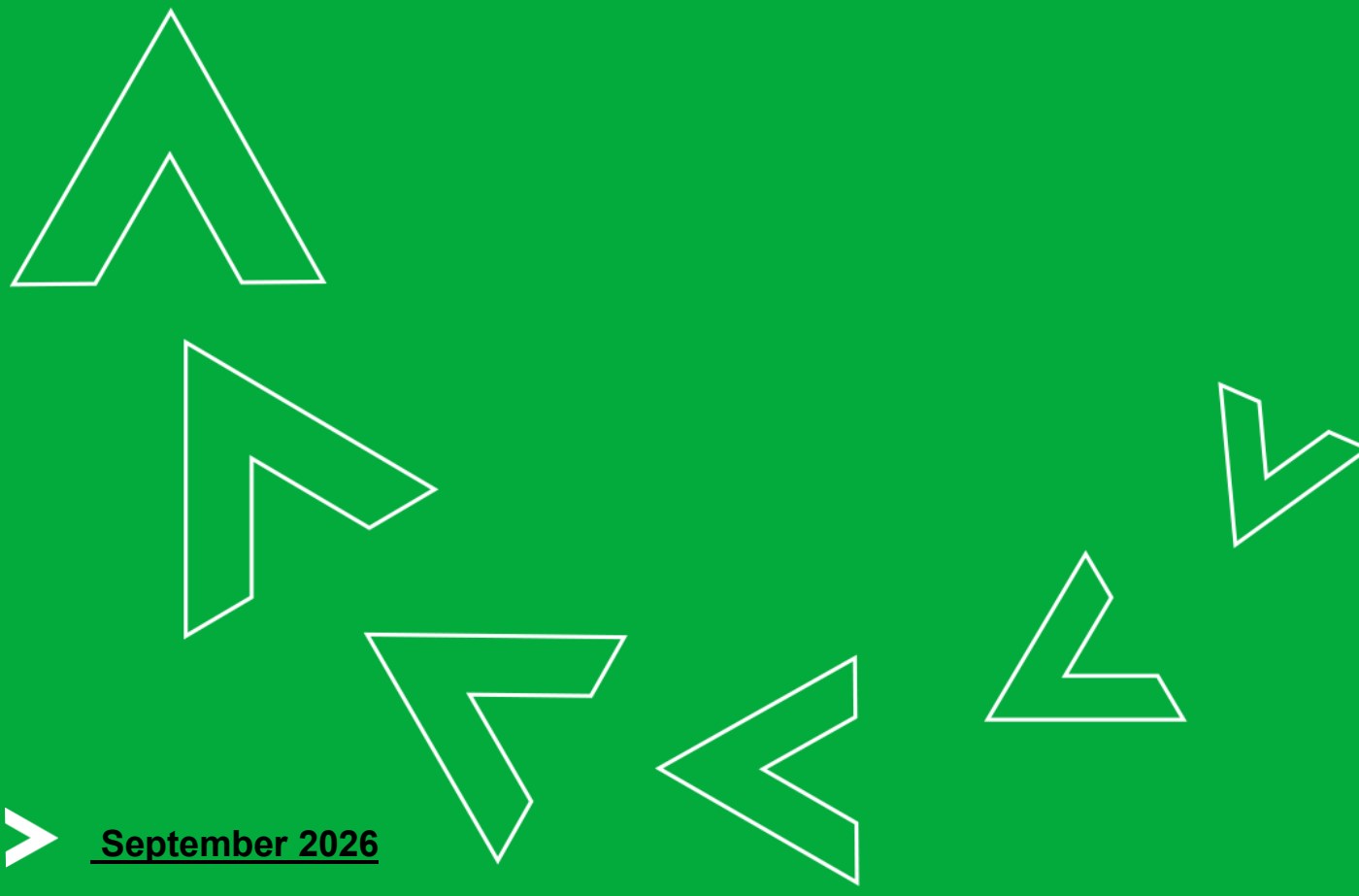
HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Hope Hacks in the secure estate Findings Report

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1. Introduction and background

1.1 Hope Hacks and the Hope Collective

Hope Hacks have been designed by the Hope Collective[1], an organisation formed to support the campaign for Damilola Taylor, a 10-year-old boy who wrote of his hope to change the world, shortly before his untimely death in 2000. The Hope Collective honour this legacy and aim to establish real change that enables the UK's most vulnerable communities to be free from poverty, violence, and discrimination. They do this by working with young adults so that they can create long-term change, amplify their voices, and focus on their hopes for the future. Other Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across the UK have organised these events for their specified area, giving young adults the chance to collaborate with each other in workshops to generate ideas on solutions to a key issue in the community.

The ideas and solutions from the hacks are also incorporated into a national report, written by the Hope Collective, to create the biggest needs assessment into; what young adults think a fairer society looks like, what the current challenges are for young adults, and what solutions would drive long lasting change. That assessment will allow the government to hear the voices of young adults and be used in decision-making and policy.

1.2 Humber Hope Hacks

Between February 2023 and February 2024, the Humber VPP held four Hope Hack events, one in each local authority area of Humberside – Bridlington, East Riding; Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire; Hull, Kingston upon Hull; Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire.

The Hope Hacks were promoted to schools, colleges, alternative education provisions and local community groups, with key demographic initially being young adults aged 16-25. Approximately 310 young adults attended the events. The events also hosted a wide range of guest speakers and partner organisations.

The events involved the young adults working in small workshop groups to discuss what fairness looks like in their community. The workshops covered 7 topics, which were initially aligned to those set out by the Hope Collective, they were:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Anti-poverty
- Race & Diversity
- Media
- Gender
- Access to Opportunities
- Community safety

However, following the first Hope Hack in Hull, the VPP launched an online survey to consult with young adults across the Humber region to establish what issues and topics were most

[1] https://www.hope-collective.co.uk/

important to them. This consultation identified the following 7 topics, which subsequently became the topics used for the rest of the events. These were:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Community Safety
- Youth Voice & Inclusion
- Diverse Experiences
- Sports & Activities
- Life Skills
- Aspirations & Opportunities

The workshop conversations were supported by examples of national and local data and headlines.

After brainstorming ideas and summarising their thoughts and opinions, the event concluded with feedback from each group, who presented their collective solutions. The young adults were encouraged to use creative freedom, and therefore the presentations were delivered in a variety of formats.

The event and report findings were used to support the VPP's Strategic Needs Assessment and helped to inform and contribute to our understanding of what young adults think would be the greatest solutions to problems in our local community. The reports, along with an audio-visual summary can be found on the Humber VPP website[2].

1.3 Hope Hacks in the secure estate

Following the success of the Humber Hope Hacks, the Humber VPP were keen to ensure that all voices and experiences were represented in this project. With that in mind, it was decided to expand the project to include young adults in secure settings such as prisons, mental health units and custody suites.

Early conversations started with HMP Hull in 2024. HMP Hull is a Category B local prison and young offender institution (YOI) for men over 18. Initially, a train-the-trainer approach was considered to support prison officers working directly with the young adult/offender (18-24 years old) cohort to continue these conversations past the project end. This was reconsidered following some anecdotal insight relating to pressures on capacity and workloads within these roles.

It was recommended that the VPP team make use of the pre-existing Young Adult forums that are held within the prison, to deliver small focus group sessions with the support of prison staff.

Later, interest was expressed from HMP Humber. HMP Humber is a Category C prison for men over 21.

In Autmn 2025, after developing the materials and resources, the Hope Hack was promoted to both prisons as a project consisting of 3 sessions:

[2] https://humbervpp.org/our-work/youth-engagement/hope-hacks

Table 1: Hope Hack itinerary

Session 1	Morning	Self & Identity	Feb – Mar 26
	Afternoon	Life Skills & Aspirations	
Session 2	Morning	Community Safety	Apr – Jun 26
	Afternoon	Healthy Relationships	
Session 3	Morning	Findings feedback & sense checking, celebration and thanks	Jul – Aug 26

The first focus group took place in HMP Hull on 23rd February 2026, and HMP Humber on 26th February 2026. The sessions ran from February to July 2026 and were delivered to 37 young adults.

The Humber VPP team would like to thank the staff at HMP Hull and HMP Humber for hosting these sessions and enabling this project to take place within the secure estates. With special thanks to the following individuals, for all their hard work in making this project happen and their dedication to supporting young adults in prison:

- Sara Ward, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor – HMP Humber
- Michelle Powell, Custodial Manager of Safer Custody Violence Reduction – HMP Hull
- Paul Hobart, Custodial Manager Young Adults, Keyworkers and Care leavers - HMP Hull

Most importantly, we would like to thank all the young adults who participated in this project and provided the valuable insight that informed this report. They exceeded our expectations in terms of openness and willingness to share their experiences.

We wish each one of them all the best for their futures.

2. Summary of findings

The conversation notes, materials and suggested solutions from each session were collated and analysed to identify 4 key findings and overarching themes, each with a set of recommendations. These were sense-checked with the young adults during the final sessions of the project. These findings and recommendations will support and inform the work of the Humber VPP and its partners, as well as other strategic arrangements such as Reducing Reoffending, Local Criminal Justice, Youth Justice, Public Health Approach to Domestic Abuse (PHADA), and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).

The full list of recommendations can be found in appendix 8.

2.1 Defining and navigating masculinity

Prior to delivering this project we had received anecdotal insight from prison officers that there had been a notable shift in attitudes and behaviours towards female officers, offences linked to domestic abuse, and violence against women in general. It was decided that the *Self and Identity*, and *Healthy Relationships* topics would enable us to explore this further. At times we felt that the groups were overly cautious when talking to us about their perceptions of women, however, it is worth noting here that these sessions were facilitated by women, and the supporting officers and staff were also women.

The young adults expressed mixed messages about what is expected and accepted of them during the conversations. **"Don't expect us to be masculine and the provider but then criticise us when we are masculine in other ways."** Young adult at HMP Hull

The majority of the young adults see their role, as a man, as being a provider and protector of the family unit, whether that be as a child, parent or partner. Although some commented that they would have no objection to a partner working and earning money, they still saw it as the man's responsibility and purpose to be the provider. We identified that this could create a sense of pressure and expectation on them to prove themselves through any means necessary.

Their responses to the 'What makes a man' task indicated that they hold themselves to very high standards, and that there is an expectation that men should be all encompassing leaders – showing strength, ambition, alongside being compassionate and humble.

The young adults demonstrated a lot of bravado and posturing during the sessions. This however, appeared to be more for the benefit of each other, rather than for us as outsiders or as women. This is unsurprising given the environment they are living in, where they must quickly prove themselves, adapt to unpredictable and sometimes volatile situations, and keep themselves safe. Aggression and confrontation appear to be the main currency for respect in these environments.

When conversations turned to mental health and wellbeing however, there was a lot of support and empathy shown by the groups. We witnessed in one of the Hull sessions, the group supporting and rallying one of the young adults who expressed that there was **"no hope"** left for him. Each group talked about mental health, whether their own personal experiences, or what they have witnessed from others in prison.

In the community we hear that "men don't talk", and this was echoed in the prisons, however it was apparent that this cohort of young men **DO** talk. They listen too, they empathise, they see

each other at their lowest, and they feel that mental health support services are missing the mark – particularly in terms of access to timely support.

2.1.1 Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Overall, this cohort told us that if they had the power to do so, they would prioritise tackling crimes that disproportionately impact women and girls – such as domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking and harassment. While this is admirable and aligns to their perceptions of the role of men as providers and protectors, there were some knowledge gaps in how domestic abuse and VAWG presents in reality.

The conversations also indicated little understanding or empathy relating to coercive and controlling behaviours in relationships, with comments such as, **"…but some people like that toxic behaviour in relationships."**

Interestingly, the Humber group told us that they do not think women fear reporting domestic abuse to the police, and that they would be believed and supported. In contrast they felt that men face more barriers to reporting domestic abuse and that they would not receive the same level of response that women do.

During conversations that touched on their perceptions of women or their experiences of relationships, we found that they were cautious and wary in their responses. A few of the young adults made comments to suggest they suspected that whatever they told us would be used against them at a later date and therefore refused to engage in these conversations and activities.

Some of the young adults were open enough to explain that they were either in prison for domestic abuse-related offences or had domestic abuse allegations made against them. They shared their experiences of these allegations, whether founded or unfounded, following them and impacting on their rehabilitation. One young adult shared his experience of being recalled for a molestation breach, despite his GPS tag disproving this. He continued to explain that an ex-partner continues to disclose new allegations each time he is due to be released from custody, which leads to further restrictions on his life in the community, despite having separated and having no contact for a significant period of time.

The Humber group reiterated that men can be victims of domestic violence too, however there are fewer support services and pathways that exclusively support male victims. Furthermore, given how they perceive the expectations on men to be – to provide and protect – fewer men feel able to reach out and talk about their experiences.

2.1.2 Co-produced recommendations

1.1	By and for men – male-centered input in education, youth justice, and the criminal justice system, which focuses on positive conversations with young men, identifying harmful messaging, reframing what it is to be a man, and building male confidence.
1.2	Dedicated services in the community and online for male victims of domestic abuse, including awareness campaigns and signposting to services.
1.3	Domestic abuse input in prison and probation – scaled from awareness raising, to addressing male perpetrator behaviour change
1.4	More transparency and communication relating to mental health service and provision, so that individuals feel that they are being taken seriously, and that their experiences do matter

1.5	Mental Health in prison campaign / promotion – the opportunity to reframe the message that men don't talk.

2.2 Opportunities to intervene, support and inspire hope

The transition from childhood to adolescence was highlighted to us as the point at which is most critical for prevention or diversion from criminal behaviours. The clear message from all the sessions was that education, support and intervention needs to take place before a child/young person reaches secondary school. One group explained that if we start educating about knife-crime, drugs, gangs etc in the first year of secondary school, we are probably already too late for some young people. Without exception, each group has told us that exposure to drugs and knife crime growing up as teenagers was commonplace for them, they were already living in those environments by the time they were at secondary school.

One group discussed the transition between primary school, where they are still considered and treated like a child, and secondary school where they are given more freedom and responsibility – commuting to school on their own for example. They explained that this newfound freedom exposes them to people, backgrounds, areas and experiences that they had not been exposed to before, for some young adults it is too much freedom, too soon.

The groups also suggested that education and awareness raising should be age appropriate, consistent, and should evolve and develop through the young adult's school life.

All of the groups told us that criminality is often linked to boredom. While this may appear to indicate that there is a lack of activities and safe spaces for children and young adults, actually, these young adults raised that the issue is the lack of accessible and affordable (free) activities. They all agreed that keeping young adults occupied and engaged in activities, hobbies, interests, sports etc., is critical in reducing their opportunities of becoming involved in crime.

Although some of the young adults had accessed education from alternative provisions. It was generally felt that these are rarely promoted or talked about as a more widely accepted alternative pathway to education. Often these provisions focus on building practical skills and building independence, which many of the young adults felt was more valuable than what is offered by mainstream schools.

The Humber group suggested that rather than educating young adults about crime and consequences through punitive measures and threats, they would have responded better to being supported through structured goal setting, based on their interests and strengths.

We also heard that prior to being released from custody, many individuals feel anxious and worried about what to expect. Prison offers consistency, routine and order that they cannot replicate in the community. For some, this can be overwhelming and they struggle to cope with living in the community and the responsibility that comes with it.

2.2.1 Co-produced recommendations

2.1	Readiness for employment: mock interviews, CV development, applications support, and more practical work experience opportunities
2.2	Develop or commission age-appropriate education resources to be delivered in primary schools, covering:

	• Knife crime • Drugs • Gangs and gang related activity • Exploitation and how to recognize it. • Domestic abuse The delivery should include elements of lived experience particularly from young adults with lived experience of the criminal justice system/youth justice system
2.3	Education, employment, and rehabilitation support that focusses on goal setting, building trust through scaffolded responsibilities, and celebrating key milestones, while allowing flexibility for if things go wrong and re-engaging them.
2.4	Free/low-cost opportunities for young adults to get involved in a wide range of activities and groups. These should be consistent rather than short-term programmes and should be able to evolve and develop with the aim of keeping young adults engaged.

2.3 Legitimate versus illegitimate means to earning money

All of the cohort expressed that money, and the access to money, is a predominant factor in their offending. While this is in part due to the perception and expectation of men as providers, there are also other factors at play including the desire to live up to a certain level of lifestyle – which is often influenced by other criminal associates – and a 'live for the here and now' or 'you only live once' attitude.

To the majority of the young adults, money is perceived as a measurement of success, status and reputation. This suggests that just having access to money is not enough, being able to demonstrate wealth through clothing, jewellery, devices, vehicles is equally important, but at least 2 of the groups told us that when it comes to money, **"Men always want more".**

The draw to criminal activity for many of the young adults is not limited to the amount of money they can earn. The ease and speed at which they can access money is often a benefit that cannot be matched through other means, such as working a 9-5 job or through manual, labour-intensive work.

There were also some examples shared where money was perceived as the foundation for their relationships with their partners or children. For example, one young adult told us that he questions whether his partner would stick around if the money and lifestyle stopped. Others use money as a way to overcompensate for missing out on time with their young children. These ideas and perceptions add further weight and pressure to earn money through illegitimate means.

Additionally, there are some who feel that they have limited opportunities available to them in the employment market because they lack the qualifications or educational attainment that most employers are looking for. At least one young adult in each group we worked with had left school or been excluded from school before their GCSE years. While some of these young adults accessed education through alternative provisions, this was not the case for all.

It is interesting to note that when we asked the young adults to complete a Basic Skills checklist, financial literacy skills scored the lowest overall. Adding yet another pressure to their provider role.

2.3.1 Co-produced recommendations

3.1	Employment opportunities for young adults, that offer more than just a wage. Opportunities that can support with structured goal setting, can be flexible if things go wrong, and believe that young adults have a value in the community.
3.2	Promotion of alternative education pathways that do not rely on grades and attainment and instead focus on practical skills building and employability coaching.
3.3	Explore opportunities to include real-world learning in education, including financial literacy
3.4	Reduce young adults' reliance on mobile devices and access to social media, through education, activities and programmes that maintain engagement.

2.5 Breaking the revolving door cycle

All the groups told us that they see the 'revolving door' effect in prison, seeing people being released and soon after being reintegrated into prison life. The majority of the young adults we worked with had been part of this revolving door themselves at some point. This enabled them to point us to what does and does not work in terms of rehabilitation.

These groups told us that consistency is crucial for them to be able to be successfully rehabilitated in the community. By consistency, they mean:

- **Professionals being consistent in their messages and approaches.** We heard how their experiences of probation services for example varies from area to area, and from officer to officer. A few of the young adults had worked with multiple officers over the course of one probation/licence period and shared that there were notable differences in approach and attitude, which led to distrust of the system and processes.
- **Having a routine and regime.** While the idea of freedom sounds idyllic to some individuals, for others it creates a sense of anxiety. Some of the young adults told us that being released from custody and having freedom can be overwhelming and they struggle to transition between the strict rules and routine of prison life, to freedom in the community.

The young adults told us that license conditions can be overwhelming, too restrictive and contradictory. They expressed the need for a sensible balance between the need to monitor and restrict their activities to prevent reoffending, and the need for them to be able to rebuild their lives. The majority of the young adults perceived license conditions and the probation system as a way of tripping them up and keeping them in the prison system.

On reflection, it would be worth exploring how license conditions are explained by staff and understood by the young adults.

We heard examples of individuals being drug or alcohol tested despite there being no license conditions relating to alcohol or substances applied to them – particularly for those who are released to approved premises. Others described being recalled for what they consider to be minor infractions of their licence conditions, which further confirms their perceptions of being set up to fail.

Support networks are also crucial to these individuals. Given the opportunity, many of the young adults would move away from the areas they were previously living in or associated with, however, this would mean severing their family ties. One young adult in Humber explained that in order to have a true fresh start he would need to move out of area and far enough away that it would not be easy to get back – for example, multiple train journeys. However, the reality is that to do this he would need a job and accommodation in this new area, and even if he had these, he would be completely alone without any support networks.

We spent a lot of time talking about different relationships, both personal and professional, and this highlighted that these young adults value mutual respect, the chance to be listened to, and feeling that the systems of support around them genuinely care about them and their journey.

Talking about family and friends brought about mixed responses. For some, their families are their focus point and the reason why they want to improve themselves, for example some of them have young children who they want to be a positive role model to. Others had complicated family relationships, including intergenerational incarceration and introductions to criminal behaviours, and experiences of the care system.

Most of the young adults described their friendship circles becoming smaller when they went to prison and hinted at false or fair-weather friends who disappear when times get hard. Some of the young adults, having had time to reflect on these relationships, recognised signs of peer pressure, negative influences and exploitation.

In terms of their relationships with professionals – we discussed police, probation, prison, youth justice, education, social care, health, youth outreach – there were very few positive experiences shared. While this is unsurprising, especially with regards to criminal justice service professionals, it is important to understand why this is – and often it has nothing to do with their offending.

There were examples of missed opportunities where professionals could have asked those difficult questions and been professionally curious. A really good example of this was when one young adult said that he was sure that his teacher had known that he was experiencing a difficult homelife and that had that teacher asked what was going on with him at home, he would have told them everything, but they never did so he assumed they did not care.

The prison officers and staff we spoke to explained that there's a lot of anxiety leading up to being released from prison. A few of the young adults have commented that prison is the easy bit, rehabilitation in the community **"is where the hard work is"**. Therefore, they need to feel that when it gets difficult, there's someone in their corner who believes they can succeed and has the tools and resources to guide them. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these young adults feel this is not the case.

As mentioned previously, the draw to criminality comes from a need or desire to earn quick and easy money. On release from custody, under license conditions, this draw is likely to be even stronger as they are trying to get back on their feet, make up for lost time and survive in the community. There is a need for employment opportunities to offer more than just a wage for these cohorts. They need structured support around goal setting, flexibility when things go wrong, and the belief from others that they have value in the community. Many of the young adults described wanting to be seen as positive role models in the future, the desire is already there, they need the support and guidance to achieve it.

The young adults told us that although there are a range of courses and training that they can access in prison, these don't necessarily equate to a relevant qualification in the community, meaning they have to re-start, which feels like a knock-back when they are already trying to find their feet.

4.1	Trauma-informed approaches input in prison – at a staff level, as well as an input for prisoners and people managed in the community – to support them in understanding and managing trauma and triggers.

4.2	Offer the national living wage to those with jobs in custody, enabling them to save and support themselves better on release
4.3	Explore career pathways that offer similar routines and regiment as in prison – such as armed forces – which could mitigate the disruption caused by release
4.4	Opportunities to access courses that link directly to employment opportunities and are acknowledged and recognised in the community
4.5	Explore alternatives to providing individuals with cash on release from custody, such as vouchers, to encourage individuals to use their release money on food and living essentials.
4.6	Explore the potential to offer driving lessons and support with completing DVSA theory tests in custody, which could increase their employability in the community.

3. Topics

In this section of the findings report we have broken down and summarised the sessions and topics that framed our discussions with these young adults. Each session was semi-structured with two primary topics – *Self & Identity* and *Life Skills and Aspirations* in session 1, and *Healthy relationships* and *Community Safety* in session 2 - associated activities, and enough flexibility to enable the young adults to lead the conversations and allow them to expand on areas that were important to them.

3.1 Self and Identity

This topic was chosen following anecdotal insight from the prisons relating to a shift in attitudes towards female officers, conflict between young adult prisoners and young adult officers, and an increase in the percentage of prisoners who have a recorded domestic abuse flag.

The aim of choosing this topic was to explore the young adult's perceptions of the role of men and masculinity in society, where these stem from and how these impact how they view themselves.

See Appendix 1 for the session sheets.

3.1.1 What makes a man/woman

The first activity we asked of them was to describe the attributes that make a man and a woman. While most of the young adults completed the 'male' component of the activity there was a reluctance to describe what makes a woman, and some young adults refused altogether. In hindsight, we should have introduced this activity later in the sessions, as this was met with a great deal of distrust and scepticism with regards to our intentions. For example, one young adult told us, **"You will take this to probation just to use against me."** This told us two things:

- The young adults would likely dilute their responses to meet what they think we want to hear, rather than expressing their genuine views.
- They have experienced being let down or misled previously and are now cautious in their responses.

The table below (Table 2) lists the words used in this activity. This list provides good insight into the high standards that these young adults feel they are expected to live up to. They show that men need to be all encompassing leaders. When we compare this to the list of words for what makes a woman, these mostly suggest that women's roles are to be supportive and caring.

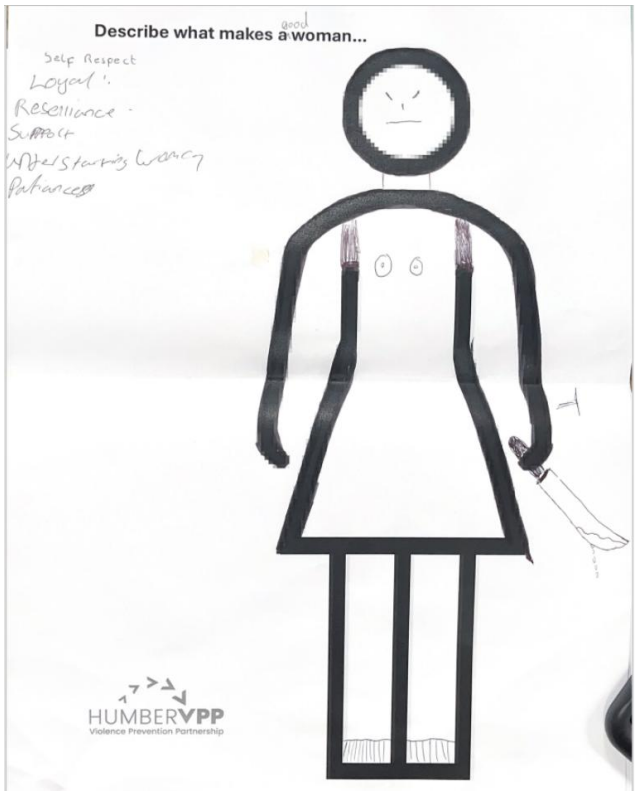
It is interesting to note that the most common attribute for women, that came up in all the groups, was **"self-respect"**, and yet none of the groups considered this for men. When this was queried, their responses implied that there are different expectations and rules for men and women regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Their views of self-respect in women related more to how they conduct themselves in public – what they wear for example.

There were only 3 negative descriptions for women, which on the surface appears to be a positive indicator. However, as previously mentioned, the groups were wary of us and initially reluctant to complete this element of the activity. When we collected the work sheets in from one group, one of the young adults had changed the activity to read *"What makes a good woman"* this was accompanied by a drawing of a woman with an angry face and holding what appears to be a knife dripping with what we assume to be blood, they had also drawn breasts onto the female figure – shown in figure 1.

Table 2: What makes a man / What makes a woman words list.

What makes a man	Man and Woman crossover	What makes a woman
Provide and protect	Motivated	Self-respect
Masculinity	Good morals	Resilient
Reliable	Respectful	Supporting
Independence	Loyal	Patient
Strong-minded	Understanding	Caring
Honest		Family orientated
Compassionate		Motherly
Emotionally and physically strong		Hard-faced
Compliant		Argumentative
Confidence		Chatty
Ambitious		Responsible
Problem solver		Self-less
Family values		Giving children
Hard worker		Hard work
Courage		
Assertiveness		
Good manners		
Self-driven		
Dignity		
Trust awareness		
Money		
Show emotions		
Empathy		
Goes out of the way to help others		

Figure 1: What makes a woman worksheet example – Hull session 1, cohort 1.



3.1.2 To provide and protect

Figure 2: Discussion prompts – Self & Identity

"54% of 18–24-year-old men feel like society expects them to be the main wage earner"

"Often boys still learn that being dominant, aggressive and taking risks are all necessary parts of being a man"

Throughout all the groups, the young adults pushed the narrative that men should be the provider and protector of the family unit. While they accepted that this is not the case for all men, they still insisted that most men would agree with this perspective.

It was interesting to note that the young adults were quick to add that they had no 'issues' with their female partner working, but that a man's role is to provide. A group in Hull gave examples of encouraging and supporting their partners to work, however their examples were limited to hair and beauty roles which could be based in the home.

> **"Men should provide, and not to say that women can't earn, but you should look after her."** Young adult at HMP Humber

It was clear that, for the most part, these perceptions and attitudes stem from their experiences growing up. Many of the young adults we worked with came from unstable home environments or had experienced care. This goes someway to explaining their drive to prove themselves and provide for themselves and their loved ones. While this is admirable, we cannot ignore that this puts a great deal of pressure on young men.

Some of the young adults we worked with have children themselves and are wanting to prove themselves to their children and become positive role models to them. However, in general, the young adults related 'providing' to money and being able to buy and pay for things. In one example, the young adult felt that being present for their partner and children was not sufficient, and they explained that they over-compensate for the time they have lost by showering them with gifts and treats, rather than time and presence.

It was clear from the experiences shared, that very few of the young adults had had positive male role models in their lives. They shared stories of experiencing hardship growing up, which may go a long way to explaining their attitudes towards the perception of what it means to be a provider.

All of the groups pushed back on the suggestion that boys are taught that aggression and risk taking are necessary parts of being a man. The Humber group suggested that 'assertiveness' can sometimes be misplaced or misunderstood to be aggression, and that everyone takes risks every day, but that **"a man should have confidence in the decisions he is making"**. This group spoke about 'masculinity' and life satisfaction in terms of being driven and purposeful. They told us that education that encourages direction and aspiration, hobbies and interests, alongside good role models, are important foundations to life satisfaction.

In the Hull groups however, we found that the responses they gave us contradicted their off-topic chats with each other. Here we saw examples of posturing and talk of violent acts that they had either been involved in or had threatened. They explained however that aggression is not always intended against a person, and instead are outlets of frustration at situations and

circumstances outside of their control. Their later discussions touched on boxing as a good method for channelling pent up frustration in a structured and disciplined way.

3.1.3 Money as a means to being happy

The relationship between these young adults and money is complicated. For most of the young adults, money is a measure of status, success and reputation, and yet they also told us that **"money can't buy you happiness, but it definitely contributes"** as it helps to provide the freedom to make the choices between doing what you want to do. They also suggested that **"money gets you into trouble"** as when you have too much or too little, you can convince yourself to take more risks.

They described men as being competitive by nature, meaning that **"Men always want more".** We heard this from multiple groups and was coupled with conversations about life satisfaction. This also linked to influences and influencers both in the community and through social media, who portray lavish lifestyles that for the average 18–24-year-old are unattainable through legitimate means.

3.1.4 Mental wellbeing and life satisfaction

Figure 3: Discussion prompts – Self & Identity

"Men report lower levels of life satisfaction than women"

The messages we see in the media are that when it comes to mental health or emotions, men don't talk about it. Over the last decade there have been numerous media narratives to encourage men to seek support and speak out, although the perception that men remain unwilling to talk continues to persist. We heard this in our conversations with these groups, this almost being their first response. Yet, each group shared what they had seen, heard or experienced of poor mental health, self-harm and suicide attempts within the secure estates.

They spoke with empathy, understanding and an acknowledgement that there are flaws in the systems of support for young men, both inside and outside of prison.

One young adult in a Hull group told us that he had been in and out of prison since the age of 13, in various prisons. Nothing has worked to keep him out of trouble and to support him in a more positive pathway. He admitted to having given up on himself and that **"no-one can help me now. The only person who can help you is yourself, and I can't help myself; I've got no hope."** This young adult also showed signs of being institutionalised, telling us that he had caught himself referring to his cell as his bedroom. We witnessed the whole group rally this young man, showing a great deal of support and empathy towards him.

A key point that was made is that for men and boys to talk, they need to know that they will be listened to and be able to trust the person they are talking to.

> **"A man discussing mental health depends on not only your own open-mindedness to feel comfortable enough to express your thoughts and feelings, but the open-mindedness of the individual you are confiding in"** Young adult at HMP Humber

"It **depends on who you talk to, I could talk to you {facilitators} and be fine, but if I tried to talk to my mum about it, I would get upset and cry"** Young adult at HMP Hull

We heard examples of feeling let down by services. In prison for example, some young adults shared the opinion that **"you have to be at the extreme to be taken seriously".** One young adult explained to us that he had requested support from the mental health team in prison but felt that his need for support was dismissed. He said he felt frustrated by the situation as he had people who were supposed to be there to support him, **"telling me how I was feeling"** rather than listening and supporting him. Others described being placed on waiting lists without being told how long they might wait or what they were waiting for, such as initial consultation or ongoing support.

Another individual explained that as part of his license conditions he was required to have a specific kind of therapy, however this isn't available in the Humber region.

While some described prison as an opportunity to take time and space away from external pressures, others admitted that they struggle with the amount of time they have to think, overthink and worry about the things they cannot control on the outside.

For the majority of young adults, family visits are a focus and motivation, but for others these can lead to more overthinking and worrying. Some young adults told us that they do not like, or they avoid family visits because it is too difficult watching their loved ones walk away at the end of each visit.

Without exception, the young adults told us that they try to manage their own mental health and wellbeing through exercise, work, and generally keeping the body busy and the mind occupied. Many young adults expressed that the routine and regime of prison-life suit them, the sense of predictability and structure helps them to be focused. The overwhelming views on what would help steer young people away from crime, was just this – **occupy their minds, keep them busy and engaged, give them structure and routine.**

3.1.5 The role of the media / social media

Figure 4: Discussion prompts – Self & Identity

"The media portrays young adults more negatively than positively, which leads to the public forming an unbalanced perception"

"1 in 3 youth related articles are about crime, and young adults are only quoted in 8% of those stories"

While all the groups agreed that stories about young adults are disproportionately negative in the media, there was a general acceptance that this is just how it is. The group in Humber explained that good news stories don't sell as well as negative stories, this is because negative stories create intrigue and that's what people search for.

However, the Hull groups spoke about the wider impact of these stories on the families and friends associated with the subjects. They felt that there needs to be more positive stories shared to create a more balanced view of young adults.

We spoke specifically about the reports of knife-crime in the media, and the work that the Humber VPP is funded to do. Without exception the groups told us that in their opinion knife-

crime is not new, it has just changed. **"Knife crime has always been there, but it's a lot worse now"** For example, the Humber group explained that people used to carry knives for protection from other people who they knew were carrying. Now, young people are inflicting harm because they do not know how to regulate their emotions and effectively resolve conflict. Their solution to this would be to start education with a much younger cohort and educate them properly. All the groups agreed that by the time a young person is in secondary school, they are likely to have already been exposed to these behaviours, so ideally education should start in primary school.

In addition, they said that young people today care too much about the opinions of others, and whether someone has 'disrespected' them. They felt that this can very easily be escalated through social media. The Humber group talked about viral videos glorifying violent acts in the name of being a man and earning respect, which they felt were harmful to young adults.

> **"Everyone wants to be 'that guy"** Young adult at HMP Humber

Their descriptions of knife crime and gang culture also indicated a cycle of intergenerational harm. Young adults join in with the conflict and rivalry between gangs and communities without really knowing why and the context of the conflict and how it originally started. One young adult commented that young people also do not realise the consequences of this lifestyle: describing it as **"misplaced purpose."**

> **"Young people are brainwashed into participating with no understanding of the cause."**
> **"They think they know, but they won't know until they know."** Young adults at HMP Humber

3.2 Life Skills and Aspirations

One of the key themes and findings from the Humber Hope Hacks was that young adults often feel that systems let them down in sufficiently preparing them for adulthood. Specifically, they gave examples of lacking financial literacy and basic life skills that would enable them to live independently and contribute to society.

Therefore, we wanted to share this theme with these cohorts of young adults and explore their own experiences and views.

See Appendix 2 for the session sheets

3.2.1 Aspiration and Careers

We started the session with an activity which asked the young adults to discuss the career they dreamed of at the ages of 5, 11 and 16 – the key transitional phases of primary education. Though a few young adults struggled to remember their aspirations at these points of age, we noticed key themes in the answers of those who could remember.

The young adults shared that between the ages of 5 and 11 their aspirations often centred on male athletes, with many mentioning dreams of being a **"footballer"** or **"boxer".** As the young adults got to 16 and started secondary school their focus shifted towards skilled trades and practical occupations such as becoming a **"bricklayer"**, **"mechanic"** or **"railway engineer"**.

It is important to highlight, however, that three young adults stated that at the age of 16, they were already or aspired to be **"drug dealers"** or **"Pablo"**, as one young adult described. This illustrates how early some young adults are getting involved in crime.

3.2.2. "Victims of Circumstance"

To explore why their career aspirations changes over time, we asked the young adults about the barriers they had faced in pursuing their goals. The young adults provided a list of barriers including**; "immaturity"**, **"criminal involvement"** and **"lack of motivation"**.

Though the most standout comment which encapsulated many of the barriers which they described was the idea that they were **"set up to fail"** - this was a clear theme throughout a lot of the discussions and topics, with other comments such as;

> **"We're victims of circumstance"**, **"Brought up in a letdown system"**, and **"We haven't been raised up; we were dragged up"** from the young adults in HMP Hull.

There was an overarching theme across the sessions that the young adults felt that they didn't have any hope – they had been failed by a system set up to help them, with discussions focussed on the failures experienced with education and often with the criminal justice system once they were involved in this. Their discussions explained how the circumstances and environment in which they were **"dragged up"** was what they felt had pushed them to be involved in crime.

Experiences of intergenerational criminality was also highlighted first during this discussion in which one individual stated how he wanted to be like his dad when he grew up. He then shared that his dad was involved in drug dealing and they are now **"pad mates"** – in his view he had achieved his goals, although he recognised this was not a positive outcome.

It is also important to highlight that the young adults felt that they were often judged by their surname, rather than as individuals, because members of their family were already involved in the criminal justice system. One young adult shared that his brother had previously been held at HMP Hull and had developed a negative reputation. When he arrived, he felt that prison officers judged him based on his surname and his brother's reputation. He did explain that he has had some officers offer their apologies for judging him too soon, but most have not acknowledged it.

There were further explanations for not achieving their childhood aspirations such as their **"associations"**, and a **"need for instant gratification"**. It was suggested that young adults do not want to work hard for years with no guarantee of a high paying job at the end of it, when they can turn to dealing drugs and earn large amounts of money fast.

During our conversations, we also explored the young adults' aspirations for life after prison and their views on why some people return to prison after release.

The majority of young adults didn't answer this question, those that did explained that they would like to give back to the community, and **"be a normal working, law-abiding citizen".** Although this was the theme from many, there were a small handful of young adults that unfortunately felt there was **"no hope''** for them anymore, particularly as the reasons for their recall were out of their control.

When we asked why the young adults felt many people reoffend and return to prison, we were given a few different explanations: trauma, the reality check and institutionalisation. One Young adult offered a personal insight in which he explained that during his previous prison sentence his mother passed away, this wasn't something he emotionally dealt with while inside prison. On release he explained the grief "hit him" and as a response he began to partake in drugs and alcohol misuse, inevitably ending him on prison recall. Another individual suggested that when you're inside you create a mental plan of what will happen when you get released: get a job,

make money, fixing any past mistakes. The reality of this however is that it isn't a simple journey and takes time and a lot of work – this realisation can lead to the return to criminality particularly for quick, easy money which we know is a motivator for a lot of young men in prison.

Finally, throughout many of our sessions we have discussed institutionalisation – the way the routines and structures of prison can become familiar over time, making the transition back into the community difficult. For some, this can play a part in returning to offending, particularly when life in prison feels more predictable than life outside. Many young adults felt that this was a huge reason for repeat offending and returns to prison.

3.2.3. Education – Experiences and Improvements.

Education was a huge theme throughout our sessions, we discussed the young adults' experiences of education, what they felt what went well or what could be improved during their time in education and in the second session, the experiences with teachers (covered further under 3.4.2. Professional Relationships').

One of main themes through our discussions around education were that Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provisions were preferred over mainstream school. The young adults said that **"they offer better opportunities and experiences than mainstream schools"** and **"better 1-1 support"**, which a handful of young adults suggested they found more helpful.

Though, it was also highlighted that they didn't offer the same level of qualification offered by mainstream school, so this was one downside of alternative school systems. One Young adult stated that PRUs **"don't help kids for their future, they just make them behave for the adults that are with them that day"**. Suggesting, that although these systems were preferred because they offered a range of activities that encouraged young people to remain in school, they did not necessarily provide a clear career pathway.

The most prominent thing which came through on the discussion of schools was that **"School doesn't teach you life skills."**

Most young adults felt that school did not adequately prepare them for adult life because it failed to teach important lessons about the real world. The young adults offered a range of recommendations such as teaching young adults about taxes, how to get a mortgage and the suggestion was even made to **"swap Shakespeare for British Sign Language"**. Another suggestion from the young adults was to be realistic with them about the time it takes to find a job. They felt that they had underestimated that **"it's a long process to get a job"** and had expected to get a job straight after leaving school.

When we discussed education, one individual shared an experience in which he felt he had been failed by his teachers. He explained how when he was at school, he was experiencing difficulties at home, which reflected in his behaviour in school. He felt that school knew about the hardships he was facing at home and yet **"no one even asked if I was okay"**. He explained that due to the lack of professional curiosity of the teaching staff he missed out on much needed support and instead faced punitive responses for his behaviours.

Another individual suggested that he felt like mainstream schools do not support young people who need extra help – **"it was easier to exclude you, so they don't have to deal with you"**. It was suggested that often mainstream schools use exclusions and encourage alternative provision routes, especially for those who do not work well in a traditional school setting. Again, showing the need for professional curiosity and a further offer for a 1-1 support for those who require it.

3.2.4. Life in prison – opportunities, personal development and improvements

After discussing the young adults' experiences of education, we went on to discuss the personal development opportunities they have whilst in prison. The groups often shared how during their time in prison they had learnt new skills such as doing a load of laundry and even managing a budget when completing their canteen order.

The groups also shared how they can participate in courses through HMPPS Creating Future Opportunities such as financial literacy. There are also opportunities to partake in Courses such as Art, Carpentry, Gardening, Bricklaying and more. Though many individuals had their reservations about these courses, we found that some groups knew more about which courses were offered than others who explained they often rely on word of mouth.

> **"We don't find out about the courses from the officers; we come to groups like this and find out through talking to other prisoners".** Young adult at HMP Hull.

It is also important to mention that it was shared that those who do get jobs within the prison, such as cleaners and mentors are paid a wage that amounts to less than the national living wage. It was suggested by one individual that if they were paid the national living wage, they would have a better chance of supporting themselves on release from prison and may even be able to save.

It was suggested that although it is positive that these courses are available, they aren't always accessible. It was explained that the courses often have long wait lists due to facilitation capacity and are short courses which do not result in a qualification that is recognised outside of prison. One Young adult who explained how he wanted to be a personal trainer on his release from prison, had participated in an 8-week course for this but knew that on his release this wouldn't be recognised, as the course in a college is two years long. He understood that short courses are suitable for those with shorter sentences, however he had been in prison for 4 years and as such had the time to be able to complete a fully recognised course had it been offered to him.

Another individual from HMP Hull also suggested that there **"isn't any support if you found a course that you would like to do, even though the prison will tell you that there is"**. He explained that prior to coming to prison he worked on a lobster boat and his intention was to return to that career pathway when he was released, he has asked if he could have support to help him to apply for and complete a boat safety course whilst in prison to help with his rehabilitation and career pathway on release. However, he stated that **"for four years [he has] received no support"**.

Throughout the discussion of career pathways, many of the groups have mentioned the connection between prisons and the armed forces. The young adults explained that they felt the Army would be an ideal opportunity for a career pathway from prison due to the similarities in regime and discipline which they experience in the prisons. During these conversations, there were some mixed messages being shared within the groups regarding whether this was a viable career option for young adults with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Research outside of the project indicates that eligibility depends on the length of sentence (no longer than 48 months) and category of offence – individuals with convictions involving sexual, racial, or violent offences, are permanently disqualified from entering the armed forces. Given the interest in this as a career opportunity, an input from Armed Forces would be beneficial.

It was also highlighted that although there are opportunities for activities such as the gym, these have long wait times, particularly for their first session. One individual from HMP Hull explained that he applied to go to the gym but was still waiting, and that he had been informed there was a

7-week waitlist. It was also stated that the young adults often miss out on activities due to staffing constraints, for example - if a prison officer is on sick leave it can result in the gym being cancelled as there are not enough officers to safely cover the wings and run the sessions. This can cause frustration among prisoners, as factors beyond their control may prevent them accessing these opportunities, despite demonstrating positive behaviour.

During the discussion of activities within the prison, there was also talk by groups across both prisons around football, in particular the work by the Twinning Project (a partnership between HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and professional football clubs with the objective of partnering every prison in England and Wales with a local professional football club www.twinningproject.org). The young adults felt that this would be really beneficial and provide them with an outlet for their energy – even football games within the prisons. There were also discussions around other sporting skills within the prisons, such as boxing. One individual who is an amateur boxer suggested how he will often train on the wing and will get requests from other individuals asking him to train them. He suggested that although boxing can be seen as aggressive, its focus is on discipline, and it gives people a safe and monitored outlet to work off the build-up of testosterone. He suggested that the offer for boxing coaching – even if carried out by those in prison under supervision, would be a great addition to the prison.

When discussing skills being taught by other prisoners it was also suggested how barbering would be a very helpful skill and something which would be valued within the prisons too, with individuals often getting haircuts in prison from those with barbering skills. There was the suggestion, similarly to the boxing, that other prisoners could facilitate these skills sharing sessions as a paid role within the prison.

3.2.5. Improvements in the community

The young adults explained that they believed most people become involved in crime because they are bored. There was the suggestion that as young people get older, hobbies and opportunities for after school clubs diminish, especially those that are free and accessible. Therefore, young people have more freedom and get bored, making them more inclined to take up offers of criminality. One individual stated that **“Kids don’t need freedom; they need routine and discipline.”**

With this they suggested that young people need more youth clubs. They don’t necessarily need lots of activities, just somewhere they can go for support, advice and guidance.

We asked them what they think we could do to for the next generation of young people to help keep them out of this path of criminality, to which the majority of young adults said, **“there is no hope for the next generation”.** Their perception was that this generation are already involved and once they are in it, it is hard to pull them back from it. The suggestion was that intervention, and preventative activity has to come earlier, **“secondary school is too late”** the focus should be on children aged 10 – 12 years old, transitioning from childhood to adolescence, to ensure that we get there before they are involved.

It was also suggested that in order to tackle intervention and prevention there needs to be key components to make sure that it is effective: **“Lived experience trusted adults”** and **“people who are relatable.”**

From this it was clear that the young adults felt that the trusted adult role was important in preventing the involvement in criminality. It was suggested that those in roles such as probation officers should be committed to helping young adults, rather than being motivated solely by pay. It was also suggested that having staff in JobCentre Plus (or employment services) who

understand the criminal justice system and probation would be beneficial, particularly for individuals following their release from prison.

There was also the suggestion that during probation, or the point when behaviour is starting to be flagged as a concern - such as in school or Youth Justice Team interventions – that positive, strengths-based language should be used in order to motivate young adults away from crime and towards achievements rather than punishment. For example, **"look at what you are capable of and what you can achieve – you won't get there if you continue with this behaviour."** These positive interactions should also include structured goal setting, with flexibility and support if things go wrong.

Overall, a trusted adult and early intervention is seen by the young adults to be the most beneficial way to steer young adults away from criminal involvement.

3.3 Community Safety

For this topic, we wanted to gain some insight into the young adult's environments and influences in the community as well as their experiences of community issues such as knife-crime and drug misuse. We also asked them what crime and anti-social behaviours they would prioritise and tackle if they were responsible for setting priorities.

We delivered this topic and the *Healthy Relationships (3.4)* topic to 2 groups – 1 in each prison – as a result of capacity and time constraints.

See Appendix 3 for the session sheets

3.3.1 How where you live shapes your perceptions of violence and crime

We started the topic off by talking to the young adults about the areas they grew up in and asking them to share examples of the positives and negatives in those areas. It is worth noting here that in the Humber group not all the young adults were from the Humber region.

Initially the Humber group spoke very positively about the areas they grew up in, talking about the diversity and multi-cultural nature of the areas and the sense of safety they felt there.

> **"The community would often look out for each other and come together at times of need."** Young adult at HMP Humber

However, the young adults identified substantially more negative than positive aspects. They described areas that were rundown with derelict buildings, poverty and deprivation, and described how they were exposed to negative influences from a young age.

Overall, the young adults' positive experiences were more closely associated with their family and social connections than with the locations themselves. Many of those who were preparing for release from custody were already planning on moving out of those areas in order to have a fresh start but acknowledged that their families still lived in those areas, so this would be a difficult balance.

> **"wouldn't want to live there, but it is home because of the family in the area"** Young adult at HMP Humber

The majority of the Hull group had grown up in North East Lincolnshire, which they described as having nothing for young adults to do there. They explained that there used to be youth clubs

and places for young adults to go, but they have all shut down. They explained that there are also few job opportunities in the area, other than factory work.

> **"There is nothing there other than a couple of clothes shops, but what does that do for us?"** Young adult at HMP Hull

Despite painting a bleak picture for a young person in North East Lincolnshire, most remained positive about returning to the area following their release. However, as noted above, this optimism appeared to be largely linked more to the presence of family and friends.

One young adult explained that he was a care leaver and that he would be released to an approved premises (AP), potentially outside of his hometown. He described AP's as being **"bad places"** with as many restrictions as prison. He said that he would be **"worse off in an AP"** with the suggestion being that you get into more trouble being in 'APs' than going home, due to the mix of people, backgrounds and needs. Later, outside of the session we were informed by the prison officer that this young adult had been anxious about his upcoming release, and this has also spiked a change in his behaviour. It became apparent from conversations with other staff members and young adults that this is not uncommon when people are preparing for their release from custody.

One young adult talked about the presence of Gypsy and Roma Traveller communities in the areas they grew up in. Their perception of these communities was particularly negative and indicated that their experiences of violence and crime growing up had been perpetrated by these communities **"…it's full of travelers and they smash the place up…intimidate people with weapons and vehicles."** These experiences influenced the young adult's responses to the top 5 priorities task (see 3.3.2), where his responses are notable outliers. While the rest of the group, and the group in Humber focussed on violence and abuse that disproportionately affects women and girls, this young adult's top 5 priorities were: *Knife or weapon enabled crime; Burglary; Violence and threats of violence; Car/motor bike theft; Business related crime.*

3.3.2 Attitudes towards violence against women and girls

We next asked the groups to choose from a list of crime and anti-social behaviour types, the 5 that they would prioritise to tackle if they were in charge of making decisions. The table below is a list of the crimes and ASB types that the groups were asked to choose from.

Table 2: If you were in charge, which crime/ASB types would you prioritise to tackle (top 5) – Community Safety activity.

Burglary		**Exploitation of vulnerable people (county lines, trafficking, modern day slavery)**	
Dangerous Driving		**Domestic abuse (coercive control, relationship violence)**	
Drug-related crime		**Criminal damage or arson**	
Nuisance ASB (signs of substance misuse, vehicle related nuisance, noisy neighbours)		**Sexual violence or abuse**	
Knife or weapon enabled crime		**Public disorder or crime in the night-time economy**	

Environmental ASB (vandalism, graffiti or littering)		**Violence or threats of violence (including online)**	
Violence against women and girls		**Personal ASB (an incident in which you feel threatened, intimidated, or harassed)**	
Fraud (including on-line fraud)		**Hate crime (including on-line)**	
Car or motorbike theft		**Stalking or harassment (including on-line)**	
Business related crimes (robbery, shoplifting, theft)		**Other**	

We analysed their choices, looking first at the most commonly chosen crime types, and then by the highest-ranking crime types. We found that 4 of the 5 highest crime types related to crimes that are disproportionately affected by women and girls. On reflection, this does not seem surprising given the shared views across the groups on gendered roles, particularly that men should protect women and girls.

Table 3: Top 5 most commonly chosen crime types and highest-ranking crime types

Rank	Most occurrences	Rank	Highest ranking
1	Domestic abuse	1	Sexual violence
2	Knife or weapon enabled crime	2	Domestic abuse
	Violence against women and girls	3	Violence against women and girls
	Stalking and harassment	4	Knife or weapon enabled crime
3	Sexual violence	5	Stalking and harassment

The subject of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is particularly notable with this cohort. Between the 2 prisons, more than 50% of the prisoner population have a domestic abuse flag on their record – this could be for a current sentence, a historic offence, or identified through risk assessments. Through conversations during the sessions, we became aware that there were a few members of the groups who were serving sentences for offences relating to domestic abuse.

In section 3.1.1 we mentioned the wariness and skepticism the young adults displayed when asked to identify the characteristics they associated with being a woman. Although their views of men as providers and protectors may reflect traditional or potentially misogynistic attitudes, they collectively prioritised tackling crimes that are predominantly affected by women and girls.

Whenever the conversations touched on violence or abuse towards women and girls, the groups were very vocal in their disdain for these types of offenders, particularly those who have committed sexual offences. **"Sexual charges should be number one priority, and they need higher sentences"** The groups told us that they feel that sentencing does not reflect the devastating impact that sexual offences have on the victim, explaining that in some cases drug offences carry longer sentences than sexual offences.

Members of the Humber group were overheard discussing individuals in prison who had committed domestic abuse offences. They described some people as being **"loud and proud about it, but a lot of them deny it." "Someone battering a woman happens so often its normalized in prison"**. We explored this a bit further, with the young adults telling us that prisoners care less about domestic abuse offences but are particularly opposed to sexual offences such as rape.

It was interesting to hear this group's views on how police and other services are tackling domestic abuse. For example, they argued that they had not ranked domestic abuse higher because the police are already acting on this efficiently. Furthermore, some suggested that "**Women aren't scared to ring the police as they know that the police are on it, a man wouldn't be taken seriously if he rang them, he would just be embarrassed.**" None of the young adults felt that if a man were reporting domestic abuse against themselves by a female partner that the police would respond to them as they would a female victim. They shared an example of a man who had been suffering domestic abuse by his partner, one day he **"snapped and struck her."** He handed himself into the police and disclosed the abuse he had been subjected to. Instead of receiving any support, he received a custodial sentence.

A couple of young adults commented that if a woman made a report to the police about them, they would not continue with the relationship, or return to the relationship, **"…but some people like that toxic behaviour in relationships."** This raises the question as to whether these young adults understand coercive control in relationships, and whether they would consider this point to be equally applicable to women who remain in or return to relationships in which they experience abuse.

An interesting point was made in the Hull group by one young adult who told us that that women need to **"make their mind up"** about how they expect men to be, suggesting that they might feel that there are mixed or confusing messages about what is expected of them. **"Don't expect us to be masculine and the provider, but then criticise when we are masculine in other ways."**

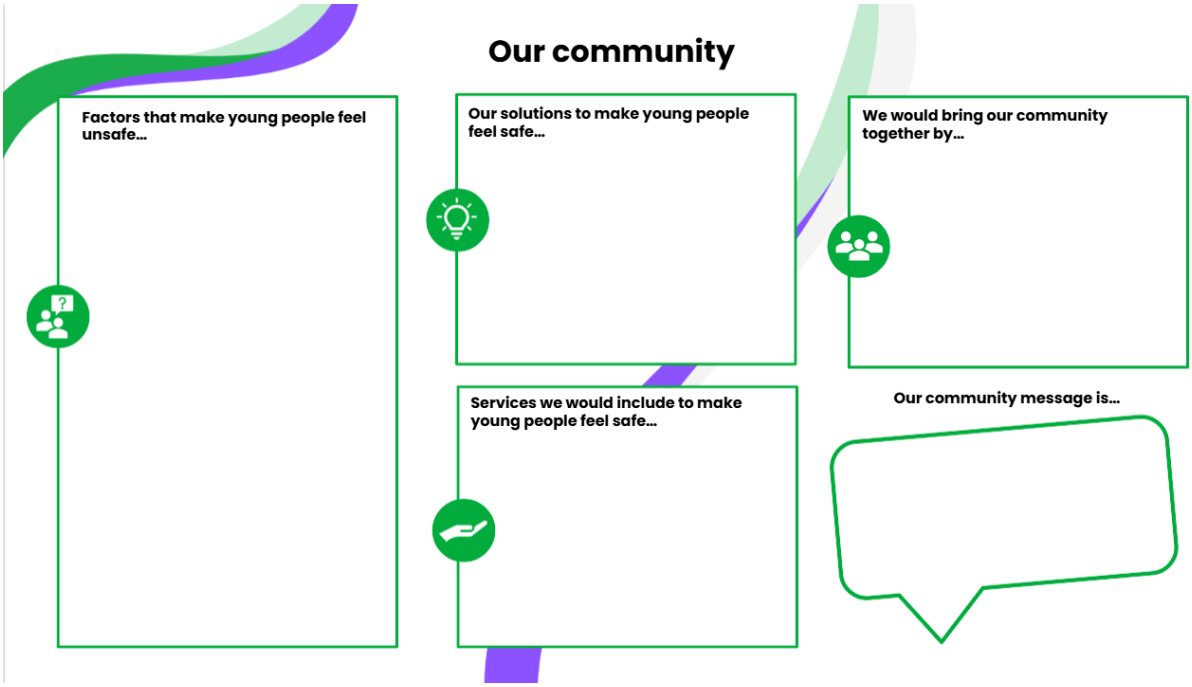
We asked the groups whether their number 1 priority would change if we had added murder to the list. Interestingly, the majority said it would not have changed their priorities. One of the young adults from the Humber group explained that **"although murder carries the highest sentence, the impact on the victim is done and over with, whereas with offences like rape, the impact on the victim stays with them for the rest of their lives."**

There was also the argument from the Hull group that **"circumstances should be taken into account"** in the sense that **"people put their own narratives on things."** For example, **"police hear 'murder' and label you as a murderer without a second thought."**

3.3.3 Creating a community plan

We asked the young adults to split themselves up into small groups for the next activity, which was to create a community plan, using the template in figure 5. This template was designed to get them to consider what factors make young adults feel unsafe and how they might resolve those factors, and ideas on how they would bring their community together.

Figure 5: Our community template



All of the groups listed knife crime and gun crime as factors that make young adults feel unsafe. The groups in Hull explained that there is not a lot of firearm-related offending in Humberside, and that is why young adults would feel afraid or unsafe, because it is something that is not normalised. However, including knife crime as well seems to contradict this argument, based on their earlier conversations. Other examples that the groups gave were:

Debt	Burglaries	Circumstances
Gangs	Domestic violence	Less opportunities
Police	Sexual abuse	Hate Crime
Racism	Drink and drug driving	
Unstable households	Speeding	

The groups told us that knife crime is being committed by increasingly younger age groups, often without context as to why they are committing these acts. The Hull group likened it to a **"pack mentality"**, however not in the sense that this is gang-related, but more to do with place-based disputes. Other suggestions as to why young adults become in knife crime were:

- **Money**
- **Reputation**
- **Their family may have done it before them, and they are trying to live up to a family reputation.**
- **Social media influence**
- **Boredom**

We discussed carrying weapons as a protective factor and whether this instead leaves them more vulnerable to being assaulted. While the group agreed that this is likely to be the case, one young adult argued that **"I know what I have done, and that could come back on me, so I'd rather get them before they get me,"** explaining that he would continue to carry a knife to protect himself in the community. This suggests that once a young person becomes involved in knife carrying, withdrawing from these behaviours may be challenging. We had previously heard

a similar account from some of the young adults in the Humber group **"Even when you leave it behind, you can't leave and expect that you won't get harmed."**

The groups came up with similar solutions to make young adults feel safe, such as:

- **Youth clubs and after school clubs,**
- **sports and leisure activities,**
- **better opportunities for work and qualifications,**
- **community centre for support,**
- **more street lights,**
- **having someone to talk to.**

There was only one group who struggled to come up with a solution, stating **"No solution as that's what they are used to, so that's all they know."** Which might suggest that solutions are not straightforward and are dependent on multiple factors.

In terms of services that they would want to see included in their community to make young adults feel safer, they considered;

- **Support into work**
- **Financial support**
- **Housing support**
- **Mental Health support – children's mental health support**
- **Community centres for group support and opportunities for teaching/learning**
- **Youth clubs**
- **Amnesty boxes**

We touched on mental health and the importance of having someone to talk to, one of the young adults in the Hull group commented that up until the age of 10 or 11, most children talk to their parents, and they are their main source of support and advice, but after they reach secondary school, they stop talking to their parents. They explained that sometimes this is because they are being peer pressured or exploited and gave the example of children who are told **"don't tell anyone anything or you're a grass, so then you don't talk about your issues as you're living by this code."** So, it's important for young adults to have a confidential service that they can turn to and trust.

This group also told us of their experiences of mental health services in the community, explaining that there are more services and provisions for women and not enough for men. It was suggested that men are more likely to talk to a female because **"females are more compassionate."** However, one young adult said that nobody cares and that **"help is not offered, so you just have to get on with it."**

The suggestion of financial support was offered by the Humber groups, who identified debt and deprivation as a factor that makes young adults feel unsafe. This led to an interesting discussion about shoplifting and theft, in which one young adult argued that they would not tackle these crimes if they were in charge because these are just desperate people **"they're trying to fill the fridge but are too proud to ask for help."** The group also suggested that they are also helping others who are struggling financially to be able to buy necessities at a more affordable price.

The groups were asked what they would do to bring their community together, with the responses being a mixture of large-scale community events such as carnivals and festivals, more permanent solutions such as community centres, and financially supportive schemes such as swap shops and advantage cards.

Finally, we asked the group to produce a positive community message:

"Stay in school. Believe in yourself"

"Be there for each other."

"You are not alone."

"Put down the guns, let's have fun."

"Treat people as you want to be treated."

3.3.4 Prison life and the Criminal Justice System

Unsurprisingly, many of our conversations with these young adults alternated between life in prison and life in the community. For some, their experiences as a young adult in the community were limited, having been in the criminal justice system throughout their teenage years.

Despite the majority of the young adults telling us that they did not have any concerns or reservations about being released from custody, we heard from the groups and the prison officers and staff that the transition from prison to the community can create a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty. Prison officers shared accounts of seeing the same faces coming back into prison because they have become institutionalised, and then as their release date approaches, some prisoners deliberately engage in disruptive behaviour to extend their sentence, ensuring continued access to basic necessities such as shelter, warmth and food. One of the Hull groups told us that being released from custody can become **"too much, going from a strict level of order and routine to being 'free' with none of that is overwhelming."**

We invited the young adults to complete a confidential Prisoner Safety Survey (see appendix 6). In the Humber group, we introduced this an optional task to be completed individually without discussion or conferring, we also provided envelopes so that their responses would not be accessed by anyone else. Despite these reassurances, two members of the group were particularly outspoken in expressing the view that they considered completing the survey as **"grassing"**, and others were responding to the survey verbally, which appeared to influence the rest of the responses.

In the Hull group, a printing error resulted in only 2 survey questions being distributed. Consequently, only limited data were collected from this cohort. Notably, one of the young adults indicated that they often felt unsafe on a daily basis; however, no further information could be obtained to explore this finding. In future, an alternative method of administering the survey would be considered to maximise data collection while maintaining participant confidentiality.

Many of the young adults had relatives who had previously been in or were currently in prison. One young adult told us that their dad had described prison life today as a holiday camp, telling him that prison is easier now in comparison to how it used to be. However, one young adult counteracted this suggestion, saying that **"it's a killer when you have a life outside"** referring to him having a young child and a partner on the outside. He explained that it was hard because he refused to let his family bring his child to visits because **"prison isn't a place for children"**.

Others we spoke to throughout the project told us that they do not tell their children that they are in prison, instead telling them that they are working away. It was clear from these discussions that these young adults were focussed on becoming positive role models for their children when they are released.

The youth crime prevention scheme Prison! Me! No way! [3](PMNW) was mentioned in each of the groups as something that they had encountered in school. Without exception, all of the young adults who had experienced this in school told us that it had had no positive impact on them. One of the Hull groups told us schemes like this **"glorifies prisons"**. They elaborated that for some who are living with parental or relative incarceration, it actually helps them to relate to the situation their relative is in, and that **"kids will always look for the positives in things."**

Others reiterated their point about education and awareness that needs to take place at a much earlier age, arguing that in most cases, PMNW is introduced in year 9 of secondary school, by which time many of the young adults have either already been exposed to crime, or are already involved in it. They felt that these schemes have no impact on those already determined on that pathway. Furthermore, their alternative would be a strengths-based model of support, focusing on setting goals and clearly identifying pathways to achieving them, whilst also highlighting the consequences of not following those pathways.

'Let's Be Blunt'

During a discussion outside the structured topics, we asked the group in Humber for their views on the Let's Be Blunt campaign. This is a community interest company (CIC) dedicated to reducing knife harm through practical, everyday actions – such as choosing safer kitchen knife designs. Their mission is to drive social change by encouraging simple preventative steps in our homes and shared spaces.

Initially, the group were unconvinced that it would have any impact, commenting that the sale of sharp-end blades would just increase on the black market, and that **"people always find a way round."** There was also the suggestion that we might see an increase in different weapons being used instead. Another consideration was that there might be difficulty in influencing individuals and organisations that have not been affected or exposed to knife crime and the impacts.

However, after reflecting on how the campaign came about, the group concluded that the idea is a positive one, with one young adult commenting that **"If it's taking away that option and could help to save even one person, then it's a positive thing. It won't eliminate it, but it could reduce it."**

3.4 Healthy Relationships

Similar to the *Self and Identity* topic we wanted to use this topic to look at what they consider to be '**red flags'** (negative / warning signs) and **'green flags'** (positive signs) in a relationship, and their perceptions of what is healthy and unhealthy. We also explored their experiences with various professional relationships – such as probation officers, and teachers.

[3] Prison! Me! No Way – https://www.pmnw.co.uk

See Appendix 4 for session sheets

3.4.1 Red Flag Relationships

The first activity of our relationship's topic was to list as many 'green and red flags' for relationships as possible.

Many of the young adults shared how trust, communication, space, honesty and loyalty were key components for a 'green flag' relationship. While 'red flags' in relationships were more insightful of what some of the young adults may have previously experienced. **"Arguments"** was the most common 'red flag' with other variations such as **"arguments 24/7"** or **"a lot of arguments"**. The mention of **"violence"** and **"domestic violence"** was also included too. Other main themes of 'red flags' included **"disrespect"**, **"disloyal"** and **"lying"** with one individual writing **"pathological lies."** The same individual had also written **"having trust so not on my case 24/7"** suggesting that his experiences within a relationship were not positive, it is worth noting that this individual was in prison for domestic abuse related offences.

When we discussed these 'red flags', it was highlighted again that your experiences of your parents' relationships can sometimes have an impact on your own relationships.

> **"If you go your whole life not seeing stable relationships, it's hard as you don't know what one looks like."** Young adult at HMP Hull

One of the young adults from the group in Hull also discussed the topic of unstable home environments. Other groups had raised this; however, this individual had stated how because of his experiences, **"if [he] had kids, [he'd] want them to grow up with parents that are together"**. This idea of the family unit being the blueprint for relationships was mentioned again during the quiz session in which one group from HMP Humber explained that the statistics relating to offenders who had/have a parent in prison didn't surprise him as **"your parents are your first teachers"**.

Interestingly, on the discussion of 'red flags' and whether these apply to all relationships, it was suggested that 'red flags' can show up in relationships with parents. However, they are ignored and brushed off because **"they're your parents"**. In comparison it was suggested that friendships are easier to raise these red flags with and if necessary, walk away from.

In terms of friendships, it was highlighted that often friendships and associates were the reason they were in prison – being with negative peer influences. They felt that friendships were the most disposable personal relationship as many spoke about their experiences in which friends had lost contact when they got into trouble.

> **"When you have nothing to offer, you find out who your real friends are."** Young adult at HMP Hull

The majority of young adults explained how the people they were friends with prior to prison are no longer in contact with them.

3.4.2 Professional Relationships

Professional relationships was a prominent theme throughout this work. One activity in session two was to use three words to describe the experiences of a list of different professionals.

It was explained to the young adults that they should only provide responses for the professionals they had an experience with. Unsurprisingly, almost all of the young adults had provided responses for Police, teachers and health care professionals.

From the chart below, you can see that the police received an overwhelming number of negative responses, shortly followed by the probation service. Police and probation were described as **"the worst of the worst."** Teachers, Youth Outreach teams and Health workers received the most positive responses from the young adults.

Figure 6: Standardised descriptions (positive, negative, neutral, no experience) of professional relationships given by young adults.

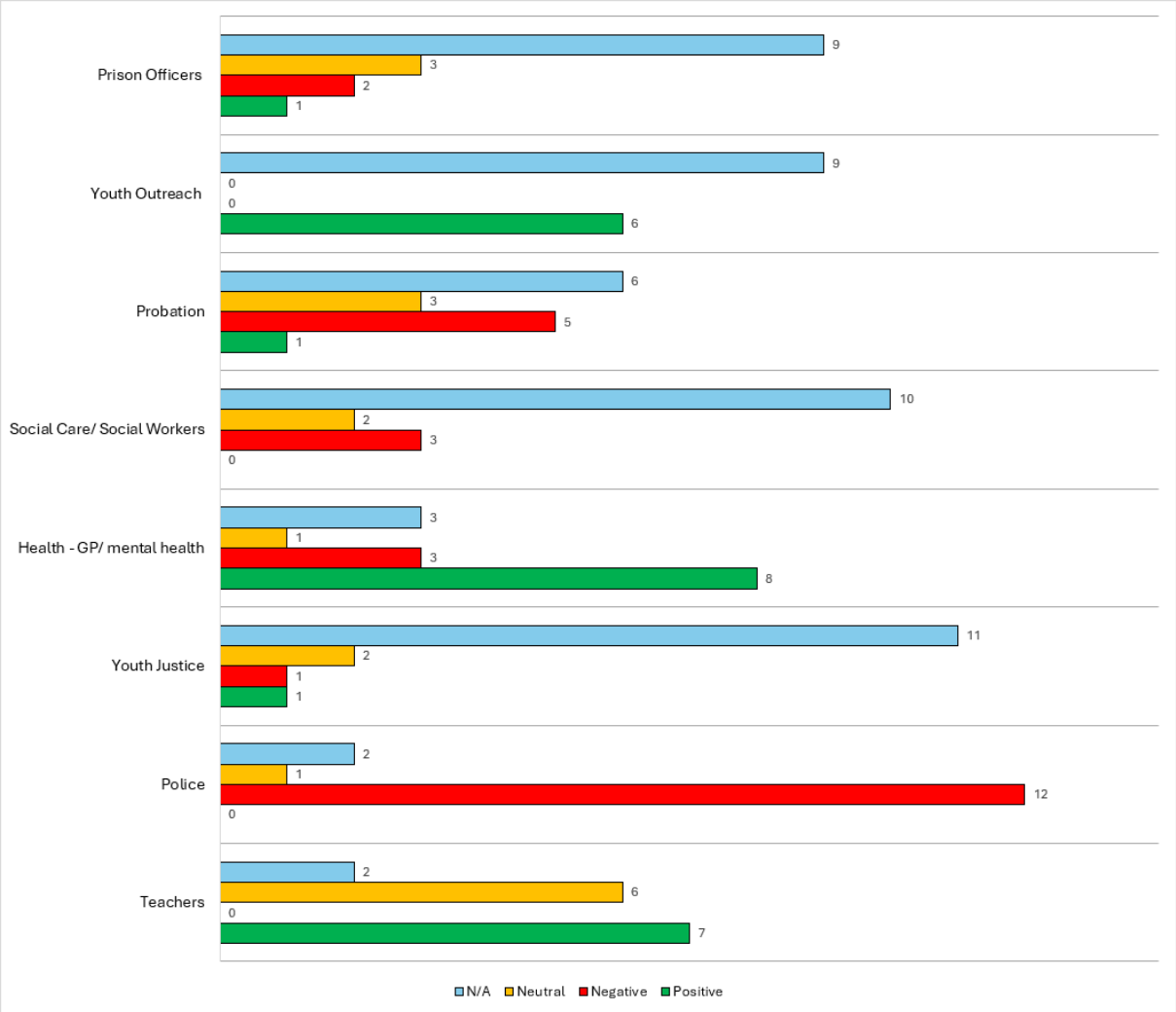


Figure 1: Visual created from the descriptions of the professionals given by the young adults (descriptions standardised as positive, neutral, negative and no experience/no answer)

Police

Unsurprisingly, the young adults had negative experiences of the police; however, it was easy to understand that this could be a bias due to the fact that they are all in prison as a result of arrests.

Descriptions of the police included:

- **"Disrespectful"**
- **"Horrible"**
- **"Unfair"**
- **"Judgemental"**

As mentioned previously, it is expected that these young adults would have a negative attitude towards Police due to their circumstances, and although they had suggested that there was **"no building bridges with them"** in order to improve their relationships, we can still return this information to the police as feedback and suggest improvements for the way situations are handled.

Probation

Probation teams received a lot of feedback and criticisms during the sessions, often the young adults explained how the system wasn't there to support their rehabilitation but to **"trip us up."**

The most common descriptions for the probation service included:

- **"Useless"**
- **"Lack of trust"**
- **"Harsh"**

When we continued to discuss the probation, it was clear that the young adults felt that the quality of service was based on what could be described as a 'postcode lottery.' They also suggested that the quality of experiences was completely based on whether or not you got a 'good' probation officer.

> **"My first one was caring, helpful and genuine. My new one is fake and unhelpful."** Young adult at HMP Humber

It was suggested often that the young adults do not feel that their probation workers care about them or their journey. This was broken down by increasing caseloads – particularly in Grimsby – and time capacity and constraints, which prevent them from building positive, trusted relationships and fully focusing on helping the young adults improve their chances outside of prison. The young adults told us that they feel that some probation officers **"lack people skills"** which is why there are often difficulties in building trusted relationships.

Although, some individuals did reflect that when they had a **"good probation worker"** they had a really positive experience and truly noticed that they cared. This indicates how important building trusted relationships with people who care is for these young adults on their journey through rehabilitation.

Teachers

Teachers received the second highest positive rating with 7 individuals sharing completely positive descriptions. They were described as **"motivational"**, **"good role models"** and **"supportive"**.

> **"They are professional, others such as prison officers are not, they judge you first."** Young adult at HMP Hull

Those which did offer slightly less positive descriptions often explained how some teachers are **"ignorant"** and **"unsupportive"** though it was clear to see the young adults in general felt that teachers were people they **"can express too"**.

Healthcare

There were also a mix of descriptions for healthcare workers such as GPs. 7 young adults positively described them, with 2 giving mixed opinions on them. The main theme which showed

in the negative comments was that they felt healthcare workers were "**ignorant**" one young adult had written: **"ignored, ignored, ignored"**.

However, the majority of individuals who described health workers positively described them as **"helpful"** – showing a disparity in peoples experiences. Unfortunately, due to the anonymity around the way we collected the forms there's no way to understand if there are any shared characteristics of those individuals who didn't have positive experiences.

Prison Officers

Prison officers were not initially included in the activity's list of professional relationships, however throughout the sessions the conversations often naturally gravitated towards the young adults' experiences of prison life and prison officers and staff. These conversations often described inconsistencies in officers' approaches. It was the young adults' perception that often more experienced officers would stick to routine, whereas the newer officers were more flexible.

It was suggested that some delays with unlocks and morning social times were due to newer officers being unable to complete a correct count. Young adults also told us that they struggle with consistencies in responses from prison officers and they feel that there should be clearer and more consistent messages. For these reasons, many of the young adults told us they tend to prefer the more experienced officers, as they knew what to expect from them and what was expected of them.

Other feedback included officers not being professional and letting their personal lives impact on their work lives, which can at times result in negativity.

3.4.3 People who care and believe in you

We asked the young adults to describe their relationships with their family and friends. This activity was completed individually and those who felt comfortable with sharing were given the opportunity to do so, but this was optional. We had already been made aware that some of the young adults had experience of care or had complex relationships with their families and may not wish to discuss these relationships with us.

We received 10 responses to this activity, all of which described supportive, caring family networks. One young adult reflected that their relationship with their family had improved **"now that I want to change and turn my life around."** In earlier sessions we had talked about visits from family and noted mixed feelings – happy and relieved to see them, mixed with sadness when they had to leave. Some young adults told us they choose not to accept visits for their own wellbeing, but for many, those visits and contacts from their loved ones are **"what we live for."**

We noted a mix of positive and negative responses in terms of the 'friends' element of the activity. Some describe really close friendships who they **"treat like family"** and can trust with anything, where others described friendship circles getting smaller, and **"associates around me for the wrong reasons."**

Whether they were discussing professional or personal relationships, the message was clear that they need people around them who care about them as a person, can see them for more than their offending, have belief that they can rebuild and make a fresh start, and are willing to support them to do so.

3.4.4 "Respect"

Throughout these sessions we noticed that the word 'respect' was frequently being used, particularly during conversations that touched on their experiences of various professionals. We

decided to explore with them what respect means to them. Initially some found it difficult to articulate a definition, arguing that **"what you deem respectful might be different from person to person."** This makes it difficult to complain that someone is showing disrespect, if everybody's threshold is different. However, others in the groups described respect as **"treating others as you want to be treated"**. One young adult gave an example of some prison officers **"speaking to us as a human being and not speaking down to us"**, he continued that this is not always the case and that **"Some only see us as criminals."** On reflection this example demonstrates that it is not just about how the other person sees and communicates with them, it is also how that communication makes them feel about themselves.

Another response was that respect is shown in **"the way a person treats you when you're not around."** This echoes back to their *green and red flags* activity in which loyalty and trust were high on their lists. Loyalty and trust are particularly important to them whilst they are in prison and have no control over what happens on the outside.

3.5 Reflection and Feedback

3.5.1 Reflections

At the end of the first sessions and the second Hull sessions we asked the young adults to complete a reflection and feedback sheet (see appendix 5), which asked for feedback on the delivery of the session as well as a personal reflection:

- How other people see me
- How I see myself/who I really am
- Who I want to be in the future

14 young adults responded to this activity. 6 told us that other people see them negatively or differently to how they are or how they want to be seen. For example, one young adult from the Humber group responded that others see him as **"A gang member, violent person, drug dealer"** and yet he sees himself as **"Family man, friendly, kind, fair."** Others describe only being seen for what they have done and being looked down on.

Almost all of the responses for how they see themselves were positives, and showed examples such as **hard working, respectful, loyal, thoughtful.** One young adult reflected that they are easily antagonised and are known for having a short fuse, however, they also reflected that in the future they want to be a better person.

Many of their future goals involved some sense of self-improvement and growth, which was really positive to see, and showed that they had taken this activity seriously.

> **"Someone better than before, who is understanding and humble."**
>
> **"Better in myself and show my daughter I am a role model for her"**
>
> **"A role model to future kids"**
>
> **"Best version of myself"**

The post-session responses revealed that much of the bravado and posturing in front of peers appeared to mask more nuanced, reflective, and, at times, vulnerable perspectives that were absent during the sessions.

3.5.2 HMP Humber group

As previously mentioned, we worked mainly with the same group of young adults across all sessions in HMP Humber. Although, some of the young adults had been released during the period of time we were running the project, more than half of the group accessed all the sessions.

This was extremely beneficial for us as it allowed us to build up a bit of a trusted relationship between us and them. For example, before the second afternoon session, one young adult voluntarily disclosed that they were autistic and explained that they are typically reserved when meeting new people, becoming more communicative as they grow more comfortable. Their willingness to share this personal information reflected the trust that had developed between the young adults and us as the facilitators. Informal conversations about food, what they had for their dinner, and what they like to cook also helped establish rapport with the group.

The young adults who had attended previous sessions displayed a greater understanding of the approach and session expectations. This familiarity allowed them to informally mentor newer group members, encouraging participation and facilitating discussion.

3.5.3 HMP Hull groups

In HMP Hull the sessions were delivered to a different cohort of young adults each time. This had its advantages - we were able to reach and engage with more young adults, and its disadvantages – we had to start from scratch each time, knowing that they had little to no trust in our intentions.

The nature of HMP Hull as a local/remand prison meant that we were unable to guarantee the same cohort of individuals throughout the whole project, especially in light of early release schemes, and cohorts awaiting trial or moves to other prisons.

However, this did allow us to engage with the younger cohort – 18–21-year-olds. We noticed very early on, the difference in maturity, attitude and outlook, between this cohort and the older 21–24-year-olds in Humber – although this may also be influenced by the uncertain nature of being on remand.

Overall, these groups found it easier to reflect on their own lives and suggest what could have been better for them, they were also more optimistic in conversations about solutions and how we could improve things for future generations.

3.6 Additional conversations and themes

3.7.1 Hope Hack Quiz

We ended session 2 with a quiz, based on data collated in the 2025 Police and Crime Plan Survey, and the 2025/26 Humber VPP Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). This worked really well with the young adults, encouraging some healthy competition while providing them with some data and insight into the work we are involved in.

The quiz questions can be found in appendix 7.

3.7.2 Experiences of probation services

Experiences of probation services came up frequently during the sessions, which highlighted a number of issues. These were shared with Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) leads during the project and as a result, it was agreed that PDU leads, Prisoner Offender Managers and

Community Offender Managers would be invited to the feedback session with the young adults, to listen to their feedback.

There was a mix of positive and negative experiences shared about probation services. At times it appeared that whether a young adult had a positive or negative experience depended on the area they were released to and the probation officer. This was more evident from the young adults who had worked with multiple probation officers.

Furthermore, the young adults felt that probation appointments are treated more like a 'tick box' exercise, rather than a supportive process. After this was relayed to probation leads, they explained that not all appointments need to be in depth and that some are intended to be brief check-ins. This can often indicate that the probation officer has no concerns with the behaviour and progress of the individual.

Those who had negative experiences of probation described feeling judged by their probation officer, for some this was based on the reputations of their relatives or associates who were known to the criminal justice system. For these young adults, they felt they had to work harder to prove themselves to be different. Others told us that probation officers **"expect you to look like a tramp"** and that if they attend an appointment in nice clothes or anything new, they jump to the conclusion that these were acquired through criminal activity. This may appear to be a minor complaint, however, the young adults explained that they are trying to be the best versions of themselves and regain some self-respect; consequently, how they present themselves is an important part of this.

Those who had positive experiences told us that it helped having an experienced probation officer who was also familiar with the prison system, along with consistency and regular communication.

The groups talked about how constrictive license conditions can be and that these are sometimes difficult to navigate and place unattainable expectations on them when they are trying to adjust to living back in the community and rebuild their lives. They also linked these license conditions to, what they consider to be, unfair recalls. One of the Hull groups told us that being released from custody can become **"too much, going from a strict level of order and routine to being 'free' with none of that is overwhelming."** They also explained that there is little to no flexibility or compassion for them if things were to go wrong.

For these reasons, many of these young adults feel they are being set up for failure and that **"once you're in the system, they've got you"** and that it is extremely difficult to break that cycle of the revolving door.

At the heart of these issues is the need to feel that someone cares about them and that they have the support and belief that they can be successfully rehabilitated in the community and diverted from further offending. However, their general opinion of probation officers was that they do not care or have empathy for their circumstances, and that **"we're all just stats to them."**

3.7.3 Role models and messages to young adults

A common theme throughout the groups was the absence of positive male role models in these young adult's lives. We heard many examples where the young adults either did not know their father growing up, or their father or other male relatives were known to the criminal justice system.

The young adults explained that there were certain expectations and assumptions placed on them to follow and live up to the reputations of their male relatives. One young adult explained

that growing up, his life goal was **"to be like my father,"** who was in and out of prison. This idolising his father had led him to criminality as well. Others shared experiences of being treated differently because of who their family members are.

Some of the young adults told us that their role models had previously been individuals involved in local drug dealing and gang related activity, as they were the ones who **"looked out for me,"** when no one was doing that at home, and provided them with some consistency and security in their lives. These associations ultimately resulted in their own involvement in criminal activity. One young adult described these associations as grooming and exploitation, explaining that they came into his life when he was at his lowest, and **"I didn't realise what I was getting myself into."** It is interesting to note that those with similar experiences in Humber denied being exploited or coerced, insisting that they are responsible for their own decisions and actions.

One of the young adults in Humber commented that **"Parents are a child's first teachers"** and a lot of behaviours and attitudes to society are guided by parents and early childhood experiences. Several conversations stood out as examples of this and how important positive role models are in shaping a young adult's view of the world. In one case a young adult spoke about how at 13 he had sexual intercourse with a woman in her 30's. He told us that when his father found out, **"he battered me."** At the end of this account, he and another young adult fist bumped each other and laughed. The fact that the young adult had been a victim did not seem to have been considered by anyone at the time, nor as he was re-telling this account, which demonstrates what boys and young men are taught regarding what is acceptable and normalized, from an early age. Given their views on sexual offences against girls, we assumed their response to this story would have received a different reaction had the young person been female, and the 30-year-old a male.

In another case, a young adult who described himself as feeling and being institutionalised, told us that his mum had rewarded him rather than disciplined him the first few times he went to prison. When his mum collected him when he was released, she would refuse to let him be seen with her in his prison tracksuit and would take him to buy brand new clothes and trainers. He was around 13 years old at the time of his first custodial sentence. He admitted that this treatment encouraged him to continue to offend and not fear prison. During this session he admitted that what would have had a better outcome for him would have been if she had **"given me a clip round the ear instead."**

With the Humber group we explored who their role models were growing up. Their answers included parents, siblings and people who ran youth clubs and activities. Many of the young adults voiced that they want to be positive role models to young adults, and their own children, in the future and to give back to the community. We then asked them what they think makes a good role model:

- **Being a positive person**
- **Being consistent – with time, place, messages, attitude**
- **Someone who leads by example.**
- **Relatable – peer support. "It's easier to talk to one of us than it is to talk to an officer."**
- **Someone who dedicates their time to making you feel better.**
- **Someone who gives advice.**
- **Approachable and makes you feel comfortable to be around.**
- **A calm presence**
- **Someone who uses their own life experiences to help and advice.**

Finally, we asked the group what advice they would give to their younger self or other young adults:

"Don't believe everything you see on social media."

"Never give up."

"Look after those who look after you."

"Don't put so much energy into the wrong things."

"Find something you're good at and stick to it."

"Keep your kids as close as possible."

"Stay open-minded."

3.7 Session 3 - Feedback and sense checking

The third and final sessions were an opportunity to share the summary of our findings with the young adults and check that they accurately reflect their views and experiences. The summaries were presented in a format that demonstrated **What the groups told us; What this tells us;** and **What are the solutions** (see Figure 7 for an example summary). We deliberately left the solutions as loose and vague ideas in the hope that they would be able to add to them and identify some more solutions.

While there were some statements that they felt depended on individual experiences and backgrounds, overall, the young adults confirmed that the findings were accurately reflective of the conversations in the sessions, and of their experiences.

The young adults were engaged in the session and provided suggestions for solutions for each of the themed findings. These solutions have been included in section 2.6 *Solutions and recommendations* and in appendix 8.

The Inclusion and Diversity Lead from HMP Humber reflected at the end of the session that the young adults were **"buzzing"** and that they had **"left feeling that they have been part of something really positive that could make a difference."** Equally, in HMP Hull, the sessions had received positive feedback from all those who took part.

Figure 7: Summary findings example presentation

Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money

What the groups told us

"Men always want more"

- Money is a measure of success, status and reputation
- Quick and easy money which meets the need for ***"instant gratification"***
- Living for the here and now / you only live once attitudes
- Compensating for lost time.
- Intergenerational criminality and criminal associations
- Lack of opportunities to earn through legitimate means
- ***"It's a long process to get a job"***
- Gaps in financial literacy
- ***"We're victims of circumstance"***
- ***"Brought up in a let-down system"***

Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money

What this tells us

Money was clearly a predominant factor for offending. This is understandable given their perception of their role as a provider. Some saw this 'provider' role only in terms of money.

For some, money was felt to be the foundation for their relationships with partners or children. They questioned whether their partner would stick around if the money stopped. Others used money to overcompensate for missing out on time with their children

To many of the young adults, the benefits of earning money through illegitimate means far outweigh those of earning money legitimately. These benefits are not limited to the amount of money they can earn. Ease and speed at which they can access money is equally beneficial.

Some young adults feel that they have limited opportunities available to them in the employment market because they lack the qualifications or educational attainment that most employers are looking for.

Many of the young adults described wanting to live up to and maintain a certain level of lifestyle. This suggests that just having access to money is not enough, being able to demonstrate wealth through materialism is equally important to maintaining their reputation.

We asked the groups to complete a 'Basic Skills' checklist and found that there were gaps in financial literacy, consistently across the groups. These skills included: opening a bank account, paying bills, checking and understanding a payslip, managing a budget, arranging insurances etc.

Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money

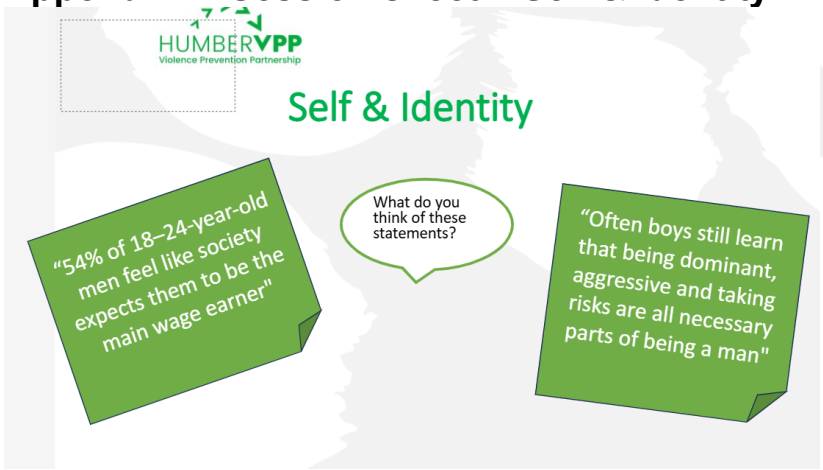
What are the Solutions?

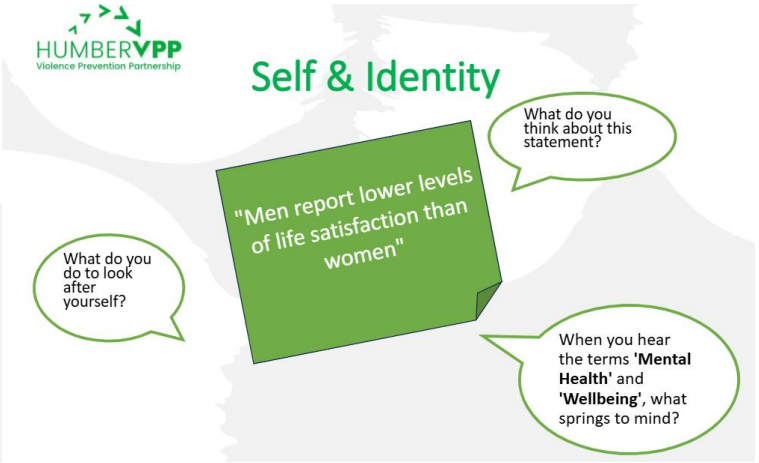
Employment opportunities that offer more than just a wage. Opportunities that can support with structured goal setting, can be flexible when things go wrong, and believe that these young adults have a value in the community.

Promotion of alternative education pathways that don't rely on grades and attainment and instead focus on practical skills building and employability coaching.

Access to basic financial education. Does this already exist within prison/probation? What support is available to young adults who have financial literacy gaps once they are released from custody?

Appendix 1: Session sheet – Self & Identity









Appendix 2: Session sheet – Life Skills & Aspirations

Life Skills & Aspirations

What did you want to be when you grew up...

...aged 5?

...aged 11?

...aged 16?

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Between each of those ages, what do you think changed?

Do you think anything influenced these changes? If so, what?

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Life Skills & Aspirations

"Schools could do more to support children and young people to achieve their aspirations"

"Schools don't prepare us for adulthood and the real world"

What do you think about these statements?

"The majority of young people do not feel confident with money"

"People making the rules don't have realistic expectations for young people"

"Lessons should have more focus on employment and general skills"

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Life Skills & Aspirations

I think employers are looking for these 5 things when hiring someone...

5 personality qualities I am proud of are...

These are the qualities I aspire to have, or that are important to me...

Life Skills & Aspirations

Skills/Tasks	I know how to do this	I don't know how to do this
Change a lightbulb		
Locate and check meter readings		
Change a fuse		
Locate and shut off/turn on a stopcock		
Do a load of washing		
Iron clothes		
General garden maintenance		
Prepare and cook a simple meal: Use a hob Use an oven		
Defrost a freezer		
Decorate a room – paint/wallpaper		
Assemble flat-pack furniture		
Put up a shelf		
Basic first aid		
Self defense		

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Skills/Tasks	I know how to do this	I don't know how to do this
Check bus/train timetable – catch a bus/train		
Open a bank account		
Set up a direct debit		
Pay a bill		
Check and understand a Payslip National Insurance contributions Tax Pension		
Manage a budget		
Do a weekly shop		
Set up connection to a broadband provider		
Set up connection to/pay for gas, electric and water		
Arrange insurances (home, car, life etc)		
Car maintenance: Check and top up oil level Check and top up tyre pressure Check and top up water level		
Jump start a car		

Appendix 3: Session sheet – Safe Communities

Safe Communities

Describe one positive about the area that you grew up in

Describe one negative about the area that you grew up in

Is this the area that you will be released to?

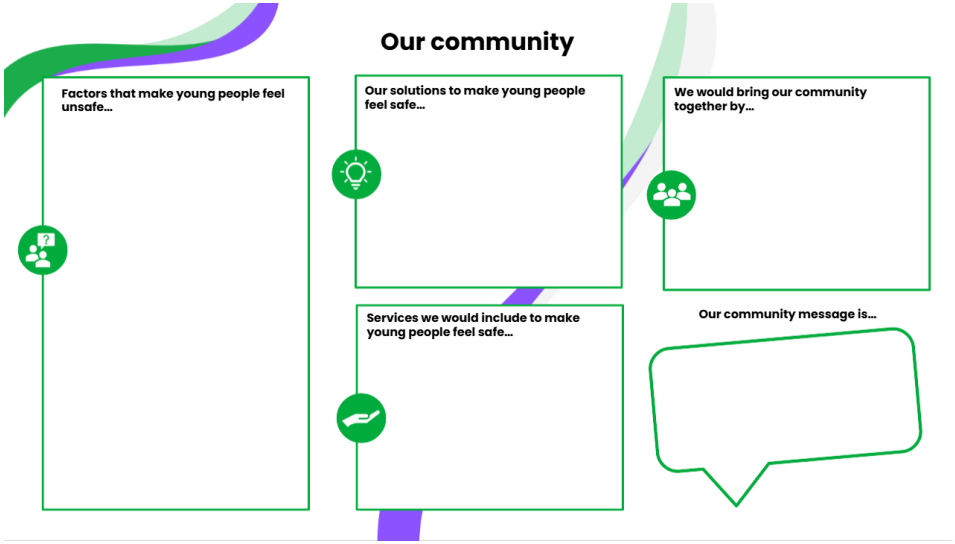
Do you have any concerns or reservations about the area you will be released to?

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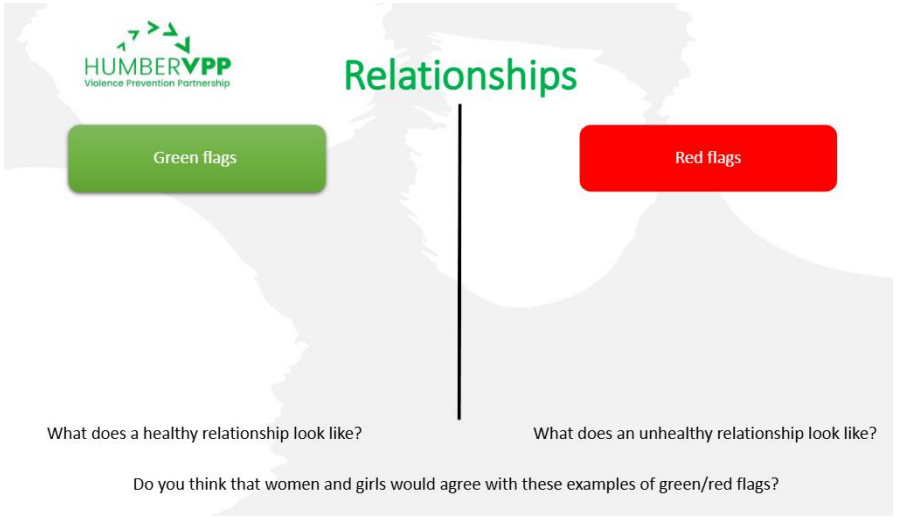
Safe Communities

If you were in charge, which crime/ASB types you would prioritise to tackle (Top 5)?

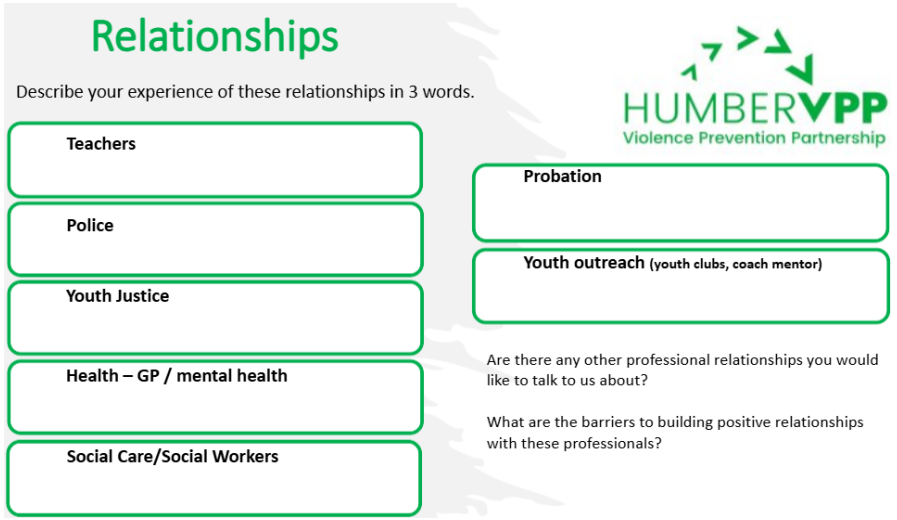
Burglary		Exploitation of vulnerable people (county lines, trafficking, modern day slavery)	
Dangerous Driving		Domestic abuse (coercive control, relationship violence)	
Drug-related crime		Criminal damage or arson	
Nuisance ASB (signs of substance misuse, vehicle related nuisance, noisy neighbours)		Sexual violence or abuse	
Knife or weapon enabled crime		Public disorder or crime in the night-time economy	
Environmental ASB (vandalism, graffiti or littering)		Violence or threats of violence (including online)	
Violence against women and girls		Personal ASB (an incident in which you feel threatened, intimidated, or harassed)	
Fraud (including on-line fraud)		Hate crime (including on-line)	
Car or motorbike theft		Stalking or harassment (including on-line)	
Business related crimes (robbery, shoplifting, theft)		Other	

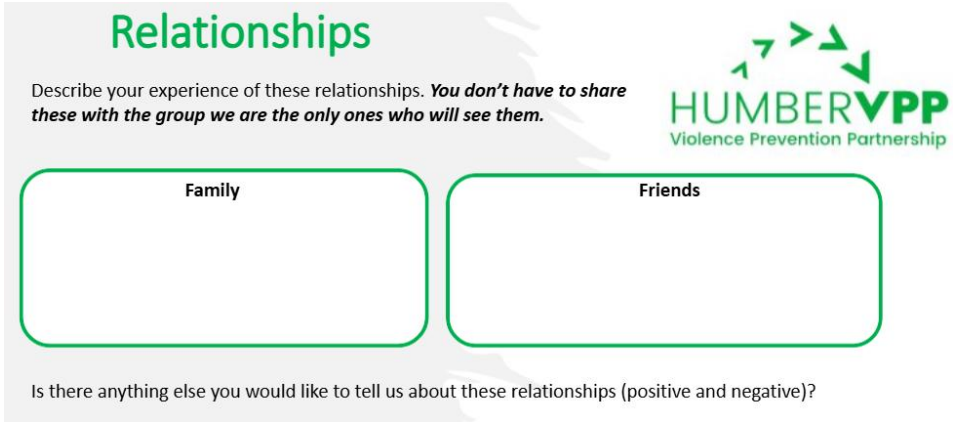


Appendix 4: Session sheet – Relationships









Appendix 5: Session sheet – Reflection & Feedback

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What should the future look like for young men and boys in Humberside?

If local leaders were here today, **what one thing would you tell them** about your experiences of growing up in your area?

Is there anything you would want to ask them?

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What should the future look like for young men and boys in Humberside?

What needs to change for young people in Humberside?

What would have helped you?

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Reflection

Your answers will be kept confidential and completely anonymous. Nobody will see them apart from us.

How other people see me…

How I see myself/who I really am…

Who I want to be in the future…

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Feedback

Have you found today's sessions engaging?

What could we have done better?

If we were to do more sessions on different topics, would you want to be involved?

…and, if yes, what would you want to talk to us about?

Appendix 6: Prisoner Safety Survey

1. How safe do you feel in this prison?

Very safe	Somewhat safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe
○	○	○	○	○

2. How often do you feel unsafe in this prison?

- ○ Daily
- ○ Weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Never

3. Where do you feel unsafe in this prison?

Enter your answer

4. Who would you speak to if / when you feel unsafe? (tick all that apply to you)

- ☐ Other prisoners
- ☐ Officers
- ☐ Outside family / friends
- ☐ Internal staff (eg. chaplain, medical)
- ☐ Safety reps
- ☐ External staff
- ☐ No-one

5. In the last 6 months (in prison) have you... (tick all that apply to you)

- ☐ heard about weapons being used or carried
- ☐ seen a weapon / someone carrying a weapon
- ☐ seen someone else injured with a weapon
- ☐ been threatened with a weapon
- ☐ been injured with a weapon
- ☐ felt pressure to carry or hide weapons or drugs for other people
- ☐ been in debt at some point

6. What do you think increases violence in prison?

Enter your answer

7. What helps to reduce or prevent violence in prison?

Enter your answer

8. Is there anything else you'd do to reduce violence in prison?

Enter your answer

Appendix 7: Hope Hacks Quiz

Hope Hacks Quiz

1. What percentage of the public said in last years Police and Crime survey that they were very confident or fairly confident in Humberside Police?

- ◯ 44%
- ◯ 55%
- ◯ 66%
- ◯ 77%

2. What percentage of the public said they felt crime had increased in their area from the previous year?

- ◯ 47%
- ◯ 50%
- ◯ 62%
- ◯ 75%

3. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that can greatly impact children and young people throughout their lives. There are 10 widely recognised ACEs, can you list 5 of them?

Enter your answer

4. How many children in Humberside do you think have a male parent in prison?

Enter your answer

5. What percentage of boys known to have a parent in prison, go on to offend in the future?

- ◯ 37%
- ◯ 46%
- ◯ 52%
- ◯ 65%

6. Men and boys are more likely to be the victim of a violent crime compared with women and girls, True or False?

- ◯ True
- ◯ False

7. Men and boys are responsible for almost 3/4 of all police recorded serious violence, True or False?

- ◯ True
- ◯ False

8. When do we see the highest number of serious violence crimes?

- ◯ Spring (March - May)
- ◯ Summer (June - August)
- ◯ Autumn (September - November)
- ◯ Winter (December - February)

9. Where is serious violence most recorded?

- ◯ Urban areas (towns / cities)
- ◯ Rural areas (countryside areas)
- ◯ Coastal areas (seaside towns /areas)

10. Which of the following statements are true?

- ◯ In 2024/25 less people were admitted to hospital with injuries from a sharp object than the previous year
- ◯ In 2024/25 the police recorded a decrease in violence involving a knife or sharp object compared with the previous year
- ◯ In 2024/25 overall, serious violence had decreased from the previous year
- ◯ All of the above

Appendix 8: Solutions and recommendations

Defining and navigating masculinity	1.1	By and for men – male-centered input in education, youth justice, and the criminal justice system, which focuses on positive conversations with young men, identifying harmful messaging, reframing what it is to be a man, and building male confidence.
	1.2	Dedicated services for male victims of domestic abuse, including awareness campaigns and signposting to services.
	1.3	Domestic abuse input in prison and probation – scaled from awareness raising, to addressing male perpetrator behaviour change
	1.4	More transparency and communication relating to mental health service and provision, so that individuals feel that they are being taken seriously, and that their experiences do matter
	1.5	Mental Health in prison campaign / promotion – the opportunity to reframe the message that men don't talk.
Opportunities to intervene, support and inspire hope	2.1	Readiness for employment: mock interviews, CV development, applications support, and more practical work experience opportunities
	2.2	Develop or commission age-appropriate education resources to be delivered in primary schools, covering: • Knife crime • Drugs • Gangs and gang related activity • Exploitation and how to recognize it. • Domestic abuse The delivery should include elements of lived experience particularly from young adults with lived experience of the criminal justice system/youth justice system
	2.3	Education, employment, and rehabilitation support that focusses on goal setting, building trust through scaffolded responsibilities, and celebrating key milestones, while allowing flexibility for if things go wrong and re-engaging them
	2.4	Free/low-cost opportunities for young adults to get involved in a wide range of activities and groups. These should be consistent rather than short-term programmes and should be able to evolve and develop with the aim of keeping young adults engaged

Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money	3.1	Employment opportunities that offer more than just a wage. Opportunities that can support with structured goal setting, can be flexible if things go wrong, and believe that young adults have a value in the community.
	3.2	Promotion of alternative education pathways that do not rely on grades and attainment and instead focus on practical skills building and employability coaching.
	3.3	Explore opportunities to include real-world learning in education, including financial literacy.
	3.4	Reduce young adults' reliance on mobile devices and access to social media, through education, activities and programmes that maintain engagement.
Breaking the 'revolving door' cycle	4.1	Trauma-informed approaches input in prison – at a staff level, as well as an input for prisoners and people managed in the community – to support them in understanding and managing trauma and triggers
	4.2	Offer the national living wage to those with jobs in custody, enabling them to save and support themselves better on release
	4.3	Explore career pathways that offer similar routines and regiment as in prison – such as armed forces – which could mitigate the disruption caused by release
	4.4	Opportunities to access courses that link directly to employment opportunities and are acknowledged and recognised in the community
	4.5	Explore alternatives to providing individuals with cash on release from custody, such as vouchers, to encourage individuals to use their release money on food and living essentials.
	4.6	Explore the potential to offer driving lessons and support with completing DVSA theory tests in custody, which could increase their employability in the community.