

West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership

Annual Report 2025–26



Delivered by

**West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**

Foreword



I was delighted to become the new Director of the Violence Reduction Partnership in 2025. The work already underway across our partnership is inspiring – illustrating that reducing violence is not the work of a single organisation but the shared responsibility of the entire region. The Mayor’s new Serious Violence Strategy – ‘Tackling Serious Violence Together’, coproduced with the Communities of West Yorkshire, makes it clear that this must remain a top priority for us all.

Across West Yorkshire, partners from policing, health, education, local authorities, and the voluntary sector have continued to demonstrate what is possible when we commit to long-term prevention solutions together.

In 2025–26, the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership strengthened its focus on early intervention and community led solutions. We have invested in young people and worked closely with community-based partners to understand and address the influential factors that can lead to serious violence.

Our Community Leaders Programme is a fantastic example of how we can empower and mobilise ambassadors to influence hearts and minds on the ground.

The newly established ‘Young Futures Panels’ across West Yorkshire present an opportunity to intervene at that crucial moment, using our established relationships and collaborative support plans to make the difference.

Young people must remain at the heart of our response, which is why we launched campaigns with the West Yorkshire Youth Commission, like ‘I Took a Seat’ which was co-produced with its members every step of the way.

Likewise, we undertook an innovative photovoice approach to engage children and young people – part of our ‘Child First’ approach. Using disposable cameras, they captured images on the theme of ‘safe spaces’, which were featured in a unique exhibition at Leeds Beckett University in September 2025.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to and championed this work over the past year; your commitment and compassion are the foundation of everything we achieve together. As we look ahead, we remain focused on creating lasting change.

Heather Wilson
Director of the West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Partnership

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Understanding the picture of serious violence in West Yorkshire

The Home Office sets three core measures to track progress on reducing serious violence. These focus on:

- reducing hospital admissions for assaults involving a knife or sharp object, especially among those victims aged under 25
- reducing knife-enabled serious violence, especially among those victims aged under 25 and
- reducing non-domestic homicides, particularly those involving knives and among those victims aged under 25.

Assessment against these measures shows that, since the Violence Reduction Partnership began in 2019, serious violence involving knives has fallen significantly in West Yorkshire (down 24%), and particularly so where children and young people were victims of this violence (down 35%).

Hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object are now 18% lower than in 2019, and 14% lower for children and young people, and police-recorded knife crime has fallen by around a quarter over the same period, showing sustained progress against these national measures.

The third measure relates to non-domestic homicide. In the most recent year, the number of these incidents increased, returning to levels similar to when the partnership began. A small number of these cases involved young victims, and while these incidents are relatively rare, each represents a devastating loss for families and communities, and underlines the importance of continuing to work together to prevent the most serious forms of violence.



Research and evaluation

We deliver a rolling programme of research and evaluation, to help us continuously develop our understanding of the scale and extent of violence in West Yorkshire and the risk and protective factors that can influence violence involvement. In 2025–26 this included:

- Five district based Strategic Needs Assessments for partners along with a West Yorkshire wide Strategic Needs Assessment.
- A comprehensive evidence synthesis exploring the influential factors linked to violence, the risk and protective factors that can influence or deter a person's involvement in violence and exploitation.
- Significant community engagement work as part of a 'Serious Violence Duty' survey, providing an evidence base for our work.
- A West Yorkshire wide Response Strategy produced and published.
- Several evaluations to explore the impact of our programmes and the implementation of our Young Futures Panels.

Research spotlight

A key piece of research was our [Domestic Homicide Reviews West Yorkshire: Thematic Analysis](#). This analysis evidences the patterns and characteristics of DHRs, the response of services and key partnership recommendations. The research led to a Domestic Homicide Prevention Summit hosted by the VRP and West Yorkshire Police, bringing together partners from across the region to discuss how collectively we can better prevent domestic homicide. In September 2025, we presented this work at the European Conference on Domestic Violence sharing our local learnings with an international audience. Partners across the region voiced a need for better communication between the districts as such a key outcome from this research is the establishment of a West Yorkshire Domestic Homicide Partnership Forum. The partnership forum provides a space for sharing of learning, better enables collaborative work on challenges and issues, and discusses responses to national and local policy changes.

To find out more about the Needs Assessment, Influential Factors work, Response Strategy, or read our collection of research and evaluations, please take this [link](#) to the Violence Reduction Partnership page



Training

E-learning development

During 2025–26, the VRP commissioned e-learning provider ‘Me-Learning’ to develop several e-learning courses on key and relevant subject areas to support our partnership response to serious violence. The courses that were created covered the following topics:

- Understanding and adopting a Child First approach
- A public health approach to violence prevention and influential factors for involvement in violence
- Understanding how to develop a Theory of Change (ToC)
- Understanding how to effectively monitor and evaluate interventions
- Trauma-informed and inclusive engagement and co-production

Following completion of development, these courses have now been rolled out to partners across the region. The courses provide a focused understanding of these key areas to enhance the way in which we work to prevent violence in the region, which provide value to

partners who may have any knowledge gaps or need a focused refresher on any key areas. The courses have been deliberately designed to not be onerous to support engagement and retention of the information presented, with courses expected to take a maximum of 30 minutes to complete.

Theory of Change, monitoring and evaluation training

Building on our [Theory of Change, Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit](#) that was developed in partnership with Ecorys, the VRP have delivered several bespoke workshops in to build our partners’ understanding of Theory of Change, monitoring and evaluation processes. By utilising the learning and outputs that are developed within the sessions, partners are equipped to effectively monitor and evaluate their interventions and projects. The effective implementation of these processes contributes to our understanding of what does and does not work to reduce serious violence, as well helping partners to refine projects to have the maximum impact. The following case study demonstrates the value this work has had with the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.



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.

In addition to this bespoke training, the VRP also provide more ad-hoc support, reviewing and supporting the development of partner Theories of Change and monitoring and evaluation processes as and when needed. Moving into 2026–27, the VRP will continue to provide this training to a wide range of partners, seeking to embed a culture of evaluation within the region.



Involving communities

Community engagement

Across our engagement activity this year we have listened to the experiences of over 6,000 people across West Yorkshire, with a strong emphasis on children and young people. We have also supported West Yorkshire Combined Authority colleagues in their work with local communities to coproduce the Mayor's Serious Violence Strategy; a consultation that reached over 5000 people. These insights provide a robust evidence base to shape our priorities, ensuring that our work is rooted in the voices and lived experiences of the communities we serve.

Youth Commission

Through its 2025 engagement activity, the Youth Commission reached 1,247 young people via peer-led workshops, events, and conversations.

Young people identified the value of existing community assets, including youth groups, sports activities, schools, and trusted adults, which support wellbeing and provide positive outlets. However, they also highlighted key gaps, particularly around access to

employment opportunities, mental health support, and safe spaces.

Barriers to support included cost, transport, long waiting times, and stigma around seeking help. Young people emphasised the need for more accessible, consistent services and clearer pathways into training, employment, and support. These insights continue to inform our Child First approach, ensuring that services respond to children and young people's needs and focus on early support, inclusion, and opportunity.

Youth Voice Census and Serious Violence Consultation

Across both activities, respondents highlighted concerns around crime, safety, and limited opportunities, alongside mixed feelings of belonging and access to support. While many people reported feeling safe during the day, confidence reduced at night, and issues such as knife crime, exploitation, and unsafe public spaces remain key worries. Children in particular identified a lack of safe spaces, activities, support, and opportunities to influence local decisions.

These insights also directly inform and reinforce our Child First approach, ensuring that the voices of children, young people, and communities shape how we prioritise prevention, build trusted relationships, and create safer, more inclusive environments where all can thrive.

Photovoice

In 2025, we launched PhotoVoice, a creative project designed to capture children and young people's views on safety in their communities.

Using disposable cameras they photographed places, people, and moments against the theme of 'safe spaces' and collaborated with photographer Daniel Wheeler to design a public exhibition.

Young people highlighted the vital role youth workers play in helping them feel safe, alongside the importance of practical safety features to improve feelings of safety in their communities such as good lighting, CCTV and safe street crossings.

They also emphasised the value of positive spaces and activities designed for young people, and shared how community perceptions and media portrayals can shape how they feel they are seen and understood.

PhotoVoice provided a powerful platform for young people to express their experiences in their own words and images and share their thoughts directly with decision makers from across Leeds.

Community Leaders

In 2025–26, the Community Leaders Programme continued to strengthen and connect the skills and confidence of people working at the heart of West Yorkshire's communities. Designed for those in the voluntary and community sector, the programme supports local leaders to develop their own leadership style while contributing to a wider public health approach to reducing violence.

Participants took part in a three month blend of online and face to face sessions, supported by experienced leadership coaches. Alongside group learning, each leader received one to one mentoring to help them apply new tools and approaches within their own organisations and neighbourhoods. The programme's Institute of Leadership and Management-recognised status reflects its high quality and the value it brings to those working directly with communities.

Community Leaders Network

Graduates from the Community Leaders Programme are able to join the Community Leaders West Yorkshire Network, a growing group of local pioneers who continue to collaborate with partners including local councils, the Police, the NHS, the VRP and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The network plays an important role in shaping local solutions, strengthening community organisations and ensuring that grassroots voices influence decision making across the region.

Serious Violence Duty

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) is a statutory requirement that places responsibilities on specified organisations to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. During 2025–26, the focus across West Yorkshire has been on the deeper embedding and operational delivery of the Duty across the partnership, whilst working to coproduce and develop a unified Serious Violence Strategy for West Yorkshire.

Throughout the year, the VRP has worked alongside Serious Violence Duty holders and wider partners to deliver and support the implementation of core products such as a Needs Assessment, Response Strategy and local response plans and deliver evidence based interventions appropriate to identified needs.

A significant focus has been the implementation of Young Futures Panels across four areas of West Yorkshire, reflecting the Government’s manifesto commitment to early intervention through local prevention partnerships.

Young Futures Panels provide a practical mechanism for delivering this ambition, enabling partners to identify children and young people at risk earlier and coordinate timely, multi agency responses. This work directly supports the Serious Violence Duty by strengthening local prevention arrangements, improving partnership working and ensuring that support is aligned to identified need in communities across West Yorkshire.



Delivery

Violence Reduction Partnership

With money provided to the West Yorkshire VRP and Serious Violence Duty Holders, a suite of over 75 interventions has been funded across the county, aiming to prevent, support, reduce and divert children and young people away from violence. This has been achieved using local and national evidence to inform their design and approach, and by working in partnership with Community Safety Partnerships, Police, Health, Fire, Education, other Duty Holders and local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations.

During 2025–26 these included ongoing delivery of the A&E Navigator services in Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Calderdale and Kirklees, the Parent Liaison Service with the Ivison Trust, a West Yorkshire ‘Focussed Deterrence’ approach, an expanded Virtual Decisions programme, and continued local

delivery in conjunction with Community Safety Partnerships.

Piloting new initiatives, Young Futures Prevention Partnership Panels have been implemented in Bradford, Wakefield, Kirklees and Leeds, as part of the Government’s broader Young Futures Programme and in alignment with the Safer Streets Mission.

£2,433,302.54
(VRP and SVD)

Intervention spend for the year

16,519

Helped reach 16,519 young people aged 24 and under

£559,322.30

Reported match funding for the year

969

Engaged 969 people aged 25 and over

1,041

Professionals trained

Virtual Decisions

For 2025–26 delivery of the Virtual Decisions programme continued locally in partnership with West Yorkshire Police and local Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise organisations. The VRP also piloted having a dedicated delivery partner, commissioning a collaborative approach between Goshukan Karate Academy's Project On Guard and the Bradford Youth Development Partnership to extend the delivery across West Yorkshire, in a targeted and consistent approach. This partnership also drew on local knowledge and expertise from the West Yorkshire Community Leaders Network to enhance the offer.

During the course of the year, 126 workshops were held by the delivery partner, providing input from the five different virtual reality experiences available from Virtual Decisions – gangs, knives, influence, identity, and anti-social behaviour to more than 1,100 children and young people. During these workshops the most frequently used films were Knives (50%) and Influence (19%).

These sessions were held in settings such as mainstream schools, alternative provision, colleges, faith organisations and mosques, youth centres, and voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds.

Children in Bradford reported the highest level of knowledge linked to four of the experiences (gangs, knives, identity, and anti-social behaviour) whilst children in Leeds reported the highest level of knowledge about influence.

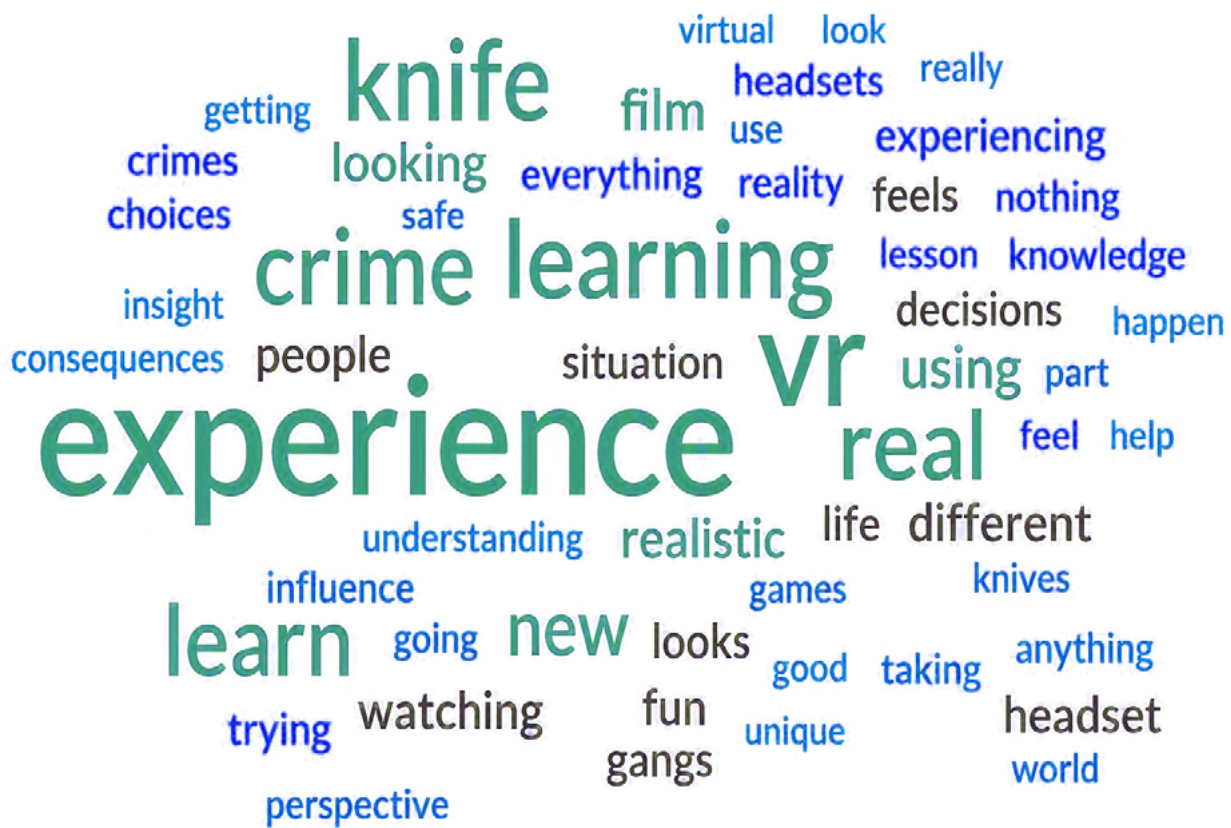
When asked what they were most looking forward to about the films, overwhelmingly this was experiencing virtual reality and seeing how realistic and immersive the films were. Children mentioned 'trying the headset for the first time', 'seeing how real it is', and 'feeling like I'm there'.

Another major theme in the children's responses was learning about knife crime, gangs, consequences and safety. Children were looking forward to learning how to keep themselves safe, seeing the dangers of knife crime, and understanding why crime happens. This new way of learning offered by the virtual reality films was exciting to the children, and they were looking forward to having the autonomy to make their own decisions and 'seeing different points of views'.

Participant demographics

Category	Demographic	Number	%
Age	0–11	104	9.1
	12–15	511	44.7
	16–18	527	46.1
Gender	Boys	736	64.4
	Girls	402	35.2
	Prefer not to say	4	0.4
Ethnicity	White	478	41.9
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	94	8.2
	Asian/Asian British	387	33.9
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	109	9.5
	Other Ethnic Group	64	5.6
	Prefer not to say	10	0.9

*Numbers may differ as not all children and young people completed both evaluation forms (pre-post session) due to time constraints and personal barriers due to the evaluation methods.



Word cloud depicting what children were looking forward to from the VR workshops/sessions

Young Futures Panels

The programme aims to intervene earlier with children who are vulnerable to being drawn into crime, by establishing multi-agency panels that identify, assess, and refer individuals into appropriate support. The Home Office piloted this approach across Violence Reduction Unit areas in England and Wales during 2025–26, with each area asked to establish at least one panel in partnership with a local authority.

West Yorkshire is distinctive within the national pilot. The West Yorkshire VRP chose to establish panels in four local authority areas rather than the single-area minimum, creating a natural comparison and opportunity to share learning across Bradford, Kirklees, Leeds,

and Wakefield. The VRP encouraged variation in panel design, so that each of the areas developed a model suited to its local context and existing multi-agency infrastructure.

The VRP commissioned an evaluation of these panels, which showed that all four panels became operational during the pilot period, and 529 children were discussed as new referrals across West Yorkshire, with an additional 16 as repeat referrals.

The preliminary findings show that implementation of the panels fill a genuine gap in the multi-agency landscape as the panels discovered children invisible to existing pathways.

Community Safety Partnerships (CSP)

We have again this year worked in collaboration with Community Safety Partnerships in each district to deliver local interventions at a community level.

Bradford

For 2025–26 the Community Safety Partnership have delivered a range of targeted interventions in conjunction with the Bradford Children and Families Trust, Inspire and Street Games, working with over 1,200 children and young people across Bradford.

These programmes have included one-to-one mentoring and small group sessions to help young people better understand and manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and develop effective coping strategies. Specialist support provided for those at higher risk of criminal exploitation, gang involvement, or serious violence, alongside an early intervention programme in primary schools to encourage positive behaviour and challenge negative thinking and multi-sport activity with a structured wraparound support offer across community settings in the district.

Calderdale

For 2025–26 Calderdale Community Safety Partnership delivered targeted support to over 2,000 children and young people.

This has included helping young people build confidence, develop positive relationships, and make safer choices, through commissioned interventions with local charity Newground Together.

Working locally with statutory services this included deployment of local Community Wardens to provide increased visibility in key areas, help to disrupt crime, support and reassurance building for residents, and engaging young people vulnerable to

exploitation, as well as work with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service educating children on the consequences of crime, engaging in risky behaviours and anti-social behaviour.

The CSP also delivered provision in partnership with Halifax Panthers CIC which included school-based programmes with Primary School Years 5 and 6 (9–11 years) on friendships, online safety, and the risks of crime, alongside more focused support for those most at risk.

Kirklees

Delivery has continued in Kirklees with a range of local providers, reaching over 1,100 children and young people and also providing specific training to 150 professionals with a focus on trauma, and behaviour and emergency situations.

Yorkshire Mentoring were commissioned to deliver a number of different programmes offering 121 and small group mentoring in both community and education based settings and specialist sessions in schools centred on violence against women and girls. A number of interventions delivered by Team Hanson, Bumpy, Training Cave, Thornton Lodge Action Group and Gorilla Grappling Academy have used sport, creative activities and workshop style sessions with young people helping to build confidence, resilience, and positive influences.

Statutory services including West Yorkshire Police (working with Fearless CIC), West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and local housing provider Pennine Housing, have provided dedicated outreach activities, and provision focused on domestic abuse and changing harmful mindsets, decreasing risk and addressing negative influential factors.

Leeds

The approach in Leeds saw the Leeds Community Safety Partnership commission 17 local projects working with just over 2,400 children and young people from across key locations in the district. A recognition event to celebrate the achievements of children and young people engaged positive activity was also held.

These local projects delivered a range of targeted youth interventions aimed at preventing violence and supporting safer communities and included working with local organisations such as Catch, Getaway Girls, Health for All, LS14 Trust, New Wortley Community Association with BARCA, St Lukes Trust, The Youth Association, CYDC, Bumpy, Yorkshire Mentoring, Immortal Martial Arts. These programmes have supported young people to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and develop skills to manage risk and make positive choices.

The Local Authority Youth Service and West Yorkshire Police have also worked across the city to provide on street detached youth work, including enhanced evening provision in the city centre to engage young people at higher risk of harm or exploitation, early intervention prevention activity and educational workshops.

Wakefield

Wakefield Council, in partnership with local organisations, delivered a range of support services aimed at improving safety, well-being, and positive life outcomes for residents to over 200 children, young people and adults. Through two interventions they worked with the Council's Domestic Abuse Support Service and also continued to work with Cranston to provide specialist counselling and therapeutic interventions to individuals affected by domestic abuse and violence.

Alongside this, the 'Branching Out' Youth Prevention Programme worked with young people aged 10–14 to reduce antisocial behaviour and strengthen emotional wellbeing. Through social and emotional learning, detached youth work, and targeted activities, the programme supported young people to make positive choices, build confidence, and engage more positively with their communities.

Commitments

Child First

Our commitment to a Child First approach remains at the heart of our work to prevent violence and support our communities. This principle guides how we design interventions and listen to the voices of those most affected.

We have continued our journey toward becoming a fully 'Child First' organisation, ensuring that children's voices shape our work and influence decisions wherever possible. This approach recognises the valuable insights of children relating to their localities and the importance of working collaboratively to create a future that fits the needs of children and young people across the region. This is guided by our Child First Framework, which was co-produced with 455 children across West Yorkshire.

The National Child First Delivery Group has continued, providing a space for collaboration, knowledge exchange and for organisations to collaborate and coordinate to provide better outcomes for children in the criminal justice system. Alongside this we have also continued to work with our West Yorkshire Child First Network to learn from professionals working with children across the sector.

To further embed the Child First Framework, the VRP piloted a creative research methodology called PhotoVoice, to explore the theme of 'Safe Spaces' which the National Youth Agency's Make Your Mark survey highlighted as a priority for children and young people in Leeds. More information on PhotoVoice can be found earlier in this report.



Trauma informed

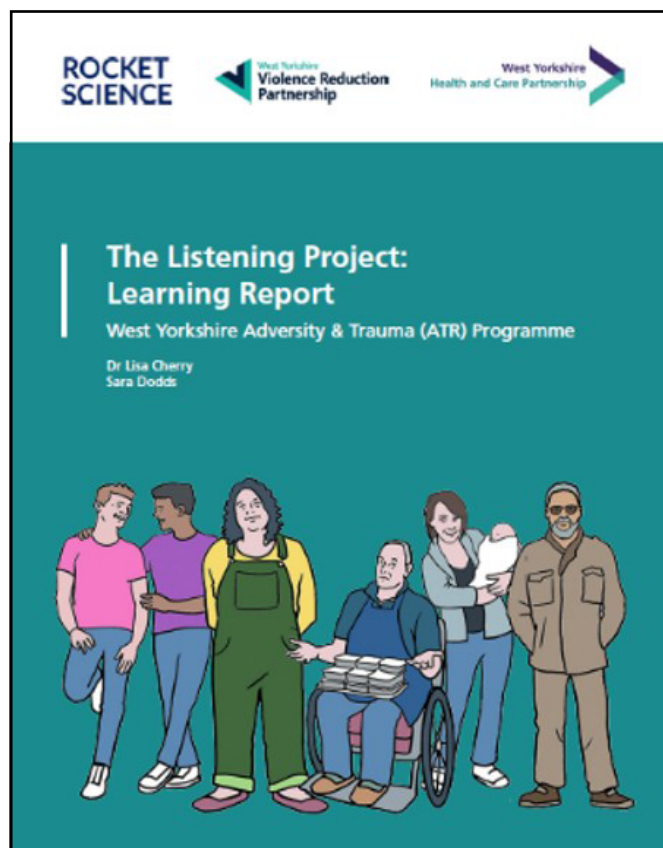
The Adversity, Trauma and Resilience (ATR) programme, which was co led between the VRP and the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (ICB), continued to bring together and support partners from across health, local authorities, education, criminal justice, policing and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to embed trauma informed and trauma responsive approaches across West Yorkshire systems. The programme also held its national profile through research, policy influence and contributions to trauma-informed practice across the UK.

Key achievements this year have included:

- Completion of the ATR Listening Project with a launch held in February 2026
- Delivery of a trauma-informed education conference attended by over 75 professionals from across education, health, criminal justice and VCSE organisations
- Rollout of the Train-the-Trainer model with 27 professionals completing the programme

- Establishment of new partnerships with the Royal Armouries and strengthening partnerships with Outwood Grange Academies Trust
- Advancement of a Women and Girls Criminal Justice Pathway
- Continued leadership of regional and national collaboration through Trauma-Informed North
- Presenting at the ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Conference 2025 on the topic of policing in the context of neurodiversity, trauma and adverse childhood experiences

Following organisational change within the ICB, the formal programme concluded at the end of 2025–26, however its learning continues to influence VRP priorities and approaches. Work is ongoing to explore how elements such as trauma informed training and workforce practice in particular can be sustained and embedded within existing partnership activity.



Campaigns

Across 2025–26, the West Yorkshire VRP has delivered a coordinated programme of campaigns and communications focused on preventing serious violence, amplifying community voices, and supporting young people at risk.

Campaign activity has combined public awareness, media engagement, and partner-led delivery to maximise reach and impact across the region.

‘I took a seat’

Behaviour change – reach and impact

Originally launched in February 2025, the ‘I took a seat’ campaign, co-produced with members of the West Yorkshire Youth Commission, focused on encouraging behaviour change and signposting to support

The campaign saw a 26% increase in young people thinking their peers understood the consequences of image-based abuse.

There was also an increase of young people saying they would report an experience to an adult or authority by 16%.

“I liked it because it shows that the person is listening to the victims, and they are helping them to feel heard. Which is helping them like ‘yes I feel better, I’ve been heard’ that sort of feeling in another person.”

The campaign had a successful impact; with 2.5 million+ Impressions achieved, 20,531 clicks converted to 10,273 active users, resulting in a high conversation rate of 50% and above average 4.5% engagement rates.



Next steps

As we move into 2026–27, the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership will continue to build on the progress made so far, strengthening our partnerships and expanding the work that helps keep people and communities safe.

The year ahead will see several important developments across the region:

Tackling Serious Violence Together – A co-produced Serious Violence Strategy for West Yorkshire

We will work closely with Serious Violence Duty holders, communities, and partners across West Yorkshire to deliver against the key objectives of the Mayor’s Strategy, namely to reduce knife crime, disrupt organised crime and gangs, and improve the safety of women and girls.

Knife Crime Concentration Fund

We have received new funding from the Home Office to focus on areas with the highest levels of knife related harm. This will allow us to deliver targeted support, work closely with local communities and partners, and reduce the risks faced by young people.

Young Futures Panels – full coverage across West Yorkshire

Following the success of our Young Futures Panels launched last year, in response to our evaluation, we will expand into Calderdale. This gives West Yorkshire full coverage, ensuring young people’s voices shape decisions, services and solutions everywhere in the region.

Young Futures Hub

We will work with partners selected by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to deliver the Young Futures Hub model. This partnership will help us share learning, strengthen youth participation and create more opportunities for young people across West Yorkshire.

Our ongoing commitment

Across all of this work, we remain committed to a trauma informed public health approach, using data and evidence, working in partnership, and involving communities in shaping the solutions that affect them. Our focus is on long term prevention, early support and creating the conditions for safer, healthier lives.

Together with our partners and communities, we will continue to drive forward meaningful change and reduce serious violence across West Yorkshire.



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