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Evaluation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme across Merseyside 2021/22

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MERSEYSIDE Violence Reduction Partnership

Merseyside Youth Association's Mentors in Violence Prevention

EVALUATION OF THE MENTORS IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION (MVP) PROGRAMME ACROSS MERSEYSIDE 2021/22

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Public Health Institute (PHI), Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), *World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention*

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About this report

Merseyside is one of the 18 areas allocated funding since 2019 by the UK Government to establish a Violence Reduction Unit. To inform the continued development of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP), in November 2019 (Quigg et al, 2020), July 2020 (Quigg et al, 2021) and June 2021, the Merseyside Academics' Violence Prevention Partnership (MAVPP)[1] were commissioned to evaluate the MVRP as a whole, and selected work programmes. This report forms one of a suite of outputs from the 2021/22 evaluation work programme, and specifically presents an evaluation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme. Additional evaluation reports for 2021/22 explore:

- The overall development and implementation of the MVRP (whole system evaluation; Quigg et al, 2022).
- The Beacon Project (Bell and Quigg, 2022).
- The Navigator Programme (Quigg et al, 2022).
- Operation Empower (Bates et al, 2022).
- The Red Umbrella Project (McCoy et al, 2022).
- The whole system approach to reducing reoffending (Harrison et al, 2022).

Evaluation outputs are available on the MVRP website: www.merseysidevrp.com/what-we-do/ or via the author.

Acknowledgements

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[1] MAVPP includes academic representatives from Merseyside universities, who represent a range of disciplines including public health, criminology, policing and psychology.

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Evaluation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme across Merseyside 2021/22

MVP is a school-based violence prevention programme, with a particular emphasis on gender-based violence, which aims to increase non-violent bystander intervention through a peer education approach. In the 2020/21 academic year, MVP was piloted in ten secondary schools across Merseyside. Findings from the evaluation of the 2020/21 pilot implementation supported the continuation of MVP. In the 2021/22 academic year, 18 new schools across Merseyside were invited to take part, whist five schools from the 2020/21 cohort continued to take part. The Public Health Institute, LJMU, were commissioned to continue evaluation of MVP in 2021/22.

Methods

Mentor surveys
Pre (N=257); Post (N=160); Follow-up (N=22)
Exploring:
- Bystander attitudes
- Perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour
- Acceptability of violence
- Gender stereotyping
- School safety and belonging
- Leadership skills
- Perceptions of training/programme
- Bystander behaviour

Mentee surveys
Pre (N=248); Post (N=237)
Exploring:
- Bystander attitudes
- Perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour
- Acceptability of violence
- Gender stereotyping
- School safety and belonging
- Leadership skills
- Perceptions of programme

School staff survey
(N=19)
Exploring:
- MVP training
- Programme implementation in their school
- Sustainability
- Barriers/facilitators
- Areas for development

Secondary data
Feedback captured by the programme implementers on perceptions and impacts of the programme from mentors, mentees, and school staff. Done through a range of methods including film, discussion groups, and feedback sheets.
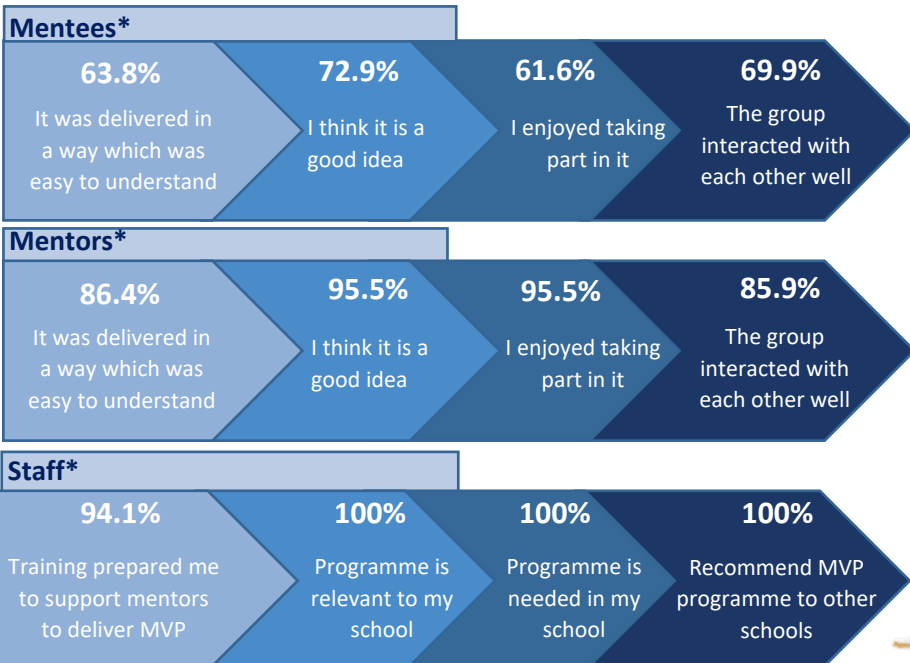
Dose/reach

48 school staff from 23 schools received the two day MVP training from MYA school development officers.

421 mentors from 22 schools received the two day MVP training. 331 mentors from 20 schools had commenced delivery of the programme to mentees.

Approximately 3,130 mentees from 20 schools received at least one MVP session. Approximately 1,950 mentees from 11 schools received all five MVP sessions.

Perceptions of the programme

Mentees*
- **63.8%** It was delivered in a way which was easy to understand
- **72.9%** I think it is a good idea
- **61.6%** I enjoyed taking part in it
- **69.9%** The group interacted with each other well

Mentors*
- **86.4%** It was delivered in a way which was easy to understand
- **95.5%** I think it is a good idea
- **95.5%** I enjoyed taking part in it
- **85.9%** The group interacted with each other well

Staff*
- **94.1%** Training prepared me to support mentors to deliver MVP
- **100%** Programme is relevant to my school
- **100%** Programme is needed in my school
- **100%** Recommend MVP programme to other schools

"The MVP programme has been completely such an amazing opportunity and one that I never thought I'd be able to experience, and one that I think is quite once in a lifetime. It's been so great to socialise with people I wouldn't normally talk to and teach them about things that I would normally not speak to anyone about." – **Mentor**

"I think the whole programme was useful as it showed real stuff that could happen and how to prevent it." **Mentee**
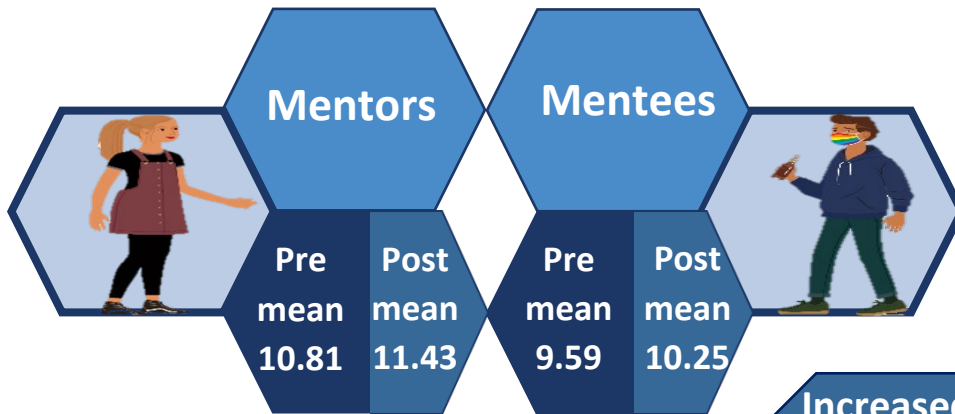
* % responding strongly agree/agree to each statement

Impacts of the programme^

Increased positive attitudes to intervene as a bystander

Mentors

| Pre mean 10.81 | Post mean 11.43 |

Mentees

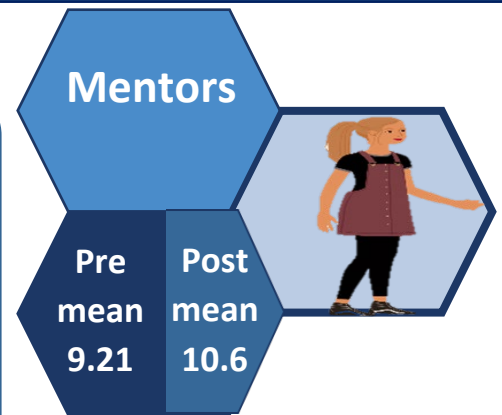| Pre mean 9.59 | Post mean 10.25 |

"I would have walked away from a fight before MVP but now I walk away and go and tell a teacher." – **Mentor**

Increased positive perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour

Mentors

| Pre mean 9.21 | Post mean 10.6 |

Decreased acceptability of violence
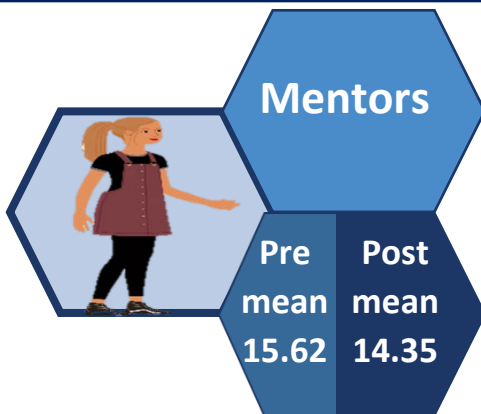
Mentors

| Pre mean 15.62 | Post mean 14.35 |

"I really enjoyed learning about the statistics and factual information on violence because it makes pupils realise what is going on in our world and how we can prevent it." – **Mentor**

"I enjoyed exploring gendered violence. I had written down a list of the pressures I felt that often overwhelmed me. It was informative and I was able to express myself and my fears without being labelled a 'man hater'." – **Mentor**

Decreased level of agreement with some gender stereotyping statements (mentors)

On a date, the boy should be expected to pay all expenses

| Pre mean 2.37 | Post mean 2.17 |

Boys are better leaders than girls

| Pre mean 1.86 | Post mean 1.69 |

Increased leadership skills
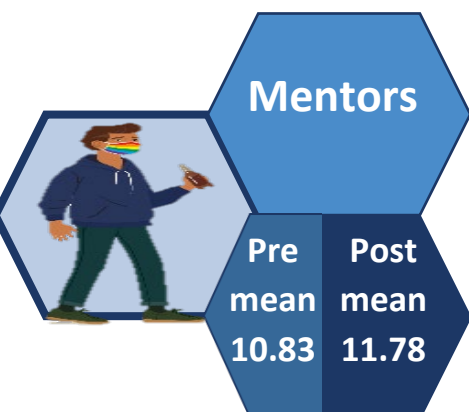
Mentors

| Pre mean 10.83 | Post mean 11.78 |

"I think one of the like main benefits of MVP is that obviously you gain lots of leadership skills and being involved with younger pupils and getting to have involvement with their lives at your school." – **Mentor**

Overall, perceptions of the implementation and the impact of the programme have been positive. Crucially, findings suggest positive changes in mentors' attitudes towards using a bystander approach, acceptability of violence, perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour, and leadership skills. Findings also showed positive changes in mentees' bystander attitudes and development of positive relationships with the mentors. Overall, findings to date support the continued implementation of MVP across Merseyside schools in 2022/23.

Executive summary

As part of a range of activities to develop, promote, and sustain a whole system public health approach to violence prevention, in 2020/21 the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) funded the development and piloting of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme. MVP is a school-based violence prevention programme, with a particular emphasis on gender-based violence, which aims to increase non-violent bystander intervention through a peer education approach to inform and empower individuals to become proactive bystanders in the face of violence. During the 2020/21 school year, MVP was implemented in ten pilot schools across Merseyside. The Public Health Institute, LJMU were commissioned to evaluate the pilot MVP programme in 2020/21, as part of the wider system evaluation of the MVRP [1, 2]. Findings suggested several key learnings about the process and impacts of MVP implementation in the pilot schools. Reports from programme implementors (Merseyside Youth Association, referred to as 'school development officers') and school staff suggested implementing the programme in Merseyside schools was feasible and the programme was adaptable to the local context. Crucially, findings suggested some important significant changes in mentors' attitudes and knowledge of the bystander approach to violence prevention. Overall, findings from the evaluation of the 2020/21 pilot implementation of MVP supported the continuation of MVP in the pilot schools and provided early evidence that MVP could be successfully rolled out in other schools across Merseyside in the 2021/22 academic year. Based on the successful pilot implementation of the MVP programme, 18 new schools across Merseyside were invited to take part in the MVP programme during the 2021/22 academic year. Schools who were previously involved in the pilot implementation were also offered support to continue implementation of the programme in the new academic year. As part of the 2021/22 wider system evaluation of the MVRP, the Public Health Institute, LJMU, were commissioned to continue evaluating the MVP programme in the 2021/22 academic year. This report includes findings from pre, post and follow-up surveys with mentors, pre and post surveys with mentees, a staff survey, and a review of secondary information collected by MYA to explore programme dose and reach, adaptation to programme content and delivery, perceptions of the programme, and impact on mentors and mentees.

> **Box 1: Overview of the Merseyside MVP programme**
> The Merseyside MVP programme consists of five core components which align with the aimed outcomes of the programme. These include exploring violence through a gendered lens, developing leadership, using a bystander approach, exploring the scope of violent behaviour, and challenging victim blaming. The programme consists of interactive scenarios and group discussions and a key concept of the programme is that it is delivered by trained student peers under the supervision of trained staff. The student mentors lead the mentees (from a younger year group) in discussions of realistic scenarios covering a range of abusive behaviour they might witness as a bystander. A list of several actions which a bystander might consider taking in the situation are then presented and discussed as a group to teach participants about appropriate actions they could take and empower them to be proactive bystanders.

Findings from the 2021/22 evaluation of the MVP programme suggested several positive findings. For the academic year 2021/22, five schools from the 2020/21 cohort committed to continuing implementation, whilst 18 new additional schools signed up to take part in the MVP programme. This was significantly more schools taking part compared to the pilot in 2020/21 (n=10).

By the end of the 2021/22 academic year:

- **48 school staff from 23 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from school development officers;
- **421 mentors from 22 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from school development officers;
- **331 mentors from 20 schools** commenced **delivery** of the programme to mentees;
- **Approximately 3,130 mentees from 20 schools** received **at least one session**;
- **Approximately 1,950 mentees from 11 schools** received **at least the minimum five sessions** (2 schools had delivered an additional optional session);
- A total of **9 schools** took up the **film media offer** and made **14 films** raising awareness on various topics related to violence and abuse; and,
- **157 mentors and 25 teachers from 12 schools** attended the **graduation ceremony** at the end of the academic year at Liverpool museum to celebrate their successfully involvement in the programme.

Thus, by the end of the 2021/22 academic year all schools had participated in staff training, whilst programme delivery had commenced in most schools, and crucially approximately half (48%) of schools had delivered all five sessions to the mentees. This represents a substantial improvement on programme completion levels compared to the 2020/21 academic year, when just two of the ten (20%) schools delivered all five sessions to mentees.

Overall, staff, mentor, and mentee perceptions of the implementation and impact of the programme were positive. Whilst larger sample sizes are required in future evaluation, particularly for mentees, the evaluation identified several key impacts of the programme on mentors and mentees, which aligned with the aimed outcomes of the programme and theory of change. Specifically, there were positive changes in mentors' attitudes towards using a bystander approach, acceptability of violence, perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour, and leadership skills. There were also some positive changes in statements related to gender stereotyping, and wider impacts for mentors including development of skills, increased confidence and self-esteem, and development of supportive relationships with MYA development officers. Whilst evidence of positive changes for mentees was more limited, there were significant positive changes in bystander attitudes, and indications of development of positive relationships with their mentor peers. Overall findings to date suggest several key learnings for programme implementation and evaluation and supports the continued implementation of the MVP programme across Merseyside schools in 2022/23.

Recommendations

Programme implementation

- To date much of the focus of the programme has been on mentors. The quality of the session content and delivery to the mentees should be of the same standard as that received by mentors. Ensure an adult who is familiar with the programme content (either MVP trained school staff and/or school development officer) is present and engaged in every session delivered by mentors to mentees to manage behaviour and facilitate and monitor the quality and appropriateness of content and discussions. This school staff member should also be confident in dealing with disclosures and supporting upset/distressed students and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Ideally, they would have knowledge of trauma-informed approaches.

- Ensure a school staff member is present during all mentor training sessions delivered by the school development officers to manage any disruptive behaviour and/or provide safeguarding if required.

- Design and implement a standard system of routine data collection to ensure consistent, accurate data is capture on: programme dose and reach for all components of the programme (including staff training, mentor training and delivery, and mentee participation); and, school level adaptations to programme content and delivery.

Programme evaluation

- Encourage schools to participate in the evaluation at the point they commit to implementing the programme.

- Provide schools with school level outcome data to encourage participation in evaluation. Many of the outcome measures associated with MVP are PSHE indicators and schools can use this data to demonstrate impact in these areas.

- Encourage schools where possible to take part in a quasi-experimental design, where surveys are administered to a control group of students not receiving MVP to allow for analysis of between school variation.

1. Introduction

Interpersonal violence is a global public health issue, with severe consequences for individuals' health and social prospects across the lifecourse and affects families, communities, and wider society, placing significant burdens on public services including health, criminal justice, social services, and other sectors. Internationally and across the UK, there is growing recognition of the advantages of adopting a public health approach to violence prevention which aims to promote population level health and wellbeing by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood of violence and promoting protective factors.

Since 2019, the UK Home Secretary has allocated funding to Police and Crime Commissioners in several areas to set up and sustain multi-agency violence reduction units. Merseyside was one of the areas allocated funding and established the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP). Over the past three years, the MVRP supported the development and implementation of a range of interventions and activities to develop, promote, and sustain a whole system public health approach to violence prevention, including funding the implementation of a range of targeted violence prevention programmes. One of the programmes was the school-based Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme (delivered by Merseyside Youth Association [MYA]), which has a particular emphasis on gender-based violence and aims to increase non-violent bystander intervention through a peer education approach to inform and empower individuals to become proactive bystanders in the face of violence and other harmful behaviours [3, 4]. The Merseyside MVP programme consists of five core components which align with the aimed outcomes of the programme [1]. These include exploring violence through a gendered lens, developing leadership, using a bystander approach, exploring the scope of violent behaviour, and challenging victim blaming. The programme consists of interactive scenarios and group discussions and a key concept of the programme is that it is delivered by trained student peers under the supervision of trained staff. The student mentors lead their peers (typically from a younger year group) in discussions of realistic scenarios covering a range of abusive behaviour they might witness as a bystander. A list of several actions which a bystander might consider taking in the situation are then presented and discussed as a group to teach participants about appropriate actions they could take and empower them to be proactive bystanders. Figure 1 provides an overview of the MVP programme implementation process, Box 2 gives an overview of the individuals and their roles in the implementation of MVP across Merseyside, and Appendix 1 provides a programme logic model, mapping inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

Figure 1: MVP programme implementation process model
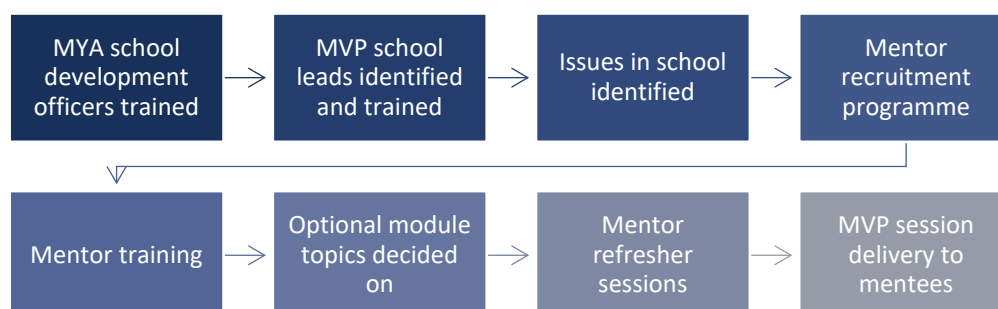
Box 2: Overview of roles and individuals involved in the MVP programme

Mentors: Secondary school students (typically Key Stage 4, aged 14-15 years) trained by the school development officers to deliver the MVP programme.

Mentees: Secondary school students (typically Key Stage 3, aged 11-14 years) who take part in the MVP programme.

MVP school leads: Two school staff members (a senior leadership team [SLT] lead and non-teaching pastoral staff member) from each school, trained by the school development officers in the MVP Mentor Support Team Professional Learning Programme to support and supervise the implementation of the MVP programme in their school.

School development officers: Four MYA (organisation commissioned to deliver MVP) staff trained in the MVP Mentor Support Team Professional Learning Programme who train the school team and the mentors in delivering the programme and provide ongoing support. Each school is assigned one of the four school development officers to support implementation.

Other key stakeholders: Two other MYA staff, the programme manager and communications officer; two members of the MVRP, the Education Lead and Youth and Community Engagement Lead; and the LJMU evaluation team.

During the 2020/21 academic year, MVP was implemented in ten pilot schools across Merseyside. The Public Health Institute, LJMU were commissioned to evaluate the pilot MVP programme in 2020/21, as part of the wider system evaluation of the MVRP [1, 2]. Findings suggested several key learnings about the process and impacts of MVP implementation in the pilot schools. Reports from school development officers and school staff suggested implementing the programme in Merseyside schools was feasible and the programme was adaptable to the local context. Adaptations to programme content and delivery included: inclusion of mental wellbeing and resilience components; identifying school specific issues and delivering optional modules based on these issues (e.g. racism); adaptation of the core content to the local Merseyside context (e.g. aligning sessions to PSHE outcomes and including Merseyside statistics on violence); and, delivering the programme based on individual school preferences and within COVID-19 restrictions (e.g. delivering training online). Findings from surveys and focus groups with mentors demonstrated that students really enjoyed the concept of MVP, including the subject content and peer-education model of delivery. Crucially, findings suggested some important significant changes in mentors' attitudes and knowledge of the bystander approach to violence prevention. In addition, a number of other positive short-term outcomes for mentors were identified including increases in leadership skills, confidence, positive peer relationships and school participation, and aspects of resilience, including self-esteem, problem solving skills, empathy, and goals and aspirations. Reports from school staff and mentors, and findings from the mentee post programme survey, suggested that the programme was also positively received by the mentees; in particular they liked that it was delivered by fellow students rather than teachers. Staff felt the programme had improved mentees' knowledge of violence, whilst mentors reported that mentees had come to recognise them around the schools and felt this could provide a means for mentees to access support if they did not want to talk to an adult. Overall, findings from the evaluation of the 2020/21 pilot implementation of MVP supported the continuation of MVP in the pilot schools and provided early evidence that MVP could be successfully rolled out in other schools across Merseyside in the 2021/22 academic year.

For the 2021/22 academic year 18 new schools across Merseyside were invited to take part in the MVP programme. Each school who took part in the programme was asked to commit to:
- 2-day training of an MVP school team (a senior leadership team [SLT] lead and non-teaching pastoral staff member);
- 2-day training of a selected group of potential mentors; and,
- Roll-out of a minimum of five MVP sessions to mentees.

Two schools who were part of the 2020/21 cohort but who were unable to implement the programme in that academic year were also invited to form part of the new 2021/22 cohort of schools and received the full programme of support from school development officers. Three schools from the 2020/21 cohort continued implementation for the academic year 2021/22. These schools were provided with light touch support from the school development officers, including a training session for new mentors and some support with programme delivery (e.g., session preparation for mentors), but school staff were expected to provide most of the implementation support as part of a sustainable approach to delivery. A new element to the 2021/22 programme was the offer of the opportunity for mentors to take part in film media to raise awareness of the topics important to them, and to take part in Merseyside wide mentor graduation ceremonies held at Liverpool museum at the end of the academic year. As part of the 2021/22 wider system evaluation of the MVRP, the Public Health Institute, LJMU, were commissioned to continue evaluating the MVP programme in the 2021/22 academic year.

1.1 Study aims and objectives

The current study aims to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the MVP programme during the 2021/22 school year. The evaluation had two core objectives, which include several research questions.

1. To monitor, document and describe the implementation of the MVP programme (process evaluation).
   - To identify how much of the intervention was piloted (dose);
   - To explore the uptake of the programme amongst the target population (reach); and,
   - To document and describe adaptations to programme content and delivery across schools.

2. To assess the perceptions and impacts of the MVP programme (outcome evaluation).
   - To explore school staff, mentor, and mentee perceptions of the training and the programme; and,
   - To identify changes in mentor and mentee attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours related to: violence prevention and bystander behaviour; gender stereotyping; acceptability of violence; perceptions of other student's willingness to intervene in problematic situations; and, feelings of belonging to, and safety at school.

2. Methodology

To meet study objectives, a range of methods were implemented with findings triangulated to inform the evaluation.

2.1 Methods

2.1.1 Review of project documentation

Documentation, materials, and correspondence produced throughout the implementation of the MVP programme in each of the schools were collated and reviewed. This included information on programme content, any individual level school changes to content or format of the programme, and data collected by MYA (e.g., pre-implementation surveys which sought to identify the perceived issues for each individual school). In addition, researchers regularly observed the development and implementation of the MVP programme through attending monthly steering group meetings and training. Information collected through such review and observation is used throughout the findings to complement data collected by other methods.

2.1.2 Mentor surveys

Pre and post training surveys were implemented with all mentors taking part in the training. 257 mentors completed the pre training mentor survey and 160 completed the post training survey, and of these, 137 pre and post surveys could be matched. 22 mentors completed the follow-up survey at post programme delivery, and of these, nine pre and follow-up surveys could be matched. Surveys aimed to identify individual level changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours related to: violence prevention and bystander behaviour; gender stereotyping; acceptability of violence; perceptions of other student's willingness to intervene in problematic situations; and, feelings of belonging to, and safety at school. Survey questions included: basic demographic information; perceptions of the training/programme content, delivery and usefulness (post and follow-up only); and a number of validated measures (pre, post, and follow-up) including:

- **Bystander Intervention Survey** [5]: 6-item scale measuring perceptions of leadership skills and attitudes to intervening in problematic situations. Participants indicate on a five-point scale how much they agree with each item (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Scores are summed on the three items related to leadership skills and the three items related to attitudes to intervening to provide an overall score on the leadership subscale and bystander attitudes subscale respectively. Higher scores indicate better leadership skills and more positive bystander attitudes.
- **Attitude toward Violence scale** [6]**:** 6-item scale measuring attitudes toward violence and acceptability, particularly in relation to fighting**.** Participants indicate on a five-point scale how much they agree with each item (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Scores on each item are summed to produce an overall total score, with higher scores indicating higher acceptance of violence and limited use of nonviolent strategies.
- **Attitudes toward Women scale** [7]**:** 12-item scale measuring gender stereotyping. Participants indicate on a five-point scale how much they agree with each item (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Scores on each item are summed to produce an overall total score, with higher scores indicating higher acceptance of gender stereotyping.
- **Student School Survey** [8]**:** 4-item scale measuring informal social control through assessing perceptions of other student's frequency of intervening in problematic situations. Participants indicate on a four-point scale how often they think other students would intervene (never to

always). Scores on each item are summed to produce an overall total score, with higher scores indicating perceived higher frequency of other student's likelihood to intervene.

2.1.3 Mentee surveys

Pre and post programme surveys were implemented with mentees taking part in the programme. 248 mentees completed the pre programme survey and 237 completed the post programme survey, and of these, 62 pre and post surveys could be matched. Survey questions included the same validated measures as mentor surveys (above), as well as basic demographics and perceptions of the programme content, delivery, and usefulness (post only).

2.1.4 School staff survey

An online survey was distributed to school staff who had taken part in the MVP training at the end of the 2021/22 academic year. Nineteen staff from 10 schools completed the survey. The survey explored staff perceptions on the MVP training, programme implementation in their school, sustainability, facilitating factors and challenges or barriers to implementation, and areas for development.

2.1.5 Secondary data of mentor/mentee/staff feedback

In addition to the survey tools used in this independent evaluation, MYA, the programme implementers, also informally captured qualitative feedback on perceptions and impacts of the programme from mentors, mentees, and school staff. This was done through a range of methods including film, discussion groups, graduation ceremonies, and feedback sheets. This information is used throughout the findings to complement the quantitative data captured via the evaluation surveys.

2.2 Data analyses

Quantitative analyses were undertaken in SPSS (v27) using descriptive statistics. Where data was available to match mentors'/mentees' pre and post training/programme surveys, paired samples t-tests were used to identify statistically significant changes from pre to post training/programme on several measures (e.g., mean scores on violence prevention knowledge pre and post training/programme). Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data from the surveys, and secondary feedback data [9]. The analysis is presented with illustrative quotes where appropriate to highlight key findings.

2.3 Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University (REC no. 20/PHI/019), and the study adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki.

3. Findings

3.1 Dose and reach

In the previous 2020/21 academic year, ten schools across Merseyside signed up to take part in the MVP programme (Figure 2). Of those ten pilot schools, seven delivered at least one session to mentees (see Butler et al., 2021). For the academic year 2021/22, five schools from the 2020/21 cohort committed to continuing implementation, whilst 18 new additional schools signed up to take part in the MVP programme (including one SEN school) (Figure 3).

By the end of the 2021/22 academic year:

- **48 school staff from 23 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from MYA school development officers;
- **421 mentors from 22 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from MYA school development officers;
- **331 mentors from 20 schools** commenced **delivery** of the programme to mentees;
- **Approximately 3,130 mentees from 20 schools** received **at least one session**;
- **Approximately 1,950 mentees from 11 schools** received **at least the minimum five sessions** (2 schools had delivered an additional optional session);
- A total of **9 schools** took up the **film media offer** and made **14 films** raising awareness on various topics related to violence and abuse; and,
- **157 mentors and 25 teachers from 12 schools** attended the **graduation ceremony** at the end of the academic year at Liverpool museum to celebrate their successfully involvement in the programme.

A breakdown of the dose and reach of the programme within each school is provided in Table 1.

Figure 2: MVP schools 2020/21
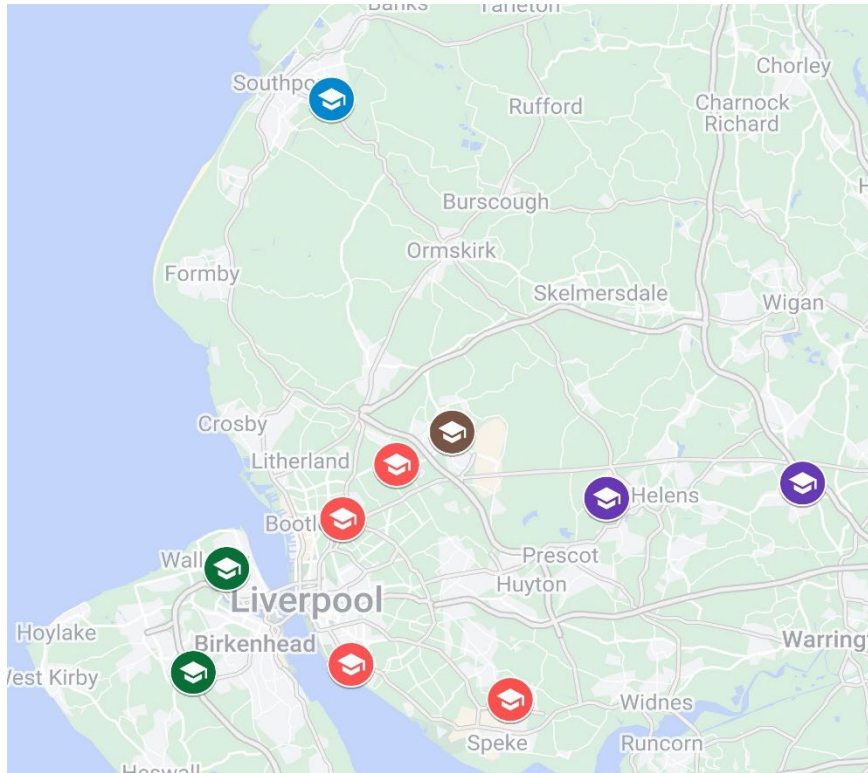
🎓 Dixons Fazakerley Academy   🎓 Meols Cop High School

🎓 Halewood Academy   🎓 De La Salle School

🎓 King's Leadership Academy   🎓 Hope Academy

🎓 The Alsop High School   🎓 The Oldershaw School

🎓 All Saints   🎓 Woodchurch High School

Figure 3: MVP schools 2021/22
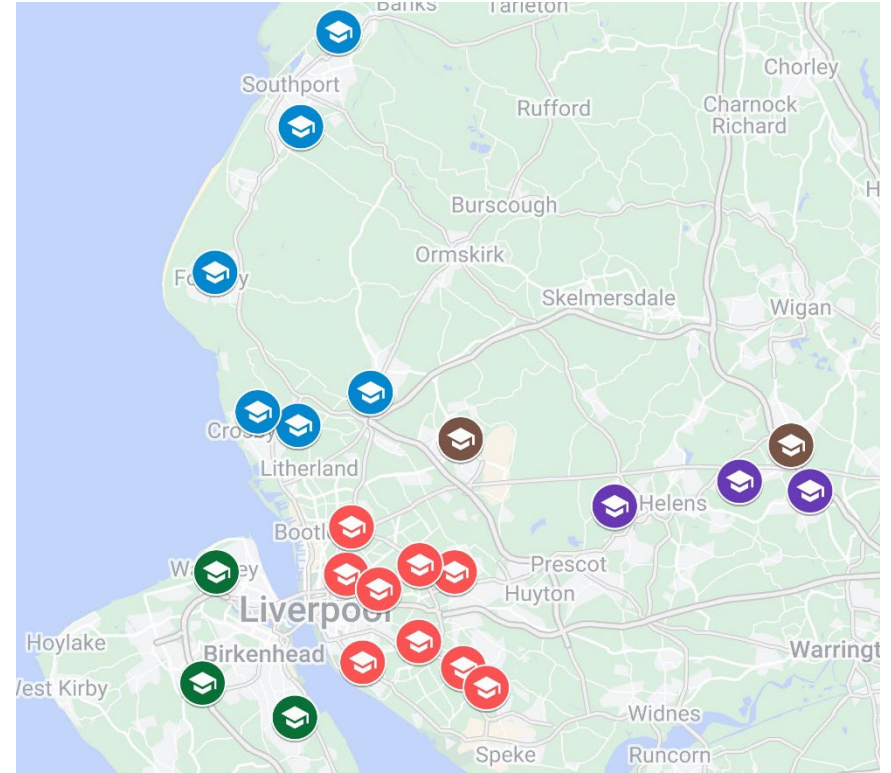
🎓 Abbot's Lea School   🎓 Chesterfield High School

🎓 Broughton Hall   🎓 Christ the King

🎓 Holly Lodge Girls' College   🎓 Formby High School

🎓 North Liverpool Academy   🎓 Maghull High School

🎓 St. Julie's   🎓 Stanley High School

🎓 Saint Francis of Assisi   🎓 St Michael's

🎓 The Alsop High School   🎓 De La Salle School

🎓 The Belvedere Academy   🎓 Hope Academy

🎓 Liverpool Blue Coat   🎓 Outwood Academy Haydock

🎓 All Saints   🎓 St John Plessington

🎓 St Edmund Arrowsmith   🎓 St Mary's Catholic College

🎓 Woodchurch High School

Table 1: MVP programme dose and reach by school, MYA secondary data (2021/22)

School number[a]	Staff training complete	Number of staff trained	Mentor training complete	Number of mentors trained	Number of mentors implementing sessions	Number of mentees	Core 1	Core 2	Optional 1	Optional 2	Optional 3	Optional 4
1	✓	2	✓	20	20	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	✓	3	✓	20	4	~60	✓					
3	✓	2	✓	15	13	~40	✓	✓				
4	✓	2	✓	19	N/A	N/A						
5	✓	2	✓	19	19	~180	✓	✓	✓			
6	✓	2	✓	20	16	~120	✓					
7	✓	2	✓	22	12	~60	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	✓	2	x	N/A	N/A	N/A						
9	✓	2	✓	16	16	~120	✓					
10	✓	2	✓	8	N/A	N/A						
11	✓	2	✓	28	8	~240	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	✓	1	✓	9	28	~90	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	✓	2	✓	26	8	~180	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	✓	2	✓	26	26	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	✓	2	✓	24	24	~180	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	✓	2	✓	20	16	~120	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
17	✓	2	✓	21	21	~180	✓					
18	✓	2	✓	21	21	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓		
19	✓	2	✓	16	N/A	N/A						
20	✓	2	✓	15	15	~240	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21	✓	2	✓	22	22	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	✓	2	✓	17	17	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
23	✓	4	✓	17	17	~210	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Note. [a] Schools have been assigned numbers to protect confidentiality. N/A: Not applicable, schools did not get to this point of programme implementation.

3.2 Programme content and delivery adaptations

Most schools which were involved in MVP in 2021/22 received the full package of support from MYA development officers including staff and mentor training, refresher sessions for mentors, and oversight of mentor programme delivery to the mentees. Two schools which were part of the 2020/21 cohort also received the full package of support from MYA development officers because they hadn't undertaken the full programme in 2020/21. Three schools from the 2020/21 cohort received light touch support from the MYA development officers to implement the MVP programme again in 2021/22. This involved training another cohort of mentors and support with delivery of core one and core two programme sessions, but optional sessions were delivered by mentors on their own (with school staff support).

All staff and mentor training in 2021/22 was delivered face-to-face. In most schools, staff chose the students who would be mentors. Three schools ran an assembly to provide an overview of the programme to the year group selected to draw mentors from, and then invited interested students to apply for the position of mentor. Staff used these applications to then choose who would be mentors in their school. The majority of schools drew their mentors from year 10, and mentors delivered the programme to mentees in year 7 and/or year 8. One school did not use specific year groups to determine mentors/mentees but chose based on the most appropriate individuals suited to the different roles in the programme.

Schools who signed up to the MVP programme were asked to commit to completing the Core 1 and Core 2 sessions and a minimum further 3 sessions from a choice of 20 additional topics. Core 1 and Core 2 sessions focus on MVP core values and approach, specifically the bystander approach and gender-based violence. Optional topics included; insults, online abuse, being left out, rumours, dating abuse, controlling behaviour, sexting, sexual harassment in school, shaming/labelling, carrying weapons, homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, viewing pornography, child sexual exploitation, impact of pornography on relationships, alcohol and consent, county lines, suicide, racism, and disability. Prior to programme implementation school wide surveys were conducted by MYA to identify the issues which were of primary concern to staff and students in each school and these results were used to inform the choice of topics for the three additional sessions. The most commonly identified issue of concern across schools was racism, followed by online abuse, and suicide.

A breakdown of programme content and delivery adaptations within each school is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: MVP programme content and delivery adaptations by school, MYA secondary data

School number[a]	Level of support from school development officers[b]	Mode of staff training	Identification of mentors	Mode of mentor training	Mentor year group	Mentee year group	MVP optional sessions[c]																					
							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7								✓			✓								✓	
2	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 8		✓																✓	✓	
3	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Mixed	Mixed	✓	✓																	✓	
4	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 8																				
5	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 8		✓							✓										✓	
6	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓	✓																✓	
7	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓								✓									✓	
8	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face																						
9	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7									✓									✓	✓	
10	2020/21 cohort: light touch	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7																				
11	2020/21 cohort: light touch	Face-to-face	Assembly and application/picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7	✓	✓									✓								✓	
12	2020/21 cohort: light touch	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7	✓	✓		✓																
13	2020/21 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10 and 13	Year 7 and 8	✓										✓								✓	
14	2020/21 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Assembly and application/picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7	✓																✓		✓	
15	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Assembly and application/picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7											✓							✓	✓	
16	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓	✓																✓	
17	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7																				
18	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓							✓										✓	
19	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 9	Year 8		✓																✓	✓	
20	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓																✓	✓	
21	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓																✓	✓	
22	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓																✓	✓	
23	2021/22 cohort: full support	Face-to-face	Picked by staff	Face-to-face	Year 10	Year 7		✓																✓	✓	

Note: [a] Schools have been assigned numbers to protect confidentiality. [b] 2021/22 cohort: full support – schools which implemented for the first time in 2021/22 and received full support from school development officers; 2020/21 cohort: full support – schools which partially implemented in 2020/21 but needed to start again in 2021/22 requiring full support from school development officers; 2020/21 cohort: light touch – schools which successfully implemented in 2020/21 and received basic support from school development officers. [c] MVP optional session: 1=insults, 2=online abuse, 3=being left out, 4=rumours, 5=dating abuse, 6=controlling behaviour, 7=sexting, 8=sexual harassment in school, 9=shaming/labelling, 10=carrying weapons, 11=homophobic bullying, 12=transphobic bullying, 13=viewing pornography, 14=child sexual exploitation, 15=impact of pornography on relationships, 16=alcohol and consent, 17=county lines, 18=suicide, 19=racism, and 20=disability.

3.3 Perceptions of the MVP training

3.3.1 Perceptions of the MVP school staff training

Findings on school staff perceptions of the training content and delivery were overall very positive, with the majority (94.1%; n=16) of staff strongly agreeing or agreeing with each statement (Figure 4). Perceptions of the impact of the training on preparedness to implement the programme were also very positive, with 70.6% (n=12) strongly agreeing, and 27.3% (n=4) agreeing that the training prepared them to support mentors to deliver the programme (Figure 4).

Figure 4: School staff perceptions of the training, staff survey
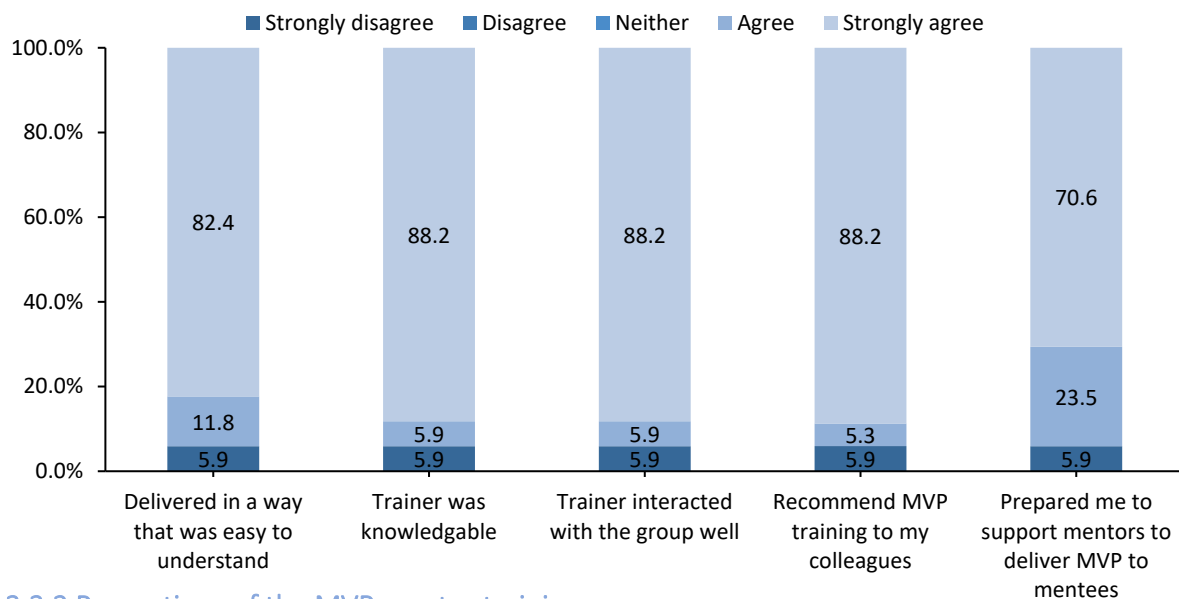
3.3.2 Perceptions of the MVP mentor training

Findings from the mentor post-training survey demonstrated the majority supported and had positive perceptions of the MVP mentor training. After taking part in the training, mentors were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with several statements about the training using a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Figure 5). Most mentors agreed (including strongly agree and agree) that: they enjoyed taking part in the training (96.7%; n=148); they thought it was a good idea (98.0%; n=150); the group interacted with each other well during training (94.1%; n=143); and the training was delivered in a way that was easy to understand (95.4%; n=145).

Figure 5: Mentors' perceptions of the training, post training survey
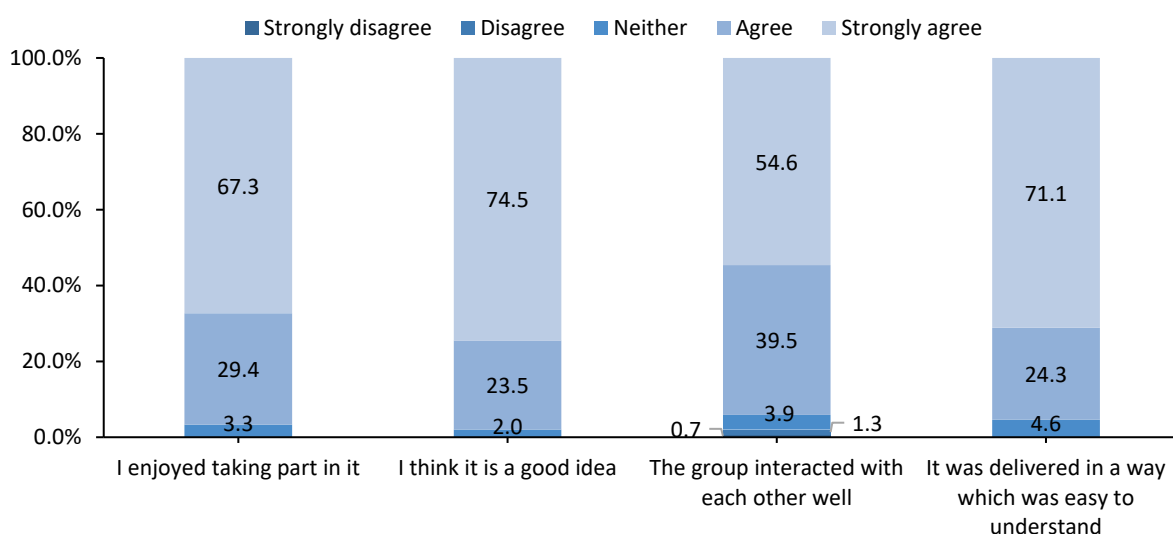
3.4 Perceptions of the MVP programme

This section triangulates quantitative and qualitative data from various sources including surveys, MYA secondary data, correspondence with key stakeholders, films, and a graduation event to analyse mentors, mentees, and staffs' perceptions and experiences of MVP programme delivery (i.e., mentor delivering sessions to mentees).

3.4.1 Overall perceptions and experiences of the MVP programme

Overall perceptions and experiences of taking part in the MVP programme were overwhelmingly positive from mentors, mentees and staff. All staff (100%; n=19) who took part in the staff survey agreed[2] that the programme content is relevant to their school, that the programme is needed in their school, and that they would recommend the MVP programme to other schools (Figure 6). Overall, most mentors had a positive perception and experience of delivering the programme to the mentees. Nine in ten (95.5%; n=22) mentors agreed[2] that they enjoyed taking part in delivering the programme and thought it was a good idea (Figure 7). Six in ten (61.6%; n=98) mentees agreed[2] that they enjoyed taking part in the programme and seven in ten (72.9%; n=118) agreed the programme was a good idea (Figure 8).

"The MVP programme has been completely such an amazing opportunity and one that I never thought I'd be able to experience, and one that I think is quite once in a lifetime. It's been so great to socialise with people I wouldn't normally talk to and teach them about things that I would normally not speak to anyone about." – **Mentor, film**

"I think the whole programme was useful as it showed real stuff that could happen and how to prevent it." – **Mentee, post survey**

"I'd say that it is a programme that offers more than what you would probably expect. It gives young people an awareness of the wider issues that they are exposed to but also by them educating it to the young people in the school I think there is possibly a bigger impact as the younger ones listen to their peers and then that relationship also develops over the long term." – **Staff, film**

3.4.2 Programme delivery

Peer delivery

Over eight in ten mentors (86.4%; n=19) and almost seven in ten (69.9%; n=107) mentees agreed[2] the group interacted well together during the programme (Figure 7 and 8). Both mentors and staff felt that what worked well about the programme was that the sessions were delivered by students and not teachers and this facilitated discussion. Crucially this was also noted by many of the mentees in the post programme survey as

"It was good that the students from year 9 led it instead of a random teacher." – **Mentee, post survey**

"Our younger students responded really well to being led by older students as opposed to teachers and this resulted in meaningful discussions which then led to small, but relevant and positive cultural and attitudinal shifts with the year group." – **Staff, staff survey**

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[2] Including strongly agree and agree.

something that worked well about the programme and helped them to engage and understand the topics *"I think having students teach it made it easier to understand"*. Many mentees also reported that the mentors were nice, engaging, and supportive throughout, and they enjoyed the freedom to express their opinions *"I enjoyed the freedom of being able to have different views and opinions on a certain topic".* Some mentors felt that further work could be done to ensure that sessions were not too scripted and therefore 'teacher like' *"I felt that when we were delivering the sessions, we were delivering them too much like teachers? I feel that it could have been more successful if the session plans were less formal"*. However, many, mentors described how they often adapted the scripted content to encourage engagement and ensure mentees understood the messages. Further, some mentors acknowledged that this adaptation might need to be done on a class-by-class or even student-by-student basis to account for differences in ability.

> *"I think I've definitely learned to adapt to the needs and like the preferences of the different children because all groups of children are, it's a wide variety, so some might suffer with learning disabilities and also might be anxious and things like that, so learning to overcome that. I'm making it a comfortable place with them and making it a space where they are OK with talking to others."* – **Mentor, graduation event**

Support and relationship with MYA development officers

Both mentors and staff referenced the support from MYA school development officers as crucial to programme implementation and perceived impact of the programme on mentors in particular. Staff and mentors reported close relationships between the MYA school development officer and mentors, and crucially how this supportive relationship fostered mentors' confidence and capacity to deliver the programme to mentees. Mentors felt able to express their thoughts and opinions with the MYA school development officers even if these perspectives were then challenged *"I loved how it was a safe space for everyone to express their opinions. You were never told your opinion was wrong or invalid but [encouraged] to broaden your view".* It was clear from mentor feedback that a key part of the enjoyment of the programme was working with the development officers with many mentors mentioning them by name and reporting how much they enjoyed their approach *"I enjoyed when [school development officer] would get everyone involved by asking 3 simple questions, it got everybody engaged with what everyone had to say"*. Staff echoed this view and spoke about the practical support the development officers provided them in implementing the programme.

> *"Continued engagement and oversight by external partners including initial training for staff and mentors facilitated positive relationship building and the ability of students to deliver content – ensuring that mentors felt valued and helping to support staff when needed."* – **Staff, staff survey**

> *"The link with [MYA development officer] worked brilliantly. They supported our staff and students throughout. They were always available whenever we needed help and they had a real impact on our mentors."* – **Staff, staff survey**

> *"Input from [MYA development officer] was fantastic. Students formed really positive relationships with them during the training which resulted in them communicating with them afterwards when seeking advice and support with aspects of the programme."* – **Staff, staff survey**

Sufficient time allocation

A suggested area for future development and improvement of the programme was to have more time dedicated to the programme. Mentors felt they needed more time planning the sessions, and that it would be useful to have time to do assemblies and deliver to other classes and year groups. Crucially, mentors suggested that training and programme delivery should not be so far apart *"making sure that you train us and then in that month start our sessions with the younger year groups so we remember it".* Staff also felt that mentees would forget the sessions if messages were not reinforced in other ways throughout the school. Following this feedback, MYA school development officers developed an MVP booklet for schools to use to reflect on conversations taking place and suggestions for other related activities that could be implemented. Whilst staff and mentors spoke about needing more time dedicated to the programme, most participants in the staff survey highlighted that time was the biggest barrier to programme implementation, both in terms of getting mentors off timetable to do the training, refresher sessions, deliver to. Furthermore, some mentors reported that they did not like missing lesson times to attend training or implement the programme. A proposed solution to this, by MYA school development officers, was to consider delivering sessions during PSHE lesson slots as MVP covers aspects of the PSHE curriculum, or in mental health and wellbeing slots that some schools include in their timetabling. In addition to ensuring adequate and appropriate timing for mentors, both staff and MYA development officers highlighted the importance of considering sufficient staff time to support programme implementation. In some schools, trained MVP staff were not always available to be present in the room while mentors were delivering the sessions to mentees. It was often staff who had the mentees during the time slot the programme was being delivered (e.g. English teacher during English period), rather than the school's MVP trained staff member. This was perceived by MYA development officers to be problematic and a barrier to fidelity, as staff who were unfamiliar with the programme were unable to monitor the quality of the messages being delivered by the mentors, and provide support where needed. Further, it was the perception of the MYA school development officers that the schools where the programme was working best was in ones where the school staff member was fully engaged in programme delivery and actively engaging in the sessions to support and facilitate discussion. It was therefore considered crucial that the staff member supervising programme delivery was familiar with the materials, ideally because they had received the MVP training but if not, because they had received the materials from the trained staff member and familiarised themselves with the content beforehand.

Sustainability

All staff participating in the staff survey (100%; n=24) agreed that they would like to see the MVP programme continue to be delivered in their school. However, while most staff (83.4%; n=20) agreed that they would 'feel confident training new cohorts of mentors and supporting them to implement the MVP programme in the future', a small percentage disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed (16.6%; n=4). Light touch support was provided this year to schools who had previously implemented the programme in 2020/21 and this included training a new cohort of mentors and supporting the implementation of core sessions 1 and 2. Thus, to date, even schools who were in their second year of implementation were still receiving most of the support package offered by MYA. MYA development officers have also been exploring the role of mentors in sustainability. At present mentors are

> *"Concerned with sustainability, assistance with this until all are confident with delivery etc."* – **Staff, staff survey**

> *"Mentors have also started to give 1-to-1 sessions to younger students who have been passive bystanders in school."* – **Staff, staff survey**

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usually drawn from the year group below exam year so in the subsequent year of programme role out, these students are usually no longer able to deliver the programme. However, MYA development officers and staff have been trialling other ways mentors can continue to be involved and support sustainability. Suggestions included mentors becoming MVP ambassadors in schools and within their local communities, for example attending relevant events such as the NOW Festival in 2023 on violence prevention. One school staff member reported *"within the 6ᵗʰ form, we have appointed an MVP Ambassador who is now recruiting a team from within the school to support the rolling out of the MVP programme in younger year groups".* Other staff suggested resources like lanyards, hoodies, and badges would be useful to highlight to other students who the Mentor Ambassadors within the school are. In addition, it was suggested that previously trained mentors who are no longer involved in programme delivery could still be involved in one off general assemblies and other similar events presenting MVP topics. Recognition for the mentors was a recommendation from evaluation of MVP in year one, and in July 2022 a graduation event for the mentors was organised by MYA, with attendance from the PCC, MVRP, and LJMU evaluation team. Feedback from the event was extremely positive and it provided a forum for mentors from different schools to meet and share experiences.

3.4.3 Programme content

Session topics and resources relevant to young people

Staff reported that students having ownership over the content of the optional sessions was important and *"helped to facilitate their positive engagement with the programme".*

Mentors also reported that discussing issues relevant to them as young people was something that worked really well about the programme. A key factor in determining which optional topics to focus on is the survey conducted by MYA prior to programme delivery. This aims to identify the perceived top issues at each school by staff and by students. Often there is a disparity between the top issues chosen by staff and those identified by students. This highlights the importance of the pre programme survey in ensuring that young people's voice is captured and issues that are most relevant to them are included in programme delivery to support engagement and impact.

> *"Both the younger students and mentors themselves were able to reflect on world issues that affect them and identify their own behaviour in real life scenarios."* – **Mentor, follow-up survey**

> *"We do a survey with staff, but also the same survey with young people and what we've seen is a disparity in their answers. So young people have rated racism, online abuse, and suicide as the top three issues they want addressed in but staff, they've rated, racism is 10th and suicide is 17th on their list. So actually, it's really highlighted the importance of youth voice and asking them, you know what are the issues that you see on the corridor and what it allows us to do as an organisation is tailor that MVP curriculum to try and combat those very real issues that are happening."* – **MYA development officer, correspondence**

Some mentees felt there should be more focus on gender, and specially how violence affects males too. Many mentees also suggested including more topics and discussing topics more in depth. One mentee suggested there should be more prior warning about sensitive topics. Several mentees reported that messages needed to be explained more and made clearer and the wording was specifically mentioned to *"make wording easier for younger children".* Many mentors and staff suggested including more local content. This was being developed on an ongoing basis by MYA programme deliverers, specifically the use of a filming company to allow students involved in MVP to design and produce films for a range of scenarios in the MVP programme to make them relevant to

the local context and population of Merseyside. Furthermore, work was done to embed more local statistics on crime and Merseyside organisations working in violence prevention.

> *"In PHSE you just listen to what they tell you about it, but in MVP, you actually do something to help. What is going wrong, like stopping bullying, stopping racism, and helping other students."* – **Mentor, film**

Relevance of the content of the MVP programme was further demonstrated with its links to other subject curriculum, most notably PSHE (statutory requirements which include topics such as internet safety and harms; relationships, pornography, violence against women and girls). Mentors noted however that MVP went beyond how and what they learned in PSHE lessons and brought subjects into a real-world context with demonstration of practical ways of addressing issues learned about in PSHE *"I think MVP is needed in schools because the only time we get to talk about stuff like this other than MVP is in PSHE… we learn lots but then it's more like on paper and it's less in person in a way"*. MVP programme content also echoed work covered in less obviously linked subjects such as English *"The feedback from the English staff was extremely positive; they could definitely see the value in the Year 7s being educated by the Year 10s. They felt that the Year 7s understood the key messages and the content generated some really in-depth discussions, as it mirrored some of the themes in 'The Tempest'"*.

Interactive nature of programme and session activities
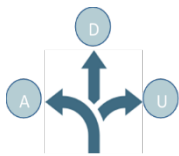
Over eight in ten mentors (86.4%; n=19) and seven in ten (73.8%; n=118) mentees agreed[2] that the programme was delivered in a way that was easy to understand for the mentees (Figure 7 and 8). Staff also reported that the novel way of delivering content was a positive way of engaging the mentees in the topics *"It was a different way we could get more, often difficult social and emotional conversations to happen and it allowed the pupils to engage in a different format, so where they aren't being spoken to or lectured. They weren't just sitting there writing, they were having peer conversations and everyone was focused on the same thing".* The interactive activities like gender box[3] and the ADU[4] were perceived to have worked really well and generated participation and interest from the mentees. Many mentees in the post programme survey reported that expressing their opinions on various topics was one of the parts of the programme they most enjoyed.

> *"I think something that worked really well were some activities like the ADU and other things, these really got the children involved and felt more inclined to participate."* – **Mentor, follow-up survey**

> *"More fun activities where we get to interact with each other and interact with the mentors."* – **Mentee, post survey**

However, many mentors also cited that the sessions could be made even more interactive, and felt mentees became bored and disengaged in parts when mentors were delivering large chunks of information - *"the lessons could have been more interactive as the younger students became distracted after a while. I think it would have benefitted from them talking to each other".* Many mentees also suggest in the post programme feedback to make the sessions more interactive including more games, tasks or activities like drawing or writing. Following mentor feedback MYA development officers reviewed each session and where there was only one ADU per session the team developed another. They also adapted sessions to ensure there was a variety of types of activities and team games across different sessions.

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[3] Students add stereotype norms for males and females inside the box, and words to describe males and females who do not stereotypical norms outside the box.

[4] Agree, Disagree, Unsure activity where a scenario of violence/abuse is presented along with a range of ways to respond and students are asked to move to the side of the room which represents their opinion on how they would respond.

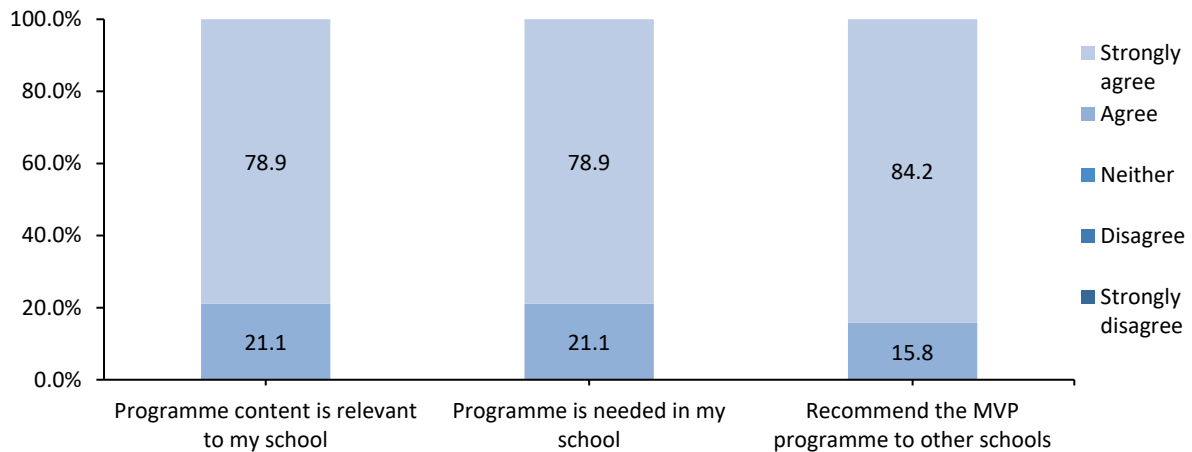**Figure 6: School staff perceptions of the MVP programme, staff survey**

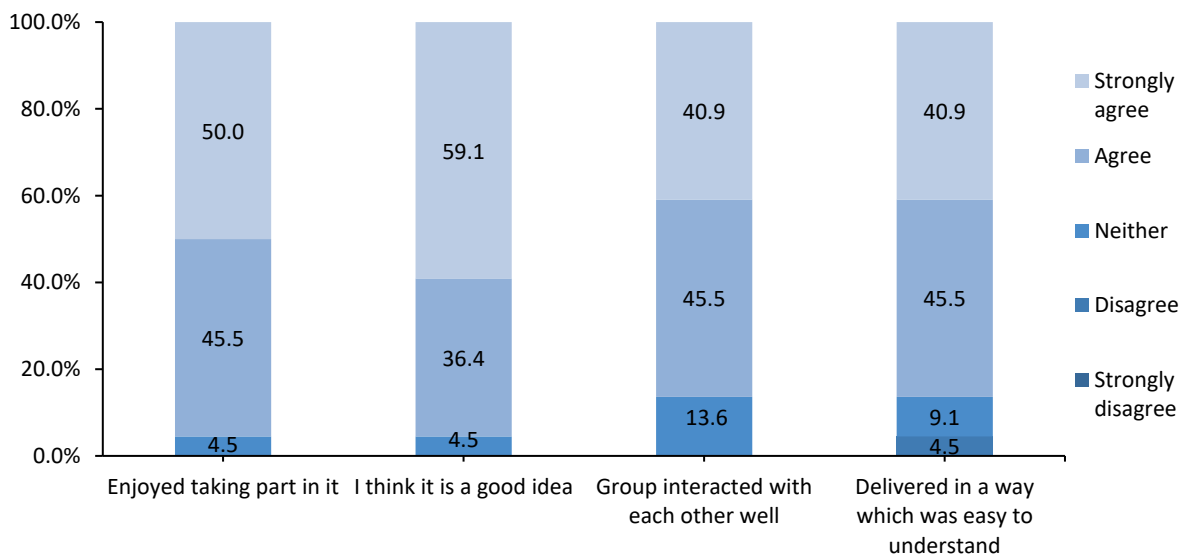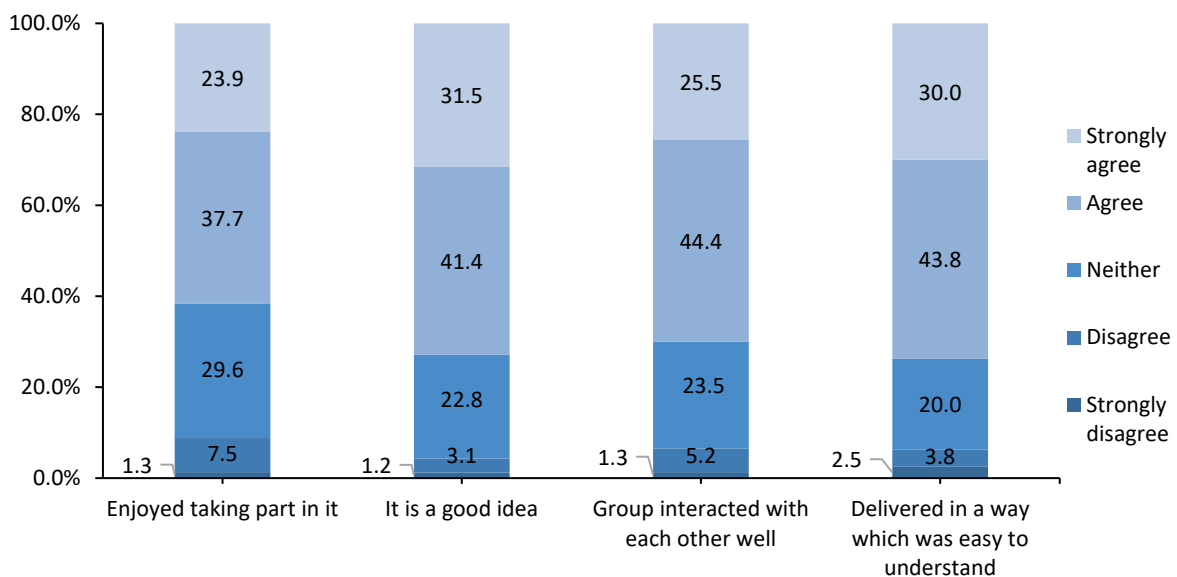**Figure 7: Mentors' perceptions of programme delivery, post programme survey**

Figure 8: Mentees' perceptions of the programme, post programme survey

3.5 Impacts of the programme

3.5.1 Bystander attitudes

Overall, there were statistically significant positive changes in both mentors' and mentees' bystander attitudes.

Mentors

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was a statistically significant increase in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training with the statements 'I need to set an example in my own behaviour for what I expect in others' (pre mean=4.02; post mean=4.22; p<0.01; n=126) and 'it is my responsibility to intervene when I notice a problematic situation' (pre mean=3.71; post mean=3.93; p<0.05; n=122). There was also a decrease in the mean level of agreement with the statement 'there is no need to get involved in problematic situations' (pre mean=2.90; post mean=2.76; p=0.165; n=118), however this change was not statistically significant.

> *"I would have walked away from a fight before MVP but now I walk away and go and tell a teacher."* – **Mentor, MYA secondary data**

> *"More aware of how to be an active bystander. Given them more confidence and a chance to be a better role model for others."* – **Staff, staff survey**

There was also a statistically significant increase in mean score on the overall bystander attitude subscale (pre mean=10.81; post mean=11.43; p<0.001; n=111), indicating a significant positive change in mentors' attitudes to taking a bystander approach.

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and the bystander attitudes measure was repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the individual statements or mean score on the overall bystander attitude measure. Mentors were also asked if since being involved in MVP they have needed to act when they saw someone being bullied, teased, or a victim of violence. Of mentors who completed the follow-up survey 31.3% (n=5) reported having taken action as a bystander. These actions included telling a trusted adult, challenging the perpetrator, and supporting the victim.

> *"I told them to stop and walk away. Asked the kid if they were alright, then reported the problem."* – **Mentor, follow-up survey**

Mentees

Of mentees for whom pre and post programme matched data was available, there was a statistically significant decrease in mentees' mean level of agreement from pre to post programme with the statement 'there is no need to get involved in problematic situations' (pre mean=3.65; post mean=3.06; p<0.01; n=49). There were increases in mentees' mean level of agreement from pre to post programme with the statements 'I need to set an example in my own behaviour for what I expect in others' (pre mean=3.96; post mean=4.04; p=0.522; n=50); and, 'it is my responsibility to intervene when I notice a problematic situation' (pre mean=3.28; post mean=3.40; p=0.508; n=47), however, these were not statistically significant.

> *"Thinking about what we would do in a bad situation involving bullying or rumours being spread."* – **Mentee, post survey**

Overall, there was a statistically significant increase in the mean score on the overall bystander attitudes subscale score from pre to post programme survey (pre mean=9.59; post mean=10.25; p<0.001; n=44), indicating a significant positive change in mentees' attitudes to taking a bystander approach.

3.5.2 Perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour

Overall, there were statistically significant positive change in mentors' but not mentees' perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour.

Mentors

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was a statistically significant increase in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training survey with the statements 'students in my school would help out if: 'a student is making fun of and teasing another student' (pre mean=2.38; post mean=2.72; p<0.001; n=121); 'a student is spreading rumours and lies about another student behind their back' (pre mean=2.21; post mean=2.62; p<0.001; n=117); 'a student is telling lies, spreading rumours, teasing or making fun of another student online' (pre mean=2.37; post mean=2.66; p<0.01; n=110); and, 'a student or group of students is pushing, shoving or trying to pick a fight with another student' (pre mean=2.34; post mean=2.69; p<0.001; n=118).

There was also a statistically significant increase in mean score on the overall scale (pre mean=9.21; post mean=10.69; p<0.001; n=103), indicating a significant positive change in mentors' perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour.

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and the perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour measure was repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the individual statements or mean score on the overall measure.

Mentees

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was no statistically significant change in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post programme survey with any of the statements. The statement 'students in my school would help out if a student is spreading rumours and lies about another student behind their back' showed an increase in mean score from pre to post programme (pre mean=2.21; post mean=2.62; p=0.799; n=46), however this was not statistically significant. There were decreases/no change in mean level of agreement from pre to post on the following statements: 'students in my school would help out if...' 'a student is making fun of and teasing another student' (pre mean=3.09; post mean=2.81; p=0.129; n=53); 'a student is telling lies, spreading rumours, teasing or making fun of another student online' (pre mean=3.05; post mean=2.93; p=0.559; n=41); and, 'a student or group of students is pushing, shoving or trying to pick a fight with another student' (pre mean=3.07; post mean=3.07; p=1.000; n=45).

There was also no statistically significant change in mean score on the overall scale (pre mean=11.89; post mean=11.70; p=0.770; n=37).

3.5.3 Acceptability of violence and use of non-violent strategies

Overall, there were statistically significant positive changes in mentors' but not mentees' acceptability of violence and use of non-violent strategies.

Mentors

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was a statistically significant increase in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training with the statement 'I don't need to fight because there are other ways to deal with being mad' (pre mean=3.84; post mean=4.15; p<0.01; n=123). There was also an increase in mean level of agreement with the statement 'if I really want to, I can usually talk someone out of trying to fight with me' (pre mean=3.47; post mean=3.59; p=0.197; n=100), however this was not a statistically significant change.

There was a statistically significant decrease in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training with the statements: 'If I walk away from a fight, I'd be a coward' (pre mean=2.72; post mean=2.44; p<0.01; n=124); and, 'it's ok to hit someone who hits you first' (pre mean=3.67; post mean=3.29; p<0.001; n=129). There also a decrease in mean level of agreement with the statements: 'if someone teases me I usually cannot get them to stop unless I hit them' (pre mean=2.12; post mean=2.05; p=0.368; n=123); and, 'if I refuse to fight my friends will think I'm afraid' (pre mean=2.49; post mean=2.44; p=0.628; n=117), however these were not statistically significant changes.

> *"I really enjoyed learning about the statistics and factual information on violence because it makes pupils realise what is going on in our world and how we can prevent it." –* **Mentor, post survey**

There was also a statistically significant decrease in mean score on the overall attitudes to violence scale (pre mean=15.62; post mean=14.35; p<0.001; n=82), indicating a significant positive change in mentors' attitudes to violence and use of nonviolent strategies.

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and the attitudes to violence measure was repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the individual statements or mean score on the overall attitudes towards violence measure.

Mentees

Of mentees for whom pre and post programme matched data was available, there were no statistically significant differences in mentees' mean level of agreement from pre to post programme with any of the statements relating to attitudes towards violence.

Some statements showed a non-significant positive change in attitudes. There was a decrease in the mean level of agreement with the statements: 'it's ok to hit someone who hits you first' (pre mean=3.58; post mean=3.50; p=0.489; n=52); 'if someone teases me I usually cannot get them to stop unless I hit them' (pre mean=2.32; post mean=2.30; p=0.875; n=50); and, 'if I refuse to fight my friends will think I'm afraid' (pre mean=2.64; post mean=2.54; p=0.599; n=39).

Some statements showed a non-significant negative change in attitudes. There was an increase in mean level of agreement with the statements: 'if I walk away from a fight, I'd be a coward' (pre mean=2.50; post mean=2.61; p=0.553; n=46). There was a decrease in mean level of agreement with the statements: 'I don't need to fight because there are other ways to deal with being mad' (pre

mean=3.87; post mean=3.78; p=0.489; n=54); and, 'if I really want to, I can usually talk someone out of trying to fight with me' (pre mean=3.48; post mean=3.18; p=0.124; n=44).

There was also no statistically significant change in mean score on the overall attitudes to violence scale (pre mean=16.39; post mean=17.14; p=0.367; n=34).

3.5.4 Gender stereotyping

Overall, there were some statistically significant positive changes in mentors' but not mentees' gender stereotyping.

Mentors

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was a statistically significant decrease in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training survey with the statements 'on a date, the boy should be expected to pay all the expenses' (pre mean=2.37; post mean=2.17; p<0.05; n=126) and 'boys are better leaders than girls' (pre mean=1.86; post mean=1.69; p<0.05; n=130). There was also a decrease in the mean level of agreement from pre to post survey with the statements: 'swearing is worse for a girl than a boy' (pre mean=1.82; post mean=1.79; p=0.697; n=124); and, 'more encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to University' (pre mean=1.82; post mean=1.79; p=0.723; n=125); however these changes were not significant. There was also non-significant increases in mean level of agreement from pre to post survey with the statements: 'on average, girls are as smart as boys' (pre mean=3.67; post mean=3.75; p=0.449; n=126); 'it is ok for a girl to want to play rough sports like football' (pre mean=4.60; post mean=4.63; p=0.696; n=132)'; and, 'it is ok for a girl to ask a boy out on a date' (pre mean=4.46; post mean=4.56; p=0.85; n=132).

> *"I enjoyed exploring gendered violence. I had written down a list of the pressures I felt that often overwhelmed me. It was informative and I was able to express myself and my fears without being labelled a 'man hater'."* – **Mentor, post survey**

However there were also non-significant negative changes with increases in mean level of agreement with some statements: 'in general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in making family decisions' (pre mean=1.71; post mean=1.77; p=0.509; n=128); 'it is more important for boys than girls to do well in school' (pre mean=1.61; post mean=1.67; p=0.421; n=132); and, 'girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers than having a professional or business career' (pre mean=1.55; post mean=1.70; p=0.53; n=128). Further, there was also a decrease in level of agreement with some statements: 'if both the husband and the wife have jobs, the husband should do a share of the housework' (pre mean=4.34; post mean=4.20; p=0.129; n=131); and, 'girls should have the same freedom as boys' (pre mean=4.74; post mean=4.65; p=0.207; n=133), although these changes were not significant.

There was no statistically significant change in mentors' mean score on the overall attitudes to women scale (pre mean=20.30; post mean=20.40; p=0.816; n=104).

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and the attitudes to women scale was repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the individual statements or mean score on the overall attitudes towards women scale.

Of mentees for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there were no statistically significant differences in mentees' mean level of agreement from pre to post programme with any of the statements regarding gender stereotypes.

Some statements showed a non-significant positive change in attitudes. There was a decrease in the mean level of agreement with the statements: 'swearing is worse for a girl than a boy' (pre mean=1.92; post mean=1.80; p=0.508; n=50); 'on a date, he boy should be expected to pay all expenses' (pre mean=2.45; post mean=2.42; p=0.816; n=55); and, 'in general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in making family decisions (pre mean=1.94; post mean=1.85; p=0.497; n=54).

However, there were also non-significant negative changes in attitudes. There was an increase in mean level of agreement with the statements: 'more encouragement in the family should be given to sons than daughters to go to university' (pre mean=1.72; post mean=1.82; p=0.624; n=50); 'it is more important for boys than girls to do well in school' (pre mean=1.64; post mean=1.80; p=0.219; n=56); 'boys are better leaders than girls' (pre mean=1.70; post mean=1.80; p=0.370; n=56); and, 'girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers than having a professional or business career' (pre mean=1.71; post mean=1.87; p=0.314; n=52). Further, there was also a decrease in level of agreement with some statements: 'on average girls are as smart as boys' (pre mean=3.54; post mean=3.31; p=0.315; n=52); 'it is ok for a girl to want to play rough sports like football' (pre mean=4.72; post mean=4.58; p=0.132; n=57); 'it is ok for a girl to ask a boy out on a date' (pre mean=4.64; post mean=4.46; p=0.184; n=56); 'if both the husband and the wife have jobs, the husband should do a share of the housework' (pre mean=4.23; post mean=4.13; p=0.648; n=53); and, 'girls should have the same freedom as boys' (pre mean=4.79; post mean=4.66; p=0226.; n=56).

There was no statistically significant change in mentees' mean score on the overall attitudes to women scale (pre mean=20.61; post mean=22.03; p=0.177; n=36).

3.5.5 School safety and sense of belonging

Overall, there were no statistically significant changes in mentors' or mentees' sense of school safety and belonging.

Mentors

Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was an increase in mean level of agreement from pre to post training with the statements: 'I feel safe at school' (pre mean=3.90; post mean=3.89; p=0.910; n=126); and, 'I feel part of my school' (pre mean=3.91; post mean=3.94; p=0.634; n=130), however these changes were not statistically significant.

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and these questions were repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was no statistically significant difference in either statement.

Mentees

Of mentees for whom pre and post programme matched data was available, there was no change/decrease in mean level of agreement from pre to post programme with the statements: 'I feel

safe at school' (pre mean=3.96; post mean=3.96; p=1.000; n=54); and, 'I feel part of my school' (pre mean=3.96; post mean=3.87; p=0.403; n=54), however these changes were not statistically significant.

3.5.6 Leadership skills
Overall, there were statistically significant positive changes in both mentors' but not mentees' leadership skills.

Mentors
Of mentors for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there was a statistically significant increase in mentors' mean level of agreement from pre to post training with all statements: 'I see myself as a leader' (pre mean=3.57; post mean=4.00; p<0.001; n=124); 'I see myself as a role model to younger students' (pre mean=3.70; post mean=3.98; p<0.001; n=125); and, 'I think others see me as a role model to younger students' (pre mean=3.52; post mean=3.76; p<0.001; n=114).

"The development of the mentors as leaders within the school has been a huge success. We chose a group of rather 'untypical' students and it has been a delight to see them grow in confidence when delivering the sessions." – **Staff, staff survey**

There was also a statistically significant increase in mean score on the overall leadership skills subscale (pre mean=10.83; post mean=11.78; p<0.001; n=109), indicating a significant positive change in mentors' leadership skills.

"I think one of the like main benefits of MVP is that obviously you gain lots of leadership skills and being involved with younger pupils and getting to have involvement with their lives at your school." – **Mentor, film**

At post programme delivery, a follow-up survey was implemented with mentors and the leadership subscale was repeated. Of the mentors for whom there was pre and follow-up survey matched data available, there was a statistically significant increase in mentors' mean level of agreement with the statement 'I see myself as a role model to younger students' (pre mean=3.88; post mean=4.29; p<0.05; n=17). There was no statistically significant difference in any of the other individual statements or mean score on the overall leadership skills subscale.

"It has helped me develop abilities that I will be a good role model to other people." – **Mentor, film**

Mentees
Of mentees for whom pre and post training matched data was available, there were no statistically significant differences in mentees' mean level of agreement with any of the statements from pre to post training. There was a small increase in mentees' mean level of agreement from pre to post training with the statement: 'I see myself as a role model to younger students' (pre mean=3.42; post mean=3.45; p=0.755; n=53). There was a small decrease in mean level of agreement from pre to post with the statements: 'I see myself as a leader' (pre mean=3.26; post mean=3.21; p=0.617; n=53); and, 'I think others see me as a role model to younger students' (pre mean=3.21; post mean=3.00; p=0.103; n=39).

There was also no statistically significant increase in mean score on the overall leadership skills subscale (pre mean=9.72; post mean=9.44; p=0.419; n=39).

3.5.7 Other impacts

Overall, wider impacts of the MVP programme for mentors included the development of skills (e.g., communication, teaching, time keeping) and increased confidence and self-esteem (needed to deliver the programme), whilst wider impacts for mentees included development of supportive relationships with the older mentor students.

Mentors

All staff (100%; n=24) agreed that the programme had a positive influence on the mentors. Qualitative feedback from mentors and staff from a range of sources highlighted that the programme had a wider impact on mentors beyond its remit as a violence prevention and bystander programme. Many of these impacts related to the skills mentors needed to develop to be able to deliver the programme to mentees. Staff and mentors reported improvements in communication, presenting, teaching, improvisation skills, computer skills, public speaking, and time keeping - *"I'm definitely a lot better at communication wherein which I may not have been ok before at continuing a conversation".* Overwhelmingly, mentors and staff highlighted that despite initial nervousness

> *"Because of MVP I've become a lot more confident when speaking because it's kind of forced myself to take on more of like a hands-on role. So, we've done assemblies not just to like the younger students, but also to our year group in year 11, and I don't think I'd normally have the confidence to be able to do that. So having MVP has been a really amazing opportunity to grow in confidence."* – **Mentor, film**

to deliver the sessions the training, refresher sessions and experience of delivering sessions substantially improved mentors' confidence and self-esteem - *"At first I was petrified to deliver but over time I have gotten better with new skills to add to my CV".* Staff and mentors spoke about the potential impact gaining and or improving these types of skills would have on mentors beyond just delivery of the MVP programme, and that they were particularly relevant to other schoolwork and future employment - *"The MVP sessions this morning was amazing again, they're really coming into their own! [Mentor] was complimented on his ability and that he could be a future teacher!"*

> *"One skill that I left out was to teach children. I'd never really had the opportunity to do that before so it was really nice and to see what they responded with and how they interact. I think that was really useful, I could definitely use that later on in life."* – **Mentor, film**

Mentees

All staff (100%; n=24) agreed that the programme also had a positive influence on the mentees. The main perceived impact was the development of positive relationships with the mentors - *"students loved forging relationships with older students."* Mentors and staff felt that this relationships between the older mentors and younger mentees provided a safe space for mentees to voice their opinions regardless of whether those opinions were perceived as socially acceptable or not. Feedback from

mentees in the post programme survey appeared to confirm this perception with many mentees reporting that the aspect of the programme they most enjoyed was the opportunity to voice their own and hear other's opinions on the topics - *"I enjoyed the freedom of being able to have different views and opinions on certain topics".*

> *"The MVP programme means a lot because it gives us like a personal relationship with the younger years and I think it is important to have like a key relationships with the younger years. Especially like whether everything that's going on, all the issues that arise, I think I firmly believe that we do create a safe space for the kids."* – **Mentor, film**

4. Summary of key findings

In the 2020/21 academic year, the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme was piloted in ten secondary schools across Merseyside. Despite severe disruptions to schools due to COVID-19, the evaluation of the pilot highlighted several key learnings for programme implementation including that the programme was feasible in Merseyside schools and adaptable to the local context [1]. The evaluation also indicated some initial impacts for mentors involved in the programme, with findings suggesting some important significant changes in mentors' attitudes and knowledge of the bystander approach to violence prevention [1]. Overall, findings from the evaluation of the 2020/21 pilot implementation of MVP supported the continuation of MVP in the pilot schools and provided early evidence that MVP could be successfully rolled out in other schools across Merseyside in the 2021/22 academic year. In the 2021/22 academic year, 18 new schools across Merseyside were invited to take part in the MVP programme, whilst five schools from the 2020/21 cohort continued to take part and were provided with varying levels of support. This report presented the findings from the 2021/22 evaluation of the MVP programme, including dose and reach, adaptations to programme content and delivery across schools, and impacts of the programme on mentors and mentees.

Delivery of the programme

In the first year of implementation (2020/21), ten schools signed up to take part in the pilot programme. Despite significant disruptions due to COVID-19 and school closures, nine of the ten pilot schools had begun implementation by the end of the academic year, and delivery of the programme to mentees had commenced in seven schools [1]. For the academic year 2021/22, five schools from the 2020/21 cohort committed to continuing implementation, whilst 18 new additional schools signed up to take part in the MVP programme. By the end of the 2021/22 academic year:

- **48 school staff from 23 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from MYA school development officers;
- **421 mentors from 22 schools** received the two-day MVP **training** from MYA school development officers;
- **331 mentors from 20 schools** commenced **delivery** of the programme to mentees;
- **Approximately 3,130 mentees from 20 schools** received **at least one session**; and,
- **Approximately 1,950 mentees from 11 schools** received **at least the minimum five sessions** (2 schools had delivered an additional optional session);
- A total of **9 schools** took up the **film media offer** and made **14 films** raising awareness on various topics related to violence and abuse; and,
- **157 mentors and 25 teachers from 12 schools** attended the **graduation ceremony** at the end of the academic year at Liverpool museum to celebrate their successfully involvement in the programme.

Whilst programme implementation was anticipated to be complete (i.e., all schools would have staff and mentors trained, and delivered the minimum five sessions to mentees) by March 2022, there were delays in some schools. However, by the end of the 2021/22 academic year all schools had participated in staff training, whilst programme delivery had commenced in most schools, and crucially approximately half (48%) of schools had delivered all five sessions to the mentees. This represents a substantial improvement on programme completion levels compared to the 2020/21 academic year, when just two of the ten (20%) schools delivered all five sessions to mentees.

Staff and MYA development officers reported that one of the main barriers to programme implementation was insufficient time to implement the programme, both in terms of getting mentors off timetable to do the training and refresher sessions, and delivery to mentees. It was also highlighted that even where this was possible, many mentors do not like missing lesson time to attend training or implement the programme. Staff time is also a key consideration. In some schools, insufficient staff time meant trained MVP staff were not always available to be present in the room while mentors were delivering the sessions to mentees. It was often staff who had the mentees during the time slot the programme was being delivered (e.g. English teacher during English period), rather than the school's MVP trained staff member. MYA development officers highlighted this as problematic and a barrier to fidelity, as staff who were unfamiliar with the programme were unable to monitor the quality of the messages being delivered by the mentors, and provide support where needed. A central premise of the programme is that all students, both mentors and mentees, should be allowed to voice their opinions regardless of whether they are positive or negative. This is actively encouraged through the use of, for example, ADU activities. Further, both mentors and mentees identified this as one of the components of the programme that worked best, reporting that they enjoyed the freedom and the safety of the MVP space to voice their opinions on violence without fear of being wrong. Perceptions of other individuals' attitudes to taking a bystander approach is theorised to be a key mechanism in changing willingness to intervene in problematic situations [10, 11, 12]. Similarly, modelling of positive attitudes to violence prevention and gender equality can safely challenge student's who hold negative attitudes, and influence behaviour [12, 13]. However, whilst it is important that the discussions are peer-led, it is also crucial that an adult (either in the form of MYA development officer or school staff) is present during every session to ensure positive attitudes are promoted and negative attitudes are safely challenged. Staff presence would also support fidelity to programme content and delivery. Further, it was the perception of the MYA school development officers that the schools where the programme was working best, was in ones where the school staff member was fully engaged in programme delivery and actively engaging in the sessions to support and facilitate discussion. It was therefore considered crucial that the staff member supervising programme delivery was familiar with the materials, ideally because they had received the MVP training but if not, because they had received the materials from the trained staff member and familiarised themselves with the content beforehand. MYA development officers advise schools to plan in advance when implementation can take place and where it best fits within mentee and mentor timetables, and staff availability. Specifically, they suggest implementing the programme during PSHE lesson sessions as MVP covers aspects of the PSHE curriculum, or in mental health and wellbeing sessions that some schools include in their timetabling. Whilst this is a key recommendation, further exploration is needed to examine if this is feasible in practice, particularly as these lessons may take place at different times for mentees and mentors. It was also highlighted by mentees that more warning about the sensitive nature of the topics to be discussed was needed. This emphasises the need for a trauma-informed approach and in particular, that staff supervising the sessions are confident in dealing with disclosures and supporting upset/distressed students and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures.

Overall, school staff, mentor, and mentee perceptions of the MVP training and programme content and delivery were overwhelmingly positive. As previously discussed, a key element of the programme that both mentors and mentees enjoyed, was that MVP provided a safe space to voice, hear, and discuss different opinions and perspectives on violence and abuse. This safe space for discussion was perceived by staff, mentors, and mentees to be facilitated by the fact it is not a teacher delivering the programme, either in terms of the mentor training or the mentee sessions. The programme content is delivered during the training session to mentors by MYA development officers, whilst the

programme is delivered to mentees by their mentor peers. Similarly, in year one of the evaluation delivery of the programme and specifically the training to mentors by an external partner was found to be a key facilitating factor [1].

The evaluation also showed that the relevancy of the session topics and resources to young people was crucial. A survey is conducted by MYA prior to programme implementation to identify what topics of violence and abuse are perceived by staff and students to be relevant to each school. There is often a disparity between the topics identified by staff compared to students, highlighting the importance of capturing young people's voices to ensure the topics align with issues they perceive as relevant to their experiences, school, and community. This also encourages higher levels of interest and engagement with the programme for both mentors and mentees. Perceived relevance and salience is argued to increase motivation to process information and enhance message receptivity, information processing, and ultimately behaviour change. Thus, the survey and tailoring of the sessions to be relevant to identified issues relevant to students could be a crucial factor in facilitating programme impact [14]. Mentors and mentees also reported that the interactive nature of the programme delivery was something that worked well. Social scenarios involving a range of behaviours (e.g., bullying, sexting, harassment) are presented and role-played. This is followed by an interactive discussion and responses to the scenario are then presented and considered, to teach the participants about appropriate actions that they could take and empower them to be proactive bystanders. These were perceived by staff and mentors to generate interest and participation from the mentees. Active learning environments are proposed to promote increased knowledge, positive attitudes, and development of skills amongst students [15, 16]. Research shows that students taught using active learning methods report less surface learning and more deep learning than in traditional lecture style delivery [17, 16].

Sustainability of the programme
An area of concern identified in the first year of programme delivery was sustainability [1]. A key barrier to sustainability is that mentors are usually drawn from the year group below exam year so in a subsequent year of programme role out, these students are usually no longer able to deliver the programme. This means that new cohorts of mentors need to be trained each academic year. Findings from the staff survey suggested however, that most staff would feel confident training new cohorts of mentors and supporting them to implement the programme. Four of the five schools from year one delivered the full five sessions to mentees during the 2021/22 academic year. Whilst this suggests a positive finding in terms of sustainability, it should be considered in light of the fact that these schools were still receiving the majority of the support package from the MYA development officers. Two schools received the full package of support, whilst the other three schools still received the majority of support package from the MYA development officers. Further one of the light touch schools did not progress to actual session delivery to mentees. It is currently unknown and untested how successful schools would be training mentors and supporting programme delivery to the mentees without MYA development officer support. Furthermore, one of the key identified factors that worked well about the mentor training and was perceived to have a positive impact on mentors was the relationships that developed between them and the MYA development officers. Thus, it is unknown if the impact of the programme on the mentors would be affected by it being delivered and overseen by staff rather than an external organisation.

Impacts of the programme
The MVP programme consists of five core components which align with the aimed outcomes of the programme (see Appendix 1). These include exploring violence through a gendered lens, developing leadership, using a bystander approach, exploring the scope of violent behaviour, and challenging

victim blaming. Findings from the mentor and mentee surveys suggested a number of statistically significant positive changes in aimed outcomes of the programme. Specifically, findings suggested the programme had a positive impact on both mentor and mentee attitudes towards using a bystander approach. Qualitative feedback further supported these findings. Furthermore, there were some promising examples from the mentor follow-up survey (conducted post programme delivery to the mentees), that changes in attitudes resulted in actual behaviour change. Of mentors who completed the follow-up survey, three in ten reported having acted as a bystander since they received the MVP training. Reported actions included telling a trusted adult, challenging the perpetrator, and supporting the victim.

Findings from the survey also suggested that the programme had a positive impact for mentors on several other factors related to willingness to intervene as a bystander. Specifically, there was a positive impact on mentors' acceptability of violence and use of non-violent strategies in problematic situations. This is important in preventing individual's from engaging in violence, but also contributes to an increased likelihood to intervene as a bystander. Personal attitudes towards violence is an important predictor of bystander behaviour and willingness to intervene [18]. Findings also showed a positive impact on mentors' perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour. This is crucial because social comparison and social judgement have the potential to influence if and when a bystander will intervene. Some studies have found that even after accounting for personal attitudes towards violence, individuals' perceptions of their peers' willingness to intervene predicted their own willingness to intervene [10, 11]. Finally, there was a positive change in mentors' leadership skills. Leadership skills and confidence to intervene are important predictors of bystander behaviour and are a specific targeted component of the MVP programme. Positive role models can change social norms, challenge negative attitudes, and lead by example by engaging in bystander behaviour. Despite these positive changes for mentors, there was no significant change in any of these three factors for mentees. Further research is required to determine the reasons for a lack of programme impact in these areas for mentees when there were significant positive changes for mentors. Potential factors to explore when investigating the differential impact on mentors compared to mentees are around differences in experience of programme delivery. For example, one area for concern was that staff unfamiliar and untrained in MVP often supervised the delivery of the sessions by mentors and this may have resulted in reduced quality in the delivery of key messages (compared to mentors receiving the sessions from experienced MYA development officers). Active learning and participatory methods and discussions were identified by mentors and mentees as key facilitating factors and something that worked well about the programme. Mentees may potentially have less engagement in the sessions than mentors given the larger class size compared to the small groups of mentors who are trained together. Messages may have also been reinforced for mentors compared to mentees because they had to learn the material in order to deliver it to mentees. Finally, the lack of significant change in these factors amongst mentees should also be considered in light of difficulties with implementing the research tools with this group. Specifically, there were problems matching pre and post mentee surveys, and resulting small sample sizes for matched analyses may have obscured any effects. Limitations in the numbers of mentees participating also meant it was not possible to explore between school effects. Differences in quality of delivery between schools may therefore exist and potentially impact upon outcome measures.

There were some positive changes in some individual statements related to gender stereotyping for mentors but there was no overall change for mentors or mentees. Whilst exploring violence through a gendered lens is a key component of the Merseyside programme and is the basis for which MVP was originally developed, not all sessions incorporate a gender-based approach. Core sessions 1 and 2

cover gender stereotypes and gender-based violence, however many of the optional sessions do not and this may have diluted the impact on gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender-based violence. Whilst this suggests less fidelity to the original programme, the broad range of topics the Merseyside MVP programme now offers allows the programme to cover the bystander approach to a wider range of types of violence and abuse. This broader approach is also in line with another of the core components of MVP to explore the scope of all types of violent behaviour. Furthermore, the offer of a broad range of topics, beyond gender-based violence ensures students can select issues of violence and abuse they perceive as most relevant to their experiences, school, and community (as discussed previously). Despite the positive changes for mentors across many of the measures, none of these were sustained when repeated in the follow-up survey. However, these analyses were based on a very small sample size (n≈9), thus further research is needed to determine if changes are sustained over time.

In addition to the impacts of the programme already discussed, qualitative findings suggested several wider impacts for mentors and mentees. Other impacts identified for mentors included the development of skills (e.g., communication, teaching, time keeping) and increased confidence and self-esteem. The mentor role is not designed for the already high achieving students, who get involved in lots of extra-curriculum activities [1]. Thus, development of these skills and confidence and self-esteem may be crucial for these students and may have wider impacts than just related to effectively delivering the MVP programme to mentees and engaging in positive bystander behaviour. Some of these students have previously included individuals on report (i.e. where their behaviour is monitored), or who had a history of school truancy and suspensions. Thus, involving such students as mentors in the MVP programme may support longer-term aims of the programme around reduced school exclusions. Furthermore, there was a heavy emphasis on how MVP supported the development of positive relationships between mentors and the MYA development workers. Supportive trusted adult relationships are a key protective factor against a range of adverse outcomes across the lifecourse [19]. Critically, amongst children who don't have access to an adult in the home to provide support, research has shown that a trusted adult in a school setting is also a protective factor in promoting resilience and mental wellbeing [20]. It is possible that the supportive relationships developed with MYA development officers will have protective effects for mentors. An identified wider impact for mentees was the development of supportive peer relationships with the older mentor students. As previously discussed, this was perceived to provide a safe space for mentees to voice their opinions, however it may also have wider impacts. Supportive peer relationships have been found to be a protective factor against low mental wellbeing particularly where children don't have access to trusted adult support [20]. Furthermore, positive peer role models (such as the mentors) may function as a type of behavioural intervention for children who have been exposed to negative experiences in the home [21]. For example, children exposed to harsh parenting and corporal punishment are at risk of developing externalizing behaviours (such as violence) and inappropriate ways of communicating and behaving with others [22, 23]. Positive peer role models and relationships may act as buffers and counteract and modify this behaviour by teaching the child more prosocial means of interacting with others [24]. Crucially, prevention strategies that prioritise interactivity, relationship building, and commitment to prosocial school norms have been proposed to create opportunities for students to develop positive behaviour change and thus school connectedness, between either students and adults, or students and peers, and is considered a critical mediating factor for school-based violence intervention effectiveness [25].

Conclusion

Findings from the 2021/22 evaluation of the MVP programme suggested several positive outcomes. Significantly more schools took part in the 2021/22 programme implementation compared to the pilot in 2020/21. Furthermore, five schools involved in the 2020/21 implementation committed to continuing the programme in the 2021/22 academic year. A higher proportion of schools in 2021/22, successfully delivered all five sessions to mentees compared to the 2020/21 cohort. Overall, staff, mentor, and mentee perceptions of the implementation and impact of the programme were positive. Whilst larger sample sizes are required in future evaluation, particularly for mentees, the evaluation identified a number of key impacts of the programme on mentors and mentees and which aligned with the aimed outcomes of the programme. Specifically, there were positive changes in mentors' attitudes towards using a bystander approach, acceptability of violence, perceptions of other students' bystander behaviour, and leadership skills. There were also some positive changes in statements related to gender stereotyping, and wider impacts for mentors including development of skills, increased confidence and self-esteem, and development of supportive relationships with MYA development officers. Whilst evidence of positive changes for mentees was more limited, there were significant positive changes in bystander attitudes, and indications of development of positive relationships with their mentor peers. Overall findings to date suggest a number of key learnings for programme implementation and evaluation and supports the continued implementation of the MVP programme across Merseyside schools in 2022/23.

Recommendations

Programme implementation

- To date much of the focus of the programme has been on mentors. The quality of the session content and delivery to the mentees should be of the same standard as that received by mentors. Ensure an adult who is familiar with the programme content (either MVP trained school staff and/or school development officer) is present and engaged in every session delivered by mentors to mentees to manage behaviour and facilitate and monitor the quality and appropriateness of content and discussions. This school staff member should also be confident in dealing with disclosures and supporting upset/distressed students and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Ideally, they would have knowledge of trauma-informed approaches.

- Ensure a school staff member is present during all mentor training sessions delivered by the school development officers to manage any disruptive behaviour and/or provide safeguarding if required.

- Design and implement a standard system of routine data collection to ensure consistent, accurate data is capture on: programme dose and reach for all components of the programme (including staff training, mentor training and delivery, and mentee participation); and, school level adaptations to programme content and delivery.

Programme evaluation

- Encourage schools to participate in the evaluation at the point they commit to implementing the programme.

- Provide schools with school level outcome data to encourage participation in evaluation. Many of the outcome measures associated with MVP or PSHE indicators and schools can use this data to demonstrate impact in these areas.

- Encourage schools were possible to take part in a quasi-experimental design, where surveys are administered to a control group of students not receiving MVP to allow for analysis of between school variation.
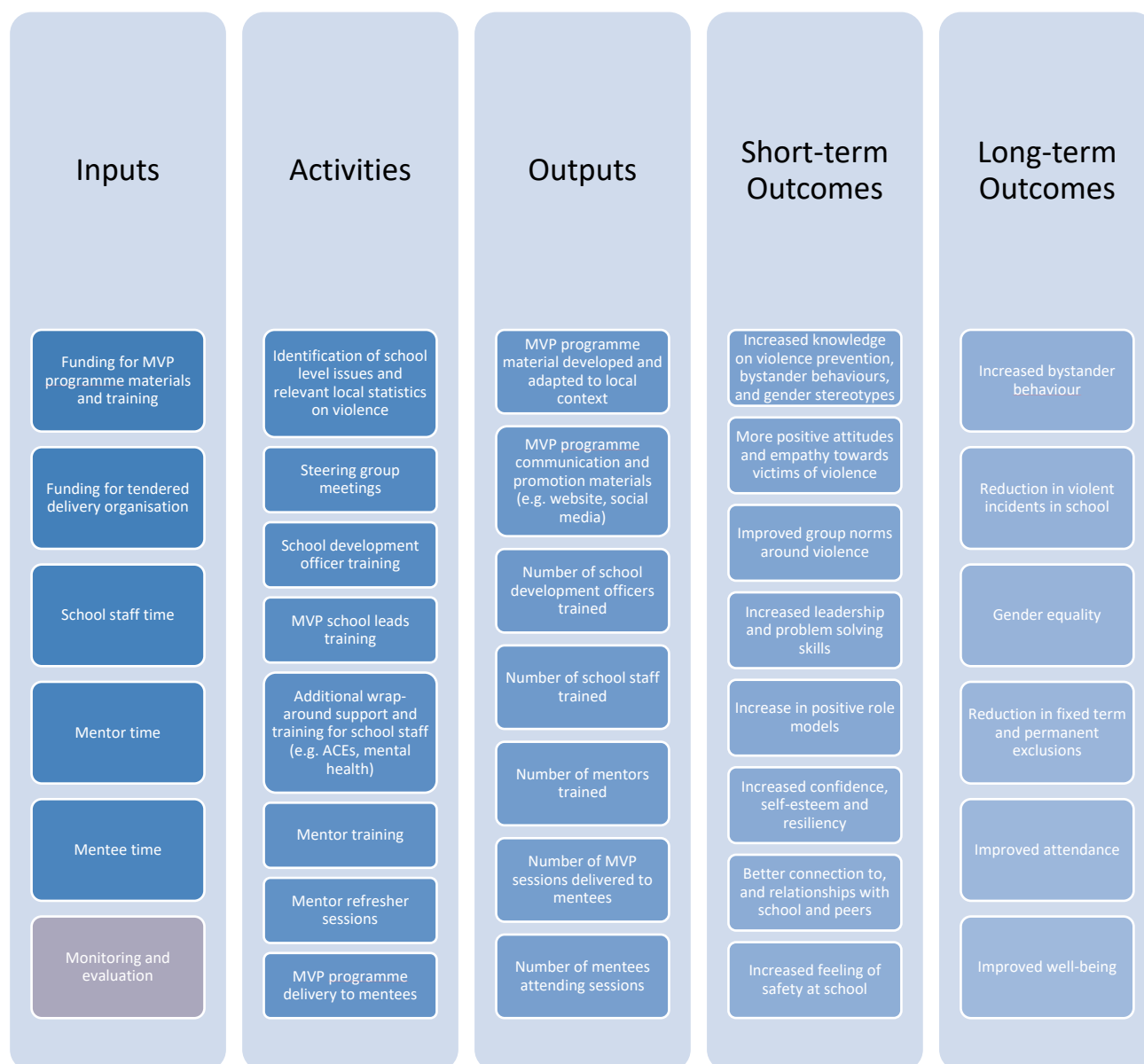
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Appendix 1

The MVP programme logic model developed based on the 2020/21 evaluation findings was updated based on the 2021/22 evaluation findings and is provided in Figure A1. It provides an overview of the inputs and resources needed to implement the programme, the activities which are implemented as part of MVP, the outputs, and the anticipated short and long-term outcomes for mentors, mentees, staff and the wider school.

Figure A1: MVP programme logic model 2021/22

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Funding for MVP programme materials and training	Identification of school level issues and relevant local statistics on violence	MVP programme material developed and adapted to local context	Increased knowledge on violence prevention, bystander behaviours, and gender stereotypes	Increased bystander behaviour
Funding for tendered delivery organisation	Steering group meetings	MVP programme communication and promotion materials (e.g. website, social media)	More positive attitudes and empathy towards victims of violence	Reduction in violent incidents in school
School staff time	School development officer training	Number of school development officers trained	Improved group norms around violence	Gender equality
Mentor time	MVP school leads training	Number of school staff trained	Increased leadership and problem solving skills	Reduction in fixed term and permanent exclusions
Mentee time	Additional wrap-around support and training for school staff (e.g. ACEs, mental health)	Number of mentors trained	Increase in positive role models	Improved attendance
Monitoring and evaluation	Mentor training	Number of MVP sessions delivered to mentees	Increased confidence, self-esteem and resiliency	Improved well-being
	Mentor refresher sessions	Number of mentees attending sessions	Better connection to, and relationships with school and peers	
	MVP programme delivery to mentees		Increased feeling of safety at school	

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