

Custody Diversion Programme: Evaluation summary

What the programme offers

The Custody Diversion Programme (CDP) was commissioned by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and delivered by St Giles Trust in collaboration with West Yorkshire Police and the Liaison & Diversion Service. It provides **targeted one-to-one support to young people aged 10-25** at risk of or involved in violence and offending across all five custody suites in the region.

At the heart of the programme is relationship-based mentoring, delivered by caseworkers with lived experience. Support is delivered in settings preferred by the young person (e.g., schools, homes), and tailored to individual needs. Caseworkers' lived experience builds credibility and trust with young people. The following findings are based on an independent evaluation by [Cordis Bright](#).



What difference it made

The evaluation found evidence of positive outcomes for young people: ✓ Improved decision-making and distancing from negative influences; ✓ Greater engagement in education and employment; ✓ Stronger emotional regulation and resilience; ✓ Improved family and peer relationships; ✓ Reduced reoffending, with police data showing no further offences or reduced offending in 8 out of 12 case study examples.

Wider system impacts

The CDP has the potential to play a valuable role in West Yorkshire's approach to youth violence reduction. Caseworkers with lived experience are positively influencing perceptions within youth services, showcasing the value of credible, relatable mentors. There were opportunities to strengthen engagement with wider services such as schools, social care, and police to enhance integration into the broader youth support system.

Opportunities to strengthen the programme

The evaluation found emerging evidence that the CDP is making a positive impact on young people at risk of serious youth violence. Its unique approach, centred on caseworkers with lived experience, is widely seen as a key strength. To maximise impact and sustainability, the CDP should:

- **Clarify referral criteria and target group** – to ensure appropriate and consistent referrals.
- **Strengthen data collection and use** – to demonstrate impact and inform service improvement.
- **Document the programme model** – to support fidelity and scalability.
- **Expand engagement with wider services** – to build robust referral pathways.
- **Clarify the role of caseworkers in custody** – balancing access with maintaining the CDP's independence.