

West Yorkshire Response Strategy 2026

Serious Violence: West Yorkshire Strategy for Change

Delivered by



**West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**

Foreword

The VRP Response Strategy 2026 plays a vital role in addressing serious violence across West Yorkshire, it enables us to place the right resources in the right places at the right times.

With national ambitions to halve knife crime and violence against women and girls over the next decade, and the Government's Safer Streets mission driving a whole system focus on reducing serious harm, the expectations for our region are clear.

This refreshed Response Strategy for 2026 sets out how the Violence Reduction Partnership, working closely with the partnerships of West Yorkshire, will deliver against the West Yorkshire Serious Violence Strategy – a key commitment of our Mayor, Tracy Brabin and an approach coproduced with our communities.

Throughout 2025 - 2026 financial year, our engagement programme reached over 5,000 people. Their voices have been essential in shaping this plan and ensuring our collective response reflects the realities facing local communities.

Using evidence from our Strategic Needs Assessment and analysis of influential factors that drive violence, we can better identify the issues and secure stronger outcomes for children, families and neighbourhoods.

A key development this year is the establishment of Young Futures Panels across West Yorkshire. These multiagency panels identify children aged 10-17 with unmet needs and increased vulnerability to being drawn into violence and bring partners together to intervene early and link children to tailored support before concerns escalate.

Serious violence impacts every aspect of life in our region - our communities, our public services, and our infrastructure. The Violence Reduction Partnership is uniquely positioned to coordinate solutions, but meaningful progress cannot be achieved in isolation.

Sustainability must be our golden thread. It is essential that we act as one system - coordinated, considered and united - to deliver the ambitions of the West Yorkshire Serious Violence Strategy and build safer futures for all communities.

T/Detective Chief Superintendent, Heather Wilson
Director of the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership



Introduction

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, now 20 areas most affected by serious violence. In 2019 securing this Home Office funding support, we established the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and gained further resources to focus on tackling serious violence.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a new Serious Violence Duty as well as amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Duty requires services¹ to work together to share data, intelligence, knowledge, and the views of communities to develop an assessment of the influential factors of serious violence as well as impact. In response specified partners are required to develop and implement a Serious Violence Strategy.

This Strategy provides a West Yorkshire framework for preventing and reducing serious violence, designed to guide the work of the VRP, Serious Violence Duty holders and wider West Yorkshire Partners.

What is serious violence?

In West Yorkshire, we define serious violence as:

“Violence and serious violence include 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.

What do we want to achieve?

National aims:

The Home Office outlined three key success measures for VRPs and the Serious Violence Duty specified authorities:

- 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.

¹ Serious Violence Duty places statutory responsibility upon the following specified partners - Police, Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities, Integrated Care Boards, Probation and Youth Offending Services

These success measures sit alongside the Government's wider Safer Streets mission, which sets a clear national ambition to halve knife crime and halve violence against women and girls within the next decade.

This national ambition is mirrored in the [West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan](#), which places a clear spotlight on tackling serious violence, reducing knife crime, and continuing the Mayor's commitment to eradicate violence against women and girls across our region.

Our Strategic Needs Assessment outlines our progress against these core measures, and our Annual Report provides a breakdown of our reach across West Yorkshire.

Our 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

To achieve our vision, 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.

1. Understand the picture of serious violence in West Yorkshire
2. Effectively share data with our partners
3. Reduce risk and vulnerabilities and develop protective factors to prevent and reduce serious violence
4. Intervene early to prevent serious violence in the first place
5. Use evidence of what works to tackle the influential factors of serious violence

Each of these objectives are discussed in turn below.

To support these objectives, all our work is underpinned by being trauma informed, applying a child first lens, prioritising community engagement and adopting a Whole Systems Approach.

Trauma Informed

Taking a trauma informed approach aims to reduce the negative impact of trauma experiences. This involves:

- Realising that trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities
- Recognising the signs, symptoms and widespread impact of trauma
- Preventing re-traumatisation

Child First

We should ensure children's rights, needs and voices are considered throughout our decision making whilst prioritising opportunities for meaningful engagement. Our [Child First Framework](#), co-produced with 455 children, outlines what this looks like in practice, including the importance of involving children in strategic decision making and closing the feedback loop so they know the value they have added.

Community engagement

We should prioritise continuous engagement with our communities, to ensure they inform our understanding and responses to serious violence in West Yorkshire. They should be valued as an equal partner and feel their voices are reflected in our approaches.

Whole System Approach

As a VRP, we structure our approach using 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 factors that put people at risk for violence or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence. The overlapping layers 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.



Objectives

Understand the picture of serious violence in West Yorkshire

The VRP produce an annual [Strategic Needs Assessment](#) alongside five local place-based profiles. These documents provide an overview of the scale and extent of violence in West Yorkshire through the use of partner data. Insights provided in these documents include key locations, offender profiles, progress against our Home Office measures and multi-year comparisons.

These profiles also feature a community voice section, summarising the insights we have gained from our engagement portfolio. This is essential to ensuring our decision making is informed, not only by data, but also by the voices and experiences of our community.

Beyond this, the team are working alongside partners to delve deeper into the data by conducting local deep-dive analyses. This will further our understanding of serious violence by identifying the influential factors prevalent in individual case studies of children involved in violence.

Case Study - Safe Spaces Photovoice:

In partnership with Leeds Youth Service, the VRP ran a project with 47 children to explore the theme of 'safe spaces' using Photovoice, a creative research methodology. Using disposable cameras, children were able to document their communities by taking photos of things that represented safety or things they wanted to change. Children then took part in 2 workshops, to explore the narrative behind their photos and then to design a photography exhibition to showcase their work to decision makers.

Impact: Using creative research methods allowed us to break down barriers to engagement, allowing children to share their views in a fun way. The flexibility of the methodology meant we could meet children where they were at, as they were in control of which stages they took part in, but could still see their work reflected in the exhibition. We were also able to gain invaluable insight into what makes me children feel safe in their communities, with the learning from this work being implemented in future delivery, such as the Young Futures Hubs and across Leeds-based provision.

Effectively share knowledge, insights and data

The West Yorkshire VRP are committed to effective, secure, and purposeful data sharing as a cornerstone of violence reduction efforts. Using the Serious Violence Duty as an enabler, we have established data-sharing agreements with key partners, facilitating collaborative use of data. More detail about how we share data with partners is available in our Data Strategy.

An example of this is the creation of our [Violence Reduction Hub](#) – an interactive data dashboard that brings together data from key partners and is available for all Serious Violence Duty Holders.

The VRP are also co-ordinating the delivery of Young Futures Panels, which formulate a key part of the government's Safer Streets Mission. The panels bring together key partners across police, youth justice, education, children's services, health, and the voluntary sector to identify vulnerable children and young people understand what we collectively know or understand about them and their unmet needs. This allows us to develop a collective understanding to shape a bespoke support offer for the child.

The VRP are working closely with their evaluation partner, and local partners to refine the implementation of the panels. The evaluation will examine how panels operate, the barriers and enablers to delivery, and how learning from the pilot stage can improve outcomes and strengthen the system response to vulnerability.

Beyond data sharing, we recognise the importance of upskilling our partnership to help support sector sustainability. We have developed a library of e-learning modules outlining key topics such as Child First, Public Health Approach, Monitoring & Evaluation and Theories of Change.

A service directory is being developed to provide a central repository of interventions and support services available for children and young people. This will enable practitioners to make appropriate referrals to services that meet the needs of the children and young people they support.

The VRP have also developed our [Theory of Change, Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit](#) in partnership with Ecorys to support partners across the system in developing a robust outline of programmes and initiatives prior to commencement, alongside guiding the collection of relevant monitoring data throughout to allow for robust evaluation. This is bolstered by the offer of bespoke Theory of Change workshops delivered by the Knowledge Hub.

Case Study – West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Theory of Change Training

After delivering Theory of Change training to partners across West Yorkshire, the VRP were contacted by the District Commander at Kirklees to discuss delivering some bespoke training to West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS). The Knowledge Hub worked with them to adapt the universal training, tailoring it to meet the needs of WYFRS and to date have delivered training on Theories of Change, Monitoring and Evaluation to four cohorts of staff at Dewsbury Fire Station.

Each session was evaluated to allow for a continuous development cycle for the training, with feedback from attendees utilised to enhance the training. Improvements included using fire service specific examples when discussing elements of the ToC, improving the templates used throughout sessions and streamlining sections that were less engaging or relevant to the group.

Impact: Our evaluations showed consistent increases in knowledge and confidence of using theories of change, monitoring and evaluation. As a result of the training, WYFRS have embedding a culture of evaluation throughout their organisation, with the aim of all interventions having an up-to-date ToC in place before delivery can commence, with elements of evaluations built into to improve processes in future delivery.

Reduce risk and vulnerabilities and develop protective factors to prevent and reduce serious violence

The VRPs [Influential Factors Evidence Synthesis](#) provides a comprehensive summary of the factors influencing violence. This is achieved by:

- collating and reviewing the most relevant research and data,
- providing clear, contextual summaries of key risk and protective factors,
- Identifying gaps in our understanding and,
- offering recommendations for targeted provision or future research, where appropriate.

This work is continually evolving, supported by an ongoing programme of research led by the Knowledge Hub. Current priorities include exploring emerging themes, such as gambling-related harm and addressing areas where evidence is limited or developing.

By combining this deep understanding of the risk and protective factors affecting violence with robust data, we are able to prioritise interventions that respond directly to unmet needs of our communities. This evidence-led approach ensures that our activity is focused where it can make the greatest impact, supporting communities and partners to reduce harm and strengthen protective factors across the system.

The Knife Crime Concentration Fund is an initiative introduced by government aiming to identify the local areas with highest need relating to knife crime offences. Problem solving initiatives will then be employed to tackle the identified influential factors in a hyper-local area to design out crime.

Case Study – Halifax Panthers: Getting Match Fit

The Getting Match Fit programme has been delivered to year 5 and 6 pupils in 29 schools across Calderdale. The intervention mixes issue-based work looking at positive words, digital safety and community safety followed by a final session playing rugby with players from Halifax Panthers who are involved as positive, aspirational role models. By the end of the 25/26 financial year, the programme is expected to have reached 1250 children, with positive feedback received from recipient schools.

Impact: "The workshop balanced serious topics with a warm, approachable tone, making it easy for children to understand and relate to. The activities and discussions encouraged participation and helped reinforce key messages about staying safe online, recognising emotions, and treating others with respect. The children thoroughly enjoyed working with Nathan. Thank you Panthers!"

Intervene early to prevent serious violence in the first place

We take a public health approach to violence reduction, meaning we engage on a whole-system level to tackle the underlying causes that are identified through our Influential Factors work and our Strategic Needs Assessment. This allows us to make evidence-based decisions across our partnership around what interventions are needed and where. By understanding the causes and contributing factors of violence, we can deliver across three different levels of prevention aimed at addressing the risk factors, reducing prevalence and threats:

- **Primary prevention**, meaning preventing violence before it happens
- **Secondary prevention**, being an immediate response to instances of violence
- **Tertiary prevention**, focusing on long term care and rehabilitation

Our delivery plan responds to all three levels of prevention.

In response to scoping research which identified a clear demand for a West Yorkshire service directory, the VRP have commenced development of this tool. Focusing specifically on services for children and young people, this online directory will equip partners to understand the wide range of services that are available across the region, enabling them to signpost children and young people into the most appropriate support.

The Young Futures Panels provide a further mechanism for early intervention. They bring professionals together to combine what is known across the wider partnership, forming a single, coherent picture of need. Within the Panels, agencies then collectively agree a bespoke support offer for each child. This enables timely consent-based referrals into the right services and ensures that vulnerable children receive coordinated, child-centred support at the earliest opportunity.

Alongside the panels, the government have also established Young Futures Hubs as part of their Young Futures Programme². These hubs will bring together services in a central location to improve children's access to opportunities and support at a community level. Leeds have been identified as an early adopter of this model, with their hub going live on the 31st March 2026. The VRP will be supporting the partnership to develop a Theory of Change for their hub delivery to enable evaluation to be conducted at a local level.

Case Study – Wakefield Young Futures Panel

A young person placed in Wakefield by another local authority was referred to the Young Futures Panel by West Yorkshire Police. They were receiving education support through an out-of-area virtual school and had no links to positive local provision. Aside from placement staff, they were largely unknown to Wakefield services, increasing the risk of isolation from community opportunities.

Through the Panel's intervention, close collaboration with home staff enabled the young person to be introduced to local support. They were connected to the local youth hub and wider activities, helping them engage in positive provision and begin building relationships within the community.

Impact: Without the Panel, the young person would likely have remained disconnected from local services and opportunities. The intervention improved inclusion, strengthened access to support, and supported their integration into the local community.

Use evidence of what works to tackle the influential factors of serious violence

By utilising the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit, which assesses violence reduction interventions on their impact, evidence quality and cost, the VRP are able to prioritise evidence-based delivery. This is done by funding interventions that are both moderate or high impact, with high level quality of evidence.

We supplement our delivery with a robust programme of evaluation, allowing us to contribute to the evidence base and create our own localised what works framework for West Yorkshire. Alongside evaluating our own interventions, we also provide support to providers across our partnership, either conducting evaluations on their behalf or upskilling organisations to evaluate their own delivery. Our Theory of Change, Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit offers sustainable support to guide partners through the evaluation lifecycle, contributing to our goal of creating a culture of evaluation across West Yorkshire.

Community voice is central to forming our evidence base for delivery plans, as we want to ensure our response to serious violence reflects the needs and experiences of the community. For example, we have worked with children and young people to identify what support offer was missing in their local areas and to outline the barriers they face to accessing the right services.

² [Young Futures Hubs - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/young-futures-hubs)

Case Study – Evaluation of Bradfords Inspire programme

Inspire is a small-group programme supporting children who struggle with confidence, emotional regulation, friendships, and decision-making. Across multiple primary and secondary schools, evaluation has combined baseline and endline assessments, facilitator observations, and pupil feedback to understand need, progress, and what drives change. This has consistently shown the value of a trusted, non-judgemental settings, external facilitators, and structured sessions that build emotional literacy and self-belief.

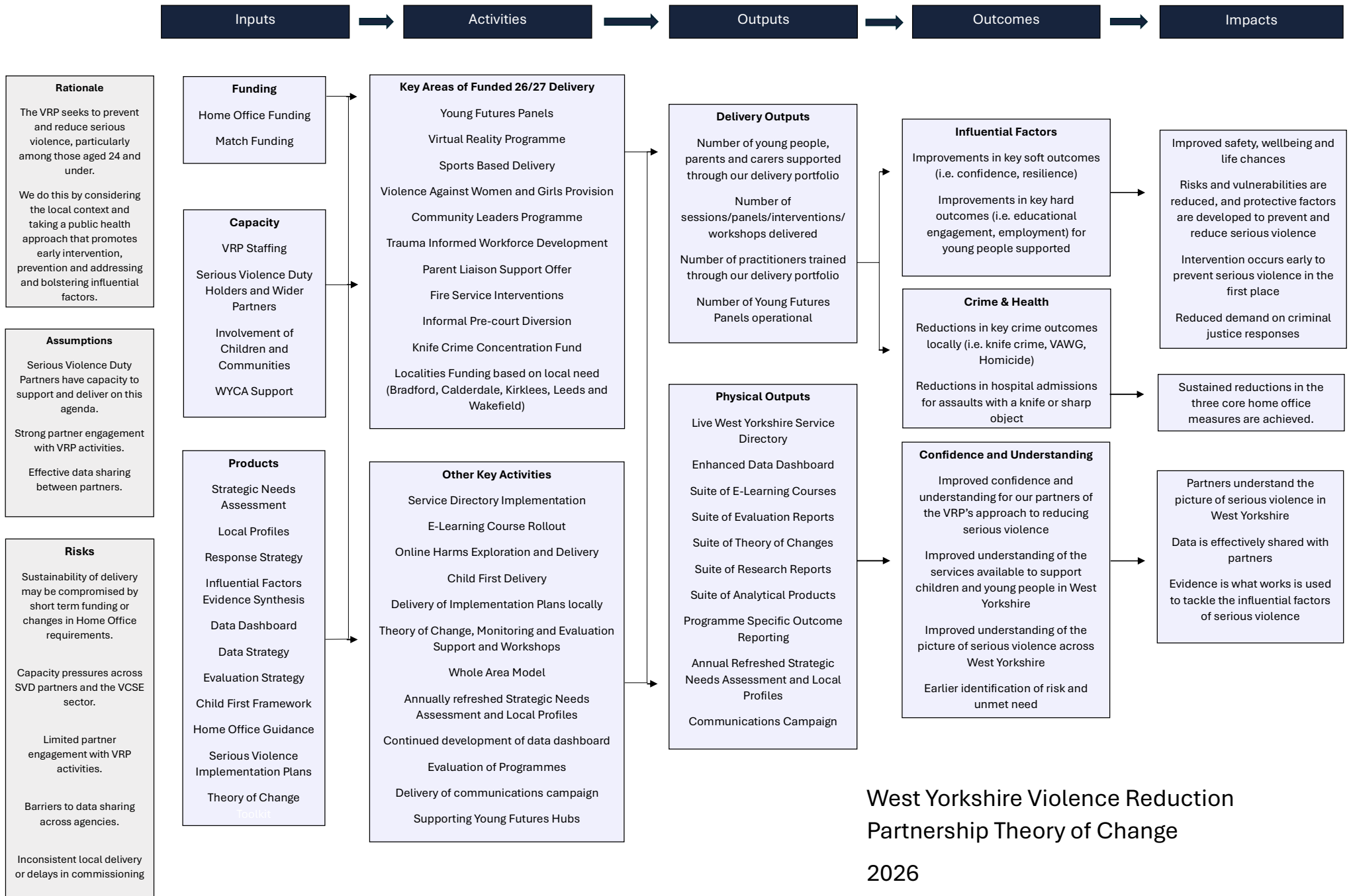
Evaluation findings show clear, positive impacts across all sites. Children learned to communicate feelings more effectively, showed reduced disruptive behaviour, and gained confidence, with many describing feeling calmer, listened to, and proud of themselves. Schools also reported reduced vulnerability to anti-social behaviour and early improvements in relationships and classroom engagement. Facilitator reflections highlight children applying coping strategies; particularly around anger and taking greater ownership of their behaviour.

Impact: Collectively, this evaluation has strengthened our understanding that relational, small-group, emotionally-focused support is an effective tool for improving wellbeing and reducing risk.

Shared Ownership

The VRP is accountable to the Home Office and hosted by West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The West Yorkshire Serious Violence Executive, chaired by the West Yorkshire Deputy Mayor, has overall oversight of serious violence and ensures that all partnership activity is aligned with the priorities and objectives of the West Yorkshire Serious Violence Strategy. This group includes the VRP, Serious Violence Duty specified authorities and wider partners who contribute to our understanding and system approach to violence reduction. Attended by senior decision makers from across the partnership, this group is responsible for the strategic direction of the collective partnership.

The operational delivery of priorities is developed and overseen by a Partnership Delivery Group and the five place-based Community Safety Partnerships. The breadth of partner involvement in these partnerships provides an opportunity to share understanding and maximise opportunities for the implementation of our priorities.



West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership Theory of Change

2026