SLA acted as a useful bridge to the Safer Slough Partnership Joint Protocol on Information Exchange – a document which more fully set-out the local partnership data-sharing landscape and duties placed on community safety partners to work together to address crime and related issues.

#### *Barriers and concerns regarding information sharing*

The lack of secure email addresses among some participants to facilitate the safe exchange of data was cited as a frustration by survey respondents during the preliminary stages of VMAP. Initially, the VMAP caseload data was being disseminated to a small number of agency contacts with secure email privileges, to enable onward distribution to other colleagues via internal email mechanisms. However, this situation improved as the provision of secure email accounts increased.

The pre-VMAP training appeared to have been particularly effective in changing attitudes on data sharing (although one respondent during the first wave of practitioner surveys felt that a minority of partners still had doubts and concerns). Several attendees had clearly taken away the simple message that not sharing information could be just as problematic as sharing inappropriately, although it was also recognised that further clarification and guidance would be appreciated.

*"In terms of data-sharing, everyone is quite happy to do that, I just don't know how confident I am in being able to defend...the fact that I shared information...I know that I can share it, I just can't necessarily say why I can share it."*

By the mid-term phase of interviews, it was clear that there was widespread buy-in to the principle of information sharing by practitioners, who recognised

its importance in facilitating a more holistic understanding of VMAP cases.

*"Everyone's got so much information here, and when we look at Serious Case Reviews that are going on all around the country, it's like, 'oh, yes, they knew that, they knew that' ... and we sit together, and it's like we've got a whole picture of this person now ... we didn't know that you were involved, and you didn't know we were involved, and, actually, that's not great, so we need to work better at that."*

*"That's where it [VMAP] sort of comes in, because sometimes people can be working in silos, the whole idea is you open it up, so everyone is aware of the situation, and if they can add additional benefit and support to those individuals, then that's the place to do it."*

However there were still concerns expressed by a number of VMAP contributors about the compliance of individual data sharing decisions with relevant protocols and legislation.

*"I'll maybe bring to the table what I think everyone needs to know, but then one of [my colleagues] was saying, okay, one of the cases that we discussed, there was concerns going to Child Protection, and this meeting had brought out information about [an individual] – can we share the minutes? And it was like, okay, can we?"*

*"It's an area that still worries me...I feel a little bit uncomfortable about how much [information] do I really take in [to meetings]?"*

For this (and other) reasons it was generally felt that VMAP attendees should be of a suitable level of seniority, ie, individuals with the ability to make managerial decisions (particularly those associated with risk).

### *Case management system developments*

The value of a case management (IT) system in enabling the secure and efficient sharing of information, and acting as a centralised repository for VMAP case data and documentation, had been recognised early on during the VMAP project planning phase.

Partners received a demonstration from the developers of a proprietary case management system during the first month of project implementation. Several interviewees from the initial review of VMAP in October 2014 reflected positively on the demonstration received, and were keen to stress the value of a case management resource to the VMAP process.

At a strategic review meeting in November 2014, key leads were invited to consider whether a serious attempt should be made to procure a suitable case management system, and how might this be best achieved. A practitioner working group consisting of VMAP attendees, led by the Police Foundation, was set up in response. This undertook an appraisal of two systems (one already used by Slough partners for analogous case management activity, and the other employed by an increasing number of partnership areas nationally). Recommendations regarding a preferred solution were presented to key leads in late March 2015, although a decision was put on hold pending the outcome of work by Thames Valley Police to identify a suitable case management solution to support neighbourhood policing activity.

A decision on a preferred case management system was anticipated to initiate further follow-up activity, culminating in a procurement business case being in place by the end of the VMAP pilot in late July. However, with Police Foundation staff having limited capacity to provide further coordination of this activity,

no further progress on system procurement was made by local practitioners during the remaining project time frame.

## *Resilience, leadership and management*

### *Resilience*

While staff cutbacks and high levels of turnover were a familiar occurrence within many agencies in Slough, the fact that the police locally had been largely shielded from the impact of austerity – seemingly a consequence of being part of a large and economically stable force such as Thames Valley – is likely to have contributed to the ability to sustain the VMAP process as a police-led venture.

However, resilience is not merely dependent on prevailing economic circumstances. For some, it is the product of a 'can-do' mentality born-out of working in a challenging and high-demand environment.

*"I think there's a resilience about this place [Slough] that you don't find ... I don't think you find anywhere else in Thames Valley. For the other places that I've worked in Thames Valley, and I've probably said this before, the can do attitude here is born from a resilience among the staff ... the officers and staff here."*

*"There's a pressing need. There's a level of demand that's unprecedented elsewhere. And a type of demand that's so complex and unprecedented elsewhere in Thames Valley. Not in the Met boroughs, in the west London boroughs because they're similar. So there's just that need, that recognition that we just need to get on and do it, because if we don't do it, no one else is going*

*to do it. So things get done, and more often than not, get done very well."*

It is clear that VMAP also benefited from the solid foundation of multi-agency collaboration and prevailing commitment to a partnership working ethos in Slough. For some practitioners, working with other partners through VMAP was seen as not just important but also expected.

*"I think people keep coming because there is that sense of duty, there is that kind of organisational duty and responsibility to, you know, come together as a partnership."*

There is also the notion that project resilience was further aided by the iterative nature of the VMAP cycle, and the way this enabled involvement in and commitment to the initiative to become a routine aspect of practitioner's day-to-day activity.

#### *The advocacy role of strategic leaders*

The involvement of key leads during the VMAP pilot year helped bring stability to the project. Police Foundation project staff maintained regular dialogue with key leads during the project pilot, who were helpful in endorsing VMAP and providing regular messages to their staff praising them for their efforts and extolling the importance of continued engagement in the initiative. Key leads also remained in post throughout the VMAP pilot which ensured consistency of strategic engagement and their growing familiarisation with the project.

#### *Role of VMAP chair and support team as a programme enabler*

As an ever-present resource during the VMAP pilot, the VMAP chair was instrumental in lending stability to

the project, helping ensure continued adherence to its core working principles.

The chair also assumed operational leadership for the project, often acting as the single point of contact locally for any VMAP-related matters. This included liaison with middle-managers from other services and teams to ensure the increased involvement of practitioners whose initial involvement with VMAP had been intermittent.

The style and tone of VMAP meetings – in particular the congenial and non-confrontational manner in which they were chaired – also generated a strong sense of inclusiveness and cooperation among attendees, a notion exemplified in the following practitioner response.

*"It's a relaxed meeting but it's an important meeting ... no one gets put on the spot here ... you know what you're coming into."*

These efforts were further supported by the work of other VMAP support staff (particularly the dedicated VMAP Coordinator), who helped to further foster and sustain agency engagement with the initiative. The VMAP Coordinator showed dogged persistence in regard to liaising with agencies and services and ensuring good levels of practitioner turnout at VMAP meetings. This was shown to be particularly important in relation to those agencies where staff turnover in key roles was a familiar occurrence.

The police analyst assigned to VMAP, again an ever-present resource during the project pilot, was responsible for designing and compiling an array of polished supporting documentation for VMAP. This, along with the overall proficient administration of

meetings by the VMAP Coordinator, lent the VMAP initiative an air of professionalism and competence that is likely to have helped engender a solid practitioner allegiance.

### *VMAP meetings and the tasking process*

Overall, survey respondents were positive about the VMAP meetings they had attended. Turnout (despite some notable persistent absences) was generally viewed as good and the openness, positive attitude and 'buy-in' to VMAP shown by attendees was welcomed. Respondents felt that cases that would otherwise not have been addressed without VMAP being in place were being picked up, they welcomed the 'broader perspective' that case discussions could provide (particularly where attendees possessed personal case knowledge), they thought the resulting actions were sensible and also welcomed the concept of 'case ownership'. Several practitioners also reported reciprocal benefits for their own work area, in terms of alerting them to previously unknown but relevant cases (for attention outside of, or peripheral to, VMAP).

Non-completion of actions (usually the non-return of information requested) for VMAP meetings was criticised. Several respondents highlighted frustrations that actions were not always completed by VMAP meeting attendees and that the desired updates were sometimes missing (although this situation improved over time).

The inability to get sufficient information 'in the room' first time to facilitate effective case discussions, particularly during early VMAP meetings, led to the over-reliance on 'information' actions. The inevitable

delays generated by fortnightly reporting cycles also meant that the context and intricacies of cases could be lost between meetings, which impacted on the continuity of problem solving dialogue. This was not aided by recognition that case ownership was only occurring intermittently (and consequently, failed to become a fully embedded component of the VMAP process).

One respondent further highlighted the difference between the 'minimal' completion of actions, as opposed to taking the initiative to follow a course of action through (the latter being more akin to the concept of case-ownership). Positively, however, survey respondents felt that any actions that had been assigned to them had been proportionate and not unduly burdensome. Some reported volunteering for actions or 'self-tasking', a development which had been noted and appreciated by others.

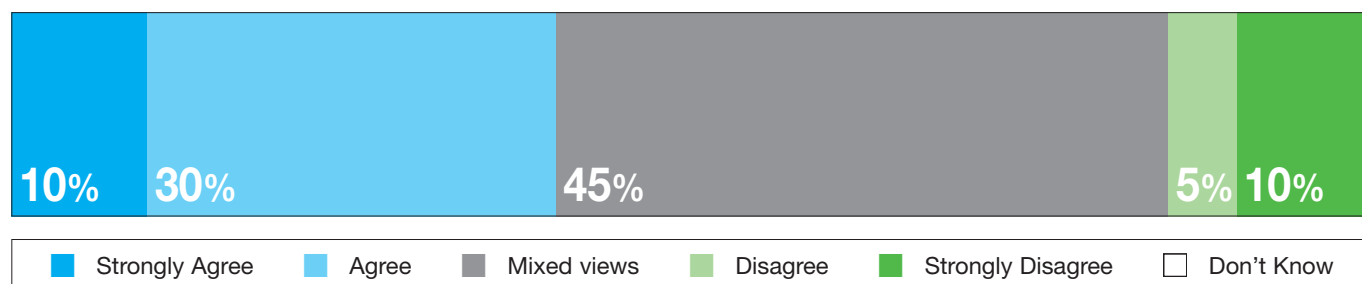
*"People are going 'put this down as an action for me, I'll do this', and it's just a really refreshing way of looking at things."*

While a non-confrontational approach to chairing VMAP meetings was generally well received – helping attendees feel at ease rather than 'under the spotlight' – it is possible that this may have served to hamper practitioner accountability. There is clearly a balance to be struck between maintaining a congenial ambiance that facilitates good levels of practitioner engagement and cooperation, while also ensuring a sufficient focus on tasking and case ownership, and scrutiny of activity undertaken. However, exerting such authority was seen to be more straightforward in an organisational rather than partnership context.

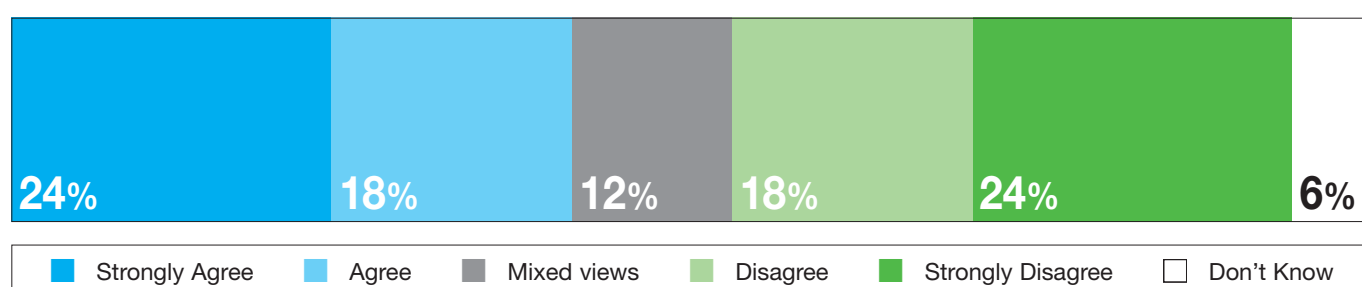
*"... my own staff, my own teams I know very well. I know what I can and can't say to them. And it's*

**Figure 5.5.4: “I have concerns about the amount of time and resource that VMAP takes up” (per cent) (October 2014 and March 2015)**

### October 2014



### March 2015



*easier to put the pressure on if I need to, than it is through VMAP.”*

Indeed, that (as seen from Section 5.4) Thames Valley Police personnel assumed 40 per cent of all case actions generated through VMAP – a sizable proportion of which were taken by one individual officer – is both testament to the prevailing ‘can-do’ mentality of the police, but also reflective of the challenge involved in ensuring parity in tasking and delegating responsibility in a multi-agency context. Additional feedback obtained suggests that a perception of latent resource and demand pressures experienced by VMAP agencies and services may, on occasions, have also led to a reticence to task actions to certain practitioners.

### Resourcing and engagement issues

#### Time commitment by practitioners

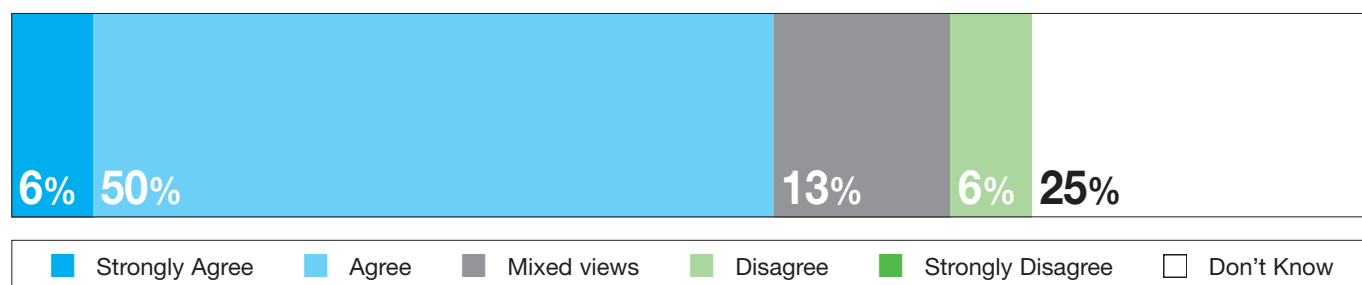
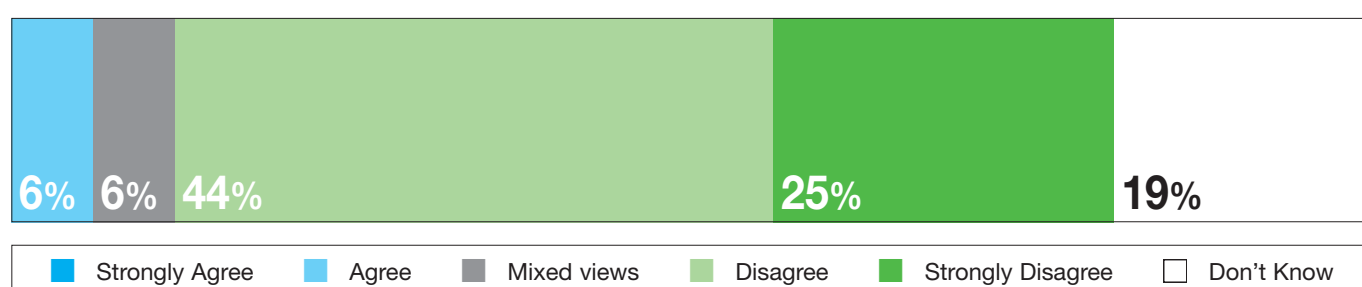
The majority of survey respondents acknowledged the substantial resource commitment that VMAP required (particularly in attending meetings, but for some also in

terms of prior case research and preparation). Overall, this averaged approximately 7.5 hours per fortnight for VMAP attendees – around 10 per cent of working time (for full-time employees).

While some concerns were voiced early on, this level of commitment was seen as worthwhile by many practitioners, particularly for those whose roles linked more strongly to core VMAP business. However, those respondents whose workload overlapped less fully with the VMAP caseload seemed to find the demand on their time more difficult to justify.

Concerns about time commitment had polarised by the mid-term practitioner interviews conducted in March 2015. While many had previously expressed ‘mixed views’, most respondents highlighted either agreement or disagreement with the following statement (in equal numbers) (figure 5.5.4).

Responses to two new statements in the March 2015 survey seemed to suggest that resource concerns

**Figure 5.5.5: “There is enough resource available in Slough to deliver VMAP effectively” (per cent) (March 2015)****Figure 5.5.6: “The time and effort spent on VMAP would be better spent elsewhere” (per cent) (March 2015)**

held by some were more a reflection of the time pressures experienced by practitioners, rather than qualms about the value of investing time and effort in VMAP (figures 5.5.5 and 5.5.6).

However, increasing doubts about the extent to which VMAP made the best use of everybody's time were clearly discernible by the third wave of practitioner interviews in July 2015. These misgivings are most strongly conveyed by the following respondent.

*“we're talking about a meeting that lasts three hours and it's every fortnight, plus the research, this is a massive commitment...I mean there are a lot of these cases that are just of no relevance to the majority of people who attend... I don't think it's the best use of everybody's time I suppose.”*

That view was not an isolated opinion and others expressed concerns about sacrificing one morning a fortnight to participate in a process where the caseload was only partially relevant to them.

*“the only issue I have with VMAP in...any negative way is my team because it's...three hours out of their day when they sit through a meeting where they could be discussing 30 cases, 18 of which are [relevant to them and] 12 they've got absolutely no interest [or] involvement at all.”*

The notion of VMAP being too time consuming was also the concern expressed most frequently in the third practitioner survey (see figure 5.5.7).

These emerging doubts appeared to be temporally linked to a subtle shift in the dynamic of VMAP meetings seen during the latter part of the pilot year. It was observed that VMAP meetings had slipped into being more of a ‘case coordination’ rather than problem resolution-focused forum, where a few practitioners already engaged with a case share updates, often to the exclusion of others present. While such conversations were not without value, it evidently led to some frustrations and misgivings about how practitioner's collective time was being spent.



**Figure 5.5.7: Survey respondents concerns about the VMAP process (July 2015)**

<b>What (if any) are your main concerns about the VMAP process? (Wave 3: July 2015)</b>	<b>Free text responses (coded)</b>
Too time consuming	5
Repetitive / same cases	2
Not providing / sharing address information	2
Need to look at more prolific offenders	1
Concerned that cases and focus will change	1
Too many cases	1
No / none	3
Not answered	3

Ultimately, the need for the VMAP initiative to be able to justify the time and resourcing afforded to it, beyond merely serving as a mechanism to engender improvements in partnership collaboration, was stated in fairly unequivocal terms by one senior manager.

*“... there's a lot of investment and time going into VMAP, which equates to money, ultimately, the cost of it is fairly significant, the meetings, and the work. The benefit is that individuals know each other, they're able to talk to each other and work together, but you could then argue that even if they know each other and they work together and they problem solve together, in VMAP or outside VMAP, because they've got those relationships, if the ultimate result is people aren't safer, crime doesn't go down, we don't solve more cases, then what's the benefit of that at all, other than the fact that people feel fluffy and happy about it.”*

### *Emerging doubts about the depth of response*

At its best, VMAP had been a place to facilitate wide-ranging and in-depth case discussions that began to explore the context and possible determinants of

recurrent violence – to which all professionals potentially could make a contribution. However, questions emerged about the extent to which the VMAP process had the capability to consistently move beyond case coordination discussions and fully explore these more deep-seated issues. The following quote from the third wave of interviews conducted in July highlighted the evident heuristic limitations of VMAP.

*“In terms of problem solving to be honest I don't know whether the VMAP is actually problem solving or not, because I think it's more about who is that case known to, which agency, in what capacity and it's not kind of really...tackling the actual core issue for that individual.”*

Was there sufficient time and scope in VMAP meetings to undertake meaningful problem solving? The following interviewee suggests not, advocating instead that problem solving discussions were best facilitated as a discrete, external process.

*“If you want to get into like the nitty-gritty...then I think we can have a breakaway meeting, or a separate case conference to discuss the case, and that's where...more can be discussed and look at actually problem solving.”*

Even early on in the VMAP process, issues such as the increasing size of the VMAP caseload were seen to be restricting the opportunity for problem solving.

*"[We] haven't had much chance to do problem solving. Did at the beginning when there were only a handful of cases, but this got harder as the case file grew."*

There was further suspicion that the comparatively large amount of cases that were discussed at some VMAP meetings may have acted as a barrier to more extensive and inclusive deliberations, with practitioners perhaps reluctant to slow up proceedings by participating in discussions. One interviewee suggested that VMAP attendees might have been holding back and needed coaxing to go beyond mere case coordination towards something more involved.

*"I feel that sometimes there are lots of other individuals around that table who say very little just simply because nobody on that case list is known to them and I just feel ... we want to welcome ... somebody else's expertise or somebody's perception or ... other views ... so I think that needs to happen a little bit more."*

## *Turning theory into practice – real world difficulties*

### *Problem solving is (too) challenging*

As VMAP evolved, there was increasing realisation and frustration among practitioners about how difficult an endeavour problem solving was. The underlying drivers of violence are often complex, and a number of individuals in the VMAP caseload were highly recurrent, displaying significantly entrenched needs and behaviours. Practitioners felt that achieving real

progress required quality engagement and relationship building with individuals.

*"If we don't develop that trusting relationship with that individual that individual's not going to open to us. If we cannot then motivate that individual to say ... what's led you to do this and what could potentially support you and reduce whatever activity that is related to your offending, we're not going to see a lot of change. The relationship with that individual is crucial."*

However, others feared that the necessary interaction with clients would become increasingly difficult as resources got ever tighter in the prevailing austerity climate.

*"Unless somebody is willing to talk about why they need to drink a litre of vodka to get themselves through the day ... it's somebody that can find the key ... but I guess it's finding the right person. And of course, as services are being withdrawn or being cut that whole ability for people to spend the time and the effort and the energy ... is starting to be reduced."*

The previous review of actions set through VMAP (in Section 5.4) highlighted that, despite the many good case discussions held during VMAP meetings, it was rare to get a clear course of action that resulted in discernible, substantive outcomes. The inability to engage with some VMAP individuals often served as an obstacle to successful problem solving, and this was despite the efforts (often repeated efforts) made by services to reach out to cases. It was clear that, ultimately, the decision whether to engage rested with the client – a situation that was an obvious source of frustration to some practitioners.

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*"It's just really, really difficult when a client doesn't engage, because you've got all these services; there's so much you could do to help this person. They don't want to engage, you can't make them."*

#### *Difficulties in operationalising the VMAP model*

Some of the issues outlined previously – VMAP falling into a case coordination modality, the lack of emphasis on engagement with VMAP subjects – were in a way linked with operationalisation shortcomings, and it clearly proved a challenge to get some components of the VMAP model to function effectively. Problem solving slots in VMAP meetings, for example, were designed to be dedicated spaces allowing for cases to be revisited a second time in order to review additional information and explore possible resolutions, while owner updates were supposed to be occasional or 'by-exception' inputs on open cases sitting with case-owners. In practice, however, there was increasingly little distinction between problem solving slots and subsequent open case discussions, which tended to lead to more intractable cases being continually revisited over consecutive meetings with limited progress. This issue was highlighted by one interviewee during the final wave of practitioner interviews:

*"We have this problem-solving case slot when we have the same cases being discussed week after week, after week and personally I don't think that really works."*

It was also originally envisaged that VMAP could identify appropriate case owners to coordinate casework activity outside of VMAP meetings. However, the process of case-allocation often felt quite nominal (and perhaps under-utilised), and practitioners who

believed that they might be well placed to take on cases weren't necessarily called-upon.

*"To be honest I don't think I have [been asked to be a case owner] and I've been a little bit surprised by that."*

### *Dependency on external resources for project reflection and development*

During VMAP the Police Foundation took on a flexible role, to monitor, review and provide support where needed. As it transpired, this involved activity such as the initial review and fine-tuning of the VMAP model, progressing work on possible case management system options, and contributing reflections on plans to take forward a revised VMAP initiative beyond its initial 12-month time frame. While we were happy to do this, it does appear that these were things that would not have been done had we not provided the additional resource, and this may be indicative of local gaps in capacity or capability including in areas of programme design, project development and strategic planning. This is perhaps unsurprising – those leading and contributing to VMAP locally had busy and wide-ranging operational jobs to which they demonstrated significant commitment. It does, however, highlight some important ingredients of effective delivery that may be in short supply close to the front-line. Our experiences here also tend to reaffirm the important role that (often external) agents have in facilitating change. Previous community safety studies have highlighted the value of embedded project researchers in supporting strategic planning processes and appraising and refining strategies over time (see Roehl et al., 2005).

## 5.6 Summary and discussion

The first part of this Chapter (5.3) chronicled the implementation and on-going delivery of the VMAP initiative in Slough between August 2014 and August 2015. A clear narrative emerged – one of a project buoyed by strong partner buy-in from the outset tempered by initial teething frustrations, followed by periods of programmatic refinement and gradual 'bedding-in' of a process. This was supplanted by a final project phase characterised by stability, but also emerging doubt among some practitioners as to whether the VMAP process was proving effective or the resourcing commitment viable.

Building on this narrative, a number of emergent strengths and limitations of the VMAP initiative were discussed within the context of a series of broad thematic findings (Section 5.5). The role of VMAP as a catalyst for improved partnership working, helping to 'oil the cogs' of multi-agency collaboration (through better case coordination and enhancing case knowledge, for example), as well as the potential long-term preventative benefits to be accrued through focussing on individuals recurrently involved in violence, were widely expressed by practitioners. The initiative continued to receive the loyal support of many participants throughout and (as we shall see in Chapter 7) beyond its implementation year. However, doubts were also raised as to whether problem-solving through VMAP was sufficiently penetrative to make a long-term difference to the lives of challenging individuals experiencing (often) intractable issues. Analysis of the working mechanics of VMAP – the 'black box' – within Section 5.4 also highlighted that material problem-solving activity appeared comparatively scarce; more often than not

VMAP actions were focused on simple case updates and auxiliary research tasks (although it could be argued that the latter provides the necessary foundation to facilitate robust problem solving). The initiative also faced operationalisation difficulties, and it proved a challenge to get some facets of the VMAP model to function consistently and effectively. The important role offered by external 'enablers' in helping to plug resourcing and skills gaps, and taking forward key project developments, was also emphasised.

### *Doing things differently?*

Reflecting on these findings, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to identify opportunities that were overlooked and things that could have been done differently, both by the Foundation and by the police and their partners in Slough. VMAP looked to move beyond a multi-agency case management orthodoxy by incorporating a 'holistic' focus on those recurrently involved in violence (whether they had been victims, offenders, or both), and significantly, a strong problem solving emphasis – comparatively innovative features largely absent from the majority of analogous multi-agency case management processes. Arguably, however, problem solving was made a more challenging enterprise in VMAP by the failure in the design and planning stages to recognise the value of directly involving victims and offenders as participants in the problem solving process. Instead, VMAP problem solving discussions tended to be 'detached' and somewhat theoretical – particularly when examining possible determinants of, and solutions to, an individual's offending behaviour or risk factors associated with repeat victimisation – which was always likely to make it difficult to consistently move beyond superficial explorations of 'causation

and cure'. It is also evident that VMAP meetings themselves, at least in isolation, often did not allow sufficient scope for meaningful problem solving activity routinely to occur, yet there was no recognition of the value of including discrete 'breakout' case conferences within the initial VMAP programme design. Rather, the concept developed organically as a means of facilitating more in-depth problem solving, although it largely failed to become a routine facet of the VMAP process during the pilot year.

It is also reasonable to surmise that attempting to problem-solve a cohort of individuals, with often entrenched behaviours, through an intermittent multi-agency panel process – always a challenging prospect – proved to be an even more demanding task than was perhaps initially envisaged. There is also the issue of needing to balance resources to caseloads – how much time was actually available to practitioners outside of VMAP meetings to problem-solve, and did VMAP try to push too many cases through? Such considerations give rise to the wider question of whether orienting resources towards more 'downstream' intervention is the most viable way for the police and local partners to work, as opposed to prioritising preventative and diversionary activity with 'at-risk' individuals upstream or those on the cusp of offending.

The final chapter of this report (Chapter 8) provides further reflections on some of the key themes emerging from our work on the VMAP initiative in Slough.

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## 6. Impact assessment: analysing effectiveness

This chapter presents the methods and findings of an impact assessment undertaken to investigate the effects of the VMAP approach on recurrent violent crime in Slough. This is a thorough and exploratory assessment employing a number of different techniques, which makes for a detailed, and in places technical, chapter. Readers more interested in the findings than the process of assessing impact may wish to skip to the chapter conclusions summarised in Section 6.10.

### 6.1 Introduction

Assessment is widely acknowledged to be the phase of SARA completed least often and least adequately (Weisburd et al., 2008; College of Policing, no date), yet it can hold the key to transforming a limited, static police response into a dynamic process of continuous, evidence-based improvement. Too often, if completed at all, assessments or 'results analyses' tend to be based on *general* performance data that rarely allow observed outcome changes to be attributed to the *specific* activities undertaken and provide little scope for ruling out competing explanations of change.

At the other end of the spectrum, the growing demand that policing should be 'evidence-based' has led to increased interest in evaluated crime reduction trials that draw their rigour from the upper tiers of the Maryland Scale, which emphasises multiple-unit comparisons and, in particular, randomisation (Sherman et al., 1998)<sup>81</sup>. While the value of embedding strong scientific principles within policing is beyond dispute, it is perhaps surprising how little this focus on the highest standards of evidence offers the real-world practitioner seeking to understand the effects of a locally tailored problem-oriented response. There are two main reasons for this: form and scale.

Real world policing problems rarely arrive in problem-solvers' in-trays in a form that is easily divisible into multiple units. The most common aim of local proactive police work is to bring down (a type of) crime in a designated (usually single) geographic area; this means that very often the SARA response will effectively be a one-case trial of a tailored treatment and therefore more powerful evaluative designs (at Maryland levels four and five) tend to be unavailable. On paper, VMAP had the potential to be an exception; because it attempted to reduce violence by addressing the problem at the level of its constituent units – (multiple) individuals who were recurrent victims and/or offenders – there were opportunities (in theory) to assess impact by using a more rigorous cohort study design.<sup>82</sup>

However, after modelling historic crime data and local resources it became clear that this assessment approach was not feasible on grounds of scale. As previously described, although relatively modest, VMAP was not a small scale initiative relative to local capacity: it involved a substantial commitment of scarce time and effort by a range of local agencies, and in the execution it was clear the caseload stretched what was practical. Yet the initiative could not be scaled-up to a level that would yield 'treatment' and control groups of a sufficient size to enable a robust cohort study. As is often the case, the appropriate scale for the problem-oriented response, in its real-world context, proved to be sub-optimal for evaluation.

Given that these are not unusual challenges, there has been much debate about how assessment should be undertaken within the SARA model and the standard of evidence to which crime-reduction practitioners (as opposed to those primarily seeking to test and develop theories) should aspire when

<sup>81</sup> The Maryland Scale is used to establish the methodological robustness of evaluations. Scores are ordered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (for evaluations based on basic cross-sectional correlations) up to 5 (for randomised control trials – RCTs).

<sup>82</sup> This would have involved measuring the progress of the VMAP cases over a follow-up period and comparing outcomes to an 'untreated' control / comparison group, selected either by randomisation (from within a wider eligible group) or based (on some form of matching criteria) to similar cases drawn from elsewhere.



evaluating effectiveness (Clarke, 1997). Our approach to these challenges follows three principles.

The first is to make use of a control/comparison group. In their meta-assessment of the effectiveness of problem-oriented policing, Weisburd et al. (2008) identified the use of an appropriate comparator group or site as the key inclusion criteria for published analyses and in doing so set a pragmatic benchmark for 'good' assessment (within SARA). The ideal here is to establish a 'counterfactual', that is a suitably similar group or area that did not receive attention and can provide a sound estimate of what would have happened to the intervention group/area, in the absence of the activity undertaken. With insufficient 'units' to allow for randomisation, a well matched control or comparison group/area, observed over the same time period, is generally considered to be of greater value in ruling out alternative explanations of change than relying on simple pre-to-post intervention comparisons.

In this instance violent crime rates involving those referred to VMAP have been compared against the same measure for those that *would also* have been referred if VMAP were operating across the rest of Slough. Although it is clear that there are differences between these groups, which count against the 'rest of Slough' cohort being considered a strict counterfactual, applying an equivalent outcome measure to this 'untreated' group provides opportunities to identify any local trends or external factors that might have also applied to the VMAP cohort in the absence of the initiative (see Appendix 6.5<sup>83</sup>).

Our second principle is to be highly specific about the patterns of outcome that would be expected if VMAP had been impactful, and to thoroughly examine the data for evidence of these. Particularly where outcome

datasets are modest in size, the most convincing indications of impact can often be found in the distinctive patterns left by the intervention design, rather than in more general measures of crime reduction. In Section 6.4 the outcome measure developed to capture and compare the subsequent victimisation or offending, specifically of those who were (or would have been) referred in to the VMAP process is described.

Third, this attention to identifying programme 'outcome patterns' or 'data footprints' is a key characteristic of a realist approach to evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 2004) which is of particular relevance to carrying out assessments within a SARA model, and which informs the approach adopted here. In particular, the realist approach emphasises the importance of examining how mechanisms of change operate in specific contexts and exploring sociological factors, both in relation to how interventions are delivered and to how they are 'received'. The realist approach also encourages the use of multiple information types to 'make sense' of context specific intervention outcomes and to add nuance to the theories of change on which they are based. As such, and resonating with the functional role of assessment within the SARA cycle, realist evaluation is less interested in questions of 'what works' and more with developing insights into what might work better, for particular groups of people, in particular circumstances.

Based on these principles, this chapter explores local crime data to identify and examine the impact of the Slough Violence Multi-Agency Panel (VMAP) approach on recurrent violence, in the context of the implementation journey described in Chapter 5. In addition to assessing impact it has two broader purposes. First, as part of a situated SARA cycle, it attempts to secure insights that might usefully inform future local violence reduction efforts elsewhere.

<sup>83</sup> This also reports a secondary 'indicative' impact measure (an underpowered version of the cohort study approach described previously).

Second, within the context of the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project, it seeks to highlight some of the broader challenges for delivering a locally-tailored, evidence-based policing response, in the context of internal and external change.

## 6.2 Assessment data

The impact of the VMAP initiative has been assessed through analysis of a dataset of Violence Against the Person (VAP) crime records extracted from the Thames Valley Police crime recording system (provided to the project under the terms of a Data Sharing Agreement). The dataset contains details of all violent offences recorded by the police within Slough Local Policing Area (LPA) during the initiative year and for a historic period dating back to 2005. In order to identify recurrent individuals, the data included the name, gender and date of birth of all individuals listed as victims, offenders and suspected offenders (ie regardless of whether charges were brought) within these offence records during the period.<sup>84</sup> The assessment period for VMAP ran from 18 of July 2014 (the first day of the fortnight from which the caseload for the first VMAP meeting was derived) until 17 July 2015 (although the VMAP process continued after this date). Data for this purpose was extracted from the crime recording system in late July 2015.<sup>85</sup>

## 6.3 Assessment rationale

VMAP, in the technical sense, was not a violence reduction 'intervention'; rather it was a mechanism for ensuring that the most appropriate, *individually tailored* interventions available were identified and applied in those cases where, on account of past recurrence, further violence might be anticipated. As each VMAP case – and the response enacted by VMAP

practitioners in each case – was unique, it is not possible to provide a quantitative evaluation of impact at the level of these multiple bespoke case interventions. This assessment focuses on the efficacy of *VMAP as a strategy*; it seeks to identify whether the overall approach – systematically identifying recurrent individuals, conducting research on multi-agency systems, pooling working knowledge, case-conferencing, attempting case-level problem-solving, tasking appropriate actions and carrying out follow-up casework – can be associated with a reduction in further recurrent violent incidents.

## 6.4 Producing a specific and comparable outcome measure

The key to assessing the impact of the VMAP approach on violent crime was to develop a measure that both reflected the *specific* outcomes that the VMAP process set out to achieve and that could be applied to alternative time periods and locations to enable *comparisons* to be made. This was achieved by building the VMAP case selection criteria into the outcome measure.

To recap, on a fortnightly basis, the VMAP selection process identified individuals who had:

- 1) Come to notice as a victim or a suspect/offender for a recorded VAP offence in the previous 14 days within the VMAP wards of Broadham, Puckford, Holmston, and Norley, and who had also;
- 2) Come to notice, anywhere within Slough, as a victim or a suspect/offender in a recorded VAP offence within the previous year.<sup>86</sup>

These individuals were then the focus of VMAP attention (as previously described) with the aim of

<sup>84</sup> This personal data was handled entirely within Thames Valley Police computer systems by appropriately vetted researchers and in line with the conditions of the Data Sharing Agreement.

<sup>85</sup> The data presented in this section is the product of exploratory searches of police crime recording systems for the purpose of evaluating VMAP; they should

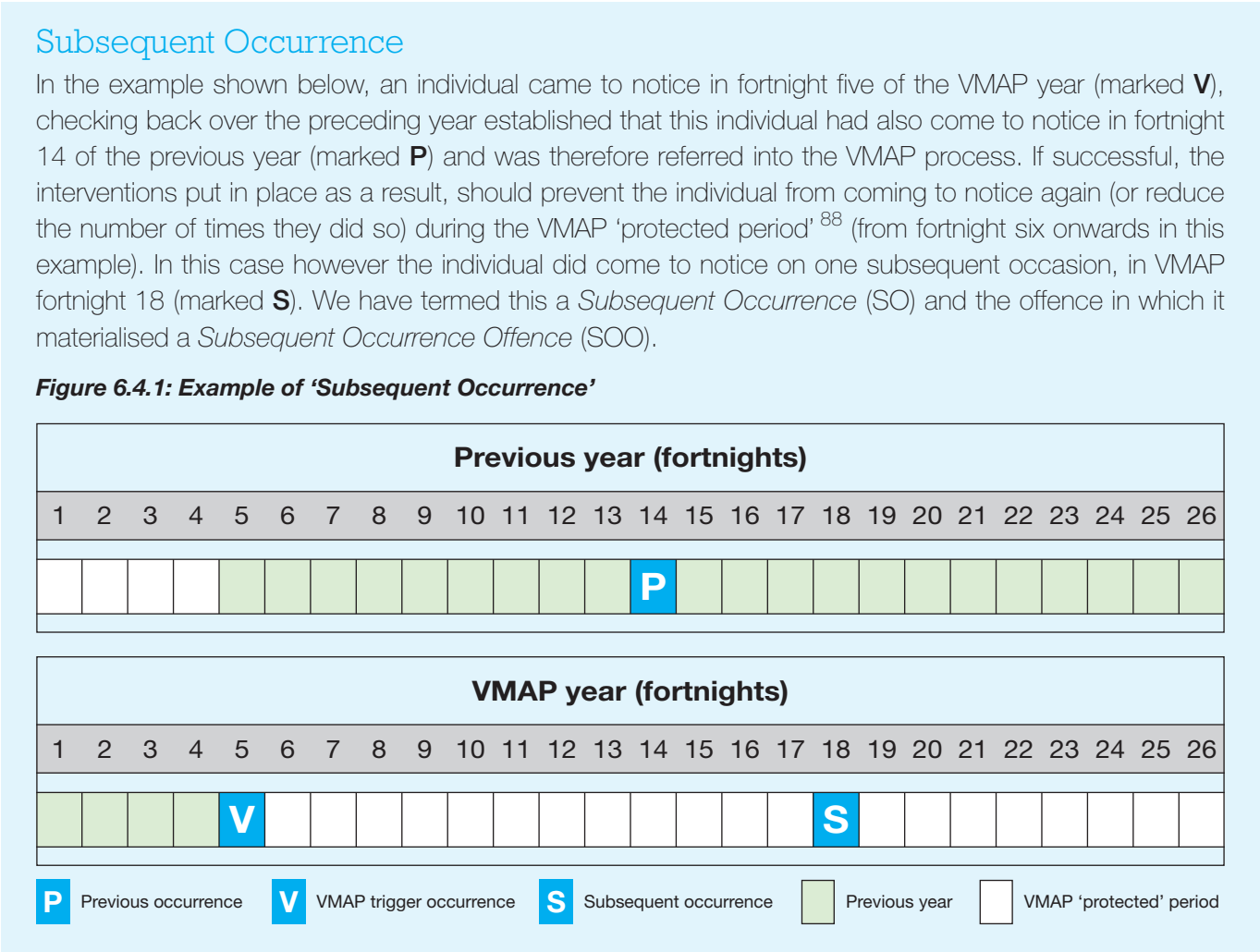
not be considered official crime data. Crime statistics for police forces and neighbourhoods can be found at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk) and for local authority areas, within the crime section of <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>.

reducing the likelihood that they would come to notice, in relation to violent crime, on subsequent occasions in the future. If this activity had been effective it would be reasonable to expect that there would be fewer recorded VAP offences involving these individuals, during the subsequent part of the intervention period<sup>87</sup> than would have been the case had the VMAP intervention not been in operation.

The specific set of offences that VMAP set out to prevent/reduce can therefore be defined (rather technically), as:

*Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences, within the VMAP intervention year and in Slough Local Policing Area, that involved one or more people, as victims or suspect/offenders, who had previously come to notice (as a VAP victim or suspect/offender) at least twice – at least once within the VMAP area since the start of the VMAP year (selection criteria 1) and at least once (anywhere in Slough) within one year prior to that (selection criteria 2).*

This pattern of recurrence is illustrated in figure 6.4.1 below.

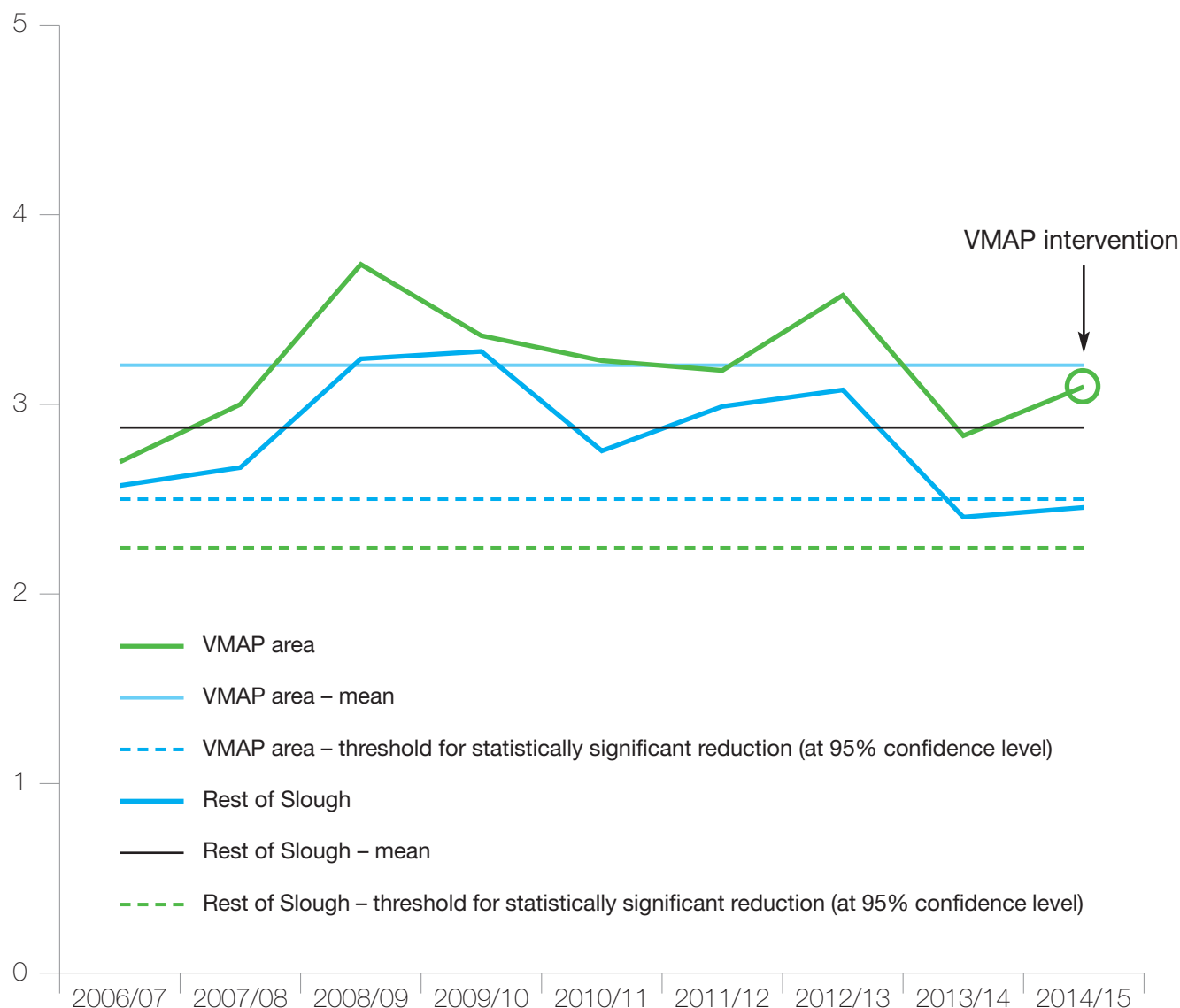


<sup>86</sup> 364 days (or 26 fortnights) prior to the start of that 14 day period.

<sup>87</sup> The project time-scales and the need to feed-back impact findings quickly, did not permit the use of a standardised follow-up period in which to monitor outcomes, beyond the end of the VMAP implementation year.

<sup>88</sup> It is acknowledged that in many cases the relatively modest extent of the intervention activity and / or the extended duration of the monitoring period

following initial presentation/intervention, makes the notion of 'protection' from involvement in further violence somewhat theoretical. However, if VMAP intervention had succeeded in reducing the likelihood of individuals being involved in violence, during the whole or some part of the remaining time period, it is reasonable to expect a lower SOO (Subsequent Occurrence Offence) rate than would otherwise have been the case.

**Figure 6.5.1: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate, VMAP and 'rest of Slough' areas (2006/07 to 2014/15)**

Using the victim and suspect/offender records in the violent crime dataset, it has been possible to count the number of offences that meet the SOO definition set out and illustrated above. This is, in simple terms, **the number of violent crimes during the year that involved someone already 'on VMAP's books'**. These are the offences that VMAP specifically set out to prevent/reduce.

To assess whether VMAP had any impact in reducing these SOOs, it is necessary to establish a 'baseline' estimate of what this count *would have been* had

VMAP not been in operation. To inform this, the equivalent counting process has been applied to data relating to the area of Slough for which VMAP was not operational<sup>89</sup> and to the eight previous 12-month periods, for both the VMAP and the 'rest of Slough' areas.<sup>90</sup> This allows for the VMAP SOO count to be placed in the context of previous levels and any broader trends affecting the local area.

To make valid comparisons between the SOO counts for these different areas and time periods it is necessary to take into account differences in both the

<sup>89</sup> ie, we have produced a count of SOOs involving those individuals who *would* have been referred to VMAP if it were operating in the town's other wards.

<sup>90</sup> In a small (though not negligible) number of cases, individuals' patterns of victimisation and/or offending would have seen them referred into both the VMAP and rest of Slough groups during the year. As such it is probable that a small

number of SOOs in the 'rest of Slough' total involved someone who had already been referred into the VMAP caseload. It is not possible to exclude this eventuality in these offence level comparisons; however this is addressed in the cohort comparisons presented in Section 6.6, along with a broader discussion of the comparability of the VMAP and 'rest of Slough' groups.

number of VMAP trigger offences (or the equivalent for the non-VMAP periods or areas) and the distribution of these throughout the year. This is achieved by expressing the SOO count as a *rate per 1,000 VMAP 'protected' days*<sup>91</sup>.

As with any measure of impact it is necessary to consider whether non-programmatic factors might account for variation in readings, either between periods or between treatment and comparator groups – and to eliminate or minimise these where possible. Three potentially confounding factors; incarceration, crime recording and population churn, are discussed in Appendix 6.4.2.

## 6.5 VMAP Subsequent Occurrence Offence (SOO) rate, change over time, and the 'rest of Slough' comparator

Analysis of the violent crime dataset reveals that 249 trigger offences occurred within the VMAP wards of Broadham, Puckford, Holmston, and Norley during the VMAP year, resulting in 298 different individuals being referred into the VMAP process. Taking account of the spread of these triggers throughout the year, this resulted in a total of 42,652 VMAP 'protected' days.<sup>92</sup>

132 Subsequent Occurrence Offences occurred within the year (that is, 132 violent crimes involving one or more people who had already been referred into VMAP), giving an SOO rate of **3.1 per 1,000 'protected' days**.

Figure 6.5.1 shows this outcome in the context of previous annual rates and the equivalent measures for the 'rest of Slough' area. As shown, in the VMAP

intervention year (2014/15) the SOO rate for the VMAP area increased slightly (from 2.8 per 1,000 'protected' days in 2013/14) to just below the eight-year mean average. The rate was therefore well above the level required to establish a statistically significant reduction, (given historic variations, at the conventional 95 per cent confidence level).

The rate for the 'rest of Slough' area also increased slightly year-on-year (from 2.4 in 2013/14 to 2.5 in 2014/15); again this was well within typical levels of variation. It is of note that the SOO rate in the rest of Slough has consistently been below that in the VMAP area throughout the nine year period. This reflects (and justifies) the decision to focus on recurrent violence in the VMAP wards, but also raises questions about the appropriateness of the 'rest of Slough' as a direct comparator (or strict 'counterfactual') for the VMAP wards (see Appendix 6.5). Despite this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the pattern of change in the rest of Slough provides no basis to suggest that (in the absence of the VMAP intervention) the SOO rate for the VMAP area in 2014/15 would have been any different from that observed.

The headline finding of this impact analysis therefore, is that VMAP did not accompany (or bring about) a lower level of the particular sub-set of violent offences it set out to prevent than would be expected, based on previous crime patterns and those for the surrounding area. The remainder of this chapter explores outcome patterns for the VMAP cohort in more detail using analysis of various sub-groups, the type and seriousness of violent recurrence and a broader measure of demand on police.

<sup>91</sup> The methodology is explained in full in Appendix 6.4.1.

<sup>92</sup> This is the sum of the number of days between each trigger offence and the end of the VMAP pilot year.

## 6.6 Victim, offender and other sub-group analyses

A key feature of the VMAP rationale was that it provided a framework for directing attention to both recurrent victims and offenders, and those who had been both – based on a recognition that individuals could fall into both categories in quick succession and that the same risk factors might apply in both cases. It is accepted however that this is an unconventional approach, that the overlap in roles did not apply in every case and that it is theoretically possible that increased contact with services through VMAP might have led to different outcomes for those who were (exclusively/predominantly) victims and those who were (exclusively/predominantly) offenders – and indeed for those (exclusively/predominantly) involved in domestic or other violent incidents. For example, it is conceivable that increased support provided to recurrent victims of domestic violence, as a result of VMAP, may have led to higher levels of reporting, and thus to *increased* rather than reduced recorded subsequent occurrences (both for these victims and for domestic violence offenders). Such an outcome might legitimately be regarded as a positive one.

To investigate any differential outcome patterns of this kind, the analysis described in Section 6.5 (above) was repeated for four sub-sets of the VMAP caseloads (and their untreated equivalents in the rest of Slough) based on the role (victim/offender) and category of violence (domestic/non-domestic) in the trigger offence that brought each case to the attention of VMAP<sup>93</sup> (see Figures 6.6.1 to 6.6.4 in Appendix 6.6). This shows that:

- The recurrence rate for individuals referred to VMAP as **domestic violence victims** was very similar to that for the previous four years.
- The recurrence rate for those referred as **non-domestic violence** victims increased compared with the previous year but was close to the average for the previous eight years.
- The recurrence rate for those referred as **domestic violence offenders** also increased compared with the previous year but was close to the average for the previous eight years.
- The recurrence rate for those referred as **non-domestic offenders** reduced and approached (but fell short of), the level required to secure a statistically significant reduction.<sup>94</sup>

Overall, this analysis provides no clear indication of the type of differential sub-group outcomes hypothesised above. It reinforces the general conclusion of ‘no impact’ rather than suggesting contrasting outcomes for victim and offenders that cancelled each other out when combined in the whole-cohort analysis. As suggested below it may, however, be indicative of a measure of progress in relation to some recurrent non-domestic violent offenders.

Equivalent sub-groups analyses were also conducted on the portions of the VMAP cohort (and their untreated rest of Slough equivalents) that were:

- Male
- Female
- Aged 25 or under
- Aged 26 to 35

<sup>93</sup> ie, by placing additional conditions on the part of the Subsequent Occurrence Offences definition that relates to the trigger offence; for example “Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences, within the VMAP intervention year and in Slough LPA, that involved one or more people, as victims or suspect/offenders, who had previously come to notice (as a VAP victim or suspect/offender) at least twice – at least once

(eg) as a victim of domestic violence within the VMAP area since the start of the VMAP year and at least once (anywhere in Slough) within one year prior to that.”

<sup>94</sup> Although it should be noted that this followed similar reductions in the previous two (pre-VMAP) years and mirrored a reduction in the (non-VMAP) rest of Slough area.



- Aged 36 or older
- 'South' cases<sup>95</sup>
- 'North' cases
- 'Low' recurrence individuals (who had come to notice on only one previous occasion in the year proceeding the trigger offence)
- 'High' recurrence individuals (who had come to notice on two or more previous occasions in the year preceding the trigger offence).

None of these sub-groups saw a statistically significant SOO rate reduction in the VMAP intervention year (given the level of variation over the eight previous years). However, in addition to non-domestic violence suspects/offenders, two groups did see reductions to levels that were well below average. These were older individuals (aged 36 and over) and (to a lesser extent) 'high' recurrence individuals (see figures 6.6.5 and 6.6.6 in Appendix 6.6).

These more positive outcome patterns are far from conclusive demonstrations of impact; in each case there were also year-on-year reductions in the untreated 'rest of Slough' group and in each case this was the continuation of a downwards trend which began at least one year before. However, taken together, they tentatively suggest a promising intervention approach for a subset of older individuals who recurrently commit non-domestic violent crimes. Although we are moving into the realms of speculation, it is conceivable that this might reflect small progress in relation to some more 'problematic' individuals, with multiple and entrenched needs, brought about by improved service targeting and coordination through VMAP.

## 6.7 Type and 'seriousness' of subsequent occurrence offences

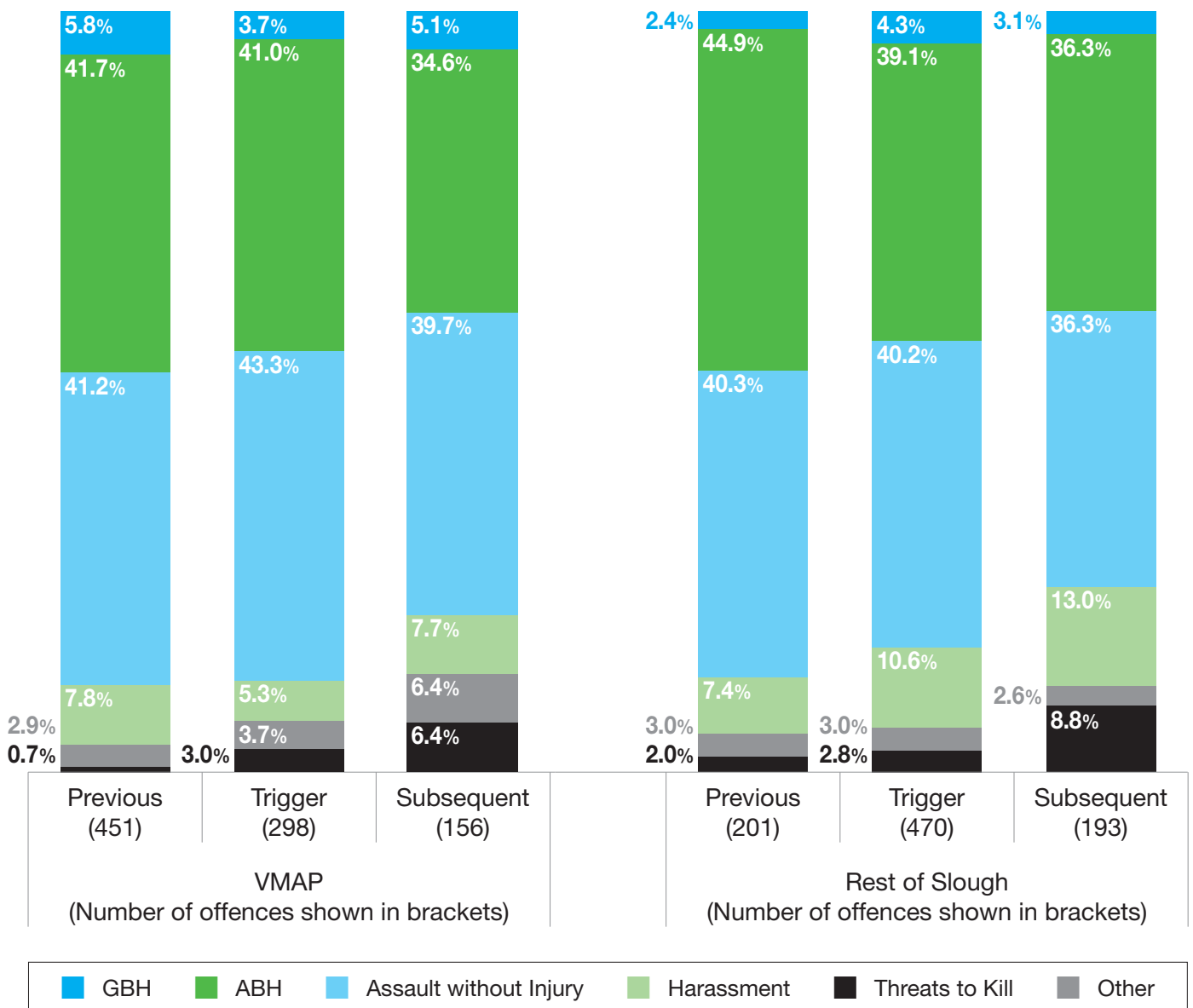
Thus far, impact has been investigated using the rate at which VMAP subjects were involved in further violent offences as the key indicator. This measure could, however, obscure any effect that VMAP might have had on the *type* of violent offences in which subjects were involved following referral. For example, interventions made as a result of VMAP referral may have reduced the *seriousness*, (but not the occurrence) of further offending behaviour or increased the likelihood that more minor offences might be reported by victims. To explore these possibilities, the type of violent offences in which the VMAP cohort were involved at the trigger offence and in the year prior to the trigger, have been aggregated and compared against those offences that occurred after referral. Figure 6.7.1 shows this alongside the equivalent analysis for the rest of Slough group.

As illustrated, following referral to VMAP non-assault violent offences (Harassment, Threats to kill and 'other' offences<sup>96</sup>) accounted for 20 per cent of subsequent occurrences, compared with 12 per cent of trigger offences and 11 per cent of previous offences, however given that a similar change is also apparent for the untreated rest of Slough group it is more likely that this reflects variations in procedural/recording practices over time, than an effect of VMAP intervention. When only assault offences are considered, the proportions of offences involving the VMAP cohort classified as GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm), ABH (Actual Bodily Harm) and Assault Without Injury in the post-referral period, was highly similar to that seen previously and at the trigger offence<sup>97</sup>, indicating no effect of VMAP referral on the seriousness of subsequent violence.

<sup>95</sup> 'South' cases were triggered by offences in Puckford and Norley wards, fell within the remit of the Slough's South Neighbourhood Policing team and were dealt with in the first half of VMAP meetings, 'North' cases were triggered by Broadham and Holmston offences, fell within the remit of the North team and were discussed in the second part of the meeting. There is no 'rest of Slough' equivalent for these groups.

<sup>96</sup> This 'other' grouping includes a number of offence categories in low volumes including kidnaps, child cruelty/neglect, dangerous dogs offences, poisoning etc.

<sup>97</sup> The headline Subsequent Occurrence Offence measure reported in Section 6.5 has been repeated using assault offences only and shows only minimal variation from the pattern illustrated in figure 6.5.1.

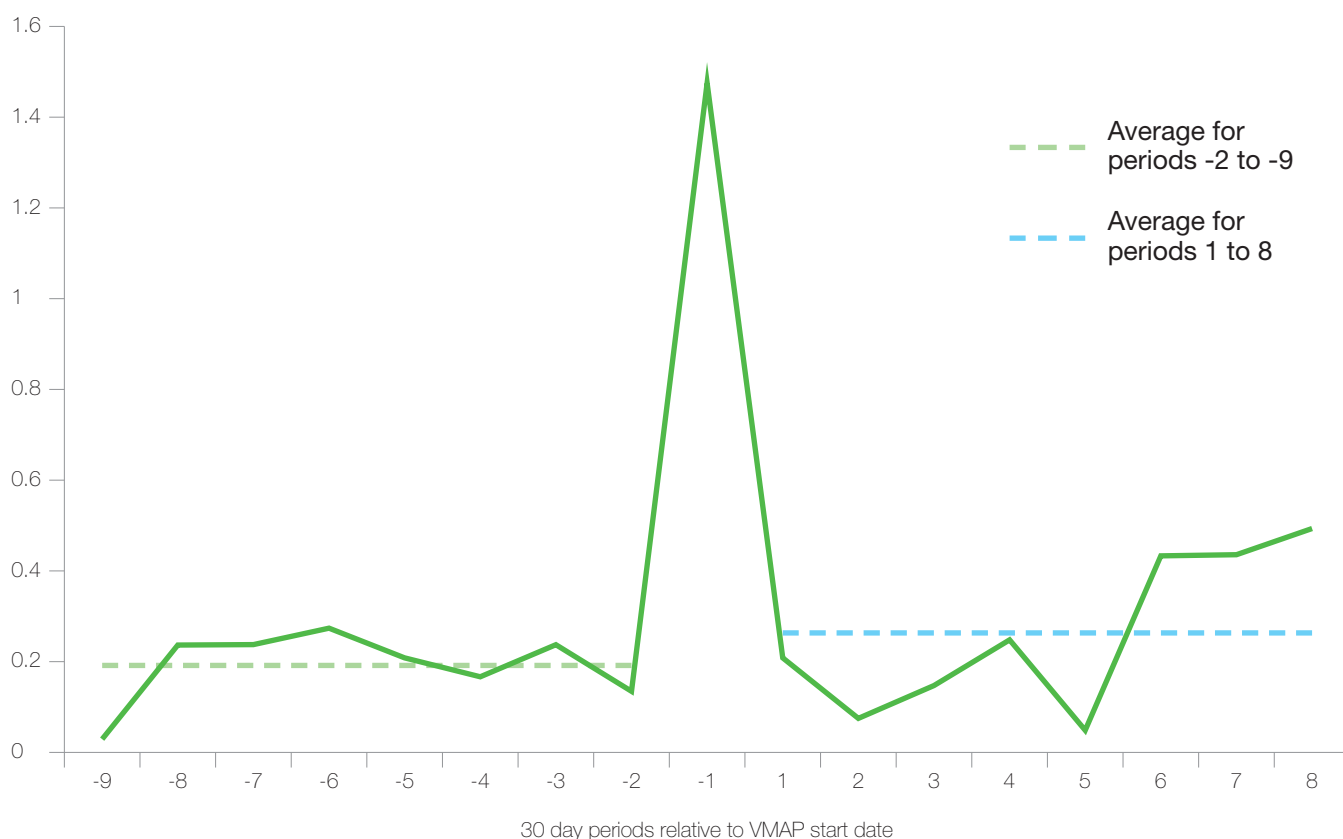
**Figure 6.7.1: Proportion of previous, trigger and subsequent offences by classification**

## 6.8 'Priority attention' sub-group

As noted in Section 5.4, following initial research and information sharing, some VMAP subjects received little or no active intervention, and in reality, in these cases there is scant reason to expect an impact to result. Other cases however, received more focused attention, reflected in the finding (reported previously) that half of all the actions set in VMAP meetings related to just 32 cases (each receiving between

seven and 16 VMAP actions each). Investigating the possibility of an impact for this 'priority attention' subgroup is not straightforward; without an equivalent comparator group (either in previous years or in the rest of Slough) it is difficult to estimate likely occurrence levels in the absence of intervention, and due to the limited size of the group, any conclusions must be drawn cautiously. However, these cases can be tracked on a month-by-month basis giving some indication of progress over time.

**Figure 6.8.1: Average number of incidents per 30 day period prior to and following the VMAP start date, for VMAP ‘priority attention’ cases**



For each of these ‘priority’ VMAP cases the number of offences in which the individual was involved (as a victim or suspect/offender) during consecutive 30 day periods, both prior to and following the date that they were first discussed at VMAP, has been counted, and an average for each period calculated across the whole group (see Figure 6.8.1).

As expected (given that a recent incident was part of the selection criteria) a clear peak in violent occurrences is evident in the 30 day period prior to first presentation (period -1). In the months prior to this these priority individuals came to attention at an average rate of around 0.2 offences per case per month (or once every 5 months). Following referral to VMAP however the average occurrence rate was *greater*, at 0.26 offences per case per month (or around once every 4 months) – with a notable jump in rate after five months. While small case numbers

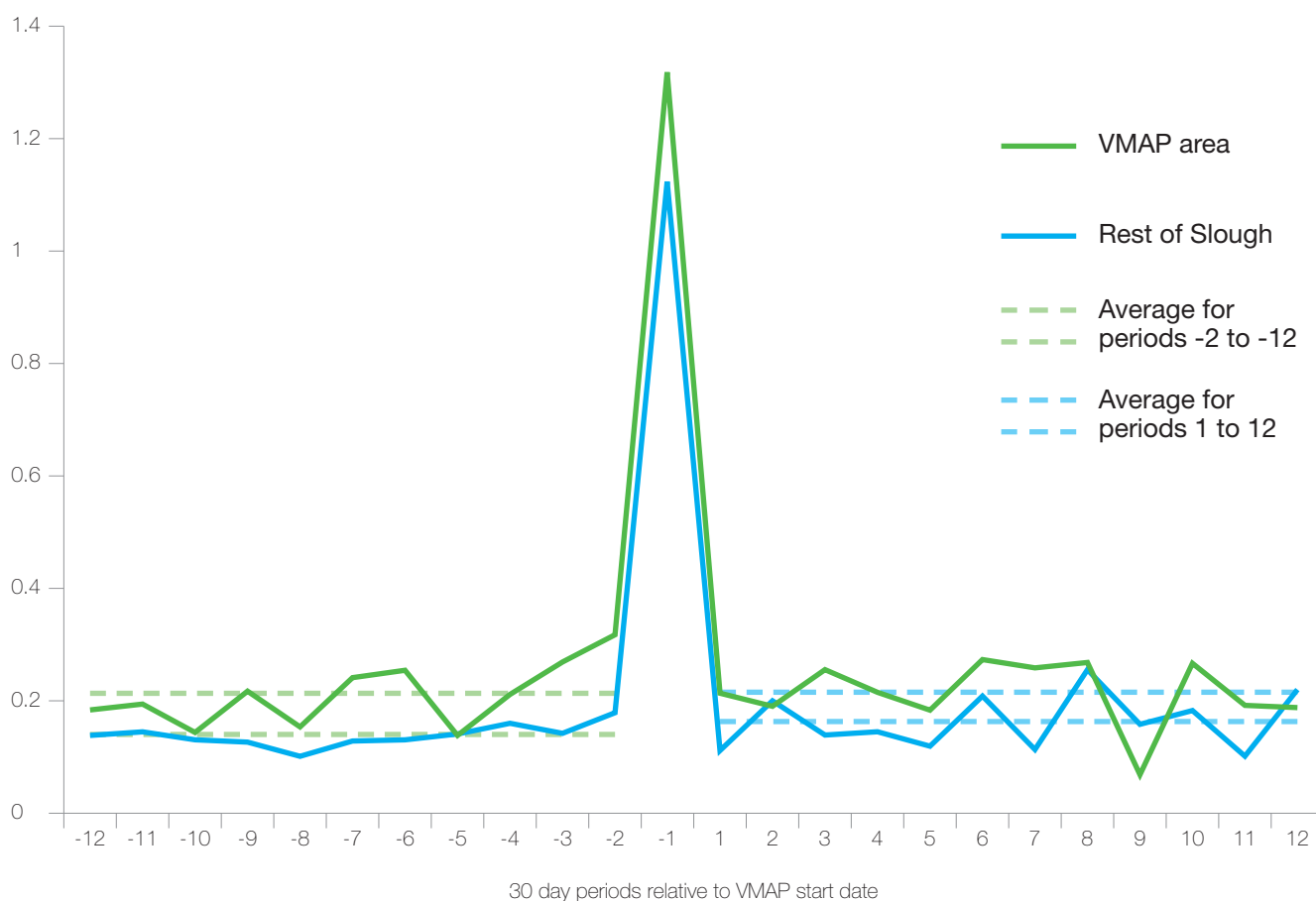
require caution,<sup>98</sup> the most plausible interpretation is that involvement in violence after the VMAP start date, prompted additional VMAP attention, leading to an increased action count for these cases. While this illustrates that VMAP remained responsive to on-going recurrence, it also echoes practitioner’s frustration with more problematic, resource intensive return cases – however, without a suitable comparator, it is not possible to suggest whether this on-going attention was effective at preventing even greater recurrence.

## 6.9 Demand reduction

Prompted primarily by practitioners’ concerns that outcome measures based on involvement in recorded violent crime might ‘set the bar too high’, analysis was also conducted on a set of police incident data which recorded individuals’ involvement in both crime (violence and other crimes) and

<sup>98</sup> Particularly for the periods further from the VMAP referral date where data is only available for part of the sub-group.

**Figure 6.9.1: Average number of incidents per 30 day period prior to and following the VMAP start date, for the VMAP cohort and rest of Slough comparison group**



non-crime police incidents (such as domestic disturbances, missing persons enquiries and concern for welfare cases). This analysis aimed to test the hypothesis that (although no impact on violent crime could be identified) VMAP activity had led to a reduction in the level of wider demand created by referred cases, as indicated by involvement in a broader set of police related matters.

For each of the 298 individuals referred to VMAP during the pilot year and each of the 455 who *would* also have been referred if it had been operating across the rest of Slough LPA, every police recorded incident in which they were recorded as either *aggrieved*, *suspect* or *arrested* was identified, for a period covering the VMAP intervention year and 12 months beforehand.<sup>99</sup>

For each individual the number of incidents in which they were involved, during every 30 day period both prior to and following the date of the VMAP meeting at which their case was first discussed (the 'VMAP start date') was calculated<sup>100</sup>. The average number of incidents occurring in each of these 30 day periods (relative to the VMAP start date) was then calculated for both the VMAP and rest of Slough groups and is shown in figure 6.9.1 below.<sup>101</sup> This shows that:

- Both the VMAP and *rest of Slough* groups saw a peak average number of incidents in the 30 days prior to their VMAP start date (period -1) – this is to be expected as recent involvement in a violent offence formed part of the VMAP selection criteria (and the equivalent selection criteria applied to the *rest of Slough* group).

<sup>99</sup> Based on an extract from the *Niche* system.

<sup>100</sup> for the *Rest of Slough* group, the date on which they would have been discussed has been used.

<sup>101</sup> Not all cases have a full set of 12 x 30 day periods of data available for analysis following their VMAP start date (ie an individual with a VMAP start date 90 days before the end of the VMAP pilot will have data available for the first, second and

third 30 day periods (periods 1, 2 and 3), but none for the fourth, fifth or subsequent periods). The average for each period is based only on those individuals for whom a full 30 days of data is available, as this reduces for each subsequent 30 day period, figures for the months further from the VMAP start date are based on smaller sample sizes and should be treated cautiously – sample sizes are shown in the table in Appendix 6.9.

- Over the rest of the year prior to VMAP selection (ie in months -2 to -12) VMAP cases were involved in an average of 0.22 incidents per 30 day period (on average, about one incident per person every four to five months), while the rest of Slough group were involved in 0.14 (one incident per person every six to seven months). This again reinforces the finding that those coming to notice in the VMAP wards were typically higher demand cases than their *rest of Slough* equivalents.
- After the VMAP start date, *rest of Slough* cases returned to approximately the same demand profile as before – recording an average of 0.17 incidents per 30 day period (in periods 1 to 12) – with no indication of a trend (either upwards or downwards) over this period.<sup>102</sup>
- The VMAP group also returned to pre-start date average demand levels (an average of 0.22 incidents per 30 day period for periods 1 to 12 – with no indication of a trend).

This indicates that VMAP did not reduce (or increase) the level of demand individuals generated for police (as measured through involvement in crime and non-crime incidents) – the average number of incidents per month following intervention by VMAP was identical to that beforehand (which was also the pattern apparent in the ‘untreated’ *rest of Slough* group). It should be noted that equivalent analysis for the subset of VMAP cases that received at least one VMAP action (ie those that were not screened out at the initial triage stage) showed identical results.

## 6.10 Conclusions

The principle finding of this analysis is that VMAP did not have a clearly demonstrable impact on violent

crime. When the particular subset of violent offences that VMAP set out to prevent/reduce is isolated, there is no indication that these occurred any less frequently following VMAP referral than would be expected, given levels during previous years, and those in the non-implementation parts of the Slough.

There is also no evidence that this finding is the product of combining victim and offender sub-groups, (for whom differential impacts might potentially have occurred) within the same assessment cohort. No indication was found of any effect on the type or seriousness of subsequent violent incidents or on a broader measure of demand on police resources. Individuals who received a higher ‘dosage’ – in terms of the number of VMAP actions set – tended to have a higher recurrence rate in the months following referral than beforehand. This is likely to reflect actions generated by additional cycles through the VMAP process, triggered by further violent incidents.

The analysis does show that violent incidents involving recurrent individuals were concentrated in the VMAP intervention wards and therefore that prioritising on a geographic basis appears to be a sensible and legitimate strategy.

There are tentative indicators within the data that sub-sets of cases showed slightly more promising outcomes. Those who came to attention as suspects/ offenders for non-domestic violence, older individuals and those involved in more previous violent incidents all showed (non-significant) reductions in recurrence. Although these findings must be treated with caution, we might speculate that this could reflect a small measure of progress in relation to some of Slough’s more entrenched, and ‘problematic’ recurrent offenders – through improved case multi-agency coordination through VMAP.

<sup>102</sup> Given that this group received no intervention, this pattern (a return to the pre-start date demand level), is what we would expect to see in the VMAP group, *if there had been no impact* – a positive impact would be expected to be reflected in a lower average number of incidents in the months following the VMAP start date.

## 7. Project postscript

### 7.1 Undaunted and undeterred – practitioner views on the future of VMAP

Despite analysis showing no evidence of impact, many practitioners remained unwavering in their support for the VMAP process.

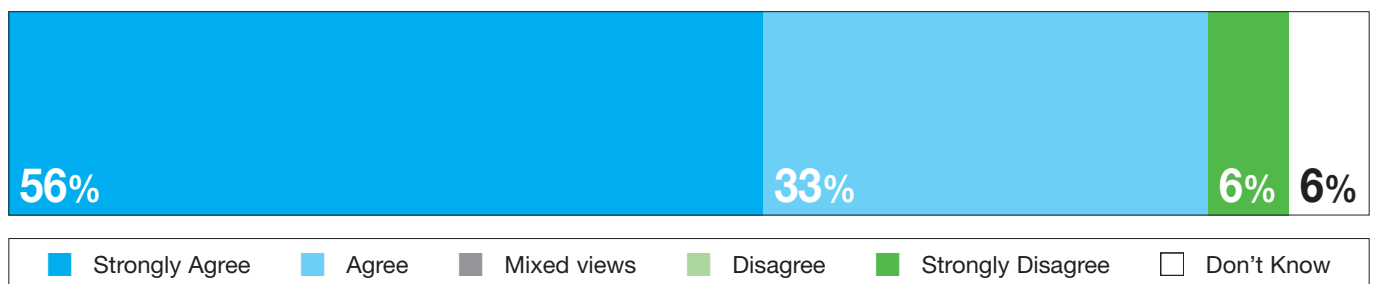
During the early stages of the project there were those individuals (as outlined previously in Section 5.3) who instinctively felt that VMAP was the 'right thing to do', even if this ran contrary to evaluation findings. Some practitioners acknowledged that the success of the VMAP pilot was likely to be reflected in 'softer' process outputs, but also felt that achieving reductions in violence would be possible with an extended project time frame. Others concurred that the impact of VMAP was unlikely to be felt so early

on, and that its true potential would only begin to materialise well into the future.

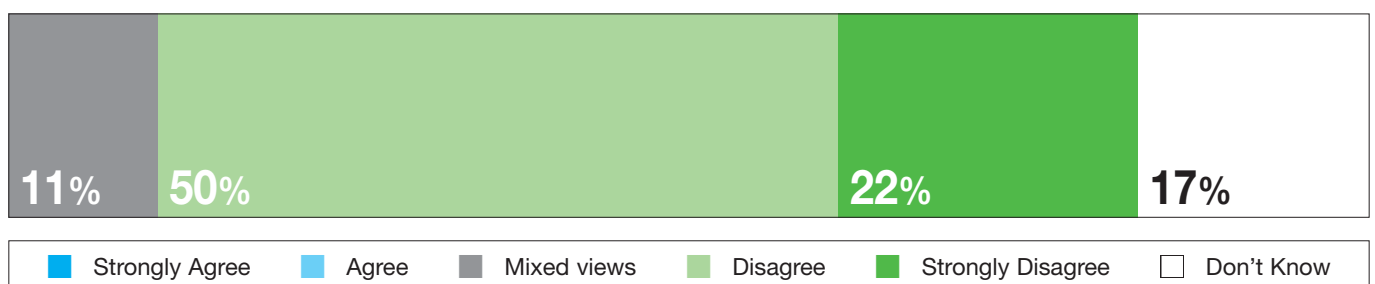
The perceived longer-term benefits of the VMAP approach are likely to be a key rationale behind calls to extend the project. Survey findings near the end of the VMAP pilot year showed a clear appetite among practitioners to continue with VMAP, with nearly 90 per cent of respondents agreeing that the initiative had a future (figure 7.1.1).

Extending the VMAP caseload (for example, to encompass wider community safety incidents and other locations within Slough) – an idea proposed by local working group leads for the next iteration of the project – was not favoured, however, with nearly three-quarters of respondents disagreeing that VMAP could take on more than it does (figure 7.1.2).

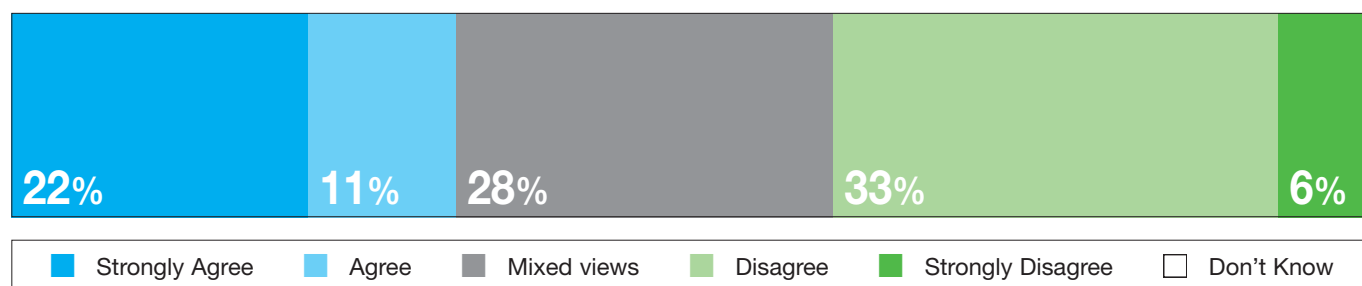
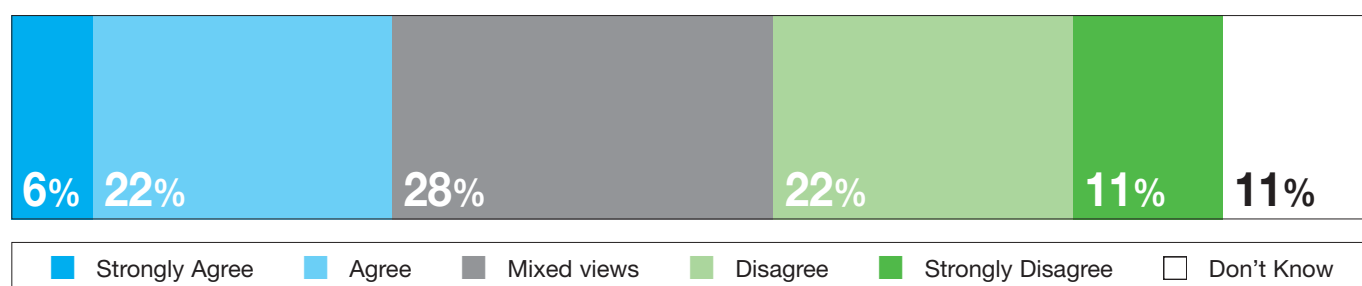
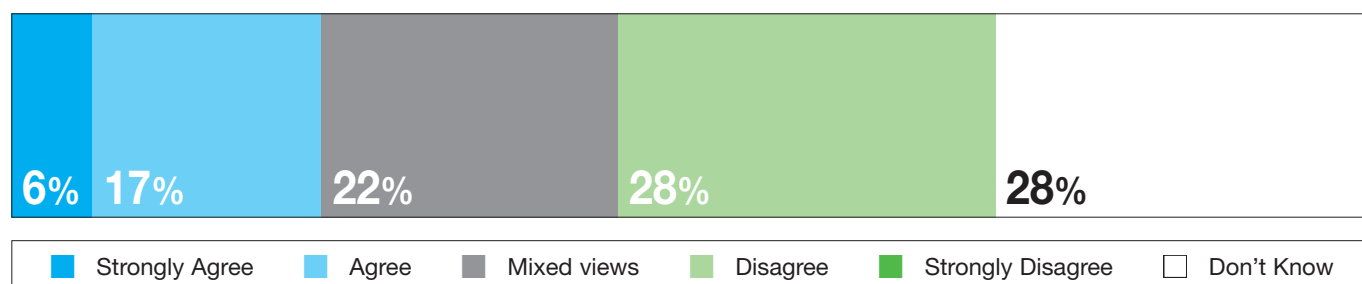
**Figure 7.1.1: VMAP should be continued in the future**



**Figure 7.1.2: VMAP could take on more cases than it does**





**Figure 7.1.3: VMAP should meet less often than it does****Figure 7.1.4: There are cases in Slough that warrant our attention more than those we discuss in VMAP****Figure 7.1.5: VMAP cases should be chosen in a different way**

There was also no clear consensus on whether VMAP should meet less often (working group leads had suggested moving VMAP from a fortnightly to a monthly cycle) (figure 7.1.3).

There were also mixed views on potential changes to VMAP case selection going forward – whether that was in relation to cases warranting greater attention than those discussed at VMAP (figure 7.1.4), or whether the caseload should be chosen in a different way (figure 7.1.5).

Differences in attitudes regarding the future of VMAP were exemplified by the following quotes –

... ranging those practitioners who wanted to maintain the current approach ...

*"I would like VMAP to continue the way it is going, and to focus on those cases that we have been focussing on for the last 12 months. I understand that they want to make some changes as to the type of cases that are brought to the meeting, and I wasn't too happy with what they were saying at that time. Only because I think it takes the focus away from what everybody is used to and what people have been trying to achieve."*

... to others who wanted to see the focus of the caseload change.

*"I feel quite strongly ... we shouldn't be going from the list that we've been going from, we should be dealing with the people in this area that we know are, sort of, top offenders and we should apply VMAP to that."*

## 7.2 Taking VMAP forward – recommendations on what to change

Retention of the VMAP process beyond the initial pilot year had been mooted early in 2015, and a working group was set-up to explore possible continuity arrangements. As demonstrated by the survey findings from July 2015, it was clear that there was overwhelming support from local practitioners to continue with the VMAP process.

In delivering initial evaluation findings back to project key leads and practitioners in Slough following the culmination of the VMAP pilot year, Police Foundation staff advocated a number of potential changes to the VMAP process. These were aimed at helping address some of the apparent functionality and procedural shortcomings previously highlighted.

A shift away from a focus on VMAP meetings as the predominant mechanism for problem solving was proposed, with an increased emphasis on inter-meeting case conferences and engagement between practitioners advocated as a viable way to enhance problem solving activity.

Allowing scope for deeper problem solving within VMAP meetings was also encouraged. It was felt this could be best enabled by ensuring that case explorations were supported by more contextual information, and by affording additional time for

dedicated case discussions. Encouraging and drawing on the pooled professional expertise of all VMAP meeting attendees, rather than just prevailing knowledge of specific cases, was also seen as important factor in helping overcome the apparent reticence of some VMAP participants to engage in case discussions.

A more intensive focus on fewer cases was also advocated, helping to counter issues related to unwieldy caseload volumes, and to afford the meeting space necessary to facilitate more in-depth case dialogue. This proposal seemed to accord with the views of one senior stakeholder when asked about their reflections on the VMAP process.

*"That [reducing the caseload] might be our next move actually, thinking about it, because if the process that has been used has failed to reduce violent crime significantly, then actually maybe we say okay, we deal with no more than five cases at a time, and we problem solve them and then they don't come off until it stops, and then we go to the next five. Although you will see a much smaller reduction, hopefully they won't repeat and you will start to eat away."*

Increasing the VMAP recurrence threshold to three offences (one recent trigger offence, and two previous offences), was proposed as an effective means of reducing caseloads, and in turn, offering a stronger predictor of future risk of recurrence. However it was also acknowledged that this would likely generate a caseload of individuals with more entrenched problems.

It was further proposed that the oversight role of VMAP meetings should be enhanced, with a view to increasing practitioner accountability. This was in

response to the view that the non-confrontational nature of VMAP meetings had limited the readiness of VMAP participants to challenge one-another, and for intervention activity to be robustly scrutinised.

### 7.3 What Slough did next

A modified version of the VMAP model was devised by the Thames Valley Police, largely based on ideas formulated during the practitioner working group meetings held in 2015.

The core concept of a multi-agency panel problem solving and case management process was retained, as was a focus on individuals recurrently involved in violence. However, some key changes to previous VMAP working arrangements were made, which (as of October 2015) included:

- Expanding the geography of coverage to incorporate recurrent cases across all three policing sectors in Slough (rather than the original focus on four intervention wards in two policing sectors).
- Widening the methodology for deriving VMAP cases to include police recorded non-crime violent incidents (rather than just violence offences as previously).
- Modifying the time frame and threshold for deriving cases to include those individuals involved in three or more occurrences of violence in the previous six months (rather than one occurrence in the previous two weeks, and one within the 12 months prior, as under the pilot model).
- Selecting those individuals ranked in the top 10 of each of the three policing sectors in Slough (30 cases in total) for subsequent review at VMAP meetings. The top 10 lists would be routinely

refreshed to bring new individuals into the caseload. The notion of focussing on 'top 10' persons of interest was a familiar premise – one already employed for the police Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TTCG) process in Slough.

- Holding VMAP meetings on a monthly basis (rather than fortnightly as under the original model).
-

## 8. Conclusions and discussion

### 8.1 Initial reflections on the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project in Slough

The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project sought to apply the principles of problem-oriented policing – and specifically the SARA process – to crime and public safety issues in two closely matched towns, Slough and Luton. In doing so it sought both to develop innovative policing practice and learn lessons about police effectiveness and how it relates to the changing context in which policing operates. In both towns effectiveness was pragmatically defined in terms of crime reduction, not least to secure the buy-in of the local police forces (this is also in line with HMIC's more recent PEEL<sup>103</sup> inspection definition).

This report has documented a five-year iterative process that started with a largely blank piece of paper and ended up with a year of multi-agency intervention activity that sought to address the recurrent involvement in violence of almost 300 offenders and victims in four wards in Slough. The *changing world* featured less strongly in Slough than was perhaps anticipated, but was evident in the nature of the communities that formed the focus for this work, the problems identified in the scanning and analysis phases of the project (including violence in Houses in Multiple Occupation – HMOs – in Puckford), but also in the organisational and political landscape of policing and crime reduction. Police and Crime Commissioners and public sector austerity were introduced in the lifetime of the project and police priorities conspicuously shifted from volume crime to 'threat, harm and risk' and then vulnerability.

Throughout the project Slough felt like a place that was clearly busy, with a significant daily presence of high risk and high harm crime and public safety issues, but where the police and their partners broadly took change in their stride, showed resilience, and sustained effective partnership relations. Our analysis suggested that the demands on the police and others were often complex, and it is illustrative that the analysis phase of the project was unable to identify any 'quick wins' suitable for traditional situational crime prevention approaches, which ultimately pushed the project towards problem solving at a case-level. For example, far from being a place where violence is driven by a thriving night time economy, we found violence in Slough to be diffuse and dispersed, frequently indoors (including non-domestic violence in dwellings) and with signs of normative cultural dynamics (particularly in Broadham, where the involvement of females in violence was notable). To the extent that this may be reflective of the nature of priority crime in other locations, with an increasing focus on private as opposed to public place crime (including violence), there may be an urgent need for better evidence about what works at the case level.

The focus on *recurrent* violence was borne out of evidence that recurrence was a strong predictor of future involvement in violence and that a comparatively small number of individuals had a disproportionate impact on levels of police recorded violence. While this is a known phenomenon and frequently reflected in operational practice, for example around burglary, it was not being systematically addressed in relation to violence. Successfully intervening with this recurrent group to reduce the likelihood that they reoffend (or are re-victimised) offered the prospect of violent crime being reduced.

<sup>103</sup> Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy programme. Further information on PEEL is available here: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/peel-assessments/>.

The project focus on violence was timely, coinciding with the growing national and local emphasis on harm and vulnerability noted above, and in the case of Thames Valley Police with a considered and thorough review of the structures and purpose of neighbourhood policing. From a partnership service perspective, violence was widely seen as 'everybody's business', while the existence of a meaningful neighbourhood police model was an important foundation for the project, not least given the focus on problem solving the involvement of individuals in local violence.

## 8.2 The Slough Violence Multi-Agency Panel

Developed in a highly consultative manner with the police and their partners in Slough, the Violence Multi-Agency Panel (VMAP) initiative sought to apply best practice multi-agency working to problem-solve an objectively generated caseload (from police records) that had hitherto largely gone unremarked and unaddressed. Although some individual cases were well-known and already subject to interventions, many might be categorised as 'medium risk', and consequently fell into the gaps between a recording and basic call-out and/or investigation response on the one hand, and more developed risk management processes for domestic violence (MARAC) and serious violence (MAPPA) on the other. The VMAP model was founded on four key concepts:

- Tailored crime prevention
- Partnership collaboration at the local level, focused on coordinating existing services
- A case-based approach
- A focus on recurrence (which had not been examined before)

The focus on recurrence offered the opportunity to review at least two previous violence offences with the potential to layer partner agency records and knowledge on top of police information and identify underlying issues and contributory factors that could be addressed through problem solving. The approach would also cut across typical typologies, including non-domestic and domestic violence, children and adults, and offenders and victims. The latter offered the prospect of addressing the dynamics of violence and taking a more holistic approach than the likes of MARAC and MAPPA, which tend to be primarily victim-centric and offender-focused respectively. One third of domestic violence victims in the VMAP caseload also presented as domestic violence offenders over the pilot year.

Closely supported by the Police Foundation in a number of project management, research and evaluation roles, VMAP was developed and implemented with a high degree of integrity, and succeeded in securing the buy-in of individuals from a wide range of statutory and third sector agencies. On average across the year to August 2015, 14 professionals committed 7.5 hours of their time every fortnight, including attending a three-hour meeting, and for the most part reported that they found the process positive, rewarding and a good use of their time (although this started to wane towards the end of the year). The action research approach that we adopted allowed process improvements to be made during the implementation year, which were acknowledged by participants in interviews and questionnaires. Participants reported a range of positives emanating from their involvement in VMAP, including the way it:

- helped foster professional relationships, trust and cooperation across agencies;

- improved information sharing (not least as a result of bespoke pre-VMAP training);
- helped services identify cases that weren't coming to light through existing processes;
- helped improve case understanding and coordination; and
- reduced duplication of effort.

And yet, despite all of the consultation, positivity and best practice, our evaluation found that VMAP was unable to achieve any meaningful reduction in the rates of violence experienced by its caseload (or the demands they placed on the police). It is this paradox that will be the main focus for the discussion here, but a number of other points will also be aired.

### *Basic limitations*

It is clear that VMAP suffered a number of basic limitations, many of which will be familiar to anyone who has attended multi-agency meetings. This included instances where participants were insufficiently prepared for meetings, resulting in actions for more information to be brought to future meetings (although this situation improved over time); a tendency as the year wore on for meetings to slip into case coordination rather than problem solving; and a failure to consistently achieve meaningful case ownership. The latter may, in part, have been a consequence of the way the VMAP chair adopted a very consensual and non-confrontational approach, which appeared to work well in securing the attendance of a wide range of professionals (who reported enjoying the process and not feeling put on the spot) but arguably resulted in a loss of accountability and focus at times. Such are the challenges of effective service delivery and

coordination in partnerships with only soft power to be exercised.<sup>104</sup> Given that the chair was a senior police officer, it also may be telling that the police in Slough took on around 40 per cent of the actions that were set during VMAP meetings.

Perhaps more significantly, VMAP arguably failed at the design and planning stages to recognise the potential value of directly involving victims and offenders as participants in the problem solving process. This had a tendency to result in case discussions that were somewhat detached and theoretical, which served to make it difficult to move beyond superficial explorations of 'causation and cure'.

Ultimately, our findings from the analysis of the VMAP 'black box' (Section 5.4) make it difficult to avoid the conclusion that simply not enough occurred in VMAP to engender meaningful outcomes with individuals. Purposeful and material problem-solving activity was evidently in short supply, and VMAP frequently deferred to a case monitoring modality – approaching two-thirds of actions recorded during VMAP meetings were shown to represent (often incidental) 'information' tasks.

### *Was problem solving ever a realistic goal?*

Seen now with the benefit of hindsight, including a detailed understanding of the characteristics of the VMAP caseload, it was perhaps always unlikely that transformational change could be achieved given the limited and finite resources that VMAP was able to draw on (which, it should be borne in mind, were relatively generous, particularly when seen in contrast to the situation in our Luton project). Here it is significant that VMAP's focus on violence offered a 'way in' to a host of complex long-term needs

<sup>103</sup> Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy programme. Further information on PEEL is available here: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/peel-assessments/>.

<sup>104</sup> There are alternatives, but with no way at present to weight their respective effectiveness. During the VMAP year, for example, we observed a similar process to VMAP in a London community safety partnership, where the model was much more adversarial with professionals summoned to a meeting to account for progress (or lack thereof). The meeting atmosphere was conspicuously different to VMAP, being rather more tense and challenging.



(including drugs, alcohol and mental health) often in the context of chaotic lifestyles and destructive but co-dependent relationships. Moreover, the individuals who formed the VMAP caseload were only rarely positively engaged through the VMAP process, and indeed there were cases that repeatedly featured in VMAP meetings where clients proved highly resistant to the attempts of services to assist them despite their obvious needs. Half of more than 600 actions set through the VMAP process related to only 32 subjects, around 11 per cent of the overall caseload.

A 'back of an envelope' calculation suggests that across the implementation year, VMAP notionally cost around £400 to £500 per case, based on an average 7.5 hours each fortnight for 12 participants (as they reported themselves), and 36 hours per fortnight each for the part-time coordinator and a full-time police analyst (but not including the likes of on-going service provision or enforcement). Although only a rough estimate, it is clear that this investment compares very unfavourably with the circa £3,000 to £4,000 invested in Troubled Families cases, for example (DCLG, 2015).

Taken together, this suggests that genuine problem solving in complex cases – rather than in more traditional situational crime prevention contexts – may in fact not be a realistic goal, particularly for stretched public services with only limited discretionary capacity. Indeed, it may be more accurate to describe much of the VMAP activity as something more akin to problem disruption, problem moderation or risk/harm mitigation – something that will be discussed further when examining the limitations of professional orthodoxies (below).

One possibility, of course, is that VMAP could have been focused on a much more targeted caseload, for

example those involved in violence at least three times in a 12-month period, which would have had the effect of limiting the number of cases under consideration and allowing more time for case discussions and – at least *in theory* – scope for more effective problem solving and client engagement outside of meetings. It would also have necessarily reduced the potential for measurable crime reduction however; although given that none was found for VMAP as a whole that might yet offer a more impactful approach. Here it could be argued that to some extent the evaluation tail (necessarily) wagged the programme design dog, in that to discern impact over the course of a year the caseload had to be sufficiently large – indeed at the design stage VMAP was expanded from two to four wards to achieve sufficient scale – but the size then limited the *per-case* resources available (and even then, did not result in sufficient cases for a robust cohort study evaluation approach).

### *Could VMAP be scaled up?*

Following those points about the size of the caseload, it is salient to note that the 298 individuals discussed during the VMAP year (arising from 249 'trigger' offences), which were drawn from only four out of 14 wards and included a sizable proportion that were screened out during the pre-VMAP meeting triage process, easily absorbed *much if not indeed all* of the spare capacity of a range of agencies; most of these operated across Slough and a number of which (especially those focusing on domestic abuse) were very obviously severely stretched. That suggests that any geographical expansion would only be feasible with a much more narrowly defined caseload, although interestingly, this is contrary to the direction police and partners in Slough initially chose to take

following the VMAP pilot year (as detailed previously in Section 7.3). That might suggest that the VMAP model (as designed) is not suitable for town-level working, which in any case would start to detach VMAP from the local level at which richer insights should be possible, not least reflecting the geography of neighbourhood policing activity. In the context of a wider shift of emphasis – particularly in policing – from volume crime to harm and vulnerability, it is also significant that a process like VMAP doesn't have to try very hard to identify more harm and vulnerability than it can cope with. As noted above, violence offers a 'way in' to complex and demanding social problems, that in many cases seem to be lacking a consistent multi-agency response and that are often highly persistent and indeed resistant to change.

### *The potential limitations of professional orthodoxies*

A more pressing concern in many ways is that 'best practice' is not in fact *effective*. Multi-agency working is widely viewed as the optimal approach to dealing with complex crime and public safety issues including at the case level, as reflected in the development of the VMAP model in close consultation with the police and their partners in Slough. Significantly, however, there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of approaches such as MARAC, MAPPA and MASH, which have received none of the scrutiny reported here, and for which existing evidence – where it exists – is primarily based on *process* rather than *impact* evaluations. As in the case of VMAP, these tend to show that professionals like the processes and think they are effective and a good use of their time – and indeed most of the VMAP participants were themselves also involved in other multi-agency initiatives.

The failure of VMAP to achieve (very carefully specified) crime reduction outputs hints at several possibilities. The first is that the things professional participants liked about VMAP – such as better understanding their colleagues in other disciplines, better information sharing, and improved case knowledge – are not, on their own, sufficient to achieve *effective positive outcomes*. One observation from VMAP meetings is that they often seemed to default to a *risk management* rather than *problem solving* posture – that is, participants appeared satisfied to know that an agency at the table had a given case on their books and 'in hand', without advancing the discussion to achieving transformational change in the individual(s) who had come to attention for being recurrently involved in violence, which was the ultimate ambition for VMAP. Particular questions were often asked, such as whether social services were aware that children were living in a household where there were violent adults, and at times these were given greater prominence than discussions about the causes and dynamics of violence and how they might be altered.

A second concern is that in fact, professional perceptions of service delivery effectiveness are wrong, and that as a result ineffective practices may be developed and persist – in respect of which it is notable how few services and interventions have been subjected to rigorous evaluation (never mind cost-benefit analysis). As one participant reflected:

*"Take the evaluation out of it ... I think personally it's worth it because I see the difference it could make to Slough as a whole ... it's about making the community feel safe."*

A third concern – albeit one that was never explicit – is that participants liked VMAP because it provided

(perhaps subconsciously) reputational cover for agencies dealing with risk, and as such participants were satisfied simply to be discussing cases they knew about in a forum with multiple partners. In this context, VMAP potentially provided *diffusion of responsibility* and *demonstrable activity*, even if it ultimately didn't change the likelihood of violence recurring (and it may be that this was enough for some participants around the table).

### Enablers of police effectiveness

Despite the failure to show impact, we do nevertheless feel it is possible to identify a number of factors that seem to represent essential enablers of police effectiveness, in the present case in partnership with other services. Indeed, *partnership working* is one such factor, and likely only to increase in prominence with the priority shift noted above towards threat, harm, risk and vulnerability (something that the likes of HMIC's PEEL inspection process will inevitably find harder both to ignore and to unpick). In Slough, VMAP benefited from, was able to build on, and contributed to, an ethos of inter-agency working at both senior and practitioner levels that was almost certainly underpinned by the view that violence was 'everybody's business' – that is, that all agencies were working towards shared goals.<sup>105</sup> This was embodied most clearly in the good working relationship between the Local Police Area (LPA) Commander and Council Chief Executive who positively engaged with VMAP, providing visible *local leadership* and (reputational) *sponsorship* of the project, and who offered the potential prospect of an occasional injection of hard power if/when required. On the policing side, the Police Effectiveness project also benefited throughout from the patronage of the chief constable for Thames Valley, who conspicuously took a stake in the project

by funding the part-time coordinator role, and consequently effectively underwrote that VMAP would be prioritised by the police in Slough (at a time when priorities were inevitably becoming less certain). It was also clear that the VMAP chair, an experienced senior police officer, provided both continuity and a distinctly consensual and inclusive approach that helped secure the on-going involvement of often hard-pressed partners. It is worth reflecting, briefly, on how hard it can be to 'design-in' such soft skills when planning an initiative like VMAP – a consideration that has significant implications for replicability elsewhere.

Perhaps most importantly, however, neighbourhood policing clearly stood out as a critical enabler of police capability across the *Police Effectiveness* project in Slough and Luton (respectively by its presence and absence), as the key interface with local residents and communities, and the primary source of knowledge and insight into local crime and related issues. In Slough VMAP was fortunate to benefit from the positive involvement of experienced neighbourhood police officers who knew their ground, could provide important insights into local people, and who showed real passion and commitment to improving the lives of local residents. Particularly in contrast to the situation in Luton, Slough also clearly benefited from continuity, with key police personnel remaining in post throughout the VMAP year (and in most cases for significantly longer than that).

## 8.3 Lessons for evidence-based policing

The *Police Effectiveness* project has thrown up a number of lessons for the development and application of 'evidence-based policing', whether doing and learning from the SARA problem-oriented

<sup>105</sup> This is in stark contrast to the *Police Effectiveness* project in Luton, where the focus on burglary was de-prioritised by the community safety partnership during the intervention year, illustrating a particular challenge with the lengthy timescales adopted in the *Police Effectiveness* project.

policing project as here, or in applying evidence of 'what works' from elsewhere.

The first is the evident lack of capacity – even in a seemingly well-resourced force such as Thames Valley – to undertake detailed local problem analysis and project management. While acknowledging that the model we adopted was distinctly resource-intensive, there were nevertheless signs that local capacity was noticeably scarce, for example when we found it necessary to offer to project manage a process intended to allow the police and local authority to reach a decision on procuring a case management system for VMAP. Had we not done so, it seemed the only outcome would have been that nothing would have happened.

Second and more generally, we have highlighted the way that the SARA approach as formally expressed understates the importance of attending to the 'analysis to action' phase of work that turns analytical insight into deliverable activity 'on the ground'. This is a substantial undertaking, requiring careful project management and, as in the case here, securing and sustaining buy-in from a range of local agencies and services (and winning hearts and minds in the process), coordinating input into drafting terms of reference, addressing data sharing concerns, designing and refining processes from scratch, and tempering the typical police inclination to 'start *today*'.

Third, the VMAP process underlines the critical importance of rigorous evaluation, marrying a detailed understanding of how an initiative is operationalised to the perceptions of the professionals involved and a clearly defined assessment of impact. This is often a significant undertaking, but the implications of persisting with ineffective practices (especially resource-intensive

multi-agency meetings), or failing to fully exploit effective ones, must be taken into account. The fact that VMAP was well-liked but ineffective in achieving its stated aims must at best raise questions about the effectiveness of comparable multi-agency panel processes that have not been similarly evaluated. That said, VMAP threw up a clear challenge, which is how to balance the scale required for robust evaluation with the capacity of local services to provide a sufficiently high-quality service, which may only be possible with a smaller caseload (this might be called 'the paradox of scale'). More broadly, the VMAP experience might also suggest that SARA is less well suited to relatively low frequency, case-level, complex and long-term needs, although in the present case these only emerged after extensive scanning and analysis had been completed. Given that these are growing in importance there may be an urgent need for other structured tools to be developed to support professionals looking to reduce ('problem solve') harm 'in the field'.

Finally, it is worth briefly reflecting on the difference between real world, practically-applied evaluation, as here, and the much narrower (and increasingly fashionable) theory-testing world of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) on the other, which a growing number of senior police officers are being encouraged to hold up as the *only* appropriate level of evidence for developing policy. Most real-world policing operates in the realm of multi-dimensional interventions that must be adapted to local context, and indeed the shift to complex threat, risk, harm and vulnerability currently under way suggests that is only likely to increase. We argue that a failure to teach police leaders about real world evaluation must necessarily limit their ability to explore and understand what is working, how and why (or why not) in a local context.

## 8.4 Two challenges for policy makers

The experience of developing, implementing and evaluating VMAP throws up a couple of important questions for policy makers and local leaders tasked with ensuring the effective use of increasingly scarce resources.

First, there is the question of at what point decisions are taken about whether to persist with or terminate a new initiative. In the case of VMAP it is clear that the participants generally viewed the process in a positive light and that the evaluation has thrown up potential improvements and benefits, including working more intensively with a smaller caseload and better managing the case ownership process. While that offers the prospect of potential impact, introducing and then re-evaluating such changes also risks persisting with an ineffective and costly approach when the required resources could be applied to something else. When resources are scarce it seems likely that the decision is skewed in favour of avoiding throwing good money after bad.

That throws up a further challenge, namely how to weigh an ineffective but widely liked initiative that appears to offer lots of positives, against un-evidenced but widely-supported 'best practice', particularly in the context of shrinking resources and a complete lack of evidence about value for money. It is clear that in the field of crime reduction, genuine evidence-based policy making is a long way off – and that in an era of scarce resources this is unlikely to change soon.

## 8.5 Concluding remarks: a glass half full

Society is changing and so is the world of policing; innovation is essential. The SARA problem-oriented

policing approach offers a rigorous and empirical approach to service improvement, identifying new priorities and ways of working, establishing their impact, and building the findings back in to practice.

In Slough we identified that recurrent violence was a suitable and under-addressed focus that was aligned with local priorities and where the analysis suggested there was the potential for more effective practices to be developed, albeit the lack of common causes pushed the project towards a case-level approach and away from a traditional problem-oriented policing response. Working closely with the police and their local partners and building on established 'best practice' we developed the Slough Violence Multi-Agency Panel (VMAP) and set out a clear definition of success. There was no sense of a project 'doomed to succeed', but a wide range of people gave up many hours of their time to contribute and in broad terms, VMAP was implemented with a high degree of programme integrity, which is a credit to everyone involved. That it failed to achieve a positive impact is without doubt a disappointment and to some extent a paradox – although with hindsight some important limitations are visible, not least regarding the challenging characteristics of many of those recurrently involved in violence. At a time when policing is re-orienting service delivery towards harm and vulnerability, the VMAP caseload has started to reveal the scale of the potential challenge. Meanwhile, the learning generated in the process of implementing and evaluating VMAP suggests that conventional approaches, at least with existing resources, may struggle to achieve transformative change and hint that less ambitious risk management may be the best we can expect to achieve.



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# Appendices<sup>106</sup>

## Appendix 2.2: National Advisory Group

### Role

The project's National Advisory Group met on five occasions between December 2011 and April 2016 to provide strategic, specialist and practical advice. The group's remit included:

- Offering guidance on methods for conducting the project, from research design to organisational change and practice development.
- Providing advice and support in addressing any problems that emerged as the project developed.
- Providing robust but constructive criticism of the project.
- Providing access to relevant policy and practice mechanisms and knowledge of relevant good practice.
- Advising on, and contributing to, the dissemination of the project's outcomes.

### Membership

<b>Sir William Jeffrey KCB</b>	Chair of Trustees, the Police Foundation (Chair)
<b>Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms</b>	Emeritus Wolfson Professor of Criminology, University of Cambridge
<b>Jon Collins</b>	CEO Restorative Justice Council (formerly Deputy Director the Police Foundation)
<b>Andy Feist</b>	Programme Director, Crime and Policing Analysis Unit, Home Office
<b>Kate Flannery OBE</b>	Formerly HM Inspector of Constabulary
<b>Professor Martin Innes</b>	Director, Cardiff University Crime and Security Research Institute; Director, Universities Police Science Institute
<b>Professor Tim Newburn</b>	Professor of Criminology and Social Policy, London School of Economics
<b>Sara Thornton CBE</b>	Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council (formerly Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police)
<b>Professor Nick Tilley</b>	Department of Security and Crime Science, UCL
<b>Rachel Tuffin OBE</b>	Director, Knowledge, Research and Education, College of Policing
<b>Chris Williams</b>	Home Office (formerly Senior Advisor, Local Government Association then Head of Community Safety, London Borough of Brent)

Bedfordshire Police and Thames Valley Police were represented on the National Advisory Group by their Chief Constables or their representatives.

<sup>106</sup> Appendices are numbered according to the sections of the main report to which they relate.

### Appendix 3.1: Analysis phase research questions

Core research questions	Sub questions
1. Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) crime and socio-economic trends	
How do long-term rates and trends of recorded violence relate to other socio-economic patterns and trends at LSOA level?	How do rates and trends of violence at LSOA (in Broadham and Puckford) correlate to patterns and changes in: population growth; population density (overcrowding/HMOs); population turnover; demographic change (ethnicity, gender, age); deprivation and occupation?
2. Understanding micro-hotspots of violence within Broadham and Puckford	
Where and when do violent offences occur?	Where are the persistent micro-location hotspots for violence and how have they changed over time?
	When do violent offences take place (eg seasonality, time of day, day of week)? Can temporal hotspots be associated with regular events (eg pub closing times), occasional events (national holidays) or victim/offender specific events eg pregnancy, unemployment?
	How do hotspots for violence correlate to hotspots for antisocial behaviour, ambulance deployments, addresses of A&E assault patients and those of troubled families?
	What hotspots are responsible for the most significant increase in violence over the last four years and within the last year?
	What proportion of violent crime takes place in private domestic residences and (semi) public places (eg hostels and children's homes, bus stations)?
	How do these hotspots relate to housing tenure (eg HMOs) and the likelihood of victimisation in the two wards compared to the likelihood in the ward population?
	How do violent offenders describe places that are attractive or unattractive to commit violence and the reasons for this? And how do these hotspots relate to offenders' activities?
	What is the nature of domestic violence reported to the police (ie what proportion is violent/not violent, what proportion leads to injury)?

3. Understanding offenders (ever) arrested for violence that offend in Broadham and Puckford	
What are the characteristics of violent offenders that live or offend in the two wards?	What are the demographics of violent offenders (ethnicity, age, gender, nationality) who live or offend in the two wards and how does this compare to the ward population as a whole?
What factors are associated with offending behaviour among those convicted of violence in the two wards?	What proportion of violent offenders (living or offending for violence in these wards), test positive for particular drugs (heroin, crack, cocaine)?
	What do offenders describe as the causes of their offending behaviour, including drug and alcohol use? What would stop them offending?
	How do offenders describe the relationship between the availability of cheap alcohol and increases in alcohol related violence?
	What proportion of violent offences for which there is an identified offender are committed by a small number of prolific offenders?
	What proportion of violent offenders who live or offend in the two wards have also been victims of crime? If so, what crimes?
	What is the relationship between the victim and the offender in violent incidents (eg stranger, spouse, sibling)?
4. Understanding victims of violence in Broadham and Puckford	
What are the characteristics of victims of violence in these ward areas?	What are the socio-economic characteristics of victims of violence living in the two ward areas and how does that compare to the ward as a whole? Has it changed over time?
	What proportion of victims of violence in the two wards are repeat victims? What proportion of repeat victims suffer more than two offences?
What factors are associated with being a victim of violence among those living in the two wards?	What do victims of violence think made them vulnerable to victimisation? What are their experiences of crime in these wards? Are they reporting all offences? Do they feel that police and partner agencies respond to their concerns about violence and its effectiveness?

## Appendix 4.2: Key points from practitioner workshop discussions (March 2014)

### 4.2.1 Recurring people and addresses

- **Review of analytical findings and local context.** It was highlighted that some individuals are involved in violence on multiple occasions. Addresses also recur, often linked to different victims and offenders. Recurrence tends to take place soon after the event. These findings were seen to be consistent with research literature, which suggests that the difference between high and low crime places is not the number of different victims but the number of times those victims experience crime. Attendees recognised the 'culture' of violence described in the analysis relating to Broadham and Puckford.
- **Early intervention.** The group identified the need to 'get in early' and provide counter-narratives to young people to disrupt the cultural normalisation of violence. On-going work with secondary schools was highlighted, particularly in relation to gang issues in Broadham. The considerable diversity of schools within Slough was recognised, with the view that intervention should be tailored. It was also suggested that interventions could be extended to primary school level.
- **Mediation and restorative justice.** The increased use of informal 'restorative' resolutions by police was raised. There was some discussion of the comparative value of mandatory versus voluntary approaches and the challenge of getting perpetrators to admit guilt and engage in restorative or behaviour-change initiatives. It was also acknowledged that mediation services were not widely available. There was general group support for improving mediation, conflict resolution and restorative options, but attendees expressed their reservations about effectiveness and the need for any practice change to be grounded in evidence.
- **Preventative responses.** The group was encouraged to think about recurring violence and preventative interventions available as part of the response to an initial incident. It was acknowledged that preventing recurrence does not tend to feature strongly as part of the police response to violence (which often focuses on the immediate situation and then pursuing a charge where appropriate). Participants contrasted this with other offence types such as burglary which build crime prevention advice into the process.
- **Person-based problem solving.** Several participants had examples of case-specific 'problem solving' activities they felt had been successful. Prevention or protection plans (as used in MARACs and safeguarding) were a familiar means of planning and recording this kind of case-specific multi-agency activity and it was felt that such an approach could be valuable for lower and medium risk cases. One participant stressed the importance of finding out and respecting individuals' views and wishes, to avoid imposing external values. Another pointed out that some interventions could take time to work and that recurrence occurring in the meantime was not necessarily a sign of failure or an unaddressed problem.
- **Working together.** An outline proposal for a local, multi-agency forum for addressing people and addresses recurrently involved in violence was discussed. This would identify individuals and addresses coming to notice as victims or offenders (or both) as the basis for co-ordinating preventative 'problem-solving' interventions. The proposal was felt to be feasible, and it was perceived that there were gains to be made from improved coordination and 'routing' of existing services. The multi-agency case management framework was a familiar one based on participants' experiences of processes such as MARAC, but there was a warning against the unnecessary proliferation of these arrangements, given the resourcing implications. It was suggested that the existing police Sector Tasking meeting (a monthly multi-agency forum, for co-ordinating community safety activity at a neighbourhood level) could provide a suitable vehicle. Practitioners discussed elements such as group make-up and agency representation, and key elements to help make it work in practice (including data sharing and management).

### 4.2.2 Non-domestic violence in a dwelling

- **Current practice for addressing non-domestic violence in a dwelling.** The lack of a specific protocol in place for dealing with non-domestic violence incidents taking place in a dwelling was highlighted. As a result, officer discretion was used on a case by case basis, which meant that responses and approaches to dealing with incidents varied. It was noted by police officer participants that non-domestic incidents tended to be assessed at 'face value', rather than situations being judged more holistically (as with domestic violence). The potential value of needs assessments used with a 'problem solving' approach was aired.
- **The role of housing in preventing and addressing non-domestic violence in a dwelling.** The group explained how the housing responsibility at Slough Borough Council is divided into two areas: private rented housing and social housing. Participants explained that the Council has many more powers to respond to incidents that happen in social housing, and that enforcement controls in relation to privately rented housing are limited to controls over the general standard of properties.
- **Under-reporting of non-domestic violence in a dwelling.** Participants expressed a general concern about the proportion of non-domestic violence in dwellings that goes unreported, in particular among vulnerable groups such as illegal migrants (who may be in fear of being removed by the authorities if they were to disclose incidents). The need to ensure that partner agencies were trained to report/refer suspected violence to the police was noted. Using Community Champions was also considered to be one way to encourage reporting from within hard to reach minority groups.
- **Houses in Multiple Occupation and rogue landlords.** Attendees agreed with the finding that a disproportionate amount of reported non-domestic violence occurred in HMOs. Participants noted that these properties were 'difficult to control', often being owned by rogue landlords who did not register dwellings in their own names, while others sub-let rooms within shared houses with little regulation. Most participants felt that HMO landlords showed a complete disregard for the compatibility of tenants (for example often putting problem drinkers with teetotalers, which had in some instances been a trigger for disputes and violence). It was acknowledged that new licensing rules (including breach of management fines levied on landlords) had made little difference to the running of HMOs.
- **Partnership working.** Participants explained that in the current system, officers use 'case review meetings' to bring problems to partners' attention and seek assistance. However, the infrequency of the meetings meant that problems were often 'saved-up' rather than dealt with immediately, creating a delay in action being taken. The group discussed the benefits of setting-up dedicated multi-agency co-located neighbourhood teams to try and engender better information sharing and timely responses to problems. The benefits of increased mobile working in facilitating greater partnership collaboration were also mentioned.
- **Social media.** One participant questioned the impact and contribution of social media in violent incidents, such as 'happy slapping' (promoted on Facebook), which was thought to have been used by young people to initiate or contribute to harassment and threatening behaviour. The current response by police when abuse on social media was reported was to make a non-emergency appointment and visit the victim within 24 hours. Participants noted an increase in the number of appointments attended over the last year and cited a number of examples of online triggers (including so-called 'revenge porn' clips put online by ex-partners after break-ups, leading to assaults on the perpetrator). Most attendees agreed, however, that social media was too big to be policed, with preventative partnership action being the most realistic option.

### 4.2.3 Adapting and responding to domestic violence

- **Review of analytical findings and local context.** Research and analysis found that there were particular stress points such as pregnancy and unemployment that appear to be 'triggers' for domestic violence. These findings resonate with wider evidence on domestic violence, which shows that particular stress points and life events substantially increase the risk of victimisation and that there are certain risk factors associated with being a victim of domestic violence (for example substance misuse and mental health problems). Previous research undertaken by Standing Together in Slough had found that greater focus was needed to develop initiatives around prevention and early intervention.
- **Increasing reporting.** The group discussed whether the current level of training given to GPs was adequate and whether routine enquiries were happening in Slough as frequently as they should. Participants agreed there was a need to improve domestic violence training for frontline medical staff and that it should be made mandatory for doctors and nurses. Some participants questioned whether other public service staff should be trained to provide assistance when they come into contact with a victim of domestic abuse.
- **Addressing under-reporting.** The group questioned what could be done to address under-reporting and whether it is necessary to increase the range of organisations to which victims could disclose incidents, and for the process to be made simpler. Participants noted how businesses could be encouraged to engage as part of their responsibility to support employees, and in doing so help reduce the financial and business impact of domestic violence (for example, in relation to sickness and low attendance, stress and alcoholism). The group also suggested that targeted prevention work could be mainstreamed into drug and alcohol or mental health services in order to engage those who are most vulnerable (potentially as victims and perpetrators) to ensure they are able to access timely support and opportunities for disclosure.
- **Possible initiatives.** The group suggested whether specific contact points within the community could be identified in order to help signpost domestic violence victims. It was highlighted that a network set-up in Oxfordshire which trains front-line agency practitioners has been recognised as good practice. Other initiatives and mechanisms in different parts of the country aimed at increasing reporting and raising awareness were also discussed. The group considered how faith groups and wider community groups can be engaged to help break down barriers and myths around domestic violence and to help communities better understand why they should report incidents and where they can access advice. The group agreed that there needs to be a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention.
- **Developing responses.** A particular issue identified by local research was whether alternatives to conventional criminal justice responses to domestic abuse could be developed. Interviews with victims had shown how some were reluctant to report incidents to the police as they knew what the process and consequences would be (eg to sign a statement and press charges); most wanted a wider range of choices and more control over possible outcomes. The need to explore a range of methods to tackle domestic violence at different stages was suggested. Attendees differed in their opinions about what an alternative response could be and whether it would be appropriate. The group agreed that developing alternative responses to dealing with domestic violence was a difficult and complex topic and one which divided opinion. The group concluded that there are currently a number of domestic violence initiatives underway so trying to find where significant value could be added would be difficult.



## Appendix 6.4: Calculating the Subsequent Occurrence Offence rate

The raw Subsequent Occurrence Offence count (SOO) for any given area and one year period will vary according to:

1. **The number of ‘trigger’ offences:** As an SOO can only follow a trigger offence, differences in the number of trigger offences will provide fewer or more ‘opportunities’ for SOOs to occur. All other things being equal, a year/area in which there are more trigger offences will see more SOOs than one in which there were fewer triggers.
2. **The distribution of ‘trigger’ offences throughout the year:** a trigger at the start of the VMAP year has greater time in which to (and therefore ‘opportunity’ to) result in a SSO, than one towards the end. All other things being equal, a year in which triggers are clustered toward the start of the year will see more SOOs than one in which they are clustered towards the end<sup>107</sup>.
3. **The rate (frequency and speed) with which ‘trigger’ offences are followed by SOOs:** taking into account the ‘opportunities’ for them to do so, given 1 and 2.

VMAP could do nothing to influence 1 or 2 – ‘trigger’ offences (by definition) occurring *prior* to VMAP intervention – but VMAP might have been able to impact on 3 if the case-specific interventions applied following triggers were effective. To enable meaningful comparisons between years/areas, it was therefore necessary to isolate the *Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate* (SOO rate) (3 above) from the effect of trigger offence numbers and distribution (1 and 2) on the SOO count.

This was achieved by dividing the raw SOO count for each year/area by the sum of the number of days between each trigger offence and the end of the initiative year. This is, in effect, the period during which each VMAP case was theoretically ‘protected’ from involvement in further violent offences by VMAP intervention.

Two examples are shown in Appendix 6.4.1. For simplicity it is assumed that each case results from a different ‘trigger’ offence and that no two cases are involved in the same Subsequent Occurrence Offence<sup>108</sup>. The incidence of SOOs has also been exaggerated for illustrative purposes.

Despite different numbers of cases/trigger offences and different distributions of trigger offences throughout the year, examples 1 and 2 can be properly compared using the *SOO rate per 1,000 protected days* measure. In this instance the rate in example 1 is greater than that in example 2. If a process (such as VMAP) had been in place during example 1 and not in example 2, and if example 2 were considered a suitable comparator for example one, we might take this as an indication that the initiative had been impactful (ie it resulted in a lower SOO rate than would otherwise be expected).

<sup>107</sup> An outcome measure that made use of a standardised follow-up period (which would have removed the need to account for this factor) was not a feasible option here as assessment was required immediately at the end of the intervention year. This represents a practical limitation of real world, time limited – and to an extent local – research.

<sup>108</sup> Although in reality this was not always the case. If both victim and suspect/offender have come to notice within the previous year, a single trigger

offence would result in both individuals (and very occasionally a second (or third etc.) suspect /offender) being referred into VMAP. Similarly, a single Subsequent Occurrence Offence could involve two (or very occasionally three or more) VMAP subjects coming to notice again. As crime reduction was the ultimate aim of the initiative it was considered most appropriate to frame the outcome measure around offence counts and rates (regardless of the number of VMAP cases involved in each), rather than individual case recurrences.

### Appendix 6.4.1: Examples of Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate calculations

Example 1																										
Case	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
1								V																		
2				V																		S				
3								V							S	S				S					S	
4															V										S	
Cases Trigger Offences)	Subsequent Occurrence (Offences)																									
1	0																									
	18 (126)																									
1	1																									
	22 (154)																									
1	4																									
	18 (126)																									
1	1																									
	11 (77)																									
4	6																									
	69 (483)																									
	12.4																									

Example 2																										
Case	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
1																				V			S			
2													V		S	S										
3																						V				
4										V			S													
5					V						S					S							S			
Cases Trigger Offences)	Subsequent Occurrence (Offences)																									
1	1																									
	6 (42)																									
1	2																									
	13 (91)																									
1	0																									
	4 (28)																									
1	1																									
	16 (112)																									
1	3																									
	20 (140)																									
5	7																									
	59 (413)																									
	16.9																									

V

 VMAP trigger occurrence

S

 Subsequent occurrence
 Previous year
 VMAP 'protected' period

## Appendix 6.4.2: The Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate measure – considerations

As with any measure of impact it is necessary to consider whether non-programmatic factors might account for variation in readings either between periods or between treatment and comparator groups – and to eliminate or minimise these where possible. Three potentially confounding factors are discussed below:

### *Incarceration effects*

First, offender incarceration will clearly be a factor in determining the likelihood of recurrence in some cases, and this may apply differentially across time periods or in areas which tend to have more or less 'serious' offending. Although it is not possible to quantify, the relatively 'low level' of much of the offending that triggered VMAP attention means that imprisonment was a fairly rare occurrence within the cohort and any discrepancy between periods or areas is likely to be minimal.

### *Crime recording practices*

Second, at a national level a change in crime recording patterns for violent crime (particularly less serious non-domestic violence) has recently been noted (ONS, 2016) and can be detected in the data for Slough<sup>109</sup>. This may have an impact on the strict comparability of the measure for the intervention year with previous periods. It is probable, however, that any effect of this would be substantially mitigated by the use of a rate rather than a raw count; ie it is unlikely to have a substantial effect on the *proportion* of VMAP qualified individuals that come to attention again during the following months.

### *Population churn*

Third, given that the measure requires individuals to come to the attention Slough police on a number of occasions it is conceivable that an increasingly churning population might result in diminishing rates over time (ie if people remain in Slough for shorter periods of time, the rate at which they come to attention again may be reduced). An indicative comparison of the trend in annual SOO rates over time, for the 'south wards' area which is regarded as having particularly transient and fast moving populations, with the 'north wards', which tend to have more fixed and static populations provides no suggestion of an effect of this nature; neither showed a consistent trend (up or down) over the nine year period.

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<sup>109</sup> Following five consecutive annual reductions in recorded violent crime (measured July to August), 2014/15 saw a 9% increase, entirely accounted for by non-domestic offences without injury.

## Appendix 6.5: Comparing the VMAP caseload to the 'rest of Slough'

The characteristics of individuals referred to VMAP (based on the selection criteria previously described) and those who *would also* have been referred if it was operation across the rest of Slough is provided in figure A6.5.1.<sup>110</sup> As illustrated, barring some differences in ethnicity (reflecting local area populations), the two groups are demographically very similar – about two thirds of each were male, each had an average age of around 31 (with a similar distribution across the age groups), with about a third of both cohorts coming from White British backgrounds and with sizable White Other and Pakistani minorities. The offence types and roles in which they came to notice (the 'trigger' offences) were also very similar; around 60 per cent of both groups were referred to VMAP as suspect/offenders (with 40 per cent as victims), with similar splits between domestic and non-domestic incidents and violence that did and did not result in injury.

Looking back over the year prior to referral, the profile of the two groups was again generally similar; about 55 per cent of both groups had been victims of violence and 75 per cent have been suspect/offenders during this time. Only in respect of the proportion that had been a suspect/offender for non-domestic violence, did the groups differ significantly, with more of the VMAP group coming to notice in these circumstances (54.5 per cent of the VMAP group compared with 46.8 per cent for the rest of Slough).

There is however a clear difference between the two groups in terms of the *frequency* with which they had come to notice during the previous year. All individuals (by virtue of the selection criteria) had been involved in violence at least twice within the previous year, however 28.0 per cent of the VMAP group had been involved in three or more offences, compared to just 19.6 per cent of the rest of Slough group, while 10.4 per cent of the VMAP group had been involved in four or more incidents, compared with 5.3 per cent of the rest of Slough group (in both instances this difference is statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level). As previously indicated (see figure A6.5.1), it is clear that the wards chosen for VMAP saw more violence involving 'highly recurrent' individuals than the rest of Slough.

### 120 day recurrence rate

Figure A6.5.1 (opposite) also shows the results of a second 'indicative' impact measure. As noted in Section 6.1, there were insufficient cases available to conduct a robust cohort study and the follow-up period available for monitoring outcomes is also much shorter than would be ideal. However (in the spirit of realist data exploration) it is informative to measure and compare the level of recurrence in the treated VMAP and untreated 'rest of Slough' groups, during the months immediately after the former were referred into the VMAP process.<sup>111</sup>

174 of the VMAP group were referred and first discussed at a VMAP meeting at least four months (120 days) prior to the end of the period for which outcome data is available (ie during the first eight months of the VMAP year). 253 individuals met the same criteria from the 'rest of Slough' cohort. Of these 37 (21.3 per cent) of the VMAP group and 41 (16.2 per cent) of the rest of Slough group, came to notice again (as the victim or suspect/offender in a violent crime in Slough) within 120 days of the VMAP meeting following referral.

This difference is not statistically significant, but is in line with the generally more 'recurrent' nature of the VMAP group, described previously. Due to this pre-existing difference it is not appropriate to treat the 'rest of Slough'

<sup>110</sup> The occurrence patterns of 42 individuals would have seen them referred into both the VMAP and 'rest of Slough' groups during the course of the year, although in figure A6.5.1 each individual has been counted once only – in the group they *first* qualified for. 22 of the 'rest of Slough' group were subsequently referred into VMAP, however as this occurred *after* (and in some cases as a

result of) a subsequent occurrence we can be sure that the groups were distinct up to the point of the 120 day recurrence measure.

<sup>111</sup> Each individual has been monitored for 120 days following the VMAP meeting at which their case was first discussed (ie the next meeting after the trigger offence), or the equivalent date for the rest of Slough group.

**Figure A6.5.1: Comparison of VMAP cases and the equivalent 'rest of Slough' group**

	VMAP	Rest of Slough
Number	278	455
% unless stated otherwise		
Demographics		
Gender		
Male	68.4	65.3
Female	31.7	34.7
Age (on date of VMAP meeting first discussed)		
Under 10	0.0	0.7
10 to 19	16.2	18.0
20 to 29	36.3	31.0
30 to 39	25.5	27.9
40 to 49	13.7	12.5
50 to 59	5.4	5.3
60 and over	2.9	2.0
Unknown	0.0	2.6
Average age	31.2	30.7
Ethnicity		
White – British	34.5	32.8
White other	15.8	12.1
Asian – Pakistani	12.6	11.4
Asian – Indian	<b>3.2</b>	<b>11.4</b>
Black	<b>9.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>
Mixed and other ethnicities	8.6	6.8
Unknown / Not stated	16.2	20.7
Trigger offence – role		
Victim of violence	42.8	38.2
Suspect / offender for violence	57.2	61.8
Victim of domestic violence	20.1	18.9
Victim of non-domestic violence	22.7	19.3
Suspect / offender for domestic violence	22.7	28.4
Suspect / offender for non-domestic violence	34.5	33.4
Victim of assault <b>with</b> injury	19.1	17.8
Victim of violence <b>without</b> injury	23.7	20.4
Suspect / offender for assault <b>with</b> injury	23.7	25.3
Suspect / offender for violence <b>without</b> injury	33.5	36.3
Involvement in violent crime during year to VMAP referral (including trigger offences)		
Victim of violence (total)	56.1	55.8
Victim of domestic violence	30.2	27.0
Victim of non-domestic violence	34.5	35.2
Suspect / offender for violence (total)	76.3	74.5
Suspect / offender for domestic violence	38.1	41.5
Suspect / offender for non-domestic violence	<b>54.5</b>	<b>46.8</b>
Involved in both domestic and non-domestic violence (as either / both victim and suspect / offender)	31.7	29.5
Both victim and suspect / offender	32.4	30.3
Number of times to notice in last year – any role (including trigger offence)		
Two occurrences in last year	71.9	80.4
Three <b>or more</b> occurrences in last year	<b>28.0</b>	<b>19.6</b>
Three occurrences in last year	17.6	14.3
Four <b>or more</b> occurrences in last year	<b>10.4</b>	<b>5.3</b>
Average total times to notice (occurrences) in last year	2.5	2.3
120 day recurrence		
Number for whom 120 days recurrence data available	174	253
& recurrent in 120 days post VMAP referral	21.3	16.2
Two occurrences only in last year		
Number for whom 120 days recurrence data available	118	191
& recurrent in 120 days post VMAP referral	14.4	15.7
Three or more occurrences in last year		
Number for whom 120 days recurrence data available	56	62
& recurrent in 120 days post VMAP referral	<b>35.7</b>	<b>17.7</b>

Statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence level) between the VMAP and 'rest of Slough' cohorts are shown in **bold**.

group as a strict counterfactual for the VMAP group (ie we cannot assume that they would have similar outcomes in the absence of VMAP). It is possible, however, to isolate just those individuals from each group who had come to notice only twice in the previous year, to form sub-groups that are, theoretically, more comparable (this includes 118 of the VMAP group and 191 of the 'rest of Slough' group).

The 120 day recurrence rate for these sub-groups is very similar (14.4 per cent for the VMAP sub-group and 15.7 per cent for the 'rest of Slough' sub-group). This suggests that for this sub-set of individuals with fewer violent incidents in their recent histories, VMAP did not have an impact on their propensity for involvement in further violence; the rate at which they were involved in subsequent violence was nearly identical to that for a well matched 'untreated' group.

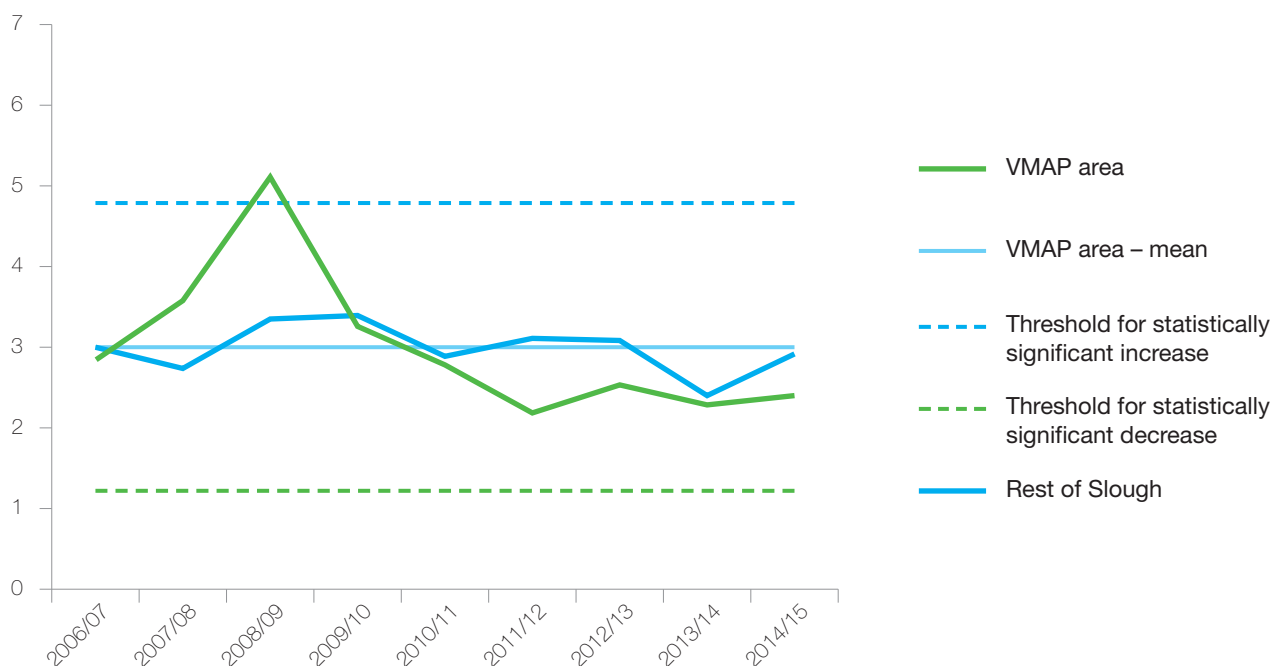
As the two *three-occurrences-plus* sub-groups are not comparable in the same way (because the VMAP sub-group contains proportionally more individuals with higher levels of previous occurrence than the 'rest of Slough' sub-group) it is not appropriate to draw equivalent inferences about impact. However, the high recurrence rate for the VMAP sub-group (which is significantly greater than that for both the 'rest of Slough' *three-occurrences-plus* group and the VMAP *two-occurrence only* group) again draws attention to the concentration of highly recurrent individuals in VMAP areas, compared to the rest of the town.

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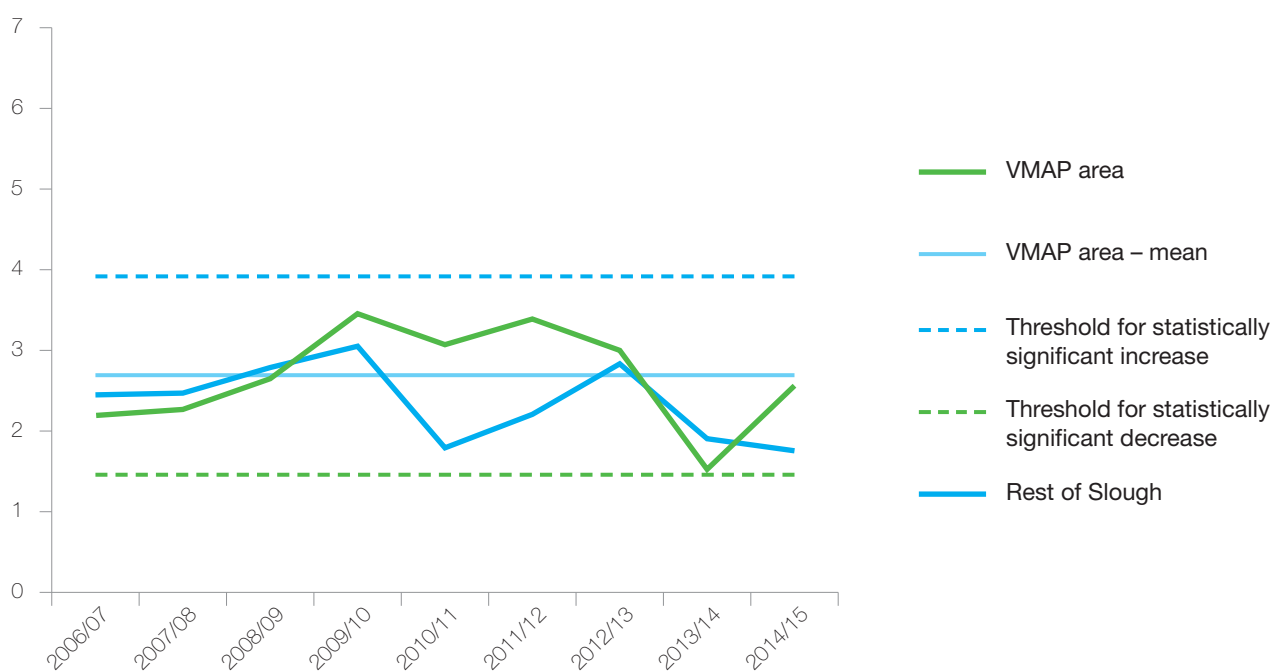


## Appendix 6.6: Subsequent Occurrence Offence rates for cohort sub-groups

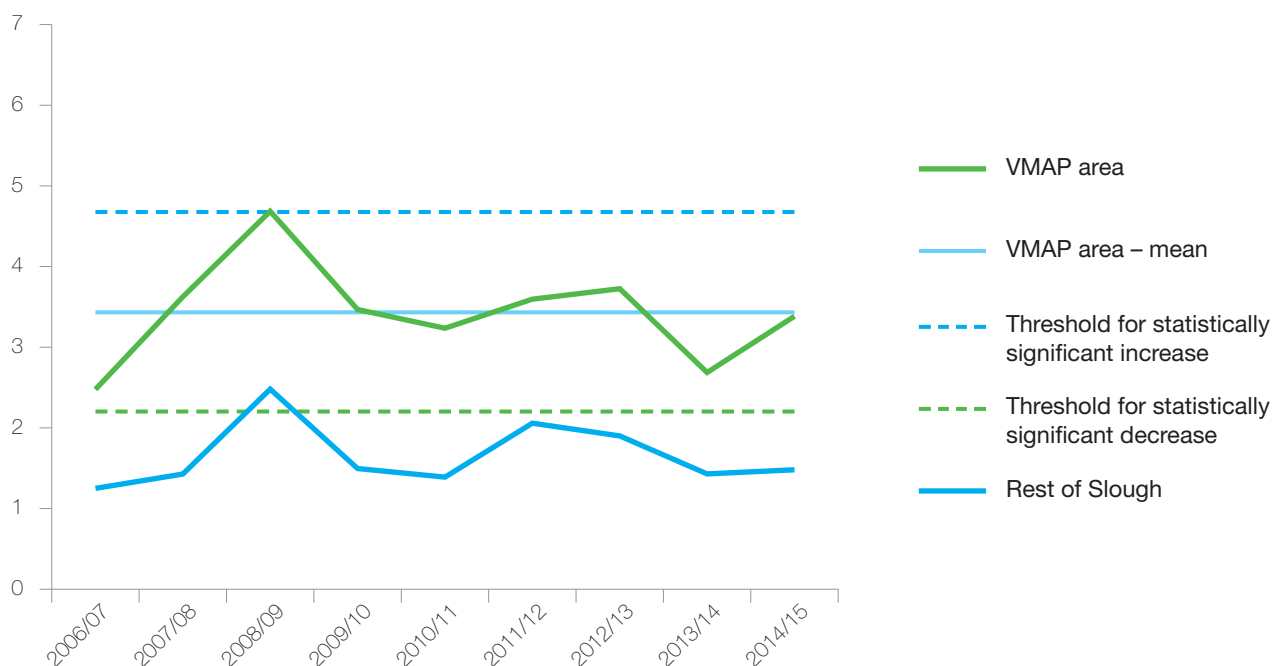
**Figure 6.6.1: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate – victims of domestic violence (at the trigger offence), VMAP and ‘rest of Slough’ areas – (2006/07 to 2014/15)**



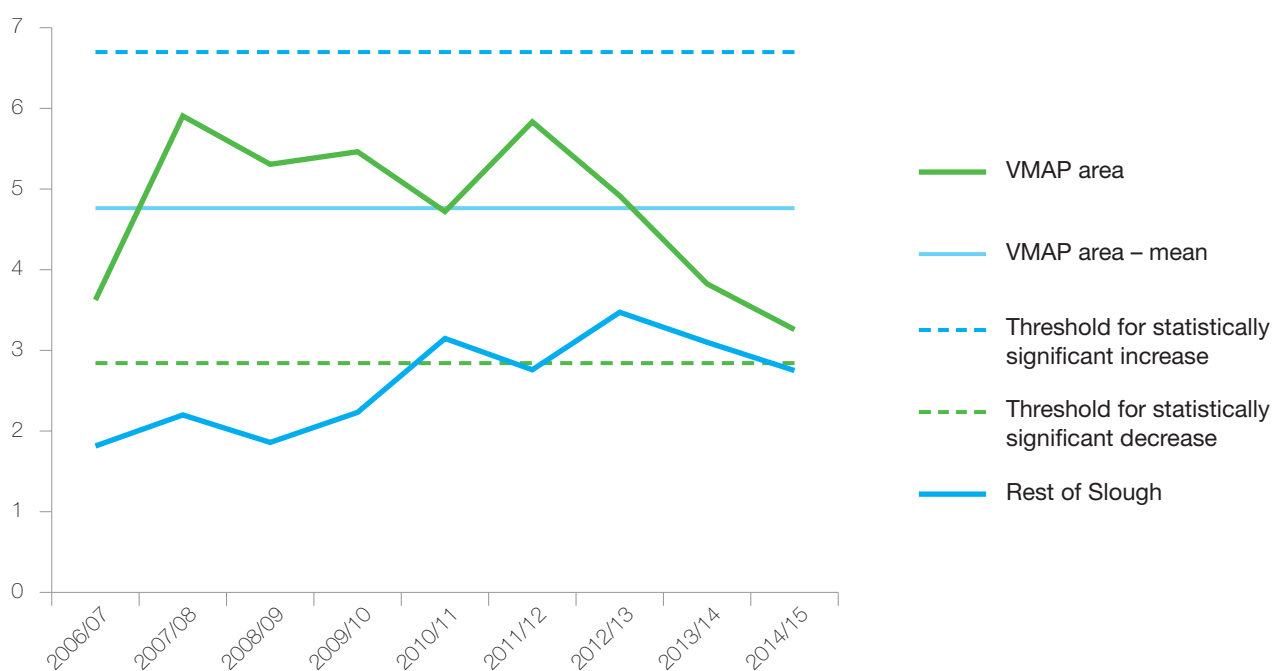
**Figure 6.6.2: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate – victims of non-domestic violence (at the trigger offence), VMAP and ‘rest of Slough’ areas – (2006/07 to 2014/15)**



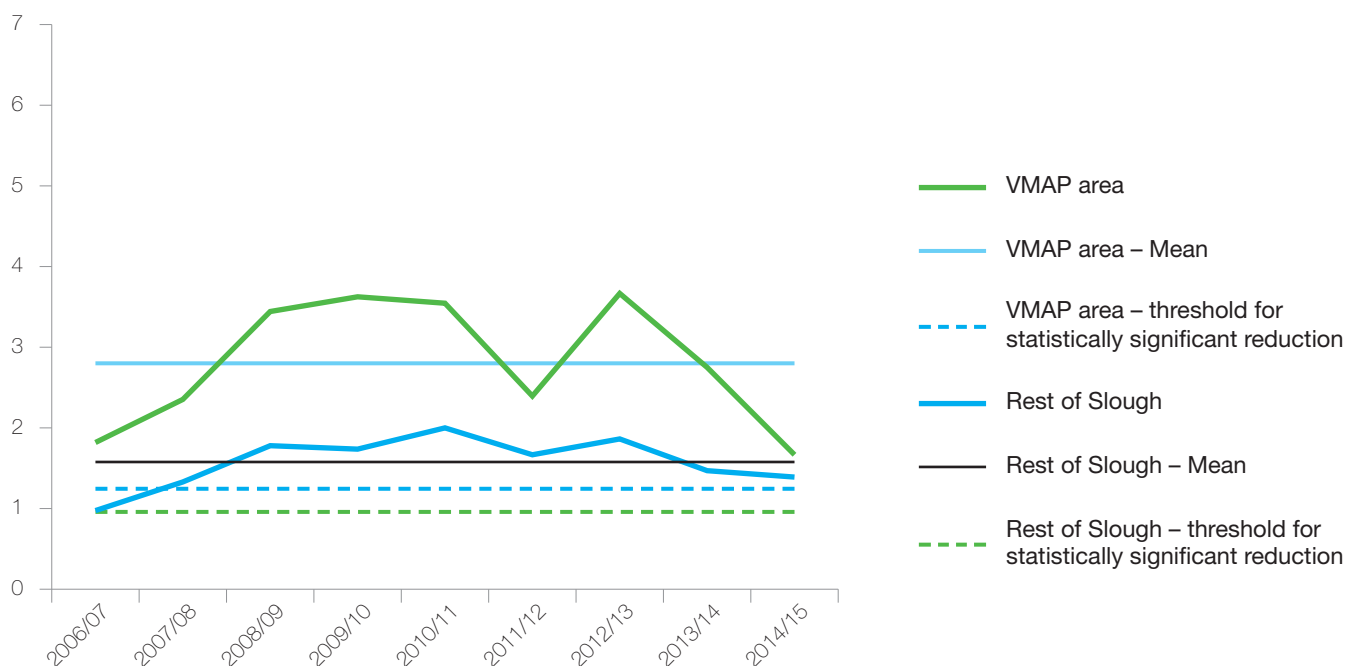
**Figure 6.6.3: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate – offenders in domestic violence (at the trigger offence), VMAP and 'rest of Slough' areas – (2006/07 to 2014/15)**



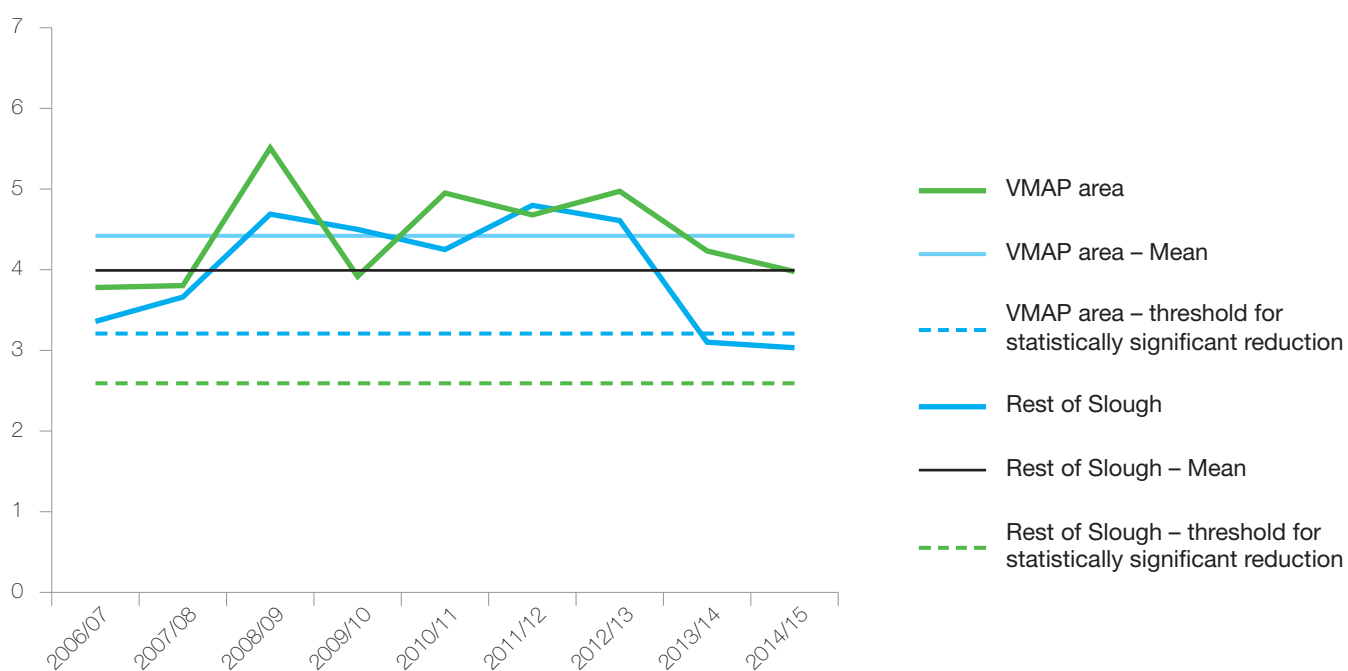
**Figure 6.6.4: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate – offenders in non-domestic violence (at the trigger offence), VMAP and 'rest of Slough' areas – (2006/07 to 2014/15)**



**Figure 6.6.5: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate, VMAP and rest of Slough areas (2006/07 to 2014/15) – older individuals (36 and over)**



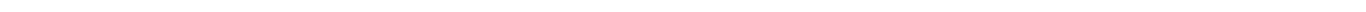
**Figure 6.6.6: Subsequent Occurrence Offence Rate, VMAP and rest of Slough areas (2006/07 to 2014/15) – ‘High’ recurrence cases (three or more occurrences in previous year)**



### Appendix 6.9: Demand reduction analysis – sample sizes for each 30 day period

30 Day Period	VMAP	Rest of Slough
-12	278	455
-11	278	455
-10	278	455
-9	278	455
-8	278	455
-7	278	455
-6	278	455
-5	278	455
-4	278	455
-3	278	455
-2	278	455
-1	278	455
1	274	437
2	242	407
3	217	380
4	205	330
5	189	295
6	163	231
7	142	199
8	111	169
9	101	155
10	63	129
11	46	87
12	26	58

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The Police Foundation  
The Foundry  
17 Oval Way  
Kennington  
London SE11 5RR

020 3752 5630

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