



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By

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Minister of National Security

Gang Violence Reduction Team Update

June 18th, 2021

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide this Honourable House with an update on the important work of the Ministry of National Security's Gang Violence Reduction Team (GVRT). The last quarter saw the GVRT diligently at work in the community with a proactive approach that has proven to be quite effective in both the neighborhoods and schools.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the Gang Violence Reduction Team has been charged with the strategic development of prevention and intervention programmes that target our at-risk population.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 4 months the Gang Violence Reduction Team have noticed a spike in attempted home invasions and robberies allegedly from known gang members/and or affiliates. With that being said the GVRT continues to actively use and implement their multi-pronged approach in the affected communities. In order to lower community tensions, the GVRT further increased its focus on Street Level Outreach throughout the shelter-in-place, curfew and other emergency measures.

The GVRT continued to visit targeted neighborhoods and build connections and relationships with at risk young people and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the team continues to show a visual presence throughout the island as they visit the various homes and neighborhoods, especially those that are impacted by anti-social behaviors. The GVRT provides intervention through the formation of trust-based relationships that serve to de-escalate and mediate tensions when necessary. Mediation of the tensions and conflicts has been direct and inclusive of individuals from all areas. The outreach work of the GVRT has connected many at-risk individuals to various resources and long term solutions that provide case management services. The goal is to steer these young people towards proactive quotient and pro-social activities that provide a range of opportunities for change. This has not been without its challenges.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately on April 6 2021 Bermuda experienced its first fatal shooting. Again, I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Jordan Outerbridge. Another Bermudian family is now in mourning because of senseless violence.

Mr. Speaker, the GVRT's Coordinated Crisis Response Unit (CCR) has been steady at work. Since the beginning of the year, the team have been deployed 6 times to support the community through emotional hardship and serious incidents. The CCR Unit have reported to the hospital several times and made several home visits to affected families, along with targeted community assessments after each incident. The CCR Unit have

trained staff in place to provide immediate emotional support to the affected families and areas. They also provide immediate triage in order to mitigate the effects through general support, counselling services and after care.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce to this Honorable House that the Redemption Program has been operational for the past 20 weeks. The 13 trainees have not only expressed their desire for a better life but are applying the skills they have learned towards a pro social and productive path that can be seen within the program. The trainees have been placed in various local business around the island to complete 30 week work placements around the island with the GVRT Business Partners. Each trainee has participated in Weekly Job Coaching Sessions, Weekly Case Management Sessions, Life Skills Sessions, Job Readiness Workshops, and Career Exposure Sessions. On a case-by-case basis the team has provided Crisis Support and Educational Support as needed.

Mr. Speaker, The GVRT has delivered 95 individual Case Management/ Job Coaching Sessions with Redemption Program trainees. Additionally, the team has supported trainees through 15 crisis situations. Since the program was launched 20 weeks ago, the team have delivered 25 sessions covering key areas which include Job Readiness Skills, Life Skills, Career Exposure, Goal Setting and General Personal Development. The GVRT is now working with each trainee to secure each of them a full-time employment opportunity and/or a full-time education opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce the following:

- 3 Trainee's where offered a fulltime job during their training placement and have recently transitioned into their new role.
- 5 of our current Business Partners have plans to transition their current Redemption Program trainees to part-time or full-time employment.
- 4 of our current trainees are actively seeking full-time employment and/or part-time employment. The GVRT are supporting these trainees to prepare resumes and apply to various businesses for jobs.
- 1 trainee will has enrolled at the Bermuda College for the fall 2021 semester.

Mr. Speaker, the GVRT has also remained in touch with many targeted schools although many formal programs were temporarily suspended during the past year due to Covid-19 regulations in our schools. The team has continued to work with the school administration and student services teams at targeted primary schools, Cedarbridge Academy, Berkeley Institute and Success Academy to provide support services for at-risk students. The team visits the schools on a daily basis to provide Incident Management Support; Mediation Services; Individual Student Support Sessions; Restorative Sessions and Small Group Sessions. Through these ongoing interactions, the GVRT along with other service providers are able to help students realize their self-worth and see the many opportunities of self-improvement available to them.

Mr. Speaker, the GVRT are preparing for summer programs and targeted prevention outreach initiatives. They have worked closely with targeted student service teams to identify at-risk students who will need extra support and connection as the summer break begins. The GVRT plans to connect younger students to camps and with local charity scholarships if needed and will check in and provide small group sessions to engage older students that have been identified.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the school summer break, the GVRT have selected a new cohort of students Summer Work Placement & Mentoring Program. The Summer Work Placements are structured to equip the students with the skill-sets for future employment. The program is due to commence on July 5, 2021 and will employ 16 targeted young people with an eight week paid work experience at local companies. The young people have been chosen from the GVRT's high school intervention programs, case management services and Success Academy Students

Mr. Speaker, the program provides the 16 young people mentoring support to ensure their success in the workplace. The program was created to address the void in professional development opportunities for young people who have participated or can be prone to anti-social behavior and have subsequently been labelled as troubled teens. This program provides on-the-job work experience and along with mentorship and coaching. It is intended to offer a satisfying and meaningful work experience, whilst

building the skills and knowledge needed to transition to sustainable, long-term employment. I would like to wish the 16 students all the best as they take on this challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the GVRT for their work and add that they cannot do this work on their own. I encourage all of us who love this community to roll up our sleeves to assist with stamping the gang culture out of our island.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.