



West Yorkshire
**Violence
Reduction Unit**

West Yorkshire Response Strategy Refresh 2023

Serious Violence: West Yorkshire Strategy for Change

December 2022



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Mayor
of West Yorkshire



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Deputy Mayor
for Policing and Crime

Foreword

The work of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is intrinsically linked to the delivery of my [Police and Crime Plan for West Yorkshire](#) and plays a crucial role.



This is why the VRU Response Strategy Refresh 2023 is such an important tool, as it outlines the framework for preventing and reducing serious violence, putting our partnership approach in motion. Informed by the evidence base of the VRU Needs Assessment, it offers a comprehensive understanding of the issues, local needs and how we will collectively respond to them.

As you will see, this document identifies a number of key objectives and priorities, setting out, how they will be achieved. Each chime closely with my overall goal as Mayor of West Yorkshire, particularly when it comes to the [safety of women and girls](#).

Following the announcement of a multi-year funding deal for the VRU, we are in a stronger position than ever to provide a long-term vision to address serious violence. Crucially, it means that the interventions which we support across our communities can be planned over an extended period, becoming more established and engrained in our neighbourhoods.

You'll read how the 'whole family' and 'trauma informed' approach is fundamental to everything we do, and this has to be embedded and interwoven throughout our multi-agency response.

We cannot make wholesale change in isolation, and it is vital that we use our combined strength to drive change. For instance, one of the most notable points within this latest iteration of the Response Strategy is the nationwide introduction of the Serious Violence Duty. If we get this right here in West Yorkshire, it could be a defining moment in terms of both the effectiveness and potency of our partnership. The Duty means services must work together to a greater extent, sharing key information, intelligence, knowledge and data, whilst capturing the views of local people.

I know that our VRU has already done much in anticipation, having already created an innovative 'Knowledge Hub' and undertaken a number of co-production initiatives within communities.

This is our opportunity, however, to cement that relationship between 'people and power', operating in unison to change cultures and behaviours, which will ultimately save lives.

By jointly agreeing our response and bolstering our partnership links, we can be more informed in tackling the root causes of serious violence.

In adopting this strategy and embracing its principles, it will undoubtedly lead to lasting change, ensuring our county remains safe, just and inclusive.

Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin



In my time as Director of the Violence Reduction Unit, I have seen just how pivotal the VRU Response Strategy has been in navigating our communities through the various challenges. From issues generated by the COVID pandemic to changes in crime trends, it has continued to deliver a clarity and focus to our approach.

This has helped guide us as a West Yorkshire partnership, breaking new ground on both local and national platforms when it comes to tackling serious violence.

The flexibility of the Response Strategy has been its strength and has allowed us to adapt to ever evolving landscapes and scenarios. It ensures that we continue to have our finger on the pulse, understanding what needs to be done and determining exactly how it can be achieved.

What is absolutely clear, is that we cannot not do this alone, particularly as we face a sustained period of economic uncertainty across our communities. The permutations of this cannot be underestimated when we examine the relationship with serious violent crime and much of our research supports this.

The document therefore spells out many of the current issues we must confront and their significance in the context of serious violent crime.

It is the VRU's exclusive insight, however, that puts us in prime position to make a difference for local people, shielding them from harm or exploitation.

Making the right choices and responding in the right way through our funding capabilities and multi-agency influence must be our focus.

The emphasis has to remain upon partnership working. It is vital if we are to make real systemic changes that support the people of West Yorkshire.

I welcome the role that the Serious Violence Duty will play in achieving this and I believe all of our institutions and organisations can subscribe to its purpose.

By delivering upon the Refreshed Response Strategy as a collective, we can continue to move forward in protecting and diverting young people from the scourge of serious violent crime.

**Director of the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit
Jackie Marsh**



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Introduction

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

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

What is serious violence

Definition

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

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

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

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

Why serious violence

Context

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

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

and violence has long been explored including recognition that it can leave young people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health which are both key risk factors for violence.

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

The Covid 19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis has exposed and exacerbated many existing structural and economic inequalities, resulting in significant impact on the health and safety of individuals and communities across West Yorkshire, which will undoubtedly have significant impact for years to come. Under these exceptional circumstances it is even more important to work together to prevent and mitigate harm as a result of adversity and trauma, intervening at the earliest point.

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

Local evidence base

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

We are not however complacent. In West Yorkshire over the last year whilst the most serious violence has remained at similar levels, overall violent crime has increased by 16% compared with the previous 12 months. Although police recorded violence with injury offences are showing a reduction on pre-covid levels, attendances at Emergency Departments with violence related injuries showing in the year ending September 2022 an increase of 6% on the monthly average compared with the year ending September 2019. Knife crime offences have increased by 5% on last year, and by 8% on year ending September 2019. Whilst West Yorkshire is reporting slightly under the national figure for non-domestic homicides for the 6 months to March 2022, between October 2021 and September 2022, overall 26 people lost their lives to violence in West Yorkshire. In purely monetary terms, violence cost in West Yorkshire is just over £1.2 billion in 2022.

Violence Reduction Unit

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

The VRU over the last four years has been a catalyst for partners to come together to develop our understanding of serious violence and test approaches to respond to the underlying causes, put in place protective factors to reduce incidents and respond where necessary through enforcement. Through VRU commissioning in 2022 we worked with 46 organisations supporting 882 young people aged over 25 years and 13838 young people under 25 years. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the VRU funded projects in 2022.

Serious Violence Duty

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 placed a new Serious Violence Duty as well as amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Duty and amendments requires services to work together to share data, intelligence, knowledge and the views of communities to understand the root causes of serious violence as well as impact. This assessment will inform the development and implementation of place-based Serious Violence Strategies which will align and support the work delivered across West Yorkshire and through the Violence Reduction Unit. We are grasping this opportunity to work together to prevent and stop violence through jointly planning the response to the Duty and reviewing our partnership arrangements to enable synergy and effective partnership working at Place and West Yorkshire regional level.

Cross cutting support

The causes and communities affected by serious violence are far reaching and therefore features as a priority across other service and partnership strategies in West Yorkshire. The landscape to tackling the causes as well as impact of serious violence is complex and addressing trauma, adversity and the root causes is a cross agency response. The VRU, partners and this strategy will strongly align and connect to the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024, West Yorkshire Plan to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and work of the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, district Community Safety Strategies, Health and Wellbeing, Safeguarding Plans and emerging Drug and Alcohol Plans. In 2023 our aim is to drive greater connectivity to maximise the collective approach and opportunities to reducing serious violence and enabling sustainable approaches.

COVID-19

Despite 2022 being a year without COVID-19 related lockdowns or social restrictions, the subsequent impacts of the pandemic can be seen across the region. The direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic will be felt for several years to come. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose and exacerbate many of these risk factors and existing structural and economic inequalities.

What do we want to achieve?

National aims:

The Home Office outlined three key success measures for VRUs:

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

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

Our vision

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

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

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

Our Objectives

We have established a sustainable set of objectives to provide the framework for our focus and delivery and will be underpinned by annual priorities for delivery.

Our vision drives our following strategic objectives:

1. Understand the picture of serious violence in West Yorkshire
2. Effectively share data with our partners
3. Intervene early to prevent serious violence in the first place
4. Use evidence of "What works" to tackle the root causes of serious violence
5. Reduce risk and vulnerabilities of individuals, families and communities to violence
6. Develop protective factors which will prevent and reduce serious violence
7. Enable community and societal responses to serious violence
8. Sustain what works and enhance the system wide response to preventing and tackling serious violence
9. Ensure that all our partners embed the trauma informed approach

Our Approach

Evidence informed

Underpinning our whole strategy, focus and delivery, is the development and use of an evidence informed approach. The West Yorkshire VRU provides leadership and strategic coordination to embedding an evidenced based, public health approach to violence reduction in West Yorkshire. Structured with a dedicated research and evidence team at its core, the Knowledge Hub, the VRU seeks to understand and address the inequalities that can lead to involvement in serious violence, improving the safety of all members of our community. During 2023 we will continue to explore how the evidence can inform the work of partners including the local plans in response to the Serious Violence Duty.

Trauma informed approach

Children and Young People who experience adversity and trauma are at high risk of; poor physical/mental health and emotional wellbeing, substantive increases in adopting anti-social and health-harming behaviours, including serious violence, poor attendance/exclusion at school and decreased educational attainment.

There are a significant number of young people living in West Yorkshire that have experienced varying and increasing adversity and trauma. The rate of children living in absolute low-income families per 1,000 children (0-15 years) is between 200 to 400 in West Yorkshire¹

There has never been a better time to prioritise the prevention of risk factors on health and wellbeing and increase protective factors as there is now. People are making the connections between the determinants of health and poor outcomes, including the impact on adversity, trauma and serious violence.

The West Yorkshire Adversity Trauma and Resilience Programme is jointly delivered by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership. Sharing a common commitment with all places and partners across the system to prevent harm and improve the wellbeing of our population, with a particular concern for those who are most vulnerable, facing multiple difficulties, complex needs, and childhood trauma

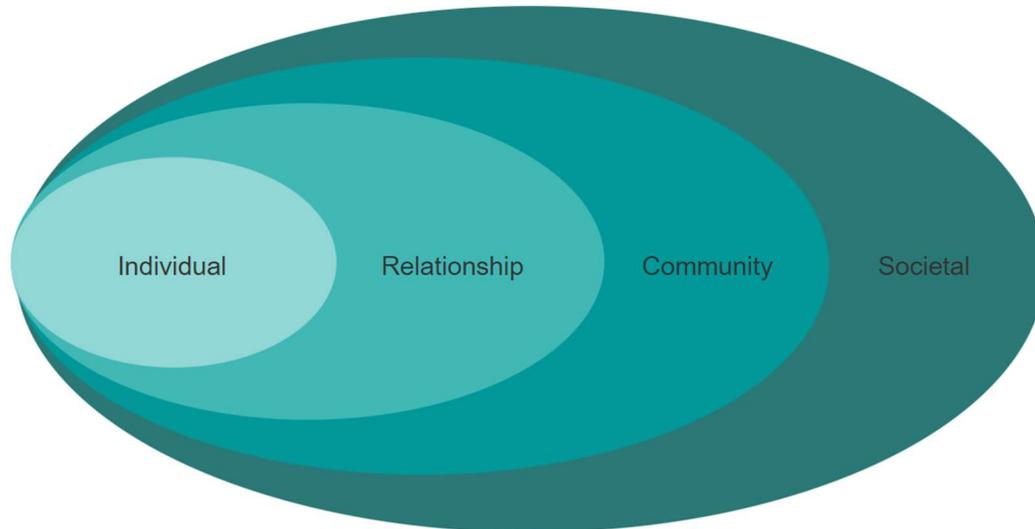
As a partnership we are committed to deliver our ambition of - *of working together with people with lived experience and colleagues across all sectors and organisations to ensure West Yorkshire is a trauma informed and responsive system by 2030 and develop a whole system approach to tackling multiple disadvantage.*

Whole system approach

The World Health Organisation has developed the four-level social-ecological model (individual, relationship, community, and societal) to better understand violence and the effect of potential prevention strategies. It allows an understanding of the range of

¹ 2019/20 Deprivation and Poverty CREST 2020.

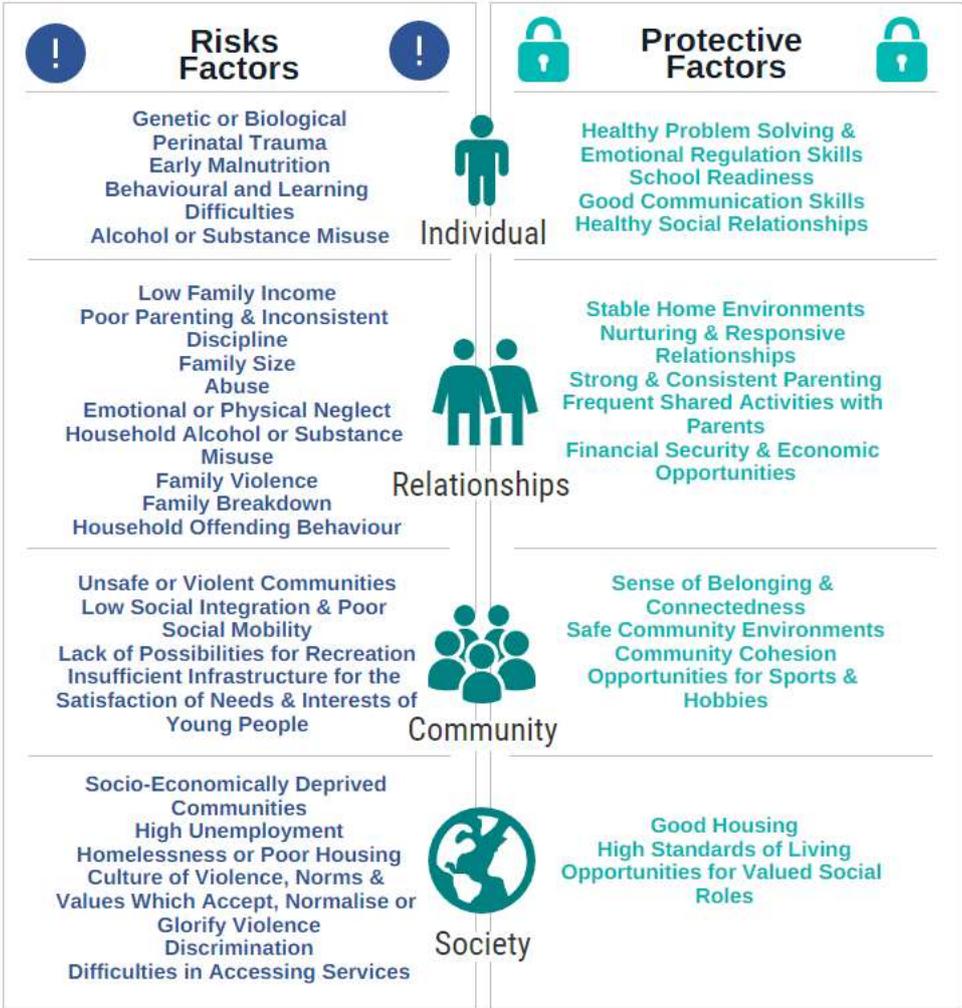
factors that put people at risk for violence or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level. Our objectives are therefore to work and impact across all levels in an evidence-based approach.



Serious violence cannot be tackled in isolation and must be addressed through prevention strategies which address the multiple risk factors which cause and perpetuate violence; as well as promote the protective factors which mitigate against the perpetration and victimisation. We take a public health approach to violence, our approach and interventions focusing on deterrents and protective factors therefore aim to work across individual, relationship, community at the same time. It considers which interventions will be universal (aimed at the general population) and which will be targeted at those more at risk.

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

Risk & Protective Factors



Working together

This strategy forms the framework for a partnership response. Our approach therefore aims to embed the VRU and Serious Violence Duty through connecting partners, aligning our vision, sharing objectives and jointly delivering at both region and place. We have a core membership of partners whose roles and responsibilities are central in ensuring a whole system approach. We will continue to identify opportunities to align our vision, objectives, priorities and delivery at both regional level and place. By focusing on the root causes of violence the partnership will support organisations whose responsibilities are to deliver, for example work to tackle VAWG, drugs, county lines, human trafficking and safeguarding. Key strategic and operational alignment of priorities and delivery across West Yorkshire includes:

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

West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership is a large integrated care system (ICS) that supports 2.4 million people, living in urban and rural areas. 770,000 are children and young people (the partnership covers, Bradford and Craven Districts, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield)

The West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership is made up of many different organisations and collaboratives across West Yorkshire, including our Partnership Board which is the Integrated Care Partnership for West Yorkshire. It also contains the NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (West Yorkshire ICB) which is a statutory NHS organisation. We work collectively with the five districts Integrated Care Partnerships.

As a partnership we are committed to taking responsibility collectively and individually to take action to prevent and reduce trauma, adversity and serious violence, supporting our population to thrive in a healthy, equitable, safe and sustainable society.

The Improving population Health programme has a longstanding commitment with the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit and a joint Senior Manager Post funded by West VRU

Five place-based Community Safety Partnerships: are key partners in the prioritisation, coordination and delivery at place and as such will be the conduit for named partners under the Serious Violence Duty to deliver at place. These local arrangements are ideally placed to identify and respond to locally evidenced based need and collaborate with Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding and Children's Partnerships in their response.

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

Sustainability

As we continue to develop our partnership working the VRU will develop and implement with partners a Sustainability Plan. We will work together to enable system change and achieve a sustainable approach to tackling serious violence. Through developing and utilising our knowledge and learning we will influence long term system change to respond to serious violence. The assets and strengths of local partnerships and communities in West Yorkshire will be harnessed to coproduce and embed the learning.

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

Think Family and Community Engagement

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

We are committed to engaging with our communities and listening to their voices to inform our understanding of local needs, perception and satisfaction. The joint VRU and partnership Communication and Engagement Strategy provides a comprehensive communications strategy, that both informs the public of VRU activities and actively works to bring about behavioural change. This is complemented by a practical engagement plan that ensures our workstreams and commissioned services reflect what West Yorkshire communities want and need. It outlines a clear framework for our approach and the ways in which it will be executed and measured.

We want to prevent trauma and adversity, intervene early and build resilience in communities and coproduce our responses². 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 our greatest assets with knowledge, skills and networks that are the building blocks of prevention and reducing serious violence and trauma. We will maximise opportunities to work in partnership to support individuals and communities who are at risk of exploitation and violence of organised crime. Coproduction and co-creation will take place at community level with active involvement from the Community Safety Partnerships and local support organisations to ensure that local people are at the heart of the solution. This will take an approach of: consult and engage on need; design, deliver and commission in collaboration.

What our needs assessment tells us

The detailed analysis of evidence found in our Strategic Needs Assessment clearly identifies and forms our understanding of serious violence in West Yorkshire. Drawing on the needs assessment key themes to address in 2023 include:

Substance Use:

- The association between violence and alcohol is well established with alcohol intoxication increasing violence perpetration and is likely to be a contributing factor in around half of all violent crimes
- Higher levels of alcohol use in young people is associated with weapon carrying
- drug misuse also shares risk factors associated with violence perpetration and victimisation. This reiterates the importance of a whole systems approach to the determinants of health and violence prevention
- Research commissioned in West Yorkshire examining the links between drugs, alcohol and serious violence was localised in the home environment, with domestic violence and family extortion evidenced when a child could not obtain drugs.
- Drug use presents significant challenges for society as a high demand for drugs increases drug-related crime and violence

Mental Health

- The relationship between mental health and violence is complex. Evidence suggest people with mental health problems are four times more likely to be victims of violence than those not experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Substance use is associated with poor mental health. Self-medication and untreated mental health issues in young people was identified. In addition co-

² Trauma Informed Co-production Guidance
https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/application/files/6416/5104/5038/West_Yorkshire_Trauma_Informed_Co-Production_Guidance_April_22.pdf

occurring mental health needs and substance misuse was highlighted as a barrier to young people accessing mental health support.

- Hospital admissions for self-harm in West Yorkshire are noticeably higher for those aged 15-19 years compared to other years
- Evidence suggests associations between young caring and mental health, with young carers having poorer mental health, more symptoms of anxiety and depression, lower amounts of self-esteem, poorer health-related quality of life, and more antisocial behaviour than their peers

Children in Care:

- Care experienced young people are over-represented in the criminal justice system
- The over-representation is suggested to be due to complex emotional needs, multiple placement breakdowns and placements in high crime and high deprivation areas
- Care experienced young people are also vulnerable to Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) with missing from care episodes increasing this vulnerability
- Criminal Justice System currently does not view these young people as victims of CCE, instead viewing their actions to be consequences of their choices, rather than a result of exploitation. This can act as a barrier to accessing necessary support

Education/Exclusions:

- The correlation between unemployment and violence is well established in research
- The NEET rate has risen for all districts apart from Wakefield compared to the end of 2020.
- Engagement in full time, quality education is a strong protective factor against a young person becoming involved in serious violence
- 2020/21 data broadly showed decreases in permanent exclusion rates and increases in suspension rates
- The number of suspensions and exclusions associated with violence are increasing in West Yorkshire

Violence Against Women and Girls:

- Women experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence victimisation and are more likely to be coerced and experience fear, than men
- For the year ending March 2021, there was a 36% increase in reports of coercive and controlling behaviour
- Misogyny, defined as a hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women, is prevalent throughout society. Experiencing misogyny has long-term impacts on victims with many altering their future behaviour, for example avoiding the area or only going out with others as a consequence.
- Misogynistic attitudes are becoming increasingly prevalent online with the rise of social media and online forums

Sexual Violence:

- The number of recorded sexual offences have seen substantial increases since April 2021
- Estimates from the CSEW for year ending March 2022 reported up to 2.7% of adults aged 16-59 years had experienced sexual assault (including attempted offences)

Deprivation and the cost-of-living crisis:

- The cost-of-living crisis disproportionately affects poorer households with dramatic increases in energy prices and growing inflation leaving less disposable income
- 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).
- Deprivation can increase young people's vulnerability to childhood adversity and poor mental health which are both key risk factors to violence
- Just under one third of West Yorkshires population live in neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived areas in England
- The most cited factor by practitioners and young people in West Yorkshire, driving serious violence was lack of economic opportunities, poverty and financial hardship

Homelessness:

- Housing situations and homelessness are both forms of contextual harm that can lead to increased vulnerability towards violence and exploitation. There is a 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

Child to Parent Violence:

- Estimates indicate that globally between 5% and 21% of families will experience child to parent violence
- Child to parent abuse can constitute a 'double stigma' as it combines the stigma of being a victims of domestic/family violence with the stigma of being the parent of a 'difficult' or 'troublesome' child

Online Spaces:

- Online spaces are new venues for stalking and harassment behaviours. 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
- Research has identified the damaging effect social media can have on young people's mental health as a result of distressing content on social media. In addition influencing the display and in provoking hostility and violence and acting as a driver for some 'in real life' violent offending

- Research has found that gambling in any capacity is related to significantly increased risk of violence
- The 'Metaverse' poses a new and emerging threat. Although the existing evidence base is limited, there are cases of sexual violence and harassment occurring in virtual reality spaces, in addition to other risks we have identified.

Neurodiversity

- The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection report highlighted that neurodivergence is more prevalent in the CJS than in the community.
- Research commissioned by the VRU into neurodiversity and violence found neurodiverse young people often experienced violence in the forms of self-harm, bullying and exploitation.
- It also found that neurodiverse young people can experience violence perpetration, usually through violence against parents and carers, radicalisation, knife carrying and sexual offences, although this was less common than experiencing violence as a victim

Priorities for 2023

We recognise that the risk factors and needs identified through our needs assessment do not neatly fit into headings and therefore there is interconnectivity between areas of need. The following priorities support the national aims, our vision and strategic objectives. By grouping into the following priorities based on a public health approach we understand the influence the wider social context has on individuals, our communities and for serious violence occurring and will deliver the identified need through this interconnected approach:

1. Individual
2. Relationship
3. Community
4. Society
5. Sustainability and cultural change
6. Evidence based understanding

Our delivery will be a mixture of short and longer term approaches and delivered through primary, secondary and tertiary prevention through a trauma informed lens. The responses below are partnership responses, are not exhaustive and will be further developed in our delivery plans.

Priority 1: Individual

Evidence:

Our research and data identifies a set of risk factors which impact on the vulnerabilities of individuals being involved in serious crime or being a victim. Focusing on the biological, behaviour and personal history factors of individuals our evidence supports that we will have particular focus on:

- Substance misuse and alcohol
- Care leavers
- Education and exclusions
- Mental health
- Neurodiversity

Response:

- **Integrated partnership work:**
 - Support the focus and implementation of emerging Drug Strategies with a particular focus on developing healthy living
 - Support safeguarding plans with a particular focus on support for children in care
- **Research:**
 - Expand our knowledge of the demographic and characteristics of service users and exploring the treatment pathways for people with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse
 - Explore the links between neurodiversity and exclusions, persistent absenteeism and SEN in schools
 - To explore Care Leaver's experiences of violence and exploitation, and to understand the risk and protective factors associated with this
- **Interventions:**
 - Explore opportunities to develop targeted trauma informed and responsive support for neurodiverse children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system
 - Explore the development of trauma informed pathways for young people at risk into alternative education and employment such as apprenticeships
 - Develop the access to and capacity of trauma informed services for young people with dual substance and mental health support
 - Support trauma informed school-based programs that help students develop social, emotional and behavioural skills to build positive relationships

Priority 2: Relationships

Evidence:

A person's closest social circle such as peers, partners and family members, influences their behaviour and contributes to their range of behaviour, in addition to being a protective factor for violence and trauma. Examining close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a victim or perpetrator. We have identified a number of focus areas for West Yorkshire:

- Deprivation and the cost-of-living crisis
- Homelessness
- VAWG

- Child to Parent Violence
- Experiences of sexual violence
- Domestic abuse in the household
- Young carers

Response:

- **Integrated partnership work:**
 - Work with partners to support the development and implementation of the West Yorkshire Safety of Women and Girls Strategy and Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy
 - Work with partners to support the development and implementation of Support in Safe Accommodation (Domestic Abuse) Strategies
- **Research:**
 - Examine the extent to which housing is a risk factor for violence and explore opportunities to mitigate risk in a violence reduction context
 - Evaluative review and service domestic abuse and sexual violence perpetrator programmes
 - Further understand trauma and adversity, vulnerability and risk associated with young carers
 - Examine the practicality of undertaking and embedding a whole family approach within our commissioned delivery
 - Expand our understanding of Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse
- **Interventions:**
 - Explore the available trauma informed support in West Yorkshire that can be offered to parents of child to parent violence
 - Support the development of by and for domestic abuse provision that are culturally bespoke
 - Delivery of 'high impact interventions' as evidenced through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) toolkit
 - Support approaches which identify and engage with the adults in these young people's lives to provide support

Priority 3: Community

Evidence:

This priority focuses on the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods, in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The needs assessment highlights the following priorities:

- Place based priorities and delivery including ASB, County Lines, organised crime, carrying a weapon, personal robbery, limited economic opportunities
- Lack of access to services and opportunities including mental health provision and a breadth of out of school activities

- Online spaces including the emerging metaverse and online gambling
- Sporting violence
- NEET

Response:

- **Integrated partnership work:**
 - Work with the partners named under the Serious Violence Duty to develop place focused Serious Violence Strategies and the inclusion of serious violence as a priority with Community Safety Strategies
 - Support the evidenced based development and implementation of the work of the SAFE Taskforce in affected areas
 - Work with the Leaders Unlocked to understand the gaps in youth provision, what would young people want/benefit from, equally what would they not want
 - Through Grip operations develop further intelligence and resource to enable a problem solving, collaborative and trauma informed targeted approach
- **Research:**
 - Increase our knowledge of the targeted support available to children and young people at risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence
 - Work with partners who are subject matter experts, such as the ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre, to understand the role Organised Crime plays in serious violence perpetration or victimisation
 - To complete a scoping exercise to understand the risks of the metaverse and explore the potential of using the Metaverse, an emergent aspect of social media, to support protective factors and a trauma informed approach
- **Interventions**
 - Education based, trauma informed interventions for young people, practitioners and parents and carers to increase safe use of social media and reduce vicarious online trauma and low-level violence
 - Develop a response to the Online Safety Bill following royal assent.
 - Delivery of 'high impact interventions' as evidenced through the YEF toolkit
 - Develop interventions in education settings for young people at risk of exclusion with consideration to engaging through primary schools
 - Support the provision of alternative routes to success and raising aspirations at those at risk of becoming NEET to provide them with alternative opportunities to crime
 - Support the development of opportunities to reduce barriers to accessing services of digital exclusion and transport costs

Priority 4: Society

Evidence:

There are a broad range of societal factors that either create a level of acceptance or intolerance for violence including health, economic, cultural and social norms, and educational. In addition there are also factors that can create and sustain gaps between different segments of society. Our needs assessment identified the following key areas:

- NEET
- Cost-of-living crisis
- Homelessness and overcrowding
- Social norms of young people, women and violence

Response:

- **Integrated partnership work:**
 - Support the alignment and implementation of place based Community Safety Strategies, Police and Crime Plan, Housing Strategies and Health and Wellbeing Plans and Improving Population Health Programme
- **Research:**
 - Assess feasibility and effectiveness of evidence-based interventions for employment and vocational opportunities for young people.
 - Understand the extent and implications of football or sporting violence for serious violence offences.
- **Interventions:**
 - Embed a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic and understand the impact of lived experiences. Women and men must be able to report a sexual assault in as supportive an environment as possible
 - Undertake a system wide approach to a targeted communications campaign to support a societal shift whereby victims are not blamed or held responsible for their victimisation, instead all culpability should lie with the perpetrator
 - Continue to develop, co-design and deliver a Digital Media Strategy with young people which responds to the findings...

Priority 5: Sustainability and Cultural Change

Evidence:

Tackling the root causes of serious violence is a long term approach with the impact not always being felt in the short to medium term. To make longer term impact therefore requires adoption of a trauma informed sustainable approach to serious violence which requires financial as well as cultural sustainability. We therefore need to ensure longevity of our approach and interventions and embedding response to serious violence into operational practice.

Austerity measures are continuing to be felt by services. A new way of working within existing financial parameters is therefore required. Working together to create system change and focusing resources on, and in, those communities most at need.

The Serious Violence Duty places a responsibility on named partners to deliver strategies to tackle the causes of serious violence further supporting the need for a coordinated approach to system and cultural change.

Response:

- Develop and deliver a **5 year Sustainability Plan** which will consider:
 - Challenges for sustainability and how these will be mitigated
 - How financial stability will be achieved
 - How cultural stability will be achieved
 - How the legacy of the VRU will be achieved
- Implement the **VRU Communications and Engagement Plans** and coordinate its implementation with partner services
 - Challenge any perceived normalisation of violence and seek to address this across the communities, services and the media
- **Integrated partnership work**
 - Review the opportunities to further maximise and align with local priorities and structures (Community Safety Partnership, Neighbourhood Policing, Serious Organised Crime and Safeguarding) to take a system wide approach and test delivery
 - **Expand the partnerships** whilst identifying the gaps and key strands where it would bring benefit and value. Explore opportunities to collaborate, integrate and re-align resources more effectively
 - Explore opportunities for **integrating approaches across services** and partnerships that work to tackle the priority risk factors for offending and victimisation
- **Develop a workforce programme to support the implementation of workstreams**
 - Embed through workforce training a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic and understand the impact of lived experiences
 - Seek to develop the roles of partner organisations working with the VRU and to tackle serious violence, to ensure governance and maximise opportunities and build capacity
- **Embed evidence base into the commissioning of services**
 - Continue to use the intelligence and evidence base to engage with partners to influence the need to take a system wide approach to tackling underlying causes including deprivation and inequalities
 - Utilise and share the growing evidence base drawn from commissioned research to develop a shared understanding across services of the root causes of serious violence including risk factors
 - Ensure all commissioned services are preceded by a clear Theory of Change and relevant performance monitoring

Priority 6: Evidence based understanding

Evidence:

Adopting a trauma informed and public health approach is at the heart of our approach. We will continue to develop and use data, researched evidence, the experiences of our communities and those with lived experiences to inform our work and reduce serious violence.

It is valuable that we not only develop our information base but also share data and our learning to enable sustainability. Our Data Sharing Plan sets out how we will develop the sharing of data between partners and our Evaluation Plan looks at how we embed an evaluation and evidence based commissioning and practice culture.

Response:

- **Engagement and Embedding Learning:**
 - Continue to develop meaningful, ongoing conversations with the community to understand the issue of violence in our communities and to influence the work of partner organisations across West Yorkshire
 - Facilitate learning and development events to share learning from delivery and research including good practice to promote the work in place
 - Develop the Youth Advisory Group for the VRU around key themes
 - Develop 'test beds' utilising research, embedding evaluation to inform any further expansion
- **Data collection:**
 - Work with our partner John Moores University to facilitate a multi-agency knowledge hub
 - Use data and intelligence from a range of sources to improve our collective understanding of the problem of violence across all our communities
 - Continue the development of the Data Dashboard to enable the successful use of the data and intelligence 'on the ground' by partners, including how it can support the data requirements of the Serious Violence Duty
- **Research:**
 - Commit to working with our academic and learning partners to ensure we learn and share the learning
 - Embed consideration and dissemination of the findings set out in the YEFs Toolkit and the emerging evidence in informing decision relating to intervention selection and delivery
 - Commission and undertake an annual programme of research to respond to emerging needs identified through the annual needs assessment
 - Carry out ongoing environmental scanning and literature searches to understand and share emerging risk and protective factors for violence
- **Needs Assessments**

- Utilise place based needs assessments and sharing of intelligence to support the Serious Violence Duty requirements and inform development of place based delivery strategies and plans
- Utilise place based evidence to inform a framework of priorities for co-development and co-commissioning. With a view to support longer term sustainability of place based interventions
- Utilise place based evidence to inform the opportunities to use the range of civil powers including enforcement for each locality
- Continue to enable collaboration of Grip activity, serious organised crime and neighbourhood policing alongside the evidence provided via the Knowledge Hub to inform increased community engagement and coordinated place based interventions
- **Monitoring and evaluating**
 - Monitor the development and implementation of interventions
 - Evaluate our programmes of delivery and use findings to inform commissioning and where appropriate the further scaling of work
 - Develop and cascade evaluation toolkit across partnerships to facilitate evidence-based approaches
 - Undertake robust impact evaluation of at least two of the VRU interventions during the funding period

Accountability

Who will be accountable?

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

The VRU is accountable to the Home Office and hosted by West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The work of the VRU is further supported and overseen through the West Yorkshire Serious Violence Reduction Executive Steering Group. Reporting to the PEG this group includes the 'core membership' as for VRUs required by the Home Office. Having responsibility for decisions relating to the VRU, this core membership and wider partners provides a strategic framework, sharing best practice and alignment with district operational delivery such as the work of the Community Safety Partnerships.

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

Our network of partners and connecting partnerships are broad but there are always opportunities to develop this further. The serious violence duty places a new emphasis

on the role and contribution of partners. Therefore as our partnership continues to mature we are further developing clarity on the roles and responsibilities of partners and our accountability structures. We will help partners to meet Home Office and statutory duty requirements as well embedding our partners as active participants in decision making at different levels. This will ensure that we can simplify and maximise opportunities of the roles of our core members and delivery structures.

What will we measure

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

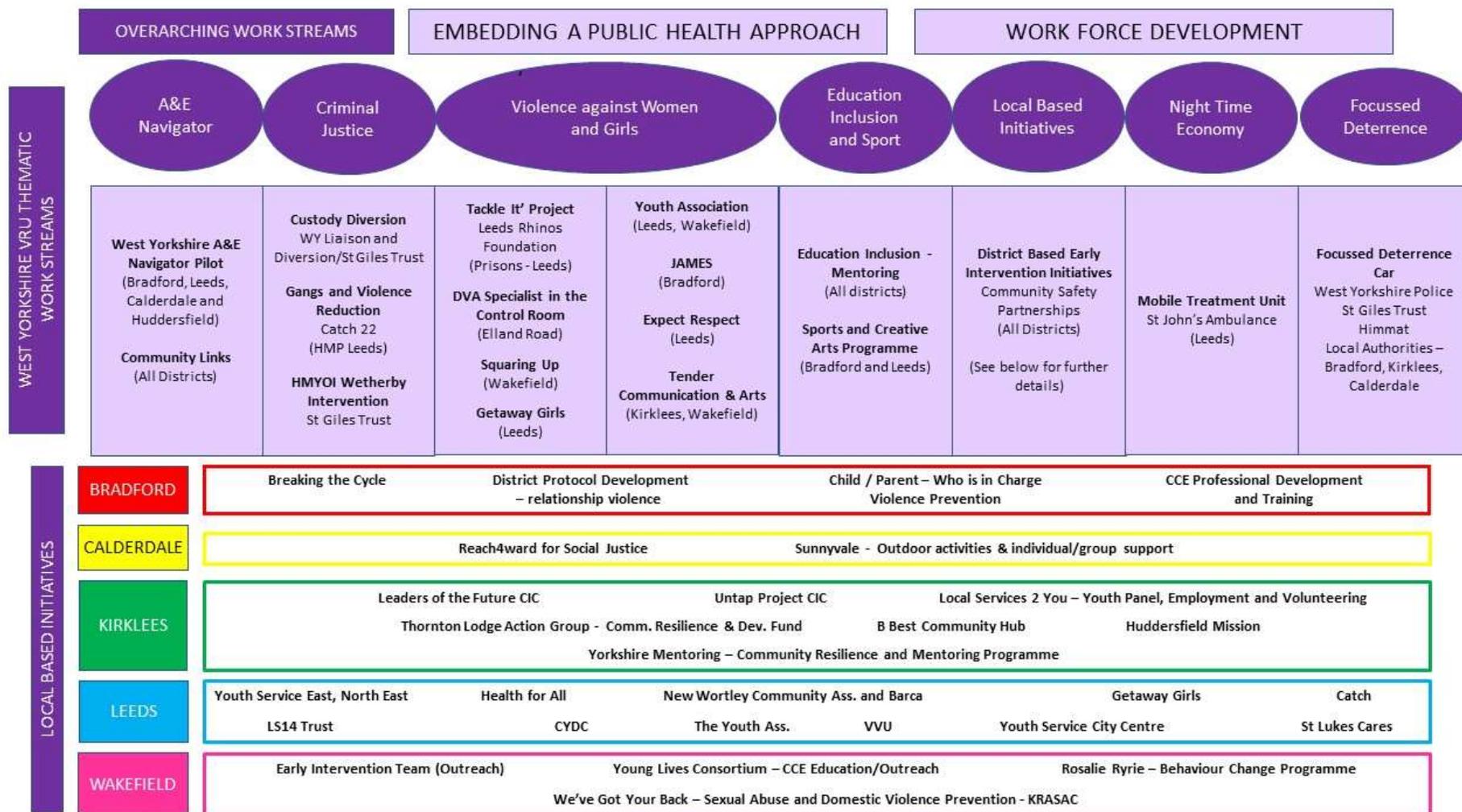
We monitor the performance of our interventions, learn from the implementation of our actions and understand the impact that it has upon communities. Our Theory of Change model (Appendix 2) outlines the outcomes and impacts that we are aiming to achieve through our inputs and activities.

How we will measure our work

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

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

Appendix 1: VRU Funded Delivery 2022/23



Appendix 2: VRU Theory of Change 2022

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

