HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Hope Hacks in the secure estate Findings

OCTOBER 2026

Introduction & Background
Hope Hacks

Hope Hacks were designed by The Hope Collective, 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 his legacy by working with young people so that they can create long-term change, amplify their voices, and focus on their hopes for the future.

Between 2023 and 2024 the VPP delivered 4 Hope Hack events to young people from schools, colleges and alternative provisions across Humberside.

The insights from these events continue to help inform and shape the work of the VPP.

Following the success of these events, we were eager to ensure that all young voices and experiences were represented in this work. With that in mind, it was decided to expand the project to include young adults in secure settings, such as prisons, in the conversations.

Hope Hacks in the secure estate
What we did

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Between October 2025 and August 2026, we:

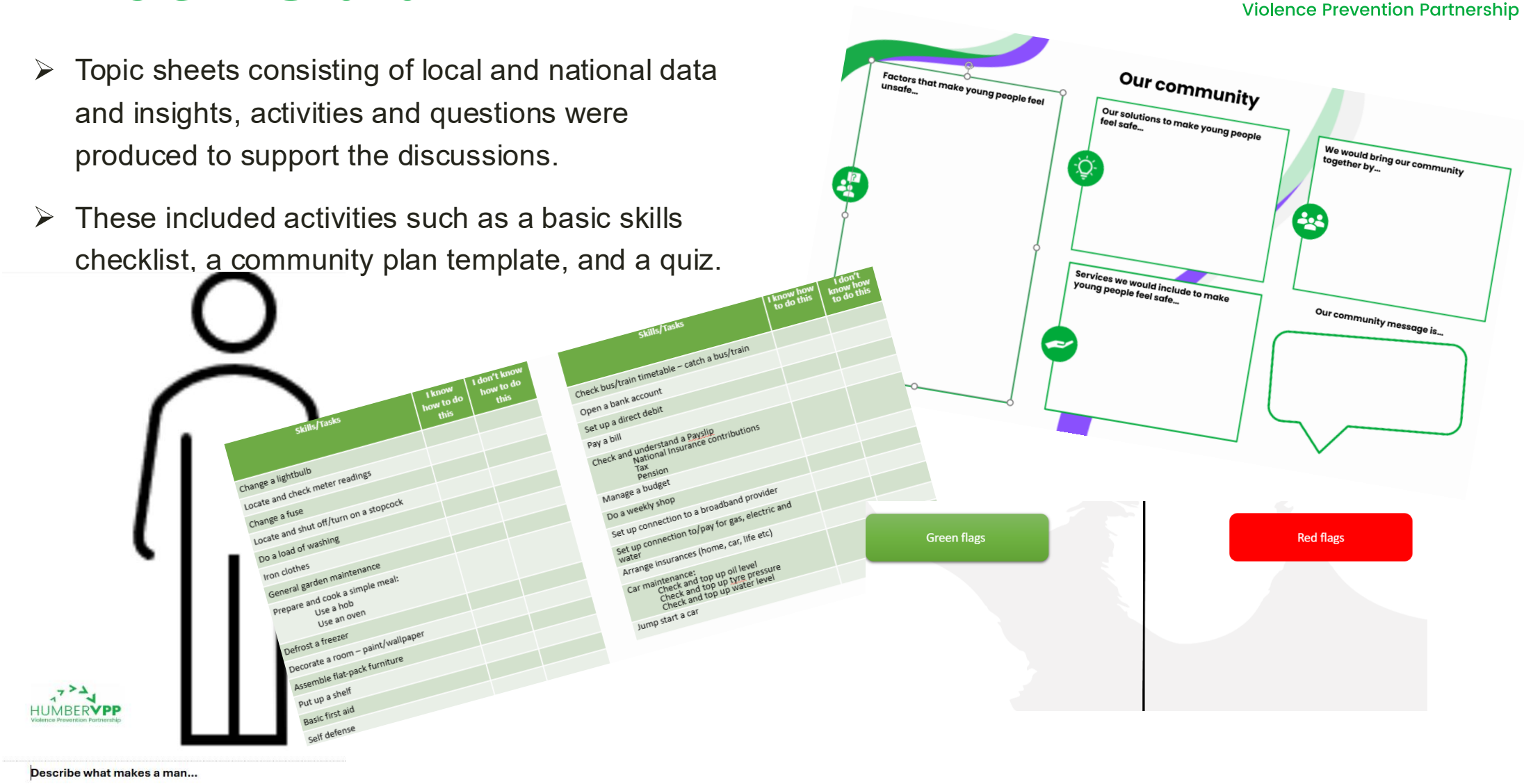
- Identified 4 topics we wanted to explore
- Developed resources and materials to support and prompt conversations
- Liaised with key staff in each prison to better understand the cohort, their needs, and how best to work with them
- Delivered 6 focus groups in HMP Hull and HMP Humber – (Feb-Aug 2026)
- Engaged with 37 young adult males aged between 18 and 24

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

Hope Hacks in the secure estate
What we did

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

- Topic sheets consisting of local and national data and insights, activities and questions were produced to support the discussions.
- These included activities such as a basic skills checklist, a community plan template, and a quiz.



Session 1:
topics, resources, activities

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Self & identity

Activities focussed on:

- What makes a man?
- What makes a woman?
- Life satisfaction and mental health & wellbeing.
- Societal expectations/norms.

Prompted discussions:

- Perceived gender roles and where these are learnt.
- Experiences and challenges.
- Family and peer values and influences.

Life skills & aspirations

Activities focussed on:

- Childhood and adolescent aspirations.
- Transferable skills for employment.
- Basic skills checklist.

Prompted discussions:

- Experiences of education.
- Transitions from childhood to adulthood - including preparedness for adulthood.
- Earning money through legitimate means vs illegitimate means.

Session 2:
topics, resources, activities

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Community Safety

Activities focussed on:

- Identifying positive and negatives of the areas and communities they grew up in.
- What makes young people feel unsafe?
- Designing a community plan.

Prompted discussions:

- Community risk factors.
- Experiences of support, hobbies, activities and interests.
- Experiences and perceptions of knife crime, drugs and other criminality.

Healthy Relationships

Activities focussed on:

- Identifying red and green flags in relationships.
- Reflecting on different types of relationships.
- Experiences of working with professionals.

Prompted discussions:

- Boundaries and acceptable/unacceptable behaviours.
- Understanding and perceptions of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
- Defining 'respect'.
- Reflections on experiences of the criminal justice system.

Session 3:
Sense checking our findings

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

The final sessions were an opportunity for us to share our findings with the young adults and gain their feedback on whether we had interpreted what they had told us accurately and they felt the findings were a true reflection of their experiences.

The young adults were encouraged to give feedback and help us to co-produce some solutions and recommendations.

The findings were presented in the format of:

- **What the groups told us...**
- **What this tells us…**
- **What are the solutions?**

The findings received positive feedback from the young adults, and they provided additional insight during the sessions.

We marked the end of the project with a celebration and thanks with the young adults.





HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Thanks & acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their support, guidance and insight throughout this project:

- Sara Ward – HMP Humber
- Michelle Powell – HMP Hull
- Paul Hobart – HMP Hull

More importantly, we would like to thank all the young men who participated. They exceeded our expectations in terms of openness and willingness to share their experiences.

We wish each one of the all the best for their future!

Our findings
Defining and navigating masculinity

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

"Don't expect us to be masculine and the provider, but then criticise us when we are masculine in other ways"



Analysis



Research

Young men and boys receive mixed messages about what it is to be a man/male and what is expected of them.

- Role of the provider and protector
- Lack of positive male role models

There's less understanding and knowledge of less obvious types of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviours.

- Tackling crimes against women and girls featured highly in their priorities.
- Mixed ideas and perceptions of what domestic abuse looks like

"…but some people like that toxic behaviour in relationships"

There are barriers to men and boys reporting domestic abuse that they have experienced/are experiencing.

- Distrust, scepticism, and wariness when talking about women and relationships

"You will take this to probation just to use against me"

Mental Health provision does not appear to be meeting the demand.

- Invisible thresholds to accessing mental health support

"You have to be at the extreme to be taken seriously"

Men **do** talk! When given a safe space and the chance to be listened to and heard.

"Men don't talk"

Our findings
Defining and navigating masculinity

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Recommendations

- 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.
- Dedicated services in the community and online for male victims of domestic abuse, including awareness campaigns and signposting to services.
- Domestic abuse input in prison and probation – scaled from awareness raising to addressing male perpetrator behaviour change.
- 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.
- Mental health in prison campaign / promotion – the opportunity to reframe the message that men don't talk.

Our findings
Opportunities to intervene, support and inspire hope

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

" I didn't realise what I was getting myself into"



Analysis



Research

Children and young people fall through the cracks of support and services at key transition points.

"You turn 18 and they expect you to be mature and know what you're doing"

Education relating to violence, crime and exploitation needs to start in primary school.

- Trusted adults, role models and lived experience

Keeping young people occupied and engaged in activities, hobbies, interests, sports etc., is critical in reducing their opportunities of becoming involved in crime.

"Kids don't need freedom; they need routine and discipline"

Alternative pathways to education that focus on building practical skills and independence, were felt to be more valuable than what is offered by mainstream education.

- Lack of awareness of alternative pathways to education and employment
- Value in building practical skills and life skills

Many would have responded better to being supported through structured goal setting based on their interests and strengths, than educated through punitive measures.

"Look at what you're capable of and what you can achieve"

Our findings
Opportunities to intervene, support and inspire hope

Recommendations

- Readiness for employment: mock interviews, CV development, applications support, and more practical work experiences opportunities.
- 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 recognise 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Our findings
Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

" We've been brought up in a let-down system"

Analysis

Research

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.

- Living for the here and now / you only live once attitudes

"Men always want more"

"We're victims of circumstances"

Lack of qualification and attainment leave many feeling that there are limited legitimate employment opportunities available to them.

- Lack of opportunities to earn through legitimate means

"It's a long process to get a job"

- Intergenerational criminality and criminal associations

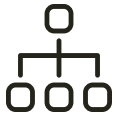
Financial literacy was the biggest skills gap in the basic skills checklist responses.

- Lack of financial literacy

Access to money means being able to fulfil the 'Provider' that they associate with being a man, it also means access to certain levels of lifestyle, reputation and respect.

- Compensating for lost time
- Money is a measure of success, status and reputation

Our findings
Legitimate vs illegitimate means to earning money



Recommendations

- 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 value in the community.
- Promotion of alternative education pathways that do not rely on grades and attainment, instead focussing on practical skills building and employability coaching.
- Explore opportunities to include real world learning in education, including financial literacy.
- Reduce young adults' reliance on mobile devices and access to social media, through education, activities and programmes that maintain engagement.

Our findings
Breaking the revolving door cycle

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

" Some only see us as criminals."

Analysis

There's value in mutual respect, the chance to be listened to, and feeling that the systems of support genuinely care.

There are genuine risks to walking away from a criminal lifestyle, especially where violence, gang related activity, and weapons have been involved.

Negative influences and influencers linked to offending often include intergenerational harm such as parental incarceration, chaotic homelives and criminal associations.

Licence conditions are felt to be too restrictive, and in some cases seen as barriers to rehabilitation. Some describe licence conditions as being a means to trip them up and keep them within the prison system.

Release from custody is often described as overwhelming, with many feeling unprepared for the transition from routine and regime, to freedom and no sense of order.

Courses and training available in prison, don't necessarily equate to a relevant qualification in the community, resulting in further knock-backs.

Research

- Missed opportunities for professional curiosity
- Very few positive relationships with professionals

"We're being set up to fail."

- Value of consistency in messages and approaches

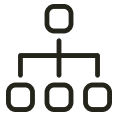
"Once you're in the system, they've got you."

- Family as the main focus and influence for rehabilitation

"This isn't jail, jail and the sentence starts when you get out."

Our findings
Breaking the revolving door cycle

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership



Recommendations

- Trauma-informed approaches input in prison – at a staff level, as well an input for prisoners and people managed in the community – to support them in understanding and managing trauma and triggers.
- Offer the national living wage to those with jobs in custody, enabling them to save and support themselves better on release.
- Explore career pathways that offer similar routines and regiment as in prison – such as armed forces – which could mitigate the disruption caused by release.
- Opportunities to access courses that link directly to employment opportunities and are acknowledged and recognised in the community.
- 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.
- Explore the potential to offer driving lessons and support with completing DVSA theory tests in custody, which could increase their employability in the community.

Final thoughts & Reflections

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

Who do you want to be in the future?

"Someone better than before, who is understanding and humble"

"A role model to future kids"

"Best version of myself"

"Better in myself and show my daughter I am a role model for her"

What would you tell your younger self?

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

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

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

"Never give up"

[the young adults] **"were buzzing…left feeling that they have been part of something really positive that could make a difference." -** Inclusion & Diversity Lead, HMP Hull

Next steps & Opportunities



- Report and recommendations to be shared with VPP board members, wider partners, and Hope Collective
- Report to be published on the VPP website
- Report to be included in the SNA submission to the Home Office

Hope Hacks in the female estate

Early discussions with West Yorkshire VRU, West Yorkshire Police and Together Women to collaborate and deliver Hope Hack focus groups in HMP New Hall.

Focus groups in HMP Wetherby

Early discussions with West Yorkshire VRU to collaborate on a serious violence specific engagement opportunity in HMP Wetherby (YOI).

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

ANY QUESTIONS?

www.humbervpp.org

HUMBERVPP
Violence Prevention Partnership

THANK YOU

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donna Hamlett
Partnership Analyst

E: donna.hamlett@humberside.police.uk

Chloe Hunter
Youth Voice Research Assistant

E: chloe.hunter@humberside.police.uk

www.**humbervpp**.org @**humbervpp**