South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership

SOUTH YORKSHIRE SYMCA MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

Preventing Knife Crime Approach

2026-2029

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1. Foreword by South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard



Knife crime is not just a statistic. It is a reality that shapes communities across South Yorkshire. Every incident represents a life impacted, often forever, and the consequences are felt across all ages and communities. Change is not optional, it is essential.

While South Yorkshire has seen reductions in knife crime in recent years, the reality is that it hasn't been consistent, and there's still much more to do. Behind every figure is a person, a victim, a life cut short, a family dealing with loss, or someone drawn into violence. Too often, those affected are young people, and that's something we cannot accept.

Through its refreshed Knife Crime Approach, the South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) is setting out a clear plan for the next three years. We won't solve this challenge through enforcement alone. Policing has an important role, but if we're serious about preventing harm, we also need to tackle the reasons why it happens in the first place – things like trauma, inequality, exclusion and a lack of opportunity. That means acting earlier to prevent harm before it occurs.

The Violence Prevention Partnership is uniquely placed to deliver that commitment. Embedded within the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, the VPP brings together partners across policing, local government, health, education and the voluntary and community sector to drive forward change. The collective power allows us to move beyond isolated interventions and work towards long term, system wide change, focused on the places and communities where harm is highest.

At the heart of our approach is a commitment to partnership, learning, and compassion. Victims, families and those with lived experience have a vital role in shaping our response and their voices must continue to guide how we act. By listening and learning we can ensure our work remains responsive to emerging trends, local need and the growing evidence about what works.

Our response also aligns with national ambitions to halve knife crime over the next decade, while reflecting the particular challenges and strengths in South Yorkshire. It focuses on early support for those most at risk, alongside coordinated action to prevent and respond to crime. Underpinning all of it is a shared belief that everyone deserves to feel safe, no matter their background.

I want to thank all the partners, practitioners and communities involved in this work every day, much of it happens out of sight and in difficult circumstances. Preventing knife crime is not quick or simple, but by working together – with a shared sense of responsibility – we can build safer futures for our children and young people, and stronger communities across South Yorkshire.

2. Foreword by South Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor, Kilvinder Vigurs



We know knife crime causes immense harm and its impact extends far beyond those directly involved, affecting families, friends, neighbourhoods and communities across South Yorkshire. Every incident represents a missed opportunity to intervene sooner, provide support earlier and prevent harm from occurring in the first place.

As Deputy Mayor for Policing and Public Safety, I am clear that tackling knife crime requires both determination and collaboration. Effective enforcement remains an essential part of the response, but lasting change can only be achieved when it is matched by prevention, early intervention and strong partnerships. We must understand not only where knife crime happens, but why it happens, and work together to address the factors that place people at risk of being both perpetrators and sadly victims.

This Preventing Knife Crime Approach sets out how the South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership will bring organisations together across policing, local authorities, health, education, youth justice, community safety and the voluntary and community sector. It provides a shared framework for co-ordinated action, ensuring that our collective efforts are informed by evidence, guided by data and focused on achieving the greatest impact.

The approach recognises that knife crime is not experienced equally. Too often it is concentrated in communities already facing significant challenges, including deprivation, inequality and limited access to opportunities. By directing resources towards the children, young people and places most affected, we can help build safer communities while addressing the wider issues that can contribute to violence and break the cycle.

A particular strength of this approach is its commitment to listening to those with lived experience. The insights of victims, families, young people and communities are crucial in helping us understand what works and where improvements are needed. Their voices will continue to shape our response and ensure that it remains relevant, compassionate and effective.

Over the next three years, we will continue to align prevention and enforcement activity, strengthen our partnerships, invest in communities and improve our understanding of what reduces harm. This is not work that can be achieved by a single organisation. It requires shared leadership, shared responsibility and a collective commitment to creating better futures for our children and young people.

I would like to thank all those who contribute to this vital work across South Yorkshire. Together, we can continue to reduce knife crime, support those most at risk, and build a county where every person feels safer, more connected and able to thrive.

3. Preventing Knife Crime Approach: At a Glance

Our Mission

Address the underlying causes of violence by working together with communities and partnerships to prevent it, helping to create the conditions and opportunities that will enable South Yorkshire's children and young people to thrive.

Our Commitment

- Reduce knife crime
- Prevent children & young people becoming involved in knife crime
- Align enforcement & prevention
- Strengthen involvement of communities & lived experience
- Build a stronger evidence base

Priority 1

Prioritise children and young people most vulnerable to knife crime

Priority 2

Design interventions to meet the needs of children and young people

Priority 3

Prioritise locations with the highest prevalence of known knife crime

The Approach

Objective 1: Prevent and reduce knife crime

- Pilot interventions addressing the social and emotional factors linked to knife carrying.
- Test practical measures to reduce access to knives and support safer communities.
- Support those at greatest risk of violence through targeted interventions.
- Provide therapeutic, hospital-based and restorative support to reduce harm and prevent repeat incidents.
- Strengthen support during key life transitions and engage young people in shaping violence prevention work.

Objective 2: Invest and build resilience early in families and the foundations of childhood and early life

- Improve education and awareness around knife crime and violence.
- Provide practical tools to support effective responses to knife-related harm.
- Support parents and carers to prevent young people becoming involved in violence.

Objective 3: Empower communities and provide pathways to opportunities

- Support community-led approaches to preventing violence.
- Ensure lived experience and youth voice inform our work.
- Invest in local organisations and community solutions.
- Strengthen pathways and access to support for those at risk.

Objective 4: Enhance system leadership and the partnership approach

- Secure funding and resources to support violence reduction activity.
- Strengthen collaboration across agencies and sectors.
- Use practitioner feedback to improve delivery and outcomes.
- Improve data and intelligence to support evidence-based decision-making.

Objective 5: Embed the public health approach

- Improve access to information and resources.
- Promote responsible reporting and awareness of knife crime.
- Develop commissioning approaches that support knife crime prevention.

4. Introduction

Knife crime has a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities across South Yorkshire. While progress has been made, harm remains concentrated in the most deprived areas, and too many children and young people (CYP) remain at risk. One life lost, or affected by knife crime, is always one too many.

The South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) recognises that knife crime is not inevitable. Preventing it requires a shared commitment across partners, bringing together enforcement, prevention, education, and the voluntary, community, social, faith and enterprise sectors (VCSFE), to tackle its root causes.

This document builds on the South Yorkshire Knife Crime Approach (2024-2027), which established a shared evidence base and set of principles. It now sets out how we will go further over the period 2026–2029, with a clearer focus on delivery and impact.

This approach outlines how the VPP will work with partners across South Yorkshire to prevent and reduce knife crime. It is learning-led and will adapt to emerging evidence, local need, and partner insight. It is designed to equip stakeholders in South Yorkshire with a suite of interventions and resources that can be applied flexibly to complement and strengthen their existing knife crime prevention activity, in line with local priorities.

The approach adopts a public health perspective that focusses primarily on CYP to prevent involvement in knife crime before it starts or escalates. By taking a preventative approach, it seeks to address the factors that contribute to violence, exploitation and vulnerability, as well as reducing wider harms including those linked to the night-time economy, domestic abuse and online environments. Nationally, VPPs have been established with a unique mandate to operate in this prevention space.

While offending rates are highest among 15- to 19-year-olds[1], knife crime is not limited to CYP with a significant proportion of offences committed by adults. To ensure a comprehensive response, further work will explore the role of the VPP in supporting those aged over 25, including identifying effective interventions for individuals with established involvement in knife crime. We will also explore opportunities to secure additional funding and work with partners to target activity where it can have the greatest impact.

5. Our Commitment

We will intervene earlier, target those most at risk, and better align prevention and enforcement activity to achieve sustained reductions in knife crime.

By 2029 we will:

- **Reduce knife crime across South Yorkshire, with the greatest reductions achieved in the communities most affected.**
- **Prevent more CYP from becoming involved in knife crime, by identifying those most at risk earlier and ensuring they receive the right support at the right time.**
- **Deliver a joined-up approach that aligns prevention and enforcement, targeting high-harm locations to achieve sustained reductions.**
- **Strengthen communities and prioritise lived experience, ensuring that those most affected by knife crime help shape and lead local solutions.**
- **Build a stronger evidence base for what works, using data, insight and evaluation to continuously improve our response.**

6. The Violence Prevention Partnership's Mission

Our mission is to address the underlying causes of violence by working together with communities and partnerships to prevent it, helping to create the conditions and opportunities that will enable South Yorkshire's CYP to thrive.

This approach will deliver against our overarching objectives to:

1. **Prevent and reduce serious violence**
2. **Invest and build resilience early in families and the foundations of childhood and early life**
3. **Empower communities and provide pathways to opportunities**
4. **Enhance system leadership and the partnership approach to violent crime**
5. **Embed the Public Health Approach in the work we undertake with the premise that prevention is better than cure.**

The VPP is embedded within the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), which provides significant convening power and access to a network of partners, resources, and influence. This enables alignment between violence reduction activity and wider regional priorities, supporting a whole-system approach. This positioning is particularly critical to tackling deprivation[2] and structural inequality[3], both of which are recognised drivers of violence. It also provides opportunities to leverage wider regional programmes, including employment and skills initiatives, which act as important protective factors for young people.

7. National, Regional and Local Priorities

Knife crime remains a national priority for the government, with a commitment to halving knife crime by 2034 through their knife crime strategy[4], the Coalition to Tackle Knife Crime, guidance on child knife possession offences[5] and the Youth Justice White Paper[6]. With £66.6m of funding for 2026/2027, VPPs across the country play a central role in delivering this ambition and are nationally assessed on their impact in reducing knife crime.

Alongside national strategies, this approach supports the delivery of both the Mayor's and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan's[7] priorities, in which communities told us knife crime is an issue of significant concern.

Additionally, as part of the Serious Violence Duty[8], the four local authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield) have a statutory responsibility to implement a strategy for reducing serious violence. Our approach will assist local planning and delivery, making clear what resources will be made available on a regional basis, with roll-out and implementation support, to enhance local plans to prevent knife crime.

8. The South Yorkshire Picture

Public place knife crime in South Yorkshire is closely linked to deprivation and inequality. Communities experiencing the highest levels of deprivation also experience the greatest concentration of knife crime, both in terms of where offences occur and where those involved are more likely to live. Half of all knife crimes take place in just one fifth of neighbourhoods, many of which are amongst the most deprived[9]. This approach will prioritise both high knife crime and high deprivation locations for investment and interventions.

In the year ending March 2026, there were 1400 serious offences involving a knife. This has decreased 2% from the previous year and 14% since the year ending March 2023[10]. However, despite knife crime decreasing, the improvement is not spread equally. For victims under 25, knife crime has dropped significantly, whereas in contrast, knife crime involving victims aged 25 and over has decreased only modestly. Knife crime suspects tend to be young, with the most common age group seen being 15 to 19. However, this age group has seen a decrease in recent years, with the rate now at 17.3 per 10,000 pop. as opposed to 24.5 per 10,000 pop. in 2022[11]. Despite the overall reduction, South Yorkshire still had the 4th highest knife crime rate in England in the 12 months to December 2025[12], and experienced the tragic effects, including a fatal school stabbing.

Most knife crime suspects and victims in public places are male, highlighting a significant gender imbalance and the need for gender-specific interventions. However, almost one in two female victim domestic homicides involve a knife or sharp instrument[13]. While the VPP's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) approach will provide a detailed response to VAWG, including knife-enabled offending, it is important to acknowledge the overlap between knife crime and domestic abuse, where women may be victims of knife-related violence within intimate and family relationships.

The majority of suspects are White (78%), although this is lower than their share of the South Yorkshire population (88%), meaning they are underrepresented relative to population size. At the same time, there is evidence of ethnic disproportionality, with some minority ethnic groups overrepresented. Black individuals make up 8.4% of suspects compared with 2.4% of the region's population, while people of mixed ethnicity account for 4.7% of suspects compared with 2.2% of the population. This disproportionality decreases slightly among those aged under 25 but remains evident.[14]

These findings demonstrate the importance of taking a data informed approach that recognises both that the majority of suspects are White and that some minority ethnic groups are disproportionately represented relative to population size. Understanding this nuanced picture is essential to ensuring that support is equitable, proportionate and effective. These patterns are also reflected at a national level[15].

Knife crime is also more likely to happen at certain times. Over half (55%) of knife crimes occur between 6pm and 3am. Weekend evenings are particularly high risk: Friday and Saturday nights between 6pm and 3am account for nearly one in five knife crimes, despite representing just over one-tenth of the week. These time periods closely align with the night-time economy, reinforcing the importance of considering this context within the approach[16].



9. Behind the Statistics

To tackle knife crime effectively, it is essential to understand its underlying drivers. Knife crime is shaped by a complex and interconnected set of factors that can both increase and reduce vulnerability. Evidence highlights that issues such as fear and victimisation, the pursuit of social status, exploitation, deprivation, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)[17] can all influence a child or young person's likelihood of carrying a knife. In addition, the rapidly evolving online environment, alongside increasing mental health challenges, means this remains a dynamic and developing area to understand. Exposure to violence is also known to increase future risk, underscoring the need for a holistic approach to identifying those most vulnerable and supporting their safety and wellbeing. There is no single cause of knife crime, rather, it is driven by overlapping and reinforcing risk factors.

Research also indicates that when young people perceive that organisations are not taking meaningful action, trust is eroded. This is closely linked to both their sense of safety and their perceptions of the local environment[18]. Improving CYP's perceptions of how knife crime is being tackled is integral to ensuring the VPP, SYMCA and the Mayor fulfil its vision of safer and more vibrant, cohesive, resilient communities.

10. Delivering in Partnership

Developing the Approach

We cannot prevent knife crime in isolation, and nor can any single organisation. Success depends on a whole-system response that brings together organisations from across the county. Partners from policing, local authorities, the fire service, health, education, youth justice, probation and VCSFE organisations have played a critical role in the development of this approach and will lead in shaping how it is delivered in practice.

The approach has been shaped through engagement with partners, including workshops with Serious Violence Duty and VCSFE partners, and feedback provided through the review of successive drafts. It has also been informed by local data and intelligence, national and local evidence of what works, research into knife crime and serious violence, case review recommendations, practitioner insight, and feedback from partners on emerging challenges and opportunities relating to knife crime prevention.

Partners have contributed to the identification of priorities, the design of interventions and the development of delivery arrangements. This collaborative approach will continue throughout implementation, ensuring the approach remains responsive to local need and emerging evidence.

Communities and Lived Experience

The voices of victims, families, and communities most affected by knife crime are central to delivering this approach. Fundamental to this programme of work is creating new and improved mechanisms to strengthen how lived experience informs both regional and local responses, ensuring engagement is meaningful and leads to tangible improvements. Partners will be supported to embed these insights into their work, helping to shape more effective and trusted responses.

Similarly, VCSFE partners are vital to efforts to prevent knife crime, with their trusted, frontline engagement with communities forming a critical and highly effective element of this approach. We will continue to support the sector through funding, training, and opportunities to influence system-wide activity. Evidently, there is a wide range of organisations across South Yorkshire and beyond working tirelessly to tackle knife crime. It is important that we not only deliver new and existing initiatives but also promote the work already taking place. We will work to strengthen connections across the partnership, ensuring that activity is not delivered in isolation but contributes to shared outcomes.

A Shared Framework for Action

This approach is not intended to prescribe activity for individual partners. Instead, it sets out a shared framework to support coordinated, evidence-led action, which can be interpreted and applied in ways that reflect local priorities and contexts. The VPP will act as a convenor and enabler. We will provide strategic direction, funding, evidence and insight, and opportunities for shared learning, while supporting alignment across local areas.

To complement the work of partners, as a VPP we will also continue to draw on national and international evidence, academic research, and practitioner insight to identify and promote effective approaches. Alongside this, we will build the local evidence base through ongoing evaluation and learning, supporting partners to understand what works in South Yorkshire and adapt practice accordingly.

How Partners Contribute to Success

Central to this approach, is a commitment to shared responsibility. While organisations will continue to deliver activity in line with their own statutory duties and priorities, reducing knife crime is a collective endeavour. Success depends on partners working together to align activity creating a consistent and joined-up response across the system. The table below summarises the distinctive role that different partners play in preventing knife crime and how these strengths will be brought together through the delivery of this approach.

Partner	Role in Achieving Our Ambition
South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership	Strategic leadership, commissioning, funding, coordination, evidence, evaluation and performance monitoring.
South Yorkshire Police	Enforcement activity, hotspot policing, intelligence and leadership of the Knife Crime Concentration Fund.
Community Safety Partnerships	Local coordination, partnership leadership and alignment with district priorities and delivery plans.
Local Authorities	Leadership of local serious violence arrangements, safeguarding, education partnerships and community safety activity.
Education Sector	Prevention education, identification of vulnerable CYP and referral into appropriate support pathways.
Health Partners	Hospital based interventions, trauma informed support and health insight to inform prevention activity.
Youth Justice Services	Diversion, prevention and targeted support for children and young people involved in offending.
Probation Services	Management of individuals involved in violence and support to reduce reoffending.
Fire and Rescue Service	Community engagement, prevention activity and support for wider violence reduction initiatives.
VCSFE Partners	Trusted community relationships, mentoring, youth work, early intervention and delivery of community led solutions.
Children, Young People and Communities	Shaping priorities, informing delivery through lived experience and helping understand and evaluate impact.

11. The Approach

Given the strong evidence for early intervention in preventing violence, the approach aims to stop CYP from becoming involved in violence before it occurs. This reflects the stronger evidence base for reducing serious violence more broadly, rather than knife crime in isolation. The approach will sit alongside the wider work of the VPP, providing coordination of additional activity focused on knife crime, strengthening our early intervention efforts.

Central to this work will be a Child First[19], trauma informed approach. This puts CYP's interests at the centre, recognising their rights, needs, and potential while supporting their pro-social identity through being constructive and future-focused. Within this approach children are defined as those aged up to 18 years old, in line with the UN Convention of the rights of a child[20]. This approach also acknowledges the challenges for children as they transition into adulthood. To help ease this transition, young people up to the age of 25 are included, which aligns with the ending of responsibilities of council's legal care of care leavers and the evidence that suggests maturity continues to evolve at least until this age[21].

However, to ensure this approach addresses knife crime in its entirety, further work will be undertaken to explore our potential role in supporting those aged over 25. This will include developing a clearer understanding of the most effective interventions and approaches for engaging individuals who are entrenched in knife crime. We will also explore opportunities to leverage additional funding streams to support new cohorts and will continue to work closely with partners to identify where efforts should be focused to add the greatest value.

Governance of the approach will be through the Serious Violence and Community Safety Executive Board which will provide oversight and accountability for delivery. Updates will also be taken to the Police and Crime Panel, SYMCA governance boards and Community Safety Partnerships.



11.1. Our Priorities

1 **Prioritise children and young people most vulnerable to knife crime**

Research shows the following experiences increase the vulnerability of CYP[22] being drawn into serious violence:

- Attending Alternative Provision (AP)
  - South Yorkshire has higher exclusion rates than the national average, especially amongst pupils on free school meals and boys[23].
- Have been excluded from school or are severely absent from formal education
  - In 2024, Barnsley and Doncaster were among the ten local authorities with the highest rates of suspension in the country[24].
- Are being looked after (this risk indicator applies to boys in particular and has put girls at risk from exploitation)[25]
  - Of the 391 children in Rotherham that the YJS worked with, 32 were looked after children (8.2%)[26].
- Have come into contact with the criminal justice system
  - South Yorkshire's 18+ proven reoffending rate was 33.1% and 27.2% for 0–17 year olds in 2023[27].
- Have multiple ACEs
  - Children consistently have higher poverty rates than other socio-economic groups[28].
- Have adverse community environments
  - Boys from the most deprived areas of South Yorkshire are more likely to be involved in all types of violent crime than boys from less deprived areas[29].
- Experience poor mental health (self-harm or suicidality[30] amongst boys has been shown to increase risk of violence) and emotional dysregulation
  - Research found that children growing up in the north have worse mental health than the rest of the country[31].
- Present with early drug and alcohol use or addiction
  - Nationally, children in contact with alcohol and drug treatment services increased by 13% from 2024 to 2025[32].
- Engage in harmful peer networks
  - Sheffield's Children Safeguarding Partnership thematic review found harmful peer networks were a reoccurring theme across recent knife crime cases[33].
- Have experiences of violence
  - Research shows children often move between being victims, witnesses, and perpetrators of serious violence and knife crime[34].

2 Design interventions to meet the needs of children and young people

CYP are not a homogeneous group, and an intersectional approach is essential to ensure interventions are effective. Programmes and support will be tailored to reflect their diverse needs, identities and experiences. At a minimum, interventions will consider:

- **Gender** – Approaches will recognise the different experiences, pressures and pathways into risk for boys and girls, ensuring interventions are designed in a way that acknowledges different approaches will be needed to be successful. Interventions will also consider that males are significantly overrepresented in knife crime offences as well as the relationship between weapon carriage, constructions of masculinity and harmful hyper-masculine ideologies[35].
- **Ethnicity and Culture** – Interventions must reflect and respect the backgrounds of CYP including language, beliefs, and traditions and be delivered by culturally competent and 'by and for organisations' where appropriate. Interventions must also ensure that communities which currently experience the highest rates of knife crime will be targeted for the largest reductions, with the help of tailored violence prevention and harm reduction approaches.
- **Age** – Activities will be developmentally appropriate and recognise true prevention work should start as young as five years old.
- **Neurodivergent and Learning Needs** – CYP who are neurodivergent or have additional learning needs may communicate risk differently, interpret environments in distinct ways, or require adapted methods of delivery to ensure they can fully participate. Interventions should be designed so that they are accessible but also specifically address these needs.
    - The Youth Justice Board found that in one year, 71% of children sentenced had speech, language and communication concerns[37].

3 Prioritise locations with the highest prevalence of known knife crime, through:

- Investing in locations where levels of knife crime (both adult and youth) are highest.
- Embedding an understanding of the link between deprivation and knife crime into decision-making around investment locations, as well as wider causes of why a location may be a knife crime hotspot.
- Targeted rollout of interventions in schools and VCSE settings.
- Increasing the number of safe spaces and trusted adults for CYP.
- Ensuring engagement opportunities are offered to CYP in those communities.

11.2. Aligning Enforcement and Prevention

Enforcement is a critical component to preventing knife crime but is most effective when aligned with prevention activity. The two strands of enforcement within this approach are ongoing police activity and the Knife Crime Concentration Fund (KCCF). Ongoing enforcement includes targeted patrols, weapons sweeps, effective use of stop and search, knife arch deployments, retail enforcement, school and youth engagement.

The second aspect, the KCCF, is a Home Office funded initiative that will operate alongside existing enforcement activity until March 2029. A key principle of the KCCF approach is the recognition that knife crime is highly concentrated in specific locations.

The programme will deliver a targeted response in seven hyper-local locations in South Yorkshire, which together account for approximately 10% of the county's knife crime, despite representing just 0.2% of the force area. This also aligns with our priorities to invest in locations with the highest knife crime. Many of these locations are within the night-time economy (NTE) with individuals often travelling in and out of these areas rather than residing there. The KCCF provides an opportunity for a distinct strategy to address knife crime in the NTE, making this a critical focus within the overall approach.

To support this, the KCCF will enable the development and delivery of problem orientated policing (POP) plans[38] for each of the seven areas. Plans will be jointly owned by partners, with ring-fenced funding to support delivery. The plans will aim to reduce knife crime by 33% and funding will be used to support a range of operational activity including hotspot patrols, offender management, situational prevention, safeguarding, youth interventions and environmental changes.

Interventions commissioned and delivered by the VPP as part of this approach will also be aligned to support CYP who live in, visit, or attend educational settings within these areas. In addition, we will consider how future interventions may need to be adapted or expanded to meet the needs of these communities, in line with the priorities set out earlier.



The Approach



11.3 Knife Crime Prevention Delivery

Objective 1: Prevent and reduce knife crime

This objective will be delivered through a targeted programme of activity across primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Primary Prevention

- **Social and Emotional Targeted Learning Pilot**[39] – Improve social and emotional skills among children in areas with high knife crime to reduce vulnerability to violence.
- **Scoping Exercise: CYP and Domestic Abuse** – Identify links between domestic abuse and knife offending to inform future commissioning.
- **Regional Priorities** – Utilise the opportunities presented through SYMCA's wider regional priorities, including reducing poverty, addressing inequality, improving skills, and increasing access to employment and training, to strengthen protective factors and support violence prevention.

Secondary Prevention

- **Focussed Deterrence Service**[40] – Deliver a combined enforcement and mentoring approach for young people identified as carrying knives, with potential for wider roll-out.
- **Young Future Panels** – Identify CYP at risk of entering the criminal justice system and support them into diversionary activity.
- **Rounded Knife Project**– Deliver and expand targeted knife swaps.
- **Trauma-Specific Therapy**[41] **/ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Pilot**[42] – Strengthen specialist mental health support for children carrying knives or affected by knife crime.

Tertiary Prevention

- **Accident and Emergency Navigators** – Provide immediate, trauma-informed support to individuals admitted with knife injuries, reducing the risk of further harm.
- **Restorative Justice** – Increase knowledge and engagement in restorative justice processes and explore opportunities to expand provision.
- **Youth to Adult Transition Mapping** – Identify key transition points and strengthen support pathways for CYP knife offenders moving into adult services.
- **Adults at Risk or Involved in Knife Crime** – Explore the characteristics, needs and pathways of adults aged 25 and over involved in knife crime and identify opportunities for effective interventions and partnership approaches.

Objective 2: Invest and build resilience early in families and the foundations of childhood and early life

This objective focuses on strengthening early foundations through education, skills, and support systems that reduce vulnerability to violence.

- **Knife Crime Education Framework** - Establish a quality framework setting standards for effective knife crime prevention education including resources[43/44], training and a feedback loop with the education sector.
- **Knife Crime Response Toolkit** – Provide practical guidance and workshops to support organisations responding to knife-related incidents.
- **Support for Parents** – Identify gaps in provision and develop an enhanced offer.

Objective 3: Empower communities and provide pathways to opportunities

This objective focuses on strengthening community capacity, prioritising lived experience, and supporting positive pathways for CYP.

- **Community Champions Programme** – Develop leadership capacity within communities most affected by knife crime, creating a network of local role models.
- **Knife Crime Lived Experience Group** – Embed lived experience in decision-making and support improvements in local responses.
- **Community Grants Programme** – Invest in community-led activity, prioritising areas and activities aimed at reducing knife crime.
- **Youth Voice** – Engage CYP to shape solutions and inform future delivery. Amplify and connect existing youth voice initiatives across South Yorkshire.
- **Pathway Mapping** – Identify and map a multi-agency pathway for children identified as at risk, found in possession of a knife, or involved in knife-related offending, to improve consistency across the county.

Objective 4: Enhance system leadership and the partnership approach to knife crime

This objective focuses on improving coordination, leadership and the use of data to deliver a more effective response.

- **Funding –** Maintain dedicated funding to support delivery of the knife crime approach and enable locally tailored responses through continued investment in Community Safety Partnerships. Funding will also support local areas to consider appropriate safety measures that complement existing approaches, such as disposal bins, knife arches, and enhanced test-purchasing activity.
- **Operation Sceptre –** Coordinate multi-agency activity across prevention, intervention and enforcement during knife crime awareness week.
- **Partnership Development and Practitioner Feedback –** Embed structured feedback mechanisms to inform the development of the approach. Strengthen existing partnerships and engage new sectors, including businesses and community organisations, to support a more coordinated response to knife crime.
- **Availability of Data –** Improve access to shared data and develop dashboards to support evidence-informed decision-making. Identify shared risk factors, opportunities for evaluation, and emerging trends to inform commissioning and strengthen our understanding of what works in preventing knife crime.

Objective 5: Embed the public health approach in the work we undertake with the premise that prevention is better than cure

This objective ensures prevention is embedded across all activity, with a focus on evidence and long-term impact.

- **Resource Hub –** Develop a centralised knife crime resource hub to improve access to local best practice, referral pathways, intervention directories, training materials and resources.
- **Knife Crime in the Media** - Deliver a positive social norms campaign to challenge perceptions around knife crime and increase the reach of existing campaign resources. Work with local media partners to promote responsible reporting through the development and adoption of media guidelines.
- **Commissioning Framework –** Embed evidence-led practice within contracts and specifications.

12. Data Sharing

To support the overall approach, we will lead the coordination and use of data to support intelligence-led activity to reduce knife crime and serious violence. We will work with partners to develop a clear, lawful, and practical data-sharing framework, with appropriate governance, agreed standards, and secure processes to enable timely exchange of information.

This will support a shared understanding of crime trends, knife crime indicators, and areas of highest harm, helping partners to target resources and interventions more effectively. By bringing together data from across policing, health, education, local authorities, and community services, we will build a more complete picture of risk, including both patterns of violence and its underlying causes.

13. Measuring Impact

The VPP will develop a Performance and Outcomes Framework to assess progress and the impact made.

The Home Office requires VPPs to monitor progress against two knife-crime-related metrics:

- Hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object (all ages, with a focus on under 25s).
- Police-recorded knife and sharp-enabled serious violence (all ages, with a focus on under 25s).

However, we acknowledge the importance of measuring success wider than crime data. Additional success indicators will be developed as part of the approach and may also consider:

- Increases in CYP's help-seeking relating to knife crime.
- Increases in CYP's perceptions of safety and accurate understanding of risk.
- Increases in CYP reporting pro social identity traits, linked to reduced likelihood of involvement with violence[45].

As part of developing the Performance and Outcomes Framework, we will identify appropriate methods for measuring impact and expand these where necessary, including surveys, youth voice activity, evaluation tools and engagement data.

Our approach is guided by the best available evidence. However, we acknowledge that the evidence base on knife crime is continually evolving, and that large-scale evaluation takes time and resource. Therefore, whilst we will prioritise prevention activities and those with rigorously tested impact, we are committed to working with partners to understand what other interventions might be appropriate to the local context and support areas to implement these.

14. Priorities for 2026/27

Each year, the VPP will produce an annual knife harm briefing that reviews activity delivered over the previous year, summarises key learning and impact, and sets out priorities for the forthcoming financial year.

For 2026/27, the VPP will:

- Deliver the Community Champions Programme and train the first cohort of community leaders.
- Establish a lived experience group to inform and shape the response to knife crime and knife-related harm.
- Develop a knife crime education framework.
- Implement a pilot to improve the management, monitoring and promotion of knife bins.
- Establish multi-agency responses across South Yorkshire's seven knife crime hotspot areas through the Knife Crime Concentration Fund.



Endnotes

1. Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment - 2025
2. The role of 'place' in understanding the drivers of serious youth violence: An examination of identity, territorialism and community (2025)
3. Structural inequalities, knife crime: A qualitative study (2024)
4. Protecting Lives, Building Hope: A Plan to Halve Knife Crime (2026)
5. Government Guidance for Child Knife Possession Offences (2026)
6. Cutting Youth Crime. Changing Young Lives. (2026)
7. South Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan
8. Serious Violence Duty (2022)
9. Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment - 2025
10. ONS Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables 2026
11. Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment - 2025
12. ONS Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables 2026
13. ONS Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics 2025
14. Data extracted from South Yorkshire Police's Crime Recording System, CONNECT
15. Youth Justice Board – Knife Crime Evidence and Insight Pack (2025)
16. Data extracted from South Yorkshire Police's Crime Recording System, CONNECT
17. Knife Crime – Key Evidence and Insights (2025)
18. Inside the Mind of a 16 Year Old (2025)
19. A Guide to Child First
20. UN Convention of the Rights of a Child
21. The sentencing of young adults: a distinct group requiring a distinct approach
22. Youth work and violence prevention
23. South Yorkshire Boys' Impact
24. School Exclusion Tracker – Centre for Social Justice (2025)
25. Government Review to Strengthen National Protocol
26. Rotherham Youth Justice Service Plan 2025-2029
27. SYMCA Police and Crime Plan 2025-2026 Performance Report
28. Foundations for a Healthy Future: Ending Poverty Together (2024)
29. Data extracted from South Yorkshire Police's Crime Recording System, CONNECT
30. Externalizing Behaviours/Violence Exposure and Suicide Among U.S. Adolescents
31. The Child of the North: Building a fairer future after COVID-19 - ARC
32. Children's substance misuse treatment statistics 2024 to 2025: report (2025)
33. Thematic Review of Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence: Sheffield (2026)
34. Going Beyond 'Safer Streets': Reducing Fatal Knife Injuries among Children and young people in England
35. Thematic Review of Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence: Sheffield (2026)
36. Going Beyond 'Safer Streets': Reducing Fatal Knife Injuries among Children and young people in England
37. Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System 2019/20 (2021)
38. Problem Orientated Policing
39. YEF Evidence – Social and Emotional Learning
40. YEF Evidence – Focussed Deterrence
41. YEF Evidence – Trauma Specific Therapies
42. YEF Evidence – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
43. Pol-Ed
44. Learn Sheffield – Effective Knife Crime Prevention Education
45. Prosocial behaviours and emotional intelligence as factors associated with healthy lifestyles and violence in adolescents (2024)

South Yorkshire Violence Prevention Partnership

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