January 2022

Serious Violence in West Yorkshire

Strategic Needs Assessment

Tracy Brabin
Mayor
of West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Unit
Tackling Violence Together

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of West Yorkshire

"We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear"

Nelson Mandela 1918-2013

West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit

Tackling Violence Together

Foreword

"Tackling serious violence remains both a national and local priority, the impacts of which cannot be understated.

As you will read throughout this document, mental health, education, and employment have all been hit hard by the ongoing Covid pandemic, disproportionately affecting our young people.

As the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for West Yorkshire, we must scratch the surface to uncover the contributory factors and root causes, whilst identifying the solutions required to remedy them.

This cannot be achieved in isolation however, and we rely upon the support and collaboration of our partners in meeting the needs of our communities.

The Strategic Needs Assessment is therefore a crucial tool in reaching our goal, as it explores where the challenges lie and how they present themselves.

Only by understanding the motivating factors behind serious violence and the associated risks, can we effectively and collectively respond to it.

In the past year we have witnessed much success through our unique public health led approach.

Between April and September 2021, for instance, 2,827 young people were supported across 41 interventions funded by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit.

The continued development of our innovative 'Knowledge Hub', has also enabled the VRU and our partners to directly access a wealth of data, identify patterns and trends and plot preventative measures and interventions aimed at the right people and places.

With each year, we are expanding our understanding and fine tuning our approach to violent crime through new insights and information generated.

Whilst we are incredibly proud of the progress we have made to date; we know that more can still be done to build upon this.

This latest version of the Strategic Needs Assessment therefore offers the necessary impetus and clarity to take us forward, ensuring long term, sustainable change.

It aligns closely with the Mayor of West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Plan and together with our partners and communities, we can reach our vision of a safe, just and inclusive county."

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

Executive Summary

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.

However, behind these figures lie the real stories of violence in our communities: the people affected. Violence affects individuals, families and communities; men, women and children; real people who acutely feel the actual and metaphorical pain, hurt and loss of violence – the majority of which is preventable.

The impacts of violence are so wide ranging they are almost impossible to measure. As the academic Thomas Abt notes in his book on violence, *Bleeding Out*, ***"Every single means of bettering oneself and one's community are hampered by [violence]… school attendance suffers when children are afraid to walk to school. Physical and mental health is impaired by the trauma of experiencing or witnessing violent events. Commercial and financial activity is strangled by the presence of violent crime."***

The purpose of this Needs Assessment is to understand the picture of violence in West Yorkshire. We aim to shed light on who is perpetrating violence and who is most affected. We want to understand where violence is happening most frequently and when violence is occurring. We need to know the what, the how and the why of violence in our region.

We also want to examine the factors that underpin violence. What are these risk factors that affect the frequency and severity of violence? Similarly, we want to better understand the factors that ameliorate violence. How do we promote these factors that reduce its worst impacts?

This Needs Assessment is the critical first step in implementing a public health approach to violence: understanding the problem. By building a detailed and nuanced understanding of violence in West Yorkshire, we can implement targeted, effective measures to prevent violence from ever happening, as well as mitigating its impact when it does occur.

Key Findings

Deprivation

- Deprivation is a significant problem in West Yorkshire, impacted by the pandemic
- High levels of deprivation are a risk factor for violence
- Deprivation can leave young people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health
- As is the case nationally, higher levels of violent offences occur in neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation in West Yorkshire.
- For both adults and children, poverty is associated with mental ill-health

Housing

- Housing situations and homelessness are both forms of contextual harm that can lead to increased vulnerability to violence.
- 24% of all homeless people in West Yorkshire were aged between 18-24.
- Mental health problems (24%) is the most cited characteristic of households owed a prevention or relief duty.
- Homelessness threatens to grow as a problem for young people if it goes unchecked, due to rising house prices and the removal of familial support that may occur during this stage of a young person's life.

Employment

- 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.
- The pandemic has disproportionately affected the employment situation of young people, increasing their exposure to risks of violence.
- Further local research is required to better understand the relationship between unemployment and violence, particularly on young people.

Substance Use

- Hospital admissions for substance misuse in 15–24-year-olds was significantly higher in Bradford and Wakefield were significantly higher with 112.6 and 109.8 admissions per 100,000 people.
- All five districts in had a higher percentage of regular drinkers at age 15 than the national average.
- Females under 18 are more likely to be hospitalised for alcohol specific conditions than males, in all districts.
- Men are more likely than women to claim DLA citing Alcohol and Drug abuse as the main disabling condition.
- Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of drugs reaffirmed the prominence of recreational drug use and emphasised the importance of identifying effective approaches to change population attitudes and behaviours towards recreational drug use. Local research supporting the recreational drug use recommendations made in the review is required.
- Alcohol is becoming an increasingly private harm as consumption is occurring more frequently and to greater extents in the home.

Mental Health

- The relationship between mental health and violence is complex.
- 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.
- Almost half of hospital admissions for violence had a mental health code in a diagnosis field. This occurred most in those aged 20 to 29.
- For Yorkshire and the Humber, the male suicide rate is almost three times higher than the female suicide rate. The impact this may have on families should be explored further in relation to how this may influence experiences of violence.

Neurodiversity

- Neurodiversity is an umbrella term which incorporates several conditions.
- Neurodivergence is more prevalent in the CJS than in the wider community.
- Individuals with neurodiversity can be disadvantaged when they encounter the CJS.
- VRU commissioned research will provide an understanding of how neurodiverse individuals experience violence, whilst providing details of protective factors and training needs.

Disability

- 23% of the population in Yorkshire and the Humber declared having a disability.
- Disability is considered to be a risk factor for vulnerability and victimisation of violent crime.
- For all ages groups, except aged 15 and under, more females reported having a disability than males. Future research should seek to understand why more females report having a disability and the influence of age.
- Disabled adults are more likely to report lower perceptions of safety, either at night or during the day than non-disabled people.
- Disabled adults, especially women, are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse, compared with non-disabled adults.
- Disabled women, aged 16 to 74, were more likely to have been victims of sexual assault than non-disabled women.
- Disability and poverty appear to be relational, further examination of this intersection should be considered.

Gender

- Women experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence victimisation and are much more likely to be coerced and experience fear, than men.
- West Yorkshire Police have started recording instances of misogyny.
- During 2020 the number of domestic abuse reports made by women increased, this is likely a consequence of the Covid 19 restrictions.
- 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. The trauma experienced by the girls requires attention, as trauma is a known risk factor for further victimisation or potential perpetration.
- Literature presents women and girls as victims, perpetrators, mothers, bystanders, and recruiters.
- Perpetrator accountability, conviction and rehabilitation, secure accommodation, addiction support, culturally sensitive services, increased awareness of services and trauma awareness are key to addressing VAWG.
- Further research which examines the intersectionality of women in West Yorkshire's local communities. This should include women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

Education

- 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, while permanent exclusion rates have been maintained or lowered, except for a sharp rise in Calderdale.
- Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the most attributed reason for both permanent and fixed-term exclusions. 'Other' is cited frequently as a reason for exclusion in some local authority areas, and more clarity should be required when recording these exclusions.
- Absenteeism in West Yorkshire plummeted in spring term 2020/21, with significant drops in illness related absence.
- 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) and GRT children.
- Numbers of children going into Elective Home Education (EHE) continues to increase in West Yorkshire. This may have been slightly accelerated due to the pandemic, however as there is no obligation to disclose a reason for taking a child out of school into EHE, it is challenging to understand what is driving this continual increase.
- There is a clear knowledge gap surrounding EHE and the various impacts it may have on young people in West Yorkshire, which would benefit from further investigation. Filling this gap may be challenging due to the limitations of data collected at this time.
- It is essential that we begin to capture much more data around the key markers of education inclusion, which will allow us to drill down to school and anonymised personal level data. Accessing this data would provide countless opportunities, allowing better strategic deployment of resources and opening the door to the utilisation of innovative new analytical tools like social network analysis. This information can then be collated and stored centrally in a West Yorkshire 'dashboard' for educational inclusion and be accessible to all relevant partners.

Technology and Social Media

- 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.
- As noted in both Catch 22's recent research and the University of Leeds dissertation, young people want to see better training for professionals and guardians in relation to online behaviour.
- Our commissioned research into social media and violence & vicarious online trauma will provide invaluable insights into this subject and will allow us most appropriately respond to the influence of social media on violence.

Future Directions for Research

- To explore the theme of **resilience** and how this relates to violence perpetration and/or victimisation and the role of a bystander or witness. Research may include an exploration of the desire to fit in, fear of repercussions, succumbing to peer pressure, poor choices, drug use or experimentation, fear of failure alongside managing trauma.
- To deepen existing knowledge and understanding of **hate crime** within West Yorkshire, specifically hate crime motivated by race, religion, disability and sexual orientation.
- To develop our current knowledge of **sexual violence** across West Yorkshire with a focus on supporting victims.
- Local research is required to better understand the nuances of the impacts of unemployment, particularly on young people
- Current research reaffirms the prominence of **recreational drug use** and emphasises the importance of identifying effective approaches. Local research is required to understand recreational drugs use and identify good practice.
- To undertake additional research to understand the influence **bereavement** may have with violence. Primarily whether losing family members as a result of violence influences risk of perpetration or increased vulnerability.
- **Disability** and poverty appear to be relational, further examination of this intersection should be considered.
- Further research which examines the **intersectionality of women** in West Yorkshire's local communities. This should include women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- To explore 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. Exploration of this theme would support existing Night Time Economy (NTE) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) workstreams.
- Further understanding of **stalking and harassment** is required, especially to support the safety planning and risk management of victim.
- There is a clear knowledge gap surrounding **Elective Home Education** and the various impacts it may have on young people in West Yorkshire, which would benefit from further investigation.
- To capture much more data around the key markers of **education inclusion**, which will then be collated and stored centrally in a West Yorkshire 'dashboard' for educational inclusion and be accessible to all relevant partners.

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Introduction

The West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is committed to embedding a 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.

A public health approach means putting evidence at the heart of our initiatives. The VRU is continually developing the evidence base of 'what works' to prevent violence in our region, which informs our support of interventions that address the risk factors associated with violence, thereby preventing violence from occurring in the first place.

Building on the previous West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit Needs Assessment published in March 2021, this iteration provides a refreshed baseline and shared understanding of the reality of violence in West Yorkshire through the analysis of a comprehensive suite of local and national data. Setting out our understanding of the problem of violence in this way is critical to the success of the West Yorkshire VRU and our partners.

Our aims are:

1. To understand the nature and extent of violence in West Yorkshire through the systematic collection of information about the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence.
2. To establish why violence occurs using 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.
3. To find out what works to prevent violence by designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions.
4. To implement effective and promising interventions in a wide range of settings. The effects of these interventions on risk factors and the target outcome should be monitored, and their impact and cost-effectiveness should be evaluated.

Background and Definitions

National context

In March 2019, the (then) Home Secretary announced a £100 million Serious Violence Fund to help tackle rising levels of serious violence nationally. £35 million of this figure was allocated to the establishment of Violence Reduction Units in the 18 areas most affected by violence.

The intention of the Home Office was to bring together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key partners to ensure a multi-agency response to the identification of local drivers of serious violence and agreement to take necessary action to tackle these.

Local Context

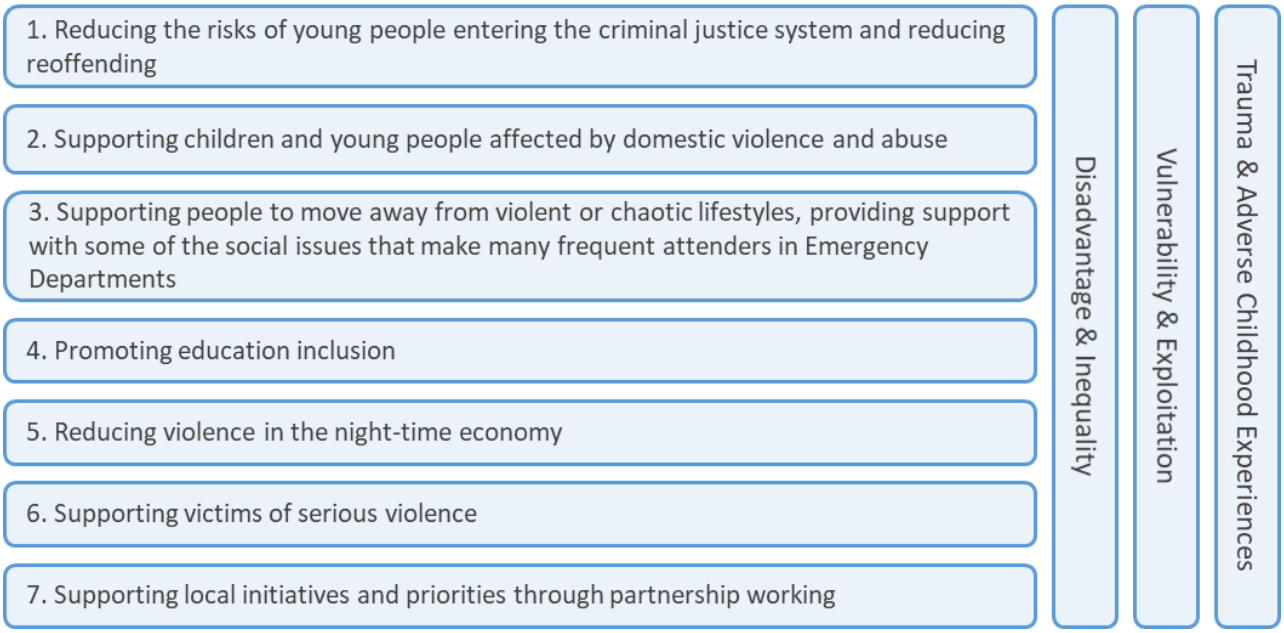
West Yorkshire received grants of £3.37 million in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 to establish and maintain the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

The core function of the VRU is to offer leadership, working with all relevant partners to provide strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence. The VRU supports a multi-agency, public health, long-term approach to preventing and reducing serious violence.

2020/21 Delivery

Delivery in 2020/21 was disrupted due to the ongoing global pandemic, which impacted on the capacity and resources of organisations across West Yorkshire. The pandemic is thought to have increased inequalities in West Yorkshire and whilst the full picture of the pandemic impact is not yet known, without intervention signs for the future are concerning, with changing needs and increased vulnerabilities in our communities as well as increased demands on services.

As a result, VRU delivery was redefined across seven priority areas, focussing on cross cutting issues of disadvantage and inequality, vulnerability and exploitation, trauma and adverse childhood experiences.



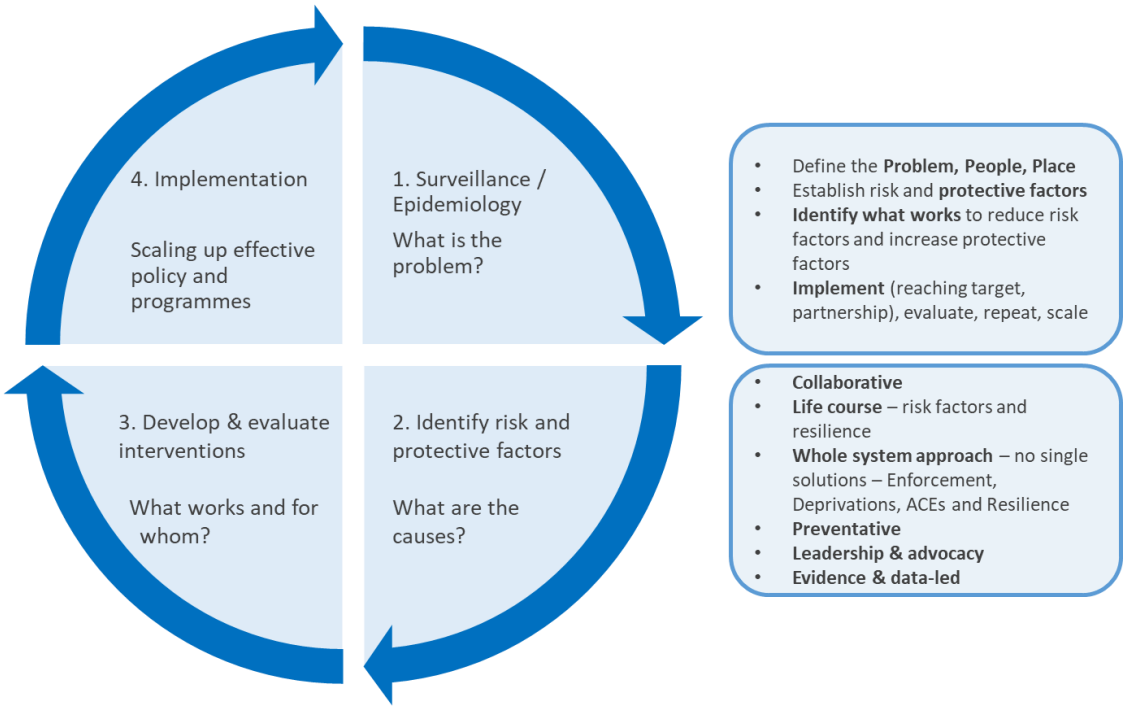
2021/22 Delivery

2021/22 delivery continued to be impacted by the pandemic, and the easing of some restrictions meant that some of the impacts of the pandemic began to emerge; the exacerbation of health inequalities, financial and food insecurity and poor mental health to name a few which put additional strain on the system to respond. Nonetheless, delivery was maintained against the seven priority areas, with Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) re-emerging as an issue of vital importance.

The VRU relationship with the NHS Improving Population Health Programme was developed further, consolidating the following shared principles:

- focusing on what will make a difference to whole populations, communities, at-risk groups and individuals.
- addressing the 'causes of the causes', looking beyond the presenting issue and consulting research and evidence that seeks to explain why people behave the way they do and what contributes to this behaviour.
- constantly adding to the evidence-base through our programme of commissioned research and evaluation.
- not being constrained by organisational boundaries, working to bring the whole system together, building connections between all sectors and our communities.

These Public Health Approach principles are encompassed in the below graphic.



Commitment was made to ensure the Health and Care Sector was represented throughout the governance and decision-making processes of the VRU and that together with partners we would work together to influence strategic plans and decision making across all sectors. We undertook to develop and commission joint interventions and programmes of work to reduce serious violence, pooling resources where appropriate and collaborating to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of the population of West Yorkshire.

Each of these elements were underpinned by the core principle of community engagement and co-production. 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.

Definition of Violence

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 Needs Assessment and developed a broader, vision, definition and framework of success measures which also allows a response to the Serious Violence Duty:

"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.

For the purposes of this Needs Assessment Organised Crime and Sexual Exploitation are not included as they are covered by West Yorkshire Police's Programme Precision and the multiagency safeguarding partnerships directly.

Data Sources

This Strategic Needs Assessment utilises a wide range of data sources to develop a nuanced understanding of violence in the region. Building on previous iterations of the SNA, this refreshed document also incorporates findings from 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.

Of critical importance is data provided by West Yorkshire Police and British Transport Police, which with our analysis gives an updated picture of violence, offenders and the victims of violent crime. This year, the VRU has moved beyond looking at crime hotspots alone to considering where identified offenders reside with a view to better understanding the root causes and risk factors impacting on those areas which can contribute to violence. This approach also develops our understanding of the protective factors which appear to mitigate violence.

This iteration on the SNA has greatly benefited from the launch of our multiagency partnership data hub. This continually developing resource compiles information from

hospital trusts across West Yorkshire (A&E attendance information), the Yorkshire Ambulance Service (paramedic attendance data) and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Information has been gathered from open-source public health tools to provide health, societal and environmental context as well as ONS data to help us understand the local population demographics.

The VRU Knowledge Hub has also developed successful information sharing relationships across our Community Safety Partnerships who have provided data for us to explore education inclusion and links to violence as well as cohort data from Youth Offending Teams.

West Yorkshire Demographic

West Yorkshire is a county in the North East of England that consists of 5 metropolitan boroughs; Calderdale, Kirklees and the Cities of Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield – a mixture of busy cities and towns with quiet villages and picturesque rural locations.

West Yorkshire is home to a number of universities across Bradford, Leeds and Huddersfield in addition to a number of further education colleges. West Yorkshire has a predominantly comprehensive secondary education system with an additional 3 grammar schools and 52 independent schools.

There are 9 NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and 9 NHS Trusts of which 6 are Acute Hospitals and 3 are Mental Health Hospitals with 3 community care providers.

There are five prisons in West Yorkshire; Category A HMP Wakefield, Category B HMP Leeds and Category C HMP Wealstun, as well as HMYOI Wetherby for boys and young men aged 15-18. HMP New Hall, also in Wakefield, is the county's only female prison.

Population

ONS mid-year population estimates West Yorkshire has a population of 2.35m, which is an increase of 12,766 (0.5%) from last year. 34% of the West Yorkshire population resides in Leeds, with Bradford next at 23%, Kirklees at 19% then Wakefield at 15% and Calderdale at 9%.

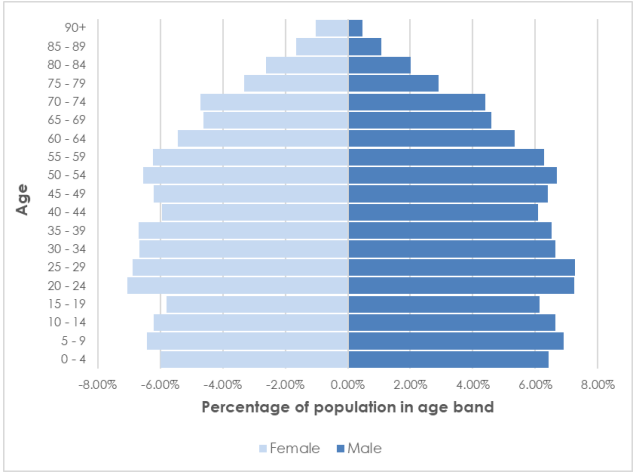


Figure 1 - Percentage of population in age band (by gender)

Ethnicity

West Yorkshire is a diverse region, with people from a range of ethnicities, lifestyles, and backgrounds, bringing great cultural diversity. Utilising open-source data, we observe the following:

- 7.4% of the population is non-British, with Bradford having the highest representation (10%), whilst Calderdale had the lowest at 4%
- 11.4% of the population were born outside of the United Kingdom, with the highest proportion found in Bradford (16%) and the lowest in Wakefield (7%).
- Around 89,000 pupils registered at schools in West Yorkshire do not have English as a first language, which equates to 23% of all pupils. Bradford has the highest proportions of pupils do not have English as a first language in West Yorkshire with 35% and Wakefield has the lowest with 10%.
- 9 in every 1,000 new GP registrations are made by people who have previously lived abroad, with the highest rate observed in Leeds at 18 in every thousand registrations and the lower rates in Calderdale and Wakefield (5 per 1,000)
- Fertility rates are highest in Bradford and remain far above the England and Wales average. Only Leeds falls under the national average. The proportion of births to migrant mothers is highest in Bradford (34%) and lowest in Calderdale and Wakefield (16% and 19%).

Cost of Violence

The costs of serious violence in West Yorkshire have been estimated by multiplying the number of recorded crimes (Oct 20 – Sep 21) by the unit cost of crime provided by the Home Office. These unit costs have been adjusted to factor in inflation rates since the publication of the original costs in 2018.

The below table breaks down the costs of serious violence for West Yorkshire.

The Estimated Cost of Violence in West Yorkshire – 2020/21	
Overall Cost The overall estimated cost for Serious Violence in West Yorkshire is **£960,534,113**	
Cost of Violence by Crime Type Homicide - £84,698,512 Robbery - £248,226,960 Violence without injury - £441,155,000 Violence with injury – £27,296,185 Rape – £143,606,648 Other Sexual Offences - £15,550,808	**Cost of Violence in Each District** Bradford – £268,051,735 Calderdale – £89,018,168 Kirklees - £160,796,690 Leeds – £316,449,916 Wakefield - £123,496,017

These figures are noticeably higher than the previous years, due to the factoring in of inflation and the inclusion of costs relating to 'other sexual offences'. When disregarding inflation and using the same crime types used in the calculation as last year for this refreshed data, we would actually see a reduction in the cost of violence in West Yorkshire, from £873,227,120 (2019/20) to £782,225,350 (2020/21).

Risk and Protective Factors for Violence

The risk factors for violence are numerous and complex, occurring at individual, relationship, community and societal levels. The diagram below illustrates some of the risk factors at each of these levels, though it is important to note that the risk factors highlighted here are not exhaustive. It is also important to bear in mind that the risk factors listed here do not directly cause violence.

The below diagram also illustrates protective factors, which appear to mitigate the occurrence of violence.

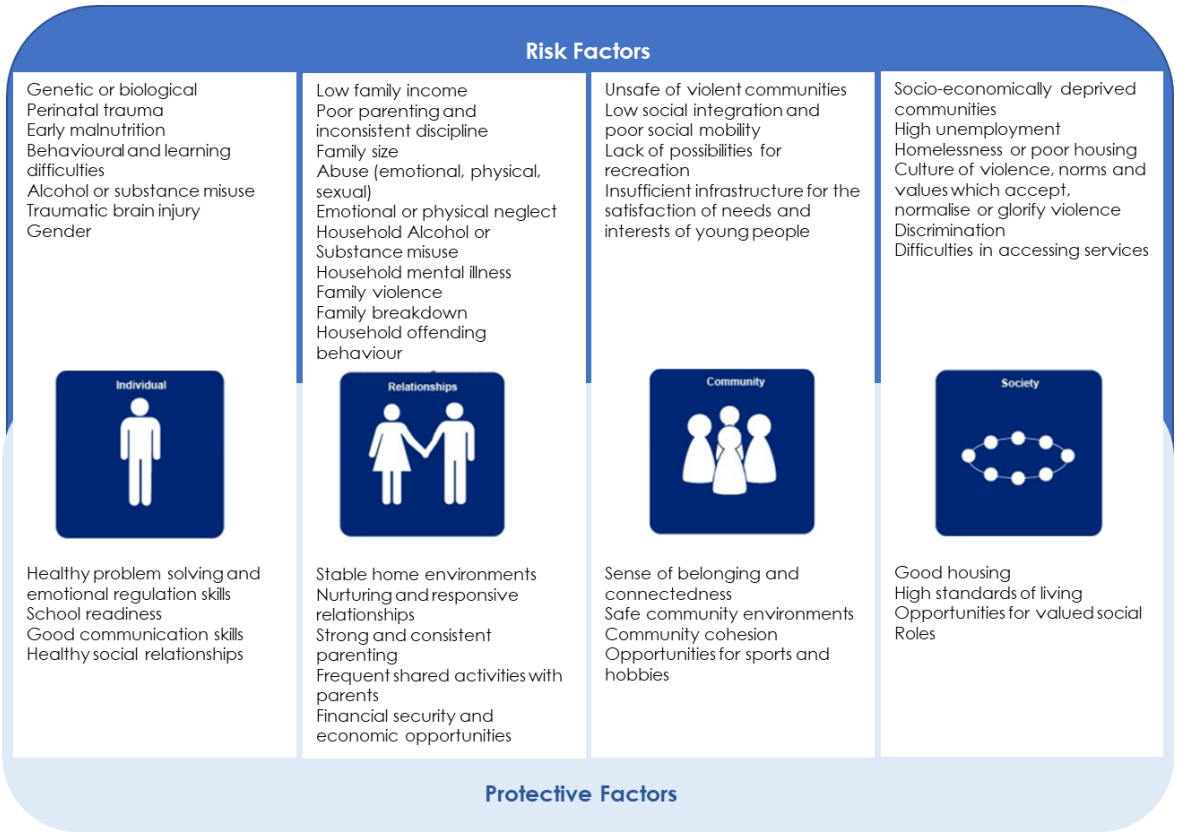


Figure 2 - Risk and protective factors diagram - PHE

These risk and protective factors are also referred to as determinants of health. As well as being correlated with violence, these factors together help to determine the quality of living, health, wellbeing and the safety of the population.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of these risk factors, though as the pandemic continues to play out, the impacts on the health and safety of individuals and communities across West Yorkshire are yet to be fully understood. The VRU anticipates that the direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic will continue to be felt for several years to come.

Understanding these risk and protective factors is a crucial part of reducing violence, helping communities stay safe as well as improving health and wellbeing. At its most fundamental level, the VRU aims to reduce the frequency and intensity of violence risk factors whilst promoting protective factors. The following sections of this Needs Assessment explore key risk factors for violence in greater detail.

Deprivation

The correlation between deprivation and violence has long been explored. Studies have demonstrated that hospital admissions for violence increase exponentially with increasing deprivation of residence (Bellis et al. 2011). It has also been found that injury in youth violence intensified with increasing deprivation in UK cities (Jones et al 2011). Deprivation has been found to increase risk of domestic violence towards women (Yakubovich et al. 2020), as well as influencing the likelihood of weapon carrying amongst young people (Brennan 2021; Harding 2020).

Hospital admissions for violence (including sexual violence) Apr 2016 - Mar 2019

	England IMD Quintile				
	1	2	3	4	5
West Yorkshire VRU	2,500 54%	975 21%	530 12%	400 9%	185 4%
Bradford	675 64%	215 20%	100 9%	45 4%	25 2%
Calderdale	170 47%	85 23%	60 16%	35 10%	15 4%
Kirklees	360 46%	210 27%	90 12%	95 12%	25 3%
Leeds	930 58%	245 15%	180 11%	160 10%	80 5%
Wakefield	365 46%	225 28%	100 13%	65 8%	40 5%

Figure 3 - Hospital admissions for violence by IMD decile

Around one million households in the UK experienced high levels of deprivation in 2019, this roughly equates to 2.4 million people. West Yorkshire is no exception, with a significant number of areas experiencing disadvantage.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is the official national measure of relative deprivation, it measures relative levels of deprivation in small areas using statistical geographies called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Each LSOA typically has an average of 1,600 residents and 650 households. The IMD groups a number of indicators together within seven domains of deprivation – income, employment, health, education & skills, housing & access to services, crime and living environment.

The first decile represents the most deprived 10% (or decile) of LSOAs in England. As of 2019, 3,284 LSOAs within England fall into the first decile of deprivation. These areas are commonly concentrated around towns and cities, typically areas of higher population density. The following map highlights the areas of West Yorkshire that are in this most deprived decile.

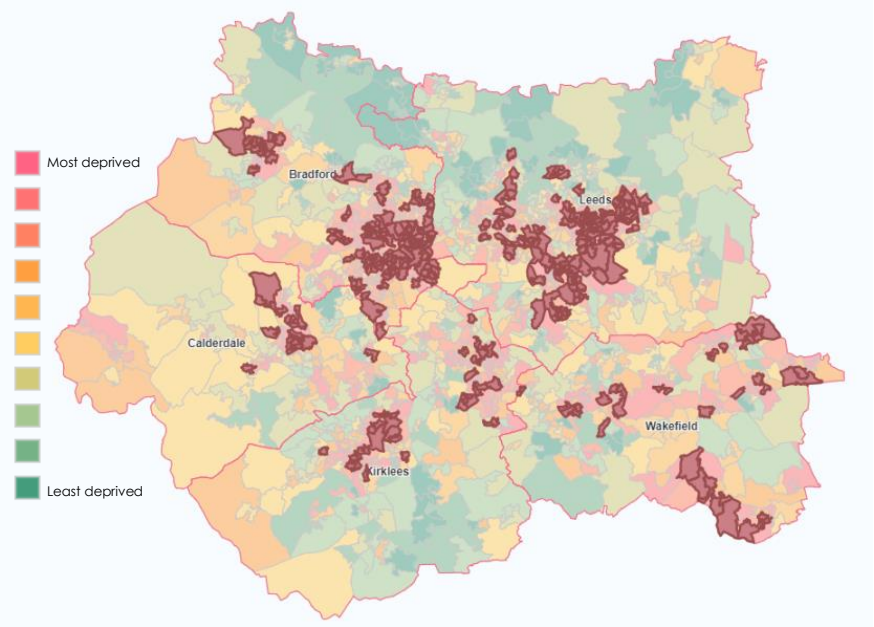


Figure 4 - West Yorkshire Lower Super Output Areas by level of deprivation (IMD)

Of those areas ranked as the most deprived nationally, 137 rank as highly deprived on 6 of the 7 domains of deprivation. Twenty-six (19%) of these are in West Yorkshire (Leeds has 13, Bradford has 11 and Calderdale has 2).

Bradford has the highest percentage (33%) of its LSOA's experiencing the greatest degree of deprivation within West Yorkshire, an intensity of deprivation that sees Bradford falling just outside of the national top 10% of most deprived local authorities in England.

Deprivation has been growing in West Yorkshire in recent years. A potential indicator of this is the number of people requiring crisis assistance in the region. Between April and September 2021, the UK's largest network of food banks, The Trussell Trust, distributed 52,969 emergency food parcels in Yorkshire and the Humber. This is an increase of 64% from the same period five years earlier in 2016, when 32,228 parcels were distributed.

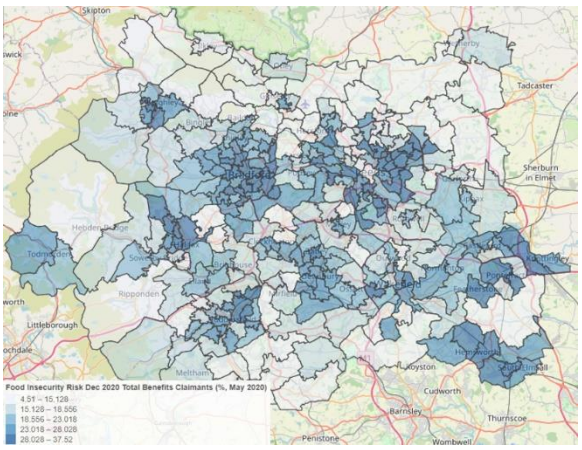


Figure 5 Household food insecurity risk data

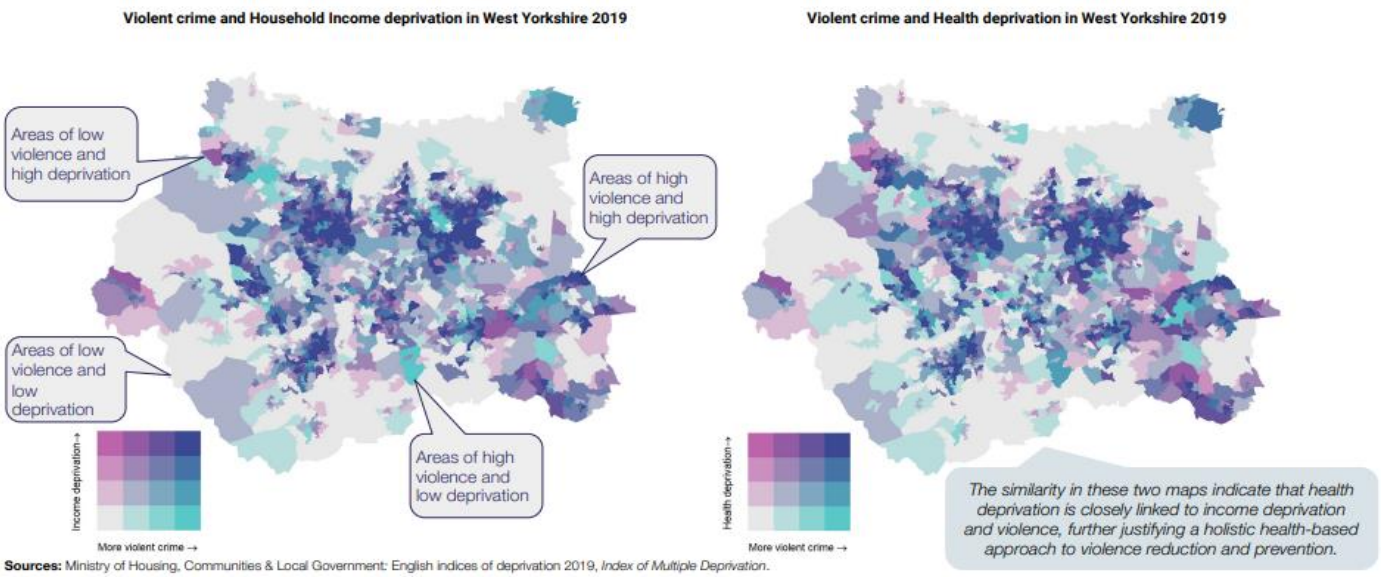
Residents from Black, Minority Ethnic groups represent 18% of West Yorkshire residents, however they account for 33% of people living in the 10% most deprived LSOA areas.

Deprivation can leave young people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health (Nelson et al. 2020), which are both key risk factors for violence. Crowded and inadequate housing conditions, precarious employment, and financial pressures make household conflict more likely (Clair 2019; Cobb-Clark & Ribar 2009). A 2014 study found that in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England, child protection plan rates for emotional abuse were nine times higher than in the most affluent areas; for neglect, seven times higher; and for physical and sexual abuse, six times higher (Bywaters et al. 2016).

The recent Child of the North report identified that in the Yorkshire & Humber region, nearly a third of children live in poverty and nearly 60% of local authorities have above average levels of children in low-income families.

For both adults and children, poverty is associated with mental ill-health (Elliott 2016). Precarious employment has a particularly damaging effect on self-esteem and mental health: as The Marmot Review: 10 Years On points out, 'rates of self-reported work-related stress, depression and anxiety have been increasing, at least partly as a result of poor quality work', and this disproportionately affects young people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The below figures demonstrate the correlation between violent Crime and both Household Income Deprivation and Health Deprivation in West Yorkshire. As is the case nationally, higher levels of violent offences occur in neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation in West Yorkshire.



Sources: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government: English indices of deprivation 2019, *Index of Multiple Deprivation*.

"Violence is not simply a manifestation of poverty; it is a force that perpetuates poverty as well."

Thomas Abt, Bleeding Out

In addition, living in poverty can make the perceived rewards achieved through criminal activity more attractive, aligning young people to potentially violent and exploitative lifestyles. As part of research commissioned by the VRU, interviews took place with practitioners and young people in West Yorkshire, the most frequently cited factor driving serious violence and exploitation among young people was a lack of economic opportunities, poverty and financial hardship. Although the mechanisms connecting economic inequalities to violence are far from straightforward, we have repeatedly been told by young people in our communities that some of their peers are becoming involved in crime (predominantly drug dealing) to support their families, or to simply buy themselves the luxuries that they see other children enjoying.

Key findings

- Deprivation is a significant problem in West Yorkshire, impacted by the pandemic
- High levels of deprivation are a risk factor for violence
- Deprivation can leave young people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health
- As is the case nationally, higher levels of violent offences occur in neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation in West Yorkshire
- For both adults and children, poverty is associated with mental ill-health

Housing and Homelessness

As identified in a 2021 report by Shelter, an estimated 1500 people in West Yorkshire are either homeless, in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping, with Wakefield having the highest prevalence, where one in 736 people are estimated to be currently homeless. The homelessness problem should be understood in the context of rising housing prices, declining social housing in West Yorkshire, social inequalities, domestic abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and prison leavers. More people are being forced into insecure, dangerous, and sometimes unaffordable private rental housing.

"When I was homeless I was lucky the police picked me up & took me to a hostel. Please help me make the much-needed changes in our services as we can't keep sticking a plaster on these issues"
CAG Member

Housing situations and homelessness are both forms of contextual harm that can lead to increased vulnerability towards violence and exploitation:

- There is significant overlap between the factors driving youth violence and homelessness/rough sleeping – poverty, social exclusion, family breakdown, unmet mental health needs and experience of trauma.
- Homelessness/rough sleeping also makes a young person more vulnerable to exploitation and potentially pushes them toward crime as a means of controlling their current situation.
- Cramped or unpleasant accommodation pushes young people away from their home for longer periods of time and incentivises risky situations. A lack of safe spaces for young people leaves this group particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation.
- Cramped or unsuitable accommodation has been linked to domestic abuse.
- For some groups, a shortage of affordable and available housing can lead to accommodation provision which worsens their situation – in particular women and girls, asylum seekers and looked after children.

Information provided by the Papworth Trust (2018) show 99.1% of disabled children live at home and are supported by their families. The cost of raising a disabled child is suggested to be three times more than a non-disabled child. Regarding parental employment, it is estimated that 84% of mothers of disabled children do not work, compared with 39% of mothers of non-disabled children. Only 3% of mothers of disabled children work full-time. Financial pressures may contribute to insecure housing circumstances and potential homelessness for both the child and the family.

Domestic Abuse and other violence and harassment were also frequently cited reasons for homelessness among people in West Yorkshire. This was also evident in the VAWG Literature Review as fear of homelessness, limited alternative accommodation and being financially dependent on their abuser were noted as reasons for not reporting domestic abuse or seeking support. In response to homelessness resulting from domestic abuse, the 2021 Domestic Abuse Bill gives priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority. This indicates that violence itself is a prominent cause of homelessness across the region.

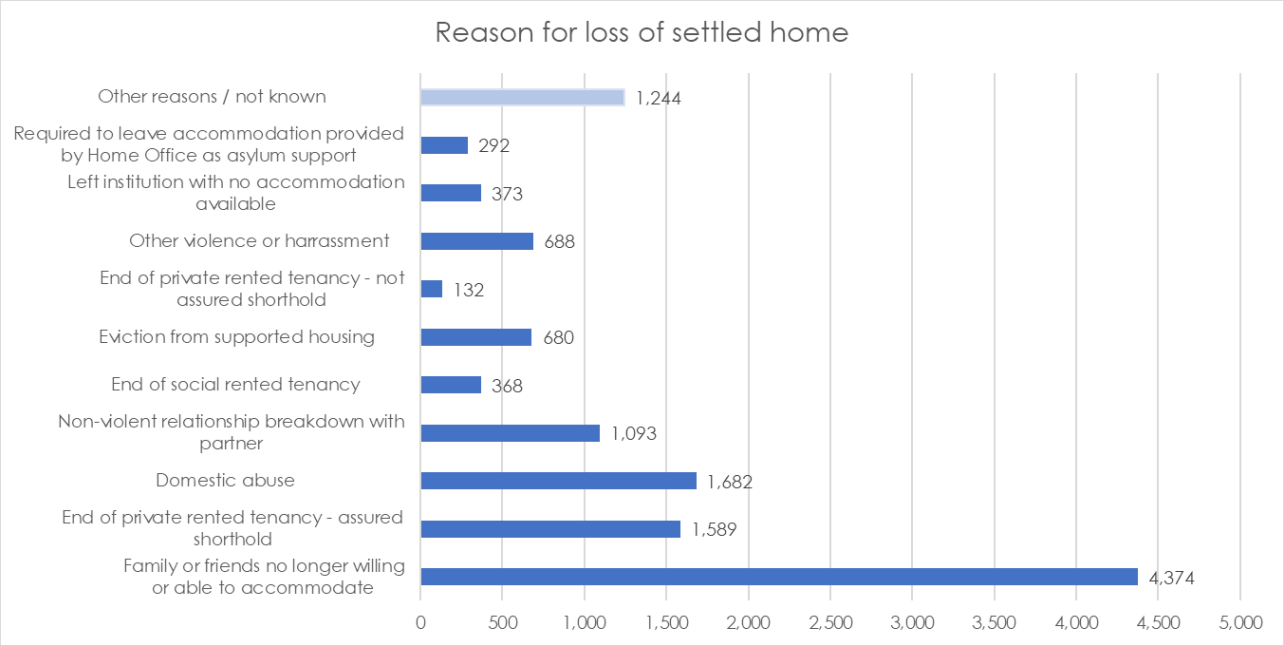


Figure 6 - Reason for loss of settled home for households owed a statutory homelessness duty in West Yorkshire by number of people, April 2020 – March 2021

When analysing the support needs of the households owed a prevention or relief duty, whereby the local authority must take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation, the most cited characteristic of these households in West Yorkshire is a history of mental health problems (24%). Following this, physical ill health and disability (13%), being at risk of/has experienced domestic abuse (11%) and having an offending history (10%) (Ministry of Housing, 2021).

Roma families are more likely to live in fixed, built housing which tends to be poor-quality rented accommodation (Women and Equalities Committee, 2019). This can contribute to poor health outcomes (respiratory conditions and mental ill health), alongside limiting employment opportunities which may lead to subsistence crime involvement. Due to social perception and stigma, families are often vulnerable to exploitation by their landlord and are often subject to unprompted evictions which can result in homelessness.

In 2020, Safe Homes for Women Leaving Prison initiative found that over 60% of women released from prison did not have secure accommodation. The 2020 HMI Probation report found women were not able to discuss their resettlement needs with case workers, which undermined effective release planning. Many women in prison experience multiple vulnerabilities and insecure housing upon their release may exacerbate these. Secure housing is a criterion for successful rehabilitation, meaning that without a stable place to reside, women can face difficulties in regaining primary care of their children, securing employment, and maintaining sobriety. Therefore, the risk of reoffending increases. Women are far more likely to stay in dangerous accommodation rather than sleeping on the streets. By releasing women without secure accommodation, women are not receiving adequate opportunities to make better choices

In 2021, as per the following figure, 24% of all homeless people in West Yorkshire were aged between 18-24, further demonstrating the sizable impact homelessness has on this demographic. Recent VRU commissioned research provided just some of the impacts homelessness or home insecurity can have on young people:

Young homeless people are twice as likely to die as their housed peers.	Risky behaviour and exhaustion, young people will often take risks to find somewhere to sleep.	Mental health issues are common such as depression, anxiety, and anorexia.
Physical health can be impacted due to limited access to enough affordable and/or nutritious food.	Substance misuses is high for homeless young people.	High joblessness as finding employment is particularly difficult due to not having facilities or a fixed address.

Key findings

- Housing situations and homelessness are both forms of contextual harm that can lead to increased vulnerability to violence.
- 24% of all homeless people in West Yorkshire were aged between 18-24.
- Mental health problems (24%) are the most cited characteristic of households owed a prevention or relief duty.
- Homelessness threatens to grow as a problem for young people if it goes unchecked, due to rising house prices and the removal of familial support that may occur during this stage of a young person's life.

Employment

The correlation between unemployment and violence has been well established (see for example Anderberg et al 2013; Balotra et al 2021; Nordin & Almen 2017). In the UK Government's Indices of Deprivation 2019, unemployment is combined with income deprivation. Income deprivation is strongly associated with increased risk of violence, as outlined in the earlier section of this document looking at deprivation.

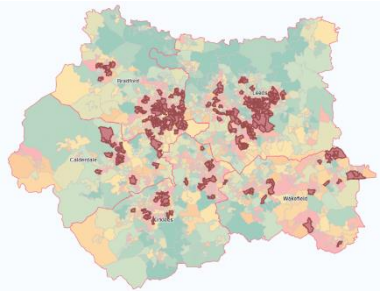


Figure 7 Income Deprivation in West Yorkshire

ONS data indicates that the employment rate in Yorkshire and the Humber is lower than the average rate for England, with 72.4% of people aged 16-64 employed between July and

September 2021. The rate for England was 75.8%. This means that there is a greater number of people not in employment in the region, being either unemployed or economically inactive.

The table below shows these figures in more detail.

	Employment rate (%) aged 16 to 64 yrs	Change on April to June 2021	Unemployment rate (%) aged 16 yrs & over	Change on April to June 2021	Inactivity rate (%) aged 16 to 64 yrs	Change on April to June 2021
England	75.8	0.4	4.3	-0.5	20.8	0
Yorkshire and the Humber	72.4	-0.5	4.6	-0.5	24.1	0.9

Figure 8 Labour market in the regions of the UK - Office for National Statistics

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a single payment for each household to help with living costs for those on a low income or out of work. A total of 89,870 people were claiming Universal Credit in West Yorkshire in September 2021.

This figure represents approximately 6.1% of eligible people in the region. The average rate of people claiming UC in the UK is 5%. The highest rates of claimants are young people, with 7.9% of those aged 18-21 claiming UC.

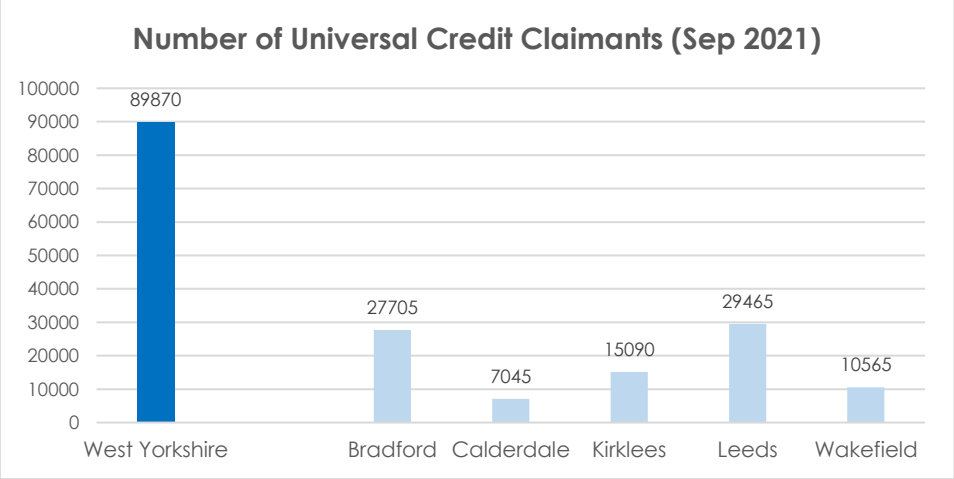


Figure 9 Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

Temporary mitigating policies introduced to support people during the pandemic provided additional income, for example the £20-a-week increase to Universal Credit and the working tax credit, which ended in October 2021, but this was not extended to other welfare benefits and may have led to inequalities in poverty between recipients of different benefit types during this period.

The Resolution Foundation suggests that rising unemployment and the removal of the £20 uplift on 6th October 2021 will lead to a further 1.2 million people (nationally), including 400,000 children, falling into relative poverty – the biggest year-on-year rise in poverty since the 1980s.

Unemployment

At 5%, the rate of unemployment in West Yorkshire is in line with the national average. There are some small differences between local authorities, with unemployment in Bradford and Kirklees being slightly higher than average and unemployment in Wakefield being lower than average.

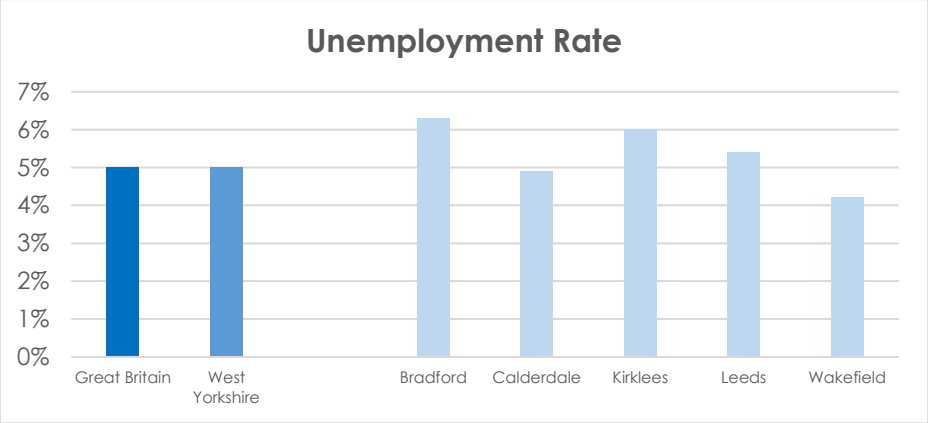


Figure 10 Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

Economic inactivity

The ONS defines economic activity as people of working age (between 16 and 64) not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

Reasons for economic activity include studying full time, looking after a family, retirement and long-term sickness. The below graph shows the number of economically inactive people in West Yorkshire.

The graph below breaks down the reasons why people in the region are classed as economically inactive. Out of the total of **314,300** people who fall into this category, **46,200** (14.6%) want to find a job.

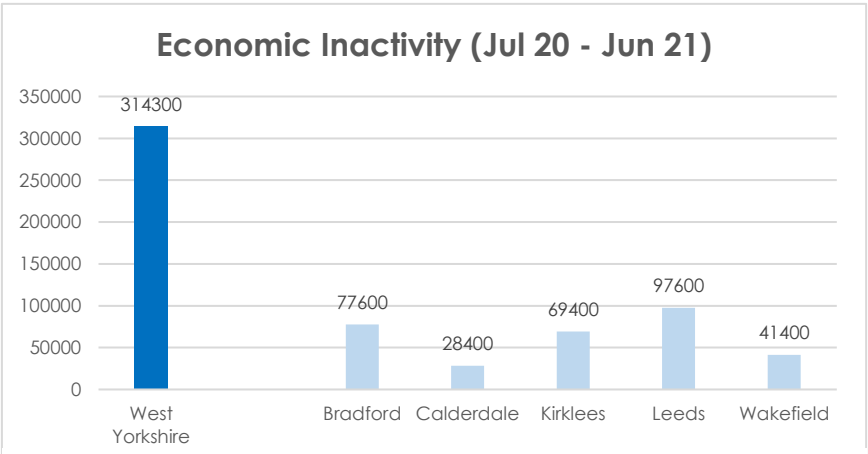


Figure 11 - Economic Inactivity rates (July 2020 - June 2021)

Economic Inactivity (July 2020 - Jun 2021)

	West Yorkshire Level	West Yorkshire %	Yorkshire & Humber %	Great Britain %
Total	314,300	21.7	22.4	21.6
Student	99,600	31.7	28.2	28.5
Looking after family/home	63,600	20.2	19.7	19.3
Temporary Sick	5,500	1.8	2.3	2.0
Long-term Sick	75,200	23.9	24.3	23.8
Discouraged	~	~	0.5	0.8
Retired	39,500	12.6	13.5	13.5
Other	29,300	9.3	11.6	12
Wants a job	46,200	14.7	19.0	20.7
Does not want a job	268,200	85.3	81.0	79.3

Figure 12 ONS Annual Population Survey

In West Yorkshire, women in employment are more likely to be paid below the Real Living Wage than men. The employment rate for disabled women and ethnic minority women in our region are 15 percentage points and 11 points below the national female rate (WYCA, 2021). It is estimated that Pakistani / Bangladeshi British women are estimated to have an employment rate that is below 40%. Based on 2020 data, 26% of working-age women were economically inactive compared with 17% of men. There has been a large increase in people claiming out-of-work benefits. Between February 2020 and March 2021, the number of women claiming out of work benefits in West Yorkshire increased by 21,000 or. Figures from the end of June 2021 show the number of female claimants remains at 39,000, 70% higher than in February 2020.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ('furlough')

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS, commonly known as 'furlough') was introduced in April 2020 in order to prevent widespread unemployment due to the impacts of the pandemic.

The CJRS ended on 30 September 2021, with approximately 1.14 million jobs still on furlough in the UK. In Yorkshire and the Humber, a total of **75,900 jobs** were still on furlough when the CJRS was closed. The below figure gives more detail.

Employments on furlough on 30/09/21

	Female	Male	Total
Yorkshire & the Humber	34,000	41,900	75,900

It is unclear at this stage what the consequences of the closure of the CJRS will be on the region, though it is anticipated that a proportion of those people affected will be exposed

to the impacts of unemployment, increasing levels of relative deprivation and the associated risk of violence.

Key findings

- 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
- The pandemic has disproportionately affected the employment situation of young people, increasing their exposure to risks of violence.
- Further local research is required to better understand the relationship between unemployment and violence, particularly on young people.

Health

Substance Use

The association between alcohol and violence is well established and well documented, with the Institute of Alcohol Studies finding that alcohol intoxication increases the chances of violent behaviour and is likely to be a contributing factor in around half of all violent crimes. Higher levels of alcohol use amongst young people have also been associated with weapon carrying (Home Office, 2019).

Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, the national average for substance misuse hospital admissions for young people aged 15-24 years was 84.7 admissions per 100,000 people. Admissions in Bradford and Wakefield were significantly higher than the national average with 112.6 and 109.8 admissions per 100,000 people. Whilst Calderdale was also above the national average, the difference much lower with 89.9 admissions per 100,000. Kirklees and Leeds show lower than average rates of hospital admissions.

In relation to those under 15, all five districts in West Yorkshire had a higher percentage of regular drinkers at age 15 than the national average of 6.2%. Notably, Calderdale and Wakefield recorded the highest rates of young regular drinkers of alcohol at 8.5% and 9.8% respectively. (PHE, 2021). This pattern is largely repeated when looking at hospital admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions for under 18s.

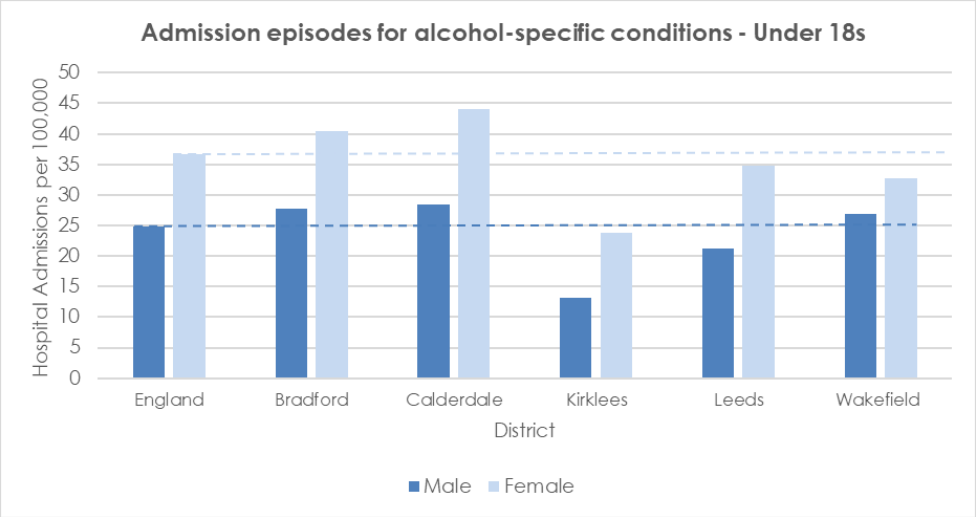


Figure 13 - Hospital admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions for under 18s

Notably, females under 18 are more likely to be hospitalised for alcohol specific conditions than males, in all districts. Kirklees is the only district to have lower than admission rates for both boys and girls than the national average. Calderdale and Bradford experience similar admissions for boys but admissions for girls are highest in Calderdale (44.1 admissions per 100,000).

Despite having high hospitalisations for under 18's, when considering binge drinking and drinking over 14 units a week, Bradford has the lowest proportions. On a similar note, West Yorkshire has a larger percentage of adults (18.4%) who abstain from drinking alcohol than the England average (16.2%). Bradford and Kirklees contribute to this as 28.3% and 22.5% of their populations abstain from alcohol. Calderdale and Wakefield are the only districts to have higher than average proportions of binge drinkers and adults drinking over 14 units.

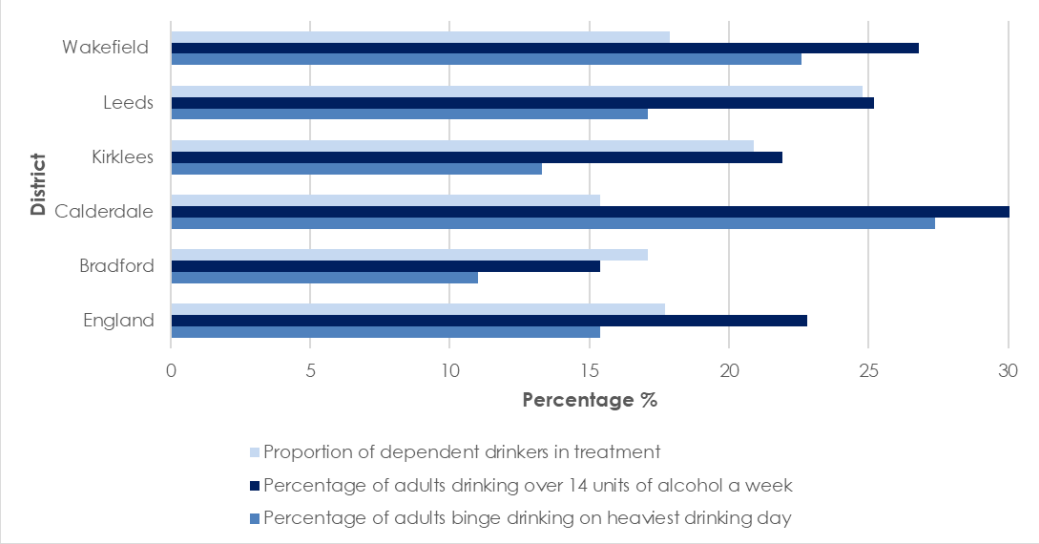


Figure 14 A graph to show the proportion of adults who binge drink, drink over 14 units per week and dependant drinkers in treatment.

When considering dependant drinkers, Leeds, Kirklees and Wakefield have more dependant drinkers in treatment than the national average. Bradford is only slightly above the national average.

In the quarter to February 2021, Disability Living Allowance payments which cited Alcohol and Drug abuse as the main disabling condition were almost twice as likely to be paid to men in West Yorkshire than women (ONS, 2021). Bradford had the highest number of male claimants whilst Leeds had the highest number of female claimants.

The use of drugs and alcohol has been closely associated to poor mental health. Recent PHE data suggests, 19.3% of individuals attending a drugs misuse service and 18.5% of individuals attending an alcohol misuse service, in West Yorkshire, have concurrent contact with mental health services. This is lower than the average for England of 24.3%, which could infer improvements are required in referral services to support more individuals with complex needs.

An estimated 3 million people took drugs in England and Wales in 2019, and recent ONS data shows an increase in rates of drug-related poisoning of 60.9% from 2010 to 2020. The percentage of children in West Yorkshire at age 15 who have ever tried cannabis was broadly consistent with the national average of 10.7%, though percentages were slightly higher in Calderdale (13.2%) and Leeds (12.7%), with Wakefield and Kirklees being lower at 8.6% and 9.3%. In 2021, the second part of Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of drugs reaffirmed the prominence of recreational drug use and emphasised the importance of identifying effective approaches to change population attitudes and behaviours towards recreational drug use. At present, there is a limited evidence base supporting the effectiveness of harm reduction approaches for recreational drug use (Sumnall, 2017). It has been noted that anti-drugs messaging through mass campaigns can be ineffective. Several recommendations were made in the Independent Review including the need to further understand the drivers of recreational use, to evaluate prevention measures and to increase societal awareness of risks (Independent Review, 2021).

Drugs are an issue in prisons with around 15% of prisoners testing positive to random drug tests. The problems are greatest in male local and category C prisons and have been closely linked to the amount of purposeful activity available to prisoners. Following release, in the period 2020/2021, all districts, apart from Bradford, saw higher than average numbers of adults prison leavers with substance misuse treatment needs, successfully engaging with community-based treatment (PHE, 2021)

Between 2019 and 2020, deaths from conditions caused by alcohol, referred to as alcohol-specific deaths, increased by 20.0% nationally (ONS, 2021). In West Yorkshire, recent PHE figures (2021) estimate:

- The rate for male alcohol-specific mortality to be double the rate of females in the region (20.5 per 100,000 and 9.8 per 100,000).
- The rate of alcohol-specific mortality deaths in each district, for both males and females, to be significantly higher than the national averages (14.9 per 100,000 for males and 7.1 per 100,000 for females.
- More male alcohol-specific deaths can be seen in Wakefield (21.4 per 100,000), closely followed by Kirklees (21.2 per 100,000).
- For females, the highest alcohol-specific mortality rate is in Calderdale (11 per 100,000).

Deaths partly attributed to alcohol also increased by 4.8% during this time period. In West Yorkshire, all five districts have a higher rate of alcohol-related mortality than the national average (PHE, 2021).

Alcohol is becoming an increasingly private harm as consumption is occurring more frequently and to greater extents in the home. Consequently, exposure to alcohol is increasing for children and young people. Covid-19 restrictions resulted in the closure of on-license premises such as pubs and bars. This moved consumption into the home and caused alcohol sales to increase by 67% (Lightowlers, 2021; Finlay, 2020). Regardless of whether family members consumed more alcohol during lockdowns, children and young people were more likely to be exposed to their consumption (Sigman, 2020).

The VRU Knowledge Hub have commissioned research in partnership to expand our understanding of alcohol and drug related outcomes whilst promoting wellbeing and reducing health inequalities across the entire population, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research will explore intergenerational attitudes to substance use and potential gender differences in consumption. Research will also examine the alcohol harm paradox and its prevalence in the region, this is based on current research which suggests the alcohol consumption in lower socioeconomic status (SES) communities lead to disproportionately higher levels of alcohol-related harm than higher SES ones (Bellis et al, 2016).

Key findings

- Hospital admissions for substance misuse in 15–24-year-olds was significantly higher in Bradford and Wakefield were significantly higher with 112.6 and 109.8 admissions per 100,000 people.
- All five districts in had a higher percentage of regular drinkers at age 15 than the national average.
- Females under 18 are more likely to be hospitalised for alcohol specific conditions than males, in all districts.
- Men are more likely than women to claim Disability Living Allowance citing alcohol and drug use as the main disabling condition.
- Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of drugs reaffirmed the prominence of recreational drug use and emphasised the importance of identifying effective approaches to change population attitudes and behaviours towards recreational drug use. Local research supporting the recreational drug use recommendations made in the review is required.
- Alcohol is becoming an increasingly private harm as consumption is occurring more frequently and to greater extents in the home.

Mental Health

The relationship between mental health and violence is complex. According to Public Health England, people with mental health problems are four times more likely to be victims of violence than those not experiencing mental health difficulties. Data from West Yorkshire somewhat supports this. Between April 2016 and March 2019 where the cause of the admission was violence, 48% of male hospital admissions and 50% of female admissions included a mental health indicator on hospital records.

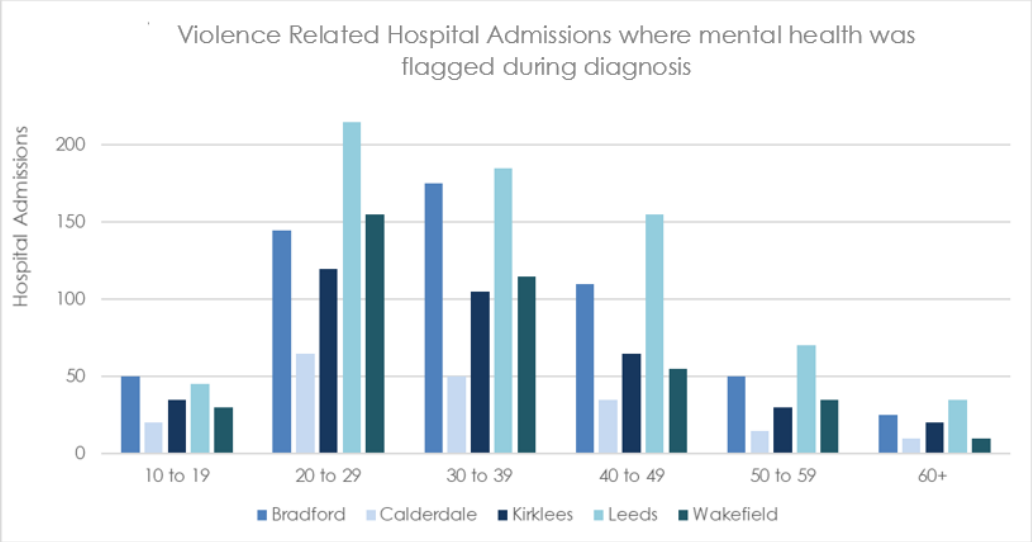


Figure 15 - Hospital admission for violence where mental health has been recorded in a diagnosis field

Recent ONS data suggests that mental health difficulties are becoming more widespread. In summer 2021 (July to August), one in six (17%) adults experienced some form of depression. Whilst this shows a reduction since early 2021 (21%, January to March), it is still above pre-pandemic levels (10%). Younger adults and women were more likely to experience some form of depression and disabled adults, of all ages, were more likely to experience moderate to severe depressive symptoms than non-disabled adults.

Findings from the Annual Population Survey show a decline in life satisfaction and an increase in anxiety across all districts from 2019/2020 to 2020/21. Covid-19 restrictions will have likely been a causal factor for this shift in wellbeing.

	Life Satisfaction		Anxiety	
Local Authority	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Bradford	7.68	7.28	3.03	3.35
Calderdale	7.57	7.4	3.1	3.32
Kirklees	7.48	7.2	3.19	3.51
Leeds	7.55	7.28	3.14	3.7
Wakefield	7.49	7.28	3.05	3.42

Figure 16 - Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey (score out of 10)

Suicide

Based on 2019 death registrations, the suicide rate for men in Yorkshire and the Humber was 17.3 per 100,000 and for females the suicide rate was 6 per 100,000 people. The overall rate for the Yorkshire and Humber region was 11.5, this was the highest rate in England, alongside the North East in 2019. (ONS, 2021 – Table 4).

	2019					
Local Authority	**10-24**	**25-44**	**45-64**	**65-74**	**Over 75**	**Total**
Bradford	4	15	15	3	3	**40**
Calderdale	3	11	13	4	1	**32**
Kirklees	3	10	18	1	3	**35**
Leeds	18	41	38	7	6	**110**
Wakefield	16	18	20	3	3	**60**
Total	**44**	**95**	**104**	**18**	**16**	**277**

Figure 17 - Number of suicides by broad age group, West Yorkshire, deaths registered in 2019, per 100,000

For Calderdale, Kirklees, and Wakefield the age group 45-64 had more deaths registered as suicides, than other age groups. This was not apparent for Leeds, as there were more suicide death registrations in the age group 25-44 age group. There were considerably more suicide registered deaths for the age group 10-24 in Leeds and Wakefield. In addition to the above, analysis for 2020 suicide rates shows both male and female suicide rates were lower in the period April – July 2020 than in the same period in 2019, demonstrating no increase in suicide in the seven months that followed the first national lockdown in 2020 (ONS 2021). However, full year data is not currently available.

Analysis from The Health Foundation estimated there would be 800,000 unemployed people with poor mental health by the end of 2021. It is evident that unemployment is not evenly distributed throughout society as the highest rates, in January 2021, were among young people aged 18–24 (14.0%), people with lower qualifications (7.8%) and people from minority ethnic groups (7.6%).

In the quarter to December 2020, for children and young people aged 10-24 years, the standardised hospital admissions for self-harm were 81.84 per 100,000 in West Yorkshire. This can be compared to 102.82 per 100,000 across England. One year earlier, in the quarter to December 2019, 108.54 per 100,000 hospital admissions for self-harm, indicating a 24.6% decrease year-on-year (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021).

In the quarter to December 2020, 4.53% of people with depression and/or anxiety disorders accessed Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services for treatment in West Yorkshire. This is marginally above the average for England at 4.38% (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021).

In the quarter to March 2021, the IAPT recovery rate overall for West Yorkshire was 51%, which is above the national target threshold of 50%, however the recovery rate for Black and Minority Ethnic patients was below the target level at 48%. Both of these West Yorkshire figures are lower than the average for England (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021).

The prevalence of low-level mental health among young people and it's impacts on violence, victimisation and perpetration are being explored in a VRU-commissioned research project. Initial findings from the research include:

- Mental health issues are a reality for an increasing number of children and young people, but not all mental health conditions become serious enough to enable access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- There are some differences in how boys and girls present symptoms of mental health issues and how these are interpreted socially.
- Young people known to be 'offenders' (perpetrating crime) can find it harder to access CAMHS, despite being at greater risk of poor mental health.
- The risk factors for both poor mental health and violence are found across lifestyle, home and family life and school situation.
- The links go in both directions: children and young people who have experienced violence are more likely to experience poor mental health and those with poor mental health are more likely to experience violence, as victims or perpetrators.
- Young people who are NEET are more likely to be at risk of perpetration of crime, and also of poorer mental health.
- Court mandated provision of mental health services can be a good mechanism for ensuring young people engage with mental health support, and can provide funding for mental health from other sources within CJS funding
- Training, guidance, and best practice exist on issues around mental health, and on violence, especially supporting victims of violence. However, there is less support and training available on the intersection between mental health and violence
- There is no requirement for schools to be consistent with each other in the mental health training that education staff have, nor any clear 'steer' from any central organisation on what the training needs might look like.

These interim findings will be used to support the further development and direction of the research. The project report will be finalised in March 2022 and the findings will assist in future VRU research and delivery priorities.

Key findings

- The relationship between mental health and violence is complex.
- 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.
- Almost half of hospital admissions for violence had a mental health code in a diagnosis field. This occurred most in those aged 20 to 29.
- For Yorkshire and the Humber, the male suicide rate is almost three times higher than the female suicide rate. The impact this may have on families **should be explored further in relation to how this may influence experiences of violence.**

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a complex area; there are a broad range of conditions falling under the banner of neurodiversity and their effects are wide-ranging. Comorbidity is recognised as adding further complexity. In 2019, the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health Care Partnership estimated that:

- ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - is likely to affect up to 4% of the general population. This roughly equates to 100,000 people across West Yorkshire and Harrogate
- Conditions such as autism, Asperger syndrome and pervasive development disorders, known as Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASCs) are estimated to affect at least 1.1% of the population. This can be cautiously equivalent to 29,000 people across West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

In July 2021, a Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (CJJI) report suggests that neurodivergence is more prevalent in the CJS than in the wider community and individuals with neurodiversity can be disadvantaged when they come into contact with the Criminal Justice System. The CJJI call for evidence suggested:

- 5–7% of those referred to liaison and diversion services have an autistic spectrum condition (ASC).
- 47% of male prisoners had a history of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (The Disabilities Trust Foundation, 2018).
- Within prisons the prevalence of autistic 'traits' or 'indicators' are thought to be around 16% to 19% and around 25% of prisoners are thought to meet the ADHD diagnostic criteria (Young et al. 2018)
- 29% of the offender population had a learning disability or challenge and in custody the rates were 36% for men and 39% for women (NOMIS, 2019).

The VRU have commissioned research investigating links between neurodiversity and violence. A component dedicated to gender will be included to determine if neurodiversity is underreported in girls and the impacts this may have. Interim findings suggest:

- Neurodiverse children are more vulnerable and can be at greater risk of both victimisation and perpetration of violence. They can also experience intersections of vulnerability.
- Neurodiversity is one of the key risk factors in Child Criminal Exploitation including County Lines.
- The prison population has a disproportionately high number of neurodiverse people.
- Neurodiversity can present Challenging Behaviours, which need youth practitioners to have specialist training to know how to respond.
- Some people with neurodiversity may not understand abuse, and when being abused may not understand this behaviour is wrong.
- Data collection in this area requires improvement and services need to report learning disabilities in a consistent way.
- People with learning disabilities find it difficult to report abuse due to a reluctance to make phone calls, limited communication skills and fear of not being taken seriously and/or repercussions.

This research will provide greater insight for future iterations of the West Yorkshire VRU Strategic Needs Assessment and inform future strategy and delivery.

Key findings

- Neurodiversity is an umbrella term which incorporates several conditions.
- Neurodivergence is more prevalent in the CJS than in the wider community.
- Individuals with neurodiversity can be disadvantaged when they encounter the CJS.
- VRU commissioned research will provide an understanding of how neurodiverse individuals experience violence, whilst providing details of protective factors and training needs.

Disability

Yorkshire and the Humber had one per cent more people reporting a disability than the UK national average, with 23% of people within these regions reporting a disability in 2019 to 2020. However, the picture of disability in West Yorkshire is difficult to precisely determine. The findings from the 2021 census should provide additional understanding of disability in West Yorkshire once they become available.

Disability is considered to be a risk factor for becoming a victim of a violent crime. For the financial year 2019 to 2020, the Family Resources Survey found that:

- 14.1 million people reported a disability, an increase of 2.7 million (22%) since 2009 to 2010.
- The proportion of females reporting a disability increased to 24% compared to 19% of males reporting a disability (increases of 5% and 1% since 2009 to 2010).
- For all ages groups, except aged 15 and under, more females reported having a disability than males.

In the year ending March 2020, the Crime Survey for England and Wales found that:

- Around 1 in 7 (14.3%) disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse, compared with 1 in 20 (5.1%) non-disabled adults.
- Disabled women are over twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women (17.5% and 6.7%).
- Disabled women, aged 16 to 74, were more likely to have been victims of sexual assault than non-disabled women (5% and 2.8% respectively) (ONS, 2021).

Recent evidence regarding perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment shows disabled people were over twice as likely to feel very or fairly unsafe when walking alone, than non-disabled people (ONS 2021). This was the same for walking during the day and at night.

There were 4 million people claiming either Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in February 2021. This represents an increase of 150,000 during the last year (DWP, 2021). There are more than 4.4 million disabled people are in work however, disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people (ONS, 2021). The WYCA State of the Region Report 2021 suggests there were signs that the employment rate gap was narrowing for disabled people but that progress has been affected by the pandemic.

Estimates suggest 43% of children in poverty are living in a family where someone is disabled. Rates of persistent poverty, and the likelihood of persistent poverty, are also higher for people living in a family that includes a disabled adult or child (SMC 2020).

Poverty rates for disabled working-age adults (38%) are more than twice that of non-disabled working-age adults (18%). Families with disabled children may face additional barriers to avoiding deprivation. It is estimated that 84% of mothers of disabled children do not work, compared with 39% of mothers of non-disabled children. Only 3% of mothers of disabled children work full-time (Papworth Trust 2018).

Carers

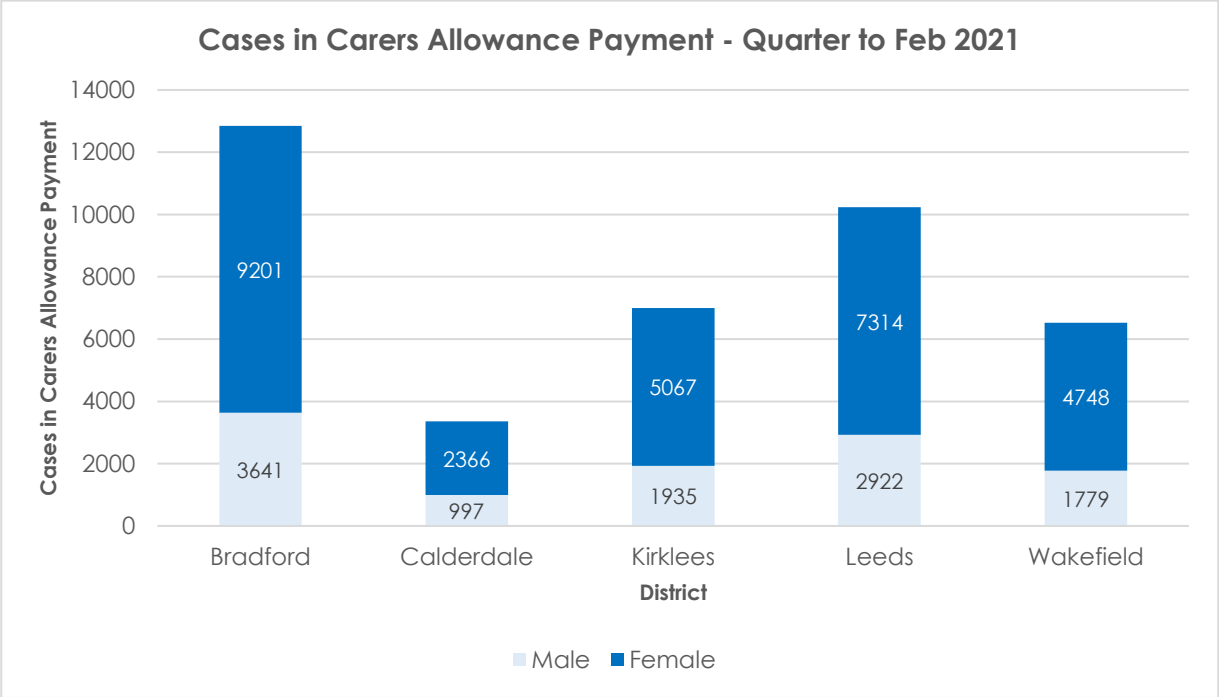


Figure 18 - Cases in Carers Allowance Payment, by gender. Quarter to Feb 2021 – ONS 2021

As expected, more women are paid carers allowance than men. here are an estimated 260,000 unpaid carers in West Yorkshire and Harrogate with an estimated 74,000 and 50,000 unpaid carers resident in the Leeds and Bradford areas. (Carers Leeds, 2021; WY&H HCP). 61% of carers are more likely to report having a long-term condition, disability or illness, compared to 50% of non-carers.

Key findings

- 23% of the population in Yorkshire and the Humber declared having a disability.
- Disability is considered to be a risk factor for vulnerability and victimisation of violent crime.
- For all ages groups, except aged 15 and under, more females reported having a disability than males. Future research should seek to understand why more females report having a disability and the influence of age.
- Disabled adults are more likely to report lower perceptions of safety, either at night or during the day than non-disabled people.
- Disabled adults, especially women, are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse, compared with non-disabled adults.
- Disabled women, aged 16 to 74, were more likely to have been victims of sexual assault than non-disabled women.
- Disability and poverty appear to be relational, **further examination of this intersection should be considered.**

Gender

Women experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence victimisation and are much more likely to be coerced and experience fear, than men. For the year ending March 2021, police crime data shows 82% of sexual grooming victims were women and girls, 81% of sexual activity with children younger than 16 was against girls; and 80% of victims of stalking, voyeurism and exposure were female (HMICFRS, 2021).

In the year ending March 2021, 33,954 reports of coercive and controlling behaviour were reported to the police, an increase of 36% from the previous year (ONS, 2021). Whilst increases are worrisome and require attention, the rise in coercive control reports may be partially attributed to inclusion of coercive control in the domestic abuse definition and improved police recognition.

Within West Yorkshire, women and girls represent over 50% of each district's population. In recognition of this, there have been recent advances to improve the safety and equality of women and girls in the region. From December 2021, West Yorkshire Police, alongside other forces across the country, have started recording instances of misogyny and misandry (WYCA, 2021). Whilst becoming White Ribbon accredited, West Yorkshire Police have also recently launched a strategy to tackle violence against women and girls. The strategy has three overarching priorities based on pursuing perpetrators, creating safe spaces and increasing confidence in policing.

Women are almost three times as likely to experience sexual assault, including attempts, than men. Despite only making up 5.7% of the population, girls aged 10 to 14 years accounted for 24.1% of police recorded sexual offences where the victim was female (ONS, 2021). In the 12 months to September 2020, police forces in England and Wales recorded 56,152 offences of rape and 96,984 other sexual offences. Over 84% of the victims were

women. The number of sexual offences recorded by the police showed a 9% decrease in the year ending March 2021 compared with March 2020 (ONS, 2021). Sexual offences decreases are also evident in West Yorkshire where reports fell by 10.6% which equates to 883 fewer offences. However, Covid-19 restrictions and subsequent lockdowns may have contributed to lower sexual offence reports. Nonetheless, domestic violence reports increased.

An estimated 1 in 6 sexual assaults are reported to the police, this proportion highlights the number of crimes which remain unreported. Of the crimes reported as "rape of a female aged 16 years and over" 60% were closed due to evidential difficulties in the year ending June 2021 (ONS, 2021). In addition, crime outcomes data shows 42% of all rape offences were closed because the victim did not support further police action against a suspect. The covid-19 pandemic has also influenced domestic abuse investigations as police forces have experienced delays in obtaining information from agencies such as family law courts. This in turn delayed many cases from being sent to the Criminal Justice System.

The term Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) incapsulates a wide range of abuses which disproportionately affect women and girls. Alongside physical violence, VAWG includes hidden abuses such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse (HBA). FGM was identified in 5,395 individual women and girls who had an attendance at NHS Trusts or GPs in England between April 2020 and March 2021 (NHS Digital, 2021). Where information is known, most of the women and girls identified were under 18 when they underwent FGM.

There can be significant lasting impacts of VAWG, one of which being unsafe or insecure accommodation. The 2020-21 Statutory Homelessness Annual Report showed 15,370 households with children were homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse. This is an increase of almost 14% from the previous year. As part of the Domestic Abuse Bill, victims of domestic abuse at risk of homelessness will have priority need for homelessness assistance.

To develop our understanding of the factors contributing to and perpetuating Violence Against Women and Girls, the VRU Knowledge Hub have recently completed a literature review which:

- **Provided an insight into the causes and impacts of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as understood in current literature and service provision.** Five themes were as women and girls can be presented as victims, perpetrators, mothers, bystanders, and recruiters. These categories are not mutually exclusive instead they can occur simultaneously or sequentially meaning women/girls can have multiple roles in crime and violence.
- **Identified the needs of women and girls in West Yorkshire to support the development and introduction of intelligence led, evidence based sustainable intervention and provision.** This was based on the finding that trauma, age, ethnicity, religion, and identity are key components to understanding the varying needs of women and girls in West Yorkshire.
- **Offered an overview of current knowledge whilst identifying gaps and making recommendations to prompt engagement and localised research.** The review evidences the importance of perpetrator accountability, conviction and rehabilitation, secure accommodation, addiction support, culturally sensitive

services, increased awareness of services and trauma informed services when addressing VAWG and supporting victims.

Findings from the review suggested the implementation a long-term public health approach, which tackles the deep rooted and ingrained social, health and economic problems facing women and girls as the best chance of addressing this issue. Key recommendations from the report included:

- A societal shift whereby victims are not blamed or held responsible for their victimisation, instead all culpability should lie with the perpetrator.
- Further research which examines the intersectionality of women in West Yorkshire's local communities. This should include women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

In response to the findings in the review, a response strategy will be co-produced alongside partners to address the needs of women and girls in West Yorkshire to maintain their safety and reduce perpetration, whilst improving their health and wellbeing.

Key findings

- Women experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence victimisation and are much more likely to be coerced and experience fear, than men.
- West Yorkshire Police have started recording instances of misogyny.
- During 2020 the number of domestic abuse reports made by women increased, this is likely a consequence of the Covid 19 restrictions.
- 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. The trauma experienced by the girls requires attention, as trauma is a known risk factor for further victimisation or potential perpetration.
- Literature presents women and girls as victims, perpetrators, mothers, bystanders, and recruiters.
- Perpetrator accountability, conviction and rehabilitation, secure accommodation, addiction support, culturally sensitive services, increased awareness of services and trauma awareness are key to addressing VAWG.
- **Further research which examines the intersectionality of women in West Yorkshire's local communities. This should include women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.**

Stalking and harassment

There has been an upward trend in stalking and harassment offences between October 2020 and September 2021 with 48,757 offences recorded by West Yorkshire Police. Of which, 26% were recorded as harassment, 25% were nuisance telephone calls, texts, or emails and 12% were stalking related. West Yorkshire Police use examples such as ASB, bullying, cyber stalking and sending abusive text messages or unwanted gifts when referring to harassment.

The number of stalking and harassment reports are likely to be underestimates, as on average victims will suffer 100 incidents before they report it to the police (College of Policing, 2021). Consequently, there are disparities between official and self-reported statistics. Limited understanding of what constitutes stalking and intrusive behaviours alongside what is acceptable can distort a victim's perception of seriousness and can be attributed to underreporting (Sheridan et al, 2019). Female victims will often not report their stalking or harassment experiences unless they thought it could escalate into physical abuse (Halsop, 2021).

Of the reports made to West Yorkshire Police between October 2020 and September 2021:

- The number of reports were proportional to each district's population. Whereby, Leeds had the highest number of reports and Calderdale had the least.
- 63% made via non-emergency methods, i.e. calling 101 and 17% were made by calling 999.
- Females accounted for 67% of victims and almost two thirds of offenders were male (62.31%).
- Females were more likely to experience online stalking and harassment than men.
- Female victims aged 28 to 33 were more likely to report stalking and harassment than other ages.
- Men were more likely to report harassment which occurred on a street, whereas females were more likely to report an offence which occurred in a residence (i.e. house or flat).
- 37% of female victims and 31.5% of male victims accepted support after they reported the offence.
- In 96% of reports, no weapon was used.

Male perpetration decreases to 50.29% (from 62.31%) when looking at online forms stalking and harassment. This demonstrates women less likely to commit physical harassment or stalking but have similar levels of involvement in committing online abuse. Online harassment and stalking can be considered as a relational or indirect form of aggression, which has been associated with females (Barlett, 2014). However, female perpetration is often deemed less threatening by male victims, therefore does not receive the equitable attention or scrutiny (Brooks, 2021; Logan 2020). Individuals' personal characteristics including psychopathological factors are associated with cyberbullying. Namely, for young female cyberbullies, Balta et al (2020) associates body image dissatisfaction and depression with their perpetration. For victims, the specific characteristics of online activity, such as the far reach and permanency of statements and images, can often facilitate and exacerbate online harassment and its adverse effects.

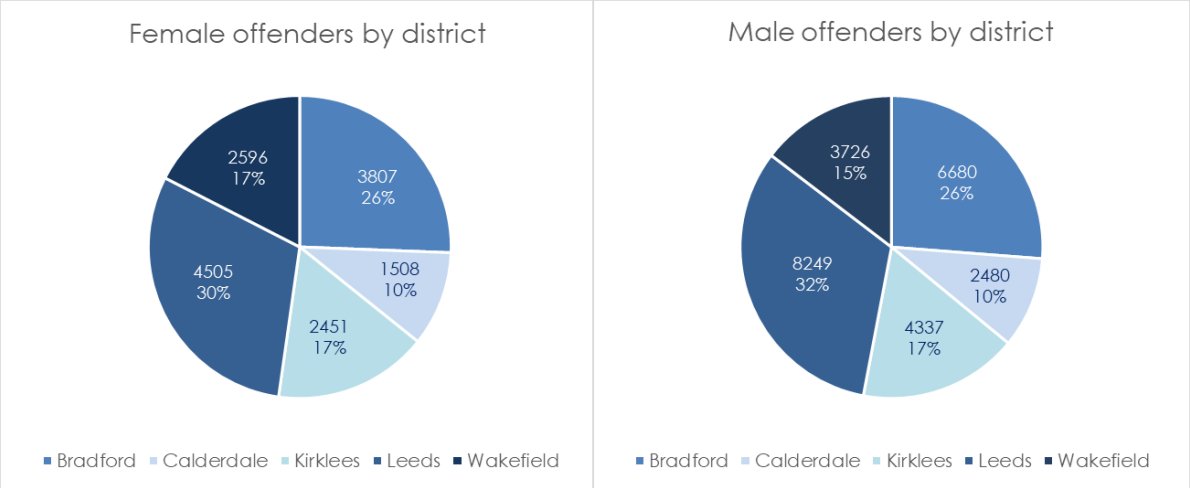


Figure 19 - Location of offenders (left for females, right for males)

Unemployed individuals were the largest offending group for both online and physical stalking and harassment. School girls accounted for 6.83% of online perpetrators and 3.6% of all stalking and harassment offenders. Offenders who were recorded as being school age or a student accounted for almost 20% of all offences. Over 85% of all online reports had an offender under the age of 40, this figure was lower at 69% when looking at all types of stalking and harassment.

Harassment which is targeted at an individual's protected characteristics, including actual or perceived identity, such as their gender, sexuality, race, religion or disability constitute hate crimes (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017; Halsop et al, 2021). In West Yorkshire, 1413 offences were flagged as being racially motivated.

Outcome 15 (victim withdrawal) and outcome 16 (evidential difficulties), where noted as the status for 67% of stalking and harassment cases. This is an unsurprising finding as forms of VAWG also follow this trend. All five districts shared relative similarities as victim withdrawals accounted for the largest proportion of their reports. Calderdale had the highest proportion of withdrawals as in 43% of their stalking and harassment reports the victim withdrew. In Wakefield, 29% of reports experienced evidential difficulties despite having a named suspect and 21% of cases in Bradford were closed as a suspect was not identified.

Victim withdrawal has been linked to lengthy, intrusive investigations and perceptions that the system favours the perpetrator (WYVRU, 2021). Nationally, victim withdrawals accounted for 54% of domestic-abuse-related crimes, 35% of sexual offences, and 44% of rape offences in 2019/2020 (ONS, 2021). For West Yorkshire, an additional 18% of investigations were closed with no suspect identified.

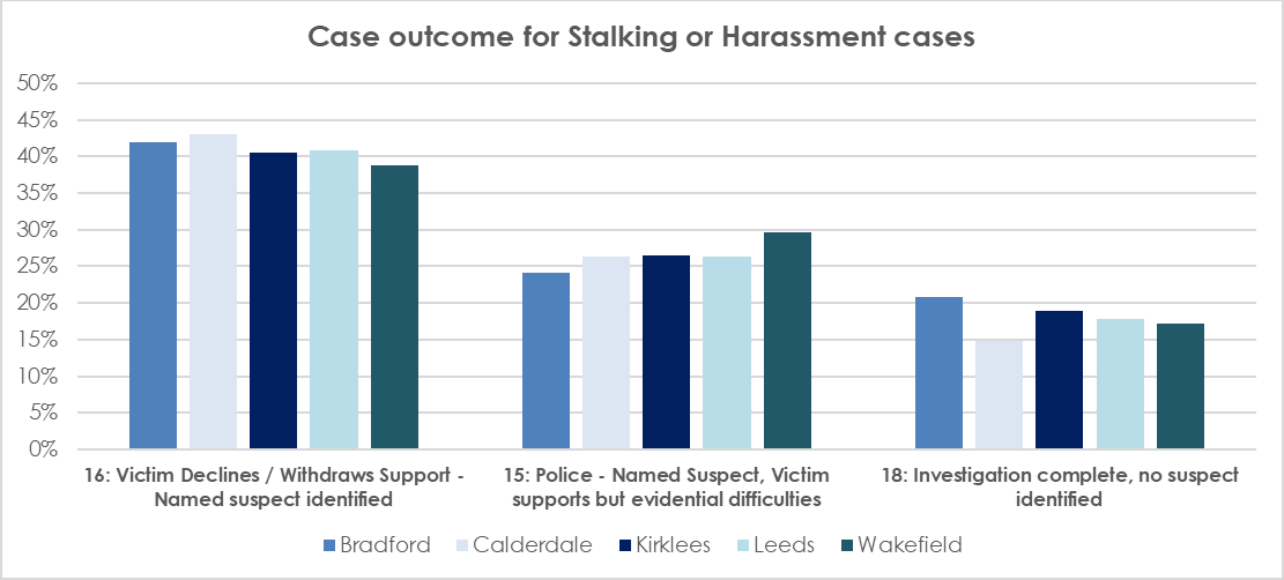


Figure 20 - Outcomes for cases of stalking or harassment

The relationship between the perpetrator and victim has important implications for estimating risk based on the length, intensity, and complexity of the relationship. This is not only apparent for the victim but potential secondary victims (Tompson, 2021). Of the reports made to WYP, 52% of online perpetrators were known acquaintances with the victim. A further 27% were former partners and only 6% were strangers. White et al (2020) examined the behaviours of ex-intimate stalkers using victim perspectives and results indicated that ex-intimate stalkers presented considerably more severe behaviours than acquaintance or stranger stalkers. However, by Logan (2020) appear to challenge White's (2020) conclusion as they found a significant number of acquaintances stalking victims experience high levels of fear, threats, life disruption, and assault.

Of the reports, 19208 (39%) had a domestic violence flagged attached. This is unsurprising as the perpetrator was known to the victim in 79% of reports. Studies which have examined those charged with stalking demonstrate that up to 56% of stalking offenders go on to reoffend (Eke and Hilton, 2011; Rosenfield, 2003). A link between unchecked stalking and harassment behaviours and escalation to sexual assault and domestic homicides was also noted by these studies. Similar findings were evident in Monckton-Smith et al (2017) as the study revealed stalking behaviour was an antecedent in 94% of female homicide cases. How these offences were distributed across the districts is shown in the following figure.

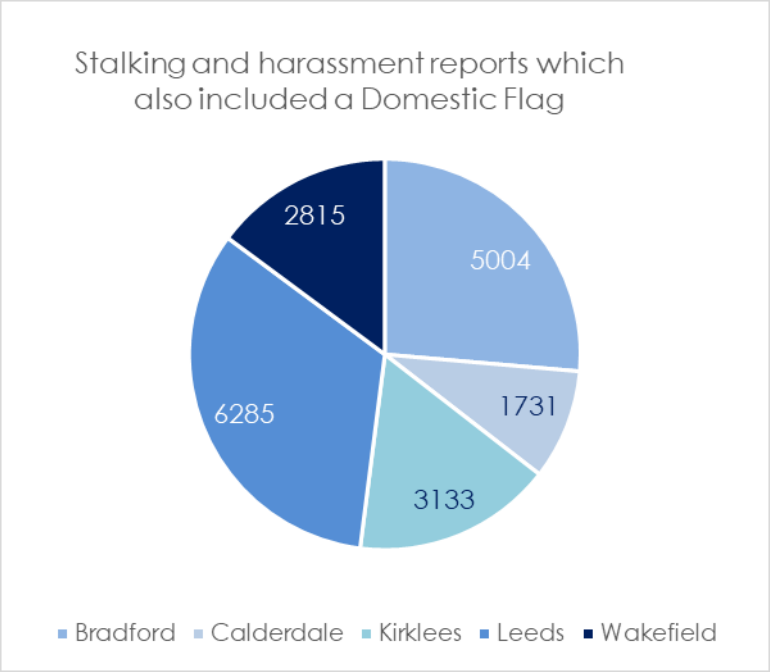


Figure 21 - Stalking and Harassment reports which also included a domestic violence flag

Key findings

- An upward trend has been identified but increase is likely an underestimate.
- Reports are often made because victims fear for their safety which can demonstrate a potential escalation of behaviour.
- A link between unchecked stalking and harassment behaviours and escalation to sexual assault and domestic homicides was also noted. **This link should be reviewed in line with the VAWG agenda.**
- Male perpetration decreases when looking at online forms stalking and harassment, demonstrating females have similar levels of involvement in committing online abuse. **Additional focus on female perpetration is warranted to understand behaviours and risk factors**.
- There were 1413 offences were flagged as being racially motivated and an additional 19208 had a domestic violence flagged attached.
- The relationship between the perpetrator and victim has important implications for estimating risk based on the length, intensity, and complexity of the relationship.
- Outcome 15 (victim withdrawal) and outcome 16 (evidential difficulties), where noted as the status for 67% of stalking and harassment cases.
- **Further understanding of stalking and harassment is required, especially to support the safety planning and risk management of victims.**

Education

Engagement in full time, quality education is a strong protective factor against the risk of a young person becoming involved in serious violence (Crest, 2021). Numerous national reports (MoJ, 2018; Timpson, 2019; Crest, 2021;) cite exclusion from mainstream school as a trigger point for children becoming at risk of serious harm. In research commissioned by the VRU in 2020, three broad mechanisms connecting educational experiences with violence and exploitation were identified:

- Daily attendance provides structure and monitoring
- Providing a sense of achievement and inclusion
- Impacting real or perceived future prospects

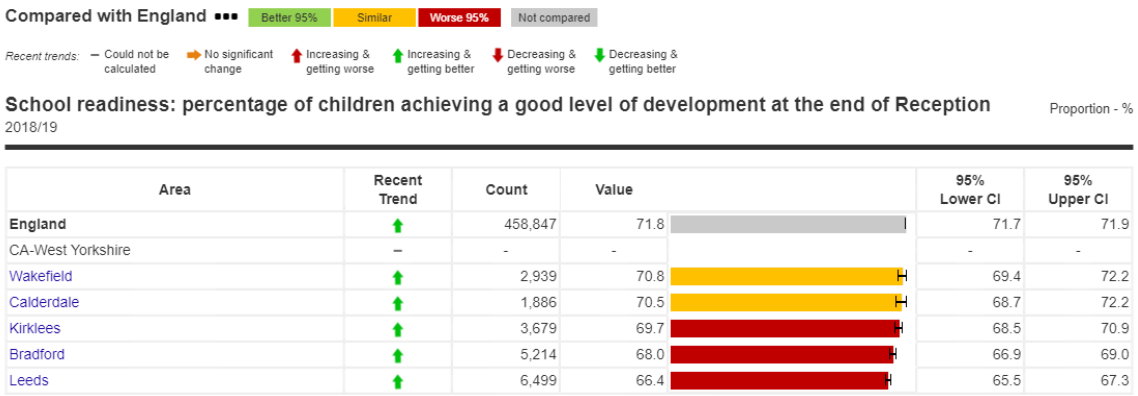
This meaningful engagement with education must start and be maintained from an early age, with parents and care givers demonstrating an active interest in their child's education and social relationships and children feeling connected to their schools.

School Readiness

School readiness appears to have a significant impact on children's educational experiences and potential future experiences with violence and exploitation. School readiness may directly impact children's engagement, achievement and consequently their real or perceived prospects.

The following table indicates the percentage of children achieving a good level of individual development at the end of the Reception year. While the percentages of children achieving this standard were trending up, all five Local Authority Areas in West Yorkshire have a lower percentage of children displaying school readiness than the average for England. Notably, only around two-thirds of children in Leeds (66.4%) achieve a good level of development at the end of reception. This statistic indicates that a third of children in Leeds are beginning their school life at a disadvantage and as such may encounter more difficulties and find the school experience more challenging than their peers.

It is not yet known as to the impact that the pandemic has had in this area, given the extended period that schools were closed and the extent to which online learning could be followed at this young age.



School readiness: percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception
2018/19

Proportion - %

Area	Recent Trend	Count	Value	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	↑	458,847	71.8	71.7	71.9
CA-West Yorkshire	–	-	-	-	-
Wakefield	↑	2,939	70.8	69.4	72.2
Calderdale	↑	1,886	70.5	68.7	72.2
Kirklees	↑	3,679	69.7	68.5	70.9
Bradford	↑	5,214	68.0	66.9	69.0
Leeds	↑	6,499	66.4	65.5	67.3

In addition, the percentage of children achieving at least the expected level in communication and language skills in West Yorkshire is slightly below the average for England in general, apart from Calderdale. These figures again indicate that children with underdeveloped communication skills may experience more difficulties at school. The figures are displayed in the following table.

Compared with England ▪▪▪ Better 95% | Similar | Worse 95% | Not compared

Recent trends: – Could not be calculated | → No significant change | ↑ Increasing & getting worse | ↑ Increasing & getting better | ↓ Decreasing & getting worse | ↓ Decreasing & getting better

School readiness: percentage of children achieving at least the expected level in communication and language skills at the end of Reception 2018/19 — Proportion - %

Area	Recent Trend	Count	Value	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	↑	525,072	82.2	82.1	82.3
CA-West Yorkshire	–	-	-	-	-
Calderdale	→	2,237	83.6	82.2	85.0
Wakefield	↑	3,411	82.2	81.0	83.3
Bradford	↑	6,243	81.4	80.5	82.3
Leeds	↑	7,934	81.1	80.3	81.8
Kirklees	→	4,249	80.5	79.4	81.6

Research from Sheffield Hallam University indicates that around 60% of young people engaged with youth justice services have speech, language and communication needs (Bryan, Garvani, Gregory and Kilner, 2015). This data correlates with figures provided by Wakefield Youth Offending Team, who found that up to 80% of young people in their service had difficulties with speech, language and communication.

Whilst further research is needed in this area, it may be that the children starting their school careers with deficits in communication skills go on to be same children who become engaged with youth justice services as they become teenagers. As such, it follows that the earlier identification of communication issues is an area that could benefit from both further research and intervention design to improve outcomes.

The necessity to address 'School Readiness' has been further emphasised by the pandemic, which has caused new reception pupils to be the 'least school-ready' for generations. New analysis from Nesta has revealed that the average pupil in England missed more than a quarter of their early years education due to the pandemic.

Educational Attainment

Attainment 8 Scores

Further along the educational journey of a child, schools are awarded an Attainment 8 score. This is based on how well pupils at Key Stage 4 (years 10-11, ages 14-16) have performed in eight core subject areas, including English, maths and sciences. Again most of West Yorkshire performs poorly on this measure, with only Calderdale recording a score slightly above the average for England. This metric suggests that having started their school career at a disadvantage, children in West Yorkshire do not make up this disadvantage, but instead continue to achieve lower levels of attainment compared to their peers in the rest of England as they progress. It should be noted, however, that both nationally and in West Yorkshire average attainment scores did increase in 2019/20 when compared to the previous year.

Compared with England ■■■ Better 95% | Similar | Worse 95% | Not compared

Recent trends: – Could not be calculated | → No significant change | ↑ Increasing & getting worse | ↑ Increasing & getting better | ↓ Decreasing & getting worse | ↓ Decreasing & getting better

Average Attainment 8 score 2019/20 — Mean - Score

Area	Recent Trend	Count	Value	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	–	28,156,249	50.2	50.1	50.3
CA-West Yorkshire	–	-	-	-	-
Calderdale	–	123,829	51.4	50.6	52.2
Kirklees	–	253,493	48.9	48.4	49.4
Wakefield	–	174,598	48.4	47.8	49.0
Leeds	–	384,293	48.1	47.6	48.6
Bradford	–	330,125	46.4	45.9	46.9

GCSE Achievement

Moving further along the educational pathway to those aged 16 to 17 undertaking GCSE examinations, West Yorkshire has an overall lower percentage of children achieving 5 GCSE's at grades A* to C (including English and Maths) than the average for England. This average figure for West Yorkshire masks some differences within the county however, with Bradford (48.1%) achieving a significantly lower score than the national average, followed by Leeds (54.8%) and Kirklees (56.3%) who are slightly beneath the national average, whereas Wakefield (57.9%) and Calderdale (59%) return figures above the national average.

Compared with England ■■■ Better 95% | Similar | Worse 95% | Not compared

Recent trends: – Could not be calculated | → No significant change | ↑ Increasing & getting worse | ↑ Increasing & getting better | ↓ Decreasing & getting worse | ↓ Decreasing & getting better

Educational attainment (5 or more GCSEs): % of all children 2015/16 — Proportion - %

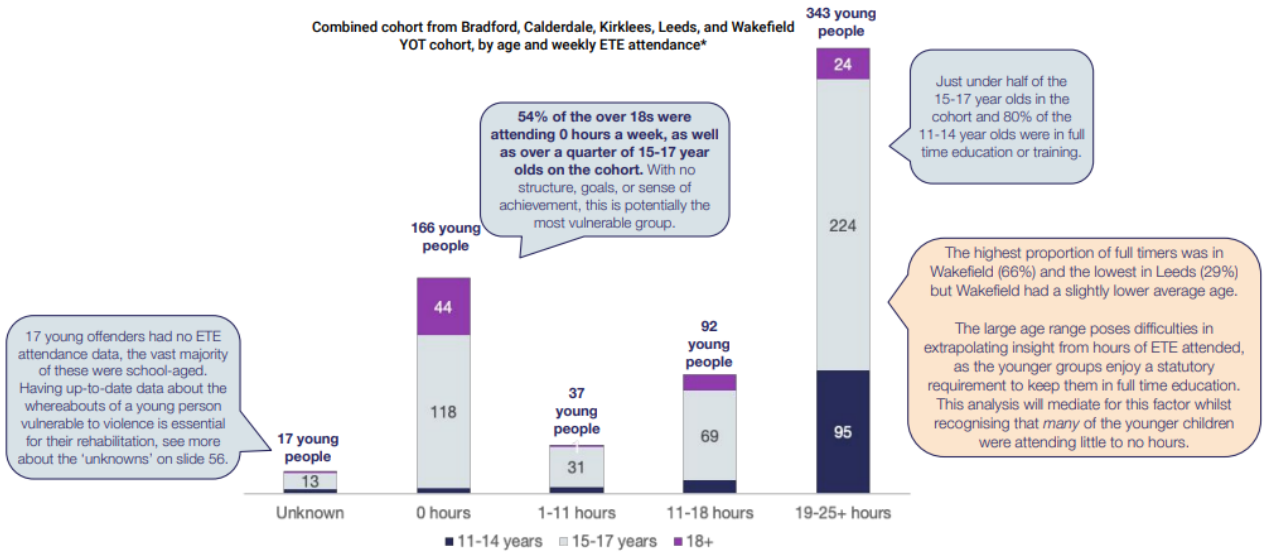
Area	Recent Trend	Count	Value	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	–	309,517	57.8	57.6	57.9
CA-West Yorkshire	–	13,130	54.2	53.5	54.8
Calderdale	–	1,380	59.0	57.0	61.0
Wakefield	–	1,995	57.9	56.2	59.5
Kirklees	–	2,664	56.3	54.9	57.7
Leeds	–	3,990	54.8	53.7	56.0
Bradford	–	3,101	48.1	46.9	49.3

NEET

Through analysis of data provided by the youth offending teams (YOT) in the five local authority areas in West Yorkshire on their 678 young people, VRU-funded research identified a clear correlation between not being in mainstream education, training, or employment (NEET) and vulnerability to violence:

- Young people on the joint YOT cohort with serious and/or violent offences were considerably less likely to be in mainstream education, training, or employment (ETE) than the rest of the cohort.
- Most of the young offenders in the cohort were attending ETE full time, but 25% were attending 0 hours a week

- There is a strong relationship between attending Alternative Provision (AP), Pupil Referral Units (PRU), and Special Units, and serious and/or violent offending in the YOT cohort.
- There is a link between not attending ETE full time and having committed a serious violent offence, but no relationship was found between attending 0 hours a week or being registered as not in education, employment, or training (NEET).



Exclusions

There is strong evidence nationally that suggests that young people who are permanently excluded from mainstream education are more vulnerable to being exploited by criminal gangs and exposed to drugs, serious violence and knife crime. Research commissioned by the VRU on this subject has significantly added to our understanding of this issue locally.

The rate of permanent exclusions in West Yorkshire broadly follows the trend for England – sharply rising since 2014 and beginning to stagnate in 2017 – with Kirklees rising much more quickly and Leeds consistently remaining the lowest.

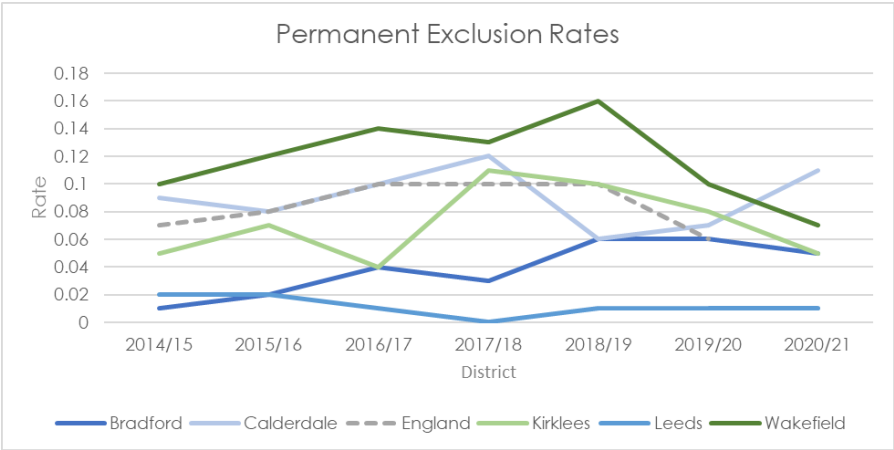


Figure 22 – Permanent Exclusion rates (by district) from 2014/15 to 2020/21

Perhaps surprisingly in 2019/20, Calderdale saw an increase in the rate of permanent exclusions during the first year of the pandemic and Bradford and Leeds remained the same, despite the lack of time pupils have spent in schools. Based on interview data with local stakeholders, there are two potential (and not mutually exclusive) explanations for the phenomenon in West Yorkshire.

1. **The pupils who remained in school were children identified as 'vulnerable' who are, as the data shows, disproportionately excluded** due to more frequent behavioural problems, learning and communication difficulties, and potentially more difficult home lives. Therefore Covid-19 made little difference to exclusion rates, but more students were excluded in some instances and for specific reasons.
2. **The shift in boundaries and structures that occurred for most children during the pandemic led to difficulties re-entering a rigid school structure, which produced more behavioural exclusions**. If this second explanation holds, we should (and do) see a continued use of persistent disruptive behaviour as a reason to exclude children during the last academic year despite limited time spent in the classroom.

Looking at the most recently captured data (2020/21), in which schools and pupils have been less disrupted by COVID, we have positively seen a decrease in permanent exclusions in Bradford, Wakefield and Kirklees, however Calderdale has again seen a sharp increase during the last school year.

Looking at fixed-term exclusions (FTEs) rates, West Yorkshire has a higher rates of FTEs than nationally, but this is driven by high levels in Wakefield. When considering the data without Wakefield, West Yorkshire rates are similar to England as a whole. Unlike permanent exclusions, every area in West Yorkshire have showed vast improvements in fixed term exclusions during the first year of the pandemic. However, as anticipated due to less COVID related disruption in schools, we have started to see an incline in fixed term exclusions across West Yorkshire.

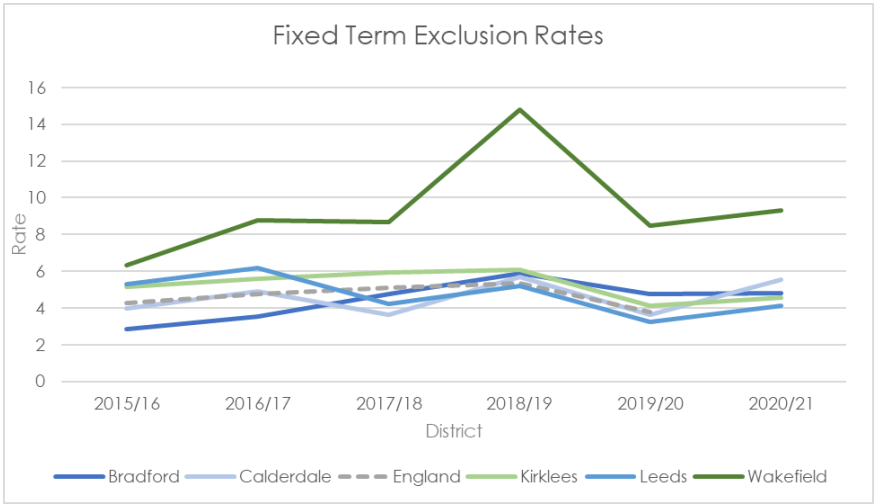


Figure 23 - Fixed Term Exclusion rates (by district) from 2014/15 to 2020/21

When looking at the most common reasons for both Permanent Exclusions and Fixed Term Exclusions, Persistent Disruptive Behaviour continues to be the outlier nationally and across West Yorkshire and during the pandemic became a more common reason for permanent exclusion than the previous year. Persistent Disruptive Behaviour appears to affect Wakefield considerably more than the other districts in West Yorkshire.

It is worth noting, however, that Wakefield have 0% of Permanent Exclusions and 1.64% of Fixed term Exclusions marked as 'other'. The other districts in West Yorkshire have sizeable percentages attributed to 'other. This could imply there is a lack of consistency of how districts classify certain exclusions which may somewhat distort the figures. In districts where 'other' is provided as a common reason, we must understand why this is the case and what can be done to improve accuracy of recording of exclusions.

Location	Most common reason(s) for exclusions			
	Fixed Period Exclusions		Permanent Exclusions	
	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
England	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	31.46%	33.55%	35.23%	34.49%
Bradford	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	30.79%	29.94%	23.64% Physical Assault Against an Adult – 21.82%	27.27% **Physical Assault Against an Adult – 29.09%**
Calderdale	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	27.27% **Other – 28.96%**	26.73% Other – 22%	27.27% Physical Assault Against an Adult – 27.27% **Other – 36.36%**	37.04% Physical Assault Against an Adult – 22.22% Other – 22.22%
Kirklees	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	22.17% Verbal Abuse or Threatening Behaviour Against an Adult – 22.09%	30.14% Verbal Abuse or Threatening Behaviour Against an Adult – 20.58%	22.54% **Physical Assault Against a Pupil – 23.94%**	24.07% Physical Assault Against an Adult – 22.22%
Leeds	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	44.43%	43.35%	**Drug and Alcohol Related – 27.27%**	40% Physical Assault Against a Pupil – 30%
Wakefield	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour			
	59.52%	56.47%	36.05%	56.94%

We also consulted with young people through our VRU school survey in December 2021 in order to canvass pupils' opinions on school exclusions. We asked what they felt would be reasonable grounds for a temporary exclusion, which is covered in the following table.

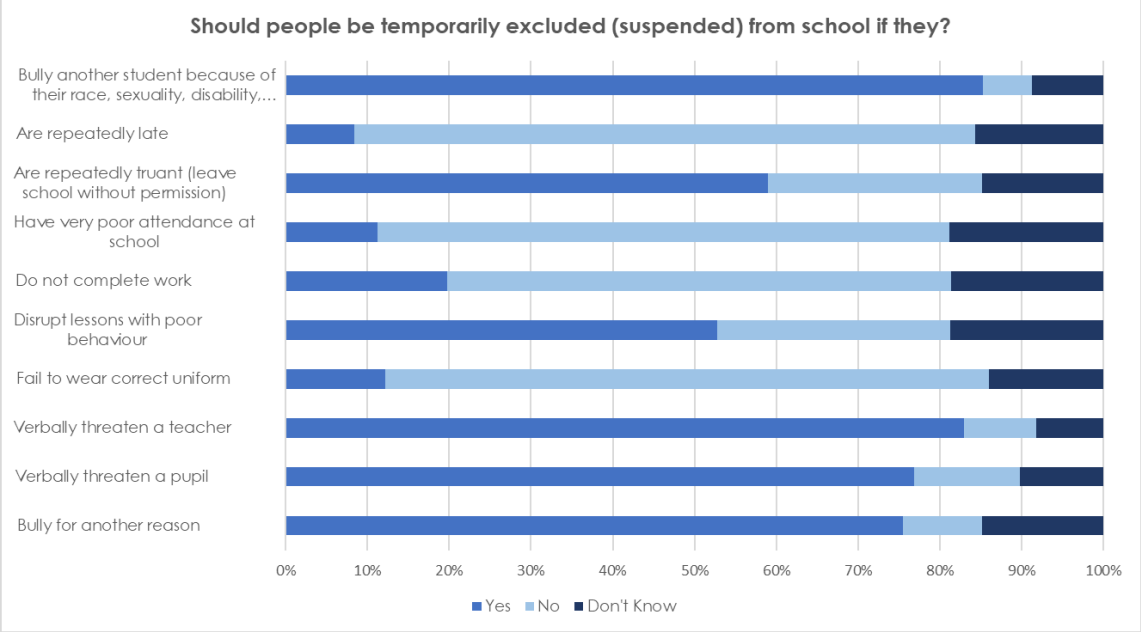


Figure 24 - Survey results for question regarding reasons for temporary exclusion

Any form of bullying and verbally threatening of pupils and teachers were all considered reasonable grounds among pupils for temporary exclusions. Interestingly, just over 50% felt disruptive behaviour warranted temporary exclusions, which is the main reason for exclusions in England and West Yorkshire. Overall, they felt wearing the correct uniform, having poor attendance at school, being repeatedly late and not completing work were not appropriate reasons for being suspended.

We also asked the young people how impactful they felt temporary exclusions were. Respondents were nearly equally split when asked whether suspending someone made it easier to learn in school. Quite notably, twice the number of respondents felt that suspensions did nothing to improve the behaviour of the student who was suspended, suggesting that pupils themselves are seeing a lack of meaningful impact offered by temporary exclusions.

"Instead of continually punishing those who struggle to engage in mainstream education, entrenching the cyclical prophecy of their bad reputations and low self-esteem, their disruptive behaviour should be taken more seriously as an indication of unmet needs."

Ciaran Thapar, Cut Short

Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners

Research scoped and commissioned by the VRU also helped to understand the wider context of school exclusions and vulnerable learners and how this impacts serious violence.

In West Yorkshire, as nationally, pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those with Special Education Needs (SEN) are disproportionately excluded, in terms of both permanent and fixed term.

The following figure show that students with SEN provisioning make up 15% of the 2019/20 headcount in West Yorkshire, but they account for 48% of permanent exclusions and 45% of fixed-term exclusions. SEN are disproportionately found in young offenders and, increasingly, among those groomed into criminal exploitation.

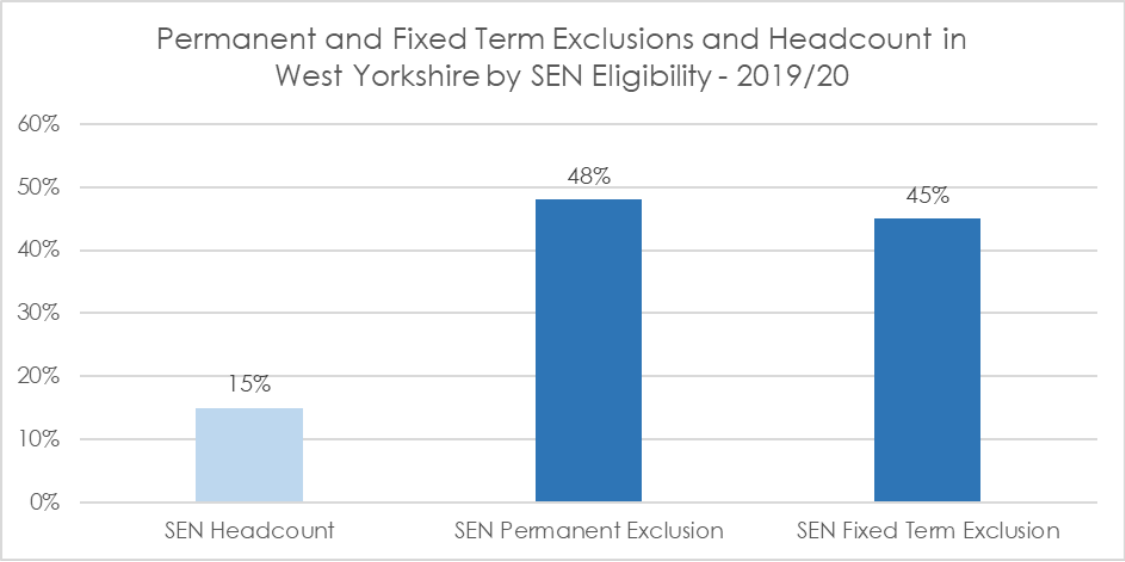


Figure 25 - Permanent and Fixed Term exclusions for SEN pupils

The below figure shows that students eligible for free school meals only make up 20% of the 2019/20 headcount in West Yorkshire, but they account for 44% of permanent exclusions and 47% of fixed-term exclusions. We know this disproportionality is mirrored amongst those committed and cautioned for violence offences nationally.

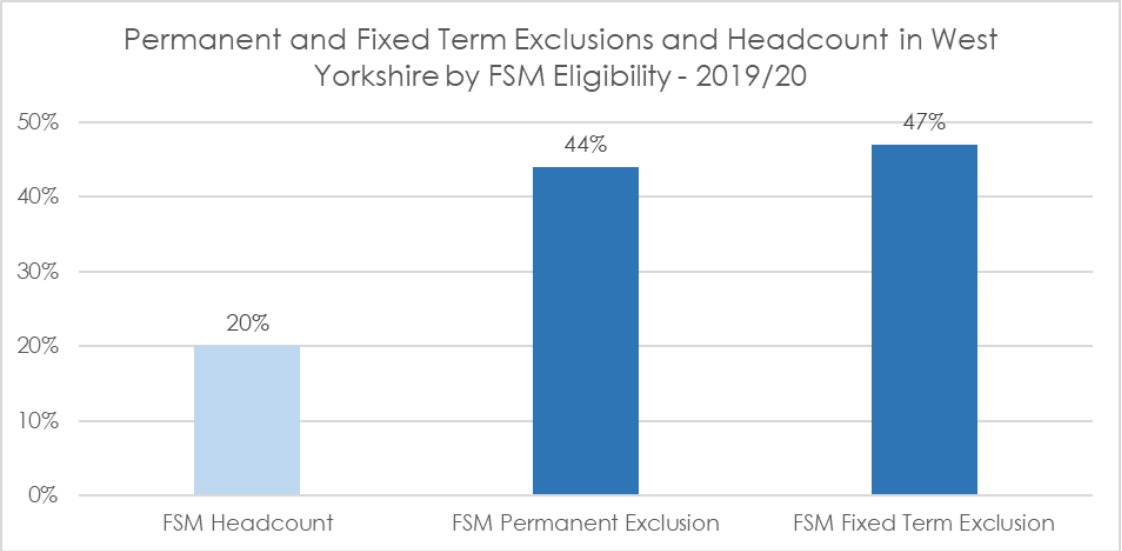


Figure 26 - Permanent and Fixed Term exclusions by Free School Meal status

There are also notable trends in relation to ethnicity and exclusions data. Nationally, the rate of permanent exclusion has consistently been higher for Black pupils compared to majority White and Asian pupils, however this gap has been closing in recent years.

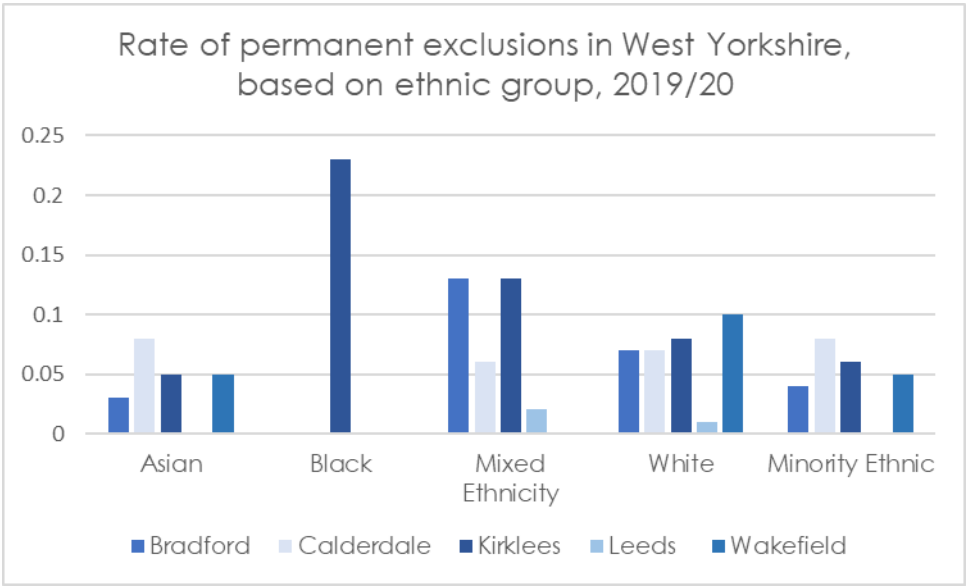


Figure 27 -The permanent exclusion rate based on ethnic group = the total number of permanent exclusions in each ethnic group, divided by the total number of pupils in that ethnic group (x100) (excluding 'unclassified')

The chart below shows the rates of fixed term exclusions, which shows that black pupils, white pupils, and pupils of mixed ethnicity have the highest rates of fixed term exclusions and that the picture varies district by district,

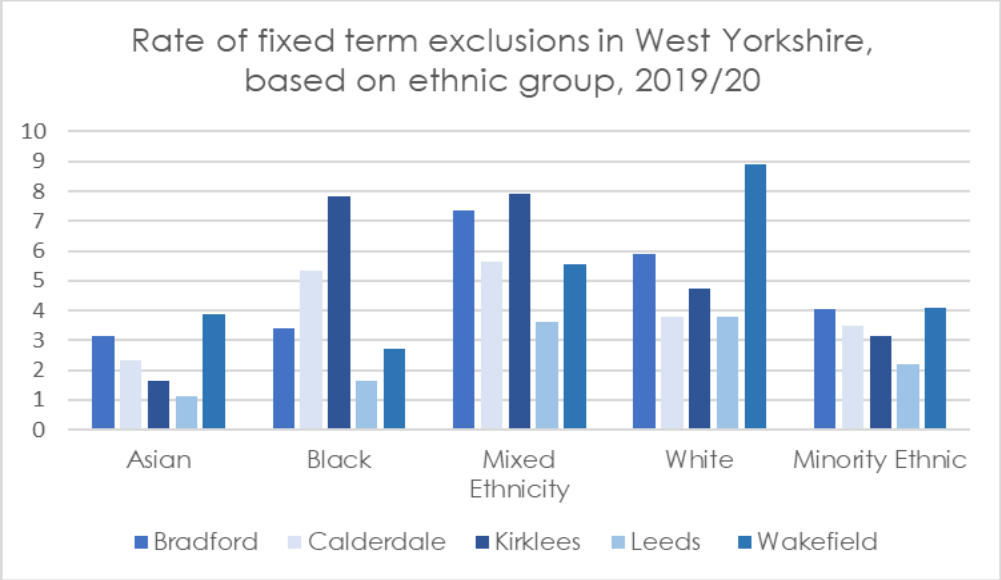


Figure 28 - The fixed term exclusion rate based on ethnic group = the total number of fixed term exclusions in each ethnic group, divided by the total number of pupils in that ethnic group (x100) (excluding 'unclassified')

Gypsy Roma pupils continue to have the highest rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions.

		Bradford		Calderdale		Kirklees		Leeds		Wakefield	
		2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
Gypsy Roma	Permanent exclusions (rate)	0.39	0.18	0.00	0.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.67
	Suspension (rate)	23.79	24.05	9.44	24.82	5.45	22.03	15.85	13.51	94.64	26.67

Rates of exclusions are also higher amongst Looked After Children (LAC) and Children in Need (CiN) in West Yorkshire compared to national rates. Statutory guidance for schools and headteachers advocates that every measure is taken to avoid excluding LAC permanently, which may explain the recent drop in permanent exclusion rates among this group.

The guidance does not mention Children in Need, who are permanently excluded at a significantly higher rate than other children. And, whilst LAC consistently have the highest levels of fixed-period exclusions, Children in Need have seen the greatest increase, more than tripling between 2012/13 and 2018/19.

Lastly, recent Teach First research has shed light on the sizeable impact the pandemic has potentially had on disadvantaged pupils, finding that these young people may be twice as likely as their wealthier counterparts to have fallen behind because of the pandemic. The survey found that 30% of teachers at schools with the poorest pupils believe most of their pupils are behind in their attainment compared to this point in a normal year, compared to just 15% of teachers at schools with the most affluent pupils.

When asked what would make the most difference to support students in the future, the most popular choice from teachers was **funding for and access to social and mental health services** (61%). In addition, four in ten (42%) said all households to have access to Wi-Fi and digital devices, a similar figure (39%) said teacher and leader development, while 52% said funding to reduce teachers timetabled hours.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Children in home education have reduced access to services available via school as well as safeguarding support provided by teachers and staff. Their environment is unregulated and, in some cases, unstructured and notably there is no duty to ensure the quality of their education. Although the numbers of EHE children remain small, there is evidence they are rising in England and West Yorkshire, and the true figure is likely to be even higher given that parents have no requirement to register their home educated child with the local authority.

Looking at West Yorkshire figures we have received from 2015/16 – 2020/21, we see a **continued increase** year by year in the number of children leaving mainstream education to be home educated. The figures have more than doubled in this timeframe. Covid-19 may have played a part in the continued increase in 2020/21 figures, however by far the most common reasons provided are "not specified" (65% in Bradford) or parental choice (over 50% in Calderdale when combined with not specified) and philosophical/lifestyle choice was top in Kirklees. This makes it challenging when trying to understand the primary drivers for taking a child out of school and into EHE.

There are sizeable concerns around EHE relating to the lack of data of children in home education and lack of support which were emphasised recently by the Education Committee. We understand numbers are likely to be underreported as parents do not have to register their children with the local authority as home educated and the DFE does not collect any national figures on EHE. The Education Committee also highlighted concerns around the lack of powers for local authorities and clarity on 'suitable' education and a shortage of data on outcomes. A recommendation made to establish a 'statutory register' for children outside of school has been accepted by the Government, which will see the collation, analysis and publication of anonymised annual data on the number of children out of school, which will allow stakeholders to better understand trends and create effective policy in response to them. The proposed register would ask for reasoning behind the decision on a voluntary basis; based on the responses we have seen locally, it is not likely this will assist in shedding light on what is motivating people to electively home educate their children.

The report also emphasises the need for the DFE to undertake longitudinal research to examine the life chances and social outcomes of elective home educated children, in comparison to these who have a received a formal schooled education. While there is certainly a need for more research into EHE in West Yorkshire (as well as more broadly), we will monitor the response to this recommendation over the coming months when considering our own commissioning to ensure there is no duplication of research.

Attendance and Absence

Nationally, whilst most young people were happy to return to school for the autumn term of 2020/21, attendance between September and December was still lower than pre-pandemic levels, hovering between 80% and 90%. This was mirrored in West Yorkshire, where attendance in the autumn term of 2020/21 was 82% in Bradford, 84% in Calderdale, 80% in Kirklees, 84% in Leeds and 79% in Wakefield. Attendance levels in West Yorkshire have noticeably increased since then. Data (at w/c 21st Oct 2021) for the autumn term of 2021/22

shows Bradford and Wakefield attendance rates increased to 87%, Calderdale and Leeds both up to 88% attendance rates and Kirklees at 89%.

Looking at absence, there has been a noticeable decline in absence rates from Autumn 20/21 to Spring 20/21 across all districts, which is in line with the national trend. As shown in the graph below, absenteeism was at its lowest rate in West Yorkshire and in England at the spring term 2020/21 audit.

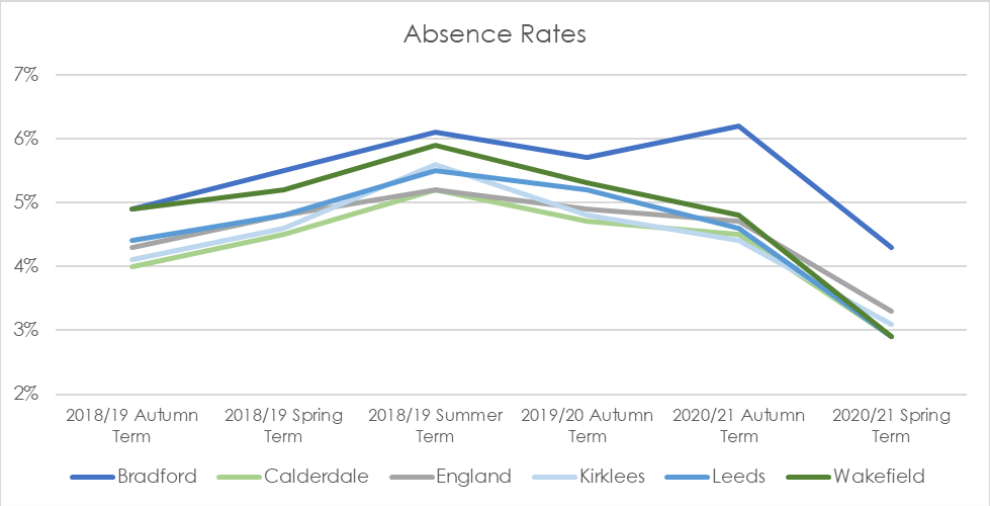


Figure 29 - Absence rates per district by term

To understand why absence rates dropped to their lowest in spring term 2020/21, it is crucial that we understand the common reasoning for absences. Illness had always been the primary reason cited for absence, however as the below graph shows, illness absences dropped to an unprecedently low level nationally.

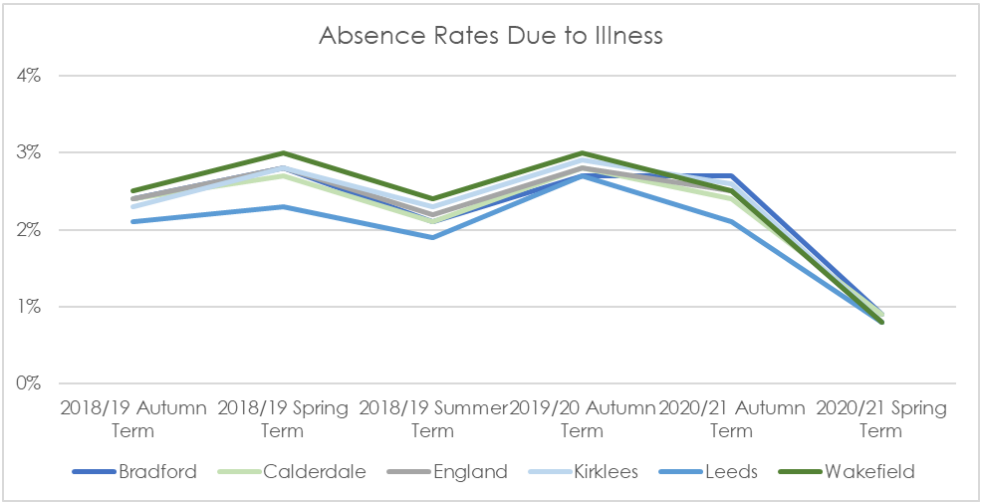


Figure 30 - Absence rates due to illness per District by term

It is possible that due to lockdown restrictions, pupils were more inclined to attend school as an 'escape' from lockdown and provide an opportunity to socialise, or that parents were keen to ensure their children attended school. It is also possible that schools changed their

recording practices (as did many workplaces) during the pandemic to discount Covid-19 related absence from usual procedures. Understanding whether these low absence rates are an exception or a positive downwards trend will become clear once the 2021/22 absentee data becomes available.

Supporting the notion that children may be keen to attend school, during consultation the VRU had with schools across West Yorkshire, one secondary school in Wakefield district commented that

"In many cases, it appears school is seen as a 'safe place' where pupils feel comfortable. We know this as many of our pupils who struggle with behaviour are not poor attenders. They come to school even if they are then unable or unwilling to comply. When pupils are excluded, temporarily or permanently, they gather at the entrance at the end of the school day."

Aspirations

Research commissioned by the VRU identified that continued experiences with deprivation, school exclusions, inadequate accommodation, and intergenerational trauma has led to a small cohort of young people with low aspirations in West Yorkshire due to a lack of hopeful vision for the future. Covid-19 and the accompanying restrictions has further eroded resilience and made the outlook of many young people bleak. This is a perfect context for violence and exploitation. (Crest Advisory, 2021)

From the evidence the VRU has gathered on this issue and through consultation with schools across West Yorkshire to understand what they feel is needed in schools, nearly every school said there was a need for aspiration lifting programmes. This demonstrates the demand that exists for further research and the development of a more coherent understanding. One school commented on the "lack of aspiration and ambition alongside feelings of entitlement" expanding that "for some, there is little sense of 'working for a living', work and education to give yourself better prospects, better life and better future." Others mentioned that young people can lack resilience, "seeing failure as a personal reflection/humiliation rather than part of a learning journey and for this reason, they are reluctant to try rather than risk failure."

Building on the evidence gathered at consultation, the VRU has commissioned a research project to explore how the aspirations of young people can be raised, with a view to improving educational attainment, thereby supporting longer-term employment and training prospects. The project focuses on each transition point that young people experience on their educational journey, what the risk and protective factors are at these transition points and what types of intervention are most appropriate and effective in supporting young people at each of these points.

Key findings

- 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, while permanent exclusion rates have been maintained or lowered, except for a sharp rise in Calderdale.
- Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the most attributed reason for both permanent and fixed-term exclusions. **'Other' is cited frequently as a reason for exclusion in some local authority areas, and more clarity should be required when recording these exclusions.**
- Absenteeism in West Yorkshire plummeted in spring term 2020/21, with significant drops in illness related absence.
- 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) and GRT children.
- Numbers of children going into Elective Home Education (EHE) continues to increase in West Yorkshire. This may have been slightly accelerated due to the pandemic, however as there is no obligation to disclose a reason for taking a child out of school into EHE, it is challenging to understand what is driving this continual increase.
- **There is a clear knowledge gap surrounding EHE and the various impacts it may have on young people in West Yorkshire, which would benefit from further investigation.** Filling this gap may be challenging due to the limitations of data collected at this time.
- It is essential that we begin to capture much more data around the key markers of education inclusion, which will allow us to drill down to school and anonymised personal level data. Accessing this data would provide countless opportunities, allowing better strategic deployment of resources and opening the door to the utilisation of innovative new analytical tools like social network analysis. **This information can then be collated and stored centrally in a West Yorkshire 'dashboard' for educational inclusion and be accessible to all relevant partners.**

Technology, Social Media and Online Trauma

The relationship between social media and youth violence has attracted increasing academic and professional interest in recent years.

Locally, research conducted in 2020 by the University of Huddersfield and the five Youth Offending Teams of West Yorkshire found strong evidence that some young people's problematic social media activity – such as displaying and provoking hostility and violence – acts as a driver for some 'in real life' violent offending in West Yorkshire. The researchers found that nearly 1 in 4 (23.44%) cases in the study were directly related to a young person's prior social media use. Of the cases identified as related to social media use, the majority were related to acts of violence. Typically, disputes online were found to escalate to the point where physical fights would occur.

"Violence between pupils is often preceded by online abuse, which pupils feel does not have a consequence in the real world."

VRU Schools Consultation 2021

The University of Huddersfield also state that their findings most likely underestimate the true extent to which social media drives violent offending amongst young people. A qualitative component to this research found that of all the young people interviewed, half reported getting into physical fights as a result of their online actions. The University of Huddersfield research also found that the most popular social media apps have intrinsic design features that act to drive online hostility and aggression. Recent research undertaken in the US adds to this, identifying comments, livestreaming, picture/video sharing and tagging as four features that can escalate conflicts. Cohen and Felson's 1979 Routine Activity Theory suggests that for a crime to occur, three elements must converge – a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian (such as a parent, teacher, shop security and so on). Applying this theory to the online space, it can be argued that there is an inherent lack of a capable guardian providing oversight of the online activity of young people.

In December 2021, the West Yorkshire VRU Knowledge Hub produced and circulated a survey to schools across West Yorkshire aimed at 11-16 year olds, which sought some views on social media. Of the nearly 1000 respondents to the survey, 66.5% felt that social media can influence and lead to violence. Respondents noted that arguments and disagreements can be instigated online easily now and lead to violent behaviour. Many added that that young people are more likely to say nastier things online as opposed to in person, with them feeling more confident to do so behind a screen.

"We cannot underestimate the power of social media on the lives of young people. In school, there are an increasing number of behaviour incidents linked to the (mis)use of social media."

VRU Schools Consultation 2021

Qualitative findings from the UK Government's Violence and Vulnerability Unit's Locality Reviews in West Yorkshire noted that lockdown has provided much more free time for young people to spend on their phones and laptops, which has in turn made things easier for gangs to groom and recruit young people. This learning is reinforced by the findings of the VRU school survey, with 31% of respondents stating that they usually spend 4+ hours on social media a day. Key word searches have also been carried out amongst Youth Violence offence data in West Yorkshire. Amongst the detail in the U25s offender's MO's (a short description of the offence, usually written at the initial reporting stage), social media was

referenced 38 times, Snapchat 40 times, Facebook 23 times and several other social media platforms were referenced fewer times.

We also collaborated with the School of Law at the University of Leeds, who produced a report that studied the relationship between social media and violence as well as looking at interventions to address the issue in West Yorkshire. The findings from this research demonstrated that some links between social media and violence have been identified, such as:

- Social media can help facilitate collective action.
- Social media facilitates of the organisation of crime through features such as encrypted messages, location sharing and anonymity.
- Social media is utilised by gangs for the purposes of recruitment and promotion.
- The impact of drill music.
- The speed and reach of communication in terms of violence online and it's 'spill over' into the real world.

However, there is an evident lack of understanding of how online tensions 'spill' offline, both in the literature and primary research. The research also found that there are very few current interventions that have been developed to address social media driven violence, with those developed often being disjointed. The research suggests that future interventions regarding social media and violence should be multi stakeholder, individualised and both preventive and reactive. Some potential future interventions around social media and violence were identified, with those consulted within the research proposing the use of social media as a means of intervention through mass media campaigns, similar to those surrounding smoking and wearing seatbelts. Other recommendations were made, including the need for further educational and training programmes for young people from an early age and other stakeholders such as parents and professionals who work with young people.

Nationally, we have seen increasing levels of research into the subject, which has helped demonstrate just how much the national lockdowns exacerbated concerns about social media and online trauma. Research published in 2021 showed that 97% of Catch22's child sexual exploitation referrals have an online or social media element, with substantial increases related to online grooming and abuse. The research also involved consultation with young people, which showed that more than 70% of young people had seen content that included videos of suicide, nudity and extreme violence during the national lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. They also described social media as toxic, citing the damaging impact it can have on mental health and wellbeing. However, it is also important to not lose sight of the benefits that the online world can bring, with the young people in this work specifying the positive impact it can have on their education, social lives and in their identity. Several recommendations were offered by these young people, with some of the most notable being:

- Young people want to see **better training** for professionals and guardians in relation to online behaviour.
- Young people felt responsible to **report content**, but also felt the 'damage' had already been done.

- Children and young people want to see **improved monitoring, swift action and accountability** from tech organisations, rather than the responsibility being placed on the user.
- Police are 'one step behind' developments in technology and so need to develop **stronger relationships** with tech companies.

In order to respond to and advance our understanding of this increasingly important vector of violence in West Yorkshire, the VRU has commissioned a research partner to explore the links between social media and violence & vicarious online trauma. The research will provide insights and recommendations to be actioned, as well as maximising the voice of diverse young people in our community to inform the development of a co-produced response to the influence of social media on violence.

Some early findings have been identified from reviewing existing literature and some initial engagement with young people and professionals, which include:

- Research consistently links social media use with **poor mental outcomes** in young people.
- Research indicates that social media does play a role in escalating violence, but only when **combined with other factors**, such as existing SEMH needs.
- The **design of social media** enhances risk of mental health problems as well as risk of violence.
- **Poor mental health** is the most researched negative outcome of social media use for young people, and violence-prevention interventions around social media use should take account of this.
- Given the impracticalities of removing all harmful content from social media and/or preventing young people from accessing this content, interventions should focus on increasing support to **help young people use social media safely** and protect their mental health.

Key findings

- 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.
- As noted in both Catch 22's recent research and the University of Leeds dissertation, **young people want to see better training for professionals and guardians in relation to online behaviour.**
- Our commissioned research into social media and violence & vicarious online trauma will provide invaluable insights into this subject and **will allow us most appropriately respond to the influence of social media on violence.**

Violence in Custody

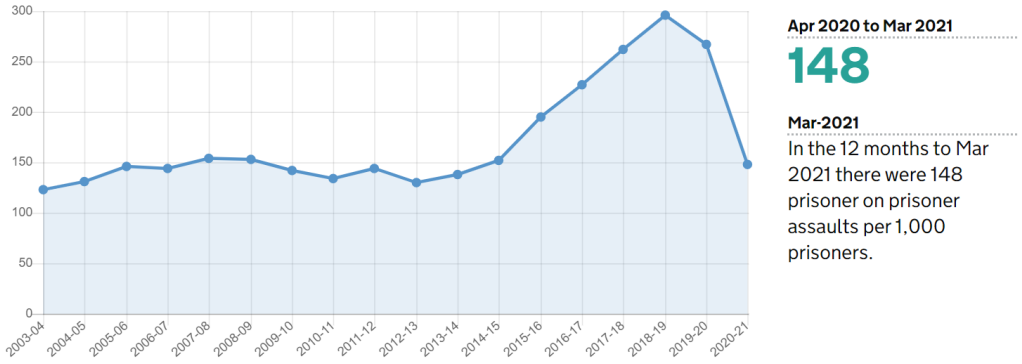
Almost half of people in custody have been sentenced due to a violent or sexual offence according to Ministry of Justice data. This figure is largely unchanged over the last twelve months.

Percentage of sentenced prison population by offence type

Violence against the person	Sexual offences	Drug offences	Theft offences	Robbery offences	Other offences
30%	18%	16%	10%	10%	16%

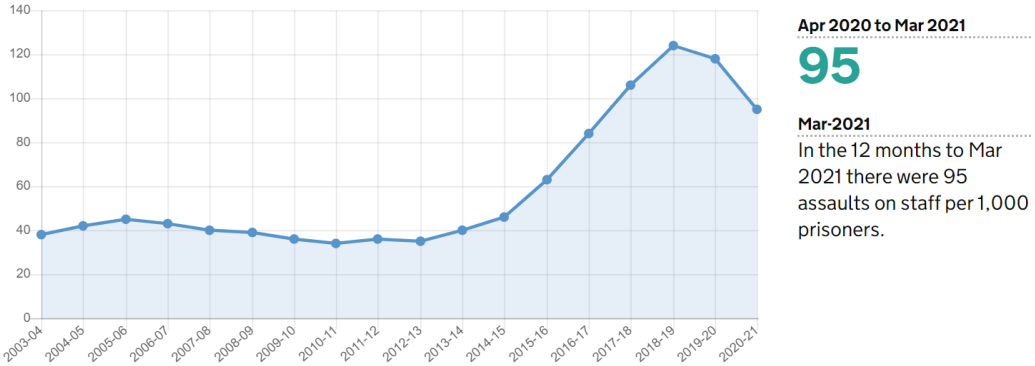
Prisoner on prisoner assaults

Violence within the custodial estate fell sharply over the last year. The graph below indicates the average number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults per 1000 prisoners in England and Wales. The average rate for 2020/21 was **148** assaults per 1000 prisoners. This rate is down from 2019/20 where the rate was 267 assaults per 1000 prisoners. It is likely that this fall can be attributed to extended periods of Covid-related restrictions in custodial facilities, with detainees unable to socialise due to the ongoing public health risk.



Prisoner on staff assaults

The rate of prisoner on staff assaults also fell over the last year, with **95** assaults on staff per 1000 prisoners, down from 118 a year previously. Again, the reasons for this fall are likely to be related to Covid-related restrictions within prisons.



Violent Crime

Over the 32-month period that VRUs have been funded to the end of November 2021, Most Serious Violence (MSV) as a category[1] increased by 9.5% in West Yorkshire, an increase seen almost entirely against those victims over 25 years of age (an increase of just 3 crimes against those under 25).

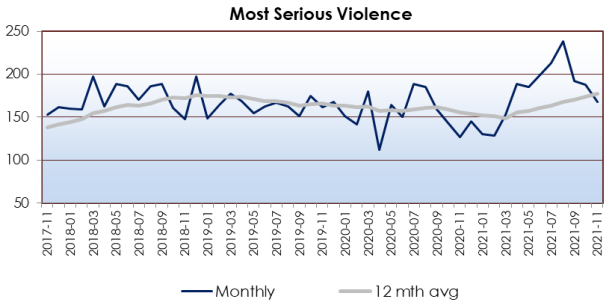


Figure 31 – Rolling 12 month average for Most serious violence

There was an initial drop seen in early 2020 when the country went into the first national lockdown and lower levels recorded than historically experienced over the subsequent festive period. Coming into the Summer months of 2021 MSV levels rose quickly, before beginning to reduce heading into Winter.

Over that same period, non-domestic homicides reduced by 21.9% and crime involving a sharp implement also reduced (1.8%). Knife/sharp implement enabled robbery fell by 13.2% including a 3.3% reduction where the victim was under 25, some 424 fewer victims combined.

Looking comparatively at the 12-months to the close of November 2021 against the previous 12-month period, we see a 13.1% increase in section 18 wounding – an additional 231 victims. Notably, 30% of these wounding crimes were against those under the age of 25 which was an increase of 12.6% year on year.

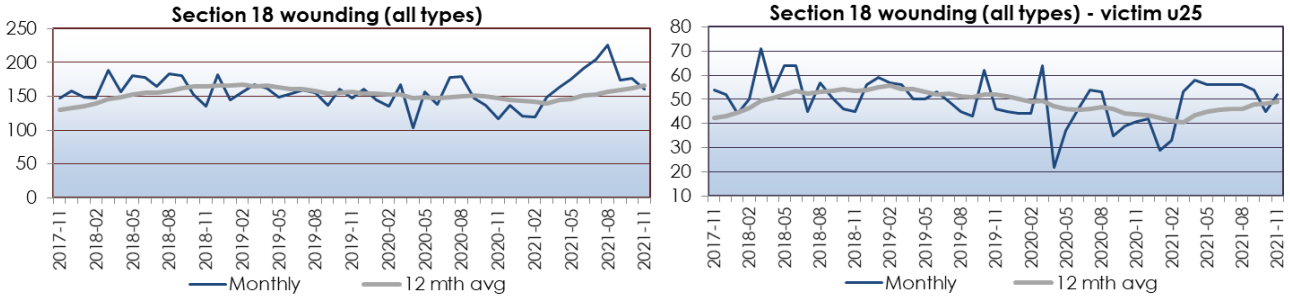


Figure 32 – Rolling 12 month average for Section 18 Wounding offences in West Yorkshire and those where the victim was under 25

Also increased over the 12-months are crimes for possession of weapons, up 8.7%. This crime type will have no doubt been impacted by the proactive work of the Operation Jemlock teams who are deploying daily into hotspot areas around West Yorkshire to prevent and deter crime and have seized and removed over 1,000 weapons from our streets in the process.

[1] As well as those most serious assaults (wounding), Most Serious Violence includes Murder, Attempted Murder, Manslaughter, Infanticide, Child Destruction, Causing Death by Dangerous Driving, Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking.

Knife Crime

Between October 2020 and September 2021 there were over 2200 recorded knife crime offences in West Yorkshire. During this period, a slight increase in knife crime offences is evident. The highest number of offences were seen in October 2020, June 2021, and August 2021. These peaks coincide with gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions and summer breaks from education, which may have contributed to elevated offences numbers. Despite the increase, even the highest figures seen during this period are still below pre-pandemic levels where the monthly average in 2019 was just over 200 knife crime offences per month.

During the analysed time period, Leeds District accounts for 40% of all offences, Bradford 26%, and Kirklees 16%. Wakefield and Calderdale had lower levels of knife crime at 11% and 7% respectively.

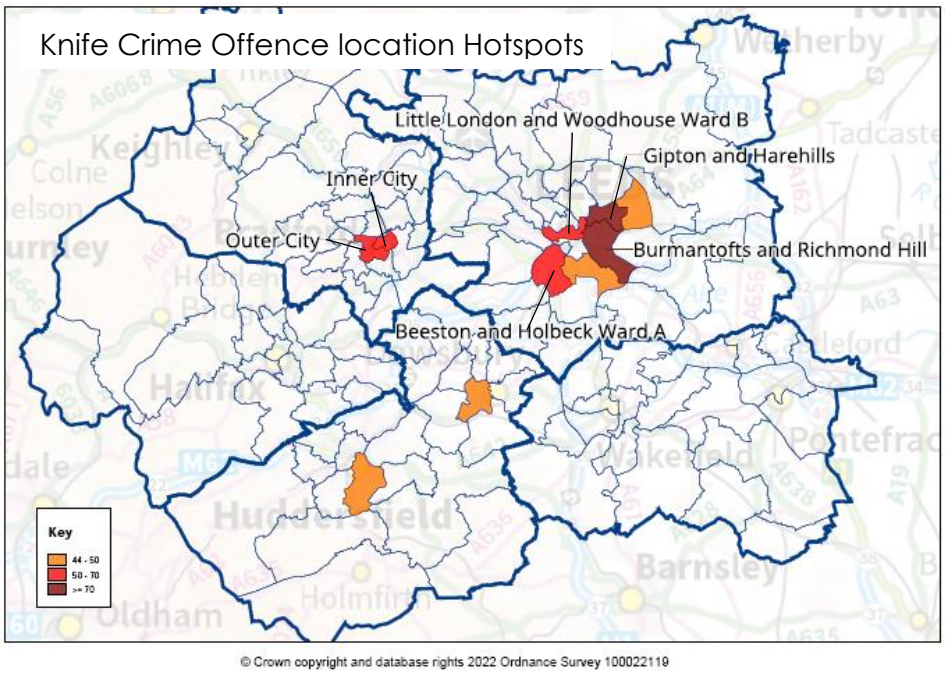


Figure 33 - Knife Crime hotspot locations across West Yorkshire

Four offence types accounted for 93% of all knife crimes in West Yorkshire. Robbery of Personal Property and Wounding or Other Act Endangering Life accounted for almost half of all knife crime offences, each contributing roughly 25%. These offences were followed by Other Wounding (24%) and Threat or Conspiracy to Commit Murder (19%). Other crime types include Robbery of Business Property, Rape and Harassment.

National decreases in knife crime have been reported, driven by decreases in robberies (ONS, 2021). This correlation has been associated with Covid-19 lockdowns and social restrictions. However, this does not hold accurate for West Yorkshire as the months with the highest reported number of robberies (November 2020, December 2020, and August 2021) not directly aligning with the months with the highest reported number of knife crime offences.

Of the knife crime offences reported to West Yorkshire Police, 28% occurred during a domestic incident.

69% of all knife enabled crime victims were male. Other than 'Knife related Rape' and 'Other Sexual Offences' where 90% of victims where female, 'knife related common assault' was the only other type of knife crime where most victims (67%) were female.

Where a self-defined ethnicity was captured, 73% of victims defined as White, 16% Asian and 5% as Black. The victim's self-defined ethnicity was not recorded for 27% of victims.

15% of knife crime victims were under 18, with 36.5% of all victims being under 25.

Where offenders were known, 90% were male. Of those offenders under 18, 99% were male, reducing to 94% when looking at offenders under 25.

Where an ethnicity was recorded (95% of offenders) 69% were recorded as White, 16% Asian and 7% Black. These proportions differ slightly when only considering offenders under 25, of which, 56% White, 19% Asian and 14% were Black.

Unemployed was the recorded occupation for 59% of knife crime offenders, followed by Student (including 'schoolboy' and 'schoolgirl'), accounting for 13% of offenders. This is unsurprising due to the average age of offenders.

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. Slightly more females were recorded for possession and accounted for 13% of offenders.

Relationship between offender and victim

Where offenders were known, 34% were strangers to the victim, 28% acquaintances, 14% partners and 11% were ex-partners. An additional 10% of knife crimes were between family members. Offenders under 18 were more likely to be strangers to their victim (63%) compared with offenders under 25 (42%).

A third (32%) of under 25 knife crime offences occurred in the same locality ward area the offender resided in.

A quarter of offenders under 18 came from the same ward as their victim. This increases to 30% when offenders are under age 16. Of the female offenders, 40% came from the same ward as their victim, this is considerably higher than male offenders (26%).

Wakefield had the highest number (63%) of offenders under 25 who offended within their own ward. Whereas Bradford had the highest number of offenders under 25 who came from outside the ward where they offended.

Offender locations

The highest prevalence of knife crime is in Leeds (Burmantofts & Richmond Hill, Gipton & Harehills and Little London & Woodhouse Wards), followed by Bradford (Outer and Inner City Wards) and Kirklees (Newsome and Dewsbury West Wards).

Whilst Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward had the highest prevalence of knife crime, it was also the ward with the most known knife crime offenders (13%). Of the wards which have

the most known offenders, seven were also included in the top ten knife crime offence locations.

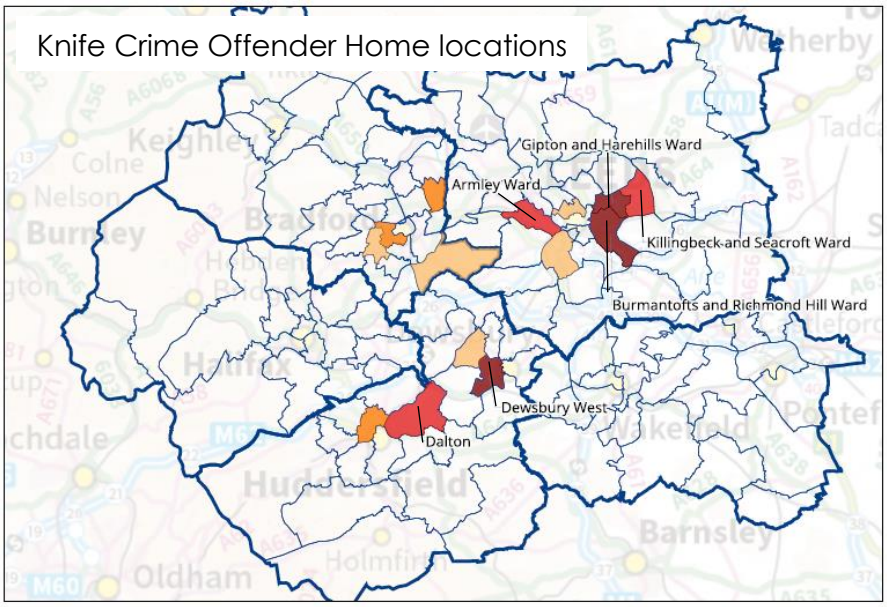


Figure 34 - Knife crime offender home address hotspots

Gun Crime

Just under 400 gun crime offences were recorded in West Yorkshire between October 2020 and September 2021, which was a drop from over 500 offences in the previous year.

Leeds (30%) and Bradford (29%) have the highest count of gun crime incidents in West Yorkshire, followed by Kirklees (17%), Wakefield (14%) and Calderdale (8%).

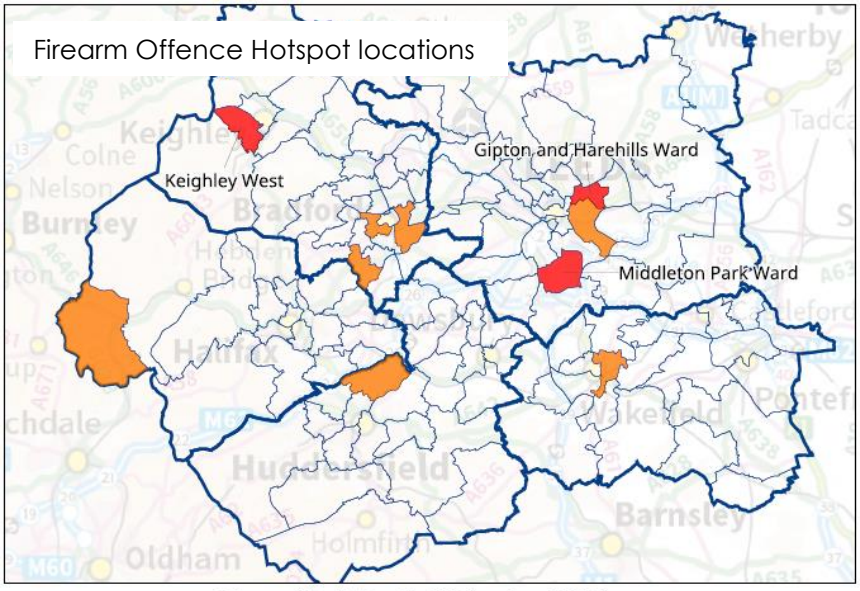


Figure 35 - Firearms offence hotspot locations

The most common offence category linked to gun crime was criminal damage (24%). These offences mostly related to weapons being fired at people's homes. This was followed by

other less serious (where the weapon was not discharged) offences (17%); most of which were possession of firearms 'with intent'. The offences predominantly involved the use of BB guns, pellet guns or (possible) imitation firearms used to threaten/intimidate the victim.

Of the gun crime offences reported to West Yorkshire Police:

- 95% of known firearms perpetrators were male
- 60% of known perpetrators were White, followed by 18.3% Asian and 9.7% were Black.

Under 25s make up 50% of firearms offenders in West Yorkshire, with the most common age of firearms offenders being age 10-14. The prevalence of BB guns and such weapons may account for the significant number of children in the data.

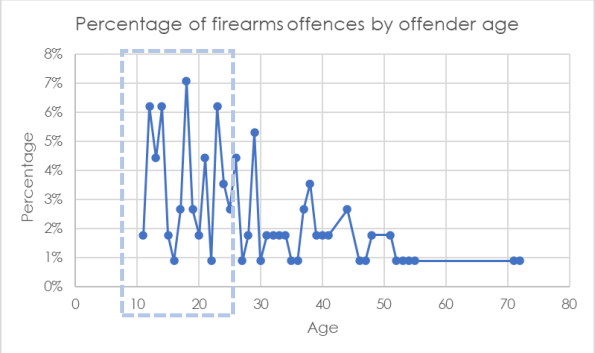


Figure 36 - Firearms offences by Age (where offender is known)

Most perpetrators (39%) were classified as a 'stranger' or unknown to the victim, with 31% classified as an acquaintance.

The majority (45%) of offender's occupation status was 'unemployed', which is repeatedly seen as the most common occupation status across the other crime types, highlighting the correlation between violent crime and (un)employment. Nearly a quarter (24.49%) were students (including 'schoolboy' and 'schoolgirl').

Domestic Abuse

Between October 2020 and September 2021 there were over 54,000 recorded domestic abuse offences in West Yorkshire. West Yorkshire Police define domestic abuse as patterns or incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse.

During the period analysed, an increase in domestic offences is apparent. A 6% increase has also been seen nationally, the Crime Survey for England and Wales shows 846,235 offences (excluding fraud) were flagged as domestic abuse-related in the year ending June 2021. This included over 687,000 violence against the person offences.

In West Yorkshire the highest number of offences were seen in May 2021 (over 4800 offences) and July 2021 (just over 5000 offences). The peaks coincide with gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions and the delayed 2020 UEFA European Championship, both of which may have contributed to elevated offences numbers. Whilst sporting events do not directly cause domestic abuse, high levels of alcohol consumption and emotionally charged events are associated with escalated prevalence of domestic abuse (Williams, 2014).

Throughout the pandemic, Covid-19 has been associated as a causal factor for an escalation in domestic abuse reports (Women's Aid, 2020). The lockdowns were expected to have myriad worrying outcomes for domestic abuse victims. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children who see, hear, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse are also classified as victims. In this analysis, children are not included as victims.

During the analysed period, Harassment and Common Assault accounted for over 60% of all domestic violence reports (33% and 28%). Other Wounding and Criminal Damage constituted an additional 17% and 7% respectively.

Of the domestic abuse offences recorded, 34% occurred in Leeds, 27% in Bradford, 17% in Kirklees, 14% in Wakefield and 8% in Calderdale.

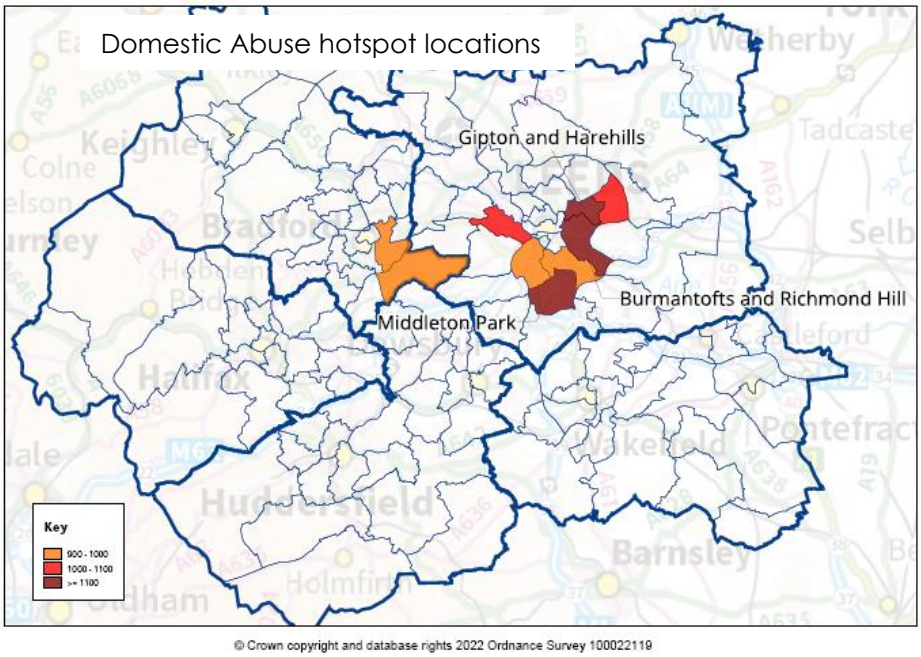


Figure 37 - Domestic Abuse Hotspot locations

Most domestic abuse offences occurred in a residence with 78% occurring in a house and 9% in a flat. An additional 9% of offences occurred on a road.

Where offenders were known, Leeds District accounts for 33% of all offenders, Bradford 25% and Kirklees 15%. Wakefield and Calderdale have lower levels at 14% and 9% respectively.

There are similarities between the offence location and locality ward area the offender resided in. This is unsurprising as 43% of known offenders were ex-partner with the victim, 27% current partners, 10% sons, 5% parents and 4% brothers. These figures demonstrate that almost a fifth of domestic abuse in the analysed period was commissioned by family members.

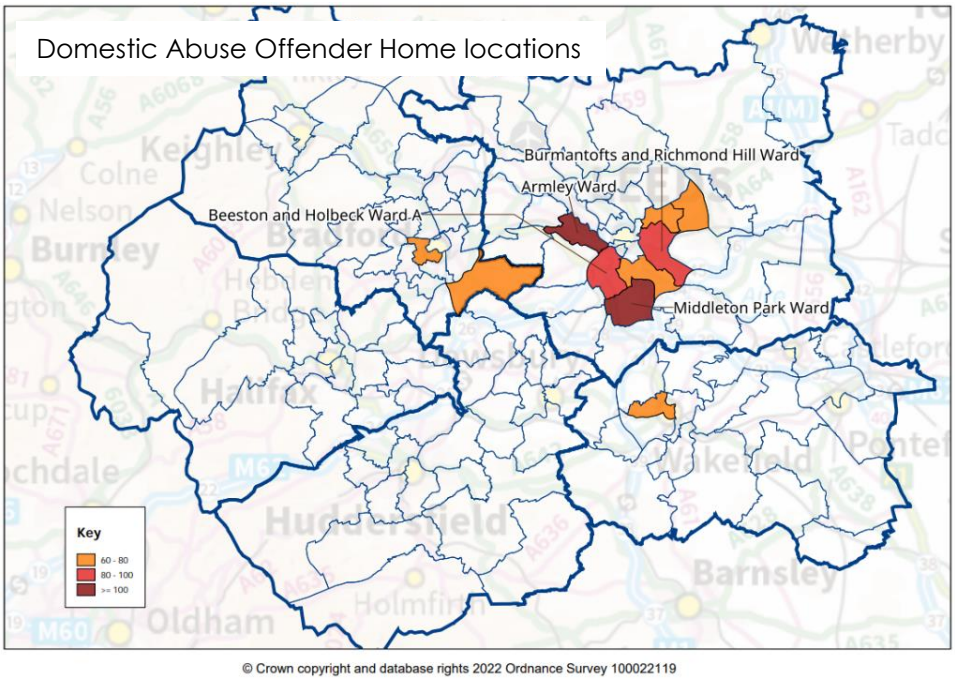


Figure 38 - Home Address Hotspots of known DA offenders

Where an offender was known, 89% were male. The age of offenders ranged from 10 to 77 years, with 34 being the average age of male offenders and 32 being the average age for female. Almost 58% of offenders were aged between 26 to 40 and 24% were under 25.

Females account for 74% of victims of domestic abuse offences. This proportion has changed in recent years with males now accounting for 26% of victims, up from around 20% in 2015. Over two thirds of victims (68%) were under 40, of which 22% were under 25. This is somewhat unsurprising as findings from the None in 3 Research Centre suggest those aged between the 16-24 years old experience the highest rates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) out of any age group.

Where a self-defined ethnicity was captured (96% of offenders), 81% of those offenders were recorded as White, 12.5% Asian, 3% Black. Victim's self-defined ethnicity was not recorded on 17,242 occasions (38% of victims). Where data was captured, 80% of victims were recorded as White, 13.4% Asian, 3% Black.

The majority (52%) of offender's occupation status was 'unemployed', which is repeatedly seen as the most common occupation status across the other crime types, highlighting the association between violent crime and unemployment.

Of the domestic abuse offences reported to West Yorkshire Police:

- 10 offences included a Forced Marriage flag;
- 66 offences included an Honour Based Abuse flag and;
- Alcohol and drugs were flagged on 12% and 5% of domestic violence offences.

It is to be noted that although flags have been used for some offences, it is still likely underused in the crime recording process. Therefore, findings using flags should be treated with relative caution. Nonetheless, they provide some evidence of violent cultural practices in West Yorkshire.

In July 2021, the UK Government published their Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. Whilst creating a new policing lead, the strategy encourages all police forces and their partners to prioritise reducing VAWG, including domestic abuse. A key theme in this strategy is that it is gendered offences should be heavily offender orientated to ensure perpetrators recognises the culpability of their actions.

Sexual Assault

Over 5,000 sexual assault offences were recorded between October 2020 and September 2021. During this period there were fluctuations but an increase in sexual assaults is evident. Increases in sexual assault reports were also seen nationally. For the year ending June 2021, police data showed an 8% increase in sexual offences with 164,763 offences reported.

Despite the increases in sexual assault reports it is likely that sexual assault figures are still underestimates. Findings from the None in 3 (Ni3) research centre explains that women are unlikely to report rape because they are hesitant to label their experiences as rape. This is primarily due to their experiences not involving physical coercion or violence. For the year ending March 2020, ONS figures suggest fewer than one in six (16%) reported sexual assault to the police. Embarrassment and belief that police could not help them were also cited as reasons for not reporting sexual assault.

Leeds (35%) and Bradford (25%) have the highest count of sexual assault offences in West Yorkshire, followed by Kirklees (16%), Wakefield (14%) and Calderdale (10%).

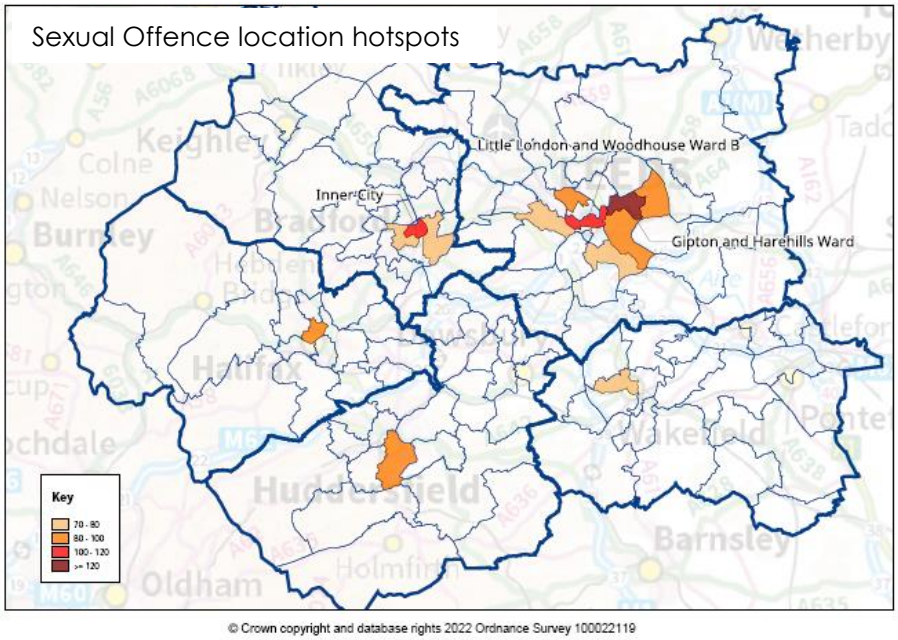


Figure 39 - Hotspots for sexual offences across West Yorkshire

Similar to other offences, the highest number of sexual assaults in West Yorkshire were in May and July whereas February saw the lowest number of sexual assaults. This was relatively consistent across all five districts.

During the analysed period, 60% of sexual assaults were recorded as rape and 40% other sexual offences. Of the sexual assaults recorded, 39% had the crime code 'Rape of a

female aged 16 and over', 34% 'Sexual assault on a female aged 13 and over', 15% were 'Rape of a female child under 16' and 6% were recorded as 'Sexual assault on a male aged 13 and over'.

Of the sexual assault offenders identified:

- 97% were male;
- 52% of offenders were under 30, of which 26% of offenders were under 25;
- 33% were strangers to the victim, 30% acquaintances, 11% partners,11% were ex-partners and 6% were parents;
- Where self-defined ethnicity was captured (95% of offenders), 64% of offenders were white, 22% Asian and 6% Black

36% of offenders resided in Leeds, 25% Bradford, 20% Kirklees, 10% Calderdale and 8% Wakefield.

There are slight differences between location of the sexual assault offence and the offender's locality ward. However, this data is likely to be skewed due to the low number of identified offenders compared to the number of sexual assault offences.

88% of sexual assault victims were female. The age range of sexual assault victims was broad, however 60% of victims were under 25. The age groups 11-15 years and 16-20 age groups accounted for the highest number of victims.

Most sexual offences occurred in a house or flat (64%), 8% on a street/road, 3% in a park or garden and 2% in schools. A weapon was not used in 88% of offences, however the use of a weapon was not known in 10% of offences.

Violence with Injury

Around 15000 Violence with Injury (VWI) crimes were recorded between October 2020 and September 2021.

Leeds district experienced the highest level of VWI crime, accounting for 34%. Bradford had the second highest levels, with 26%. Kirklees and Wakefield both had 15%, though Kirklees had a slightly higher total. Calderdale had 10% of West Yorkshire's WVI crimes.

81% of all Violence with Injury offences were Section 47 Assaults. The more severe injury crime of 'section 18 assault' formed just 4% of this category. 37% of violence with injury crimes were against those under the age of 25 which was an increase on the previous year.

Gipton and Harehill in Leeds had the highest number of VWI crimes, with 3% occurring here. The other wards in West Yorkshire which had 2% of the VWI crimes were, Little London and Woodhouse (Leeds), Town Ward (Calderdale), Newsome (Kirklees), Inner City Ward A (Bradford) and Burmantofts and Richmond ward (Leeds).

Where a location qualifier was recorded, 36% of violence with Injury occurred on a street/road and 30% took place in a house or flat.

Most victims (63%) were male, with 37% female. Where an ethnicity was self defined, 80% of victims were white, 12% Asian and 3% Black.

Where offenders were known, 76% were White, 13% Asian and 5% Black. 75% of offenders were male. 20% of offenders were under 25. 30-40 years was the peak age group for offending of this type.

40% of offenders were unemployed.

Health Impact

Research has shown that that up to 90% of ambulance records for violent incidents did not appear in police datasets. The same study showed that less than 5% of A&E presentations for violence do not show up in police records (Sutherland et al. 2021). Accordingly, it is important to layer multiple data sets to aid our understanding of the scale and nature of violence.

In order to develop our understanding in this area, the VRU have worked in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University to build a partnership data hub with monthly feeds from a number of partners.

Information from Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) allows us to map the rates of assault related injuries (per 100,000 population) across West Yorkshire.

Leeds City Centre, Armley & Wortley, Central Halifax & Boothtown, Huddersfield Leeds Road & Far Town and Wakefield Central are the top 5 Middle-Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) for paramedic attendances.

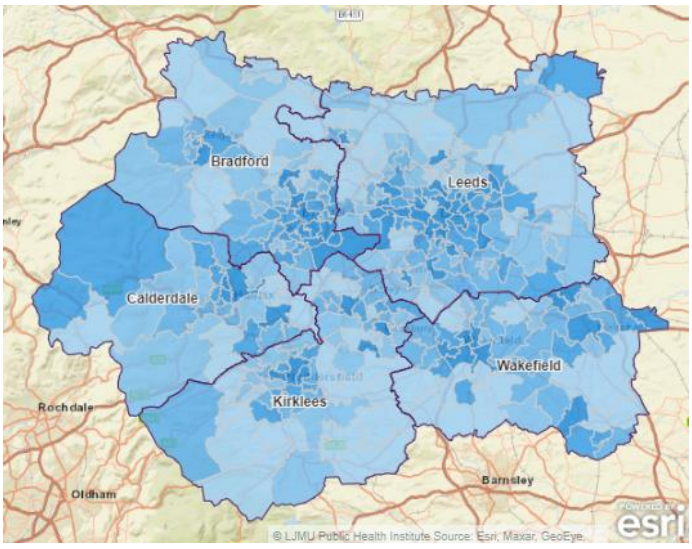


Figure 40 - Yorkshire Ambulance Service assaulted related attendance rates across West Yorkshire (per 100,000 population)

Attendance data for November 2020 to end of October 2021 perhaps unsurprisingly shows both a large summer peak, a smaller peak in December with regular weekend peaks (into early hours of Sunday mornings) in attendance rates. Where age and gender data were captured, 25-29 year olds are most commonly attended to.

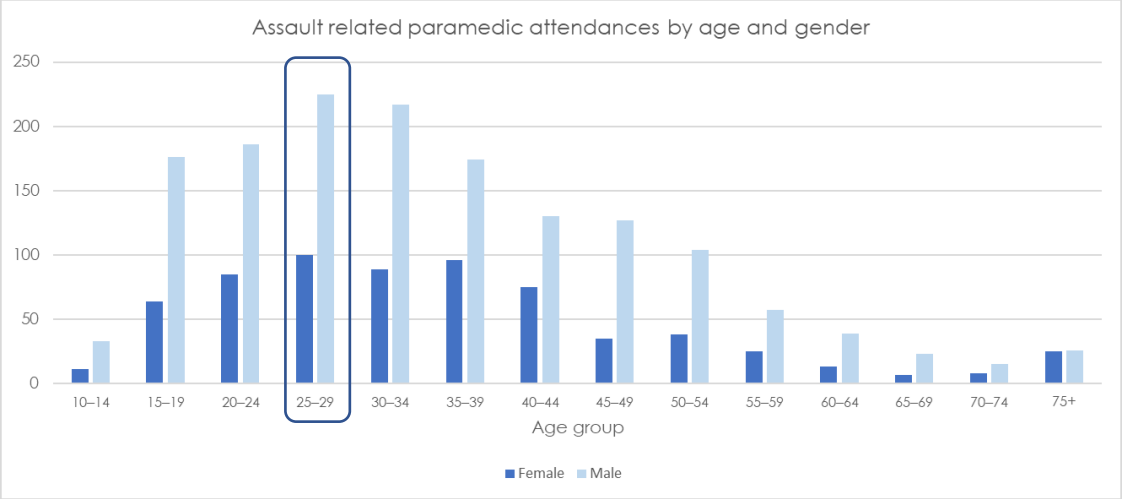


Figure 41 Assault related paramedic attendances by age and gender

These peaks correspond with hospital admissions data from Public Health England. These data further add to the picture YAS data portrays showing that 62% of hospital admissions were for Assault by bodily force (Locally ranging from 60-70% across the 5 districts). Assault by a sharp object was the admission diagnosis code in 14% of hospital admissions, this remained constant across Bradford & Calderdale, but fell to 8% in Wakefield and rose to 17 and 21% in Leeds and Kirklees respectively.

17% of male and 15% of female hospital admissions defined as violence were coded as wholly attributable to alcohol by diagnosis coding. 35% of male and 29% of female admissions defined as violence were coded as related to substance misuse.

In contrast to low recording of mental health as a factor in crime data, the PHE data shows 48% of male and 50% of female admissions defined as violence also included a diagnosis code for mental health.

Homicide

There has been a downward trend in the numbers of non-domestic homicide crimes recorded over the last 5 full financial years. With 4 months of data to go in the 2021/22 financial year, numbers of non-domestic homicide were just 1 crime behind the previous year.

In the last 12 months to the end of November 2021, 44% were recorded in Bradford, 28% in Kirklees, 17% in Leeds and 11% in Calderdale. No non-domestic homicides were recorded in Wakefield.

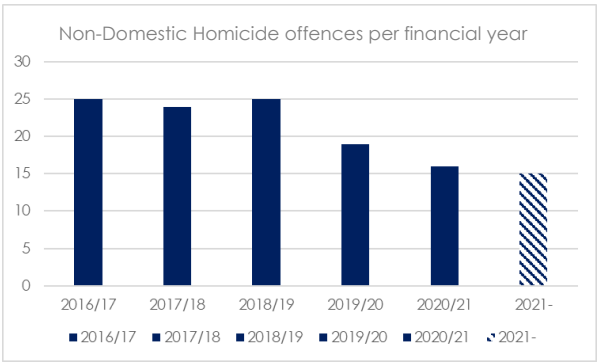


Figure 43 - Non-domestic Homicide offences per financial year (2021/22 year incomplete)

Where offenders were known for non-domestic homicides over the same period, 39% of victims were under 25.

Looking at the 2-year period ending September 2021 including domestic homicide crimes, the youngest offender was 15 years of age.

Children and young people (up to 25 years old) were responsible for 31% of homicides (where an offender was known). Those aged 30-39 were responsible for 38%.

Where an offenders ethnicity was self defined, 57% identified as White and 39% as Asian.

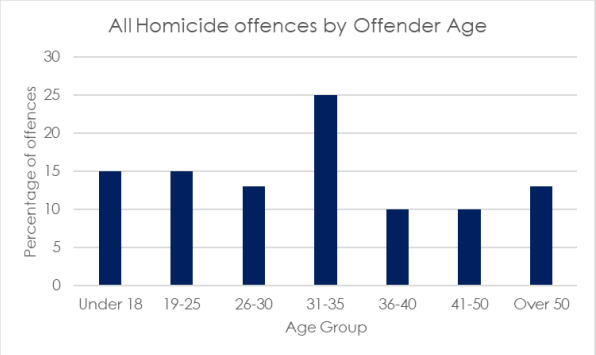


Figure 44 - Homicide offences by offender age

83% were male and 17% female.

Where there were multiple offenders linked to a crime, 35% of those offenders were under 25.

Youth Violence

Youth Violence in West Yorkshire remains notably lower than pre-pandemic levels, likely impacted by periods of national and local COVID related lockdowns, as monthly offence numbers diminished during periods of restriction.

Youth Violence Monthly Average Comparisons (Oct 20 – Sep 21)		
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
836	718	732

Leeds accounted for 34% of all offences, Bradford 26% and Kirklees 17%. Wakefield and Calderdale have lower levels at 14% and 10% respectively, with the following map indicating geographic locations of offences.

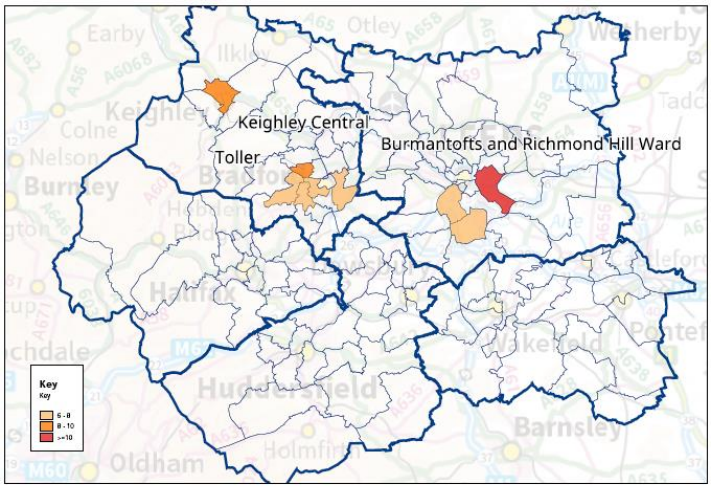


Figure 45 - Youth Violence hotspot locations

Removing historic violent crimes and focussing on crimes where the offender was 16 years and under (school age), 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. A potential explanation for the early weekday peak may be the desire to resolve issues developing over the weekend.

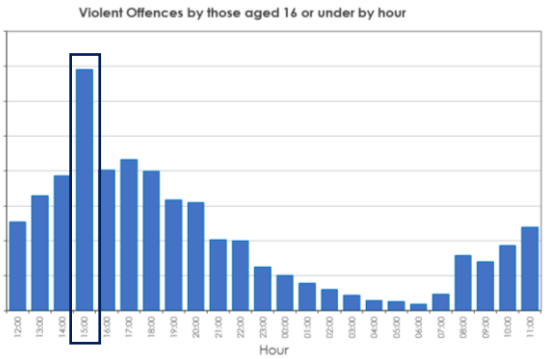


Figure 46 - Violent offences by hour - Offender 16 or under

54% of youth violence where a location qualifier is available was linked to a house/flat/bedsit type of location, followed by 29% in open space, then 5% in schools.

Looking at the most prominent offence type for youth violence, 68% were Section 47 Assaults (Actual Bodily Harm), of these 16% involved the use of a weapon. Rape and Sexual Offences make up 20% of all youth violence offences, falling from 24% in the previous year.

Almost a third of youth violence offences were flagged as domestics (32%). For ages 18-24, the most common relationships between offenders and victims in these cases were partners and ex-partners. For under 18s, sons (20%) and daughters (14%) made up to 34% of domestic. Anecdotally, this type of child to parent violence is largely hidden and the numbers are likely to be a fraction of the actual frequency of this type of offending due to a reluctance to bring ones child into the criminal justice system, potentially harming their future chances and the shame and stigma that can be associated with feeling a parent unable to manage a child's behaviour. A recent study showed that this type of child on parent violence also increased during lockdown.

When looking at the ages of offenders, 14 & 15 year olds make up 16% of youth offenders[2].

The number of offenders at each age rises quickly from 10 to 14 years before falling slightly, peaking once more around age 24.

Comparing to the previous 12-month period, there has been a slight shift in offender age over the last year, with youth violence becoming more prevalent amongst the younger ages and this change further emphasises the importance of interventions being targeted as upstream as possible.

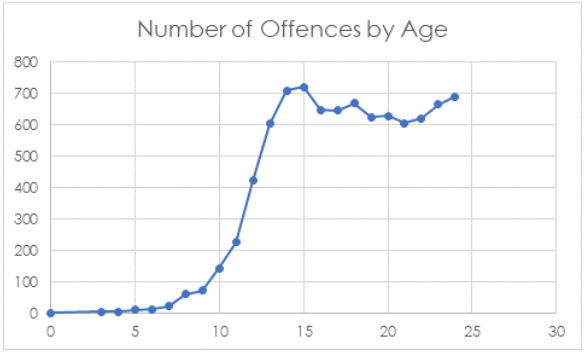


Figure 47 - Number of Violent offences by Age (Under 25 cohort)

Looking at ethnicity of Youth Violence offenders, for those which were recorded, 73% were white, followed by 16% Asian, 6% from mixed ethnic backgrounds and 5% Black.

75% of violence related youth offenders were male and 25% female. The gender of youth violence victims was very similar at 74% male and 26% female.

[2] Those under 25

Robbery (Personal)

Over the period that VRU's have been funded (32 months to end of November 2021), there has been a 16.7% reduction in robbery offences. Splitting the category into those offences against people and those against businesses, there was a 14.5% reduction in personal robbery and 31% reduction in business robbery.

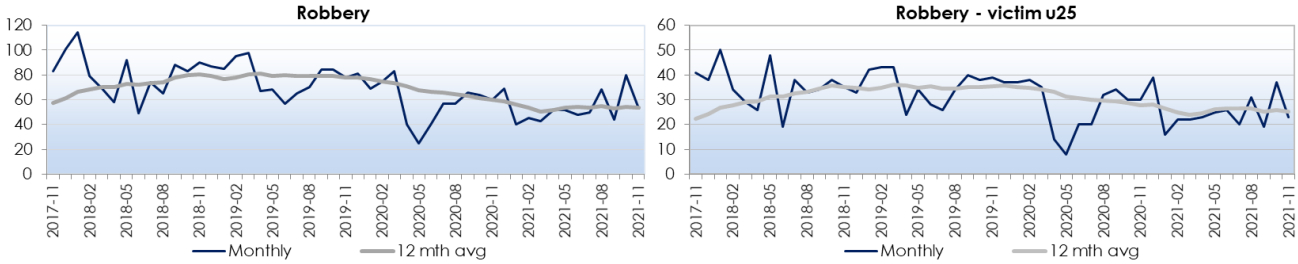


Figure 48 - Numbers of robbery offences by month for all offences and for those where the victim is under 25 years old

Reductions were seen across all districts over this period with the exception of Wakefield where there was a 6.4% increase in personal robbery.

Robbery rates were significantly impacted during the periods of national lockdown (pandemic) whereby following the victim-offender-location pyramid, there was less opportunity for crime given the reduction of people on the streets who could be targeted. Unsurprisingly for personal robbery, mobile phones and cash are most commonly taken.

Looking at Personal robbery offences in the 12-month period to November 2021, 40% of these crimes were against victims who were under 25.

For the 12-month period to September 2021, the majority of personal robbery offences took place in open public spaces, streets, parks and woods.

The greatest proportion of offences occurred in Leeds district (45%). The next highest area was Bradford with a much lower 26%. Kirklees recorded 15%, 10% in Wakefield and 5% in Calderdale.

Little London and Woodhouse ward B in Leeds saw the most offences of personal robbery recorded.

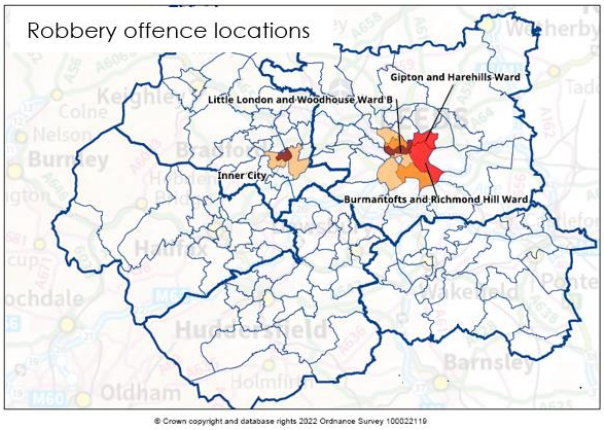


Figure 49 - Robbery offence location heat map

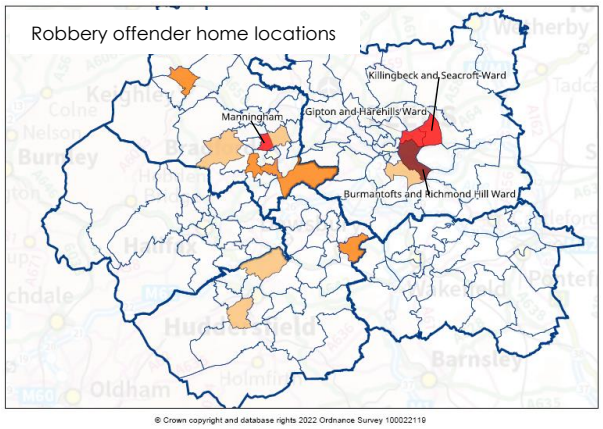


Figure 50 - Known Robbery offender Home Locations heat map

Examining where known offenders reside, the nearby Burmantofts and Richmond Hill in Leeds was the top ward, although it is difficult to understand from data if the offender home location hotspots are influenced by police patrols (more patrols allocated to hotspot crime areas resulting in increased arrest rates)

A bladed weapon was present during the commission of at least 28% of the recorded personal robberies.

Where gender is concerned, 91% of known offenders were male compared to 76% of victims. Therefore, whilst women make up a small proportion of the known offender group, they make up quarter of the victim group.

In West Yorkshire, robbery is predominantly a youth-based crime type as 61% of offenders were under 25.

Where both an offender was known and a self-defined ethnicity recorded, 70% were white, 17% Black, 5% Asian and 8% of mixed ethnic backgrounds.

53% of offenders were identified as unemployed, which as identified earlier in the document can be a risk factor to involvement in violence. 29% of offenders were either school, college or university students which brings that link to youth crime.

Night-time economy

Isolating violent offences which occurred between 7pm and 5am allows an examination of the night time economy (NTE). For the purposes of this Needs Assessment, we seek to look wider than the traditional definition of the NTE referring to only those crimes that occur inside/on streets outside of licensed premises, fast food outlets and at taxi ranks.

Overnight crime was quarter in October 2020 through March 2021 before rising from just over 600 offences in April to over 950 in July as the country came out of periods of lockdown and schemes such as "eat out to help out" were introduced to support the struggling hospitality industry.

36% of offending was in Leeds, 25% in Bradford, 16% in Wakefield, 14% in Kirklees and 10% in Calderdale.

Calderdale's Town ward and the Little London & Woodhouse B and Gipton and Harehills Wards were the top 3 hotspot areas across West Yorkshire

40% of overnight crimes occurred in public spaces – roads, streets, footpaths. These offences are split into 2 main types; those crimes which took place on the pavements outside licensed premises where people tend to congregate to gain entry, use outside

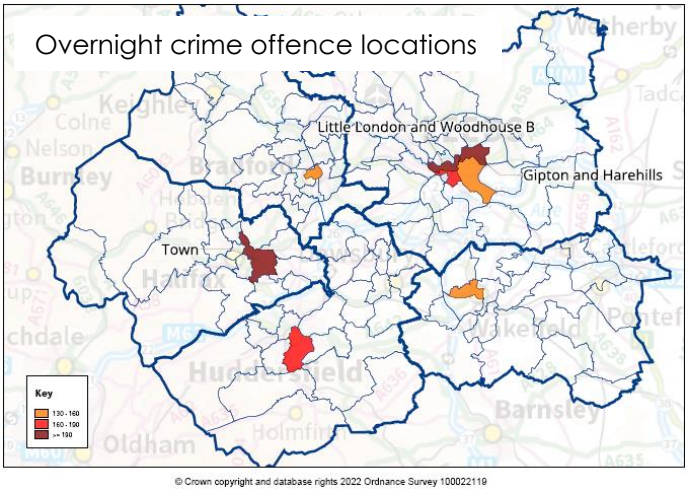


Figure 51 - Hotspot areas for overnight crime in West Yorkshire

smoking areas or whilst leaving premises and those crimes which occurred following leaving a residential address – a fight breaking out into the street. Assault occasioning actual bodily harm is the most common offence type (72%) followed by Section 18 wounding (more serious) offences - 14%.

35% of these crimes occurred within residential properties, similar to those in public spaces, Assault occasioning actual bodily harm was the most common offence type (69%) but there was an increase in sexual offences (including rape) which accounted for 18% of offending in the home during the night-time compared to 6% in public space.

Between 36-40% of offending across each of these location types was against a victim under 25.

Just 10% of overnight violence was linked directly to premises linked to the hospitality

The 'drink involved' and 'drug involved' flags on police systems remains underused, identifying just under 20% of this offending as linked to alcohol and 4% to drugs whilst information within reports would suggest greater numbers. Research to give a greater understanding of the scale to which drink and alcohol is involved in offending would be advantageous.

For overnight violence overall, 42% was against a female and 58% against a male. When looking at victims against the offence setting, the balance sways to more female victims when in a residential setting 55% v 45%.

Offender home ward locations differed from the wards areas offences were committed in, although given the nature of offence locations (many in public spaces and hospitality settings) an element of travel may be required.

19% of known overnight crime offenders were under 25 years old, of this cohort 29% were female and 71% male. In the 25 and over category there were fewer female offenders, reducing to 22 v 78%.

Where an offender was known, 40% of offending was against an acquaintance and 50% were stranger offences.

Vulnerability

Organised crime remains a complex and high harm threat within West Yorkshire. The continued use of 'ultra-violence' to assert ascendency in the gang/OCG culture by very young people has been identified as a significant threat in West Yorkshire and is inextricably linked to knife/firearm crime and the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults.

The use of violence is seen as a primary measure to assert control, gain respect and reinforce territorial advantage over competitors. West Yorkshire Police place considerable importance on the understanding of individuals and groups engaged in serious and organised crime and those that crosscut with most serious violence.

The Violence and Vulnerability Unit, a national team of gang and county line experts were commissioned and jointly funded by the VRU and the Home Office to undertake 3 Locality Reviews (Bradford, Leeds and Kirklees) and a Strategic Framework Assessment.

The Locality Reviews consisted of interviews and focus groups with front-line practitioners to gather information, knowledge and perception, whist building a qualitative picture of the key issues around county lines, gangs, youth violence and drugs. Across the 3 districts, a lot of strong examples of partnership working and good emerging practice were identified, with common recommendations being made to hold visioning events to promote the work in place and encourage the importance of working in partnership.

The Strategic Framework Assessment of West Yorkshire consisted of interviews with senior strategic managers from various agencies to collate a county wide strategic framework to address violence, vulnerability and exploitation across the county.

The assessment of West Yorkshire found a lot of good ongoing work across the 5 districts, showing strong partnership working across a range of disciplines and work streams, including analysis, enforcement, safeguarding and work with young people and school – however it was uneven across the 5 districts. Focusing on the assessment's findings in relation to organised crime, the report found that:

- Gangs and groups operate across West Yorkshire in order to sell class A drugs. Violence and exploitation are a result of their chosen business model. Any preventative strategy has to focus on the demand for these drugs.
- The major driver behind the rise and increase in drug lines across the UK appears to have been a change in the UK class A drug market, which is not yet fully understood in terms of demand, supply and usage.

Illegal drugs use and supply are significantly linked to violence in West Yorkshire, with schools commenting during a VRU survey that drugs had "become the norm in many groups of young people, appear to be easy to obtain and users are very young, for example in Year 7 (11 years old)" whilst another school commented on "the increasing number of our students, especially at a younger age associated with potential drug use and known users in the community"

West Yorkshire Police Programme Precision team manage the response to Organised Crime and produce partnership profiles to aid the multi-agency response to this pervasive issue.

Hate crime

Between October 2020 and November 2021, there were over 9300 hate crime offences in West Yorkshire. When observing the monthly rates of hate crimes, we have seen a continuous increase in recorded hate crime offences in West Yorkshire, rising from an average of 670 per month in Oct 18- Sep 19 to 777 in Oct 20 – Sep 21.

Leeds and Bradford accounted for 37% and 27% of all offences respectively. Kirklees (17%), Wakefield (12%) and Calderdale (8%) had lower numbers of hate crime offences.

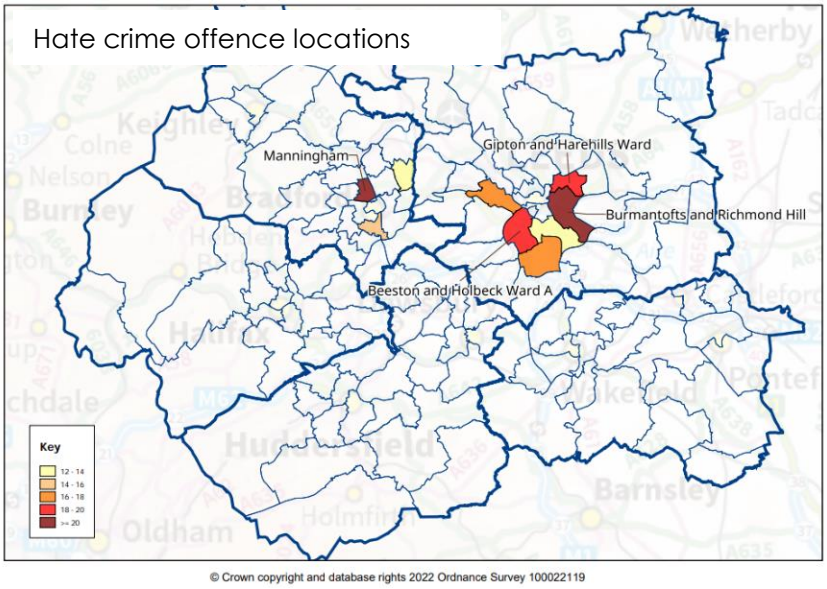


Figure 52 - Heatmap illustrating hotspot locations for Hate Crime in West Yorkshire

Burmantofts and Richmond Hill in Leeds and Manningham in Bradford were the top two areas where hate crime offenders were from, followed by Gipton and Harehills Ward and Beeston and Holbeck Ward A.

The top 4 hotspot wards for hate crime offences in West Yorkshire are Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, Gipton and Harehills Ward, Beeston and Holbeck Ward A and Little London and Woodhouse Ward B.

Racially aggravated harassment and harassment together make up for 77% of all hate crime offences, followed by racially aggravated common assault and common assault accounting for 10% and 4% was attributed to criminal damage. The majority of hate crimes were related to race (70%), followed by sexual orientation and disability.

In comparison to some of the other crime types covered in this document, hate crime does not appear to be a predominately youth-based crime type, with 15% of offences being committed by U25s.

76% of all hate crime offences were committed by males and 24% by females. Where ethnicity has been recorded, 75% of offenders were White, 14% Asian, 7% Black, 3% Mixed Ethnicity and 1% Other Ethnicity.

Community Voice

Community engagement events have been organised by the VRU over the course of the year, alongside community meetings, community advisory groups (CAG) and consultation events. We have used these forums as opportunities to better understand key thematics, ensure our ambitions remain grounded with the needs of the community and to capture local insight.

Delivery

Raising the aspirations of young people was a key topic we raised to try and improve the resilience and wellbeing of community members, to reduce the numbers of young people being drawn into serious violence and criminality. As part of a CAG meeting, members supported the need to build resilience in young people, to help them to react to events/experiences differently and not resort to violence.

When discussing the idea of trauma informed education and trauma informed practices in schools, a member said that there was too much pressure on young people, and concerns were raised that their emotional and mental health was not taken into consideration. *"Schools were so result driven; mental health and well-being was not nurtured, and this should be part of the curriculum."* The group felt it was not a constructive environment, and this in turn made their motivation and engagement worse.

An apprentice youth leader said *"Teachers say you're not going to go anywhere or amount to anything - You'll be working at McDonalds. It can be hard to prove them wrong, but that's where gang members come in, they provide that acceptance."*

The need to **tackle the level of school exclusions** and the harm that this can cause was widely accepted amongst CAG members and young people. This also links into the need for trauma informed practice within schools. During a CAG meeting, a member said that *"the behaviour plans in place in schools were unrealistic"* e.g., being excluded for wearing the wrong shoes was not deemed a strong enough reason. The group felt that Academies were essentially businesses and being paid to educate children which was wrong. A number of the CAG members had experience or professional backgrounds in education settings and the group acknowledged that teachers do want to do more, but that Ofsted presents challenges on what they're measured on and therefore where the focuses have to be. A member said, *"pastoral and safeguarding staff don't often agree with policies, but they must follow the school rules. This results in good staff leaving schools and negative outcomes for children"*

From a young person's perspective, one said *"being put in isolation doesn't mean you're a bad kid"*. The group at Appletree Community Allotment in Wakefield felt that young people's needs were often not met in school, there was a lack of support and the right support plans needed to be put in place. These plans should be tailored support and often the staff did not know how to deliver this. *"Disruptive behaviour displayed could be a cry for help."*

Young people were aware of the risks of becoming groomed when they gained more free time after exclusion, *"exclusions play into criminals' hands; children at risk of CCE have less pressure as they are available to crime gangs due to not being in school."*

It was agreed that **social media** is a contributor to violence, and it was discussed that it is a popular way for gangs to recruit new members by showing off their assets and attracting young people. An apprentice youth worker spoke about the need to educate young people on the dangers and that *"Everyone needs to know it's not the high life that it's made out to be".*

A CAG member who is a youth worker said from their experience *"Snapchat was one of the apps that causes the most issues, as messages can be sent but then disappear."* West Yorkshire Police in conjunction with the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Organised Crime Unit ran a series of campaigns with Crimestoppers 'Fearless' on Snapchat and TikTok during 2021 allowing people to find out more about county lines crime and highlighting the risks of potential predatory criminals poaching young people online. Information about crime and offences could also be given anonymously via the website. This campaign was the most successful campaign that Crimestoppers had run in terms of engagement. This could be promoted again to continue supporting our communities.

In relation to promoting violence or online bullying, 'young person A' felt that *"people should be made accountable similar to You Tube where you have to present a passport or a form of ID to be able to verify your age and who you are"*. At a group consultation each young person spoke about the age they personally joined social media regardless of age restrictions that may exist. The ages were predominantly 8-10 with few joining later.

'Young Person C' explained that "*People create groups just to add someone in that they want to start on. And anyone who tries to defend that person gets started on too"*. To provide clarity on this, a group of young people would create a private group or conversation on a social media app and then add someone in with the sole purpose of bullying them, targeting them or starting an argument with them.

Community Recommendations

In addition to engaging groups on the topics were already looking at, we have made sure to seek out their views to understand what else they think that West Yorkshire partners should be focussing on.

When discussing a coproduction project working to tackle knife crime in Kirklees, community members felt that **support to educate parents** about the risks of and to their children being involved in violent crime (conversations have focused on gangs, knife/gun crime specifically) would be beneficial.

Similarly, they discussed that supporting parents/guardians to provide diversionary activities for their children or guidance on how to support them out of a situation should they feel/find their child on the periphery/involved in gangs/violence, would be a positive way to reduce levels of knife crime and violence.

A topic widely raised by communities is the need to tackle the inequalities which impact on violence; mainly poverty and deprivation. When doing a one-on-one consultation with a young person who had lived experience of offending in July 2021, 'Young Person C' started by saying he "felt the police were doing an 'alright job'" but explained further the wider struggles faced by the community he grew up in and why this impacted their involvement

in crime. He felt the main issue, in his experience, had been "experiencing poverty and drug use in the family". He went on to say, *"this isn't the choice of the young person, but that the whole community 'didn't have any money'*. He spoke further about drug problems and said people worried about how they were going to get a job and that "when people were stressed, they used drugs". This led to him being exploited by someone to sell drugs so he could have some kind of income for himself and his family. When asked at the end of the consultation what more could be done, they spoke about needing **support to find credible employment.**

During September 2021 consultation took place regarding the new Police and Crime Plan and the wide range of community safety issues which communities felt were important, 'Member E' felt that Covid had only highlighted the poverty issues which had been ignored for so long and that it had pushed more people below the poverty line.

The notion of there being a 'reluctance to report' was a common theme raised at several consultations throughout the year. Meaning that young people (but also wider communities) would not contact the police or report intelligence to them as being considered a 'snitch' was considered to be far worse. At a CAG meeting, 'Member D' said that talking to the police has serious repercussions and there is a lack of action/no support to deal with these repercussions. They said this will put a lot of young people off engaging. They also said that because a person's name must be put on their statement it also causes people to disengage. 'Member D' clarified *it isn't that communities don't trust the police, it is that they don't trust that they will be protected by the police afterwards*. 'Member E' also said they would be interested in **more education for young people** on this reluctance and that she felt like young people weren't able to stand up for other people due to the repercussions which they might face. She said she felt there would be more progress in crimes if people weren't so intimidated.

When consulting on the school's survey, 'Member G' from CAG raised the reluctance to report culture again and suggested a question could be included in the schools survey about how they [young people] would like to pass on information safely.

At a Safer Kirklees and VRU Reducing Violence Project meeting in December, the group spoke about the need to have **community-led knife amnesties** as involvement from the police can put people off (more trust in community organisations etc.)

A group of young people from Appletree Community Allotment in Wakefield raised **gaming platforms to be considered in social media related work**, drawing attention to chat functions on consoles and within games, citing that "*XBOX is one of the biggest*".

Future research recommendations

- To expand our current understanding of **housing** as both a risk and protective factor. Research should include the role of housing for women and girls, prisoner leavers and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- To explore the theme of **resilience** and how this relates to violence perpetration and/or victimisation. Research may include an exploration of the desire to fit in, succumb to peer pressure, poor choices, drug use or experimentation, fear of failure alongside managing trauma.
- To deepen existing knowledge and understanding of **hate crime** within West Yorkshire, specifically hate crime motivated by race, religion, disability and sexual orientation.
- To develop our current knowledge of **sexual violence** across West Yorkshire with a focus on supporting victims.
- Local research is required to better understand the nuances of the impacts of unemployment, particularly on young people
- Current research reaffirms the prominence of **recreational drug use** and emphasises the importance of identifying effective approaches. Local research is required to understand recreational drugs use and identify good practice.
- To undertake additional research to understand the influence **bereavement** may have with violence. Primarily whether losing family members as a result of violence influences risk of perpetration or increased vulnerability.
- **Disability** and poverty appear to be relational, further examination of this intersection should be considered.
- Further research which examines the **intersectionality of women** in West Yorkshire's local communities. This should include women from the LGBTQIA+ community and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- To explore 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. Exploration of this theme would support existing NTE and VAWG workstreams.
- Further understanding of **stalking and harassment** is required, especially to support the safety planning and risk management of victim.
- There is a clear knowledge gap surrounding **Elective Home Education** and the various impacts it may have on young people in West Yorkshire, which would benefit from further investigation.
- To capture much more data around the key markers of **education inclusion**, which will then be collated and stored centrally in a West Yorkshire 'dashboard' for educational inclusion and be accessible to all relevant partners.

West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Unit

Tackling Violence Together

Tracy Brabin
Mayor
of West Yorkshire