

West Yorkshire Response Strategy Refresh 2022:

Serious Violence: West Yorkshire Strategy for Change



Tracy Brabin
Mayor
of West Yorkshire



West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Unit
Tackling Violence Together

Foreword

The West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Response Strategy Refresh 2022 builds upon our continued learning, experience and knowledge and is one of the most significant tools to delivering an effective partnership response to serious violence.

Informed by the research and findings of the VRU Strategic Needs Assessment, it outlines an approach that revolves around a solid evidence base and foundation.

The Covid pandemic has brought its own challenges over the past few years in terms of the prevalence and nature of serious violence witnessed, particularly during the lockdown period.

Whilst we have anticipated and recognised these trends along the way, there will undoubtedly be new dynamics to contend with as we move forward.

The Response Strategy Refresh 2022 enables us to keep our finger on the pulse and is guided by the latest facts, figures, and empirical evidence.

As you will read within this document, we have launched a multi-agency partnership data hub, which offers a health, societal and environmental context, aside data from the Office of National Statistics.

This is one of our greatest assets in combating serious violence, helping to understand the landscape we are operating within and informing problem solving within our communities.

These insights ultimately provide the collective confidence to act together in tailoring our interventions and preventative measures, making a real difference to people's lives.

As you will see, the Response Strategy Refresh 2022 identifies each of our priorities, setting out exactly how they will be achieved and by who, to make it happen.

We are in a stronger position than we have ever been before and the VRU's unique partnership role in West Yorkshire is enabling us to work further upstream with a truly proactive drive.

Corresponding with the objectives of the Mayor's Pledges and the Police and Crime Plan, this document represents our commitment to our communities in combating serious violence.

Our plan is both innovative and inclusive, with transparency and accountability at its heart.

Through our partnership vision and public health led strategy, we are determined to bring about quick time successes as well as lasting change for those who live and work in our county.

**Chief Superintendent Jackie Marsh, Director of the West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)**



Contents

Foreword	2	Response:	14
Introduction.....	4	Priority: Young People.....	14
What is serious violence	4	Evidence:	15
Definition	4	Response:	15
Why serious violence	4	Priority: Place based problem solving initiatives.....	16
Context	4	Evidence:	16
Local evidence base.....	5	Response:	17
Violence Reduction Unit.....	5	Accountability	18
Serious Violence Duty	5	Who will be accountable.....	18
Cross cutting support	6	What will we measure.....	18
Covid-19.....	6	How we will measure our work.....	18
What do we want to achieve?	6	Appendix 1: VRU Funded Delivery 2021	19
National aims:.....	6	Appendix 2: VRU Theory of Change 2022.....	20
Our vision	6		
Our ambitions	7		
Our Approach.....	7		
Evidence informed.....	7		
Whole system approach	8		
Working together	8		
Sustainability	9		
Think Family and Community Engagement	10		
West Yorkshire Priorities for 2022.....	11		
Priority: Risk Factors for Vulnerability and Victimisation	11		
Evidence:	11		
Response:	11		
Priority: Substance Misuse and Alcohol.....	12		
Evidence:	12		
Response:	12		
Priority: Violence Against Women and Girls.....	13		
Evidence:	13		

Introduction

This Strategy provides a West Yorkshire framework for preventing and reducing serious violence. Informed by an evidence base, the strategy sets out our understanding of serious violence, local needs and how we will respond to this.

A refresh of our previous annual Serious Violence Response Strategy, this Strategy brings together a more evidenced based, developed, integrated partnership understanding and vision of tackling serious violence. The Response Strategy therefore provides the framework for the work of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and also that for wider West Yorkshire partners.

What is serious violence

Definition

The annual Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) provides a detailed understanding of serious violence in West Yorkshire. We define serious violence as:

“Violence and serious violence includes specific crime types where there is the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community”.

The specific crime types included in West Yorkshire include homicide, knife crime, personal robbery, gun crime, violence against women and girls, organised crime, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

The definition will focus on geographic areas of criminality and specific groups where serious violence, or its threat or impact, is evident; this is young people, women and girls, public places, the night-time economy, gangs and organised crime groups.

Why serious violence

Context

West Yorkshire has a population of 2.35m, a county that consists of 5 metropolitan boroughs; Calderdale, Kirklees and the Cities of Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield. West Yorkshire is a diverse region, with people from a range of ethnicities, lifestyles, and backgrounds, bringing great cultural diversity.

There are broad social and economic circumstances that together determine the quality of living, health, wellbeing and the safety of the population. Deprivation and inequalities around these determinants show strong correlations to adversity and trauma and the root causes of serious violence. West Yorkshire has a significant number of areas experiencing disadvantage and this has been growing in recent years. One indicator of this is the number of people requiring crisis assistance in the region which too has grown over recent years. The correlation between deprivation and violence has long been explored including recognition that it can leave young

people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health which are both key risk factors for violence.

Income deprivation is also strongly associated with increased risk of violence. There are fewer people in employment and higher rates of Universal Credit claimants in West Yorkshire than the average for England and Wales. The current picture of employment in West Yorkshire is volatile, mainly due to the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic

Reducing inequalities cannot be achieved unless all organisations work together to identify and address these root causes and differences in communities.

Local evidence base

Information exchange, research and production of annual Strategic Needs Assessments continue to develop our knowledge and understanding of serious violence. We are starting to see some positive outcomes from our approach and focus since the first establishment of our Serious Violence Strategy in 2019 including reductions in knife crime, gun crime, youth crime, robbery and hospital admissions.

We are not however complacent. Most serious violent crime continues to increase across West Yorkshire and despite our work today Serious Violence remains a challenge for West Yorkshire with an increase of 9.5% of most serious violence over the 32 month period ending November 2021. Between October 2020 and September 2021, 24 people lost their lives to violence in West Yorkshire. In the same period, 2325 people were seriously harmed due to violence. In purely monetary terms, violence cost West Yorkshire nearly £1 billion in 2021.

Violence Reduction Unit

Serious violence has been identified as a priority across West Yorkshire for a number of years. The national Serious Violence Strategy published in 2018 allocated funding to 18 areas most affected by serious violence. In 2019 securing this Home Office funding support, we established the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and gained further resources to focus on policing of serious violence.

The VRU over the last three years has been a catalyst for partners to come together to develop our understanding of serious violence and test approaches to respond to the underlying causes, put in place protective factors to reduce incidents and respond where necessary through enforcement. Through VRU commissioning in 2021 we worked with 34 organisations engaging with 5816 young people aged 24 or under. In 2020 we engaged with a further with 16,838 young people.

Serious Violence Duty

The opportunity to work together to prevent and stop violence was formalised through the government setting out in 2020 amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which will place a serious violence legal duty on key services. The duty requires services to work together to share data, intelligences and knowledge to understand the root causes of serious violence including domestic and sexual violence.

Cross cutting support

The causes and communities affected by serious violence are far reaching and therefore features as a priority across other service and partnership strategies in West Yorkshire. The landscape to tackling the causes as well as impact of serious violence is complex and addressing trauma, adversity and the root causes is a cross agency response. The VRU, partners and this strategy will strongly align and connect to the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024, West Yorkshire Plan to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls and work of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Integrated Healthcare Partnership, district Community Safety Strategies, Health and Wellbeing and Safeguarding Plans.

Covid-19

Local and national lockdowns over the last two years arising from Covid-19 continued to impact on the landscape of violence. The current picture of employment in West Yorkshire is volatile, mainly due to the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has disproportionately affected the employment situation of young people, increasing their exposure to risks of violence. Further local research is however required to better understand the relationship between unemployment and violence, particularly on young people. We have also seen increases in some crime types such as domestic abuse for example. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many of these risk factors and existing structural and economic inequalities. It is recognised that this will also bring significant impact for years to come.

What do we want to achieve?

National aims:

The Home Office outlined three key success measures for VRUs:

- I. A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25,
- II. A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25,
- III. A reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives.

Beyond these three success measures, the Home Office allowed for flexibility for VRUs to adopt a broader definition of serious violence. As such, we have utilised the emerging themes identified through our annual Strategic Needs Assessment and developed a broader, vision, definition and success measures which are reflected in this partnership strategy.

Our vision

We will reduce serious violence and fear faced by communities across West Yorkshire.

We know that to make the most effective impact will take longer than this one year strategy and so adopt a 3 year vision:

"Across West Yorkshire, we will work together to prevent violence, reduce its harmful impact and where necessary respond with robust enforcement. We will do this by strengthening our partnerships, working with our communities, developing our understanding of the causes of violence and delivering interventions that make a lasting difference."

Our ambitions

During 2020 the VRU, alongside our partners, established seven workstreams. In response to our further developed understanding of need and alignment to serious violence duty and West Yorkshire strategic priorities we have refreshed these workstreams. These sustainable set of ambitions provide the framework for our focus and delivery and will be underpinned by annual priorities for delivery.

1. **Criminal Justice and Reducing Re-offending:** Reducing the risk of young people entering the criminal justice system and reducing reoffending
2. **Domestic and Sexual Abuse:** Supporting families affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse
3. **Complex Needs and A&E attendance:** Supporting people to move away from violent lifestyles, providing support with some of the complex needs that make many frequent attenders in Emergency Departments
4. **Education:** Promoting meaningful engagement in education
5. **Violence Against Women and Girls:** Creating an environment where women and girls can feel safe and be safe
6. **Local solutions through co-production:** Working with communities to develop locally based initiatives
7. **Adversity, Trauma, Resilience:** Reducing adversity and ensuring a trauma informed approach throughout partners work

Our Approach

Evidence informed

Underpinning our whole strategy, focus and approach is the development and use of an evidence informed approach. The West Yorkshire VRU provides leadership and strategic coordination to embedding an evidenced based, public health approach to violence reduction in West Yorkshire. Structured with a dedicated research and evidence team at its core, the Knowledge Hub, the VRU seeks to understand and address the inequalities that can lead to involvement in serious violence, improving the safety of all members of our community. This is achieved through:

Facilitation of information sharing: Working with Liverpool John Moores University the Knowledge Hub have launched a multi-agency partnership data hub. Information has and will continue to be gathered to provide health, societal and environmental context as well as ONS data to help us understand the local population demographics, inform detailed problem solving and assess performance.

Providing a robust evidence base: Our annual Strategic Needs Assessments (SNA) brings together the VRU's own empirical research on violence in West Yorkshire, as well as primary, secondary and tertiary sources of evidence to build a comprehensive picture of how things currently stand. This is supplemented with the production of district profiles. The SNA directly informs this Response Strategy, it's priorities but also the place based delivery plans.

Commissioning projects to test approaches: Utilising research and evidence to respond to need and learn from implementing different approaches within different contexts. Testing evidenced based approaches continues to support system change and inform replication across the region. We have commissioned over 30 projects at West Yorkshire and local level. Appendix 1 shares the breadth of projects commissioned and delivered during 2021 which we will continue to build upon.

Commissioning research: The SNA identifies gaps in our understanding of why violence occurs, its impact and what works. The Knowledge Hub continues to commission and use research to determine the causes and correlates of violence, the factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions. The findings are consolidated into the SNAs and in turn inform the Response Strategy priorities and implementation.

Evaluation: Understanding what works and in what circumstances to reduce serious violence supports delivery and system change. Nationally commissioned evaluation of the VRU is supplemented through locally commissioned evaluation.

Whole system approach

Serious violence cannot be tackled in isolation and must be addressed through prevention strategies which address the multiple risk factors which cause and perpetuate violence. As well as promote the protective factors which mitigate against the perpetration and victimisation. We take a public health approach to violence, our approach and interventions focusing on deterrents and protective factors therefore aim to work across individual, relationship, community at the same time.

In addition we recognise that our approach will also hold to account those who perpetrate serious violence. Our approach will include the role that enforcement and criminal justice can make to this whole system approach.

Working together

The VRU are just one partner in the response to Serious Violence. Our approach therefore aims to maximise opportunities to connect to partners to enable the sharing and utilisation of insight and knowledge to inform delivery of the priorities. We have a core membership whose roles and responsibilities are central in ensuring a whole

system approach. We will continue to identify opportunities to align our ambitions, priorities and delivery at both regional level and place. By focusing on the root causes of violence the VRU will support organisations whose responsibilities are to deliver for example work to tackle drugs, county lines, human trafficking and safeguarding. Key strategic and operational alignment of priorities and delivery across West Yorkshire includes:

The West Yorkshire Mayor Pledges and Police and Crime Plan: This specifically includes the emerging work to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The West Yorkshire Mayor places women and girls at the heart of her 10 Mayoral Pledges and it is also a priority in the Police and Crime Plan. There are further shared commitments to reduce serious violence in the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2021 - 2024 including sexual offences, child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and county lines. Including the continued opportunities to align with Serious Organised Crime and Operation Precision to tackle the root causes which lead to involvement in serious organised crime. This includes Operation Jemlock which was established as West Yorkshire Polices' response to increasing levels of serious violent crime and knife crime, funded through the Home Office Serious Violent Crime fund, and now embedded and co-located within the VRU. Based around evidenced based hotspot policing, the dedicated resources provides targeted enforcement into the hotspots across West Yorkshire. Working closely with Precision Team (Serious Organised Crime), Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) and Early Action Teams (EAT) it supports our early intervention work. This work has also led to innovative partnerships with the implementation of teachable moments and deterrent models.

West Yorkshire and Harrogate Integrated Health Care Partnership: share a priority to improve the lives of the population involved in serious violence and ensuring safe and healthy communities across West Yorkshire. Operationally joint posts have been funded as part of the VRU arrangements delivering across both the Improving Population Health Programme and the VRU.

Five place based Community Safety Partnerships: are key partners in the prioritisation, coordination and delivery at place. These local arrangements being suitably placed to identify and respond to locally evidenced based need and collaborate with Safeguarding and Children's Partnerships in their response. The new serious violence duty placing increased emphasis on key partners plans to reduce violence.

Whilst a set of ambitions and priorities have been agreed and provide the West Yorkshire framework for achieving our vision, it is acknowledged that stakeholders and, partnerships will prioritise and deliver different elements. A system wide approach will be taken drawing upon the combined intelligence, knowledge and skills.

Sustainability

We will work together to enable system change and achieve a sustainable approach to tackling serious violence. Through developing and utilising our knowledge and learning we will influence long term system change to respond to serious violence. The assets and strengths of local partnerships and communities in West Yorkshire will be harnessed to coproduce and embed the learning.

We recognise that there aren't quick solutions to health inequalities and the root causes of serious violence. It is imperative that our investment in communities isn't therefore just for the short term but provide sustainable protective approaches. Our commissioning of projects and research will have to demonstrate plans to enable sustainability.

As we continue to develop our partnership work during 2022 we will be developing a joint Sustainability Plan.

Think Family and Community Engagement

We will adopt a whole family approach which draws on the involvement and support in developing positive relationships of the whole family as part of the response to risk factors and enabling protective factors.

We are committed to engaging with our communities and listening to their voices to inform our understanding of local needs, perception and satisfaction. The VRUs Community Engagement Plan provides a structure and platform to further enhance the engagement with communities including through incorporating

- Incorporating lived experience
- Community Coproduction Initiative
- Themed Engagement and Groups
- Third Sector Support
- Community Advisory Group

We want to build resilience in communities and coproduce our responses. We recognise it is imperative to work in partnership with our communities and those with lived experience to directly address the impacts of entrenched inequalities. Our communities are great assets with knowledge, skills and networks that are the building blocks of prevention and reducing serious violence and trauma. We will maximise opportunities to work in partnership to support individuals and communities who are at risk of exploitation and violence of organised crime. Coproduction and co-creation will take place at community level with active involvement from the Community Safety Partnerships and local support organisations to ensure that local people are at the heart of the solution. This will take an approach of: consult and engage on need; design, deliver and commission in collaboration.

West Yorkshire Priorities for 2022

The analysis of evidence supports a number of priorities to addressing serious violence in 2022. The following priorities support our vision and ambitions:

- Risk factors for vulnerability and victimisation
- Serious violence themes – Violence against women and girls
- Substance misuse and alcohol
- Place based problem solving
- Young people

Priority: Risk Factors for Vulnerability and Victimisation

Our research and data identifies a set of risk factors which impact on the vulnerabilities of being involved in serious crime or being a victim. Risk factors include neurodiversity¹, disability, unemployment and mental health.

Evidence:

- The majority (45%) of gun crime offender's occupation status was 'unemployed', which is repeatedly seen as the most common occupation status across the other crime types
- 23% of the population in Yorkshire and the Humber declared having a disability
- Disability and poverty appear to be relational
- Disability is considered to be a risk factor for becoming a victim of a violent crime.
- Neurodivergence is more prevalent in the criminal justice system than in the wider community.
- Individuals with neurodiversity can be disadvantaged when they encounter the criminal justice system.
- Where the cause of the admission was violence, almost half of hospital admissions had a mental health code in a diagnosis field
- Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of adults experiencing depression, rates are still above pre-pandemic levels. Rates of life satisfaction has declined but levels of anxiety have increased.
- For Yorkshire and the Humber, the male suicide rate is almost three times higher than the female suicide rate.

Response:

- Undertake local research to better understand the nuances of the impacts of unemployment, particularly on young people
- Further examine the intersection of disability and poverty to be undertaken to inform interventions

¹ [Neurodiversity](#) is an overarching disorder category and can consist of intellectual disability, Communication Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention- Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Neurodevelopmental Motor Disorders (Tics) and Specific Learning Disorders.

- Utilise commissioned research to provide an understanding of how neurodiverse individuals experience violence, whilst providing details of protective factors and training needs
- Commission research into the impact bereavement has on families in relation to how this may influence experiences of violence including risk of perpetration or increased vulnerability
- Utilise and share the growing evidence base drawn from commissioned research to develop a shared understanding across services of the root causes of serious violence including risk factors
- Explore opportunities for integrating approaches across services and partnerships that work to tackle the priority risk factors for offending and victimisation
- Explore the development of pathways for young people at risk into alternative education and employment such as apprenticeships

Priority: Substance Misuse and Alcohol

Exposure to and use of substances including alcohol are evident in a range of violent behaviours and a contributing factor to violence.

Evidence:

- Current research reaffirms the prominence of recreational drug use and emphasises the importance of identifying effective approaches.
- Alcohol intoxication increases the chances of violent behaviour and is likely to be a contributing factor in around half of all violent crimes
- Recreational drug use contributes to the increasingly exploitative and violent nature of drug markets and supply chains
- Hospital Admissions for Substance Misuse in Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield were higher in 2021 than the national average
- All five districts in West Yorkshire had a higher percentage of regular drinkers at age 15 than the national average
- Use of drugs and alcohol has been closely associated to poor mental health
- There are lower than national average levels of people attending drug/alcohol services concurrently with mental health services
- All five districts have a higher rate of alcohol-related mortality than the national average
- Exposure to alcohol is increasing for children and young people with more home drinking due to Covid-19
- Drugs and alcohol related deaths have risen in the last year

Response:

- Assess the level of provision and pathways available to support for people with dual diagnosis and complex needs
- Develop increased understanding of recreational drug use including evidenced based practice to inform development of preventative approaches
- Undertake research to expand understanding of alcohol and drug related outcomes whilst promoting wellbeing and reducing health inequalities across

the entire population. Including exploring intergenerational attitudes to substance use and potential gender differences in consumption, and examine the alcohol harm paradox and its prevalence in the region

- Assess the recent increase in spiking and the impact these events may have had on perceptions of safety, especially occurrences involving injectables. To develop a better understanding of why spiking occurs, methods and examine measures which are intended to reduce/stop spiking and inform delivery.
- Implement approaches to investing in protecting children and people with problematic drinking. Including exploration of protection from alcohol promotion through the media and strengthening support for parents
- Support the work of projects focusing on co-existing drug and mental health issues and serious organised crime groups by tackling root causes of serious violence

Priority: Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) incapsulates a wide range of abuses which disproportionately affect women and girls which are evident in our West Yorkshire SNA. This includes domestic abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation and stalking.

Evidence:

- VAWG is a cross cutting theme across West Yorkshire – West Yorkshire Mayoral Pledge, West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan, West Yorkshire Police VAWG Strategy
- Women experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence victimisation and are much more likely to be coerced and experience fear, than men
- During 2020 the number of domestic abuse reports made by women increased, a likely consequence of the Covid 19 restrictions
- Females account for 74% of victims of domestic abuse offences
- Despite the increases in sexual assault reports it is likely that sexual assault figures are still underestimate
- Women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence and girls aged 10-14 account for almost a quarter of female sexual assault victims
- Trauma experienced as a result is a known risk factor for further victimisation or potential perpetration
- An upward trend has been identified in stalking, but the increase is still likely an underestimate
- A link is shown between unchecked stalking and harassment behaviours and escalation to sexual assault and domestic homicides
- Male perpetration decreases when looking at online forms stalking and harassment, demonstrating females have similar levels of involvement in committing online abuse
- Outcome 15 (victim withdrawal) and outcome 16 (evidential difficulties), where noted as the status for 67% of stalking and harassment cases
- Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children who see, hear, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse are also classified as victim

- Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) numbers has followed a similar pattern to Rape offences with CSEA seeing an increase in comparison to last year

Response:

- Ensure alignment and support to place based Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategies, West Yorkshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Board and West Yorkshire Police VAWG Plan through utilisation of the evidence base to inform joint approaches including:
 - Communications
 - Training
 - Children
 - Addressing offending and reducing re-offending
 - Pathways for reporting and support
- Undertake a system wide approach to a targeted communications campaign to support a societal shift whereby victims are not blamed or held responsible for their victimisation, instead all culpability should lie with the perpetrator
- Undertake further research which examines the intersectionality of women in West Yorkshire's local communities. Including women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- Undertake a system wide approach to the awareness of trauma and services to support victims of VAWG
- Develop our understanding of stalking to understand behaviours and risk factors, and inform the development of provision of response, support and safety planning
- Develop the data hub to include data pertaining to sexual offences and children as victims of domestic abuse to inform our understanding of extent and impact and required response
- Establish pathways for the early identification and provision of support for young victims of sexual violence
- Undertake workforce training and minimum standards for training
- Embed a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic and understand the impact of lived experiences. Women and men must be able to report a sexual assault in as supportive an environment as possible
- Develop the partnership understanding about the root causes of, and links between CSEA, serious violence and other exploitation to inform a shared response.

Priority: Young People

Engagement with young people is pivotal to our public health approach. Young people are most at risk of serious violence or gang exploitation and their vulnerability as victims. Our evidence shows clear needs and opportunities for engagement and response to young people including:

- Early intervention
- Social Media

- Education and Community Setting
- Building family and personal resilience

Evidence:

- Engagement in full time, quality education is a strong protective factor against the risk of a young person becoming involved in serious violence
- Fixed-term exclusions appear to be steadily rising back to pre-pandemic levels in West Yorkshire
- Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the most attributed reason for both permanent and fixed-term exclusions
- Schools are disproportionately likely to exclude children with social, emotional and mental health needs, special education needs (SEN), children eligible for free school meals (FSM), those from Black backgrounds and Gypsy Roma Traveller children
- Numbers of children going into Elective Home Education (EHE) continues to increase in West Yorkshire
- Social Media is continuing to develop as an important vector of violence.
- Due to the significant increase in time young people spend online, the pandemic has exacerbated the concerns around social media and online trauma
- 67% of young people we consulted in West Yorkshire felt that social media can influence and lead to violence
- Findings from our research demonstrate that social media does help to facilitate offline violence
- 30% of wounding crimes were against those under the age of 25 which was an increase of 12.6% year on year
- Of the offenders reported for possession of an article with a blade or point, 20% were aged 15-19 years and 18% were aged 10-14 years
- A third (32%) of under 25 knife crime offences occurred in the same locality ward area the offender resided in
- Under 25s make up 45.5% of firearms offenders in West Yorkshire, with the most common age of firearms offenders being age 10-14
- Youth crimes were most common on Mondays and Tuesdays and peak times were 3pm-4pm which is suggestive of violence occurring after the school day concludes
- 68% of youth violence offences were Section 47 Assaults (Actual Bodily Harm) and a third of offences were domestic abuse
- 40% of personal robbery offences were against victims who were under 25

Response:

Early Intervention

- Embed through workforce training a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic and understand the impact of lived experiences
- Continue to use the intelligence and evidence base to engage with partners to influence the need to take a system wide approach to tackling underlying causes including deprivation and inequalities

- Identify and engage with the adults in these young people's lives to provide support

Education and Community Settings

- Undertake research into Elective Home Education and the various impacts it may have on young people in West Yorkshire to inform delivery
- Develop the data sets on the dashboard around the key markers of education inclusion
- Draw together, share and inform the evidence and learning from test bed intervention in Wakefield secondary school
- Support the evidenced based development and implementation of the work of the SAFE Taskforce in affected areas

Social Media

- Develop system wide training for professionals and guardians in relation to online behaviour
- Utilise the VRU commissioned research into social media and violence and vicarious online trauma to provide invaluable insights into this subject and appropriately respond to the influence of social media on violence
- Co-design with young people communications that speak to young people using media with the best reach
- Continue to develop, co-design and deliver a Digital Media Strategy with young people which responds to the findings, exploring:
 - Training provision
 - Developing common messages across partner organisations to engage with young people
 - Targeted preventative work in areas with high exclusions
 - Opportunities for development of relationships with tech companies to improve monitoring, accountability and swift action where needed. Also to ensure that partners are knowledgeable and able to respond to emerging technology

Priority: Place based problem solving initiatives

The needs and priorities at place differ depending on each areas local landscape and needs. We will develop place based problem solving initiatives based on those issues pertinent to each community.

Evidence:

- Whilst some responses lend to a West Yorkshire wide approach the value of coproduction at a local level to respond to local need is recognised
- Intelligence and delivery through Surge operations provides further intelligence and resource to enable a problem solving, collaborative and targeted approach
- Opportunity to maximise and align with local priorities and structures (Community Safety Partnership, Neighbourhood Policing, Serious Organised Crime and Safeguarding) to take a system wide approach and test delivery
- Differing geographic patterns in offences, offender and victim profiles and inequalities identified through the SNA require different responses

- Serious Violence Duty places a responsibility on named partners to deliver strategies to tackle the causes of serious violence.

Response:

- Continue the development of the Data Dashboard to enable the successful use of the data and intelligence 'on the ground' by partners
- Utilise place based needs assessments and sharing of intelligences to inform development of place based delivery plans
- Utilise place based evidence to inform a framework of priorities for co-development and co-commissioning. With a view to support longer term sustainability of place based interventions
- Utilise place based evidence to inform the opportunities to use the range of civil powers including enforcement for each locality
- Continue to enable collaboration of Surge activity, serious organised crime and neighbourhood policing alongside the evidence provided via the Knowledge Hub to inform increased community engagement and coordinated place based interventions
- Facilitate visioning events to share learning from Locality Reviews including good practice to promote the work in place and encourage the importance of working in partnership
- Expand the partnerships whilst identifying the gaps and key strands where it would bring benefit and value. Explore opportunities to collaborate, integrate and re-align resources more effectively
- Seek to develop the roles of partner organisations working with the VRU and to tackle serious violence, to ensure governance and maximise opportunities and build capacity
- Support the delivery of a healthy and vibrant night time economy as their use post Covid-19 increase. Exploring opportunities for business involvement in solutions

Accountability

Who will be accountable

The Partnership Executive Group (PEG) chaired by West Yorkshire Mayor has overall oversight of serious violence. Comprising of West Yorkshire strategic leaders it brings the highest level of accountability in the region. A partnership with responsibilities extending to Serious Organised Crime, Reducing Reoffending, VAWG and Drugs and Alcohol also ensures the necessary connectivity.

The VRU is accountable to the Home Office and hosted by West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The work of the VRU is further supported and overseen through the West Yorkshire Serious Violence Reduction Executive Steering Group. Reporting to the PEG this group provides a strategic framework, sharing best practice and alignment with district operational delivery such as the work of the Community Safety Partnerships.

The operational delivery of priorities are developed and overseen by a Partnership Delivery Group. The breadth of partner involvement in this group provides an opportunity to share understanding and maximise opportunities for the implementation of the priorities.

Our network of partners and connecting partnerships are broad but there are always opportunities to develop this further. The serious violence duty places a new emphasis on the role and contribution of partners. Therefore as our partnership continues to mature we are further developing clarity on the roles and responsibilities of partners and our accountability structures. Ensuring that they meet Home Office and statutory duty requirements as well embedding our partners as active participants in decision making at different levels. This will ensure that we can simplify and maximise opportunities of the roles of our core members and delivery structures.

What will we measure

The use of data and intelligence is at the heart of our public health response to serious violence. We use our knowledge to plan and design our response; in our implementation and delivery; as well as informing the monitoring of implementation and impact we make on serious violence.

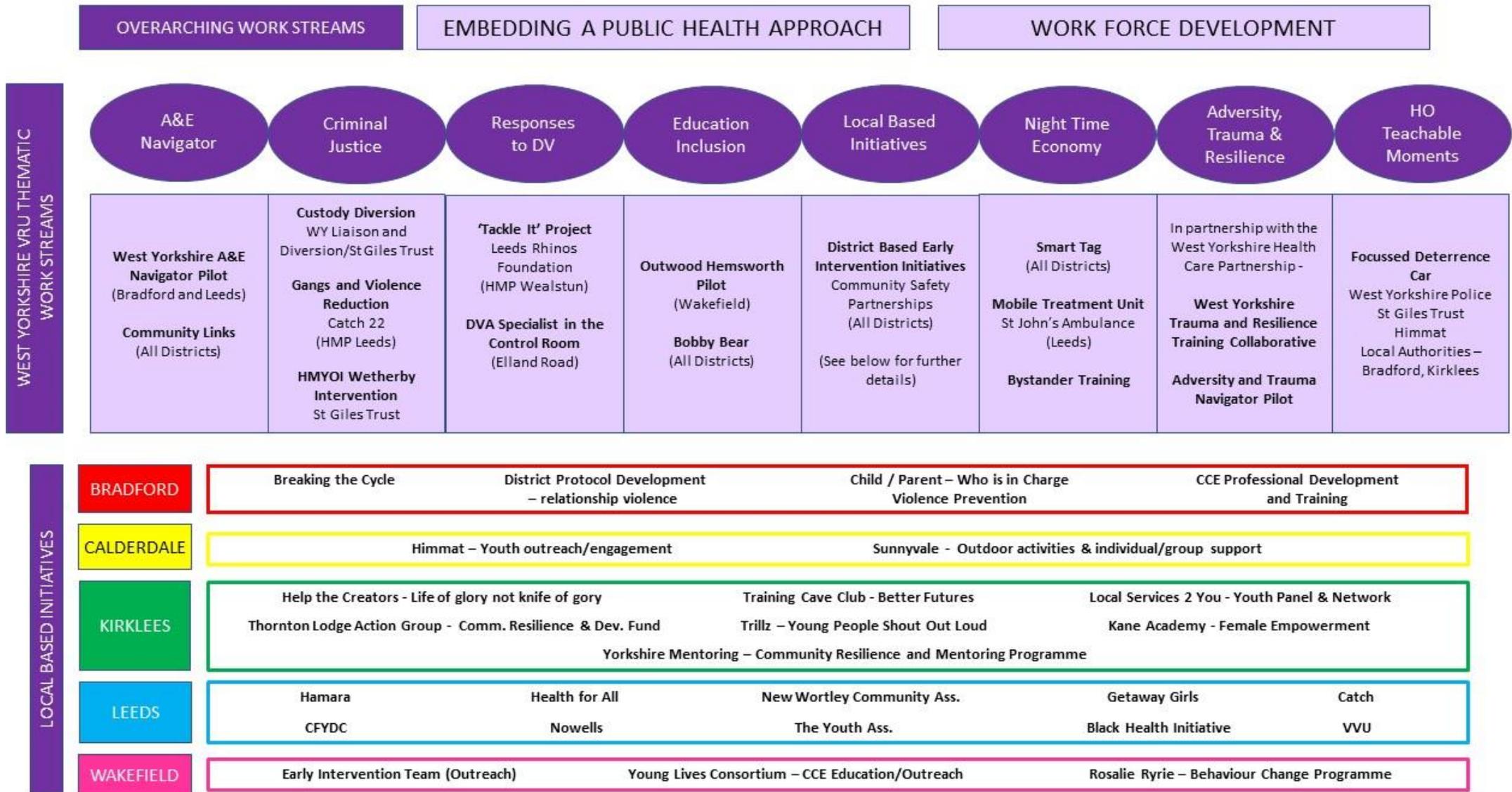
We learn from the implementation of our actions and understand the impact that it has upon communities. Our Theory of Change model (Appendix 2) outlines the outcomes and impacts that we are aiming to achieve through our inputs and activities.

How we will measure our work

The VRU Knowledge Hub take a central role in facilitating the robust evidence base and analysis through hosting a data dashboard; production of Strategic Needs Assessments supplemented by Place based profiles; commissioning evaluation and research projects; and through community engagement and gaining their feedback.

Utilising our evaluation and review we are accountable for our delivery through our governance arrangements. We continue to utilise this intelligence and community feedback to inform ongoing quality improvements to our approach, transformation and sustainability of our work.

Appendix 1: VRU Funded Delivery 2021



Appendix 2: VRU Theory of Change 2022

Across West Yorkshire, we will work together to prevent violence and to reduce its harmful impact. We will do this by strengthening our partnerships, working with our communities, developing our understanding of the causes of violence, and delivering interventions that make a lasting difference.

Outcomes

1. The VRU will ensure system leadership and sustainability across West Yorkshire
2. West Yorkshire will be a trauma informed and responsive system
3. We will prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system and reduce reoffending.
4. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse will be supported.
5. All A&E departments will provide trauma informed navigator support for young people.
6. Contribute to the reduction in school exclusions (both permanent and fixed term) and contribute to increased education attainment for the most vulnerable young people.
7. We will address the determinants and root causes of serious violence and contribute to reducing inequalities
8. Contribute to a reduction in violence against women and girls
9. VRU Provision in localities will be evidence based responding to the identified needs of the population



Impact

Preventing and reducing adversity and trauma
 Reducing the root causes of violence, including addictions, risky behaviours etc
 Reducing inequalities and improving life expectancy
 Increasing educational attainment and reducing exclusions
 Reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object
 Reduction in non-domestic homicides, particularly amongst those victims aged under 25 involving knives
 Reduction in first time offenders
 Reduction in reoffending
 Reduction in weapon related crime, particularly amongst those victims aged under 25
 Reduction in domestic violence and abuse
 Reduction in Violence against Women and Girls

Inputs

Funding - Year 4 funding of £5.8m from the Home Office
 Match funding where applicable

Capacity - Central VRU staffing,
 Op Jemlock (Grip) team
 Police & Crime team support
 WYCA support
 ICS support

Products - Needs Assessment & Response Strategy
 Research & Evaluation knowledge products
 Existing Data Agreements
 LJMU partnership data hub
 Engagement reports
 Public Health Planning & Evaluation Tool

Partnerships - Statutory partners
 Existing multi agency partnerships
 Third sector and community networks

Delivery Support - Existing interventions programme
 Guidance from Home Office
 VRU networks (Director, Data, Evaluation)

Activities

Commissioning of specific evidence-based interventions
 Increased system leadership and embed sustainability
 Development of sustainability plan, including Identification of match funding to support sustainability
 Workforce development and training
 Supporting local initiatives and priorities through partnership working
 Development of a VRU data strategy
 Provide intelligence and insight through research and evaluation
 Support the delivery of the Serious Violence Duty at place
 Development of a trauma informed engagement and coproduction strategy and plan

Outputs

Action plan to deliver against the Response Strategy
 Strategic Needs Assessment
 Locality based Needs Assessment profiles
 Annual report
 Online partnership data hub
 Data Plan
 A rolling evaluation programme
 A repository of evidence (Research & evaluation)
 Sustainability plan
 Trauma informed engagement and coproduction plan
 Quality Improvement dashboard aligned to Public Health planning and evaluation framework
 West Yorkshire trauma and adversity framework 2022-2030
 Theories of change for all programmes of work

