

Annual Report

Mentors in Violence

Prevention

2021-22



Mentors in Violence Prevention

Challenging Gender Based Violence, Everyone's Responsibility



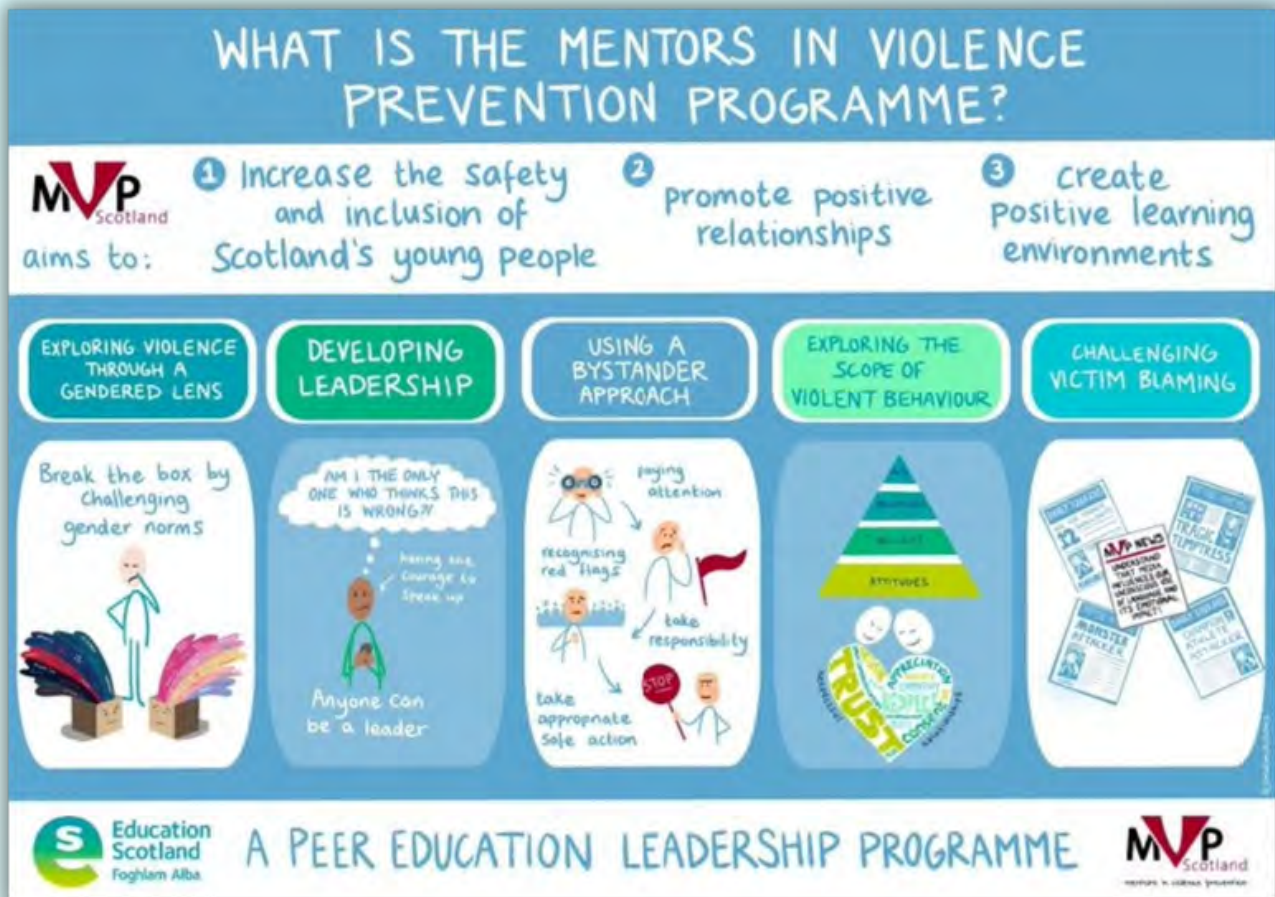
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Contents

- 03 | What is Mentors in Violence Prevention?
- 04 | Why is MVP needed?
- 06 | Programme delivery and reach
- 07 | Professional learning delivery
- 09 | Continuing professional development
- 10 | Programme delivery impact – staff survey
- 13 | Social media and pupil voice
- 14 | Press and collaboration
- 15 | Conclusion
- 16 | Contact

What is Mentors in Violence Prevention?

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a peer education programme providing young people with the language and framework to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence. The programme 'scenarios' explore a range of behaviours including image sharing, controlling behaviour and harassment, and use a bystander approach where individuals are not considered potential victims or perpetrators, but empowered and active bystanders with the ability to support and challenge their peers in a safe way.



Mentors in Violence Prevention was developed in the United States by US Educator Dr Jackson Katz and was introduced to Scotland in 2012. MVP has been embraced in Scottish schools and adapted to the culture of Scotland whilst continuing to retain core features. A strong emphasis is placed on building healthy, respectful relationships both in the school and in the community. More than 130 schools are now delivering MVP in 30 local authorities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders, in some of our largest and smallest secondary schools. The 2 remaining local authorities are engaged with the MVP National Team and are at varying stages of programme implementation. It is anticipated that the first group of establishments within these authorities will begin school delivery during the 2022/23 academic session.

Why is MVP needed?

Violence against women is a human rights issue. It is a violation of women's right to life, their right not to be tortured or treated in an inhumane or degrading way, their right to respect for private and family life and their right not to be discriminated against. It remains an endemic problem across the world and has been identified as a major public health issue by The World Health Organisation which estimates that almost one third of women worldwide have experienced gender- based violence, with most of this being intimate partner violence. The United Nations identifies that gender-based violence, is a form of gender discrimination and “one of the fundamental social, political and economic means by which the subordinate position of women with respect to men and their stereotyped roles are perpetuated.”

Despite continued downward trends for crime overall, most recent statistics show a picture of increasing levels of gender-based violence. Police Scotland report a 15% increase in sexual crimes since the previous year, the highest level since 1971, with over a third of these relating to a victim under the age of 18. Reports of rape and attempted rape have also increased by 9% and sexual assault by 29% in this time period. The majority of victims of these crimes are women. 2020-21 saw a 4% increase in domestic abuse reporting to police compared to the previous year with 65,251 incidents being recorded. The vast majority were again female victims with a male accused.

Domestic abuse impacts hugely on children within the family and in the UK, one in five children will have experienced domestic abuse by the time they reach 18. The implications for education are that in every classroom, at least one child will have been living with domestic abuse since they were born.



Gender-based violence can occur in the home, in public places, in schools and in the virtual online environment. One study indicated that 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space. Online harassment of girls on social media platforms can range from threats of physical or sexual violence to racist comments and stalking. A Plan International study in 2020 found 58 per cent of girls reporting that they have personally experienced some form of online abuse, with 47 per cent of those being threatened with sexual or physical violence. The report highlights that women and girls are often targeted just for existing online or for speaking up and being actively engaged. The abuse often results in young women being silenced, policing their own behaviour and feeling unsafe both online and in the physical world.

Gender-based violence does not impact all women equally and the intersection of protected characteristics such as race or sexual orientation can lead to increased risk. For example a 2020 health needs assessment found that 37 per cent of LGBT+ respondents had experienced an abusive relationship. Women with long term illness or disability are also at greater risk of experiencing gender based violence and women from some minority ethnic communities, can face additional challenges where cultural practices can involve gender based violence such as Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

Equally Safe, the Scottish Government's strategy to eradicate violence against women and girls describes prevention as involving 'addressing the systematic inequality, attitudes and assumptions that give rise to violence and abuse.' Its 2017 delivery plan set out several key priorities where education settings can play a crucial role. The MVP programme can contribute by raising awareness of gender-based violence, challenging gender stereotypes and norms and addressing safe and healthy relationships and consent.



[1] Based on 22 Local Authority submissions but only 12 of these are end of year submissions (the other 10 were mid-year submissions)

Programme delivery and reach

Recovery from the pandemic has been significant and has seen the number of schools delivering the programme increase to just beyond pre pandemic levels.

**132 schools
delivering MVP in
2021/22
an increase on pre
pandemic levels**



The main challenges faced, according to feedback from local authority coordinators, has been a reduction in available staff in existing schools due to staff moving on and lack of staff availability where staff have remained. For some schools that are trained but have never delivered, it has been identified that a refreshed programme of professional learning for staff is required.

In session 2021/22 132 schools delivered MVP using the full peer education model where senior pupils are trained and then deliver input to younger learners. This is 59.2% of trained schools[1]. This compares to 130 schools delivering pre-pandemic in 2018/19.

This is a positive recovery given the challenges facing schools in these times and reflects the wide understanding in schools of the need for this input for our young people.

Professional learning delivery

Throughout 2021 and into 2022, professional learning was mainly delivered online, due to ongoing pandemic restrictions.

Numbers were capped to around 12 participants at these events to ensure quality interaction and oversight. Events were regularly oversubscribed indicating a high level of demand.

**669 practitioners
received MVP
professional
learning in
2021-22**

Evaluations

The MVP National Team continued to collate pre and post responses of participants receiving training in MVP. The vast majority of participants indicated that the time spent on the training was worthwhile and that the information presented was important. 99% of participants noted that they would recommend the MVP professional learning to a colleague.

'Gaining the skills and knowledge to allow me to support young people in my school in the delivery of the MVP programme as well as helping me to recognise opportunities to integrate the principles of MVP into my curricular area.'

Practitioner, City of Edinburgh Council

'It brought me an awareness of gender violence statistics and challenging gender inequality. Emphasised the importance of teaching pupils what a good relationship should look like and also that I always need to model good behaviour, including challenging all corridor conversations that are not appropriate. Discussing victim blaming and challenging conversations about this is important.'

Practitioner, Falkirk Council

A range of questions looked at attitudes related to gender-based violence, the role of the bystander and participants' confidence in relation to teaching on these issues. The results consistently demonstrate staff showing stronger disagreement with victim blaming statements post training and an increase in their confidence to educate learners on these topics.

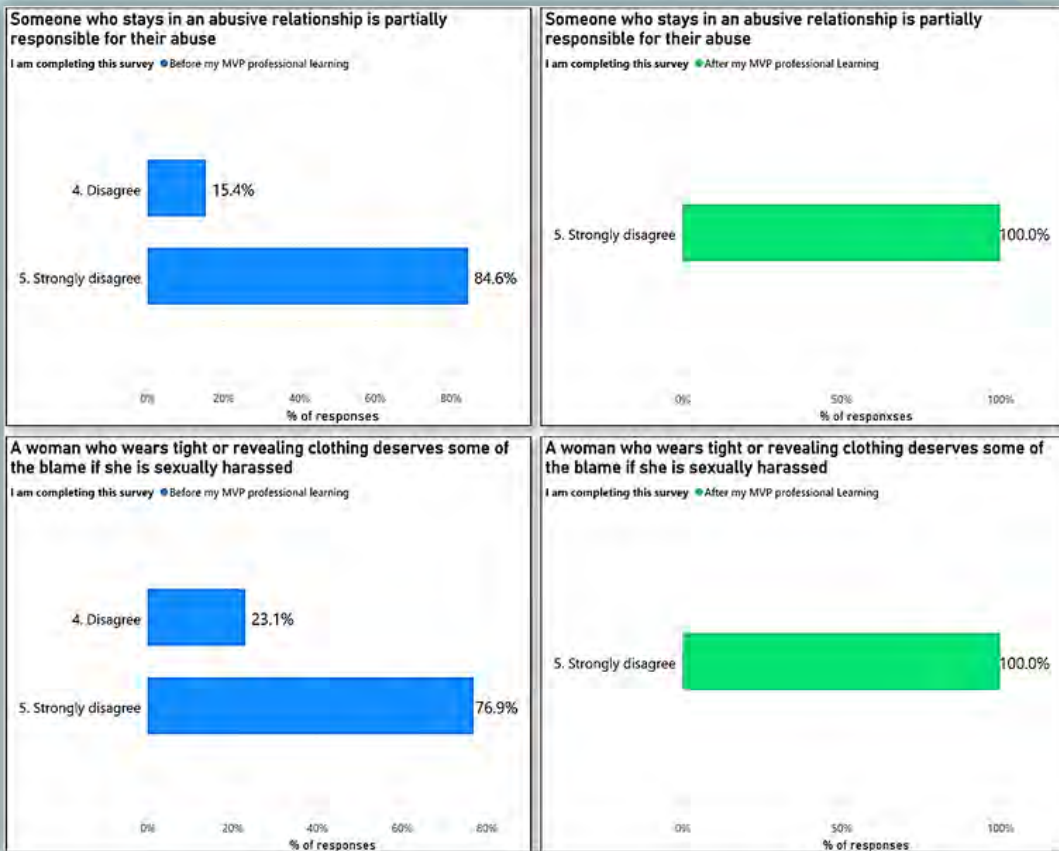


Figure 1 Comparison of pre/post responses in 2021/22 to two of the statements in the questionnaire

In addition, staff also report a greater likelihood of speaking up or taking action themselves to interrupt abusive situations and a greater confidence in being able to bring their new knowledge and skills into their own social circles.

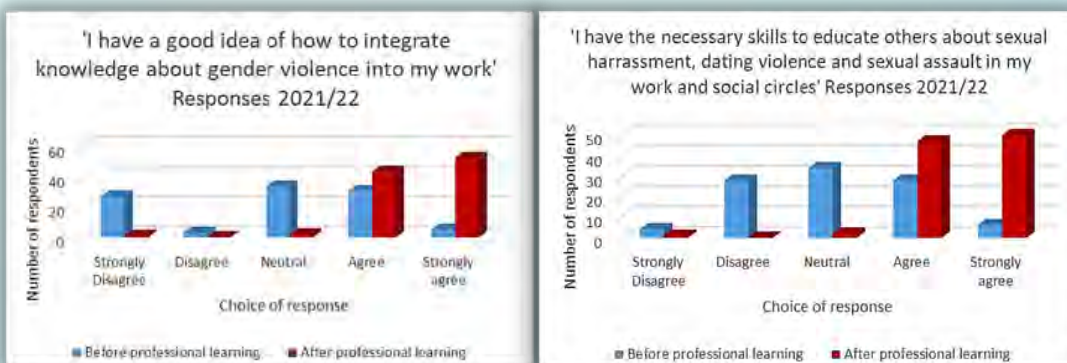


Figure 2 Responses by 2021/22 participants to two questions pre/post MVP professional learning

Building for sustainability continued during 2021/2022 with the continuation of the Training for Trainers programme. Two such courses were delivered online, each over two days, and attended by 22 staff from 8 local authorities.

Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development is supported by the MVP National Team through networks, support visits, resource production and events. Resources include wakelets that include videos, articles, research and lesson resources around topics such as volunteering, gender equality, leadership and victim blaming. Practitioners are able to draw on these to support and enhance their MVP implementation and delivery and develop a whole school approach.

2021 saw the launch of the MVP podcast channel and throughout the year the MVP National Team spoke with a range of guests discussing areas of interest and relevance. The first guests were Will Linden and Rachel Barr who were both instrumental in developing and supporting MVP when it was first established in Scotland.



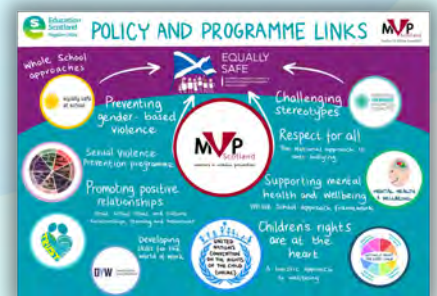
Since then, a podcast has been published with Luke Hart about his experience of coercive control and domestic homicide, with the Oor Fierce Girls about their campaign challenging sexual harassment, with The Rosey Project exploring supporting survivors of sexual violence and with The Men's Project in Australia who told us about their research, The Man Box.

Education Scotland's MVP National Team also took part in several online webinars and awareness raising sessions including the delivery of internal CLPL session to Education Scotland staff in conjunction with the Improving Gender Balance and Equalities team.

In addition an 'Understanding Incel Ideology' webinar, saw the MVP National Team deliver alongside Dr Kaitlyn Regehr, to 131 attendees (including many local authority safeguarding leads) providing information about the MVP programme and how it can contribute to the prevention of the radicalization of young men in harmful incel communities.

Sketch notes

As part of the aim to improve programme visibility and find creative ways to engage key messages with a range of stakeholders, a series of sketch notes were produced in collaboration with an artist. These cover programme core components and wider policy links. These have been positively received by practitioners and pupils and are already being used in professional learning, notice boards and promotional events about MVP



Programme delivery impact - staff survey

A short staff survey was launched in April 2022 over a two week period to try to capture some of the impact of delivering the MVP programme. Fifty-eight staff responded. This is a small sample but helps to give an indication of the impact of MVP in schools. Next year the National Team will explore additional means of communicating and disseminating this survey to staff to ensure a greater response.

A range of closed questions were asked examining staff perception of impact on mentors, mentees and on the ethos and culture of the school. Survey respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements. Responses suggest that staff recognise a positive impact of MVP on mentors, mentees and on the overall ethos and culture of the school.

Impact on mentors



Figure 3 Staff responses to statements related to the impact on mentors

Impact on mentees (pupils receiving the lessons from senior pupils)



Figure 4 Staff responses to statements related to the impact on mentees

Impact on ethos and culture of school

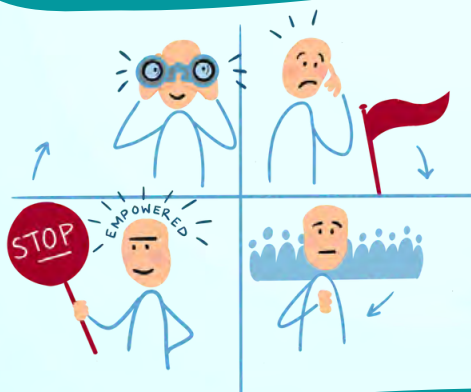


Figure 5 Staff responses to statements related to the impact on the ethos and culture of the school

Additional questions included:

Please share any examples of pupils being active bystanders

'Our Mentors set up a gender based violence discussion group to give pupils the opportunity to raise issues that are happening around school.'



'4 mentors supported a vulnerable young person on a sat night, they asked his friend to use his phone and called his parents to come and collect him.'

'S1 pupils approached to disclose a violent incident in the corridor. A mentor sought support for a fellow pupil who she believed was the victim of neglect at and abuse at home. Verbal sexualised abuse in the community was also disclosed by a mentor who, along with a friend, were the victim of abuse.'

Press

MVP Scotland featured in several press articles including local newspaper, The Courier and a national newspaper, The Times.

In the latter publication, Dr Kaitlyn Regehr, speaking about her collaboration with Education Scotland and MVP is quoted as saying;

'older students will teach younger students about gender violence... young people who are feeling left out and marginalized will get support from older students who are going to take them under their wing and look after them. That type of grassroots intervention is how we change a culture'



Collaboration

The MVP National Team continued to work collaboratively on a number of projects. The Domestic Abuse Information for Educators resource, produced last year, is being reviewed and refreshed in partnership with the Improving Gender Balance Team and Scottish Women's Aid. Support was given to Police Scotland to develop their You, Me, Together coercive control resource for schools to ensure it aligned with the Scottish curriculum and other resources such as MVP and Relationship Sexual Health and Parenting (RSHP) materials. Practitioners from South Ayrshire also sought support for a domestic abuse resource they had developed with staff, subsequently attending MVP professional learning and supporting schools in the authority with their MVP implementation.

Our ongoing work with the Mental Health Foundation is constructing a way forward where peer education opportunities can be offered in a more cohesive way in schools.

Conclusion

2021/22 remained a challenging year for MVP schools, practitioners and young people. However, the MVP National Team continued to be inspired by the efforts of all to fully re-establish the programme in their school communities. Practitioners appeared to see a renewed need for MVP to help support healthy relationships in their school communities and to address increased concerns about gender-based violence and online abuse, issues which the pandemic brought into sharp focus. With challenges to recruit in the MVP National Team and constraints in local staffing, the fact that more schools than pre-pandemic have been supported to deliver the programme is truly remarkable.

With renewed funding from Scottish Government secured for 2022/23, the MVP National Team will prioritise the reestablishment of MVP in existing schools including professional learning for staff and school support visits, as well as bringing on board those new schools keen to implement the programme. There are plans for several new scenarios focusing on issues such as incel ideology and mental health. Mentors in our steering group felt body image was a key area where MVP could support positive conversations. Mentor and practitioner feedback will continue to be key in improving and developing the programme going forward.



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