

# A fascinating and inspiring experience



Survivor Journey workshop with Lindsay Oliver (New Beginnings Peer Support), Laura Mounsey (Harrogate Family Law), Rachel Weir (My Sister's Place), Hannah Winbolt-Lewis (IDAS) and Holly Morgan (My Sister's Place)

## Dr Ruth Smith

High Sheriff of North Yorkshire 2024-25

As I approach the seventh month of my role as High Sheriff, I can reflect on what has been a fascinating and inspiring experience. I started the year unsure of what to expect, but the role has far surpassed my expectations.

While the Burghley seminar and the regional meetings were invaluable, and the High Sheriffs' Association provided extensive resources to understand the role, the turning point for me came when I became clear about how I wanted to make a difference in my county.

In the months leading up to my year, I set three key objectives: • Support children and young people affected by domestic abuse

(DA) by raising awareness among those working with children, enabling them to provide immediate support and connect with local charities • Improve best practices for DA survivors navigating the police and court systems • Support emergency services and the judiciary, whose challenging roles can also impact their wellbeing.

Everyone tells you that the year goes very quickly and this is particularly true when you want to achieve something meaningful. With my passion around the DA agenda, mental wellbeing and young people, I wanted to use my skills and knowledge as well as the unique opportunities we have to link with the judiciary, police and DA charities. I mention all this because being clear on my focus has really helped determine how I spend my time and set criteria for the volume of invitations that I receive.

It was a fabulous evening at Ripley Castle for my summer reception, when a couple of hundred people from the county attended: judiciary, emergency services, civic, church and charities. Fantastic connections were made among the guests and it provided the opportunity to set out my plans for the year.

It has also been insightful to learn more about the criminal justice system. I have spent time with North Yorkshire Police, met four High Court judges, sat in Teesside and York courts and visited two prisons.

These visits have been fascinating particularly through the lens of the impact of trauma on children and how a significant number end up in the criminal justice system as a result of their response to experiences in their younger years.

One of the key moments so far was organising a workshop with DA



Ready for a night shift with North Yorkshire Police

charities, survivors, the judiciary, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Safer Communities and North Yorkshire Police. Together, we mapped out the survivor's journey through the police and court processes and identified 36 action points to improve their experience. The workshop was a great success, with participants demonstrating a strong commitment to implementing positive change.

I have also developed an online conference, 'Supporting Children Impacted by Trauma', for anyone who works with children and young people. Currently, we have around 80 people registered.

It has been an absolute pleasure to spend time with the Lord-Lieutenant. I was invited to the British Empire Medal investiture – it was wonderful to meet the unsung heroes in our region as they received their medals. We also visited York Women's Counselling Service as they received The King's Award for Voluntary Services.

It has been so interesting to visit the ambulance and fire services as well as numerous charities, including those supporting disabled people, children in care, helping ex-offenders get into paid employment and counselling services for women and children. I always walk away feeling both humbled by people's resilience and appreciative of the people who give their time and energy to support them.

The first seven months have been a truly unique experience. I look forward to continuing driving positive change and supporting those who dedicate their lives to serving others.



With CEO Mags Godderidge of the charity Survive