

West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership **Annual Report 2023–24**



Delivered by

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Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

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Foreword

Over the past year, we have made significant strides in our collective efforts to tackle the underlying causes of serious violence across West Yorkshire. Most notably, in the summer of 2023, we reached a pivotal moment in our ambitions to become a Violence Reduction ‘Partnership’. Placing even greater emphasis on our collaborative approach, it marked the national introduction of a Serious Violence Duty, with legal expectations for key agencies. This has opened the door to many new opportunities and relationships, as you will see throughout our latest annual report. A major milestone was the creation of our West Yorkshire Youth Commission in conjunction with ‘Leaders Unlocked’. They met for the first time in April 2023 and have gone from strength to strength, developing a ‘Big Conversation’ report incorporating vital peer to peer research. There have also been important communications campaigns and engagement efforts, which have continued to support our communities on crucial themes such as knife crime, violence against women and girls, and child criminal exploitation. In addition, our flagship ‘Navigator’ programme, which sees support workers placed in A&E departments of hospital, led to a national conference for best practice. Our efforts to become a ‘trauma informed system by 2030’ also remain on track, with a charter now launched to assist organisations.

Day in, day out we are delivering an intervention portfolio that is changing the futures of hundreds of young people across West Yorkshire. From leading the ‘child first’ agenda across the county to hosting multi-faith events and education celebrations, we are continually increasing our combined capabilities. Our Community Leaders programme, for instance, is a great reflection of upskilling local ambassadors to support our joint ambitions. Equally, innovation has been the cornerstone of our progress and the use of virtual reality to deliver immersive knife crime learning to young people is testament to that. The arrival of the Knife Angel in Leeds coupled with the launch of anti-violence month in Bradford also typifies just how far we have come in a relatively short space of time. While our annual report highlights the many successes of the 2023–24, we know there is still more to do, and we are determined to sustain and build upon those achievements together.

Lee Berry,
Director of the West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Partnership



Key statistics Financial year 2023–24

25,000

We reached almost 25,000 young people under 24

800

Engaging over 800 people aged 25+

400

Training nearly 400 professionals

5 years

Knife enabled assaults with intent to cause serious harm were at the lowest level for 5 years in all areas

Research and evaluation

At the heart of the Violence Reduction Partnership, the Knowledge Hub ensures that we are evidence led, undertaking innovative research, conducting detailed analysis and robust evaluations.

Bringing together such a rich repository of data and information has allowed us to produce five in depth Strategic Needs Assessments; one for each of the Local Authorities in addition to a West Yorkshire wide short read Needs Assessment.

This year we’ve produced a substantial report exploring the influential factors for serious violence providing a contextual understanding to the landscape of serious violence. This detailed understanding of violence at local and county level allowed clear strategic priorities to be developed within our Response Strategy and our delivery plan to be refreshed ready for 2024–25.

To ensure that we contribute to the body of evidence for ‘what works’ to reduce violence,

the Knowledge Hub also leads a number of evaluations into the programmes we deliver, and we support the evaluations of partners across the system. This year saw the development of a randomised controlled trial protocol for our Custody Diversion programme, continuation of our A&E Navigator evaluation and a process evaluation of our innovative new online harms programme to name a few.

To support the wider partnership in embedding a culture of evidence and evaluation, we have also developed a Theory of Change and Evaluation Toolkit in partnership with Ecorys.

Finally, the VRP was a key part of the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of Serious Youth Violence. The report highlights the VRPs clear vision and objectives, the approaches we take (public health, child and family specific) and refers to our ‘thorough and detailed’ Needs Assessment. The report describes the ‘impressive work’ of the VRPs research unit.

Partnership

Adversity Trauma and Resilience Programme

First established in June 2020, the West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme, jointly delivered by the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (WYHCP) and West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership, continues to have the shared vision of:

‘Working together with people with lived experience and colleagues across all sectors and organisations to ensure WY is a trauma informed and responsive system by 2030 and develop a whole system approach to tackling multiple disadvantage.’

- Number of partner organisations involved since 2020 – **177**
- Number of people engaged with the network since 2020 – **571**
- Current number of people signed up to access the website – **445**

Register for the programme website: [West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme - Digital Hub](#)

Activities during the last year have included:

- Delivering trauma informed training to senior prison managers in HMP Wealstun.
- Providing funding for a dedicated Trauma Informed and Suicide Prevention Officer post in HMP Leeds.
- Introduction of two new workstreams looking at the Trauma of Racism and Trauma Informed Staff Experience and Workforce Practices.
- Development of a Training Co-ordinator post which is being recruited for 2024-25.
- Published guidance on Trauma Informed Language and Trauma Informed Co-production.
- Published a Readiness Checklist and West Yorkshire Charter to support organisations to reflect on how their services and systems currently operate and embed a trauma informed and responsive approach.
- Specific work with expert consultants looking at online harms, trauma informed education and bespoke training packages.
- Recruitment of Trauma Informed Fellows as part of the Improving Population Health Fellowship programme.

Case study

Knowledge Exchange – March 2024

Approximately 200 people joined our fourth annual Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Knowledge Exchange held during early March. With the theme, 'Changing Hearts, Mind and Systems', the event brought people together online for Days 1 and 2 and in person for Day 3 with the common aim of helping to strengthen community resilience, build real change and improve lives.

Sessions looked at how we work collaboratively with all our places and how we work across different geographies to embed a trauma informed and responsive approach and reduce traumatisation across our partnership.

Content from Days 1 and 2 can be accessed by registering on the event website – [West Yorkshire Knowledge Exchange 2024](#)



Our campaigns

Start the conversation

Alongside the Police and Local Authority partners, we launched a new campaign to tackle child criminal or sexual exploitation. This involves crimes including grooming, sexual abuse, drugs, county lines offences, carrying and the possession of weapons, money muling and serious acquisitive crime.

Based on research from the Violence Reduction Partnership around online harms, it builds on findings that young people do not make a distinction between online and offline environments.

The campaign encourages parents, carers and guardians to have simple conversations with their children, which could help to keep them safe when they go online.

Tackling Knife Crime

In 2023, we developed a social media video designed to tackle the carrying and use of knives. Focused on serious violence hot spot data, it contained a real-life case study from West Yorkshire.

The impactful message recognised the way some justify the possession of knives whilst outlining the devastating consequences for individuals, families and communities.

Over the course of the dedicated social media campaign, the video reached over 400,000 young people.



Just Don't

The “Just Don’t” campaign is the latest step in the fight to improve the safety of women and girls, alongside partners across the region.

Shocking research has shown that 86% of young women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment in public and working with the Mayor of West Yorkshire, we are urging everybody in the region to be an ally, step up, call it out and help stop it.

The campaign launched during Violence Against Women and Girls Week of Action and is centred around a powerful video which shows men and boys making excuses for inappropriate behaviour and harassment in everyday situations. The Violence Reduction partnership invested into the delivery of the campaign.





Hard-hitting messages on knife crime reached more than 5,000 young people across Leeds during a month-long awareness campaign, which saw the imposing 27ft Knife Angel sculpture visit to the city.



Knife Angel

A programme of activity, led by the community safety partnership Safer Leeds and supported by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership ran throughout February 2024. The month also officially kickstarted Project Shield, which is the city's longer term co-ordinated response to knife crime.

Students from 22 schools attended the Royal Armouries Museum to take part in our immersive virtual reality learning package. It uses cutting-edge immersive virtual reality (VR) technology and live-action footage to

simulate a young person's initial encounter with a gang and decision to carry a knife.

These authentic, immersive experiences powerfully engage young people, enabling them to simulate making decisions and experiencing consequences in a safe, trauma-informed, virtual environment.

The VRP provided external training for 87 facilitators, from several organisations, enabling the programme to be delivered in different settings throughout West Yorkshire.

Engaging communities

During 2023–2024 we worked with CREST Advisory on an engagement framework which has allowed our work to be centred around five principle levels of engagement: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering.

These have guided our work and partnership to ensure meaningful engagement is taking place across the partnership.

We have held three showcase events for the VRP and community partners to share best practice and their work. We also held a dedicated multi-faith event and education symposium. These events have attracted over 400 partners and community members across West Yorkshire.

“The networking and learning about how engagement with faith communities has a positive benefit to local communities”

“Multiple speakers and the lived experience perspective was really powerful. It was great to network and learn about the VRP”

Community Advisory Group (CAG)

Continuing from its initial set up in 2019, we consistently collaborate with our CAG who have supported us with consultations, provided feedback on our social media campaigns and designs, and been involved in panels such as our community co-production work and the appointment of our new director.

Community Leadership Programme

Launched this year, this programme aims to develop and support a network of 20 community leaders and emerging leaders across West Yorkshire who are connected to, working or volunteering in the VCSE sector.

Lasting three months, the programme has been developed to offer to local leaders, as part of a whole system, public health strategy to reducing violence and improving community safety.

By joining this programme, participants have the space and support to develop their unique leadership style and make even more of an impact in their community work.

As part of our core capacity building work, we have commissioned this programme to continue supporting communities to support themselves, as we believe it is one of the best ways to effect long term sustainable change within local areas. Building and harnessing a foundation of skills amongst those who are, and who will remain part of the fabric of our local communities, is key to increasing community safety and reducing violence.



Co-production

In January 2023, CNet, a third sector network in Bradford, were commissioned by the VRP to complete the first stage of a community consultation exercise to inform the project and understand community needs, amplify community voices and understand perceptions about serious violence. CNet used a mixed methods approach to consult with the community about their perceptions of violent crime in the City Ward of Bradford.

The research involved local mosques, community centres, schools and the university to engage with a diverse range of local people. These findings enabled organisations to come together in a consortium to work with the community, promoting social cohesion and develop appropriately co-produced resources.

As a result, Bradford Youth Justice have worked with 78 young people to produce artwork and music, with a final showcase event held on the 28 March 2024 that brought the Bradford community together to celebrate the work of young people across the district.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE)

The network across West Yorkshire continues to play a key role in the work that we do, supporting and promoting our activity at a local level. We were part of the annual VCSE conference in November 2023, which celebrated the work of the sector and our partnership. This focus was on equity, diversity and inclusion, giving delegates the opportunity to discuss any challenges, issues or developments as well as any actions they would like to see to see how we can continue to support their crucial work in the community.

Priority groups

As our asset mapping continues to be developed, our relationship building with specific community groups continues to expand. This year we have noted a great success in working with faith-based organisations engaging with over 50 new faith-based partners and places of worship.

We have also strengthened our engagement with new educational partners to allow us to work with young people and promote our campaigns such as ‘Just Don’t’, attending 8 school, colleges and universities events and engaging with over 400 young people.

Leaders unlocked

The West Yorkshire Youth Commission (WYYC) was established in 2023 with funding from the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP).

The WYYC enables children and young people aged 14–25 to have a stronger voice and influence on serious violence and exploitation issues across the region. This peer-led project enables young people to get involved and have their say about issues that affect their lives and help build a safer community.

The Youth Commission work is grounded in extensive peer-to-peer research. Engagement took place with over 1,300 young people across West Yorkshire between May and October 2023. The culmination of the 2023 engagement was the Production of the Youth Commission’s final report.

The report is structured into four key priorities that outline the WYYC’s key areas of peer-led research. Each section features a comprehensive analysis of young people’s responses, verbatim quotes from individual participants, and recommendations for change.

The key priorities chosen were:

- **Attitudes and violence towards women**
- **Community relationship and life**
- **Rehabilitation and prevention**
- **Drugs, gangs and knife crime**



Navigator programme

Navigators are currently working in three hospital trusts across Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, and Leeds, with a service in Wakefield due start delivery during 2024–25.

The model this year has been to employ dedicated youth workers, either internal to the trust or in collaboration with Local Authorities, to work alongside clinical staff within key hospital departments such as the A&E.

Each operate in a Trauma Informed way, this provides each service with the flexibility to adapt their response to the complex and varied needs of victims of serious violence and associated risk and vulnerabilities who attend each service.

Victims of serious violence are identified upon their presentation to an emergency department or during admission to hospital. These young people are provided bespoke support by these designated youth workers throughout their attendance at hospital.

Upon discharge from the clinical environment, further support is facilitated through collaboration with statutory community embedded and third sector partners and monitored through a funded follow up service ‘Community Links’.



Mentoring in schools

Building on previous learning from activity in Wakefield, we have worked with three partners to continue delivery of bespoke interventions on a targeted and universal level within four identified secondary school settings.

With a focus on education inclusion and the primary outcomes being to support a reduction in exclusions and improve outcomes for young people. Each intervention aims to improve engagement with education, and offers other support linked to confidence building and resilience building.

Barca have worked with young people in Leeds, following a person centred 1:1 or small group approach, and complimented by work with the whole family to improve relationships where needed.

In Bradford, Brathay have focused delivery by providing a youth coach offer, therapeutic counselling and vocational training to young people identified by school on a 1:1 or small group basis.

In Calderdale and Kirklees, it has been facilitated by St Giles Trust and includes education sessions

as part of whole school/year group assemblies, 1:1 mentoring and family support for identified vulnerable students and training to parents, carers and professionals.

Custody diversion

A collaborative approach between the West Yorkshire Liaison and Diversion Service and St Giles Trust, working closely with West Yorkshire Police.

Combining St Giles case workers with lived experience of serious youth violence with Liaison and Diversion staff already in the Custody Suite, it aims to engage children and young people in a custodial environment.

The service engages with children and young people following an arrest, when they are reconsidering their options and actions which resulted in their detention.

They employ a ‘teachable moments’ framework to encourage reflection and provide young people with agency and support required to facilitate in a diversion from re-offending in the future.



Case study

Referral details

Mum has told school staff that T pulled a knife on sibling this morning. Mum said T also pointed the knife towards her. Mum said T has used a knife and hit the door with it previously but today he threatened sibling and her with the knife. T is becoming more violent each day and refuses to listen to parents. T is very aggressive towards staff and mum.

Shows signs of idolizing criminal activity. A referral to the Early Action Team has gone in to the police this week and is due to be looked at today. Both parents have been spoken with as part of the screening and they have been clear that they are struggling with T's behaviour, and it seems to be getting worse and is getting to the point where he is becoming a risk to himself and others, especially if he is getting hold of knives. Parents welcome any support and are happy to be referred to St Giles.

Support details

T is getting one to one support either face to face or on teams (online), the work that has been done around knife and gang awareness and making the right choices. The face-to-face meetings have been around, T expressing his

feelings in a positive manner with staff in school and at home. The online meetings have been around watching educational videos around knife and gang awareness and then the case worker going through consequence work around what they have watched. The case worker then identifies areas that T struggles to understand or have a breakdown in seeing cause and consequence and then breaks these down into smaller topics to direct the 1-1 high intensity sessions. T has agreed to go back to football, and the caseworker is supporting him to find a team out of area with to help to build positive peer groups. Aim with football is to have positive influences in his life and use it as tool to control his anger.

Initial outcomes

T has better understanding on the dangers on carrying and using a knife and gang awareness from videos and discussions he has had with his lived experience mentor. One of the main improvements have been around his anger in which he would in past get angry and go to the kitchen get the knife out, T will now take time out to calm himself down and use talking as way to express his feelings. The case worker continues to help T work on his emotional regulation.

Our work with Community Safety Partnerships (CSP)

Bradford

Working with Bradford CSP, the newly formed Bradford Children and Families Trust and their Breaking the Cycle service. Delivery has included dedicated casework with some of Bradford's most vulnerable young people and focused activity with Year 6 to support transition to secondary school for those prone to violence. Also, development of a follow up drama based on the story Bloods Thicker, co-produced consequence cards and weapon sculptures created by young people with an exhibition held during late March.

Kirklees

Partners at Kirklees CSPs have commissioned a number of district-based organisations to deliver interventions with an emphasis on early intervention, prevention. This has included specific individual work with Yorkshire Mentoring, Penguin Theatre Company, B-Best, Creative Map and Untap to provide an approach focused on social skills training with young people. There has been work with Thornton Lodge Action Group and local provision within the community to offer sports programmes and coaching qualifications, and with Hanson who have provided workshops and martial arts sessions.

Calderdale

Delivery during the first three months of 2023–24 was a continuation of previous work with Sunnyvale Fisheries and Outdoor Activity Centre providing enrichment activities, consequence education and Reach4ward focused on local outreach with young people. From November 2023 the CSP commissioned Project Communities CIC to work with those at risk of school exclusion by providing one to one support and mentoring.

Wakefield

Made the decision to commission an intervention aimed at supporting the local response to the specific issue of domestic abuse in the district. Wakefield CSP commissioned the national charity Cranstoun to deliver their 24-week 'Men and Masculinities' programme, using several different techniques to support self-awareness and behaviour change in a group setting.

Leeds

The CSP funded ten interventions in the city, working with both Local Authority Youth Services and community based VCSE organisations. This included specific work with girls and young women, as well as street based mentoring activity for those involved in or on the periphery of gangs, criminality, or youth violence. There has also been trauma informed support for young people with complex needs and support for parents. To accompany the Knife Angel being in Leeds during February, partners from across the city engaged with a considerable number of young people on the dangers of and impact of knife crime.



Next steps

The West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership has made some huge strides during 2023–24, undertaking groundbreaking research and evaluation, which is continuing to support our communities and lead the way nationally. We have engaged those at risk of serious violence, delivering key campaigns and an intervention portfolio that are changing lives on the ground.

It is important that we do not rest on our laurels, however. Now is the time to build upon this success, whilst anticipating the challenges on the horizon. We are currently at a pivotal moment in our work to tackle serious violence across West Yorkshire, with sustainability crucial to the future of our partnership approach.

It's vital that we remain committed to a long-term strategy for addressing serious violence, with collaboration at its core. Crucially, children must sit at the heart of our thinking, with a seat at the table when it comes to decision making, co-producing responses to local issues.

With knife crime a national priority, our next steps must be bold, engaging those key services that can help stop re-offending, whilst looking at the innovative ways we can tackle online sales. The Violence Reduction Partnership can be the catalyst for this change and has never been more relevant, having already expanded our Navigator programme with mentors in A&E units.

The maturity of our partnership means we are very well placed to capitalise on new opportunities, enabling us to diversify our prevention role, expanding our reach to an even greater degree. At a time when we face much uncertainty and financial challenges, working together has to be the mantra if we are to deliver solutions that best serve our communities.





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