

# VPC 2.0 pilot and workstreams – Expanding the case for 'Why'

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to show that the VPC 2.0 governance and safeguarding workstreams are not being justified solely on the research presented at the VPC national conference on the 8<sup>th</sup> July and are actually an important part of supporting a bigger strategic picture. This paper presents assertions, findings and commitments from strategic policing documents identified as being relevant to the work of the VPC Hub team which otherwise may not be fully recognised.
- 1.2 Relevant common themes include; the need to understand the increasingly complex policing environment and develop more sophisticated understanding of it to inform the response (Policing Vision 2025, 2016) and (NPCC Child Centred Policing Strategy, 2015). Risks around abuse of position and power imbalance (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services [HMICFRS], 2019). The specialist nature of safeguarding, dealing with vulnerability and the threat from hidden crime types such as child sexual exploitation [CSE] is raised by both HMICFRS (2018) and the Citizens in Policing [CIP] Police Support Volunteer [PSV] strategy (2019), as well as the importance of greater engagement with communities through innovation (PSV Strategy, 2019). Other relevant research and events are also mentioned to highlight the wider range of strategic factors driving the work of the VPC Hub team.

## 2. Overview

- 2.1 There is an emerging theme from the police derived documents discussed below that policing is becoming increasingly complex and advising that a more sophisticated approach is required to understand and respond to the underlying factors. In considering the VPC within this complexity there is a fundamental distinction to be recognised in that the VPC is not a statutory policing function and does not require an operational policing response or development based on it. The VPC Hub team has worked on the basis that the VPC is a youth group, based on a submission to the NPCC in 2014 (appendix A. item:6, section 4.1). The research and work with partners indicate that youth groups and youth workers have developed their own specialisms, good practice and quality assurance arrangements, all of which have evolved and operate in a culture quite different to that of policing. An underlying theme from the police documents below is that their context appears based on statutory service provision within the operational policing arena.
- 2.2 It is stressed that the follow-on observations within this paper should not be taken or confused as being critical of them for their contextual positioning. The 8<sup>th</sup> July research acknowledges it as entirely natural and its recommendations make clear not only the futility of trying to make changes 'within' policing, but also the inappropriateness of placing further demands of them. As a marker, the military cadets operate through the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, there is

no direct responsibility or additional demand placed on operational military units to run a cadet unit as well. This model has been in place over many years and can inform our pilot. However, failing to understand context (ISO 31000, 2009) and recognise this vital distinction could be a blind spot, allowing weak VPC governance and safeguarding to 'fly under the radar', in an undetected 'incubation period of disaster' (Toft and Reynolds, 2005). This issue was at the core of the research presented on the 8<sup>th</sup> July, from which so many risks manifest and this premise is the foundation stone from which to expand on 'the why' and help make 'the invisible visible' (Blacker and McConnell, 2015, pp.45-46).

2.3 Any new measures that are developed to mitigate risks without taking this distinction into account could be undermined and cause a false sense of assurance and overconfidence, which is a risk in itself (Blacker and McConnell, 2015, p.47). It follows that the greater the number of measures introduced that fail to do so, the greater the level of blindness and overconfidence. The VPC Hub must ensure this distinction is recognised as *'the'* enabler to developing and following through on a 'more sophisticated approach' to secure genuine risk mitigation for the VPC. Quite simply, there is no other police based group with either the remit, time, youth sector contacts or growing knowledge to do so. Excerpts from the following police derived documents are used to support this assertion by expanding on the aforementioned themes common to the research presented on the 8<sup>th</sup> July.

## 3. Complexity and the need for a more sophisticated response

### 3.1 The Policing Vision 2025

3.2 States: 'The communities we serve are increasingly diverse and complex, necessitating a more sophisticated response to the challenges we face now and in the future' (2016, p.2). That complexity includes child sexual exploitation. The document goes on to state, 'the service must to continue to adapt to the modern policing environment' (2016, p.2). The 8<sup>th</sup> July research provides evidenced based findings to understand the complexity of VPC risks and explain why a more sophisticated response can mitigate them through a standard operating model that enables more effective cultural interplay.

### 3.3 The NPCC National Strategy for the Policing of Children and Young People

3.4 States: 'It is a complex area of policing and one that we often struggle to get right' (2015, p.1) and that policing must be more sophisticated in relation to identifying and dealing with serious and persistent offenders (2015, p.4). It declares an ambition 'to improve the quality of policing for children and young people by acknowledging their differences, recognising their vulnerabilities and meeting their needs' (2015, p.4). The strategy appears to make no reference to the VPC and is perhaps an indication of the perspective from which the document is produced as mentioned at 2.1 and conveyed within its title and areas of focus, essentially; 'service provision within the operational policing arena'. The strategy stresses the relationship between police and young people as the 'biggest challenge and arguably most critical area' (2015, p.12). On that basis it

seems reasonable that pursuing a more sophisticated understanding should extend to the VPC role within its NPCC defined aims and principles, to ensure the 'totality' of understanding across all aspects of police interaction with young people. The 8<sup>th</sup> July research provides evidence based findings to understand the complexity of VPC interactions and related risks and explain why a more sophisticated response can mitigate them through a standard operating model that enables more effective cultural interplay.

## 3.5 Institute for Public Safety Crime and Justice [IPSCJ] Research

- 3.6 The IPSCJ (2019) report on the findings from their national evaluation of the VPC in England and Wales includes the following headline findings (p.3):
  - Cadet leaders lacked time to perform their role well, with a lack of leaders being a factor.
  - Strategic leads support greater standardisation at a regional and national level. Issues around recruitment of cadet leaders was seen as a threat to sustainability and undermining planned growth.
  - More and better training for cadet leaders is also required alongside achieving a sustainable financial model.
- 3.7 The VPC governance pilot recognises and seeks to address all of the issues mentioned in the IPSCJ headline findings using an evidenced based approach.

# 4. Specialism and vulnerability

## 4.1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service 2019

- 4.2 HMICFRS report on the issue of police officers and police staff abusing their position for a sexual purpose over a three year period between 2015 to 2017. During this period the Independent Office for Police Conduct [IOPC] received 415 referrals and assert this issue is a significant problem (2019, p.6). The focus of the report is on police officers and staff who, in the course of their duties use the opportunity of engaging with the public, often crime victims, to abuse their position. The report identifies the following issues to be addressed:
  - Incorrect vetting
  - Exploiting the power imbalance
  - Lack of understanding around professional boundaries
  - Establishing the right culture
  - The importance of a standardised approach
  - Gathering intelligence from the workforce
  - Effective links with external agencies
  - Using personal mobiles for work related issues
  - Lack of resources

- 4.3 Although there is no focus on the VPC context, many of the issues identified accord with the 8<sup>th</sup> July research findings which actually go into greater depth in relation to understanding VPC specific risks. In relation to power imbalance, Wurtele (2012, pp.2443-2452) provides an overview of child sexual abuse in youth organisations through adult volunteers being in long term roles supporting young people and advocates the importance of clear codes of conduct and boundary violation training. This is not part of police operational safeguarding and a clear area of risk. Holland, Tannock and Collicott (2011, pp.408-413) found less evidence for adult interventions relating to child abuse and 'the breakdown of adult solidarity' as a potential factor. This poses the question of whether a non-police adult leader would be prepared to challenge inappropriate behaviour by a police officer VPC leader, and if so at what threshold, especially if 'power imbalance' was an additional factor.
- 4.4 Through the research the VPC Hub have also initiated responses in relation to vetting, professional boundaries, use of personal phones and gathering intelligence from the workforce. The VPC governance pilots seeks to integrate them into a standardised approach that will enable the correct cultural balance and interplay to develop between policing and VPC. The research asserts that without a new governance model not only will 'the right culture' fail to be established but other measures introduced will only have a short term effect and not embed as good practice.

### 4.5 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service 2018

- 4.6 The HMICFRS annual assessment on the 'State of Policing 2018' highlights the strain on forces 'under significant pressure as they try to meet growing complex and high-risk demand with weakened resources' (2018, p.32). In relation to child protection, the importance of an effective 'whole system' approach to inter-agency working is highlighted (2018, p.89). The report provides a sense of the specialised nature of this work within an operational setting. The importance around early intervention is highlighted (2018, p.86) and this is a key function of the VPC in its capacity as a youth group, rather than from a policing or judicial orientated intervention at the point of crisis.
- 4.7 This isn't a new concept, the 8<sup>th</sup> July research reviewed literature on the evolution of child protection and the interagency conflict and confusion undermining effectiveness (Hamalainen, 2016, pp.735-746) and (Gray, 2015, pp.50-51). Stafford (2012, pp.83-84) highlights that in England, the; Every Child Matters Change for Children (2004) was introduced with its driving principle being to join up and co-ordinate pre-emptive intervention by services to improve children's outcomes, rather than responding at the point of crisis. Crawford and L'Hoiry (2017, p.647) studied joint working between police and other safeguarding agencies and reinforce the notion of interagency confusion. They identified that safeguarding cuts across the skills and expertise of diverse organisations, each seeing solutions influenced through their own organisation's priorities, with culture being a barrier to achieving 'trans-discipline'.
- 4.8 Looking further back, the 'Every child matters' [ECM] Green Paper (2003) highlights the complexity of children's needs asserting that they rarely fit neatly into one set of organisational boundaries,

but the targets, plans and inspection regimes drive institutions to work in isolation (2003, p.68). The importance of those working with children to receive routine training in child development, with an awareness of specialist issues like mental health and special educational needs is stressed (2003, p.22). The paper advocates removing organisational boundaries and professional and cultural barriers to improve inter-professional relationships (2003, pp.56-57). The 8<sup>th</sup> July research indicates the VPC could be caught within this situation, trying to operate as a youth group within the wrong cultural body or organisation. The research recommendations could easily derive from the same thinking behind the 'Every child matters' legislation, which research over a decade later (Crawford and L'Hoiry, 2017) indicates still hasn't achieved 'trans-discipline'.

- 4.9 Subsequent research suggests this difficulty could be compounded by an ever expanding range of risk factors. Appleton and Sidebotham (2016, pp.3-8) reviewed child safeguarding policy and development in the UK over twenty-five years and highlight current problems being more complex and wide ranging. Examples include; young people as abusers, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, radicalisation and threats through social media. They cite Parton posit that with 'greater social awareness of the issues, the challenges around child protection have become more politicised with the narrative of professional blame and system failure becoming more dominant and pervasive'. Peckover and Golding (2017, pp.41-45) report on the complexities of multi-agency working involving domestic violence and safeguarding, they highlight (Hester, 2011) describing the myriad of understanding that professionals from different agencies have and the solutions they bring to bear, being so different that they can be 'conceptualised as taking place on separate planets', with subsequent differences in risk understanding and the ability of professionals to assess it.
- 4.10 Hood, Gillespie and Davies (2016, p.493) reinforce this view and the difficulty in developing 'interprofessional expertise' in a system that contains expertise within specialist silos. They reference a wide source of researchers and a general view that 'services organised as separate professional bureaucracies inevitably create institutional and cultural barriers which in child protection may be exacerbated by institutional anxiety about risk'. They explain how this can be compounded for front line practitioners by the ambiguity, unpredictability and the volatility of situations. The research suggests the VPC hasn't been accepted or established into any bureaucracy and may be evolving within its own, along with an associated sub-culture at leader level.

### 4.11 Police Support Volunteer [PSV] Strategy 2019 to 2023

4.12 This strategy makes clear reference to 'the importance that volunteers play within policing culture' and 'the roles they perform across a variety of policing functions' (2019, p.3). The research and supporting literature review make clear the underlying structural risk in relation to the VPC is lack of cultural interplay which comes back to the point made earlier in this report at 2.1; a clear distinction needs to be made by viewing the VPC through the lens of youth work rather than operational policing. The pilot seeks to provide a governance arrangement that facilitates the right cultural interplay to ensure it operates safely.

- 4.13 The Pilot initiation Document recognises this aspect as a key issue stating: 'A core principle in approaching the pilot and ensuring success, is a requirement to accept the VPC is a uniform youth group and not a pseudo police unit. Failing to overcome this will constrain innovation and keep the VPC locked into unsuitable adult orientated systems, processes and policies that have been developed for policing and fail to mitigate known risks. As a uniform youth group, the VPC must look to adopt best practice from the youth sector whilst providing re-assurance to police leaders that their VPC units are being run safely and that they can evidence this fact to cadets, their parents and carers, as well as wider stakeholders'.
- 4.14 The PSV strategy recognises the need for volunteering programmes that are 'well managed, resourced, innovative, professionalised and evidence-based (2019, p.4). The strategy splits volunteering roles into three categories; 'enabling roles', 'preventative roles' and 'specialist roles' (2019, p.10). VPC leader (and youth engagement) fall within the preventative category. However, safeguarding and vulnerability as a distinct volunteering role is positioned at the extreme end of the specialist role category. This categorisation appears to overlook the importance of VPC leaders and volunteers having awareness of child development issues and the risks around CSE within a youth group environment, especially one like the VPC which actively seeks to recruit vulnerable young people. This suggests that the 'organisational boundaries' (ECM Green paper, 2003, p.51) of policing mentioned at 4.8, do not extend to recognising and responding to this risk through a multi-disciplinary approach, perhaps supporting the research assertions included at sections 4.3 and 4.7.
- 4.15 Further content from the PSV strategy reinforces this limitation with a declared focus towards two main goals: reflecting volunteers' wishes and motivations and maximising the benefits to communities (2019, p.13). The goal of cadet safety is not mentioned and could be another example of VPC safeguarding 'flying under the radar'. The strategy (2019, p.14) mentions the Strategic Policing Requirement and sets out the national threat, using an iceberg illustration to denote the comparatively small volume crime above the surface and a greater hidden crime type below. This hidden group includes CSE, domestic abuse, cyber-crime, missing from home and mental health. All are relevant to cadets and thereby requiring that VPC adult leaders and volunteers have training and controls relevant to the youth-group environment (ECM Green Paper, 2003, p.22), as distinct to operational policing responses and associated procedures.
- 4.16 Reinforcing this, the strategy (2019, p.14) also explains that the increasing complexity of crime requires the skills and expertise of specialists and asserts that it is wholly appropriate to seek to attract volunteers from disciplines who have the necessary skills and experience to support specialist functions within the service. Based on its categorisation of VPC adult leaders and volunteers, the perspective appears to focus on service delivery within the operational arena and overlook the training and supporting processes required for VPC adult leaders and volunteers to carry out their own specialist role and reduce the risks for CSE and other hidden crime types mentioned in the national threat assessment occurring within the police family.

# 5. Innovation, community engagement and confidence

### 5.1 Aligning with Citizens in Policing [CIP] - The CIP Strategy 2016-2019

- 5.2 The VPC sits within the CIP programme. The 2016-2019 strategy vision is defined as 'Connecting communities to policing and policing to communities'. NPCC paper (July 2016, Agenda Item:18, 1.1) states 'this is a timely opportunity to expand our imagination as to how volunteers can benefit from and contribute to the aims of policing and wider society'. Stated key principles at section 2.1 are; that this work will be 'widely inclusive, and evidence based'. Using the research evidence base, the VPC pilot will seek greater involvement from community members through their increased involvement in VPC committee and volunteering roles.
- 5.3 Complexity is recognised in the strategy at section 1.4 with the need to 'deliver niche capability to support partners who face rising challenges from complex threats such as cyber-crime, sexual exploitation'. Whilst it appears to be written from the perspective of service delivery within the operational arena, these issues are relevant within the VPC youth group environment as previously mentioned in the ECM Green paper (2003, p.22) and require their own 'niche capability' to support VPC adult leaders and volunteers. At section 1.4 the strategy also declares an ambition to 'promote cross-agency working through sharing innovation and best practice, an approach recommended in the ECM green paper (2003, pp.56-57) and exactly what the VPC pilot is pursuing through engaging subject matter experts from the youth sector.

### 5.4 Police Support Volunteer [PSV] Strategy 2019 to 2023

5.5 The PSV strategy (2019, pp.16-23) explains its adoption of the 5Cs framework (Capacity, Contribution, Capability, Consistency and Connectivity) from the national CIP strategy to address its priorities. In relation to 'capacity' (2019, p.18) there is a commitment to 'develop sustainable delivery models that will recruit, manage, support and train the PSV to fulfil the requirements of their role'. Volunteers will be recognised and rewarded for their 'contribution'. Under 'capability' (2019, p.20) volunteers will be recruited into defined roles with a clear understanding of their role profile and requirements. Roles will be categorised and standardised to achieve greater 'consistency' (2019, p.22). Greater 'connectivity' (2019, p.23) will be sought through PSVs being connected to the communities, increasing social responsibility and delivering two way benefits. This section also asserts that volunteering roles will help the police to develop a proactive and sophisticated understanding of community needs to keep people safe, particularly as communities become more complex and diverse and commits to actively involve, engage and collaborate with others in order to do so. The VPC pilot seeks to deliver against all elements of the 5Cs framework.

### 5.6 IPSCJ Pilot supported by CIP

5.7 Forces are being invited to participate in a police volunteering pilot with the ambition to test what an uplift in police volunteering can achieve. A 'stage 1' activity seeks to identify interesting and innovative volunteering practice from elsewhere for development. The VPC Pilot has identified youth sector practice and seeks to develop it for the VPC, not just to increase numbers but to make it safer. Learning opportunities and efficiencies should be considered between both pilots.

### 5.8 Independent Office for Police Conduct [IOPC]

5.9 Following safeguarding failures in several forces the IOPC wrote to Chief Constable Sawyer for details on the response to these failings and are monitoring progress. The VPC Hub workstreams are the mainstay of that response, the quality of which will have an impact on improving the safety of cadets and leaders and in turn securing and strengthening public confidence and trust in policing.

#### 5.10 Academic Endorsement

- 5.11 The research on VPC Governance and Safeguarding is assessed as 'academically credible' by two risk specialists from the University of Portsmouth:
  - Professor Pete Lee Theme Director for Security and Risk Research and Innovation.
  - Dr Sara Hadleigh-Dunn Curriculum Director for the MSc Risk, Crisis and Resilience Management programme.

Both endorse the need to translate the research findings into a practical response to mitigate the risks. In addition to the IOPC, their involvement provides another source of independent advice and opportunity to secure endorsement on the quality of the response.

### 5.12 Strengthening the Evidence

- 5.13 As the pilot progresses and the new model takes shape it is essential to be able to demonstrate its benefits through a continued evidenced based approach. In justifying the pilots, the research highlights the similarity between pre Laming inquiry (2003) era MPS Child Protection Teams and VPC adult leaders and their standing within policing. The research goes on to interpret this through grid group culture theory, extreme case modelling and the resultant cultural risk.
- 5.14 As a follow on stage, the value of fault tree analysis [FTA] is to be explored. Two FTA's would be constructed. The first based on the investigation findings in GMP for comparison against the new model to confirm if sufficient safeguards and redundancy have been built into it. This would provide a clear visualisation on the improvements provided by the new model. A second stage

would seek to explore whether 'Monte Carlo' simulation technique modelling could be used to compare probabilities around safeguarding failures between the old and the new models.

# 6. Conclusion

6.1 This paper has highlighted several police derived strategy documents and inspections that show:

- The wider recognition around complexity of the policing environment and the need to adopt an evidenced based approach to identifying a more sophisticated understanding and approach.
- A desire to expand the police imagination as to how volunteers can benefit from and contribute to the aims of policing and wider society, along with the need to deliver 'niche capability' to support partners who face rising challenges from complex threats.
- Ambition to promote cross-agency working through sharing innovation and best practice.
- 6.2 Their context however, appears based on statutory service provision within the operational policing arena. As previously mentioned, this assertion is not to be confused as a criticism of those documents. Wider research highlighted in this paper indicates that despite research, public inquiries and legislation, the challenges remain in trying to overcome organisational boundaries, and professional and cultural barriers to improve inter-professional relationships and that a state of 'trans-discipline' amongst organisations with statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children has still not been fully achieved.
- 6.3 In strengthening the justification for 'why', the research presented on the 8th July simply seeks to understand and explain the complexities and associated risks around the VPC, along with a realistic approach to addressing the lack of cultural interplay to mitigate the risks. This paper has sought to position it more clearly within the wider strategic picture.
- 6.4 Identifying different specialisms and responding to them should not be confused with trying to separate the VPC from policing. The green paper (2003) recommends that everyone working with children needs to be trained to do their own job well and understand how it fits with that of others (2003, p.86). The pilots should therefore not only deliver a safer VPC operating model, but also ensure that adult leaders and volunteers involved, understand the benefits the VPC delivers back into policing as a result of their efforts. This reflexive benefit to policing should help to achieve a strong risk aware culture in line with Hopkins (2010) LILAC model through stronger leadership, greater involvement of youth sector specialists , enhanced organisational learning, clearer lines of accountability through governance committee's and more effective communication between policing and their cadets.

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# 8. Appendices

Appendix A



National Volunteer Police Cadet Framewc