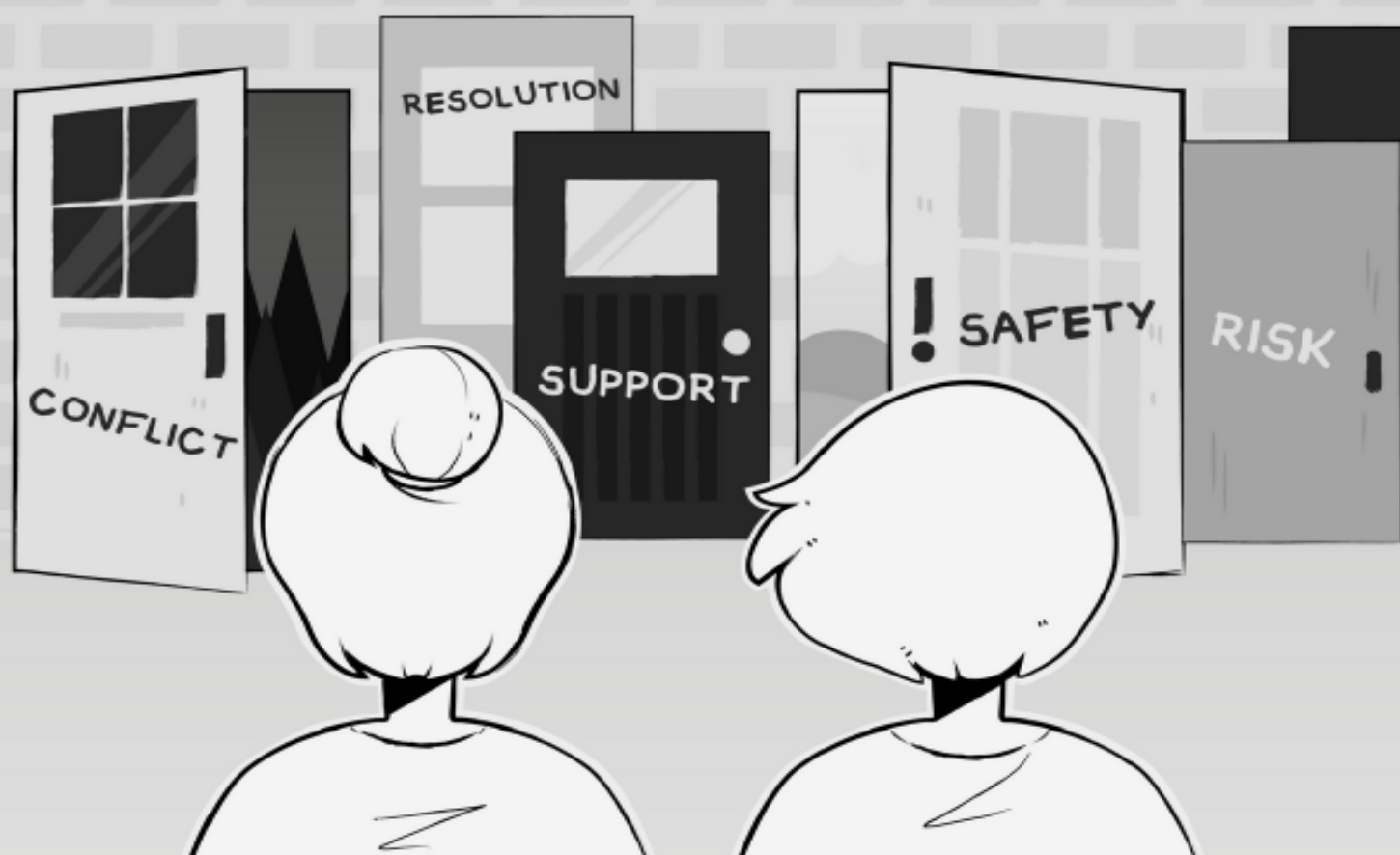


July
2025

Evaluation of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight school-based Choices programme

*Summary report of delivery and impact between
2023-2025*



Nadia Butler, Rebecca Bates, Charley Wilson, Ann Marie Farrugia, Zara Quigg

School of Public and Allied Health / Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University

Evaluation of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight school-based Choices programme

Summary report of delivery and impact between 2023-2025

Nadia Butler, Rebecca Bates, Charley Wilson, Ann Marie Farrugia, Zara Quigg

School of Public and Allied Health / Public Health Institute, Faculty of Health, Liverpool John Moores University / World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention, Tithebarn Building, 79, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool L2 2ER.

May 2025

For further information contact Nadia Butler at n.l.butler@ljmu.ac.uk or Zara Quigg at z.a.quigg@ljmu.ac.uk.

About this report

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was one of several areas allocated funding by the UK Government, to establish a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). To inform the continued development of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU, Liverpool John Moores University were commissioned to evaluate selected programmes of work that have been funded by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU. This report forms one of a suite of outputs from this evaluation work programme, and specifically presents an evaluation of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU funded school-based Choices programme between the years 2023-2025.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the evaluation:

- The evaluation funders, Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU.
- Members of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU team and programme implementors who supported evaluation implementation including Joanna Issac, Eleanor Snookes, Angela Goswell, Annabel Cook, Lesley Wood, Faye Philips, and Kristianne Drake.
- All study participants who took part in interviews and provided their invaluable views on the early stages of this intervention.

Executive summary

Introduction

In 2023, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Violence Reduction Unit commissioned Artswork and Bearface to design and deliver the school-based violence prevention programme, Choices. It was targeted at Year 6 and Year 7 students to provide additional support during the potentially vulnerable transition period from primary to secondary school. Choices examines the risks and impact of knife crime, exploitation, and other types of violence and abuse. The programme aims to enable young people to make healthy decisions, build positive relationships, and respond appropriately to potentially risky or challenging situations. The programme supports a trauma-informed approach, includes teaching materials which have been developed in partnership with individuals with lived experience of violent crime, and can be adapted throughout delivery using the voice of the child as part of the philosophy and enquiry-based learning approach and the drama framework.

Methods



Review of programme documentation

Documentation, materials, and correspondence produced throughout the implementation of the Choices programme were collated and reviewed. A review of the online course was conducted to provide an overview of programme session content and resources. A revised logic model was produced based on Artswork's original logic model/theory of change and evaluation findings. Researchers regularly observed the development and implementation of the Choices programme through attending steering group meetings (online) and one of the staff inset training days (in person).



Review and analysis of monitoring data

Programme monitoring data collected by Artswork and Bearface was accessed and analysed to understand the programmes dose, reach, and impact. This included:

- Data on school recruitment including number of schools contacted, number of schools and staff per school who completed inset training, number of schools where workshops had been delivered and number of students who attended per school, type of schools, school location, whether schools were considered 'hot spots', how schools were recruited, where schools completed inset training, and notes on recruitment.
- Data from pre (n=379) and post (n=246) training surveys conducted with staff attending the inset training including changes in knowledge and confidence using creative techniques to address violence and exploitation, and perceptions of the training.
- Data from student workshops including changes in confidence to make positive choices when peers are making negative ones, interpretation of the animation characters true intentions, and identification of who is a trusted adult.



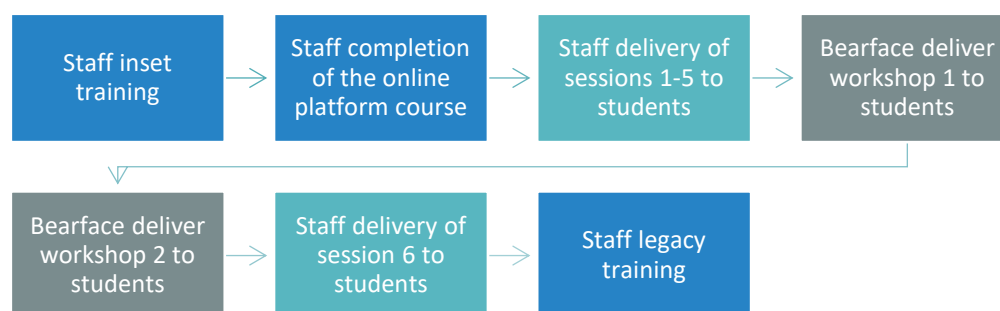
Qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and school staff

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders and school staff who had a key role in programme implementation. Participants included Artswork staff (n=3), In Focus trainers (n=2), the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU evaluation lead (n=1), and primary and secondary school teachers (n=5). Interview questions focused on: perceptions of training; programme content and delivery, including any adaptations; factors supporting and impeding implementation of Choices; areas for development; and perceived impacts on school staff, students, and the wider school context.

Overview of the Choices programme

The implementation of the Choices programme began in May 2023, and took place in a number of sequential steps depicted in Figure 1 comprising: training of school staff by Artswork (including contracted trainers from In Focus), delivery of sessions by school staff to students, student forum theatre workshops ran by Bearface, the final session delivered by school staff, and legacy training for school staff by Artswork.

Figure 1: Choices programme implementation process model



Staff inset training: A one-day training session for school staff, exploring flexible creative approaches to learning that will support young people to develop their cognitive, critical and problem-solving skills. The session also aims to build confidence to adapt and develop programme materials to meet the needs of pupils. Training focused on three specific techniques, each of which can be adapted and used in other curriculum areas including philosophy for young people, enquiry-based learning, and mantle of the expert.

Programme sessions: The session plans for each of the six one-hour sessions which teachers deliver to the students are all available to download on the Artswork Learning Platform which each school is given access too. In addition, any resources or materials (e.g. handouts and activities) which are included in the sessions are downloadable. Where relevant, information is also given on how each session links to other curriculum subjects (e.g. PSHE) and how it can support wellbeing. Each session covers one of the core elements of the programme including asking questions, being a philosopher, debating, thinking hats, hot seating, and being a social scientist.

Student workshops: Each pupil receives two workshops using Forum Theatre techniques which are designed to allow pupils to “rehearse for change”. The first workshop includes consideration of the causes and impact of violence from both victim and perpetrator perspectives. This workshop uses testimony from people with experience of entering the criminal justice system which they have shared with Bearface as a way of supporting future generations to make different decisions. The second workshop builds on this and includes consideration of healthy relationships and making positive choices.

Staff legacy training: A half-day or twilight session for school staff which introduces a legacy pack which supports ongoing learning within school settings. This includes an introduction to using forum theatre within a teaching environment and opportunities for staff to reflect on the process together, sharing with each other what they have learnt.

Key findings and considerations for future implementation and evaluation

Between May 2023 and April 2025, ~445 school staff from 97 schools had completed the inset training, and ~5,356 students from 78 schools had completed the workshops delivered by Bearface. Of the 78 schools which had completed both the inset training and the workshops, 58 were primary (14% of primary schools across the four areas (Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight), 15 were secondary (16% of secondary schools), and 5 were other types of schools (13% of other schools). 43 were in Hampshire (10% of Hampshire schools), 17 were in Southampton (31% of Southampton schools), 11 in Portsmouth (24% of Portsmouth schools), and seven on the Isle of Wight (14% of Isle of Wight schools). Of these schools 48 were VRU target schools and 21 were identified as hot spot schools.

Overall perceptions of the school staff inset training, the programme's content, materials and resources to deliver the sessions, and the student workshops were positive. School staff felt the interactive approach taken in the training and practising the activities which are part of the programme was useful. Staff commended the programme for the way it handled sensitive topics, its use of real-life scenarios, and the way it accommodated different learning styles through the range of activities like role-play and group discussions. This inclusive approach supported student engagement in the programme and ensured the programme effectively met the needs of all types of students. School staff also reported that the skills acquired in the training and used to deliver the programme were relevant to delivery of other curriculum subjects. School staff perceived the student workshops as a key element of the programme and reported that their students really enjoyed the workshops. However, it was mentioned that some of the resources were too young for some secondary school children to fully engage with. For example, it was mentioned that the session pace was slower than what is typical in secondary schools, particularly considering the amount of content covered in each session. Additionally, it was reflected that some of the activities and scenarios did not accurately reflect how secondary students would realistically behave.

Monitoring data from school staff training surveys and student workshops provided some evidence on the positive impact of the programme on staff knowledge and confidence in using creative approaches to address serious violence and exploitation, and student confidence to make positive choices and resist peer pressure, knowledge of risky situations, and who is a trusted adult who they could seek support from.

To inform considerations for future programme implementation and sustainability a SWOT analysis based on the evaluation findings to date was undertaken.

Strengths:

- Whilst preventing violence, knife crime, and exploitation is the aim of the programme it does this in a trauma-informed way by not using scare tactics or directly focusing on these sensitive topics. Instead, the emphasis is on supporting children to identify risky situations, make positive choices and resist peer pressure, and increase help-seeking behaviour from trusted adults. This means the programme is applicable to students who are exposed to more serious adverse situations and those who are not (i.e. by reducing naivety). Furthermore, these skills are transferable to a wide range of other risky behaviours (e.g. substance use) thus the programme has the potential to have wider positive impact beyond reducing risk of violence and exploitation.
- The programme is designed to be flexible in the way in which it can be delivered, supporting school staff to fit the programme into already packed timetables and substantial core curriculum demands.

- The skills which school staff develop, and the activities included in the programme, are applicable to delivery of other curriculum subjects, this both supports effective delivery of other subjects and reinforces the key messages of the programme around critical thinking and decision making.
- The use of a variety of methods, including debating, role-play and forum theatre supports engagement with the programme, particularly for students who may struggle with more traditional teaching techniques. The variety of activities also ensures that students can engage in the elements with which they are most comfortable (e.g. group discussions vs. role-play).
- The development of the online platform which contains all the downloadable session plans and resources can be accessed for free on an on-going basis for school staff for the duration of the programme (ending July 2025). This supports implementation of the programme with future cohorts and means staff can work through the programme content at their own pace and return to the materials for a refresher at any point. There is also a community section where staff can share fables which their students have created as part of the programme with other schools and support each other with programme implementation. This supports the sustainability of the programme.

Weaknesses:

- A key component of the programme is the student workshops, however unlike the programme sessions which are delivered by school staff, these are delivered by an external theatre company Bearface. Thus, without sustainable funding this element of the programme is unlikely to be able to be delivered to future cohorts.
- As the programme is primarily delivered by school staff there is a lack of monitoring data around the dose of the sessions which each student receives, this may represent a threat to the fidelity of the programme.
- Evaluating the impact of the programme has been challenging due to pressures on school staff time and resources meaning it wasn't possible to implement pre and post student surveys to measure changes in aimed outcomes of the programme. A lack of this evidence prevents assessment of programme effectiveness, and this may be a barrier to securing further funding for programme implementation or demonstrating to schools the value of delivering the programme to their students.
- The programme may face challenges in secondary schools as its content may not align as well with the needs and learning styles of older students and the programme's structure may require further adaptation to better suit this cohort.

Opportunities:

- The model of programme delivery predominantly by school staff means this aspect of programme delivery is sustainable and staff can deliver it to future cohorts of students. It also has the potential to be delivered to other year groups beyond Year 6 and Year 7.
- Free access to the online platform and programme materials for the duration of the programme with the option to download and keep the resources indefinitely means there is the opportunity for other school staff to deliver the programme even if they haven't completed the inset training, if the trained staff in their school can share their learning from the inset training with them and support them to deliver the programme.
- There is an opportunity to develop the programme further to include a parent component which would support and reinforce the key messages and skills students learn in the programme by also practising them in the home. It may also increase parent's knowledge of

the risks of violence and exploitation and support them to identify their child's involvement with risky peers.

Threats:

- School recruitment and onboarding was demonstrated to be a very intensive process which required a dedicated programme coordinator who had to make numerous contacts with schools to get them to sign up to the programme. There is the possibility that without such resource for recruitment and onboarding in the future, school engagement and delivery of the programme substantially decreases.
- Many VRU-identified target and hot spot schools did not wish to take part in the programme, therefore there is a risk that the schools which might most need the programme are not willing or able to deliver it.

Considerations for future programme implementation and sustainability:

- Consider if and how a parent component of the programme could be designed and delivered. This might involve a simple briefing leaflet which schools could provide to parents or something more intensive like a parent workshop which covers the same activities delivered to the students and in the inset training (e.g. role-play, discussing the animation).
- Consider providing the inset training materials to school staff to support a train-the-trainer model where they could then train and disseminate the programme to other colleagues in their school, widening delivery to other year groups and supporting a whole school approach.
- Consider filming a student workshop or creating a film of the workshop activities (using actors) to provide to school staff as part of the programme resources so they can use the film with future cohorts of students if funding is not available for them to attend workshops in person.
- Consider including suggestions on how the materials may be adapted for other year groups in the staff inset training so staff can consider if and how they could deliver the programme to a wider cohort of students. This could include space within the community of practice section of the online platform where adaptations to the programme by school staff could be shared with other schools.

In summary, the Choices programme has demonstrated strong potential in supporting violence prevention through a trauma-informed and creative approach. Moving forward, key considerations include ensuring the programme remains adaptable across different school contexts, sustaining key components such as the workshops, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation to support ongoing development and effectiveness.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Study aims and objectives.....	2
2. Methodology.....	3
2.1 Methods.....	3
2.2 Data analyses	3
2.3 Ethical approval.....	3
3. Findings	4
3.1 Overview of the Choices programme	4
3.2 Dose and reach	9
3.3 Facilitators and barriers to programme implementation	10
3.4 Impacts of the programme	15
3.5 Sustainability and areas for development	20
4. Summary of key findings and considerations for future implementation and evaluation.....	22
5. References	25

1. Introduction

As a key point of contact and a formative setting for children and young people, schools, working in partnership with other stakeholders, including parents and the community, are in a unique position to prevent and address youth violence, abuse, and exploitation. School-based interventions have the potential to educate and equip children and young people with the knowledge and skills to critically examine prejudicial social norms, engage in healthy peer relationships, manage aggression, develop interpersonal communication and help-seeking behaviour, and resolve problems in a non-violent way [1, 2]. Furthermore, such interventions also form an important part of the requirements schools are expected to meet for the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education curriculum in the UK.

Social skills training is an evidence-based effective school intervention for reducing violent crime [3]. Social skills training supports children and young people to think before they act, understand other people's perspectives, communicate effectively, and use strategies to manage aggression [3]. Programmes can be universal or targeted at higher risk children and are typically delivered in structured sessions, although the dose varies by programme and may include a single short session up to a longer programme of support over several weeks. School-based programmes are typically delivered by teachers, who generally have received training from an external programme provider. Programme content and activities vary; however, they can include role playing where children practice conflict resolution and help seeking behaviour, are shown demonstrations of positive behaviour, and equipped with relaxation and deep breathing techniques [4, 3].

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Toolkit, which aims to collate evidence on approaches to preventing violence, suggests that social skills training is likely to have a large impact on preventing violent crime, with an average reduction of the number of children involved in crime estimated as 32%. Whilst YEF have high confidence in this estimate, variability across programmes, in addition to a lack of UK based evidence means further evaluation of such programmes in the UK is needed, particularly in secondary schools [3].

The transition period between primary and secondary school has been identified as a particularly vulnerable time for young people, increasing their risk of exposure to violence, abuse, and exploitation. Whilst schools are in an ideal position to support young people through education and equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to make this transition and effectively cope with risky situations, and despite many of these topics forming part of school's mandatory PSHE curriculum, a 2013 review of PSHE provision found that it was 'not yet good enough' with inconsistencies in provision and a lack of teacher confidence in providing information across numerous topics, particularly around healthy relationships [5]. Furthermore, a lack of opportunities for teachers to receive training in how to effectively deliver such education to pupils has also been identified [6]. Other barriers to delivery of social skills training have included the curriculum not being culturally relevant (i.e. using US programmes) and finding space in the school curriculum for implementing the intervention [3].

Artswork, in partnership with Bearface Theatre, have been commissioned by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Violence Reduction Unit to deliver the programme called Choices targeted at Year 6 and Year 7 students. The programme examines the risks and impact of knife crime, exploitation, and other types of violence and abuse, and aims to enable young people to make healthy decisions, build positive relationships, and respond appropriately to potentially risky or challenging situations. In line with

previous research and evidence on effective social skills programmes in school settings, the programme supports a trauma-informed approach and includes teaching materials which have been developed in partnership with individuals with lived experience of violent crime, and which can be adapted throughout delivery using the voice of the child as part of the philosophy and enquiry-based learning approach, and the drama framework. The providers deliver three components of the project (inset school staff training, student forum theatre workshops, staff legacy training), while the trained school staff then deliver the programme curriculum to their students throughout the academic year.

1.1 Study aims and objectives

The current study aims to conduct an evaluation of the Choices programme implemented in schools across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight. The evaluation had two core objectives, which include several research questions.

1. To monitor, document and describe the development and implementation of the Choices programme (process evaluation):
 - To describe the implementation of the Choices programme, including set up and training, and programme content and delivery.
 - To identify how much of the intervention was delivered (dose).
 - To explore the uptake of the programme amongst the target population (reach).
 - To elicit the facilitators and/or barriers to programme development.
 - To identify areas for development and sustainability.
2. To assess the perceptions and impacts of the Choices programme (outcome evaluation):
 - To explore school staff and student's perceptions of the training and the programme.
 - To explore potential outcomes of the programme on staff and students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methods

2.1.1 Review of programme documentation

Documentation, materials, and correspondence produced throughout the implementation of the Choices programme were collated and reviewed. A review of the online course was conducted to provide an overview of programme session content and resources. A revised logic model was produced based on Artswork's original logic model/theory of change and evaluation findings. Researchers regularly observed the development and implementation of the Choices programme through attending steering group meetings (online) and one of the staff inset training days (in person).

2.1.2 Review and analysis of monitoring data

Programme monitoring data collected by Artswork and Bearface was accessed and analysed to understand programme dose and reach, and programme impact. This included:

- Data on school recruitment including number of schools contacted, number of schools and staff per school who completed inset training, number of schools where workshops had been delivered and number of students who attended per school, type of schools (primary, secondary, other), school location, whether schools were considered 'hot spots', how schools were recruited (pro-actively by Artswork or school made initial approach to Artswork to request the programme), where schools completed inset training (own school or host school), and notes on recruitment.
- Data from pre (n=379) and post (n=246) training surveys conducted with staff attending the inset training including changes in knowledge and confidence using creative techniques to address violence and exploitation, and perceptions of the training. Pre and post surveys were able to be matched for 255 staff.
- Data from student workshops including changes in confidence to make positive choices when peers are making negative ones, interpretation of the animation characters true intentions, and identification of who is a trusted adult.

2.1.3 Stakeholder and school staff semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders and school staff (n=11) who had a key role in programme implementation. Participants included Artswork staff (n=3), In Focus trainers (n=2), the Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU evaluation lead (n=1), secondary school teacher (n=1), primary school teachers (n=2) and a paired interview with two teachers from one primary school (n=2). Interview length ranged in time from 34 to 49 minutes and were carried out online. Interviews questions focused on: perceptions of training; programme content and delivery, including any adaptations; factors supporting and impeding implementation of Choices; areas for development; and perceived impacts on school staff, students, and the wider school context.

2.2 Data analyses

Quantitative analyses were undertaken in SPSS (v28) using descriptive statistics. Where data was available to match staff pre and post training surveys, paired samples t-tests were used to identify statistically significant changes from pre to post training. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews [2]. The analysis is presented with illustrative quotes where appropriate to highlight key findings.

2.3 Ethical approval

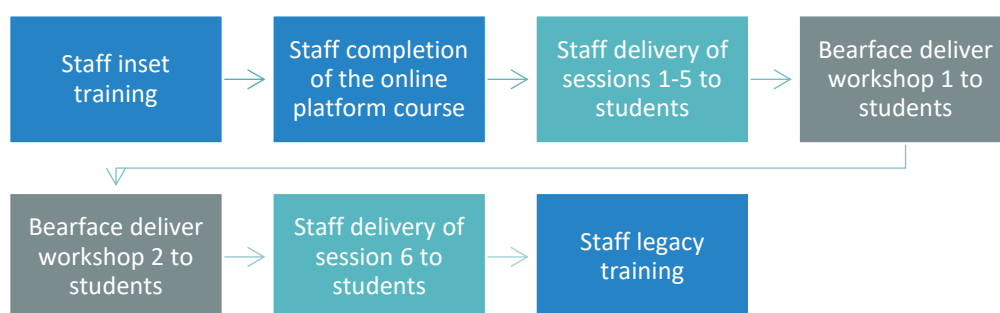
Ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University (REC no. 23/PHI/016).

3. Findings

3.1 Overview of the Choices programme

The implementation of the Choices programme began in May 2023, and took place in a number of sequential steps depicted in Figure 1 including: training of school staff by Artswork (including contracted trainers from In Focus) delivery of sessions by school staff to students, student forum theatre workshops ran by Bearface, the final session delivered by school staff, and legacy training for school staff by Artswork.

Figure 1: Choices programme implementation process model



Staff inset training: A one-day training session for school staff, exploring flexible creative approaches to learning that will support young people to develop their cognitive, critical and problem-solving skills. The session also aims to build confidence to adapt and develop programme materials to meet the needs of pupils. Training focused on three specific techniques, each of which can be adapted and used in other curriculum areas:

- Philosophy for young people: Encouraging pupils to see the world in new ways, question their assumptions and develop their own points of view.
- Enquiry based learning: Encouraging pupils to pose questions, research and create solutions.
- Mantle of the expert: A drama-based approach putting young people into the role of the “expert”. Pupils work alongside their teachers and other professionals to become social scientists exploring how to address violence and knife crime in society.

Programme sessions: The session plans for each of the six one-hour sessions which teachers deliver to the students are all available to download on the Artswork Learning Platform which each school is given access to. In addition, any resources or materials (e.g. handouts and activities) which are included in the sessions are downloadable. Where relevant, information is also given on how each session links to other curriculum subjects (e.g. PSHE) and how it can support wellbeing. Each session covers one of the core elements of the programme:

- Session 1: Asking questions. This session aims to introduce different types of questions, encourage critical thinking and creativity; build communication skills and teamwork; and develop awareness of the power of questions.
- Session 2: Being a philosopher. This session aims to develop critical thinking skills; develop questioning and reasoning skills; and build social interaction and working with others.
- Session 3: Debating. This session aims to explore the debating process and the moral concepts of instinct.

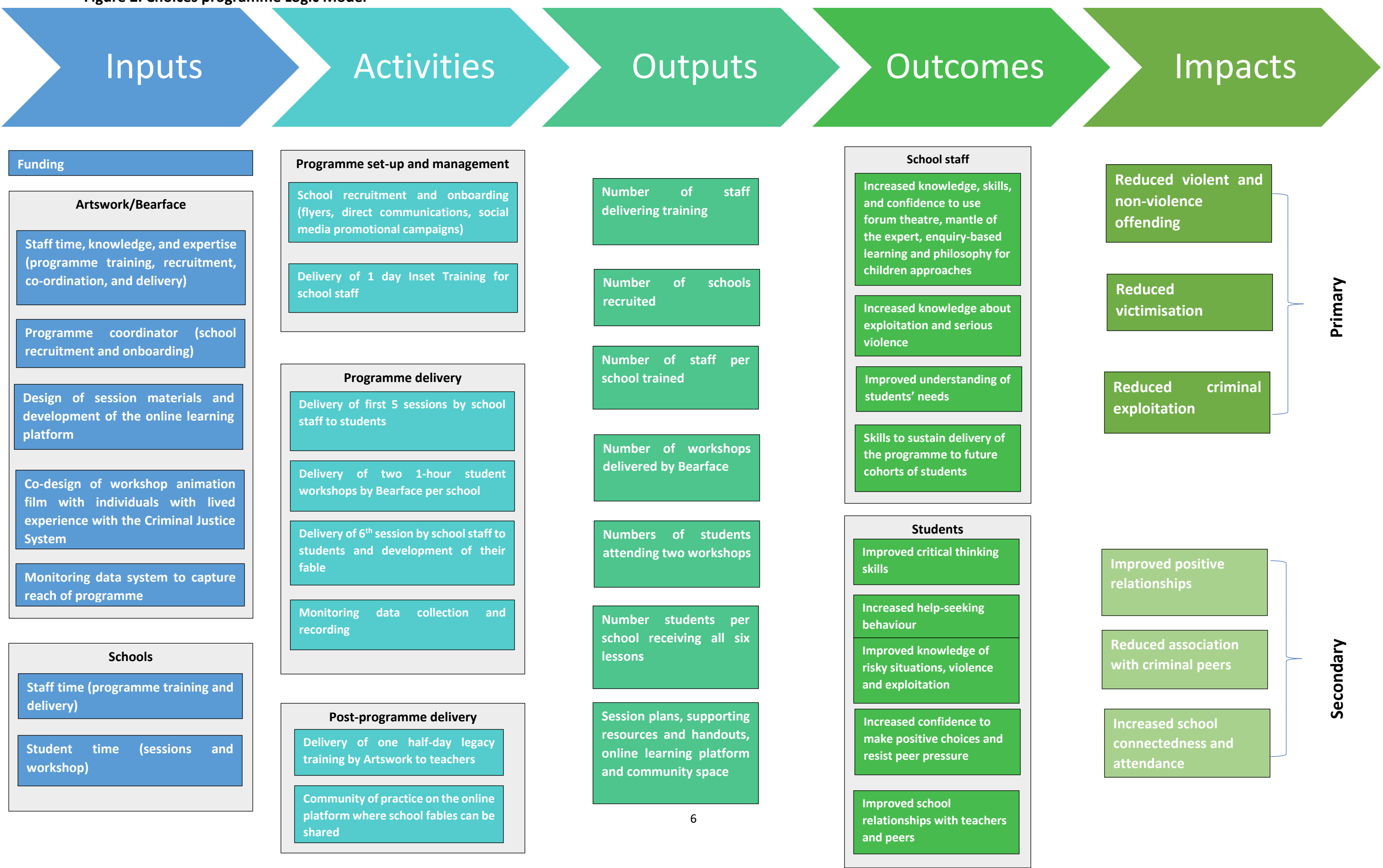
- Session 4: Thinking hats. This session aims to familiarise students with the concept of Edward de Bono's thinking hats and encourage critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Session 5: Hot seating. This session uses philosophy and hot seating to understand and explore motivations and behaviours using one of Aesop's fables (e.g. the Fox and the Grapes).
- Session 6: Being a social scientist. This session aims to set up the framework for Mantle of the Expert and develop enquiry-based learning skills. Specifically, this session builds on the previous five sessions and the workshops and aims to provide students with an opportunity to use their learning to develop their own fable which can be shared with others.

Student workshops: Each pupil receives two workshops using forum theatre techniques which are designed to allow pupils to "rehearse for change". The first workshop includes consideration of the causes and impact of violence from both victim and perpetrator perspectives. This workshop uses testimony from people with experience of entering the criminal justice system which they have shared with Bearface as a way of supporting future generations to make different decisions. The second workshop builds on this and includes consideration of healthy relationships and making positive choices.

Staff legacy training: A half-day or twilight session for school staff which introduces a legacy pack which supports ongoing learning within school settings. This includes an introduction to using forum theatre within a teaching environment and opportunities for staff to reflect on the process together, sharing with each other what they have learnt.

A logic model for the Choices programme was adapted from the original logic model and theory of change produced by Artsworld, based on the evaluation findings, and is provided in Figure 2. This provides an overview of the inputs and resources required to implement the programme, programme activities, outputs, and the aimed outcomes.

Figure 2: Choices programme Logic Model



3.1.1 Perceptions of training, programme content, and workshops

Overall, there were very positive perceptions of the inset training, the programme's content, materials, and resources provided to deliver the sessions, and the student workshops.

The training was appreciated for its approach of leveraging teachers' existing knowledge as a foundation. One staff member noted how this strategy effectively supplemented teachers' understanding of the subject matter and complemented any prior experiences they may have had in their role, thus enhancing their skill set and knowledge base.

"Yeah, we actively had that [the training] they went through all of the different activities that we would then be completing ourselves, which was really reassuring. And I think because we'd been walked through it. We knew the background anyway because we had the discussion about kind of how, you know, it [county lines] was becoming increasingly popular. So obviously we had the background information, but I found it really beneficial in completing the activities alongside them, completing them with us so that we knew what we would be delivering." **School Staff 1, Interview**

Another aspect of the training which school staff felt was useful was its interactive approach, practising the skills needed to deliver the programme by doing the programme session activities in the training.

"Learning the creative skills by physically doing them. It gave a very clear idea and picture of what we can do with the children and how we can use the resources." **School Staff 1, Post training survey**

"We thought the content was really good, we enjoyed the activities because they led us through using the classroom as that discussion space with making choices 'Would you rather be a starfish or a crab'? And 'would you rather live on the moon or at the bottom of the ocean'? Then we went through all of those activities, and it was good for us to go through it because it meant we had a very clear understanding of how it would work when the children were there." **School Staff 4, Interview**

"I really enjoyed the interactive elements as it gave me ideas for how I could implement these strategies with my own students." **School Staff 3, Post training survey**

Other staff mentioned that the session time could have been utilised more efficiently by receiving the materials before the session, allowing them to review the content, prepare questions, and save time during the session.

"I think having a whole day for it's too much... it would have made more sense if we were sent the lessons beforehand to look through." **School staff 3, Interview**

At post training, staff were asked how likely they were to recommend the training session to others¹. The majority of trainees (93.9%; n=251) indicated that they were likely² to recommend the training session to others.

Individuals also commended the programme for its effective handling of sensitive topics in a manner suitable for the age group. A number outlined that they were appreciative of the programme's use of real-life scenarios, noting how the programme has sought to actively move away from resorting to scare tactics. Additionally, some noted how the programme's flexibility in accommodating various learning styles, such as through the

"Genius to do the whole thing without directly mentioning crime." – **School staff 1, training survey**

¹ Ten-point scale (1=least likely to recommend; 10=most likely to recommend)

² Score of 6-10=likely; 1-5=unlikely

use of multiple activities like role-plays and group discussions, has helped to keep students engaged. This inclusive approach also ensured that the programme effectively met the needs of all types of students.

“That's what was so clever about it. Because they taught them [the children] all of those skills, but without exposing them to anything you wouldn't want them to be exposed to yet. But yeah, so they were putting them in situations that they might easily find themselves in at the park. And just you know, with somebody pushing them or taking something from them and you know, trying to encourage them to join in with bad behaviour. But none of it was beyond their level.” **School Staff 2, Interview**

“Even if they weren't doing the role play, they still had to move [to sides of the room for different questions]. I think that they were able to talk if they wanted to verbally contribute or get up or be involved, but actually it catered to the quiet ones as well.” **School Staff 2, Interview**

“So, I think there's a big sell in terms of it being creative and being different for the staff in terms of them learning something new, but also a lot of schools have commented that they have pupils who may not be traditionally academic. And so, this type of programme really works for them because it is different and uses different techniques. And so, they're keen to learn those techniques as to how they could use them, not just on this, but in other ways with all pupils, but particularly those that would find these more creative ways more engaging.” **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

“I feel that this met the perfect balance of addressing a sensitive situation in a way that allowed for reflection and personal input from our children.” **School Staff 4, Post training survey**

Furthermore, the programme and the skills learned in the training was perceived to be relevant to other subjects and curriculum, increasing the usefulness of the training and ensuring wider benefit. At post training, staff were asked how likely they were to use the resources and techniques that they had been shown in the training session in other areas of their teaching practice³. The majority of trainees (88.9%; n=217) indicated that they were likely⁴ to use the resources and techniques learned in other areas of their teaching practice (unlikely 1.6%, n=4; neither 9.4%, n=23).

“The pressure on teachers is so enormous that we wanted to make sure that if we're taking a day of their time that that is absolutely the most useful thing that they can do. And therefore, can absolutely use these techniques across all different curricular subjects. Because actually in that way they're much more likely to be using them and embedding them, which is what you know, that's what's going to make the difference.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

“Teachers are also quick to feedback that there's a lot that can be done across curriculum. So, some of the activities would be great for PSHE and then in some regards it's you can use it in a history lesson, an English lesson, maths, there's so many applications for it.” **Trainer 1, Interview**

“The ones [teachers] that I've worked with have been incredibly responsive and come back and said this is brilliant because we're gonna use it in other classes.” **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

“It was easy enough to do [online resources], but you had to go through every single step that you had to work through each of the different steps. You couldn't jump ahead, which was probably on purpose, so I understand their reason for doing that. We have been so busy we haven't gone back

³ Five-point scale (1=least likely to use resources/techniques; 5=most likely to use resources/techniques).

⁴ Score of 4-5=likely; 3=neither; 1-2=unlikely.

and used any of the other resources that are there, but I know that we can, I know that we could.”

School Staff 4, Interview

School staff perceptions of the workshops delivered by Bearface were very positive, and many felt this was a key element to the programme. Many schools approached the programme deliverers about booking further workshops for next year for new cohorts of students⁵.

“The year group absolutely loved the workshops with the drama group! They got so much out of it, and they have really enjoyed them.” **School staff 2, Post training survey**

“I just wanted to say thank you for today’s workshops. The practitioners were amazing, and our students engaged really well. It is a rarity that our young people warm to strangers like they did today. I was amazed that they were able to get our kids role playing and in costume!” **School staff 1,**

Workshop data

3.2 Dose and reach

3.2.1 Reach

Between May 2023 and April 2025, of the 565 schools on the list provided⁶ to Artsworld for recruitment and onboarding:

- ~445 school staff from 97 schools had completed the inset training⁷.
- ~5356 students from 78 schools had completed the workshops. 358 workshops had been delivered, each student attends two workshops and multiple workshops may be required in some schools to accommodate larger year groups.
- 5 schools had the inset training but had cancelled/not participated in student workshops.
- 14 schools had the inset training but are awaiting workshop completion.
- 9 schools had been offered dates for staff inset training and student workshops but had not confirmed.

Of the 78 schools which had completed both the inset training and the workshops, 58 were primary (14% of primary schools across the four areas (Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight), 15 were secondary (16% of secondary schools), and 5 were other types of schools (13% of other schools). 43 were in Hampshire (10% of Hampshire schools), 17 were in Southampton (31% of Southampton schools), 11 in Portsmouth (24% of Portsmouth schools), and seven on the Isle of Wight (14% of Isle of Wight schools). Of these schools 15 were target schools and eight were identified as hot spot schools.

A further 412 schools had no dates offered at the point of writing for either the inset training or the workshops. Of these schools 314 were primary (74% of primary schools), 64 were secondary (67% of secondary schools), and 34 were other types of schools (72% of other schools). 331 of these schools were in Hampshire (79% of Hampshire schools), 19 in Portsmouth (42% of Portsmouth schools), 37 on the Isle of Wight (73% of Isle of Wight schools), and 25 in Southampton (46% of Southampton schools). 48 of these schools were VRU target schools and 21 were identified as hot spot schools for violence and exploitation.

By April 2025, of the 565 schools, 49 had confirmed they did not wish to participate in the programme. Of these schools 34 were primary (8% of primary schools), 9 were secondary (10% of secondary

⁶ By Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU.

⁷ Recorded number of places booked. Not all staff/students may have attended.

schools), and 6 were other types of schools (13% of other schools). 31 of these schools were in Hampshire (7% of Hampshire schools), 12 in Portsmouth (27% of Portsmouth schools), three on the Isle of Wight (6% of Isle of Wight schools), and three in Southampton (5% of Southampton schools). 15 of these schools were VRU target schools and six were identified as hot spot schools for violence and exploitation.

3.2.2 Dose

No data is currently captured on the dose of the programme which students receive (i.e. the number of sessions each school has delivered).

3.3 Facilitators and barriers to programme implementation

3.3.1 Facilitators

Flexibility in delivery

Flexibility in terms of school staff training and delivery of the sessions was considered a key facilitating factor to supporting attendance at training and allowing schools to adapt the programme content and delivery according to their students' needs and other competing pressures and challenges that emerge because of school curriculums.

"That flexibility [in delivery] is really useful for schools, because some schools seemed to be able to go 'we're going to do this as you've suggested it to us' and then other schools are going 'oh no, we can't do that, but we could do it this way' and I think that's what's going to make the difference for schools to implement or not." **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

"We're not being prescriptive to the school because we can't be because each school is different. So we're allowing them that flexibility in terms of who comes to the training on the proviso that whoever comes needs to either deliver it or be able to effectively disseminate it within the school and then they've got the flexibility of how they actually roll out that programme." **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

One stakeholder outlined how one of the ways the programme ensures flexibility is to equip teachers with the necessary tools to incorporate elements of the programme more naturally and effectively in their teaching, as opposed to teachers having to adhere to strict lesson plans.

"It's much more about giving the teachers the tools to then help the pupils build the skills rather than saying you now have to do a lesson on open and closed questions, for example." **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

Further efforts have also been made to enhance flexibility and support delivery by developing shorter activities which can be done on a regular basis which reinforce the messages from the longer session to continue to build and develop students' critical thinking skills. This proactive approach acknowledges the potential challenges encountered by some schools in fully implementing each hour-long session within their timetable and seeks to offer accessible solutions to facilitate programme implementation. It was also felt that the online platform allows school staff to access and think about the programme content at different relevant points which removes the pressure for staff to have the time to digest the programme and the session plans all at once.

"So we are starting to pull together some of those 10 minute activities and going even if you can't do anything else, if you can do that on a regular basis, these 10 minute activities, which kind of help people to explore Socratic questioning and looking at things like open and closed questions and what the difference is between them, not only will it help with some of the academic subjects, it will also help with that flexible thinking. So that's kind of the next bit we're going to do just because I think

you know, we're definitely missing it on some schools because they're just kind of going, 'we can't, we can't put it in'." **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

"But being able to make it all online even if they go, I don't really remember what she said about thinking hats, that's OK. It's all online for them and that they can go and refresh themselves and look at it all on there. I think having, yeah, having that kind of that learning platform is really, really good." **Trainer 1, Interview**

Senior Leadership Team buy-in

Stakeholders felt a key facilitating factor to successful recruitment and onboarding of schools was senior leadership team or head teacher buy-in to the programme. Critically this supported school staff buy-in to the programme by providing them with the time to attend the inset training, work through the online session plans and materials, and fit and deliver the programme to students within their timetable.

"So, for example, some primary schools, the head teacher, they're absolutely on it, they're my main contact. It's brilliant because you've got SLT involved so they can make sure that the rest of the school are participating." **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

"But I mean, I've worked in education for 30 years, and if I'm honest, I've heard that on such a regular basis because it takes that time and it takes senior management buy-in on it to release teachers and make sure they have time." **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

"I think it's really important that when the teachers are fully briefed and fully aware of what's happening, their buy-in is a lot more apparent." **Trainer 1, Interview**

"In some schools, there's been no sign of senior management teams. People aren't really sure why they're there and I think, I was just going to say I think in my experience, certainly when you look at sort of research that's being done by YEF and places when there's not the senior management team buy-in, it often slips." **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

"It was for this head in particular she went 'this teaching practice is really important because you can use it right the way across the board. It isn't just about this. I want you to do it as CPD because you'll be embedding this in your sessions'." **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

Furthermore buy-in by senior leadership teams or the head teacher was perceived as supporting the embedding of the programme and encouraging a whole school approach.

"I think one of the things that we are picking up is that those schools who are taking the whole school approach seem to be more able to deliver and really embed than those schools who are taking the model of we'll send a couple of teachers to the inset and then those poor teachers have to try and come back and explain it all." **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

3.3.2 Barriers

School recruitment and onboarding

Several key barriers were identified which related to school recruitment and onboarding. These included challenges to recruit hot spot schools whose students were having behavioural issues, or experiencing violence and exploitation, high levels of staff sickness and absence which meant extra-curricular activities often had to be dropped to ensure core curriculum was still delivered, and reaching the right contact at each school who had the authority to enrol their school in the programme.

“There is a battle to engage with schools, particularly the schools that the VRU want us to engage with. And I think that comes down to this thing of just, you know, if you are a school who is experiencing lots of behavioural issues, the last thing you want is something else to deal with.”

Stakeholder 1, Interview

“Staff sickness and absence which is causing issues for the programme, and I think you know kind of we can’t really mitigate for that one.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

“So, it’s that’s the number one challenge is getting a contact in the school and the right contact who has the empowerment to say ‘yes, we will be going ahead with the programme’ and then helping to facilitate getting that booked in and worked through.” – **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

Whilst some schools approached the programme coordinator directly with expressions of interest in taking part, there was also a system of pro-actively contacting and trying to engage schools in the programme, particularly schools identified by the VRU as hot spots. Analysis of the monitoring data shows that 90% of schools were pro-actively recruited by Artswork and numerous attempts were made with each school to reach the right contact, engage the school in the programme, and book in the inset training and student workshops.

Time to implement the sessions and attend training

A significant barrier encountered by the programme was the challenge of school staff finding time to deliver the programme to their students. During stakeholder interviews, stakeholders noted how school timetables often do not allow teachers to dedicate sufficient time to the programme due to time constraints, national curriculum requirements, as well as other pressures and priorities such as SATs exams and the transitional period students in year six face.

“It’s the feedback that’s coming back is there’s just no time in school timetables at all. That’s when we get the negative feedback, that’s what it is.” **Stakeholder 3, Interview**

“The other challenge in year six is you’ve got the SATs, and obviously pressure of transitioning.” **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

“The second challenge with the schools, more so with secondary, is helping them to work out how they fit this programme into an already jam-packed curriculum.” **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

“Teachers being constrained by the national curriculum, which means that they are struggling to see how they implement the lesson plans that we’ve designed into what they need to teach.”

Stakeholder 1, Interview

A major barrier was finding the time for staff to attend a full day inset training, which often resulted in only a selection of staff attending or support staff rather than the teachers who would be delivering the sessions. In addition, stakeholders highlighted that time pressure was also evident during training sessions for school staff. This pressure was seen as arising from the reality that teachers often have to participate in multiple training sessions, and inset days are limited throughout the year.

“When we designed the programme, the idea was that those inset sessions were going to be delivered to a whole one [school], that is not happening, or rarely, it’s much more that we’re doing an inset, and schools will send selected teachers in... I think it’s much more successful when it is teachers. We’ve done them where there’s not teachers in the room, they’re all support staff. That’s an even bigger barrier to the delivery.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

“Sometimes you get there on an inset training day and they’re like, ‘well, we need to be finished by this time because we’ve got more training to go into afterwards.’ You’re just like, literally waiting to

get through this, and it's not, it's not always ideal, but like their time is so precious.” **Trainer 2, Interview**

Findings from the monitoring data confirmed these barriers to engagement, with the majority of schools who had confirmed they were not participating in the programme (n=28 as of April 2024) citing difficulties releasing staff for a full day inset training and/or fitting the programme into current timetabling.

Misunderstanding about programme content and delivery

Another barrier which was identified was confusion about what the programme content covered prior to attending the training. This was perceived by stakeholders as a lack of communication with staff by the key contact at the school about the programme aims and content. One teacher felt the advertisement for the programme was misleading, as they expected focused content on knife crime prevention, but instead found the training to be more generally centred on teaching decision-making skills.

“I think the information we have beforehand is a little bit misleading in terms of what we were actually going to get from it... So, our main aim when we signed up to it was, we thought this is going to be some really good clear knowledge on knife crime to keep our young children safe, almost like a before it's potentially too late. After doing the training and it obviously wasn't particularly focused on knife crime, I'd say the main aim became how we generically teach students about good decision making again while they are still with us before it's too late.” **School staff 3, Interview**

“The way the information had been passed down to the staff wasn't quite right, and they believed that we were teaching them almost disarming techniques and we would be talking directly about knife crime and about county lines, whereas obviously the course is more to do with building confidence and resilience and inquiry-based learning... They thought we would be kind of talking about getting actual knives out of hand, so there was a bit of kind of apprehension around what we were doing. But yeah, that miscommunication can lead to difficulties when delivering cause it's not what the teachers have been expecting.” - **Trainer 1, Interview**

In addition, there was some initial misunderstanding about the programme delivery with some schools thinking it was just the student workshops.

“I think there was a miscommunication between whoever booked it, so maybe the head or the deputy head and then passing that information along to the teachers.” **Trainer 1, Interview**

“The idea from schools that once the pupil workshops happen, that's it.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

Lack of appropriate facilities and mix of schools

At times a lack of appropriate facilities or equipment to effectively deliver the inset training was a barrier. One stakeholder revealed how technology setup issues, such as the absence of Wi-Fi and difficulty in setting up presentations, have, in some instances, made it difficult for those delivering the training to start the sessions on time.

“You don't know what the technology set up is gonna be when you get there, so I haven't heard it myself, but my colleague... had an experience where there wasn't any Wi-Fi, they couldn't get the presentation set up, so x had to deliver for like the first 20 minutes without a presentation, which is really tricky.” **Trainer 1, Interview**

It was also felt that delivery to just one school wasn't the ideal circumstance and school staff were more engaged in the training when multiple schools were trained together. Findings from the monitoring data showed that 44 schools participated in the training at a host school⁸.

"One observation I made is that when you have just one school in the room and they're all from the same school... it's not quite the same level of engagement as when you get three or four schools or even just two schools. So they're not all from the same school." **Trainer 2, Interview**

Appropriateness of programme for secondary school students

The programme was widely perceived by staff as more appropriate for a primary school audience. The content and pace were seen as misaligned with secondary settings, where lessons need to be more structured and time efficient.

"I felt like it was very primary school focused and as a secondary school we felt some of it just wasn't appropriate for how our students would act...It would take a very long time to do a relatively small amount of content, which isn't really the sort of pace that we have at secondary school typically."

School staff 3, Interview

Additionally, staff felt the programme lacked relevance and adaptability for older students, with no clear alternatives provided for unsuitable activities. These issues left one teacher discussing how their school had to heavily adapt the materials.

"They would say this probably wouldn't work in secondary, but there wasn't really an alternative for that...It felt more like we were looking through like eight lessons to see, like, the odd bit we could pick out." **School staff 3, Interview**

Not having access to future Bearface workshops

A key barrier to future implementation is the lack of access to future Bearface workshops and the unique expertise of the Bearface Theatre team. While staff feel confident in planning and resourcing early sessions, they express concern about being unable to replicate the impact and quality of the final workshop and performance. The original facilitators were seen as highly skilled, delivering content that was both powerful and emotionally resonant for students, something difficult to reproduce without their involvement. This highlights a reliance on external specialists for delivering the most impactful elements of the program.

"The bit we're going to have trouble with is recreating the actual workshop that they came and led."

School staff 4, interview

"The Bearface theatre, they were just incredible. I can't replicate that myself. I was really disappointed it wasn't running again this year because I can do all the future plans and all the resourcing of those first sessions, but I can't replicate that end performance. I think it was really appropriate but hard hitting at the same time for them [pupils] and you just saw their faces like go like, "Oh my gosh", like they were just in complete shock about certain things." **School staff 5,**

interview

⁸ This is captured as training delivered at the school or at a host school so doesn't provide an exact estimate of how many schools received the training along with other schools.

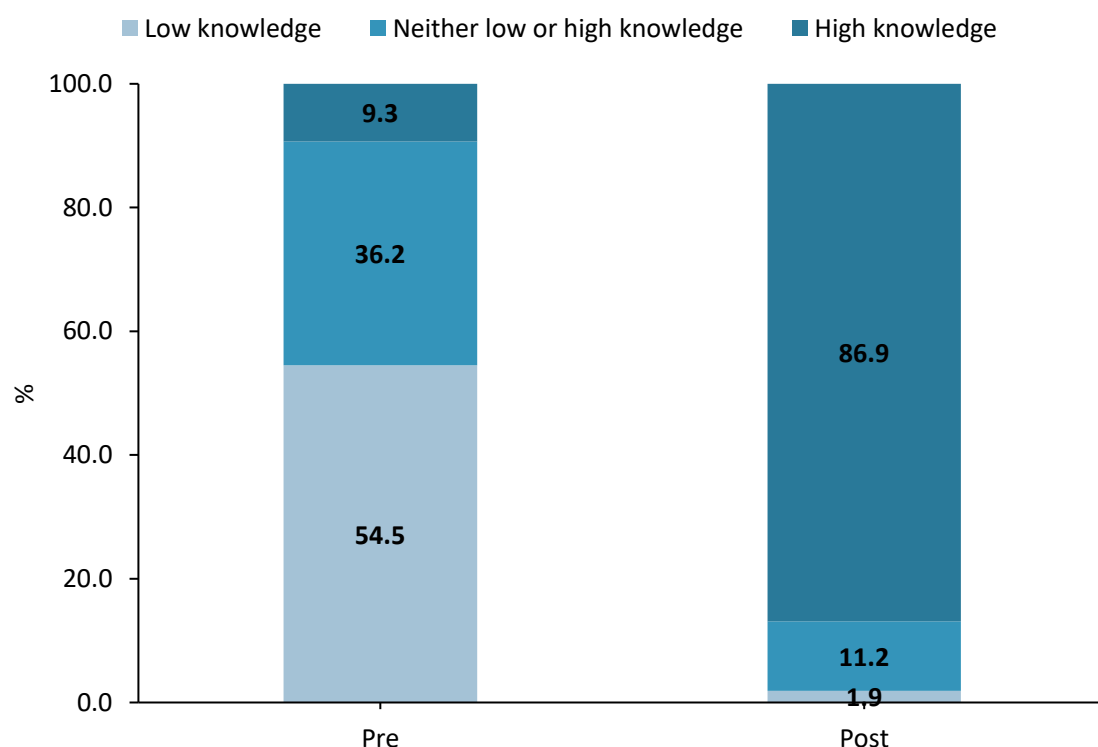
3.4 Impacts of the programme

3.4.1 Impacts for staff

Knowledge and confidence in using creative approaches to address serious violence and exploitation

At pre and post training staff were asked to rate their ‘*knowledge of using creative approaches within the classroom to reduce the risk of children becoming involved in county lines, knife crime, exploitation and gang violence*’⁹. Prior to training over half (54.5%; n=206) of trainees had low knowledge levels, and less than one in ten trainees (9.3%; n=35) had a high level of knowledge¹⁰. At post training very few staff (1.9%; n=5) had low knowledge levels, and the majority of trainees (86.9%; n=233) had a high level of knowledge (Figure 3). In matched analyses (n=255), there was a significant increase in staff knowledge from pre to post training (pre, mean=2.33, SD=0.97; post, mean=4.14, SD=0.69; p<0.001).

Figure 3: Staff knowledge of using creative approaches to address serious violence, Artsworks’ pre and post training surveys



At pre and post training staff were asked to rate their ‘*confidence around using creative approaches within the classroom to reduce the risk of children becoming involved in county lines, knife crime, exploitation and gang violence*’¹¹. Prior to training over half (59.2%; n=222) of staff had low confidence levels, and less than one in ten staff (8.8%; n=33) had a high level of confidence¹². At post training very few trainees (1.1%; n=3) had low confidence levels, and the majority of trainees (90.3%; n=241) had a high level of confidence (Figure 4). In matched analyses (n=255), there was a significant increase in staff confidence from pre to post training (pre, mean=2.26, SD=0.95; post, mean=4.26, SD=0.66; p<0.001).

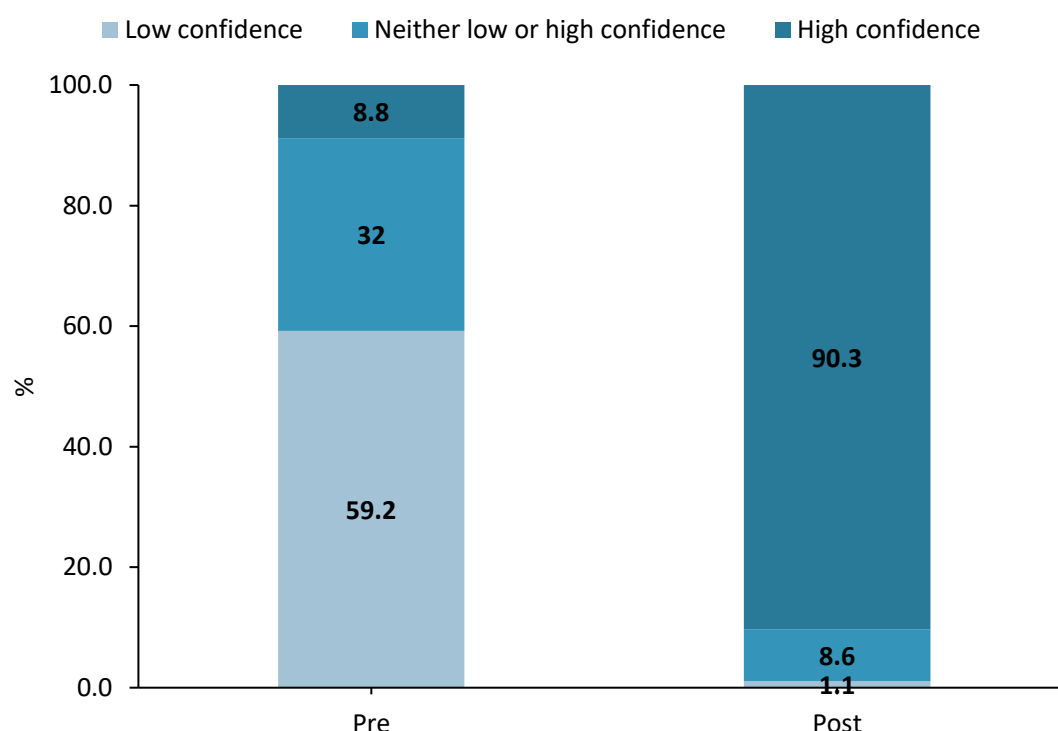
⁹ Five-point scale (1=low levels of knowledge; 5=high levels of knowledge).

¹⁰ Score of 1-2=low knowledge, 3=neither low or high knowledge; 4-5=high knowledge.

¹¹ Five-point scale (1=low levels of confidence; 5=high levels of confidence).

¹² Score of 1-2=low confidence, 3=neither low or high confidence; 4-5=high confidence.

Figure 4: Staff confidence in using creative approaches to address serious violence, Artsworks' pre and post training surveys



At post training, the majority of trainees (73.9%; n=17) agreed that they had increased confidence in implementing positive changes in their policies or practices (disagree 8.6%, n=2; undecided 17.4%, n=4), and 94% (n=251) agreed that they had increased confidence in using creative approaches to achieve positive outcomes in their work (disagree 1.1%, n=3; undecided 4.9%, n=13).

“Every session that we’ve had, the teachers come out... very confident that they’re able to do that.”
Stakeholder 3, Interview

3.4.2 Impacts for students

Confidence to make positive choices and resist peer pressure

Bearface collect a measure of distance travelled at each workshop with students. Due to the short amount of time allocated for each workshop this is a basic measure collected at the start of the first workshop and the end of the second workshop by counting how many students agree, disagree, or say they don’t know in response to the statement *‘I feel confident to make positive choices even when my friends are making negative ones’*.

Data from the workshops ran in November 2023 and April 2025, showed that at the baseline measure, 21.1% disagreed with the statement, 61.8% agreed with the statement and 17.1% said they don’t know, this compared to the post measure where 11.0% disagreed with the statement, 70.0% agreed, and 18.9% said they don’t know. This means from pre to post measure, there was a 50.3% decrease in the number of students who disagreed with the statement and a 7.7% increase in the number of students who agreed with the statement. There was also a 5.1% increase in the number of students who said they don’t know.

"For the young people, it's about gaining those invaluable skills around creating your own prosocial identity, so that you feel you have the confidence to be able to make those decisions in an autonomous way so that you're not always going 'oh well, my mate Jimmy's doing it, so I'm just going to do that, because otherwise I'm going to be left out' " **Trainer 2, Interview**

"I felt that the children really enjoyed it. I thought it was something quite different, but on top of that they were also learning skills. So, they're all reinforcing them, like debating and all of those skills, even negotiation and reasoning and problem solving, and actively turn taking." **School Staff 2, Interview**

It was also discussed how the Choices programme could be crucial in supporting children during their transition from primary to secondary school, particularly in rural areas where exposure to negative experiences and risks may be limited. One school staff member expressed appreciation for the programme, noting its value in preparing children for the realities they may face in larger, more diverse secondary school environments compared to the more sheltered primary school that their children were used to.

"I was really hoping it [Bearface workshop] was going to happen again this year because we're in such like a rural area and they're very sheltered our children, they don't, they just wouldn't be aware that stuff like this happens. It's exposing them to it in a safe way that's not too much but also this could happen to you and you're about to go from a really nurturing, tiny primary school to quite a big secondary school where there will be people who do these things. I just think it was invaluable."

School staff 5, Interview

Knowledge of risky situations

After the students are shown the animated film in the workshop, they are asked what they think the character Buddy is asking them to do¹³. There is no 'correct' answer since the film is ambiguous about what risky behaviour Buddy might be referring to. Instead, a positive outcome could be understood to be student's identifying that Buddy might be encouraging them to be involved in a risky, vulnerable or criminal activity, and that he is not a friend. As shown in figure 5, many students interpreted Buddy's intentions as negative and would lead to involving them in risky situations including robbery, anti-social behaviour, drugs and violence. Over one third of students described his intentions as involving skipping school and hanging out (this is the message Buddy directly says to the other character in the animation), however most students also identified how this would include some element of making trouble (even if they did not explicitly state what kind of trouble).

"Questioning the world around them more because part of this is around critical decision making and not taking things at face value and in a positive way just asking questions." **Stakeholder 2, Interview**

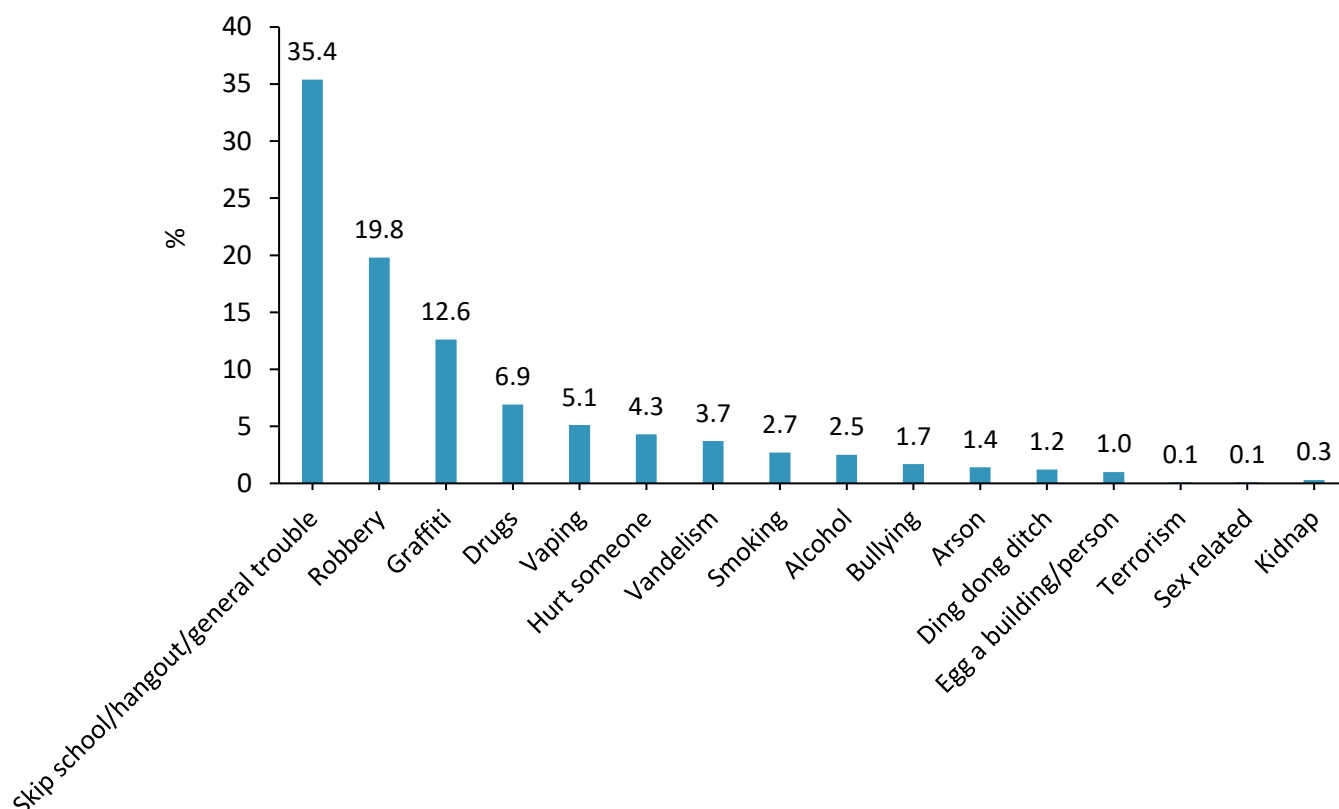
Students demonstrated improved understanding of risky situations and greater awareness of how to identify coercive or manipulative behaviours. The workshop activity involving actors was particularly effective in illustrating the contrast between outward appearances and internal experiences. This interactive approach helped deepen their ability to recognise red flags and improve their critical thinking skills.

"Basically, they do this part where Buddy's the one that's like coerced and getting into bad stuff, then the kids are told to interview Buddy. One of the actresses has got a mask on, but they asked questions like 'where'd you get your new shoes from'. Then the character Buddy replies like 'Oh, I got

¹³ Data was captured as free text. The free text data was then coded by Artsworld into the categories shown in Figure 5.

them cheap, they're so cool, aren't they?'. Then lifts the mask and then it's meant to be that their honest opinion, and says 'actually, someone gave them to me, I'm a bit scared, I don't know if I now owe them something'. It was a very clever, it got to a point where my students were shouting like, lift the mask so that they could see their opinions. So, I felt that was the most impactful." **School staff 3, Interview**

Figure 5: Students’ perceptions of Buddy’s intentions, workshop secondary data



Help-seeking behaviour

Within the workshop students are also asked to write down who is a trusted adult¹⁴. Whilst not a measure of distance travelled or help-seeking behaviour specifically, the data provides insight into the adults whom students consider a trusted adult and thus may be likely to seek help from. Data from 779 students suggested that nearly half considered their parents a trusted adult, followed by a third naming their teachers as a trusted adult (Figure 6).

"[A trusted adult is...] someone who can support you when you have done the wrong thing to make better choices." **Student 1, workshop secondary data**

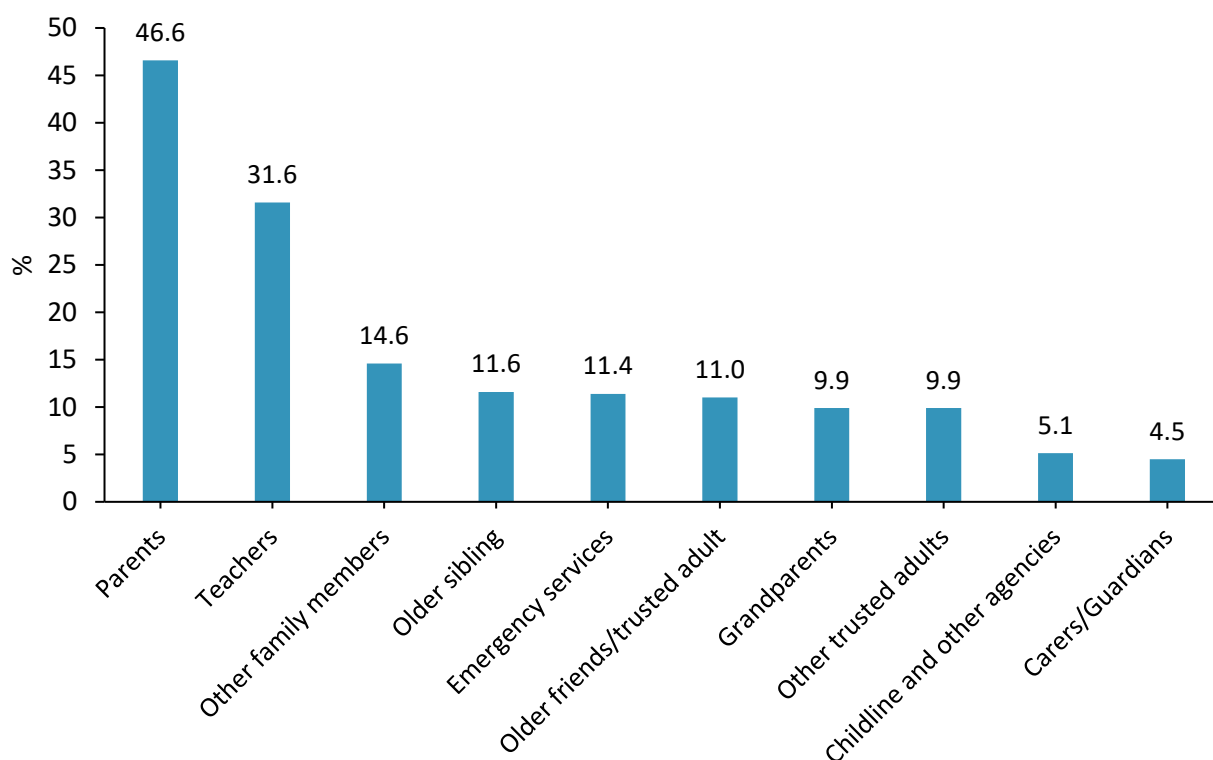
"Young people understanding, speaking out and having the confidence to trust, you know, to identify in advance their trusted adult and know that they can go to that person." **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

¹⁴ Data was captured as free text; thus, students could name as many or as few adults they considered a trusted adult. The free text data was then coded by Artswork into the categories shown in Figure 6.

One school discussed how they had asked students whether they had a trusted adult they could talk to. This was believed to be a simple yet powerful way of identifying potentially vulnerable children. During one of the initial workshops, pupils were asked to raise their hands if they had someone they could confide in when worried. While most students responded positively, staff noted a small number who did not raise their hands. These students were discreetly flagged for follow-up, allowing teachers and tutors to offer additional support and ensure those children were not overlooked.

“I think at the end of the first workshop, they say to the students ‘Hands up, if you have at least one person that’s like a responsible adult that you could speak to if you were worried’. As staff we identified the people that didn’t put their hands up and just made notes of it, so that we could then even let their tutors know, keep an eye on them or check on them ourselves. Most of the classes everybody would say yes but there would just be like maybe one or two that wouldn’t put their hand up and would kind of look around like, I’m not sure who I’d talk to.” School staff 3, Interview

Figure 6: Students’ perceptions of who is a trusted adult, workshop secondary data



3.5 Sustainability and areas for development

Overall, there was consensus that the programme was sustainable in so far as once the school staff had completed the training, they could continue to use the knowledge and skills along with the online programme sessions and resources if they downloaded them (before 31st July 2025) to deliver the programme to future cohorts of students.

“So, we make sure and when we get to nearer to the end of it, we do say this doesn't stop here and that we're not talking about the fact that they're going to go and do the Bareface thing. What we make really clear to them is that the legacy of this programme is they go back, and they share it with the rest of their colleagues, and they can then keep doing that with their year groups.” **Trainer 2, Interview**

“In some cases, I think there's a real possibility for a model that runs over multiple years within a school and kind of passes the baton between different year groups.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

However, concern was raised about the sustainability of the workshop element of the programme. Once VRU funding ends, schools would either need to self-fund the workshops or seek alternative sources of funding. One suggestion for this by a school staff member was that a video recording of some of the workshops could be produced and added to the online resources, another requested a script for school staff to follow to make this element more replicable. This would allow teachers to use it with future cohorts when funding was not available for the workshops, and in addition would provide them with a resource to refresh and practice their own forum theatre techniques potentially allowing them to deliver a similar workshop themselves.

“I feel it's a shame that we have now found this programme that we think the children responded really well to... And yeah, we're not going to be able to use it next year or the year after necessarily. And you kind of think, oh, OK, so we've got this resource, but without the theatre bit, you know, I wonder whether if they now won't revisit schools, whether they record the theatre section, somehow, make that deliverable somehow. So that now we've bought into it, not financially... We've got the resources; we still need that last missing link. So then we could continue to use it.” **School staff 1, Interview**

Inset training for new or further staff members was perceived as a potential barrier to sustainability. Again, because once VRU funding of this training ends, schools would either need to self-fund the training or seek alternative sources of funding. A potential suggestion to overcome this would be to use a train-the-trainer model, where school staff who have attended the inset training and delivered the programme train other staff in their school. This is an approach already being implemented in some schools who didn't have the ability to let all staff attend the inset training together.

“...because we've seen staff could train each other. So, if I was moving into a different year group next year, I could, you know, say, oh, this is how we did it to the person replacing us or we've obviously got it in our [online resources] as well... So, if you train up a couple from the school, then they can train up the rest of the school.” **School staff 2, Interview**

Feedback indicated that some schools were beginning to explore delivering the programme to other year groups and considering necessary adaptations to make it accessible for younger students. One school, for example, implemented the sessions with a combined Year 5 and Year 6 class and observed a positive impact on the younger pupils. However, the Year 5 students were unable to participate in the workshop element, which the school found frustrating, as they felt it was a missed opportunity. While the programme was widely viewed as appropriate for primary-aged pupils, staff noted several challenges in adapting it for secondary settings. The content and pacing were seen as misaligned with

secondary school expectations, where lessons require more structure and time efficiency. Additionally, staff reported a lack of relevance and flexibility in the materials for older students, with no clear alternatives offered for age-inappropriate activities. As a result, some schools had to make significant adaptations to deliver the programme effectively. For example, by changing some of the scenarios and fables to be more age appropriate, by combining sessions and selecting elements that were most useful and relevant for them to deliver. Future considerations should focus on how to better tailor and adapt the programme for secondary school contexts.

“And they're [teachers] already sort of sort of saying, OK, if it's primary school, they're going, ‘this is for my year sixes, actually I'd love the year fives to do this’. And actually... I've heard them sort of say, you know, we actually think that we've modified this technique to be able to use it in years two and three.” **Trainer 1, Interview**

“We adapted it a bit, obviously, like I said before, to make it more appropriate for secondary school.” **School Staff 3. interview**

One area identified for development of the programme and to widen the potential impact was to incorporate a parent component to the programme. This would potentially increase the impact of the programme, with parents able to reinforce the key messages around making positive choices and resisting peer pressure. It may also support schools and families working together, potentially leading to a wider impact in reducing violence and exploitation in the local community.

“And I think if there was an opportunity to expand the programme, that is the area that I would want to expand it into is that kind of parent/carer engagement in the whole thing so that you've got that real, you know you've got that all the points of community where those young people touch all working together.” **Stakeholder 1, Interview**

“We have had a couple of schools ask not specifically whether Choices covers parents, but whether I know of other courses that kind of include parents. So I think absolutely there is a desire from schools to have that consistency because otherwise the moment that you know the pupils leave the school gates, umm, they could move into a different world and those skills that I've just learned kind of get pushed to one side and also you know as a parent myself sometimes my six year old comes back and I'm like you're gonna have to explain to me how you do this because we don't necessarily know.”

Stakeholder 2, Interview

4. Summary of key findings and considerations for future implementation and evaluation

In 2023, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Violence Reduction Unit commissioned Artsworld and Bearface to design and deliver the school-based violence prevention programme, Choices. It was targeted at Year 6 and Year 7 students to provide additional support during the potentially vulnerable transition period from primary to secondary school. Choices examines the risks and impact of knife crime, exploitation, and other types of violence and abuse, and aims to enable young people to make healthy decisions, build positive relationships, and respond appropriately to potentially risky or challenging situations. The programme supports a trauma-informed approach and includes teaching materials which have been developed in partnership with individuals with lived experience of violent crime, and which can be adapted throughout delivery using the voice of the child as part of the philosophy and enquiry-based learning approach, and the drama framework.

Between May 2023 and April 2025, ~445 school staff from 97 schools had completed the inset training, and ~5,356 students from 78 schools had completed the workshops delivered by Bearface. Of the 78 schools which had completed both the inset training and the workshops, 58 were primary (14% of primary schools across the four areas), 15 were secondary (16% of secondary schools), and 5 were other types of schools (13% of other schools). 43 were in Hampshire (10% of Hampshire schools), 17 were in Southampton (31% of Southampton schools), 11 in Portsmouth (24% of Portsmouth schools), and seven on the Isle of Wight (14% of Isle of Wight schools). 48 of these schools were VRU target schools and 21 were identified as hot spot schools.

Overall perceptions of the school staff inset training, the programme's content, materials and resources to deliver the sessions, and the student workshops were positive. School staff felt the interactive approach taken in the training and practising the activities which are part of the programme was useful. Staff commended the programme for the way it handled sensitive topics, its use of real-life scenarios, and the way it accommodated different learning styles through the range of activities like role-play and group discussions. This inclusive approach supported student engagement in the programme and ensured the programme effectively met the needs particularly of primary aged students, however future considerations should include adapting some of the activities to ensure secondary students also fully engage. Some staff reported a lack of relevance and flexibility in the materials for older students, with no clear alternatives offered for age-inappropriate activities. As a result, some schools had to make significant adaptations to deliver the programme effectively. Future considerations should focus on how to better tailor and adapt the programme for secondary school contexts.

School staff also reported that the skills acquired in the training and used to deliver the programme were relevant to delivery of another curriculum. School staff perceived the student workshops as a key element of the programme and reported that their students really enjoyed the workshops. Monitoring data from school staff training surveys and student workshops provided some evidence on the positive impact of the programme on staff knowledge and confidence in using creative approaches to address serious violence and exploitation, and student confidence to make positive choices and resist peer pressure, knowledge of risky situations, and who is a trusted adult they could seek support from.

To inform considerations for future programme implementation and sustainability a SWOT analysis based on the evaluation findings to date was undertaken.

Strengths:

- Whilst preventing violence, knife crime, and exploitation is the aim of the programme, it does this in a trauma-informed way by not using scare tactics or directly focusing on these sensitive topics. Instead, the emphasis is on supporting children to identify risky situations, make positive choices and resist peer pressure, and increase help-seeking behaviour from trusted adults. This means the programme is applicable to students who are exposed to more serious adverse situations and those who are not (i.e. by reducing naivety). Furthermore, these skills are transferable to a wide range of other risky behaviours (e.g. substance use) thus the programme has the potential to have wider positive impact beyond reducing risk of violence and exploitation.
- The programme is designed to be flexible in the way in which it can be delivered, supporting school staff to fit the programme into already packed timetables and substantial core curriculum demands.
- The skills which school staff develop, and the activities included in the programme, are applicable to delivery of other curriculum subjects. This both supports effective delivery of other subjects and reinforces the key messages of the programme around critical thinking and decision making.
- The use of a variety of methods, including debating, role-play and forum theatre supports engagement with the programme, particularly for students who may struggle with more traditional teaching techniques. The variety of activities also ensures that students can engage in the elements with which they are most comfortable (e.g. group discussions vs. role-play).
- The development of the online platform which contains all the downloadable session plans and resources can be accessed for free on an on-going basis for school staff and downloaded to keep once the programme has concluded. This supports implementation of the programme with future cohorts and means staff can work through the programme content at their own pace and return to the materials for a refresher at any point. There is also a community section where staff can share fables which their students have created as part of the programme with other schools and support each other with programme implementation. This supports the sustainability of the programme.

Weaknesses:

- A key component of the programme is the student workshops, however unlike the programme sessions which are delivered by school staff, these are delivered by an external theatre company, Bearface. Thus, without sustainable funding this element of the programme is unlikely to be able to be delivered to future cohorts.
- As the programme is primarily delivered by school staff there is a lack of monitoring data around the dose of the sessions which each student receives, this may represent a threat to the fidelity of the programme.
- Evaluating the impact of the programme has been challenging due to pressures on school staff time and resources meaning it wasn't possible to implement pre and post student surveys to measure changes in aimed outcomes of the programme. A lack of this evidence prevents assessment of programme effectiveness, and this may be a barrier to securing further funding for programme implementation or demonstrating to schools the value of delivering the programme to their students.
- Some staff felt the programme was better suited to primary-aged students, with some suggesting that the content and delivery style did not fully align with the structure and pace typically expected in secondary school settings.

Opportunities:

- The model of programme delivery predominantly by school staff means this aspect of programme delivery is sustainable and staff can deliver it to future cohorts of students. It also has the potential to be delivered to other year groups beyond Year 6 and Year 7.
- Free access to the online platform and programme materials for the duration of the programme with the option to download and keep the resources indefinitely means there is the opportunity for other school staff to deliver the programme even if they haven't completed the inset training, if the trained staff in their school can share their learning from the inset training with them and support them to deliver the programme.
- There is an opportunity to develop the programme further to include a parent component which would support and reinforce the key messages and skills students learn in the programme by also practising them in the home. It may also increase parent's knowledge of the risks of violence and exploitation and support them to identify their child's involvement with risky peers.

Threats:

- School recruitment and onboarding was demonstrated to be a very intensive process which required a dedicated programme coordinator who had to make numerous contacts with schools to get them to sign up to the programme. There is the possibility that without such resource for recruitment and onboarding in the future, school engagement and delivery of the programme substantially decreases.
- Many VRU-identified target and hot spot schools did not wish to take part in the programme, therefore there is a risk that the schools which might most need the programme are not willing or able to deliver it.

Considerations for future programme implementation and sustainability:

- Consider if and how a parent component of the programme could be designed and delivered. This might involve a simple briefing leaflet which schools could provide to parents or something more intensive like a parent workshop which covers the same activities delivered to the students and in the inset training (e.g. role-play, discussing the animation).
- Consider providing the inset training materials to school staff to support a train-the-trainer model where they could then train and disseminate the programme to other colleagues in their school, widening delivery to other year groups and supporting a whole school approach.
- Consider filming a student workshop or creating a film of the workshop activities (using actors) to provide to school staff as part of the programme resources so they can use the film with future cohorts of students if funding is not available for them to attend workshops in person.
- Consider including suggestions on how the materials may be adapted for other year groups in the staff inset training so staff can consider if and how they could deliver the programme to a wider cohort of students. This could include space within the community of practice section of the online platform where adaptations to the programme by school staff could be shared with other schools.

In summary, the Choices programme has demonstrated strong potential in supporting violence prevention through a trauma-informed and creative approach. Moving forward, key considerations include ensuring the programme remains adaptable across different school contexts, sustaining key components such as the workshops, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation to support ongoing development and effectiveness.

5. References

- [1] UNESCO and UN Women, “Global guidance: school-related gender-based violence,” UNESCO and UN Women, Paris, 2016.
- [2] UNESCO, “School violence and bullying: global status report,” UNESCO, Paris, 2017.
- [3] Youth Endowment Fund, “Social skills training,” Youth Endowment Fund, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/social-skills-training/>. [Accessed 29 May 2024].
- [4] Butler N., Quigg Z., Wilson C., McCoy E., Bates R., “The Mentors in Violence Prevention programme: Impact on students' knowledge and attitudes related to violence, prejudice, and abuse, and willingness to intervene as a bystander in secondary schools in England,” *BMC Public Health*, vol. 24, no. 729, 2024.
- [5] OFSTED, “Not yet good enough: Personal, social, health and economic education in schools,” OFSTED, London, 2013.
- [6] PSHE Association, “Key principles of effective prevention education,” PSHE Association, 2016.
- [7] Braun V., Clarke V., “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77-101, 2006.

