



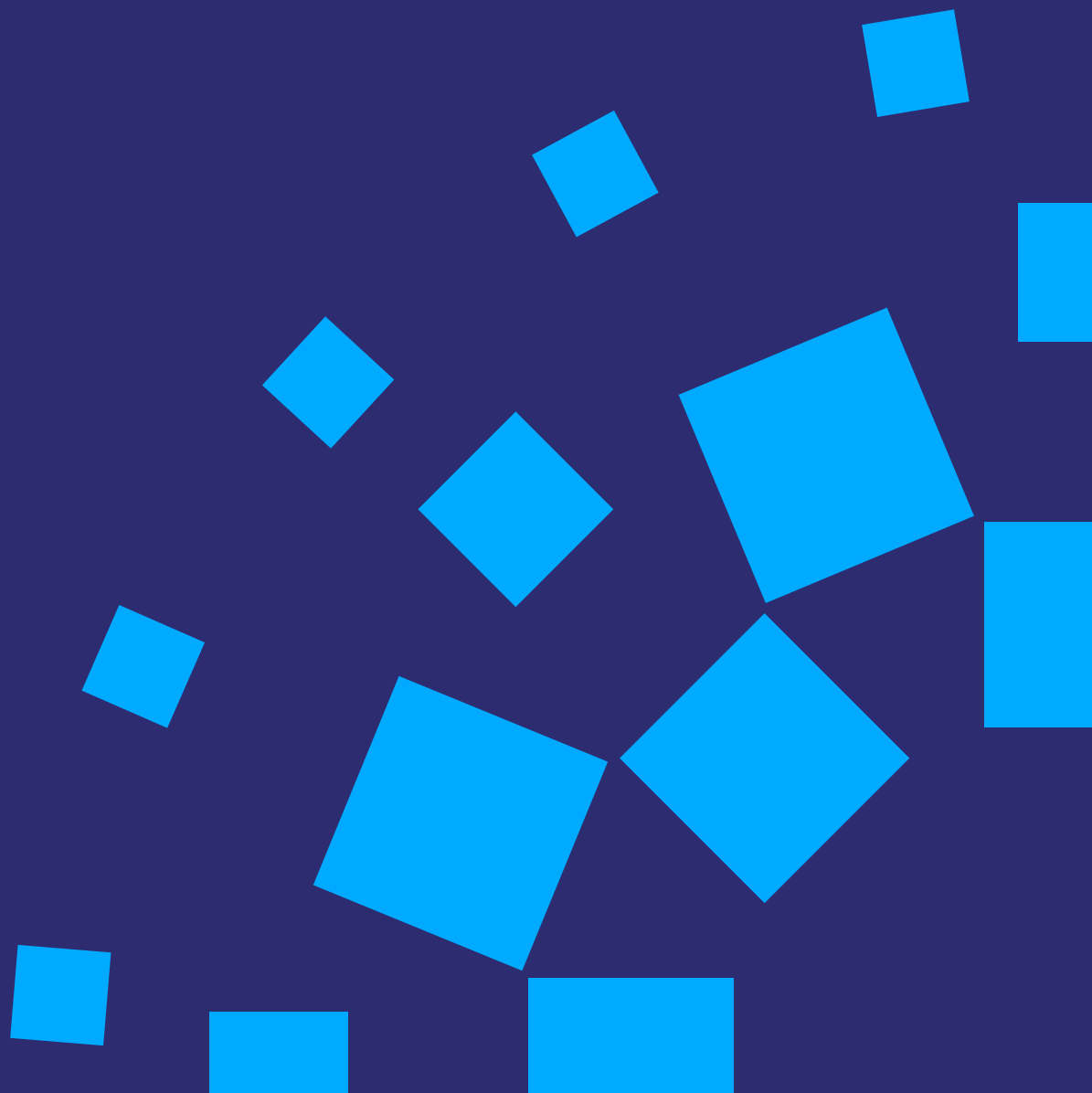
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Policing

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Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme

Evaluation of High Harm Perpetrator Unit (HHPU)

Key findings and implications for practice



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Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme (VVCP)

The College of Policing was awarded a grant through the Home Office Police Transformation Fund to develop the evidence base on vulnerability and serious violence. The programme focused on key areas of interest to policing, including knife crime, gangs, county lines, criminal exploitation of young people, and child sexual abuse and exploitation. This is one of nine summaries accompanying ten reports delivered as part of the VVCP.

If you have any questions about the VVCP, please email:

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Overview

The High Harm Perpetrator Unit (HHPU) was set up to more efficiently manage offenders considered to be the most likely to repeatedly commit significantly harmful offences. This involved amalgamating the existing ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offender Register) and IOM (Integrated Offender Management) offender manager units into one HHPU. The new unit focused on identifying high-harm offenders through new (as well as traditional) methods, including the use of an algorithm, as well as the creation of official multi-agency referral meetings.

Does it work?

The HHPU had a number of short-term and long-term aims, both in terms of broadening the range of offenders that could be managed and refining the manner in which this was carried out. The short-term aims have largely been met, with more offenders now being managed and offenders being identified earlier through a mixture of traditional and new methods. Existing offender managers have been upskilled to manage all types of offender, and unconvicted offenders are being identified for management to prevent harm. For the longer-term goals, it is too early to tell whether significant reductions in harm will have been made by this model yet, and so they were out of scope for this evaluation.

Background

About this report

This report summarises the findings of the full independent evaluation of the HHPU undertaken by the University of Birmingham as part of the College's Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme (VVCP). This summary describes how the HHPU works in practice and outlines key findings from the impact, process and cost analysis strands of the evaluation. Emerging implications for practice are also discussed.

[Read the full HHPU report](#)

What is the High Harm Perpetrator Unit?

The HHPU was set up by Surrey Police in September 2017 and became fully functional in April 2018. The aim of the HHPU was to more efficiently manage offenders considered to be most likely to commit repeat offences of a significantly harmful nature. This involved amalgamating the existing ViSOR and IOM offender manager units into one HHPU. Previously, IOM offender managers would deal with prolific offenders across a range of crimes including violence but excluding sex offences. ViSOR offender managers would deal with violent and sexual offenders that may pose a risk regardless of their frequency of offending. The approach was initially piloted in Surrey Police's North division.

The new unit focused on identifying high-harm offenders by continuing traditional methods of referral and implementing new methods. The traditional methods are ViSOR offenders being referred through multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) meetings and IOM offenders being referred through joint police/probation meetings. The new methods include the use of an algorithm and the creation of official multi-agency referral meetings with offender-focused management. Offenders are tracked consistently whether they're identified from the traditional ViSOR or IOM referrals or the novel HHPU methods.

In the setup of the North division HHPU, Surrey Police aimed to:

- shift the focus of their offender management to high-harm perpetrators, and to introduce effective ways of identifying those offenders
- increase the overall capacity of offender management in North Surrey
- increase the number of cases being actively offender managed

- start to identify individuals where, although there is information or intelligence that they are committing high-harm offences, there are currently no statutory obligations on them to engage with police management activity
- upskill offender managers so they can manage all types of offenders
- introduce a multi-agency approach to managing offenders
- decrease harm caused by offenders
- ensure that the HHPU is cost-effective

How was the intervention evaluated?

Following the development of a logic model¹ for HHPU, a mixed methods approach was employed to conduct an impact, process and economic evaluation. The qualitative analysis included a document review on a number of offender management files, interviews with HHPU staff and observations of two HHPU meetings. The quantitative analysis examined performance and management data, NICHE² data and economic data.

The **impact evaluation** used performance and management data analysis to assess:

- whether more offender managers had undergone training since the HHPU's inception
- the caseload of each offender manager before and after the HHPU's inception
- whether the HHPU is sustainable in terms of workload and offender manager capacity
- whether offender managers' wellbeing was being considered through the number of high-risk cases they were being required to manage, compared to previous figures

1 A logic model helps you think critically about the links between your problem, your intervention and your measures of success to show how and why your intervention might work. More information can be found at: whatworks.college.police.uk/Support/Pages/Research-guidance.aspx

2 NICHE is a police records management system. It stores details of individuals the police have had contact with and is a record of police **incidents**, not just police **convictions**.

The impact evaluation also explored NICHE data to test whether the implementation of the HHPU meant the overall level of harm caused by offenders in Surrey decreased, and to test whether the algorithm was appropriately ranking offenders in terms of how harmful they were. How the algorithm ranking changed over time was also assessed by tracking the trajectory of the top bracket of offenders over the course of the intervention.

Finally, the analysis of offender management data included basic demographic information on each of the offenders. It also included information on all of the interventions that had been conducted with them, such as restraining orders, travel warrants or checks on the offender's address. Descriptive statistics and basic statistical tests were used to assess:

- the number and types of interventions being used with the current HHPU cohort
- whether the interventions being used were more rehabilitative, disruptive or both
- whether the number and type of interventions being used differed between the three types of offender (IOM, ViSOR, HHPU) being managed by the HHPU

The **process evaluation** involved interviews with HHPU offender managers, HHPU management and associated staff from other police units and external agencies to discuss the utility and viability of the HHPU model as a whole. The interviews were supplemented by the observation of two of the multi-agency HHPU meetings to examine how information about potential HHPU offenders was being discussed and shared.

A complete **cost analysis** was not possible with the available data. In addition, some of the benefits of upskilling and improved organisational structure are not easy to quantify, particularly in the short term. However, indicative costs for staffing and training are provided in this report.

Figure 1: HHPU logic model



How did the intervention perform?

Evidence is presented using the EMMIE framework, which was developed to help practitioners and decision-makers understand and access the evidence base quickly and easily. The EMMIE framework describes findings across five dimensions:

Effect	Impact on crime or offending	Does the evidence suggest that the intervention led to an increase or decrease in crime or offending, or that it had no impact?
Mechanism	How it works	What aspect(s) of the intervention could explain this effect?
Moderators	Where it works	In what circumstances and contexts is the intervention likely (or unlikely) to work?
Implementation	How to do it	What conditions should be considered when implementing an intervention locally?
Economic cost	How much it costs	What direct or indirect costs are associated with the intervention, and is there evidence of cost benefits?

Effect – what was the impact of the intervention?

Evidence on the overall impact of the intervention is limited by both the duration of the evaluation period and available data sources. In the absence of longer term data, the best available measures of change were used to give an indication of potential impact. Future follow-ups using longer term data would help us to understand better the overall impact of the intervention.

The major effect of developing the HHPU was its increased capacity. More cases were managed by the HHPU than by both the previous IOM and ViSOR units combined. The increased capacity meant the focus of the intervention could expand to include unconvicted offenders (particularly domestic abuse perpetrators), suggesting a move towards targeting offenders at earlier stages than before. It has also enabled offender managers to become better equipped through their training

to manage offenders of all types. Although it is difficult to report definitively on the impacts of the intervention in the medium to long term, offender managers reported learning from their peers and feeling they had developed their skills.

Unplanned benefits of the HHPU setup were also reported. These included more proactive and new ways of working, increased resilience of HHPU staff and an increase in the capacity of other police units resulting from the set-up of the HHPU, which provided dedicated offender management for all types of offenders. Finally, the new algorithm used to predict the highest-harm offenders demonstrated a weak, but significant, predictive ability, and can be further refined.

Mechanism – how did it work?

For the HHPU to function, cases are identified both via traditional means (such as MAPPA and IOM meetings) and by two new methods: through a newly created algorithm and through external referrals by other police units and external agencies. A monthly HHPU meeting has been implemented where cases identified through all of these approaches are discussed by multiple units in Surrey Police. These include inspectors from the neighbourhood policing teams and representatives from the antisocial behaviour team, alongside external partner agencies such as drugs and alcohol services. A full list of attendees is provided in Appendix A of the main report.

There are 46 different interventions that HHPU staff can then draw on to manage offenders once they have been identified. These interventions are split into three types: disruptive, rehabilitative and those that combine disruption and rehabilitation. There are 32 disruptive interventions (such as restraining orders); four that are rehabilitative (for example providing help with accommodation) and 10 that combine both disruptive and rehabilitative elements (such as officers performing checks on the offender's address). These interventions are carried out by the police and partner agencies such as Children's Services.

Moderator – where did it work best?

As an intervention piloted in one part of the force during this evaluation period, the evaluation did not identify moderators for implementation.

Implementation – how to do it

The multi-agency approach to offender management was widely well-received and was identified as filling a much-needed gap in service. Integrating the previously separate IOM and ViSOR teams was also found to be an integral aspect of the HHPU's success. The integration of the previous IOM and ViSOR cohorts was facilitated by co-locating the offender managers in the same offices, ensuring a more equitable spread of caseloads, requiring staff to manage all type of offenders and encouraging staff members to work with different members of the team. This integration and co-location was accompanied by continual, internal evaluation of process and the unit's subsequent structure. These three factors (integration, co-location and ongoing evaluation) were deemed to be crucial in the forming of any new HHPU in other police forces.

In seeking to establish whether this model is replicable, some 'best practice' guidelines have been developed from observations of both the interviewees and the evaluation team, for any other police forces looking to move to an HHPU style of offender management. These include:

Processes to be completed prior to the creation of the HHPU

- Writing a 'mission statement' that explains the purpose of the HHPU.
- Establishing terms of reference for the HHPU, to include:
 - what is included in the force's definition of high harm (it is recognised that Surrey have defined it using several particular crime types and use the Cambridge Harm Index (CHI) to quantify harm, although this may differ in other forces)
 - an explicit referral process for other police units and external agencies, including types of offenders that can be referred in (or that anyone can be considered), and what criteria would make them suitable for management
- Development of a communication strategy to properly circulate the mission statement and terms of reference, both internally within the force and externally to relevant partner agencies.

Committing to organisational changes during the setup of the HHPU

- Having regular meetings with prospective HHPU staff to inform them of the changes and the type of work they would be expected to take on can assist with transition and ensure new members of staff can be found in a timely manner if necessary. These meetings should include discussions with IOM offender managers who will not have managed sex offenders before. IOM offender managers may require additional support or wish to move roles if they are not comfortable with this change to their workload. This should assist with the transition to the HHPU and ensure that new members of staff can be found in a timely manner if necessary.
- Ensuring a fair distribution of the different workloads that come from ViSOR and IOM across all members of staff so they have a balanced caseload.
- Ensuring that the teams are co-located.
- Implementing a daily morning briefing meeting to encourage staff cohesion and knowledge sharing.
- Implementing a monthly HHPU meeting to ensure time for actions to be completed.
 - Ensuring that this meeting remains below two hours to ensure regular attendance (this may involve implementing the policy of discussing only new cases).
- Developing internal training documents outlining the different types of interventions available to offender managers, including lists of available services in the area.
- Setting up single points of contact with each police unit and external agency, responsible for liaising with the HHPU.
- To regularly test any new algorithm implemented to ensure its efficacy. This can be done by comparing whether the ranking that it gives each offender correlates with their subsequent number of offences committed and harm score for a given period of time.

Economic cost – how much is it?

It was not possible to conduct a full cost benefit analysis. Some of the benefits of upskilling staff and improved organisational structure are not easy to quantify, particularly in the short term. Instead, setup and ongoing costs of the unit were identified as a guide.

The only setup cost noted was the provision of Managing Sex Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) training to all staff, at an average of £471.25 per person. The only ongoing cost noted was the salary of an additional detective inspector to supervise the unit, whose annual salary is £73,433.

Conclusion

In terms of overall efficacy, the unit has increased its capacity through a more effective and equitable spread of workload across the offender management team. While there is not yet a demonstrable decrease in the harm caused by offenders since the HHPU's inception, the implementation of the HHPU was shown to be largely effective, and has been well received by other police units and external partner agencies. Importantly, the HHPU was deemed to have filled a gap in service by assessing and managing unconvicted offenders, to have facilitated offender management and, in some cases, to have eased the workload of associated police units. Testing of the algorithm showed it has weak, but significant, predictive ability, and the ranking of offenders does not substantially change over time. Further work is required to ensure that both the algorithm and the additional offender referral process used by other police units and external agencies is operating as efficiently as possible. Forces looking to implement this approach should consider the best practice guidelines that have been developed.

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