# Hope Hacks in the secure estate – 7-minute briefing

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

## 1. Introduction

The Humber VPP delivered strengths-based focus groups in HMP Hull and HMP Humber between February and August 2026.
37 young adult males aged 18-25 participated in the project.
The project expanded on the previous Humber-wide Hope Hack work, enabling wider experiences to be represented in the work. Hope Hacks | Humber Violence Prevention Partnership

## 2. Topic areas

4 overarching topics were identified that would provide structure to the conversations.

- **Self & Identity** – exploring societal expectations and gendered norms
- **Life skills & Aspirations** – childhood and adolescent aspirations, transition points and experiences of education
- **Community safety** – reflecting on issues and experiences that make young people feel unsafe
- **Healthy Relationships** – identifying boundaries and reflecting on experiences of professional relationships

## 3. Findings (themes 1 & 2)

The findings from the focus groups can be categorised under 4 key headings:

- **Defining and navigating masculinity** - pressure to live up to the perception of the role of men as providers and protectors, often exacerbated by a lack of positive male role models
- **Opportunities to intervene, support and inspire hope** - education and awareness raising often occurs too late. Missed opportunities by professionals and trusted adults to ask difficult and uncomfortable questions.

***"Don't expect us to be masculine and the provider, but then criticise us when we are masculine in other ways"***
***"Kids don't need freedom; they need routine and discipline"***

## 4. Findings (themes 3 & 4)

- **Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money** – the benefits of earning money through illegitimate means far outweigh those of earning legitimately. Often associated with a perceived lack of opportunities.
- **Breaking the revolving door cycle** – the systems in place to rehabilitate young adults into the community are experienced and perceived as barriers and a means to trip them up and keep them within the CJS.

***"We've been brought up in a let-down system"***
***"Some only see us as criminals"***

## 5. Recommendations for prevention

- Develop age-appropriate education resources on knife crime, drugs, gangs, exploitation, and domestic abuse
- Include the lived experience of those who have experienced the YJS or CJS in education input
- Low-cost / free activities, groups and youth provision, that engages and evolves with the young people
- Male-centred input in education, YJS and CJS focused on reframing conversations with young men and boys, and building male confidence
- Provide real-world learning, particularly financial literacy, in education
- Employment opportunities available for young people, that offer more than a wage, including goal setting, support, and flexibility when setbacks occur.
- Trusted adults need to be relatable, consistent, and use strengths-based language and approaches.

## 6. Recommendations for rehabilitation

- Improve employment readiness through CVs, applications, interviews and practical experience
- Provide training courses with recognised qualifications and direct links to employment opportunities.
- Consider introducing trauma-informed training and support for HMPPS staff and people experiencing custody and probation
- Acknowledgement that custodial releases can be overwhelming and the cause of anxiety for many young adult prisoners. ***"This isn't jail. Jail and the sentence starts when you get out"***
- Mental health support must be timely and clearly communicated

## 7. Next steps

- Sharing the report and findings with wider partners, the Hope Collective, and Pol-Ed
- Publication of the report on the VPP website - www.humbervpp.org
- Inclusion of the report in the Strategic Needs Assessment submission to the Home Office
- Explore the opportunity to replicate this work in the female estate.

www.humbervpp.org
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