

Operation Rasure – Thames Valley Police

Operation Rasure is the Thames Valley Police response to tackling serious violence.

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Key details

Topic	Violence including homicide
Organisation	Thames Valley Police
Target group	Adults General public

Smarter practice

Overview

Operation Rasure is the Thames Valley Police response to tackling serious violence and aims to prevent:

- serious violence
- homicide
- knife-enabled crime

Operation Rasure uses data analysis to produce a serious violence dashboard to focus activity on serious violence hot spot areas, identify individuals causing the most significant harm in the community and those vulnerable to their activity.

A simple and intuitive mobile phone app directs officers to geographical areas with the highest volumes of serious violence. These can be tackled using targeted patrols and problem-solving tactics, involving partnership working and community engagement.

Since 2020, Operation Rasure has overseen and funded over 80 force operations, many supported by the force joint operations unit. An evaluation of Operation Rasure is underway and early findings are positive.

Problem

In 2019, the Home Office announced that 18 police forces across England and Wales worst affected by serious violence would receive funding to establish violence reduction units (VRUs) to help tackle and prevent serious violence. Thames Valley Police (TVP) was one of these forces.

VRUs take a preventative, whole system approach to violence reduction, including data sharing, analysis and commissioning (and developing) evidence-based interventions. (See [Violence reduction unit year ending March 2021 evaluation report – GOV.UK.\(opens an external website in the same tab\)](#)) In 2021, the Home office also made funding available for activity focused on serious violence hot spots, known as [GRIP funding\(opens an external website in the same tab\)](#).

TVP's VRU has developed effective information systems using a range of data sources to support analysis of serious violence in the force. This analysis is then used to target resources. The force regards its use of data and an evidence-based policing approach as critical to its success in reducing serious violence as a precursor to homicide.

Response

Operation Rasure

Operation Rasure has changed the way of working within each local policing area by not only focusing on enforcement, but also in engaging partner agencies and explaining the activity being undertaken within their communities. Operation Rasure oversees and funds specific activities across the force's local policing area. These activities are informed by detailed analysis of the local serious violence problems.

To help local policing areas focus their activities, TVP has developed its serious violence dashboard (using Power BI software). This allows officers and staff to easily identify public spaces at high risk of serious violence. The dashboard also identifies known habitual knife carriers.

The dashboard is fed data by the TVP records management system, NICHE. It is structured around the victim, offender and location triangle that enables a focus on hot spots and people. It has sped up the availability of relevant information to officers and staff as it automatically processes and presents the required data, rather than needing to commission analysts to undertake the work each time.

The dashboard has supported the use of hot spots policing across the force. [Hot spots policing](#) involves targeting activities and resources to particular geographic areas where crime is most concentrated. It is assumed that by concentrating activities and resources in high crime locations, the approach can reduce crime by discouraging offenders from taking advantage of opportunities to commit crime.

TVP has also developed an app for patrol officers to support them to undertake hot spots policing. The app has been designed to be simple to use and a tool to encourage changes in patrol behaviour. It identifies hot spots near the officer's current location, enabling them to patrol when and where serious violence has happened rather than where they think it might be happening. Officers have engaged well with the new technology, which also tells the user why it is an allocated hot spot and provides a short briefing by way of background.

Operation Rasure logic model

Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TVP identified in 2019 as one of 18 forces in need of a violence reduction unit (VRU) to tackle and prevent serious violence.
Response – data and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of serious violence dashboard to identify public spaces with a high risk of serious violence. Randomised controlled trial (RCT) developed and implemented to target geographical areas (hot spots) with a high incidence of serious violence.

Response – Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of a mobile phone app to enable easy identification of hot spots by patrol officers and the recording of targeted activities undertaken in them.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of officers trained in hot spots policing, use of app and actively patrolling areas. • Number of patrols conducted in hot spots per week. • Number of geographical areas identified as high risk of serious violence. • Number of operations funded. • Number of partners/agencies engaged with Op Rasure and hot spots approach. • Number of forces the app has been shared with that are actively using it to run their own hot spots trials.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in serious violence in hot spots. • Increase in positive outcome rate for serious violence crimes. • Improved use of technology and increased efficiency among officers. • Improved multi-agency and partnership working. • Improved collaboration with other police forces.

- [View the logic model as a poster](#)

Implementation

How Operation Rasure works

A core focus of Operation Rasure is supporting the use of a hot spots approach to target resources. Training on hot spots policing was provided to staff working at all levels in the 12 local policing areas and the joint operations unit (including dogs, firearms and roads policing support). The training covered the evidence and theory behind hot spots policing and how to use the app developed by TVP to inform patrol decisions.

Serious violence dashboard

Officers and staff in the LPAs have access to the serious violence dashboard, which helps them visualise the problem of serious violence and homicide in their local area. The dashboard uses police data to identify high risk ('hot') locations, individuals and times.

The dashboard also includes:

- what crimes are happening and where
- who is involved
- further information on their offending history

This information is accessible for officers quickly and in real time.

Officers and staff use the dashboard to develop appropriate activities based on the problem identified.

Mobile phone app

Alongside the dashboard, patrol officers use the app to inform which areas to patrol. The app presents a list of randomised hot spots, nearest to the patrol officers' location. The officers select which hot spot they are going to patrol and the app then brings up a briefing with information about that location.

The app monitors officers' activity using geolocation and records the time spent in the hot spot, whether they have driven through it, stopped in the hot spot or patrolled on foot. Once a patrol is completed, the app prompts officers to record how many people they spoke to, searched or arrested, and who they were crewed with.

The app puts a limit on the number of times certain areas can be patrolled. If an area reaches its maximum number of patrols, it will no longer appear as a location for officers to patrol. This helps protect against over-policing the same area.

The app also:

- provides a timer for officers to use while active in the hot spot so that a consistent 'dose' of patrolling is received (evidence suggests around 15 minutes is the optimal time to spend at a hot spot)
- provides the details of a designated point of contact for the hot spot
- allows the use of other data from a range of sources including Airwave to enhance the data picture
- provides directions to the nearest hot spots, should the patrol officers wish to continue to another

The tasks officers complete within each hotspot are bespoke and based on the problem being addressed. Officers' hot spots patrolling and activities can be monitored in terms of performance, with top performers identified, and feedback provided to those who may need help to improve their patrols or the activities undertaken. This information can be used to contribute to officers' performance conversations with supervisors and performance and development reviews (PDRs).

Hot spots targeted for patrols include those with identified issues with crime types, including:

- murder
- grievous bodily harm
- rape with a weapon
- serious violence with injury
- violence without injury
- public order offences where there was a fear or use of violence

For lower level offences, a weapon needed to be present to be included in the analysis.

Analysts also identified 'hot institutions' linked to buildings that generate high numbers of crimes, which if left unidentified could lead to an inaccurate hot spot assessment. These institutions – such as prisons – are afforded an enhanced prevention plan.

The force is currently developing its identification of people at a heightened risk of becoming involved in serious violence. These 'hot people' are currently being included on the serious violence dashboard so problem-solving plans can be formulated.

The hot spot approach being used as part of Operation Rasure is being evaluated through a [randomised control trial \(RCT\)\(opens an external website in the same tab\)](#), which is being conducted by the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing. The information collected by the app is being used to provide the data on patrol activity needed for the evaluation.

Enablers for implementation

A culture of innovative data use

The force has developed processes for maximising use of the data it holds. Although it largely uses information systems available to other police forces, it has placed staff in key roles who have an advanced understanding of these systems and their potential.

Effective briefing of staff

Successful implementation relied on engaging with senior leaders, training staff on evidence-based policing approaches such as hot spots and making sure the mobile phone app provided briefing that was helpful for patrol officers.

Easy to use technology

The simplicity of the app has helped officers to engage with the hot spots process. Within three taps, officers can be sent directions to a randomised hot spot area near their location. The information provided about the location helps officers patrol the correct area.

Ensuring the right resources

The force made sure the units that were to implement hot spots policing were set up in a way that would accommodate it as a strategy, such as ensuring the unit's capacity and capability matched crime patterns, as well as achieving appropriate supervision levels to support a positive work-life balance. Funding from the Home Office GRIP fund was the main driver for the development of the hot spots app.

Incentivising good performance

Top performing officers (namely those that engage with the app and follow the principles of hot spots policing) are identified. Line managers and senior leaders are encouraged to provide positive feedback, which can be reflected in PDRs.

Effective partnership working

Operation Rasure is part of Thames Valley Together, which includes 24 organisations that share data and have partner access. Sharing information helps create a more detailed picture of serious violence locations and the people involved.

Outcomes and impact

The evidence base for hot spots policing is strong. Research studies not only look at its effectiveness but also provide details of how it should be implemented, including the optimal amount of time that should be spent in a hot spot by an officer. TVP used this evidence to inform their implementation of hot spots policing as a tactic in their force.

Using the GRIP funding from the Home Office, the force is conducting its own evaluation of Op Rasure in order to understand the impact of using a hot spots policing approach on serious violence in TVP. TVP is also included in the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing's wider evaluation of GRIP-funded projects.

Assessing outcomes and impacts

The evaluation is ongoing, but early findings on the process of implementing the hot spots approach in TVP have suggested that key areas for development focused on:

- improvements in how crimes were being targeted – for example, mapping capabilities that can accurately geolocate large volumes of crime data and inform specific patrol plans for the 'hottest' places in force
- benefits of having access to the diverse skills of officers in the Joint Operations Unit when tasking patrols
- possible improvements to tracking officers patrolling hot spots and the ability to track untasked officer activity to identify if benefits were from the extra patrols or from business-as-usual activities
- improvements to training, including the provision of refresher training and consideration of providing training to licensed premises staff as key locations for violent crime

- improvements in the monitoring structure from gold command through to local officers, who are able to see activity around hot spots and drive activity

TVP conducted its own analysis at the one-year stage following the implementation of their hot spots policing strategy. This analysis showed a non-statistically significant reduction of 8.7% in violent crime and an 8.6% reduction in the harm caused by violent crime. (Harm was measured using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index.)

The force is also in the early stages of developing a cost model in collaboration with the University of Sheffield. The aim is to enable calculation of cost benefits linked to the hot spots project, based on factors other than savings based on the reduced number of violent crimes. It is anticipated that the model will take account of factors including health/lifestyle and early intervention.

Learning and recommendations

TVP highlighted the following considerations for other forces wishing to implement a hot spots policing approach.

- The simplicity and ease of use of the hot spots app was perceived as central to how and whether patrol officers engaged with the trial. The app has been subject to updates and improvements throughout the process, based on feedback from officers and practical considerations to assist with data collection and analysis.
- Sufficient resource needs to be allocated to properly embed hot spots policing across the force. This includes analytical resource and strategic support to ensure the approach can be fully socialised.
- The force initially developed a toolkit to be used by officers on the ground to assist them with policing serious violence. This was however interpreted as a test, so they have moved away from this and now recommend a simple linear model of seven essential steps or actions that should be undertaken in turn as part of a whole system approach to violence reduction. Compliance is monitored at a senior level.
- TVP would emphasise the importance of partnership working to support similar operations. The force described working with a range of stakeholders, including schools and charities – these were linked to offenders (habitual knife carriers) but also victims or potential victims.
- To support Operation Rasure as a whole, the force learnt that performance data can be used to positively incentivise officers. This was probably more effective in gaining support for the approach than using geolocation to enforce patrols.

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Tags

Homicide Hot spots policing