LIME CULTURE

Scoping to support the development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire

April 2023

Introduction

Background

1. In May 2021, Tracy Brabin was elected Mayor of West Yorkshire, representing the interests of 2.3 million people across the region. The Mayor has responsibility for transport, housing and planning, and finance powers, as well as the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner, supported by an appointed Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Alison Lowe OBE.

2. The Mayor's Policing and Crime Plan 2021-2024 prioritises supporting victims and witnesses, keeping people safe and building resilience, enabling safer spaces and thriving communities, and responding to multiple and complex needs.

3. In recognition of the need for a step change in tackling violence against women and girls, the Mayor of West Yorkshire launched her Safety of Women and Girls Strategy in November 2022 to drive forward a public health approach tackling violence against women and girls through education and prevention, behaviour change, the creation of safe spaces and supporting the third sector. The initial success of this strategy in raising the profile of women and girls and mobilising resources to protect and support female victims has prompted further consideration of how best to explicitly address the vulnerabilities and safety of men and boys, building on existing provision alongside the research, interventions and learnings generated through the work of West Yorkshire's Violence Reduction Unit.

4. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority commissioned LimeCulture in February 2023 to support the development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire.

5. A rapid review and scoping exercise took place between 14 February and 31 March 2023 to:
   - determine the current position in relation to the safety of men and boys in West Yorkshire;
   - engage local stakeholders in the early scoping and development of the strategic direction for West Yorkshire in relation to the safety of men and boys;
   - explore priority concerns relevant to the safety of men and boys, informed by the local and national evidence base relating to male victims of crime; and
   - identify initial key themes and recommendations to inform the strategic direction for West Yorkshire in addressing the safety of men and boys.

Overview of findings

6. During the scoping exercise, we directly engaged with 40 key stakeholders and undertook a broad desk-based review of national and local strategies, literature, research and practice to identify key concerns, risks and protective factors relating to the safety of men and boys across West Yorkshire.

7. In summary, the safety concerns relating to men and boys in West Yorkshire generally mirrored the national landscape, with mental health and suicide, serious violence, domestic abuse, sexual violence, online engagement, and dual status as victim and perpetrator all being on stakeholders' minds. All the stakeholders we spoke with recognised the value of existing programmes and interventions, particularly around serious violence, and supported the

creation of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy. They felt such a strategy will bring increased focus on the safety needs of men across West Yorkshire and create opportunities for gender equity in the accessibility and availability of support services.

8. It was notable that – in parallel with the national picture – men and boys are largely absent from the public narrative in West Yorkshire as vulnerable or as victims and do not explicitly feature in existing local strategies relating to policing, crime and safety other than as allies or perpetrators. Moreover, men and boys are not easily identifiable within local evaluations and needs assessments. This makes it difficult to determine how well the safety and support needs of men and boys are being met across a wide range of concerns, and how far other issues intersecting with male gender are taken into consideration when taking policy and commissioning decisions impacting males.

9. Locally, there appears to be a significant gap in addressing safety and support needs in relation to the risks of experiencing the types of offences disproportionately affecting women and girls. Concerns about the accessibility of support and whether males are properly recognised as victims were raised by the majority of stakeholders, with particular emphasis on issues around domestic abuse, forced marriage and sexual violence.

10. In taking the next steps towards a dedicated Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire, we recommend that commissioners engage with a much wider range of stakeholders to further explore underpinning drivers of risk, barriers to support-seeking, and existing provision and programmes for men and boys. Priority should be given to actively engaging men and boys with lived experience, including through leveraging the client advisory groups and panels that already exist within West Yorkshire's service providers.

11. The strategy itself should ensure that existing and new programmes of work appropriately recognise men and boys as vulnerable and as victims, identify their safety needs, and provide effective responses to those needs to improve their safety. It should span research, policy development, commissioning and the provision of support; and consider priorities that embed an effective response to males who are vulnerable, victims, or at risk of victimisation – including gendered data collection and analysis, further exploration of intersectionality, embedding partnership working, building competence and confidence among professionals, and promoting public awareness of men and boys as vulnerable and as victims. The strategy should also seek to address gaps in the provision and promotion of services supporting male victims of crimes that disproportionately impact women and girls.

12. Full recommendations can be found on pages 31-32.

13. LimeCulture would like to express our thanks to all those that gave up their time to contribute to this scoping exercise – without their valuable input, this report would not have been possible.

Scope

14. For the purposes of this scoping exercise, we interpreted the "safety of men and boys" in its broadest possible terms, encompassing:
    ☐ situations or circumstances where men and boys are or may feel unsafe or at risk;
    ☐ men and boys as vulnerable; and
    ☐ men and boys as victims of crime.

15. For consistency, we defined "vulnerable" in line with the national policing definition of vulnerability used by the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP), National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing:

    "a person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation".

16. Although the scope for this project has been kept deliberately broad to enable the identification of key themes to inform the early stages of development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire, the following areas were deemed out of scope due to existing commissioning responsibilities and/or the timeframe available to complete the work:

    ☐ health inequalities impacting the safety of men and boys;

    ☐ child neglect and physical abuse of male children (given the breadth of the safeguarding agenda, and the lead being with local authority children's services); and

    ☐ specific risks to males in custodial environments.

17. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime may wish to revisit these in the next stages of the strategy's development.

Methodology and approach

18. The rapid review and scoping exercise took place between 14 February and 31 March 2023. A mixed methods approach was utilised to enable the LimeCulture project team to identify and explore the key considerations relating to the safety of men and boys in West Yorkshire, and maximise engagement with the broadest range of stakeholders at this early stage of strategy development.

19. A desk-based review was conducted to determine the current picture pertaining to the safety of men and boys. This included looking at local and national prevalence data relating to the safety of men and boys; reviewing national and local strategies, research and evaluations to identify key risk and protective factors impacting the safety of men and boys; and exploring effective approaches to intervention and support concerning males.

20. The desk-based review ran in parallel to a broad, initial stakeholder engagement exercise. To ensure a consistent but flexible approach, we developed a semi-structured question framework to collect qualitative data from stakeholder consultation.

21. The project team conducted 40 one-on-one interviews via online means with key professional stakeholders across West Yorkshire to elicit and explore their views on:

    ☐ the key issues in relation to the safety of men and boys in West Yorkshire, with a particular focus on issues impacting local communities;

    ☐ current responses and any gaps/challenges in addressing these issues within West Yorkshire;

    ☐ priorities for addressing the safety of men and boys in West Yorkshire; and

    ☐ how the priorities identified in the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan and related strategies enable or hinder responses to the safety of men and boys.

22. Stakeholders were able to book interviews with the project team at a time convenient for them during the consultation period. Stakeholders included:

- ☐ specialist men and boys third sector support providers;
- ☐ non-specialist VSCE sector organisations;
- ☐ representatives from the five local Community Safety Partnerships (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield);
- ☐ Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Leads and Trauma Informed Adversity Programme Leads;
- ☐ West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Leads;
- ☐ strategic policy leads for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Victims and Witnesses, Safeguarding, Road Safety and Equalities from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
- ☐ Liaison and Diversion Services;
- ☐ Youth Justice Services; and
- ☐ the West Yorkshire Police VAWG Lead.

23. We also engaged with a wide range of voluntary, social, community and enterprise (VSCE) organisations:
    - ☐ VRU-funded providers, including training providers;
    - ☐ specialist VSCE support providers, including local domestic abuse, sexual violence, and LGBTQ+ organisations;
    - ☐ non-specialist VSCE support providers;
    - ☐ support groups/networks for men; and
    - ☐ education and alternative education providers.

24. Where possible, relevant stakeholders consulted with their client advisory groups or Lived Experience Panels prior to interview to represent wider views.

25. Professional stakeholders were initially identified by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority commissioning team; where further individuals/organisations were identified through the course of stakeholder interviews, these were followed up by the LimeCulture project team. For the full list of stakeholders involved in the initial consultation, please see Appendix 1.

26. It is important to note that all stakeholders interviewed as part of this process were assured they would not be personally identifiable from information shared with the LimeCulture project team; and that the information they provided would be used to identify key themes and frame the recommendations. As such, this report does not disclose the source of any of the information, views or experiences expressed to the project team as part of the strategy scoping exercise.

27. A Lived Experience survey was designed to enable men and boys to contribute directly, with the questions purposefully designed to allow individuals to provide whatever information they wished to contribute. The survey was shared with key partner agencies and relevant organisations. Several sstakeholders noted they had utilised the survey to directly canvas views from their organisation's Lived Experience Advisory Groups as they felt this was more appropriate at the early scoping stage.

28. The LimeCulture project team then analysed qualitative and quantitative data to identify key themes and priorities to inform the next stages of development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire.

29.   We established an independent Expert Advisory Panel to inform our analysis and test emerging strategic themes, with representation from the Men and Boys Coalition, Mankind UK and the Male Survivors Partnership.

Findings

National context

30. Recent years have seen an increasing recognition of men and boys as vulnerable and as victims, including in consideration of their different safety needs, their ability to access support, and their potentially dual status as both victim and perpetrator in certain contexts.

31. Despite this emerging recognition however, males are still often absent from public narratives around personal safety and the needs of male victims are often not being met by core services for victims of crimes that disproportionately affect women.

32. Although data relating to male victims of crime can be found in Office for National Statistics reports, the Crime Survey of England and Wales, and commissioned prevalence research, there is limited gender-specific research relating to individual and community risk and protective factors impacting the safety of men and boys (although the nature of the work under way within VRUs and in relation to adverse childhood experiences is beginning to capture this, to a degree), and little depth of evidence specifically relating to male victimisation and barriers to support.

33. Nonetheless, there are several key national strategies relevant to the safety of men and boys. It should be noted however that the majority of documents reviewed by the LimeCulture project team made little explicit reference to the specific needs and/or responses of men and boys; those that did have been included in the summary below.

34. The **Serious Violence Duty** (Section 8 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts [PCSC] Act 2022) requires specified authorities to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence through a public health approach. They must conduct a strategic needs assessment to comply with the Serious Violence Duty, and define what constitutes "serious violence" in their area.

35. While serious violence is not specifically defined in the legislation, the statutory guidance[1] states that the authorities should ensure a focus on "public space youth violence", including homicide, violence against the person (which may include both knife crime and gun crime), and other areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent (such as in county lines drug dealing) – these being the key focus areas of the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy.[2] However, there is also flexibility within the duty to take account of other related forms of serious violence in light of local prevalence and the impact of serious violence on individuals and communities. Examples given include (but are not limited to) alcohol-related violence, criminal exploitation, modern slavery and violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse and sexual offences, and male and LGBTQ+ victims.

36. In March 2019, the Home Office announced **multi-year funding for 18 Violence Reduction Units** (VRU) to build capacity in local areas to tackle the root causes of serious violence. VRUs bring together police, local government, health and education professionals, community

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[1] Home Office (December 2022), *Serious Violence Duty: Statutory Guidance for Responsible Authorities,* paragraphs 30-33, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1125001/Final_Serious_Violence_Duty_Statutory_Guidance_-_December_2022.pdf
[2] HM Government (2018), *Serious Violence Strategy,* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy

leaders and other key partners to ensure a multi-agency response to the identification and addressing of local drivers of serious violence.[3]

37.   The Home Office publishes an annual evaluation of the learnings and outcomes from the 18 VRUs, one of which sits within West Yorkshire. Although the national evaluations do not draw out gendered analysis, reported outcomes inherently focus on male-dominated offences e.g. assaults with a knife/sharp object, knife-enabled serious violence, and non-domestic homicides. The most recent evaluation for the year ending March 2022 found *"more purposeful"* commissioning taking place, with progress specifically noted in commissioning interventions based on identified needs, albeit that progress was mixed when it came to commissioning based on evidence of effectiveness. Recommendations relevant to developing a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy in West Yorkshire (although not male-specific) include engaging with health and voluntary sector organisations; ensuring engagement with community leaders and representatives of grass roots organisations to provide insights into "at risk" cohorts; and co-developing interventions with young people.[4]

38.   Similar themes are also evident in local evaluations of interventions commissioned by the West Yorkshire VRU, which emphasise the importance of trauma-informed educational settings, collaborative working between police and youth services, strong community links, the availability of "lower-level" interventions, and active referral rather than signposting.[5] Again, while these evaluations do not specifically consider impacts on men and boys, the cohort of individuals captured by the interventions are dominated largely by males.

39.   A 2018 review of the evidence relating to young people, violence and knives by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies highlights inequality, deprivation, social trust and mental health as deep drivers of youth violence. The review paper shows that while more serious violence is linked to deprivation, less serious violence among males is often independent of the level of socio-economic deprivation. It emphasises evidence of the effectiveness of investment in prevention activities for children and young people via a public health approach. It also notes evidence of high levels of mental ill-health and traumatisation among self-described gang members.[6]

40.   The College of Policing evidence briefing on knife crime from 2019 reports that both perpetrators and victims of knife crime are most likely to be males in late adolescence, with risk factors for both perpetration and victimisation including adverse childhood experiences and poor educational attainment. It makes note that ethnicity has been found to have no significant effect on weapon carrying in the UK. The briefing highlights the high volume of approaches to tackling knife crime offences, as compared to those focusing on safety and supporting victims, and concludes that public health approaches – including prevention work for at risk groups – have had a positive impact in addressing this issue.[7]

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[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/violence-reduction-unit
[4] Home Office (2023), *Violence Reduction Units: Evaluation Report for Year Ending March 2022*
[5] See, for example, L.Cherry, E. Froustis [date], *Trauma Informed Education Settings Insight West Yorkshire*; Wavehill Research (2022), *Teachable Moments Evaluation Summary*
[6] R. Grimshaw, M.Ford (2018), *UK Justice Policy Review Focus Issue 3: Young People, Violence and Knives: Revisitng the evidence and policy discussion.* Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.
[7] College of Policing (2019), Knife Crime Evidence Briefing

41. The Youth Endowment Fund's *Evidence and Gap Map* report (2021) highlights a lack of evidence in relation to contextual safeguarding and interventions aiming to prevent child criminal exploitation.[8]

42. The **Government's *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy***, published in July 2021, emphasises that while the crimes within the strategy disproportionality impact women and girls, there is much more to be done to support men and boys, including around their safety.[9]

43. In lieu of a dedicated national strategy considering the safety needs of men and boys (e.g. in relation to interpersonal violence), in May 2022 the Government published ***Supporting Male Victims*, an updated official position statement on male victims** of the crimes considered in the *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy* and *Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan*.[10] The update was informed by responses from males to the public Call for Evidence for these strategies, and further targeted work to engage male victims/survivors and those working with men and boys. The position statement summarises existing research and prevalence data relating specifically to male victims of crime, and highlights that:

☐ responses must recognise that males are not a homogenous group;

☐ men and boys can be victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in their own right; and

☐ many men and boys do not come forward to report abuse due to *"systemic, environmental and cultural barriers"*.

44. The position paper summarises some of the barriers facing males in disclosing abuse or seeking support – fear of not being believed (including myths and misconceptions about male victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in particular); lack of faith in the criminal justice system; guilt, shame and embarrassment; not recognising a situation as abusive; unaware of how to report; fear of losing child contact; immigration status; fear of "outing", threats of harm from the perpetrator; pressure from family and friends to remain in a relationship.

45. It also acknowledges additional structural, cultural, individual and interpersonal barriers for LGBT victims/survivors in accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence services; and highlights barriers to accessing support for those within prison estates in particular.[11]

46. Although the position paper does not include specific guidance on commissioning support services for male victims of crime, it sets the expectation that commissioners should utilise Ministry of Justice funding for victim and witness support services (committed to reach £185m per annum by 2024/25) in supporting males.

47. Male victims are also explicitly recognised in the **Government's *Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan*** (March 2022), which is driven by the three pillars of prioritising prevention, supporting victims, and pursuing perpetrators.[12] This emphasises that while reporting and prevalence data

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[8] White et. al (January 2021), Evidence and Gap Map of Interventions to Prevent Children Getting Involved in Violence. Youth Endowment Fund. https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YEF-Evidence-and-Gap-Map-Technical-Report-FINAL.pdf

[9] HM Government (2021), *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls*, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy

[10] Home Office (2022), *Policy Paper: Supporting Male Victims, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims* - original version published 2019 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020/male-victims-position-paper-march-2019-accessible-version

[11] In 2020, HM Prison and Probation Service reported 239 sexual assaults in the male secure establishment. *Safety in custody quarterly: update to December 2020 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-december-2020*

[12] Home Office (2022), *Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan,* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan

show women are most likely to be impacted by domestic abuse and men are most likely to be perpetrators, there is a need for a nuanced tailored response to male victims and survivors.

48. More generally, the *Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan* highlights the following interpersonal and community-level predictors of *both* perpetration and victimisation, which will be relevant considerations for the development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy: that:

☐ Interpersonal - experience of child abuse, exposure to violence at home, relationship status (recent divorce or separation), poor quality peer relationships, and *"disadvantaged status"*; and

☐ Community - neighbourhood deprivation including low levels of employment and high proportions of households with children; societal or cultural norms that condone violence and gender inequality.

49. In addition, the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** now recognises children, including boys, as victims of domestic abuse, and places a statutory duty on Local Authorities relating to the provision of support for victims/survivors and their children in safe accommodation.

50. The *Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy* (2021) explicitly recognises boys as victims of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, and acknowledges the lasting impact such violence can have on men and boys, and the importance of dedicated support for males who have unwanted sexual experiences. this can have a lasting impact on men and boys.[13]

51. The *National Statement of Expectations* **for the commissioning of violence against women and girls (VAWG) services** expects commissioners to have sufficient local specialist VAWG service provision in place including for male victims, and to invest in capacity-building for specialist services and groups that face the greatest barriers in accessing support.[14]

52. The *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Commissioning Toolkit* (2016) recognised that males have different needs to female victims and therefore require different kinds of services. An updated version of the Toolkit was published in March 2022, which acknowledges too that *"…men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse."*[15] The Toolkit emphasises that violence and abuse affects people of *"all ages, abilities, sexualities and backgrounds"* and that *"issues can be compounded by multiple inequalities and a broader context of social exclusion and marginalisation".* It cites the Male Domestic Abuse Network's **Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Domestic Abuse[16],** and the Male Survivors Partnership's **Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence**[17], both of which emphasise the importance of specific services tailored to the needs and circumstances of male victims.

53. The **2018 *Victims Strategy***, in reflecting on changes in the nature of crime, highlighted from the Government's own funding data that "demand for support services from male victims of sexual violence has risen 176% in three years" (from 6,709 in 2014/15 to 18,580 male victims

[13] Home Office (2021), *Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy,* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-abuse-strategy

[14] Home Office (2022), *National Statement of Expectations: Guidance on commissioning services to support victims and survivors of violence against women and girls*

[15] Home Office (March 2022), *VAWG Services Commissioning Toolkit* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations-and-commissioning-toolkit

[16] Male Domestic Abuse Network Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims and Survivors of Domestic Abuse, https://mdan.org.uk/service-standards/

[17] Male Survivors Partnership Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence, https://limeculture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/11.-Quality-Standards-For-Services-Supporting-Male-Victims-Survivors-Guidance.pdf

in 2015/16 supported by specialist services in England and Wales).[18] The increase was indicative of increased focus and investment from government at this time on supporting male victims, and in itself suggests that where services are available and appropriate, men and boys will access them.

54. The **Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) public statement on male victims** aims to ensure the CPS response is effective in light of the specific needs of male victims of crimes considered within the CPS VAWG strategy, namely domestic abuse, rape, sexual offences, stalking, forced marriage, honour-based violence, child abuse, prostitution, human trafficking (focusing on sexual exploitation), pornography and obscenity.[19] It commits to providing information for prosecutors to challenge myths and stereotypes; exploring issues for males resulting from multiple discrimination; reflecting the male experience of crimes in media communication to increase confidence in reporting; and ensuring all relevant policies, guidance and training for prosecutors include the experience of male victims.

55. The CPS public statement explicitly acknowledges barriers male victims face to reporting such crimes, many of which are based on gender stereotypes and sexist or homophobic assumptions. It also recognises specific types, patterns or contexts of abuse for male victims that differ from female victims:

   ☐ males are more likely to be abused in the context of child sexual abuse by authority figures or people outside the family;

   ☐ disclosure rates for sexual abuse for boys peak at age 13; girls at age 16;

   ☐ lower proportions of men than women report domestic abuse;

   ☐ a larger number of men report sexual abuse following chemsex parties; and

   ☐ in honour-based violence cases, male victims are often targeted when blamed for the behaviour of women; or are not complying with expected masculine behaviours; or when thought to be gay; or have disabilities.

56. The differences for males in disclosing, reporting and/or accessing support services are also reflected in the Ministry of Justice's recently published research (January 2023) exploring the *Formal Support Needs of Adult Victim-Survivors of Sexual Violence.*[20] Through a review of existing literature and primary research with victims and those supporting them, it noted an evidence gap in where and how male victims/survivors seek 'formal' support and how best their needs can be met. The study highlighted barriers faced by male victims in disclosing abuse and accessing support, including societal and cultural issues around self-perception and myths around male victims, and structural considerations including a lack of available support specifically for males. Recommendations included the importance of demonstrating inclusivity for males (among others) through promotional materials, language and commissioning practices, the recognition of intersectionality, and the importance of gendered approaches. Interestingly, within the research, male survey respondents were more likely than female to describe their ideal support provider as someone trained in supporting individuals with mental health issues.

[18] HM Government (2018), *Victims Strategy* – referencing data from the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund
[19] Crown Prosecution Service, *Public statement on male victims for crimes covered by the CPS Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy*, https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-public-statement-male-victims-crimes-covered-cps-vawg-strategy
[20] Ministry of Justice (2023), *Formal Support Needs of Adult Victim-Survivors of Sexual Violence,* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/formal-support-needs-of-adult-victim-survivors-of-sexual-violence

57. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's recent national mapping of domestic abuse services in England and Wales found that:

  ☐ with respect to why male and female victims wanted support, the greatest variation was a desire for men to access support for their abuser to change their behaviour – with 74% of men wanting this compared to 47% of women, a difference of 27 percentage points;

  ☐ four in five male victims (83%) wanted support with respect to the family courts;

  ☐ refuge figures were the same for men and women, with 29% of respondents seeking refuge support;

  ☐ 82% men reported that accessing help was 'quite or very difficult', compared to 43% of women and 73% of non-binary people;

  ☐ 13% of men felt services that were meant to be for men were "lacking or discriminatory; and

  ☐ in terms of the professionals to whom men disclose, healthcare professionals and the police were found to be the most common for men – as for women; however men were less likely to tell a domestic abuse service and more likely to contact a helpline than women.[21]

58. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's findings reflect themes emerging from a 2019 evidence review published by the British Medical Journal on the barriers to initial disclosure and help-seeking by male victims of domestic abuse:[22]

  ☐ fear of disclosure;

  ☐ challenge to masculinity;

  ☐ commitment to their relationship;

  ☐ diminished confidence/despondency; and

  ☐ the "invisibility perception" of services.

59. A thematic analysis of 22 domestic homicide reviews involving male victims also identified similar themes – dismissal of men's injuries (including a lack of exploration of such injuries), women's abusive acts often dismissed by services, male victims treated as perpetrators, and a lack of available support for male victims.[23] It also found healthcare professionals had missed opportunities to support, refer or signpost men to appropriate services. The authors concluded that *"domestic abuse services are not currently working inclusively, and this serves as an additional barrier to male help-seeking victims",* and furthermore noted that an exploration of men's engagement with domestic abuse services and the reaction they receive remains absent from the literature.

60. Picking up themes of safety and vulnerability, the **VKPP's National Vulnerability Action Plan** for policing includes the following objectives among others: that:

  ☐ to embed a trauma-informed approach;

  ☐ to deliver a combined safeguarding response;

  ☐ to ensure all victims and suspects are assessed for mental health and vulnerability, and advised on/signposted to available services;

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[21] Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2021), *A Patchwork of Provision: How to Meet the Needs of Victims and Survivors Across England and Wales,* https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/national-mapping-of-domestic-abuse-services/
[22] A.L Huntley et al (2017), *Help-seeking by male victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA): A systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis.* British Medical Journal. https://bit.ly/3b5b1ZY
[23] K.Hope, E.Bates, M.Brooks, J.Taylor (2021), What can we learn from Domestic Homicide Reviews with male victims? https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/6038/

☐ to work with communities, community groups and in collaboration with PCCs to increase reporting of those groups that are under-reporting.[24]

61. Through a meta-analysis of 126 reviews of death and serious harm, the VKPP found that the identification of vulnerability and risk was the most common 'missed opportunity' and that, in many cases where risk went unidentified, onward police responses were missing, ad hoc and/or inappropriate. In relation to vulnerable adults, the VKPP noted that police appear in some cases to struggle with identifying risk and vulnerability which may be related to mental health needs; and that there was evidence in these reviews that the victim/offender overlap in relation to adults is misunderstood, and that some officers may still struggle to understand the dynamics of exploitation.[25]

62. In general therefore, the themes identified through the national literature around male victims and survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse, and which will be relevant to wider considerations around identifying and addressing the safety needs of men and boys, included:

☐ the responses to male victims from 'formal' services are often lacking, with minimal outreach and missed opportunities for onward referral and/or signposting;

☐ common barriers to support-seeking such as social barriers (e.g. masculine stereotypes, supposed "norms" and traditional gender roles), individual barriers (e.g. identity impacts, shame), and practical barriers (e.g. appropriateness of services, cost, location)[26];

☐ insufficient or non-existent referral routes due to lack of awareness of offences disproportionately affecting females also affecting males, services not promoted as available to males, and limited capacity in existing services;

☐ a lack of support services for males – both geographically and in relation to service access criteria (e.g. for non-recent abuse only);

☐ the reluctance of men to access support through female-oriented services (this was especially cited for male refugee victims/survivors)[27];

☐ the importance of specialist services (e.g. domestic abuse, sexual violence) being recognisably "for men" - some male victims/survivors cited community and peer support groups as an effective way for men to come together to share their experiences; others highlighted the value of digital/online support in providing males with the opportunity to seek initial support[28];

☐ the importance of explicit reassurances about the confidentiality of services to build trust among males;

☐ the tendency of men to seek formal support (most commonly mental health support) for the impacts of unwanted sexual experiences or other trauma (e.g. depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol misuse) without disclosing sexual abuse/assault[29];

☐ the need to support males via awareness raising and outreach activities to overcome the societal stereotypes and expectations to improve their engagement with services;

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[24] https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/national-vulnerability-action-plan-nvap/
[25] VKPP (2020), The role of police in responding to child and adult vulnerability: A meta-analysis of 126 reviews of death and serious harm, page 27
[26] Donne et. al (2018), *Barriers to and Facilitators of Help-Seeking Behavior Among Men Who Experience Sexual Violence.* Am J Mens Health. 2018 Mar;12(2):189-201, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29161934/; Hlavka (2017), *Speaking of Stigma and the Silence of Shame: Young Men and Sexual Victimization,* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1097184X16652656
[27] Ministry of Justice (2023), Formal support needs of adult victim-survivors of sexual violence
[28] Donne et al (2018)
[29] The Men's Unwanted Sexual Experiences (MUSE) Project – University of Brighton, Mankind UK, Male Survivors Partnership: Unpublished research (at time of writing).

- [ ] the detrimental impact of gender stereotypes for men and boys and their effect on help-seeking behaviours, including the ways in which traditional masculine norms affect how men view themselves as victims or if they even recognise their victimisation at all[30]; and

- [ ] fear of not being believed or viewed as a perpetrator as a significant barrier to seeking support and reporting domestic abuse.

Local context

63. There are a suite of local and regional strategies and approaches already in place across West Yorkshire that are relevant to exploring how the safety needs of men and boys are currently recognised and addressed.

64. The Mayor's **Police and Crime Plan 2021-24** sets out four priorities and three cross-cutting themes to drive efforts in creating a *"safe, just and inclusive West Yorkshire"*:[31]

Police and Crime Plan Priorities	Related Strategies / Plans
Supporting Victims and Witnesses and Improving Criminal Justice Outcomes – *focus on victims*	Victims and Witness Strategy (in draft)
Keeping People Safe and Building Resilience – *focus on person-centred crime and vulnerability*	Vulnerability and Safeguarding Strategy (in development)
Safer Places and Thriving Communities - *focus on place-based crime*	Place-Based Strategy (in development)
	VRU Response Strategy and Strategic Needs Assessment (2022/23)[32]
	Local Community Safety Partnership Plans (Leeds, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield)
Responding to Multiple and Complex Needs – *focus on reducing offending and re-offending*	
Cross-cutting themes	
Safety of Women and Girls	Safety of Women and Girls Strategy (2022)[33]
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	
Early Intervention and Prevention	

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[30] Hine et al (2021), *Understanding the Profile and Needs of Abused Men: Exploring Call Data from a Male Domestic Violence Charity in the UK.* Sage Journals, Volume 37, Issue 17-18, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/08862605211028014
[31] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/the-police-and-crime-plan/
[32] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/vru-needs-assessment-response-strategy/#:~:text=The%20Needs%20Assessment%20for%20the,preventing%20and%20reducing%20serious%20violence
[33] West Yorkshire Combined Authority (2022), *Safety of Women and Girls Strategy,* https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/a-mayoral-combined-authority/mayoral-pledges/the-safety-of-women-and-girls/safety-of-women-and-girls-strategy/

65. Beyond a headline recognition that both women and men can experience sexual assault, males are not otherwise referenced as victims within the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan.

66. The Mayor's **Policing and Crime Commissioning Strategy (2022-2024)** sets out how the Combined Authority will commission services including for victims and witnesses. It includes explicit commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to co-commissioning with those with lived experience.[34]

67. The **West Yorkshire Police VAWG Strategy** was launched in 2021 in response to the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) national framework for supporting women and girls who are victims of violence and harassment.[35] It should be noted that it is clear within the national framework that the term women and girls in this context applies to all those who experience these types of offences. This is not explicit within the West Yorkshire VAWG strategy. In common with the NPCC framework, the strategy establishes three priorities – the pursuit of perpetrators, the creation of safe spaces (private, public and online), and increasing trust and confidence in policing. The West Yorkshire Police VAWG Strategy aligns with the West Yorkshire Safety of Women and Girls Strategy, and progress is monitored through the Police and Crime Plan.

68. The West Yorkshire Police Equalities Monitoring Summary data is published online (latest April 2021 to March 2022), and is used to inform the police force strategy in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. It includes data both on the delivery of policing services, and relating to the police workforce; its framing provides insight into police force priorities.[36]

69. **Programme Precision** is a collaborative multi-agency programme driven by the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy.[37] Serious and organised crime covers many areas of threat that may disproportionately affect men and boys including firearms, human trafficking, exploitation, fraud, cyber-crime, corruption and organised acquisitive crime (including burglary and robbery).

70. The **West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy**, hosted by West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (WYHCP). All WYHCP partners have pledged to prevent suicide and to reduce the suicide rate by 10%. The strategy acknowledges high levels of suicide among males both in West Yorkshire and nationally.

71. The **West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit** routinely commissions research into themes related to violence and victimisation [38], delivers evaluations of key interventions and programmes[39], and reports to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority on efforts to tackle serious violence. Work exploring health inequalities in serious violence[40] has significantly informed the VRU strategy over the last year.

72. Delivered jointly by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority VRU and WYHCP, the West Yorkshire **Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme** aims to prevent trauma and mitigate harm by:

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[34] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/9802/policing-and-crime-commissioning-strategy-2022-2024.pdf

[35] https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/policing-vawg-national-framework-for-delivery-year-1.pdf

[36] https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/about-us/diversity-equality-and-inclusion

[37] https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/programme_precision_strategy_document_2022_0.pdf

[38] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/research/

[39] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/evaluation/

[40] https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/application/files/8916/3698/1083/Crest_Inequalities_and_Serious_Violence_in_West_Yorkshire.pdf

☐ understanding services better;

☐ understanding the needs of the population;

☐ preventing re-traumatisation and offering better care for all that is equitable and accessible.

73. The Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme produces a range of resources and training for professionals to pursue systemic change.[41] Key documents reviewed by the project team include the Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme Evaluation[42], insights reports, and Knowledge Exchange events.[43]

74. The project team observed evidence of strong engagement with local communities in the development of existing West Yorkshire strategies, and the active involvement of those with lived experience of the issues at hand in designing local and regional strategies, plans and services.

75. This engagement work has included men and boys; however it is not clear to the project team whether issues raised during these consultations in relation to safety needs have been addressed. It was notable that local youth engagement work has focused on the role of men and boys in prevention (including as allies) in the context of the safety of women and girls, rather than considering explicit safety concerns for men and boys that relate to or emerge from the themes addressed in the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy (see paragraph 77 below).[44] [45]

76. With the exception of the West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy, we did not find explicit reference to safety issues affecting men and boys within local strategies. Where gender was highlighted this was most often in relation to female victims, and equivalent figures were not provided for male victims. Nor were population numbers routinely used, which would have identified absolute numbers of male victims and offered valuable insights into the male experience.

77. We were unable to determine whether Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) had been carried out for the strategies that have been developed to date – reviewing these where they exist will be important in understanding the impact of existing strategies in the context of gender. We understand commissioned support providers are now required to complete EQIAs as part of their contract and grant arrangements as well as reporting access and outcome data by gender, which will in future provide useful insights into the equity of support access for men and boys.

78. The Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme has clearly been influential in embedding an appreciation of the impacts and implications of trauma (including childhood trauma) in approaches to both prevention and support provision across West Yorkshire. This was especially clear within the VRU, which is, in turn closely aligned with the local Community Safety Partnerships. Trauma-informed approaches here recognise both protective and risk factors affecting the vulnerability and victimisation of young people and adults. However, neither programme is explicit in terms of any gender differences relating to protective and risk factors either for women and girls, or men and boys.

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[41] https://westyorkshiretraumainformed.co.uk/

[42] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8518/adversity-trauma-and-resilience-programme-evaluation.pdf

[43] https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/our-priorities/population-health-management/adversity-trauma-and-resilience

[44] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8203/6-111021-youth-consultation-summary-final.pdf

[45] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/the-police-and-crime-plan/west-yorkshire-police-and-crime-plan-faqs/

79. The Safety of Women and Girls Strategy identifies men and boys as allies but does not acknowledge them either as victims or vulnerable to crimes disproportionately affecting women and girls. Notably, the Independent Advisory Panel for VAWG positions the Male Independent Advisory Group as a place to share feedback and learning and help change culture, while the Women's Independent Advisory Group affords victims, survivors and those with general interest to improve the response to VAWG offences, and share lived experience, ideas and innovation.[46] Given different considerations around the safety of men and boys, the existing pillars within the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy will not easily translate to a specific Safety of Men and Boys Strategy.

80. In summary, while local strategies, plans and programmes are picking up themes relevant to the safety of men and boys, they do not currently:

   ☐ identify and recognise specific vulnerabilities to victimisation/exploitation related to male gender (men, boys and those who identify as male);

   ☐ explicitly acknowledge that males are vulnerable to crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, or recognise the barriers male victims may experience in accessing support;

   ☐ identify the intended or actual impact of interventions by gender, even where a significant proportion of those in the intervention cohort are likely to be male e.g. VRU funded diversion interventions; or

   ☐ identify the effectiveness of interventions/strategies for male victims.

Stakeholder engagement: Overarching themes

81. All the stakeholders we spoke to felt that the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy had been needed and is an important recognition of the issues facing women and girls.

82. With that in mind, stakeholders welcomed the development of a strategy that acknowledges the vulnerability of men and boys to exploitation and victimisation. They were keen to ensure that any strategy supports gender equity not gender equality.

83. It is important to recognise that, while males may present in the minority in the context of certain risks and crime types (e.g. domestic abuse and sexual violence), stakeholders felt males should be considered a significantly vulnerable minority. This is particularly relevant given the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty in taking the impact of "serious violence' into account when determining local inclusions and responses.

84. Many stakeholders expressed a desire that the strategy not be viewed either as an "add on" or in competition to the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy.

85. Stakeholders told us that where there is a prevailing view that men and boys do not seek support or engage with services, it is more often the case that men face barriers to accessing such services. They felt this may include a lack of recognition of men and boys as victims/vulnerable.

86. Stakeholders shared a wide range of views on the specific issues, risks and protective factors impacting the safety of men and boys across West Yorkshire, ranging from deprivation and

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[46] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/9762/item-7-vawg.pdf

intergenerational poverty to domestic and sexual violence, to road safety, to technology-assisted exploitation and abuse.

87. For any and all of these issues, it is critical that any strategy should not seek to *prove* that men and boys are more unsafe than women and girls, but rather ensure that existing and new programmes of work can:

  ☐ appropriately recognise men and boys as vulnerable and as victims;

  ☐ identify their safety needs; and

  ☐ provide effective responses to those needs in order to improve their safety.

88. The key themes that emerged from early stakeholder engagement and the national and local data are set out below.

Trauma-informed approaches

89. The importance of trauma-informed approaches came out strongly as a cross-cutting issue from both stakeholders and the local context review. The Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme within West Yorkshire and its links to the VRU appear to have been instrumental in supporting a whole system approach to understanding the prevalence and impact of trauma across the population of West Yorkshire. There are learnings from this work that can be usefully applied to the Safety of Men and Boys Strategy.

90. Stakeholders felt that approaches across West Yorkshire must take into account the potential impacts of trauma on men and boys.

91. Stakeholders reflected in particular on the impacts of **intergenerational trauma** among men and boys across a range of different communities, highlighting as examples years of generational or societal deprivation, and oppressive and traumatic events.

92. Stakeholders noted that **re-traumatisation** can occur when services fail to recognise individuals as victims or assume they are perpetrators. Examples given to the project team included:

  ☐ males being subject to Stop and Search, mental health/sectioning, and arrest processes; and

  ☐ males accessing services where they felt they were neither believed nor understood.

93. Some stakeholders also noted risks of **vicarious trauma among men and boys through** either the experience of violence or the perceived risk of violence.

Impact of deprivation

94. The West Yorkshire VRU strategies specifically acknowledge risk factors relating to deprivation in considering experiences of violence. Concern about the impacts of deprivation were clear throughout all of our conversations with stakeholders during the engagement exercise.

95. All stakeholders shared that the rising cost of living is resulting in increased levels of deprivation locally. They raised concerns that this is – and will continue to - negatively impact the safety of men and boys, and strongly felt that acknowledging deprivation as a key intersectional issue should be fundamental to the strategy.

96.   Stakeholders identified financial issues as a key risk factor in male suicide; and highlighted their role in increasing opportunities locally for the criminal exploitation of boys and young men.

97.   It was also noted that a lack of financial resources can also present challenges for individuals in accessing support where it is provided at some distance from home, or where finances dictate levels of digital inclusion (e.g. an individual's ability to access online support services).

Personal safety and harassment

98.   The importance of perceptions of personal safety was highlighted as an overarching consideration across all the different safety issues for men and boys explored during our desk review and stakeholder engagement exercise.

99.   Many of the stakeholders we spoke with told us that men can feel unsafe both on nights out and within their local communities.

100.   Although there is limited local data available on personal experiences of safety[47] relates to women and girls, national ONS data from 2022[48] demonstrates similar concerns around personal safety regardless of gender, particularly in the younger age range, although there are expected differences between males and females in some categories.

101.   The ONS study reported that males do feel unsafe in public arenas, and this affects their behaviours. People (regardless of gender) felt less safe walking alone in all settings after dark than during the day; with women feeling less safe than men in all settings after dark.

102.   Although more women (27%) than men (16%) aged 16-24 reported they had experienced at least one form of harassment in the previous 12 months, this can still be seen as a significant minority. Importantly, similar proportions of men and women aged 16-24 reported feeling threatened by a stranger at 8%.

Equality, diversion, inclusion and intersectionality

103.   In this early scoping work it has not been possible to give detailed consideration to the broad range of community and protected characteristics and how these intersect with male gender. However, it is abundantly clear within the national literature, and through input from stakeholders and the lived experience of men and boys, that this issues and/or protected characteristics often increase individuals' vulnerability or compound to restrict their capacity to seek support, rather than acting as protective factors or enablers.

104.   Local stakeholders told us it was important to understand in considerations of safety, risk and protective factors that male gender intersects with a range of other protected characteristics.

105.   It was noted that men and/or boys are sometimes only perceived as victims or vulnerable due to some additional vulnerability factor such as their ethnicity, religion, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality that may make them a victim of crime. This suggests the very state of "being male" is seen as affording a form of protection against vulnerability.

106.   Conversely, research shows that some personal characteristics at a societal level appear to make it less likely males will be perceived as vulnerable, even where those characteristics in

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[47] https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1657/dr-anna-barker-leads-study-published-on-the-safety-of-women-and-girls-in-parks-in-west-yorkshire
[48] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/research/

fact cause them to be more vulnerable to risk of harm (e.g. the adultification of young black males).

107. Stakeholders told us ensuring the inclusivity and diversity of services which could include by and for was essential in ensuring equitable access for males regardless of background or circumstances, and this will only be achieved through the strategy by properly understanding the needs of the different communities across West Yorkshire.

108. Further work is needed with local communities and specialist support providers to explore the impacts of structural, cultural and systemic barriers on the safety of men and boys.

Expressions of gender

109. Stakeholders told us that gender expression is an important element to consider in the context of the safety of men and boys, both in victimisation and the ability to access appropriate support. This is especially important in understanding the impact of male societal and cultural stereotypes on the way in which men and boys may or may not recognise their victimisation and access support. Stakeholders also noted challenges faced by trans and non-binary individuals in accessing support services where gender is a criterion for access.

110. In terms of the national and local data, generally it is not possible to identify gender beyond binary -male or female for police reported crime as it is only recorded in binary form. However, ONS data shows there was a 56% increase in transphobic hate crime over the last reported year (ONS 2022) – the increase for West Yorkshire was slightly higher at 58.2%. The Crime Survey for England and Wales suggests those identifying as transgender are four times more likely to be a victim of crime.

111. One stakeholder told us that reviews of Coroner reports show trans and non-binary young people die by suicide at higher rates than can be determined through standard health records.

112. Since 2022, relevant authorities have been required to challenge LGBTQ+ discrimination and violence under the Serious Violence Duty. Stakeholders highlighted benefits of partnership working to address barriers around accessing support for these groups, which had enabled the delivery of relevant services locally (e.g. crime reporting, sexual health, harm reduction around needle use) in existing spaces where people feel safe.

113. Stakeholders noted that some of the challenges relating to gender are already acknowledged locally, including in the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ as a cross-cutting theme within West Yorkshire's Safety of Women and Girls Strategy. However, stakeholders told us they were unclear how LGBTQIA+ priorities are interpreted for trans women under the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy, and that more work needed to be done.

Specific thematic issues

114. In addition to the overarching themes of trauma, deprivation, personal safety, equality and diversity, and intersectionality, our review of national legislation and strategies, research literature and campaigns has identified the following key themes relevant to a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy:

☐ mental health and suicide;

☐ complex needs and disadvantage;

- school exclusion;
- missing children;
- homelessness, rough sleeping and housing;
- serious violence, including knife crime and personal injury;
- criminal exploitation;
- domestic abuse, including stalking, harassment and forced marriage;
- sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and child sexual abuse; and
- neurodiversity.

115. Each of these themes was reflected both in the local data and/or our conversations with stakeholders across West Yorkshire.

116. In addition, the following themes were identified at the local level through our desk review and stakeholder engagement:
- road safety;
- online risks and preventative programmes; and
- dual status of males as victims and perpetrators.

117. The following section explores each of these themes in more detail, bringing together national and local data, existing strategies and interventions/programmes, and stakeholder views. They are not presented in any particular order of priority.

Mental health and suicide (including suicidal ideation)

118. In 2021, there were over 5,000 suicides registered in England alone.[49]

119. Suicide is the biggest cause of death in men under the age of 50, and around three quarters of deaths from suicides each year are men.[50] Grief and loss, money worries, alcohol, relationship breakdown, and mental health problems are all significant risk factors for men in relation to suicide.

120. The West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan (linked to the Adversity, Trauma and Resilience programme) explicitly recognises the risk to needs of men due to the high rates of suicide.[51] Research found that the risk was highest for men who had been recently bereaved (especially where the bereavement was a result of suicide) – stakeholders told us that, as a result, dedicated local resource has been put in place to address this through specifically commissioned services.

121. The West Yorkshire VRU needs assessment[52] shows that, post-COVID, boys are not being referred to psychological therapy services in the same numbers as girls – it was unclear from either the desk review or our conversations with stakeholders whether this was being further explored and, if necessary, addressed.

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[49]
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2021registrations

[50] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8221/
[51] https://suicidepreventionwestyorkshire.co.uk/application/files/8516/4431/6977/Suicide_Prevention_Strategy_2022-2027.pdf
[52] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/vru-needs-assessment-response-strategy/

122. Stakeholders were keen to counter assumptions that men and young boys don't talk about mental health and wellbeing by pointing to the success of peer-led groups locally such as Andy's Man Club. Some stakeholders mentioned other community-based male specific emotional support services including Gasped, recognising that they tackle a wide range of issues and support males in building their emotional resilience. Stakeholders described some" professional snobbery" from formal mental health providers in relation to these informal groups, but it was clear from several stakeholders that these groups are often a point of disclosure for severe trauma and abuse (including domestic abuse).

123. Stakeholders emphasised that men and boys cannot be treated as one homogenous group and underlined the importance of targeted outreach to engage with males, including through the co-production of awareness campaigns. Recent examples shared with the project team by stakeholders included the co-produced SpeakUp Leeds campaign to address mental health inequalities [53], and the Check In With Your Mate campaign by West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention which sought to target and address the specific needs of men.[54]

124. These approaches demonstrate that men and boys can and do engage with services especially when they see themselves reflected in promotional material.

Complex needs and multiple disadvantage

125. There is broad recognition that groups of individuals with multiple disadvantages are likely to experience a poorer quality of life and increased vulnerability as well as presenting a high cost to public services. The Making Every Adult Matter framework is a national approach which recognises the impact of multiple disadvantages on males experiencing two or more of the following - homelessness, addiction, risk of re-offending and mental ill-health. It should be noted that these factors are different from the multiple disadvantage factors affecting women, which are less likely to include offending and more likely to include domestic abuse.[55]

126. Responding to complex needs is cited as a priority within West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Police and Crime Plan. Stakeholders described a range of successful VRU-funded interventions for young people that utilise a trauma informed approach, including Liaison and Diversion services, Breaking the Cycle, and A&E Navigators.

127. Several stakeholders also referenced the *Burnt Bridges*[56] safeguarding review into the death of five men in Calderdale, which they felt had acted as a catalyst for delivering local approaches to understand local needs.

128. Stakeholders noted that organisations working in this area had previously formed West Yorkshire Multiple Disadvantage Consortium, which subsequently informed the development of the Trauma, Adversity and Resilience Programme through life course evidence, approaches and provision. This suggests to the project team that approaches to multiple disadvantages are embedded in the programme and therefore are likely to impact positively on the safety of needs of those with multiple vulnerabilities including men and boys.

129. Stakeholders, in discussing complex needs, very much viewed such work as an opportunity to address multiple vulnerabilities including those stemming from childhood. Stakeholders

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[53] https://www.mindmate.org.uk/speak-up/
[54] https://staffcheck-in.co.uk/campaign-toolkit/males/
[55] https://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Gender-Matters-full-report-Feb-2020.pdf
[56] https://safeguarding.calderdale.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/burnt-bridges.pdf

working with this cohort of individuals (both female and male) described continuing challenges in identifying appropriate onward services for individuals presenting with complex needs, where one or more of these factors was not exclusionary; demonstrating the need for multidisciplinary approaches to trauma.

School exclusions

130. Nationally, permanent exclusions are higher for boys (0.04) than for girls (0.01), and fixed-term exclusions twice that for boys than for girls.[57] School exclusions in West Yorkshire are also higher for boys, in line with the national picture. However, West Yorkshire rates have been increasing for boys excluded for the threat or use of an offensive weapon. National data shows that schools are disproportionately likely to exclude children with special educational needs, those eligible for free school meals, and those from Gypsy and Roma backgrounds.[58]

131. Local VRU and stakeholder research points to school exclusions increasing children and young people's vulnerability to violence and exploitation.[59] While exclusion itself increases the risk of lower educational attainment and social exclusion, it was also found that engagement in full-time, quality education acts as a strong protective factor against young people becoming involved in serious violence, often through criminal exploitation.

132. Training for local schools on trauma-informed approaches (funded by the VRU) has been shown to reduce the number of exclusions suggesting an overall positive impact; however, the evaluation of the VRU's school-based interventions is not currently disaggregated by gender and therefore these interventions can only be assumed to have improved outcomes for boys.

133. Stakeholders working in alternative education settings and mentoring programmes with children and young people at risk of exclusion told us that they often address a range of safety risks for the boys in their cohort. They reported that many of these are risk areas not only linked to exclusion but to serious violence, and the drivers are often trauma related. Stakeholders told us they often looked to extend the availability of their provision beyond the school day to redress the balance between risks and protective factors; examples given were the exploration of partnership programmes with local gyms.

134. The Violence Reduction Unit Strategy for 2022-23 identifies that the VRU will be exploring the development of trauma informed pathways for young people at risk into alternative education and employment such as apprenticeships.

135. The next stage of strategy development would benefit from further engagement with schools/Pupil Referral Units, the Virtual School and alternative education providers.

Missing children

136. Research by Missing People identified a number of reasons why children go missing including conflict, abuse and neglect at home, trafficking/criminal exploitation (this is especially a factor in looked after children) sexual exploitation and mental health.

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[57] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england
[58] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england
[59] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/7954/vru-education-inclusion-final-report.pdf

137. West Yorkshire Police's Equality Monitoring data for 2021-22 reported over 7,000 missing persons occurrences involving children (those aged under-18). [60] The same reporting highlights *"46.8% of these occurrences involved a female child, ….and 32% of those female children were flagged to be at risk of child sexual exploitation."* The proportion of male children missing is not reported nor the proportion of male children flagged as at risk of exploitation.

138. In line with this local data, national missing persons data for 2020-21 shows male children make up a higher proportion of missing children nationally (64% aged 0-11 and 51.1% aged 12-17).[61] Of those reported missing, similar numbers of male 53.7% and 44.9% female children were flagged as having mental health issues; however only 16.8% of boys were flagged at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) compared to 76.3% of girls. The UK Missing Persons Unit suspects under-recording due to a lack of awareness of CSE in relation to male children.

139. Stakeholders reflected that where male children were missing there was felt to be a perception, that they are less vulnerable than female missing children, despite specific vulnerabilities including mental health and the risk of exploitation.

140. Stakeholders mostly identified missing people as a safety risk for children rather than adults. Local missing persons data is not disaggregated by gender, with 4,034 adults reporting missing in 2021-22 in West Yorkshire.

141. Nationally 53.7% of missing persons incidents involve males, with 0.1% of missing people having their gender recorded as trans.[62] Missing adults are particularly vulnerable to suicide or suicidal thoughts but may also experience physical harm from others.[63]

Homelessness, rough sleeping and housing

142. Several stakeholders specifically identified the vulnerabilities of males who are made homeless in West Yorkshire.

143. National data shows the majority of rough sleepers are male – five times higher than female rough sleepers.[64] There is significant overlap in the factors driving youth violence and those driving homelessness and rough sleeping – poverty, social exclusion, family breakdown, unmet mental health needs, and experience of trauma.

144. The VRU has previously highlighted the unique challenges facing women and girls around vulnerability through domestic abuse and risks of unsafe accommodation leading to exploitation. However, stakeholders told us that housing was also a particular challenge for men and boys, with the lack of appropriate housing creating risks to men and boys' personal safety, leading to subsequent exploitation.

145. Specific challenges were cited in relation to a lack of hostel accommodation in rural areas within the region, with young men often told they'll be "fine" to sleep rough. Stakeholders told us that young men can be less able to stay with their friends than young women will be, and may also be embarrassed to ask for help.

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[60] https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/equality-information-report-202122-accessible-version
[61] https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/equality-information-report-202122-accessible-version
[62] https://missingpersons.police.uk/cy-gb/resources/downloads/missing-persons-statistical-bulletins#
[63] https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2.-Harm-while-missing-info-sheet.pdf
[64] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2022

146. Additionally, concerns were raised by stakeholders about the vulnerability of gay/trans/non-binary asylum applicants in temporary accommodation where non-traditional gender expression may put them at significant risk.

147. However, stakeholders identified housing as an area where multiple disadvantage unlocked access to services, and therefore was beneficial to addressing safety needs; where individuals did not satisfy multiple criteria they were deemed "less vulnerable" and did not reach the threshold for housing.

Serious violence

148. Data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales shows that serious violence (e.g. homicide, knife crime, gun crime) has a disproportionate impact on men and boys.[65] Men, and especially younger men, are twice as likely as women to be victims of violence - 2.2% of men compared to 1.4% of women. When including other personal crimes including robbery and theft, this increases to 4.1% of men and 2.8% of women. In around 23% of violent offences against men the perpetrator is an intimate partner; acquaintances are more common at 33% and 20% of violent offences the perpetrator is a stranger.

149. Those living in the most deprived areas of England were more likely to be victims of violence with injury than those living in the least deprived areas (1.2%, compared with 0.5%).[66]

150. Within West Yorkshire, the VRU needs assessment shows violent offences requiring hospital admission between 2018-19 and 2020-21 were four times greater for male victims than female victims; with more than a third of these substance misuse related.[67]

151. Data from the VRU needs assessment shows that West Yorkshire has the third highest rate of knife crime amongst similar police force areas - 66% of the victims are male. West Yorkshire also has the third highest rate of gun crime amongst similar police force area - 99% of these victims are male (it should be noted the majority of these relate to air rifles or BB guns). Most knife and gun crime offences occur in areas of high deprivation.

152. Approaches to addressing these issues are embedded within the work of the VRU and stakeholders told us they have been invaluable in driving a prevention and response model for serious violence. The VRU approaches are implemented alongside West Yorkshire Police's Programme Precision, which directs police force activity against serious organised crime and exploitation.

153. The overarching metrics of the impact of the West Yorkshire VRU are as follows:[68]

   ☐ A reduction in hospital admissions for knife crime – 14% reduction in 2021/22

   ☐ A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence, especially among victims aged under-25 – 11% reduction in 2021/22

   ☐ A reduction in non-domestic homicides – 28% reduction in 2021/22

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65 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/thenatureofviolentcrimeinenglandandwales/yearending march2022#groups-of-people-most-likely-to-be-victims-of-violent-crime

67 https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/vru-needs-assessment-response-strategy/
68 https://www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk/media/to4hvk20/item-7-west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit-update-report.pdf

154. Given the high proportion of male victims within serious violence crime types, it stands to reason that achieving reductions in these areas significantly reduce safety risks to men and boys, both from engaging in violence and becoming a victim of violence.

155. Importantly, stakeholders felt that the interventions specifically funded by the VRU or through VRU funding of place-based initiatives (including the A&E Navigators Programme and Liaison and Diversion programmes) had had a significant impact beyond these headline metrics and had been effective in addressing wider safety concerns relating to men and boys.

156. However, it was not possible to identify this from existing evaluations and needs assessment data, where impact was often not disaggregated by gender (the focus being instead on young people more generally).

Exploitation

157. The stakeholders we spoke with during our engagement exercise were not always able to communicate a clear definition of exploitation; however, they referenced a wide range of exploitation "types" ranging from modern slavery, trafficking, grooming, county lines, and cuckooing.

158. National Referral Mechanism data shows the majority of referrals for modern slavery were across a range of exploitation types (criminal, labour, and sexual exploitation) are for male victims, with males making up 78% of adult victims and 80% of child victims. Of the 13% of referrals flagged as "county lines", 76% of these were male victims.[69]

159. Child sexual abuse (CSA) is also identifiable through referrals to social care for children in need where child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), gangs and child criminal exploitation can all be recorded following assessment.[70] However, flags of CSE and CSA in police recorded data are known nationally to be inconsistent.[71]

160. VRU research shows that girls tend to be more vulnerable to CSE while boys are more vulnerable to criminal exploitation.[72] However, stakeholders felt it was important to recognise that safety risks to men and boys were often compounded by assumptions around stereotypes that only girls/women could be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and boys/men only faced criminal exploitation. (It should be noted the VRU needs assessment specifically excludes crimes categorised under Child Sexual Exploitation or Organised Crime as these are addressed by the West Yorkshire Police's Programme Precision.)

161. Stakeholders were keen to highlight difficult circumstances around homelessness and/or substance misuse where men had become vulnerable to modern slavery. They reported positive police responses to these issues where they had been identified through community-based services.

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[69] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022#:~:text=2022%20was%20a%20record%20year,from%203%2C193%20to%20reach%204%2C580

[70] https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/scale-and-nature-scoping-report-2018/

[71] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2022

[72] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/7951/vru-crest-inequalities-and-serious-violence-in-west-yorkshire.pdf

Domestic abuse

162. The Crime Survey of England and Wales 2022 shows that 6.9% of women and 3% of men report being victims of domestic abuse in the last year.[73] Police recorded crime shows around 74% of victims are female and 26% male[74], suggesting males under-report domestic abuse to the police.

163. West Yorkshire Police's reporting data is in line with this national proportion, with 74% of police reports for domestic abuse in West Yorkshire coming from female victims - this again suggests under-reporting locally by male victims.

164. Interestingly, higher proportion of males are referred to the MARAC in West Yorkshire than nationally (9.1% as compared to 6%).[75] As no outcome data is available it is difficult to draw conclusions about the reasons for this, and the impact of a MARAC referral for males. Exploring the make-up of these referrals will be a useful next step in the context of this strategy.

165. Children, including boys, are also victims of domestic abuse – NSPCC studies showed that 25% of under-18s had been exposed to domestic abuse and around 6% this will be at the highest risk levels. (This data is not disaggregated by gender.) [76]

166. In the Crime Survey for England and Wales, 9.5% of men and 23.3% of women reported stalking experiences since the age of 16 (CSEW 2022). In West Yorkshire, the VRU needs assessment identified that 77% of victims reporting stalking to the police are female, suggesting 23% of stalking victims are male – this is broadly in line with the national data but suggests under-reporting of stalking experienced by men. The West Yorkshire VRU has developed a specific workstream around stalking in Kirklees with a strong Lived Experience component - it may be appropriate to explore similar approaches utlising male victims as those within Kirklees are female.

167. Existing needs assessments and strategies only reference honour-based violence and forced marriage in the female context, although West Yorkshire Police's Frequently Asked Questions do state that forced marriage can happen to men.[77] National data suggests one in five forced marriages has a male victim[78] – these are known to be significantly under-reported and male victims often experience significant barriers in reporting. Stakeholders referred to Yorkshire as a hotspot for forced marriage especially in relation to males - we have not been able to find data to support this assertion, but stakeholders did describe the specific challenges for males (especially when they had come to the UK from overseas) in reporting forced marriage and the domestic abuse that had followed.

168. Responses to these safety issues for male victims of domestic abuse are likely embedded within local VAWG strategies and the VRU response, and driven by local collaboration under the Serious Violence Duty. However, it is notable that the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy, West Yorkshire Police's VAWG Strategy, and the VRU Response Strategy do not explicitly

[73] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022#sex

[74] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022#sex

[75] https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data

[76] Radford, L., Corral, S., Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C., Howat, N. and Collishaw, S. (2011), 'Child abuse and neglect in the UK today'. London: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

[77] https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/advice/relationships/forced-marriage/forced-marriage-frequently-asked-questions

[78] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2021/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2021

reference male victims of domestic abuse when describing domestic abuse. Where victims are referenced, they are either female victims or featured in the context of women and girls.

169.   Stakeholders told us there has been significant progress in the availability of support services for male victims of domestic abuse in specific areas of West Yorkshire. Specialist male IDVAs are now available, and the National Male Domestic Abuse Line is located in West Yorkshire. However, provision is by no means universal and stakeholders felt access to support remains inequitable. Stakeholders told us that male victims often feel they are not believed where the first step in accessing support for their experience of domestic abuse is an assessment of their risk as a potential perpetrator.

170.   Stakeholders reported that refuge accommodation for male victims was not available, and that wider distributed housing was often unsuitable for highly vulnerable male victims of domestic abuse, especially those fleeing with children.

171.   Stakeholders emphasised that domestic abuse happens in family contexts therefore support for children - including boys - is critical, particularly as experience of domestic abuse is identified as a risk factor for young people's future involvement in violence. Stakeholders felt strongly that this kind of vulnerability was less likely to be identified in male children.

172.   Stakeholders working with men and boys often described disclosures of significant trauma relating to domestic abuse (both recent and in childhood), but noted that these disclosures were often not explicit or immediate, and could come in the context of wider support requests around health and wellbeing.

Sexual violence

173.   According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), 1.2% of men described experiencing sexual violence in the last year compared to 3.3% of women.[79] In West Yorkshire, 86% of those reporting sexual offences to police were female and 14% are male.[80] This is in line with national police recorded offences, where only 14% of those reporting sexual violence to the police are male.[81] Compared with prevalence data from the CSEW, this suggests systemic under-reporting by male victims of sexual violence.

174.   An estimated 3.5% of men have experienced sexual abuse before age 16 (compared to 11.5% of women). Men were much more likely than women however to have experienced sexual abuse by a person in a position of trust or authority, such as a teacher, doctor or youth worker, at 16% compared with 6%).[82] The same data shows girls are more likely than boys to be on a child protection plan due to sexual abuse. In terms of police recorded sexual offences against children (which will include adults reporting offences from their childhood), nationally male victims were recorded for 20% of sexual offences. Data from the West Yorkshire Police and Crime needs assessment shows a 47.5% increase in child sexual offences from the previous

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[79] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffencesprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales

[80] VRU Needs Assessment 2022-23 https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime/west-yorkshire-violence-reduction-unit/vru-needs-assessment-response-strategy/

[81] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022

[82] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/childsexualabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019

year (2021-22) - the proportions of male and female victims are not included in publicly available data.

175. The Voice of West Yorkshire consultation recorded child sexual abuse and exploitation as a priority with 79% of responses, with 69% responses identifying rape and sexual offences as a priority. As previously noted, the West Yorkshire Safety of Women and Girls Strategy and West Yorkshire Police's VAWG Strategy do not reference male victims of sexual offences, with the exception of a statement that both women and men must be able to report a sexual assault in a supportive environment. Although male victims are referenced within the VRU strategic needs assessment for serious sexual offences, which moreover acknowledges a younger age profile for male victims, this is not reflected within the response strategy where sexual offences are referenced under the VAWG heading within "Relationships". The Police and Crime Plan refers only to victims within its strategy and indicators without identifying differing safety risks and needs.

176. West Yorkshire hosts an all-age, all-gender Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Leeds, which offers 24/7 access to support and, where appropriate, forensic examination. However, stakeholders told us they did not feel there is - at present - accessible, equitable provision for male victims of sexual violence beyond the West Yorkshire-wide Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) service. This was felt to be a particular inequality in relation to therapeutic support, echoing the findings from the Ministry of Justice research into the formal support needs of adult victims/survivors of sexual violence.[83]

177. Stakeholders noted that male victims seeking therapeutic support may be limited to online services and national helplines depending on their location within West Yorkshire. Stakeholders told us services for those who had experienced sexual violence were often explicitly women only, and that it was often unclear from publicly available information if they were accessible to or inclusive of male victims.

Dual status

178. Our engagement with those providing perpetrator programmes was not extensive as with those supporting male victims and survivors. Interestingly, some of these stakeholders felt they were not well placed to identify safety risks to men and boys. Conversely, others felt they were uniquely placed to understand risks to men and boys working as they did with those who had offended or who were at risk of offending.

179. Services specifically working with male perpetrators described significant trauma within the cohort and shared concerns about the short time-limited interventions currently available for men and boys (e.g. where a boy may have assaulted a parent), as well as the absence of support for those who were both perpetrator and victim.

180. Stakeholders highlighted a broad range of safety risks for particular groups of males engaged with the criminal justice system, including:

☐ those recently arrested/charged with online sexual offences at risk of suicide;

☐ those reported for domestic abuse who may also have experienced domestic abuse or other trauma;

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[83] Ministry of Justice (2023), *Formal Support Needs of Adult Victims-Survivors of Sexual Violence*

- those reported for sexual offences but seeking support for their own experiences of child sexual abuse; and
- those leaving prison having served sentences for sexual offences seeking to access support for their own trauma.

181. Stakeholders told us these individuals often have limited access to support at the time when they are most vulnerable.

182. The VRU response strategy states there is a review of domestic abuse and sexual violence perpetrator programmes under way; stakeholders told us they did not think there were any programmes which were currently free at the point of access for perpetrators of sexual violence.

Recognising neurodiversity

183. A joint inspection report carried out by the HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on neurodiversity in the criminal justice system (2021) suggests it is possible that half of those entering prison "*can be expected to have some form of neurodivergent condition which impacts their ability to engage".*[84]

184. The West Yorkshire VRU has commissioned research into neurodiversity in young people and violence exploring the links to victimisation including hate crime, domestic abuse and violence. This found neurodiverse young people often experience violence in the form of self-harm, bullying and exploitation, and are more likely to be excluded from school.[85] VRU research into the impacts of neurodiversity is ongoing in relation to young people.

185. Stakeholders across different areas expressed concerns that neurodiverse individuals were particularly vulnerable to exploitation and that sufficient services are not yet in place appropriately support them, with long waiting times to assessment and a lack of specialist support services being particular concerns.

Road safety

186. The West Yorkshire Mayor has committed to Vision Zero, aiming to end fatal and serious road casualties, and established a Vision Zero Board - a multi-agency partnership specifically designed to ensure integrated delivery of the Vision Zero principles including Safe Behaviours and People, Safe Speeds, Safe Roads, and Post-Decision Learning and Care.

187. National road safety statistics show that, broadly, three-quarters of road accident victims are male and that fatalities through driving increase within deprived areas.[86] Several stakeholders raised local issues around unsafe driving by men, and especially by young men.

188. Some stakeholders felt that the risky driving behaviours associated with accidents could be related to trauma, especially in young men. They felt response strategies from Community Safety Partnerships and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority should be specifically tailored to reflect this understanding. This will require responding to differing attitudes to road safety across diverse local communities.

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[84] Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2021), *Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence,*
https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/07/Neurodiversity-evidence-review-web-2021.pdf
[85] https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8513/report-neurodiversity-and-violence.pdf
[86] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2021/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2021#casualties-by-age-and-sex

Online risks and preventative programmes

189.	*Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) 2022 stresses that *"schools and colleges play a crucial role in preventative education"* and that this is most effective in the context of a whole school approach that *"creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment"*.[87]

190.	Locally, stakeholders expressed concerns about the risks to boys from online and social media-based misogynistic content, which was often only presented as a safety risk to women and girls. Stakeholders also reflected the risk of boys and young men routinely engaging with such material, leading to isolation, exploitation and radicalisation. There were particular concerns raised about the depth of risk in relation to incel groups online. Some stakeholders described the need for spaces for men and boys to unpick masculinity in positive ways to counter this agenda.

191.	Anecdotally, CSP stakeholders told us that, in line with national trends, they have seen an increase in referrals under the PREVENT duty following revised guidance being issued to schools to respond to newly emerging risks. [88] Stakeholders told us that schools are increasingly feeling the impact of these risks and the resulting pressures on young people, and that they are tackling this through targeted education programmes focusing on healthy relationships.

192.	Stakeholders felt there was a need to explore the content and consistency of these programmes in schools across West Yorkshire, and whether there is any wider effectiveness research available that can shape their future development.

193.	In the context of inappropriate social media content, stakeholders reflected on the widespread use of the term "toxic masculinity". Some were uncomfortable with this term and its implications for boys. Particular concerns were voiced where related programmes did not describe the negative impacts of such expressions of masculinity on men and boys alongside describing the negative impacts of misogynist behaviours on women and girls. Stakeholders felt this potentially created challenges for boys and men in feeling able to express challenging emotions and seek support.

194.	We note the VRU is developing education-based, trauma informed interventions for young people, practitioners, and parents/carers to promote the safe use of social media and reduce the risks of vicarious online trauma and involvement with low-level violence.

195.	Stakeholders noted that these issues are not confined to education but exist more broadly among males in wider society; while it was recognised that this is likely to be an area picked up through the workstreams within the Women and Girls Strategy, stakeholders were keen to ensure that further development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy explicitly recognises and articulates the negative impact these issues can on the safety of men and boys.

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[87]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf
[88] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-safeguarding-learners-vulnerable-to-radicalisation/understanding-and-identifying-radicalisation-risk-in-your-education-setting

Conclusions

196. There has been increasing local and national recognition in recent years of the imperative to specifically acknowledge and address risks relating to the safety of men and boys, including through targeted and tailored interventions and improved access to high quality support.

197. Reflecting this wider trend and their own lived experience of working with men and boys, there was support from all the stakeholders we spoke to for a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy to be developed in West Yorkshire.

198. Stakeholders felt it had been right in the first instance to focus on the safety of women and girls and reflected on the success of this strategy in bringing partner agencies together. They were keen for a similar approach to now be applied to the safety needs of men and boys.

199. Safety concerns relating to mental health and suicide, serious violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence dominated stakeholder input, mirroring the national landscape.

200. All of these issues – and in some cases, responses to them – were identifiable in work already under way across West Yorkshire. There was a clear sense from stakeholders that West Yorkshire is on the right path in identifying and addressing the needs of men and boys, with existing strategies and programmes of work (including VRU-led interventions) already addressing major concerns about the safety of men and boys in relation to serious violence.

201. Professionals and services working with men and boys were generally able to identify specific vulnerabilities and safety concerns in relation to men and boys. Those working within broader trauma-informed programmes were especially keen to develop and assure effective support pathways for male victims and identify appropriate interventions/diversions for men and boys at risk of exploitation.

202. However, we observed several gaps in relation to men and boys within existing strategies and approaches; and stakeholders reflected that men and boys were largely absent from the public narrative within West Yorkshire (and indeed nationally) either as vulnerable or victims. It was interesting to observe that professionals that did not work directly with men and boys, or who worked less frequently with men and boys, did not immediately recognise males as a vulnerable group until they considered individual safety risks impacting male friends or family members. There is a sense from stakeholders that this "oversight" may have been an unintended consequence of the (rightly) unrelenting focus on the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy in West Yorkshire, and the cross-cutting themes contained within the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan.

203. As noted earlier in this report, there is limited research relating to specific vulnerabilities and safety risk factors impacting males, and little evidence-based best practice in improving the safety of men and boys. This was reflected in local needs assessments and evaluations of interventions, where gender was not explicitly disaggregated or referenced. We also did not have sight of any Equality Impact Assessments that had informed the development of relevant strategies. It was therefore not always clear within existing strategies and programmes whether the intended impact and/or the effectiveness of interventions was considered in relation to men and boys. The lack of gendered analysis made it difficult to determine how well the safety and support needs of men and boys are being met through current provision across West Yorkshire, and potentially limits the ability to make informed policy and commissioning decisions.

204. There appears to be a particular gap in West Yorkshire in addressing the safety and support needs of men and boys in relation to the types of offences disproportionately affecting women and girls – domestic abuse, forced marriage and sexual violence were explicitly noted by stakeholders as of concern. The Government's position statement on this issue is unequivocal[89], noting that it is critical that support services:

- are clear about the support they offer and to whom;
- take into consideration the needs of victims/survivors; and
- understand the impact of harmful stereotyping, combined with myths and misconceptions about male victims that can act as barriers for men to engage.

205. Stakeholders working with men and boys also reported that local/regional services intended to support victims of these crimes are often not accessible to male victims.

206. Stakeholders recognised the challenges created by the intersectionality of needs for men and boys. They told us more needs to be done to understand how risk and protective factors differ for males locally, and how they may be compounded where multiple protected characteristics combine.

207. All the themes identified through this scoping exercise can be framed under the existing high-level priorities within West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Plan (though are notably distinct from those priorities articulated within the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy).

Recommendations

208. Based on findings from this initial strategy scoping exercise, we recommend the following steps to drive the next stages of development of a Safety of Men and Boys Strategy for West Yorkshire:

1. The Safety of Men and Boys Strategy should span research, policy development, commissioning, and the provision of support.

2. The Safety of Men and Boys Strategy should consider priorities that will ensure recognition of and effective responses to males who are victims or at risk of victimisation, including:
   - improving data collection around gender in services not specifically working with males;
   - embedding partnership working including with male-specific and community-specific organisations;
   - identifying training needs for professionals working with men and boys around recognising and responding to male vulnerability and any male-specific interventions;
   - strengthening referral pathways, including identifying specific barriers to accessing support; and
   - promoting awareness of men and boys as vulnerable and as victims.

3. The strategy should address as a priority identified gaps in both the provision and promotion of services supporting male victims of crimes that disproportionately impact women and girls. It is important that, while males may present in the minority in the context of certain risks and

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[89]
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101059/Supporting_Male_Victims_2022.pdf

crime types (e.g. domestic abuse and sexual violence), they are considered a significantly vulnerable minority.

4. The next phase of work should engage a broader range of stakeholders to explore the underpinning local drivers of risk, barriers to support-seeking, and existing provision/programmes relating to the key concerns identified for men and boys.

5. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority should prioritise engagement with Lived Experience Advisory groups including those specifically working with male clients and those who identify as male (these are often accessible through services working with men and boys) to capture lived experience directly, with a view to co-producing the strategy in line with the principles articulated in the Mayor's Policing and Crime Commissioning Strategy.

6. An EQIA should be undertaken to explore and understand the impacts of equality, diversity and inclusion on the safety needs of men and boys, with particular consideration of how these elements intersect with the male (and non-binary) gender.

7. Review existing Equality Impact Assessments, needs assessments and evaluations for funded programmes and services to identify intended and unintended impacts on males.

8. Utilise learnings from the Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme and Violence Reduction Unit around risk and protective factors to inform approaches to men and boys within the strategy.

9. Identify how education programmes tackling trauma and healthy relationships describe the impact of negative expressions of masculinity on boys to address safety risks in a holistic way.

10. Map sexual violence support pathways and existing provision (including access data and outcomes reporting where available) to ensure these are robust and deliver equitable support for those who identify as male and non-binary. This will provide an opportunity to examine access across a range of intersecting protected characteristics.

11. Ensure strengthened risk prevention, risk management, and access to appropriate support, for males engaged in existing programmes/interventions (including commissioned support) through explicitly recognising equality and inclusion factors for males across a range of protected characteristics, including those who identify as male, as non-binary and as transgender.

About LimeCulture

LimeCulture is a national training and consultancy organisation specialising in safeguarding and sexual violence, with extensive experience in service improvement, strategy development and stakeholder engagement.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder Engagement

The following stakeholders engaged with LimeCulture through one-to-one interviews during February and March 2023.

- ☐ Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA)
- ☐ Andy's Man's Club
- ☐ Behind Closed Doors
- ☐ Ben's Place (Survivors West Yorkshire)
- ☐ Bradford Community Safety Partnership
- ☐ Breaking the Silence (The Meridian Centre)
- ☐ Calderdale Community Safety Partnership
- ☐ Calderdale SmartMove
- ☐ Crimestoppers
- ☐ Gasped/Man Matters
- ☐ GW Theatre Company
- ☐ Huddersfield Giants Community Trust
- ☐ Huddersfield Town Foundation
- ☐ JAMES
- ☐ Kirklees & Calderdale Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre (KCRASAC) Kirklees Calderdale Wakefield Counselling Centre
- ☐ Kirklees Community Safety Partnership
- ☐ Leeds Council Mental Health Inequalities Lead (CYP)
- ☐ Leeds Community Safety Partnership
- ☐ Liaison and Diversion Services (covering all five local areas)
- ☐ Men's Health Unlocked
- ☐ OurHouse Wakefield
- ☐ Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership (PDAP)
- ☐ Reflections Yorkshire CIC
- ☐ Restorative Solutions CIC
- ☐ Rosalie Ryrie Foundation
- ☐ S&H Development and Training Ltd
- ☐ Staying Put
- ☐ Victim Support West Yorkshire
- ☐ Voluntary Sector Infrastructure (VSI) Alliance
- ☐ Wakefield Community Safety Partnership
- ☐ West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy Lead
- ☐ WomenCentre
- ☐ West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Programme

- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Violence Reduction Unit
- WYCA - Police Crime Reduction Officer
- WYCA - Delivery Manager: Policing & Crime
- WYCA - Equality Inclusion and Diversity Lead
- WYCA - Head of Commissioning: Policing and Crime
- WYCA - Vision Zero Lead
- WYCA Analyst
- WYCA Engagement Team
- Zarach