

NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

violence
reduction
unit

Improving lives to prevent crime

Student Support Champions (SSCs): An evaluation of a proof-of-concept project in eight Newcastle secondary schools

September 2023

Contents

Executive summary.....	3
Introduction	4
Methodology for this evaluation.....	5
Limitations	6
Student Support Champions (SSCs).....	7
What informs the rationale for Student Support Champions?	7
Implementation.....	12
Barriers	14
Enablers	14
Analysis and findings	14
Findings.....	15
What has this proof-of-concept cost?	22
Discussion	23
References.....	26
Appendix A – Logic Model	29
Appendix B – SSC job description.....	30
Appendix C – Student Support Champion infographics.....	32

To cite this report: Fletcher, E. & Johnson, N. (2023). *Student Support Champions: An evaluation of a proof-of-concept project in eight Newcastle secondary schools*. Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit.

Executive summary

In October 2022, the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), part of the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, in partnership with Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police and eight Newcastle secondary schools, introduced two Student Support Champions (SSCs) as a proof-of-concept. Each SSC works across four schools, one day per week as an external trusted adult in school but, crucially, they are positioned out-with the school hierarchy. Students are referred by their school for one-to-one or small group work to explore attitudes and behaviours to violence, discuss violence prevention themes and, more importantly, provide an opportunity for students to share their worries and concerns and to work with a trusted, relatable adult to identify vulnerability/ies and improve safeguarding in and out of school.

The SSC role is new to the landscape to the systems of support available to students and contributes to safeguarding and contextual safeguarding. Stakeholders agree that this role fills a gap in the existing systems of support for students and does not duplicate any other role, service or provision. The role is all about working with students, in the protective and inclusive environment of their school, and building relationships to safeguard them from the risks and harms found in the disparate contexts they visit or occupy (i.e., contextual safeguarding). The stakeholders for this project, that is the students, teachers and non-teaching staff, local authority and the police, agree that a key factor to the success of SSCs is that they are not teachers or school staff and not the police.

Within the VRU's public health approach to violence reduction, the SSCs are situated as an accessible secondary intervention with a primary preventative dimension. The role bridges the students' home, community and school worlds across the domains of education, local authority services and policing. Each of these domains is an 'entry point' to systems of support for students, for example, entry to systems of support may be the result of an arrest by police, suspension or permanent exclusion from school, a safeguarding referral, a student's disclosure, or the identification of behaviours linked to exploitation or involvement in serious violence (such as missing from home episodes or weapon carrying). Early findings of this proof-of-concept have demonstrated improved multi-agency working, especially in information sharing and co-ordinating support for vulnerable students.

Students are referred for SSC support or they can self-refer by asking for help, especially in circumstances where they might not otherwise do so. Forming and cultivating a consistent, positive and relatable relationship enables students to share their worries and concerns with their SSC, providing often unseen detail about a student's life and allowing focussed support. This approach facilitates a dialogue which can re-shape the student's self-narrative, influence the formation of a

pro-social identity and disrupts any emergent pro-offending identity. As the interaction with the SSC occurs in the school setting it does not carry the stigma of more formal sanctions or referral to a statutory or other form of external intervention.

To address local trends in anti-social behaviour or violence identified by Northumbria Police (Neighbourhood Policing), the SSCs have worked with individual or small groups of students and, with the support of the VRU's Education Team, delivered violence reduction-themed learning to the wider school population. The SSC's delivery of primary preventative learning and messaging to students, their parents, carers and guardians and school staff on behalf of local policing has potential to disrupt emergent trends.

Stakeholders report that this proof-of-concept has been a resounding success. The concept requires further investment to pilot SSCs across more schools or in other local authorities; other Newcastle schools and Sunderland City Council have expressed an interest in this approach. Any pilot should be accompanied by a detailed evaluation to explore any wider (i.e., school- and non-school or home and community outcomes) and longitudinal impact (i.e., improved attendance, reduced suspensions and permanent exclusions and improved academic achievement), and any cost benefit.

Introduction

In early 2022, as COVID-19 measures were relaxed, secondary schools in Newcastle were experiencing an increase in incidents involving their students in acts of violence and violent behaviours in and out of school; the incidents were thought to have been linked to post code rivalries and/ or peer crime groups. Some schools approached Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police, and the Northumbria VRU for support to prevent and reduce violence and disruptive behaviours, and to safeguard their students.

Through these common but quite unique concerns, the VRU Co-ordinator responsible for Newcastle and the VRU's Education Team (second author) convened a partnership with the schools, police and the local authority. The schools were given the opportunity to talk to the VRU and police individually about their issues in more depth and to share common themes as a collective; something that hadn't taken place before. The VRU Education Team increased their activity in these schools and with the police supported the schools with information, guidance and training. Northumbria Police nominated dedicated single points of contact (SPOC) for each school to problem solve some of their concerns and emerging issues. The VRU Co-ordinator proposed the Student Support Champion (SSC) role, although nameless and without a job description at the time.

The SSC role has evolved in consultation with each school, police and local authority every step of the way; a Logic Model (Appendix A) was developed to capture the collective aspirations for

this role. It was important that the role should not become subsumed within the school hierarchical structures, that the role was ‘value added’ and did not deliver similar outcomes to other approaches or duplicate other roles across systems of support or other services.

Participating schools saw the potential of this new initiative, were supportive and eager to take part in the proof-of-concept phase. Some schools were able to sign up immediately whereas others had to seek approval from their senior leadership or trust boards. Eight schools were keen to implement the SSC concept. Following further consultation with stakeholders, in May 2022 the VRU Education Team advertised for two *Student Support Champions* (Job Description is at Appendix B) and recruited to these posts in July with start dates in October. These posts were subject to police vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks; this took time and delayed the full mobilisation of the project. The project was launched in November 2022¹, and was largely operational in schools during the 2023 Spring and Summer terms.

Methodology for this evaluation

As a proof-of-concept project, the methodology for this evaluation has been intentionally responsive, using a mixed methods approach to explore quantitative and qualitative data. To ensure an inclusive approach a non-consequentialist ethical approach was taken to data collection, analysis and reporting, comprising respect for persons, beneficence (non-maleficence) and justice.

An online survey for students and another for teaching and non-teaching staff who had worked with the SSCs were launched on 10 March 2023 and closed on 28 July 2023; 47 students and 31 members of staff completed the survey voluntarily and anonymously.

Between May and August 2023, semi-structured interviews and small focus groups were held separately with students, staff, the police, the local authority (via Teams) and the SSCs (via Teams). These interviews and focus groups were audio recorded for later review and analysis by this report’s authors; each setting consented to this recording and participant consent was confirmed before each session was recorded. Participation was voluntary and contributions were anonymous – the emphasis was on ‘what was said’ and not ‘who said it’. Recordings were transferred to a secure folder and then deleted from the recording device; on publication of this report all recordings will be deleted. One school did not consent to audio recording their students, so notes were taken; and in another school the students were not available to participate before the end of the 2023 summer term.

¹ See news item (November 2022) on launch of Student Support Champion project, available at [Newcastle Schools to get ‘Student Champions’ – as part of Kim McGuinness's plans to keep fighting knife crime - Northumbria PCC \(northumbria-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.northumbria-pcc.gov.uk/news/schools-to-get-student-champions-as-part-of-kim-mcguinnesss-plans-to-keep-fighting-knife-crime-northumbria-pcc-northumbria-pcc.gov.uk)

Participating schools have also provided quantitative data on, for example, attendance, and suspensions and exclusions as naturally occurring data within school performance measures. However, whilst for some students who were referred to the SSCs showed improvement in some metrics, for other students the beneficial outcomes were not reflected in these data – it may be that such data is too simplistic to measure improvement in, for example, attitudes and behaviours. It is difficult to attribute fully the improvements or otherwise to the SSCs as there are so many other influencing factors and variables that may impact on these data. Students did, however, share that they believed their attendance had increased with their involvement with the SSCs.

To protect the anonymity of contributors, particularly from the participating schools, any quotes in this report will only refer to students, staff, the police, or local authority. This applies to the SSCs too, as each only works in four schools any detail may unintentionally identify a student or member of staff.

Limitations

The scale of this proof-of-concept project in eight secondary schools with two SSCs working with a small cohort of students limits how the findings of this evaluation might be generalised. Whilst the subjective qualitative data identify positive feelings from students, school staff, the police and local authority, it is unclear whether the quantitative data attributes any improvement in student's disposition to school (e.g., attendance, suspensions and exclusions) to this project and should be considered in any future evaluation.

Data collection only occurred after students had worked with the SSCs. There was a concern that by using a pre-experience survey for students, this may have disrupted the emergent relationships as they may have felt they were being assessed (yet again), thereby contributing to assessment fatigue (see, for example, Firmin & Lloyd, 2023).

The SSCs have worked with specific students with demonstrable and self-reported improvement to attitudes and behaviours, however, it is unclear how this work may have cascaded to others across these student's various networks as a 'ripple effect'. As '[children] can influence each other's behaviour and beliefs' (Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.43), the SSC's successful engagement with 'referred' students may influence others to engage or to change their own behaviour or reconsider their beliefs. This should be a dimension in developing this role and any future evaluation of this approach.

Student Support Champions (SSCs)

A public health approach to violence reduction comprises primary prevention and secondary and tertiary interventions. This demands different ways of working, blending different communities of practice, strengthening the existing and convening new partnerships to meet the local challenges, some of which might not otherwise have happened. The *Serious Violence Strategy* (for England and Wales) demands a whole-system approach across education, health, social services, policing and criminal justice, housing, youth services, and victim services advocating a public health approach comprising *primary prevention* to address violence before it occurs; *secondary interventions* immediately after violent acts to prevent short-term consequences; and *tertiary interventions* after violence has occurred to prevent long-term consequences (Home Office, 2018).

The complexity of a child's² life is such that primary prevention (i.e., to prevent harm from happening) may be too late for some who require secondary interventions which might, at the very least, enable those who have been exposed to or have witnessed violence, or who are being abused or exploited to seek help and access systems of support. The term *system of support* describes the 'functionality of different services (e.g., schools, social care, youth justice) working individually or together to support children, as opposed to a discrete intervention' (Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.6). Primary prevention must be situated within education and, for the purposes of the *Serious Violence Duty* (see Home Office, 2022), educational authorities should have representation at a strategic level but are only required to collaborate, if requested, with 'specified authorities'³ or can request to participate in partnership arrangements.

Our *Student Support Champions* are, therefore, principally a secondary intervention with dimensions of primary prevention.

What informs the rationale for Student Support Champions?⁴

Education is key to the development of children and young people, unleashing their potential to flourish, overcome inequalities and other risk factors, such as poverty, abuse, neglect, behavioural difficulties, school exclusions, special educational needs, drug use, children in care and those with physical or mental health issues. Many of these risk factors, which are not the fault or responsibility of the child, increase vulnerability to inter- and extra-familial risks and harms but may not be part of

² The terms child, children, young person, young people, adolescent, pupil and student are used interchangeably.

³ The *Serious Violence Duty* 'specified authorities' are the Police, Justice, Fire and Rescue, Health and local authorities, including Community Safety Partnerships (see Home Office, 2022, p.11).

⁴ It is important to note that the original rationale for Student Support Champions was based on the literature available in early 2022; our rationale has since matured and is complemented by more recent publications.

the lived experience of all children (Open Innovation Team, 2023). In their review of 21 children, all boys, caught up in criminal exploitation who had died or suffered serious harm, the *Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel* found many of these risk factors (except exclusion from school) 'were mostly not present, or not at a level to bring the children to the attention of children's social care or other services' (CSPRP, 2020, p.15).

Vulnerability because of, for instance, fear, absence of a trusted adult, social isolation and tendencies towards low self-esteem and self-harm, is a driver for children and young people to carry knives (Smith & Wynne-McHardy, 2019). Many vulnerable children who are coerced into committing crime and criminally exploited can present with (persistent) disruptive or violent behaviour in school resulting in suspension or permanent exclusion, perhaps, as a 'less resource-intensive [solution] in order to focus their attention on [students] who are easier to manage' (Tindle et al., 2023, p.48). Suspensions and, particularly, exclusion remove children from their own networks of support, unintentionally marginalising or stigmatising them (Irwin-Rogers, Muthoo & Billingham, 2020; Graham & Robertson, 2019; Public Health England, 2020), compounding their vulnerability (APPG, 2019) and victimising them further by being excluded (Just for Kids Law, 2020; Arnez & Condry, 2021). Exclusion from school often accelerates their (further) involvement into criminal and/or sexual exploitation (CSPRP, 2020; Children's Commissioner, 2021). Evidence shows that excluded children are at higher risk of exposure to crime (Children's Commissioner, 2020) or becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence (Department for Education, 2019; CSPRP, 2020), becoming involved with the criminal justice system (Commission on Young Lives, 2022) which some authors have described as the 'school-to-prison pipeline' (Arnez & Condry, 2021; Muñiz, 2021). It is, therefore, important to encourage students to share their worries and concerns, supporting early interventions to prevent disruptive or violent attitudes and behaviours and provide schools with an alternative to formal sanctions or, ultimately, permanent exclusion.

Exposure to diverse risk factors does not and should not make involvement in serious violence inevitable. Education is central to the statutory framework to protect children (Department for Education, 2018) and, as the only statutory service we all experience regardless of need, should be 'a strong protective factor against children and young people's risk of involvement in serious violence' (Home Office, 2022, p.94). Schools, however, cannot be the only access point to systems of support; in the autumn and spring of 2021/22, the Children's Commissioner estimated 'that 818,000 children were persistently absent, meaning that they missed at least 10% of possible school sessions, for reasons other than just illness' (2023, p.4). Schools do, however, have the most consequential contact with children as they:

‘support young people’s sense of mattering, furnishing them with deeply meaningful forms of recognition and respect and helping them to see the difference that their existence makes to the world.’ (Billingham & Irwin-Rogers, 2022, p.89).

There are various violence reduction-themed secondary interventions operating in schools to provide students with support. For example, *Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)*⁵ is a peer education programme equipping students with the knowledge and skills in non-violent bystander approaches to support other students encountering gender-based violence, bullying and other forms of abuse from peers. There is evidence that MVP mentors and mentees are empowered towards reducing in-school behaviours; however, it is unclear how MVP supports those affected by more complex, such as extra-familial, risks and harms (Butler, Bates & Quigg, 2021). Schools are also intuitively safe spaces where ‘police and young people can interact positively, and where police can build relationships and trust with students’ (Bradford & Yesburg, 2020, p.4); however, there is a lack of robust evidence on the role of police officers in schools, with some concerns about perceptions of increased surveillance or enforcement activity.

Schools have the most connections across systems of support and are best able to support a child within the school setting and, where necessary, signpost or refer them to external support: ‘the two most common entry points (to systems of support for children) are via schools and the police’ (Tindle et al., 2023, p.32). The importance of early intervention cannot be understated here, support should be timely to prevent the escalation of behaviour; recognising that for some students the threshold for statutory support may be too high or waiting lists too long, or ‘[on] the other end of the scale, children cannot access services if their needs are deemed to be too high’ (Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.35).

A recent survey of Year-3 to Year-13 students (n=68,241) found that whilst schools are generally safe places, many Year-8 to Year-11 students reported feeling unsafe, and whilst teachers have a statutory responsibility to protect their students they are not always viewed as *trusted adults* (Jackson, Jones & Rapson, 2022). Whilst many positive teacher-student relationships in schools enable students to flourish, it is thought that many teachers lack the *content knowledge* (see Ofsted, 2019) of or were not confident in discussing sensitive or taboo topics (see, for example, Sundaram, Kumar & Alldred, 2023), or the structures, such as authoritarian relationships (Tindle et al., 2023) and disciplinary regimes (Billingham & Irwin-Rogers, 2022), and expectations of academic achievement often stresses teacher-student relationships (Young Minds, 2022). Students who

⁵ See, for example, the Scottish MVP at [Mentors in Violence Prevention in Scottish Schools \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](https://mentorsinviolenceprevention.org.uk) and the Merseyside Youth Association’s MVP at educationmvp.co.uk

attended alternative provision tended to have a more positive experience with an increased focus on building relationships and providing support in these settings (Tindle et al., 2023). The evaluation of the Merseyside MVP found that a key dimension of the programme was the use of an external organisation to train the student mentors as they enabled discussions of ‘sensitive or taboo topics [...] more openly and honestly than perhaps would have been possible with someone in a more authoritarian role like a teacher’ (Butler et al., 2021, p.38).

Involving children in the type of support they want or need may increase levels of engagement (Open Innovation Team, 2023). For example, in the context of ensuring children are safe, children and young people say they need:

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

(Department for Education, 2018, p.10).

The lived experiences of children and young people inform their worldview, with thoughts and feelings shaping their identity, attitudes and behaviours as they observe and imitate the grown-ups around them – today, this includes online and offline influencers too. During adolescence, the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, young people experiment with different ways being as they encounter boundaries, roles and responsibilities and learn ‘habits of thought, action, and feelings that are difficult and unnatural. [...] a process, which, not surprisingly, is cause for much tension and conflict’ (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p.12). The influences of social and peer groups and the role of popularity as the driver for social prestige, visibility and influence are important as adolescents, particularly boys and young men, feel they need to *matter* as ‘socially conscious, autonomous persons’ (Blakemore, 2019, p.156). The opinions of adolescent peers, who in

most instances are chosen, will often take precedence as ‘the need for peer acceptance and desire to avoid being socially excluded’ (Blakemore, 2019, p.43). ‘Mattering’ is the sense of social significance and attachment with a social entity, which could be pro-social or pro-offending in nature, with some reciprocal recognition (Billingham & Irwin-Rogers, 2022) and is, perhaps, an essential component of the trusted adult relationship with children.

Jahnine Davis, a *Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel* member, in evidence to the *Education Select Committee*, recently described how we should support children:

‘I think what good practice looks like is how we centre the voice of children and young people, how we hear and engage with them, how we meet them where they are on their journeys [...]’. (Davis, 2023).

Trusted relationships should ensure that:

‘a child [feels] able to discuss a concern at school (at the universal end of the spectrum) as it is for them to be able to talk through more complex needs and problems with a specialist service provider (at the targeted end)’ (Lewing et al., 2018, p.15; see also Young Minds, 2022).

It is important that these trusted relationships, regardless of the setting, are consistent and relatable to children and young people (Firmin & Lloyd, 2023); however, such relationships are often undermined by inconsistent funding or entry points and services or irregular changes in staffing (Tindle et al., 2023). It may be that ‘positive relationships between children and young people are more important for improved outcomes than the interventions they are delivering’ (Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.40). These trusted adults help ‘children and young people to safely navigate risky relationships and situations outside of their home and family’ (Firmin et al., 2022, p.34), and ensure they have the best possible chance of making it through complex systems of support (College of Policing, 2021).

The adolescent’s need to be popular is often a barrier to talking about, for instance, intimate partner abuse or sexual abuse, as the perceived risk of being ostracised by peers or getting others into trouble is considered too great (Ofsted, 2021; Tomova, Andrews & Blakemore, 2021).

Establishing trusting, supportive, respectful, empathic, and reliable relationships (after Open Innovation Team, 2023) takes time and skill, comprising effective communication, persistence, tenacity, creativity, to provide an agile response across the systems of support (CSPRP, 2020).

Children must have confidence in their trusted adult relationships allowing them to share worries without fear or shame of themselves or their peers, even if their peers are the perpetrators of abusive or violent behaviour.

‘Children who really need help can often appear no different to their peers. This can mean that certain signs are being missed, for example at school. The ‘telling’ about abuse only comes when a relationship of trust has been built.’ *Marian Brandon, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of East Anglia* (in Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.33)

The timely sharing of their worries with trusted adults in schools should be regarded a teachable moment or window of opportunity without stigmatising the child or ‘labelling’ them as bad, risky or an offender. For example, accessing systems of support because of an arrest by the police

‘can contribute to a perception of an ‘offender identity’. [... reducing] the police’s effectiveness in preventative work, as those at risk do not want to engage for fear of being criminalised in this way’ (Tindle et al., 2023, p.49).

‘Labelling and its consequences can cause children and young people to perceive themselves negatively, lowering self-esteem and reducing their engagement with statutory support, eventually adopting a pro-offending identity’ (Open Innovation Team, 2023, p.26; see also Seal & Harris, 2016).

Once acquired, children and young people may find it difficult to shed a pro-offending identity and associated narratives and discourses, particularly if this is the only way they imagine they can ‘matter’ (after Billingham & Irwin-Rogers, 2022). Therefore, making changes to an emergent or established pro-offending identity and development of a ‘new’ more pro-social narrative may be challenging and costly (see, for example, Anderson & McNeill, 2019).

Implementation

Based on discussions with stakeholders and working with the local authority, eight schools were identified as settings for SSCs. The eight schools volunteering to take part in this proof-of-concept project were: Excelsior Academy; Gosforth Academy; Jesmond Park Academy; Kenton School; Mary Astell Academy; St Cuthbert’s Catholic High School; Studio West and Walbottle Academy. In February 2023, due to delays in mobilising the project in Studio West the SSC was introduced into Trinity Academy Newcastle. Mary Astell Academy is an Alternative Provision for children who have been or are at risk of exclusion from school, and Trinity Academy Newcastle is a special school for children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

The SSC’s roles and responsibilities (see Appendix B) included:

- Proactively engage and support young people who are involved in, or at risk of being involved in, peer crime groups and youth violence, developing a trusted relationship that encourages them to want to seek help.
- Complete initial needs assessments with young people and support them to develop action plans and regularly review to assess progress.

- Share intelligence and information with key partners to safeguard young people and the wider community.
- Offer advice to schools on safety planning such as morning arrival or school exit plans, to minimise risk to the school day.
- Provide general awareness raising of violence reduction issues such as weapon carrying and exploitation.
- Actively seek local interventions in the community who could support the young people, their families and the schools.
- Make referrals to relevant agencies and VRU interventions who could support the young people and their families.
- Represent young people at various meetings e.g., Fair Access Panel.
- Develop and deliver a pilot around exclusions for weapon carrying.
- Where appropriate, offer home/school liaison to families of young people to ensure the family is offered support and aware of circumstances.

A Student Support Champion was each allocated to four schools, to work in each of their schools one-day-per-week. Once in schools each SSC made sure that students and staff knew who they were, this included an infographic which was shared across schools for students and staff with information about the role and contact details for each SSC (see Appendix C). The SSCs negotiated with each school how best to refer a student for support and how this should be recorded; during the early phase of the project a referral form was developed and shared across the project.

Since their deployment into schools, 192 students (37 girls and 155 boys) have been referred to the SSCs, most referrals were for Year-8 to -10 students. Table 1 shows the referrals from each participating school.

School	Referrals
Excelsior Academy	44
Gosforth Academy	24
Jesmond Park Academy	28
Kenton School	19
Mary Astell Academy	22
St Cuthbert's Catholic High School	20
Trinity Academy Newcastle	13
Walbottle Academy	22

Table 1: Referrals for SSC support, by school

The reasons for referral were diverse and included anger and in-school behaviours, information related to violence in community or school, involvement with gangs, carrying weapons, being

exploited or involved in drug use, or missing from home episodes. These referrals were the access point for each student to work with the SSC and, where necessary, navigate systems of support.

Barriers

As a proof-of-concept, the project adopted a responsive approach as barriers were encountered and solutions were co-produced with the schools, local authority and police. For example, early negotiations on implementation with schools engaged headteachers and other senior leaders (e.g., Heads of Year, Designated Safeguarding or Pastoral Leads), however, once deployed into some schools the SSCs had daily contact with different staff members. This identified, in addition to securing strategic buy-in, the need to engage at the earliest opportunity with those who would be most involved in the day-to-day operation of the project. Schools are busy places and, in some settings, this key person has changed which disrupted or stalled implementation. The police also reported an initial lack of clarity on the SSC role, taking a little time for personal introductions to be made and an understanding of the role to emerge.

Delays in police vetting and DBS checks slowed the deployment of the SSCs into their schools; DBS clearance was required before schools allowed work with students to begin – once this was resolved, the project was fully operational by early 2023.

Enablers

Without any doubt, the enthusiasm of the schools, the local authority, and the police to innovate and try something new to support children and, ultimately, that of the SSCs themselves and the students. The SSC's knowledge and skills have developed trusted and relatable relationships with students, the schools and the police as this proof-of-concept evolved. The power of multi-agency working, in this public health approach to violence reduction, is demonstrated in the evidence and testimonies of those involved.

Analysis and findings

Data collection comprised of the online survey for students and school staff, and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students and staff, police officers, the local authority and the SSCs. Some schools have provided naturally occurring data, such as attendance and behaviour data, to complement and contextualise that which has been collected as part of this evaluation. A thematic approach has been taken to the survey responses, interviews and focus groups; findings are presented in the narrative.

The surveys

There were 47 responses to the post-experience survey from students, representing 26.8% of those who were referred to work with the SSCs. 91% (n=43) of students agreed (i.e., strongly agreed

or tended to agree) that they enjoyed the work with the SSCs, with 72% (n=32) reporting that they felt better supported in school as a result. Throughout the survey in free text responses, only three respondents said that 'getting out of lessons' was a benefit of working with the SSCs. When asked whether they would like the SSCs to do anything differently, 76% (31 from 41 responses) of respondents said 'No'.

In rating what they had learned from their sessions with the SSCs, 94% (n=44) of students reported (i.e., strongly agreed or tended to agree) that they were able to describe the consequences of knife crime; 91% (n=41) the consequences of substance misuse; 82% (n=37) the consequences of exploitation; and 93% (n=41) the consequences of crime and anti-social behaviour.

There were 31 responses to the staff survey from across the eight settings; one setting had eight respondents and one setting only one. Twenty-four respondents (77%) agreed (i.e., strongly agreed or tended to agree) that students had actively engaged with the SSCs. 84% (n=26) agreed that the SSCs had brought new knowledge and skills to the school.

Respondents reported that there had been reductions (i.e., some improvement or good improvement) in suspensions (67%; n=21) and exclusions (53%; n=16), and an improvement (i.e., some improvement or good improvement) in school attendance (66%; n=20). However, the (incomplete) naturally occurring data provided by schools is not conclusive and should be explored further.

The interviews and focus groups⁶

There were eleven semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students; eight interviews and focus groups with school staff; one focus group with police officers, one with the local authority and one with the SSCs themselves. The audio recordings have been reviewed by the authors who have grouped several themes which are described here.

Findings

'You've got to be very good to do what [the SSC] does. I've been through loads of people, like counsellors and all that but this has probably been the most effective one that I've had.' (Student Focus Group, School F).

'The Student Support role is embedded in a particular ethos and from a particular focus and it's not where a teacher's focus is [...].' (Local Authority Focus Group).

Developing relatable and trusted relationships with all stakeholders have been key. For example, SSCs have brokered relationships with students, the school, and police; students with their

⁶ These were conducted by the first author.

school and peers; schools with the police, leading to effective information sharing and positive action to protect students, improving multi-agency working. The SSCs are visible and have become, in a very short period, a very positive addition to the systems of support for students and their schools, for example:

‘The value-added bit is the additional networks that [the SSCs] are able to access that schools don’t automatically either think about or have access to [...]’ (Local Authority Focus Group).

‘We’ve had great results. [...] a lad was pretty much being exploited by other children. [...] his Mum was “Is this normal?” He didn’t report it to the police, the child reported it to the SSC and they informed me. We spoke to the parents when he was at school, and we put a safeguarding plan in place.’ (Police Focus Group).

In brokering in-school relationships, staff from the schools felt that the SSCs had supported improvements in both peer-to-peer (see Figure 1) and student-staff relationships (see Figure 2).

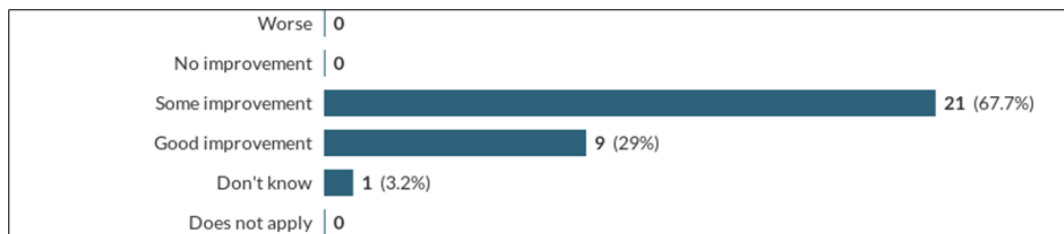


Figure 1: Staff survey: Improvements to peer-to-peer relationships

Twenty-five students (56%), in their survey responses, reported (i.e., strongly agreed or tended to agree) that they were able to discuss how they were feeling with peers. The importance for adolescents being able to share thoughts and feelings with peers, who in most cases are chosen, can recruit an alternative system of support, that of peers, and influence risk perception and decision-making and take precedence (after Blakemore, 2019).

The SSCs work with students in 1-2-1s and in small groups. The 1-2-1s enable students to discuss more personal information which they might not be willing to share with peers; and in small groups the SSC is able to facilitate a dialogue between peers. These may be individual preferences. For these two students (Student Focus Group, School D) one liked group work, whilst the other qualified their preference:

Student 1: ‘[...] because if you have someone else there, so when you’re thinking about what you’re say they speak instead of you. So, you have more time to think about what you’re going to say’ [...]

Student 2: ‘It depends on what you need to speak to her about. Like I have group work with someone else and I don’t really have much to say’.

For the SSCs, students were willing to share more than their worries or concerns, as described in this Student Focus Group (School A):

Q. What sort of things are you happy to talk about with [the SSC] that you wouldn't talk about with teachers?

'Family life, personal experience, what's going on outside school' (Male student)

'I've spoken loads about my family life, as well' (Female student).

It also allows students to be aware of and share their emotions and for the SSCs to de-escalate a situation:

'[...] to get stuff off your mind. Like if you're about to get angry, and you're angry and about to kick off – you can explain it. The fact that you are going to kick off with a teacher, [the SSC] can explain instead of you [...]' (Student Focus Group, School D).

It is thought that any improvement to student-staff relationships will enhance the protective factors of students being in school, staff felt that the SSCs had enabled this (see Figure 2).

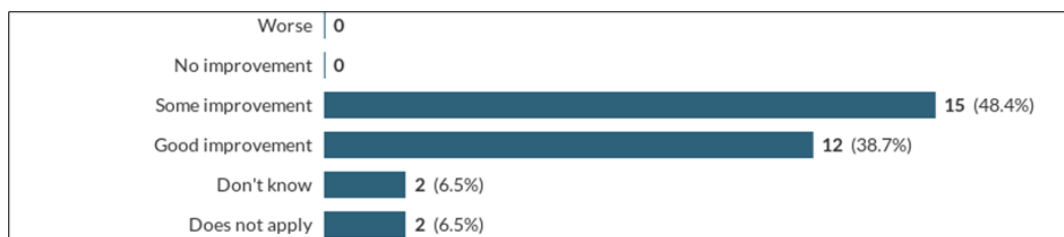


Figure 2: Staff survey: Improvements to student-staff relationships

Whilst the survey question (for students) was posed in the context of the SSC role, 55% (n=25) of students reported being better able to discuss their feelings with adults (although in-school and out-of-school adults were not defined in the question).

It would be expected that an improvement in student-staff relationships would create a more positive and protective environment, and most students (72%) reported feeling better supported in school (see Figure 3).

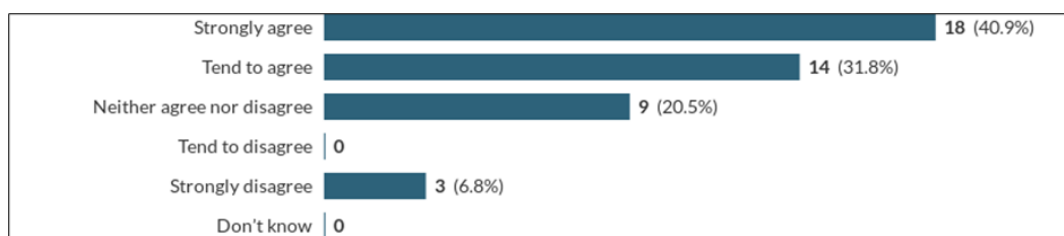


Figure 3: Student survey: 'I feel better supported in school'.

It is noted here that three students, each from different schools⁷, strongly disagreed with this statement, however, this evaluation has not explored the detail or context of these responses and it did not arise as a theme in the focus groups at these schools.

The contemporary lived experience of many children is outside the experience of many professionals who are working with them, especially post-COVID – we all must listen to and understand their concerns and prevent harm or limit its impact:

‘You are a child. You are being exploited. This is safeguarding. You are a victim – we need to support you. [...] It’s not just safeguarding an individual. It is safeguarding the school community and extended community. If things could get nipped in the bud early or identified early and things put in place – the impact of that would be much more positive than waiting until a kid is picked up by the police, [...] that’s too late!’ (Local Authority Focus Group).

However, not all children have anyone with whom to share their concerns or what frightens them and, more importantly, who can do something about it. Children need accessible trusted and relatable relationships, especially in settings where children feel safe, such as schools or other organised youth settings, and are empowered to share their concerns or ask for help. In the focus groups held with students, the feedback was extremely positive towards the SSC role with all agreeing it was a good idea:

‘The reason I think [the SSC] is very good, she makes us feel at home, she doesn’t put pressure on us [...] she’ll only ask if we want to tell her’ (Student, School C).

‘It’s someone different to speak to’ (Student, School D).

‘Well before I started speaking to [the SSC] I was getting into lots of trouble around school and everything, and getting quite violent, quite aggressive. As the weeks have passed, I started to talk to [the SSC] and she’s gave me loads of help and support on how to change my behaviour and if you look at my record my [suspensions] have went down. [...] It’s helped me in lots of ways. (Student, School F).

Teachers and non-teaching staff also agreed that the SSC role had brought an added dimension to understanding each student’s needs and informing early intervention or other support:

‘[The SSC] has filled a gap we were desperate to fill, and she is able to meet with the students and [...] not be the face of the school. (Staff Focus Group, School B).

⁷ The student respondents are anonymous, but the responses can be attributed to a particular school.

When asked if the role could be undertaken by anyone else in the school, the students were clear that it could not, as such conversations are often awkward even with a teacher they knew, feeling that:

‘Teachers will tell you what they think they have to tell you’ (Student, School A).

‘Teacher’s job is just to get you to the lesson, [the SSC] will speak to you’ (Student, School D).

‘Teachers just don’t understand. You just don’t get through to them as easy’ (Student, School F).

The local authority took the view that this role:

‘[...] is a completely unique role. [...] Because of the violence reduction aspect to it, and because it is directly keyed into the police and all of the things that are happening in the community – there is no other role that does that. [...] when [the local authority and VRU Co-ordinator] started all this, it was on the back of schools articulating their frustration, concern, panic about some behaviours they were experiencing in school that they hadn’t experienced before. They didn’t know who to go to, they didn’t know who to report to, they didn’t know what could be done’ (Local Authority Focus Group).

School staff recognised that the SSCs developed a very different relationship with students, enabling a different type of dialogue:

‘[...] Our kids are quite honest but if they are genuinely worried about themselves and what they are getting in to, sometimes it’s better that it’s not one of us or for it to get back to Mum. [...] The kids know that because she hasn’t got [a school] badge on, she is someone the kids can speak to – fits in with the other VRU Education Team sessions’ (Staff Interview, School A).

‘[The SSC] is able to foster some confidence with the kids, to get them to open up and talk about things they wouldn’t ordinarily share with teaching staff’ (Staff Focus Group, School B).

‘[...] difficult things that we need to know that they won’t say to us, getting a different way to either safeguard them or to make adjustments to make their school-life easier’ (Staff Focus Group, School B).

Transition from primary school is recognised as a challenging time for most children, and there may be a role for the SSCs here to listen to the views of students as they move from the ‘primary’ regime, which affords a degree of self-management, to one which is more authoritarian and has more rules and consequences: ‘Because I think transition is something that all secondary schools underestimate the impact of [...]’ (Local Authority Focus Group). The intentional positioning of the SSCs as external to the school hierarchy enables them to develop a trusting, relatable relationship which might bridge this transitional period, as described in this exchange with Year-7 and Year-8 students (Student Focus Group, School D):

Q. Would you share something with [the SSC] that you wouldn't share with a teacher?

Student 1: 'Yeah [...] there's not many teachers that actually speak to us like [the SSC]. You can trust [the SSC].'

Q. Is trust important to you?

Student 2: 'Yeah. [...] If you don't really trust someone, then they'll go behind your back and do stuff.'

Student 1: 'You can share secrets with [the SSC] because the teachers will just open their mouths and tell other teachers.'

[...]

Student 2: 'In Year-7 you didn't know many of the teachers or to speak to anyone but, then in Year-8, it's a bit easier. [...] If you had the [SSC] in Year-7 it would have helped us more [...] someone to talk to privately.'

To better support Year-6 students preparing for their transition to secondary school, at the end of the summer term, in one setting, the SSC took part in their Year-6 assembly to introduce herself and offer support to students before they arrive in September. The role might also be developed to include activity during the school holidays, such as summer schools or more general outreach (Local Authority Focus Group).

In addition to listening to and supporting students, the SSCs have provided strategies for students to better cope with their frustrations or outbursts; students recognise that their relationship with SSCs is judgement-free:

'You can speak freely and not be judged – that's like trust' (Student, School F)

Q. Is that important – not to be judged?

'It depends on what you've done. Let's just say you have an argument with a teacher, and you get angry, and the teachers will always say that "You're in the wrong". I can explain with [the SSC] what has happened with the teacher. [The SSC] will say what you should have done better and next time "do this". And a few times this year I have had arguments with teachers, and I just went mad. After working with [the SSC] I've just realised "What's the point of getting angry?" when you can be excluded – there's no point.'

It is evident that the students have, often in a short space of time, built positive, trusted relations with the SSCs enabling them to share what they couldn't or wouldn't share with members of school staff, and as a result they felt safer in school and in the community. This trust, which must be earned and may take time, gives an insight into a child's lived experience, as described here by an SSC whilst working with a student who had been referred following concerns about knife carrying:

'A young person who did the 1-2-1 knife crime intervention with the [VRU Education Team. I was asked by them] to catch up with [the student] because he was quite lonely and sad in the intervention. [The Education Team] just wanted to make sure he was OK. I picked him up and we spent a long time together on a weekly basis, there was just something there that was off with him. Then he said in one session "There's something I need to tell you, but I don't quite trust you, yet" [...] it must have been about four weeks down the line and he said that he felt suicidal, low mood and that's why the knife had come into stuff [...]' (SSC Focus Group).

In this instance, the SSC was able to liaise with the school to ensure this child was supported and reassured and got the support he needed.

Students emphasised the importance and value of the role to them individually. Very few suggestions were put forward about how the role could be improved, with most students saying they would like more, on more days. Other suggestions were practical, in terms of the meeting place with some saying they'd like to use a different room in school or would benefit from a 'walk and talk'.

Building on the strengthened relationships between professionals, information sharing has improved. Participants made it clear that, with SSCs bridging the multiple worlds of students across different domains, particularly school and community, professional relationships had been strengthened leading to improved multi-agency working, such as Youth Justice Service, Children's Social Care. An expectation of this project was that information sharing between the SSCs and the school and other stakeholders would improve the support provided to students, however, this has had wider impact. The SSC approach on information gathering is cognisant that it should be purposeful and shared with the informed consent of the students so as not be regarded as a form of increased surveillance (Wroe & Lloyd, 2020).

The rapport the SSCs build with the students may provide police with the emerging themes, helping them to be pro-active in identifying young people at risk and allowing them to put in place targeted diversion to prevent crime and disorder. Some schools have reported that they no longer feel the need to call the police as often, for advice as an example, as the SSCs have that content knowledge and links; and the police described the benefit of improved relationships and information sharing. Although some of information sharing might lead to increased incident or crime reporting, the information does fill a knowledge gap. The Chief Inspector, Communities (Northumbria Police) as a key stakeholder has been a strong advocate of the project from the outset:

'I want better relations with [the SSCs]. I want an embedded relationship. Not necessarily there all of the time [...] because if we don't pick up that demand early, it escalates and causes more demand down the track [...]' (Police Focus Group).

This ethos is recognised by individual police officers too:

‘I think the service [the SSCs] provide is invaluable, I also hope for the future that this can be expanded to cover more schools. I also hope the information sharing can continue to improve as although the champions have made great strides to improve this area, we could still do better.’ (e mail correspondence from police officer to second author).

VRU staff are often mistakenly labelled as ‘the police’, so it is important for students to be able to differentiate the SSCs as ‘neutral’ (Police Focus Group) and not an extension of enforcement or increased surveillance. This, however, does not prevent the sharing of information with the school and across settings to ensure the student is safe. As the SSCs work across the eight schools they can build a picture of a student’s community-based, non-school peer and other relationships. The SSCs are open and honest in their relationship with students about what they will share with their school and police (after Wroe & Lloyd, 2020), especially as:

‘[...] kids are telling us stuff that nobody else would hear otherwise and some of the stuff that they do say are quite significant safeguarding concerns, in terms of the puzzle that fits other things.’

Q. Does the child know that when they share information that you are going to have to do something with it?

‘Yes, I am open with them and tell them that if there is anything significant, I need to pass it on and they agree to that’

Q. Does that include sharing stuff with the police?

‘Yes. [...] I’ve had young people come to me [...] I know you can report stuff about what's going to happen tonight. Can you put this in for me?’ (SSC Focus Group).

The SSCs have helped increase the exchange of information and build relationships between the schools and police, in particular the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. However, the governance and processes for information sharing require more thought to ensure that it is timely and actionable informing the response to protect students and wider community.

What has this proof-of-concept cost?

This evaluation has not set out to explore the cost benefit of this proof-of-concept project, but we can outline what the Student Support Champions have cost and what, in addition to cultivating and strengthening trusted relationship with students, might have been saved. This should be a dimension of any future evaluation.

The annual cost of the SSC proof-of-concept is calculated at £82,000, and is currently funded until March 2025 by the VRU. This includes the direct staff (but not line manager) costs, and

estimated indirect costs, such as travel and expenses. Any costs incurred by the schools, the local authority and the police are not included in this figure.

The cost of doing nothing can be implied from other sources. For example, a student permanently excluded from school is still entitled to full time education and will often be offered a place in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit (AP/ PRU) – the additional cost of this type of provision is estimated at £11,000 per student per year (Irwin-Rogers, Muthoo & Billingham, 2020). It is estimated that over the life-course ‘the cost of exclusion is around £370,000 per young person in lifetime education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs’ (Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017, p.22). These costs comprise education in the alternative provision sector; lost taxation from lower future earnings; associated benefits payments (excluding housing); higher likelihood of entry into the criminal justice system; higher likelihood of social security involvement; and increased average healthcare.

Where a young person goes on to commit a violent offence, the Home Office has previously calculated (at 2015/2016 prices) the economic and social cost of crime and violent crime, factoring the emotional, physical and societal (e.g., policing, health, criminal justice) component costs (Heeks, Reed, Tafsiri & Prince, 2018). The costs of physical and sexual offences, including those encountered by children and young people who are being criminally or sexually exploited, are set out in Table 2:

Crime Type	Overall cost	Emotional cost component	Physical cost component
Violence with injury	£14,050	£8,060	£180
Violence without injury	£5,930	£2,810	£0
Rape	£39,360	£24,360	£30
Other sexual offences	£6,520	£3,690	£20

Table 2: Costs of violent crime (Heeks et al., 2018)

The fear of crime is not included in these costs, but fear is a significant motivator in weapon or knife carrying (see, for example, Smith & Wynne-McHardy, 2019) which may add further costs by failing to reassure children and young people at the earliest opportunity and before they develop a pro-offending identity.

Discussion

In this proof-of-concept initiative, the Student Support Champions, as non-school, non-police accessible and relatable trusted adults, have enabled secondary school students to share aspects of their lives which might have otherwise been unheard or unseen – allowing exploration of their concerns or worries to reassure them, stimulate reflection and cultivate strategies to avoid, for example, conflict with other students or teachers, and better navigate the systems of support available. Working with 192 students from eight Newcastle secondary schools during the spring and

summer term of 2023, the SSCs cultivated a new type of relationship bridging the contexts of home, school, and community as students shared an insight to their lived experienced across an increasingly complex landscape.

All stakeholders (i.e., students, schools, local authority, and policing, and the SSCs) have described the transformational potential of this new role and, for professionals, how it has strengthened relationships across the existing multi-agency partnerships. Improved information sharing has filled some knowledge gaps amongst professionals towards better protecting children and young people, particularly from extra-familial risks and harms, and impacting student attitudes and behaviours in school and in the wider community. That the student and SSC relationships are positioned in the protective environment of the school means it is less stigmatising and enables students to ask for help and access systems of support.

The shift in some of the student's self-reported attitude to school, such as improved attendance or behaviour, as a protective factor against vulnerability and risks and harms related to exposure to violence is promising; albeit the natural occurring data on, for example, attendance and suspensions from participating schools is inconclusive. Whilst schools, the local authority and police engaged with the VRU to shape this initiative, students were not involved in this process so there is potential here to recruit students to develop further the SSC role and, perhaps, to co-produce a Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme for schools in Northumbria as a student-driven social action project. Parents, carers and guardians and their families may have a role here too.

The current participating schools comprise, what can be described as, six mainstream secondary schools with two alternative providers (Mary Astell Academy and Trinity Academy Newcastle). To complement the core provision of Mary Astell and Trinity, the VRU Education Team already offer Project Based Learning (PBL)⁸ to bring violence reduction-themed learning to students with special educational needs or disabilities, social emotional and mental health needs or who have been excluded from school. It may be that the SSCs duplicate some of this offer, albeit students and staff from Mary Astell and Trinity schools and the local authority were very positive about the role and expressed a desire to retain their SSCs.

The schools involved in this project are all keen to continue with the SSC role; there have been enquiries from other Newcastle schools and an expression of interest from Sunderland City Council. VRU funding is confirmed to March 2025 to maintain the current two SSCs and to recruit

⁸ For the academic evaluation of VRU PBL in Alternative Provision and Pupil Referrals Units, see [Project Based Learning - Northumbria PCC \(northumbria-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.northumbria-pcc.gov.uk)

one more, however, continuing and/ or expanding the programme will require a sustainable model for funding – being sure to maintain the independent positionality of the role.

It has not been possible in the timeframe for project design and implementation and this evaluation to attribute any or all of the in-school benefits (e.g., improved attendance or reduction in suspensions) or any out-of-school or community outcomes (e.g., reduction in youth violence or anti-social behaviour) to the students' engagement with the SSCs. The stakeholders who participated in this evaluation make a compelling case for SSCs, however, an independent longitudinal evaluation should be commissioned to explore further the role, refine further its Logic Model (Appendix B) to a Theory of Change and its impact, including the 'value added' and cost benefit.

In summary, in a short period of time this proof-of-concept project has demonstrated a novel approach to engaging with students where schools or the police have concerns or for students who are concerned about their own safety. Establishing an accessible, relatable and trusting relationship with a non-school adult has enabled students to share and explore their concerns and, where appropriate, access systems of support.

References

- Anderson, S. & McNeill, F. (2019). Desistance and Cognitive Transformations, In D.P. Farrington, L. Kazemian & A.R. Piquero (Eds.) (2019). *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press. (pp.600-623).
- APPG (2019). *BACK TO SCHOOL? Breaking the link between school exclusions and knife crime*. All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction. Available at [APPG-on-Knife-Crime-Back-to-School-exclusions-report-FINAL.pdf \(preventknifecrime.co.uk\)](https://preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/APPG-on-Knife-Crime-Back-to-School-exclusions-report-FINAL.pdf)
- Arnez, J. & Condry, R. (2021). Criminological perspectives on school exclusion and youth offending. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26(1); pp.87-100.
- Billingham, L. & Irwin-Rogers, K. (2022). *Against Youth Violence. A Social Harm Perspective*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Blakemore, S-J. (2019). *Inventing Ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain*. London: Transworld Publishers (Black Swan).
- Bradford, B. & Yesberg, J.A. (2020). *Police in schools – an evidence review*. UCL Jill Dando Institute for Security and Crime Science/ National Police Chiefs' Council. Available at [Police in schools Evidence Review 0.pdf \(hubspotusercontent00.net\)](https://hubspotusercontent00.net/Police%20in%20schools%20Evidence%20Review%200.pdf)
- Butler, N., Bates, R. & Quigg, Z. (2021). *Evaluation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme across Merseyside. Final Report*. Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University/ Merseyside Youth Association/ Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. Available at [2023-07-evaluation-of-the-mentors-in-violence-prevention-programme-merseyside.pdf \(ljmu.ac.uk\)](https://liverpool.ac.uk/~liverpool/merseyside-youth-association/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/evaluation-of-the-mentors-in-violence-prevention-programme-merseyside.pdf)
- Children's Commissioner (2020). *Injustice or In Justice. Children and the justice system*. Available at [Injustice or In Justice | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/injustice-or-in-justice/)
- Children's Commissioner (2021). *Still not safe. The public health response to youth violence*. Available at [Still not safe | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/still-not-safe/)
- Children's Commissioner (2023). *Attendance is everyone's business. Children's Commissioner's submission to the persistent absence inquiry*. Available at [CC A4 HEADER \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/attendance-is-everyones-business/)
- College of Policing (2021). *Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme Evaluation of the trusted adult workers role and Rock Pool train the trainer educational approach. Full technical report*. Available at [Evaluation of the trusted adult workers role and Rock Pool train the trainer educational approach: Key findings and implications for practice \(college.police.uk\)](https://www.college.police.uk/evaluation-of-the-trusted-adult-workers-role-and-rock-pool-train-the-trainer-educational-approach-key-findings-and-implications-for-practice)
- Commission on Young Lives (2022). *All Together Now. Inclusion not exclusion: supporting all young people to succeed in school*. Available at [Commission on Young Lives calls for an end to 'exclusions culture' as part of a new era of inclusive education to tackle the scourge of teenage violence and exploitation and help all children to succeed at school \(thecommissiononyounglives.co.uk\)](https://www.thecommissiononyounglives.co.uk/all-together-now-inclusion-not-exclusion-supporting-all-young-people-to-succeed-in-school/)
- CSPRP (2020). *It was hard to escape. Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation*. Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. Available at [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871114/it-was-hard-to-escape-report.pdf)
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Larson, R. (1984). *Being Adolescent. Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years*. USA: Basic Books, Inc.
- Davis, J. (2023). Evidence to the Education Select Committee: Child exploitation and county lines H1114 (4 July 2023). Available at committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/13442/pdf/

Department for Education (2018; updated 2020). *Working Together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*. Available at [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

Department for Education (2019). *Timpson Review of School Exclusion*. Department of Education [DFE-00090-2019]. Available at [Timpson Review of School Exclusion \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/timpson-review-of-school-exclusion.pdf)

Firmin, C., LeFevre, M., Huegler, N. & Peace, D. (2022). *Safeguarding Young People Beyond the Family Home*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, Policy Press.

Firmin, C. & Lloyd, J. (2023). *Contextual Safeguarding. The Next Chapter*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, Policy Press.

Gill, K., Quilter-Pinner, H. & Swift, D. (2017). *Making The Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion*. London: IPPR. Available at <http://www.ippr.org/publications/making-the-difference>

Graham, W. & Robertson, A. (2021). Exploring criminal justice policy transfer models and mobilities using a case study of violence reduction. *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 00(0); pp.1-19.

Heeks, M., Reed, S., Tafiri, M. & Prince, P. (2018). *The economic and social costs of crime. Second edition*. London: Home Office [Research Report 99]. Available at [The economic and social costs of crime second edition - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-second-edition.pdf)

Home Office (2018). *Serious Violence Strategy*. Available at [Home Office – Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)

Home Office (2022). *Serious Violence Duty. Preventing and reducing serious violence. Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities*. Available at [Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/serious-violence-duty-statutory-guidance.pdf)

Irwin-Rogers, K., Muthoo, A. & Billingham, L. (2020). *Youth Violence Commission Final Report*. Youth Violence Commission. Available at [Youth Violence Commission Final Report July 2020.pdf \(open.ac.uk\)](https://open.ac.uk/record/doi/doi:10.21203/3.13493641)

Jackson, I., Jones, N.W. & Rapson, S. (2022). *The Pupil Safeguarding Review Report 1: Do pupils in English schools feel safe, and do they know what to do if they do not?* Edurio/ The Key. Available at [Pupil Safeguarding Review | EDURIO & THE KEY](https://www.edurio.com/pupil-safeguarding-review-1)

Just for Kids Law (2020). *Exploited and Forgotten: Childhood Criminal Exploitation and School Exclusion*. London: Just for Kids Law. Available at [JfKL school exclusion and CCE 2.pdf \(justforkidslaw.org\)](https://www.justforkidslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/JfKL_school_exclusion_and_CCE_2.pdf)

Lewing, B., Doubell, L., Beevers, T. & Acquah, D. (2018). *Building Trusted Relationships for Vulnerable Children and Young People with Public Services*. Early Intervention Foundation. Available at [Building trusted relationships for vulnerable children and young people with public services | Early Intervention Foundation \(eif.org.uk\)](https://www.earlyinterventionfoundation.org/publications/building-trusted-relationships-for-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-with-public-services)

Muñiz, J.O. (2021). Exclusionary Discipline Policies, School-Police Partnerships, Surveillance Technologies and Disproportionality: A Review of the School to Prison Pipeline Literature. *The Urban Review* 53; pp.735-760.

Ofsted (2019). *Education inspection framework. Overview of research*. Available at [Educ with special educational needs, social emotional haeth needs or whohave been excludued form schoolation inspection framework: overview of research - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683819/education-inspection-framework-overview-of-research.pdf)

Ofsted (2021). *Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges*. Available at [Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92122/Review_of_sexual_abuse_in_schools_and_colleges_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

Open Innovation Team (2023). *The role of systems of support in serious youth violence: evidence and gaps*. Department for Education/ Open Innovation Team/ Youth Endowment Fund. Available at [Serious youth violence research programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/Serious_youth_violence_research_programme_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

Public Health England (2020). *No child left behind: public health informed approach to improving outcomes for vulnerable children*. Available at [Addressing vulnerability in childhood - a public health informed approach \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/87444/Addressing_vulnerability_in_childhood_-_a_public_health_informed_approach_(publishing.service.gov.uk).pdf)

Seal, M. & Harris, P. (2016). *Responding to Youth Violence Through Youth Work*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Smith, V. & Wynne-McHardy, E. (2019). *An analysis of indicators of serious violence. Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study. Research Report 110*. London: Home Office. Available at [An analysis of indicators of serious violence: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study and the Environmental Risk \(E-Risk\) Longitudinal Twin Study \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/81444/An_analysis_of_indicators_of_serious_violence:_Findings_from_the_Millennium_Cohort_Study_and_the_Environmental_Risk_(E-Risk)_Longitudinal_Twin_Study_(publishing.service.gov.uk).pdf)

Sundaram, V., Kumar, S.A. & Alldred, P. (2023). *It's #AboutTime. A Whole School Approach to Ending Violence Against Women & Girls*. End Violence Against Women. Available at [FINAL-About-Time-WSA-report-140723.pdf \(endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk\)](https://endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FINAL-About-Time-WSA-report-140723.pdf)

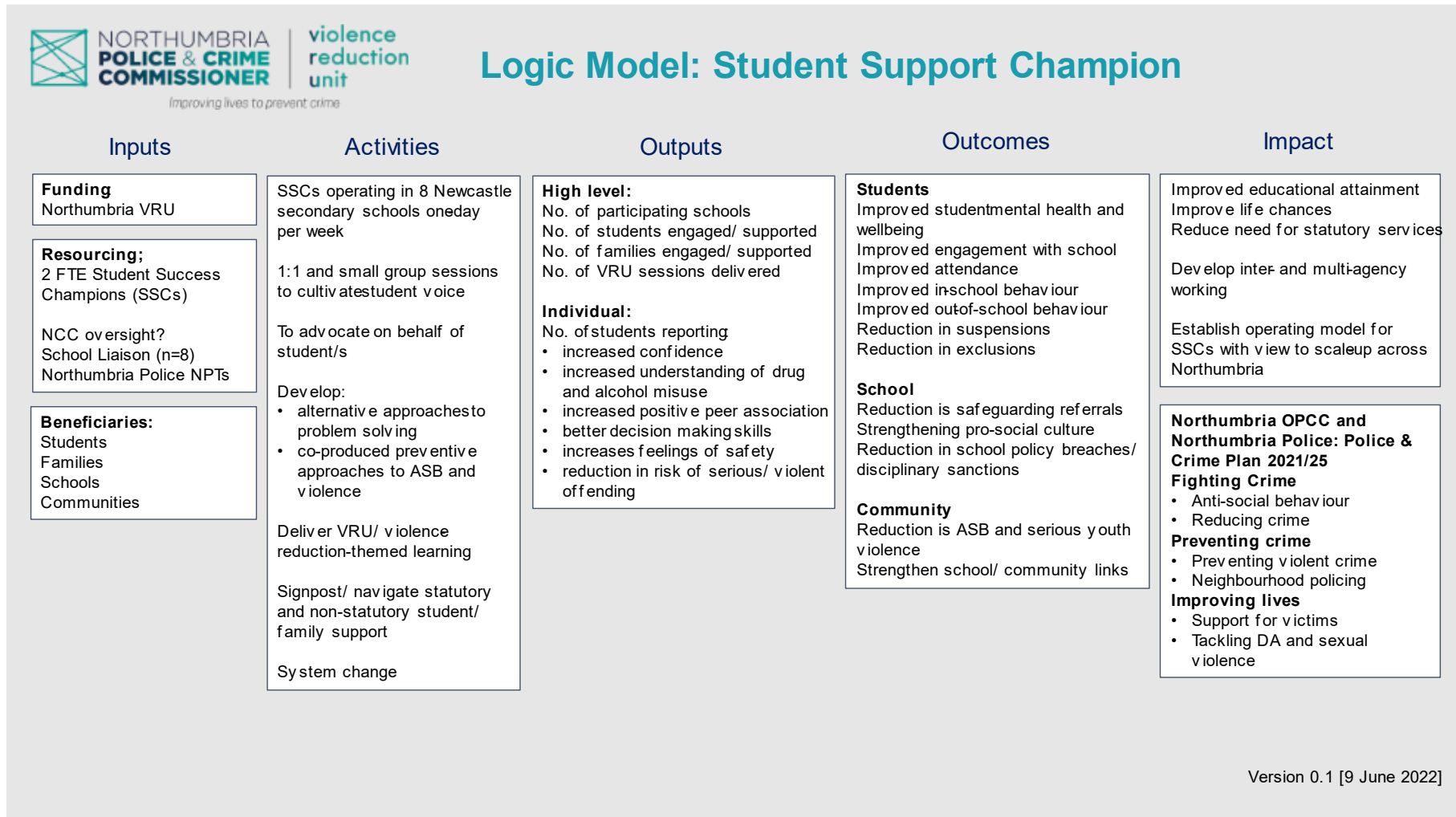
Tindle, A., Kearney, I., Cervantes, D., Henley, M. & Bayley, A. (2023). *Serious violence foundational system mapping. Research report [RR1346]*. Department for Education/ Youth Endowment Fund. Available at [Serious violence - foundational system mapping - Youth Endowment Fund](https://www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Serious_violence_-_foundational_system_mapping_-_Youth_Endowment_Fund.pdf)

Tomova, L., Andrews, J.L. & Blakemore, S-J. (2021). The importance of belonging and the avoidance of social risk taking in adolescence. *Developmental Review* 61; pp.1-10.

Wroe, L.E. & Lloyd, J. (2020). Watching over or Working with? Understanding Social Work Innovation in Response to Extra-Familial Harm. *Social Sciences* 9(37); pp.1-16. Available at [Social Sciences | Free Full-Text | Watching over or Working with? Understanding Social Work Innovation in Response to Extra-Familial Harm \(mdpi.com\)](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0762/9/37/6442)

Young Minds (2022). *Someone to turn to: Being a trusted adult for young people*. Young Minds and UK Youth. Available at [someone-to-turn-to-report.pdf \(youngminds.org.uk\)](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Someone-to-turn-to-report.pdf)

Appendix A – Logic Model



Appendix B – SSC job description

Student Support Champion (Violence Reduction Unit)

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Location: Victory House, Balliol Business Park or any accommodation as directed by the PCC

Accountability: To the Coordinator, VRU

Car User Status: Casual

Salary: Grade F (£26,796 to £29,331)

Status: Full time, Fixed Term, 12 months

Purpose: To support the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver the vision and aspirations outlined in the Police and Crime Plan with a specific focus on the delivery of the Violence Reduction Units Response Strategy.

Role summary

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is one of twenty areas that have an established unit and commission services to deliver a Response Strategy including capacity building, tactical changes and interventions. VRUs are a multi-agency approach designed to bring together Police, Local Government, Health, Education and the Community and Voluntary sector to tackle violent crime, and importantly, its underlying causes.

Reporting to the VRU Coordinator the post holder will work between a partnership of secondary schools in Newcastle offering support to teaching staff around local youth violence issues and to young people believed to be involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in youth violence. You will offer 1-2-1 support for young people, providing a listening ear and different approach to problem solving. As Student Support Champion you will also be advocates for young people at various meetings to ensure their voice is heard and their circumstances explained. The Student Support Champions will also work towards prevention and putting strategies in place to dissuade students from bringing weapons into school.

Develop a pilot to offer interventions for weapon/knife carrying as opposed to exclusion and be able to deliver interventions around key violence reduction themes.

Key roles and responsibilities

1. Proactively engage and support young people who are involved in, or at risk of being involved in, peer crime groups and youth violence, developing a trusted relationship that encourages them to want to seek help.
2. Complete initial needs assessments with young people and support them to develop action plans and regularly review to assess progress.
3. Share intelligence and information with key partners to safeguard young people and the wider community.
4. Offer advice to schools on safety planning such as morning arrival or school exit plans, to minimise risk to the school day.
5. Provide general awareness raising of violence reduction issues such as weapon carrying and exploitation.
6. Actively seek local interventions in the community who could support the young people, their families and the schools.

7. Make referrals to relevant agencies and VRU interventions who could support the young people and their families.
8. Represent young people at various meetings e.g., Fair Access Panel.
9. Develop and deliver a pilot around exclusions for weapon carrying.
10. Where appropriate, offer home/school liaison to families of young people to ensure the family is offered support and aware of circumstances.

The post-holder may be required to undertake such other responsibilities as are reasonably commensurate with the grade of the post.

Minimum knowledge, skills and abilities

- Ability to establish and build trusted relationships with young people.
- At least five years experience of understanding the difficulties young people face in navigating their lives in challenging environments and who are/at risk of being led into antisocial and criminal behaviour. This includes knowledge of County Lines, Knife Crime and the Prevent agenda.
- Ability to communicate professionally and effectively with young people, parents, professionals and colleagues.
- A creative and enterprising approach to finding support for and solutions to engaging young people engaged in negative behaviours or with those who may not want to engage
- Maturity, professionalism and knowledge of the positive behaviours that enable effective team working.
- Strong IT skills including Word, Excel and Outlook including the ability to set up and maintain timely, accurate and detailed records on databases and paper files.
- Awareness of and commitment to equal opportunity and diversity practices and policies.
- A sound knowledge of safeguarding practices and information management and data security.
- Degree or equivalent qualification or experience in a relevant subject.
- Knowledge of the school environment and working systems.
- Knowledge and experience of working with young people involved in or at risk of gang and serious youth violence.
- Knowledge and understanding of key themes e.g. drug and alcohol, knife crime, vulnerability.
- Behaviour management techniques.

This is a politically restricted post and will be subject to Police Vetting and will be subject to DBS Enhanced Clearance

Appendix C – Student Support Champion infographics



**Hello, my name is Sarah.**
I'm a Student Support Champion - a new role in your school.

This is where I work each week...

Monday: **Excelsior Academy**
Tuesday: **Mary Astell Academy**
Wednesday: **Walbottle Academy**
Thursday: **St Cuthberts High School**



Why am I in school?

I am employed by Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). We work with lots of people and organisations to stop violent crime and help keep everyone safe.



What will I be doing?

I will be working with individuals and small groups to help young people reflect upon issues they may face in the community.

Please come and see me if you would like to talk about more personal matters, particularly around violence and crime.



Any questions?

If you have any questions, please come and see me in school or contact me on any of the details below.



How to contact me?

Telephone:
07561 713596

Email:
Sarah.Kilday@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk



**Hello, my name is Yvonne.**
I'm a Student Support Champion - a new role in your school.

This is where I work each week...

Monday: **Jesmond Park Academy**
Tuesday: **Kenton School**
Wednesday: **Gosforth Academy**
Thursday: **Trinity Academy**



Why am I in school?

I am employed by Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). We work with lots of people and organisations to stop violent crime and help keep everyone safe.



What will I be doing?

I will be working with individuals and small groups to help young people reflect upon issues they may face in the community.

Please come and see me if you would like to talk about more personal matters, particularly around violence and crime.



Any questions?

If you have any questions, please come and see me in school or contact me on any of the details below.



How to contact me?

Telephone:
07561 712596

Email:
Yvonne.Butterfield@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk

