



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire

Victims and Witnesses Strategy

Policing and Crime Team



Victims and Witnesses Strategy Foreword

As one of only two metro mayors with the responsibilities of a Police and Crime Commissioner, I see a once in a generation opportunity to bring together partners and powers to create a public health approach to policing and crime in West Yorkshire.

I'm proud that West Yorkshire Police is one of the best performing police forces in the country, but we can't be complacent. People in West Yorkshire want to be safe, feel safe, have trust in their police, and know action will be taken if ever they or their loved ones are harmed.

During my election campaign, in deciding priorities, I laid out ten manifesto commitments to the public, several of which related to police and crime: keeping women and girls safe; increasing police officer and police staff numbers; putting victims first; and ensuring our police force represents the community it serves.

But I also needed to know what the public thought, so with colleagues and my brilliant Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Alison Lowe OBE, we set about one of the widest consultations ever undertaken in West Yorkshire. We met with and spoke to older people, young people, sex workers, police, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, Gypsy and Traveller people, families, community workers, and representatives from business, transport, health, and education sectors, and we heard what needs to be done.

93.2% of respondents told us that supporting victims and witnesses was important to them, with helping victims of crime to get justice and increasing trust in the criminal justice system scoring most highly within this priority.

Whilst the Police and Crime Plan goes some way to setting our direction of travel, we must be agile, flexible, and responsive to the current and changing government landscape. As a Mayoral Combined Authority, we can now benefit from devolved powers, which help give our region the freedom to decide how best to meet local needs and create new opportunities. My office has been committed to delivering for you and this strategy shows our commitment to victims and witnesses.

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire





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Transforming the provision of support services for the victims of domestic and sexual abuse through a major extension of our West Yorkshire network of independent domestic and sexual violence advisers, and building new capabilities in supporting the victims of stalking.

The **Mayor's Safer Communities Fund** goes from strength to strength and is impacting our communities with much needed support and services.



The launch of the Independent Stalking Advocacy Service alongside the police unit transforms the service to victims of this heinous crime.



The **Commissioning Strategy 2022-24** was launched in Autumn 2022 and has been well received and speaks to the amazing provision for community-based services.



Launching a West Yorkshire-wide call for evidence to hear the 'lived experience' of victims of violence perpetrated against women and girls.



Why is this a priority?

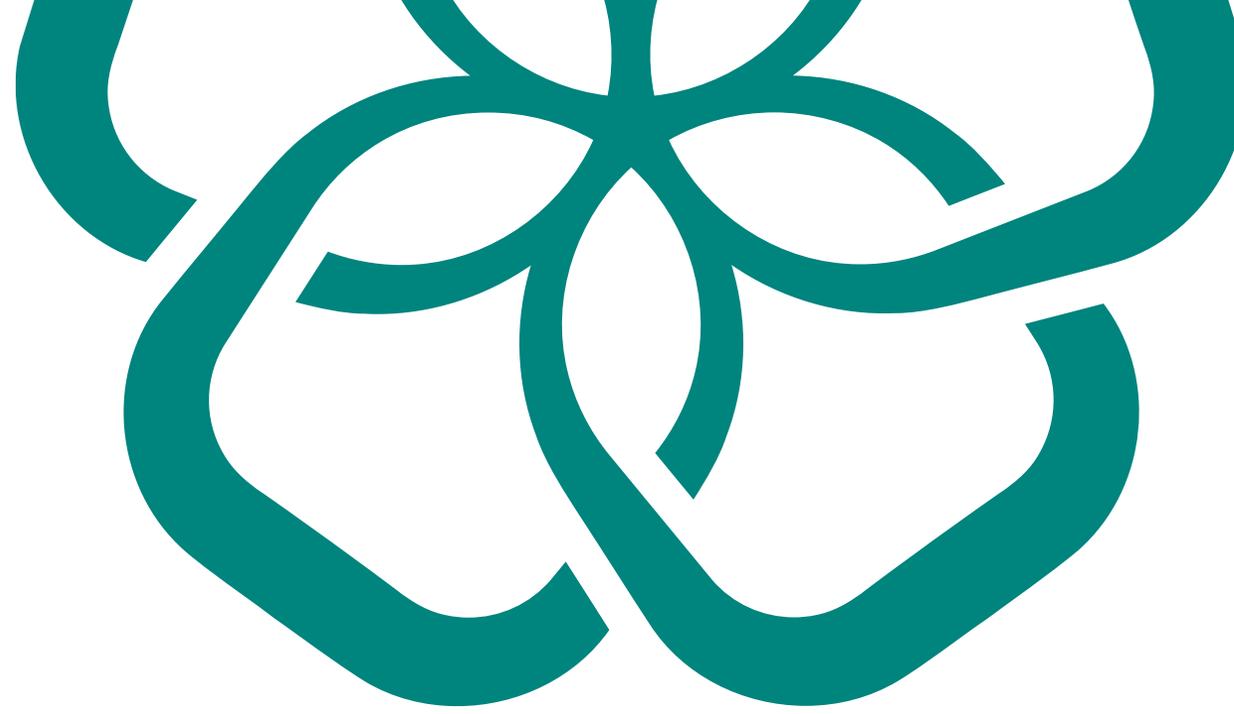
- The Police and Crime Plan consultation tells us that victims' trust in the criminal justice system needs to improve. Ensuring perpetrators face justice is a crucial way of doing this.
- 20% of the consultation's respondents said they had been the victim of a crime in the past year. These victims wanted to see the criminal justice system prioritise their needs ahead of perpetrators, as well as see improved victim services for women and girls.
- Victims were more likely to record lower levels of confidence in the criminal justice system and in police effectiveness than non-victim respondents.
- The Needs Assessment tells us that prosecutions for high harm crimes are unacceptably low.
- We need to support all victims in the criminal justice system, as court backlogs can impact on victim satisfaction and positive outcomes for Domestic Abuse and other sensitive crimes.
- The plan will highlight the [Victims' Code](#) and the rights given to victims.

The following links provide further detail around the consultation and engagement that has taken place in relation to this strategy:

[The Voice of West Yorkshire](#)

[Summary Needs Assessment](#)

[National crime and policing outcomes and measures](#)



Scrutiny and Oversight

The Mayor receives reports and statistical information from the police on their performance against the metrics contained within the Police and Crime Plan and holds the police to account for delivery of her pledges and her vision for West Yorkshire to be a safe, just and inclusive place to be for all.

The delivery and impact of this strategy will be monitored through the relevant metrics of the [Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024](#) performance framework (pages 40-43), [Community Outcomes Meetings](#), and the [Police and Crime Panel](#). In addition, the existing structures of West Yorkshire's community safety governance and partner coordination will be utilised.

The Mayoral Combined Authority maintains strategic oversight through boards and groups such as the Local Criminal Justice Board and the West Yorkshire Reducing Re-offending Board.

We work with the police, partner agencies, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, and victims and survivors to ensure we deliver for those who are most vulnerable, putting them at the heart of our response. We will continue to ensure the Mayor's voice is heard at a national level.

This strategy outlines how we work in partnership with stakeholders in West Yorkshire, as well as at a regional, national, and international level. We deliver change with voluntary, community and social enterprises, the private sector, and local communities to improve the lives of all people across our region.



Working in partnership

Our work is not limited to this strategy. We continue to build and deliver with partners and colleagues across the Mayoral Combined Authority to ensure we can support victims and witnesses in our communities.

When we say communities, we mean groups of people with shared interests. This might be due to a shared location, a shared faith, a shared ethnicity or cultural heritage, a shared characteristic (such as LGBTQIA+ communities), or a shared disability. It may also include people across the region who are united by an interest in the same activity. We also recognise that these communities contain a diverse range of views, which cannot be represented by a single spokesperson.

Our Mayor, with Police and Crime Commissioner powers, is in a privileged position to influence not just the police service, but other services and businesses that can help to keep West Yorkshire safe, just and inclusive. This includes her responsibilities in transport, adult skills, housing, and culture, and working closely with the business community to ensure change happens. We know that we can only achieve success working together. Our success is dependent on all parts of the region thriving, contributing, and being championed and celebrated.

One of the responsibilities of the Mayor is to commission quality, inclusive services that meet the needs of our diverse communities. This will be done using the Commissioning Strategy:

[Policing and Crime Commissioning Strategy 2022-2024](#)



Above: Relationships between the stakeholders involved in the Police and Crime Plan.

Introduction

Priority One of the Police and Crime Plan is 'Supporting Victims and Improving Criminal Justice Outcomes'. It sets out our work with West Yorkshire Police, the wider criminal justice system, and voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, to improve outcomes for victims and survivors and to commission services that support them.

Following consultation internally and with partners from the VCSE sector, the young persons' Independent Advisory Group (YIAG), the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), and the West Yorkshire Community Safety Partnerships Forum, amongst others, we have identified five clear themes:

- Place Victims at the heart of the Criminal Justice Process
- Equality of Access to Justice
- Victims' Journey
- Children and Young People
- Vulnerable Adults

Under each theme are statements of intent and ambition that reflect our desire to improve the treatment of victims, survivors, and witnesses within the criminal justice system, and reduce trauma, including, crucially, trauma generated and re-lived through repeated contact with the criminal justice system. This means improving access to special measures for vulnerable victims, all victims of sexual and domestic abuse, and children and young people. Getting this right across the criminal justice system will improve outcomes, increase the number of people kept safe from their abusers, and increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice.

Themes





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Plan On a Page

Themes

Place Victims at the Heart of the Criminal Justice Process

Equality of Access to Justice

Victims' Journey

Children and Young People

Vulnerable Adults

Outcomes

We will work with criminal justice partners and advocate for victims' rights through the LCJB.

We will ensure all victims, survivors, and witnesses of crime access policing and the criminal justice system in a way that is culturally competent and meets their needs.

We will make sure all victims and witnesses are treated with respect. We will work with West Yorkshire Police to deliver the best possible investigation outcomes.

We will work with partners across West Yorkshire to ensure they take a 'Child-First' approach throughout the entire criminal justice process.

We will work with criminal justice partners to ensure that vulnerability in all its forms is understood. We will have measures in place to safeguard victims and survivors of crime.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Trust and Confidence

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Safety of Women and Girls

Place Victims at the heart of the Criminal Justice Process

We continue to ensure all partners and West Yorkshire Police take a victim-centred approach across the criminal justice system. This improves the engagement, trust, and confidence of victims and survivors throughout their journey. The single most important person in any criminal investigation is the person who has been harmed.

We continue to work with the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts, and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations who do so much fantastic work to support victims and survivors. We bring all these organisations together in the Local Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, where they work together to improve the whole system and services for victims and survivors of all crime.

The voices of those with lived experience are alive within this strategy, informing policy and practice to enhance and improve systems for all.

The Victims and Prisoners Bill will enshrine the 12 Victims' Code Rights in law and the Mayor will hold policing and criminal justice agencies to account for the quality of their delivery.

Delivery Actions

- We seek opportunities to place the lived experience of victims and survivors at the centre of policy and practice improvement.
- We work with all criminal justice partners to become a trauma-informed criminal justice system by 2030, ensuring that services are sensitive, empathetic, and understand the impact of lived experiences.
- We advocate for victims' rights through the Local Criminal Justice Board.
- Victims and Prisoners Bill: We create a framework to measure the performance of all statutory and community, voluntary, and social enterprise agencies who support victims and survivors at all stages of the criminal justice system.

Key links:

- [National Guidance for Local Criminal Justice Boards](#)
- [MOJ – Victims Code](#)

Equality of access to justice

Cultural competence is the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and more that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences.

Victims and survivors have a right to feel confident in policing and the criminal justice system and in their ability to hold the system to account when things go wrong.

We have put in place an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group to advise and scrutinise the criminal justice system from within the Local Criminal Justice Board.

All West Yorkshire Police officers are taking part in cultural competence training, developed by a cross cultural and racially diverse external team, as part of the West Yorkshire Police Race Action Plan.

Delivery Actions

- We ensure that all victims, survivors and witnesses to crime access policing and the criminal justice system in a way that is culturally competent and meets their needs.
- We work with criminal justice, VCSE partners, and academia to understand and tackle emerging and currently unidentified inequalities in the criminal justice system.
- The Local Criminal Justice Partnership acknowledge, own and work to end race disparity across the criminal justice system.
- We work with community partners to implement measures that improve the confidence of underrepresented and marginalised communities in policing and the justice system.
- We are working with criminal justice partners to improve outcomes for victims of rape and sexual assault. The Mayor will continue, as a priority, to fund specialist support for victims of these crimes and work within the LCJB to improve outcomes for victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

Key Links:

- [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)
- [Police Race Action Plan - Accessible Version | West Yorkshire Police](#)
- [Victims and Witnesses: Care and Treatment | The Crown Prosecution Service \(cps.gov.uk\)](#)

Victims' Journey

West Yorkshire Police are one of the best performing forces nationally for the prosecution rape offences. 74% of Rape and Sexual Assault cases result in the perpetrator being found guilty, but we won't rest until more victims and survivors feel confident to come forward to speak to the police about recent or non-recent crimes that were committed against them.

West Yorkshire Police and the Crown Prosecution Service put significant resources into the investigation of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO), with a force Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) champion at Detective Superintendent level, and a dedicated Senior Crown Prosecutor at CPS.

The Local Criminal Justice Board is working with criminal justice partners to reduce the time it takes to prosecute perpetrators and increase the number of early guilty pleas at court to keep more victims and survivors engaged with their case so that they can see justice done at court.

Operation Soteria Bluestone is a joint academic and policing developed set of principles for the investigation of sexual and intimate offences. This, and the new National Rape Investigation Model, has been adopted by West Yorkshire Police.

Delivery Actions

- If you report a crime to the police, you will be treated with respect, your wishes about the investigation are held to be of great importance and West Yorkshire Police will deliver the best possible investigation outcome.
- Whether or not you report a crime to the police as a victim, you will be entitled to support services for victims and survivors, funded by the Mayor.
- We ensure that specialist, highly trained support services are available for victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse or Sexual Offending throughout the whole investigation, including at court.
- We empower victims and survivors by giving them the opportunity to communicate, in person or in writing, between with perpetrators, through our commissioned Restorative Justice service.
- Throughout the criminal justice process, contact will be maintained at a frequency agreed by you, and you will be consulted when key decisions are made about your case.

Key Links

- [West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel - Friday 10 March 2023 - Item 6](#)
- [Operation Soteria – Transforming the Investigation of Rape](#)

Children and Young People

We work with partners across West Yorkshire to ensure they take a 'Child-First' approach throughout the entire criminal justice process. This means we will aim to create a system that treats children as children, incorporating children's voices into decision making, and helping them to thrive.

Children can be victims, witnesses and offenders. All children in contact with criminal justice agencies have access to a professional Appropriate Adult service to actively assist them in understanding what is happening at the police station, during the investigation.

The West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership are concerned with reducing violent offending and victimisation of and by children and young people under 25 years. Their needs assessment guides prevention activity delivered with key partners in public health and education and on the ground through policing activity by Operation Jemlock.

We continue to embed a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic, and understand the impact of lived experiences. The Violence Reduction Partnership Adversity Trauma and Resilience (ATR) Network aims to introduce a trauma-informed approach across systems in West Yorkshire by 2030.

Delivery Actions

- Work with criminal justice agencies to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard within the criminal justice system.
- The impact of trauma and the role adverse childhood experiences play in making children and young people more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of crime is recognised and understood.
- Increase victim and survivor awareness of the special measures available to them during the investigation and at court by offering these at the earliest opportunity.
- Use academic research and a public health approach to reduce the incidence of violent crime in young people under 25 years of age.
- Commission specialist victim services for children and young people who are victims of or witnesses to crime.

Key Links

- [Child First \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/child-first/)
- [West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership](#)
- [Safeguarding Children as Victims and Witnesses | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)
- [Special Measures | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)
- [Operation Jemlock](#)

Vulnerable Adult Victims

Adults may be considered vulnerable if they have significant additional needs, such as some disabilities and mental ill-health, or are neurodiverse. People who are victims of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Offences and Hate Crime are always considered vulnerable.

The Police and the Crown Prosecution Service may make an application to the court for special measures to be authorised by the judiciary.

Special measures are a suite of actions approved by a judge or magistrate, which allow a victim to feel more comfortable when giving evidence. These range from ensuring the defendant can't see the victim, to remote access by video link or the giving of evidence in chief and cross examination away from the court room entirely.

Special Measures Advisors, working with investigators, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts, and victim support services such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors have made great strides to increase the number of applications made to the court.

Delivery Actions

- Work with criminal justice agencies and the VCSE sector to ensure that vulnerability in all its forms is understood and measures are put in place to safeguard victims and survivors of crime.
- Ensure special measures to protect and help vulnerable victims and witnesses to give their evidence considered and offered when appropriate.
- Empowerment and consent: listen to the views and wishes of victims and survivors. Where possible obtain their consent for any further investigative action.
- Provide a partnership safeguarding response to vulnerable victims and survivors of crime to ensure that their social, emotional, and mental health needs are met, working alongside organisations beyond the Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Police.
- Ensure that information is made available to vulnerable victims and survivors in a way that is understood.

Key Links

- [Special Measures | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)
- [What are Special Measures & how can they help you give your evidence at court? West Yorkshire Police - YouTube](#)
- [Victims of Crime Advice, Help and Support | West Yorkshire Police](#)
- [MOJ – Victims Code](#)
- [Victims and Witnesses: Care and Treatment | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

Victims and Witnesses Strategy

Cross-Cutting Theme: 1



Trust and Confidence

The Mayor recognises that trust and confidence in Policing and the Criminal Justice System is poor in communities who need those services the most.

Conscious and unconscious bias exist in every aspect of the criminal justice system, as it does in society. The Mayor works with all services to identify and root out bias and discrimination where it occurs.

The Mayor through her oversight of West Yorkshire Police and the Chief Constable, ensures that allegations about police conduct are investigated to the fullest extent.

The Mayor ensures that the rights enshrined in the Victims' Code are not negotiable, regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, sexuality, ethnicity and all other personal protected factors.

Victims and Witnesses Strategy

Cross-Cutting Theme: 2



**Equality,
Diversity,
and Inclusion**

We recognise that people face different layers of disadvantage and inequality.

We understand the importance of intersectionality. Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression.

We continue to tailor our services to address the needs of all victims and witnesses, so that they are available in formats that meet different users' needs and capabilities.

We challenge the unconscious biases that have developed over generations in society. It occurs in every aspect of life, occupation and lifestyle, irrespective of gender, class, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, or where you live.

We recognise the complexities of gender-based violence and disproportionality across the criminal justice system. In West Yorkshire we encourage equity in support services and believe both males and females should be empowered and encouraged to report as victims.

Victims and Witnesses Strategy

Cross-Cutting Theme: 3



Safety of Women and Girls

Work across the partnership to improve outcomes for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and violence, including criminal justice outcomes.

We continue to embed a trauma-informed approach across systems to ensure services are sensitive, empathetic and understand the impact of lived experiences. Women and men must be able to report a sexual assault in as supportive an environment as possible.

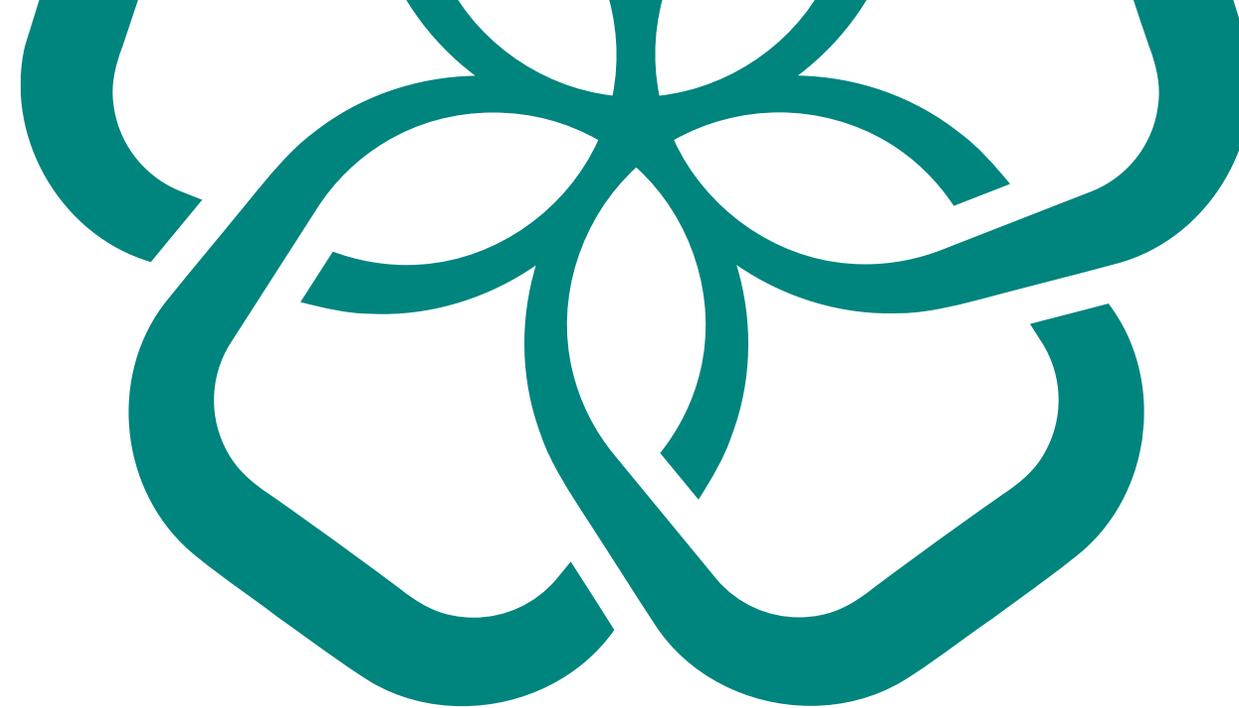
Collect the evidence needed to support a change in legislation to fully recognise misogyny as a hate crime against women and girls and ensure that women reporting these offences are treated with respect.

Challenge the behaviours that put women and girls at risk, including targeted awareness raising campaigns (for example covering coercive control, financial abuse), work to influence and educate young people, and deliver perpetrator programmes that reduce reoffending.

Help and Support

We understand that the issues raised in this strategy may be sensitive or upsetting. If you, or someone you know, have been affected by any of the issues raised in this strategy, you may wish to contact the following organisations for advice and support.

Organisation	Advice or support available	Contact details	Website
Rape Crisis	Rape Crisis Centres provide independent and confidential services for women and girls of all ages who have experienced any form of sexual violence, at any time in their lives. You can find your nearest branch and use their live chat helpline at their website.	Call: 0808 802 9999	rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help
Victim Support (National)	Victim Support provides advice and guidance to people who have experienced a crime or traumatic incident.	Call: 08 08 16 89 111 or live chat at their website victimsupport.org.uk	victimsupport.org.uk
Victim Support (West Yorkshire)	Victim Support provides advice and guidance to people who have experienced a crime or traumatic incident.	Call: 0300 303 1971	victimsupport.org.uk/west-yorkshire
Childline	Childline provides support for anyone aged 18 or under offering a free, private and confidential service where children and young people can talk about anything. You can call them 24/7 or contact them online.	Call: 0800 111	childline.org.uk/get-support
Samaritans	Support and guidance for anyone experiencing emotional distress.	Call: 116 123 24 hours a day, every day. Email jo@samaritans.org	samaritans.org
Mind	For information, advice, and support for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.	Call: 0300 123 3393	mind.org.uk
Crimestoppers	An independent charity allowing you to give information about crime anonymously over the phone or online.	Call: 0800 555 111	crimestoppers-uk.org



**In an emergency,
always dial 999**

If you have any reason to believe that a child or adult is at immediate risk of harm, **always** contact the police on **999**.

You can also report things like Anti-Social Behaviour and Criminal Damage online to the police at westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it
For a **non-emergency** incident dial **101**.



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Thank you

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