



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba

MVP Scotland Annual Report 2022-2023



Mentors in Violence Prevention

Challenging Gender Based Violence, Everyone's Responsibility

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What is Mentors in Violence Prevention?

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a gender-based violence programme delivered in 173 secondary schools throughout Scotland. Developed in the United States by US Educator Dr Jackson Katz PhD, it was introduced to Scotland in 2012 and adapted for the culture and context of Scottish learners.

MVP is delivered as part of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy and supports early prevention of gender-based violence. MVP lessons explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin such abuse and give learners a language and framework to explore the issues.



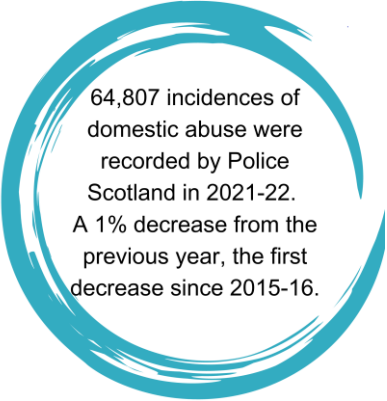
MVP utilises a peer education model, with senior pupils trained and supported to deliver lessons to their younger peers. These cover a range of topics including sexual harassment, consent, image-based abuse and coercive control. Supporting young people to develop healthy relationships and recognise harms is at the heart of the [MVP programme](#).

In addition, the programme uses a bystander approach which allows learners to explore sensitive topics from the stand point of a neutral observer, rather than as victim or perpetrator, and allows options for safe interventions to be explored within a supportive environment.



Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

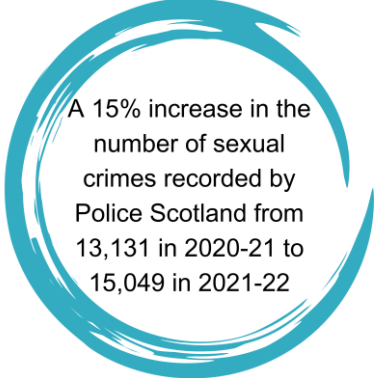
Violence against women is a human rights issue. [The World Health Organisation \(2018\)](#) estimates that almost one third of women globally have experienced gender-based violence, with most of this being intimate partner violence. Recent figures from Scotland suggest gender-based violence remains of significant concern.




64,807 incidences of domestic abuse were recorded by Police Scotland in 2021-22. A 1% decrease from the previous year, the first decrease since 2015-16.

While reported incidents of domestic abuse from [Police Scotland 2021-22](#) have seen a small 1% decrease, this is in the context of a greater increase of 4% the previous year. The vast majority were again female victims with a male accused. Children living in homes where domestic abuse occurs are now considered as having experienced the abuse, rather than merely witnesses and this is the [most common reason](#) for children in Scotland to be placed on the Child Protection Register.

[Police Scotland 2020-21](#) saw reported incidents of sexual crime increase by 15% in the last year with cyber related sexual crimes increasing four fold in the last eight years and reports of rape and attempted rape increasing by 9%.




A 15% increase in the number of sexual crimes recorded by Police Scotland from 13,131 in 2020-21 to 15,049 in 2021-22



13% of learners had experienced personally invasive behaviour such as sexual touching in the 3 months prior to the survey

Gender-based violence occurs in public spaces, private homes and in places of education. A [University of Glasgow study](#) in over 600 Scottish schools found that 1/3 of learners had experienced personally-invasive behaviour, such as sexual touching. [The Rise Report 2022](#) found that in Scotland over a third (36%) of young women had been in an intimate relationship with someone who was abusive or harmed them physically or emotionally and nearly three quarters knew someone who had.

There has been growing concern about misogynistic attitudes and so called 'Incel' ideology, particularly online. The most public examples of this being influential [online personalities](#) and their harmful content with regards to attitudes toward women. The concern is that the widespread reach of online influencers is having a harmful impact on the attitudes and beliefs of young men and boys in particular. [The Man Box](#) research found that young men who adhere to rigid gender stereotypes are more likely to display abusive behaviours towards women.



Those identifying as inside the Man Box were over six times more likely to perpetuate sexual harassment

Programme Delivery

MVP implementation begins in a school with readiness discussions between the leadership team and the local authority co-ordinator. Once successfully concluded, professional learning is arranged and a staff team identified. Two days professional learning is provided for schools new to the MVP programme and further staff can then attend a one day capacity building course. This is delivered by the National MVP team or local trainers who have been through the MVP Training for Trainers programme.

It is then the responsibility of the trained staff, known as the mentor support team, to recruit and train senior phase pupils or mentors. The mentors also receive two full days of training very similar to that of staff professional learning. While this equips them to begin delivery of lessons to their younger peers, the expectation is for ongoing support and further training and development to be provided by staff throughout the year.

Schools delivering for the first time are encourage to focus on delivery to one year group with a view to building on this over years two and three. The recommendation is for a minimum of 4 lesson to be delivered by the mentors to any given year group. As schools then develop and embed MVP further year on year, they will often recruit a larger pool of mentors delivering to multiple year groups. The mentor support team, alongside mentors themselves, will decide which lessons to deliver according to age and stage appropriateness, identified need and curricular timetabling. There is currently a bank of 13 scenario based topics to choose from once the two mandatory lessons are delivered (figure 1)

Once the peer education programme is established and mentors are delivering lessons, trained staff are able to supplement this by themselves delivering to other classes or year groups.

SESSION NAME	TOPIC	SESSION NAME	TOPIC
*CORE SESSION 1	Bystander/Scope of Violence	WORDS	Homophobic language
*CORE SESSION 2	Violence triangle/A gendered lens	NAMES	Transgender bullying
CORRIDOR	Domestic violence (in younger relationships)	EXPOSURE	Viewing pornography
TEXT MESSAGES	Controlling behaviour (in younger relationships)	EXPLOITED	Child sexual exploitation
PRESSURE	Sexting - coercion	HARASSMENT	Sexual harassment
PHOTOS	Sexting – images	EXPECTATIONS	Impact of pornography on relationships
LABELLED	Shaming	PARTY	Alcohol and consent
KNIFE	Carrying of weapons		

*mandatory lessons

(Figure 1)

Green only to be delivered by staff

Programme Reach

173 schools have delivered the MVP programme in 2022-23

This year a record number of schools have delivered the MVP programme. This includes 35 schools delivering for the first time and 39 restarting after a gap of a year or more. Significant challenges remained this year from the impacts of the pandemic and competing demands on school resources. This welcome recovery in delivery can be seen as indicative of both the level of need and the commitment of schools, staff and local authorities to challenge gender-based violence and promote healthy relationships.

5,017 mentors delivered MVP lessons

Mentors are all senior phase pupils, predominately from S5 and S6 year groups (94% of schools, MVP Practitioner Delivery Survey Nov 22). They receive two days of intensive training prior to becoming mentors and subsequent ongoing development and support from their MVP staff team.

This year the average number of senior pupils trained as mentors in a secondary school delivering MVP is 29, with some schools reporting over 80 delivering MVP to their younger peers. The size of the school populations, the number of staff supporting the programme and the stage of the school's implementation of MVP, determines how many mentors a school will have in place.

A minimum of 6,688 MVP lessons were delivered

Based on mentors working in the recommended groups of three, delivering the minimum number of four lessons to one year group, we estimate around 6,688 lessons have been delivered to younger peers.

Many schools do however deliver more than the minimum recommended, in particular those schools who have been operating MVP for a number of years and have mentors delivering to multiple year groups. This is around 44% of delivering schools.

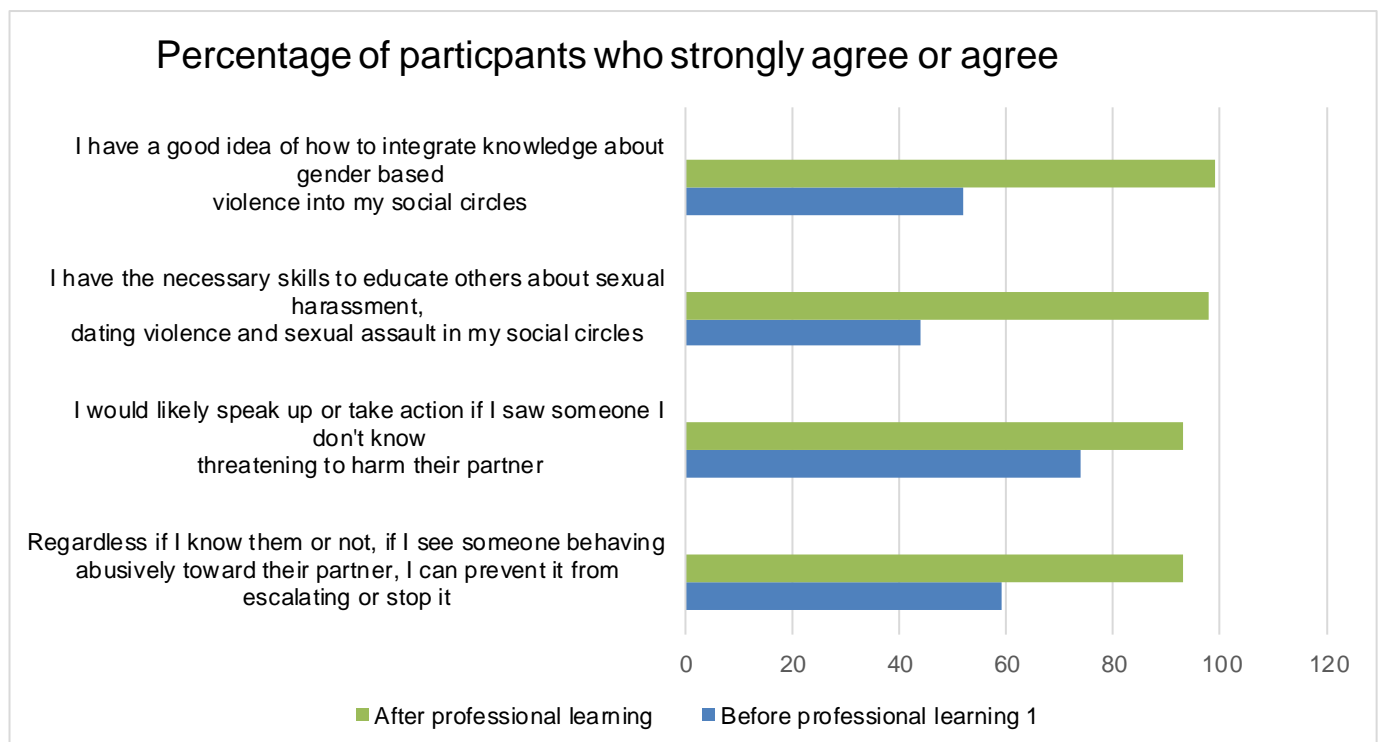
In addition, in almost half (49%) of delivering MVP schools (MVP Practitioner Delivery Survey Nov 22), MVP trained staff are delivering lessons to supplement the peer delivery programme. It is likely therefore that the number of MVP lessons being delivered is much higher than estimated.

Professional Learning

580 staff completed MVP professional learning in 2022-23

Over the course of this session, professional learning was delivered to teaching staff and a wide range of partner agency staff from organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland, Police Scotland and Community Learning & Development. Professional Learning included a two day course for new schools or a one day capacity building course for existing schools. Fourteen staff from across nine local authorities also completed the two day training for trainers. The number of authorities working towards a sustainable training model with their own staff delivering MVP professional learning has reached 18, two of whom now have internal trainers for the first time this year. A further 20 staff working in the area of additional support needs attended bespoke professional learning to support them in implementing MVP in their setting. The local authority coordinator for Stirling and a Community Sexual Health Educator for NHS Forth Valley supported delivery of this bespoke training.

To evidence the impact of professional learning on staff who are trained, an anonymous pre and post questionnaire is completed online by participants. It looks at a number of indicators including behaviours and awareness and confidence related to knowledge and skills. As with previous years the survey evidenced increased awareness and confidence following professional learning as illustrated in Figure 2 below:



“Learning new ways to protect my pupils. Seeing how my school can have positive peer influences. Seeing a way to empower my pupils learn worthwhile skills and improving their confidence and self-esteem. Having discussions with other professionals and learning what is happening in their schools. Making new contacts for support moving forward.”

(Scottish Borders practitioner)

“Good to have space and time to debate, analyse and think deeply about gender-based violence both in a professional and personal capacity. Looking forward to taking this back into school to have an impact on young people.”

(City of Edinburgh Council practitioner)

16 Days of Activism

During the International [16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence](#), a learning programme was planned and delivered by Education Scotland. It was a key highlight of the professional learning offer. Nine practitioner events were held offering specialised learning around a range of topics and presented by expert speakers/researchers in their field. Speakers included international and UK experts on topics ranging from the impact on children of coercive control, race and gender-based violence and an exploration of Incel ideology and misogyny.

A total of 195 practitioners attended from a wide range of organisations including teaching, Social Work, Rape Crisis, Women’s Aid, CLD, Police Scotland and Community Justice staff. Several practitioners from third sector organisations such as One Parent Families Scotland, Helm and Emily Test also attended. The recording of several of these sessions will support professional learning going forward.

Feedback was extremely positive:

“Really helpful session. Was clear and concise with information provided. Definitely informative and useful for moving forward in my own practise”

“I have a pupil for whom I am concerned and this session made me realise some details”

Impact

Impact is measured in a number of ways throughout the year both with practitioners and learners.

Practitioner survey

The practitioner impact survey generated 76 staff responses, representing 44% of delivering schools in 19 local authorities. A range of closed questions were asked, examining staff perception of impact on mentors, mentees and the ethos and culture of the school. As is demonstrated below, the results are very positive with staff reporting strong improvements in recognition of healthy and unhealthy relationships as well as likelihood to take bystander action, following MVP delivery. The stronger reported impacts for mentors is unsurprising given the high level of training given to mentors, and their immersive role delivering the programme.

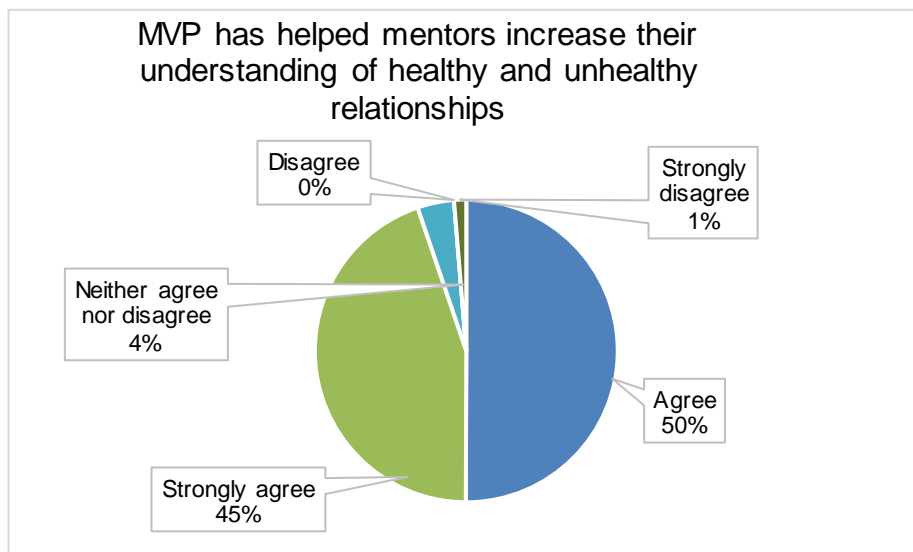


Figure 3
95% of staff report they strongly agree or agree that MVP has helped mentors increase their understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships

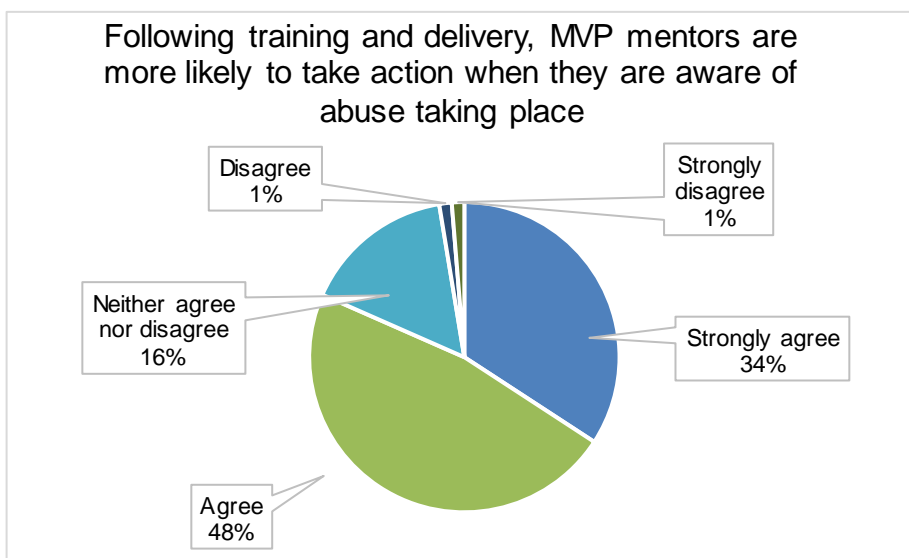


Figure 4
82 % of staff strongly agree or agree that following training mentors are more likely to take action when they see abuse

MVP has helped mentees increase their understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships

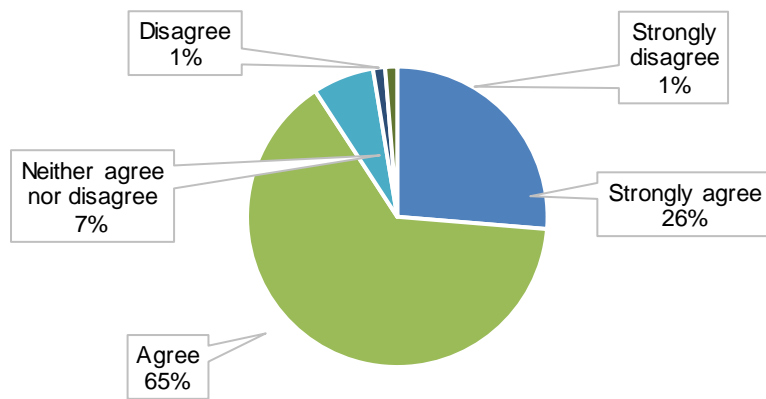


Figure 5

91% of staff strongly agree or agree that MVP has helped mentees increase their understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships

Following delivery of MVP the number of younger pupils who raise a concern or seek help for themselves or a friend has increased

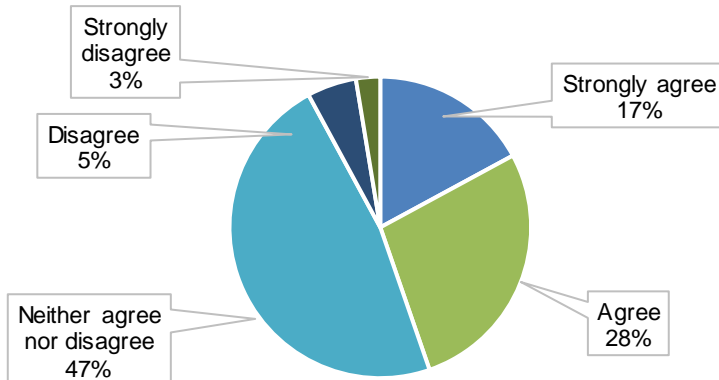


Figure 6

45% of staff strongly agree or agree that following MVP delivery the number of mentees who raise a concern or seek help has increased.

When reporting on school culture and ethos, 74% of staff said MVP had contributed to the building of positive relationships within their school community and 79% that it had helped ensure gender-based violence is unacceptable in their school community.

When asked for specific examples of impacts on mentors, several stood out:

One mentor in particular has struggled with their own mental health issues throughout school. He has a difficult home life and often finds it difficult to attend school. Since joining the MVP programme as a mentor, we have seen a massive improvement in his attendance and enthusiasm towards school. He often comes to talk to me (as MVP lead teacher) to report on how well MVP lessons have been going and to let me know how much he is enjoying being involved. (Dumfries and Galloway Council practitioner)

One senior pupil recognised after receiving the training that her friend was in a unhealthy relationship. This pupil was able to talk through the different options that she had to try to help/support her friend. (Fife Council practitioner)

The MVP National team were approached this year by a NQT, based in an East Dunbartonshire secondary school. She shared her personal story of being an MVP mentor in 2014/15, the impact it had on her personally and the role it played in her career development. Her blog can be found on the [MVP website](#).

I often reflect on my time with MVP in school and believe it was the best thing I participated in. The opportunity to work with, and teach younger pupils nurtured my love of helping others and eventually influenced my decision to become a teacher.
(East Dunbartonshire NQT)

Practice development

Staff were also asked to consider how the programme had influenced themselves as a practitioner and comments indicate an overall positive contribution.

MVP has encouraged the opportunity for wider discussion amongst staff about the issues being tackled and the reasons why the programme is important. It has encouraged open conversation about the language that we all use and how we interact with each other.
(Fife Council practitioner)

Much more aware of the language I use in classroom and I have had the strength to question young male students on attitudes that are not acceptable.
(Dumfries and Galloway Council practitioner)

Whole school approaches

Survey feedback suggests that in more than half of the schools, the mentors' role was wider than lesson delivery and being developed into a wider whole school approach. Involvement in P7 transition work was often noted, with presentations at assemblies and stalls at parents' evenings also highlighted.

Several respondents noted their mentors were involved in campaign work around [White Ribbon Awareness Day](#) and [Anti-Bullying Week](#). In a few schools mentors supported drop ins, one to one mentoring or buddy schemes. This wider scope for the mentors is likely to have increased the impact of the programme on the ethos of the school.

Case Study

MVP mentors at Graeme High School Falkirk have embraced social media to spread their MVP messages. One Tiktok [video](#) 'What makes a healthy relationship?' has now reached almost 200,000 views. As a result of their social media presence, in particular the TikTok videos, mentors have been recognised in the playground, on the bus and on the way to/from school by younger pupils, who have praised them for their efforts and been positive about their lessons. The mentors led activities for International Women's Day, Men's Mental Health day and Holocaust Memorial day. They worked with Police Scotland and Fearless on their hate crime campaign and filmed input for Holocaust Memorial Day recognising that being an active bystander affects many areas of life.

Our MVP Development Officer asked mentors and staff about the impact of the MVP programme in their school. Feedback was as follows;

- The atmosphere in school is much nicer; less nasty comments being heard and more challenge evident when nasty comments are made.
- A teacher described how one pupil, who used to use quite derogatory language and be quite aggressive towards his peers, has been overheard challenging a fellow pupil with the phrase 'that's not very MVP of you' when they made a nasty comment to someone.
- Mentors had received comments on their TikTok videos by pupils from across the country and from other countries, commending MVP messaging and expressing a desire for MVP to be in their schools.
- Mentors stated that younger pupils know who they are and that they are promoting messages of kindness and 'not standing for violence' which has resulted in younger pupils approaching mentors to talk and seek advice on situations where they are having fall-outs with friends, being bullied or feeling low in mood
- Discussions have been overheard by teachers about consent following MVP lessons: how to ask for consent and the importance of asking.
- Mentors expressed feeling more ready for the world of work and future careers due to skills developed in this role such as presenting to a class, managing workload, organisation, working effectively as part of a team, self-motivation, being prepared, working with adults and people from varied backgrounds and experiences.

- Mentors expressed being more inclusive, through working as a mentor team with pupils they weren't already friendly with in a setting which requires a lot of self-reflection, evaluation and which lends itself to opening up due to the 'safe space'.
- Mentors expressed seeing mentees being kinder and more inclusive of one another due to the 'safe space' created during MVP lessons and the fact lessons are led by fellow pupils.

Mentor/mentee survey

Schools are requested to ask both mentors and mentees to complete a survey at the end of their delivery year. The number of responses to this have traditionally been low. This mirrors the experience of partner organisations when trying to gather programme data. This year mentee data was again limited making meaningful analysis impossible. The number of mentors completing the survey this year, while small, included a spread across nine schools and eight local authorities.

Although the information gathered cannot be seen as representative of the national picture, it provides some insight into impacts on senior pupils. Results are similar to those reported by staff in the practitioner survey.

Figure 7 below demonstrates how the vast majority of mentors (92%) strongly agree or agree that MVP has helped them recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.

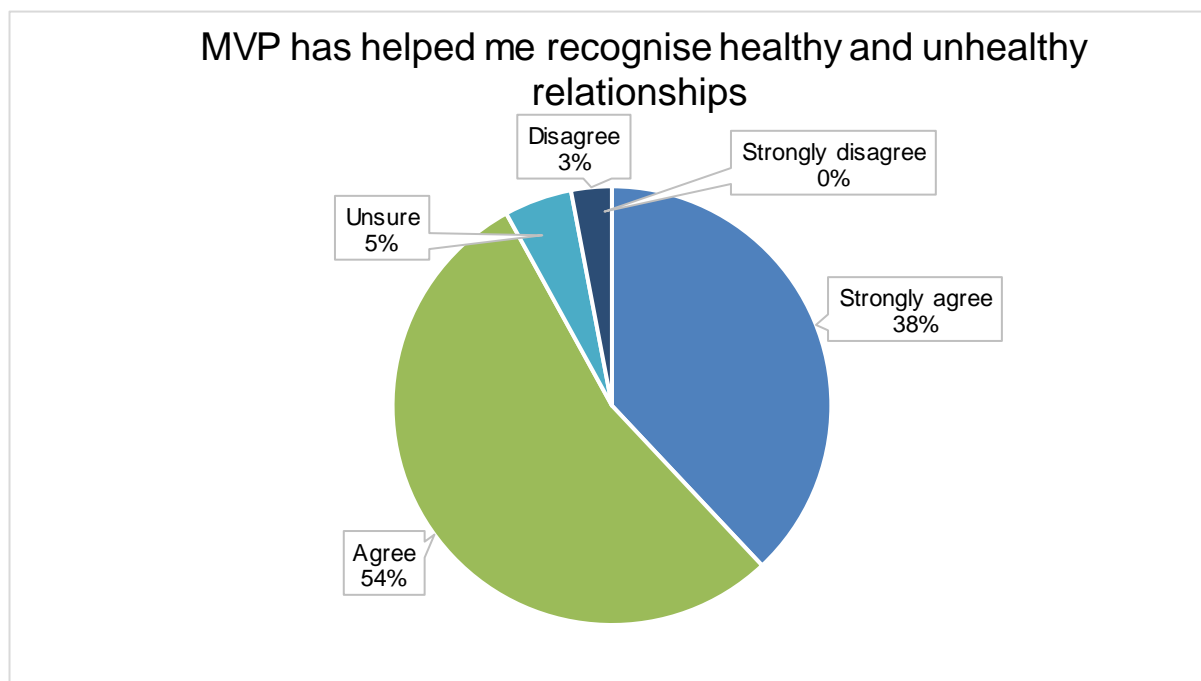


Figure 7

The following two graphs, Figures 8 and 9, highlight that 95% of mentors report that MVP has helped them understand that there are different ways to help if they see abuse or violence and the programme has helped them build good relationships with their younger peers.

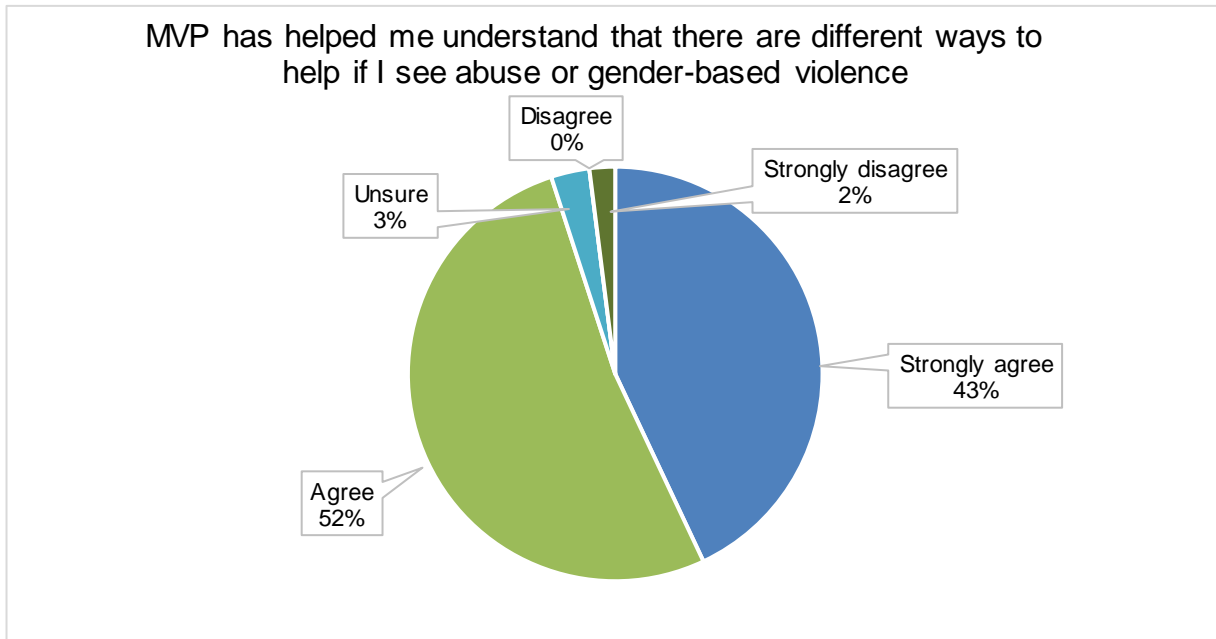


Figure 8

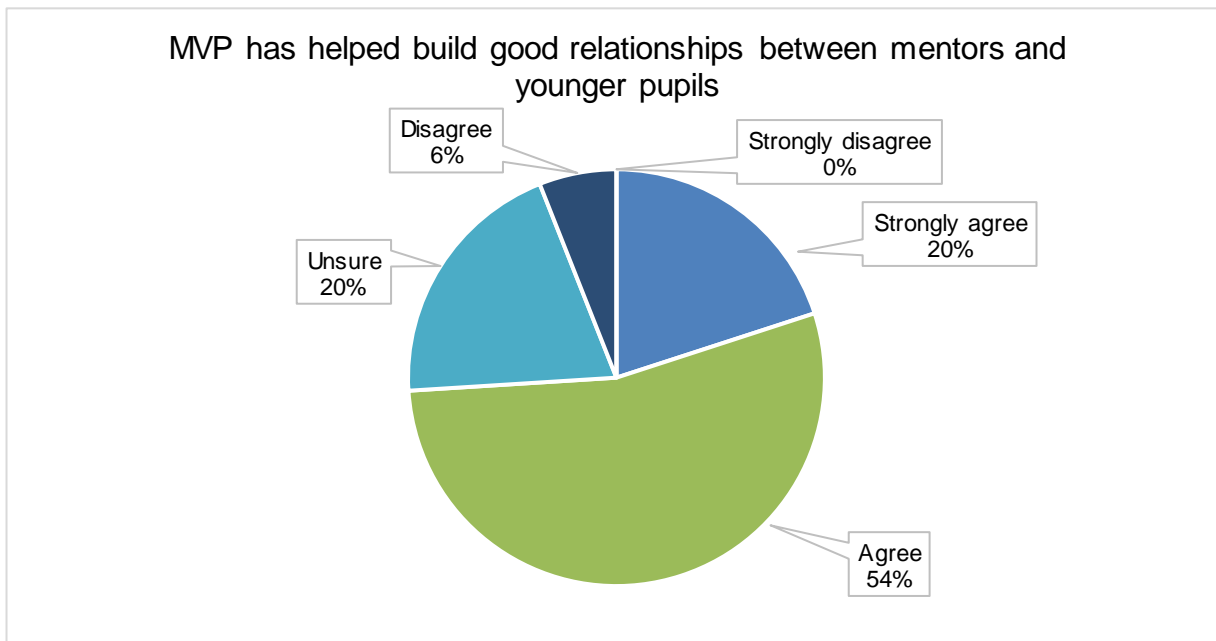


Figure 9

Recognising something is wrong and having the confidence and skills to act are key components of active bystander action (Berkowitz, A.D. (2009). *Response Ability: A Complete Guide to Bystander Intervention*. Chicago: Beck & Company). The large percentage of mentors reporting that MVP has supported them in being able to recognise harms in a relationship and ways to help if they witness abuse, is a positive indicator of potential active bystander behaviour.

Mentors also reported improvements in key skills most notably leadership and presentation skills. Leadership is required for active bystander behaviour and over half of mentors (58%) reported significant improvement in this key skill area. This was noted by staff also. 'I've been particularly impressed to watch the students who struggle academically have another focus in attaining their leadership awards and in the practice of standing up and speaking to younger pupils. Without MVP these pupils would not have had any similar opportunity to develop their skills in this way.' (Dundee City Council practitioner)

Development work

The ongoing development of resources, alongside engaging with young people to ensure their relevance and credibility was also a key priority for this session. To this end a number of new scenarios have been planned and are currently in the later stages of development. These include a scenario exploring honour- based abuse in collaboration with Shakti Women's Aid as well as a scenario being developed alongside The Mental Health Foundation about the gendered nature of body image and mental health.

A third scenario looking at Incel ideology and misogyny is being written alongside Dr Kaitlyn Regehr from University College London. This year has seen a rise in concerns about this issue from both staff and learners. There were several requests from MVP staff via our online forums for resources to support conversations in class about particular high profile misogynist social media influencers who had come to prominence. MVP mentors also raised concerns, through the National Mentor Steering Group that meets online monthly ,about a perceived rise in concerning misogynist attitudes amongst their younger peers. One school's mentors asked if they could write a scenario on the topic. These mentors are now working with the national team and Dr Regehr on scenario development. An interim resource was released to support staff in the meantime in the form of an [A-Z](#) and a [wakelet](#), which currently has had over 300 views.

The infographic is titled "A-Z of Supporting Conversations Around Misogyny" and is set against a light blue background with a grid of letters. Each letter contains a key point or strategy for supporting conversations. The points include:

- A** Avoid one-on-one conversations. It's better to have a group discussion.
- B** Be mindful of your own emotional reaction to the topic and how it may impact your ability to facilitate conversations.
- C** Create a safe space for discussion. Set ground rules and boundaries.
- D** Digital and information literacy skills are important for young people to challenge and evaluate what they see and hear online.
- E** Engaging boys is essential. Boys are also impacted negatively by gender norms.
- F** Frame challenging conversations around values. What do you stand for?
- G** Gender norms are established at a young age, challenging at every opportunity.
- H** Healthy relationships are at the heart of prevention work.
- I** Include role models who support young people to feel safe, respected and able to contribute.
- J** Jokes and banter are often used to excuse harmful speech or behaviour.
- K** Key phrases that can support challenging conversations.
- L** Listen to young people. Shouting down comments or views can shut them out.
- M** Men are overrepresented in the current high profile and often gender inequality as both a cause and consequence of gender based violence.
- N** Not all men are a challenge. It's important to have a clear, balanced vision.
- O** Open and honest conversations that happen in safe and supportive spaces will allow young people to feel respected and able to contribute.
- P** Positive male role models and healthy narratives around masculinity are important areas to discuss.
- Q** Question your own biases and assumptions. Young people from having open and honest conversations.
- R** Recognise that many young people are already experiencing misogyny or gender based violence.
- S** Supporting processes should be followed when necessary.
- T** Timely resources can support anyone, take the time to check for a conversation.
- U** Use the MVP programme as building blocks for your prevention work.
- V** Violence against women/girls takes many forms and impacts in many ways.
- W** While without approaches are most effective for long term prevention.
- X** X-rated material such as pornography has been shown to impact negatively on young people's perception of relationships.
- Y** Young people may be the most effective in challenging their peers.
- Z** Zero tolerance of discrimination and abusive behaviour gives a clear message of the values you expect to be upheld.

At the bottom of the infographic, there are logos for Education Scotland and the National Mentor Steering Group (NMSG), along with the text "Mentors in Violence Prevention in Scottish Schools (mvp.scot.nhs.uk)".

Conclusion

During the session April 22 – March 23 the MVP programme has continued to expand its reach with a record number of secondary schools across Scotland now delivering MVP.

Those practitioners who attend MVP professional learning and support the programme, report positive impacts on their confidence, knowledge, skills and their own professional practice. The MVP programme has helped build a range of skills in the senior learners and in turn support their achievement. More of these young people are now able to recognise and safely challenge harm. In some instances delivery of the programme has highlighted risk of harm for a learner that had not been highlighted until the delivery of the programme; this has empowered staff to intervene.

MVP and gender-based violence prevention continues to support the drive for inclusion, wellbeing and equality for all within Scottish education. Commitment to this is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of schools seeking to deliver the MVP programme. Levels of violence in Scotland's schools have come under increased scrutiny in recent months with [one union describing an 'aggression epidemic'](#) following polling of its members experiences. This has led to the Scottish Education Secretary announcing a summit on violence in Scottish schools. The MVP programme is already supporting schools to developing safe communities and healthy, relationships, where abusive behavior is recognised and challenged by staff and learners.

[All Learners Matter](#), the report from the National Discussion to inform a renewed vision for the future of Scottish education, calls to action that 'safe and inclusive cultures that nurture respectful relationships and address discrimination and harassment are imperative'. Its evidence highlights the desire for 'safe and inclusive school cultures' that challenge stereotypes and inequalities, including gender inequality, and the need for professional learning for staff that give them awareness and understanding of these issues. The MVP programme is well placed to continue to meet these needs with a proven and established programme that challenges gender inequality and supports inclusion and the development of healthy relationships; and with a robust, highly rated and effective professional learning programme.

As evidenced on page 4, the prevalence of gender-based violence and its impact on the lives of Scotland's young people continues to be of significant concern. The Scottish Governments [Violence Prevention Framework for Scotland](#) commits to working to 'tackle the deep-rooted inequalities which can lead to violent behaviour' and recognises the success of the MVP programme in challenging gender inequality and preventing violence against women and girls.

It shares the MVP programme's commitment to supporting young people to develop healthy and positive relationships. MVP can support this framework and within [Equally Safe](#), Scotland's strategy for the preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, continue vital prevention work within schools and their wider communities. To this end, The Independent Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services [report](#) recommends that 'the national rollout of MVP, alongside other schools based prevention approaches, should continue until it is available in every high school.'

The national MVP team would like to thank all MVP mentors, staff, schools and partner agencies who have continued to support and deliver the MVP programme with passion and commitment over the course of the session 22-23.

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