

# Humber Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) Mid-point Evaluation

## Section 1: Executive Summary and Recommendations

### Executive Summary:

- This report offers a mid-point evaluation of the Humber Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) and is intended to provide constructive feedback and recommendation on how to continue developing the region's response to serious violence. The report covers the time period April 2022 to January 2024.
- This report combines a mid-point assessment (or health check) of the VPP as well as case studies of two sports-based interventions commissioned by the VPP.
- The Humber VPP seeks to reduce youth violence by dovetailing with the region's Serious Violence Duty to also tackle gender-based and intergenerational violence.
- The Humber VPP operates on a hub (Fig. 2) and spoke model, deploying public health and trauma-informed approaches. The hub is run from within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the spokes are community safety partnerships across the 4 Humberside local authorities.
- This report uses a combination of survey and focus group methods to understand the experiences of key staff groups involved in the management and delivery of the VPP.
- Strengths of the VPP include: 1) a clear vision about the nature of youth violence in Humberside and how to tackle it, 2) a well-organised and accessible VPP hub in the OPCC and, 3) a high level of commitment from strategic leads across the region (the VPP Board), demonstrating ongoing buy-in across the partnership.
- Weaknesses of the VPP include: 1) vision and goals of the VPP not well understood by all interventions, 2) structure and engagement between OPCC 'hub' and local authority 'spokes' suboptimal and missing opportunities for collaboration, and 3) data sharing, data collection. and engagement with, young people underdeveloped.

### Recommendations:

- Knowledge and understanding of the VPP is not getting 'out there' enough and the 'hub' and 'spoke' model has greater potential to combat violence reduction than currently realized. The following recommendations are intended to address this:
- Develop the organogram (Figure 2 below) to include reporting lines and shared activities between the VPP hub and local authority spokes.
- Establish an implementation group to differentiate between strategic and operational management, which can take forward the aims of the VRU and the SNA (to include VPOs, YJMs, police and youth outreach from each LA).
- Enhance understanding of VPP commissioning criteria and constraints by including representation from Violence Prevention Officers (VPOs), youth outreach and youth justice in decision-making and / or reviewing of VPP interventions going forward.
- Task the new Campaign & Communication appointment in VPP hub to spearhead collaboration with VPOs, youth outreach and University local evaluation team to engage youth 'at risk of violence' voice.
- Escalate data sharing priorities to identify primary 'at risk' population so that interventions can be targeted at those at greatest risk / need.
- With VPOs, youth justice, community safety and University local evaluation team develop an eligibility criteria for referral of young people in and out of VPP commissioned interventions.
- Use the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) to construct a dashboard of key success measures (including appropriate proxies e.g. school absence, A&E attendance, crime data, knife amnesties, first time entrants).
- Work with University local evaluation team to develop tools for gathering information from young people about the impact of interventions.

## Section 2: Research Context, Methods and Results

### 2.1 Background to the VPP

The Humber Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was one of two new Police Force Areas (PFAs) funded by the Home Office in 22/23 (the other being Cleveland). The first iteration of the Strategic Needs Assessment in March 2023 (SNA) points to the high rate of violence with injury in the region between 2016 and 2022 (using ONS data), with the region ranking no lower than 4<sup>th</sup> highest nationally for these types of crimes and 19<sup>th</sup> highest for hospital admissions for injury from a sharp object in England and Wales over the same period. As a region with higher than average levels of deprivation, a strong correlation exists between those areas with high levels of violent crime and high levels of deprivation.

The Humber region consists of four local authorities that have different geographical and demographic characteristics. This is demonstrated in Figure 1 below which illustrates the comparative size of the local authorities and the population concentration in the region's biggest city, Kingston-upon-Hull which is a local authority in its own right. Another compelling feature of the region is the number of communities in the region that are estuarine or coastal (including Kingston-upon-Hull) which typically have higher levels of deprivation. The SNA (2023) records that 22.5% of the Lower Super Output Area's (LSOA) are in the top 10% of deprivation nationally.



Figure 1: Humberside by local authority area (adapted from [HERE](#))

## 2.2 Structure of the VPP

The VPP is led from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and operates on ‘hub and spoke’ principles with the core ‘hub’ based in the OPCC providing Humber-wide oversight, whilst the ‘spokes’ are governed by the CSPs in each of the four local authorities. The Core Team based in the OPCC are there to support the partnership, with the VPOs funded to support the CSP-level activity. The core VPP team was originally constructed as described in Figure 2 below. The Graduate Research Assistant was removed from the structure when the position was vacated and the Evidence and Evaluation Manager role was combined with the Programme Manager role. This created space for a new Campaigns and Communications Officer position which was between October 2023 and March 2024. A replacement has been recruited and is in the process of onboarding. The four ‘spokes’ in each of the local authorities are primarily comprised of VPP funding for Violence Prevention Officers (VPOs) who have responsibility for coordinating the delivery of violence prevention initiatives in each local authority combined with youth outreach interventions funded by the VPP. The VPP Board is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and comprised of senior representatives from criminal justice, youth justice, NHS, fire and rescue, children’s services, supported by the core VPP team and attended by a representative of the local evaluation team.

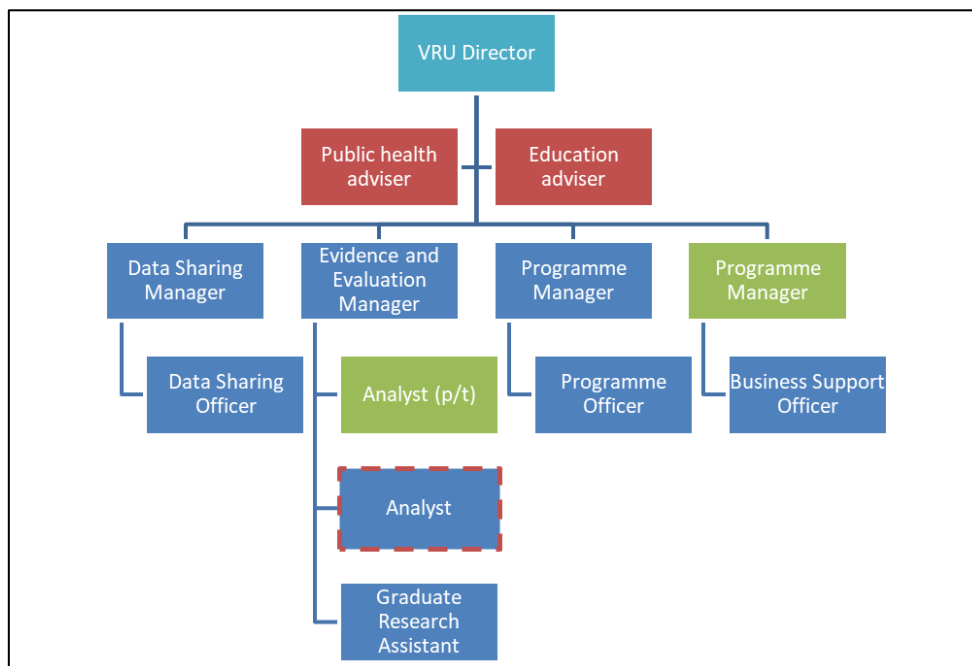


Figure 2: Original structure of the VPP 'hub'

### 2.3 Priorities of the VPP

Problem
<b>Exposure of violence in the context of family / neighbourhood:</b> (leading to desensitized, learned behaviour)
<b>Traumatic adverse childhood experiences:</b> (Chaotic family setting, co-morbidities)
<b>Perception of unattainable status through legitimate means:</b> (Due to unmet needs, low aspiration, humiliation, lack of respect, lack of opportunity)
<b>Self-protection:</b> (Danger is routine, inability to trust the authorities to protect you, violent reputation is a deterrent)
<b>Situational Risk:</b> (nighttime economy & increased opportunity for recreational substance use, risks of coastal region e.g. isolation, reduced opportunities & financial freedoms, generational permanence, population density, and resultant increases in crime)

The VPP’s Theory of Change model identifies the causes of youth violence across the region in Figure 3. This locates the causes of youth violence in childhood experiences of adversity combined with situational dangers associated with nighttime economy and coastal communities. Fundamental to understanding why young people behave in violent ways is understanding the relationship between trauma, fear and weapon carrying. The causes of youth violence in the region are consequently understood by the VPP as a combination of these factors combined with a related sense amongst young people that danger is routine, that people don’t respect you, and that authority figures can’t protect you, leading to self-protective, weapon-carrying strategies.

Consequently, the ethos that underpins the VPP is driven by a commitment to developing trauma-informed practice<sup>1</sup> that supports young people and those professionals who work with young people. Similarly, the first phase of the VPP commissioning prioritized a significant commitment to sporting intervention to help improve confidence, provide role models, and encourage ambition and self-worth in young people. Finally, a heavy emphasis on youth outreach (including violence prevention) dovetails with trauma-informed practice and sporting interventions to try and ensure engagement in violence reduction across all four local authorities in the Humberside region.

*Figure 3: the Causes of Violence in Humberside (extract from VPP theory of change)*

The full programme-level logic model for the VPP can be found in Appendix 1 but fundamentally, this articulation of the causes of violence in Humberside has been adopted into the [Serious Violence Duty Response Strategy \(2023 – 2025\)](#) that defines serious violence to include:

- Homicide
- Violence against the person (public space)
- Robbery
- Possession of a weapon
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual offences
- Violence against women and girls
- Child exploitation and county lines
- Modern slavery
- Organised crime groups

The scope of the Humber Serious Violence Duty is based on the underlying adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that occur in and around the home and shape the conditions in which children and young people are drawn into risky spaces, situations and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, the VPP understands and approaches violence as interwoven with family and community life and its approach to combatting violence is shaped by this understanding. This focus is seen by the VPP as a strength and is best expressed in Figure 4 below which illustrates the meshing of youth violence with domestic and intergenerational harm.

Ultimately, the VPP conceptualizes violence as: what happens in the home shapes what happens on the streets.

<sup>1</sup> See [HERE](#) for definitions of trauma and trauma-informed practice.

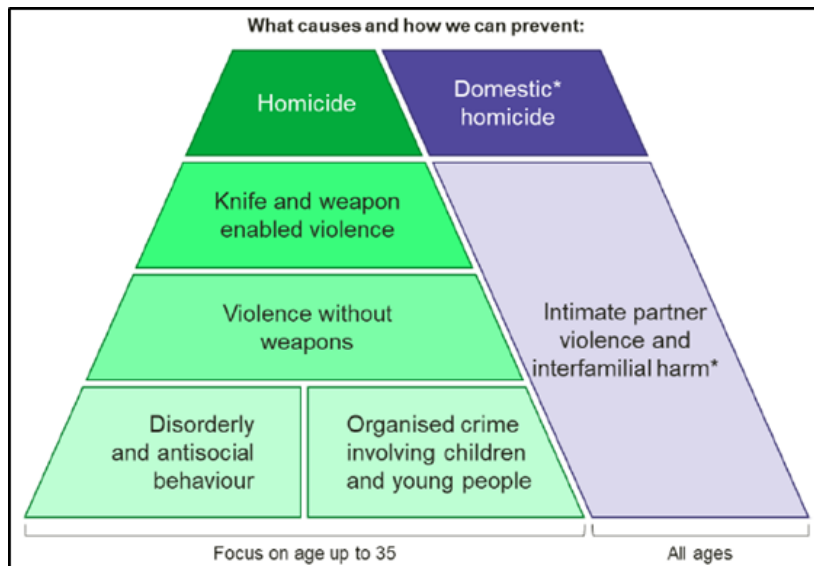


Figure 4: What causes Violence and how we can Prevent (Source: Humber VPP Response Strategy [HERE](#))

## 2.4 Methodology

The purpose of this mid-point evaluation is to assess the design and implementation strategies employed in the establishing of the Humber VPP. It seeks to provide insights into the intricacies of the implementation process: the obstacles faced, the challenges overcome and the lessons learned. The purpose of this evaluation is to evidence the contextual factors and mechanisms that have contributed to the observed outcomes, and optimise best practice in the development of future VRUs.

The process evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach that was undertaken in the following 4 stages:

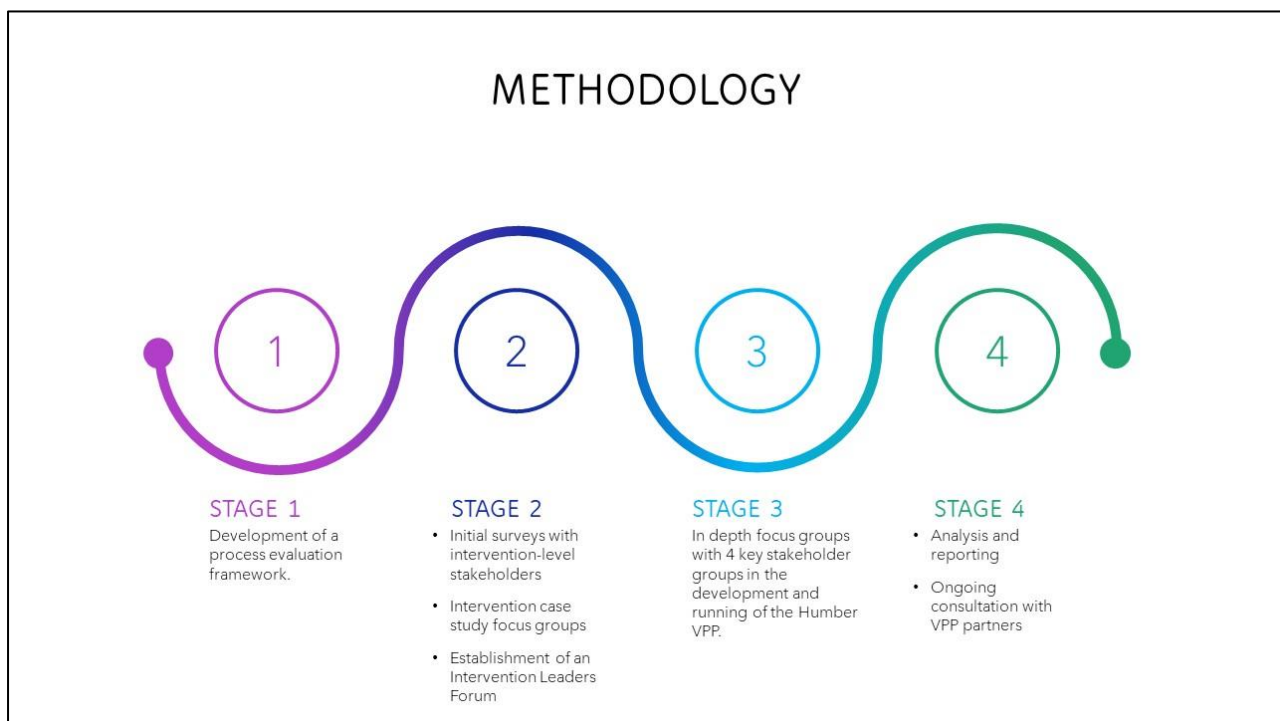


Figure 5: Methodology

### Stage 1: Development of a Process Evaluation Framework

In the preliminary stage, a 3-part series of collaborative workshops with the Humber VPP delivery team were held to develop an overarching 'Theory of Change' for the Humber VPP which was approved by the Board in October 2023 (see Appendix A). The projected, optimal outcomes of this 'Theory of Change' were then used to establish the measures employed in this evaluation. During this phase, an extensive desk-based review was also undertaken to map the relevant, existing documentation. This included a gap analysis, project mapping, literature reviews, and attendance of the national 'Serious Violence Research and Evaluation' conference.

Throughout the evaluation process, there was ongoing consultation with the VPP partners. Based on these processes, combined with the collective expertise of the research team in the evaluation of nationalised, multi-agency projects, a 'strengths-based' approach to data collection was selected. This approach highlights the positive aspects of the subject of exploration: highlighting choices which have led to successful outcomes and viewing obstacles as opportunities for development and innovation. This method encourages a functional, problem-solving approach to the challenges of multi-agency work streams.

### Stage 2: Mixed Methods Data Collection with Year-1 Intervention Partners

Initial surveys were conducted with intervention-level stakeholders through an online survey using JISC, gathering baseline qualitative data from each of the 9 sports-based interventions funded in the first year of the Humber VPP. An online intervention leaders' forum was established, and two in-depth focus groups were held with two of the nine sports programmes selected for a detailed project-level evaluation by the VPP delivery team. The preliminary analysis of data collected from these two focus groups also uncovered the process-level challenges, which were noted and reflected upon during Stage 3 of the process evaluation.

### Stage 3: In-Depth Focus Groups with Key Stakeholder Groups

During this stage, in-depth focus groups with key stakeholder groups were conducted. The research adopted a systems lens, sampling participants from the leadership roles across the VPP system. These consisted of groups involved in the development and operation of the Humber VPP: the Humber VPP Board, the VPP Delivery Team, the VPP Bid Team, and the Humber Violence Prevention Officers. Consistent with the intervention-level focus groups, a strengths-based approach was employed to gather perspectives on how different areas of the VPP system interacted.

### Stage 4: Analysis and Reporting

The chosen method of analysis was 'SWOT' (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). A SWOT analysis is a strategic method of inquiry that is well suited to organisational decision-making and multi-agency strategy development. By identifying strengths and weaknesses within the organisational processes, as well as opportunities and threats in its interaction with external and environmental contexts, it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the VPP's current state. This understanding is valuable for strategic planning, risk management, and leveraging internal strengths to capitalise on external opportunities, ultimately contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of the partnership.

In Stage 4 the struggles discussed across the stakeholder focus groups aligned with those commonly discussed in the project-level intervention focus groups. Based on this alignment, the decision was made to utilise the data from the sports intervention focus groups in the analysis of 'process level' challenges. This provided evidence of the impact of the VPP partnership, its structures, strategy, operation and communication on the experiences of project-level interventions.

## 2.5 Limitations

As a mid-point evaluation this study is designed as an initial reporting and analysis mechanism for the ongoing assessment of the Humber VPP. Young people accessing the commissioned interventions were not consulted at this stage. The qualitative data collected during this study were derived from stakeholders in leadership and delivery roles. This may have resulted in a positive reporting bias. Future evaluations will aim to collect data from a broader range of stakeholders, including young people accessing the commissioned interventions as service users.

## 2.6 Feedback from the Stakeholder Focus Groups

The following 'SWOT Analysis' examines the positive aspects (Strengths) and areas for improvement (Weaknesses), potential areas for growth and enhancement (Opportunities) and external factors that may pose challenges (Threats) uncovered by the qualitative data captured for this interim process evaluation of the Humber Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP).

### 2.6.1 Strengths:

- 1. Positive Stakeholder Engagement:** The setup and early operation of the VPP have been marked by a widespread enthusiasm toward network-building across the region. Stakeholders have demonstrated collaborative synergy and a strong desire to build effective communication channels and foster an environment conducive to achieving common goals. For instance, stakeholders have expressed satisfaction with the open culture within the Humber VRU. According to a Board member, ***"One of the most positive elements of this VRU is that it is a much more formal structure, there's a very open culture here, and it's much more evolved than what I've experienced elsewhere."*** This openness facilitates constructive dialogue and cooperation, with stakeholders perceiving minimal barriers to collaboration. Another Board member expressed: ***"When we have a request, we're pushing at an open door"***. Similarly, a member of one of the local authority teams echoed this in how their outreach to community partners has been received, expressing ***"because of my professional background, when I've reached out to partner agencies like the police I've had a really positive response"***.
- 2. Active Data Sharing Initiatives:** Efforts to promote the sharing of data have been considerable. The VPP has proactively organised events such as data sharing conferences, aimed at dispelling myths on barriers to data sharing and facilitating networking among stakeholders. This proactive approach has the potential to enhance the accessibility and utility of data, facilitating informed decision-making and collaborative problem-solving.
- 3. Leveraging Previous Expertise and Networks:** The 'spokes' of the VPP possess extensive previous expertise and networks, which were discussed across the partnership as highly beneficial in reducing potential barriers to effective multi-agency collaboration. VPOs and representatives of the Board discussed the how the leveraging facilitated by these resources has enhanced the effectiveness of operations between partners. This utilisation of existing networks is a considerable asset to the functioning of the partnership, enhancing its capacity to address complex challenges.
- 4. Commitment to Impact Assessment:** There is a shared commitment among stakeholders to assess the impact of the VPP and its commissioned interventions both rigorously and regularly. Stakeholders recognise the importance of collecting a robust and ongoing evidence base to inform decision-making regarding the direction of funding and the extension of effective programmes. This commitment across the partnership to evidence-based practice safeguards the VPP's resources and the likelihood that they will be allocated efficiently to interventions which are tailored to the needs of the Humber community. As expressed by a Board member, ***"If midterm evaluation shows we can't measure success then that should determine whether to extend the funding or not."***

5. **Maturation of the Partnership:** Stakeholders agreed that as time has gone on, the partnership has solidified and clarified its role, demonstrating increased confidence and maturity in leadership. Despite initial challenges, stakeholders observed significant progress in the cohesion and effectiveness of the partnership. According to a member of the VPP team, *"the first year was very difficult but it feels like in this last year it's really started to come together. That confidence, that sense of leadership, that sense of maturity – there's a solidness to it which feels like it's accelerated in pace in the last year"*. This observation of the maturation process which the partnership has undergone with time was echoed across stakeholder groups, with members of the Delivery Team discussing how the partnership's capacity to navigate complex issues has strengthened over time.

Collectively, these strengths underscore the VPP's resilience and effectiveness in addressing the challenges of drawing together multiple agencies, approaches and initiatives into one cohesive network of violence prevention. The strengths of the partnership demonstrate a solid foundation for the continued mission of improving young lives across the region.

#### 2.6.2 Weaknesses:

1. **Urgency in Resource Allocation:** All stakeholders described considerable challenges associated with feeling as though they *"hit the ground running"* without sufficient time to research, strategise, network and make informed decisions. Post-holders across the partnership expressed sincere gratitude and enthusiasm for the prospects of the VPP, whilst also expressing the challenges of beginning delivery without sufficient time to develop a shared vision and prepare accordingly. This challenge was associated with the need to *"get money out the door"* to meet spending deadlines. It was felt by the Bid and Delivery Teams, as well as at the Board that this sense of urgency has impeded the potential of the partnership, leading to *"a distinct lack of relevant, evidence-based programmes"*.
2. **Opportunities for Information Flow:** As will be discussed below in the 'Opportunities' section, issues were raised across the partnership regarding a need for further clarity between partners. This was deemed to stem from a lack of a centralised vision and common plan. Stakeholders across the partnership highlighted the need to facilitate more opportunities for targeted information sharing and unified strategising across partnership agencies. Difficulties associated with this uncertainty centred around the need to ensure that all partners had access to (and agreed upon) the limitations, plans, and data relating to the partnership's goals. These challenges were associated with the above urgency in resource allocation, and were also indicated to pose challenges in terms of staff retention: *"The previous post holder echoed the others' comments of frustration that there is no strategic plan. Quite honestly, I think that's why he left. Because there wasn't that centralised vision, or common plan of what was expected overall and within each locality"*.
3. **Representing 'Seldom Heard Voices':** Across the partnership it was acknowledged that there is an ongoing need to, as a VPP team member expressed, *"get out in our communities and incorporate those seldom heard voices"*. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of including perspectives from those directly affected by violence, such as young people in the justice system. The VPP team expressed a desire to *"test the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and ask if it is really reflective of what they are experiencing"*. The Board echoed these sentiments in their desire to *"use young people's voice to inform commissioning"*. However, there was also a recognised challenge in effectively and ethically capturing and integrating these voices into decision-making processes.
4. **Data Capture and Sharing:** There are challenges related to the willingness of key partners to share data. This reluctance hampers the partnership's ability to access crucial information necessary for informed decision-making and optimal impact. Stakeholders have also raised concerns about the



quality of systems for the capturing of data on the commissioned interventions. It was suggested across the partnership that without robust systems for data capture, it could not be effectively ascertained if the interventions were reaching the correct cohort of young people, or effectively helping them. This was felt to impede the ability to identify those interventions which were most effective, celebrate these successes and focus future attention on the areas proving most beneficial to the young people in Humberside. According to a member of the Board, ***"we can't extend contracts if there's not evidence of outputs and outcomes"***.

5. **Structural Repetitions & Gaps:** Across the partnership, confusion was expressed over the responsibilities and conflicting priorities of stakeholders. VPOs for instance, discussed the challenges of having multiple supervisors and unclear lines of reporting, leading to uncertainty and inefficiency in decision-making processes: ***"I feel like I've got two bosses – the Humber VPP and my CSP manager. Trying to do everything everybody wants is difficult. They're all really busy. I don't see my boss very often, so I tend to make quite a bit up myself and then wonder if I'm even on the right path, which is a worry"***. Partners also discussed that these structural confusions often resulted in an overreliance on their existing networks within the sector acquired from previous roles – without which there was a fear that their work, however well-meaning, might be ineffective.

### 2.6.3 Opportunities:

1. **Enhanced Collaboration:** Across the partnership, stakeholders expressed a strong motivation to continue working towards improved collaboration. According to a member of the Board, ***"all areas are keen for better collaboration – the desire is there"***. Partners identified opportunities for increased collective action, promoting the need to implement regular, structured sessions for communication, engagement and strategy formation between branches of the partnership. Another Board member expressed positively that ***"multi-agency working is clunky. This is really a pretty good example of cooperation on balance, and we need to keep pushing for better"***.
2. **Engagement of Children and Young People (CYP):** There is an opportunity for the partnership to further engage with children and young people in the community. This will ensure it is best placed to address their specific needs and concerns. The Delivery Team emphasised the importance of testing of the Strategic Needs Assessment against the opinions of the cohorts of young people the VPP aims to reach and assist. As stated by one member of the VPP Team, ***"there is an ongoing need to ramp up our focus on youth outreach to test the things which are written large in the needs assessment"***. As discussed above, there was a strong motivation communicated across the partnership to reach and incorporate the voices of young people. Partners also identified opportunities to raise community awareness of the VPP's existence and its role in violence reduction efforts. Increased efforts towards visibility could foster community engagement and support for the VPP's initiatives.
3. **Continuation of Data Sharing Initiatives:** The VPP can capitalise on the momentum of existing data sharing initiatives to incentivise partner agencies to share data across the partnership. Improved data sharing will foster transparency and informed decision-making. The VPP-led Data Sharing Conference was well-received across partnership agencies. Continuing these efforts can enhance the accessibility and utility of data for stakeholders.
4. **Maximising Expertise:** The VPP benefits from considerable combined expertise among stakeholders. Leveraging this collective knowledge can lead to innovative solutions and improved outcomes. As one member of the Board expressed, ***"if you look at the representation sat round here today - we're here and we're committed"***. Stakeholders also recognised the potential to learn from existing Violence

Reduction Units (VRUs) on how to effectively integrate multi-agency approaches. They expressed a willingness to learn from successful models and adapt strategies accordingly.

5. **Research and Network Building:** Allocating time for research and network building in the initial phases before commissioning was deemed across the partnership to optimise likelihood of improved outcomes and strategic focus. According to a member of the VPP Team, *"if we had had more time in year one, I don't think we'd have that overreliance and overspending which we now have on sport interventions"*. It was proposed across the partnership that by allowing time to garner the necessary knowledge base at the outset, there would be a greater opportunity to develop, operationalise and test a more robust system of data collection by which to assess the effectiveness of commissioned interventions.

### 2.6.3 Threats:

1. **Spending Deadlines:** The VPP faces constraints with regards to commissioning timelines. As indicated above, this impacts upon decision-making and flexibility in program implementation. Stakeholders expressed the difficulties of these limitations in delivering the most effective programmes. As articulated by a Violence Prevention Officer (VPO), *"The VPP's hands are tied and that means they don't come to us [for advice]"*.
2. **Capacity to Alter Course:** The VPP's capacity to alter its direction in response to feedback is constrained by early commissioning requirements and contractual commitments. Stakeholders highlighted the need for greater flexibility. According to a member of the Board, *"we have vast amounts of information and intel across the board. But what we seem to do is go back to the purist model and deliver something simply because it has to be done in that way"*. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of systematically using a high-quality SNA to guide decision-making and focus efforts more effectively. A commonly referred to sentiment was the need for *"mid-term redirection"* to facilitate refocusing of activities based on updates to the SNA, community representatives, CYP, emerging data and expert advice.

## Section 3: Partnership Work Analysis

### 3.1 Identification of successful strategies and areas needing improvement

#### 3.1.1 Successes

Overall, partners and board members expressed a strong commitment and dedication to the VPP, alongside a desire to make it work. They described a positive working climate combined with an approachable delivery team that have helped foster an open working culture:

***This is really a pretty good example of co-operation in balance. [VPP Board Member]***

***The fact we can sit around the table and say these things is indicative of this open culture...there's lots to be positive about even if there's more work to be done. [VPP Board Member]***

The formation of the delivery team took place over several months and continues to bed in. The initial Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) launch conference in June 2023 was considered a successful event with attendance from a wide variety of statutory and voluntary organisations, setting out the role and remit of VRU's nationally, creating a useful local context. Other more established VRUs are receptive and responsive to the VPP delivery team in terms of providing advice and guidance, which is helpful as a newer VPP. Internal roles in the delivery team have started to become more clearly defined as the work of the partnership grows and develops. Naturally, working strategically across several organisations within the VPP with multiple partnerships is complex requiring the interface of services, systems, people and data.

#### 3.1.2 Areas for Development

The logistics of the Home Office commissioning arrangements have been described (by all) as difficult, creating partnership challenges and constraints. The large Year 1 spend of 40% took place when the delivery team and VPP partnership were in the embryonic stages of development. This led to a perception that decision-making and funding for interventions is not always embedded in existing frameworks and services and there have been some missed opportunities and potential duplication. Furthermore, there were questions across the partnership about measuring outcomes. These combined issues have been challenging for all partners, including the VPP hub:

***Funding is poorly divided across the 3 delivery years...Problems with the Home Office criteria – not bringing the value we wanted. [VPP Team]***

***...the money had to be spent quickly and without joint conversations [VPP Board Member]***

***...there's not evidence of outputs and outcomes...[is it] reaching the people we want to reach? [VPP Board Member]***

The Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) is an extensive document that provides a lot of regional and comparative data. The opportunity to use it in a more targeted manner by the VPP relies on refinement and distillation into a dashboard of key performance measures. Use of the data within the partnership is complicated in terms of expectations, systems and processes, and partners are not always clear on baseline reporting measures. Without clear reporting mechanisms including a baseline for data collection, measurement of change is difficult meaning effectiveness and monitoring is equally difficult. This leads to repetition and gaps in service delivery:

***I still don't see the data other than the strategic needs assessment. I don't see the police data..., and I'm scratching my head as to why. I don't see health data. I don't see probation data. I don't see fire***

***data. So I'm left to work off my gut, and deal with the significant stress of "am I doing this right?" [VPO Focus Group]***

***We've got a good SNA...we need to act on that better. [VPP Board Member]***

Development of relationships across the partnership has been a key priority for the VPP delivery team. Relationships between the VPP and key organisations, such as the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the Violence Prevention Officers (VPO's) are becoming more embedded as the VPP matures, whilst also characterised by some of the typical multi-agency challenges such as role clarity and communication. This is compounded by an absence of regular and consistent centralised communications from the Home Office about the VPP, which hinders the development of a common understanding. When this is understood in context of the previous point regarding the SNA, it is easy to see obstacles to the development of shared goals.

The delivery of VPP activities could be strengthened by increasing operational as well as strategic representation on the Board. One way of achieving this is by introducing a separate implementation group who are represented at the Board by the chair of this group. This would involve operational managers in key area's (as suggested above), who are already driving the work of the VPP strategy via their pre-existing service settings. This leads to a greater coordination between strategy and operation and helps inform future commissioning decisions about existing practice delivered by frontline professionals:

***The reason why there's so little awareness of VRUs is because nothing from the Home Office (HO) links us all together...there's no support from anyone at the HO from a comms or awareness point of view to get our message out. [VPP Team]***

***We're committed but we're all sitting here frustrated because we're not being able to make decisions. [VPP Board Member]***

There are some specific recommendations linked to the Violence Prevention Officer (VPO) role. The VPO role is central to driving forwards the aims of the VPP and has a critical position between local communities, the police, strategic leaders and operational services on the VPP delivery team and board. The four VPOs were appointed before the delivery team and it is clear this role could benefit from sharpened definition to develop closer working relationships and outcome measures. This includes a clear job description (with flexibility to respond to local need), alongside well-defined reporting lines and interface with other key partners such as the VPP and CSP. There was evidence of synergy between the VPP delivery team and the VPOs regarding the underpinning conceptual basis for the role, but this has not yet translated to reality:

***We (VPOs) identify key priority areas to develop work under: VAWG, nighttime economy etc. We brought key partners in around the table to develop our ideas and get a steer from. Bringing all the right people together, and creating new projects or helping exciting projects that are already going and figuring out where the gaps are. [VPO Team]***

***...VPOs should be the eyes and ears on the ground. [VPP Team]***

***...there wasn't that centralised vision, or common plan of what was expected overall and within each locality. [VPO Focus Group]***

The four Local Authority areas of the Humber Hull, East Riding, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire represent very different demographics which require unique understanding and service provision. VPP partners told us analysis of need in specific geographical areas is key to effecting change in terms of violence prevention and this could be refined to focus representation in some areas and plug absence in others:

***There is a missed opportunity to prioritise early intervention and diversion from the YJS' [VPP Board Member]***

***We need to look at the need within our area's and say, is that relevant? Is it going to meet need? Who is accessing the provision and is it the profile we're trying to reach? And how has it had an impact at an individual level? [VPP Board Member]***

## Section 4: Sporting Interventions

### 4.1 Survey Analysis

One of the first steps in making initial contact and introduction with the sporting activity leads (n=15) who had been commissioned by the VPP to deliver interventions. A survey was designed to gather information on what each project does, who it interacts with, what they hope to achieve for the young people taking part and what changes they hope to see in their communities as a result.

The questions asked in the proforma survey were:

1. Name of your organisation and name of the specific project receiving VPP funding (if different)?
2. Name and contact details of your preferred point of contact?
3. What has the Police and Crime Commissioner (Violence Prevention Partnership) funded your organisation to do?
4. Brief description of what the project does?
5. What age group is your project intended for?
6. What do you hope to achieve for the young people you're working with?
7. What changes are you hoping to see in your community as a result of this project?
8. How are you documenting the details of your project (such as who you are reaching and any progress the project has made)?
9. How are you finding young people to take part in the project?

Following the completion of the surveys, the data was transferred into 'word cloud' software which served as an analytical tool to visualise the predominant data in the form of key words. Words that were mentioned most frequently are represented on a larger scale, as compared to a smaller scale for those mentioned less.

Analysis focused on questions 6 and 7 as these provided more insight into the aspirations of the project leads when it came to outcomes of their activities - whether that be for the young people themselves or the communities they live in. Once, these word clouds were created, their key themes were analysed against the overarching Theory of Change of the Violence Prevention Partnership.



Figure 6: What do you hope to achieve for the young people you're working with?

One of the key themes within the data showed a focus on reducing and preventing crime (key words: reducing, reduction, crime). However, there is a low level of data showing mentions concerning violence and/or violence related crime (knife crime especially).

An overarching theme based on the frequency of responses across the data was a focus on behaviours, mental health, and well-being regarding the hopes for what young people would be able to achieve after taking part in the intervention.

There is limited reference to violent crimes within the survey data. However, there is mention of reducing the risk of criminal behaviour amongst the young people taking part in these interventions. This suggests a common desire across intervention leads to reduce the risk these young people face of becoming involved in or a victim of violent crimes.

The intervention leads' hope to achieve a reduction of substance misuse revealed by the survey correlates well with the VPP Theory of Change (see Appendix 1).



Figure 7: What changes are you hoping to see in your community as a result of this project?



risk to services). These interventions cover a range of approaches, with the most common including mentoring (n = 45), social skills training (n = 43) and sports programmes (n = 32).

As the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Toolkit explains, sports programmes have a ‘high’ average impact on youth crime and violence. However, the YEF also acknowledges that although there is some emerging and promising evidence associated with some of these sporting activities, there are large evidence gaps. Alongside the ‘high’ impact rating of such activities, the Toolkit estimates a ‘low’ level of confidence in this impact. There is a lack of high-quality research and a lack of studies from an English and Welsh context.

### 4.3 Case Study 1: ‘Get Inspired’ Hull Kingston Rovers



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***Get Inspired*** is a sports-based community outreach project delivered by Hull KR Foundation, which offers multi-sport activities and sessions to help to engage young people into physical activity including boxing, rugby league and football. The stated primary aim is to increase sport participation for children and young people (CYP), aged 10-19 in specific ‘hotspot’ locations, who are deemed at risk of becoming NEET (No Employment, Education or Training). The overall objective is to reduce youth crime rates and instances of anti-social behaviour, and to improve the health, education and future prospects to those who attend. *Get Inspired* was funded by the Humberside VPP for 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> January - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. Funding allocation was £134,282 (with additional match funding from HKR Foundation of £12,589). This was intended to deliver a target total of 220 sessions across the identified geographical (hotspot) locations over the 12 months and to reach and engage 300 children and young people

*Get Inspired* is a universal intervention in the sense that it is aimed at all young people, albeit it is delivered in specific and targeted geographical areas: ‘hotspots’ which have been identified by the police (and others) as some of the most deprived areas within the Hull (and more widely the Humber region). The demographics of the proposed participants are predominantly CYP from low-income households, living in local authority housing, with high numbers of CYP coming from families with ‘complex’ needs. Combined with a prevalence of inter-generational worklessness, anti-social behaviour and sometimes unsupportive family environments,



the result for many of the children and young people in these areas is often high levels of deprivation and below average educational achievement.

#### 4.3.1 Activity delivery



HKR Foundation utilizes a large, recognizable branded van, which contains a wide variety of sports and physical activity equipment. The intervention leads and practitioners use the van as a mobile community outreach space that can be easily mobilized to travel to regular identified places or other identified specific locations as needed, often at short notice. It is a geographical activity in that the team travel to 'hotspot' areas, with the aim of diverting behaviour from antisocial activities to sports/positive activities instead.

*Get Inspired* targets three identified hotspot areas within the Kingston-upon-Hull local authority area and attended regularly on a weekly basis, at all three sites. However, they are also able to react to changing circumstances based on local knowledge, reports and information provided by a variety of sources and organizations, including the VPP, Violence Prevention Officers and the local police officers. As such they are flexible enough to present in locations as and when needed. On such occasions they find a suitable location to set up the equipment (field/sports pitch/car park) and then work to engage the CYP who often become curious and investigate. The target audience here are all CYP who live or socialize in the particular hotspot area and those who attend are often already out in the public space. The HKR badge and branding are seen as a key driver for initial participation by CYP and a well-known name that draws them in to the space in the first place. *'If we are there they can come and kick a ball about for a couple of hours, rather than feeling bored and go to steal from a shop or throw something'*.

From our focus groups with intervention leads and staff members of this project we heard of many positive benefits and strengths of this initiative.

The overarching objective of this project is to encourage young people into physical activity and reduce youth crime rates and instances of anti-social behaviour. This aim of reduction and prevention is targeted exactly at those locations 'hotspots' where traditionally there has been a distinct lack of provision for this age group.

#### 4.3.2 Strengths

*All sessions are open to all who would like to attend*

In attempting to be as open and inclusive as possible, as many sports and activities as possible are offered including boxing, rugby, football, karate and gymnastics. Music is also an activity that tends to draw the young people into the activity. In addition to this the project provides fruit and vegetables and a smoothie maker is provided for the CYP to make and consume and to take home to their families or carers. They are also provided

with information on healthy diets and food and nutrition advice. This can encourage engagement by others who may not be attracted by the sports or physical activity but are being reached via another ‘hook’. This is seen by the intervention team as a real strength of the project, as a byproduct it also helps the families with food bills and the current cost of living crisis. The fact that these **activities are offered without charge** is seen as a huge asset. With no charge to attend, it provides a free start in something that they might not have access to, i.e. a physical activity or sport:

***Because it’s free the parents send them along and it stops the e-cigs, the knife crime, the quad bikes, the ones on the verge of being kicked out of school or have learning difficulties. They’re getting that form of release that they aren’t getting anywhere else. The parents contact us after a few sessions and say they’re behaving better in school.***

Although the target demographic is aged 10-19, the most effective age group to work with in terms of seeing **positive changes in behaviour is in ages 9-13**. The primary/secondary school cross over age was discussed as a vulnerable age at risk of engagement with low level crime and ASB which can quickly spiral and escalate:

***Its’ very integral for kids at this age to feel included and to feel cool. If you can get them engaged when they’re walking home...if they’ve got friends in their circle who are causing trouble and leading them down a path. At that age you are led more by your peers than your parents.***

The delivery team clearly felt that interventions with CYP who are involved with negative social cycle or peer group have the most significant impact.

#### *Building the right relationships*

A key aim of the project was to build strong relationships. In this case slightly older CYP (14-17) and those with difficult family backgrounds are targeted within the sessions and often given extra responsibilities. It is argued that this **leads to avenues of respect, kudos and ‘leadership’** for these young people and the younger ones also respond well to this. This trust and confidence support the older ones to apply this in other areas of their lives, in school/college/apprenticeship for example: *‘They know they are not going to get judged. They know we are not the police. We can show them there might be consequences for their action in a non-judgmental way’.*

The **flexible nature of the project sessions** was also identified as a benefit by the staff members. The ability to get to a ‘hotspot’ area as identified by partners or their own personal knowledge allows them to be reactive to emerging situations. This was apparent when attending the one site which had been identified (through several sources) as having both a gang and knife crime issue.

Wider benefits were also discussed in terms of the development of social capital and trust of and between CYP. In bringing participants together around a range of sports-based activities, such interventions can start to develop a level of trust in project team, authority figures and other agencies which can help build respect, self-esteem and foster inclusivity of participants. Focus groups with the delivery team also identified that such activities serve as a distraction from violence or ASB more generally by providing opportunities and encouragement to engage in education and foster better behaviour more broadly.

#### 4.3.3 Challenges

There are some obvious **challenges** with such interventions. For *Get Inspired* the nature of the activity is that is predominantly takes place outside means the **weather conditions are sometimes prohibitive** – the team have tried to find alternative facilities over the winter, community centres etc. but this is often ad hoc and less than ideal.

The venues chosen and the nature of the van as the location means the right equipment is on site so the CYP can be effectively engaged, but these spaces can also become the ‘territory’ of particular groups. Gender may

play a part here, and although the gender split of attendees is reported as fairly even (60/40 m/f) more could be done to encourage girls to attend for themselves, as opposed to come with the boys. In addition, **some sessions have very few attendees** but this was felt that this was often in the ‘newer’ locations.

One of the main challenges for this intervention is **lack of knowledge and data collected about the CYP who attend** as the participation is through personal choice. The levels of non-referral participation might be considered a strength of the project, but it does make the lack of data collection more problematic in terms of being able to demonstrate the effectiveness or otherwise of the intervention.

#### 4.3.3 Developmental activities and opportunities

It is clear from the funding agreement and the extension to cover the whole of 2023, that the multi-sport and activity sessions offered by HKR Get Inspired were anticipated to garner specific levels of attendance of CYP, in specific and targeted geographical locations, over a certain number of weeks.

However, from the focus groups carried out by the evaluation team with the HKR ‘Get Inspired’ project leads and those delivering the sessions, the aims and achievements very much revolve around relationship building and trust and confidence in adults/figures of authority. The goal on the ground evolved in to attempting to prevent CYP in engaging in anti-social behaviour and therefore criminal behaviour and activities further down the line.

#### 4.4.4 Future goals (identified at focus groups):

Get this provision into school environments - to include a safe space indoors for those CYP who do not want to engage with sports activities per se.

To have more provision in the summer school holidays in particular when ‘boredom’ reaches the peak: ‘Their families can’t afford to go away, so they are sat doing nothing for six weeks’.

#### 4.4 Case Study 2: ‘Act Fast’ Motorsports North Lincolnshire



**Act Fast** is an independent, Ofsted registered school near Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire offering ‘**alternative provision**’ to individuals with **additional educational needs**. A core remit of the school is the provision of **vocational skills** to boost the employability of its attendees, with a particular focus on **motorbike riding and maintenance**. The Act Fast site includes a large outdoor racing track, the use of which is a means of incentivising its students to pursue ‘thrills’ in a safe and monitored way. *Act Fast* was commissioned by the Humber VPP from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to provide a motorbike specific, six-session ‘**diversionary scheme**’ for CYP deemed to be ‘at risk’ of entering the criminal justice system. Sessions consisted of motorbike maintenance and safety, time on the track, and ‘wrap-around’ services tailored to the needs of the individual. Funding allocation totalled £38,253, to deliver two sessions per week over a three-week period to a cohort of 4 CYP. This scheme was initiated in response to the prevalence of motorbike theft, joyriding and associated antisocial behaviour among CYP in the Scunthorpe area.

#### 4.4.1 Target Cohort

CYP were identified for the scheme locally through groups including ‘Operation Yellowfin’, ‘Tactical Tasking Coordination Group’ (TTCG), Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Panel, and ‘Multi Agency Child Exploitation Board’ (MACE). The Scheme targeted CYP ‘on the peripheries, delving in and out of crime, rather than full-blown ‘prison risks’. Those who are on the outskirts, getting arrested, getting warnings. Attendees of the scheme were working on either out of court disposal, or court orders. Some attendees were identified as high risk through the police radar for motorbike and vehicle theft. Recruitment criteria also included CYP who’ve experienced trauma, come from ‘rough backgrounds’, are in a ‘cycle of offending’ or who ‘lack of positive role models’. There were no specific violence-related eligibility criteria.

Members of the Act Fast delivery team discussed how recruitment to the diversionary scheme involved a degree of conscious risk management, insofar as anticipating the dynamics of certain combinations of known CYP. Potential cohorts were considered based on factors such bail conditions, existing negative relationships between potential members, and the capacity for conflicting additional needs to arise within the cohort.

#### 4.4.2 Activity delivery



The programme runs for a total of six sessions per cohort, held twice a week over a period of three weeks, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This condensed structure was intentionally chosen by Act Fast staff following drop-

out rates observed in previous, longer-running programmes. Longer programmes were deemed to lead to a decline in attendee enthusiasm, commitment, and perceived value for each session. However, based upon the success observed in the initial two cohorts and the sustained participation of attendees throughout the six sessions, the *Act Fast* team expressed that there may be increased value in extending the scheme to run for up to eight sessions in future. Each young person attending the programme is accompanied by their case worker from North Lincolnshire Council. The case worker provides the young person's transportation to and from *Act Fast*, and maintains an ongoing dialogue with the *Act Fast* staff regarding the young person's wellbeing and response to the scheme. The *Act Fast* facility is fairly unique in the United Kingdom, with just one other similar project based in Scotland.

#### 4.4.3 Staffing

The *Act Fast* staff team is comprised of young, current champion bikers and older, ex-police and ex-military representatives plus a compliment of teachers and support workers, employed at the school. This composition was discussed by the team as a conscious choice in the provision of the types of positive role model which would resonate with the target population of CYP using their services. The recruitment of staff with a particular demeanor and mentality was discussed as a significant component of the projects running smoothly and successfully

***For someone to give these young people respect they have got to be quite a confident person. If they are not confident enough they will be on the back foot: shoulders out, shouting "do as I say", and posturing based on their own insecurity. Whereas if you have the right team, the young people see that and they respond.***

A primary ethos of the programme is that the young attendees are treated with **respect**. This approach then feeds into the methods of behaviour management favoured by the delivery team. Staff discussed the significance of making the CYP feel important in determining both their behavioural outcomes and the positive impact of the project: ***'new bikes, new kit, helmets on - it makes them feel special'***. One member of staff attributed the positive developments in behaviour and mental wellbeing demonstrated by the CYP on the programme to this prioritisation of respect and caretaking: ***'It gives them a sense of belonging. We always welcome them all in at the beginning of the day. Check how they are. Making them a cup of tea. Make them feel at home.'***

The environment design of the *Act Fast* facility is intended as an extension of this ethos. Following consultation with the CYP using their services, the indoor facilities at *Act Fast* were designed to feel like a cross between a home space and a classroom, at the request of the young service users.



#### 4.4.4 Strengths:

##### *Optimising previous experience of staff members*

The attendees' relationship with and attitudes towards the police was helped by having an ex-police officer on staff. This facilitates connections to current police officers, and enabled the *Act Fast* staff to encourage local police to see value in the scheme. These connections also allowed for police site visits to be arranged with greater ease. This further developed the improvement of relationships between CYP and the police. The visiting police would run 'Myth busting' classroom sessions before then joining the CYP on the track where they would all race together. In these sessions, commonly held assumptions and misconceptions about the laws relating to motorbike theft and joyriding were clarified. For instance, prior to attending the scheme, many CYP believed that the police were legally obligated to chase down individuals joy-riding without helmets. The desire for the thrill of a police chase therefore incentivises many CYP to joy-ride without a helmet – thus further endangering them further.

***Having my background makes a difference with the young people because they see that they can trust me. Another part of the scheme is that they know the police are funding it. And the police also come down and get them in a classroom before the ride. And then they all go out and ride together'***

##### *Targeting the right cohort*

The CYP invited to attend the scheme tend to be '***known kids from known families***' facing '***peer pressure to act as their family is expected to act***'. Engaging this type of young person in the project was observed by the staff to have '***a positive ripple effect***' within the local community.

##### Effective structure - incentivising behavioural change

The draw of the racetrack is used consciously in how sessions are run, in order to facilitate the best results. CYP are allowed out on the track only after performing vehicle maintenance and performance tests, kit checks, and attendance of information or classroom-based sessions such as the police visits. This structure was deemed to elicit the best behavioural outcomes with the greatest ease:

***Anyone messing around in the workshop when they get here and start doing the bike checks, the others are on to them because they know that that's going to knock off their ride time. The longer they're in the workshop doing the checks the less ride time on the track they get, because they all go out together. Even if they're slow getting their gear on or fixing something on the bike, there's an incentive to help each other so they can get out there.***

Staff also discussed the effectiveness of staying proactive in identifying and understanding the particular traits and behavioural patterns of the CYP attending the scheme. By learning each person's individual needs and emotional triggers, staff are better able to identify issues early before they escalate. This is also built into the structure of the programme in the relationship between Act Fast staff members and the case workers of each CYP attending. Each case worker communicates with their CYP prior to them a session to identify any personal challenges they may be facing. Similarly, the *Act Fast* staff inform case workers of any external factors, such as adverse weather conditions, that may affect how the session takes place or the participants' ability to engage.

#### *Sufficient staff capacity*

Behavioural management was also associated with having enough members of staff to allow on-to-one attention to be given to any young people 'acting up', whilst other staff continued the main session. The one-to-one attention was associated with maintaining the sense of respect and 'feeling important' which the scheme aims to offer the attendees. Similarly, having a sufficient number of staff also enables the session to continue and for the remaining staff maintain order.

#### 4.4.5 Options for ongoing support

As an Ofsted registered 'alternative provision' school, the Act Fast team are able to offer CYP attending the scheme a longer-term relationship with the school once the scheme has run its course. The scheme '***opens the door to get them engaged. Anyone can apply to the school, and it works well for those where college doesn't suit their needs. Usually when they finish the scheme we do a slow integration into the school.***

Staff observed positive behavioural change across the CYP who participate in the scheme:

***Their smiles at the end of the day, that's the most rewarding thing. They're wet through, they're covered in mud, and they're beaming. Just pure joy.***

***They grow a lot from when they first come. They turn up a bit rowdy and by the second time they know the structure. They're polite, courteous, saying "please. thank you". At first they fight to be top dog, but by the end of the scheme they're all mates, swapping phone numbers, helping each other on the track side.***

Reflecting this, staff also reported that the figures on stolen motorcycles have reduced since the scheme started. There are no longer any CYP on the list of offenders – only adults, and no CYP who have attended the scheme are any longer on this list.

#### 4.4.6 Challenges

##### *Seasonal dependency*

Seasonal Dependency poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of the scheme, as it heavily relies on weather conditions. Additionally, the scheme operates in tandem with daylight hours, with the track only opening in April coinciding with the change in clocks.

### *Critical Narratives*

A critical aspect of the scheme involves challenging negative narratives, particularly regarding the perception of the scheme as **'rewarding bad behaviour'**. One member of staff who is ex-police discussed how he has previously held this belief and was initially sceptical of the scheme. He went on to reflect on the challenge of shifting these negative perceptions among local communities, due to a lack of appreciation for the impact of trauma on CYP's behaviours:

***You have to look at the trauma these kids have been through. Their 'ACE' scores and the things they've witnessed – they're behaving in this way because of what's happened to them. Everyone deserves a chance and you can't knock them for what's happened in the past, but people still do.***

#### 4.4.7 Developmental activities and opportunities

To enhance the effectiveness, several developments could be implemented. Firstly, there is an opportunity to refine the recruitment process to encompass CYP at risk of interpersonal violence. While the *Act Fast* diversionary scheme currently targets CYP associated with motorcycle-related offences, expanding recruitment criteria to engage with individuals deemed to be susceptible to violence would advance the applicability of the scheme to the overall goals of violence prevention. This could be achieved within the established channels of recruitment already associated with the scheme: Case workers from North Lincolnshire Council, 'Tactical Tasking Coordination Group' (TTCG), Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Panel, and 'Multi Agency Child Exploitation Board' (MACE), as well as with schools, social services, and local police forces. By widening the recruitment criteria, the scheme could more effectively reach the target cohort of the Humber VPP and its broader community safety initiatives.

Secondly, there is a need to enhance the scheme's data collection and monitoring strategy in order to capture the progress made by its attendees. Based on the above recommendation to broaden the recruitment criteria, this enhanced monitoring process should aim to capture not only the reduction in motorcycle theft and joyriding, but should also aim to observe the extent and nature of interpersonal violence risks of the scheme's attendees before, during, and after the sessions taking place. Such metrics may include pre- and post-participation assessments focusing on behavioural changes, attitudes towards violence, and conflict resolution skills.

In summary, by advancing the scheme's impact assessment and targeting referral routes more strategically, the diversionary scheme could maximise its potential to decrease the risk of CYP engaging in interpersonal violence in the Humberside region.

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## Appendix 1:

